Radical Intimacies:
Affective Potential and the Politics of Love in the Transatlantic
Sex Reform Movement, 1900-1930

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Department of History in the University of
Toronto

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2010
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Abstract

This dissertation explores the transatlantic shaping of the early twentieth century sex reform movement as a pivotal moment in the history of affect. I focus on a set of influential white middle class British and American radical intellectuals who emphasized emotions, instincts, and energies as transformative forces that could politically, socially, and materially alter the world. Crucially, this dissertation shifts historical attention on this period as a watershed in sexual practices toward the lens of a politics of love that informed sex reformers’ construction of discourses and practices. I argue that sex reformers’ politics of love amounted to the emergence of new registers of organizing bodies along the lines of gender, race, class, and sexuality by differentiating these bodies in terms of what I call their affective potential to achieve love. By examining the sex reform movement through this lens of a politics of love, I highlight the multiple ways that sex reformers radicalized the domain of intimacy as an arena of intense concern in matters of both social and political organization as well as ontological questions of spiritually and ecologically relating to the world. Each of this dissertation’s chapters aims to take the reader on a journey through the multiple worlds that took shape as sex reformers looked to develop scientific, spiritual, social, political, and economic strategies to engineer relationships defined by love. This journey spatially and temporally situates sex reformers’ bodies as affective compasses that moved through and
constructed historically specific worlds out of Darwinian maps of cities and nations, Bohemian living arrangements, ‘modern’ schools and playgrounds, Edenic gardens, plant breeding and animal sex research laboratories, and imagined eugenic utopias of future species and races.
Acknowledgments

This project has only been possible through the generous financial, intellectual, and moral support of a number of individuals and institutions. I am grateful for the financial support of an Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and University of Toronto fellowships and travel grants. The University of Toronto funded conferences where I was fortunate to receive encouragement and suggestions from Jad Adams, Judith Allen, Alejandro Cervantes Carson, Kate Fisher, Will Fisher, Kevin Floyd, Sarah Franklin, and Lesley Hall.

In my many travels to the archives, I have benefitted from the help of the staff and archivists at the American Philosophical Library, the Beinecke Library, the British Library, the British Psychoanalytic Institute, the International Institute for Social History, McMaster University’s Russell Archives, St. Paul’s Cathedral’s Archive, the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, and the Wellcome Library. In particular, I would like to thank Mieke Ijzermans for many conversations on the Russells and helpful suggestions for this project.

My greatest debt is to my supportive, generous, and inspiring committee, Michelle Murphy, Stephen Brooke, and Elspeth Brown. My supervisor, Michelle Murphy, has seen this project through its many transformations. I owe many of its strengths to Michelle’s encouragement to make my claims more precise and to keep in mind their stakes. Michelle, through your patience and diligence, you have helped me to find my voice. I thank Stephen Brooke for comments on copious drafts which pushed me to take my argument to a higher level of analytical rigor by attending to the distinctions between transatlantic communities. I greatly appreciate Elspeth Brown’s detailed comments which have raised the bar for my historical scholarship, urging me to more deeply ground my primary sources in the
historiography. Many thanks to all of you for being such inspiring examples as academics with high professional standards, dedication, and commitment to teaching.

I would also like to thank both of my examiners for their engaged and careful reading of the manuscript. I thank Ashwini Tambe for many helpful suggestions on ways to deepen my analysis. I am grateful to Laura Wexler for her insightful observations, encouragement, and challenging questions which have offered important direction on further developing my work. Laura, your work has inspired me through many stages of this project.

Beyond my committee, this project has been enriched by a community of professors, graduate students, and undergraduate students at the University of Toronto. I owe a special thanks to Professor Barbara Todd for valuable advice to attend to the clarity of my prose and to situate my narrative in its longer history. Sarah Amato, Todd Craver, Julie Gilmour, and Nicholas Matte have contributed to this project through their friendship, their insightful comments on my work, and many conversations on our mutual research. This project has also benefited from my discussions with Brian Beaton, Michael Pettit, Ariel Beaujot, and Frances Timbers. As an instructor and teaching assistant, I have encountered some brilliant students who have asked good questions about my research. They have inspired me to communicate my arguments more effectively and to deepen my knowledge to provide them with better answers. In particular, I want to thank Cristina D’Alessandro, Joan Densmore, Will Martin, Victor Short, and Julia Zhao. I am grateful to Will and Victor for “epic email” exchanges on the ideas of Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, and Bruno Latour.

Finally, I want to thank my family who have been a constant presence in witnessing my joys and pains of transforming into an academic. My father, Ron Hustak, my uncle John
Hustak, and my sister Corina Hustak have patiently listened to stories of Red Emma, Dora Russell, occultists in Greenwich Village, plant sexuality, and animal research. They have consistently supported my ambitions and, in times of frustration, they have reminded me to have faith that completing this dissertation would be possible. Sadly, my mother, Frances Hustak, and my grandmother, Maria Hustak, did not see this project reach its final stages. I am, however, indebted to both of them for what they taught me about the importance of strength, kindness, determination, and paying attention to feelings. Even in their absence, they continue to profoundly shape my world.
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Introduction

Radicalizing Intimacies Across Space and Time

According to the January 1920 issue of the Birth Control Review [hereafter BCR], the world was in crisis and women’s bodies were its site of hope and despair. By 1920, American birth control leader, Margaret Sanger, was famous for her radical stance on birth control which had led to her opening the first American birth control clinic in 1916, a number of arrests for disseminating birth control information, and the decision to launch the Birth Control Review as a propaganda organ of the movement. Sanger’s activities in the United States were shaped through transatlantic partnerships with British birth control activists who petitioned the American government on behalf of Sanger after warrants were issued for her arrest. Sanger developed intimate relationships with British birth control activists, taking refuge in England, lecturing, and even contemplating opening a clinic there. By the time Sanger’s editorial on “Birth Strike to Avert World Famine” appeared in the BCR’s January 1920 issue, these transatlantic networks fostered not only a sense of mutual struggle and bodily investments between British and American sex reformers, but these networks also highlighted globalized racial, class, gender, and sexual alliances for deciding which bodies were valued, who should control resources, and which women should mother, reproduce, and populate the world.

As British and American white middle class intellectuals increasingly explained global problems in terms of bodies, sex, energies, and emotions, they intensified the meanings of American and British global political alliances as matters of historic bodily connections in whiteness, sexual morality, and capitalist economies. As such, British and American sex reformers, like Sanger and Stopes, shaped a transatlantic community that took
note of bonds between white middle class bodies beyond national borders while also acknowledging how the contours of the sex reform movement were shaped by specific national circumstances.

Around the same time that Sanger published her editorial, Marie Stopes was leading the British birth control crusade. Stopes, in fact, raced to open the first birth control clinic in Britain in 1921 before Sanger could do it. Stopes did, however, support Sanger by signing a petition along with sex reformers Edward Carpenter and H.G. Wells, which was then sent to President Woodrow Wilson in the United States to protest the criminal prosecution of Sanger.¹ Taking refuge in England, Sanger was delighted to publicly express her views in socialist and feminist venues, writing to Stopes in 1915 that “it was a jolly talk, and I felt that there was after-all a real human being in England.”² In this same letter, Sanger told Stopes that she would be “sending you the Naughty pamphlet tomorrow.”³ As two towering figures on the international stage of the early twentieth century birth control movement, Stopes and Sanger recognized and cultivated this relationship as a shared commitment to the birth control movement. Sanger, in fact, expressed an affinity to Stopes in a shared emotional relation to the movement, claiming that “I like to feel that women are getting happiness out of love – So few do. We have both had such interesting lives since last we met.”⁴ In a sense of sharing in a besieged climate where the fight for birth control drew strength from transatlantic partnerships, Sanger urged Stopes to keep up her spirits by telling her to “Be well + strong dear woman. If you could breathe deep for vitality + rejuvenation in a few

³ Ibid.
weeks you would be your self again.” As both Stopes and Sanger moved in a shared community of transatlantic sex reformers, their activities highlighted political alliances in terms of bodily alliances composed of energies, emotions and instincts integrally tied to the stakes of consolidating white middle class ‘civilization’ through controlling reproduction.

In January of 1920, Sanger’s editorial on “A Birth Strike to Avert World Famine” situated bodily intimacies, the management of sex, and motherhood at the heart of early twentieth century geo-politics which foregrounded intense global intimacies in British and American relations. Sanger re-articulated the 1798 Malthusian prophecy of population outstripping food supply by offering a feminist and socialist solution. She emphasized that food scarcity could be attributed to poorly managed female fecundity, resulting in overpopulation which ultimately served capitalist demands for an exploitable workforce of a ready supply of labourers who could be paid lower wages. In her editorial, Sanger posed the question, “Shall we bring children into a world that is bankrupt and starving? All of our mother instincts, all of our humane feelings, all of our common sense must cry out against such a course.” At a time of considerable American prosperity and a growing American empire, Sanger stressed that America could not afford to be complacent given that its fate was interlocked with Europe’s problems. While Sanger acknowledged that hunger had not yet gripped the United States, she indicated that there were warning signs, namely child labour in American factories and starving children in Europe.

5 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
Insofar as Sanger closely bound the fates of both America and Europe, the possible solutions contrived through managing women’s bodies and reproduction also took on a transatlantic scope of communal cooperation that intimately intertwined Britain and the United States. Like Sanger, Stopes also addressed the issue of maternal feeling or lack thereof in the context of purported mismanaged and irresponsible reproduction among the lower classes. In Stopes’s 1918 publication of *Wise Parenthood*, she depicted the working-class mother as:

harried, overworked and worried into a dull and careless apathy. These too often will not, or cannot, take the care and trouble to adjust ordinary methods of control so as to secure themselves from undesirable conceptions. Yet, they do not desire more children, and often have already produced a number of low-grade or semi-feebleminded puny infants.\(^\text{10}\)

Stopes, in fact, concluded that sterilization would be appropriate for “the careless, stupid or feeble-minded who persist in producing infants of no value to the State.”\(^\text{11}\) Both Sanger and Stopes suggested that economics, sex, and emotions were integrally linked in defining national and global conditions which could be blamed on women’s failure to manage their fertility while such conditions could also be improved through the careful management of reproduction. Sanger went so far as to position the management of reproduction at the centre of the rise and fall of world power. She stated that “It is time for the women of the world – for each individual woman to accept her share of this problem. In this hour of crisis and peril, women alone can save the world. They can save it by refusing for five years to bring a child into being. And there is no other way.”\(^\text{12}\) Sanger’s solution to the world’s problems of scarcity was not merely a matter of controlling women’s biological reproduction

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\(^{10}\) Marie Stopes, *Wise Parenthood: The Treatise on Birth Control for Married People* (1918; London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1924), 41-42.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 42.

but crucially depended on managing affects such as ‘humane feelings’ and ‘mother instincts’ which would guide women’s reproductive decisions in relation to a world consciousness of global political conditions.

Sanger’s attention to instincts and feelings was symptomatic of the early twentieth century political and intellectual climate of a changing and intensified relationship between bodies and politics as distant places seemed to merge in ever closer proximity. Sanger lived at a time of heightened and developing global consciousness. Since the late nineteenth century, European nations and the United States moved in increasingly tense and intimate relations to one another in colonial ventures such as the European scramble for Africa, the growth of both the American empire and nation in its ventures into Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii, and Liberia, the economic competition in a struggle for control of resources and markets, and heightened awareness to manhood and health as national military resources. Within this international context, social movements partook of this heightened sense of global intimacies as social activists such as feminists, socialists, and pacifists maintained that the success of their movements depended upon international cooperation. These alliances were particularly strong between Britain and the United States where white middle class intellectuals imagined common historical, religious, geo-political, and bodily bonds of whiteness, sexual norms, democratic values, Anglo-Protestantism, and capitalist economies. At a time of fast-paced cultural and political change where old certainties seemed to fall away, British and American relations became ever more intimately interlocked at the site of projections of family values, racial reproduction, and the management of sexual energies.
Crucially for this dissertation, global intimacies also affectively inscribed bodies. In the late nineteenth century, white middle class intellectuals expressed their cultural malaise in a medicalized discourse on nervousness as a symptom of the effects and pressures of ‘modernity’ on white middle class bodies. White middle class intellectuals witnessed high levels of migration, working-class protests, and the advent of the ‘modern’ woman as signs of a changing world that registered a profound sense of white middle class vulnerability, which in turn played out in sexual, economic, and political anxieties. In this climate, white middle class intellectuals experienced global uncertainties as felt bodily uncertainties over white middle class energies to fuel capitalist accumulation, imperial power, and sexual reproduction. In contrast to conservative white middle class intellectuals who ominously warned that such changes must be met by reinforcing traditional family values and sexual purity, radical white middle class intellectuals who advocated sex reform, socialism, and feminism promoted sexual freedom, companionate marriage, and the cultivation of white middle class sexual instincts and sexual pleasure as a matter of the rise or fall of civilization. This dissertation is concerned with this latter group of white middle class transatlantic intellectuals who were a leftist vanguard, advocating new familial forms and an ethic of love through sexual freedom.

Radical “sex reformers,” as I will call them, reconfigured sexual, gender, racial and class norms along an affective register which politicized love as the unique, refined, superior

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capacity of white middle class bodies. On both sides of the Atlantic, a diverse group of white middle class professionals such as journalists, novelists, scientists, mathematicians, clergymen, nurses, social workers, educators, and physicians formed a community around their shared concerns of reforming sex and, by extension, civilization. In the early twentieth century, well known figures such as British novelist H.G. Wells, British philosopher Bertrand Russell, British birth controller and feminist philosopher Dora Russell, anarchist Emma Goldman, American heiress and salonniere Mabel Dodge, and American radical journalist Hutchins Hapgood moved within transatlantic sex reform circles. My story of sex reformers’ practices of love primarily takes place in the two geographic burgeoning metropolitan sites of New York City and London which served as particularly dense nodes of sex reform politics where bohemian marriage experiments, social gatherings, conference meetings, psychoanalytic sessions, birth control clinics, and modern educational ventures shaped and were shaped by a transatlantic sex reform community. Although sex reformers advocated love in the context of feminist and socialist commitments, these commitments were also tied to their particular interest in cultivating and channelling sexual energies as the antidote to white middle class nervousness and vulnerability. It is one of my contentions that sex reformers’ feminist and socialist projects mired love in an agenda to affectively consolidate white middle class elitism.

From the perspective of our own political and historical moment, Sanger’s entanglement of bodily and global intimacies seems oddly familiar. On an international stage, the questions that have largely been identified with Western liberal capitalist nations have emphasized the issues of transnational adoption, same-sex marriage, biotechnologies,
and reproductive health. Implicit, but often left unstated, in this context is the alignment of an ideal of familial love that is grounded in a vision of liberal capitalist nations as sites of resources, technologies, science, and ‘progressive’ values. What Judith Stacey has called “the postmodern family” is a phenomenon of Western liberal capitalist nations where this family presumes a ‘progression’ beyond the ‘modern’ condition and ‘modern’ family. In this context, love performs as an unqualified positive good that is uncritically embraced without taking note of how it is saturated in contemporary politics. Although today the political Right has primarily been associated with family values campaigns, the political Left has also engaged with reinforcing and creating new forms of normative family values.

While my sympathies lie with feminist and socialist ideals of more egalitarian work and familial relations, it is important to question what makes leftist familial ideals of love possible. Are there presumptions of an economic, educational, or privileged status that allows for such a familial situation? And, how are leftist ideals politically mobilized in ways that might undercut their objectives? In considering the politics of leftist family values, the story of early twentieth century sex reformers like Sanger is instructive for highlighting a

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necessary critical distance from love and sexual freedom as non-innocent ideals that could potentially re-articulate rather than undermine hierarchies.

In a post 9/11 world, the War on Terror has heightened a sense of vulnerability, anxiety, fear, a claustrophobic feeling of tighter global proximities, and intensified social bonds which have produced an affectively charged bodily condition attuned to this political condition of global connectivity. These intimacies, however, are not limited to spatial geopolitical ties where events have ripple effects as seemingly far distant worlds virtually touch each other. Both the Right and the Left have been jointly drawn into locating the family as an affectively charged site where global, sexual, and bodily intimacies are tightly bound together. This can be seen in the media attention to patriarchal power in Afghanistan against which the West measures its own ‘progress,’ ‘modernity,’ and ‘development.’ Gargi Bhattacharyya has argued that the cultural project of the War on Terror has divided ‘us’ and ‘them’ along the lines of affirming the West’s sexual freedom, loving families, and better treatment of women while demonizing Islamic men in ways that have affectively re-articulated state racism. Bhattacharyya draws specific attention to how the War on Terror has politicized affective relations, arguing that:

In the face of terrorist attacks that despise ‘our’ way of life, our way of life comes to be represented as a familial drama, all idealised gender types and affective relations. Although the statement here identifies a retreat into dreams of normative heterosexuality, with Americanness being signified

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17 Jackie Orr has discussed the effects of 9/11 as a politics of fear that has underpinned a militarized state. See Jackie Orr, “The Militarization of Inner Space,” Critical Sociology 30(2): 451-481. Other scholars have discussed global connectivity in terms of feeling by invoking categories such as haunting and affect. Jacques Derrida highlights the transformed conditions of capitalism in light of greater global proximities. See Jacques Derrida, Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994). Patricia Clough has focused on affect as a productive category for analytically grasping global connectivity in terms of the speed, intensities, and degrees of proximity made possible by technology. See Patricia Clough, Autoaffection: unconscious thought in the age of teletechnology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
through the old tropes of mom and dad, I wonder if that appeal has been more to a sense that ‘we’ feel and they do not.\textsuperscript{18}

While the War on Terror has contributed to a politicized Western affective condition of nervousness, anxiety, and fear, it has also mobilized love and sexual intimacies at the site of racialized and imperial familial narratives.

Most recently, the War on Terror’s cultural and affective project has taken the shape of debates among leading Western Anglo powers over maternal health provisions for Afghan women.\textsuperscript{19} These debates are situated alongside the development of birth control facilities through Stopes International, a Western family planning organization that owes its name to early twentieth century British birth control pioneer and eugenicist Marie Stopes.\textsuperscript{20} In this context, the pressing questions are less about love than questions of educating Afghan women about birth control, limiting the number of children, and negotiating questions of patriarchal violence in the home. In this scene of heightened global connectivity, the decisions made about managing sex, populations, women’s bodies, marriage, and familial ties involve a particular Western political mobilization of ‘positive’ affects in contrast to the ‘negative’ affects of vulnerability, fear, and panic. While much of the attention to the post 9/11 global situation has focused on fear prompting escalated security measures, bigger national defence budgets, and constructions of the ‘enemy’ as capable of striking without


warning, this has obliterated the ways that ‘positive’ affects are also being politically mobilized, particularly at the site of familial and sexual intimacies. Such mobilization of ‘positive’ affects has also rendered ethical judgments, rationality, and emotions as inseparably intertwined in what passes as an affectively charged world conscience largely articulated through Western liberal capitalist democracies.

What Patricia Ticiento Clough has called, “the affective turn” suggests an ethos enveloping both the academic and political climate of our time where a vocabulary of ‘life,’ energies, human capital, and relations have seized on affects as the units of political, economic, and social management.\(^{21}\) Clough describes our current political condition as the “worldwide meshing of biopolitics with an affective economy.”\(^{22}\) Clough suggests that the stakes involved in directing analytical attention to this affective economy lie in grasping a transformation in the terms of power where the unequal distribution of resources, privilege, and status have been situated in the circulation and governance of affects. Clough explains the political stakes of affects in the following statement:

> there is a marking of populations – some as valuable life and others as without value. Increasingly it is in these terms that differences such as those of ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation become materialized. Some bodies or bodily capacities are derogated, making their affectivity superexploitable or exhaustible unto death, while other bodies or body capacities collect the value produced through derogation and exploitation.\(^{23}\)

To attend to the specific workings of the affective economy, then, is to profoundly engage with feminist, colonial, queer, and anti-racist projects at the level of how bodies are managed, made, and regulated in the valuation of ‘life.’ To do so, also introduces radical possibilities for disturbing normative constructions of value by interrogating how families, work regimes,


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 25.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
and nations are constituted through dynamic and intimate relations. An attention to the kinds of relations and intimate bonds that constitute aggregates of family, work, and nation, make it possible to understand these institutions as malleable, shifting, and subject to reinvention. In other words, what can be seen as affective politics must take note of both how patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial regimes have invested in consolidating energies, desires, and emotions and how feminist, postcolonial, queer, and anti-capitalist projects have looked to the possibilities of these same affective dimensions to undermine the fixity of bodies, undo normative constraints, and emphasize intimacies and connectedness in opposition to the dominant white male autonomous heterosexual capitalist subject.

In light of recent scholarly attention turned to affect,24 I think that it is worth asking, does affect have a history? What or whom has a history has been a question that has opened new avenues of historical investigation that has critically located the discipline and writing of history in the politics of the present. In the 1970s and 1980s, the women’s movement and the Gay Liberation Movement introduced a political agenda that dovetailed with intellectual commitments to writing histories of women and sexuality. The latter half of the twentieth century also witnessed civil rights and decolonization movements that inspired postcolonial studies. In the 1990s, scholarly attention moved toward investigating the construction of

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normative categories such as whiteness and masculinity through which psychological, physical, and political violence came to be enacted on the bodies of marginalized others. Building on the late twentieth century tradition of a politically informed writing of history, I suggest that historicizing affect is critical to our political present insofar as ways of training, channelling, and producing affects has become instrumental to the micro-politics of everyday life at the heart of both normative values and the ways of reimagining life that exceed those norms in the twenty-first century. I situate this dissertation in a nexus of theoretical, political and historical commitments to telling a story of the early twentieth century sex reform movement as an affective history. Such a history, I argue, is an important cautionary tale of the ethical risks and promises in how affects are constituted, deployed, and differentially distributed in historically specific ways. This dissertation gestures toward opening an academic and politically rigorous process of investigating the histories of affect as a lens to re-examine the past and critically inform the politics of the present. In other words, to the question of whether affect has a history, this dissertation answers yes by showing the affective history of the sex reform movement.

In this dissertation, I focus on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century transatlantic rise of the sex reform movement as a critical historical moment when prominent white middle class intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic cast affects in scientific, political, social, and economic agendas to cultivate sex instincts as the foundation of both bodily and national health. I devote particular attention to a motley group of white middle class intellectuals in the United States and Britain who can be considered sex reformers insofar as they criticized existing sexual morality as harmful to civilization. The cohort of
sex reformers I am following can be loosely characterized as predominantly white middle class intellectuals claiming an Anglo-Saxon lineage who insisted that social and political attitudes, policies, and institutions must be reformed to encourage the cultivation and expression of sex instincts in white middle class bodies while limiting the fertility and regulating the sexuality of lower class, racialized, and colonized others. The period that they lived in was marked by the influences of sexology, Freudianism, Darwinism, the rise of social sciences, feminism, socialism, and fears of white degeneration, is an important genealogical episode of contemporary interests in affect. More importantly, the early twentieth century sex reform movement introduced and propagated explicit discourses on instincts, energies, and the emotional ordering of society that makes visible the stakes of affective politics. Throughout the dissertation, I argue that the sex reform movement mobilized a politics of love that hierarchically organized bodies along the lines of gender, race, class, and sexuality in terms of their bodily capacities to experience a range of affective states from levels of intense vitality to a purportedly higher emotional experience of love.

In what follows, I highlight a politics of love because sex reformers frequently invoked love as a transformative force that could change the world. In doing so, I consider how sex reformers’ construction and practices of love – both as ideological orientations and as lived conduct- amounted to a historical, political, and social ordering of affects. I distinguish between emotions and affects to the extent that emotions like love are specific structures and orderings of affects, which in turn include emotional experience but can also encompass a wider set of more immediate instantaneous feelings of instincts, energies, and
This distinction is prevalent throughout this dissertation as I cast a sex reform politics of love in terms of strategies for managing energies, instincts, and emotions toward producing a white middle class ideal of love. I argue that sex reformers profoundly influenced this historical moment by defining hierarchies of gender, race, class, and sexuality through an emotional index which divided bodies into those that were highly energized and promiscuous and those which were devitalized but held the potential to achieve ‘sexual love.’

I have used the term affective potential to highlight sex reform politics as the management of affects according to which bodies were deemed capable of achieving love. In doing so, I highlight what operates as an often implicit and invisible register that can be used to legitimize, structure, and order the authority, power, and privilege of some bodies over others. I show how ascribing differential values to bodies ultimately delineated white middle class superiority in terms of the privilege, capacity, and potential to practice love thereby casting white middle class civilization in a romance narrative. While white middle class sexual energies were deemed crucial to civilization, sex reformers suggested that the conservation, direction, and exaltation of white middle class sexual pleasure would produce a

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25 I have drawn on both theories of emotion and affect to make this distinction. For example, Brian Massumi indicates that emotion and affect follow different logics where “an emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits of into function and meaning.” In contrast to emotion as bound to a more structural, discursive, narrative and fixed position, Massumi defines affect as “a thing’s relationality autonomized as a dimension of the real” in terms of emergence, virtuality, and a radical openness that escapes or pre-exists structure. Massumi, Parables for the Virtual, 28, 35. Nigel Thrift also similarly distinguishes between affect and emotion with affect as lines of force rather than individualized emotions. Thrift, Non-Representational Theory, 175. On theorizing emotion, Catherine Lutz has discussed emotions as embedded in Western cultural systems. See Catherine Lutz, “Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category,” in The Emotions: A Cultural Reader, ed. Helena Wulff (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 19-36. Rei Terada, in fact, uses emotion as a category that performs similar analytical work to the theorizing of affect. Terada maintains that emotion is the crux of poststructuralism insofar as it destabilizes the subject. However, Terada maintains that emotion occurs on a more interpretive level than affect so that emotion encompasses both reason and sensory experience. See Rei Terada, Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the ‘Death of the Subject’ (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
more loving harmonious society. In contrast, sex reformers considered lower class, racialized, and colonized others to be highly instinctive, animalistic, and possessing greater vitality which allegedly threatened the collapse of civilizing through the production of unfit bodies that would create greater burdens upon the allegedly more productive and ‘civilized’ white middle class. I show how sex reformers defined the meaning of acting out of love in gender, racial, and class specific ways by presenting a historical narrative for observing the non-innocent political and strategic deployment of affects to produce a white middle class ideal of love. My decision to focus on a sex reform politics of love attends to the value of love as a political category marked by its status as a universal good that would be difficult to criticize while it performed the cultural work of upholding white middle class privilege. This dissertation is invested in grasping this slippery, elusive, and highly politicized meaning of love.

What this dissertation calls, affective potential, therefore denotes specific political statuses ascribed to bodies that sorted them out along lines of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Here, my analysis of a sex reform politics of love considers how the designation of a body’s affective potential also presumed a specific interaction with the world at the level of differential access, control, and use of resources. This point is crucial to considering how white middle class men and women encountered the world in historically specific practices such as primitivism, slumming, nature study, or fleeing to the farms which can be reframed as matters of affectively orienting the body in gendered, racially, and class-specific ways. This dissertation deploys such terms as “affective cartographies” and “affective compass” to
draw attention to the geo-political stakes of affect. As such, I show how spatial intimacies are integrally linked to bodily intimacies.

What is at stake here is the definition of the energies of some bodies as expendable and exploitable resources and the energies of other bodies as requiring conservation and enhancement. By presuming that white middle class bodies possessed the highest affective potential in their capacities to spiritually turn sexual energies into love, sex reformers also indicated that these bodies had the privilege and, even ethical obligation, to use human and nonhuman others to cultivate this potential. Sex reformers argued that this cultivation would amount to loving relations with the world whereby their bodies would become intimately engaged with the world in ways that would transgress their individualized bodies and achieve a harmonious oneness with the world. However, at the same time such transgressions tended to reaffirm the superiority of those bodies. This paradox can be explained through a historical analysis of what can be described as affective potential. Indeed, sex reformers’ insistence on the urgency to cultivate sexual energies and transform the world along the lines of love stemmed from a perceived affective crisis in white middle class bodies which equated the potential collapse of civilization with a worrisome decline in white middle class sexual energies.

What can a history of an early twentieth century transatlantic sex reform politics of love teach us about the present? For sex reformers who were in the vanguard of socialist and feminist movements to invigorate their own typically white middle class bodies promised to create a more loving society. While sex reformers defined this loving society in the socialist and feminist terms of egalitarian economic and sexual relations, such promises of love were
specifically tied to a white middle class context. As such, sex reformers’ vision of a more loving society promised closer bonds between white middle class men and women while drawing a sharp emotional and affective divide between races and classes. This history of the early twentieth century Left’s double and differential deployment of love highlights what other scholars have drawn attention to as the fractures inherent in the Left. Among a number of leftist political movements such as feminism, gay liberation, civil rights, and de-colonization, there has been a legacy of competing claims over which agenda should be privileged. Within each of these individual movements, there have been tensions over the marginalization of others whether it be a white middle class feminism that excludes the interests of black women, a civil rights movement that privileges male leadership, or a socialist movement that insists that feminism is secondary to class struggle.

While this history of sex reform has important lessons for considering fractures in the Left over time, my focus on love, in particular, insists on critically engaging categories that have been deployed across leftist movements to imagine a different political future. In doing so, my work has been shaped by a concern with the need for political and analytical vigilance in how emotions and politics are entangled. More specifically, I suggest that a critical,

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26 Maria Lugones draws attention to these fractures through the metaphor of travelling to other worlds which constitute forms of intermeshing oppressions. See Maria Lugones, Pilgrimages/Peregrinations: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003). On the specific fractures within feminism along the lines of colonialism, see Leela Gandhi, Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Patricia Clough shows how these fractures have marked trajectories of feminism. See Patricia Clough, Feminist Thought: Desire, Power, and Academic Discourse (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1994). Homi Bhabha discusses the fractures of gender, race, and class in terms of cultural hybridities and in-between spaces. See Homi Bhabha, the location of culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
27 A number of scholars have recently devoted attention to emotions as integrally tied to politics. Much of this literature has engaged with feminist analyses of politics identified with masculinity and rationality in opposition to femininity and emotionality. These scholars have, for the most part, pointed out how liberalism posits a rational independent male subject which has overlooked how passions, feeling, and emotions have been entangled in politics. See Leonard Ferry and Rebecca Kingston, eds. Bringing the Passions Back In: The
vigilant, and careful attention needs to be paid to the deployment of categories like ‘love,’ ‘care,’ ‘intimacy,’ ‘kinship’, and even ‘affect’ in their political uses, celebration, and perceived promises to reshape worlds.  

This history is part of a legacy of intellectuals’ own hauntings by histories of racism, sexism, and colonial violence. 

In the vanguard of many early twentieth century social movements, sex reformers were no less haunted by what they identified as class, sexual, and racial oppression but their solutions promised a more loving society upheld by the emotional and affective leadership of white middle class bodies. I suggest that sex reformers are an important group to consider because they paid such close attention to how transforming interactions between bodies and with the environment underpinned politics. I consider sex reform politics to be an important illustration of the work involved in making connections. However, the ways sex reformers’ politics of love was complicit with racial, gender, sexual, and class hierarchies also highlights the importance to consistently maintain a critical distance from romanticizing connectedness by continuing to ask critical questions about how the work and practice of care, kinship, and love in relation

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30 Bruno Latour has positioned the work of making connections at the core of actor-network theory, emphasizing material encounters with the world as a ‘real’ as opposed to abstract ground for theorizing the social. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
to ethical and political commitments of who or what is included and excluded as we move in new relations of proximity to some bodies and distance ourselves from others.31

I. The Sex Reform Movement and the Making of New Intimate Worlds, 1900-1930

The early twentieth century is a historical period that has attracted the attention of a number of feminist historians who have analyzed it as an important moment for suffrage, the assertion of female sexual pleasure, companionate marriage, women’s education and professional work, and the greater political attention devoted to maternal health, infant welfare, and the importance of motherhood to the state. Insofar as feminist historians have addressed the significance of the sex reform movement, they have done so largely in terms of what it meant for the assertion of female sexual pleasure.32 To this predominant feminist narrative of the sex reform movement, I want to suggest a different feminist lens, namely what this movement meant for redefining and disturbing gendered dichotomies of man/woman and reason/emotion. I would argue that for sex reformers, love was a more important question than sex.

In the late nineteenth century, white middle class intellectuals in urban centers within the United States and Britain began to draw attention to a set of questions and concerns that

31 In calling for this critical vigilance, I am aligning myself with Michel Foucault’s important point that a critical ethos must be maintained as we may seek, without totally succeeding, to ‘liberate’ ourselves from existing normative frameworks. See Michel Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?” in The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 32-50.
shaped the early stirrings of the sex reform movement. Around the 1870s, white middle class educated men and women increasingly regarded their bodies as superior to other bodies in their acute sensitivity and capacity for refined emotions such as love, compassion, and sympathy. However, because of this superiority and the attendant pressures of upholding civilization, these same white middle class professional elite also contended that their bodies were acutely vulnerable to degeneration due to the exhaustion, expenditure of energies, and psychic toll of upholding Victorian middle class sexual norms. In this period, the white middle class body became a site of intense intellectual interest and anxiety. In 1869, American physician, George Beard announced that neurasthenia, a nervous disease that allegedly attacked ‘civilized’ highly sensitive bodies, was a pervasive American malady as white middle class bodies struggled to cope with the new pressures and climate of ‘modern’ urban conditions. Despite Beard’s designation of neurasthenia as an American malady, the specific attention to the constitution of white middle class bodies turned this into a transatlantic concern intimately bonding the historical connections between Anglo bodies into a problem of a more broadly defined white middle class health and civilization. This medicalization of white middle class nerves, specifically their exhaustion and loss of energies, had a wider popular currency beyond medical texts and patient-doctor interactions. There were a constellation of discourses that coalesced around the physical enhancement, cultivation of energies, and reproduction of white middle class bodies. This set the stage for sex reform campaigns that sexual energies were pivotal to overall bodily and national health.

While the medical discourse on neurasthenia is a salient example of the way white middle class energies moved to the forefront of cultural concerns, this discourse was situated
amid a diverse platform of strategies for improving and protecting white middle class health. In the domain of science, the medical problem of nervousness also related to the interests of physicists in conservation and entropy which became key scientific concepts in the late nineteenth century. Both environmental and biological scientists who increasingly looked to the movement of energies in ecology, physiology, and endocrinology also drew on how white middle class bodily energies were integrally linked to environments and animal ancestors. By the 1870s, the popularity of Darwinism across a range of sciences contributed to locating white middle class bodies in a temporal frame that linked differing levels of energy to differing stages of civilization. The cultural fascination with primitivism in Germany, England, and the United States specifically cast white Anglo bodies in an evolutionary history and economy of energies that affectively racialized, gendered, and classed these bodies as less passionate, less sexual, and less energetic than lower class and purportedly ‘primitive’ others.

In Britain and the United States, white middle class intellectuals’ scientific interests in understanding energies, instincts, and emotions whether in domains of psychology, biology, physics, or ecology were shaped by a political and economic context of imperialism, immigration, urbanization, and industrialization. Both British and American sex reformers warily observed the rapid rise of American capitalism and imperialism while they also took note of British fears of a declining empire and growing economic competition. In the late nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, white middle class intellectuals who were in the vanguard of the sex reform movement considered these conditions as disconcerting signs of a mismanaged economy of white middle class sexual energies. Early
pioneers of sex reform such as Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis wrote in the late
nineteenth century at a time when bodily energies garnered transatlantic attention in the
physical culture movement which involved the spread of athletics to shape and train
children’s bodies as future citizens and national discourses on the white male physical fitness
as a measure of potential military reserves. As a constellation of experts from physicians to
sexologists and scientists turned attention to assessing the health of white bodies, this
attention was profoundly shaped by a political context that tied physical and national well-
being to racial health.

While physicians, politicians, scientists, and other professionals contributed to
foregrounding white male bodies as the bedrock of the nation, white women’s bodies were
also a source of concern as reproducers of the nation. Sex reformers couched their arguments
within Malthusian concerns over population outstripping resources which registered
widespread cultural concern over a declining white birthrate in comparison to the high
fecundity of lower class, racialized, and allegedly ‘primitive’ others. For the most part, on
both sides of the Atlantic, white middle class intellectuals were alarmed by the growing
levels of immigration and mobile populations which prompted sexual anxieties over the
dilution of the purity of Anglo-Saxon stock through miscegenation. While in Britain, the
issue of immigration was less of an issue than in the United States where, according to a
number of white middle class intellectuals in both Britain and the United States, it seemed to
threaten the very composition of the nation. However, as white middle class intellectuals
found a common cause in addressing the racial health of the Anglo body which, influenced
by Darwinism, these intellectuals came to construe as locked in a common struggle for
survival across nations. These political concerns over which bodies were most vital to the
health and character of the nation shaped and were shaped by a specific focus on the
differential distribution of sexual energies. Late nineteenth century white middle class
intellectuals turned attention to sex and politics whereby fears of white degeneration drew
upon fears of the higher sexual energies and promiscuity of lower class, colonized, racialized,
and less intelligent segments of the population.

While British and American sex reformers shaped their campaigns through a mutual
set of concerns over what ‘modernity’ meant for white middle class bodies, they also
identified what was at stake in sex reform through the prism of specific national economic
conditions. On both sides of the Atlantic, sex reformers identified the American situation in
terms of the pace of ‘modernity’ in the United States as it began to rival other European
powers as a major economic and imperial power in the late nineteenth century.
Consequently, American sex reformers emphasized the American businessman as a particular
symbol of the energetic costs of this pace on bodies, depleted sexual vigor, and unbounded
materialism. In the case of Britain, such endangered manhood was more broadly tied to a
more generalized British educated and professional man and less exclusively defined as
uncontrollable rampant materialism. Both the speed and growth of American capitalism
contributed to a specific national manifestation of Darwinism. Herbert Spencer’s Social
Darwinism was much more popular in the United States than in Britain, partly due to the
sense of the aggressively competitive economic climate likened to the ‘modern’ struggle for
survival. These varying degrees of perceived economic pressures may also account for the
distinctively warm reception of Freudianism in the United States which embraced the notions
of the need to abandon ‘repression’ and exalt libidinal energies. At a time when sex reformers tightly bound capitalism and sexuality, they articulated their projects through the sense of bodily energies, sex, and families mediated in relation to different national economic conditions.

There were also differences in the geo-political stakes for sexually reinvigorating white manhood and sexually awakening white womanhood. When sex reformers discussed the American political situation, they emphasized the racial making of the American nation where its whiteness was threatened by immigration, and the failure of reconstruction after slavery and subsequent inauguration of new forms of segregation. In this context, sex reformers framed the stakes of a project of consolidating white men and white women’s sexual energies as no less than consolidating the whiteness of America and its British racial lineage. As sex reformers shared concerns over the threat to ‘civilization’ posed by a loss of male sexual energies, they defined specific British stakes in light of fears over the defence of empire which became particularly salient in the sense of the poor physical showing of male soldiers in the Boer War. In considering British stakes in sex reform, sex reformers looked to the implications for empire, particularly birth control and the international distribution of white versus other babies. To this extent, sex reformers framed the importance of appealing to women to affirm their sexual instincts as a matter of imperial motherhood where white women’s bodies would reproduce whiteness and thereby serve Britain. In the United States, however, women’s bodies were contentious sites deemed to be vital to making the

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33 Anna Davin discusses the meaning of imperial motherhood in light of the politicization of women’s bodies in the context of maternal health and eugenics whereby women’s citizenship carried both the valuation of reproducing a future race and the blame for ‘unfit’ offspring. See Anna Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 87-151.
It was American sociologist E.A. Ross who coined the term, ‘race suicide,’ which American President Theodore Roosevelt voiced as a national concern. In this context, sex reformers were both helped and hindered in that such claims popularized the national importance of motherhood and reproduction yet these claims also denounced white middle class women’s use of birth control as the prevention of much needed white babies. In other words, sex reformers could justify their appeal to women to affirm sexual instincts as linked to the births of healthy eugenic babies while defending birth control for white middle class women. As sex reformers looked to sexually invigorate white manhood and sexually awaken white womanhood, their campaigns were grounded in specifically gendered and national stakes of whiteness.

Sex reformers also responded to national differences in suggesting that opportunities for cultivating sexual energies were specific to place. Sex reformers differentiated between the United States and Britain in terms of the opportunities for primitivism. They identified the United States as a place where primitivism could be practiced specifically through engagements with American Indians who, in this period, were inextricably bound to the distinctiveness of the American past. In contrast, sex reformers suggested that British middle class men and women would find the ‘primitive’ in colonial ventures or working-class neighbourhoods. Sex reformers also situated strategies for cultivating sexual energies in the

national specificities of landscapes and national identity, specifically in the elision of the American nation, ‘wilderness’ and ‘primal’ bodies compared to the elision of the British nation with a rural idyll, pastoralism, and Romanticism. As sex reformers sensitively attended to the connections between place and body, they integrally tied cultivating sexual energies to the ways Britishness and Americanness were under (re)construction and (re)invention in this late nineteenth and early twentieth century moment.

What a number of white middle and upper class intellectuals eventually shaped as a radical bohemian politics of sex reform arose from and remained immersed in deep-seated conservative fears of white vulnerability and the dangers of being numerically, bodily, and politically invaded by populations from below. In other words, white middle class intellectuals contributed to a radicalization of sex and politics that contested prevailing social values while also remaining wedded to class, racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies. This radicalization, I suggest, amounted to a shift in the ways these hierarchies were defined from say, the emphasis on money, material wealth, and the contests over control of bodies within the home toward an affective register that looked to more intimately and equitably bind white bodies while entrenching an affective boundary against others.

Sex reformers were at the forefront of radical Left movements of socialism and feminism but their radical critiques of both capitalism and patriarchy also emerged partly out of concerns for white middle class bodies who upheld ideals of Victorian sexual morality. Sex reformers argued that white middle class bodies were harmed by their very success in emulating Victorian ideals of domesticity allied with the capitalist ideal of the Victorian professional husband as economic support and the Victorian angel of the house as ornament
and provider of an emotional and domestic haven. As sexology and Freudian ideas of the harm of suppressing libidinal energies began to circulate in the 1890s, white middle class intellectuals increasingly emphasized the importance of sexual energies to politics, overall bodily health, and the survival of white middle class civilization. Out of these concerns, white middle class intellectuals developed a radical critique of ideals of passionless Victorian women and the economic and intellectual pressures on Victorian professional men which left them little time to cultivate their sexual sensibilities and depleted their sexual energies.

In the early twentieth century, sex reformers articulated their concerns over weakened instincts, low sexual vitality, and pallid, debilitated bodies in the political context of working-class militancy, the rise of Socialist and Communist parties, and the radicalization of feminists in suffrage, birth control, marriage and divorce reform, and the emergence of the insistence on asserting female sexual pleasure. As a group of politically savvy activists, sex reformers situated their campaigns to cultivate sexual energies in feminist and socialist commitments to overhauling social values of property and possession. Many sex reformers criticized marriage as a bourgeois institution based on jealousy rather than love whereby sexual and emotional relations were invested in patriarchal and capitalist pillars of social order. In doing so, sex reformers not only mounted an ideological critique but tightly bound their personal practices to a vision of a more sexually enlightened, vital, and loving world. Aware of how this vision radically challenged the prevailing sexual morality which dubbed even birth control literature as obscene material, sex reformers formed tight networks and social communities as bohemian enclaves in places such as Greenwich Village in New York City and Bloomsbury in London. In this dissertation, I focus on these two geographic sites as
examples of the cosmopolitan, transatlantic shaping of a sex reform politics of love which highlights how white middle class intellectuals intensely politicized their intimacies with each other, racialized others, and specific environments.

As sex reformers engaged in social and political activism, they also drew on their middle and upper class educated backgrounds in ways that shaped an intellectual culture that situated love, sex, and intimacies as white middle class privilege. The communities of Greenwich Village and Bloomsbury were not only considered hotbeds of radicalism but also the spaces where bohemian intellectuals could be found meeting in cafes, restaurants, cabarets, and living room salons. In this sense, sex reformers’ social and political activism and experimentation in marriage, raising children, religion, primitivism, and relating to nonhuman others, ultimately materialized intellectual discourses while these discourses also made sense of these practices. Throughout the dissertation, I have drawn on an array of primary source texts such as correspondence, published works, articles in newspapers and periodicals, and diaries in which sex reformers situated intimacies in philosophical frameworks. As an educated elite, sex reformers were familiar with the writings of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, Baruch Spinoza, Plato, and Henri Bergson. In specifically framing arguments about the importance of sexual energies, instincts, and emotions, sex reformers drew quite heavily on Nietzsche, Freud, and Bergson. Many British and American sex reformers imagined a future of Nietzschean supermen who both exalted the instincts, passions, and vitality of blond beasts while directing these forces into civilization. To sex reformers, Sigmund Freud’s works were important for showing the harmful effects of inhibiting sexual instincts and failing to find proper channels for such
instincts. While Freudianism contributed to sex reformers’ claims of the inextricable connections between sex and civilization, they looked to French philosopher Henri Bergson’s concepts of “creative evolution” and “vitalism” to explain sexual energies as the very source of an organism’s life, the importance of reproduction, and the key to shaping the course of evolution. Insofar as sex reformers shaped and moved within an intellectual culture that presumed familiarity with specific intellectual discourses that were used to construct ideas of love and intimacy, they bound experiences of love to white middle class minds and bodies.

As white middle class British and American sex reformers situated their bodies amid prevailing concerns over neurasthenia, the evolutionary future of the race, physical fitness, work regimes, sexual intimacies, and the births of ‘fit’ children, their positioning within this world was shaped by an ethical commitment to structure their relations according to love. What is most important to grasp is that in this period, sex reformers radicalized intimacies as the domain through which worlds could be built. Sex reformers’ campaigns amounted to a politics of love which specified ethical ways of engaging with others and the world in ways that differentiated the cultivation of sexual instincts in white middle class bodies as higher ‘civilized’ experiences of love. Although for sex reformers cultivating sexual energies were important within the particular experience of white middle class bodies which were shaped by the ‘civilized’ norms of Victorian capitalist and sexual morality, the question of the affective potential of those ‘civilized’ bodies to turn sexual instincts into love highlighted the gender, race, class, and sexual politics of how sexual energies circulated in ways that made familial and sexual love accessible to some bodies and not others.
II. Genealogies of Affect Theory

In 1971, Michel Foucault called for historians to write genealogies which would redefine the historical method as one that looked for contingencies and accidents rather than origins; plotting or connecting points rather than tracing a linear development. In doing so, Foucault also suggested that such a method would redefine what had a history, suggesting that the histories of instincts, sentiments, and emotions had yet to be written. While my project of writing affective histories falls within this Foucauldian project, I also want to suggest the possibility of reversing this lens by arguing that the early twentieth century transatlantic sex reform movement is also an important episode in considering the genealogy of affect theory itself. In doing so, I also want to draw attention to a level of analytical precision inspired by affect theorists who have insisted on the differentiation between emotions and affect. Following these theorists, I use affect as a capacious term that encompasses a range of feelings from instincts to sensations to surges of energy while I use emotion as a more organized state of feeling that is more wedded to stability than other types of affect. However, my particular focus on writing a genealogy of sex reform, centred on a politics of love, considers love as an emotional lens through which to observe how affects can be politically organized to underpin, re-entrench, and stabilize hierarchies of gender, race, class, and sexuality.

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36 Ibid., 139-140, 162.
38 In discussing the recent turn to affect, Clare Hemmings has warned against the de-politicization of affect. She suggests that scholars need to critically approach affect not only in its positive possibilities for escaping the fetters of structuralism but as mired in social meaning. Hemmings, in fact, indicates the writings of Frantz
While grounded in the new exigencies of our current political and historical moment, contemporary affect theorists have nonetheless invoked similar theoretical frameworks and concepts as early twentieth century sex reformers. For example, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s works have both invoked and challenged psychoanalytic concepts which began to become consolidated in cultural discourses in the early twentieth century.\(^{39}\) Moreover, their ideas on affects as connective forces situate bodies and environments as coterminous in the mutual and continuous making of one another, and in doing so, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly invoke Henri Bergson’s concepts of creative evolution and vitalism to argue for “involution,” which considers how bodies connect and draw upon the world in a series of becomings that hinge on a present indeterminate moment of simultaneously producing both bodies and worlds at the site of encounters and mutual interaction.\(^{40}\) Without acknowledging this historical context of affect theory, other affect theorists such as Nigel Thrift, Brian Massumi, and Patricia Clough have similarly drawn on psychoanalysis, vitalism, and evolutionary theory as points of departure for theorizing affect.\(^{41}\) Thrift briefly mentions Darwinism, psychoanalysis, vitalism, and even suggests that the nineteenth century introduced the possible “movement from intention to automation as the industrial systems of


\(^{40}\) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari discuss “memories of a Bergsonian.” See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 237-239. However, disrupting the normative frameworks of Darwinian evolution as linearity and Freudian psychoanalysis as an entrenched familial narrative is a running theme throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*.

that century took hold.”  

Thrift’s work on both non-representational theory and knowing capitalism have situated a “politics of affect” in the emerging strategies of capitalism and new forms of governmentality that anticipate or attempt to shape the potentiality of bodies.  

While Thrift’s mention of the nineteenth century suggests a history of how affects can be co-opted in governing strategies, this falls short of historicizing the very use of affect as a way of theorizing the body.  Thrift, for example, suggests that affects redefine the human body in terms of “its unparalleled ability to co-evolve with things, taking them in and adding them to different parts of the biological body.”  This concern with how the human body is shaped through relations also has a history in the profound turn of early twentieth century sex reformers to practices of intimacies, maximizing love in the world, and cultivating sexual energies.

While Thrift’s work has shown that affects can be bound to “the discovery of a whole new means of manipulation by the powerful,” Brian Massumi’s discussion of affects as the turn toward potentiality, virtuality, and emergence registers a more optimistic view of affects as the embrace of surprise, invention, and possibility.  Massumi argues that “affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is.”  By situating the importance of affect in conjunction with emergence, vitality, potentiality, and transformation, Massumi’s work both resonates with early twentieth century sex reformers’ own vocabulary while re-articulating these concerns in the context of the present moment of a commitment to conceiving of the

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43 Ibid., 182.
44 Ibid., 10.
material world as a radical ground for transformation. I suggest that the story I tell here of how early twentieth century sex reformers addressed their own concerns over what vitality and what evolutionary theory could explain about emergence indicates a genealogical link to Massumi’s narrative. This genealogy, however, also warns against the depoliticization of affect.\textsuperscript{47}

As I show throughout the dissertation, a sex reform politics of love was heavily invested in calculating, cultivating, and maximizing potential while binding this to the future of securing white middle class hegemony along affective lines. Although Massumi suggests that affects and emotions are of different orders, this separation cannot so neatly be accomplished where attention to the distribution of affects are channelled into producing or shaping complex emotional experience which straddle the boundary of a stable subjective state and the continued momentum of affects organized around that state.\textsuperscript{48} I understand the relationship between affects and emotions as one where emotions can be defined as a historically specific and politicized ordering, organization, gathering, and consolidation of affects. In other words, I turn to affects to help to understand the construction and micro-dimensions of the formation of emotions at the site of bodies, epistemologies, and politics.

Patricia Ticento Clough has also grounded her discussion of affect in interrogating and re-articulating psychoanalytic concepts, specifically that of the unconscious, in ways that focus on how the unconscious can be construed as virtuality or a pre-cognitive possibility.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{47} Hemmings, “Invoking Affect,” 550, 561, 565.
\textsuperscript{48} Massumi, \textit{Parables for the Virtual}, 27.
\textsuperscript{49} Clough, \textit{Autoaffection}. Clough’s work demonstrates how affect theory has built upon the extensive feminist and queer theory critiques of psychoanalysis. See for example, Jean Walton, “Re-Placing Race in (White) Psychoanalytic Discourse: Founding Narratives of Feminism,” in \textit{female subjects in black and white: psychoanalysis and feminism}, eds. Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian, Helene Moglen (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); Judith Butler, \textit{The Psychic Life of Power} (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,
Clough’s linkage of the unconscious to affect theory undermines any distinct separation between thought, body, and the world as they fold into each other through the unconscious as a technical substrate.\(^{50}\) According to Clough, ontology amounts to “the reach of thought to the différantial relationship of human and nonhuman, body and machine, nature and technology, the living and the inert.”\(^{51}\) Like Massumi and Thrift, Clough turns to theorizing affect as an opportunity for analyzing connectedness and relationality in ways that disturb the notion of an autonomous human subject. However, Clough’s turn to the unconscious as a ground for reconsidering ontologies has a genealogy indebted to sex reformers’ enthusiastic embrace of Freudian and Darwinian concepts which informed their intimate relationships to environments, animals, and each other as a politics of love.

Although scholars have stressed the distinction between emotion and affect, their relation to one another also needs to be theorized, particularly in what they contribute to understanding how relations are formed and the politics of these relations. Scholars who have theorized the relationship between emotions and politics have similarly framed this relationship in ways that resonate with affect theory’s concern over relationality. Sara Ahmed, for example, describes love as a way of inhabiting nations, specifically in terms of making connections as “the pull of love towards an other who becomes an object of love, can be transferred towards a collective, expressed as an ideal or object.”\(^{52}\) Similarly, Robert Solomon suggests that emotions have political significance insofar as “they have a great deal..."
to do with relationships between people living together in society.\textsuperscript{53} Solomon’s concept of the “politics of emotion” further binds emotion to potentiality insofar as he argues that emotions are strategies for the “magical transformation of the world.”\textsuperscript{54} My story here of how sex reformers forged a politics of love that was inextricably tied to their attention to shape instincts and energies is an early genealogical episode of the relationship between affects and emotions. Furthermore, sex reformers historically specific usage of terms such as ‘vitality,’ ‘vigor,’ ‘impulse,’ ‘instincts,’ ‘energies,’ and ‘life force’ as their designated targets in attaining more complex or higher experiences of love suggests emotions as an important intermediate ground between affects and discursive structures. Throughout the dissertation, I suggest that sex reformers’ politics of love demonstrates an important historically specific relationship between affect and emotions which inextricably linked shaping affects and emotions to gender, racial, sexual, and imperial politics.

The genealogy of affect theory has also been intertwined with histories of feminism, specifically feminism’s insights on corporeality, an ethic of care, dependency theory, and love.\textsuperscript{55} These themes have been variously deployed as feminist strategies for overturning patriarchal values of autonomy, rationality, and competitiveness and reclaiming values primarily associated with women. Feminist theory has provided a point of departure for


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 194.

affect theorists’ consideration of becomings, relationality, and the transformative engagements between the body and the world. Indeed, some feminists such as Rosi Braidotti have heavily drawn on Deleuzian theory for its possibilities of conceiving how bodies are made and not essentialized.\textsuperscript{56} However, feminist theory early on provided an important framework for considering connections. Luce Irigaray seized on the concept of love for considering equitable and mutually enhancing relationships between masculine and feminine principles in the world.\textsuperscript{57} Joan Tronto advocated ‘care’ as an important feminist orientation to politics which stressed relationality, emotions, and connections.\textsuperscript{58} Elizabeth Grosz and Judith Butler have insisted on the importance of turning attention to corporeality as a radical ground for feminist ethics and transformation whereby the devaluation of women as bodies and essentialized sex become just as malleable and socially constructed as ideologies.\textsuperscript{59} Some feminist work such as that of Arlie Hochschild and Nancy Folbre have drawn particular attention to how capitalism has re-entrained a subordinate economic position of women through the devaluation and exploitation of emotional labour.\textsuperscript{60} What Michael Hardt refers to as “affective labour” re-articulates what has been a prominent theme among feminist scholars who have shown the gendering of labour as women are disproportionately slotted into service industries and work associated with emotion and care.\textsuperscript{61} While feminist theories


\textsuperscript{57} Irigaray, \textit{The Way of Love}.

\textsuperscript{58} Joan Tronto, \textit{Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care} (New York: Routledge, 1993).


\textsuperscript{61} Michael Hardt, “Affective Labor,” \textit{Boundary 2} 26(2) (Summer 1999): 89-100.
point to affect theory’s recent genealogical thread, early twentieth century sex reformers also seized on love, bodily experience, and the sexed body in particular as amenable to strategies that both treated the body and emotions as malleable entities while exploring them as productive sites for feminist politics. With this in mind, the story of early twentieth century sex reform has an important place in the genealogical thread of affect and feminist theory.

Affect theory has not only been indebted to feminist insights of rethinking corporeality, emotions, and feelings but it has also been shaped by queer theory’s insights on the construction of desires. Through queer theorists’ attention to how desires are not necessarily essential or fixed in a particular body, they have contributed to conceiving of feelings, energies, instincts, and emotions as constructed through normative frameworks. As such, queer theorists and feminists, have critically engaged with psychoanalytic concepts to show both Freudianism’s normative heterosexual patriarchal construction of desire and the malleability of bodies and desires insofar as Freud addresses perversions. Queer theorist, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, also emerged as a leading scholar on affect in her work on *Touching Feeling* which turned to affect as a useful analytic for moving beyond considering bodies as the ground ultimately shaped by discourse. Instead, Sedgwick argued that affects like shame, presented a new theoretical avenue for considering bodies as *beside* discursive norms. Similarly, Sara Ahmed, a queer theorist, has devoted considerable attention to considering affects in terms of bodily orientations to objects and others in the world which

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63 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*.

64 Ibid., 8.
unloosens the notion of fixed or predetermined sexual desires.\textsuperscript{65} In a number of instances, there has been a shared common ground between feminist, queer, and affect theory.

While affect theory has been shaped by queer theory’s insights into the construction of desires which facilitate the shaping of fleshy bodies as they materially engage the world, this strand must be located in a longer history that predates queer and affect theory.\textsuperscript{66} Not only did a heterosexual/homosexual binary first emerge into common cultural discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but sex reformers’ projects actively looked to develop tactics to ensure the development and enhancement of heterosexual desire. Indeed, what can be seen as sex reformers’ heteronormative politics of love was far from a queer politics of insisting on the affirmation of a multiplicity of desires. When sex reformers discussed love as a spiritualized experience of sex, they presumed two clearly and differently gendered bodies engaged in the act of sex. To this extent, sex reformers’ campaigns did considerable work to project love as a specific bodily capacity that emerged through heterosexual sex. In other words, early twentieth century sex reformers efforts to actively shape desires and their anxieties over ensuring heterosexual development further point to the possibilities of perversions, even if attempting to avert such desires. To this extent, what I consider an early twentieth century moment of the active shaping of a heteronormative


\textsuperscript{66} Scholars have drawn attention to flesh as a point of contact where global social, political, and economic discourses converge with the inscription and material construction of flesh. See for example, Elizabeth Povinelli, \textit{The Empire of Love: toward a theory of intimacy, genealogy, and carnality} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Catherine Waldby and Robert Mitchell, \textit{Tissue Economies: blood, organs, and cell lines in late capitalism} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Margrit Shildrick, “‘You are there, like my skin’: reconfiguring relational economies,” in \textit{Thinking Through the Skin}, eds. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (London: Routledge, 2001),160-173; Shirley Tate, “‘That Is My Star of David: Skin, Abjection, and hybridity,” in \textit{Thinking Through the Skin}, 209-22.
politics of love serves as an episode that informs the genealogy of a relationship between queer theory and affect theory.

In the mainly optimistic turn to what the analytic of affect might contribute to feminist and queer investments in de-naturalizing and de-essentializing the body, less attention has been paid to how affects circulate, aggregate, and are produced in racialized domains. This is perhaps an under-explored linkage as a possible point of genealogical connection between postcolonial and race studies and affect theory. Given affect theory’s close kinship to poststructuralists’ commitments to de-territorializing the human subject, it is perhaps worth noting Gayatri Spivak’s criticism that such a preconception of a fully autonomous subject as the point of departure for analysis presumes a Westernized position mired in what she calls “postcolonial reason.”67 However, scholars of critical race studies and postcolonial theory have gestured toward considering feelings, emotions, and bodily sensations as racialized experiences. Frantz Fanon has written on the experience of race as one intimately bound to emotional states located in a racial politics of everyday life.68 Anthopologist and postcolonial scholar, Ann Laura Stoler, has also made a persuasive case in a number of her works that emotions, desires, and the orientation of feelings are implicated in colonial structures of power where intimacies are regulated and exploitable affective labour is racialized. Stoler’s Haunted by Empire, a compilation of essays by scholars re-examining the shaping of colonial relations through the lens of intimacy, has drawn important attention to bodily proximities, sentiments, and emotions as sites of how colonial

power and race are produced, structured, and reinforced. What race theorists, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, have called racial formation highlights race as the effect of a historical and social process which undermines the notion of race as fixed, biological, and unchanging. In other words, the study of history here has a significant role to play in showing the creation of race in the contexts of specific moments distinguished by distinctive social, political, and economic structures and investments. My story here of early twentieth century sex reformers highlights a configuration of transatlantic whiteness which redefined national boundaries at the site of purportedly shared affective capacities of white middle class bodies. This can be seen as a genealogical episode which located race in the nexus of a historically specific popularization and politicization of instincts, energies, and emotions which inscribed distinctions of ‘primitive’ or ‘civilized’ into bodily feeling.

What I discuss as sex reformers’ politics of love marks an episode in the affective history of whiteness where the privileged experience of love signified an affective racial formation in the domain of early twentieth century sex reform. As such, this story presents a possible avenue for considering the genealogy of affect theory in terms of its entanglement with race and colonialism. Although at odds with current antiracist and postcolonial projects, sex reformers’ politics of love as a multifaceted politically and affectively informed discourse on race registers an early framing of what Nigel Thrift has described as new registers of power that take account of affectively manipulating bodies. While neither continuous nor identical with the current investments of critical race and postcolonial studies,

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69 Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*.
this historical episode of the sex reform movement offers an insight into normative constructions of whiteness through both discourses on instincts, energies, and emotions and the embodied practices interpellated by political, social, and intellectual investments in those discourses.

By turning a historical lens onto affect theory itself, the early twentieth century sex reform movement can be seen as a pivotal event in the genealogies of affect theory. This introduces a complex and tense relation into affect theory’s conceptual and political kinship. While early twentieth century sex reformers situated their projects to cultivate sexual instincts and develop loving relationships in the context of promoting eugenic reproduction among healthy white middle class bodies, contemporary scholars on affect have situated their projects in a very different set of political commitments, namely the efforts to undermine hierarchies of gender, race, and class. However, despite these contradictory objectives in their different historical moments, the early twentieth century sex reform movement also importantly addressed similar questions of connection, interdependence, and relationality across bodies and worlds which were also often committed to feminism and socialism. Such a genealogy, however, highlights one strand in affect theory’s past that also raises an important critical awareness to vigilantly observe the trajectory of affect theory and, as Thrift points out, its possibilities to be co-opted by the Right and the Left. In other words, this dissertation has both political and philosophical stakes in its turn to the ways sex reformers construed and deployed their politics of love.

72 Nigel Thrift discusses how capitalism has also looked to affect for its own strategies, indicating that affect has not only been incorporated by leftist critics of class, sexual, gender, and racial oppression. See Nigel Thrift, *Knowing Capitalism* (London: Sage Publications, 2005).
III. Affect-ing History

While the previous section showed that affect theory has a history, in this section I argue that using the lens of affect can contribute to historical analysis. What could be called affect-ing history takes a set of relations or a point of intimate contact as a historical event whereby the dynamics of those relations must be situated in the political and social context of the historical moment. This approach to history draws on a number of diverse historiographies which, from different perspectives, approach encounters as historicizable relations whether this be in histories which primarily historicize contacts between ‘human’ bodies by locating them in webs of social and political power, specifically histories of sexuality, the body, and emotions or in histories of human/nonhuman encounters, specifically histories of the environment, science, spirituality and animals. This dissertation brings these historiographies together at the site of a historical methodology of affect-ing history; that is, centring on the point of contact and mutual transformation between bodies and worlds through a historical analysis that pays precise attention to historically specific ways that connections happen.

What I have identified as affect-ing history has four dimensions. Firstly, this methodology focuses historical attention on ways that bodies engage with each other and worlds through historically specific methods, ethics, strategies, or values. Secondly, rather than take entities like the body, a building, or a tree as complete and self-contained, affect-ing history shifts this to taking encounters between unfinished, open, and incomplete entities as the objects of analysis. Thirdly, affect-ing history involves treating diverse historiographies as mutually interrelated, mutually shaped, and touching one another.
Fourthly, affect-ing history entails shifting the historian’s temporal perspective. Rather than begin with plotting the encounter on a linear grid, the historian engaged in affect-ing history starts in the middle at the site of the encounter. In this case, I have focused on early twentieth century sex reformers’ discursive constructions and embodied practices of emotions, instincts, and energies as a historical lens that engages in this methodology that I have named affect-ing history. I do so by re-visioning the history of early twentieth century political and social movements and practices of sex and marriage as conditions that ultimately ground affects as temporal and situated bodily experiences.

My aim to demonstrate here that sex reformers’ campaigns and personal practices were underpinned by and deployed a politics of love engages in mainly affect-ing historiographies of sexuality, the body, gender, emotions, whiteness, and colonialism. Historians of sexuality who have written on the early twentieth century have generally emphasized feminist claims for sexual pleasure, the development of organizations such as the World League for Sexual Reform, bohemian practices of open marriage, youthful rebellion, and the pressing issues of sexual knowledge. Much of the early twentieth century sex reform movement in Britain and the United States has also been associated with bohemian enclaves of London’s Bloomsbury and New York City’s Greenwich Village. The historical picture of sex reformers as largely interested in sex but not necessarily emotions, particularly love, is in need of revision. Historians such as Lesley Hall, Marcus Collins, Stephen Brooke, and Kate Fisher have made valuable contributions to the history of sexuality in early twentieth century Britain which have shown how intimacy, sexual fulfillment, marital happiness, and
companionate marriage emerged as pressing social and political questions. Historians such as Stephanie Coontz, Nancy Cott, Christine Stansell, and Christina Simmons have shown similar developments in the turn to sex manuals, bohemian marriage experiments, advocacy for birth control, and ideals of marital happiness as sexual fulfillment in the American context. Collectively, the work of these historians show a transatlantic connection in developments of sexual norms and practices which have often positioned prominent figures of the sex reform movement in the vanguard of these developments. While these historians have shown how intimacy became an increasingly emphasized arena of social and political concern, much of the scholarship has focused on sex rather than love as the primary concern. I suggest, however, that love as a mode of connection and a highly politicized site of intimate encounter, should be the primary rather than peripheral concern in the historical analysis of early twentieth century sex reform. This, in essence, means to enact the methodology of affect-ing history on the existing historiography of early twentieth century sex reform.

In considering the history of sex reform as inextricably tied to a specific historical construction and practice of love, I also engage with histories of emotion. What Peter and


75 Stephen Brooke delivered a conference paper at the European Social Science History Conference discussing the importance of emotions in the socialist and feminist politics of sex reformers Naomi Mitchison and Dora Russell. See Stephen Brooke, “Writing New Worlds: Sex, Love, Emotions and Politics in Interwar British Socialist Feminism,” (paper delivered at the European Social Science History Conference, Amsterdam, 23 March 2006).
Carol Stearns famously discussed as “emotionology” in 1985 highlighted emotions as behavioural codes specific to time and place.\textsuperscript{76} More recently, Joanna Bourke has urged historians to pay particular attention to the emotional body which suggests a shift in perspective from the emphasis that has been placed in histories of the body on the physical body.\textsuperscript{77} Michael Roper has approached the potential contributions of histories of emotions from a slightly different angle. Roper indicates that histories of emotions are tied to earlier but recently discounted approaches of psycho-history which reclaims while also turning some of the insights of psycho-history in a new direction of embodied practices of subjectivity.\textsuperscript{78} While Bourke and Roper’s work point to the possibilities for histories of emotion to open new avenues and insights into the body, gender, and subjectivity, Adela Pinch has emphasized a methodology for historians of emotion. Pinch has, in fact, argued the importance of engaging with Foucault’s insights on writing histories of sentiment. She claims that failing to engage with Foucault’s work, “suggests that scholars who evidently feel the need for alternative perspectives on the historicity of the body, on the relation of repression to discourse, on the relationship between emotion and power, feel no obligation to engage with an influential body of work, thus impoverishing the field as a whole.”\textsuperscript{79} As such, Pinch persuasively makes a case for not only how histories of emotions can inform histories of sexuality, gender, and the body opening new perspectives but she importantly highlights a productive engagement between philosophy and history. Pinch highlights what I

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{76} Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” \textit{American Historical Review} 90 (October 1985): 813-36.  
consider both a politically and theoretically approach to history whereby “the history of feelings requires a framework that is non-normative, non-teleological, that pays close attention to how gender shapes what feelings mean but does not prejudge whether emotion belongs to men or to women.” Pinch’s insights here can be considered an example of how affect-ing history shapes the line of inquiry and framework of how historical analysis is undertaken. My focus on the early twentieth century sex reform movement as a significant period in histories of emotion also interrogates the very periodization that has defined the histories of emotions. In most cases, historians have primarily focused on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the defining moments in emotions history due to the advent of the culture of sensibility, sentiment, sympathy, and compassion. This has contributed to a picture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the eras of feeling while the early twentieth century has primarily been defined for developments in histories of sexuality.

My interest in writing an affective history of the early twentieth century sex reform movement brings histories of emotion into conversation with what historians have said about the prevalent early twentieth century cultural discourse on energies and instincts. Both historians of Britain and the United States have considered the medical diagnosis of neurasthenia as a widespread cultural concern among the middle and upper educated elite. While recently historians have turned attention to how the medicalization of nervousness infused multiple cultural domains, much of the historical attention to nervousness initially

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80Ibid., 109.
focused on it as part of medical history. In the American historiography, historians have devoted considerable attention to the shaping of white middle and upper class masculinity in relation to concerns over nervous exhaustion which underpinned the turn to primitivism in the effort to cultivate sexual energies through engaging with allegedly primal others. Historian Tom Lutz has, in fact, used the terms “economistic logic” and “nerve capital” to describe the early twentieth century activities of white middle class men. Anson Rabinbach has similarly emphasized the importance of energies in capitalist strategies to productively manage the body’s energies. Gail Bederman’s groundbreaking study on Manliness & Civilization, Athena Devlin’s Primitivism and Profits, Bruce Pettegrew’s Brutes in Suits and Anthony Rotundo’s Manhood in America have pointed out the mediation of white masculinity through the cultivation of primal instincts. Much of the historical attention to early twentieth century nervousness and primitivism has focused on masculinity whereas attention to femininity and nervousness has generally focused on the gendered medical discourse of women’s reproductive bodies, hysteria, and higher emotional sensitivity. The subject of primitivism has been less well-developed in the British historiography yet historians such as Elaine Showalter, Janet Oppenheim have indicated that nervousness was a

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83 Lutz, American Nervousness, 12, 47.
84 Rabinbach, The Human Motor.
concern in Britain. While the American historiography has suggested that primitivism and the concerns of nervousness were integral to the self-conscious and simultaneous making of manhood and the nation, the British historiography has suggested that much of this took place in colonial ventures, even ventures such as D.H. Lawrence’s retreat to ranches in the United States. Historian Seth Koven and feminist scholar Anne McClintock have indicated that British class politics, specifically in the middle classes eroticization of the lower classes, has been integrally tied to race. Although Koven’s Slumming and McClintock’s Imperial Leather discuss the latter part of the Victorian period, their insights highlight a practice of primitivism in the context of British middle and upper class philanthropy which introduced new proximities mediated by desires for the other. These histories of desires, energies, and instincts are a productive avenue for writing affective histories of the early twentieth century. Historians’ discussions of nervousness provide one lens for exploring a much broader theme of connectedness, permeability, and mutual transformation between bodies and worlds.

What I have defined as a historical methodology of affect-ing history also productively builds on and offers a perhaps intensified analysis of what historians of colonialism and race have considered through the lens of intimacy. I have been particularly influenced by Ann Laura Stoler’s claim that historians must take note of what has been cavalierly dismissed as “the emotive fluff” of history. Stoler’s works have insisted that colonial politics made emotions, desires, sentiments, and instincts the business of running an

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86 Showalter, The Female Malady; Oppenheim, Shattered Nerves.
In Stoler’s collection, *Haunted by Empire*, historians explore intimacy as a lens for understanding a colonial politics that took relations of proximities and distance seriously in colonialism and the construction of race. Laura Wexler’s *Tender Violence* positions photographic displays of intimacy at the heart of colonial politics that masked racial and colonial violence through such depictions. Julian Carter’s work on *The Heart of Whiteness* specifically focuses on late nineteenth and early twentieth century discourses on nervousness, marital sex, and sex education that constructed whiteness at the sites of bodily and sexual intimacies. In their recent collection on *Mobile Subjects*, Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton have also used intimacy as a productive lens for analyzing the histories of race and British imperialism. These histories of race and colonialism which have used intimacy to rethink relations of space, politics, and the shaping of subjectivity are an important point of departure for writing affective histories that attend to proximities and distances. However, a historical methodology of affect-ing history contributes a precise accounting of the making of bodies through racial and colonial discourses that engineer or anticipate intimacies through investigations and strategies that shape, channel, and produce energies, emotions, and instincts.

This dissertation exemplifies what I have called a historical methodology of affect-ing history. By choosing to examine the history of the early twentieth century sex reform movement, I have the advantage of working with a group of white middle class intellectuals

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90 Stoler, *Haunted by Empire*.
92 Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness*.
who invoked a specific vocabulary and set of practices that can be considered an early usage of terms genealogically tied to contemporary affect theory. However, my method of taking sex reformers’ encounters or how they form their relations as the starting point of my analysis shows a historically specific set of political and social investments that may be different for other periods and shape bodies and worlds in different ways. Furthermore, my methodology highlights how histories of sexuality, emotions, gender, the body, whiteness, and colonialism can be taken in new directions by using affect as a more refined lens for more precisely interrogating how sexuality, gender, race, and class happen. More generally, this methodology of affect-ing history also intensifies interdisciplinary approaches to history. I would argue that the very focus of historicizing relations fosters a scholarly approach to drawing connections and expanding the historical lens beyond say just a body toward the multiple worlds that body engages as they become entangled and mutually shaped. Such an approach radicalizes the domain of intimacy in historically specific ways across time and space.

IV. Mapping Intimate Zones of Affective Encounters

By focusing on how sex reformers’ politicized love in the context of specific historical circumstances, I am looking at a particular embodied form of relationality. Because of its focus on how bodies relate to one another and the world, this dissertation explores multiple layers that saturate the meaning and practice of encounters. Taken together, the chapters show a historically specific way of relating to the world that affectively sorted bodies along gender, racial, class, and sexual lines. I take into account the complexity
of a lens like love that draws on a manifold set of relations grounded in social, political, and ecological practices that not only externally organize human and nonhuman bodies but also enfold these relations within the very definition and becomings of bodies. What I have called affective potential is a concept that each of the chapters works toward developing in its multifaceted complexity as a lens for considering the embodiment of gender, race, class, and sexual categories at the site of bodily capacities for feeling that anticipate action. As such, I consider the overall dissertation a map of how affective potential rendered intimacies as territories. I broadly conceive of places as sites of intimate encounters which interweave bodies and environments to include homes, countryside, laboratories, cities, schools, astral travel or cosmic encounters, chemical messengers within the body, and white time travel to Darwinian pasts through bodily feeling. Each of the chapters develops a particular dimension of a sex reformers’ politics of love which takes the point of connection and affective encounter between bodies or bodies and environments as what then constitutes both the embodiment of place and the body as territory.

In the first chapter, “Civilizing Sex: The Whiteness of Love and the Darwinian Romances of the Anglo-American Empire,” I take a panoramic view of an imperial cartography informed by a sex reform politics of love that cast territories as sites of affective encounters. I highlight a mapping of both the close proximities of colonial metropolitan spaces and more distantly marked locations of entire nations as zones of high intensity, stimulation, enervation, re-vitalization, pleasure, love, and jealousy. Such an imperial cartography, I name a white emotive imaginary which highlights how sex reformers’ situated love within a particular configuration of the world that privileged white middle class bodies
as affectively higher on an evolutionary scale. I specifically focus on sex reformers’ interest and mobilization of Darwinian ideas on sexual selection as the choosing of mates to anticipate the future course of evolution whereby control over reproduction promised a possible control over natural selection. This chapter jointly implicates Darwinian evolutionary designations of populations and territories as ‘civilized’ or ‘primitive’ with a colonial politics of intimacy, bodily capacities, and familial love.

From the broad panoramic view of the first chapter’s attention to worlds as intimate domains, the second chapter takes up the analysis of the making of the intimate as a making of the family. The second chapter, “Sympathetic Connectivity: The Hapgoods, the Russells, and the Transatlantic Politics of Love,” focuses on the specific case studies of two radical intellectual couples engaged with socialist and feminist politics, bohemian marriage experiments, and sex reform. Through the specific lens of how these couples looked to modify personal practices from sex to living arrangements, I show how a common set of questions and practices facilitated a transatlantic shaping of ideals of love complicit with a white feminist and socialist politics. I demonstrate this transatlantic dimension through my selection of case studies: one American couple, journalists Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce, and one British couple, philosopher-mathematician Bertrand Russell and feminist philosopher and political activist Dora Russell. This allows for a nuanced view of the complexities of the structuring of relationships to produce or facilitate what emerged as a historically specific view of white middle class love which I denote by the term sympathetic connectivity. Throughout this second chapter, I consider sympathetic connectivity as a mode of relationality tied to racial, gender, class, and sexual hierarchies. In doing so, I highlight
the Hapgoods and Russells’ specific strategies for producing love whereby they looked to cross barriers of connection to reach or evoke responses in the other while also stimulating their own bodies.

While the second chapter re-focuses the first chapter’s emphasis on global affective spatialities toward the intimate dense spatiality of sexual, domestic, and familial relations, the third chapter re-focuses the first chapter’s emphasis on Darwinian temporality as affective time embodying race, gender, and sexuality toward a singular emphasis on the maturing body. The third chapter, “Love’s Taming of Wild Animals: The Management of Children’s Emotional Individuality,” situates the racial, gender, sexual, and class markings of affective potential in the context of the connections between sex reformers, educators, and psychologists who helped shape a normative vision of a developmental process. Throughout this chapter, I use the term affective maturity to capture this developmental process that presumed a specific kind of privileged body that enfolded the ‘primitive’-‘civilized’ evolutionary continuum of populations and nations into the singular bodily development of white middle class childhood to adulthood. In this chapter, I consider how sex reformers’ advocacy of ‘modern’ education and parenting strategies that would encourage rather than repress children’s instincts, particularly their allegedly ‘savage’ and sexual instincts, ultimately presumed a white middle class child whose energies could be guided toward the development of love. In doing so, sex reformers ultimately aligned white middle class children’s bodies as immaturity aligned with adult ‘uncivilized’ or ‘savage’ bodies while also fixing the bodies of ‘uncivilized’ or ‘savage’ children in a permanent state of immaturity. I argue that children’s bodies were differentiated along the lines of presumed
racial, gender, sexual, and class particularities in terms of their affective potential to be emotionally educated toward the ideal of white middle class love.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation marks a shift from considering how sex reformers forged radical intimacies by re-conceiving the social and political relations between people toward the radical intimacies that disturbed human/nonhuman ontologies. Beginning this shift, the fourth chapter maps sex reformers’ affective encounters on a cosmic plane whereby spiritualized sex defined by both mutual pleasure and love were inextricably linked to heterosexuality, distinctively gendered physiological responses, whiteness, and an educated middle class background. In this chapter, entitled “Vital Spirits: Sex Reformers’ Radical Religion of Hidden Potential in Body, Earth, and Sex,” I explore a spiritual subjectivity which sex reformers created in the intersections between cultivating sex instincts, bodily relating to the world, and the flow of energies between human and cosmic (or nonhuman) realms. I argue, here, that sex reformers situated love as a particular spiritual expression of sex accessible to white middle class men and women as a kind of cosmic elite, joining their bodies to a force that moved throughout the universe. In doing so, I suggest that sex reformers crafted a spiritualized subjectivity that I call vital spirits which ambivalently drew on both the reformulation of Christianity while also combining radical forms of spirituality such as occultism, theosophy, and transcendentalism. Throughout the chapter, I emphasize that sex reformers’ politics of love amounted to an embodied spirituality that insisted on affective encounters with the world to achieve a cosmic harmony with the universe.
On another register of human/nonhuman intimacies, I examine sex reformers’ positioning of love as a particular ecological interconnectedness of bodies and the environment. This is the subject of the fifth chapter, “Eco/ontologies of Sex Reform: Environmental Intimacies, Plant Eugenics, and Building Organic Machines.” It is here that I devote specific attention to how sex reformers’ positioned white middle class bodies as highly sensitized, permeable, vulnerable, and profoundly connected to environments. In this chapter, I show sex reformers’ politics of love as engaged with an environmental ethic that positioned the cultivation of sexual energies as a relation to ‘nature.’ I use the term eco/ontologies to analyze how sex reformers particular affective mode of being-through-‘nature’ disturbed ontological distinctions between bodies and environments as energies flowed between and through them. In the first part of the chapter, I show how the pristine quality of purportedly ‘natural’ environments like mountains, forests, and farms was intimately tied to sex reformers’ spiritualization of sex and purportedly racially pristine qualities of eugenic mating. I demonstrate how sex reformers’ ideas on intimate engagements with ‘nature’ redefined the Garden of Eden as a space where sex flourished but retained a pristine quality by virtue of presumed eugenic white middle class mating. In considering sex reformers’ travels to the country, the frontier, the mountains, and the forests, I indicate a particular geography informed by the presumption of a white middle class body requiring sexual reinvigoration and escape from the enervating effects of the city. In the last section of this chapter, I focus on the building of organic machines to show how sex reformers’ eco/ontologies did not necessarily preclude technologies but redefined and could even be deployed to perfect relations between bodies and environments. In other words, this
part of the chapter highlights a network where the vitality of white middle class bodies could be produced through engagements with environments that made the ‘natural’ body appear to function as machine and, in some ways, also specifically engaged with technological objects to improve its organic functions.

I conclude the dissertation with a chapter on “‘Becoming-Animal’ in the Early Twentieth Century: Physiologically Engineering Affects Through Human/Nonhuman Intimacies.” This chapter focuses on how sex reformers engaged with developing sciences of endocrinology and physiology in ways that intensified human/animal intimacies. I draw particular attention to sex reformers’ paradoxical approach to animals as these intimacies were marked by the tension of using animal bodies as resources for augmenting and understanding human sexual experience while such exploitation and treatment of animal bodies separated the (white middle class) human as a privileged agent. Throughout the chapter, I introduce the Deleuzian term, ‘becoming-animal,’ to highlight a specific early twentieth century moment where human and animal bodies were unravelled as distinct coherent or closed entities. I suggest that the developing sciences of endocrinology and physiology contributed to treating human and animal bodies as permeable and mutually informed by one another. In this final chapter, I re-emphasize the Darwinian focus of the first chapter through a different lens, namely how the ‘human’ and the ‘animal’ came to be ontologically entangled at the site of their sexual physiologies. In doing so, I develop human/animal intimacies in this period as more tightly bound in their material bodies, treated as interchangeable parts with nonhuman bodies deemed resources for powering white middle class affective experience. As such, I emphasize sex reformers’ politics of love as one that
politicized the affective resources of human and nonhuman bodies whereby nonhuman bodies were slotted into a white middle class (re)production process which looked to physiologically engineer love.
In October of 1920, British sexologist and reformer, Havelock Ellis’s article on “The World’s Racial Problem,” appeared in the American periodical, *The Birth Control Review*. Margaret Sanger and her American Birth Control League’s decision to publish Ellis’s article attests to the transatlantic connections among sex reformers who forged American and British ties of kinship at the sites of whiteness, sex, and ‘civilization.’ Six years prior to this issue of the *BCR*, Margaret Sanger had fled to England after being criminally charged with violating the Comstock Act which forbade the dissemination of obscene materials such as birth control literature. During her stay in England, Sanger met Ellis with whom she later had an affair and sustained a long lasting correspondence and friendship.  

In addressing Sanger’s American readers, Ellis appealed to a kinship between American and British citizens as white races.

In his contribution to the *BCR*, Ellis lauded the “expansion of the white races” from the discovery of America to the Russo-Japanese war of 1904. He celebrated the fact that nine-tenths of the globe came under the political control of one-third of humanity, namely the ‘white races.’ Ellis, however, warned that the victory of the Japanese exposed the vulnerability of white civilization. Ellis was familiar with white racial anxieties over the unprecedented influx of immigrants into the United States between the 1880s and 1920s. Ellis cited American Lathrop Stoddard’s concerns over the fate of the Nordic race, pointing

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3 Ibid.
out that England was also threatened by the indiscriminate flow of bodies in global circuits of migrations, arms, and markets. Ellis used the early twentieth century racial language of Yellow, Red, Brown, and Black Perils to emphasize the vulnerability of white civilization, specifically in terms of threats of non-white populations. Although Ellis’s article can be seen as an example of the relationship between sex, race, and the eugenic strand of the birth control movement, there is another story here about bodily capacities to feel which speaks to another dimension of sex reform politics.

Although Ellis emphasized the dangers of a “colored military peril,” a story of white responsibility, white degeneration, and white capitalism undergirded it. Ellis suggested that the white middle class leadership of world affairs had created the conditions that allowed other races to rise and endanger such leadership because “its [white] civilization has been too materialistic.” Historian T.J. Jackson Lears has shown an antimodernist stance among early twentieth century radical intellectuals who feared that burgeoning capitalism and industrialization would eventually turn humans into machines and thus destroy ‘human’ feeling. Ellis’s comments were shaped by this cultural context which located materialism and devitalized sexual energies as pressing problems specific to a professional middle class in white capitalist nations. In the early twentieth century, white vulnerability meant more than simply invasion, migration, and arms. It, in fact, denoted an affective condition of ‘civilized’ gendered bodies which intertwined Darwinism, reproduction, eugenics, and love.

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
Perhaps Ellis’s failure to elaborate on the point of white civilization’s materialism is attributable to the ways the subject fell outside the *BCR*’s primary agenda. While the *BCR* mainly focused on the social and political costs of the reproduction of the ‘unfit’ and the crisis of overpopulation in non-white nations, there was another underlying story of the importance of white middle class sexual energies and reproduction to civilization that pointed to the affective dimension of birth control politics. Despite the *BCR*’s marginal coverage of the maximization of sexual pleasure for white middle class couples, many of its contributors, including Sanger and Ellis, wrote sex manuals, sexological literature, letters, and conference papers which encouraged white middle class couples to cultivate sexual energies and maximize their sexual experience as a pleasurable but also emotionally invested, spiritual, ‘civilized,’ and uniquely ‘human’ experience.

While Ellis’s article in the *BCR* racially mapped territories and political power, his work on *The Objects of Marriage* went farther to suggest how this mapping of the “world’s racial problem” folded into the space of the white middle class bedroom. Ellis’s *The Objects of Marriage* shifts the scale, angle, and topography of the map of the “world’s racial problem” by focusing on love in white middle class sexual practices. This pamphlet, published in 1917, claimed that marital love marked the body’s imperial and evolutionary status. Throughout the manual, Ellis binds love to an evolutionary history of sex itself which showed a progression from animal sex to ‘civilized’ sex. In doing so, Ellis charted different formations of manhood and womanhood over time in terms of changes to the relationship between love and sex. Manhood and womanhood progressed along the timeline from animal roles of male ornamentation and female sexual selection to ‘primitive’ gender roles of
aggressive sexual manhood involving wife capture coupled with female promiscuity and hard labor, and culminating in ‘civilized’ gender roles of female modesty, ornamentation, consumption, and financial dependence matched by male self-control, a professional work ethos, protection, and financial support. This temporal progression rewrote the ancestral past through early twentieth century concerns over white middle class sexual energies and capitalism. As historians of British and American imperialism have shown, sexual difference and the treatment of women was widely used to mark the evolutionary status of ‘civilized’ nations.9

For Ellis, in particular, sexual energy over time was transformed from an animal into a spiritual act with supreme value, which thereby marked a departure from “the animal end of marriage.”10 He equated the limited vision of reducing sex to a merely procreative function as not only a characteristic of animals but also of the lower races of mankind. Initially, Ellis conceded that “the erotic idea, in its deeper sense, that is to say the element of love, arose very slowly in mankind” and that even among certain tribes, traces of it could be found at least in “a purely psychic sense.”11 Ellis went on to ascribe love an evolutionary status by indicating that “even among European races the evolution was late.”12 Ellis crucially introduced love as an evolutionary product along a trajectory running from immediate sex gratification to ‘higher’ developments which bound knowledge and spirituality to sex instincts. Charting these developments in what can be seen as an affective evolutionary ‘progression,’ Ellis maintained that:

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11 Ibid., 6.
12 Ibid.
sex gradually becomes intertwined with all the highest and subtlest human emotions and activities, with the refinements of social intercourse, with high adventure in every sphere, with art with religion. The primitive animal instinct, having the sole end of procreation, becomes on its way to that end the inspiring stimulus to all those psychic energies which in civilization we count most precious.  

Should there be any possible confusion among his readers as to what this meant for love in the ‘civilized’ world, Ellis emphasized the eugenic implications of love. As Ellis tied love to the spiritual state of marriage, he also firmly attested to love as a eugenic advantage.

According to Ellis, birth control would ensure the spiritual aim of marriage, the “eugenic improvement of the race” and “selection in parentage.” Ellis’s *The Objects of Marriage* is an example of how the Darwinian saga reached into the intimate practices and spaces whereby sex manuals on invigorating sex lives were also imperial capitalist narratives that construed love as a privilege of ‘civilized,’ ‘advanced,’ and educated ‘white races.’

Taken together, Ellis’s *The Objects of Marriage* and “The World’s Racial Problem,” specifically map a *white emotive imaginary* that enfolded global and local, public and private, metropole and colony, bodies and environments. Ellis’s *The Objects of Marriage* reframes his story of the “world’s racial problem” as a micro-politics of white middle class practices of intimacy that were located within a Darwinian process that lent an urgency to mate selection, reproduction, and the cultivation of latent primal energies. Ellis’s text not only articulates the problem of a loss of white middle class vitality in need of cultivation but, through evolutionary frameworks, gestures toward a spatial mapping of energies. In the early twentieth century, both British and American middle class intellectuals indulged in the cultural practice of primitivism which was particularly grounded in geographic spaces of a mythological American West, colonized territories, and the jungles of Africa. White middle

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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 23.
class sex reformers such as Ellis located the obstacles to white middle class intimacy in an internationalist context of the energetic costs of upholding white civilization which, in this period, redefined the stakes of upholding civilization along the lines of reviving lost ancestral energies. This project ultimately underpinned racialized encounters of slumming, travel to the West, farming, and efforts to preserve allegedly dying races, specifically what late nineteenth and early twentieth century intellectuals considered the vanishing race of the Indian. Although much of the historiography on primitivism has focused on the United States, scholars have shown that primitivism also took root in the British middle class cultural imagination, particularly in the fiction and practices of D.H. Lawrence and the exaltation of what Bloomsbury art critic Roger Fry called, “Negro Sculpture” and the “Art of the Bushman.”

Ellis’s text exemplifies wider cultural currents which historians Matthew Frye Jacobson and Gail Bederman have identified as the paradox of a ‘civilized’ body which cultivated ‘primal’ or ‘barbarian virtues’ as necessary energies to uphold civilization. Through such a paradox, Ellis suggested that white middle class couples could safely revive primal energies insofar as these energies would manifest as the evolutionary product of love.

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15 See for example, John Kasson’s discussion of the fascination with the wild and ‘primitive freedom’ as an Anglo-Saxon bourgeois Protestant phenomenon, John Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity In America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 10, 19, 54, 212. Kasson’s discussion of Edgar Rice Burroughs suggests that what he calls “Revitalized Man” was a white European male ideal. Marianna Torgovnick situates primitivism as a widely dispersed Western cultural preoccupation that emerged in arts and literature. See Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). For a specific discussion on D.H. Lawrence, see Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, 159-174. For Torgovnick’s discussion on Roger Fry and primitivism, see 86-88. Although Torgovnick does not discuss Greenwich Village, the Armory Show’s display of modernist art shows a transatlantic connection with Fry’s organization of an exhibit to showcase the work of modernist art.

I argue that British and American sex reformers’ prominent and frequent discussions of love and sexual energies mapped bodies and spaces along an evolutionary continuum on the basis of their affective capacities, that is the possibilities of a body to reach particular levels of feeling from instincts to more complex emotional experiences like love. Both Ellis and Sanger were part of a transatlantic network of predominantly white middle class intellectuals for whom the category and practice of love performed crucial political work in defining the relationship between sex and civilization. Sex reformers were an eclectic group of writers, scientists, feminists, socialists, psychoanalysts, and birth controllers, largely regarded as the avant-garde of the early twentieth century who made the reform of sex morality their mission. In their various campaigns such as marriage reform, birth control, and sex education, sex reformers used love as a condition that separated sex among the ‘civilized’ from sex among the ‘savage.’ Sex reformers regarded sex instincts as a common denominator between humans and animals which drew upon the early twentieth century popularity of evolutionary thinking. While historians have shown how Darwinism profoundly influenced the cultural imagination of early twentieth century British and American middle class intellectuals, Darwinism also informed white middle class practices of intimacies and imbued them with the significance of racial survival, strategic mate selection, and the fate of ‘civilization.’

What I will call, affective potential, draws attention to the shaping of racial, gender, class, and sexuality through degrees of bodily energies, the sharpness of instincts, and the capacity for love. I use the term affect to highlight the range of feelings encompassed by emotions, energies, instincts, and vitality which sex reformers differentially attributed and quantified in certain types of bodies. In doing so, I am giving important historical attention to a salient early twentieth century discourse on ‘energies,’ ‘vitality,’ ‘emotions,’ and ‘instincts’ which historians have generally highlighted in terms of sexual practices or the management of bodily energies but not so much as a politics of emotion. By drawing particular attention to love, I emphasize the importance of a precise nuanced political account of how sex reformers mapped energies and, specifically, when, where, and in which bodies these energies developed as love.

In the white emotive imaginary of sex reformers, high, instinctive, sexual energies were generally attributed to ‘lower’ classes, races, and the ‘feebleminded’, while the white middle class purportedly exhausted its energies through overwork and the burdens of civilization. However, when sex reformers considered love, higher energies did not equate to greater love in the bodies of allegedly ‘primitive’ others but, in fact, marked these bodies as promiscuous and animalistic. To make their case for cultivating sexual energies, sex reformers believed that, for white middle class bodies, sexual pleasure, foreplay, and intensified sexual intimacies would amount to love. This had important stakes for remaking white middle class masculinity and white middle class femininity along affective lines. Sex reformers encouraged supposedly overworked, sexually exhausted, ‘over-civilized’ white middle class men to revive primal sexual instincts while ‘repressed’, frigid, chaste white
middle class women were encouraged to seek sexual pleasure and embrace their reproductive body as a eugenic agent of sexual selection with the power to shape the future race. I argue that how affects were imagined to be distributed across bodies and space amounted to an imperial politics of love where a body’s felt experience attested to its location in gender, race, class, and imperial hierarchies.

This chapter considers how spaces came to be identified with the affective potential of the kinds of bodies presumed to inhabit them. I argue that sex reformers assigned an affective character to entire nations, cities, farms, forests, specific districts, buildings, homes, and other spaces. However, I also want to stress how imperial forms of masculinity and femininity were brought into being by early twentieth century concerns over cultivating sexual energies, eugenic reproduction, and intertwining the fate of civilization with white middle class love. I will use the term *white emotive imaginary* to capture this affective cartography which maps zones of different levels of energies and, in turn, suggests how white middle class occupation of space affectively shaped bodies. I use this term for several reasons. Firstly, I want to emphasize that this map, which will take us to places such as cabarets, the urban ‘jungle,’ the frontier, white middle class bedrooms, and a primal past, is a specifically white middle class imperial narrative. I want to stress that this map was a racialized imaginary that identified highly energized sexual spaces with ‘lower’ classes and races situated in a Darwinian past. Secondly, this map presumed a white middle class moving subject that navigated both temporal and spatial territories endowed with the privileged mobility of shifting between ‘primitive’ and ‘civilized’ registers of time and space. Thirdly, sex reformers framed the campaign to cultivate sexual instincts and the ideal spaces
for doing so, in the context of what historian Christina Simmons has explained as the ‘myth of Victorian repression.’ What I refer to as a white emotive imaginary designates the racial and class specificity of the Victorian code of sexual morality which presumed female passionlessness and lustful male sexual desire. In other words, white middle class sexual norms partly explain both the affective character attributed to certain spaces specific to how white middle class bodies inhabited them. This was a world that privileged certain emotions such as love over others which aligned the affective potential of white middle class bodies with leading the world toward a loving social and political order.

*White emotive imaginary* names a fantasy according to which sex reformers oriented their lives in a way to maximize their energies and instincts with the intent of producing love. I situate the stakes of this term in feminist theories of phantasmatic space where the privileging of heterosexual desire has constituted masculinity and femininity through a Freudian narrative of family romance. This literature has a direct bearing on this historical period when Freudianism rose in popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. Sex reformers articulated the importance of embracing sex instincts in the context of heterosexual desire, the urgency of eugenic mate selection, Malthusian anxieties over a low white middle class birthrate and the fecundity of ‘lower’ classes and races, and intertwined Freud’s vision of the psyche with the Darwinian narrative of human history. This was not a distortion of Freud’s own thinking given that he located the psyche in evolutionary frameworks, going so far as to

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relate the beginnings of human society to the ape family in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.²¹ Although I have stressed the phantasmatic dimension of this space, I also emphasize that this fantasy informed the way white middle class bodies experienced, inhabited, and mapped space.

What early twentieth century British sex reformer, mathematician, and philosopher Bertrand Russell referred to as a man’s “emotional universe,” is here analyzed as an imperial and class formation of a white emotive imaginary.²² This chapter draws on the historiography of colonialism which has looked to intimacy and emotions as sites of imperial power.²³ I have been influenced by Ann Laura Stoler’s argument that emotions are the serious business of imperial politics rather than the “emotive fluff” of history.²⁴ Similarly, I have looked to Linda Gordon’s call to reconsider the analytical purchase of the term “internal colonialism.”²⁵ I show the interweaving of metropole and colony in the practices of white middle class primitivism. I also consider ‘internal colonialism’ at the level of the formation of imperial masculinity and femininity through white middle class efforts to revive primal sexual energies. This chapter considers how a sex reform politics of love offered a spatial and temporal mapping in tandem with the shaping of white middle class masculinity and femininity. I first explore how sex reformers framed love in the context of Darwinian

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narratives of sexual selection, ornamentation, and emotional expression which interwove the lessons of animal courtship and eugenic reproduction. The second section considers early twentieth century primitivism whereby sex reformers navigated urban spaces, travelled to allegedly ‘ancestral’ places in ways that recast Darwinism in the ‘modern world.’ In the third section, I look to the global mapping of the reproductive anxieties of the era, particularly the concerns over a white middle class birthrate and the injunctions for white middle class men to cultivate sexual energies, for white middle class women to enjoy sex, and for careful mate selection. In the final section, I consider the sex reform politics of love drew on the figure of a Nietzschean superman that straddled past and future tenses as the vigorous, unrepressed, blond beast of the past but one that would bring primal energies to existing civilization.

I. The Darwinian Legacy

Although Charles Darwin had published On the Origin of Species in 1859, followed by The Descent of Man in 1871 and The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals in 1873, his works had a legacy beyond their initial Victorian audience. Darwin’s reception also extended beyond Britain’s borders, with the spectacular American reception of Herbert Spencer, a self-proclaimed Darwinist and a member of the X-Club which included ‘Darwin’s Bulldog’ T.H. Huxley and John Tyndall.26 As historians of Social Darwinism have shown, Darwinian views of struggle, the transmutation of species, and the contingency of an organism’s future on its responses to a changing environment influenced both American and

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British social scientists in anthropology, economics, politics, philosophy, and sociology.\(^{27}\)

Historian of science, Peter Bowler, has shown that Darwinism provoked debates within the sciences of zoology, embryology, botany, ecology, paleontology, and biogeography.\(^{28}\)

Bowler has situated Darwinism as one theory among other evolutionary theories that informed the life sciences as an inquiry into the origin and development of organisms.\(^{29}\)

Within the historiographical debates over whether other evolutionary theories such as Lamarckism, orthogenesis, or Herbert Spencer’s views on equilibrium and disequilibrium can be counted as non-Darwinian, I tend to agree with Mike Hawkins and Greta Jones that Darwinism was a malleable, fragmented, and selectively appropriated theory of evolution.\(^{30}\)

In the United States, however, Lamarckism had a much larger and influential following than in Britain. In considering how sex reformers drew on Darwinism, I suggest that they did not rigidly differentiate Darwinism from Lamarckism, nor did they see Darwinism as incompatible with ideas of ‘progress,’ ‘life force,’ growth, inheritance, or Lamarck’s doctrine of acquired characteristics.\(^{31}\)

For the most part, sex reformers were less interested in

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\(^{27}\) Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). I am inclined to agree with David Stack who has claimed that ‘Social Darwinism’ is a problematic term because it suggests that there is a scientific Darwinism that is not social. Stack’s work also importantly points to the malleability of Darwinism which has generally been tied to the Right. See David Stack, *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism, 1859-1914* (Cheltenham, England: New Clarion Press, 2003), 6-8.


\(^{31}\) In fact, Darwin himself drew on Lamarckian ideas in a number of his works, where he referred to the use and disuse of organs as a body mutated in response to the environment. See for example, Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and plants Under Domestication Vol. 1* (1868; Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 135.
debating the subtle differences of evolutionary theories than in what they contributed to understanding sex, reproduction, manhood and womanhood, and the future of ‘civilization.’

Darwin’s work offered sex reformers an evolutionary history of sex, emotions, desires, and reproduction from animal to human romances which charted the emergence of love as a force that ‘civilized’ sex instincts. Much of Darwin’s work looked to bridge an animal and human divide by showing traces of a common ancestry. This project extended to locating elements of human romance in the animal world, particularly through Darwin’s concept of sexual selection which explored animal courtship. Darwin’s *On The Origin of Species* focused on the concept of natural selection whereby a species’ ability to adapt to the changing environment signified its future survival. However, Darwin’s second work *On The Descent of Man* elaborated his concept of sexual selection.\(^{32}\) Bert Bender has argued that, in fact, it was sexual selection more than natural selection which captured the American middle class imagination.\(^{33}\) According to Darwin, sexual selection accounted for the development of secondary sex characters which did not directly impinge upon natural selection but, over time, the choice of mate affected the future of the species.\(^{34}\) Darwin suggested that there was an accidental evolutionary advantage that occurred through the wise selection of mates. For instance, female birds may desire the brighter plumage of male birds which could eventually serve as protection from later predators.\(^{35}\) Darwin also introduced the biological and evolutionary importance of secondary sex characteristics of beauty by indicating that the


\(^{34}\) Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 372-375.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
incitement of sexual desire furthered the reproduction of the species. In the 1860s and early 1870s, Darwin’s writing on sexual selection occurred in the context of debates over aesthetics over the questionable divine element of the feelings inspired by beauty. Darwin crucially introduced the feelings of sexual attraction, sex, and the survival of the species into an origin story tying animal courtship to human romances. A number of sex reformers returned to Darwin’s example of courtship among birds because it reversed the gender roles of courtship and pointed to the importance of female reproductive choices in determining the course of evolution.

Darwin used the story of bird romances to illustrate the shift of gendered behavior in courtship which took for granted the common factor of sex instincts but looked to their different manifestations over time. In doing so, Darwin naturalized heterosexual desire but also framed the lineage of human romance through white middle class capitalist and imperial family norms. The significance of the male bird’s ornamentation relied upon a frame of reference of the Victorian white middle class wife who had, over time, been reduced to the role of a ‘doll;’ ornamental, sexualized, and financially dependent on attracting a husband. In 1896, British sex reformer, Edward Carpenter wrote of the reduction of the female to a doll in his popular work on Love’s Coming of Age, invoking Darwinian concepts of selection to show a disturbing lack of sexual intensity in white middle class homes. Darwin’s discussion of birds’ sex antics also took for granted an anthropological view of ‘primitive’ men as closer to the animal for their ornamentation through such decorative bodily markings.

like tattooing or paint. The Darwinian tale of this animal romance provided a primal scene in a white emotive imaginary.

Although Darwin was keen on dismantling the chasm between human and animal relations, his work also points to how affects or gradations of feeling were implicated in the process of evolution. Darwin, in fact, traced the early formation of societies to “instinctive feelings” which inspired humans to congregate and bond with “some degree of love.”

According to Darwin, “a degree of sympathy, fidelity, and courage” lent cohesion to collective bonds which tied emotion to the formation of a political unit. Although Darwin admitted that these emotions were to some extent present among the lower animals, he claimed that benevolence was a distinctively human trait. Darwin set a precedent for using emotion as a category to differentiate and hierarchically classify human beings by attributing sympathy to a higher evolutionary stage. To Darwin, the feeling of sympathy marked ‘civilized’ bodies in comparison to so-called ‘savages’ who were purportedly ruthless in their elimination of the physically or mentally weak members among them. Darwin, however, warned that sympathy could work against natural selection by leading ‘civilized’ nations to nurture their weak through paternalistic or charitable institutions. In doing so, Darwin classified white middle and upper class bodies as agents of sympathy while others were marked as objects of sympathy, situating them in colonial, class, and racial hierarchies.

Darwin’s discussion of sympathy in the context of evolution entangled science, economics,

39 Ibid., 162.
40 Ibid., 163.
41 Ibid., 168.
and imperial politics at the site of a body’s changing affective potential which marked bodies as lower or higher on the evolutionary ladder.

Darwin’s account of sympathy not only mapped a particular affective cartography of societies where sympathy was more or less intense but it also accounted for population levels. Darwin was particularly influenced by Reverend Thomas Malthus’s 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population* which predicted that population would outstrip food resources. Malthusian fears cast a shadow over the nineteenth century and continued into the early twentieth century, often underpinning later arguments for birth control in both the United States and Britain. In discussing sympathy, Darwin warned that “care wrongly directed, leads to the degeneration of a domestic race, but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.” Although Darwin suggested that sympathy could threaten evolutionary progress, the very status of a society as ‘civilized’ meant that it could not abandon its weaker members. Here Darwin framed sympathy as a trait exemplified in white middle and upper class bodies which were financially secure and apparently of sound stock. In a chilly precursor to eugenic debates on marriage, Darwin suggested that “weaker and inferior members of society [should] not [be] marrying so freely as the sound.” Quoting one of his contemporaries, W.R. Greg, a Manchester economist, Darwin framed the problem of this evolution of sympathy to the detriment of natural selection in the following way: “The careless, squalid, unaspiring Irishman multiplies like rabbits: the frugal, foreseeing, self-respecting, ambitious Scot, sagacious and disciplined in

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42 Greta Jones indicates that population pressure was the most famous pressure associated with Darwinism. See Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought*, xi.
44 Ibid., 168-169.
his intelligence, passes his best years in struggle and celibacy, marries late, and leaves few behind him." In drawing attention to Greg, Darwin pointed to the flexibility of the human/animal association, suggesting that the science of breeding should be applied to humans as an even more important control than on animals. Darwin’s reference to the Irish hints at how sympathy and sex were framed as part of a white emotive imaginary which foregrounded the sympathy of a white middle class bestowed on a colonized Irish population. At this time in both Britain and the United States, the Irish were not considered white which historians have explained in terms of the colonial status of Ireland, the presumed unfitness of the Irish for self-government, and high levels of Irish immigration and poverty due to the mid-nineteenth-century Irish Potato Famine. The racial status of the Irish was also evoked in nineteenth century caricatures of simian-like Irishmen. Darwin’s reference to uncontrolled breeding of the Irish also affectively characterized other colonized and lower class populations by uncontrolled desires and degraded their practice of sex to that of animals.

While the narrative on emotions hovered amid the pages of Darwin’s *On The Descent of Man*, the importance of emotions to Darwin’s theories received more explicit attention in his 1873 work, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. In this work, Darwin intended to further elucidate the shared trajectories of human and animal histories. In fact, Darwin traced the evolutionary strand of emotions to animals using photographic evidence to

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46 Ibid., 174.
document the origins and similarities of facial expressions.\textsuperscript{48} Darwin used facial expressions as physiological signifiers of emotional experience to trace emotion across species. In doing so, he imposed a hierarchy of existing race and class relations. At the outset of his work, Darwin specifically referred to signs of emotion in infants, the insane, Negroes, the Chinese, Kaffirs, and various Aboriginal tribes.\textsuperscript{49} To Darwin, proof of emotion in so-called savages and lower species offered confirmation of the human connection to primal animal ancestors.\textsuperscript{50}

Although Darwin aimed to show that emotions were not uniquely human, he also traced histories of specific emotions which developed in different stages in evolution.

Darwin devoted some attention to traces of love which he defined as a desire for contact.\textsuperscript{51} Unlike many of the other emotions such as fear and anger, Darwin implied that love was particularly tricky to document because it never involved a specific predetermined course of action.\textsuperscript{52} Darwin evaded the ambiguity and diversity of actions that could be inspired by love by simply searching for signs of affectionate contact. For instance, Darwin suggested that love could be observed among dogs and cats who rubbed against their masters and mistresses, apes who embraced, monkeys who fondled one another, animals who nursed their young, and birds who sang to communicate their desire for mating.\textsuperscript{53} Darwin went on to consider the physical manifestations that might signify love in other ‘races’. Darwin assured his readers that, despite the absence of the European custom of kissing, Fuegians, New

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 20-28.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 99-100.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
Zealanders, Tahitians, Papuans, Australians, and the Somals of Africa did exhibit signs of affection. Although kissing may have been absent, other practices of touch such as the rubbing of noses among Laplanders and New Zealanders were evidence of early traces of love. Darwin concluded that the manifestation of love “is so far innate or natural that it apparently depends on pleasure from close contact with a beloved person.” Darwin’s observations must be placed within the context of British imperial expansion which inspired travel and contributed to a genre of travel narratives that exoticized indigenous inhabitants. These travel narratives include Darwin’s own visit to the Galapagos Islands, T.H. Huxley’s voyage on The S.S. Rattlesnake, and the co-founder of natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace’s voyage to Brazil. To Darwin, Europeans set the standard of love against which allegedly lower human beings and animals were to be measured. As Darwin claimed that the lower animals reflected the “principle of pleasure derived from contact in association with [my italics] love,” he implied that these physical indicators of affection were simply early traces of what later would evolve to modern day love. This was, in other words, an association with, likeness to, or in-the-process-of-becoming love but not quite the full evolution to the stage of love.

As Darwinism drew the animal to the human through a romanticization of animal courtship, sex reformers drew upon Darwinism in a way that invested their romantic

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54 Ibid., 100.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
relationships with evolutionary importance. Sex reformers essentially wrote ‘modern’ bodies into the primal scene, bringing the human body into close proximity to the animal through ancestral connections to instincts, senses, and physical intensities. For sex reformers, the exaltation of sex instincts was critically linked to the animal within. British sexologist, Havelock Ellis, was a towering figure in the sex reform movement. He was invited to serve as president and vice-president in a number of conferences and organizations related to sex reform which were often dominated by British and American sex reformers. His name was routinely invoked as an authority on sex reform with his works on *Psychology of Sex*, *Essays in Love and Virtue*, and *Man and Woman: A Study of Secondary and Tertiary Sexual Characteristics* advertised, recommended, and discussed in sex reform periodicals and correspondence. Ellis’s pamphlet on “The Love Rights of Women,” shows how sex reformers framed their projects within a Darwinian tale of the birds’ ‘courtship’ rituals which exemplified the “love art” in the use songs to woo and heighten sexual stimulation. From this story, Ellis moved on to suggest the close connection between animal courtship rituals of violent competition and ‘savages,’ arguing that the typical courtship of the ‘savage’ was marked by violence, ‘wife-capture’, and rough play. This suggests that the relationship between animal and human romances critically functioned within the frame of a white emotive imaginary in two ways. Firstly, sex reformers established a kinship of feeling across time to relocate white middle class bodies in a primal scene. Secondly, this kinship could also be used to defend colonialism in the present on the grounds of the animal passions of ‘primitive’ societies.

60 Ibid., 5.
In Ellis’s “The Love Rights of Woman,” the ‘civilized’ or ‘modern’ woman’s sensory, instinctive, and bodily predicament was positioned within a teleological account of love. By seizing on the problem of ‘coldness’ which signified the performance of ‘civilized’ white femininity, Ellis essentially located the project of maximizing love as one the was bound to white middle class bodies. Ellis’s attention to ‘coldness’ drew on early twentieth century studies on the problem of frigidity in white middle class women whose sexual unresponsiveness was framed as the bodily effect of Victorian sexual norms of female modesty, passivity, and chasteness. The medical discourse on frigidity occurred in both the United States and Britain and inspired transatlantic conversations between sex reformers.  

Ellis explained that the ‘civilized’ woman had learned to repress her ‘erotic’ desires which resulted in her coldness. Ellis conflated the arousal of sex instincts in the civilized body with the step toward the ‘higher plane’ of love. Ellis wrote that:

> It is true that women whose instincts are not perverted at the roots do not desire to be cold. Far from it. But to dispel that coldness the right atmosphere is needed, and the insight and skill of the right man. In the erotic sphere woman asks nothing better of a man than to be lifted above her coldness, to the higher plane where there is reciprocal interest and mutual joy in the act of love. There – in her silent demand is one with Nature’s. For the biological order of the world involves those claims which, in the human range, are the love rights of women.

For Ellis, the act of love and its possibilities remained confined within the gender order of the white middle class couple whereby white middle class men could affirm their skill in the bedroom rather than the workplace and white middle class women could embrace their sexual instinct all within the framework of a new ‘civilized’ morality characterized by “reciprocal interest” and “mutual joy.” This is an example of how sex reformers construed

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62 Ibid., 5-6.
63 Ibid., 12.
love within a white emotive imaginary that used white middle class gender norms as the point of departure for love’s transformative possibilities.

Through a Darwinian narrative, sex reformers entangled animal and human romances which situated white middle class bodies in bio-political space and time. Sex reformers situated their relationships within a Darwinian script whereby their desires, reproduction, and familial lives were performed as continued processes of sexual and natural selection. Both American and British eugenicists contributed to the transatlantic periodical, *The Eugenics Review*. American psychologist, J.W. Slaughter, who also served on the committee for founding the Eugenics Education Society in London, is one example of the transatlantic shaping of the eugenics movement. Slaughter was also a contributor to *The Eugenics Review* which carried articles on considering the breeding practices of human beings in anticipation of a future generation. The word breeding in connection with animals frequently appeared as the writers of the *Eugenics Review* discussed breeding in terms of human mate selection which, they argued, was more important but yet less conscientiously attended to than animal breeding. While British and American eugenicists formed bonds through joint contributions to eugenics periodicals, conferences, and visits between the American Eugenics Society and the British Eugenics Education Society, their concerns were shaped by specific national contexts. American eugenicists were particularly concerned about immigration and the degeneration of Anglo-Saxon stock. In the United States, there was also much more legislative support for eugenics with the passage of a sterilization law in 1907 in Indiana, interracial marriage state laws, and the requirement of attaining marriage health certificates in some states. British eugenicists, however, received less state support and funding for their
projects. The Darwinian connections between animals and humans can be seen in the origins of the American Eugenics Society which developed out of the American Breeders’ Association. In the context of human marriages, reproduction, desires, and especially love, eugenics writers firmly tied love to the Darwinian tale of sexual selection, natural selection, and the evolution of the species. What historian Angelique Richardson has called the ‘eugenization of love’ in the late nineteenth century was articulated in the sex reform literature in the context of a Darwinian world.\(^\text{64}\)

In an article, on “Selection in Marriage,” J.W. Slaughter rehashed the story of the courtship of birds, mentioning Darwin’s discussion of the songs, markings, strutting, and antics of male birds in the hopes of attracting the female who happened to be the agent of sexual selection.\(^\text{65}\) Slaughter went on to explain that this process was reversed through the development of civilization which shifted the male and female roles by making the male the “agent of selection” due to his “superior economic position” which left the females with the role of ornamentation in the hopes of being selected.\(^\text{66}\) This assumption of a reversal of roles began from the premise of a white middle class family narrative whereby the white middle class professional was in a superior economic position while the white middle class woman focused on ornamentation in the hopes of securing marriage and financial security. The significance of the evolutionary narrative and its implications for love were interpreted through the gendered behaviour of white middle class courtship and reproduction in Western capitalist nations.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 157.
The Darwinian narrative acted as a structural framework for how sex reformers conceptualized and experienced sex instincts. This can be considered a critical early twentieth century moment in writing affective histories. By invoking Darwinism, Slaughter highlighted the problem of “the flow of spontaneous affection” which, when educated toward eugenic aims, would allow for love to flourish. Slaughter charted the movement of affection in evolution by indicating that the church signified the concerns over asserting control over the direction of affection at the earliest stage in civilization. Influenced by early twentieth century debates over eugenic legislation on marital health certificates, Slaughter suggested that “clergymen could be a most important agent of selection in mating.”

Slaughter saw the potential to turn the church’s concern with controlling sex instincts into a valuable aim to be rearticulated in this eugenic moment. Slaughter directly connected the evolutionary course of the relationship of affection, reproduction, and the future generation to a furthered projection of love. According to Slaughter, the future attitude of “responsibility toward offspring” would establish the success of the eugenicist’s work, “when knowledge is sufficiently widespread these factors will become an integral part of the psychology of love.”

A number of eugenicists wrestled with the issue of love in the Darwinian framework which moved from considerations of animal desires toward the differentiation of human races on the basis of emotional experience. In doing so, eugenicists established an affective index of racializing bodies which drew upon Darwinism. Eugenicists seemed to find Darwinism useful for invoking wilderness imagery and plotting early ‘love’ encounters to

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67 Ibid., 158.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 162.
frame the origins of ‘civilized’ bodies which could revive intense primal feelings and produce love. This was particularly apparent in British journalist, Caleb William Saleeby’s, contribution to the *Eugenics Review*. Saleeby extensively published on eugenics and, like Slaughter, participated in founding the Eugenics Education Society. Saleeby’s “The Psychology of Parenthood” appeared in *The Eugenics Review* where he justified his focus on love by mentioning Darwin’s interest in emotions.  

In his article, Saleeby traced a progression of the primal beginnings of love in animal courtship towards “Love in the noble sense.” This differentiated human beings on the basis of an affective index for race and class hierarchies of power. Saleeby’s article began with the Darwinian saga that was so familiar to the community of sex reformers, claiming that:

> if it be true that man is not primarily a rational animal, if he be rather, au fond, a bundle, an assemblage, an organism of instincts, it behoves us to recognize in ourselves and in others the primacy of instincts, because from them flows all that goes to make up human nature, whether it be good or evil.

By describing ‘man’ as “an organism of instincts,” Saleeby undercut presumed ‘human’ uniqueness on the grounds of reason and, instead, depicted an organism profoundly responsive, affectively charged, and intimately intertwined with the ‘animal.’ On these grounds, Saleeby also suggested that, given “the primacy of instincts,” human action could then be seen as unplanned, undirected, unorganized, and profoundly contingent on encounters with the world. This picture suggests a specific historical episode in ways that affect has been deployed in specific social and political agendas. Contemporary theorists of

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., 41.
73 Ibid., 39.
affect, such as Gilles Deleuze, Nigel Thrift, Brian Massumi, and Sara Ahmed, have looked to affect as a lens for positively tying body’s metamorphoses, its fragmentation, and its desires to ways of reimagining worlds beyond the totalizing and normative violence of patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial power.\textsuperscript{74} Saleeby’s story, however, suggests a genealogical episode of affect which is rooted in early twentieth century anxieties over eugenic reproduction and revitalizing white middle class energies to uphold “civilization.”

Saleeby’s emphasis on undercutting the association of reason with the ‘human,’ took for granted the need to reframe white middle class masculinity. For instance, in Saleeby’s account of love, he drew particular attention to ‘paternal instinct.’ He argued that “some development of the paternal instinct, in which a father’s love and care came to help the mother’s – which I take to be the essence of marriage – would have superior survival value and would triumph in the inter-societary struggle for existence.”\textsuperscript{75} In Saleeby’s re-articulation of Darwinism through the prism of contemporary concerns, love emerged as a characteristic evolutionary development in the bodies of those deemed to be the most valuable citizens. Saleeby maintained that “except in utterly degraded persons, the object of feelings which are associates with the racial instinct becomes the object of the feelings which are associated with the parental instinct. The object of the emotion of sex becomes also the object of tender emotion. Thus, ‘love,’ in its lower sense becomes exalted by Love in the noble sense.”\textsuperscript{76} Writing around 1909, Saleeby was influenced by the early twentieth century


\textsuperscript{75} Saleeby, “The Psychology of Parenthood,” 40.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 41.
sex reform movement which called for the reform of marriage along more egalitarian lines. However, reformers’ calls for a father’s love presumed the imagined figure of a white middle class professional father who offered economic support but was far too busy to attend to domestic affections. Saleeby’s attention then to both a “father’s care” in the “struggle for existence” and the importance of shaping instincts rather than reason drew upon the perceived late nineteenth and early twentieth century crisis of devitalized, over-civilized manhood. As such, Saleeby’s turn to fatherhood and instincts can be seen as defining a reformed masculinity within a white emotive imaginary.

While sex reformers looked to sex instincts as the common connection between all living things, it was love or ‘tender emotion’ that secured the status of ‘civilized’ bodies within the evolutionary hierarchy. Saleeby, for example, asserted the superiority of white middle class bodies by suggesting that “tender emotion is what has made and makes everything that is good in morality, - everything that permits us to hold up our heads at all, or to hope for the future of the races.”

Saleeby ended his article with the claim of the benevolence of eugenic projects in laying down principles that would ensure “a proportion of sympathy, of tender feeling, and of all those great, abstract, world-creating passions” which would bring into existence a future generation “consisting only of bodies who were loved before they were born.” In the early twentieth century, eugenicists like Saleeby entangled love and eugenics in a moral code which depended on the Darwinian story to convey the stakes of upholding it.

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 43.
From bird courtships to eugenic selection in marriage, Darwin’s linkage of sexual attraction and species survival profoundly shaped early twentieth century sex reformers’ claims that their vision of morality promised to produce a more loving society. Darwin provided an important narrative for tracing the primal origins of feelings which could show a kinship between animals, ‘lower’ classes and races, and white middle classes. However, by subjecting feeling to evolutionary mechanisms, Darwin also opened the possibility that certain ‘higher’ bodily feelings like love could have been the product of ‘civilization.’ This was the particular legacy of Darwinism for early twentieth century sex reformers who made love a pivotal issue, often framed through eugenics. There were direct connections between Darwin and eugenics such as Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton, who coined the term eugenics in 1883 and envisioned it as practical Darwinism applied to human fecundity. Many scholars have emphasized the influence of eugenics as a moral code, and even religion, in early twentieth century Britain and the United States. As I have argued, sex reformers politically deployed love to differentiate sex among the ‘civilized’ from sex among the ‘savage’ which added an emotional and spiritual context to white middle class sex. The significant overlap between sex reform and eugenics contributed to framing love in terms of what I have considered the affective potential of a body which affectively located that body in spatial and temporal hierarchies of gender, race, and class. Sex reformers’ discourse and

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79 Jones, Social Darwinism and English Thought, 99.
practices of love, however, affectively marked both bodies and worlds in a cultural universe that can best be described as a white emotive imaginary.

II. Too Close for Comfort: Primitivism, Intimate Encounters, and Affectively Navigating the Metropolis

As Darwinism undermined the boundaries between human and animal, the implications of Darwin’s evolutionary narrative extended to a rigorous differentiation within the species. In Britain and the United States, many white middle class sex reformers adopted primitivism as a practice for cultivating primitive elements of human nature which had been relegated to an earlier stage in the development of civilization. Their practices of primitivism crucially relied on the Darwinian narrative which introduced a temporal dimension to how white middle class bodies navigated the metropolis. My analysis here is informed by what sociologist, Sara Ahmed, has referred to as ‘orientation’ in relation to how emotions are shaped by a body’s lines of direction and lines of flight.\(^{81}\) Nigel Thrift’s insights on the politics of the affective saturation of space can also importantly inform our understanding of early twentieth century sex reformers’ aims to cultivate sexual instincts through encounters in ‘wild’ spaces of the city with purportedly ‘primitive’ bodies.\(^{82}\) These insights into space and orientation are important to understanding how sex reformers inhabited the spaces of London and New York City. As historians have shown, the metropolis developed in the period from 1890 to 1940 which overlaps with the rise of the sex reform movement. Historian, Angela Blake, has shown that New York City’s immensity and diversity served as an anxious site for

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\(^{82}\) See for example, Thrift’s discussion of affect as built into designs of urban space. Thrift, *Non-representational theory*, 187.
businessmen, politicians, tourists, and social reformers who sought to make the city ‘knowable.’\textsuperscript{83} I want to build here on how space became ‘knowable’ and remapped through the stakes for the white middle class affective body which interwove spaces of the public and private, metropole and colony, nature and culture, and the psyche and ‘civilization.’

Bronislaw Malinowski, a famous early twentieth century British anthropologist who was part of sex reform networks, situated the psyche itself as a product of an evolved white middle class body. At the time, Malinowski’s work was viewed as a groundbreaking study in anthropology which became well known in both Britain and the United States. Malinowski indirectly pointed to the tendency of ‘civilized’ bodies to repress sexual impulses by arguing that less evolved more primitive Trobrianders were sexually uninhibited. Malinowski specifically referred to the psychic state or absence of a Freudian psyche in ‘savage society’ when he discussed “the essentially ‘unrepressed’ Trobrianders.”\textsuperscript{84} According to Malinowski, the repression of sexual instincts was “a mental by-product of the creation of culture.”\textsuperscript{85} Malinowski linked the “uncivilized society” of the Trobrianders to a particular gendered and classed affective character which described the condition of the male Trobriander in the following way: “there are fewer strains on his nerves and his ambitions and his economic responsibilities, he is freer to give himself up to his paternal instincts.”\textsuperscript{86} Malinowski, however, was not alone in his interests of ‘savage society’ in what it could teach to delicate, repressed white middle class bodies about the cultivation of sex instincts. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, white middle class sex reformers who claimed an

\textsuperscript{83} Angela Blake, \textit{How New York Became American, 1890-1924} (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., x.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 32.
Anglo-Saxon lineage identified the costs of civilization with nervous, sexually repressed bodies so that seeking encounters with the lower classes, racialized and colonized others were strategies for working on the affective body.

Malinowski’s work is one example of how Darwinism and Freudianism were intertwined in a spatial and temporal topography that constituted a white emotive imaginary. This topography, however, was not confined to the annals of anthropological literature. It was put on display, enacted, and lived within sex reform circles. In short, it was a topography that both oriented sex reformers’ intimate practices and was mapped by those same practices. Scholar Joel Pfister has argued that the psyche was staged in both the personal lives and professional work of a number of Greenwich Village playwrights such as Eugene O’Neill, Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook.87 Journalists and writers, Neith Boyce and Hutchins Hapgood were part of this circle of playwrights who began to call themselves the Provincetown Players in their summer retreats to Provincetown Massachusetts. In 1916, Boyce and Hapgood performed their play, Enemies, for a Provincetown audience. On the Provincetown stage, Boyce and Hapgood re-enacted the struggles of their own marriage to live according to a bohemian ethic of ‘modern’ varietist marriage which contended that marital fidelity artificially constrained the need for human beings to pursue variety, indulge their sexual inclinations, and seek happiness beyond a single partner. As Boyce and Hapgood negotiated feelings of jealousy and ownership, they

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situated intimacy within a Darwinian-psychoanalytic narrative. In one scene, Boyce turned to Hapgood and exclaimed:

Perhaps I was not satisfied at the mother’s breast, and you were. I seem to you a ravening monster, because you do not permit me to be a little child – Is there anything more unreasonable than a baby hungry for milk and warmth? Have you no sympathy for this deep starvation of mine, going to the distant unconscious past, to the womb, and perhaps beyond it? Can you not give me this infinite release, this satisfied freedom of instinct?  

Boyce simultaneously drew upon the Darwinian trajectory of human history and the Freudian explanation of sex instincts in a family drama by invoking the “unconscious past,” the satisfaction of “the mother’s breast,” the “ravening monster” and a “deep starvation” going beyond the womb. In doing so, Boyce gave the psyche a gendered and racialized body located in time and mapped its journey through the spaces of animal to ‘primitive,’ to ‘civilized’ societies. *Enemies* exemplified the production of love and blurred the lines between fantasy and reality, public and private, past and present, primitivism and civilization, and the private stage and the world stage.

For my purposes, primitivism is a significant practice among sex reformers because it positions love within an evolutionary narrative. Sex reformers looked to primitivism as a necessary step in cultivating sex instincts, excitement, and sexual feeling. As they looked to ‘awaken’ a primal element in their own bodies, sex reformers practiced what I consider to be affective colonial politics. Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce were particularly candid about the problem of a sexually fatigued Anglo-Saxon body. These concerns resonated with

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88 Alys Weinbaum has suggested that Darwinism and psychoanalysis are inextricably linked. In her book, *Wayward Reproduction*, Weinbaum traces a moment of convergence between Freud’s development of psychoanalysis, Darwin’s discussion of sexual selection and American feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s vision of a future in which women select mates on the basis of eugenically desirable traits for a future race.

a medical discourse on the problem of neurasthenia, initially framed in 1869 by American
physician, George Beard, as a disease of ‘modern’ nervousness associated with ‘brain’
workers and the pressures of modern civilization. As historians have noted, neurasthenia
was popularly conceived as a disease of the ‘civilized’ and its symptoms were tied to a
referred to the problem of “the erotic ineptitude of civilized man” which required the study of
‘savages’ who were much more indulgent and expressive of sexual impulses.\footnote{William Fielding, “The Art of Love,” in Sex in Civilization, eds. V.F. Calverton and S.D. Schmalhausen (New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1929), 635.} Hapgood’s
attention to sexual fatigue drew upon broader cultural discourses surrounding peculiarly
white sensitivity to environments which ultimately racialized feeling. He regarded the Latin,
Gaelic and French feeling as distinct from the Anglo-Saxon who allegedly shrank from the
expression of personal feelings.\footnote{Hutchins Hapgood, “Sex and Society,” undated. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale, Box 27, File 793.} Hapgood, undoubtedly, identified his own bodily energies
with that of the Anglo-Saxon, apologizing to Neith Boyce at the beginning of their courtship
for his “lack of physical energy.”\footnote{Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, February 1899. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale, Box 11, File 354.} Significantly, Hapgood juxtaposed his own lack of energy
with the bodies of “The practical people, the robust, [who] don’t seem to feel much of
anything they simply do. That’s not happiness, though it may be content.”\footnote{Ibid.} The ’practical
people’ possessed a vitality that was lacking in ‘civilized bodies’ but were unlikely to
experience love insofar as Hapgood maintained that they “don’t seem to feel much of
anything.” As sex reformers, like Boyce and Hapgood, imagined their bodies in a primal past and often actively sought to awaken that primal past by seeking encounters with bodies deemed to be savage, they colonized and affectively exploited those bodies.

Sex reformers drew on the medical discourse surrounding neurasthenia to define a specifically affective character of the white middle class body which also gendered the practice of primitivism. Historians have focused primarily on white middle class men in relation to primitivism, referring to models of manhood in this period as “primitive masculinity,” or “de-evolutionary masculinity.” However, there were white middle class women who also participated in this practice in the gendered form of exalting a sexualized maternal instinct. This drew on Freud’s view of how a child’s initial sexual feelings first arose in connection to the mother. While white middle class men looked to primitivism as a way to rejuvenate exhausted bodies overworked from the demands of professional life and the financial support of home and family, white middle class women looked to primitivism to overcome sexual inhibitions, and exalt the biological and sexual power of motherhood. These gendered formations of primitivism existed in the context of a white emotive imaginary in which a specifically white affective physiology was tied to how these bodies navigated intimate encounters and social space.

Neith Boyce and Emma Goldman are good examples of primitivism as a gendered practice. As we saw in Boyce’s performance in Enemies, she situated her feelings in relationship to the mother’s breast and womb. Neith’s letters to Hutchins further attest to the

95 Ibid.
extent to which primitivism undergirded her practices of intimacy. Writing to Hutchins in May of 1916, she claimed “I am ‘primitive’ – that is, very instinctive – this is covered up a good deal by my calm + reasonable manner.” Even while invoking a primitive element within her, Boyce was careful to also assert the ‘civilized’ status of her body which called upon the Darwinian journey traversed by the body. Boyce seems to have been part of a practice well known among Greenwich Village sex reformers. Hapgood’s friend, the renowned anarchist and sex reformer, Emma Goldman also attempted to return to primal origins. In a letter to Neith, Hutchins mentioned meeting Goldman who “talked to me with great frankness about her relation with Reitman. He is the ‘call of the wild’ for her. Has shocked and violated her civilization, her heart and her soul.” By acknowledging primitivism as a significant departure from the ‘civilized’ body, primitivism became a bodily practice and performance of whiteness. Although sex reformers conceived of primitivism as a rebellious transgression of the bodily boundaries of a ‘civilized’ morality, the practice of primitivism in fact affirmed the whiteness and class status of the ‘civilized’ body by foregrounding its evolutionary journey.

The significance sex reformers attributed to cultivating sex instincts made primitivism an important practice for teaching white middle class bodies to navigate global, temporal, and bodily terrains in the efforts to produce love. Emma Goldman’s relationship with her tour manager, Ben Reitman, exemplifies how sex reform, the cult of primitivism, a Freudian sexualization of the mother, and Darwinism were entangled in a specific historical

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97 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 16 May 1916. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale, Box 19, File 506.
98 Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 1908 or 1909. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale, Box 12, File 372.
By time Goldman had met Reitman, she had already become famous as a renowned anarchist linked to Alexander Berkman’s attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick. Goldman had been prevented from speaking at venues, hunted down by law enforcement authorities, and arrested on a number of occasions. Reitman, who was known for leading a march of the unemployed, offered Goldman his Hobo Hall as a speaking venue. Reitman briefly lived with Goldman in Greenwich Village at her Mother Earth headquarters which was a communal living situation among a number of anarchists, including Berkman. While Goldman was known for championing the cause of striking and mistreated workers, she was also known for her anarchist stance against marriage and sexual morality. Goldman’s advocacy of the importance of sex instincts to civilization was partly shaped by her knowledge of Freudianism. She saw Freud lecture in 1895 in Vienna and attended Freud’s 1909 lecture at Clark University in Worcester Massachusetts. Goldman’s autobiography, Living My Life, indicates how deeply Freudianism influenced the way she viewed the world, particularly in her discussion of Reitman as caught between the love of two mothers, herself and his own mother. In her letters to Reitman, Goldman not only celebrates sexuality but situates her sexuality in the context of reviving a ‘primal,’ ‘savage,’ and ‘wild’ element.

In Goldman and Reitman’s relationship, primitivism functioned as a strategy for managing the affective potential of ‘civilized’ bodies. Their letters invoked the imagery of nature and the figures of ‘mamie,’ the ‘savage,’ and the ‘barbarian,’ as ways of inspiring and

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producing sexual feeling. In June of 1908, Goldman wrote to Reitman, “I have tasted the
invigorating breeze at your primitive, and trammeled nature”.\textsuperscript{101} She also suggested that Ben had revived a deep primitive element within her which she referred to as “the madness of a
wild, barbarian primitive love” which made it impossible to “reconcile oneself to any
relationship under civilization.”\textsuperscript{102} Goldman contrasted their passionate relationship to their
‘civilized’ status by claiming her surprise that “civilization, that sham and hypocrisy, could
make such a natural being possible. You are nature, all nature, wild and savage and
beautiful.”\textsuperscript{103} In this space of producing feeling, intimacy, race, evolution, and sex
radicalism became intertwined.

Goldman’s primitivism shows the remaking of an affective white middle class
femininity which presumed a specific location within Victorian sexual norms. In a letter to
Reitman, Goldman confessed that he had awakened in her “the savage primitive woman who
craves the man’s love and care above everything in the world. I have a great deep mother
instinct for you.”\textsuperscript{104} This sexualization dovetailed with the rise of Freudianism which partly
explains Goldman’s role as ‘Mamie’ in her letters to Reitman. Reflecting on a night she had
spent with Reitman, she wrote to him that all seemed “aglow with love and passion and
ecstasy,” she went on to express her hope that he would “rest and dream of your mamie and
the lonely treasure box and your mountains of joy.”\textsuperscript{105} Goldman here not only challenged

\textsuperscript{101} Emma Goldman to Ben Reitman, 29 June 1908. \textit{The Emma Goldman Papers} (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-
\textsuperscript{102} Emma Goldman to Ben Reitman, 3 July 1908. \textit{The Emma Goldman Papers} (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Emma Goldman to Ben Reitman, 2 July 1910. \textit{The Emma Goldman Papers} (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-
\textsuperscript{105} Emma Goldman to Ben Reitman, 29 June 1908. \textit{The Emma Goldman Papers} (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-
conventional Victorian norms of femininity but she also introduced a critique of feminist campaigns and the figure of the New Woman. Goldman condemned a narrow view which circumscribed female emancipation to education, the vote, and professional work. Instead, Goldman argued the instinctive life and the sexual freedom to indulge bodily pleasures was another, possibly more important, ground for emancipation. This critique emerged on both sides of the Atlantic as part of a dimension of feminism that celebrated the sexual power of the maternal body.

Goldman and other sex reformers drew on eugenics to emphasize the reproductive and sexual power of the maternal body. To Goldman, the ‘modern woman’ was a woman with “a re-born consciousness as a unit, a personality, a race builder” rather than “a reckless breeder of hapless children.” Such a view of the ‘modern’ and likely emancipated woman suggests that Goldman’s connections between a ‘free woman’ and love were tied to this ‘race builder’ with the privileged affective potential to love. In her relationship with Reitman, she considered how the cultivation of the mother instinct allowed Reitman “the joy of holding a free Woman in your arms, that I gave myself to you in freedom, you dear, do you know any law more impelling, more commanding more majestic than the law of love.” To Goldman, instinct was powerfully aligned with this law of love and she suggested the superiority of instinct over reason because it was “an inborn force and not an acquired one with time drilling and polish.” While this claim could seemingly refer to an instinctive capacity for all humanity to achieve love, the language of ‘inborn force’ and ‘an acquired one’ resonates

107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
with early twentieth century eugenics discourses which were mired in debates over Lamarckism’s ‘acquired characteristics’ and the Mendelian concept of germ plasm or inborn traits. Goldman’s primitivism amounted to orienting white middle class women towards seeking encounters that would simultaneously affirm sex instincts and motherhood in what was both a feminist and racial project.

On both sides of the Atlantic, sex reformers expressed grave concerns about weakened, sexually fatigued Anglo-Saxon bodies which showed their shared investment in the fate of this affective body. For many white middle class men and women, the cult of primitivism was a response to a perceived crisis in the toll civilization had taken on the affective composition of white Anglo-Saxon bodies. To British sex reformer, philosopher and mathematician, Bertrand Russell, sexual fatigue was the specific malady of the ‘civilized’, as it was “unknown among animals and very rare among uncivilized men.”\(^{109}\) As an aristocrat who attended Cambridge and now moved in the elite Bloomsbury circle, Russell counted himself among these suffering ‘civilized’ men. Russell’s various books on the importance of forging a new more sexually celebratory morality to indulge sex instincts can be seen as part of his larger concern with the affective composition of ‘civilized bodies.’ In his work on the \textit{Conquest of Happiness}, Russell staked out his overriding concern that “civilized countries suffer” with respect to the unhappiness brought on by “nervous fatigue.”\(^{110}\) Within these so-called civilized countries, Russell was especially concerned with ameliorating the lives of a group he termed the “brain workers.”\(^{111}\) Bertrand Russell’s wife, Dora Russell, also addressed the predicament of the ‘civilized’ body. She suggested the need

\(^{111}\) Ibid., 69.
to rethink the relegation of emotions to the margins of civilization and acknowledge that
“civilizing does not proceed by imposing moral prohibitions on coarse and raw instinct, but
by rendering the instinctive life more supple and varied in its expression through a great
variety of habits learnt by intelligence.” According to Dora Russell, the existing conservative
sexual morality had been an effect of patriarchy which entrenched the gendered order of
valuing reason/paid labour/man over emotion/maternal labour/woman.112 Like Goldman, the
Russells’ hopes for a redefined gender order to facilitate the production of love were firmly
situated within a white middle class existence.

What sex reformers casted as a vulnerable white physiology in need of sexual
invigoration constituted a particular affective compass by which they navigated the
metropolis. This affective compass both oriented a white middle class body and mapped
urban terrain as a world that can be described as a white emotive imaginary where both
spaces and populations were differentiated in relationship to white bodily experience.

Historians have devoted attention to how space is affectively experienced, particularly in the
feeling of home and belonging which sheds light on questions of migration, citizenship, and
policing the borders of the ‘nation.’113 A vast historical literature on the history and politics
of space has explored themes of voyeurism, the organization and policing of space, the
display of empire within the city, and the mutual shaping of space and subjectivity which
invoke gender, race, and class hierarchies.114 Historian Laura Wexler has drawn important

112 Russell, The Right To Be Happy, 275.
113 See for example, Wendy Webster, Imagining Home: gender, ‘race,’ and national identity, 1945-1964
(London: UCL press, 1998). Also, see the work of Inderpal Grewal, a professor of English who works on the
history of empire. Inderpal Grewal, Home and Harem: nation, gender, empire, and the cultures of travel
114 The earlier historiography has focused on the development of city planning in response to coping with the
growth of the metropolis. See for example, Anthony Sutcliffe, ed. Metropolis, 1890-1940 (London: Mansell
attention to how white middle class bodies intimately experienced empire, particularly in the case of Kate Chopin’s obsessive return to the St. Louis Fair in 1904. Laura Wexler points to Chopin’s seeming discomfort as a kind of haunting that manifested in the feeling of a dissonance between the celebration of progress and the violence such pleasure in the fair seemingly masked. Wexler’s account importantly points to how the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period of American imperialism shaped both space and bodily feeling. I chart here another story of how imperialism in this period shaped relations between bodies and space. I suggest that early twentieth century sex reform campaigns were critical to showing the historical specific shaping of feeling given their encouragement to pursue encounters that would stimulate sexual energies and fortify white middle class leadership of civilization.

In early twentieth century Greenwich Village, middle class bohemians pursued ‘primitive’ encounters which often led them to Harlem in a kind of metropolitan colonial venture. Bohemians went to Harlem with the expectation of stepping backward in time to a

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116 This theme of the effacement of violence through the display of intimacy and domesticity is more extensively dealt with in Wexler’s Tender Violence. See Laura Wexler, Tender Violence: domestic visions in the age of U.S. imperialism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

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place of primal fantasies characterized by unrestrained sexual passions, irresponsibility, ‘jungle music,’ and high energies. While both Seth Koven and Anne McClintock have shown Victorian social reformers’ ambivalent revulsion and eroticization of the ‘lower’ classes, the early twentieth century climate of sex reform turned white middle class occupation of slums into an experience of voyeuristic pleasure, sexual invigoration, and racial obligation. Tim Gilfoyle has noted the period from 1820 to 1920 as one of the consolidation of sex as a publicly consumed commodity that transformed the organization and inhabitation of New York City’s spaces. Sex reformers’ engagement in Harlem not only shows this integration of public and private space in a capitalist economy but it also shows sexual energies as both white capital and racialized commodities during the rise of an economic turn toward mass consumption. In other words, white slumming and sex reform campaigns to cultivate sexual energies contributed to designating Harlem as a racialized zone of intensity that catered to a kind of consumerism of sexual energies.

A Greenwich Village novelist, Carl Van Vechten, who was part of the circle of sex reformers, wrote about the practice of slumming in his work, Nigger Heaven. Van Vechten was a Jewish immigrant who moved in the circles of both white middle class reformers and Harlem Renaissance writers. Van Vechten was a close friend of wealthy salonniere Mabel Dodge, Neith Boyce, and Harlem Renaissance writer, James Weldon Johnson. In the 1920s, Van Vechten increasingly turned to Harlem as the ideal space for reconnecting with primal energies. He, in fact, debated this very issue with Mabel Dodge who insisted that Taos New

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Mexico and encounters with the Pueblo Indians better satisfied white middle class desires for the primitive. Van Vechten described “Nigger Heaven” in terms of the highly sexualized atmosphere of the cabaret where “Couples were dancing in such close proximity that their bodies melted together as they swayed and rocked to the tormented howling of the brass, the barbaric beating of the drum.”

Van Vechten’s work situated the cabaret in an evolutionary tale of the ‘savage’ tribe’s close relation to the animal, describing the unrestrained impulses of the drummer who “shook his head like a wild animal.” Van Vechten’s work depicted the sexualization and exoticization of the space of Harlem in the bohemian imagination.

Shane Vogel explains the efforts of black entertainers to negotiate the hegemonic construction of the cabaret whereby they catered to white middle class imaginings of black authenticity which incorporated plantation and ‘jungle’ scenes in ways that eroticized histories of slavery and colonialism. While Van Vechten’s Nigger Heaven is an example of what Marianna Torgovnick has called the “Western lust for things primitive,” historian Davarian Baldwin has drawn important attention to the fashioning of a black modernity and subjectivity through these same institutions of leisure and consumption in what he has called the “marketplace of intellectual life.” Baldwin significantly points to contested meanings within the black community over ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture in a politics of racial uplift that was mindful of the racial politics of white primitivism.

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120 Ibid., 19.
Van Vechten’s work exemplifies the racialization of emotions, particularly as love was considerably out of place in the cabaret. Although Van Vechten’s protagonist, Mary Love, is an upwardly mobile mulatto character, her discomfort in cabarets is something she reflects on as a likely part of her white racial inheritance. It seems to be more than a coincidence that Mary’s last name is Love and she feels her repulsion and seemingly frigid disposition toward the promiscuity of the cabaret as a betrayal of her race. Mary’s response to the cabaret signified her upward mobility in terms of an emulation of the affective disposition of white middle class womanhood and a seeming rejection of the higher energy and promiscuity that marked black womanhood in the white emotive imaginary. In one particular instance, Mary observes the scene of the cabaret, thinking to herself:

Savages! Savages at heart! And she had lost or forfeited her birthright, this primitive birthright which was so valuable and important an asset, a birthright that all the civilized races were struggling to get back to – this fact explained the art of a Picasso or a Stravinsky. To be sure, she too, felt this African beat – it completely aroused her emotionally – but she was conscious of feeling it. This love of drums, of exciting rhythms, this naïve delight in glowing color – the color that exists only in cloudless, tropical climates – this warm sexual emotion, all these were hers only through mental understanding.  

Mary’s dilemma of feeling an affective dissonance in the space of the cabaret illustrates a specific bodily experience of being caught between the politics of racial uplift by adhering to white middle class sexual norms and an early twentieth century articulation of black authenticity. This was also a divisive intra-racial issue as African Americans debated proper responses to primitivism and the politics of racial uplift which led W.E.B. DuBois to comment that after reading Caribbean writer, Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem*, he felt like taking a bath. This dilemma indicates the legacies of racial and colonial violence on

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123 Ibid., 89.
shaping feeling which profoundly structured black men and women’s experience of (dis)orientation, dislocation, and ambivalence within a white emotive imaginary that exalted sexual pleasure and primitivism. For black men, primitivism was problematic in light of the violence of lynching and stereotypes of the black male rapist.\textsuperscript{125} For black women, embracing sexual freedom was problematic in light of the legacy of sexual exploitation by white men and stereotypes of black female hypersexuality which were used to sanction the rape of black women.\textsuperscript{126} In other words, a white middle class affective compass directed toward Harlem spaces as zones for reviving primal energies did not provide the same clear directions or navigation of space for African American bodies. Feeling, therefore, provided an index of power that structured and densely interpreted proximities, distance, and contact in Harlem spaces. Furthermore, through the ways bodies inhabited space, an affective character was attributed to the space itself in how it offered a zone for the kind and degree of affective exchange.

Van Vechten’s fictional depiction of the Harlem scene blurred lines between fiction and reality as it drew upon a primal fantasy that inspired many sex reformers to seek out the primitive in Harlem clubs. Upon visiting the United States, British intellectual and sex reformer, Bertrand Russell, was taken to Harlem’s Ebony Club by Greenwich Village


\textsuperscript{126} On black women’s complex negotiation of slavery’s legacy of sexual exploitation with early twentieth century campaigns for birth control and sexual freedom, see Jessie M. Rodrique, “The Black Community and the Birth Control Movement,” in \textit{Passion and Power}, eds. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, 138-154. Also see Simmons, \textit{Making Marriage Modern}. 

Higginbotham discusses as a politics of respectability, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, \textit{Righteous Discontent: the women’s movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). Also, see Vogel, \textit{The Scene of Harlem Cabaret}. 
writers, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and Genevieve Taggard.\textsuperscript{127} This suggests that ventures into Harlem were a common practice among sex reformers seeking to temporarily escape from ‘civilized’ existence into a primal past. For his part, Bertrand Russell claimed to be horrified by “negro ladies got up like Americans” and believed to feel “jungle poison invading our souls.”\textsuperscript{128} Russell was offended by the interracial sexual space of the Ebony Club and confessed that he was unable to flirt and dance in this atmosphere. It is important to note here the affective dimension of these encounters. Russell laid claim to the very whiteness of his body and its evolutionary position by claiming to sense “jungle poison” infiltrating his very being. The white body’s sensitivity marked the permeability of its boundaries which made it open to reviving sexual energies through engagements with allegedly ‘primitive’ others.

Sex reformers assigned ‘primitive’ bodies a particular affective composition, marked by spontaneity, high intensities, irresponsible and reckless abandon, and an overall absence of depth of consciousness. Journalist Hutchins Hapgood who moved within the Van Vechten, Dreiser, and Anderson circles, commented on the “joyous negro” whose songs and poetry were “not sophisticated or civilized, but full of human juiciness, of strange, powerful fancy and sensuous meanings.”\textsuperscript{129} It is important to note here that Hapgood celebrated this image of the “joyous Negro” during the Jim Crow era. At a time when the racial segregation of public spaces was rigorously enforced, including some cabarets which employed black entertainers but barred black customers, this figure of the “joyous negro” effaced black

\textsuperscript{127} Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 11 October 1927. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Hutchins Hapgood, “The Joyous Negro,” 31 October 1913. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 26, File 736.
historical experiences of suffering, violence, and inequalities. Like Van Vechten’s fictional character Mary Love, Hapgood focused on a racialized body’s capability to feel intensely, contrasting “our Puritan temperament [which] is just the opposite of that of the Negro.”¹³⁰ Hapgood pointed out that “the joyous negro” could be useful to civilization. Sex reformers, like Hapgood, who celebrated primal black sexuality continued to draw upon stereotypes of hypersexuality while refusing to confront how those same stereotypes contributed to the sexual violence endured by black men and women. In this case, primitivism marked a specific late nineteenth and early twentieth century moment which, insofar as it registered ambivalent responses among black men and women, demonstrates a colonial affective politics at the heart of the sex reform movement. White sex reformers generally promoted primitivism in order to rejuvenate their ‘civilized’ bodies, paradoxically urging the importance of primal energies to secure white middle class dominance.

In navigating the metropolis, white middle class sex reformers also turned to New York City’s “little colonies” of immigrant communities in search of opportunities for affectively remaking their bodies. Linda Gordon’s view of “internal colonialism” helps to consider New York City as a condensed imperial space where white sex reformers’ went in search of affective conquests.¹³¹ White sex reformers’ primal fantasies encompassed a number of immigrant populations, including Southern Italian immigrants who not considered ‘white’ in this period.¹³² Southern Italian immigrants came to be a visible presence in New York City when nativism, xenophobia, and concerns over Anglo-Saxon racial stock were

¹³⁰ Ibid.
rife. As historian Matthew Frye Jacobson has shown, whiteness was a malleable and mutable category which, in the early twentieth century, came to include the Irish while excluding Southern and Eastern Europeans.\textsuperscript{133} In New York City, sex reformers looked to the Italian quarter of the Bowery District of New York City as another destination for affective encounters. Hutchins Hapgood often reported on Little Italy, fascinated by “colonial Italians of distinction.”\textsuperscript{134} Hapgood promised his readers that in the Italian quarter, they would enter a different world where they would find “something primitive, passionate, and yet natural.”\textsuperscript{135} This account resembles the travel narratives of both British and American adventurers who reported on the ‘savagery,’ and promiscuity of indigenous inhabitants. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon body of stifled, restrained, inexpressive feeling, Hapgood affectively racialized the Italian body in terms of its unbridled passions. He described Italians as “all passionate – or nearly all – and all irresponsible.”\textsuperscript{136} As Jacobson has contended, the fitness for self-governance was a criterion for defining whiteness in the early twentieth century. By casting the Italian as both irresponsible and uncontrollably passionate, Hapgood pointed to both racial and colonial status through an affective index. Hutchins’s comment was one that expressed a colonial relation which assumed that a passionate nature was the benefit of not having to carry the Anglo-Saxon burden of civilization. While sex reformers were drawn to what they imagined as bodies that carried higher sexual energies, they simultaneously distanced themselves from those bodies by

\textsuperscript{133} Jacobson, \textit{Whiteness of A Different Color}.
\textsuperscript{134} Hutchins Hapgood, “The Drama of the Italians,” Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 28, File 847.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Hutchins Hapgood, “The Italians,” Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 28, File 863.
claiming these higher energies as signs of the idleness, backwardness, ignorance, and promiscuity of a lower race.

The differences between the cult of primitivism in Britain and the United States can be explained through their specific colonial histories which are integrally linked to the making of national identity. The distinctive American experience of high immigration in the early twentieth century contributed to a heightened sense of racialized proximities which Greenwich Villagers affectively exploited. Similarly, as a number of scholars have pointed out the figure of the Indian was central to defining the American nation as a taming of the frontier and the triumph of white masculinity.\textsuperscript{137} What these scholars have shown to be the romanticized representations of Indians in American frontier mythology has important implications for the history of white Anglo-Saxon sexual intimacies. While historian Philip Deloria has discussed the instabilities and contradictions inherent in fashioning an American national identity through the Indian as distinctively connected to the American landscape, traditions, and national memory, I want to highlight the importance of the Indian in politicized and racialized narratives of love and intimacy, specifically in regard to the early twentieth century sex reform movement.\textsuperscript{138} Sex reformers imagined the Red Indian as a fierce, savage, natural being belonging to a primal past which could reflect a profoundly instinctive life untainted by the pressures of civilization. White love insofar as it depended upon sexual excitement also depended on the figure of the Red Indian. Through the Red Indian, Neith Boyce expressed her own feelings of sexual intensity. She wrote of “the


fierceness and wildness which something perverse in me wanted – perhaps the red Indian!”

This mention of perversity suggested that the affective composition of wildness and fierceness associated with the ‘Red Indian’ distorted the calm, self-governing, ‘civilized’ body of the Anglo-Saxon.

A fascination with the Pueblo Indians led Greenwich Village artist, Maurice Sterne, to head to New Mexico. Sterne’s interest in the Pueblo reflected how he was shaped by his circle of sex reformers and their fascination with the emotionality of what were deemed ‘primal’ bodies from an earlier stage of evolution. This difference in affective composition was marked by a lack of consciousness. Through the figures of the Indian and the Orient, Sterne affirmed a particular Western experience of the body. To Sterne, “the people of the East and the Indians out here are not self-conscious.” He confessed that “It makes me laugh when I see an Indian self-conscious.”

This view of a self-conscious Indian as performing or staging an authentic Western bodily experience was one indication how sex reformers’ sense of recovering a lost primal past obscured their own performances and staging of love. At the time, Maurice Sterne wrote several letters to then wife, Mabel Dodge, who eventually divorced Sterne to marry the Pueblo, Tony Luhan. Dodge’s marriage to Tony offered a more extreme act of interest in primitivism than most Greenwich Villagers were willing to take. In later years, Dodge lamented this step but nonetheless emphasized how the figure of the Red Indian marked the early twentieth century racial characterization of certain bodies as more affectively marked by higher sexual energies and more instinctive

139 Neith Boyce to Mabel Dodge, 1915. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 3, File 90.
140 Maurice Sterne to Mabel Dodge, 22 November 1917. Mabel Dodge Luhan Collection, Beinecke Library, Box 33, File 947.
141 Ibid.
natures. The extent to which the figure of the Indian functioned in the primal fantasies of sex reformers can be observed in how many sex reformers travelled to visit Dodge.\textsuperscript{142} Naomi Mitchison, a British sex reformer had made this journey.\textsuperscript{143} British novelist, D.H. Lawrence, whose \textit{Lady Chatterley’s Lover} generated considerable excitement among sex reformers, visited Dodge at Taos and also retreated to a Texan ranch in the United States in efforts to escape ‘civilization’ and cultivate the ‘primitive.’ Similarly, Neith Boyce and her children also traveled to visit Dodge in the hopes of restoring their vital energies.\textsuperscript{144} Writing an autobiographical account of her life in 1933, Dodge wrote of what she now considered a shameful racial transgression, claiming “I suffered, myself, in secret, + sometimes burned at white heat with a flush that flooded my whole body when I had a momentary realization of what I had done. When I identified myself in imagination with my race + knew that I had broken its barrier + left it + crossed to the other side to stand with the dark men, their river of blood dividing me forever from my own kind.”\textsuperscript{145}

Within a white emotive imaginary, the Red Indian’s wildness was inextricably tied to the wild, untamed frontier. The interweaving of bodies and space remapped territories and reconfigured bodies along the lines of an affective cartography informed by a presumed white physiology and colonial politics. Just as the exaltation of a black primal sexuality

\textsuperscript{142} Elizabeth Hutchinson’s recent work on \textit{The Indian Craze} has pointed out the early twentieth century American cultural fascination with the ‘primitive’ through the practice of collecting Native American art which was manifested in home décor as the space known as the ‘Indian corner.’ While Hutchinson discusses the collection Native American objects such as Navajo rugs, baskets, and bead work, she stresses the participation of Native American artists in projects of modernity whereby the art objects represent an intercultural exchange. Hutchinson makes the important claim that to ignore Native American engagement with modernity is to reinforce the assumption of primitivism. See Elizabeth Hutchinson, \textit{The Indian Craze: primitivism, modernism, and transculturation in American art, 1890-1915} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

\textsuperscript{143} Naomi Mitchison to Mabel Dodge, 21 November 1935. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 26, File 716.

\textsuperscript{144} Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 1929. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 20, File 513.

effaced racial violence, the celebration of the Indian’s wildness effaced how this designation of wildness had served to justify policies of Indian Removal, the seizure of Indian lands as uncultivated, ‘wasted’ or empty space, and the enforcement of the Dawes Plan requiring Indians to become skilled farmers and make profitable use of their land. Although some Greenwich Village sex reformers such as Mabel Dodge Luhan and John Collier campaigned to preserve Indian lands and culture, their activism was based on a presumption of the Indian as fixed in time and located along a Darwinian trajectory. The cultural assumption of the Indian as a dying race also underpinned a sense of white evolutionary superiority in terms of a racial character of resilience and adaptability. In the early twentieth century, the cult of primitivism marked a specific transformation in the discourse of wilderness mediated through the sense of a crisis in the devitalization of white middle class sexual energies. In light of the sex reform movement, the frontier also became an affective space for cultivating sex instincts and ancestral vitality.

While British sex reformers certainly shared the American sex reformers’ enthusiasm for a return to nature, they were less likely to risk the bodily boundaries of whiteness. Primitivism among British sex reformers resonated with American sex reformers in the common practice of seeking country retreats or trips to farms to restore the nervous exhaustion caused by city life. As historian Julian Carter has pointed out the claim to nervousness was a configuration of “whiteness as weakness” that marked the Anglo-Saxon

146 On how designating territories as ‘waste spaces’ underpinned American imperialism, see Jacobson, Barbarian Virtues, 6, 109-121, 127-128.
147 Flannery Burke, From Greenwich Village to Taos: Primitivism and Place at Mabel Dodge Luhan’s (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 49-56.
body as particularly sensitive to modern urban conditions.\textsuperscript{148} However, in comparison with American sex reformers’ attitudes toward New York City, British sex reformers seem to have been less likely to pursue encounters with ‘primitive’ bodies as ways for reconnecting with their primitive selves. Yet British sex reformers, while less experiential in their approach to primitivism, still endowed particular kinds of bodies with particular racialized affective natures which elided bodies, class, and colonial relations of power. Bertrand Russell had, in fact, suggested that love was commoner in some societies compared to others, citing the rarity of love in China as a specific result of its valorization of reason over strong emotions.\textsuperscript{149} Russell’s suggestion of a lack of love in China resonated with the claims of other sex reformers that the high birthrate in China was tied to the unrestrained reproduction of unloved children. Kenneth Austin’s letter to Marie Stopes, eugenicist and leader of the British birth control movement, also shows how the British also affectively racialized populations. This birthrate was not only tied to assumptions of the sexual promiscuity of certain races but also a racialized affective character. In December of 1918, Kenneth Austin wrote to Marie Stopes asking whether she had observed anything particularly distinctive of the social and sex relationships in Japan.\textsuperscript{150} Austin maintained that “the Japanese and races of young souls all over the world are swayed by strong waves of emotion. We are the same collectively but have it under greater control.”\textsuperscript{151} Austin’s reference to ‘young souls’ invoked maturity which entangled affective racial character, capacities for self-governance, 

\textsuperscript{149} Russell, \textit{Marriage and Morals}, 119.
\textsuperscript{150} Kenneth Austin to Marie Stopes, 12 December 1918. Marie Stopes Papers, British Library, London, Item 58482.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
and imperial power. In the early twentieth century, the practice of primitivism was shaped by the longer history of British imperialism and an expanding American empire which, from 1898-1899, incorporated Hawaii, Cuba, and the Philippines. What historian of American empire, Amy Kaplan, has discussed as the “anarchies of empire” where shifting definitions of domestic and foreign threw into question the borders between nation and empire can be applied to the intimate bodily experience of primitivism. What white sex reformers included and expelled in the efforts to rejuvenate sexual energies while securing their ‘civilized’ status also points to the body itself as a contested frontier, intimately connected to the mapping of political and geographic space.

III. Sexual Selection: Re-configuring Desire through an Evolutionary/Reproductive Imperative

Both the lessons from Darwin’s story of bird courtships and the affective compass of white middle class bodies came together at the site of white middle class mate selection and the biological power of motherhood. Throughout the nineteenth century, Victorian middle class women engaged in a civilizing role to domesticate the ‘wild’ spaces of empire as much as to provide a refuge from the jungle of competitive industrial capitalism. As historians have noted, white middle class women assumed a civilizing mission in domesticating the empire. However, this civilizing role assumed a new meaning in the context of the late


153 Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds. *Domesticating the Empire* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998); Wexler, *Tender Violence*; Mary Procida *Married to the Empire: Gender, Politics, and*
nineteenth and early twentieth century rise of eugenics and sex reform. At this time, white middle class physicians, scientists, sociologists, social reformers, politicians, journalists, and novelists imbued the maternal body’s reproductive capacities with the national and imperial significance of shaping a future race by harnessing their power to produce children for the nation. This heightened significance of reproduction differentially positioned women in racial and class hierarchies according to the desirability of their children to the State. In both Britain and the United States, sex reformers held white middle class healthy mothers as exemplars of ‘voluntary’ mothers who carefully managed their fertility, made wise choices about mate selection, and had sufficient financial resources. In this turn toward the maternal body’s civilizing role as the symbol of racial, national, and imperial strength, the emotions surrounding sex and reproduction were also connected with biological capacities tied to ancestral inheritance. Sex reformers elided the ‘rational’ choice of mate selection and motherhood with ‘sex-love’ and the births of ‘loved’ children which took for granted the conditions of a white middle class home. In doing so, they cast the white middle class mother into a Darwinian romance narrative whereby her motherhood was sanctioned, civilized, and made sacred in its connections to perpetuating Anglo-Saxon racial stock. This story of the eugenic mother began with an act of sex inextricably bound to love which underwrote the ‘civilized’ status and racial purity of mother, father, and child.

Havelock Ellis’s marriage to Edith Lees exemplifies the entanglement of sex reform and eugenics in the decisions about their intimate lives. Prior to their marriage, Havelock

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and Edith discussed their views on marriage which included the importance of the
independence of both husband and wife, legal union as only relevant where it consecrated
spiritual union, and the mutual economic contributions of husbands and wives. In practice,
the Ellis marriage operated along the lines of other sex reform marriage experiments which
came to include openness, frankness, honesty and acceptance of extramarital love affairs.
However, in Havelock and Edith’s case, Edith’s extramarital affairs occurred in the context
of same-sex relationships. Havelock considered that he was perhaps being unfair in indulging
in heterosexual affairs yet reasoned that:

> it was also true that the very qualities in her nature which made her largely homosexual were qualities
which, fortifying as they might be to our comradeship, were inimical to the purely feminine qualities of
sweetness and repose which a man seeks in a woman, and therefore opposed in our case to a strict
conjugal fidelity.\(^{155}\)

Like other non-monogamous sex reformers, however, Havelock suggested that he and
Edith’s struggles over their affairs allowed for “a larger and deeper conception of love.”\(^{156}\)

In the early 1890s, when Havelock and Edith were discussing marriage, they consulted the
London Harley Street physician, Dr. Birch, on the advisability of motherhood for Edith
whom he had previously treated for a nervous breakdown.\(^{157}\) Birch discouraged Edith from
having children, suggesting that this would exacerbate Edith’s own precarious mental health
and permanently land her in an asylum.\(^{158}\) As historians have shown, there is a long history
of the association of women’s reproductive bodies with precarious mental health but, what is
particularly distinctive of the early twentieth century, is the densely knotted associations of

\(^{156}\) Ibid.
\(^{157}\) Ibid., 230.
\(^{158}\) Ibid., 231.
eugenics, national and imperial health, and parental responsibility. Havelock who had always experienced a nervous and highly sensitive condition claimed that Edith had this nervous temperament to a much greater extent, suffering from moods or depression, and overstimulated energy. In his autobiography, Ellis attentively documents his English ancestry which he proudly emphasizes in discussing the great responsibility of parenthood, claiming that “my heredity was as nearly as possible perfect, and my health – with due allowance for an intellectual worker’s nervous hyperaesthesia would pass all ordinary tests.” While Ellis indicated that Edith later regretted the decision to follow Dr. Birch’s advice, Ellis suggests that this was likely the best decision given that “even if she were physically apt for maternity, and in most respects she certainly was, her inherited nervous instability would have involved serious risks to herself, and possibly still more on the child.” While Ellis also cited other reasons for not entering into parenthood including his insufficient economic position, his lack of any “keen anxiety for parentage” and, at the time Edith’s lack of any “overpowering desire for a child”, he ultimately highlighted the eugenic reasons for justifying their decision not to enter into parenthood.

In the early twentieth century, eugenicists and birth controllers not only shared a mutual investment in scientifically controlling reproduction, they also drew considerable attention to sexual desires, sexual pleasure, and the spiritualization of sex where love was

160 Ibid., 230.
161 Ibid., 231.
162 Ibid., 230.
present. While Darwin’s theory of natural selection had pointed to an unsettling arbitrariness as to what a species could do to plan for its survival, sex reformers interpreted sexual selection as a way to manipulate romantic conditions, choices, and desires that pre-empted mating and therefore, influenced the quality of offspring. For the most part, sex reformers addressed these issues in the context of literature intended for a middle class audience which not only encouraged white middle class sex and reproduction but situated love as an evolutionary privilege of these bodies. Historian Julian Carter has, in fact, argued that early twentieth century marital advice was a power-evasive and race-evasive discourse that normalized *heterosexual whiteness*.163 According to Carter, early twentieth century marital advice manuals implicitly located the possibilities for love in white middle class heterosexual relations on the basis of the greater sensitivity of white middle class bodies.164 However, I would add that sex reformers’ advice on love did not necessarily imply conventional marriage given that a number of them advocated non-monogamy or ‘varietist’ marriage.165 For example, Swedish sex reformer, Ellen Key, argued that love was more closely tied to the conditions of health and reproductive bodies than it was to the institution of marriage. Although Key was an activist in the feminist and birth control movement in Sweden, she had much greater popularity outside of Sweden, including Britain and the United States where her works were advertised and circulated. In 1911, Key published *Love and Marriage* which was one of her more popular works among sex reformers. This work shows how Darwinism

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164 Ibid., 75-117.
165 Julian Carter’s discussion on the whiteness of love is discussed in terms of marital love. See for example, the beginning of her chapter on “The Marriage Crisis” where she refers to “racial valences of the discourses of modern marriage” and at the beginning of the chapter on “Birds, Bees, and the Future of the Race,” where she mentions “marital heterosexuality.” See Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness*, 77, 119.
profoundly influenced sex reformers conceptions of love. Key, in fact, devoted an entire chapter to what she called, “love’s selections.” As Key framed love as a spiritual property of sex, she also used love as a critical measure of the higher evolutionary position of those bodies which experienced it.

Key’s view of love as a product of evolution hierarchically differentiated bodies along the lines of both race and class in what can be seen as an assessment of their affective potential. What Key called “peasant’s love”, was “lower in the scale of happiness than that of the cultivated person, who finds in love all the refined delights of the senses.” Key not only identified love as a creative force tied to “racial destiny” but used love to re-map colonial relations of power. According to Key, “Among those nations with which sexual connections begin early, morals are, as a rule, loose, and where morals are loose, the emotion of love has small importance.” This is one example of how a sex reform politics of love remapped the world according to an affective cartography where territories, bodies, and imperial power were mutual extensions of each other. Key suggested that some territories could be marked by high sexual intensity, loose morals, and promiscuous sex while others could be defined as landmarks of love where love, ‘civilization,’ and sacred sex flourished. These landmarks of love were also defined through the affective potential of their ‘civilized’ inhabitants who “raised instinct into passion.” Key elevated this into a divine quality of ‘civilized’ bodies which rearticulated former imperial projects of Christianization through a biological frame of love, sex, and reproduction. Like a number of early twentieth century

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167 Ibid., 112.
168 Ibid., 46.
eugenicists and ministers, Key framed love as a religion grounded in biology whereby, “Love – as we have already shown – has now become a great spiritual power, a form of genius comparable with any other creative force in the domain of culture, and its production in that region is just as important as in the so-called natural field.” By seeking to bring desire into line with the evolutionary imperative of producing a fitter species, sex reformers naturalized desire while using eugenics as a mechanism of selection and a tool for navigating the romantic terrain of a white emotive imaginary.

Sex reformers were largely interested in shaping a body whose desires were tightly bound to evolutionary goals. They tended to advocate managing these desires toward an imagined eugenic future in the interest of securing white civilization. Charles B. Davenport, head of the Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor and an internationally renowned figure in the eugenics movement, suggested that love was an important factor in eugenic projects. On November 7, 1912, Davenport delivered a lecture on “Family and the Nation” which devoted considerable attention to the eugenic implications of intimate relations.

Davenport told his audience that:

> Eugenical matings are sometimes said to neglect the element of love - but this is not necessary. For in most persons who have an appropriate equipment of inhibitions the process of falling in love is a gradual one. The normal youth is always under self restraint - at home, at school, at college. Some day he lets down the bars a little and lest acquaintance ripen into friendship and sees that friendship may ripen into love. Now in the early stages of the process is the time to consider whether the possible union would be desirable from the stand point of eugenics; ie. in relation to children. And if it appears, from such knowledge as can be got that the mating would probably result in socially inadequate children then do not let friendship ripen into love but turn attention elsewhere.

Davenport considered love as an important force that could be bound to eugenic aims. What Davenport refers to as “persons who have an appropriate equipment of inhibitions” further

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169 Ibid.
highlights how sex reformers construed love in terms of what I have called affective potential. Davenport circumscribed love’s possibilities in terms of the direction of affection toward eugenically desirable bodies at every stage of the courtship process. His emphasis on the self-surveillance of desires suggests that desire was necessarily tied to the development of love in the context of heterosexual white racial reproduction.

Davenport’s concerns about love and eugenics circulated in a transatlantic network of sex reform. British sex reformers like Havelock Ellis and Helena Wright also devoted important attention to love. As early as November of 1877, Havelock Ellis wrote in his diary that “Love is the result of the gravitating instinct imparted in us by Nature for a specific purpose; ie. the propagation of the species.”\(^\text{171}\) Although this might suggest a more inclusive view of the propagation of all human beings, sex reformers like Ellis were deeply concerned with the propagation of specific kinds of bodies, namely white middle class individuals whom they considered to have been adversely affected by the demands of civilization. British sex reformer and physician, Helena Wright agreed with Ellis. In her 1931 Matlock lecture, Wright drew the stark contrast between the birth control couple and the non-birth control couple by pointing to sex as a “vehicle of affection”.\(^\text{172}\) Wright located love within the realm of white middle class couples. From the late nineteenth into the early twentieth century, the white middle class modern couple appeared as the biological heroes in sex reform literature. This depended on contrasting this idealized white middle class couple with working class, unfit, immigrant, and sickly couples who purportedly committed the biological and national sins of irresponsible reproduction.

\(^\text{171}\) Havelock Ellis, Diary, 9 November 1877. Havelock Ellis Papers, British Library, London, Item 70525.
\(^\text{172}\) Helena Wright, untitled (lecture, Matlock, 22 April 1931), Helena Wright Papers, Wellcome Library, London, Item B13.
The site of courtship offers a dense transfer point of power which makes visible the ways in which a eugenic family narrative informed sex reformers’ accounts of love. Sex reformers suggested that civilization had perverted the natural tendencies of human evolution insofar as a species essentially sought its own self-preservation and continuance in reproducing a fitter race. This problem was articulated among sex reformers as the worrisome issue of a differential birthrate. Anxiety over the births of fewer children among white professional and upper class couples in comparison with lower or ‘unfit’ couples pervaded the sex reform literature. Sex reformers’ concern over the differential rate of reproduction rearticulated Thomas Malthus’s original prophecy of 1798 regarding the likelihood that population would one day outstrip world resources. Instead of considering this matter as a problem of the inequitable distribution of resources, sex reformers made the further leap towards considering which populations ought to monopolize resources and which lives were most valuable on a global scale. Charles V. Drysdale, a consulting physician at the London Metropolitan Hospital, wrote in 1904 of a declining birthrate in English-speaking countries. The Drysdale family was famous for founding and leading the Malthusian movement for birth control and the regulation of population. By pointing out the falling birthrate of English-speaking countries, Drysdale and others insisted on the importance of cooperative networks grounded in the shared bonds of endangered whiteness. As we saw earlier in Ellis’s BCR article on “The World’s Racial Problem,” he shared this sense of

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imperiled whiteness and its implications for British and American cooperation. In Helena Wright’s 1934 Matlock lecture, she referred to the policy of marriage health certificates in Germany, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the United States. Such a listing of nations invoked a kinship of white nations surrounding a Nordic and Anglo-Saxon racial bond which looked to police both desires and reproduction by withholding the State stamp of marital legitimacy. At the level of bodily racial hygiene, desires, and reproduction, state policies of marriage health inextricably intertwined the mapping of international alliances with bodies through a white emotive imaginary.

From the mid-1870s, white middle class men and women anxiously looked to a declining white middle class birthrate which registered Malthusian fears of a white population being overwhelmed by a lower class, nonwhite population. This context shaped sex reformers discursive construction and practice of love as a tool inseparable from a eugenic and reproductive agenda which ultimately normalized the connection between love and heterosexual sex. As such, white middle class romances merged both Malthusianism and Darwinism as white middle class love was tied to redressing the problem of the birthrate, ensuring racial survival, and the continuance of white ‘civilization.’ In a letter written to Marie Stopes in January of 1922, British eugenicist James Barr insisted that “until we get a selective birthrate there can be no general elevation of the human race. The nation which most effectually adopts eugenic ideals is bound to rule the world.” Barr went on to suggest the importance of liberating “the sexual function” from repression yet circumscribed the cultivation of sex instincts within the framework of heterosexual sex leading to

reproduction. Barr claimed “We may not at once be able to get rid of homosexuals but an enlightened nation will have no use for them, and they will gradually disappear from the face of the earth which their shadow now darkens.” Nancy Ordover’s work on *American eugenics* has influentially argued for recognizing eugenics as not only a science about racial reproduction but one that also tied homosexuality to dysgenic sexual practices. Barr’s reference to the eventual disappearance of “the homosexual” also resonates with early twentieth century discourses on the vanishing Indian. By anticipating “the homosexual’s” eventual extinction, Barr also implied the unfitness of this particular sexual type that would be weeded out by the process of natural selection. Sex reformers’ anxieties over the white birthrate brought to the fore questions of national boundaries, citizenship, and kinship given that bodies classified as white and nonwhite desired, reproduced, formed families, and moved in the circuits of empire. These issues encouraged the transnational connections between sex reformers which looked to a global cooperation to bind white middle class men and women across nations through the ties of biology. In doing so, American and British reformers developed particularly close relations on the basis of a shared history, racial inheritance, and insistence on cultivating sex instincts for the purpose of reproduction.

Through the prism of Darwinian sexual selection, sex reformers sought to (re)productively channel the revitalized instinctive energies of white middle class bodies. While sex reformers drew upon what Darwin’s work had taught about a kinship between humans and animals, they applied these lessons differently to the practice of primitivism.

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177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
compared to eugenic reproduction. In the case of primitivism, sex reformers emphasized the permeability of human/animal bodies to cultivate sex instincts whereas in the case of reproduction sex reformers suggested that human reproduction could be informed by the controlled breeding of livestock to improve quality. In the 1924 issue of the *Birth Control Review*, L.J. Cole published a conference paper entitled “Animal Aristocracy and Human Democracy.” Cole was a professor of genetics at the University of Wisconsin and chief of the Animal Husbandry Division at the American Department of Agriculture. In his paper, Cole maintained that the tactics of animal breeding could be productively employed in human reproduction without compromising the spiritual dimension of human sexuality.\(^{181}\) Cole argued that mate selection in both animal and human reproduction should tend toward the perpetuation of an improved stock.\(^{182}\) In doing so, Cole drew upon the practice of breeding purebreds in animals and suggested the same could be applied to human beings by breeding like with like. Here the Darwinian narrative of an animal past served eugenicists’ projects whereby animal reproduction could be used as a test site for the larger project of human eugenic reproduction.

As Cole argued for a consistency between the spiritual dimension of human sexuality and breeding for quality, he also firmly tied love to the responsible reproduction of white middle class couples. This was particularly manifested in the debates over marriage health certificates whereby a number of eugenicists and physicians insisted on marriage between eugenic mates. Although the United States was much more aggressive in implementing marriage health legislation, British sex reformers also expressed the benefits of restricting

\(^{182}\) Ibid.
marriage to eugenic mates. At one meeting of the Galton Society on December of 1909, there was some discussion of arranging a series of lectures on the topic of “Marriage and Eugenics”. Some British sex reformers such as Marie Stopes objected to marriage health certificates. Stopes, in particular, worried about too closely aligning the institution of marriage with reproduction and, instead, advocated teaching racial responsibility in schools rather than entrenching it in legislation. In fact, Stopes advocated sterilization even as she rejected the policy of marriage health certificates as “tyrannously oppressing people who are not marrying for the procreation of children.” Generally, critics of marriage health certificates argued that they would be ineffectual because they could not curtail the unruly desires and uncontrolled reproduction of the lower classes. Cole’s insistence that a scientific approach to human reproduction would not compromise the spirituality of sex exemplifies a tension introduced by the animal kinship of the Darwinian past. On the one hand, Darwinism’s strong links between animals and humans offered the possibilities of using animal reproduction to inform human eugenics but, on the other hand, this kinship registered salient fears of human vulnerability, atavism, and degeneration. As sex reformers negotiated this tension, the problem of regulating reproduction effectively marked the limits of primitivism. Although many sex reformers encouraged bodily proximities between

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185 Ibid.
‘civilized’ and ‘primitive’ others in order to cultivate sex instincts, their discussions of reproduction stressed the distancing and separation of these bodies.

At a time of heightened white middle class concerns over reproduction, sex reformers located love in white middle class families which also ascribed greater value to the lives of white middle class children. As loved children, sex reformers argued that these children would best contribute to the future of the nation. In short, these children were not only wanted by their parents but also by the State. In October of 1922, Marie Stopes presided over the meeting of her Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress. As Stopes called the meeting to order at 8:00pm at Essex Hall, she commenced the meeting by defining the CBC as a “pro-baby, pro-racial Society” designed to encourage A1 couples to reproduce desired babies while discouraging C3 couples. Although Stopes’s organization was devoted to controlling reproduction and specifically redressing the problem of a differential birthrate, it also implicated love in its program. In the meetings and propaganda of the CBC, Stopes casted love as a property of white middle class eugenically desirable couples. Stopes’s address to her audience at Essex Hall inextricably tied love to the birth control couple, maintaining that “True love should involve mutual self-expression guided by self-restraint in obedience to the natural physiological laws.” Delivering a public lecture in June of 1921, Stopes specified the kinds of populations which might be considered undesirable, dysgenic, inferior C3 populations. It was in this lecture that she posed the rhetorical question, “Is America any better of the much multiplying Italian?” In the British

189 Ibid.
context, Stopes invoked the figure of the Irish man as a “sturdier race” and a “dark man” that forebodingly suggested the possible consequences of the failure to guide eugenic reproduction.\(^{191}\) Stopes’s comments construed loving parents and loved children through the lens of white middle class racial anxieties and the presumption that white middle class homes offered the best conditions and therefore produced the best children.

While a number of historians of the birth control movement and eugenics movement have drawn attention to the value attributed to specific kinds of bodies, less attention has been given to how these bodies were inscribed with particular affective capacities. While some scholars have drawn attention to the eugenic dimension of the early twentieth century feminist movement, they have not specifically focused on how ‘maternal love’ itself was tied to white middle class motherhood in Western nations. Stopes’s attention to love was part of a broad discourse that situated love within the context of eugenics and birth control. While the birth control and eugenics movements devoted considerable attention to sexuality, there was a specific affective economy tied to these programs. Dora Russell who was instrumental in forming the Workers’ Birth Control Group in England, conceptualized the birth control campaign as one that directly aimed toward the production of love. According to Russell, “Birth control is the greatest discovery of all, since by it for the first time in human history love is set free.”\(^{192}\) Russell’s connection between love and birth control also shaped a re-articulation of colonial relations by redefining alignments between white capitalist nations along the lines of love. Russell maintained that areas such as China, Spain, Africa, Italy, and

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\(^{191}\) Ibid.

South American were marked by a higher birthrate. However, Russell took the signs of a higher birthrate to the level of emotion by suggesting that children in these areas were only loved out of a selfish motive to immortalize the self through children. Like other birth control activists on both sides of the Atlantic, Russell condemned reproduction along the lines of quantity rather than quality. Russell objected to this tactic of conceiving of the number of bodies as an extension of power rather than the quality of bodies. Situating this in a Darwinian framework, Russell referred to the indiscriminate breeding of children as “a part of the struggle for the species, a sort of biological imperialism, an offshoot of struggle for power.” In effect, Russell like a number of her contemporaries, used the differential birthrate among nations as an affective mapping of where love on the map was strongest, most developed, and most civilized. While Russell condemned what she called ‘biological imperialism’ whereby the numbers of children were valued above their quality of life, her use of the category of love masked an affective imperialism that hierarchically classified countries on the basis of the intensity and presence of loving relationships.

As sex reformers praised the healthy, responsible white middle class mother who managed her fertility, they wrote this hegemonic figure into a narrative of the emotional context of the home. As such, the ‘voluntary’ mother belonged to the world of a white emotive imaginary where the presumed lack of love, violence, and hardships of working-class homes and mothers were measured through the lens of fertility control, economic resources, and family size. In other words, sex reformers also endowed eugenically fit bodies with a privileged interior quality of affective potential for love. At the 1922 Malthusian

193 Ibid., “Why Do We Have Them?”, *In Defence of Children*, 3.
194 Ibid., 16-17.
195 Ibid., 4.
conference in London, Charles V. Drysdale’s paper on “The Personal and Family Aspect of Birth Control” went beyond simply the desirability of bodies but contextualized these bodies in terms of emotional relations. Drysdale’s paper disturbingly linked the practice of birth control to an affective index for hierarchically ordering bodies. According to Drysdale, the failure to practice birth control was tied to responsibility, intelligence, status, and the very possibilities of loving. Drysdale recounted a story of the working class couple which in birth control literature was always construed as the non-birth control couple.\textsuperscript{196} Drysdale appealed to pity for the working class wife whose failure to use birth control led to the decline of physical beauty, fatigue, and drudgery.\textsuperscript{197} Drysdale suggested that “Instead of arriving home after his day’s work to a cheerful home with a happy wife and pleasant meal awaiting him, he finds a tired, dispirited woman harassed by children crying round her or demanding her care on every side, and without the time or means to prepare a satisfactory supper.”\textsuperscript{198} Drysdale drew a stark contrast with the model white middle class family which employed birth control and could consequently “enter on their new life together in love and confidence.”\textsuperscript{199} Drysdale further commented on the importance of birth control as the emancipation of women who when “free from passive maternity will rarely consent to bring diseased or defective children into the world, or start them under too unfavourable conditions.”\textsuperscript{200} In his paper, Drysdale’s references to the failure of “primitive types” to exercise birth control elided economics and colonialism which further blurs distinctions between home and empire.

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
domestic and the foreign, and the citizen and the alien. Given the logic of Drysdale’s paper, the failure of “primitive types” to use birth control also carried the affective implication of the absence of loving relations in “primitive types” and in working class homes.

As sex reformers romanticized biological motherhood by writing the white middle class mother into the scene of a loving home, they also situated this mother in a Darwinian narrative of sexual selection. Sex reformers reframed Darwinian narratives of female selection of male animals to emphasize the evolutionary stakes of late nineteenth and early twentieth century campaigns for female fertility control and eugenic mate selection. By focusing on the issue of mate selection, a number of early twentieth century writers foregrounded desires, beauty, and love in formulating a Darwinian narrative for the present.

In 1907, American sociologist, Lester Frank Ward, published the second edition of *Pure Sociology* which based the evolution of human social organization on the “dynamic agent” of feeling. According to Ward, feeling was the prime mover of the course of human history. More importantly, Ward identified five types of love which he located in the shift from primitive social organization toward civilization. For Ward, what he called natural love was common to animals, lower or primitive peoples, and the higher specimens of humanity. Natural love was essentially the sexual impulse. However, Ward maintained that romantic love and conjugal love were exclusively the products of modern civilization.

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201 Ibid.
203 Ibid., 378.
204 Ibid., 384-89.
and largely Western nations. What Ward termed romantic love and conjugal love referred to what sex reformers considered the spiritual emotional dimension of sex which mutually enhanced two personalities. Ward situated romantic love as a pivotal turning point in the development of civilization. Suggesting that human evolution was marked by an increasing development of feeling towards higher spiritual ends, Ward’s work is evidence of an early twentieth century vision of what I have considered the affective potential of bodies. Ward also racially differentiated bodies according to this affective potential by suggesting that romantic love was “practically confined to what is generally understood as the Aryan race, or, at most, to the so-called Europeans, whether actually in Europe or whether in Australia, America, India, or any other part of the globe.”

Ward’s account of feeling as an evolutionary momentum was also a deeply embodied account of a shifting political order defined by the place of women’s biological agency as reproducers and sexual selectors. In charting the course of evolution in terms of feeling, Ward also traced shifts in forms of governance from a gynaecocratic regime towards an andocratic regime. Ward defined gynaecocracy as the earliest forms of social organization when females were the agents of sexual selection and males were preoccupied with ornamentation to gain favour among the females. As females selected from male competitors, the increasing importance of physical strength to oust rivals gradually prompted a transition toward an andocratic regime where female selection and male ornamentation gave way to male selection and female ornamentation. This transformation, however, Ward aligned with the momentum of feeling. Ward described the stage of romantic love as a

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205 Ibid., 392-393, 405-406.
206 Ibid., 392.
productive synthesis of the best aspects of both gynaecocracy and andocracy whereby

“romantic love therefore marks the first step toward the resumption by woman of her natural
scepter which she yielded to the superior physical force of man at the beginning of the
androcratic period.” Ward rewrote the Darwinian narrative with feeling at the centre of it
and with romantic love marking a critical stage in the emergence of civilization. According
to Ward, romantic love marked a new phase of evolution, whereby:

The great physiological superiority of the new regime cannot be too strongly emphasized. Its value to
the race is incalculable. Female selection, or gyneclexis, as we saw, created a fantastic and extravagant
male efflorescence. Male selection, or andrelexis produced female etiolation, diminutive stature,
beauty without utility. Both these unnatural effects were due to lack of mutuality. Romantic love is
mutual. The selection is done simultaneously by man and woman.

As Ward inextricably tied the transition between gynaecocracy and andocracy to the
changing social value of the maternal body and the nature of love between men and women,
he re-articulated a Darwinian narrative that reinforced the relationship between bodies, love,
and politics. By so firmly binding the course of evolution, reproduction, and love, Ward’s
work normativized love as the product of heterosexual desire, white civilization, and white
middle class bodies.

Ward’s re-articulation of Darwinism occurred in the context of the developing
maternalist strand of the early twentieth century feminist movement on both sides of the
Atlantic. Like Ward, a number of early twentieth century feminists seized on the
implications of Darwinian sexual selection for telling the story of human history through the

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207 Ward, Pure Sociology, 396.
208 Ibid.
shifting value of the maternal body, reproduction, and the nature of love between the sexes.
American feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman was notably influenced by Ward’s theory of a
shift from a gynaecocratic regime towards an andocratic regime and dedicated her book on
*The Man-Made World* to Ward.\(^{210}\) Gilman’s unhappy marriage, depression, and her
treatment for invalidism where she was subjected to Silas Weir Mitchell’s diagnosis of a rest
cure partly inspired her critiques of a society that educated women to assume roles of
weakness and dependence. In her famous work, *Women and Economics*, Gilman indicated
that humans were the only animals where the female was reduced to a dependent role on the
male. Gilman drew upon Darwinism’s profound connections between humans and animals
and the importance of the survival of the species, to argue that such an unnatural political
order ultimately weakened the project for species survival by rendering one half of the
human race dependent on the other.

Another feminist, Eliza Burt Gamble, offered an account of Darwinism which shows
the malleability of Darwinism in light of early twentieth century professionals’ attention to
matters of motherhood, reproduction, and love. Gamble acknowledged the importance of
feeling towards evolution but argued for a greater recognition of maternal care and affection.
Throughout Gamble’s 1916 work on *The Sexes in Science and History*, she questioned
Darwin’s failure to give proper credit to care and affection as important forces for facilitating
social organization and the survival of a species. Gamble maintained that “Mr. Darwin
admits that ‘parental and filial affection lies at the base of the social instincts,’ and gives as
his opinion that this quality is the result of Natural Selection – that those individuals which

bestowed upon their offspring the greatest care and attention, would survive and multiply at
the expense of others in which this instinct was less developed.”

Both Gamble and Ward rewrote Darwinian narratives to give due recognition to the importance of affect in the course of evolution. In doing so, they firmly tied past human history and future racial destiny to the importance of emotions in determining reproductive choices. Through these Darwinian narratives, the white middle class mother who acted as a responsible agent of selection emerged as a moral agent of love who ‘civilized’ sex.

IV. Shaping A Generation of Nietzschean Supermen

While sex reformers drew upon Darwinism to situate a bodily capacity to love in ancestral origins and the development of civilization, they looked to Nietzsche’s figure of the superman as the idealized future type who would productively employ the energies and instincts of a ‘primitive’ body in the service of ‘civilization’. The superman can be seen as the figure of the utopic and millennial dimension of a white emotive imaginary. Sex reformers invoked the superman as the embodied synthesis of the paradoxes of civilization. The superman was the imagined future white middle class man who would exemplify the supposed vitality, instinctive life, and sexual prowess of the ‘primitive’ to reinvigorate rather than threaten professional work, citizenship, and family life. For sex reformers, the birth of the superman spelled the transformation of neurasthenic, fatigued, overworked, and emasculated white middle class men. In these utopic imaginings of a future racial type, sex


212 Dan Stone has discussed the British Nietzschean movement and the influence of Nietzsche’s ideas on early twentieth century intellectuals such as Havelock Ellis. See Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002).
reformers conceived of the superman, not only in physical stature, musculature, pure ancestry, and eugenic health but also in terms of a maximized affective potential. Nietzsche’s blond beast of the *Genealogy of Morals* embodied the early version of Aryan primal ancestors unashamedly pursuing the gratification of instinctive impulses.\(^{213}\) This blond beast was an imagined figure of white ancestry who roamed the forests of Europe prior to the development of ‘civilization’ and Christianity. Nietzsche’s story romanticized the beast as a figure in the history of Aryan bodies which showed that a body’s affective orientation changed over time. According to Nietzsche, the superman would be just as instinctive as the beast and rise above the slave moralities of Christian Europe.\(^{214}\) Instead of obeying a morality that exalted the weak to the detriment of the strong, the superman’s will to power would recognize only the law of his own impulses. While the figure of the superman privileged white middle class manhood as the rock upon which civilization would stand or fall, the figure of the superwoman also emerged in the feminist eugenics of the early twentieth century.\(^{215}\) Like the superman, the superwoman would allow herself to be guided and take pleasure in instincts as the source of vitality, survival, and growth. However, the blond beast’s orientation according to instincts had a gender-specific manifestation in the superwoman as she affirmed a right to sexual pleasure and harnessed the biological power of motherhood by acting as an agent of selection and managing her fertility. Together, the superman and superwoman exemplified the projected future of a white middle class couple


\(^{214}\) Ibid.

whose bodies fully maximized their affective potential by possessing the instinctive life of
the ‘primitive’ and reconciling them with upholding civilization. Sex reformers generally
justified their campaigns as the promise of a loving and harmonious world. Such a promise
suggested that the superman exemplified love as the apotheosis of sex instincts refined in
‘civilized’ bodies.

As sex reformers conceived of their projects as an attack on Victorian sexual
morality, they construed Victorian sexual morality as a slave morality that harmed the future
of the white middle class family. The Darwinian links between primal ancestors and present
white middle class bodies were also integral to sex reformers’ vision of the future race. The
future superman was conceived as an outgrowth of the direction of sexual energies that drew
upon past and present connections. Lester Ward’s vision of feeling as a dynamic agent
resonated with the views of other sex reformers that the future superman would be a product
of love and a more virile, sexually vigorous, instinctive being. Hutchins Hapgood’s story of
the “Criminal Monkey” articulated the ancestral connections between monkeys and humans
in a vision of the future sexual morality. In the April 1917 issue of the periodical, The Social
War, Hapgood, like Ward, positioned energies, passions, and feeling at the crux of human
evolution. For Hapgood, “The society of monkeys were, at a remote period, law-abiding and
exceedingly regular. There were no agitators, criminals or abnormalities among them. They
swung in the trees, repeated the habits recognized by tradition, ate only decent food and were
a peaceful and contented race.”

In Hapgood’s version of the story of monkey society, the
advent of sinful, highly vital, passionate monkeys who disturb the peace becomes important

to perpetuating human evolution. These rebellious monkeys were “possessed by a vicious passion” and desired to “eat flesh and drink blood. That was against every monkey tradition: It was perverse.”\textsuperscript{217} However, this resonated with the more academic accounts of Gilman, Ward, and Gamble who suggested a disruption of the former matriarchate towards the violence of a patriarchal regime which abandoned the values of care and nurturance in favour of strength, the subordination of the female, and the claims of property.\textsuperscript{218} Hapgood’s story reconstructed the more academic accounts into a story made accessible to a wider public.\textsuperscript{219}

Just as academic accounts suggested this period of violence was necessary as a stage toward evolution, Hapgood’s account of the criminal monkey also suggested the importance of the rebellion of ‘sinful monkeys’. By breaking away from traditional, comfortable and conservative society, these sinful monkeys acted as a kind of avant-garde in the jungle which led to their struggle for existence in a new environment where “to exist at all, they were forced to use their grey matter and to develop their hands.”\textsuperscript{220} According to Hapgood, it was the sinful monkeys, much like the blond beast of Neitzsche’s \textit{Genealogy of Morals}, who were the necessary precursors to the race. Hapgood’s story of the sinful monkeys valued “the strenuous struggle” through which these monkeys were “driven on by a terrible, insatiable appetite, they were gradually re-constructed and became Men. But the decent, law-abiding monkeys still swing in the trees and do not eat flesh.”\textsuperscript{221} Hapgood regarded the unashamed, determined pursuit of desires as comparable to “the Vital Impulse of Bergson’s

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{219} Hapgood’s story on “The Criminal Monkey” appeared in a five cent periodical which was likely aimed toward a broader audience than the academic texts of Ward, Gilman, and Gamble.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
philosophy.”222 Hapgood’s emphasis on the importance of disruptive, sinful monkeys ultimately rearticulated the projects of sex reform within an evolutionary narrative. The evolutionary importance of sex reformers’ contestation of traditional morality and their radical disruption of existing institutions was positioned in the context of the importance of the Criminal Monkey in facilitating a higher evolutionary type. The ending of Hapgood’s story confirmed how sex reform projects moved toward the biological creation of the superman. Hapgood cited anarchists, idealists, moral criminals of current society as those who would “carry on Evolution a step, into a race that we may call ‘Supermen,’” leaving Human Beings undisturbed, placid, well-to-do, perfectly adjusted to their well-worn environment, swinging in their traditional trees, so to speak, easily satisfied, law-abiding and uninteresting.”223

When sex reformers envisioned the superman, they situated this future type in a particular emotional ordering of the world where love was produced by virtue of white health, selection, and reproduction. At birth control and sex reform conferences, sex reformers from a number of countries joined together in their concerns over their shared investments in furthering the affective potential of white bodies toward the idealized superman. In 1925, a diverse group of white middle class professionals met at the National Birth Control Conference in New York City. It was here that American social worker and suffragist, Edith Houghton Hooker, delivered a paper which claimed that “Among human beings sexual selection is phrased as the spiritual emotion called Love. This mysterious and potent force that binds men and women together in a life-long union acts to insure the

222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
improvement of the race stock.” Hooker went on to point out that “Marriage is essential to the ultimate creation of the superman.” Hooker’s mention of marriage, love, and the superman looked to a future world where sex among supermen and superwomen would be spiritualized as love. This temporally located the superman along the axes of a Darwinian past of sexual selection, sex reformers’ present anxieties over white racial stock, and the future of a loving world. In other words, the superman charted past, present, and future time through the white emotive imaginary of the possibilities of arousing latent instincts, passions, and energies of a white middle class body. Through the superman, sex reformers articulated a hopeful vision of white vital bodies embracing desires which tied the superman to a white genealogy of affects.

By using the figure of the superman to articulate the future of their projects, sex reformers defined time and space through the affective journey of white bodies in capitalist nations. As a symbol for sex reformers to rally around, the superman performed important work for sustaining transnational bonds between sex reformers as a provisional family linked by a sense of shared history, bodily health, and investments in the future. Like the 1925 gathering of sex reformers in New York City, the 1929 World League for Sex Reform (WLSR) Congress also brought together sex reformers who were deeply concerned about shaping bodies of the future. In the program for the World League for Sex Reform Congress, the Eugenics category stated the Neitzschean quote, “You shall not merely continue the race

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225 Ibid.
but move it upward.”  

British sex reformer, Dora Russell who co-organized the WLSR with physician and sex reformer Norman Haire, was profoundly influenced by Nietzsche’s works. In Russell’s *The Right To Be Happy*, which appeared prior to the WLSR meeting, she expressed her concern for how modern civilization with its emphasis on reason over emotion had contributed to a weakened, repressed, unhappy white middle class. At the very outset of her work, Russell invoked the figures of the superman and superwoman. She argued that educated middle class moderns could not be called super-men or women because they continued to view instincts as dangers to civilization. Russell condemned her own society’s sexual morality on the grounds that, “instead of treating each man as a haphazard bundle of instincts the deep flow and satisfaction of which might bring him happiness, they took him to be a rational being, composed of mind and passions, a body ruled and moved by an intelligent soul.” This view of man as a “haphazard bundle of instincts” directly drew on Nietzsche. Russell went on to further consider civilization’s damaging effects on the body in terms of the “slave origin of European Christianity.” For sex reformers, then, the births of the superman and superwoman were contingent on dismantling Victorian white middle class sex morality. In sex reform projects, the iconography of the superman served to define a temporal and spatial dimension of what I have called a white emotive imaginary where human history was charted through the white middle class body’s affective journey from Darwinian ancestors to present devitalized bodies to the superman.

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228 Russell, *The Right To Be Happy*. 70.
229 Ibid., 16.
The superman was yet another figure, alongside Darwin’s birds, ‘Red Indians,’ passionate Italians, white primitivists, and ‘voluntary mothers’ who populated a white emotive imaginary mapped through the politics of sex reform. These figures also moved across territories and within a temporal frame shaped by the specific affective orientation and navigational practices of a white middle class body. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sex reformers’ claims that sex instincts needed to be cultivated to restore the health and energies of ‘civilized’ white middle class men and women. This project to cultivate sex instincts reconfigured the spaces of homes, nations, cabarets, the jungle, the metropolis, and the countryside as zones of intensity and opportunities for white middle class affective encounters. These spaces, however, were also constituted through a temporality marked by a white middle class body that marked these venues by relegating them either to the primal past or the ‘modern’ present. As sex reformers advocated the need to cultivate sex instincts, they also contributed to authoring a white emotive imaginary where bodies were situated in affective hierarchies of gender, race, class, and sexuality. As I have shown, sex reformers’ attention to love, in particular, designated a specific affective potential in ‘civilized’ white middle class bodies while the bodies of ‘lower’ classes, races, and colonized peoples were judged as highly instinctive, energetic, promiscuous bodies largely incapable of practicing love. Sex reformers framed love in a way that justified class and racial status along the presumed benevolent and liberating axis of love. In other words, the importance of love to sex reform politics lay in this mystification of how love was wedded to and constituted through gender, race, and class hierarchies. As sex reformers drew on Darwinian and Nietzschean narratives, they imbued sexual attraction, romance, reproduction, and family
life with evolutionary significance and imperial politics which constituted the whiteness of love.
In 1929, a number of leading middle class intellectuals met in London to discuss their mutual commitment to reforming the world along the lines of sex.\(^1\) At the conference, psychoanalysts, scientists, economists, physicians, novelists, sociologists, anthropologists, and feminists gathered together to talk about the problems of sex and civilization.\(^2\) When the WLSR congress convened in 1929, Magnus Hirschfeld, the Austrian founder of the Institute for Sexual Science, declared the common goal for the delegates: to establish a new code of sexual ethics, scientifically grounded in psychology and biology.\(^3\) In his presidential address, Hirschfeld referred to “sexual statesmanship” and “sexual sociology” which emphasized the importance of sex-instincts as nation-building and international forces.\(^4\) He explained that “sexual statesmanship” would be practiced according to “a sexual code dealing not only with...

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\(^2\) A number of intellectuals across a range of disciplines in Britain and the United States gave moral and/or financial support to the Congress. In the correspondence between Dora Russell and Norman Haire, the following names appeared as those who pledged their support: anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, editor of the Hogarth Press Leonard Woolf, novelists Clive Bell, H.G. Wells, Naomi Mitchison, and Lytton Strachey, physician Bernard Hollander, mathematician Bertrand Russell, economist John Maynard Keynes, population geneticist Carr-Saunders, abortion law reformer Stella Browne, American physicians Abraham and Hannah Stone, and American psychoanalyst A.A. Brill. See Norman Haire to Dora Russell, 31 December 1928. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 407-411, File 407. Also, see “The Third International Congress to be held in London from the 9th to 13th September 1929.” Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Folder 407-411, File 407.


\(^4\) Ibid.
marriage and divorce but all sexual relations.” These remarks set the tone for the papers that followed.

Over the course of five days in London, the delegates presented papers which showed who might be considered a sexual statesman, what specific practices might constitute sexual statesmanship, and how sex could redefine social relations and communities. Sex reformers’ attention to emotions, particularly love, qualified both “sexual statesmanship” and the degrees of belonging within a community which privileged white middle class heterosexual couples. Hirschfeld himself had opened the door to this very question in his presidential address. He told his colleagues that “The more deeply we study the physiology of love the better we are able to judge what things should be regarded as advantageous and what are disadvantageous, what are harmful and what are not.” Hirschfeld here introduced love as a normalizing criterion where its presence or absence would be used to weigh benefit and harm. Hirschfeld specifically highlighted that such a study of the “physiology of love” led to the consideration of “sexual hygiene” which, he stressed, involved assessments of fitness for marriage. According to Hirschfeld, “Persons whose impulse departs very widely from the normal must be regarded as unsuited either for marriage or for reproduction.” Furthermore, Hirschfeld’s speech suggested that love was directly tied to what he termed the “sexual evolution of the race.” In other words, Hirschfeld specifically located love in normal, healthy, ‘civilized’ bodies whose marriage and reproduction were valued as assets to the

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., xiii.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., xii.
State. What I have called affective potential crucially marked who was included or excluded from “sexual statesmanship.”

In the session on marriage reform, delegates tackled the question of what “sexual statesmanship” and “sexual sociology” might mean for marriage and parenthood. On the first day of conference sessions, Dora Russell presented a paper on “Marriage and Freedom” which argued that a new sexual code would entail new sexual practices surrounding marriage and parenthood so that they would be based on love rather than jealousy. According to Russell, the existing institution of marriage which punished adultery, compelled conjugal rights, and legitimized children amounted to treating marital partners and children as possessions and turning sex into a duty.\(^9\) Russell articulated the promise of sex reform as a transformation in social relations. She claimed that:

> Love, generosity, tenderness, creative freedom, these are all inhibited in us by our marital and parental traditions; it is our part, therefore to frame laws which shall release and encourage these emotions in place of the others and thereby promote freedom and happiness in the place of bondage and despair.\(^10\)

Appealing to a common understanding among her audience, Russell indicated that, for the most part, they could agree that “marriage as we know it has little or nothing to do with freedom,” amounting to “legal and social tyranny.”\(^11\) However, Russell suggested that they did not fully appreciate the kind of difficult emotional transformation that a new sexual code would involve. Russell posited that the requirement of sexual fidelity must be eliminated in a future society based on a new sexual ethics. Russell advocated marriage as “life as a

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\(^10\) Ibid., 25.
\(^11\) Ibid.
partnership” and parenthood as “unselfish creative love.” However, she argued that “the partners to such a marriage should, in my view neither expect nor even persuade each other to grant complete sexual fidelity.” In doing so, Russell advanced the radical view that fidelity actually worked against love. Dora’s discussion of sexual freedom and love, however, presumed a eugenically healthy and economically stable couple. She maintained that the expression of desire should be encouraged except where injury could result or “in the case of undesirable or irresponsible parenthood.” Similarly, she suggested “sex partnerships among young people” ought to be encouraged when “health and economic circumstances allowed.” Finally, when Russell advocated the “stable and non-possessive love of two parents,” she inextricably tied this to the aim of a new sexual morality “to breed and to rear increasingly more perfect specimens of the human race.” Although this was undoubtedly a ‘new morality,’ it was one that shifted the terrain of class, racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies to an affective register of power that continued to reserve the privileges of citizenship for a white educated middle class.

What Russell here envisioned as the new sexual morality was already being practiced in radical marriage experiments among a number of middle class intellectuals, including Russell herself. I want to turn specific attention to the marriage experiments in the bohemian enclaves of New York City’s Greenwich Village and London’s Bloomsbury. I argue that

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12 Ibid., 27.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 29.
17 The Bloomsbury Group included Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Vanessa and Clive Bell, Duncan Grant, Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry, and Dora Carrington. Historians of Greenwich Village bohemians have also commented on the similarities between Bloomsbury and Greenwich Village communities of artists.
these marriage experiments invested the management of intimacies with the power of remaking the social which had at the heart of it, a practice of citizenship which I describe as sympathetic connectivity. I define sympathetic connectivity as a dynamic practice of forging social ties through bodily experiences of shared intensities, energies, and affective communication. I use the term sympathetic connectivity for both historical and conceptual reasons. First of all, sympathy has a long history, dating to the eighteenth century’s cult of sensibility, of an association with refinement, civilization, paternalism, and charity which have firmly tied it to the bodies of ruling elites. Secondly, although sex reformers generally used the term love more frequently than sympathy, they sometimes invoked sympathy as a way of explaining an affective merging of their bodies with others which exalted whiteness and middle class status at the level of the body’s sensitivity. More importantly, my focus on a sex reform politics of love also looks to a specific formation of sympathy in the early twentieth century which was biologically grounded in evolutionary thought, ‘voluntary motherhood,’ eugenics, medical concerns over the degree of white middle class sensitivity manifested in the symptoms of neurasthenia, and the growing interest in emotions through the rise of psychology. Thirdly, I use the term connectivity to highlight sex reformers efforts to remake social institutions in a way that looked to an embodied social whereby the individual and the collective were indistinguishable. Lastly, sympathetic connectivity serves as a useful analytic lens for getting us closer to an appreciation of the kind of affective management of bodies and radical transformations in social relations that were largely left


18 On the eighteenth century and the importance of feeling, see Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler, eds. Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 3.
implicit in Hirschfeld’s terms of “sexual statesmanship” and “sexual sociology.” In doing so, this chapter offers a historical example of what Michel Foucault has called a “microphysics of power.”19 While the previous chapter explored how sex reformers re-imagined the world as an affective cartography for cultivating sex instincts, this chapter casts greater scrutiny on how sex reformers invoked specific strategies for turning sex instincts into love which took for granted a community of similarly educated, economically stable, and racially bonded others.

I focus on the specific case studies of the marriage experiments of American literary couple Neith Boyce and Hutchins Hapgood and British couple Dora and Bertrand Russell to show sympathetic connectivity as a practice of citizenship which foregrounded the body as an agent in the formation of communities. Here I consider the specific social relations and citizens within what the previous chapter explained as a white emotive imaginary. I have chosen to juxtapose the stories of the Hapgoods in Greenwich Village and the Russells in Bloomsbury20 to show how a sexual ethics based on love traced a community that exceeded national boundaries. This defined citizenry in a cosmopolitan frame along the lines of whiteness, emotions, ‘civilized’ status, and shared beliefs in socialism and feminism. While I have emphasized the transatlantic connections of sex reformers’ intimate practices, these connections were also forged through mutual impressions of the specific national character of Britain and the United States. In Britain, sex reformers generally conceived of the United

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States as a nation whose families and marital intimacies were much more endangered by burgeoning capitalism, a flood of immigration, and racial relations. Such an impression of the United States gave some sex reformers, like Bertrand Russell, a sense of missionary zeal in teaching Americans how to love or keeping at bay the “young tiger, just growing up, learning to roar” of American capitalism.\textsuperscript{21} American sex reformers often looked to Britain as an ancestral connection and often framed their own histories of birth control, feminism, and socialism within British traditions. Despite sex reformers’ acknowledgment of these perceived national differences, their focus on a new sexual ethics grounded in the practice of love promised a cooperative network that would reduce such differences in an imperial project of white love.

The marriage experiments of the Hapgoods and the Russells show a specific early twentieth century practice of a biologically grounded socialism and feminism as a politics of love.\textsuperscript{22} While historians have generally focused on early twentieth century bohemians as hedonistic rebels, many of these bohemian sex reformers insisted on the importance of love and denied accusations that they were advocating promiscuity.\textsuperscript{23} I draw important attention

\textsuperscript{21} Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 26 September 1929. Bertrand Russell Archives, McMaster University.
\textsuperscript{22} Nancy Cott has shown that feminist consciousness emerged in the early twentieth century which intertwined movements for both political and economic rights. See Nancy Cott, \textit{The Grounding of Modern Feminism} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987).
to love as a neglected yet crucial component of sex reform politics where class and racial privilege were tied to love in a way that complicates the feminist implications of the doctrine of sexual pleasure. In doing so, I have drawn on historians of emotion who have analyzed emotions as historically and socially constructed phenomena and a specific historical experience of the body. My approach here is to take love as a relational category that drew the body and society into mutually constitutive connections. This story of radical families also builds on the work historians have done on the family, emotions, and marriage. A number of historians, for instance, have pointed out the greater expectations of marital affection and companionship in this period. My focus on sex reformers considers how these expectations were politically charged in redefining family practices which embodied principles of socialism and feminism. As radical marriage experiments, my story of sex reformers’ citizenship as sympathetic connectivity also draws on historians of the family who significant component of their intimate and sexual relations. See Mary Ann Caws, Women of Bloomsbury: Virginia, Vanessa, and Carrington (New York: Routledge, 1990), 3-6, 19, 66, 71-78, 95-98. These works focus on themes of youthful rebellion and sexual pleasure which obscure sex reformers’ concerns with sex as a practice of love and a politics of emotion. A notable exception to this is Stephen Brooke’s work on the interconnectedness of love and emotions in the politics of British sex reformers, Dora Russell and Naomi Mitchison. See for example, Stephen Brooke, “Writing New Worlds: Sex, Love, Emotions and Politics in Interwar British Socialist Feminism,” (Jackson Memorial Lecture, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MA, 24 February 2006).


have looked to both the hegemonic nuclear family and alternative forms of family as sites of
citizenship. Building on this work, I situate the story of a specific segment of sex reformers
who advocated non-monogamy in the nexus of historiographies on the sexuality, the family,
marrige, and emotions.

This chapter traces the production of love and embodied politics through what can be seen as an early twentieth century practice of citizenship which I call sympathetic connectivity. I first show how sex reformers’ specific attention to sexual practices, particularly the perfection of sex technique and the importance of mutual pleasure, exemplified ways of connecting with other bodies that moved sex into the realm of spirituality, epistemology, and feminist and socialist politics. In this first section, I explore how sex reformers configured sex as a practice of love defined by the harmonious blending of two personalities. This specific framing of sex as love located this particular practice of sex as ‘higher’ or ‘civilized’ sex which also circumscribed who could be selected as a partner. In this period, sex reformers’ attention to sex technique focused on how bodies
communicated with one another which pointed to a specific affective engineering of the social through a set of signals, responses, and coordination of bodies to cooperatively produce love. Insofar as sex reformers looked to ‘good sex’ as sex with love they redefined marriage to permit and, even encourage, affairs beyond the marital bond as part of forming a community of love. In the second and final section, I consider the Russells’ and the Hapgoods’ efforts to redefine living arrangements of household labour, economics, and childcare to maximize love. Here sympathetic connectivity is illustrated through the ties between the body’s experience of love, work, and defining the home as a feminist and socialist community which, ironically, relied on the labour of servants and a middle class income. In these radical homes, there was a double process where, firstly, by privileging love, sex reformers not only reconfigured normative arrangements of marriage, family, and parenthood and, secondly, by changing the conventional roles of husbands and wives, the division of labour, and the boundaries of the family also produced love. The sex reform movement’s politics of love are here illuminated by the possibilities of bodies to connect with others which presumed the advantages as well as Victorian moral constraints of white middle class existence.

I. Perfecting Sex, Producing Love: Early Twentieth Century Intimacies and the Efforts to Harmoniously Blend Two Personalities

On both sides of the Atlantic, leading proponents of sex reform wrote sex manuals for married couples which not only gave detailed instructions on how to reach mutual orgasm but specifically framed their advice as the attainment of love. What American birth control leader, Margaret Sanger, called “love etiquette,” amounted to precise rules for how bodies
should approach one another in the act of sex.\textsuperscript{29} In 1926, when Margaret Sanger published *Happiness in Marriage*, she advised the husband to hone his skill as a lover by controlling “the tumultuous power of his impulses.”\textsuperscript{30} Sanger set down a precise behavioral code for the young husband who should “concentrate upon the psychic condition and mood of his beloved” and “note her response to his caresses, the caresses of a true artist.”\textsuperscript{31} To be a “successful husband-lover,” Sanger also advised the husband to be aware of the female sexual cycle and “take advantage of her exact condition in this moon-monthly rhythm instead of beginning his lovemaking in the wrong period.”\textsuperscript{32} Despite Sanger’s references to the husband as the piano-player, the artist, the composer or the “successful lover,” she also insisted that women were active participants in sex insofar as they allowed themselves to enjoy it.\textsuperscript{33} Sanger suggested that the female sexual response to the husband was a sign that he had adjusted his own desires to her body and the wife then became an active participant through his consideration of her rhythms and desires. Offering a description of the woman’s role, Sanger claimed “She must learn therefore to relax. She must seek to fall into the rhythm of the love flight, as the continuation of a dance, a dance of soul as well as body.”\textsuperscript{34} Sanger went on to suggest how these bodies connected as “beings are co-mingled in a new and higher unity.”\textsuperscript{35} Through all of these prescriptive actions, Sanger indicated that “physical demands are harnessed for the expression of love.”\textsuperscript{36} Sanger’s work is one example of a new genre of early twentieth century sex manuals that provided a behavioral code which

\textsuperscript{29} Margaret Sanger, *Happiness in Marriage* (1926; New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1940), 122.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 130.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 161.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 132. Sanger refers to the “successful husband-lover” on page 123.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 132.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 143.
amounted to a sociality of sex whereby bodies sympathetically connected to one another through careful consideration, adjustment, and attunement to the desires, movements, and responses of one another.37

Sanger’s references to “physical demands,” the “true artist,” the “successful husband-lover,” the husband’s knowledge of his wife’s body, and the wife who learned to relax point to how sex manuals highlighted love as a far from ‘natural’ or spontaneous experience but one requiring an extraordinary amount of work. As a set of instructions on how to simultaneously achieve love through sex, sex manuals ultimately show a process undergone or engaged by white middle class bodies to achieve their affective potential for intimacy that purportedly awaited expression in constrained Victorian white middle class bodies. Sex manuals are important for historicizing love in this period insofar as sex manual writers described a choreography bodies which were both limited and enhanced by one another as they sought to orchestrate mental, physical, and emotional responses in an effort to achieve what was construed as a spiritual experience of love. While authors of sex manuals generally posited an ideal state of harmonious communication or coordination between two bodies, their precise instructions for achieving such a state pointed to a trained, practiced, and perfectible work on the body’s relation to itself and a heterosexual partner. To this extent, Sanger’s manual is one example of specific ways for performing the work of sympathetic connectivity which, I argue, amounted to a project for re-educating white capitalist bodies intimately bound to Anglo-Saxon ties of kinship in transatlantic circuits of sex reform.

By the time Sanger had published her work, she had already made considerable efforts to collaborate with British birth control leader, Marie Stopes. Sanger urged Stopes to write a series of articles on birth control for American editor, Norman Hapgood, and published news of Stopes’s London clinic in the *Birth Control Review*. Sanger, in fact, planned to establish a clinic in England and gave speeches there on birth control. When Sanger first became involved in the birth control movement, she and Stopes had an amicable relationship. Over time, however, they came to resent one another. Sanger was angered by Stopes’s support for Mary Ware Dennett, the Boston leader of the Voluntary Parenthood League, a rival organization to Sanger’s American Birth Control League. Stopes, known for her domineering and authoritative personality, came to resent Sanger’s increasing international popularity in the birth control movement. This resentment likely reflected the significant overlap in the close transatlantic connections between British and American birth controllers.

Stopes’s 1918 work, *Married Love*, offered the similar advice as Sanger’s *Happiness in Marriage*. Like Sanger, Stopes mentioned “the untutored male.” She, in fact, compared the male who solely sought to gratify himself to wild animals “who are not so foolish as man;

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a wild animal does not unite with his female without the wooing characteristic of his race.”

Like Sanger, Stopes denounced the male’s approach to “using the woman as a passive instrument” and stressed that “without the discipline of control there is no lasting delight in erotic feeling.” Stopes also explained that “woman has a rhythmic sex-tide.” Both Sanger and Stopes suggested the importance of mutual understanding between husbands and wives to cooperatively achieve sexual pleasure. This process can be described as sympathetic connectivity where a connection to the other is established through a sympathetic relation, marked by knowledge of the other, sensitivity and responsiveness, and mutual adjustments. In Sanger and Stopes’s advice, this connection also took on the special character variously described as “spiritual union,” “sex-communion,” or “subtle spiritual alchemy.”

Stopes and Sanger’s works show not only a set of practices that can be described as sympathetic connectivity, but they point to the performance of this code as a practice of citizenship deeply invested in hierarchies of gender, class, race, and sexuality. The sex advice of Happiness in Marriage and Married Love situated the possibilities for a body to sympathetically connect to others and achieve love in terms of the affective condition of white middle class bodies. Both Sanger and Stopes framed the importance of their work as urgent advice for men and women of Anglo-Saxon countries. Whether Sanger and Stopes chose to advocate marital love or emphasize the burden of so-called unfit reproduction on the State and the mother ultimately situated men and women in class, racial, and imperial hierarchies differentiated by the injunction to middle class couples to practice sex as love and

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43 Ibid., 83.
44 Ibid., 57.
45 Ibid., 89.
46 Ibid., 53.
lower class, racialized couples to curtail and control fecundity. Sanger referred to the shared affective condition of English and American peoples who “lead the world in so many ways, have an almost unprecedentedly high proportion of married women who get no satisfaction from their personal union with their husbands.” In advising couples, both Stopes and Sanger presumed that they were doing a service for highly sensitive, nervous, men and women; a particular physiological condition associated in this period with white middle class bodies. Stopes referred to “the overstimulation of city life [which] tends to ‘speed up’ the man’s reactions, but to retard hers.” A common experience of the city’s effects on sex life, also appeared in Sanger’s work where she included “disturbing environments” and “nervous tensions” as causes of male “psychic impotence.” When Sanger discussed the need for the husband to become fully aware of the female sexual cycle, she had in mind sex between white middle class couples. In Sanger’s manual, she directed attention to the wife whose sexual cycle differed from that of ‘primitive’ women. Sanger was particularly concerned with ‘civilized’ woman in whom the sexual cycle “atrophies with woman’s removal from the natural mode of life that prevails among savages and primitive tribes.” She highlighted the effects of “modern life, particular of social life in cities, with increased nervous excitement, false stimulation and a hectic enslavement of hurry and speed.” While historians have shown that white middle class men and women’s complaints of nervousness used illness as a performance of ‘civilized’ status, this condition also framed white middle class bodies as highly sensitive, responsive, and affectively charged so that it also translated in texts to a

47 Sanger, *Happiness in Marriage*,
50 Ibid., 158.
51 Ibid.
potential to sympathetically connect to others and the body’s capacity to experience love.

Insofar as sex reformers claimed the possibilities for sex to be a spiritual union, they
restricted such experience to white middle class bodies which they believed capable of
responding to one another at the most intense spiritual levels.

Although both Sanger and Stopes promoted monogamy as particularly suited to a
spiritual union, they were equivocal as to whether monogamy was actually the highest ideal
or, given social constraints and social attitudes, simply the best available arrangement at the
present time. Sanger suggested that “true marriage” came from achieving mutual sexual
pleasure and this bodily and spiritual expression of love.52 This left open the question of
whether those legal or state-sanctioned marriages that did not reach this ideal of mutual
sexual pleasure could then be counted as ‘false’ and allow for infidelities. Sanger’s own
marriage to artist, William Sanger, was based on ‘varietism’ which permitted both partners to
seek sexual relationships beyond the marital bond.53 In the introductory remarks to Stopes’s
Married Love, Dr. William J. Robinson suggested that ambivalence toward monogamy lay at
the heart of the purposes of this book. Robinson suggested that non-monogamy looked to a
perhaps future utopia, contending that monogamy is “the only socially approved and legally
permitted system, and we have to deal with it.”54 He went on to address the reformers
involved in marriage experiments, stating that:

those radical sexologists who do not believe that monogamy is the best system of sexual
relationship, who are sure that it will not survive for all eternity, that it will be replaced
in the future by a higher adjustment will agree, even if they do so reluctantly, that for a
few years to come – say five hundred to a thousand – it will be the only feasible, the only

52 Ibid., 126.
53 For a discussion on Sanger’s marriage as part of the bohemian ethic of Greenwich Village, see Coates,
54 Marie Stopes, Married Love; or Love in Marriage, preface and notes by William J. Robinson (New York:
Stopes herself seemed to espouse this view of *Married Love* as a practical guide to confront the present conditions and exigencies of monogamous marriage. She wrote *Married Love* shortly after divorcing Canadian botanist, Sir Reginald Ruggles Gates, whom she claimed could not consummate the marriage. As Stopes’s biographer, June Rose, has contended, Gates ardently defended his sexuality by suggesting that Stopes was sexually insatiable. During her marriage to Gates, Stopes carried on an affair with her later biographer, Aylmer Maude. Although Stopes seemed to exalt monogamy, her marriage to Humphrey Verdon Roe eventually involved a mutual agreement that she could seek affairs elsewhere so long as he was unable to sexually satisfy her. Such an arrangement led to Stopes’s affair with a much younger man, Keith Bryant, another one of her biographers. Stopes’s and Sanger’s seeming ambivalence on the question of monogamy points out their negotiation of what was suitable for a radical intelligentsia and what was safe to prescribe to a wider audience of middle class couples.

What Stopes and Sanger prescribed as a kind of ethic for practicing sex had specific manifestations in bohemian ‘varietist’ marriages which exalted spiritual, but not institutional, monogamy, sensitivity to a partner by allowing sexual freedom beyond the marriage, and an appreciation of the need of each partner for a social community beyond the private interests of the nuclear family. The marriages of Neith Boyce and Hutchins Hapgood and Dora and

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55 Ibid., 11-12.
57 Ibid., 103.
59 Ibid.
Bertrand Russell are examples of how the sexual ethic described by Sanger and Stopes took on a specific meaning in Greenwich Village and Bloomsbury circles. In Greenwich Village, the Hapgoods and Sanger moved in the same circles of bohemian radicalism, attending Mabel Dodge’s salon and associating with Emma Goldman. In London, Stopes collaborated with Dora and Bertrand Russell, exchanging letters on their mutual involvement in the birth control movement.  

As educated white middle class couples, the negotiations of intimacy in the Hapgood and Russell marriages show the specific tensions and anxieties that arose from the effort to practice a sexual ethic of mutual pleasure. Such tensions and anxieties were, like claiming neurasthenic symptoms, performances of a ‘civilized’ status, but enacted through the imperative to reach ‘sex-communion.’ As the cases of the Hapgoods and the Russells will show, these struggles presumed the need for white middle class men to control their impulses and take time out of their professional lives to learn the ‘art of love’ and the need for white middle class women to discover their sexual side, moving beyond the denial of sexual desire and the pretense to passionlessness, chasteness, and innocence.

Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce’s relationship points to a sexual ethic to produce love which existed among radical bohemians years before Stopes and Sanger published their detailed accounts of the complex physical, mental, and emotional coordination of bodies. Lesley Hall has suggested that the popularity of Stopes’s *Married Love* in 1918 can be accounted for her writing at the right time in “the spirit of the age.”

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61 Hall, 209.
Bloomsbury marriages helped to set the stage for what Hall has referred to as “the sudden efflorescence of a new form of marriage manual” in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{62} When they met in the 1890s, Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce were both journalists living in New York City. They worked together on the \textit{Commercial Advertiser} for the muckraking journalist and editor, Lincoln Steffens. They had a middle class upbringing, attended college, and were deeply critical of the Puritanism of their parents’ generation. Neith and Hutchins were very self-aware of how their exposure to Victorian sexual norms had likely shaped their gendered responses to the act of sex and the consequent struggles for two such bodies to reach the ideal of mutual sexual satisfaction. Such an ideal created anxieties for both men who had to supposedly take the initiative to awaken sexual desire and for women who needed to actively respond.\textsuperscript{63} In their marriage, Neith frequently apologized for her failure to be more emotionally expressive. Around 1905, she promised Hutchins that she would be “more expressive – more everything that you like.”\textsuperscript{64} In her defense, Neith demanded greater understanding from Hutchins, claiming that he should know “how deep in me it is – so deep that even if it’s frozen sometimes on the surface – by some act of yours or mood of mine there are depths upon depths below that are unchanged + will always be.”\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 208.
\textsuperscript{63} Nancy Cott has used the term “passionlessness” to describe the set of ideas surrounding the understanding of women’s sexuality and moral nature in the context of Victorian sexual morality. Cott’s discussion of passionlessness offers an alternative view to the dominant narrative of Victorian sexual morality as ultimately disadvantageous to women as the denial of sexual desires. Instead, Cott shows that passionlessness could enable Anglo-American women to assert sexual control in the context of Victorian marriage through the right to refuse conjugal rights and the ability to claim spiritual allegiance to God over obedience to a husband. See Nancy Cott, “Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850,” in \textit{Signs: Journal of Women or Culture and Society} 4(2) (Autumn 1978): 219-236. Cott’s ideas of passionlessness, relate to my project insofar as my interests lie in how early twentieth century sex reformers’ understanding of the costs of Victorian sexual morality provides an important reference point for considering the cultural work of practices of intimacy.

\textsuperscript{64} Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 1905. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 19, File 497.
\textsuperscript{65} Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 1905. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 19, File 499.
positioned her own body in response to Hutchins as an extraordinary effort to transform the supposed ‘coldness’ of white middle class Victorian femininity which had turned prudishness, aloofness, and passionlessness into virtues. In doing so, however, Neith looked to raise an affective potential within her own body through a relation to Hutchins and the exigency of reaching a spiritual union.

As Neith worried about how to reform what appeared as coldness, Hutchins anxiously doubted his ability to fully satisfy her. In October of 1905, Hutchins’s performance anxiety surfaced in a letter to Neith, reproaching her for referring to him as a past lover. He communicated his efforts to sexually satisfy her over the past few years of their marriage when he asked, “Have I not tried always to arouse you and make you love me warmly?”\(^{66}\) In 1916, after seventeen years of marriage, Hutchins continued to seek to evoke sexual responses from Neith, writing to her of his being “full of lust and love and desire to talk and hear you talk! I don’t know how I can go to bed alone!”\(^{67}\) Hutchins’s efforts to adjust his own body to elicit female sexual desire points to a transformation in white middle class masculinity, self-consciously monitoring sexual adequacy in the milieu of increasing knowledge and attention to the possibilities of female sexual pleasure. This process of adjusting feminine response and masculine responses to a common goal illustrates sympathetic connectivity, rooted in transformations in white middle class masculinity and femininity.

\(^{66}\) Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 31 October 1905. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 12, File 363.
\(^{67}\) Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 1916. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Box 12, File 363.
Living in the radical bohemian milieu of Greenwich Village, the Hapgoods were part of a world where the sexual ethic of mutuality so precisely articulated by Sanger and Stopes, also took on a specific character in the efforts to remake marriage along more egalitarian lines. Within the Village, a number of sex radical couples lived according to a ‘varietist’ ethic of marriage which seemed to intensify the efforts to elicit reciprocal affection because of the presence of multiple lovers and networks beyond the family. Writing to Neith in 1916, Hutchins looked for reassurance that his feelings were reciprocated. He urged her to “Tell me you love me and also tell me about the flirtations you are having. Have you been unfaithful? Have you sinned? Did you like it? Come hug me and confess it all!” Hutchins ended his letter by referring to himself as a “spiritual monogamist” because where other women are concerned, “my imagination and my nervous system do not seem to fit in with them.” Hutchins’s invocation of nervousness here performed a specific late nineteenth and early twentieth century formation of white middle class masculinity, re-articulated as the affectively charged potential of the heterosexual white middle class male body to sympathetically connect with a woman. In the same comment, Hutchins also tied his spiritual experience of sex to this nervous male body.

Hutchins’s autobiography, *A Victorian in the Modern World*, describes the emotional work and difficulties of effecting a transformation in white middle class masculinity which had presumed conjugal rights to the wife, the role of economic provider, and the sexual approach to the wife as a passive partner. In Greenwich Village, sex radicals’ marriage experiments combined the new sexual ethics with efforts to radically alter the power

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68 Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 1916. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Box 12, File 363.
69 Ibid.
relationships of Victorian bourgeois marriage. Hutchins described the milieu of Greenwich Village as a place where one could go into a café and join in what he referred to as a “symposium” on “sexual ethics.”

Although Hutchins advocated a new sexual morality, he commented on the difficulties for the men of Greenwich Village to adjust to the shift in women’s roles and the conceptions of their sexual nature. In the Village, Hutchins indicated that sexual freedom revealed the “naturalness of woman’s instinct.”

Depicting Greenwich Village as a kind of crucible for a radical transformation in the dynamics between men and women, Hutchins explained that “The woman was in full possession of what the man used to regard as his ‘rights,’ and the men, even the most advanced of them, suffered from the woman’s full assumption of his old privileges.”

As sociologist Michael Kimmel has shown, there were a segment of feminist men in Greenwich Village who challenged the traditional white middle class privileges of masculinity in the effort to create more egalitarian marital relations.

New York City’s Greenwich Village, however, was not the only place one could find the struggles and pleasures of experimenting with sex and marriage. Floyd Dell, who eventually moved to New York City and wrote for the radical socialist periodical, The Masses, was first initiated into bohemian sexual ethics in Chicago. Dell’s 1930 work on Love in the Machine Age focused on the early twentieth century efforts to redefine marriage and destroy what he criticized as the patriarchal regime. Dell emphasized how these reform

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71 Ibid., 320.
72 Ibid.
efforts changed the dynamics of courtship where “normal selective courtship begins in play” and moves to the stage of “instinctive comparisons.” Dell argued that both partners to such a relationship became aware of their “emotional responsibilities” which he elided with physical responsibility. Both Chicago and New York City were part of a cosmopolitan network of bohemian communities which facilitated communication between sex radicals through the publishing and institutional channels of sex reform. The Russell marriage in London’s Bloomsbury is a case in point.

The Russell marriage attests to the ways that a new sexual ethics moved through circuits that intertwined metropolitan life, sexuality, and avant-garde intellectual critiques of existing institutions. Both Dora and Bertrand Russell were educated at Cambridge University where radical theories on sex and marriage circulated among the student population. It was here that Bertrand Russell and other Bloomsbury Group members consolidated their relationships as a radical crowd intent on practicing marriage in a different way. Bertrand Russell met Dora while she was a student at Girton College, Cambridge and, upon their meeting, discussed their mutual criticisms of legal marriage. When they married in 1921, they embarked on a marriage experiment along the same lines as the Hapgoods. In 1933, shortly after the Russells separated and two years before their divorce

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75 Ibid., 176.
77 Katie Roiphe draws attention to social experiments in non-monogamous marriages among London intellectuals, particularly those who were connected to the Bloomsbury Group. See Katie Roiphe, *Uncommon Arrangements: Seven Portraits of Married Life in London’s Literary Circles, 1910-1939* (New York: The Dial Press, 2007).
would be finalized, Dora reminded Bertrand of their arrangement to reconstruct marriage beyond the confines of legal and social institutions. She explained that “According to any decent code, such as we lived by people should be free to have children with the men and women they love.”

During their marriage, Bertrand and Dora agreed to not only allow each other the freedom to pursue extramarital affairs but to also love and accept any children that resulted from such indiscretions. Although living in the radical milieu of Bloomsbury, the Russells’ marital and sexual practices were not specific to Bloomsbury but a wider cosmopolitan phenomenon that situated them and Bloomsbury itself in transnational networks of sex reform.

Like the Hapgoods’ marriage experiment, the Russells’ efforts to remake marriage were inseparable from the sexual ethics of training the body to reach and elicit higher levels of feeling which intermingled love and sexual pleasure. I would argue that this amounted to a specific form of ‘affective labour’ both in the sense of Hera Cook’s attention to the physical labour in sexuality and Michael Hardt’s attention to ‘affective labour’ as immaterial labor which Hardt largely conceives as informational. I suggest that affective labour in this context amounts to the extraordinary work of tapping into the body’s affective potential.

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Bertrand Russell confronted similar anxieties to those of Hutchins Hapgood to the extent that he considered visiting a physician who might advise him on how to sexually satisfy Dora.  

This gesture points to a significant transformation in both the medical establishment and white middle class masculinity in terms of the increased attention of the medical profession to providing sexual knowledge and white middle class men’s greater ease, comfort, and sense of obligation in seeking sexual advice. For Bertrand Russell, his sexual insecurities reached the point at which he despondently claimed that Dora ought to have more children with men who can give them to her. This was Bertrand Russell’s initial response to the news of Dora’s pregnancy with the child of her lover, American journalist Griffin Barry. Like the Hapgoods, the Russell couple placed tremendous importance on sex as an emotionally invested experience. Dora Russell wrote of “sex-love” in her 1927 *The Right to Be Happy* as “physical sympathy and intimate union, we draw into ourselves in no other way the understanding of another human personality, and the knowledge of two very different creatures can live in exquisite harmony.” Two years later, Bertrand Russell’s publication *Marriage and Morals* reinforced the importance of love in sexual relations. Contrasting sex with love and sex without love, Russell maintained that sex with love rejuvenated one’s whole being whereas sex without love would simply leave one bitter, fatigued and degenerate.  

By referring to sex with love in terms of rejuvenating a fatigued and degenerate body, Russell specifically located the practice of sex with love as the promise of the affective potential in a white middle class professional male body which was disturbingly

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82 Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 20 October 1927. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29.  
83 Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 14 November 1929. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29.  
exhausted by overwork, consumed by the competition for material wealth, and in danger of
degeneration due to the effects of modern civilization on white health.

While both the Russell and Hapgood marriages exemplify the romanticization of
white middle class heterosexual norms, they also point to a radicalized heterosexuality
insofar as heterosexual desire here extended the boundaries of the conventionally defined
nuclear family and troubled the legally defined institution of marriage. Both the Hapgoods
and the Russells extended their families to include their extramarital lovers and illegitimate
children. They often justified their radical families in terms of a socialist politics that
undermined the exclusivity of the private family which jealously defended its property rights
in both persons and possessions. In contrast to what British novelist and sex reformer, H.G.
Wells, called “jealousy-marriage,”86 the new reformed marriage entailed bringing
extramarital lovers within an expanding network of love as the practice of a sympathetic
connectivity between bodies that transformed the social. When defending his affair with
Lucy Collier, Hutchins told Mabel Dodge that “I am in a really social situation with several
persons - and you understand only individual situations and clashing wills.”87 He referred to
this situation as “an unusually beautiful social desire.”88 Neith wrote to Mabel, “I really feel
very kindly toward her and don’t want her to hate me – and why should she?”89 Neith also
seemed to feel an ethical obligation in not “using the strong arm or the spiritual policeman’s

86 H.G. Wells, “Divorce is Inhuman,” in Divorce As I See It, eds. Bertrand Russell, Fannie Hurst, H.G.Wells,
Theodore Dreiser, Warwick Deeping, Rebecca West, Andre Maurois and Leon Feuchtwanger (London: Noel
Douglas, 1930), 33.
87 Hutchins Hapgood to Mabel Dodge, 27 January 1916. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 5,
File 153.
88 Ibid.
89 Neith Boyce to Mabel Dodge, undated. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 5, File 156.
Angered by Mabel’s interference in this matter, Hutchins told her that she had the kind of nature that demanded “something jealous and exclusive, at bottom egotistic and deeply unsocial.” In the milieu of Greenwich Village’s ethic of radical marriage and socialism, these were emotionally laden fighting words. For both British and American sex reformers, the accusations of jealousy, egotism, and exclusivity implied personal affective attachments to ownership and private property and political attachments to patriarchy and capitalism. Neith reassured Mabel of her awareness and participation in this arrangement, explaining her friendly intentions toward Lucy. The Hapgoods exchange of letters with Mabel over the Collier affair show the emotional and political dimensions of the new sexual ethics profoundly tied to remaking marriage.

What the 1929 international meeting of the WLSR in London had advanced as a new sexual ethics had been dispersed as a cosmopolitan phenomenon in bohemian communities of different nations united in their efforts to redefine marriage. English professor and scholar of postcolonial theory, Leela Gandhi, suggests in *Affective Communities* that communities can be shaped in ways that decenter the nation. Gandhi argues that reformers created alliances based on gestures of friendship and an ethical investment against imperialism that shaped communities that cut across national boundaries. I suggest a similar line of reasoning to explain the similarities between the Hapgood marriage and the Russell marriage. Both marriages can be conceived as part of “affective communities” of sex reform where a common set of sexual ethics profoundly influenced how sex reformers in different countries

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90 Ibid.
practiced sex, marriage, and family life. Six years after the Russells had married, Dora’s lover Roy Randall compared her to an ambassador who carried out diplomatic negotiations between him and Bertrand.\textsuperscript{93} Randall cultivated a friendship with Bertrand and developed an affectionate attachment to Dora and Bertrand’s daughter Kate.\textsuperscript{94} Like the Hapgoods, both Dora Russell and Bertrand Russell brought their extramarital lovers into the family fold. Bertrand Russell praised Dora on a number of occasions for inviting his lovers to spend Christmas with the family.\textsuperscript{95} Even when Dora took American Greenwich Village journalist Griffin Barry as a lover, Randall continued to be part of the Russell family affairs.\textsuperscript{96} In September of 1928, Randall reminded Dora of a disastrous dinner party, claiming that “I never connected the failure of that dinner with Griffin Barry – only with my misunderstanding of the Darwinian theory! And with your difficulties with Alice and Bertie.”\textsuperscript{97} Later on in the Russell marriage, Dora’s pregnancy with Griffin Barry’s daughter, Harriet, led Bertrand Russell to offer to adopt Harriet and take on the fatherly responsibilities.\textsuperscript{98} Shortly after the Russells separated in 1932, Dora wrote to Bertrand of how she had appreciated his kindness to Griffin and would have offered the same kindness to any child of Bertrand’s lover and soon-to-be new wife, Patricia Spence.\textsuperscript{99} Like the Greenwich Village sex radicals, both Dora and Bertrand regarded their family life as a commitment to socialist and feminist principles of relinquishing attachments to private

\textsuperscript{93} Roy Randall to Dora Russell, 28 July 1927. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 78-92, File 78.
\textsuperscript{94} Roy Randall to Dora Russell, undated. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 78-92, File 78.
\textsuperscript{95} Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 19 November 1927. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29.
\textsuperscript{96} On Griffin Barry and Dora Russell’s relationship, see Harriet Ward, A Man of Small Importance: My Father Griffin Barry (Debenham, Suffolk: Dormouse Books, 2003).
\textsuperscript{97} Roy Randall to Dora Russell, 7 September 1928. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 78-92, File 78.
\textsuperscript{98} Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 7 November 1929. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29.
\textsuperscript{99} Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 24 November 1929. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29.
\textsuperscript{99} Dora Russell to Bertrand Russell, 9 March 1933. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 78-92, File 82.
property which, in the context of marriage, often took the form of claims to the exclusive right of the wife’s sexuality and entailed her economic dependence. Like the Hapgoods, the Russells understood the remaking of marriage as inextricably tied to remaking the social.

The Russells and the Hapgoods’ family lives show the shifting and dynamic relations which pushed at the boundaries of what constituted the family at the site of a radicalized heterosexuality. Within these families, a particular form of citizenship which can be described as sympathetic connectivity, accounted for the privileges, freedom, and rights of the members. These families functioned as communities based on defining belonging through the feeling and expression of love. However, as sex reformers expanded the terms of inclusion within a family along the lines of love, they also defined terms of exclusion along these same lines. Although Hutchins Hapgood regarded the immigrant and working-class populations of New York City as highly sexual, instinctive, and passionate, he affirmed his own evolutionary and affective distance from them by claiming:

> It is easy to find commonplace filthy, bestial human beings, but the power of seeing in them, or in anyone, the ‘primal sympathy’ for things which to refined persons have an added charm for their very primal quality, is not too common. To see the necessary is a great gift, and to feel its large attractiveness is a great joy. It is because that I am so much civilized in some ways – too much, perhaps, for some practical purposes – that I like the contemplation of the elemental and the simple.100

As we saw in the previous chapter Charles Darwin proclaimed sympathy as a development of civilization. Here Hapgood aligned sympathy with the human as opposed to ‘bestial’, the ‘civilized’ as opposed to the savage, and the intelligent and the complex as opposed to the ‘elemental and the simple.’ In other words, Hapgood here endowed bodies with a particular affective potential for forming specific kinds of connections that racialized and classed these

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100 Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 16 June 1898. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 11, File 350.
bodies. In Dora Russell’s 1927 work on *The Right To Happiness*, she advocated “temporary sex partnerships” and “sex love” but situated the urgency for such reform in sexual morals in light of white middle class bodies.\(^{101}\) She claimed that “sex love and love of children that had been part of life hang on the ‘economic man’ as an excrescence or a luxury. There is no room for them in the scheme of things.”\(^{102}\) In this same work, Russell discussed “a real sex union” as “the civilizing of sex.”\(^{103}\) Bertrand Russell’s 1929 *Marriage and Morals* suggested that “extra-marital sexual relations” was “too austere a precept, for after all we are dealing with a matter in which human emotions are very strongly involved.”\(^{104}\) As Bertrand Russell addressed the reform of marriage, he specifically tied these reforms to the happiness of “a civilized man and woman” who would live in mutual freedom and the physical and mental intimacy of shared values.\(^{105}\) A year after the publication of *Marriage and Morals*, Bertrand’s work on *The Conquest of Happiness* discussed the need to reform sexual morals in light of the specific physical condition of the “nervous fatigue” so prevalent in the “advanced communities” of “brain-workers” who were particularly sensitive to the urban environment.\(^{106}\) The Russell and Hapgood marriage experiments were justified on the basis of the peculiar sensitivity of ‘civilized’ white middle class bodies to sympathetically connect to others and shape love relations that could not be contained in conventional family forms.

II. “A Beautiful Social Desire:” White Middle Class Socialism and A New State for ‘Modern Marriage’

\(^{101}\) Russell, *The Right To Be Happy*, 154
\(^{102}\) Ibid., 75.
\(^{103}\) Ibid., 167.
\(^{105}\) Russell, *Marriage and Morals*, 143.
When Hutchins Hapgood defended his affair with Lucy Collier as “a beautiful social desire,” he situated his marriage experiment as a socialistic endeavour to remake the State. For many early twentieth century sex reformers, transforming sexual morality was inextricably tied to the economic relations between husbands and wives. They often invoked the trope of the professional husband who worked long hours to support his family and the dependent wife who became his sexual and ornamental possession. The Hapgoods’ and the Russells’ socialist views situated their marriage experiments in the longer history of free love’s connection with socialism in both Britain and the United States. They regarded their marriages as challenges to both patriarchy and capitalism which, they believed, worked in concert to perpetuate a harmful sexual morality that threatened the vitality of white middle class men and women. Far from content to consider their marriage experiments in ‘varietism’ as simply an alternative to conventional marriage, non-monogamous sex reformers looked to reform the State along socialist lines that would eventually normalize their sexual ethics and make them foundational to State policies. Historian Mari Jo Buhle has emphasized the importance of these “new intellectuals” and their calls for a new sexual morality to early twentieth century socialism, “where previously the ranks of the Left included a handful of intellectuals among its autodidact masses, now the Socialist movement

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attracted scores of college-educated men and women seeking rebellion.”

What I have described as the sympathetic connectivity of the white middle class body points to the mechanics of the social in terms of how bodies formed a community through specific decisions and practices that included and excluded certain bodies. This highlights the shifting and converging boundaries of both the family and the nation while re-articulating white middle class leadership of ‘civilization’ according to affective potential. This, I argue, amounted to a specific white middle class version of socialism. Sex radicals often looked to their sensitivity and capacity for sympathy as the justification for both the freedom of their marriages but their leading political roles in a future socialistic state governed on the basis of white middle class heterosexual love.

In this section, I want to build on what I demonstrated as the emotional, physical, and mental work of love in the intimate relationships between bodies which attended to the nuances of sensory responses, physical motions, and knowledge of bodies. Here I want to consider how those intimate relations delineated in sex manuals and practiced by the Hapgoods and the Russells inextricably intertwined the sociality of sex with the political practice of citizenship in remaking the State along lines of love. By exploring the linkage between sex reform and socialism, I want to highlight how the sex reformers’ challenges to the institution of marriage and sexual norms were also profoundly tied to reimagining economic and political relations which looked to citizenship in terms of emotionally gendered roles. In other words, this section points to how sex reformers’ views of intimacy

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108 Mari Jo Buhle, Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 258. Buhle also indicates that these “new intellectuals” drew upon British socialists who were also advocating a new sexual morality. She points out that these “new intellectuals” in the United States “found kindred spirits among British New Moralists.” See Buhle, Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920, 260.
were not merely matters confined to bedrooms and private life but were invested in political and ethical ways of building a new world.

In their calls for a new sexual morality, sex reformers not only situated their critique within white middle class family norms but their critique of capitalism was rooted in concerns for the sexual energies of white middle class men and women. On both sides of the Atlantic, sex reformers deployed the trope of the white American heterosexual businessman who no longer had the time for love. Hutchins Hapgood pointed out that “The husband, especially in America, feels that it is no longer necessary to develop the art, the technique, of love; to continue to surprise the wife with his resourcefulness, his growing charm, and power and knowledge.”\textsuperscript{109} The American husband seeking success in a capitalist economy “saves his real creative energy for his work, for his crude responsibilities, and does not cultivate his wife’s sensibilities.”\textsuperscript{110} Hapgood drew attention to a particular distribution of vital energies which, where directed into work, took away from the sexual intensity of the home. Bertrand Russell also highlighted the American businessman’s condition as an extreme case of the devitalization of white middle class energies under capitalism. In \textit{Marriage and Morals}, Bertrand Russell used the example of the American businessman who has no time for love where love acts in an antagonistic relation to the “gospel of work” and economic success, leaving wives dissatisfied.\textsuperscript{111} Russell went on to elaborate the dire social implications of this emotional bankruptcy such as the husband’s immersion in work, spending his leisure time

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\item \textsuperscript{109} Hutchins Hapgood, “Love and Technique,” 13 August 1912. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 27, File 745.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Russell, \textit{Marriage and Morals}, 119-120.
\end{enumerate}
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watching prizefights, and persecuting radicals.\footnote{112} He also considered the devastating effects of leaving a wife sexually dissatisfied, suggesting this contributed to her puritanical views and condemnation of the liberal sexual lives of others.\footnote{113} While lecturing in the United States, Bertrand Russell understood his encounters with American ladies in this context. In April of 1924, he wrote to Dora that the “American ladies are quite dreadful.”\footnote{114} Conveying his contempt for these women, he exclaimed, “Poor things, they get no male companionship, + they want it. They have to put up with nothing but sloppy copulation. So they try to rape the mind of every lecturer who comes along. That is why they are willing to pay for lectures. I am really a species of mental male prostitute.”\footnote{115} For British sex reformers, the trope of the American professional husband could be used to point out a specific and extreme case of the broader condition of devitalized white middle class men under liberal capitalist regimes. Sex reformers evidently took note of a particular affective white middle class condition in what historians have described as a period of burgeoning American capitalism and mass consumerism.\footnote{116}

\footnote{112} Ibid., 121.
\footnote{113} Ibid.
\footnote{114} Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 18 April 1924. Bertrand Russell Archives, Bertrand Russell fonds, McMaster, Box 7.29.
\footnote{115} Ibid.
\footnote{116} On the late nineteenth century shift to big business in America, see Alan Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America: culture and society in the Gilded Age (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982). Historians on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century rise of consumer capitalism have generally considered the relationship between bodies and commodities in terms of themes of how accumulation came to mark citizenship and the use of commodities as devices for self-fashioning, and as a politics of empire whereby practices of commodity consumption were implicated in defining the nation. On the development of consumption as a condition of citizenship see Lizabeth Cohen, A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003). Cohen charts the tensions between the citizen consumer ideal and the purchaser consumer ideal as the competing interests of aims to protect consumers and regulate products and the look to purchasing power as the bedrock of the nation’s well-being. Charles McGovern also explores how Americans came to associate consumption with national identity in Charles McGovern, Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006). On the self-fashioning of the subject through gendered practices of consumption, see Nan Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: working women, popular culture, and labor politics at the turn of the twentieth century
As they turned their attention to the importance of sexual energies for civilization, sex reformers articulated a specific white middle class version of feminism and socialism at the site of remaking marriage and the State. In Britain and the United States, there were leading sex reformers who criticized mainstream feminism’s focus on the professional career-oriented New Woman as the exemplar of women’s emancipation. Emma Goldman criticized the “emancipation which has brought woman economic equality with man; that is she can choose her own profession and trade, but as her past and present physical training have not equipped her with the necessary strength to compete with man, she is often compelled to exhaust all her energy, use up her vitality and strain every nerve in order to reach the market value.” Dora Russell also addressed the importance of feeling hitherto neglected by feminism’s emphasis on the professional woman. Condemning single working girls for “thwarting parenthood,” Dora argued that the real project for feminism should be “to raise the social, economic, and intellectual status of the mother which is at present inferior to

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that of the earning spinster or independent woman who leads a free sexual life.”\footnote{Russell, \textit{The Right To Be Happy}, 168, 172.} Although Dora and Goldman may have disagreed on the nature of the professional woman’s sexual life, they both regarded mainstream feminism as problematic in its neglect of feeling and emotions. For Dora, maternal feeling was absolutely essential to feminism as the “source of individual and social happiness.”\footnote{Ibid., 173.} Much like Hutchins and Bertrand, Dora’s and Goldman’s comments suggest that, in this period, sexual energies came to be regarded as economic and political resources which illuminated white middle class suffering under capitalism, particularly in the context of the sexual life of white middle class homes.

While sex reformers in both Britain and the United States shared similar struggles in their efforts to reform sexual ethics, they contended with specific national circumstances which influenced their strategies. In Britain, sex reformers were more likely to seek institutional channels for reform such as running for office, petitioning the government, and forming alliances within the Labour Party. The political climate in Britain, specifically with its receptivity to socialism, markedly contrasted with the scale of militant labour violence, anarchist activities, governmental persecution of radicals, the enforcement of the Comstock Laws, and the general failure of the government to restrain coercive corporate tactics against workers. In the American context, sex reformers like Emma Goldman, Margaret Sanger, Hutchins Hapgood, John Reed, Max Eastman, and Mabel Dodge tended to be suspicious of party politics and tended to sever their socialist activities from the institutional and legal machinery of the American government. In both New York City and London, sex reformers encountered the tensions between feminism and socialism. In the case of socialism and
anarchism, sex reformers found it considerably difficult to convince the party leadership that questions of sexual freedom were also questions of economics. Dora Russell, for example, encountered such difficulties in consolidating the Workers Birth Control Group. On one occasion, the efforts to get birth control put on the agenda at the meeting of the Women’s Division of the Labour Party created a split in the group among leading socialist women. Anarchist, Emma Goldman, also encountered similar difficulties when she fought to get the male leadership of the anarchist movement to pay attention to the sex question. Despite these different national contexts, sex reformers seemed to agree that there was a common transatlantic problem of devitalized white middle class sexual energies which required remaking the home and the State along feminist and socialist lines.

What did it mean for early twentieth century sex reformers to shape a vision of socialism that was tied to a critique of capitalism’s effects on white middle class sexual energies? This transformation importantly turned socialism into a platform for reinforcing white middle class leadership and offered a specifically biologically grounded definition of sympathy that re-entrenched class difference. Havelock Ellis, a sex reformer and socialist, described what he saw as the early twentieth century transformation of socialism, drawing specific attention to sympathy. In April of 1912, Ellis’s article on “Individualism and Socialism” appeared in the *Contemporary Review*. Ellis traced the history of socialism to an eighteenth century form of sympathy and the “primitive family” which functioned as a unit

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subordinating individuals to the collective. Ellis argued that, in contrast to Karl Marx’s “rigid economic theory,” socialism had now attained a modern and practical meaning which “covers all the activities – first instinctive, then organized- which arise out of the fundamental fact that man is a social animal.” Dora Russell made a similar claim in her 1925 *Hypatia*, where she reconceptualized the Marxist superstructure as the exchange of “animal passions” rather than on the exchange of goods. In Ellis’s version of socialism, it had ceased to be about sympathy as charity which, in present circumstances, was purportedly dangerous in encouraging the breeding of defectives. According to Ellis, the socialism of 1912 looked to the quality of orienting the State toward ensuring “eugenic selection” and “the counterbalancing tendency of individualism, and the eugenic guardianship of the race.” There is also evidence of the compatibility of socialism and eugenics in the American radical socialist circles. In the September 1913 issue of the radical socialist periodical, *The Masses*, one author wrote on “Natural Eugenics,” criticizing women’s economic dependence on men because it constrained her choice of mate selection which had dire implications for conserving the race. On this ground, the author advocated mothers’ pensions. Ellis’s work is one example of how sympathetic connectivity can be seen as a practice of citizenship among sex reformers. First of all, they looked to white middle class bodies as the agents of sympathy to be selectively bestowed on the less fortunate. Secondly, how white middle class bodies sympathetically connected to other bodies whether in the

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124 Ibid., 522.
125 Dora Russell, *The Right To Be Happy*, 93.
126 Ellis, “Individualism and Socialism,” 526-527.
127 Ibid., 527.
129 Ibid.
mutually enhancing act of love or, like the practice of primitivism, using another body to rejuvenate white middle class sexual energies, ultimately invested white middle class bodies with the freedom and privileges of an affective form of citizenship.

What I have considered to be a specific version of white middle class socialism geared toward rejuvenating sexual energies also took the form of a class politics of primitivism. Hutchins Hapgood, who participated in the radical socialist and anarchist milieu of Greenwich Village extended the practice of primitivism to the working class. For Hutchins Hapgood, the working class held a particular fascination. He referred to his “philosophy of the proletarian” by observing the intimate practices of the working class. These sympathetic relations to the working class allowed Hutchins, like other middle class Greenwich Villagers, to cast the self as performative and transformative through the mode of sympathetic connectivity. This chameleon-like ability fetishized the transcendence of class by exalting instincts, emotions, and sexual energies. In other words, this was a form of primitivism along class lines which shows the interrelatedness of class and racial formations. To Hutchins, the working class by virtue of being less civilized was also far less inhibited. Hutchins easily aligned political and social anarchism with working class life. Upon relating a story to Neith of the ‘varietist’ or open marriage of the Johannsens, Hutchins indicated that “anarchistic ideas about everything have their birth-place in the labouring class – the class that naturally revolts.” Hutchins often wrote of his fascination with the

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131 Michael Omi and Howard Winant have used the term “racial formation” to conceptualize race as shifting and malleable category, specific to time and social context. See Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).
promiscuous, freer sexual practices of the working class yet failed to see these sex practices as a cultivation of love. Hutchins’s emphasis on the liberal sex practices among proletarians in contrast to his emphasis on love in the context of white educated middle class sexual freedom situates love at the heart of a class politics integral to white middle class socialism.

Transatlantic sex reformers used a discourse of love that narrowly circumscribed love as sympathetic connectivity among them as white middle class leaders of civilization. Bertrand Russell considered social movements in terms of an emotional movement in the world. At the outset of his 1918 book, *Roads to Freedom*, Russell claimed that “whatever bitterness and hate may be found in the movements [socialism, anarchism, and syndicalism] which we are to examine, it is not bitterness or hate, but love, that is their mainspring.”

Mabel Dodge had a similar vision of the interconnectedness of economics and emotions. She advocated a transformation in the system of governance which would privilege love values over money values. By this, Dodge meant that labour would be valued in and of itself for its artistic and creative potential instead of the dollar value that could be extracted from it. To Dodge and her socialist sex reforming colleagues, materialism, capitalism and money values exploited workers because profit rather than the artistic integrity of the activity itself was valued. For Dodge, love was what promised a transformation from a capitalist to a socialist society. In her article on “The Money Complex,” Dodge maintained that:

> Money often becomes the surrogate for the repressed emotions. When people are unable to love freely and to be loved in return, they can find an outlet in the activity of adding gold and silver together and in that way getting a feeling of increased significance.

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134 Mabel Dodge, “‘Pass’d! for Us, Forever Pass’d’ What Shall We Build? Let the People Revalue, rule by New Light.” N.d. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 91.

Dodge reasoned that love was a crucial source of energy that leveled class distinctions because “How each man uses his energy and what he does with it constitutes his history. All that he produces is forms of his energy.” Yet, Dodge had relied on existing class and racial distinctions as well as developing eugenic classifications to differentiate the potential and quality of energy which also differentiated capacities for love.

Dodge’s concern over rejuvenating energy derived from wider cultural anxieties over a devitalized white middle class population that feared degeneration. Dodge clearly positioned this rejuvenation of valuable energy at the heart of white middle class marriages. Dodge exempted idiots and defectives from a valued energy producing class, arguing that the equality of man rests on “his sole possession, his energy. His problem is how to release it and use it for others. They all start even provided they are not idiots or defective in some way.” Dodge echoed the sentiments of many of her sex reform colleagues by undermining money values but then associating the energy of love with reproduction. This positioned family formation and marriage as critical to the development of a socialist state governed by love. Positing this idealized world socialism, Dodge argued that once men learned to love their neighbours, “a social sense could develop in them that might bring about an authentic redistribution of money that would last. But not by force, not by strong government, by dictating, or by laws. Only by understanding and the release of love.” Both Bertrand Russell and Dodge’s association of socialism with love had two strategic advantages that

underpinned what I have identified as a white middle class version of socialism. Firstly, white middle class intellectuals could affirm sexual energies, supposedly freeing themselves from suffering under capitalism and, at the same time, reinforce class differences in terms of affective potential. Secondly, they could ethically justify their leadership of a future socialist society as furthering the production of love in the world.

Sex reformers’ radical feminist and socialist politics were about more than simply taking the model of the family and transposing it onto society. Indeed, an important aspect of the sex reform critique of marriage was that a capitalistic sexual morality had artificially severed family affections from social relations, turning family love into the pursuit of private gain, ownership over family members as possessions, and selfish desires to compete with others in the wider world to exalt family status and well-being. Instead, sex reformers proposed that the very nature of family affections, particularly maternal love, should be interwoven into the social fabric which simultaneously required overhauling capitalism. In Dora Russell’s attack on both the economic and sexual organization of family life, she specified two gendered irrational aspects of parental feeling: the masculine form of an interest in property rights tied to the legitimacy of children and the desire for immortality by carrying on the family name and the feminine form of a “physical sympathy” rooted in the exclusive attachment to feeding and caring for one’s own husband and children which also bound the wife to her husband’s financial support.¹⁴⁰ Russell’s proposal for reforming both the family and society zeroed in on the transformative possibilities of parental feeling which lends further historical specificity to the political and sexual dimensions of sympathetic connectivity as a mode of relationality.

¹⁴⁰ Russell, The Right To Be Happy, 180.
In contrast to the severing of home from the world of work and politics, Dora Russell contended that “parental feeling leaves the restricted field of the family and attaches itself to the destiny of the whole human race.”\textsuperscript{141} At a time when Eleanor Rathbone in Britain campaigned for mothers’ pensions and American Progressive women in the United States led the newly formed State Department, the Women’s Bureau, in the interests of infant and maternal welfare, Russell argued that maternity should be paid in recognition of its communal service.\textsuperscript{142} She seized on parental feeling as the key to altering the very basis of communal relations. According to Dora:

\begin{quote}
the creative delight of parenthood would be more and more realized by the whole community and that as we turned our attention more and more to the happiness of the child, so would our political institutions, our foreign policy, our perspectives, our dreams, our very natures be turned from pursuing hatred and destruction to the delight and happiness of conscious creation.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

Russell’s plan called for the simultaneous transformation of gender relations by remaking the home and the State to facilitate “the mutual co-operation between men and women.”\textsuperscript{144} Dora Russell suggested that this could form the basis of an “individual and communal philosophy,” calling for “not a decline of the paternal or a mere intensification of maternal feeling, but a fusion of the two.”\textsuperscript{145} This proposal was positioned within early twentieth century debates over the place of the father in the family, specifically concerns among social

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 197.
\item Ibid., 199-200.
\item Ibid., 200.
\item Ibid., 185.
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146 Scientists, feminists, and socialists over the absent father and the importance of a paternal presence for child development.

In the radical milieu of Greenwich Village, sex radicals similarly argued for turning to familial affections, not as isolated from the world of politics, but as foundational to it. Although Julian Carter has used the term ‘mother-love’ as a new lens for historically grasping women’s relationships that fall outside the ‘romantic friendship’ or ‘lesbian’ paradigm, I suggest that mother-love was also critical to a radicalized heterosexual socialist project for transforming both marriage and economic relations. 147 Hutchins Hapgood’s newspaper article, “Mother’s Love,” referred to such love as “that reforming and transforming love.” 148 He proposed that “If a mother’s love were organized throughout the community, so that it affected our social life, what could possibly remain of evil in the industrial situation, in the political situation, in the criminal situation?” 149 Hapgood’s view of “mother love” suggests that what he saw as the “beautiful social desire” of his own relationship with Neith and the Colliers could be dispersed throughout the world. As seen in the Hapgoods’ play Enemies, maternal love could take on an erotically charged character in light of the rise of Freudian conceptions of sexuality and the family romance. Many sex reformers in this period transformed motherhood from the Victorian conception of

146 John Tosh has argued that the Victorian middle class father’s assertion of masculinity required distancing themselves from qualities of ‘feminine’ sensitivity and softness. Tosh points out that the Victorian father was emotionally absent even if not physically absent. See John Tosh, A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 96-97. Robert Griswold has discussed the historical transformation as turn toward emotional roles for fathers tied to the rise of the “companionate family” in nineteenth-century America. See Robert Griswold, Fatherhood in America: A History (New York: Basic Books, 1993).
149 Ibid.
motherhood as an evasive and acceptable way for middle class women to affirm sexuality to locating motherhood at the heart of the management of sex-instincts, mate selection, and reproduction in the interest of the future of the race. Hapgood’s consideration of the political and economic institutions of the world also suggests that love was produced and made possible by institutional networks. For many sex reformers who practiced non-monogamous marriage, the shift to remaking marriage along the lines of sexual freedom was inextricably tied to changing economic relations between the sexes which included professional work and the division of childcare and household labour.

Although the Hapgoods and the Russells took steps to invigorate the sexual intimacies of white middle class marriage, they also situated the very possibilities of such intimacies in gendered economic relations of professional work and domesticity. In an article for the newspaper, *The Commercial Advertiser*, Hutchins ideally described “Two Kinds of Love,” which idealized the form of love that exists “between two persons, a man and a woman and maybe that of ‘affinities,’ in a mature, high, experience, and not a base, foolish, or romantic sense.” Bertrand Russell, in a similar fashion, claimed “love must feel the ego of the beloved person as important as one’s own ego.” And, Dora Russell, described love as “physical sympathy and intimate union, we draw into ourselves another

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human personality.” While the previous section looked to the practice of sex to achieve such an ideal of love, this section focuses on the specific institutional arrangements undertaken that would facilitate the gendered economic conditions to make love possible. In this sense, the Hapgoods’ and the Russells’ efforts to reform the distribution of professional and household work between men and women was crucially part of making possible what Marcus Collins has considered an ethic of mutuality.

Both the Hapgood and the Russell families participated in radical milieus of socialist and feminist politics which looked to the mutual reconstitution of the home and state in a way that would engineer sympathetic connectivity. In other words, these radical milieus looked to redefine relations of work and home that would make it possible for white middle class men and women to “draw into ourselves another human personality.” In Dora’s 1929 speech on “Marriage and Freedom,” at the World League for Sexual Reform, she not only advocated a world based on love but specifically highlighted the transformation in gendered relations of work and home that would make this possible. Here, Dora outlined a series of principles for a society based on sexual freedom which included the following: married women should be under at least “social persuasion to continue to work after marriage” and “parties to a permanent partnership for child-rearing shall encourage sexual freedom for each other, and shall share the mutual domestic burdens in such a way as to make this possible for women equally with men.” Some years prior to Dora’s speech, Hutchins underlined the importance of feminism and professional work to more intimately connecting women to both

153 Russell, The Right To Be Happy, 131.
154 Collins, Modern Love.
the home and the world. Hutchins’s article on “Learning and Marriage” described a social and affective transformation in women’s bodies which can be seen as a view toward expanding possibilities for sympathetic connectivity. He wrote:

> It is beginning to be seen that women who work independently are, as a rule, more capable mothers and more interesting and attractive wives than those women who do not. Their natures are fed and enhanced by a vital relation to things outside the home, and thus greater spiritual and mental nutrition, and thus greater emotional enhancement, they bring to the home, to the children, to the husband.  

He concluded that this “vital relation” to the home and the wider world would make her “a better mother, a better lover, a better wife, a better citizen.” For two professional couples like the Hapgoods and the Russells, their shared work and knowledge were important conditions of intimacy that looked to shift the traditional gender and economic role of the white middle class woman and contest the role of the white middle class man as the breadwinner.

In both the Russell and Hapgood households, the commitment to shared professional work came to be a significant part of their marriage experiments. Bertrand Russell’s interest in Dora’s work suggested that love also required an intellectual connection. On one occasion, Bertrand Russell wrote to Dora, while on a lecture tour in the United States, that “I meet no one else whose outlook + point of view is really sympathetic to me, or whom I could endure as the mother of my children.” He connected Dora’s intelligence to their emotional and physical connection, emphasizing the uniqueness of their relationship in that “One never finds brains + vigour + public spirit all together with an unimpaired instinctive

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157 Ibid.
158 Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 11 October 1929. Dora Russell fonds., McMaster University, Box 7.29.
life.”¹⁵⁹ Throughout their marriage, Bertrand Russell supported Dora’s role as professional career woman and mother. In October of 1927, he told Dora “I shall be only too delighted to take on the domestic work now that you can earn so much money; that was formerly the only obstacle.”¹⁶⁰ In offering to redistribute the share of domestic labour, Bertrand recognized that “if you are to have a successful career, some separation will be unavoidable. You have already sold more copies of your book that I ever sold of any book before ‘Education.’”¹⁶¹ By praising the success of Dora’s work and sharing in her political activities for birth control, Bertrand Russell acknowledged the importance of creative, professional endeavours for wives as a condition of marital intimacy.¹⁶²

The Hapgoods also looked to shared knowledge and work as one site for sympathetically connecting to one another in ways that made intimacy contingent on selecting a mate of white middle class status and education. As journalists, the Hapgoods encouraged one another, with Hutchins particularly mindful of the importance of work to Neith. In June of 1898, a year prior to their marriage, Neith identified her work with self-worth, telling Hutchins, “Work is the best thing I’ve found so far anyway – when I’m not working I hate the world and myself.”¹⁶³ At this time, Hutchins and Neith discussed the model of the ‘modern’ New Woman. Reading George Bernard Shaw’s plays, Hutchins was reminded of these conversations.¹⁶⁴ Throughout their marriage, both Hutchins and Neith felt

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.
¹⁶⁰ Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 26 October 1927. Bertrand Russell fonds, McMaster, Box 7.29.
¹⁶¹ Ibid.
¹⁶² Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 27 November 1927. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29. In his support of Dora’s Workers’ Birth Control Group, see “Statement by Bertrand Russell on Behalf of the Workers’ Birth Control Group,” 1925. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 402-406, File 403.
¹⁶³ Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 16 June 1898. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 18, File 488.
¹⁶⁴ Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 11 June 1898. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 11, File 349.
the tensions to balance family life and work. These tensions show how the demands of a new sexual ethic of an appreciation of two personalities introduced shifts in gender roles. Neith negotiated the demands of childcare with her devotion to work. Writing to Hutchins in August of 1905, she anxiously told him, “I must go to work now- the only thing that bothers me here is lack of sleep. I have Boyce in the other room + Charles wakes me up about 6.”

A couple of years later, Neith told Hutchins of a book she had been reading by Lafcadio Hearn which made her think of their marriage. She explained to Hutchins:

> For as he [Hearn] says, all practical society is leagued together to stamp out the artist, when possible + you and I do not belong to practical society. The prospect of going home, though it attracts me, also frightens me. With three children - little money-making ability the cost of living + difficulty of servants - it means such tremendous demands on my time + energy just to keep the household going that I don’t see where work is going to come in - But I suppose it will!

By situating their lives as artists in contrast to the people of ‘practical society,’ Neith also placed their practices of intimacy and their interconnectedness through work within the world of a white emotive imaginary. She distanced their lives from those of ‘laborers,’ and encouraged Hutchins that when they would visit Italy, he would have “healthy domestic life (prunes, oatmeal, good meat, and conjugal peace) you will find the atmosphere you need for working out your material.” She assured him that this would allow him to “get away from your labour business + look at it calmly with the artistic eye – Then we shall have a good book of some sort.” Neith saw this work and domestic relationship as a partnership when in June of 1905, six years after their marriage, she told him “we haven’t been able to make

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165 Carol DeBoer discusses Neith’s struggles to conform to a “new paradigm for marriage” as both inspiration and interference in her writing. See Carol DeBoer, ed. *The Modern World of Neith Boyce: Autobiography and Diaries* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 27.
166 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 31 August 1905. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 19, File 497.
167 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 1907. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 19, File 501.
169 Ibid.
‘good’ in a worldly way [but] we both have talent and individuality.” Hutchins also encouraged Neith, telling her “The longer I know you the better I see how much cleverer you are than I.” He also excitedly wrote to her in 1908 that “Everybody seems much interested in your book - and in my conversation.” For both Hutchins and Neith who had been part of Greenwich Village’s feminist club Heterodoxy, the negotiation of work and household responsibilities partook of the early twentieth century feminist movement, the model for companionate marriage, and the concern over the costs to intimacy of the traditional economic roles of a breadwinner husband and an ornamental wife.

While the cooperative effort to share professional work and economic roles with wives in the Hapgood and Russell marriages looked to reshape the role of the Victorian middle class wife, there was also a similar effort to share household and childcare responsibilities which reshaped the Victorian middle class husband’s role. These dual shifts in both Victorian middle class femininity and masculinity at the site of the distribution of labour might be considered what leading sex reformer Edward Carpenter saw as the balancing masculine and feminine elements which, he contended, Nature failed to keep distinct in the two sexes. This made sense given Carpenter’s definition of love as “non-differentiation – absolute union of being.” In the early twentieth century, the Russells and the Hapgoods efforts to redefine the gendered division of household labor partook of this view of the mutual sharing of male and female elements and the turn toward ‘masculine

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170 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 22 June 1905. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 19, File 497.
171 Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 4 August 1900. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 11, File 355.
172 Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 1908. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 12, File 369.
174 Carpenter, Love’s Coming-of-Age, 115.
175 Ibid., 20.
domesticity.”

Both Bertrand Russell and Hutchins Hapgood participated in child-rearing duties. Hutchins, in fact, positioned his own body at the site of the ideal to achieve intimacy with a wife by sharing the household responsibilities. On one occasion, Hutchins expressed the desire to have shared Neith’s labour pains in order to have experienced motherhood. In 1908, Hutchins seemed to have embraced his role in the family, including its radical challenge to traditional white middle class manhood. He enthusiastically told Neith that he could understand “how a father loses his keenness for his male intellectual labours by being put in a position whereby he pays sympathetic attention to children, becomes feminized, as it were.” After eighteen years of marriage, in March of 1917, Hutchins seemed to have grown somewhat resentful. He wrote to Neith of his conversation with their editor Lincoln Steffens which suggested the emotional and practical difficulties of shifting the gendered economic roles of husband and wife in keeping with a new sexual ethic requiring sympathetic connectivity. Hutchins recounted to Neith that “Steffens, by the way, also said that he thought I for many years had been a good mother and that that had been good for you + for the family, but not for me or for my work.” The Hapgoods’ active shaping of household routines and professional work schedules shows the practical arrangements made to produce love by establishing connections across the economic and sexual divide between the traditional breadwinner-husband and dependent-wife. Hapgood is a good example of how these arrangements amounted to a practice of sympathetic connectivity where mutual

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178 Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 11 September 1908. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 12, File 369.
understanding, sexual intimacy, and shared labour were intended to mutually transform gendered subjectivity.

In their efforts to practice a new sexual morality, the Russells, like the Hapgoods, also turned to redistributing childcare responsibilities and re-articulating fatherly obligations in ways that were linked to a more general shift toward a sensitive, responsive, and emotional manhood. Bertrand Russell participated in childcare responsibilities, writing to Dora about Kate’s increase in weight and her cleverness, and both children’s physical and mental vigor. Russell fashioned himself as a father in the context of early twentieth century British and American intellectuals’ emphasis on the importance of the father as playmate. In various letters to Dora, Bertrand told her news of his time with daughter Kate and son John: making a snowman with John, putting them to bed, taking John to dance lessons, helping John with his homework, and taking them out on a motor boat at St. Ives. While away on lecture tours, Bertrand was mindful of the domestic burden on Dora with running their school which encompassed household labour as a boarding school tied to the routines of the Russells’ family life. In October of 1927, Bertrand expressed his concern over leaving Dora with much of the work, urging that they “live at Battine House, + have another teacher at Telegraph House, so that you are relieved of the work of putting to bed, minding at night,

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The Russells recognized the difficulties of pioneering a new form of family life along a more equitable division of professional and household labour. They realized that the possibilities for the success of such a radical family form would require a transformation in the State. As a socialist, Russell contemplated that if the State were to take over motherhood as a political service, this could do considerable damage to both men and women’s emotional relations. In *Marriage and Morals*, Bertrand Russell indicated the importance of paternity to the emotional lives of men. He, in fact, suggested that desires for children are stronger in men than in women who risk pain, labour, and “possible loss of beauty” as a concession to men’s desire for paternity. Although Russell condemned paternity’s investment in children as property, he suggested that to eliminate male responsibility for children would lead to the trivialization of sex, women’s loss of intimacy with men, and growing male boredom that would eliminate procreation. Possibly thinking of his marriage to Dora, he maintained that cooperative marriage was important because both sexes could learn from each other and provide for the “emotional education” of their children. Like Dora who advocated a “communal philosophy” on the basis of the fusion of maternal and paternal feeling, Bertrand’s role in the Russell household and his views on paternity pointed to parenthood as intimately tied to redefining gender relations as a practice of *sympathetic connectivity* at the site of the creation and caring for children.

Although the Russells and the Hapgoods looked to more equitably distribute household and professional work between men and women, their efforts to balance these

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183 Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 20 October 1927. Bertrand Russell fonds, McMaster, Box 7.29.
185 Ibid., 187, 199.
186 Ibid., 199.
labours often led them to resort to hiring female servants. As such, their efforts to reform the home and work in the interests of maximizing the possibilities for marital love can be seen as a specific version of white middle class socialism and feminism, where the burden of domestic labour continued to fall on ‘lower’ class women. For the Russells, additional servants and teaching staff were the solution to Dora’s frustrations over managing her own writing career, operating Beacon Hill School, and her responsibilities to her children and household.\footnote{Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 20 October 1927. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster, Box 7.29. Dora Russell, \textit{Tamarisk Tree: my quest for love and liberty}, 104.} Furthermore, the Russells expected the servants to be unconventional enough to adapt to the radical marital practices of the Russell household. On one occasion, Dora’s Irish cook, Hannah, was scandalized upon catching Bertrand Russell in a compromising position with the children’s French governess.\footnote{Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 26 August 1927. Dora Russell fonds, McMaster, Box 7.29.} Bertrand Russell suggested to Dora that they dismiss Hannah on account of her “Catholic morals.”\footnote{Ibid.} This prejudice against “Catholic morals” was part of a widespread view among sex reformers that Catholics were generally ‘lower’ class, backward populations, brainwashed by the priesthood and irresponsibly reproducing children out of devotion to a conservative sexual moral code. As ‘lower’ class and immigrant women, Catholic women, especially the Irish, had a history of supplying elite homes with a labour force of domestic servants in Britain and the United States.\footnote{See Elizabeth Ewen, \textit{Immigrant women in the land of dollars: life and culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925} (New York, 1985). On a history of the transformation from the ‘hired girl’ or ‘help’ to the degraded status of domestic servant, see Faye Dudden, \textit{Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America} (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983). Dudden points out the racial tensions with the Irish immigration whereby the post-Famine Irish migration of Irish single women in the late 1840s and 1850s flooded the domestic service market and overwhelmed the numbers of black women already in domestic service. Dudden also highlights the racial politics of the category of ‘help’ in the early nineteenth-century}
children. Neith often expressed similar frustrations to Hutchins over being torn between her work and childcare. She found it particularly difficult when she lacked extra help from the servants. In one instance, Neith referred to the Italian nanny who had a “horse-laugh” and scared the Hapgoods’ son, Charles. On a separate occasion, Neith wrote to Hutchins of eldest son Boyce’s hopes that they would hire a servant who was both pretty and fluent in English. As a support for white middle class intimacies, white middle class radicals’ marriage experiments turned the servant into a commodity where, in place of the wife, she became part of the furniture of the white middle class home: decorative object, conformity to liberal sexual morals, and a degree of assimilated whiteness through a proficiency in English. In the space of these radical homes, the Hapgoods and the Russells lauded the importance of white middle class marital intimacies which were contingent on employing a female servant labour force that undermined the maternal feeling, emotional lives, and capitalist exploitation of ‘lower’ and, often immigrant and racialized, women. Historian Faye Dudden has pointed out that the changed status from ‘help’ to ‘domestic servant’ which occurred around mid-century coincided with the greater privacy, emotional intensity of the family, the separation of home and work, and capitalist modes of production that changed the nature of the home from a place of market production. Dudden’s connection to the devalued status of the servant to the greater intimacy of the family is particularly important here when considering the place of servants among sex radical families. In the case of early twentieth-century

\[\text{whereby references to black domestics as servants were tied to a lower status and more distanced relationship to the family than the status of ‘help.’}\]

192 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 1911. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 19, File 504.
194 Dudden, Serving Women.
models of familial intimacy and companionate marriage, it is ironic that the mid-nineteenth-century intensification of white middle class familial intimacies which demoted the servant’s status ultimately came to rely on the servant in the early twentieth century to make the ideal of mutually fulfilling white middle class companionate marriages possible.

The Hapgoods’ and the Russells’ willingness to employ female servants to make white middle class love possible was not treated as an ethical dilemma or a necessary compromise in a feminist-socialist imagining of a State of mother-love. In fact, the use of ‘lower’ class and immigrant women as resources for white middle class love was integral to sex reformers’ vision of the higher value of white middle class motherhood to the State. Whether sex reformers imagined a State governed according to what the Russells’ called parental feeling or what Hapgood called mother-love, they turned attention to the white middle class couple as the unit of a bio-political citizenship. By seeking to put sex instincts and the biological power of motherhood at the heart of State governance, sex reformers stressed the political management of human resources. While sex reformers exalted maternal love as the basis of new social bonds, it was qualified as a property of white middle class families. While historians of the American and British birth control movements have shown the class and racial politics of feminism’s claim for women’s control over their bodies, this literature has not considered how the dominant image of the ‘voluntary’ mother

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as intelligent, white, middle class, and heterosexual also underlined a racial and class politics of love.196

The Hapgoods’ and the Russells’ interests in reforming sexual ethics brought them into the intertwined realms of the birth control and eugenics movements which romanticized the eugenic, healthy, ‘voluntary’ mother as the symbol of mother-love. While the Russells campaigned for the right of working class women to birth control, they sharply differentiated the value of the white middle class mother from that of the working class, unfit, or colonial mother. As we have seen, Hapgood’s discussions of the spread of mother-love presumed a white middle class educated, independent, and sexually satisfied woman who moved beyond the traditional role of the Victorian middle class housewife. Hutchins’s article on “Women in Society: New Sex and Domestic Relations,” indicates the differential value ascribed to the

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biological resources of ‘lower’ class as opposed to ‘higher’ class families. Considering the possibilities and hope for shaping a better world, Hutchins wondered whether:

children will be born into a kinder society? That there will be fewer little waifs, fewer outcasts, and fewer criminals, fewer uneducated? We cannot now tolerate carelessness toward the human material of the smaller home. The time is coming when we cannot tolerate carelessness toward the human material of the larger home, which is the entire community.\footnote{Hutchins Hapgood, “Women in Society: New Sex and Domestic Relations,” Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 28, File 826.}

This view of a careless rather than responsible motherhood and its association with a cruel rather than kind society partook of a transatlantic conversation between birth controllers who looked to white middle class educated women as responsible, healthy, loving mothers in contrast to careless, unhealthy, unloving ‘lower’ class and ‘unfit’ mothers.

In the Russells’ fight for working-class women’s access to birth control, there was also a presumption that working-class mothers were careless breeders, neglectful of their children and performing an unjust and unloving act. In Dora’s book, \textit{In Defence of Children}, she not only discussed loving marriages but rooted this love in the privileges and freedoms of white middle class families. Dora claimed that even in times of war, ‘proletarian mothers’ “breed like animals, dumbly caring for their offspring as best they could.”\footnote{Dora Russell, “Proletarian Mothers,” \textit{In Defence of Children} (1932, pg. 1). Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 164-168, File 168.} Contrary to the middle class family with sufficient resources, Dora argued that proletarian parents have children for profit so as to be assured of extra wage-earners in the household.\footnote{Dora Russell, “Why Do We Have Them?” \textit{In Defence of Children} (1932, pg. 17). Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 164-168, File 168.} In stressing birth control for proletarian women, Dora stressed the importance of birth control in
preventing the reproduction of “unproductive members of society”.\(^{200}\) In sympathy with
Dora’s own birth control campaigns, Bertrand Russell emphasized the dangers irresponsible
reproduction could pose to civilization, claiming that “The most civilized are the most sterile;
the least civilized are the most fertile; and between the two there is a continual gradation.”\(^{201}\)
Despite socialist views, the Russells and the Hapgoods turned the economic inequalities
between families into a measure of the affective potential of the family and the value of its
biological resources to the State.

Sex reformers held the ‘voluntary’ mother as an example of the proper management
of both the state’s physical and emotional resources. The ‘voluntary’ mother embodied
marital happiness, the affirmation of sexual pleasure, and bio-political citizenship in a State
governed according to love. As we saw in the previous chapter, Emma Goldman, one of the
early leaders of the American birth control movement, regarded the ‘modern’ mother as a
“race builder” who “will become a mother only if she desires the child, even before its birth,
all that her nature and intellect can yield.”\(^{202}\) Here Goldman juxtaposed middle class women
who were deprived of joy, denied sexual pleasure and turned to cats, the Bible, and dogs as
substitutes with working class women who had “a more normal expression of their physical
instincts” but became “reckless breeder[s] of hapless children.”\(^{203}\) In attacking sexual
morality, then, Goldman associated the role of middle class women as race builders with
fertility, sexual pleasure, happiness, and love in the middle class home.

\(^{200}\) Dora Russell, “Why Do We Have Them?” *In Defence of Children* (1932, pg. 16). Dora Russell Papers,
IISH, Amsterdam, Box 164-168, File 168.
\(^{202}\) Emma Goldman, “Victims of Morality and The Failure of Christianity.” *The Emma Goldman Papers*
\(^{203}\) Ibid.
These tropes of the healthy ‘voluntary’ mother in contrast to the fecund, haggard, sexually irresponsible working-class mother circulated widely among birth controllers. In the September 1920 issue of the BCR, Lily Winner’s article on “Our Biological Outlook,” she complained that “instead of well-mated, healthy marriages, to contribute strong and beautiful children to the country, we are confronted by a great problem of waste of human material and a poverty-stricken, under-nourished, unhealthy mother-class.”

In Britain, The Malthusian, one of the earliest and prominent birth control periodicals, ran similar stories. On February 15th in 1914, The Malthusian’s readers could find an article on “Family Restriction and Nerves” which invited readers to “Compare the mother of a happy middle class suburban family of three children with the poor anaemic, draggled, despised mothers of ten children we meet.” Calling for “proper sex development,” the anonymous author encouraged greater indulgence of the “natural impulse to sex union” for the middle class woman and the curtailment of childbirth for the poorer woman.

The transatlantic conversation on poorer mothers as a liability rather than resource to the State can be seen in The Malthusian’s coverage of Margaret Sanger’s birth control clinic. In the January of 1918 issue, an anonymous author described the “wrecks of women came just to tell their tragedies to Margaret Sanger and urge her to save other women from the sorrow of ruined health, overworked husbands and broods of sickly, defective wayward children growing up on the streets, filling the dispensaries and hospitals, filing through the juvenile courts.”

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205 Ibid.
207 Ibid.
Within the American black community, advocates of birth control tended to make similar claims except the fecund, sexually irresponsible mother was typically construed as Southern, impoverished, superstitious, uneducated, and a consequent drain on the project of racial uplift. In the early twentieth-century the black intelligentsia was far from a homogeneous unified voice but fragmented along lines of appropriate strategies for uplift and offered competing and contested definitions of the New Negro. These differences were also marked by the distinctive experiences of Caribbean Harlem Renaissance writers like Claude McKay, W.A. Domingo, Asa Philip Randolph, and Cyril Briggs whose experience of migration and tradition of living under British colonialism shaped their intellectual critique, particularly its internationalist Pan-African outlook. Black Caribbean intellectuals’ participation in the Harlem Renaissance and their fashioning of the New Negro situate the shaping of black modernity in transatlantic circuits of sex and labour that drew on both experiences of American racism and British colonialism. As historians of the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negroes have shown, the black intelligentsia’s leadership of the black community often reinforced white middle class morality, drawing sharp class distinctions between Northern educated black intellectuals and Southern migrants. Historian Kevin Gaines’s *Uplifting the Race* shows the tensions and contradictions of a black middle

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209 Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 163-175. Carby has highlighted the prominence of the black intellectual in the early twentieth century, claiming that “what differentiated most clearly the crisis of representation of the twenties from the intellectual assurance of the turn of the century was the relation of the intellectual to ‘the people.’” See Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, 166. Also, see Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes*.


class seeking to challenge white racism while redeploying those stereotypes onto impoverished black Southern migrants in order to distance itself from associations with primitivism, backwardness, uncleanliness, and sexual promiscuity. There were multiple and contested positions within the black intelligentsia that differed in their views of the New Negro as the successful capitalist or the politically astute socialist radical now awakening to capitalist oppression and global kinship among black workers. Although historians have shown the fracturing of the black community along the lines of whether one achieves uplift through capitalist success or a socialist-informed critique of the capitalist system, black socialist radicals also shared much in common with the black middle class in terms of how they were interpellated by shared histories of slavery, exploited labour, and sexual violence. When it came to sex reform, there was a cross-racial cooperation among white and black socialists which, at the same time, existed in tension with specific racial histories. These histories conditioned white and black socialists’ respective positions on sex reform that moved black socialists closer to the black middle class on matters of racial uplift and sexual morality.

Through the lens of black socialists’ positions on early twentieth century sexual morality, it is possible to observe how a socialist politics traditionally seen as fragmenting the black community also shared some common ground with the black middle class on matters of sexual moral standards which deployed the Northern intelligent, middle class, black woman as the paragon of responsible motherhood. This framing of the responsible mother of

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213 Christina Simmons has highlighted a common conservatism on sexual morality among black sex reformers who, shaped by histories of sexual violence, held a conflicted relationship to embracing sexual pleasure as one that risked confirming white stereotypes of black promiscuity. See Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern*. 
the black community attests to the cooperation between white and black socialists, particularly in Greenwich Village where Jamaican radical, Claude McKay, served for a term as a joint editor of the white socialist paper, *The Liberator*, under the editorship of Max Eastman. This cooperation attested to mutual interests between black and white intellectuals on both economic and sexual matters which they inextricably intertwined. The popular black socialist periodical, *The Messenger*, is an important example of how black and white socialist and sex reform politics mutually informed one another. Under the editorship of Caribbean intellectual, Asa Philip Randolph and African-American North Carolinian Chandler Owen, *The Messenger* was marketed as the “Only Magazine of Scientific Radicalism in the World Published by Negroes,” which drew on the early twentieth century’s faith in science on matters of economic relations as well as sexual relations. As Barbara Foley has noted, *The Messenger* was the most influential left wing periodical with a monthly circulation of 150,000 by 1919 which likely earned Owen and Randolph the fame of being the “most prominent black Socialists of their generation.” Like McKay, Owen and Randolph were part of both Harlem and Greenwich Village radical circles and, in fact, both Owen and Randolph offered courses on economics at the Rand School in the Spring of 1919. Despite Randolph and Owen’s criticisms of “Old Crowd Negroes” or the dominant black middle class leadership, *The Messenger* shared profound ties to the black middle class not only in the funding of the paper through Randolph’s wife’s success in what came to be defined as the black business of beauty culture but also in its depictions of black female sexuality. As Barbara Foley has noted, the cover of *The Messenger* depicted “a decidedly unproletarian

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icon of modest Negro womanhood.” This situates Owen and Randolph’s *The Messenger* within the broader history of black women’s negotiation of sexual freedom and their history sexual exploitation under slavery which haunted and constrained black women’s position within a dominant white middle class sex reform discourse on affirming sexual pleasure. Martha Patterson has explained the racially specific formation of the New Woman whereby “instead of the ‘selfish’ attributes of the white ‘New Woman’ – sexual freedom and individual accomplishment – the black expression of New Womanhood epitomized refinement, domestic accomplishment, and race progress.” So, while Randolph and Owen may have embraced an economic radicalism deeply critical of the black middle class’s compromise with white capitalism, they reinforced black middle class standards of propriety through the model of New Negro Womanhood as the exemplar of sexual morality.

Chandler Owen’s writing on the subject of birth control shows the negotiated position of black socialists caught between the black middle class leadership’s dominant constructions of black women’s role in the struggle for sexual freedom.

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215 Ibid. On the funding of *The Messenger* through Lucille Green Randolph’s earnings as a beauty culture entrepreneur, see Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes*, 78.

216 Darlene Hine-Clark has discussed the sexual exploitation of black women under slavery as shaping a “culture of dissemblance” marked by the duality of seeming openness and secrecy. See Darlene Hine-Clark, “Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts in the Culture of Dissemblance,” *Signs* 14 (Summer 1989): 912-920. Deborah Gray White has discussed the unique position of black women as subject to both sexual and racial oppression. In a chapter on the Jezebel and Mammy sexual representations of black women, White discusses how dominant constructions of black female sexuality are inextricably tied to the living and work conditions under slavery. White’s work suggests the roots of what Hine-Clark describes as the “culture of dissemblance”. White points out how constructions of black female sexuality were tied to the demands of the slave economy, specifically the importance of black women’s reproduction to producing slaves and the working conditions that publicly exposed black female bodies. See Deborah Gray White, “Chapter one: Jezebel and Mammy: The Mythology of Slavery,” in *Ar’n’t I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985) 27-61.

217 Martha Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 59. A recent compilation of essays on The Modern Girl, has shown the racial formations of the Modern Girl, as the adolescent predecessor of the New Woman, through transnational capitalist commodity cultures which not only contributed to dominant and often locally specific constructions of the Modern Girl but also allowed possibilities for self-fashioning as ‘modern girls’ participated in commodity cultures. See Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, Tani E. Barlow, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
of racial uplift and white socialist and sex reformers’ constructions of sexual freedom.

Chandler Owen, an African American writer and an editor of the popular black socialist paper, *The Messenger*, wrote an article for the *BCR*’s special September of 1919 issue devoted to “The New Emancipation: The Negroes’ need for Birth Control, As Seen By Themselves.” Owen provided a picture of birth control among black couples that was similar to how leading transatlantic white middle class birth controllers depicted the ‘lower’ class immigrant mother. Owen’s consideration of birth control, however, showed an intra-racial politics of uplift which cast the ‘modern’ black family as urban and middle class. He claimed that “The Negroes in cities today are beginning to learn a great deal about Birth Control.”

As a university-educated man, Owen was part of what W.E.B. Dubois referred to as the Talented Tenth. In discussing the conditions of the black family, Owen claimed that “Those who are able to care for children have the fewest; those who are least able have the greatest number. This is true of all races.” In doing so, Owen also pointed out that among the “Negroes in cities”, “it is difficult to find the more intelligent women who have any children at all.” Owen portrayed the ‘voluntary’ black mother as urban, intelligent, and middle class whereas “Negro girls of the South” were linked to “over-production” and poor families where “the end of life is not education, not a broad virtuous life, but the gratification of desire.” In Owen’s case, the value of black motherhood and the possibilities of care and a loving family continued to be situated in the educated middle class home. Like a number of white birth controllers, Owen suggested that birth control could be used as a tool to reduce

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218 “Women and Children of the South - An Interview with Chandler Owen, Editor of the *Messenger,*” *BCR* vol.3, no.9 (September 1919): 20.
219 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
221 Ibid., 9.
the numbers of the impoverished and uneducated except that in Owen’s case, ‘voluntary’
black motherhood held the specific value of redressing the legacies of slavery and racial
inequalities.

While black sex reformers stressed birth control as a tool for racial uplift, white sex
reformers emphasized birth control’s importance to transforming a conservative sexual
morality. White sex reformers construed ‘voluntary’ motherhood as a bodily display of
responsibly managed fertility, a sign of a happy and sexually satisfied woman, and a valued
resource of the State. In other words, the ‘voluntary’ mother in a white discourse on birth
control and eugenics was also one who had been impregnated through ‘sex-love,’ ‘sex-
communion,’ or the ‘art of love.’ There was an intimate and emotional subtext surrounding
the body of the ‘voluntary’ mother which elided maternal and paternal feeling with white
middle class marital intimacies. Dora Russell, in fact, referred to birth control as a “tool of
love” while Bertrand Russell pointed out that parenthood should ensure that love would serve
the “biological purposes of the race.”222 Although both of the Russells claimed that parental
instinct was distinct from sex instinct, they regarded parental instinct as a much more
permanent and deeply rooted bond. Dora and Bertrand Russell argued that marriage and its
curtailment of sexual freedom should only occur where children are involved. This,
however, did not necessarily imply marital fidelity but a “life-long partnership” based on the
biological tie of the two parents in the body of the child.223 In *The Conquest of Happiness,*
Bertrand Russell explained the urgency of turning political attention to managing parenthood.
He argued that “It is necessary, therefore, if the white races are to survive, that parenthood

223 Dora Russell refers to “lifelong partnership” but explicitly states that this does not require marital fidelity. Russell, *The Right To Be Happy,* 186.
should again become capable of yielding happiness to parents." The juxtaposition of happy homes, birth control, and parental feeling situated love as the particular capacity and product of white middle class couples. In 1929, when Dora told the WLSR delegates that a future society based on love would require a father’s willingness to share the domestic labour, such a family situation she described in her book as “racial improvement.” While sex reformers situated the ‘voluntary’ mother in a sexually satisfied, loving ‘modern’ marriage, in light of the intellectual influence of Freudianism, sex reformers also used parental feeling to add a deeper meaning to sexual love. Although British intellectuals tended to be more critical of Freudianism than their American counterparts, on both sides of the Atlantic there were sex reformers who invoked parental feeling in relation to their sexual partners. In Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman’s love letters, Goldman took the role of ‘Mamie.’ Neith also occasionally addressed Hutchins as “Infant” and Dora admitted to

225 Dora Russell, “Father-right: psychological results,” in *In Defence of Children* (1932, pg. 18), Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 164-168, File 168.
maternal feelings toward Bertrand Russell in her desire to take care of him. What Dora and Bertrand Russell proposed as the instinctive happiness to be found in parental feeling, ultimately pertained to a presumed white middle class couple who properly managed fertility, rediscovered sexual pleasure, and restored white racial health.

**Conclusion**

In an interview in the late 1970s, Dora Russell compared the legacy of the 1960s sexual revolution to the early twentieth century sex reform movement. She told Eta Daniels that “by love we meant real love, not treating sex like eating your dinner.” In other words, free love in the early twentieth century was not the free love of the 1960s. By drawing this distinction between the early twentieth century sex reform movement and the 1960s, Dora Russell emphasized the primacy of love in sexual ethics. In the longer history of free love’s relationship to sexual practice, early twentieth century sex reformers imbed love as a ‘civilized’ ethical practice specifically tied to affirming sex instincts which departed from nineteenth century sex radicals’ discussions of free love, often framed in the context of women’s rights to refuse sex. As sex reformers defined the stakes of their project against the backdrop of a puritanical past of Victorian sexual morality, they consolidated a relationship between love and sexual freedom that established white middle class standards for affective experience which erased histories of colonial and racial sexual exploitation. As sex reformers advocated embracing sex instincts, they did so in ways that problematized such a

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228 Dora Russell to Ms. Eta Daniels, 7 February 1978. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 131-9, File 131.
project for working class, colonial, and racialized populations which had traditionally been associated with primitivism, promiscuity, and high fecundity. Chandler Owen’s essay on birth control in the black community shows how black radicals negotiated histories of racial sexual violence and derogatory associations of black primal sexuality with a predominantly white middle class narrative of sex reform. Owen’s essay exemplifies the stakes of sexual politics for the black community whereby Owen ultimately situated birth control in a class politics of the uplifted, intellectual, and dignified New Negro Woman in contrast to impoverished, migrant black masses from the South. To this extent, sympathetic connectivity as a practice of sexual statesmanship redefined citizenship in terms of the affective histories of white middle class bodies, re-articulating their political privilege along an affective axis.

By the time the WLSR met in 1929, sex reformers had worked for thirty to forty years to overhaul Victorian sexual morality by arguing for a new sexual ethics that positioned love at the centre of the relationship between sex instincts and civilization. As sex reformers firmly bound love to the practice of sexual freedom, they contributed to an ideal of love that privileged white middle class bodies who were associated with prudery, ‘civilization,’ and chasteness rather than primitivism and promiscuity. In other words, sex reformers constructed a sexual ethics that maximized the possibilities for white middle class bodies to attain love while limiting and denying those possibilities to others. What Magnus Hirschfeld had deemed “sexual statesmanship” at the WLSR congress, amounted to a white middle class practice of sympathetic connectivity which drew attention to love as a politically and ethically sanctioned way for white middle class bodies to relate to others and the rest of the
world. Sex reformers had highlighted specific ways for sympathetic connectivity through their engagement in a series of early twentieth century debates such as perfecting sex technique, reforming marriage along ‘varietist’ lines, capitalism’s barriers to intimacy in the gendered economic roles of husband and wife, eugenic mate selection, the burden of ‘unfit’ children on the state, the need to sexually rejuvenate neurasthenic white middle class men and women, and the importance of white racial health and reproduction to ‘civilization.’ This romanticized and politicized love as ‘civilized’ sex among eugenic white middle class couples. Hirschfeld’s call for “sexual statesmanship,” “sexual sociology,” and a “physiology of love,” must be situated in the context of the previous thirty to forty years of sex reform activities which looked to how bodies connected with one another and how these relations were integrally linked to social and political institutions. At the WLSR meeting, sex reformers introduced a new vision of citizenship bound to white middle class affective experience which, in this early twentieth century moment of concern over energies, intimacy and emotions, simultaneously reframed the historical exclusion of lower class, colonized, and racialized bodies from political citizenship along affective lines.
Chapter Three

*Love’s Taming of Wild Animals: The Management of Children’s ‘Emotional Individuality’*

As sex reformers imagined a world where marriage and the household would take very different forms, they also turned attention to developing the kinds of humans who would inhabit such a world. Sex reformers were deeply concerned about how to educate children so that they may be spared their parents’ struggles of undoing the harmful effects of a Victorian white middle class morality. Influenced by the Freudian intellectual climate that looked to childhood as a vital time for future adult sexual adjustment, sex reformers strongly advocated for transforming education towards cultivating children’s instincts. In 1927, Bertrand and Dora Russell founded Beacon Hill School which partook of a broader transnational early twentieth century ‘modern’ school movement that put instincts, energies, and emotions at the heart of its curriculum, procedures, and pedagogical philosophy. Russell later described this period of his life as inaugurating a “new emotional centre” which shifted his focus from mathematical logic toward a philosophy on social issues.¹ Primarily noted for his fame as a mathematician, Russell suggested that the “intellectual intoxication” of 1900 while writing *Principia Mathematica* faded between 1910 and 1914 when he claims to have felt “the staleness that beset me whenever I tried to return to mathematical logic.”² Although Russell divided the parts of his life into his intellectual era and his focus on social issues, he regarded emotions as inseparable from his intellectual life. In May of 1902, shortly after completing *Principia Mathematica*, Russell wrote that “writing is the outlet to feelings which are all but

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² Ibid., 148, 238.
overmastering, and are yet mastered. Two things are to be cultivated: loftiness of feelings, and control of feeling and everything else by the will.”³ In his autobiography, he acknowledged his “debt of gratitude” to his first wife, American Quaker Alys Pearsall-Smith whom he suggests made possible his intellectual achievement insofar as he “derived sufficient happiness from her and my work to have no need of anything more.”⁴ Both Russell’s marriage to Dora Black and their founding of Beacon Hill School were part of a new period in his life beginning with his feeling of being rejuvenated in 1914 when he began to turn greater philosophical attention to love, marriage, education, and politics. According to Russell, it was upon completion of Principles of Social Reconstruction in 1915 that he began to frame “a philosophy of politics based upon the belief that impulse has more effect than conscious purpose in moulding men’s lives.”⁵ This political philosophy provided a crucial ground for Beacon Hill School’s pedagogy.

In 1926, one year prior to opening Beacon Hill School, Bertrand Russell published his book, On Education which shows the pedagogical philosophy surrounding the establishment of Beacon Hill School. In On Education, Russell advocates a democratization of education which would bridge the class divide between an aristocratic education, distinctively marked by a focus on shaping and indoctrinating children’s beliefs, and a working-class education focused on practical training for wage labour.⁶ Throughout On Education, Russell is primarily concerned with two issues: first, reforming education so that it conforms to what Russell considers the nature of the child, and second, developing a more harmonious social

³ Ibid., 168. Russell’s statement occurs in a letter to Lucy dated 23 May 1902.
⁴ Ibid., 128.
⁵ Ibid., 242.
order through binding children’s instinctive and emotional development to the desirable political objective of happy harmonious social relations. Russell’s *On Education* outlines pedagogical methods tailored to the instincts and emotional development of the child which will “produce the power of independent judgment” in presumably all children. Russell maintained that “While they are small and cannot do much harm, it is biologically natural that they should, in imagination, live through the life of remote ancestors.” By this, Russell was describing a trajectory of child development that situated the temporal transition to adulthood within evolutionary frameworks, tying age to imperial categorizations of ‘primitive’ and ‘civilized’ bodies and societies. In the context of Russell’s emphasis on the importance of an education centered on children’s instincts and emotions, his comment on children living through the life of remote ancestors should also be seen as grounded in an important historical moment where maturity in terms of age and race were tied to emotional development. As such, Russell contributed to the climate of child study and sex reform which articulated the developmental process of the child as a ‘life’ history situated in a longer narrative of human history whereby ‘progress’ could be measured by the stages of a body’s affective potential.

Sex reformers, child psychologists, and education reformers of many kinds often interpreted these various stages in the child’s particular affective orientation to the world along the lines of evolutionary theory: from a state of instincts and ‘primitivism’ to love and ‘civilization.’ Russell was, in fact, mindful of how anxious ‘civilized’ middle class parents might interpret his view that childhood was proximate to a state of savagery, reassuring this

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7 Ibid., 10.
8 Ibid., 103
audience not to “be afraid that they will remain at that level, if you put in their way the
knowledge and skill required for more refined satisfactions.” Just as the Russells had looked
to the “civilizing of sex,” they proposed to make the most of the child whose instinctive life
had not yet been subjected to the imposition of social moral codes. The Russells designed a
plan for education that “cultivated instinct, not the crude, unformed impulse which is all that
nature provides.” Russell suggested that “the right sort of love should be the natural fruit
resulting from the proper treatment of the growing child, rather than something consciously
aimed at throughout the various stages.” After Beacon Hill had been operating for roughly
six years, Russell published another work on Education and the Social Order which further
expounded an emotion-oriented pedagogical philosophy as a key to building a future society.
For Russell, “To make human beings who will create a better world is a problem in
emotional psychology: it is the problem of making human beings who have a free
intelligence combined with a happy disposition.”

Both Dora and Bertrand Russell’s commitment to providing children with an
“emotional education” at Beacon Hill School is an example of how early twentieth century
sex reformers, child psychologists, and education reformers found common ground in their
focus on developing the child’s sexual instincts and guiding emotional development. This
significantly departed from early to mid-Victorian views of the child as innocent. In the late
nineteenth and early twentieth century, sex reformers, child psychologists and education
reformers mutually contributed to shaping a view of the child as ‘savage’, highly instinctive,

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 108.
11 Ibid., 150.
pre-civilized, and, therefore, less sexually repressed than its parents. In pedagogical, medical, and sex reform discourses, the potential for educating the child toward what I will call affective maturity presumed a white middle class body with the future capacity for the ‘civilized’ and spiritual experience of sex as love. I use the term affective maturity to describe the demarcation of the ‘child’s’ stages of development in terms of levels of emotional expression which did not neatly map onto a linear progression measured by age. Affective maturity here functions as an analytical lens to highlight how campaigns to educate the child’s emotional development from a state of instincts and undifferentiated sexual aims presumed the potentiality of a white middle class child’s body to advance beyond a state of ‘immaturity’ and an allegedly primitive and savage affective disposition. I have chosen the term maturity because scholars have used it to denote the colonial politics of citizenship and fitness for self-government that cast the colonized in the role of childlike and often feminized dependents and colonizers as adult and often masculinized instructors and providers. I consider how sexology and pedagogy mutually informed one another in ways that put emotions at the centre of projects to shape future citizens by socializing and educating children toward intensified heterosexual intimacies which privileged the white middle class procreative family as the fundamental unit of civilization.

The transatlantic ties between British and American circles of child experts and sex reformers can be seen in the circulation and production of knowledge on the child which

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13 For example, historian of Dutch colonialism, Frances Gouda, has claimed that the “idiom of parental obligation” has functioned as “a constitutive metaphor of many colonial discourses.” See Frances Gouda, “Good Mothers, Medeas, Or Jezebels: Feminine Imagery in Colonial and Anticolonial Rhetoric in the Dutch East Indies, 1900-1942,” in Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism, eds. Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1998): 237; Matthew Frye Jacobson’s discussion of American imperialism in Barbarian Virtues considers how colonizers deployed maturity as condition for denying the fitness of self-government. See Jacobson, Barbarian Virtues.
invoked a common set of evolutionary and psychological discourses. Sigmund Freud’s late
nineteenth century insights that neurological disorders such as hysteria were rooted in the
problems of children’s psychosexual development offered an important ‘scientific’
justification for reforming sexual morality in a number of countries, including Britain and the
United States. In 1905, Freud’s work, Three Essays on the theory of sexuality, discussed
infantile sexuality in terms of developmental stages of sexual maturity.14 Despite a
sometimes ambivalent engagement with Freudianism, there were leading sex reformers and
child experts on both sides of the Atlantic who selectively appropriated Freudian concepts to
make their case for turning attention to educating children’s instincts on a path toward
‘mature’ emotional development, with a particular focus on heterosexual love.

Like Freud, these sex reformers and child experts also situated child sexuality and
heterosexual love in the context of evolutionary development. Historian Steven Mintz has
emphasized the importance of evolutionary theory for the late nineteenth and early twentieth
century child study movement which turned attention toward the emotional development of
the child. Mintz claims that Charles Darwin’s 1877 biographical sketch of his son, Doddy,
inspired the first systematic studies of a child’s mental and emotional development.15 In his
sketch, Darwin suggested the likeness between children and apes, equating the temporal
relation between the child and the adult with that of evolutionary time between earlier forms
of humanity and ‘civilization.’ Both British and American circles of child experts and sex
reformers drew upon Ernst Haeckel’s evolutionary theory of recapitulation which maintained

that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. Sex reformers and child experts mapped Freud’s discussion of the child’s psychosexual development from the stage of the ‘unrepressed’ free play of the id toward the development of the ‘ego’ as a censor onto the evolutionary course of human history. In doing so, they charted an affective evolutionary progression of the child’s development in stages of increasing affective potential in the capacities for emotional expression. Child experts and reformers who advocated an emotional education for children were influenced by evolutionary debates on growth, embryology, organicism, and heredity. However, the sex reform movement also seems to have influenced British Victorian evolutionary thinkers like Herbert Spencer. In 1914, Spencer condemned the “nursery legislation” of the mother who failed to teach her daughter about “the nature of the emotions, their order of evolution, their functions, or where use ends and abuse begins.” Spencer hinted at the sexual repression of such a daughter who is “under the impression that some of the feelings are wholly bad, which is not true of any one of them.”

Apart from common intellectual discourses in both British and American communities of radical intellectuals, there were also joint institutions and organizations in both Britain and the United States such as ‘modern’ schools, infant and child welfare programs, child health conferences, child guidance clinics, and overlapping concerns over appropriate parenting. In a shared commitment to what sex reformers and child experts were calling “the century of the child,” there were also specific national conditions which

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18 Ibid.
differently shaped the strategies and course of reform efforts. In Britain, sex reformers who advocated the development of ‘modern’ schools contended with the national context of debates over funding for denominational schools. In this case, sex reformers like the Russells were concerned that such support for denominational schools would entrench Christian conservative morality into the education of children thereby construing sex as sinful and contributing to an unhealthy ‘repression’ of sexual instincts. Similarly, in the British tradition of elite education which sent children to boarding schools like Eton and Harrow, British reformers often turned attention to the problems of sex segregated schools, the discipline of the headmaster, and the regulation of children’s, especially boys’, sexual morality in these schools. Although American reformers were also concerned with sex segregation, this was emphasized less as a problem of the school as an institution than as a problem of the sexual moral codes that separated girls from playing with boys. In the American context, religion in the schools was less of a concern than the intrusion of a State endorsed conservative morality, often identified with Comstockery in the United States, into the curriculum of school children.

In this chapter, I argue that late nineteenth and early twentieth century sex reformers and child experts defined a child’s maturing process in terms of emotional possibilities that

19 See for example, Dora’s letter concerning the Education Bill before Parliament. She complains that Roman Catholics are likely to gain concessions but she also denounces the Church of England’s control over elementary education. She writes to Mr. Lowes Dickinson of a series of signatures for a letter to protest the bill. Among the signatories, she lists Naomi Mitchison, Bertrand Russell, Vera Brittain, H.G. Wells, and Julius Huxley who were all interested advocates of sex reform. See Dora Russell to Mr. Lowes Dickenson, 18 June 1930. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 538-542, File 539.

located the child’s body in hierarchies of gender, race, class, and sexuality. What I have called affective maturity describes how sex reformers and child experts targeted specific dimensions of feeling from instincts to energies to emotions whereby the child’s body was located in stages defined by emotional and sexual goals that were inseparable from evolutionary, psychoanalytic, and pedagogical thought. Throughout this chapter, I aim to show how sex reformers and child experts inextricably linked the child’s age and what I have called affective maturity, to a utopian vision of emotionally desirable citizens in a harmonious loving community. To this extent, I tie the futurity of the child in terms of both age and body to the politics of utopian visions of a future civilization.

My argument has three important historiographical stakes. Firstly, while historians of both American and British childhood have marked the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a distinctive period in defining the child’s growth in terms of emotional development,21 these histories have ultimately historicized the child without fully exploring how the process of emotionally educating the child offers an important opportunity for also historicizing emotions, instincts, energies, and heterosexuality. Secondly, my work takes seriously Harry Hendrick’s urging that historians consider “the politics of age relations.”22 I take age as a politically charged category whereby the child as a temporal incarnation was tied to utopian imaginings of a political future of white educated middle class governance on the basis of love. I build on David Macleod’s claim that between 1890 and 1920, a “dual sense of the child as promise and problem underlay decisions that the new century must by

‘the century of the child’²³ by showing that ‘promise’ was defined through how sex reformers and child experts intertwined child bodies, politics, and emotions. This also introduces the question of the intersection of politics and emotion at the site of the symbolic white middle class child’s body. I suggest that a consideration of the politics surrounding the loved child can importantly contribute to the historiography on early twentieth century political policies of child welfare, child labour, compulsory schooling, and infant and maternal health.²⁴ Thirdly, my attention to how sex reformers and child experts deployed strategies that involved carefully managing relations between adults and children intervenes in the historiographical discussion on the question of children’s agency and adult control and intervention. My focus on these strategies moves beyond the issue of whether childhood was a purely adult construction of what Gary Cross has called “wondrous childhood” or whether there was an autonomous children’s culture of play.²⁵ Instead, I situate adults such as parents and teachers, and children as actors in an affective exchange network where the specific problem of managing a child’s emotional development presented both possibilities and constraints on both adults and children. What historians have considered the material culture


of childhood, specifically in the use of toys, I situate as part of this affective network where the mother’s breast, objects for classroom learning, animals, and toys were strategically managed objects used to facilitate children’s emotional development. While historians have shown that childhood has been a white middle class construction, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth century framing of innocence and sheltered childhood, I offer another way of thinking about the stakes of this middle class construction. I do so by drawing attention to the potentiality of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century child’s body to reach a stage of affective maturity, often defined by sex reformers, educators and child psychologists in terms of the goal of mature heterosexual love which both materially and discursively tied the child’s body to the politics of sexuality, science, and empire.

This chapter looks at strategies to socialize the white middle class child body as the citizen of an imagined future state where what I described in the previous chapter as sympathetic connectivity would be the norm rather than the exception. Throughout the chapter, I show how sex reformers and child experts prescribed specific practices for parenting, play, and pedagogy which located the white middle class child body in a temporal progression towards affective maturity. By situating the white middle class child in a program for emotional development, sex reformers and child experts hierarchically positioned the white middle class child according to the potential to move from its state of ‘savage’, ‘animal’, and perverse sexuality to a state of ‘civilized,’ ‘human,’ ‘heterosexual’

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love. In this course of affective progression, the child’s arrested development as a failure to reach the mature stage of ‘heterosexual’ love elided the temporality of the child’s ‘life’ history with the fixity of ‘lower’ classes, races, and ‘homosexuals.’ In the first section of this chapter, I consider how parenting advice looked to manage the sexual instincts of the baby which put the baby within the same category of affective capacities as the animal, particularly in its limited mode of expressing and feeling love mainly through touch. As we saw earlier, Darwin’s discussion of animal expressions of love explained this in the limited terms of physical contact.27 In the second section, I turn to the extent to which sex reformers and playground reformers mutually informed one another’s views on structuring play to emotionally develop children. I focus particularly on the prescribed stages of play from baby to young adult which posited the teleological goals of guiding children toward heterosexual intimacy, social cooperation, and loving family formations. I analyze how the nature of games, the structure of play, and the relationships facilitated between children show that the reform of play presumed a white middle class child which re-enacted the economic and imperial status of the white middle class home. In the final section, I consider the development of ‘modern’ schools as the institutionalization of an emotional education for children which presumed the affective maturity of the white middle class body that situated its very possibility for love, spiritualized sex, and mutual sexual happiness as a racialized, classed, and (hetero)sexualized affective property. Although Claudia Castaneda has criticized how poststructuralists have used the child’s body as a foil for discussing the adult body, I suggest here that the emotional guidance of the child importantly subjects affects to the realm of education and socialization thereby de-essentializing them as fixed or biological

entities. While sex reformers and child experts suggested that they were working with the ‘natural’ material of the child’s spontaneous impulses and instincts, their efforts to manage the child’s affective life ultimately pointed to the very ‘unnaturalness,’ construction, and malleability of affects.

I. ‘His Majesty The Baby’: The Baby’s Affective World of Touch and the Selfish Gratification of Sex and Hunger Instincts

Among leading early twentieth century intellectuals on the subjects of childrearing, sex education, and psychology, there was considerable agreement that educating the child toward affective maturity began at the early age of babyhood. Child psychologists, education reformers, and sex reformers dominated much of the literature on childrearing which construed the baby as a domineering, manipulative, egocentric, instinctive, and sexually unrepressed figure. British psychoanalyst, Barbara Low, traversed all three fields of psychology, pedagogy, and sex reform. Within the field of psychoanalysis, Low made important contributions, including her successful 1920 publication, *Psycho-analysis: A Brief Outline of the Freudian Theory* which targeted a popular audience. Introduced to psychoanalysis by her brother-in-law, David Eder, Low and Eder soon became influential in founding the London Psycho-Analytic Society in 1913. In 1919, Low also became a member of the British Psychoanalytical Society which replaced the London Psycho-Analytic Society. Low’s specific contributions to psychoanalysis involved its application to education. In doing so, she likely drew upon her previous experience as a teacher in both boys’ and girls’ schools. Interested in both pedagogy and psychoanalysis, Low joined the Institute for the
Study and Treatment of Delinquency\textsuperscript{28} and became involved in American Homer Lane’s “Little Commonwealth,” an experimental school in Dorset, England for delinquent teenagers. Low’s interest in psychoanalysis also brought her into the realm of sex reform, including a very close connection to radical marriage experiments. As historian, Mathew Thomson, has indicated, Low’s sister Edith and David Eder had a marriage based on the ideal of sexual freedom which allowed Edith to carry on an affair with H.G. Wells.\textsuperscript{29} Low was also connected to the world of British sex radicalism through a friendship with D.H. Lawrence who derived much of his understanding of psychoanalysis through conversations with her.

When Barbara Low appeared at the World League for Sexual Reform Congress in 1929, the multiple strands of sex reform, pedagogy, and psychoanalysis converged in her discussion on the child’s sexual life which highlighted children’s emotional receptivity to parental prudishness while also locating the parent-child divide along an evolutionary continuum.

At the 1929 World League for Sexual Reform Congress in London, British psychoanalyst, Barbara Low, presented a paper on “Sexual Education: Some Psycho-

\textsuperscript{28} In the early twentieth century, delinquency was a prominent topic among child study experts, some of whom were involved in child guidance clinics. In Britain, Cyril Burt was one of the leading authorities on the subject of child delinquency. In the United States, William Healy was recognized as an expert in the area of delinquency. Both Burt and Healy framed delinquency as a problem of “feeblemindedness” or “mental defect.” See William Healy, \textit{The Individual Delinquent: A Text-Book of Diagnosis and Prognosis For All Concerned In Understanding Offenders} (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1927). Historian Victoria Getis has shown that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century attention to juvenile delinquency coincided with the rise of social sciences and the reform campaigns of Progressives who, in framing the problem of delinquency, primarily cast it as a problem of immigrants in the slum districts. Victoria Getis, \textit{The Juvenile Court and the Progressives} (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Kathleen Jones has pointed out how early twentieth century child guidance experts increasingly turned to heredity and emotional factors to explain delinquency. Jones, in fact, also points out William Healy’s ties to the eugenics movement. See Kathleen W. Jones, \textit{The Troublesome Child: American Families, Child Guidance, and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). John Stewart points out similar concerns for the child guidance movement in interwar Britain. See John Stewart, “‘I Thought You Would Want to Come and See His Home’: Child Guidance and Psychiatric Social Work in Inter-War Britain,” in \textit{Health and the Modern Home}, ed. Mark Jackson (New York: Routledge, 2007).

\textsuperscript{29} Thomson, \textit{Psychological Subjects}, 98.
Analytical Considerations,” where she told her audience that the child from its very earliest beginnings has a sexual life. Drawing on Freudian theory, Low mentioned the early stages of the child’s sexual life as the pre-genital stage of the dominance of anal and oral sexual satisfaction prior to the age of four which would be followed by the Oedipal phase from four to seven years old and then the latency period up until the age of ten years old. She argued that sex education needed to be considered in light of the full potentialities of the child for its individual capacity for development. In doing so, she advocated the need to consider “the whole personality, above all the unconscious mind, so dynamic in its workings.” In her paper, Low was chiefly concerned with how parents might transfer their repressed psychological baggage onto the unrepressed child. This portrayed parents as far more sexually inhibited than their children. Low’s concerns, however, of parental inhibitions also had a particular evolutionary context where she claimed that the “guilt attitude” characterized “civilized man’s sexual development.” As such, the young child of unrepressed, highly sexual energies pre-empted the “civilized man.” Although the baby was more willing to act on sex and hunger instincts, it was at the beginning stages of a journey through affective maturity where emotions such as love would develop over time.

Low’s comments on the early sexual life of the child were neither surprising nor new by 1929. These ideas of the sexuality of the child and its progression through a number of stages had been circulating in transnational communities of psychoanalysts, sex reformers, and modern educators since Freud published his work on Three Essays on Sexuality. In

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31 Ibid., 371.
32 Ibid., 369.
1919, American psychologist, William Alanson White, offered a precise account of the baby’s character. Such an account, like White’s other work, was profoundly shaped by theories of energy and evolution. In his autobiography, White indicates that “these two concepts, namely, of evolution and energy, seem to have been fundamental in my thinking then, and they still are, but of course now with considerable modifications.” ⁴⁴ Early on in life, White was influenced by Herbert Spencer’s synthetic philosophy and organic evolution and later on, in 1892, he was much impressed with Darwin’s The Origin of Species. ⁴⁵ In discussing the effect of Mercier’s book on The Nervous System and The Mind, White seized on its importance for addressing feelings along the lines of Spencer’s synthetic philosophy. ⁴⁶ White’s own view of children seems to have been shaped by evolutionary frameworks as he explained that “It is characteristic of children and perhaps we are human beings because our anthropoid ancestors were the most curious of all animals.” ⁴⁷ At the time that White published The Mental Hygiene of Childhood, he was working as the superintendent of St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington. Prior to his position at St. Elizabeth’s, White had worked as a psychiatrist in New York City and as an assistant physician at Binghamton State Hospital between 1893 and 1903. During his time at Binghamton, White began to establish himself as an authority in the medical profession. His papers at the local medical society and at the New York Medical Association were well-received and he soon began receiving invitations to speak in all parts of the United States on mental disease and mental hygiene. ⁴⁸

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⁴⁵Ibid., 11, 69, 71.
⁴⁶Ibid., 72.
⁴⁷Ibid., 17.
⁴⁸Ibid., 174.
While at Binghamton, White first made some important connections including meeting the future Greenwich Village psychoanalyst Smith Ely Jelliffe, and Theodore Roosevelt who later appointed White to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital. In his autobiography, White refers to his “lasting friendship” with Jelliffe who collaborated with White on translating major European works on psychology and started a publishing business together to bring these works to the United States. In the early twentieth century, White was a leading figure in the field of psychology, serving as president in organizations such as the American Psychopathological Association and the American Psychoanalytic Association. He was also the president of the 1930 First International Congress on Mental Hygiene. Like Low, White contended in the preface of *The Mental Hygiene of the Child* that the child “is possessed of a developing sexuality.” This developing sexuality, however, was tied to the child’s affective progression which began with the baby’s realm of emotional expression limited to physical contact, instincts, and sensations toward a purportedly mature state of love and unselfishness.

The baby had a specific realm of possibilities for expression which positioned it at the beginning stages of a process of affective maturity. White ascribed a specific affective potential to the baby when he suggested how its realm of experience was limited to sensations or “undeveloped interests succeeded in building up a world of the simplest sensations and sensation groups.” Within this world of simple gratification and sensory experience, the baby’s actions were selfish and domineering whereby “His Majesty the

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39 Ibid., 84, 175.
40 Ibid., 79, 175.
42 Ibid., 37.
Baby” aimed to “develop a tyranny over the persons of its environment.” White warned parents of the baby’s manipulative character which “as the child is surrounded by persons who love it and try to satisfy its every want, it develops all sorts of expressions and signs calculated to make them do its will.” Like the blond beast of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, White, like Bertrand Russell, maintained that the child’s development was primarily driven by a “will to power.” White charted the baby’s development through its “creative energy then manifesting itself psychologically as interest” and investing such energy in an increasing number and diversity of ‘love-objects’ as the baby ascended to maturity.

According to White, there were two forces that could explain attachments to objects: “the primitive instincts of self-preservation and race-preservation – hunger and sex.” In keeping with some of the widely accepted Freudian tenets, White asserted that the mother was the child’s first love-object as well as a nutritive source and, as such, she satisfied both the baby’s hunger and sex instincts. However, the baby’s growth occurred as:

> the love of the child is led from love-object to love-object over a path which constantly leads it along the way of better, deeper, more satisfying expression, more and more approaching the adult characteristics, which will ultimately lead to parenthood itself and the development of the parental, instinctive love activities and to that complete unfolding of the personality.

Charting this course of development, White located the affective potential of the child to reach such affective maturity in a white Western imperial capitalist heterosexual body.

White offered specific examples of the failure to reach this full flowering of parental

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43 Ibid., 39-40.
44 Ibid., 39.
46 White, *The Mental Hygiene of Childhood*, 38.
47 Ibid., 39.
48 Ibid., 42.
instinctive love among Papuans of New Guinea, Australian tribes, and more generally among ‘savages’ where “children are often deliberately murdered for one reason or another.”

For White, not all people could aspire to such a stage of love where “parental affection, love, regard, and consideration for children as we know them are by no means qualities with which all human beings are born, but, like all other human attributes, they have attained their present state by a process of evolution.” This view of arrested affective development was not limited to races. White suggested that homosexual love was similarly an immature state in a teleological process geared toward the affective maturity of heterosexual love. White traced a “logic of this progression” whereby “the child can only get from a state of being in love with itself to being in love with someone else of the opposite sex.”

White’s discussion of the guided development of the child simultaneously aligned the child’s development with the evolutionary course and superiority of white heterosexual love. The child’s development was grounded in the evolutionary development where:

> love, however, must travel a path of gradual unfoldment and in order that we should ultimately be able to love a person of the opposite sex and not of our immediate family with whom we can join interests to the end of race-preservation, it is necessary to pass the intermediary stages of love for persons of the same sex and for persons of our immediate family.

As such, the baby’s love as primarily instinctive, selfish, indiscriminately attached to animate and inanimate, same-sex and opposite sex ‘love-objects’ amounted to an immature state of love mapped onto sexual and racial hierarchies. What I discussed in the previous chapter as the idealized love of sympathetic connectivity, White hinted at as a teleological goal for the baby’s transition to affective maturity. According to White, the baby would move beyond its

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49 Ibid., 153.
50 Ibid., 152.
51 Ibid., 61.
52 Ibid., 115-116.
selfish pursuit of instinctive gratification as it came into conflict with the desires of others which would facilitate “that appreciation of others which later grows into such a mutual respect, understanding, and sympathy as are at the basis of that capacity for mutual concessions which make human society possible.”

This capacity situated the possibilities for love as the affective potential of a white middle class baby’s body.

Although the baby may not have yet been capable of mature heterosexual love, the baby’s unrepressed, instinctive, and primal state held out much promise to transatlantic sex reformers who nostalgically looked to seize the moment before the child succumbed to normative sexual codes. White participated in a larger conversation among sex reformers concerning the uncensored baby who indiscriminately pursued its desires without shame or disgust. According to White, the baby was unashamedly governed by hunger and sex instincts, maintaining that “the infant is without all of those inhibitions to conduct which the adult always preserves in some measure.” As such, the baby was perhaps more sexual, less inhibited, and possessed more vitality than its parents. Yet, like many sex reformers, White argued that the unashamed, uninhibited, instinctive state of the baby “affords a wonderful opportunity for teaching.”

As we saw earlier, Bertrand Russell’s pedagogical philosophy also acknowledged this “opportunity for teaching.” Looking to redesign an education system that would educate instincts, Russell argued that proper education should take its objective as “cultivated instinct, not the crude unformed impulse.” As I will later show, sex reformers on both sides

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53 Ibid., 50.
54 Ibid., 47.
55 Ibid., 48.
of the Atlantic turned to creating ‘modern’ schools which would focus on learning directed toward the child’s instincts, energies, and emotions as important to shaping the child as worker, family member, and citizen.

A number of well known British and American sex reformers such as British sexologist Havelock Ellis and American Samuel Schmalhausen recognized the advantages of studying the sexual life of the child as a window onto a primal state pre-existing the bodily and psychic effects of ‘civilized’ sexual morality. Samuel Schmalhausen, an American editor of the Modern Quarterly, insisted that the wise parent and teacher “looks upon the child as possessing an erotic personality.” Schmalhausen was also known for his efforts in bringing the work of sex reformers across nations into conversation through compilations of their works. These collaborative efforts with Victor Calverton, earned them a place among what The New Republic derogatorily labeled “the sex boys.” Havelock Ellis’s essay on “Perversion in Early Childhood” appeared in one such compilation which focused on the child as uninhibited by ‘civilized’ sexuality, specifically when considering children’s pleasurable interest in pain. Yet Ellis contended that the child’s sadism could not be deemed cruel any more than it was possible to associate the child’s pursuit of close physical contact with love. The baby, like the animal, possessed an affective potential limited to seeking gratification of sex and hunger instincts. Ellis argued that this confirmed that

58 See Leonard Wilcox, “Sex Boys in a Balloon: V.F. Calverton and the Abortive Sexual Revolution,” Journal of American Studies 23(1)(April 1989): 21. Wilcox claims Calverton and Schmalhausen were at the center of an international network of radical intellectuals as shown in their anthologies. He also shows Calverton’s connections with British sex reformers such as Havelock Ellis and H.G. Wells. See Wilcox, “Sex Boys in a Balloon,” 7-26.
60 Ibid.
“Children are at work – if you will, at play – in the exercise-ground of the yet undifferentiated emotions.” In other words, Ellis suggested that perverse sexuality could be considered typical for the child’s age which, therefore, also cast these non-normative practices as immature and ‘primitive’ even while they were part of the child’s developmental process. Ellis went so far as to suggest a eugenic differentiation between the intensities of children’s experience of sexual feeling. Ellis indicated that “On the whole it would appear, as we should expect, that the child of sound and solid ancestry is less sexually excitable in childhood and the child of more unsound heredity, or of hypersexual parents more precociously excitable.” The child’s position at the primitive level of evolution was therefore distinctively marked by both the spontaneity and randomness of affects that preceded the more organized states of emotions.

Given that sex reformers considered sex instincts to appear in the child at the very earliest stages of life, their work had important implications for the genre of parenting advice regarding the guidance of the child’s sexual life and emotional development. Historian Ivan Crozier has drawn specific attention to how concerns over masturbation were particularly linked to the sexual health of the male child in nineteenth century medical discourse. In the early twentieth century, both American and British physicians advised parents on how to address the masturbatory tendencies of infants and young children. In 1927, American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Smiley Blanton, informed parents that male babies showed signs of sexual stimulation on their external sexual organs at birth whereas, for girls, this

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., 534.
occurs in the first year of life. Such an active, unrepressed, sexual life in the infant, Blanton positioned as the initial stages of the infant’s eventual emotional development of love. As far as Blanton was concerned, the infant was not conscious of loving anything and “in so far as he has any love capacity it is centered on himself.” The infant’s lack of shame in exhibiting sexual instincts could be attributed to this stage of life where “his gratification is found in the satisfaction of his own needs, such as the taking of food, excretory processes, and the skin sensations.”

Blanton’s instructions to parents on how to address sexuality in the child also echoed sex reformers’ own recommendations for sex education. Blanton suggested frank sex instruction and the development of pride in a healthy body, both of which became cardinal principles of the Russells’ policies at Beacon Hill School. This view resonated with much of the work sex reformers had done both to stress the sexuality of the child as well as to argue for sexual life in both female and male bodies.

Just as leading sex reformers had looked to the importance of sex instincts as regenerating forces for nervous white middle class bodies, so did parenting advice focus on the ‘nervous’ child as a specific concern in its sensitivity to the environment. Blanton, in fact, devoted an entire chapter to the subject of nervousness, discussing the transmission of nervousness from the mother to the child while also citing family pedigree as a factor in the child’s nervousness. Blanton’s discussion of nervousness presumed a white middle class background as he highlighted education and extra-school activities such as music, dancing,

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65 Ibid., 142.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 141.
68 Ibid., 218.  Blanton also discusses a child’s nervousness as a response to parental pressure on child to succeed in school, the climatic conditions of spending too much time indoors in the winter, and the lack of suitable playmates. See Blanton, *Child Guidance*, 213-215.
gymnastics, and drill." Cameron also noted the sexual life of the child in discussing infant masturbation. Cameron specifically addressed mothers when he looked to alleviate anxieties over children’s masturbatory practices. He reassured mothers that this practice was no indication of sexual excess or perversion but that children should, nonetheless, adopt the attitude that “it is a deplorable breach of manners, that it is a disgusting habit.” For the most part, Cameron presumed a white male middle class child, often eliding the ‘boy’ with the universal ‘child.’ Cameron’s concerns over the male child ultimately arose from problems he identified in “emotional states, which would stamp a grown man as a profound neurotic are almost the rule in infancy and childhood.” These neuroses were specific to “we civilized people, living lives of mental stress and strain.” The problem of neurasthenia could manifest itself in the children who are “intellectually alert, impressionable, and forward for their age, and who, when well, throw themselves into work or play with a great expenditure of nervous energy.” Cameron’s sexual yet nervous child implicitly belonged to an educated white middle class family. Bertrand Russell’s concern over the health of his own children and the particular problem of ‘sexual fatigue’ among the ‘civilized’ likely led him to consult Cameron’s text which he cited in his work on education. Although working on opposite sides of the Atlantic, both Blanton and Cameron found nervousness a pressing concern which

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69 Ibid., 214.
71 Ibid., 69.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., 111.
can be explained in light of the construction of nervousness in this period as a problem of white ‘civilized’ middle class bodies in modern capitalist nations. Although Blanton and Cameron periodically referred to the female child, their focus on nervousness primarily addressed the problem of exhaustion from overwork which was generally associated with white middle class men in comparison to nervousness in women which was largely framed as hysterical symptoms associated with the female reproductive cycle.

As child care experts drew attention to the nervous child, they pointed to the heightened sensitivity and, of course, psychological impressionability which could be attributed to the role of touch in the infant’s life as the primary mode of relationality. For American behaviourist, John Watson, who had observed babies for up to the first year of their lives at Johns Hopkins Hospital, the initial love responses occurred through touch. The baby’s experience of love began with stroking, the touching of skin, lips, and sex organs. In *Psychological Care of Infant and Child*, Watson argued that “It [the infant] will ‘love’ the stroker. This is the clay out of which all love – maternal, paternal, wifely, or husbandly – is made.”

Although an American psychologist, Watson’s ideas had international influence with Bertrand Russell highlighting Watson’s work alongside his discussion of the role of psychoanalysis in the education of children. Watson’s emphasis on touch as the primary expression of love for the child resonated with Darwin’s views of animal ‘love’ as limited to physical contact and the baby’s world as governed by its relation to ‘love-objects’ whereby love only developed as the child furthered its relations with the world. Early twentieth century child care experts often emphasized the acute and heightened affective context of

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parent-child relations, particularly where the child’s sexuality was concerned. These experts gave parents very specific instructions on vigilantly observing the tightness of the child’s foreskin and the avoidance of dressing the child in tight clothing. As the child grew older, parents were supposed to ensure that children slept with their hands outside of the bedcovers and refrained from sliding down or climbing up banisters. Ernest Groves, a well-recognized American authority on child care, warned parents of physical punishments which could sexually arouse the child. Groves told parents to only “administer spankings or slappings, beatings or whippings only on the hands, arms, and lower legs, lest he do that which is farthest from his purpose—stimulate a perverted erotic reaction which may seriously hinder normal emotional development.”

As sexologists, like Ellis, and child rearing experts, like Watson and Groves, turned their attention to the infant’s level of emotional development, they associated the early age of infancy with autoeroticism which linked autoeroticism with both immature sexual practices on the road to heterosexual development and the limited capacity to feel solely in terms of physical rather than psychic forces.

With experts on both sides of the Atlantic defining the baby’s world as one governed by touch, their discussion of the mother as the first ‘love-object’ drew particular attention to the mother as an affective conductor. That is, she carried the responsibility of acting as an agent for carefully managing the instincts and energies of the child as its initial contact with the world and the beginning of its emotional development. In other words, the infant

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77 Peter Stearns has argued that middle class parents were more anxious in the early twentieth-century than in previous times due to the construction of the child as highly vulnerable. See Peter Stearns, Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Childrearing in America (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

78 Watson, Psychological Care of the Infant and Child, 135.

79 Ibid.

emotionally developed only through a relation, connection, similar to the ways more recent affect theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have described bodies as plugged into an environment.\textsuperscript{81} Susan Isaacs, a British psychoanalyst and educator, emphasized the intensity of the child’s contact with the mother by discussing the breast as a child’s assurance or uncertainty of love. Writing in the October 1929 issue of \textit{The Nursery World}, Isaacs told her readers that:

\begin{quote}
To give the breast is to the babe’s mind in these early days to give love; to withdraw or withhold it is to withdraw or withhold love. When we understand this we see also how important are the ways in which we manage all the business of feeding and weaning. These are by no means mere affairs of bodily hygiene, but living interests of the developing mind.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

In stressing the importance of regular feeding schedules, Isaacs indicated that deviation from the baby’s accustomed schedule meant “to disturb the rhythm of love satisfactions. He cries not only because he is hungry, but also because he is lost without love and love does not come to him.”\textsuperscript{83} When Isaacs referred to bottle-feeding as a cold and heartless experience amounting to “a mere affair of satisfying hunger,” she placed the bottle within the affective context that “to lose the breast means to lose love.”\textsuperscript{84} Isaacs’ work must be situated in the context of early twentieth century debates over working class women’s poor reproductive health, the lack of time for these women to breastfeed, and the use of colonized or lower class women for wet nursing.\textsuperscript{85} Isaacs’ work situated love and well-adjusted children in white

\textsuperscript{81} Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, \textit{anti-oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia}, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 4-5, 9-22.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Jacqueline Wolf, ‘Don’t Kill Your Baby’: \textit{Public Health and the Decline of Breastfeeding in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries} (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 30, 139. Linda Bryder points out early twentieth-century Anglo-transnational anxieties over the failure of white middle class women to peform
middle class homes which were defined by a middle class income, a husband-father as provider, and a wife-mother who did not need to work. Isaacs’ description of the breast points to the mother as an affective conductor with a feeding-function and love-function that was located in class and racial hierarchies which politicized the possibilities of a baby for affective maturity.

By the time Isaacs wrote for *The Nursery World* in 1929, she had already established herself as a leading authority on child education and psychology. Isaacs collected a considerable amount of data from observing children at her experimental school, Malting House, which she ran with husband Nathan Isaacs between 1924 and 1927. At this school, Susan Isaacs used I.Q. tests which had first been developed in 1905 in France. However, by the 1920s, these tests were institutionalized in the United States and Britain. In the early 1920s, Isaacs had also been psychoanalyzed by J.C. Flügel and became part of the British Institute of Psycho-Analysis, run by Ernest Jones who was one of Freud’s most trusted disciples. In 1929, Isaacs’ work in *The Nursery World* was a column under the pseudonym of Ursula Wise which gave advice to parents who, at this time, increasingly looked to experts on what came to be seen as “scientific” motherhood. Although historians have focused on the importance of motherhood in this period in terms of scientific motherhood and

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maternalist politics, they have paid little attention to this historically specific importance placed on the affective relation between mother and child.  

Although early twentieth century experts’ attention to breastfeeding, contaminated milk and the malnutrition of bottle-fed infants has been well documented, Isaacs’ work shows the affective importance of the breast in the child’s emotional development. In 1935, Isaacs’ work on The Psychological Aspects of Child Development continued to stress the child’s state of what she called “emotional immaturity” and grounded the developmental process in the goal of “an appropriate and more settled heterosexual choice.” This work situated the infant’s particular attachments to objects as an initial stage in a process of affective maturity where “the earliest signs of affection are those of patting the breast while nursing.” She also contended, just as White had, that “the wish of the infant to touch and


91 Ibid., 19.
manipulate the persons of adults is very strong.” In keeping with much of the child care literature, Isaacs also acknowledged the child’s genital excitement and masturbation. Isaacs work suggests the possibility of reading texts of child advice through an analytical approach that scholar Clifford Geertz has referred to as thick description. What Geertz has discussed as a semiotic approach to culture to show a social discourse that exposes the multi-layered meanings of rituals can be applied to showing the specific historical meaning attributed to breastfeeding as an affectively charged act.

Although historians have noted that childhood as a particular stage in life came to be widely accepted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the professionalization of child psychology in the early twentieth century situated the child within an evolutionary narrative charted by phases of emotional expression. As I discussed in chapter one, Darwin’s 1873 publication, *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*, grouped together photographs of infants, animals, the insane, and ‘primitive’ peoples to make the point that emotions were not a distinguishing mark of humans. However, Darwin did point out nuances of emotional expression and the evolutionary development of certain emotions that differentiated ‘civilized’ bodies from others. Darwin’s argument found its way into late nineteenth and early twentieth century studies of child psychology. Hector Cameron did, in fact, draw the comparison between the infant and the wild animal. Cameron argued that over-protective anxious parents imprisoned the child “just as the marvelous instinct of the wild animals

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92 Ibid., 20.
93 Clifford Geertz, “Chapter 1: Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1975), 1-30. Geertz is actually employing Gilbert Ryle’s term “thick description” as a useful way of understanding ethnographic research and the concept of culture more broadly.
becomes less efficient in captivity.”

This suggestion that valuable instincts could be lost through disuse also points to how the rising profession of child psychology intertwined the Lamarckian insights of the use and disuse of organs to the Darwinian temporal progression from animals to humans which stressed what historian Paul White has called an “evolutionary kinship.”

In the literature on child care advice, the predominance of sex and hunger instincts emerged as the baby was conceived along the lines of the wild animal. Historian Julia Grant has discussed the ‘savage instincts’ of boys and early twentieth century experts’ view of the importance of cultivating and channeling rather than repressing these instincts as a source of vital energy. Historian Anthony Rotundo has pointed out how ‘boy culture’ engaged with a late nineteenth and early twentieth century model of ‘primitive masculinity’ which exalted savagery and instincts. In the advice on children, recapitulation theory was particularly salient as a comment on the modern child’s development as a repetition of former stages of evolution. This was expressed by the trans-nationally acclaimed American psychologist, G. Stanley Hall who was a key figure in the spread of psychoanalytical ideas in the United States. Hall has been credited with spearheading the child study movement which took root in both Britain and the United States. Hall played an instrumental role in arranging Freud’s

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94 Cameron, The Nervous Child, 22.
1909 visit and lecture series at Clark University in Worcester Massachusetts where Hall served as the university’s acting president. Hall referred to the child as the oldest stratum of the soul as “reminiscences of the primeval vigor and spontaneity of its dawn.” Hall reflected on his work on children as a challenge to “The disposition to regard animals as well as defectives, savages, and children as too remote from the adult culture to shed much light on the mature mind.” Children, in other words, were at a stage of affective immaturity but, whereas so-called defectives and savages were fixed in time and allegedly doomed to such a state of immaturity, white middle class children were only temporarily at this stage which held out the future possibilities for growth.

In his late nineteenth century ground-breaking work, Adolescence, Hall differentiated the child from the adult in terms of its way of affectively relating to the world which mapped the child’s stage in ‘life’ onto a larger evolutionary history. Hall’s work emphasized the distinctive affective realm of the child where touch was the child’s primary mode of communication and development. At the outset of his work, Hall described the problematic study of the child in the following way: “the reason that theories of knowledge cannot give us the external world in all its full reality is because the latter rested upon touch, and the development of the higher senses has thus removed us many degrees from reality.” Hall seized on the issue of touch by citing the somatic factor of the child’s love experience stating that “This precocity of love is of scientific interest as illustrating in the individual what is probably an inversion of the order of the development of the race, in which the somatic

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100 Ibid., 51.  
101 Hall, Adolescence: Volume II, 5.
seems to precede.” Hall not only claimed that the normal child was not unlike the animal in how the ontogenetic paralleled the phyletic but based his argument on the affective state of the child. From the predominance of the somatic in dictating the child’s affective experience, Hall deduced that “It is as if man were polyphyletic in his origin and now the different ethnic stocks were successively harked back to.” Here Hall’s conception of the child’s primal state and affective orientation to touch drew on the early twentieth century debates over immigration, nativism, race suicide, and the dilution of Anglo-Saxon stock. In Hall’s consideration of the child, its association with a range of “ethnic stocks” had the double effect of infantilizing immigrant populations while attesting to the affective maturity of the white middle class child who, at this young age, was equal to the maturity of adults among these “ethnic stocks.”

One of Hall’s pupils and leading child guidance expert, Phyllis Blanchard, similarly invoked evolutionary terms, stressing the “conditioning of the emotional responses” as the adaptability to “civilization.” In her book, *The Child and Society*, Blanchard focused on the development of the “civilized” child, invoking “primitive” children to highlight play as a “fundamental drive” that linked young children to animals. Although Blanchard privileged the influence of environmental conditions over heredity insofar as socializing children’s emotions, she did suggest that different children had different capacities for emotions. In her book, she indicated that “in thinking of these emotional drives and expressions of the adolescent, we must of course distinguish between the average or superior

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102 Ibid., 102.
105 Ibid., 133, 138.
types and those of inferior mentality.” 106 This connection between emotions and intelligence is significant given Blanchard’s view that “Hereditary influences predetermine the potential capacity for educational and vocational achievement.” 107 Blanchard looked to emotions as much more malleable than intelligence at a time when educational reformers, sex reformers, and psychologists on both sides of the Atlantic considered intelligence testing as a ‘scientific’ measure for determining whether children were feebbleminded and, therefore, defective and highly sexualized. 108 In both the early-twentieth-century United States and Britain, leading intellectuals debated the sterilization of the ‘feebleminded’ who apparently lacked the intelligence to manage fertility and could, according to many eugenicists, deteriorate the intellectual level of the race. As one historian has shown, the Sandlebridge schools in Britain were developed for the segregation of feebbleminded children where teachers were particularly watchful over child sexuality. 109 In this sense, child sexuality, emotions, and

106 Ibid., 249.
107 Ibid., 73.
intelligence were not starkly separated but inextricably linked in child expert, parent, and
teacher assessments of the child’s potentiality which also presumed a certain inherited
capacity for progress based on the child’s location in gender, racial, and class hierarchies. In
this sense, what counted as knowledge of the child in light of the early twentieth century
professionalization of child study, not only grounded the child in existing political
inequalities but also projected those inequalities into the future insofar as socialization in
home, school, and playground trained children for citizenship.

As we saw in the previous chapter, sex reformers who were also birth control
advocates and eugenicists contributed to the healthy loving white middle class mother as a
cultural icon attached to racial destiny and national resources. Her body, however, was
inextricably tied to the images of healthy happy babies which were sentimentalized in family
photographs, birth control periodicals, newspaper coverage of better and beautiful baby
contests, and medical literature which invoked family, eugenic, and national pride at the site
of the white middle class baby’s body. What historian Karen Dubinsky has called the
“symbolic politics of children” had a particularly salient meaning amid the early twentieth
century rise of eugenics, child welfare campaigns, maternal feminism, and the birth control

110 On parents’ eugenic pride in the display of the baby in the family photograph, see Shawn Michelle Smith,
“Chapter 4 ‘Baby’s Picture Is Always Treasured’: Eugenics and the Reproduction of Whiteness in the Family
Photograph Album,” in American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture (Princeton, NJ:
Princeton University Press, 1999). On the importance of the baby in eugenics literature, see Annette K Vance
Dorey, Better Baby Contests: The Scientific Quest for Perfect Childhood Health in the Early Twentieth Century
Contests at the Indiana State Fair: Child Health, Scientific Motherhood, and Eugenics in the Mid-West, 1920-
1935,” in Formative Years: Children’s Health in the United States, eds. Alexandra Minna Stern and Howard
Markel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002): 121-152; Erica Bicchieri Boudreau, “‘Yea, I Have
movement. In this period, the politics of the baby invoked age, racial purity, class, and procreation as the hope for shaping a future civilization. While the white middle class baby was the dominant idealized image of the baby, the black community also invoked the healthy black middle class baby as a testament to racial health, the resiliency of a race that persevered through slavery and lynching, and the promise of racial uplift. Although much of the historical attention to the healthy happy early twentieth century baby has focused on its physical body, sex reformers situated this baby in a particular affective context. I argue that this affective context was what imbued the baby’s body with political significance as a vital, highly energized, instinctive body whose birth to ‘civilized’ white middle class parents also qualified that body as possessing the potential for development. The image of the healthy happy baby must be understood as a politics of love where the value of the baby to the State presumed the loving home of white ‘civilized’ middle class parents and the baby’s hereditary and environmental advantages that endowed it with the capacity to affectively mature to the stage of ‘civilized’ white love.

The symbolic value of the baby lay in the implied affective context of the home that valorized the baby’s very existence. The baby was ambivalently located in the childrearing, birth control, and eugenics discourses so that its construction both affirmed the life of the baby represented while also valorizing the decision to prevent the births of other babies. This

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differentiation amounted to a politics of love at the site of the baby’s body whereby love acted as a dense category that symbolized the resources, race, intelligence, sexuality, and religion of the parents. While historians have devoted considerable attention to the early twentieth century as the advent of a concept of the rights to childhood, they have given little consideration to the prominent place love held within these rights. It was not simply that the State valued the baby solely through the distribution of political resources designed to care for and encourage the births of certain babies and not others. There was also an emotional relation to the State. The transatlantic dimension of early twentieth century birth control politics merged white middle class capitalist nations into a partnership that invoked a shared evolutionary past and shared investment in the future at the site of what Edith How-Martyn called the “baby-citizen.”

British birth controller, Edith How-Martyn, worked closely with American birth controller Margaret Sanger in the joint enterprise of The Birth Control International Information Centre which aimed to distribute birth control information and instruction. They specifically targeted nations deemed to be impoverished and overpopulated such as India and China. When How-Martyn spoke of the “baby-citizen,” she emphasized the love showered on this baby which gave its physical health an emotional and morally layered meaning. How-Martyn looked beyond merely the provision of the child’s physical necessities when she demanded, “What are the rights of every child? As I see them they are: -To be a wanted baby, born of healthy parents. To have a home where he is loved, adequately fed, clothed, and housed.” Implicitly then, babies born to parents who could not

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113 See for example, Sealander, *The Failed Century of the Child*; Lindenmeyer, ‘A Right to Childhood’.
115 Ibid.
provide adequate food, clothes, and housing were not only deemed unfit from an economic standpoint but also as unethical and unloving parents. How-Martyn’s comments further point to a bio-political citizenship at the site of love where she extended the absence of love as a criterion to evaluate which children should and should not be born. She implied that one of the aims of her cross-Atlantic cooperation with Margaret Sanger was that “Parliament will use this knowledge to prevent the births of children of feeble-minded, insane, epileptic, criminal + other socially undesirable parents.” Early twentieth century sex reform politics emphasized that the most desirable citizens were also those most capable of providing loving homes which meant that the State had an investment in love that was inextricably intertwined with its investment in healthy white middle class bodies.

The issue of loved children was a testament to which parents were enfranchised and disenfranchised on the grounds of their capacity to provide love. Which children should be born was directly linked to which parents were valued citizens of the State. Marie Stopes’ address to Mary Ware Dennett’s Voluntary Parenthood League in New York City, a rival to Margaret Sanger’s American Birth Control League, in October of 1921 awkwardly positioned Stopes at the crossroads of Sanger and Dennett’s battle for determining the direction of the movement. From my perspective, what is particularly interesting is how

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117 The exchange of letters between Mary Ware Dennett and Marie Stopes indicates the controversy between Margaret Sanger and Mary Ware Dennett. Stopes’s acceptance of Dennett’s invitation to speak at a Voluntary Parenthood League event in New York City angered Sanger’s supporters in both England and the United States. In a letter of August of 1921, Stopes told Dennett of the protests over her visit. In November of 1921, Stopes wrote to Dennett that the press coverage of the controversy with Sanger has hurt the cause in England. She told Dennett, “I do wish Margaret’s ideas of publicity were not quite so blatant, for I suppose she either arranged or welcomed this fracas?” See Marie Stopes to Mary Ware Dennett, 22 August 1921. Marie Stopes Papers, Wellcome Library, London, File MI Overseas 1915-1957. Marie Stopes to Mary Ware Dennett, 19 November 1921. Marie Stopes Papers, Wellcome Library, London, File MI Overseas 1915-1957.
love was mobilized in both contexts to undergird the use of birth control. The value of the lives of certain babies over others was affirmed in terms of the presumed capacities for love in their parents’ bodies which endowed the baby with the potential for affective maturity. In New York City, Marie Stopes told her audience that “you can never have the cradle of American childhood rocked under wholesome conditions if the child that is in that cradle caused its mother an agony for nine months of fear and apprehension.” Stopes drew upon the common trope of the haggard, anxiety-ridden, weakened working-class mother whose material conditions could not be conducive to bringing a loved child into the world. The foreclosure of love was evident in Stopes’ following claim that:

only perfect love coupled with knowledge will cast out that fear in the modern woman, and knowledge will never empty the cradle. It will give you, however, cradles in America in which all the children are those delicious children that come when love on the part of both parents is guided by knowledge, and the child is the product of that union.

Not only were working-class mothers deemed to be ignorant of birth control knowledge but to many sex reformers, that very ignorance made them backward and characterized their relationships as primitive sex encounters rather than “perfect love”.

Towards the end of her speech, Stopes strategically rearticulated the Declaration of Independence to her American audience which revealed whose children deserved to be born by virtue of being guaranteed their parents’ love. Stopes maintained that the inalienable rights are “life, liberty, knowledge, and the pursuit of health and happiness, both for themselves [all men and women, according to Stopes], and to control their unborn children in

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119 Ibid.
the interests of the race."\textsuperscript{120} The transatlantic birth control movement strategically employed love to affectively interpellate subjects to reinforce positions within class, racial, and sexual hierarchies of power.\textsuperscript{121} The love of children hegemonically aligned with basic humanity enabled a bio-politics of emotion at the site of reproduction whereby the white middle class couple’s ability to identify itself with the white healthy happy baby encouraged reproduction. By contrast, working class, immigrant, or genetic carriers of disease who (dis)identified with such a baby would curtail reproduction.

What sex reformers, educators, and child psychologists jointly contributed to defining as the nature of the baby amounted to a class, raced, gendered and sexual politics of love which endowed parents and children with specific capacities and entitlements to love. Early twentieth century sex reform dovetailed with the rise of the child study movement as a number of intellectuals found the concerns of educating the child as integrally linked to developing well-adjusted healthy and sexually unrepressed adults. Sex reformers and child study experts found a common ground as they jointly contributed to a construction of the baby as a highly sexualized, egocentric, perverse, and shameless pursuer of self-gratification. Such a construction marked the baby as the first phase in a projected course of affective maturity which ultimately presumed the baby’s white middle class background. As I have shown, parental advice literature in this period positioned both parents and children in a fluid relationship of affective exchanges where their actions were interpreted in light of the flow.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{121} This is my application Louis Althusser’s concept of interpellation to highlight the way affects can be considered in terms of hegemony. Althusser defines interpellation as the interactive process of hegemony whereby a subject comes into being by virtue of being turned toward dominant ideologies. See Louis Althusser, \textit{Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays}, trans. Ben Brewster (New York & London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 174-175.
channeling, and interplay of instincts, energies, and future possibilities for the development of love which also hinged on appropriately directing the perverse inclinations of the baby toward heterosexual object-choices. While His Majesty the Baby was largely governed by touch and physical contact in ways that sex reformers and child experts likened to animals, as the Baby grew older a new array of tactics concerning play integrally tied the developing baby with developing stages of ‘civilization’ whereby education and play targeted children’s ‘tribal’ and ‘primal’ instincts in navigating children’s affective maturity.

II. The Imaginative World of the Child: Structuring Play and Producing Emotions

While the world of the baby had been governed by a sense of touch and self-gratification, the next stage of the child’s affective maturity was marked by dramatic play, games, and fantasies. The early twentieth century child study and sex reform movements significantly overlapped in the production of ‘scientific’ knowledge and suggested training of the child, specifically as they increasingly focused on shaping children’s instincts, emotions, and successfully channeling their ‘primal’ energies into ‘civilization.’ Within this space of growing expert knowledge of children and sex reform, playground reformers advocated the need to study, manage, and value play as an important mechanism for productively channeling children’s instincts, guiding their sexual development toward heterosexual love-objects, and transforming their shameless gratification of sex and hunger instincts into mutual sympathy, love, and reproduction. As historian, Howard Chudacoff has observed of American children’s play in the early twentieth century, “More than ever before advice was grounded in emotional and ascriptive qualities of the child, qualities that related directly to
play.” While Chudacoff points out the increasing adult interference in children’s culture in the early twentieth century, Peter Thorsheim discusses the British playground movement’s investment in structuring play as a matter of national and imperial power. According to Thorsheim, “concerns about the body, urban green space, and empire came together in late nineteenth-century London around fears of degeneration.”

In a transatlantic network, there were child guidance experts, psychoanalysts, physicians, eugenicists, birth controllers, and child welfare activists who treated play as a technology for managing the child’s affects toward maturity. Through these experts’ advice, publications, and development of organizations and institutions, play took on a historically specific meaning as an organized practice for guiding the child’s instinctive impulses towards white middle class companionate marriage and the evolutionary product of love.

In both Britain and the United States, child study experts discussed children’s play as both a sign of a child’s early stage in a process toward affective maturity and a particular re-enactment of the stages of human evolution which aligned the immature state of the child with ‘lower’ races and ‘primitive’ societies. Playground reformer, Joseph Lee, who co-founded the Playground Association of America with the settlement house reformer Jane Addams and Henry Curtis, discussed one particular phase of a child’s life as the “Big Injun” phase. At this stage, Lee described the child in terms of early twentieth century stereotypes of Native Americans. The child at the Big Injun Age, from about the age of six to eleven, manifested a fighting-instinct, a desire to show courage, a competitive spirit, a love

122 Chudacoff, *Children At Play*, 123.
of mischief, a closeness to nature, and a desire to test the laws of society. Lee used one example of the mischief of the Big Injun child who smoked cigarettes as “some sort of equivalent to the paint and feathers, the scalps and claws of grizzly bears, affected by the original Big Injun.” Furthermore, Lee situated this child along a trajectory of affective maturity insofar as this child’s age, likened to a ‘primal’ state of civilization, lacked sympathy and often behaved cruelly towards animals. Lee also associated the “fighting-instinct” with the Irish and “Latin nations” which positioned these immigrant groups at the level of the child’s Big Injun age. Cyril Burt, a British child psychologist and educator who wrote on the delinquent child and collaborated with Susan Isaacs, also discussed the ten or eleven year old child in terms resembling Lee’s Big Injun phase. According to Burt, ten or eleven-year-old children exhibited rivalry among their peers. At the age of twelve or thirteen, these children’s “collective activities now resemble those of a precivilized stage of human evolution: they play pirates and robbers or cowboys and Red Indians, and form bands for hunting, fishing, fighting, and marauding.” Burt also pointed to the inclination of boys at this age to explore in the manner of “the strange migratory habits of certain animals and birds and the trekking of primitive tribes.” Both Lee and Burt’s discussion of the child at this age, presumed a male child which mapped onto assumptions of gendered roles in evolution of male competition and drew on late nineteenth and early twentieth century models of primal masculinity.

125 Ibid., 174-177, 182-183, 197.
126 Ibid., 191.
127 Ibid., 218.
128 Ibid., 193.
130 Ibid., 436.
A number of early twentieth century child psychologists, educators, and sex reformers associated the child’s “wild,” “savage,” and “primitive” character with perverse sexual practices that precluded the “civilized” assumption of exclusively heterosexual desires. In 1924, sex reformer Albert Moll’s *The Sexual Life of the Child* was translated into English. Albert Moll was apparently very well connected to sex reformers in various countries. In the middle of organizing the 1929 World League for Sexual Reform, Norman Haire complained to Dora Russell that “Moll has been writing to friends of his abusing Hirschfeld, and apparently suggesting that the W.L.S.R. is unduly interested in abnormalities.”

In *The Sexual Life of the Child*, Moll described the child’s sexual world as one of “perverse sentiments” and the variability of its “amatory sentiment.” Moll related to his readers, the child’s realm of perversion which indiscriminately attached itself to objects in practices that spanned masturbation, exhibitionism, sadism, masochism, homosexuality, and heterosexuality. Moll warned his readers of too rigidly enforcing the sexual segregation of play between boys and girls, telling his readers that “the perverse activities of the undifferentiated sexual impulse may very readily appear in place of the suppressed heterosexual manifestations.” As Moll outlined the stages of child development, the child moved towards the stage of “normal individuals” which was “unmistakably heterosexual.”

American physician, William Robie, whose work was known to British and European sex reformers, expressed his agreement with Moll’s theory on sexual instincts and the

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133 Ibid.
134 Ibid., 79.
135 Ibid., 61.
combination of the psychic and physical inclination of opposite sexes towards one another.¹³⁶ Robie situated sex instincts in light of furthering the development of an emotional context, stating that “physical reflexes are becoming more and more subjected to emotional idealization and dispersion.”¹³⁷ As for what this meant for children, Robie indicated that “this emotional appeal is the principal point of attack in the forewarning and training of young people in the correct view of sexual life.”¹³⁸ Robie, Moll, and others who contributed to establishing the ‘truths’ of the child’s sexuality, charted the child’s affective maturity as a process leading from perversion towards heterosexual object choice which would crystallize in love. In Britain, Havelock Ellis also discussed children’s “undifferentiated emotions” but drew attention to “perverse” as an adult conception of the child’s sexuality. He contended that, given the child’s age, these practices were “natural.”¹³⁹ Ellis, however, supported this argument by equating the child’s immaturity with the observance of sexual practices among lower animals, the Trobrianders studied by Bronislaw Malinowski, and different stages of cultures as well as different periods of history.¹⁴⁰ Insofar as sex reformers like Ellis and Moll addressed the subject of the child, they situated the child’s undiscriminating choice of sexual objects alongside a ‘primitive’ or ‘uncivilized’ state. As such, Moll and Ellis elided the highly instinctive, sexually unrepressed character of the child as a stage prior to the development of ‘civilized,’ heterosexual love. As Claudia Castaneda has asserted, the child has been discursively and materially constructed in time and space through the assumption of

¹³⁷ Ibid., 187.
¹³⁸ Ibid., 191.
¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 542.
its potentiality.\textsuperscript{141} The child as a body-in-transition can therefore lay bare the rituals of performance, iterability, and repetition that are typically taken for granted as natural in the adult body. In this sense, the early twentieth century attention to guiding the child from perversion towards love demonstrates how love was produced through multiple forms of power.\textsuperscript{142}

Sex reformers’ discussions on child sexuality influenced how playground reformers and child psychologists understood the importance of children’s play. Playground reformer, Joseph Lee, charted these stages of the child’s affective progression toward love in terms of the nature of children’s games. Lee argued that the growth of children beyond infancy and the rise of higher animals above competition could be attributed to love. In Lee’s work, the child’s affective maturity is contingent on the child’s evolutionary status whereby “the lover is, biologically speaking, the decisive element in human progress.”\textsuperscript{143} Consequently, Lee marked the child’s successive forms of play from building blocks to the Injun phase of hunting to team sports as successive developments in the affective possibilities of the child. Focusing primarily on the boy’s more acute or demanding sexual instincts, Lee asserted that “nothing will make a lower satisfaction look more flat and tawdry than a remembered boyish ideal.”\textsuperscript{144} In a number of texts on the child, the term ‘child’ frequently implied the male child unless the authors specified a female child. British psychologist, Cyril Burt’s discussion of children’s play as a “hereditary mode” where the child exhibits “an overflow of excessive animal spirits, a spilling of superabundant nervous energy which in the brimming state of

\textsuperscript{143} Lee, \textit{Play in Education}, 407.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 409.
careless dependence are not wholly drawn off and absorbed by the serious struggle for existence.”  

Burt primarily focused on the boy in his work which situated this description of the young child’s nervous energy in light of the cultural concerns of weakened, devitalized neurasthenic ‘civilized’ male bodies. Burt suggested that love ultimately marked a child’s development beyond selfishness whereby the “emotion – named variously love, affection, sympathy, tenderness – has been held to be ‘the main, perhaps, the only source of altruistic conduct.’”  

Burt explained juvenile delinquency in terms of the immature and ‘primitive’ character of these children who “far from being altruists, most criminals are disobeying egoists, unloving and unloved.”  

Once again, Burt’s focus on the boy led him to specifically indicate that boys did have the potential for maternal feeling.  

Citing Freud, Burt found his work important for calling “attention to immature manifestations existing from the earliest years of infancy.”  

Both Burt’s and Lee’s works exemplify a transatlantic conversation on the instincts and energies of children whose vitality, particularly that of boys, was seen as valuable to ‘civilization’ but requiring education toward love.

As these various experts framed the child’s sexuality, it could be described along the lines of what contemporary theorists have called queer sexuality. Yet, in this period, experts developed specific strategies to educate the child toward heterosexual desire which they elided with love. This particular historical episode offers an empirical lens for observing what queer theorist, Judith Butler, has referred to as a “heterosexual matrix.”  

Butler has

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145 Burt, *The Delinquent Child*, 469.
146 Ibid., 459-460.
147 Ibid., 460.
148 Ibid., 459.
149 Ibid., 414.
discussed how the performance of gender has been inextricably tied to a “heterosexual matrix” which depends on clearly differentiating men from women to make heterosexual object-choices possible.\textsuperscript{151} Early twentieth century reformers’ writings on pedagogical philosophies of play can be historicized for how they construed play as a tool for directing children’s desires toward heterosexuality which presumed that children’s path to maturity required moving beyond the random selection of objects of desire toward exclusively heterosexual mates with the possibility of reproduction.

In 1920, Luther Gulick’s \textit{A Philosophy of Play} emphasized that children’s games and make-believe importantly shaped the future roles of white middle class men and women. Gulick was active in the play movement as a founder of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, a teacher at the YMCA Training School in Springfield, Massachusetts, a founder of the Campfire Girls, and a pioneer of the New York Public Schools Athletic League. Gulick also addressed the American Academy of Political and Social Science in carrying his message that recreation was important to the nation as a way of developing health and morality. As historian Mark Dyerson has shown, Gulick was part of a coterie of early twentieth century playground and park reformers who were disciples of G. Stanley Hall and, like Hall, their views were informed by recapitulation theory, specifically Ernst Haeckel’s law that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.\textsuperscript{152} Gulick was one of the prominent early twentieth century middle class intellectuals who positioned play as a matter

\textsuperscript{152} Mark Dyerson discusses Luther Gulick in the context of a broader argument that early twentieth century intellectuals such as progressive reformers for parks and playgrounds, considered athletics as crucial to conserving the human resources of the nation whereby leisure was situated amid political and scientific understandings of evolution, energies, and national efficiency. Mark Dyerson, “Nature By Design: Modern American Ideas About Sport, Energy, Evolution, and Republics, 1865-1920,” \textit{Journal of Sport History} (Fall 1999): 447-469.
of national importance tied to a prevalent national discourse on the destructive effects of modernity on ‘natural’ human energies. Although Gulick’s philosophy of play argued that play was crucial to socializing boys and girls, he situated the very potential for such development in white middle class bodies who would uphold Anglo-Saxon heterosexual capitalist civilization. What Gulick referred to as the chart of “Anglo-Saxon Play” showed the child’s growth in terms of which forms of play it gravitated toward.  

Often focusing on the development of boys, Gulick suggested the future shaping of the businessman and husband as economic provider, pointing out that “Most of the intensity of the business world is built on these old instincts of fighting and hunting.” Through children’s use of toys, Gulick argued, they could also be taught the ownership of property. Gulick’s emphasis on boys’ play looked to the entrenchment of manly capitalist values where “from self-mastery the boy goes onto competition.” In contrast to the boy, Gulick emphasized girls’ play as developing “domestic feelings,” drawing attention to the importance of the doll as “a peg upon which hangs the bulk of the domestic feelings of the girl.” Like the boy, however, Gulick presumed a girl from a middle class home by claiming that “girls in tenements and apartments have far less opportunity for the growth of domestic feelings than is afforded to girls in homes.” Gulick’s discussion of children’s play provided an economic, gendered, racial context to the affective maturity of the children engaged in successive stages of play.

154 Ibid., 143.
155 Ibid., 81.
156 Ibid., 149.
157 Ibid., 69.
158 Ibid., 96.
Gulick also located white middle class children’s affective maturity through play in an evolutionary narrative. As one of G. Stanley Hall’s disciples, Gulick popularized recapitulation theory.\textsuperscript{159} At the outset of his work, Gulick proposed to discuss forms of play as “the survival value, from the evolutionary standpoint, of the feelings involved in play, and the extent to which those feelings are still of use.”\textsuperscript{160} By considering play as the shaping of children’s instincts, he associated the young age of children with a primal state in their potential to achieve affective maturity. Historian Philip Deloria has indicated that Gulick’s Campfire Girls invoked a common stage of evolutionary development between children and Indians insofar as Gulick’s Campfire Girls exalted the domestic over the wild fire and encouraged girls to make ceremonial dresses.\textsuperscript{161} Gulick’s concerns over children’s play were also concerns over the vitality of middle class men and women. He seemed to share the concerns of his contemporaries over the feminization of boys and the effects of civilization on devitalized neurasthenic middle class men, when he insisted that:

\begin{quote}
The fundamental qualities to be cultivated in the boy are those of muscular strength, the despising of pain, driving straight to the mark, and the smashing down of obstacles. The world needs power and the barbaric virtues of manhood together with the type of group loyalty which is based upon these savage virtues.\textsuperscript{162}
\end{quote}

As discussed in chapter one, white middle class intellectuals engaged in the cultural practice of primitivism as the re-capture of lost ancestral energies which had been quelled in the ‘progress’ of civilization. In children’s literature, these anxieties over the costs of civilization to white male middle class bodies were manifested in the exaltation of the ‘bad boy’ figure in British and American novels which sentimentalized mischief, pranks, and aggression in the

\textsuperscript{159}Dyreson, “Nature By Design,” 458.
\textsuperscript{160}Gulick, \textit{A Philosophy of Play}, 9.
\textsuperscript{161}Deloria, \textit{Playing Indian}, 111, 113, 117.
\textsuperscript{162}Gulick, \textit{A Philosophy of Play}, 98.
boy as signs of vitality.\textsuperscript{163} The extent to which the ‘bad boy’ image pervaded Anglo-American culture can be observed in Havelock Ellis’s autobiography and the autobiography of William Allen White, Kansas journalist and Republican political consultant to Theodore Roosevelt. Both Ellis and White explained their own boyhood as either measuring up or failing to meet the ‘bad boy’ representation.\textsuperscript{164} Drawing attention to both the primal state of children and the importance to cultivate these energies, Gulick encouraged hunting and fighting games “to develop those qualities that make fighters of men.”\textsuperscript{165} Gulick’s advice on managing children’s play re-enacted an imperial politics at the site of feeling. Gulick’s primary concern was how play could engender certain feelings and when discussing games of chase, Gulick aligned children’s feelings at this stage with “Hawaiian feelings” and “Chinese feelings.”\textsuperscript{166} His reference to Hawaii situated feeling as an axis of imperial politics given that Hawaii became an American possession in 1898. In Gulick’s work, the child who played was implicitly a white middle class child who was also endowed with a capacity for moving through stages of affective maturity whereby, as Gulick contended, “play is thus seen to be an indication for the capacity for growth.”


\textsuperscript{164}Havelock Ellis’s autobiography is almost apologetic for not reflecting the ideal of aggressive boyhood. Ellis, instead, suggests that he was a helpful, timid, and nervous child who tended to avoid confrontation. By contrast, William Allen White recounts numerous fights and strenuous tests of his physical limits as a boy with ‘gang instincts’ at the ‘Injun’ stage of life. See Havelock Ellis, \textit{My Life} (London: Alan Hull Walton, 1940; repr. 1967), 44, 85. William Allen White, \textit{The Autobiography of William Allen White} (New York: MacMillan Company, 1946), 48-54, 63-78. On page 48, White claims that “As a fighter I was probably repeating the history of the race.”

\textsuperscript{165}Ibid., 32.

\textsuperscript{166}Ibid., 19.
As early twentieth century sex reformers, child psychologists, and educators framed the child’s affective maturity as the possibility to reach the stage of heterosexual love, many of their concerns over structuring children’s play focused on training children for future happy, sexually satisfying companionate marriages which posited love as the integration or merging of male and female elements. Sex reformers’ warnings that sex segregation in childhood would lead to prudishness, sexual ignorance, and sex antagonism, resonated with early twentieth century philosophies on reforming children’s play to facilitate intimacies between boys and girls that would lead to a future state of companionate sexually satisfying marriages. Alice Sies, an assistant professor of childhood education at the University of Pittsburgh, drew attention to doll-play among boys and girls, insisting that the “tendency boys show to make certain nurture responses.”\(^{167}\) Joseph Lee advocated pet-keeping and playing with dolls because, he reasoned, taking care of another creature would foster “the reciprocity of relation without which there cannot be true friendship.”\(^{168}\) Given the traditional association of emotion, love, and affections with women, Lee particularly emphasized that “A man is not quite a man who has not something of the mother in him.”\(^{169}\) Much like sex reformers’ utopian ideals of the vigorous Superman whose ‘primal’ instincts were joined to the ‘civilized’ expression of love in companionate marriages, Lee maintained that “the real Superman, the true representative of the race life is the maternal instinct.”\(^{170}\) In the case of girls, Ernest Groves encouraged tomboyism as an important phase for girls to

\(^{167}\) Alice Corbin Sies, *Spontaneous and Supervised Play in Childhood* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), 54.

\(^{168}\) Lee, *Play in Education*, 225.

\(^{169}\) Ibid., 224.

\(^{170}\) Ibid.
develop healthy bodies and avert future rebellion against femininity. Joseph Lee also cautioned against the too rigid separation of the sexes in play, suggesting that at the tomboy age, it was perfectly safe for parents to encourage girls to play with boys. This would then prevent young girls from being “condemned to premature ladyhood.” Many of these ideas on play were put into practice at Bertrand and Dora Russell’s Beacon Hill School in West Sussex just outside of London. At Beacon Hill, pedagogy followed much of the Russells’ philosophy which included the understanding that “play and pretence are a vital need of childhood for which opportunity must be provided if the child is to be happy and healthy quite independently of any further utility in these activities.” Children’s co-education and, of course, the fact that they played together at Beacon Hill School must be situated in Dora Russell’s own philosophy that co-education was necessary so that “we learn gentleness may be expressed through manhood whilst strength is a quality vital to the woman.” Rather than rigidly define children’s bodies in exclusively masculine or feminine terms, experts on child development much like sex reformers, looked to a complete self as the blending of male and female elements which, nonetheless presumed ‘mature’ love as the union of man and woman.

As I have shown, sex reformers, child psychologists and educators pointed out the seriousness of play which situated it alongside a middle class capitalist work ethic, Anglo-Saxon bodily energies, and what behaviorist John Watson called “heterosexual

172 Lee, Play in Education, 392-393.
adjustment."175 Many white middle class intellectuals positioned themselves as experts on child development which grounded play in class, racial, sexual, and imperial politics. As historians have noted, the concept of childhood presumed a child free from paid work, attending school, and defined by play but such a concept ultimately excluded the experiences of African American, immigrant and working-class children.176 By focusing on children’s play as key to the maturing process of the child, early twentieth century child study experts presumed a white middle class child with the potential to ‘progress’ which recapitulated the experiences of human evolutionary development. Howard Chudacoff and James Walvin’s works have indicated the seriousness of children’s play in the early twentieth century insofar as play was a contested site of social control as an important domain to the socialization of children and an opportunity for children to shape their own worlds.177 I argue that children’s play was serious in its enactments of gender, racial, class, sexual, and imperial politics where children were implicated in a future imagined within a white emotive imaginary.

What I find particularly distinctive in this period is that the socialization of children through play was about affectively shaping children to form impulses, instincts, and emotions that would form the bedrock of social and political order. In other words, when sex reformers, child psychologists, and educators urged observing, managing, and organizing

175 Watson, Psychological Care of Infant and Child, 146.
176 Viviana Zelizer’s work discusses the emergence of the “priceless child” who embodied the experience of childhood as free from labour, an economic responsibility on parents, and embedded in a culture of play and school. Zelizer indicates that the between 1870 and 1930 there was a transition in the social value of the child from an economic role in contributing to the family economy to a sentimental value. See Viviana Zelizer, Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1985). A number of historians have shown how the definition of the ‘child’ presumed a white middle class family. See Klapper, Small Strangers. Davin, Growing Up Poor; Walvin, A Child’s World. In the American context, Kriste Lindenmeyer has argued that the 1930s marked the period when a sheltered childhood became more democratized through Depression-era state initiatives to entrench the ideal of American childhood. See Kriste Lindenmeyer, The Greatest Generation Grows Up: American Childhood in the 1930s (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005).
177 Chudacoff, Children At Play, 99-113; Walvin, A Child’s World, 79, 89.
play, they located the child within a process of affective maturity from a life governed by instincts and self-gratification toward ‘civilized’ emotional expressions and cooperative, mutual, communal social relations. The seriousness of play allows for conceptualizing this period through Derrida’s deconstructive method of analysis. In “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourses of the Human Sciences,” Derrida advocates free play as a way of rearranging or maneuvering within terms set by normative discourses. Derrida’s argument suggests that playful analytics can disrupt but are never entirely free of the very structures they attempt to dislodge. Playfulness, in other words, does not amount to a freedom from seriousness, structure, or authority but simultaneously partakes of the structure even as it seeks to undercut it. Derrida’s insights on play, not necessarily as a specific concrete practice or tool for children, but as an analytical strategy or thought experiment for carving out possibilities for thinking beyond normative codes, provide important ways for understanding the centrality of play to sex reform and pedagogical projects. For early twentieth century white middle class sex reformers, educators, and child psychologists, play was an idealized, imaginative space where, like the baby, normative Victorian moral codes had not yet taken hold on the psychic and physical makeup of the child and, thus, the instinctive freedom of the child was depicted as a nostalgic escape from the overburdened, neurasthenic white middle class adult bodies. Yet, as reformers looked to structure, organize, and shape play to further desirable emotional and heterosexual development in children, these reformers simultaneously located play within normative structures committed to upholding white middle class leadership of civilization. As such, Derrida’s insights on the analytics of play

179 Ibid.
help to conceptualize the historical meaning of play in this period as wedded to both the possibilities and constraints of projects committed to ways of being outside of normative structures. The tendency of historians of children to position analyses of play within the dichotomy of adult social control versus children’s autonomy fails to account for how play was structured in a way that fantasized both control and disruption. The child’s positioning as a more instinctive being attested to a sense of lost ancestral vitality and at the same time, organizing play was situated in bringing the child toward an idealized state of affective maturity.

III. Producing Loving Citizens: The Institutionalization and Disciplinary Control of Children’s Affects

From childrearing literature to theories of play, a number of white middle class intellectuals who fashioned themselves as ‘modern’ educators consolidated an array of strategies for educating children as emotional citizens in the space of the ‘modern’ school. The ‘modern’ experimental school was an international phenomenon emerging out of intellectuals’ radical critiques of the conventional school as an organ of the State’s capitalist, patriarchal, and imperial values. In Britain and the United States, ‘modern’ educators and parents who turned to ‘modern’ schools to educate their children were deeply concerned that conventional schools exhausted children’s energies, crushed their instinctive urges and talents, and ultimately contributed to weakened, unhappy, and sexually repressed future citizens. A number of sex reformers such as Bertrand and Dora Russell, Hutchins Hapgood, Ellen Key, and Mabel Dodge addressed the issue of children’s education while other intellectuals such as Elizabeth Duncan, Alexander O’Neill, and Herbert Spencer who have
not been regarded as sex reformers, established pedagogical philosophies that drew on sex reform discourses of the importance of sexual instincts and energies to the course of civilization. In this sense, the ‘modern’ school marks an important institutional expression of the cross-fertilization of pedagogy and sex reform, specifically in the vision of the possibilities for shaping the child as an emotional citizen in a world built on feelings.

In April of 1936, Dora Russell told her friend and fellow sex reformer, British novelist H.G. Wells that “You can’t, if you will forgive my saying so, make a new world out of steel and glass, it can only be made out of human beings with sound feelings about their fellows, plus the intelligent teaching in technical things to make those feelings effective.”

When Dora and Bertrand Russell founded Beacon Hill School in 1927, they created an institution dedicated to “intelligent teaching” targeted specifically at training children how to feel. Dora’s frustration with Wells occurred shortly after the Russells divorced when she was financially struggling to keep Beacon Hill School open. One of Dora’s articles on “Self-Government in the School,” explained the importance of a curriculum designed to educate emotions in light of the application of psychology to pedagogical practices. Drawing on how education had traditionally privileged the development of intelligence to the neglect of emotion, Dora pointed out that:

> [the] emotional drive of the individual, which if it is twisted, may render even the highest type of intelligence ineffective. But even to-day it is scarcely recognised at all that social behaviour is not intellectually but emotionally determined. It is neither knowledge nor moral precept that really governs our behaviour to other people. Even those actions we believe are rational have their real source in the emotions and habits that we have acquired in our early years.

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180 Dora Russell to H.G. Wells, 10 April 1936. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 93-102, File 98.
Accepting primarily white middle class British and American children as early as 9 months old up to the age of eighteen, the Russells’ policies at Beacon Hill enacted the views of ‘modern’ parenthood and the philosophy of play that circulated among sex reformers, child psychologists, and advocates of the ‘modern’ school. By centering education at Beacon Hill on directing, refining, and shaping children’s instincts, energies, and emotional development, Dora and Bertrand Russell’s pedagogical practices show the process of bringing children to affective maturity which posited an affective potential in the young white middle class child. Dora’s view of emotions as fundamental to governing social behaviour also indicates that affective maturity was inextricably linked to the formation of citizenship grounded in affectively educated and reformed Anglo-Saxon bodies.

The Russells’ plans to establish Beacon Hill School arose from transatlantic conversations on how existing conventional schools contributed to the present problems of white middle class fatigue, neurasthenia, loss of male sexual vigor, and female sexual inhibitions. Rather than subject children to the dull regime of rote learning and sitting at a desk, advocates of the ‘modern’ school argued that instincts, energies, emotions, and vitality were important to the learning process, socialization, and upholding civilization. Swedish feminist and sex reformer, Ellen Key discussed the “soul murder” of schoolchildren who were condemned to a six to eighteen year regime of sitting at a desk. Key argued that such

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a regime crushed the spontaneity, creativity, and vitality of the child. This discussion of “soul murder” occurred in the context of Key’s work on *The Century of the Child* which tied the education of the child to future sexually satisfying, loving marriages as the bedrock of civilization. Key suggested that, from the standpoint of heterosexual companionship, American schools were better than European ones in their less rigid enforcement of sex segregation. British socialist and sex reformer, John Langdon-Davies, maintained that “Here the English public school system has certainly triumphed and produced a veritable fear of ever expressing feeling.”  

184 Bertrand Russell turned specific attention to the salient concern over British public school boys’ practice of masturbation. In *Education and the Social Order*, Bertrand Russell contended that public schools held a specific strategy for keeping boys so busy that they would have no time or inclination to indulge in sexual sins.  

185 Alexander Sutherland O’Neill, the founder of the British ‘modern’ school called Summerhill, approvingly wrote to Bertrand Russell that “Your attitude to sex instruction and masturbation is splendid, you put it in a way that will not shock or offend.”  

186 Modern educators voiced such concerns in light of an early twentieth century sex reform movement which looked to the importance of sexual energies in shaping future citizens and civilization.

Although Key praised American schools as less rigid in their enforcement of sex segregation than European ones, both American and British reformers participated in what
one historian has called, “the modern school movement.” On both sides of the Atlantic, reformers identified the need to reform education so that instincts, energies, and emotions became the serious business of pedagogy. In Greenwich Village, many white middle class intellectuals were interested not only in reforming marriage and sex for adults but envisioned their ideals of a reformed sexuality at the site of educating children’s bodies. Hutchins Hapgood who wanted his children to attend ‘progressive schools’ and receive an unorthodox education, felt very strongly about conventional schools as “institutions that kill.”

Hapgood explained that these institutions lacked the necessary “motherly” or emotional dimension so necessary to children’s growth. John Collier, who was part of the Hapgoods’ intimate social circle and eventually became head of the Indian Affairs Bureau, criticized the education system’s failure to give important, if not equal, weight to emotions in the curriculum, routines, and procedures of the school. Collier pointed to an education system that was deeply flawed because “emotion is not recognized in our educational institutions.”

He diagnosed the problem of the current education system as one that “appeals to the intellect solely, and is largely ineffective.” According to Collier, the education system had failed many children because it did not “liberate and develop their emotions, their instincts, their fancy. It does just the opposite.” For Collier, the problem with the education system was one manifestation of a greater overall impoverishment of feeling in which “The Gospel we need to-day is the gospel of the release of human energies and desires – their release from

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188 Hutchins Hapgood, “Institutions That Kill.” Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke Library, Box 26, File 731.
189 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
restrictive forces.” Hapgood and Collier’s views exemplify how a number of Greenwich Village sex radicals, like their British counterparts in Bloomsbury, not only considered marriage as the site for reforming sex morality but also looked to the institution of the school as critical to directing the affective maturity of the child. In doing so, early twentieth century sex reformers contributed to an important transition in the school as a place saturated with affect and productive of it.

As both British and American white middle class sex reformers shared common concerns over the affective shaping of school children, they also drew upon a common set of transnational pedagogical strategies. On both sides of the Atlantic, ‘modern’ educators developed schools that radically reformed pedagogy by employing key methods advanced by educational theorists such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Joseph Pestalozzi, Maria Montessori, and Friedrich Froebel. For ‘modern’ educators in the early twentieth century, these pedagogical philosophers were useful for redesigning an education system that looked to mutually integrate knowledge, learning, embodiment, and the training of instincts, impulses, emotions, and energies. As they looked to Rousseau’s views, ‘modern’ educators encouraged children’s relationship to nature and shifted traditional education’s importance on self-control, reason, and the suppression of instincts toward the cultivation, use, and

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193 Ibid.
refinement of spontaneity and instincts. In looking to Pestalozzi and Montessori, ‘modern’ educators drew on the value of object learning, manual labor and craft work to engage the child’s body with the environment and facilitate learning through action. Early twentieth century ‘modern’ educators also emphasized the value of play in a child’s learning process which they attributed to German pedagogical philosopher, Friedrich Froebel, whose methods were critical to the establishment of nursery schools. As ‘modern’ schools developed on both sides of the Atlantic, their founders drew on an international array of pedagogical philosophers which often overlapped with the international scope of sex reform.

A number of British and American sex reformers were at the forefront of the ‘modern’ school movement. Sex reformers’ concerns over the exhaustion, nervousness, and prudishness of white middle class adult bodies translated into a campaign for a reformed education system that would shape a vital, instinctive, sexually vigorous future adult body. In the United States, sex reformer Emma Goldman strongly supported the Ferrer schools, named for the martyred Spanish anarchist, Francisco Ferrer.195 One student of the Ferrer School in New York City, Rion Bercovici, pointed out the radicalism of the Ferrer Schools as a pedagogical experiment. Bercovici offered a brief description of the radical politics of the Ferrer School, describing the school’s connection to his own experience as “atheism, anarchism, and vegetarianism were the holy Trinity of my childhood.”196


linked the school to prominent Greenwich Village bohemian radicals such as Louise Bryant, John Reed, Mabel Dodge, and Max Eastman. Although Bercovici claimed these radicals had no influence on the teachers and pupils of the school, most of whom were sons of German and Irish laborers and farmers, the climate of sex reform appears to have shaped the procedures of the school. ¹⁹⁷ Bercovici specifically mentioned, Will Durant, an ex-monk from Canada, whose role at the school involved “the rationalistic teaching of sex.” ¹⁹⁸ During one of his lecture tours in the United States, Bertrand Russell met and debated with Will Durant. ¹⁹⁹ Greenwich Village radicals took both an intellectual and personal interest in ‘modern’ schools. Many of them, including Mabel Dodge, Margaret Sanger, Hutchins Hapgood and Neith Boyce, sent their children to ‘modern’ schools. Bercovici, in fact, mentions Mabel Dodge’s son, John Evans, who attended the Elizabeth Duncan School. ²⁰⁰ Elizabeth Duncan, the sister of the well-known dancer Isadora Duncan, developed a school devoted to encouraging children’s free expression of the body both in terms of a pedagogical attention to the physical development of the body as well as its freer sexual expression. ²⁰¹ To put these aims into practice, the children of the Duncan School wore togas and engaged in activities such as archery. In Britain, reformers who fashioned themselves as ‘modern’ educators also designed school curriculum, procedures, and a teaching method to affirm the

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹⁹ Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 11 October 1927. Bertrand Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29; Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 11 October 1929; Bertrand Russell fonds, McMaster University, Box 7.29.
²⁰¹ Judith Walkowitz discusses Isadora Duncan’s dancing as a transnational phenomenon tied to newly emerging ideals of the sexual expression of the body. See Judith Walkowitz, “The ‘Vision of Salome’: Cosmopolitanism and Erotic Dancing in Central London, 1908-1918,” American Historical Review 108(2) (2003): 337-76. Walkowitz argues that Duncan’s dancing showed both the bonds of Anglo-Saxonism and the casting of the ‘foreign’ as degenerate or seedy while also regendering a traditionally masculine-coded cosmopolitanism.
sexuality, instincts, and energies of children’s bodies. There were an array of ‘modern’
school experiments in Britain such as Beacon Hill School, Alexander Sutherland O’Neill’s
Summerhill, Susan Isaacs’ Malting House School, Dartington Hall, and William Curry’s
school. Historian Matthew Thomas has devoted specific attention to the array of anarchist
schools in Britain which drew on an internationally shaped pedagogical philosophy that
encompassed Froebel’s ideas on play, Rousseau’s ideas on the tailoring of education to
children’s nature, and ideas on object learning and labour. Despite the international
breadth of the ‘modern’ school movement, ‘modern’ school reformers in Britain and the
United States articulated the pedagogy of Rousseau, Froebel, Pestalozzi, and Montessori
through the lens of a specific white transatlantic concern over the devitalization and sexual
inhibitions of middle class bodies.

The Russells’ development, planning, and advertising of Beacon Hill School
exemplifies the particularly close ties between British and American white middle class
intellectuals who were interested in both sex reform and ‘modern’ education. As a boarding
school, the Russells accommodated a significant population of American students whose
parents could afford the Beacon Hill School fees of 40 pounds per term excluding music and
riding lessons. The Russells were primarily interested in educating white British and
American children of the intelligentsia who not only had the necessary income to afford the

202 In her discussion of Susan Isaacs’ Malting House School, Lydia Smith indicates that in 1926 The New Era
listed fifty-three private schools and twenty public schools operating according to progressive principles and
also noted similar schools in the United States, Europe, India, and South Africa. Smith, To Understand and to
Help, 63.
203 Matthew Thomas, Anarchist Ideas and Counter-Cultures in Britain, 1880-1914: Revolutions in Everyday
Life (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005). Other historians have also shown the ties
between ‘modern’ educators and socialism. See Kenneth Teitelbaum, Schooling for ‘Good Rebels’: Socialist
Education for Children in the United States, 1900-1920 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Kevin
school fees but also shared concerns over the effects of education on children’s bodies. As historians have shown, the school has been a site mired in the racial, class, gender, sexual, and imperial politics of disciplining children’s bodies. News of Beacon Hill School spread relatively quickly across the Atlantic. Approximately one year after the school opened, Hazel Hunkins wrote to Dora Russell that a number of her American friends had inquired about Beacon Hill School. Hunkins who worked for the American Women’s Club Magazine offered to advertise Beacon Hill School among the “American colony in London.” One concerned American mother asked for Bertrand Russell’s advice concerning sending her children to an experimental school, wondering “whether to throw them in to a big public school such as they have in the States, you know, and let them mix with jews, Italians maybe a Jap or two and a few niggers, and sink or swim, or try to bring them up all the same class, as they say over here.” Such concerns were not far from the Russells’ decisions in accepting children to Beacon Hill School. In 1929, Bertrand wrote to Dora that “A man named Bhavan [presumably Hindoo] wants to send us his daughter aged


205 Hazel Hunkins to Dora Russell, 17 April 1928. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 538-542, File 539.

206 Ibid.

10. If we refuse he will think it is on account of her colour.”

Marie Sweet Smith, a divorced mother, residing in New York City, specifically identified the Russells’ pedagogical interests with their sex reform activities. She made the case for her son’s suitability for Beacon Hill School on the basis of his attitude toward sex as a natural part of human life. She assured the Russells that son, DeWilton, held no prudish attitudes toward the body, mentioning that he had read Margaret Sanger’s “Book for Boys and Girls.” Appealing to the Russells’ interests in sex reform, Smith indicated that she was an advocate of birth control and had read both Havelock Ellis’s work and Dora Russell’s *The Right To Be Happy.*

Aside from emphasizing DeWilton’s sexual knowledge, Marie Sweet Smith also sought to convince the Russells to admit DeWilton on the grounds of his mental and physical health as a planned baby. Marie Sweet Smith confided to the Russells that “I have always thought that the beauty of his body and mind were a direct result of the planning and love and thought put into his creation.”

These comments must be understood in the context of the linkages between the birth controllers and eugenicists who construed the healthy, happy, and beautiful baby as the eugenic white middle class baby. As the Russells looked to create a ‘modern’ school that would institutionalize the ethics of sex reform, they specifically positioned such efforts as a project for shaping the possible future of white middle class bodies who would affirm instincts, energies, and emotions in upholding civilization.

In establishing the curriculum, procedures, and teaching methods of the school, the Russells strategically redefined pedagogy to subtly manage children’s emotional encounters

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208 Bertrand Russell to Dora Russell, 10 September 1929. Bertrand Russell fonds, McMaster University.
209 Marie Sweet Smith to Dora Russell, undated. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 547-551, File 548.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
with the world. At Beacon Hill School, the Russells and staff members deployed pedagogical tactics that were inextricably intertwined with the view of developing children’s sexuality from indulging their spontaneous impulses, sexual curiosity and instincts to encouraging more complex emotional development to ensure happy marriages. Dora Russell’s article, “Why Co-education is Necessary,” suggests some possible reasons for Beacon Hill’s coeducation environment. According to Dora, “The aim of the educationist should be, neither to suppress these emotional elements, since they are important driving forces, nor to bring out one set at the expense of the other.” She went on to explain how coeducation would facilitate greater intimacies by evoking the recognition that “gentleness may be expressed through manhood, whilst strength is a quality vital to woman.” Not only did the Russells establish informal routines to encourage intensified heterosexual intimacies but they also interwove sex reform concerns over the traditional pedagogical neglect of sex instincts into the curriculum. One student drew and labeled diagrams of the uterus, vagina, testis and noted that a baby results from the combination of a father and mother’s seed. In the nature study classes at Beacon Hill, children were taught sexuality through the observation of animals. One student noted the reproductive processes of bees, earwigs,

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212 Shirley Jespersen has indicated that freedom of the child and the importance of tailoring education to the impulses of children underpinned Beacon Hill School’s pedagogy. See Shirley Jespersen, “Inside Beacon Hill: Bertrand Russell as School Master,” The Educational Forum 52(1) (1987): 59-67. In his autobiography, however, Bertrand Russell suggested that he and Dora’s optimistic goals for the school were, to some extent, misguided. He went so far as to claim that the children were destructive and cruel if left unsupervised. He also came to doubt the wisdom of allowing children too much freedom, arguing that “Young children in a group cannot be happy without a certain amount of order and routine. Left to amuse themselves, they are bored and turn to bullying or destruction.” See Russell, The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 389-390.


214 Ibid.

grasshoppers, and starfish. Another student graphically described the male frog’s action of clasping the female during sex and “nests on her back.” Bertrand Russell justified Beacon Hill School’s policies on sex education, claiming that “Straightforwardness about reproduction and bodily functions helps emotional stability as well as intelligence.” Historians have noted the advent of nature study in connection with sex education in Britain and the United States which extended beyond the radical ‘modern’ schools to the state-sponsored schools. However, historians who have looked to nature study and sex education in the schools have largely approached the issue as one of how to convey sexual knowledge to the child rather than manage and direct an already highly sexualized, instinctive, even animalistic, child. Yet, in this period, ‘modern’ educators like the Russells regarded the child’s stage of uninhibited sexual impulses, instincts, and vitality as an important educational opportunity to direct the child’s sexual energies before repressive sexual moral codes had impeded and suppressed such impulses.

At Beacon Hill, sex education was one part of a nuanced set of procedures and curriculum designed to affectively manage children. As the Russells advocated a shift in the educational focus from strictly mental development to emotional development, they also stipulated that teachers must also transform their consideration of students. Bertrand Russell insisted that “neither character nor intelligences will develop as well or as freely where the teacher is deficient in love; and love of the kind consists essentially in feeling the child as an end.”

Dora Russell also affirmed this ethic of love in Beacon Hill School’s regime, maintaining that “Those who need extra love or encouragement must be given it without making them dependent, or arousing the envy of the others.”

In “Methods of Education,” Dora offered a glimpse of a typical day at Beacon Hill School where children performed domestic duties of making breakfast and making their beds. At the school, children engaged in activities such as weaving, cooking, carpentry, playing with blocks and sand, painting, creating mosaics, and learning words and numbers. This cooperative participation of both boys and girls in domestic and creative work can be considered part of training children for what we saw in the previous chapter as Dora’s vision of a future where men and women shared household labour and childcare. In her article on “Methods of Education,” Dora also emphasized that the school curriculum and routines were deeply invested in directing children’s energies in terms of an active bodily engagement in learning. In doing so, both Dora and Bertrand advocated allowing children plenty of opportunity to play, the freedom to choose their own classes, to decide whether they would come to school,

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222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
and encouraging children’s spontaneity, curiosity, and instincts. Like other ‘modern’
educators, Dora and Bertrand Russell claimed that the ‘modern’ school conformed to the
child’s particular stage of instinctive and emotional development. Through their emphasis on
cultivating children’s instincts while lauding an emotional climate to produce love, the
Russells offered Beacon Hill School as an institution to guide children toward affective
maturity.

While some policies at Beacon Hill School were directly tied to the explicit sexual
development of children, other policies were more broadly geared toward shaping a
particular economy of energies which was inseparable from concerns over future
heterosexual companionship. Although both of the Russells were critical of the Freudian
emphasis on the parent’s sexual relationship to the child, they were nonetheless influenced by
Freud’s insights on the libidinal circulation of energies. Their efforts at Beacon Hill School
to properly manage children’s energies, then, were inseparable from their concerns over

224 The Russells seem to offer a historical example of what queer theorist, Lee Edelman, discusses as the
contemporary problem of the political mobilization of the child as a figure that is tied to “reproductive futurism”
whereby the figure of the child and futurity itself are complicitous with heteronormativity. Lee Edelman, No
Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). However, I think that
Edelman’s embrace of negativity, the death drive, and his claim that there is no future for queer subjectivity
limits the theoretical possibilities for rethinking the child and the future as contested political sites that point to
the importance of how utopia is imagined and ground that utopia in political realities. Kevin Floyd has
suggested that Edelman’s project is “a secretly utopian, polemic, dressed up in the Lacanian drag of an anti-
utopian polemic.” Kevin Floyd’s Keynote Address at the University of Illinois’s 11th Annual Gender and
History Symposium importantly discussed the points of convergence and divergence in a Marxist and queer
utopian politics of the child. Floyd argues that utopianism is something that radical politics cannot do without,
showing that the figure of the child at the site of a possible conversation between Adorno and Edelman registers
both a destruction or discontinuity of the present by imagining the future as well as being tied to a politics of the
present. See Kevin Floyd, “The Importance of Being Childish: Futurity, Death, and Utopia in Edelman and
Adorno,” (Keynote Address, 11th Annual Symposium of Gender and History, University of Illinois at Urbana-
Champaign, March 4-6, 2010). The possibilities for utopian politics can be appreciated through Deleuzian ideas
of becoming and recent attention to affect, temporality, and the virtual. See Guattari and Deleuze, A Thousand
Plateaus. Also, see Brian Massumi, Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation (Durham &
Pedagogy, Performativity (Durham: Duke University press, 2003); Nigel Thrift, Non-representational Theory:
sexual energies in white middle class bodies. Drawing on the specific Freudian insights into child psychology, Dora Russell discussed the importance that educators “must always reckon, however, that there are what the psychologists call the child’s complexes, the complicated tangles of emotions—fears, grudges, self-doubts, feelings of guilt, which may have come to him early from sources that it is hard even for those who know him well to trace.” \(^{225}\) Similarly, Bertrand Russell pointed the value of psycho-analysis for showing that behaviourist methods do not eradicate an impulse but show it “is driven underground and finds some new outlet which has not been inhibited by training.” \(^{226}\) Russell specifically situated this “emotional disturbance and unprofitable expenditure of energy” in the context of prevailing concerns over white middle class energies. \(^{227}\) Following his discussion of this unprofitable use of energy, Russell claimed that “we all suffer, to a greater or lesser degree, from nervous disorders having an emotional origin.” \(^{228}\) In 1932, Bertrand Russell referred to the psychological problems incurred on boys due to their segregation in preparatory public schools. Not only did Russell here presume the boy as a white middle class child who had the advantages of a preparatory education but he also looked to heterosexual companionship as the goal of this child. Warning of the dangers of the segregation of boys and girls, Russell claimed that such preparatory schools would ultimately enhance the mother-image as pure which “sometimes causes contempt for any woman with whom sexual intercourse is regarded as possible.” \(^{229}\) The Russells’ efforts to organize children’s learning and activities so that

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\(^{227}\) Ibid.
\(^{228}\) Ibid., 59.
\(^{229}\) Ibid., 82.
boys and girls shared similar intellectual and domestic experiences ultimately turned Beacon Hill School into a training ground for what the Russells conceived as happy marriages. Many of Beacon Hill’s policies such as coeducation, permissible nudity, and the participation of both boys and girls on the School Council, in the classroom, and in domestic tasks interlocked heterosexual companionship, reproduction, happy marriage and the futurity of the child.

Beacon Hill School is an important example of the social and historical construction and embodied experience of instincts, energies, and emotions. As part of a network of early twentieth century ‘modern’ schools, Beacon Hill School is one illustration of a broader shift in pedagogical strategies that dovetailed with the sex reform movement in privileging the importance of cultivating sex instincts and sexual curiosity with a view toward developing love in ‘civilized’ white middle class children. As the Russells engineered an educational and social environment to specifically cater to childhood as a stage of life marked by un-repressed sexual energies, highly vital, spontaneous and even animalistic tendencies, they wrestled with developing new pedagogical methods to reach the new pedagogical goals of an emotional as opposed to strictly mental education. In doing so, Beacon Hill School’s curriculum, procedures, and teaching methods not only looked to develop an affective maturity in the child but presumed a specifically white child with educated middle class parents as capable of such maturity. The Russells’ founding of Beacon Hill School must be situated in relationship to the transatlantic concerns over white middle class sexual energies, prudish Victorian sexual norms, the malady of neurasthenia, and unhappy marriages where middle class husbands failed to cultivate the ‘art of love’ and middle class wives clung to the
image of female sexual modesty and passivity. Through a pedagogical strategy of incorporating coeducation, nature study, dance, and permissible nudity and other activities to revalorize the body, the Russells aimed to affectively refashion children’s bodies which defined love in terms of heterosexual companionship.\(^{230}\) Beacon Hill School is an example of how a politics of love worked on children’s bodies while the presence of those children at Beacon Hill School also tied love to the potential for affective maturity in white middle class children.

**Conclusion**

This story of how sex reformers, educators, and psychologists shaped and deployed a series of strategies and institutions to cultivate, enhance, and control the child’s affective potential furthers our understanding of an early twentieth century politics of love. More specifically, this chapter has considered the theme of temporality in the form of evolutionary narratives and the child as future citizen which conditioned the possibilities for affective maturity, privileging white middle class children as those most capable of reaching the goal of idealized mature heterosexual love. What I have highlighted as a specific child body endowed with the affective potential of maturing from a ‘savage’ perverse instinctive life to ‘civilized’ heterosexual familial love presents a historical moment when temporality, futurity, 

\(^{230}\) Anne Bloomfield has discussed the incorporation of dance into the mainstream British curriculum as an indication of the new priority placed on educating children’s physical health. Although Bloomfield does not discuss this in the context of sexuality, she does directly tie the incorporation of dance to the influence of ‘modern’ pedagogical ideals in focusing on the child’s spontaneity, natural impulses, instincts, and overall happiness. See Anne Bloomfield, “Health or Art? The Case for Dance in the Curriculum of British State Schools, 1909-1914,” *History of Education* 36(6) (2007): 681-696.
and the virtual were inextricably interwoven in the affective possibilities of bodies. Historian Harry Hendrick has considered the writing of children’s history to be a “politics of age relations” in which the figure of the child was defined by its state of becoming and never entirely separated from the adult. Hendrick’s insights were not only important for pointing out the historicization of the child’s maturity but he also indicated that the advent of “new psychology” in the early twentieth century inaugurated a conception of the child that privileged the will, emotions, and passions as part of a developing personality. However, Hendrick maintained that writing the history of a subject like love was a difficult task for the historian. This disclaimer on historicizing emotion is particularly problematic for writing histories of early twentieth century childhood. Hendrick, in fact, suggests that childhood in the early twentieth century was specifically constructed through a new disciplinary interest in shaping emotions. I argue that early twentieth century childhood cannot be adequately conceptualized without writing a history of affect, maturity, and love. This chapter has not only sought to address the absence of love from the historiography on the child but to situate love in the context of hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality which qualified the child’s potential for affective maturity.

In addition to shedding light on the historically specific early twentieth century relationship between temporality, childhood, and emotions, my narrative also points to how history can inform a politics and theory of the present. One contemporary scholar, Claudia

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231 Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze have used the figure of the child to theorize the deterritorialization of the subject as a “becoming-child” as a temporal relation. See for example, Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: The Athlone Press Ltd., 1988), 273-277, 286-295.
233 Ibid., 30.
234 Ibid., 24.
Castaneda has criticized theories of the normative subject for using the child as a ground for the “transgressive possibility” of the adult subject. However, this unique status of the child as a being-in-transition can be productively employed to make visible the performativity of processes that are naturalized at the level of the normative privileged adult subject. Some historians have employed a genealogical method to historical analysis following Michel Foucault’s call to account for contingencies, departures from linear or master narratives, and what becomes possible and enacted at specific points in time. It is important to recognize both the possibilities and limitations of the early twentieth century child as a queer figure of perverse sexuality which illuminates the denaturalization of heterosexuality. Although early twentieth century sex reformers, child psychologists, and ‘modern’ educators pointed to what can be seen as an affective indeterminacy in the child, their advice and strategies specifically looked to direct children toward heterosexual white middle class love. In this case, rather than celebrate the queerness of such a child, early twentieth century reformers celebrated the child’s instinctive, unrepressed life in terms of its possibilities for more fulfilling, sexually satisfying, harmonious heterosexual marriages. In this sense, the child was a figuration situated within global-historical racial, class, gender, and sexual relations of power at the site of emotional experience. Why reformers used strategies such as parenting manuals, organizing children’s play, and developing the

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‘modern’ school to provide heterosexual direction instead of celebrating the queerness of the child points to the historical shaping of discursive and material realities.

As a subject for historical investigation, the child is inextricably tied to questions of age, possibility, and the future. In this sense, historical narratives of childhood can importantly point to the politics of imagining the future. From their advice on how to facilitate the child’s emergence from selfish egocentrism to suggestions on the provisions for play, early twentieth century sex reformers contributed to a characterization of the child which was inextricably tied to their imagined future world of vital and instinctive bodies who would sexually connect with one another through the spiritual experience of love. Such a utopian future, however, also politicized the potentiality of the child by locating reform efforts as the project of revitalizing white middle class bodies. My focus on the interplay of touch between babies and mothers, the use of play to cultivate children’s emotions, and the ‘modern’ school’s efforts to encourage spontaneity, sexual curiosity and the free expression of the body shows a series of stages that interlocked the temporal ‘progression’ of the child with affective maturity. These stages also show a trajectory in the production of love as rooted in the education white middle class children’s bodies. As the Russells and other ‘modern’ educators insisted on the necessary pedagogical turn to emotions, their reform projects were rooted in cultural anxieties over white Anglo-Saxon bodies in terms of their capacity for feeling, their immersion in capitalism, their nervous exhaustion due to education, and their declining birthrate that portended a loss of white imperial power. The child was positioned alongside lower classes, racialized, and colonized others in terms of its
evolutionary status but insofar as the child belonged to a white middle class home, its potentiality was regarded in terms of an evolutionary affective shaping towards love.
Chapter Four
Vital Spirits: Sex Reformers’ Radical Religion of Hidden Potential in Body, Earth, and Sex

Sex reformers’ political imaginings of a future world of vital, instinctive, loving citizens was not limited to the figuration of the white middle class child and its growth. When sex reformers looked to reshape intimacies through primitivism, bohemian marriages, and ‘modern’ child rearing and education, they also situated these practices on a cosmic plane of spiritually working on a white middle class ‘modern’ self. Between 1913 and 1914, Greenwich Village salonniere, Mabel Dodge, corresponded with the notorious anarchist Alexander Berkman who had just been released from prison for an 1893 assassination attempt on industrial magnate Henry Clay Frick. Dodge addressed Berkman as a fellow radical, committed to the political and social ethics of Greenwich Village. Dodge wrote to Berkman that “no sooner has an idea become crystallized into an institution – a habit – or even a party than it is ready for some spiritual dynamiting.”¹ Both of them believed in the ‘varietist’ marital ethic of the Village. Dodge, in fact, interpreted this ethic as one site for spiritual dynamiting. She claimed to “not believe or disbelieve in marriage but I do believe in love which may exist either within the institution or outside of it providing that it is free.”² It is significant that Dodge used the phrase spiritual dynamiting in a letter to Berkman at a time when dynamite was associated with early twentieth century anarchism and militant working class politics. This suggests that love also extended to a multitude of political causes.

¹ Mabel Dodge to Alexander Berkman, 1913-1914. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale.  
² Ibid.
Dodge’s letter suggests that the politics of love in the Village also amounted to a religious practice that took politics as a spiritual remaking of the modern self. This undermines any strict division between the secular and the spiritual when considering sex reformers’ radical politics. When sex reformers, like Dodge, engaged in radical political movements such as feminism, socialism, and anarchism, they also engaged in a spiritual practice. In other words, radical politics were not simply grounded in the earthly order but partook of a cosmic plane of existence. What Dodge considered spiritual dynamiting exemplifies an intensification of spirituality that imbued everyday actions such as the practice of sex, domestic relations, professional work, and political activism with religious significance. As I will show in this chapter, the sex reform movement’s politics of love was inextricably tied to millennial aspirations for white middle class bodies to achieve what became known among sex reformers as “cosmic consciousness.” As some sex reformers like Edward Carpenter and Mabel Dodge looked to an ideal state of “cosmic consciousness,” they bound their material, ethical, and political investments in the world to a cosmic register. When sex reformers urged the cultivation of unseen bodily sexual energies, they pointed to these energies as what intertwined bodies with souls, and earthly with spiritual realms.

Although sex reformers criticized institutional and dominant Christian morality for its idealization of purity, asceticism, and emphasis on church authority, their campaigns to chart a New Morality intensified spirituality as a bodily feeling achieved through connections with, rather than abstractions from, the material world. A number of sex reformers identified with mysticism by pointing to an intuitive cosmic capacity to engage unknown unseen forces that

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could be felt through bodily experience with the world. In doing so, sex reformers drew on traditions of religious thought that provided ways of incorporating the body, sex, and environmental connections into the practice of spirituality. At the time, sex reform projects were influenced by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century climate of the growing cultural awareness and practice of new forms of religion such as spiritualism, theosophy, Christian Science, and occultism. Sex reformers also spiritualized their flights to farms and condemned the spiritual bankruptcy of ‘modern’ cities in ways that invoked nineteenth-century Transcendentalism and Romanticism. All of these different forms of spirituality shared a faith in the body’s accessibility to the divine through an engagement with the world which situated matter from bodies to environments as nodes of spiritual forces. In other words, these alternative forms of spirituality presented sex reformers with an opportunity to rethink traditional Judeo-Christian divisions between bodies and spirits, heaven and earth, and knowledge and spirituality.

As sex reformers turned to forms of spirituality that provided alternatives to Christianity, they emphasized spiritual experience through relations with the world which entangled affect, knowledge, and religion. What I refer to as affect captures the way the body apprehends, knows, or communicates with the world through a range of feeling from instincts to energies and emotions which sex reformers grounded in both science and religion. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the proliferation of alternative forms of spirituality was inseparable from developments in physics and psychology which offered scientific explanations of unseen forces from theories of the ether, the conservation and hypertrophy of energy in physics to hypnosis, telepathy, and libidinal energies in
psychology. What can be described as a sex reform religion merged spirituality, science and sex in ways that defined commitments to perfecting sex technique, eugenic breeding, and cultivating energies as spiritual practices.

What Mabel Dodge referred to as spiritual dynamiting offers an important example of the production of a radical spirituality which drew together political challenges to patriarchy and capitalism, epistemologies tied to knowledge of instincts and energies, and alternative ways of conceiving the body as a site of divine expression. Like a number of other sex reformers, Dodge looked to sex as a spiritual act. Her own efforts to maintain an open marriage with Maurice Sterne, defined her battle with jealousy as a spiritual struggle where she needed to “learn again to love God as I did” and to offer “more love to the individual outside – not less. Only less self-Love. I must become as big as I was meant to become – I feel my own potentiality sometimes urging me to grow.” In July of 1919, Dodge wrote to her close friend, Neith Boyce, that “this potency we have for discovery and understanding by which we attain to all in the end is the power of love functioning up thro’ the bodily generative organs to greater + greater creations by us.” Here Dodge cited love as an important condition for defining the spiritualization of sex and the body as a vehicle of communication with divine forces.

Mabel Dodge’s view of spiritual dynamiting also drew on a redefinition of God which exemplifies how sex reformers’ turn to affect brought God into the social and political practice of cultivating sexual energies. Defining God as “that wonderful inner upsurging energy that finds us,” Dodge defined spirituality in a way that positioned God within the

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4 Mabel Dodge to Maurice Sterne, July-August 1916. Maurice Sterne Papers, Beinecke, Yale.
5 Mabel Dodge to Neith Boyce, 10 July 1919. Hapgood Papers, Beinecke, Yale.
network of bodily energies and sex.\textsuperscript{6} This perhaps found its culminating expression in Dodge’s diary entry of February 15\textsuperscript{th} of 1916 where she proclaimed “I always said god was the only possible satisfactory lover.”\textsuperscript{7} Dodge’s explanation of her life as a search for “the secret organic activity for which we have as yet no definition” also brought together practices of seeking self-knowledge, evolutionary discourses on organicism, and the occultist writings on the ancient knowledge unlocking the mysteries of the divine.\textsuperscript{8} Dodge racialized this spirituality as a primal form of religion lost to civilization whereby she grouped together Pueblo Indians, Aztecs, Incas, and Egyptians as Eastern peoples who harbored the secrets of a lost science.\textsuperscript{9} In doing so, Dodge positioned Eastern peoples in a dichotomous and hierarchical relation to the ‘progress’ of Western civilization. Dodge’s own life exemplifies these multiple strands, given that she indiscriminately looked to psychoanalysts, Christian scientists, occultists, the Taos Pueblos Indians religious practices, socialists, and feminists as sources for spiritual development.

In this chapter, I argue that sex reformers redefined spirituality as the body’s capacity to reach higher levels of feeling, particularly love, and connect to divine forces hidden within the material world. This turns important analytical attention to how sex reformers’ emphasis on the cultivation of sex instincts and energies in white middle class bodies pointed to a \textit{divine} affective potential to practice sacred sex, engage with sublime landscapes, and ultimately reach a ‘cosmic consciousness’. By stressing the attribute of divine, I want to

\textsuperscript{6} Mabel Dodge to Maurice Sterne, July-August 1916. Maurice Sterne Papers, Beinecke, Yale.
\textsuperscript{7} Mabel Dodge, “Diary,” 25 February 1916. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Yale.
\textsuperscript{9} Mabel Dodge to Maurice Sterne, 1917. Maurice Sterne Papers, Beinecke, Yale.
highlight how the spiritual dimension of sex reform politics contributed to a biologized interpretation of what it meant to be a chosen people.

I want to stress here that this spiritual dimension of the sex reform movement offered a divine sanction to what I have shown in previous chapters as the grounding of bodily capacities for love in racial, gender, class, and sexual hierarchies. Throughout this chapter, I use the term *vital spirits* to describe a spiritual practice of subjectivity which imbued the body’s sexual, political, and social relations to the world with spiritual significance. My term *vital spirits* highlights a radical practice of spirituality grounded in the present, ethically shaped by sexual and political ways of being, and driven by concerns over maximizing ‘life’ in the moment which turned away from sacrifice, suffering, and mourning or preparing for death. I use the term *vital spirits* to also highlight how sex reformers’ practice of spirituality importantly reconceived sex, the body, and matter more generally as endowed with spiritual and ethical significance thereby overturning traditional associations of sex, the body, and matter with sin. My term *vital spirits* denotes the indiscriminate crossing of the thresholds of living and dead, pure and polluted, real and unreal, and perceptible and imperceptible. In my narrative, *vital spirits* functions as an analytical concept to make two important claims. Firstly, sex reformers’ campaigns to cultivate sex instincts took the form of a redemption narrative of rescuing the tempted sexually instinctive body from a place of abjection in Christianity which had important implications for bringing together heavenly and earthly realms at the site of bodily vitality. This redefinition of religion embodied spirituality, giving a material and visceral expression to spirits. Secondly, as sex reformers endowed worldly connections with spiritual significance, they imbued the spiritual realm with the politics of
social relations which racialized and classed spirits. In this particular political formation of spirituality, the legacies of colonialism and slavery haunted sex reformers’ spirituality which fetishized lost and abjected religions of ancient civilizations and ‘vanishing races’ as closer to ‘nature,’ and primal sexuality. Crucially, sex reformers’ attention to love indicated the simultaneous bodily expressions of the divine and the political as vital spirits.

This chapter’s focus on the spiritual dimension of the sex reform movement bridges historiographies of sex radicals and radical forms of spirituality. In doing so, I hope to carve a historiographical space which looks to the spirituality of sex radicalism and the ways that radical politics reshaped ways of considering the body’s place in relation to cosmic forces.

Although historians of late nineteenth-century sex radicals like Moses Harmon, Virginia Woodhull, and Angela Heywood have shown how their politics and radical forms of spirituality mutually informed one another, historians of early twentieth century sex radicals have not explored their spiritual practices thereby leaving the impression of a secularized politics of feminism and socialism. This has had the effect of leaving the spiritual implications of early twentieth century sex radicalism insufficiently explored or appreciated. My story of how sex reformers entangled radical politics and spirituality also presents an important historical episode in the early twentieth century history of religion that has been neglected in the historiography. What I explain throughout this chapter as sex reform spirituality presents a unique narrative within the broader historiographical theme of how

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bodily experience contributed to rethinking, contesting, and transforming existing forms of spirituality.\(^{11}\) Historians Beryl Satter, Catherine Albanese, Molly McGarry, and Ann Taves have written histories of religion that use the body as a radical site for interrogating the meaning and practice of spirituality.\(^{12}\) As radical white middle class intellectuals, sex reformers framed their bodily experience of vitality through discourses that simultaneously drew on epistemologies of science and sexuality as well as spirituality. This story of sex reform spirituality introduces a complexity into the historiographical theme of the relationship between science and religion which reframes the historiographical question as


one that asks how the subject’s spirituality is tied to a bodily, political, and social relationship to the world that draws on multiple arenas of experience that exceed the polarities of science and religion.\(^{13}\)

Far from precluding religion, sex reformers drew inspiration from ‘new’ knowledge of eugenics, evolution, psychology, and physics to reformulate spiritual practices. Historians such as Peter Bowler, Janet Oppenheim, Adam Crabtree, and Jenny Hazelgrove have shown how historical actors such as theologians, psychologists, and spiritualists drew upon both religion and science by negotiating, transforming, and shifting the boundaries between the two.\(^{14}\) Historian Christopher White has argued that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century developments in psychology contributed to a “religious efflorescence” marked by new forms of spirituality which were grounded in new ways of measuring the mind.\(^{15}\) While White focuses on the mutual interplay between psychology and religion in the United States, Mathew Thomson shows that occultism and psychology mutually informed one another in

\(^{13}\) This analytical focus has been shaped by Michel Foucault’s insights on spirituality as a relation between the subject, truth, and knowledge. See Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (Picador, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2005).


British intellectual culture.\textsuperscript{16} I approach this theme of symbiotic religious and scientific epistemologies from the vantage point of how they converged in the overarching goals of sex reform to create vital spirits whose sex instincts and love played pivotal roles as sources of spiritual strength.

What I have called vital spirits is a cosmic subjectivity enacted by sex reformers, and those who followed their advice, which turned the cultivation of sexual energies into a religious engagement with other bodies and the environment. I focus specifically on a spiritual politics of love whereby a white middle class body carried the potential to become a vital spirit by connecting with the unseen divine forces in other bodies and the earth. I will show how sex reformers’ cosmic subjectivity was shaped through a politics of love which wedded a re-articulation of Christian themes to occultist, theosophical, and spiritualist attention to the body as a channel for divine communication. In the first section of this chapter, I consider how sex reformers’ challenges to a puritanical Christianity contested church authorities’ interpretation of Christianity as a perversion of the ‘true’ meaning of Christian love which, according to sex reformers, could encompass eugenics, birth control, and sexual pleasure. In other words, I make the point that sex reformers reworked tenets of Christianity to make a case for their campaigns as compatible with, if not a ‘truer’ expression of, Christianity. In the second section of this chapter, I show that sex reformers drew upon the proliferation of new religions in an intense climate of interest in rethinking spirituality. I consider how sex reformers’ campaigns were informed by the growing popularity of occultism, theosophy, Christian Science, and spiritualism as tools in forging a religion that

could spiritualize the cultivation of sexual energies. What I referred to as white middle class sex reformers’ affective compass in the first chapter, here has a specific cosmic mapping that endows white middle class heterosexual statesmanship with divine status.

I. Sex Reformed Christianity: A New Morality of Love, Sacred Sex, and Eugenic Creationism

Many sex reformers who advocated a new code of sexual ethics criticized Christian ideals of chastity and purity while also seeking to locate this new code in a broader more flexible conception of Christian love. Sex reformers and a number of clergymen argued that Christianity needed to be practical and relevant to the conditions of Christians living in a ‘modern’ world. Such conditions included the pressing concerns over a declining white birthrate, the rising birthrate of allegedly unfit segments of the population, and the perilous condition of the physical health of white middle class men and women. In 1919, the National Birthrate Commission was formed in response to these mounting concerns over national health, the birthrate, and religious morality. When British birth control leader, Marie Stopes, went to present her case to this Commission, she chose to speak about how Christian

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principles were, in fact, consistent with birth control. This would seem rather unusual given that birth control activists in the early twentieth century essentially seemed to be involved in a battle with the churches in both Britain and the United States. Yet, on March 10th of 1919, before a Commission of an eclectic group of experts which included clergymen, psychologists, and physicians, Stopes argued that birth control was both a scientific and a religious matter. Stopes maintained that the churches had debased Christian ethics for a long time by failing to recognize the “highest potentialities of marriage” which, for Stopes, meant the spiritual dimension of sexual fulfillment. Stopes separated Christian principles from their interpretation and enforcement by institutions, proclaiming that “the insistence so often made in the name of a false Christian morality that the act of physical union should take place only for the procreation of children not only ignores profound physiological truths, but degrades one of the greatest religious truths.” In doing so, Stopes carved a space for new sexual ethics within traditional Christianity.

Stopes’s presentation to the Commission entangled love, vitality, sex, and Christian principles through her description of the relationship between physiological truths of sex and the divine. By insisting on the relationship between spirituality and physiology, Stopes framed a morality for what can be considered vital spirits whose access to the divine was inseparable from bodily experience of the world. Stopes spoke of the “true lover and true mystic” who were inseparable in their consciousness of both the physical facts of sex and the

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
spiritual importance of love. She connected the body’s sexuality to cosmic powers, arguing that for the truly married pair, “each is no longer a simple unit, but the two are fused and merged into a pair, and this is partly based upon and is correlated with the physical exchange of chemical and ultra-chemical particles.” At a time of flourishing sex research on hormones and body chemistry, Stopes suggested that there were ultra-chemicals or divine particles that situated the body at the nexus of spiritual and material worlds which were specifically joined in the act of sex. To the Commission, Stopes described sex as “the restrained and sacramental rhythmic performance of the marriage rite of physical union” which had value apart from the procreation of children. Stopes, however, also contended that not all sex was sacred. In fact, Stopes indicated that sacred sex was a product of evolution, a class privilege of economically secure mothers, and a matter of eugenics. She qualified sacred sex as the following:

Owing to certain peculiarities inherent in our bodily structure, which are the result of our long animal ancestry, this act of union cannot take place in most circumstances without the probability of conception on the part of the woman. In the interests of the potential children of the race, no conceptions should be allowed save those ardently desired and welcomed; and as there are myriads of potential conceptions which must on various grounds be a source of fear instead of joy to the woman, it is therefore logically necessary that some means for controlling conception must be available for all united pairs.

Stopes’s contention that some couples should be encouraged to have children and others prevented politicized love as a practice that traversed spiritual and material worlds.

As Stopes argued for a place for the body in spirituality, she also interjected divine judgment into the body’s politics of location in gender, race, class, and sexual hierarchies. At the outset of her speech, Stopes advocated birth control as a tool for furthering a social ideal
of the “monogamic, deeply loving pair, surrounded by healthy, happy, and beautiful children.” As such, Stopes materialized a divine spirit, giving it a bodily manifestation of health, happiness, and beauty which she tied to eugenics, whiteness, and middle class status. In Stopes’s 1926 publication, *The Human Body and Its Functions*, she discussed the “vital sex organs” of men and women as “a sacred racial trust.” In this work, Stopes discussed “the spiritual sides of mature sex love” which presumed white middle class bodies. She identified traits typically associated with early twentieth century white middle class men and women, proclaiming that such an experience could only occur among “sound healthy bodies in which the functions act normally and healthily as nature intended, and who have not, either by premature use, or by excesses and misuse injured the subtle balance of all the nervous and delicate tissues concerned.” Stopes’s specific mention of a delicate state of nervousness, sound healthy bodies, and nature’s intended sexual practice exclusively defined spiritual sex love as an activity among white middle class heterosexual bodies. At a time of deep concern over the vitality of white middle class men and women, Stopes looked to sex organs as divine regenerative sources. In discussing the boy’s sex organs, Stopes referred to “the potential power of a divine creation.” Where Stopes suggested that birth control ought to prevent children, she also denied the higher divine potential of love to less socially desirable bodies. Stopes’s speech to the Commission not only suggests a strategic maneuvering to convince the clergy that they should support birth control but it also attests to how sex reform projects grappled with questions of spiritual practices.

27 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 185.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 186.
While Stopes’s invocation of love as the spiritual manifestation of birth control may seem an idealistic, even naïve, romanticization of sex, sex reformers on both sides of the Atlantic strategically and contentiously deployed love as a religious and political argument for sex reform. Stopes’s decision to focus on the spirituality of birth control must be situated in the context of a broader transatlantic debate over claims that birth control reduced sex to a mechanistic, technological, and promiscuous practice. American birth control leader, Margaret Sanger engaged in such a debate with the Catholic New York lawyer, Winter Russell, in which they offered different and competing claims to the meaning of birth control for love. In December of 1920, on a Sunday Afternoon at Parkview Palace in New York City, Margaret Sanger and Winter Russell debated the resolution that “the spreading of birth control knowledge is injurious to the welfare of humanity.”  

Winter Russell began the debate with the religious argument that such knowledge reduced marriage to a purely physical relationship when, in fact, “it [marriage] borders on the aesthetic, spiritual, mental and modern aspects of life, and when you try to take the physical by itself you find a condition of naked sensuality, which is disastrous in the extreme.” Sanger identified Russell’s claims with opponents of birth control who “barricade themselves behind the Bible or the terrible vengeance of an offended nature.” Sanger responded to this moral challenge in two ways. First of all, she divided the population into those who use birth control, which encompassed all wealthy, spiritual, cultural, and educated individuals, and those who do not

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
which included the disease-ridden, the miserable, and the anxious.\textsuperscript{35} Secondly, Sanger made a moral argument for birth control by contesting Russell’s claim that birth control eliminated love. Instead, Sanger argued that “the sex relationship has distinctly two functions. It has its love function and it has its maternal and paternal function. One is quite independent of the other, and one is just as moral as the other.”\textsuperscript{36}

Sanger herself cooperated with the clergy, included arguments for birth control as a spiritual practice in the \textit{Birth Control Review}, and contributed to periodicals such as \textit{Church and Society} where she continued to make the case for love, birth control, and a spiritual politics of reproduction. In 1932, Sanger’s article on “Birth Control” in \textit{Church and Society} made the case for love among certain desirable bodies and not others, claiming that:

\begin{quote}
when consciousness is applied to the process of generation there will be fewer children born as the result of a reckless abandon to the hour; fewer children brought into the world unwanted and unloved; more children planned for and conceived in love; more born of the mother’s conscious desire; and more give the heritage of healthy bodies and sound minds.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

Sanger suggested that the divine spirit moved among the loved, the wanted, the healthy, and the intelligent which joined questions of spirituality to vitality, specifically at the level of women’s reproductive energies and eugenic health. Like Stopes, Sanger’s campaign for birth control negotiated rather than rejected Christian doctrines, specifically situating Christian love as a strategic point of contention and compromise.

As Stopes’s and Sanger’s remarks suggest, reframing spirituality was an important dimension to making the case for birth control. Although historians have recently begun to undermine the view of the late nineteenth century decline of religion, the spiritual politics of

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Margaret Sanger, “Birth Control,” \textit{Church and Society} vol. 4, no. 5 (February 1932). Margaret Sanger Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Northampton, Box 25, File 1.
the sex reform movement has received little attention. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sex reformers suggested the transformative possibilities of Christian ethics in the crucible of modern conditions. At the 1922 Fifth International Birth Control Conference, held in London, an entire session was devoted to morality and religion. This session was dominated by American and British speakers which attested to how debates over sex reform and religion marked their shared religious history. The Reverend Gordon Lang acted as the president of this session and presented a paper on “The Moral and Religious Aspects of Birth Control.” At the 1922 Conference, Lang’s paper on the morality of birth control began with his citation of Jesus’s claim that “I came that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.” Such an opening to Lang’s paper indicated a theme of vitality at the heart of the spiritual practice of birth control whereby Jesus’s interest was to maximize and not diminish life. Lang used this quotation to set the tone for his argument

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38 Christopher White refers to the ‘decline narratives’ in the historiography. See White, Unsettled Minds, 5.
39 This is possibly the then Archbishop of York, (William) Cosmo Gordon Lang who later presides over the 1930 Lambeth Conference which became famous for its endorsement of family limitation as morally desirable in certain circumstances, particularly where the health of the mother and child are concerned. Cosmo Gordon Lang also had experience among the working poor in his early Oxford days as one of the members of the Toynbee Hall University Settlement which was essentially domestic missionary work among the poor. Lang met Beatrice Potter, later Mrs. Sidney Webb, while working among the London poor in the East End. Lang gave lectures to working class men and temporarily lived in some working-class homes. He also later became the Bishop of Stepney where he continued to work among a large segment of London’s poor families in the East End. By the time, the Lambeth Conference met in 1930, Lang had risen to the rank of Archbishop of Canterbury. It seems that Lang was recognized as a supporter of birth control. According to Barbara Evans, Helena Wright’s biographer, Wright considered the Lambeth Conference a victory for the birth control movement and her 1930 publication on The Sex Factor in Marriage included an extract from a speech Lang made to the London Diocesan Council for Rescue Work at the Mansion House in April of 1930 stating: “We want to liberate the sex impulse from the impression that it is always to be surrounded by negative warnings and restraints, and to place it in its rightful place among the great creative and formative things.” Unfortunately, neither Barbara Evans or Archbishop (William) Cosmo Gordon Lang’s biographer mention Lang’s presence at the 1922 Birth Control Conference. See Barbara Evans, Freedom to Choose: The Life and Work of Dr. Helena Wright Pioneer of Contraception (London: The Bodley Head, 1984), 139-142, 153. On Archbishop Cosmo Gordon Lang, see John Gilbert Lockhart, Cosmo Gordon Lang (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1949), 47-49, 152-153, 348-350.
that birth control was a Christian practice of love, health, and perfection which Jesus himself would sanction. Lang wedded Christianity to the “moral objective to desire a happier, healthier, and better-equipped race.” Lang staked birth control’s place in Christianity on the ground of love and the prevention of undesired births, arguing that “It is sometimes suggested that Birth Control would do away with love, but few things could nullify affection more rapidly or more thoroughly than the cruel poverty and fear which paralysed homes where poor people were having a constant succession of babies.”

Lang’s paper pointed to loving bodies as white, healthy, happy, and middle class who behaved as vital spirits when they regulated their fertility and responsibly reproduced in contrast to impoverished, unhealthy homes.

At the London Birth Control Conference, Lang’s co-presenters, American suffragist and social worker Edith Houghton Hooker and British birth control advocate, Charles V. Drysdale, shared many of Lang’s views. Charles V. Drysdale belonged to a family that was famous for pioneering the Malthusian movement in the late nineteenth-century. Drysdale’s paper, “Neo-Malthusian Morality and Religion,” drew a distinction between theology and religion by defining religion in terms of action. Like Lang, however, Drysdale suggested that the Bible offered support for birth control, specifically in St. Paul’s command to “Defraud ye not one of the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
incontinency.” Drysdale interpreted this as biblical evidence of sexual desires and, therefore, the need for early marriage. However, Drysdale wedded the spiritual value of birth control to a politics of citizenship grounded in eugenically managing reproduction. According to Drysdale, “Neo-Malthusianism is, in fact, a most important part of true religion, and its exponents who seek to direct Birth Control for the benefit of humanity and for race improvement are religious in the best sense of the term.” Similarly, Edith Houghton Hooker’s paper joined early twentieth century eugenics and evolutionary theory to the spiritual and emotional context of birth control. Hooker claimed that “Among human beings sexual selection is phrased as the spiritual emotion called Love. This mysterious and potent force that binds men and women together in a life-long union acts to insure the improvement of the race stock.” Like Lang and Drysdale, Hooker spiritualized sex at the site of its regenerative powers to vitalize the body. She regarded love and sex in terms of the source or creation of life whereby “life and love are one, and the welfare of both the individual and the race will be best conserved when this fundamental truth is recognised. The problem of sex will never be solved by vain repression. Sex is affirmative, not negative, so far as humanity

45 Michel Foucault’s lectures on biopolitics demonstrate transformations in ways that political theory has concerned itself with the calculation of bodies and the assessments of life as state resources or what Foucault calls ‘human capital.’ See Michel Foucault, The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire: Plagrave MacMillan, 2008). In this sense, the birth control movement can be seen as a specific early twentieth century formation of biopolitics.
is concerned.” What Hooker called a “divine experiment” and what Drysdale regarded as the practice of religion, involved the participation of bodies as evolved, ‘civilized,’ eugenically mated vital spirits.

Although birth control activists played an important role in forging a new relationship between Christian morality and sexual ethics, the attention to love as a religious and political practice pervaded the wider sex reform movement. Key proponents of sex reform such as Ellen Key, Havelock Ellis, and Edward Carpenter, who were sympathetic to birth control situated love as a crucial underpinning of sex reform’s wider and more diverse platform. Ellen Key’s influential 1911 publication, *Love and Marriage* suggested a New Morality with love, vitality, and sex at the cornerstone of spiritual practice which both challenged and drew upon diverse elements of Christianity such as perfectibility, millennialism, fruitfulness, and a set of commandments. In her work, Key placed a life-enhancing principle at the core of her religious platform, turning practitioners of such a religion into vital spirits who cultivated bodily health, sex instincts, and racial reproduction. As a Swedish Protestant feminist, Key used Lutheranism as a foundation from which to reform Christian principles. She advocated the development of “neo-Lutheran prophets of love” who would attend to the importance of how sex was practiced rather than exalting an ideal of monogamy which could sanction “all the worthless children produced by ill-matched and impure marriages” in a “command of fecundity.”

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
4, 39.
51 Ibid., 15.
the urgency of this New Morality in light of “the value of love – like all other personal values – sinks under modern conditions of work, which drain the vital forces and make people forget even the meaning of the idea of living.” Addressing the broader moral project of reformers, Key claimed that they were guided by “the certainty that personal love is life’s highest value.”

In formulating this New Morality, Key did not entirely break with Christianity, despite her insistence that an ideal of monogamy be rejected in light of the widespread practice of polygamy. Instead, Key located a spiritual practice of pursuing and affirming vitality within the long history of transformations in Christian practice. Key reworked the theme of sacrifice in terms of mate selection, arguing that the “creed of life which makes the mission of the race cooperate with personal happiness in love, will also demand of the latter the sacrifices which the former renders necessary.” Key seized on love as the pivotal force in this new spiritual practice. According to Key, “Love – as we have already shown – has now become a great spiritual power.” In ways that resonate with what we saw in an earlier chapter on sympathetic connectivity, Key spiritualized heterosexual connections whereby women “discover erotically that they have souls.” Key spiritualized sex as an individual’s quest for perfectibility by achieving greater completeness through the other. Discussing the modern woman’s love, Key described sex as “the insatiability of its demand for completeness

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52 Ibid., 173.
53 Ibid., 4.
54 Ibid., 7.
55 Ibid., 55.
56 Ibid., 46.
57 Ibid., 77.
and perfection itself, and for completeness and perfection in the feeling of the man.”

Even here, Key invoked a transformation of Christian injunctions to fruitfulness, claiming that:

Because fruitfulness, the power of production in all its forms is the divine part of man, it is impossible for anyone to attain ‘holiness and communion with God’ in the meaning for the religions of life, or, in other words, full humanity. Even in its limited form, that of creating a family, it is the unerring means of extending the ego beyond its own limits, the simplest condition for humanization.

While insisting on the necessity of a new religious code in light of a present crisis of declining white vitality, Key also drew on Christian themes of millennialism. Key suggested that her new religion offered both a racial and feminist future of the “final State [which] will appear as a unity combining male and female principles.” She suggested that love was a great equalizing force between men and women which involved “the attention to each other’s emotions” and compelled individuals toward unity. According to Key, love “desires the future, not the moment, it desires union, not only at the formation of a new being but in order that two persons through each other may care for a new and greater being than either of themselves.” However, Key’s suggested set of Commandments which would underpin the New Morality foregrounded these equal vital spirits as invested in upholding a superiorly evolved race. Under the New Morality, Key pointed to the prohibited acts of:

All parentage without love; All irresponsible parentage; All parentage of immature and degenerate persons; All voluntary sterility of married people fitted for the mission of the race; and finally All such manifestations of sexual life as involve violence or seduction and entail unwillingness or incapacity to fulfill the mission of the race.

58 Ibid., 84.
59 Ibid., 183.
60 Ibid., 257.
61 Ibid., 294.
62 Ibid., 176.
63 Ibid., 155.
Key not only identified a set of rules for governing the practice of love but she also suggested that love itself was a moral force acting in the interests of race and evolution whereby love’s “origin is the very instinct of the race.”

In sex reformers’ efforts to formulate a New Morality and proclaim the spirituality of sex, the traces of traditional Christian doctrine persisted. While this can be seen in the examples of Stopes, Sanger, Key, and the 1922 birth control conference papers, some sex reformers experienced this as a personal struggle to negotiate Christianity and the desire to privilege love, sex, vitality, and the body as spiritual practices. Leading figures of the sex reform movement such as Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter expressed what can be considered sex reform conversion narratives. Carpenter, in fact, resigned his post as a minister when he became disillusioned with the Church shortly after reading American poet Walt Whitman and feeling dissatisfied with Christianity’s failure to adequately encompass the Whitmanesque exaltation of the body. In the history of Protestantism, the earliest form of this conversion experience involved a spiritual crisis through which one was transformed by a calling from God. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sex reformers who had been raised in pious Christian households underwent a specific spiritual crisis shaped by the salient tension between sexual instincts and Christian morals and cultural concerns over depleted white vitality, a declining white birthrate, the growing materialism of a seemingly spiritually bankrupt capitalistic nation, and growing urbanization and industrialization which seemed to alienate humans from earth, feeling, and God. These factors profoundly shaped both Carpenter and Ellis’s turn toward mysticism which was

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64 Ibid., 48.
nonetheless retained Christian elements. Ellis himself placed his own ‘conversion’ experience within the long history of Protestant conversions but maintained the uniqueness of his conversion as a profound shift in an attitude toward the universe as opposed to a turn toward God. What I consider sex reformer conversion narratives were articulated through questions of racial reproduction, the cultivation of white middle class energies, and the divinity of the creative powers of sex.

What Ellis specifically described as his conversion in his autobiography, *My Life*, exemplifies a spiritual crisis over sexuality, vital energies, and the place of love in the context of late nineteenth century anxieties over the effects of modernity and racial decline. Given that Ellis considered *My Life* to be an effort in writing a “spiritual biography,” the event of his departure from Europe for Australia on board the *Surrey* can be considered a climactic moment in his autobiography. While on board the *Surrey*, Ellis underwent a painful experience of spiritual turmoil which positioned sexuality and religion at the centre of his crisis. Ellis suggests that this spiritual crisis was prompted by both his reflections on Freidrich Strauss’s *Old Faith and New* and George Drysdale’s *Elements of Social Science*. Describing how these two works profoundly affected him, Ellis recalled that “moods of deep melancholy passed over me and were blended with thoughts of sexual origin when I read in the Elements of Social Science of the dangerous devitalizing effects of nocturnal seminal emissions and feared I might be impotent.” In a diary entry of July 1878, Ellis recorded this spiritual crisis. He conveyed the traumatic effect of losing his childhood faith and the pain of abandoning his Church of England and Broad Church tendencies. With his faith

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68 Ibid., 130.
shaken, Ellis experienced the feeling of “living in a vacant universe which I felt to be a machine.”

Ellis’s melancholy arose from the dual impact of Strauss’s work on religion and Drysdale’s work on sexuality which he associated with a conception of the universe that encompassed spirituality, vitality, and love. Ellis claims to have struggled with the tension between two different ways of understanding the universe which seemed to be irreconcilable. He explained that “on the one hand was the divine vision of life and beauty which for me had been associated with a religion I had lost. On the other was the scientific conception of an evolutionary world which might be marvelous in its mechanism but was completely alien to the individual soul and inapt to attract love.”

Ellis’s sense of a loss of certainty, a fear of the emptiness of the world, and a feeling that Darwinism profoundly shook the foundations of faith, were symptomatic of broader late nineteenth century cultural trends. Ellis initially aligned love and vital energies of a sexual origin with the universe of religion rather than science.

Ellis’s eventual resolution of his spiritual crisis drew together the restoration of religion to the world with the vitality of the body and its sexual potency. His despair only lifted upon reading James Hinton’s *Life in Nature* which occurred as a “revelation,” “an immense inner transformation,” and “what religious people had been accustomed to call ‘conversion.’” Hinton’s work helped Ellis to perceive harmony between the worlds of science and religion which he described in terms of two streams merging into a “stream of

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71 Historians have shown the complexities of theological and scientific debates over Darwinism’s implications for Christianity. As these historians have demonstrated, there were multiple ways of negotiating Darwinism and Christianity which offers a more nuanced picture than a simple dichotomy of Darwinism versus religion. See Jon H. Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America: Protestant Intellectuals and Organic Evolution, 1859-1900* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
new potency.”

This reconciliation, described in the sexual terms of potency, also suggested that male sexual energies and vitality returned to the world as religion came to be reconciled with science. In June 1913, Ellis discussed this same ‘conversion’ experience in an article on “Science and Mysticism.” He explained that, while drawn to Darwin and Huxley’s scientific view of the world, this view left him with a feeling of alienation from emotion. Ellis discussed how Hinton’s conception of mechanism restored him by showing him a way of seeing religion in the world because “as he [Hinton] viewed it, the mechanism was not the mechanism of a factory, it was vital, with all the glow and warmth and beauty of life.” Recalling the intensity of his ‘conversion,’ Ellis vividly captured his experience of reading Hinton as “the swiftness of an electric contact; the dull aching tension was removed” and there was “a casting out of dead ideas which have clogged the vital process.” To this extent, Ellis’s concern over these “dead ideas” resonated with broader transatlantic modern intellectual anxieties which intertwined death, modernity, and sexual repression with ‘civilized’ Western Christianity.

While Hinton’s work was important for Ellis to move through his spiritual crisis, it was also his view of love as a bodily and spiritual practice that was pivotal for his ‘revelation’ of the harmony between material and spiritual worlds. In a diary entry of January 4th 1880, approximately two years after his professed loss of faith in Christian dogmas, he wrote “By no means let us forget Christ or his life. But we should, above all,
love Christ simply as Love.”\footnote{Havelock Ellis, Diary, 4 January 1880. Havelock Ellis Papers, BL, London, Item 70525.} Joining Christ and love, Ellis suggested that all that came within the realm of human experience could be spiritual insofar as “Christ will be then a divine atmosphere, suffering and interpenetrating all things.”\footnote{Ibid.} Far from an ascetic denial of the body or the earth, Ellis’s view of Christ as love brought sex, nature, and bodily instincts all within the ambit of spirituality insofar as Christ as a divine atmosphere led Ellis to conclude that the moral course was to “Be natural. Be yourself. Do not try to repress your nature, but to develop it, not to make it smaller, but larger.”\footnote{Ibid.} Such a transformative view of the meaning of Christ also held important implications for situating love as a specific orientation to the world and a guide for relating to others. Ellis deduced that moral action then consisted in the following: “Sympathise with human souls when you are able to do so; get into communion with nature; love all forms of art. In all these ways you will be making your nature richer and deeper and more fitted to do God’s work in the world.”\footnote{Ibid.} This is one example of how sex reformers’ politics of love could also be imbued with a missionary zeal of doing God’s work as they shaped a moral code that precisely defined loving relations. What I examined as a critical practice of sympathetic connectivity in chapter two was also a spiritual practice which informed their politics.

Ellis’s effort to reclaim an allegedly lost vitality and sexuality through newly defined spiritual practices was also a performance of white masculine imperial spirituality. In 1913, when Ellis described his ‘conversion’ as a “casting out of dead ideas,” he also reinforced a dichotomization of Western and Eastern spirituality which situated spirituality in the racial
and colonial context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century concerns over the loss of white vitality brought on by capitalist and evolutionary ‘progress’. Ellis’s mission to restore vitality, sexuality, and the body to a devitalized West ultimately reinforced colonial and racial hierarchies that associated the East with sexuality, emotion, and femininity. Ellis’s understanding of his spiritual crisis as the irreconcilable difference between spiritual/emotional and scientific/rational worlds was grounded in a bodily and emotional performance of a white ‘civilized’ masculine body that divided East and West. In “Science and Mysticism,” Ellis conflated the history of Western Christianity’s relationship to the Orient with his own spiritual ‘revelation’ which seemed to harmonize these traditions at the site of his own emotional experience. Locating his own body in the religious histories of East and West, Ellis suggested the long history to his own spiritual reconciliation could be discerned from examples such as the mystic Laotze who lived 600 years before Jesus, the “savage mystic [who] is also the savage man of science,” and the Greeks who only arrived at an appreciation of the harmony of religion and science by absorbing “oriental” influences. 81 Ellis framed his own crisis as the broader historical crisis of Western Christianity which, contrary to early Christian philosophers St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, artificially separated scientific instincts from religion. 82 Despite Ellis’s privileging of a “vital experience” of religion in association with the East, he also positioned Christian teachings, devitalization, and the very pain of his spiritual crisis as marks of evolutionary ‘progress.’ 83

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82 Ibid., 774.
83 Ibid., 776.
mysticism along different lines and in separate individuals” which made it seem as if these two ways of viewing the world were antagonistic.\textsuperscript{84} Reflecting on his former spiritual crisis in 1913, Ellis affirmed manly Christian, Victorian, and ‘civilized’ values. He referred to this as an important exercise in “moral and intellectual discipline” and part of a man’s necessary intellectual training.\textsuperscript{85} Without this experience, Ellis claimed that a man would be “condemned to live in a mental jungle where his arm will soon be too feeble to clear away the growths that enclose him and his eyes too weak to find the light.”\textsuperscript{86} In doing so, Ellis reclaimed the value of white Western Christianity, despite its devitalizing tendencies, insofar as it inaugurated a spiritual consciousness that was seemingly unavailable to the ‘savage mystic’ or the ‘oriental’ who did not seem to be spiritually conflicted.

Not only was Ellis’s spiritual experience a specific reformist framing of spirituality that remained tied to white Christian imperialism, but it also evoked a particularly close relationship between Britain and the United States which were then seen as two of the most problematic zones of lost white vitality. By the late nineteenth century, the cult of muscular Christianity became popular in Britain and the United States in response to concerns over the feminization of civilization. While historians have indicated that the cult of muscular Christianity emerged as a way for white middle class men to affirm both Christian values and masculinity, sex reformers’ reformulation of Christianity also drew on the affirmation of manhood and religion.\textsuperscript{87} American and British sex reformers identified common interests in

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 772.  
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 778.  
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.  
their shared religious ties to Protestantism, allegedly imperiled white health due to neurasthenia, and shared experiences of rapid industrialization and urbanization. Like Ellis, the Hapgoods looked to redefine spirituality in order to reassign the body’s vitality a central role in a religious experience that continued to draw on Christian concepts. The Hapgoods also underwent a conversion experience when eldest son Boyce died after setting out to make a life on the Western frontier. In November of 1919, Neith wrote to Hutchins that “your letter about ‘salvation’ strikes a true note.” While drawing on the concept of salvation, Neith changed its meaning to one consistent with multiplying a body’s connections with the world and extending itself beyond the ego. She insisted that “it isn’t a personal thing – but consists in throwing down the barriers of self- so that we can truly feel the wider life – so that we really love our neighbor as ourself and God in all human beings – then life can take its free course through us without self-impediments – that is ‘salvation’ – I know that to shut ourselves up in grief would be a selfish thing.”

Although Neith urged Hutchins to discard sin and grief in recasting this new meaning of ‘salvation’ that embraced ‘life,’ she defined a spiritual attitude toward the world that partially drew on and yet differentiated itself from Christianity. Yet, this spiritualization of ‘life’ amounted to turning a transatlantic crisis of lost white vitality into a religious crusade by turning ‘life’, ‘creative power’, and ‘vital force’ into spiritual ideals. In a letter to Hutchins in 1917, Neith described their intimate relations and bodily energies as a spiritual practice. She told Hutchins:

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88 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 15 November 1919. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 19, File 509.

89 Ibid.
You have a generous soul - as well as a strenuous + aspiring one - and I think you’re of one the few people who can really keep on living, can live down mistakes + misfortune and go beyond - I have often doubted whether I could - whether I had enough vital force.  

Neith’s reference to a strenuous and aspiring soul drew on a culturally pervasive ideal of white capitalist manhood which was popularized by President Theodore Roosevelt. This soul, in other words, took on the material form of white masculine energies tied to the strenuous life which promised to restore lost manly vigor. Neith’s own concerns over her “vital force” intertwined bodily energies, spirituality and anxieties over white civilization.

In spite of sex reformers’ rejection of traditional Christianity for its failure to give proper spiritual attention to the body’s material connections to the world, Christianity continued to shape even the vital spirits of a radical spiritual practice. To this extent, sex reformers’ vital spirits remained encumbered by and articulated through Christianity even as they sought to liberate these souls from hegemonic Christian underpinnings of Victorian bourgeois morality. What Jacques Derrida has called hauntology captures this historically specific instance of trying to depart from an identifiably oppressive value system while remaining shaped by that same system. Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* discusses hauntology as Marx’s confrontation with the ghosts of capitalism insofar as communism’s emergence and dialectical relationship to capitalism relies on and even requires capitalism. This concept of hauntology, however, also has both a wider application to reform and resistance projects over time and a historically contingent application inasmuch as the events and ideologies surrounding haunting change over time. In their acts of spiritually affirming ‘life’ whether

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90 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 1917. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 19, File 508.
through sex or a communion with nature, sex reformers’ remaking of an earthly and spiritual
ontology was haunted by their early training, shaping, and continued investment in Christian
morality, particularly insofar as Christianity remained tied to histories of white civilization
and imperial politics.

II. Mystic Secrets of Evolutionary Bodies: Bodies, Science, and Intimately Unlocking
Mysteries of the Universe

As sex reformers grew increasingly discomforted by a Christianity that failed to take
account of the divine potential within the body, earth, and sex, they turned to other forms of
worship such as occultism, theosophy, spiritualism, and Christian Science. While each
distinctive in their basic tenets, these religions had in common the active engagement of the
body with spiritual forces whether through occultism’s emphasis on cultivating scientific and
mathematical knowledge as access to mastering cosmic forces and performing magic;
theosophy’s emphasis on discovering the lost secrets of the East; spiritualism’s emphasis on
the sensory channels of the body as access to spirits; or, Christian Science’s emphasis on
mind cures as communication between the human and divine mind to transcend bodily pain.
These religions proliferated and attained considerable popularity in the mid to late nineteenth
century. Historian Jenny Hazelgrove has argued that spiritualism’s influence persisted into
the interwar period. She, in fact, makes specific mention of Havelock Ellis, D.H. Lawrence,
Marie Stopes, and Edith Ellis for whom “sex took on mystical proportions.”92 According to
Hazelgrove, these ideas of sex, love, and mysticism flooded the post-First World War

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92 Hazelgrove, *Spiritualism and British Society between the Wars*, 155.
Rather than a decline in religion, this period seems to have been marked by an intense reworking of spiritual practices characterized by both a radical interrogation of Christianity and heightened interest in new ways of engaging cosmic forces. Through their spiritual dissatisfaction with Christianity, sex reformers moved from spiritual crisis to spiritual quest in search of a religion that would turn relations between bodies, earth, and sexual energies into vehicles for divine communication. On July 10th of 1919, Mabel Dodge wrote to friend, Neith Boyce that “this potency we have for discovery and understanding by which we attain to all in the end is the power of love functioning up thro’ the bodily generative organs to greater + greater invisible organs of generation + to greater + greater creations by us.” Like a number of other sex reformers, Dodge’s cosmic vision privileged sexuality to the extent that she invested sexual organs with the hidden potential of spiritual transcendence. Turning vitality into a sacred and unseen force, Dodge recast relations of bodies, sex, science, and religion in response to a perceived cultural crisis of lost white vitality.

Sex reformers’ efforts to fashion a religion out of the fragments of science, occultism, Eastern spirituality, and Nature had a white middle class heterosexual agenda at the heart of it, endowing the recovery of white sexual energies with the status of a divine mission. While the previous section explored how sex reformers were shaped by but also turned from Christianity for its failure to offer a spiritual solution to the problem of neurasthenic white middle class men and women, this section explores the tools sex reformers used to forge a spirituality that would privilege vitality. As such, sex reformers turned an alleged crisis in

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93 Ibid.
94 Mabel Dodge to Neith Boyce, 10 July 1919. Hapgood Papers, Beinecke, Box 5, File 152.
the loss of white energies into more than just a concern over the fate of civilization. They rendered this a crisis of cosmic proportions. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century transatlantic intellectual community was profoundly interested in the inherent potentialities in matter that eluded thresholds of visibility. This included concerns over the capacities of bodies which garnered specific attention in a number of developing scientific fields. In the field of biology, scientists addressed bodily potentialities in terms of hereditarianism and environmentalism which looked to what had not yet developed or what might be latent powers within the body.\textsuperscript{95} In physics, scientists engaged with late nineteenth century theories of the ether, the conservation of energy, and entropy drew on earlier eighteenth century concepts of magnetic fluid and an invisible substance that connected all entities to each other across cosmic and material realms. Wary of psychology’s own kinship with histories of religious fits, trances, hallucinations, and visions, late nineteenth century psychologists insisted on their expertise as scientists of hypnosis and latent sexual energies which pointed to the body’s potential to transcend its present state. Some American and British psychologists also transgressed the boundary between psychology and religion by studying the mind’s potential for divine communication in the form of paranormal activities, resulting in the formation of American and British societies to investigate spiritual phenomena. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sex reformers shaped their movement through an engagement with this cultural and intellectual obsession with the relationship between bodies and unseen forces, eliding the boundaries between physics, psychology, and religion as epistemologies for apprehending the imperceptible.

\textsuperscript{95} Peter Bowler has discussed what he calls “non-Darwinian” evolutionary theories such as orthogenesis which stressed teleology and purpose. See Peter Bowler, \textit{The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).
This section examines the spiritual practices that constituted the vital spirit, with a particular focus on what sex, laws of physics, evolution, Nature, and love might mean to sex reformers’ encounters with the world as vital spirits. What I show here are three dimensions of sex reformers’ refashioning of religion as an amalgam of occultism, science, and transformations of traditional Christian doctrines. First of all, sex reformers engaged with pressing questions of Creationism at the level of endowing sex and evolution with the magical properties and secret knowledge of the ‘origin’ of life. Secondly, sex reformers redefined practices of spiritual discipline from Christian asceticism to an imperative to cultivate sexual energies, rigorously maximize the body’s material connections to the world, and attend to the body’s eugenic purity. Thirdly, what sex reformer Edward Carpenter considered “Nature-Sex-Mysticism” points to an important component of the spiritual meaning sex reformers attributed to encounters with ‘natural’ environments for restoring bodily energies. Along these lines, they unsurprisingly reworked traditional ideas of Edenic Paradise and The Fall which had been tied to temptation and the loss of innocence. I look to these three themes not only because they show the issues preoccupied many of the defenders of Christianity who, from the 1870s, increasingly regarded themselves as a besieged camp.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{96} See for example, George Marsden, \textit{Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). Jon Roberts has claimed that it was not until 1875 that American Protestant intellectually community began to see Darwinism as a theological threat. See Roberts, \textit{Darwinism and the Divine in America}, 137. Historian Mark Noll has suggested that while the period from the Civil War until World War I can be considered the high tide of “public Protestantism” or Christian social activism, this period was alos marked by a perception of an imperiled Christian community. See Mark Noll, \textit{A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 1992), 288-302. These historians have also stressed the close British and American ties in the shaping of religious traditions. Also, see Thomas E. Woods, Jr. \textit{The Church Confronts Modernity: Catholic Intellectuals and the Progressive Era} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Historians considering late nineteenth century Britain have discussed the anxiety over modernizing religion. See for example, Peter Bowler, “Chapter 8: Anglican Modernism,” in \textit{Reconciling Science and Religion: The Debate in Early Twentieth Century Britain} (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 244-86. Callum Brown has indicated similar anxieties over the decline of the church and a descent of the
In doing so, I consider how sex reformers redefined spirituality in ways that struck at the heart of pressing theological controversies. Sex reformers exalted love as a spiritual force that justified these reformulations of Christianity. This must be located within a historical period from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century when the Christian Church increasingly turned to preaching messages of God’s love rather than the Calvinistic message of inherent sinfulness. In this sense, sex reformers’ framing of love treaded on a theological battleground. As historian George Marsden has claimed of the 1870s with Dwight Moody’s businessman’s style revivalism, “his message, aside from the constant stress on the necessity of conversion, was of the love of God.” Marsden contends that this was part of the shaping of the New Theology of the late nineteenth century which was distinctively aimed at the Victorian middle class. Similarly, in Britain, William Ralph Inge, the Dean of St. Paul’s, known for his support of eugenics also frequently preached a message of Love, Hope, and Faith. Sex reformers, crafting a cosmic subjectivity of vital spirits, were part of a nineteenth century culture of a softening image of God while redefining this image to privilege white middle class sexual energies.

As late nineteenth and early twentieth century Christian theologians and clergymen worried about the threat of Darwin’s view of transmutation of species to God’s creations, sex working class in ‘heathenism.’ Brown also points out the clergy’s accommodation of Darwinism and evolutionary theory as “the modernization of theology.” See Callum Brown, Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain (London: Pearson Education Ltd., 2006), 47, 75, 112. Historians of spiritualism have suggested that Christianity failed to meet popular demands for a religion to provide greater emotional solace. In the American and British spiritualist movements, many individuals found Christianity inadequate for coping with deaths of loved ones. See for example, Cathy Gutierrez, Plato’s Ghost: Spiritualism in the American Renaissance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 67. In the British context, see Kollar, Searching for Raymond, x, xii.

97 Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, 32.
98 Ibid., 25.
99 Idem, 25.
100 See for example, WR Inge, “Faith, Hope, and Love” (delivered at All Saints Ennismore Gardens Quinquagesima, 1906). Inge Sermons, St. Paul’s Cathedral Archives, London, Box 5.
reformers took the importance of creation in a radically different spiritual direction. Sex reformers often referred to “creative force,” “creative power,” or “creative evolution” in ways that entangled sex, reproduction, and evolution in a religious outlook that emphasized their common thread in the production of ‘life.’ Within this concept of creativity and ‘life’, sex reformers spiritualized sexual energies as not only the source of reproducing children and perpetuating species but also as a source of individual regeneration and a single organism’s experience of vitality. This seems to have been how Mabel Dodge explained evolution to her psychoanalyst, Smith Ely Jelliffe. She proposed to Jelliffe, that “a new expression is being brought to earth – may be sex expressing itself from other centres – a new mode by the higher types of women.”

In her spiritualized vision of evolution, Dodge tied divine sexual experience to the Victorian white middle class woman whereby “civilization having brought about an anesthetic + repressed female type – is really, seeking by its evolutionary will to force sex onto another higher level – a new mode.” Dodge had, in fact, turned to occultism to make sense of a gendered sexual subjectivity and her place in evolution. Dodge’s use of the term “centres” was key concept advanced by Russian occultist Georges Ivanovich Gurdjieff’s who believed that regions of the body corresponded with planetary regions joined together by forces. Dodge was eventually instructed in Gurdjieff’s teachings by Harlem Renaissance writer, Jean Toomer, when he visited Dodge’s home in

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101 Mabel Dodge to Smith Ely Jelliffe, undated. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Box 20, File 568.
102 Ibid.
103 See for example, G.I. Gurdjieff, Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson: An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1950; repr. 1978), 146-147, 163. On page 37, Gurdjieff refers to a region of the spine as “a solar plexus.” Throughout his work, Gurdjieff articulates a view of the “I” as intimately integrated with the universe by grounding this view in knowledge of physics, evolution, and psychology.
Taos, New Mexico. Dodge here serves as one example of how occultism, sex reform, and science could be inextricably linked in the performance of a white middle class gendered cosmic subjectivity of a vital spirit.

Through sex reformers specific attention to vitality, sexual energies, and reproduction, occultist traditions of the worship of fertility, the mastery of forces, and the performance of magic through knowledge acquired a considerable public and influential role. Although, undoubtedly, Mabel was an exceptional woman, her turn to occultism was not an unusual or anomalous position in bohemian radical communities. Occultism had a considerable presence within these circles of bohemianism, including among very public figures in the birth control movement. British birth control pioneer, Annie Besant, was also a leading figure in the theosophical movement. Among British and American birth controllers, Besant was recognized as a legendary figure in the birth control movement, often cited for her and Charles Bradlaugh’s prosecution for disseminating Charles Knowlton’s *Fruits of Philosophy*. While British and American birth controllers shared a sense of their common struggle, they also shared interests in occultist practices as ways to spiritually inform the processes of reproduction, evolution, and vitality.

Margaret Sanger’s organization of the 1925 Birth Control Conference in New York City included a session on the Religious and Ethical Aspects of Birth Control which, by

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focusing on the issue of sex and religion, offered the opportunity to publicly express occultist influences on the birth control movement. Sanger, aware of Dodge’s notoriety as a mystic in Greenwich Village, invited her to attend this session at the conference. Sanger believed that the notion of the “psychic release of sex” would be of especial interest to Dodge. At the conference, German feminist, Helene Stocker presented a paper on “The Psychic Release of Sex.” Stocker argued that love should be viewed as “the unity of the soul and senses” in contrast to a lower conception of love as “the plane of mere pleasure.” Stocker’s choice of topic at an international gathering of physicians, birth controllers, social workers, and other professionals suggests that spiritual questions preoccupied sex reformers who struggled with a conservative religious sexual morality and accusations of promiscuity. Stocker addressed this very dilemma as she claimed to be fighting two enemies: those on the conservative side of prudish “reactionary asceticism” and those who allegedly treated love as “a game, a play, a passing trifle of the senses.” Other sex reformers such as Bertrand Russell, Emma Goldman, and Dora Russell also defended their views against allegations of advocating the promiscuity of free love. At the Birth Control Conference, Stocker also associated the spiritualization of sex with socialism in contrast to a “mixture of capitalistic morality and egoistic morality” which, by treating women’s bodies as property, cut both men and women off from the possibilities of spiritually and materially connecting with the world. As sex reformers challenged the dominant sexual and capitalist morality aligned with the history of Christian empires, their self-fashioning as vital spirits took on transnational dimensions.

106 Margaret Sanger to Mabel Dodge, 21 March 1925. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Box 31, File 885.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
particularly wedded to the multiple locations of white bodies, the spread of Anglo-American empire, and the shape of biological yet nonetheless spiritual ‘civilizing mission.’

Margaret Sanger is a notable example of the emergence of an interconnected spiritual and biological ‘civilizing mission’ that characterized the birth control movement. In her work on *The Pivot of Civilization*, Sanger insisted that birth control is “economic, biological, psychological and spiritual in its aspects.”\(^{110}\) Much like Ellis’s spiritual and sexual moment of enlightenment, Sanger claimed that the birth control movement promised an awakening of “a race creative” through which “birth control concerns itself with the spirit no less than the body.”\(^{111}\) In terms that resonated with the occultist insistence on learning to master forces in the world, Sanger suggested birth control as the scientific tool towards “mastery of procreative powers.”\(^{112}\) Perhaps drawing on while challenging a Christian morality of suffering, Sanger criticized the hypocrisy of “mother-worship” in a society where there was an “appalling waste of human life and human energy.”\(^{113}\) Sanger’s tone in her published works also took the turn toward a millennial vision of the future that privileged the white middle class woman as the moral exemplar. In 1922, Sanger imagined what the world of *The New Motherhood* might look like:

> When we insist that conception be surrounded by its normal atmosphere of triumphant love and happiness, and thus infuse into the new life the spark of love with its impulse to live, to love in its turn, to be strong, we shall have a new sort of humanity. There will be no more ‘dumb, driven cattle’ in the guise of men. When we can visualize out of the surging love and happiness of the creative act the strong healthy, happy, mentally and spiritually vigorous child, we shall produce individuals with intellectual and spiritual gifts beyond those of any race that has yet appeared on earth.\(^{114}\)

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111 Ibid.
112 Ibid., 23.
113 Ibid., 28.
Sanger’s message of hope, however, spiritually differentiated white middle class eugenic bodies from working class, and colonized bodies. Despite decoupling Christian notions of sex and sin, Sanger re-articulated the relationship between sex and sin at the level of the kinds of bodies that engaged in sex, qualifying sacred and loving sex in white ‘civilized’ bodies. This world, depicted by Sanger, as one seething with vitality, love, and an ‘impulse to live,’ can be juxtaposed with the world of hate she describes in The Pivot of Civilization where she condemns the breeding of defectives, delinquents, dependents, and the overpopulation of specific nations. Following her condemnation of the “ruthless struggle for existence in China,” Sanger concluded that “we are enjoying the ironic internationalism of hatred.”115 In contrast to Sanger’s vision of a world of “the new motherhood,” Sanger referred to the degradation of motherhood among the “foreign-born” and working classes who exemplified “penalized, prostrate motherhood.”116 In a striking contrast to the vigorous new mother, what Sanger called “slave-mothers,” she depicted as “pale, hollow-eyed and listless, often needlessly sharp and impatient with the children.”117 These contrasts between Sanger’s millennial vision for birth control and the existing state of “uncontrolled breeding” suggests a refashioning of religion at the site of sex, reproduction, and eugenics which endowed white middle class bodies with sacred properties.

While Sanger did not specifically advocate occultism in her published works, occultist traditions seem to have shaped her spiritual vision of the birth control movement. Sanger, in fact, consulted astrologers and psychics. Sanger repeatedly consulted Elizabeth

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116 Ibid., 38, 41.
117 Ibid., 38.
Aldrich who interpreted the events of Sanger’s life in terms of astrological alignments.\textsuperscript{118} As a famous leading figure in the American birth control movement and an advocate of free love, Sanger’s turn to Aldrich suggests that occultism offered a religious view of the world that could satisfy Sanger’s conception of sex and reproduction. On February 6\textsuperscript{th} of 1922, Aldrich wrote to Sanger that “The whole Birth Control movement is largely a Neptunian affair. As I have said, Neptune is much conceived with suffering humanity.”\textsuperscript{119} Aldrich also put Sanger’s battles with the clergy into astrological perspective. She told Sanger that:

I observe with considerable interest that the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter which spread so much havoc in our world, and which occurred September tenth, nineteen twenty one, fell on the spot of your Progressed Venus and near your Radical Sun. I cannot remember the time exactly that your legal fracas with the police and a few (for one) of the clergy started. As this conjunction is still going strong, I have no doubt it was the manifestation in your life of this conjunction.\textsuperscript{120}

This fracas was likely the arrest of Sanger and the police raid on her clinic which, she believed, had been orchestrated by Cardinal Patrick Hayes.\textsuperscript{121} Contemplating a trip to spread the birth control campaign internationally, Sanger worried that her absence might affect the movement in the United States. Aldrich told her “I note that as you set out for the Orient your Moon Progressed is in opposition to your Venus Progressed.”\textsuperscript{122} In this same reading of Sanger’s future, Aldrich reassured her that “This aspect of Sun sextile Uranus of which I


\textsuperscript{119} Elizabeth Aldrich to Margaret Sanger, 6 February 1922. The Margaret Sanger Papers (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1995): Reel 83.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.  

\textsuperscript{122} Margaret Sanger, The Pivot of Civilization, 27.
have spoken, will give you remarkable magnetic power.”\textsuperscript{123} This reference to magnetic power highlights the persistence of mesmerism’s influence from the early nineteenth century into the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{124} In the context of Aldrich’s exchange with Sanger, magnetic power signified a mastery of universal forces, specifically energy, which was related to historical changes in the understanding of the universe where magnetic power formerly referred to the manipulation of invisible magnetic fluids that connected bodies. Historians have emphasized the history of magnetism and its religious implications with Franz Anton Mesmer’s eighteenth-century mesmerism but it also has ties to Jean-Baptiste Lamarck’s evolutionary theory which stressed the ‘cause excitatrice.’\textsuperscript{125} To this extent, the powers of magnetism had roots in both the histories of biology and psychology. In this respect, Sanger embodied her understanding of the birth control movement insofar as Aldrich located her at the intersection of scientific, political, and spiritual forces.

While Sanger’s explicit engagement with astrologers may not have been a common experience for British sex reformers, she highlighted a spiritual dimension to the birth control movement which must be situated in a broader transatlantic context. What a number of sex reformers referred to as mysticism, looked to knowledge that fell outside of science’s parameters where intuition and forces beyond immediate comprehension could be relegated to the realm of spirituality. Like their American counterparts, British sex reformers

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Historians have traced mesmerism’s impact on the development of spiritualism and other new religions as attending to the spiritual possibilities of unseen forces as well as spiritualism’s connections to science. See for example, Alison Winter, \textit{Mesmerized: Powers of the Mind in Victorian Britain} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
considered sex, reproduction, and evolution as processes intertwined with the mysterious, cosmic force of vitality. Havelock Ellis who was part of Margaret Sanger’s circle of British supporters, also shared Sanger’s views on the spiritual dimension of birth control. In his pamphlet on *The Objects of Marriage*, Ellis denounced Christianity’s characterization of sex as wanton or immoral when practiced outside of the purpose of procreation. Ellis, like Sanger, argued that sex and spirituality were integrally related in that “sex gradually becomes intertwined with all the highest and subtlest human emotions and activities, with the refinements of social intercourse, with high adventure in every sphere, with art, with religion.”

Ellis specifically endowed ‘civilized’ bodies with this divine potential to achieve those highest human emotions that make sex an art and a religion. Ellis framed sacred sex as a mark of evolutionary progression whereby “the primitive animal instinct, having the sole end of procreation, becomes on its way to that end the inspiring stimulus to all those psychic energies which in civilization we count most precious.”

In a subsequent pamphlet, arguing for the “erotic rights” of women, Ellis blamed Christianity for turning women’s “devotion”, “maternity” and “emotional receptivity” against them by compelling their chastity and denial of sexual pleasure.

Ellis offered a utopic futuristic vision of a world inhabited by women with “erotic rights” where “the perfect poise of the conflicting forces of life, the rhythmic harmony in which generation is achieved with the highest degree of perfection compatible with the make of the world.” In this sense, bodies, sex, reproduction, and evolution were inextricably bound to the cosmic mapping of the world.

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127 Ibid., 9.
129 Ibid., 15.
Within the space of the British birth control clinic, sex reformer and physician Helena Wright considered her work to have a spiritual meaning. Wright was a well-respected figure in the birth control movement who was periodically consulted by Marie Stopes on the safety of certain birth control methods. She first met Marie Stopes in 1918 and, upon her return from China where she was involved in medical missionary work, Wright visited Stopes’s clinic at Tottenham Court Road. In 1928, after her return from China, Wright searched for work at a birth control clinic and soon decided to work with Margery Spring Rice at the North Kensington Telford Clinic where she remained for thirty years. Wright’s expertise as a gynaecologist and advocate of birth control put her in touch with prominent sex reformers such as Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells and key organizers and financial backers of eugenics such as Lady Denman. Wright’s early life was influenced by her parents’ arrangement to exclude fidelity from the marital contract. Wright’s biographer, Barbara Evans, suggests that Wright’s own marriage to Captain Henry Wright, whom Wright renamed ‘Peter,’ was based on a ‘varietist’ marital arrangement. Wright, in fact, believed that sexual fidelity to one individual for life was unnatural and unrealistic to expect. She devoted an entire book to this subject in 1968 which she entitled Sex and Society: A New Code of Sexual Behaviour which, even in the 1960s, proved difficult to find a publisher because of its advocacy of extramarital sex. While Wright is primarily known as a pioneer in birth control and international family planning, her work was informed by a complicated and entangled personal history of the ethics of sex reform and eclectic religious influences such as Christianity, Christian Science, and occultism. In her childhood, Wright witnessed her

mother’s séances. Wright’s mother also sent her to a Christian Scientist in the hopes of correcting her poor eyesight. During her studies at the London School of Medicine for Women, Wright became a member of the London Inter-Faculty Christian Union, attended Christian conferences including the World Christian Federation meeting at Lake Mohawk in the United States, and, in 1913, she served on the Executive of the Student Christian Movement. These early experiences with Christian activism, shaped her later decision to join her husband in medical missionary work in China under the sponsorship of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. While deeply committed to Christianity, Wright’s spirituality also exceeded the bounds of Christianity whereby she turned to beliefs in telepathy and astrology which were linked to occultist traditions.

Even after Wright returned to England in 1928, she continued to position her work at the crossroads of sex reform and Christian networks. She addressed religious gatherings, including the Lambeth Palace Conference of 1930, where she presented her views on the consistency of birth control and religion which often resonated with theological interpretations of evolution as evidence of Design. In November of 1929, Wright delivered a lecture on “Ideal Marriage” to the Presbyterian Guild. To the Guild, Wright claimed that “the body is a divine instrument and we had nothing to do with its design or production, we merely occupy it, work with it, and express ourselves thro’ it.”¹³¹ Wright went on to explain that as a divine instrument, the body’s engagement in sex is “the most beautiful, the most mysterious of all the functions of the body.”¹³² Wright, however, qualified this beauty and mystery of sex in terms of racial progress and a white middle class feminist politics of

¹³² Ibid.
affirming sexual pleasure and voluntary motherhood. Wright’s discussion on the body’s divine attributes was prefaced by her emphasis on the importance of sex as “the only relationships wh. [which] has a direct influence on the future of the race.”

In her speech, Wright tightly bound birth control and evolution in an argument that pointed to material evidence of the cooperative relationship between science and religion as mutually invested in the creation and unfolding of ‘life.’ Wright told the Guild that “The more scientists get to know about the body, the more beauty they see in all its functions.”

A few years later in a debate on sex and religion, Wright made further claims to the spirituality of sex as a religious argument from Design. However, her claims were in keeping with sex reformers’ receptivity to mysticism which embraced the late nineteenth century intellectual community’s growing sense of the uncertainty of knowledge, the parameters of science, and the areas of inquiry that fell outside of the powers of human comprehension.

Wright, like a number of her contemporaries, situated the experience of love through sex within the liminal zone of scientific knowledge of the body and the spiritual intuitions of bodily feeling. At a debate on religion and sex in 1931, Wright contended that:

As an example of what I mean by a spiritual faculty let’s take our self-evident power of loving. No one has ever yet been able to describe love in words, but we all agree to its existence, & cannot call it either an intellectual or a physical process. Or again, who can explain what is loosely called ‘intuition…’

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133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
At this debate, Wright denied any separation between her authority as a scientist and her spirituality, pointing out that her work in chemistry, physics, biology, and medicine inspired religious insight. Through science, Wright indicated she became “conscious of being a body, a mind, something else - What the something else is, I don’t know, I can’t think of a perfectly inoffensive name for it, so allow me to call it ‘spirit,’ & mean thereby all the faculties which are neither physical nor mental.” While Wright’s claims were similar to Victorian evolutionists, Thomas Henry Huxley and Herbert Spencer who both suggested a realm beyond human knowledge, she went further than them by arguing for Design or an architect of the body and evolution. Wright, however, also criticized the Christian Church for inhibiting human faculties by surrounding sex with moral prohibition. At a time when the Christian churches in Britain and the United States turned toward preaching a loving God as opposed to a vengeful one, Wright seized on love as a force that affirmed sex and therefore undermined Christian prohibitions around it. To Wright, it was love that offered a powerful example to the scientists of the existence of spirit.

While a number of theologians during this period could appreciate Wright’s use of an argument from Design, the more radical side of her claim came from her reinterpretation of the importance of creation as an argument for conceiving of sex as a divine act which should encourage women to pursue sexual satisfaction. In her lecture to the Presbyterian Guild, Wright argued that “The creative object of sex heeds no explanation we all understand it, we share it in common with the natural world. It is the aspect of sex which has union for its object which is at present undergoing an interesting process of development and

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137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
evolution.” As a divine act, Wright claimed that the pursuit of sexual satisfaction was entirely in keeping with a religious ethic, if not an imperative spiritual duty. She insisted that “The complete and perfect human being needs a full, satisfying sex life. The sex act is meant to be enjoyed by both parties equally.” Although Wright also told the Guild that marriage ought to be an act between a man and a woman for life, her sympathies seemed to lie with the non-monogamous sex reformers who may sustain a marriage but pursue their sexual desires beyond the marital bond. While, perhaps strategically, Wright did not advocate non-monogamy to the Presbyterian Club in January of 1930, she seemed to hint at fidelity and possession as part of the normative sexual codes contributing to the devitalization of white middle class couples. Her lecture, entitled “Sex Problems of the Unmarried” mentioned jealousy alongside sexual inhibitions such as neuroses and vague sexual dissatisfaction which were typically associated with white middle class couples. Wright’s claim that “sex is life-energy” situated sex in both a religious and political context of producing vitality whereby satisfying sexual needs was both spiritually and politically beneficial. What I explained in chapter two as sympathetic connectivity marked by an ethic of reciprocal affections in sex, Wright explained as “conscious cooperation with the will of God.” In doing so, she redeemed sex from the abject place of sin while pointing to the beauty and health of the body as manifestations of the divine. On April 22nd of 1931, Wright gave her Matlock lecture wherein she proclaimed “The body is beautiful – The body is not in itself a source of

140 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
wickedness and sin. Sex is beautiful, a gift of God like any other natural gift. Sex, moreover, is a natural instinct demanding healthy activity as much as any other instinct.”

On the grounds of health, physical beauty, and spiritual feeling, Wright reclaimed matter from its abject place of sin, evil, and contamination to a position of exalted spiritual expression which also situated Wright’s redefinition of spirituality within prevailing cultural discourses on eugenics, physical culture, voluntary motherhood, and companionate marriage. While redeeming the body as a conduit for cosmic forces through the practice of sex, Wright also sacralized the body’s material qualities of whiteness, middle class status, and intelligent self-discipline which mired this vital spirit in a politics of feminist eugenics.

While Wright’s advocacy of love seemed to suggest a universal cosmic experience of sex, it is clear from her Matlock lecture that only certain bodies manifested divine attributes. Referring to famous British anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski’s groundbreaking work, Wright acknowledged that even the ‘savage’ man has connected pregnancy with intercourse. Wright’s particular interest in drawing on the ‘savage’ man, however, was to locate the repression of sex instincts as a unique problem of ‘modern’ civilization; thus, locating the attitude toward sex instincts as a marker of ‘primitive’ versus ‘civilized’ societies. However, within ‘civilized’ societies, Wright sharply differentiated between couples on the grounds of health, affection, and, spiritual feeling in light of her view of religion. Wright defined sex as “a vehicle of affection, companionship & union” which is “health creating.” Yet, while supposedly applicable to an abstract view of health, Wright qualified the divine manifestation of sex and health in terms of the “necessity to breed for

144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
Wright suggested that this eugenic aim should be taken up by the churches who could attend to a sex as “a positive doctrine.” This resonated with the broader climate of sex reform which looked to cooperation with the clergy whereby the late nineteenth century movement of theological liberalism encompassed a number of clergymen seeking to modernize the Church. Wright’s encouragement of the Church’s cooperation with birth controllers resonated with the transatlantic projects within the birth control and eugenics movements such as Margaret Sanger’s efforts to organize clergy committees, eugenicists suggestions that the Church control over marriage could act as a force of sexual selection, and Marie Stopes’s extensive correspondence with Catholic and Protestant clergymen from all over the British empire. As we have seen with a number of Wright’s contemporaries, she contrasted the birth control couple and the non-birth control couple. She pictured the birth control couple in terms of romantic love, free and responsible parental instincts, loved and wanted children, and the natural and uninhibited expression of sex instincts. In contrast, she pictured the non-birth control couple in terms of strained and unwilling continence, overcrowding, irritability, exhausted multiple motherhood, and haphazard children. This stark contrast between the birth control and the non-birth control household located the spiritual experience of sex in the conditions of white middle class homes and the affective history of white middle class bodies.

Despite perhaps their divergent views on the role of God in the universe, Dora Russell and Helena Wright could agree on a specific view of creation which came to be articulated

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147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
through the sex reform movement’s investment in affirming sex instincts as a source of vitality. Although Dora Russell dispensed with the necessity of a God in religion, she did not dispense with religion itself. In *The Right To Be Happy*, Dora suggested that her advocacy of open marriage, birth control, the creative instincts of parenthood, and mutual sexual pleasure could be seen as “a simple religion which mankind is now in a position to grasp. It has no need to postulate God.”\(^\text{151}\) While Wright may have given God a place as a Designer, Dora’s view of religion resonated with Wright’s positioning of vitality, sex, reproduction, and evolution at the core of a redefinition of creation and spirituality. Dora Russell explained the central principle of this “simple religion” as “life is creation, their fusion and incarnation in the mechanism of life itself that life is only valuable in so far as it uses and uses to the full every creative activity which it possesses.”\(^\text{152}\) This religion that exalted life, Dora insisted radically departed from “the slave origin of European Christianity.”\(^\text{153}\) She, in fact, pointed to a rather ironic contradiction within Christianity by suggesting that “yet supreme unions exist: they exist in spite, not because, of orthodox Christian doctrine.”\(^\text{154}\) Such supreme unions, Dora equated with sexual compatibility and love. What she advocated here as a religion, she proclaimed to radically overturn “traditional morality and early teaching [which] combined with the subjection of women, have robbed men of the spontaneous delight and vigour which should come to them through sex-love.”\(^\text{155}\) By highlighting ‘sex-love,’ ‘vigour,’ and ‘spontaneous delight, Dora made a case for putting vitality and love experienced by cultivating sex instincts at the core of spiritual practices. Vitality here

\(^{151}\) Russell, *The Right To Be Happy*, 290.
\(^{152}\) Ibid.
\(^{153}\) Ibid., 16.
\(^{154}\) Ibid., 131.
\(^{155}\) Ibid., 128.
attested to the feeling of a spiritual and material co-construction of the world; a conception of the universe which informed sex reformers’ campaigns for a New Morality.

Contrary to what sex reformers’ regarded as Christianity’s rejection of all matter as sinful, they transformed and intensified questions of sin to the issue of how one engaged with the material world, especially whether biological processes manifested virtue or vice. This consequently turned questions of eugenic breeding, birth control, and sexual love into spiritual as much as political questions. Just as we saw leading birth control advocate Margaret Sanger posit a new world for the new mother, Dora Russell also situated the “creative power of motherhood” as a millennial question of racial destiny. Dora pointed out birth control as knowledge that would transform the world so that “parental feeling leaves the restricted field of the family and attaches itself to the destiny of the whole human race. Left free or guided by knowledge rather than doctrine, it will not substitute tyranny of race destiny for the tyranny of the family, a religion or a State.”156 In this sense, while sex reformers like Dora Russell offered a way to redeem sex, sin, and bodies from Christian abjection, they also introduced divine sanctions for how those bodies were politically hierarchized in categories of gender, class, race, and sexuality. It was largely an unquestioned assumption that sacred sex happened among white middle class heterosexual couples in Western ‘civilized’ capitalist nations.

Sex reformers’ redefinition of what creationism might mean for vital spirits also implied a specific moral guide for practicing sacred sex according to ideals of love, beauty, eugenic purity, and the divine powers of mutual sexual pleasure. In effect, sex reformers transformed traditional Christian emphasis on asceticism into a new form of spiritual

156 Ibid., 197.
discipline which prescribed ways of engaging with the world to affirm ‘life.’ As sex reformers integrally linked spirituality and the sexual knowledge yielded by developing sciences of eugenics, psychology, and even physics in its insights on energies, they shaped spiritual practices that were grounded in enhancing the body’s engagement with the world through knowledge. As such, I find Michel Foucault’s formulation of spirituality particularly important for analyzing this historical moment where sex reformers’ fashioned a cosmic subjectivity by redefining relations between science, sex, and spirituality. Foucault has argued that spiritual knowledge can be seen as a condition for transforming the subject whereby the subject begins with a sense of incompleteness, imperfection, and, most importantly, an incapacity for truth which provides the momentum for transformation. According to Foucault, spirituality “postulates that for the subject to have right of access to the truth he must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become to some extent and up to a certain point other than himself.”¹⁵⁷ This spiritual orientation to the world, according to Foucault, involves caring for the soul which inaugurates a set of practices such as conversion, ascetics, and salvation. While Foucault’s lectures on The Hermeneutics of the Subject were delivered between 1981 and 1982, his formulation of spirituality as a relation of the subject to truth can inform our understanding of an early twentieth century moment in the emergence of a sex reform spirituality when relations between the subject, sex, scientific knowledge, and religion were at the heart of debates over the course of modernity. Rather than ahistorically apply Foucault to the early twentieth century, I suggest that sex reformers’ consolidation of relations of science, sex, and spirituality into a set of practices amounted to a spiritual

¹⁵⁷ Foucault, The Hermeneutics of The Subject, 15.
discipline of the self which is an important genealogical episode in Foucault’s thinking on the hermeneutics of the subject.

As sex reformers’ turned attention to the mystical powers of sexuality, they intertwined the divine potential of the body with scientific knowledge which could contribute to making more perfect bodies and intensifying sexual feeling. In doing so, what sex reformers constructed as the mutual workings of the material and spiritual drew particular attention to ways of disciplining or working on matter as a spiritual act. This focus on molding matter to elicit its divine attributes called upon sciences of eugenics, physics, psychology, and biology as tools to spiritually work on the body. As such, sex reformers’ calls for cultivating sexual instincts, conserving energies, perfecting sex technique, and breeding for quality required no less self-discipline than Christian ascetics. Perhaps mindful of how sex reform’s opponents maligned it as an immoral doctrine of promiscuity, Bertrand Russell declared that “The doctrine that I wish to preach is not one of licence; it involves exactly as much self-control as is involved in the conventional doctrine.” Russell specified that “self-control will be applied more to abstaining from interference with others than to restraining one’s own freedom.” While such self-control involved a different code of sexual ethics, it entailed rigorously working on the self which intensified the demands of sexual freedom and reproduction. Dora Russell specifically denounced Christian asceticism while also alluding to the place of science in disciplining matter that could be put at the heart of a new spirituality. In discussing what she believed to be the flaws of Christian asceticism, Dora stated:

159 Ibid.
True the saints enjoin upon the Christian worldlings the right use of things material, to eat without enjoyment, to procreate without pleasure, to tend a family without delight and in a spirit of Christian authority, to see in married life duties, burdens and consolations.\textsuperscript{160}

She concluded that Christian asceticism “says in effect that we should do nothing intelligent to manipulate matter, but rather endure patiently the worst that primeval chaos can do.”\textsuperscript{161} Reflecting on the history of Western civilization, Dora argued that over time “the leadership of ascetics and puritans” stood in the way of the possibilities of understanding and effectively using instinct for the purpose of developing civilization.\textsuperscript{162} Dora Russell urged her readers to “let instinct working through a technique perfected by science govern or rather create men’s moral nature.”\textsuperscript{163} Helena Wright intertwined both the scientific and spiritual discipline of the body through birth control when she referred to the “harnessing of electricity.”\textsuperscript{164} For Wright, then, birth control was at the nexus of physics, biology, politics, and religion whereby, she contended, that God would not sanction uncontrolled reproduction and birth control offered the promise of the prevention of the births of “weakly unproductive individuals.”\textsuperscript{165} By invoking electricity, Wright’s view of birth control became grounded in the mid to late nineteenth century associations between technology, magic, harnessing the power of cosmic forces, and channeling spirits.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{160} Russell, \textit{The Right To Be Happy}, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 275.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Historians have shown how late nineteenth and early twentieth century spiritualists looked to technologies such as photography, the telegraph, x-rays, and electricity more generally as confirmation of spiritual phenomena and ways of penetrating unseen forces. See Fred Nadis, \textit{Wonder Shows: Performing Science, Magic, and Religion in America} (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005). Also see literary scholar, Pamela Thurschwell, \textit{Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). On spirit photography in Britain, see Andrew Fischer, “‘Photographer of Marvels’: Frederick Hudson and the beginnings of spirit photography in Europe,” in \textit{The Perfect Medium:}
“harnessing electricity” was tied to her view of the cosmic powers of sex whereby “God has, apparently, so designed our bodies that the influence and importance of sex goes much further than the work of reproduction.” These two aspects of manipulating matter and channeling instincts underpinned sex reformers’ insistence on a form of spiritual discipline which took sciences as the tools for disciplining bodies, instincts, desires and emotions to maximize love and vitality.

What Havelock Ellis had discussed as a spiritual conversion to mysticism, did not mark an end or liberation from spiritual discipline but inaugurated a new set of spiritual practices which looked to rigorous material, political, and spiritual transformation of the body in relation to knowledge. British author, Edward Carpenter who was an internationally recognized figure in sex reform, socialism, and Eastern mysticism, provided a religious interpretation of specific practices of sex reform. Carpenter’s eventual disenchantment over Christianity’s treatment of the body led him to resign his clerical fellowship at Cambridge. Influenced by American poet, Walt Whitman, Carpenter’s work went in the direction of offering a religious account of the body’s spiritual engagement with the world through social, political, and ecological relations. Carpenter’s turn to Eastern mysticism and his association with birth control activist, theosophist, and occultist, Annie Besant influenced the course of

his redefined spirituality. Carpenter’s *Love’s Coming-of-Age* was first published in 1896 and soon became a canonical text of the sex reform movement.

Throughout *Love’s Coming-of-Age*, Carpenter explains necessary practices of bodily transformation to achieve “cosmical harmony” through transcendence beyond an existing patriarchal and capitalist morality.\(^{169}\) Carpenter devotes attention to a spiritual, bodily, and political transformation to harmoniously incorporate masculine and feminine principles, relinquish claims to property, overcome selfishness and jealousy, and to affirm sexual instincts as a ground of intimacy with the world. This mystical view of the world which intensified the importance of social and political activism seems to attest to Carpenter’s wider influence on the sex reform movement. Approximately twenty years after the first publication of *Love’s-Coming-of-Age*, Bertrand Russell published an essay on “Mysticism and Logic” which insisted on the interdependence of mysticism and science so that “even the cautious and patient investigation of truth by science, which seems the very antithesis of the mystic’s swift certainty, may be fostered and nourished by that very spirit of reverence in which mysticism lives and moves.”\(^{170}\) Russell advocated mysticism as an insight into a “higher reality,” an “attitude toward life,” and a profound insight into “the possibility of this universal love and joy in all that exists is of supreme importance for the conduct and happiness of life.”\(^{171}\) This suggests that, like Carpenter, Russell’s own political and social activities had a mystical element to them, particularly in his writings on *The Conquest of*

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\(^{169}\) Carpenter, *Love’s Coming-of-Age*, 143.


\(^{171}\) Ibid., 28.
*Happiness* and *Marriage and Morals* which stressed the importance of imagining ways of relating to others that departed from existing social and political norms.

Carpenter was a prominent figure in early twentieth century movements from sex reform to socialism, feminism and vegetarianism but his arguments for reforming social and political relations were situated in a larger context of a spiritual orientation to the world. In *Love’s Coming-of-Age*, Carpenter described a spiritual state of transcendence from custom and convention whereby “one will look quietly within himself, he will perceive that there are most distinct and inviolable inner forces, binding him by different ties to different people, and with different and inevitable results according to the quality and the nature of affection bestowed – that there is in fact in the world of the heart a kind of cosmical harmony and variety and an order almost astronomical.”  

As Carpenter’s work demonstrated, to achieve “cosmical harmony” required incessant spiritual work in attending to manifold relationships with the world. Rather than divide the world into traditional Christian categories of good and evil, Carpenter imagined a universe of embodied forces of love and jealousy. He, in fact, argued that “a great disturber of the celestial order of Love is Jealousy.”  

In this cosmology of swirling emotional forces intertwining bodily passions with universal passions, Carpenter provided a crucial role for sex as “the allegory of Love in the physical world. It is from this fact that it derives its immense power.”  

Insofar as sex could be equated with Love, it aimed at “non-differentiation – absolute union of being” and therefore offered a practice of connection for otherwise incomplete, isolated, individual entities seeking “cosmical

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173 Ibid., 165.
174 Ibid., 20.
harmony.”¹⁷⁵ To perform one’s spiritual duty in this universe required indulging but also refining sexual instincts. Carpenter held as an ideal the “master of life who, accepting the grosser desires as they come to his body, and not refusing them, knows how to transform them at will into the most rare and fragrant flowers of human emotion.”¹⁷⁶ This “master of life” did not simply indulge sexual instincts but spiritually worked on them so that “the sexual transformed by the magic of the will into the emotional and spiritual.”¹⁷⁷ To this extent, Carpenter’s cosmic vision foregrounded a vital spirit which behaved in an unmistakably occultist and theosophical fashion insofar as this spirit mastered forces, performed magic, and relied on its will. Much like occultism’s emphasis on the discipline required to master forces, Carpenter’s work suggested a spiritual discipline involved in sexual indulgence.

What Carpenter described as ‘cosmical harmony’ entailed rigorous emotional, material, and political practices of spiritual discipline to overcome obstacles to unity or Love. Carpenter’s discussion of the necessary transformation in attitudes toward marriage and private property pointed to a spiritual discipline requiring a renunciation of traditional values of modern Western capitalist society. In discussing marriage, Carpenter emphasized the division between the sexes, the treatment of the wife as a possession, and its perpetuation of jealousy. Far from working toward cosmical harmony, Carpenter suggested that marriage isolates a couple “suddenly cuts them off from the world, not only precluding the two from sexual, but even from any openly affectional relations with outsiders, and corroborating the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 8.
¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 11.
selfish sense of monopoly which each has in the other.”\textsuperscript{178} As Carpenter conceived of the world as emotional forces, he objected to marriage as it furthered “the narrow physical passion of jealousy, the petty sense of private property in another person, social opinion, and legal enactments, [which] have all converged to choke and suffocate wedded love in egoism, lust, and meanness.”\textsuperscript{179} Given this set of obstacles which encompassed jealous impulses instilled over the course of human evolution, the cherished values of ownership and fidelity, and both social and legal codes, the achievement of Love and ‘cosmical harmony’ involved an extraordinary struggle for transformation. Carpenter suggested that achieving ‘cosmical harmony’ entailed a fundamental shift in what ‘modern’ men and women held most sacred. He argued for a practice of “variety of love” which would permit “married people to have intimacies with outsiders, and yet to continue perfectly true to each other.”\textsuperscript{180} For Carpenter, marriage exemplified the early impulse toward private property that played out in specific gender roles whereby woman “became something between an angel and an idiot - a bundle of weak and flabby sentiments, combined with a wholly undeveloped brain.”\textsuperscript{181} Not only would renunciation of fidelity be required but sex equality could not occur until “our whole commercial system, with its barter and sale of human labor and human love for gain is done away.”\textsuperscript{182} This amounted to a project of both social and spiritual reform insofar as such renunciation furthered love in both earthly and cosmic realms.

Yet, as Carpenter intertwined earthly and cosmic realms, he fashioned a cosmic subjectivity which was contingent on a body’s position in evolutionary and political

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 53.
hierarchies. While Carpenter suggested love was the higher spiritual state of sex indulgence, this state was unattainable to those “in the animal and lower human world – and wherever the creature is incapable of realizing perfect love (which is indeed able to transform it into a god).” In fact, when Carpenter turned to his discussion of marital love, he specifically cited that his concerns were with “the men of the English-speaking well-to-do class.”

Although Carpenter praised women and working class men for their greater capacities for sympathy, he ultimately reinforced the superiority of bourgeois men insofar as both women and working class men allegedly lacked “the powerful organizing faculty” and, “in all this he (workman) is a mere child: and evidently by himself unfit to rule the world.” By implication, Carpenter’s association of women and working class men therefore also suggested women, too, were “unfit to rule the world.” It was, in fact, to the potentiality of white bourgeois men to Love that Carpenter’s attention was drawn in that he saw in them “some splendid material, and if well pounded into shape, kneaded and baked, might result in a useful upper crust for society.” To shape, knead, and bake the white bourgeois male self suggested a rigorous spiritual discipline that rendered ‘cosmical harmony’ and Love an inordinate struggle, test, and process requiring an active social, political, and material engagement with the world.

On both sides of the Atlantic, prominent white sex reformers who were invested in shaping a New Sex Morality shared Carpenter’s mystical view of sex. Hutchins Hapgood’s correspondence with Mabel offers a personal experience of the kind of spiritual discipline

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183 Ibid., 21.
184 Ibid., 28.
185 Ibid., 33.
186 Ibid., 29.
that might be required to shape, knead, and bake the white bourgeois male self. Hutchins admired Dodge’s mysticism and confessed his own spiritual struggle to move beyond “the old self-conscious and social-and-sex-needing life.”\textsuperscript{187} The path to achieving even “one moment of full cosmic sympathy” entailed a profound struggle with existing impulses and dominant social values. Hutchins claimed that “It is pathetic – that soul in me – which jealously guards all that has been – will not let anything go!”\textsuperscript{188} While Hutchins referred to Mabel as “God-drunk,” he and Mabel shared an inclination toward mysticism that Lois Rudnick has indicated marked this generation’s reform efforts as “a profound yearning for emotional and spiritual certainty.”\textsuperscript{189} This discomforting sense of the uncertainty of knowledge, a sense of a self in isolation and incomplete with unknowable hidden potential shaped a wider network of sex reformers. Bertrand Russell’s own views on mysticism points to a transatlantic dimension in redefining religion through this uncomfortable realization of epistemological limitations which then inspired new ways of conceiving relations between science, spirituality, and sex. According to Russell, “in religion, and in every deeply serious view of the world and of human destiny, there is an element of submission, a realization of the limits of human power, which is somewhat lacking in the modern world, with its quick material success and its insolent belief in the boundless possibilities of progress.”\textsuperscript{190} Russell’s own view of sex reform had much in common with Hapgood, Dodge, and Carpenter’s insistence on transcending a self profoundly shaped by patriarchal and capitalist morality. In

\textsuperscript{187} Hutchins Hapgood to Mabel Dodge, 4 March 1914. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Box 16, File 448.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{190} Russell, “Mysticism and Logic,” 31.
Marriage and Morals, Russell prescribed new sexual relations between men and women in which “love must feel the ego of the beloved person as important as one’s own ego.”¹⁹¹ Like Carpenter, Russell also qualified love in terms of an imperative of evolution wherein love “serves the biological purposes of the race.”¹⁹² In this way, a spiritual discipline entailed an emotional, material, and political reorientation which, as we saw earlier, Dodge proclaimed as a practice of ‘spiritual dynamite.’

Dodge’s mysticism was shaped from multiple strands of occultism, science, and sex reform which she indiscriminately drew on as tools for investigating, channeling, and mastering sexual energies. As Dodge treated theosophy, occultism, psychoanalysis, physics, evolution, and the politics of sex reform as multiple ways to cultivate vitality, her mysticism took the form of shaping a vital spirit bound to certain practices of spiritual discipline enacted to continually elicit, augment, enhance, and perpetuate sexual energies. In a diary entry of 1916, Dodge wrote of her sexual relationship with Maurice Sterne who became her second husband. She confessed that “the craving for him was in my solar plexus and abdomen – not the sex centre. It felt as tho’ all the nerves involuntarily stretched themselves tight towards the centre. The muscles contracted automatically – pulling in to the centre.”¹⁹³ While here Dodge points to occultist traditions in explaining the body in terms of centres aligned with a cosmic mapping of the universe, she also ties her physiological experience to this cosmology. This spiritual vision, however, was informed by Dodge’s knowledge of psychoanalysis. She explained this bodily experience in both scientific and occultist terms, drawing attention to this as “a neurosis because of its masturbatory character” and the sex relation here as “a

¹⁹¹ Russell, Marriage and Morals, 126.
¹⁹² Ibid., 128.
¹⁹³ Mabel Dodge, Diary, 1916. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Box 100, File 2291.
neurasthenic weakening thing.” Dodge’s entry recounts a physiological, spiritual, and psychological ordeal that exemplifies new standards of spiritual discipline wedded to a historical moment of proliferating New Age religions, the developing science of psychology, the medical attention on neurasthenia, and sex reformers’ new ideals of ‘varietist’ marriage.

Dodge’s turn to both spiritual and scientific sources of authority were subordinated to the larger and, seemingly more important, project of working on the self to maximize vitality. Dodge’s mysticism as a blend of both occultism and science offers an opportunity to trace her fashioning of a vital spirit that sought out sexual energies in multiple venues while also binding that vital spirit to practices that disciplined and mastered its forces. In June of 1938, Dodge still retained a view of the inseparability of religion and science when in “On Human Relations,” she referred to the theosophical books of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Annie Besant alongside discussions of physics, Freudianism, and Henri Bergson’s “élan vital.” Drawing together these different and seemingly disparate domains of knowledge, Dodge geared them toward the larger project of achieving knowledge of ‘life.’ In doing so, she interrogated ways of knowing whereby “to know with the mind before one has known with the blood and the secret organic activity for which we have as yet no definition is of no value.” Instead, Dodge argued that “We must first know by an inward growth before the mind can be turned loose to rationalise, determine, and define what that life growth has been.” This growth was also profoundly tied to human history whereby Dodge’s vital

\[^{194}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{196}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{197}\text{Ibid.}\]
spirit only achieved its cosmic insight by penetrating “that buried racial and chemical life.”

Dodge’s vital spirit spatially and temporally travelled to psychoanalytic consulting rooms, the solar system, the evolutionary past, and the present and past frontiers of ancient Eastern civilizations. From the privileged position of a white middle class ‘civilized’, yet neurasthenic, subject, Dodge offers an example of a vital spirit’s extraordinary mobility made possible only by its whiteness, middle class status and evolutionary position.

As sex reformers shaped what can be seen as the cosmic subjectivity of a vital spirit, they also tied this vitality to a special connection to Nature which introduced new conceptions of Eden, purification, and sin. In their concern over the neurasthenic effects of ‘modern’ cities on white middle class bodies, sex reformers endowed Nature with a regenerative and restorative power. As sex reformers also maintained sex instincts as the cornerstone of creativity and ‘civilizational’ progress, their emphasis on connections to Nature transformed Eden from a Paradise of sexual innocence to a fertile ground for cultivating sexual energies. British and American sex reformers shaped spiritual practices that worshipped Nature as sublime matter that was also inextricably linked to sublime sexual energies as bodily matter which drew on British Romantic poets and American Transcendentalists. In their works and personal papers, British and American sex reformers turned to the American Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American poet Walt Whitman, the English Romantic poets, and the Judeo-Christian story of

198 Ibid.
199 Barry Hankins has labelled Transcendentalism as a “new religious movement” while showing its connections to Romanticism. See Barry Hankins, Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 23, 24, 28.
Eden to fashion a vital spirit that drew upon the divine potential of bodies, sex, and Nature.

On the 9th of November in 1877, Ellis wrote in his diary that

Love is the result of the gravitating instinct imparted in us by Nature for a specific purpose; i.e. the propagation of the species. Nature, our great Mother, has not implanted in us this divine instinct of Love for the sake of granting us sweet sensations – alas, that is not her way – but that by the gratification of our own desires we may carry out her ends.\(^{200}\)

In his autobiography, Ellis suggested that his incorporation of Nature into his spiritual outlook also dispensed with sexual sin. What Ellis discussed as his resemblance to both Jesus Christ and the satyr Pan, reflected his literal embodiment of his spiritual view of “The wild being of the woods who knelt in adoration before the secret beauty of sleeping nymphs was one at the heart with the Prophet who could see no more than a passing stain of sin in the wanton woman kissing his feet.”\(^{201}\)

Just as Ellis juxtaposed Christianity with a transformed view of sexual sin and Nature, Carpenter reconceived of Eden through the lens of late nineteenth and early twentieth century depleted sexual energies. From this vantage point, Carpenter’s Eden emerged for white middle class bodies as a Paradise for the renewal of energies and sacred sex in a pristine environment. In his essay, “Civilisation and its Causes,” Carpenter situated the story of Adam and Eve within the broader framework of the ‘civilized’ man’s lament of the loss of the “primitive condition of ease and contentment, and that they embodied in his consciousness, with poetical adornment and license, in imaginative legends of the earlier Paradise.”\(^{202}\) In fact, Carpenter framed his own political views on sex, the body, and democracy as finding “the way back to the lost Eden, or rather forward to the new Eden.”\(^{203}\)

\(^{200}\) Havelock Ellis, Diary, 9 November 1877. Havelock Ellis Papers, BL, Item 70525.

\(^{201}\) Ellis, My Life, 82. Also, Ellis refers to Emerson to his friend Thomas Davidson on p. 160

\(^{202}\) Edward Carpenter, Civilisation; its causes and cure and other essays (London: Allen & Unwin, 1921), 27.

\(^{203}\) Ibid., 58.
For Carpenter, sex instincts were integrally linked to the body’s relationship to the environment. Carpenter argued that a consequence of severing man from Nature was “the disownment of the sacredness of sex” as Christianity discredited former sex-worshipping religions. When Ellis wrote to Carpenter in May of 1920, he reiterated a number of Carpenter’s claims about Eden while also identifying the kinds of bodies who would populate Eden, reproduce, and engage in sacred sex. Membership in Eden was demarcated by racial, class, and colonial hierarchies. Rather than banish sex from the Garden, Ellis’s comments suggest that sex was purified through the science of eugenics. Ellis told Carpenter that “the flabbiness of the civilized, and the prevalence of doctors and hygienists, which you make fun of, is due to the modern tenderness for human life which is afraid to kill off even the most worthless specimens and so lowering the whole level of ‘civilised’ humanity.” Like a number of British and American intellectuals, Ellis lamented the effete ness of ‘civilisation’ and suggested the desirability but impracticality of the “strenuous life.” In the United States, both William James and Theodore Roosevelt became popular proponents of the “strenuous life” which encouraged a rugged, frontier manhood of testing bodily endurance and vigor through engagements with Nature. Ellis pointed out to Carpenter the desirability but impracticality of strenuousness, claiming that:

Introduce a New Hardness in this matter & we should return to the higher level of savagery, while the doctors would disappear as if by magic. I don’t myself believe we can introduce this hardness (too many ‘humanitarians’ about!) & that is why I attach far much importance to intelligent eugenics, working through birth control, as the only now possible way of getting towards that high natural level you aim at.

204 Ibid., 46.
205 Havelock Ellis to Edward Carpenter, 16 May 1920. Havelock Ellis Papers, BL, Item 70536.
206 Ibid.
What Ellis called “that high natural level” tightly bound together science and religion in the making of nature which redefined relations of purity, sex, and sin by placing value on the kind of ‘life’ produced. Ellis’s and Carpenter’s association between eugenics and spirituality partook of a broader theological climate where both American and British ministers who wanted to ‘modernize’ religion by incorporating science wrote and delivered sermons that interpreted Biblical passages as evidence of God’s sanction for eugenics. Historian Wendy Kline has also suggested that eugenics was a new morality for the early twentieth century. However, in this climate, many sex reformers uniquely forged connections between eugenics and spirituality that carried the duty to cultivate sexual instincts and mutual sexual pleasure as a priority over even fidelity.

As British and American sex reformers redefined a spiritual practice in relation to the ‘natural’ environment, they not only reinforced white superiority but they practiced spiritual primitivism. Both Carpenter’s theosophy and Ellis’s mysticism associated sexuality, revitalizing the body, and spirituality with non-white, non-Western bodies, fixed in time. While British and American sex reformers shared similar experiences and concerns about ‘modern’ cities, they romanticized the American West and frontier zones for opportunities to engage with ‘primal’ others and climates, specifically Native Americans who were cast as closer to ‘nature.’ In 1917, Mabel claimed that “Eastern peoples” which included Aztecs, Incas, Egyptians, and ‘Indians’ possessed a unique unconscious where “lie things that neither

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they nor we can fathom.” In doing so, Mabel located the unconscious in a racialized and embodied spirituality which essentialized the East and its populations as mysterious, other-worldly, untouched by modern ‘civilization,’ and closer to a romanticized origin of connectedness to the Earth. While Mabel’s second husband and artist Maurice Sterne was in New Mexico, he wrote to her that “the people of the East and the Indians out here are not self-conscious.” Not only did Sterne suggest a racialized and ‘primitive’ mental structure but accompanied this with suggesting that ‘Indians’ were also more spiritual for having escaped the effects of ‘civilization.’ In a subsequent letter to Mabel, Sterne racialized spiritual feeling, stating that “everything with which the white race has come in touch with is bound to be destroyed. I mean every truly beautiful, spiritual, powerfully sublime.” Sterne’s comments resonated with a broader racialized and evolutionary discourse on the ‘vanishing Indian’ which would be unable to survive the effects of ‘civilization.’ Both Mabel and Maurice’s comments point to the ambivalence at the heart of white middle class intellectuals turn to Native American spirituality for its supposed mystical connection to ‘nature.’ This ambivalence lay in both reinforcing the superiority of Western ‘civilization’ while simultaneously suggesting that the West was spiritually bankrupt and needed to learn the ways of Native American spirituality. In 1917, Mabel described her attraction to Native American spirituality in terms of vitality. She claimed that “certainly the live part of me – the inner life is a life that finds no counterpart in western civilization + culture.” Shortly after her divorce from Sterne, Mabel Dodge married the Pueblo Tony Luhan and turned her home

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208 Mabel Dodge to Maurice Sterne, 12 April 1917. Maurice Sterne Papers, Beinecke, Box 3, File 61.
209 Maurice Sterne to Mabel Dodge, 22 November 1917. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Box 33, File 946.
210 Maurice Sterne to Mabel Dodge, 1919. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Box 33, File 946.
211 Mabel Dodge to Maurice Sterne, 12 April 1917. Maurice Sterne Papers, Beinecke, Box 3, File 61.
into a retreat for British and American intellectuals who regarded the Pueblos as spiritually connected to ‘nature’ for having been unaffected by ‘civilization.’ Both Naomi Mitchison and D.H. Lawrence, prominent British literary figures who were also connected to sex reform circles visited Taos. On the 28th of April in 1930, D.H. Lawrence’s wife, Frieda, wrote to Mabel that “the Indians changed us all into a deeper realization + connection with the earth it drove us, it wasn’t only a mental experience.” In 1933, Mabel explained both her marriage to Tony Luhan and her turn to Native American spirituality as a racial crossing. She explained that:

I suffered, myself, in secret, + sometimes burned at white heat with a flush that flooded my whole body when I had a momentary realisation of what I had done. When I identified myself in imagination with my race + knew I had broken its barrier + left it + crossed to the other side to stand with these dark men, their river of blood dividing me forever from my own kind, I had a sense of drowning horror at having done the impossible act.

What Mabel regarded as breaking the “taboo of racial union”, she also saw as a spiritual gain which provided her with “secure + positive knowledge of being right with the universe, of being in league with the whole cosmic scheme, + a part of God’s hidden Plan.” British and American sex reformers racially mythologized Native American spirituality as possessing divine knowledge to be unveiled and exposed in ways that drew on long Western historical traditions of male scientists approaching Nature as a mysterious feminized entity to be

213 Frieda Lawrence to Mabel Dodge, 28 April 1930. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Box 23, File 633.
215 Ibid.
penetrated. By pursuing encounters with Native Americans, British and American sex reformers interwove strands of Transcendentalism, occultism, Romanticism, evolutionary theory, and the politics of Indian displacement into the mythologized figure of the Native American body’s relation to Western vitality. This romanticized an originary and lost connection to Nature which, as Carpenter put it, inspired a return to Eden as a place of regeneration rather than contamination, original sin, and promiscuity.

As a number of white British and American sex reformers turned to occult forms of spirituality, they fashioned vital spirits that were haunted by legacies of colonial and racial violence. What Laura Wexler has shown as Kate Chopin’s profound sense of discomfort as she obsessively returned to the St. Louis Fair in 1900 can be seen as a haunting that also came to be manifested as an inner experience of spirituality. As white sex reformers obsessively searched for the secrets of the East or ways of worship that Christianity had come to purge, they enacted a colonial politics of spirituality that had a discomfort with the whiteness of Christianity at the heart of it. The religious experimentation of sex reformers might be seen as a spiritual manifestation of the outward display of moving among the World Parliament of Religions at the Chicago Fair in 1893. John Burris has suggested that the display of ‘exotic’ forms of spirituality within the White City reaffirmed the evolutionary superiority of Western Christian social order. While Burris draws the distinction that, unlike Britain and France, the United States lived in its colonies, he argues that “American

events displayed indigenous peoples much as the European powers displayed their colonies." However, at a time of a sense of crisis in white middle class energies, I argue, like Wexler, that the navigation of political exhibitions of colonial power could take the form of a haunted bodily feeling of a discomfort with whiteness. Historians of spiritualism and the occult have suggested that these were largely white middle class Anglo-Saxon movements which turned to forms of spirituality historically associated with African spirituality. Catherine Albanese has contended that by the early twentieth century religious practices were shaped towards ways of maximizing energy towards “life-enhancing and world-affirming ends.” Albanese traces the history of occultism to the early colonial contact and conquest marked by a West Indian presence in New England and Native American Algonquin cosmology. Molly McGarry, in fact, places the concept of haunting as pivotal to understanding American spiritualism which turned marginalized Indian bodies and female sexuality into important spiritual resources. White sex reformers turn to unconventional forms of spirituality such as spiritualism, theosophy, Christian Science, and occultism more broadly had a racial politics at its core whereby their spiritual primitivism was grounded in the historic white privileges of Protestant Christianity. As white sex reformers turned to ‘exotic’ forms of spirituality, the American black middle class affirmed Christian values as part of racial uplift politics during the Jim Crow era. Adele Oltman highlights the racial

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219 Ibid., 95.
221 McGarry, Ghosts of Futures Past, 73, 95.
222 Edward Blum has claimed that Protestantism came to be directly tied to consolidating whiteness in the aftermath of the Civil War. See Edward Blum, Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).
politics of spirituality within the black community whose leaders associated the rural masses with the folk religions and vestiges of African spirituality. 223

In fashioning a radical religion for sex reform, white middle class intellectuals blended an eclectic mix of occultism, Transcendentalism, exoticized spiritual traditions of allegedly ancient or ‘primitive’ others, developing trends in physical and social sciences, and the politics of sex reform. This sex reform spirituality was therefore a historically specific formation grounded in white middle class anxieties, expectations, and millennial hopes for ‘civilization’ which reformulated traditional conceptions of creationism, spiritual discipline, and Eden through an imperative to cultivate and probe the mysterious powers of sexual energies. In doing so, sex reformers inserted their ideas of love, sex, and reproduction into critical issues that occupied theologians and clergymen seeking to come to terms with what developing scientific knowledge might mean for the ‘modern’ condition of Christianity. As sex reformers reclaimed matter from an abject status in Christianity and tied it to the universal force of love, they endowed white middle class bodies with the divine potential of reaching a ‘cosmical harmony’ through sex. By framing sacred sex as an act among evolutionary superior bodies, sex reformers politicized love on a cosmic plane whereby white middle class couples traditionally bound to Victorian sexual morality could indulge and cultivate sexual energies with God’s blessing.

Conclusion

While historians have noted an early nineteenth century shift toward Christianity as a “religion of the heart,” by the end of the nineteenth century what spiritual feelings of love, sympathy, and vitality meant for religion took on contested political meanings in light of sex reformers’ aim to create a New Morality. Sex reformers attacked Christianity on the grounds that it served as a crucial underpinning for Victorian middle class sexual morality which dangerously failed to positively affirm and channel sexual energies. Despite critiques of Christianity, sex reformers were nonetheless shaped by it. As I have argued, sex reformers shaped radical spiritual practices that privileged vitality, sex, and bodily engagements with the world; yet, as they shaped this New Morality, they were haunted by the very Christian traditions they vigorously opposed. In sex reformers’ moments of spiritual crisis, renewal, and spiritual therapies, traces of Christianity persisted. At the same time, sex reformers blended reinterpretations of Christian values with new developments in physics, eugenics, and psychology and new forms of spirituality. This eclectic mix is important to understanding the spiritual dimension of the sex reform politics of love as the formation of vital spirits which occurred around concerns over white middle class sexual energies at the heart of civilization. As sex reformers specified practices of sacred sex and spiritualized bodily experiences, they pointed to the divine potential of white middle class bodies to achieve love as a profound connectedness to the world. As this chapter has shown, this

period marked a particularly unique occurrence in histories of religion and sex reform. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century transatlantic circuits of sex reform, white middle class intellectuals’ concerns over cultivating sexual energies contributed to the construction of a new cosmic subjectivity which can be labeled the vital spirit. By considering how sex reformers situated their social and political activities on a cosmic map, their practices such as marriage, parenthood, and primitivism can be interpreted as enactments of a vital spirit. However, as sex reformers turned to spiritual practices which privileged the cultivation of sexual energies, bringing together cosmic and earthly realms also politicized these vital spirits. Born out of white middle class anxieties over the depletion of sexual energies, these vital spirits were also implicitly located within white middle class bodies. In other words, sex reformers fashioned spiritual practices whereby reproduction, eugenics, psychoanalysis, and evolution were reconceived as sciences for probing the divine potential of bodies which specifically framed capacities for love through racial, class, gender, and sexual hierarchies.
In January of 1918, Reverend James Marchant, the Director of the National Council of Public Morals, told Marie Stopes that what he most valued in her book, *Married Love*, was the mixture of poetry and science. He praised her for taking into account the emotional and psychological aspects of sex. In the same year that *Married Love* was published, Marchant wrote to Stopes that “Yr. [your] spiritual pedigree must be unique. I see you recognize your poems come from afar – but don’t look too far for their origin to sources alien from your pedigree.” Perhaps thinking of Stopes’s *Married Love* which Marchant read prior to its publication, he told her “Yr. [your] spiritual inheritance has found a voice.” Marchant’s reference to a combination of poetry and science likely referred to how Stopes couched scientific details on the physiology of sex in a story of romance that drew on the imagery of moons, tidal waves, crests, woods, and seasonal rhythms. At this time, the British Romantic poets, the American Transcendentalists, and American poet Walt Whitman were popular among early twentieth century British and American intellectuals who nostalgically looked to reconnect with nature amid conditions of increasing urbanization, mechanization, and consumerism. What Marchant perceptively identified as a theme of poetry wedded to science also attests to how Stopes situated sexual intimacies in spiritual, ecological, biological, and emotional terms. Marchant’s comment on the integration of poetry and

3 Ibid.
science draws together a profound current permeating the rethinking of sexual energies, spirituality, and intimacies in ecological terms that positioned bodies and environments as fluid extensions of one another.

Although historians have primarily focused on *Married Love* as a groundbreaking work in the dissemination of sexual knowledge, this historical attention has occluded the environmental context of “married love.”

In Stopes’s work, married love flourishes in a particular setting which redefines an Edenic space as the ground for cultivating sexual energies. Stopes begins *Married Love* by setting the scene with a quote from George Meredith’s “Diana of the Crossways.” Meredith’s passage describes a man’s experience of love as “a finer shoot of the tree stoutly planted in good gross earth; the senses running their live sap, and the minds companioned, and the spirits made one by the whole-natured conjunction.” Meredith goes on to describe “the speeding of us, compact of what we are, between the ascetic rocks and the sensual whirlpools, to the creation of certain nobler races.” Stopes moves on from Meredith’s passage to explain that “the old desire of our race springs up afresh in its pristine beauty.” Even in her admonitions of sexual prudery, Stopes drew on natural imagery when she described the mistaken racial ideal of celibacy as “branches which may flower, but never fruit in a bodily form.” Stopes went on to ground the very possibilities for married love as a flight from the city which “with its tubes and cinema shows

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 22.
8 Ibid., 26.
than in woods and gardens where the pulling of sweet rosemary or lavender may be the sweet excuse for the slow and profound mutual rousing of passion.”9 While it is true that Married Love focused on human heterosexual intimacies, Stopes suggested that fertile land provided the conditions for a fertile couple, pristine land contributed to racially pure bodies, and distance from the city restored white sexual energies.

Far from merely providing a backdrop to married love, Stopes’s descriptions profoundly pointed to the entangled ontologies of bodies and environments. In discussing sexual union, Stopes interwove scientific and poetic language, describing “the solid nucleus of an immense fabric of interwoven strands reaching to the uttermost ends of the earth; some lighter than the filmiest cobweb, or than the softest wave of music, iridescent with the colors not only of the visible rainbow, but of all the invisible glows of the wave-lengths of the soul.”10 In Married Love, Stopes intimately connected bodies to environment, particularly in her description of women’s sexual physiology as “a rhythmic sex–tide which if its seasons were obeyed would ensure not only her enjoyment, but would explode the myth of her capriciousness.”11 Such explanations, Stopes did not merely leave to poetic description but tied to what “we have studied [in] the wave-lengths of water, of sound, of light: but when will the sons and daughters of men study the sex-tide in woman?”12 Stopes’s idyllic setting as the conditions for arousing woman’s sexual desire to “explode the myth of her capriciousness” specifically located white middle and upper class women’s bodies in a coterminous relationship with an Edenic paradise. By couching these claims in supposedly

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9 Ibid., 36.  
10 Ibid., 22.  
11 Ibid., 53.  
12 Ibid.
‘natural’ rhythms, Stopes sought to convince white middle and upper class women of the unnaturalness of sexual prudery by situating the cultivation of their desires in an idyllic setting. Although Stopes’s work partook of a broader climate of feminist claims that women should embrace their sexual feelings, she also reinforced gender difference by considering women as closer to the earth, obeying different physiological rhythms and responses.

Throughout *Married Love*, Stopes periodically used scientific language to articulate connections between bodies and environments in *Married Love*. Her mention of ‘wave-lengths of the soul’ wedded the language of physics to spirituality at a time when scientists were debating the quantum theory and Newtonian physics of wave-length particles. Stopes also made direct references to British endocrinologist Edward Starling’s study of hormones, pointing out the “chemical stimulus of secretions” and discussing the chemical messages transmitted through the body.\textsuperscript{13} As Stopes intertwined science and spirituality, she saw spiritual capacities in evolutionary theories and therefore, contended that ‘Mendelians’ and ‘Mutationists’ put far too much emphasis on morphological heredity.\textsuperscript{14} This attention to body chemistry and evolutionary discourses also appeared when Stopes referred to the important hereditary properties of spermatozoa. Discouraging a wasteful expenditure of semen, Stopes stressed the importance of “vital energy and the precious chemical substances.”\textsuperscript{15} While painting a picture of an ethereal paradise for married love, Stopes also regarded her work as “*rational* guidance based on natural law.”\textsuperscript{16} Emphasizing her contributions to scientific knowledge, Stopes maintained that “those who search for natural

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 42.
law in every domain of the universe, should have so neglected the most vital subject, the one which concerns us all infinitely more than the naming of planets or the collecting of insects.”

Stopes, then, not only treated *Married Love* as an important guide to intimacy but also suggested that it addressed a major lacuna in scientific work.

The combination of poetry and science in *Married Love* presents a point of departure for considering how sex reformers’ attention to sexual energies drew together plant and human bodies at the site of both religion and botany. Stopes’s training as a botanist and her early investigations into plant sexuality cannot be easily separated from her later attention to writing popular works on human sexuality. Along the lines of the spiritual and scientific workings of sexual energies, Stopes and other sex reformers pointed to intimate connections between bodies and environments. In *Married Love*, Stopes inextricably tied both scientific and religious projects in the efforts to make ‘nature’ whether by orchestrating bodily encounters with the environment to produce bodily feeling or by conducting breeding experiments on plants that used the same logic as eugenic campaigns for human fitness. Historian Alexandra Minna Stern, in fact, discusses plant studies in the broader context of her argument that eugenic thinking pervaded preservation, and conservation movements in early twentieth century California. Stern devotes attention to eugenicists in these movements whose “vision at once mirrored and extended into the world of plants and animals the Pacific West’s brand of nativism and racial exclusion.”

This dual aspect of human and plant intimacies attests to the slipperiness between human ‘nature’ and ‘nature’ as Earth which implicated environments in sexual politics. Stopes drew human and nonhuman natures

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17 Ibid., 44.
together when she contended that “we are set in the world so to mold matter that it may express spirit.”  

While in the previous chapter, I discussed how sex reformers created a cosmic subjectivity of the vital spirit, here I want to turn attention to how sex reformers molded matter in the efforts to mine the body’s affective potential. Sex reformers’ attention to connections to the environment, particularly in the flow of sexual energies, ecologically situated sexual intimacies in ways that left the human body open, fluid, and entangled with nonhuman others. This is what I will call eco/ontologies which spiritually, materially, and scientifically entangled ontological realms. I would argue that the formation of eco/ontologies in the early twentieth century was an affectively charged way of being in the world. In this period, sex reformers’ interests in sexual energies, emotions, and instincts shaped attitudes toward the body’s engagement with the environment and its use of material resources. Eco/ontologies involved the material interrelatedness and valuation of forms of ‘life’ defined by the distribution of energies, levels of intensity, production of emotions, and sensory experience. The “/” in eco/ontologies marks the mediation of affect and its work on relations between bodies and environments insofar as affect marks the body’s reach beyond itself and the felt reciprocal effects generated by contact with other bodies. I use the term eco/ontologies in the historically specific context of early twentieth century sex reformers’ and environmental scientists’ attention to instincts, emotions, and energies as ways for bodies

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to connect to both humans and nonhumans. I draw specific attention to how environmental science and sex reform shared a common ground by invoking material evidence of cells, evolutionary laws, eugenic breeding, energies, and chemicals to map a messy material world that confounded ontological boundaries.

This chapter explores how a sex reform politics of love contributed to reconfiguring relations between bodies and environments as the land, atmosphere, and bodies were intertwined in projects to consume and produce energies. I draw on what Michelle Murphy has called body-ecologies in the context of bodily experience of Multiple Chemical Syndrome in late twentieth century capitalism’s built environments. Although I have found Linda Nash’s work on *Inescapable Ecologies* valuable in its attention to bodily intimacies with the environment, I take issue with her claim that “the singular and self-contained human body of the early twentieth century, came, by the end of that century to seem distressingly porous and vulnerable to the modern landscape.” I argue that in the early twentieth century, sex reformers’ anxieties over an economy of vital energies contributed to a specific affectively charged orientation to both ‘natural’ and built environments that can be described as a body-ecology of white vulnerability.

While sex reformers on both sides of the Atlantic found a common cause for sexually invigorating white middle class bodies which were believed to be affected in the same ways by conditions of modernity, their campaigns were also grounded in specific national histories and environments. Historian Frank Trentmann has discussed both the wider transnational

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21 Michelle Murphy, “The ‘Elsewhere within Here’ and Environmental Illness; or, How To Build Yourself a Body in a Safe Space,” *Configurations* 8 (Winter 2000): 87-120.
urban phenomenon of a Western anti-modernism and the distinctive English neo-romanticism which exalted the English village, the ‘simple life,’ conservation of wildness, and the preindustrial peasant as the authentic Englishman defined by his connection to the land through labour.\textsuperscript{23} Trentmann shows that neo-romanticism was a widespread movement which included the lower classes who were predominant in ramblers’ associations, hiking clubs, and youth hostellers.\textsuperscript{24} My interest here in the neo-romanticism of white middle class intellectuals explores the specific class, racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies invoked by the presumed affective capacity and imperative for white middle class health to spiritually engage with ‘nature.’ In England, then, the white vulnerable middle class body’s search for a lost connection to ‘nature’ drew upon a particular definition of authentic Englishness linked to how urban industrial capitalism and modernity had severed a primal connection to the land through lower class labour that physically experienced the nation. Although the figure of the propertied, self-sufficient agricultural labourer with a stake in the nation also held sway in the American national myth of the yeoman farmer, in the United States this figure was attached to a vision of America as an abundant, fertile, classless democracy which made it an attractive imperial destination. As historians have shown, white middle class men and women were predominant in early twentieth-century folklorism in England which essentially temporally fixed lower class labourers in time as the preservers of ancient and primitive customs.\textsuperscript{25} In the United States, these assumptions of lower classes and allegedly ‘backward’ others were specifically mapped onto the bodies of immigrant and colonized others.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
Furthermore, the white vulnerable middle class body engaged with ‘nature’ in the United States through a highly racialized context of primal connections to an ‘Indian’ Other defined as the authentic American, immigrant populations fetishized as primitive or ancient cultures, or African Americans who performed the role of exotic Others in the plantation and jungle scenes of cabarets. Within these different national histories of Britain and the United States, white middle class intellectuals’ also framed opportunities to reinvigorate their nervous exhausted bodies in relation to specific environments wherein the American landscape purportedly had areas of ‘wilderness’ and sublimity in contrast with England’s countryside, cliffs, moors, hills, or coastal areas which were more likely to be described as ‘wild’ but not ‘wilderness’. These distinctions were integrally tied to the historic relationship between Britain and the United States which qualified the affective experience of the movement of white middle class vulnerable bodies.

In this chapter, I turn attention to how sex reformers’ attention to love grounded affective potential in specific material relations where bodies, soil, rocks, trees, light, noise, and other atmospheric conditions formed a network for producing and consuming energies. I situate this narrative of eco/ontologies as a dialogue between histories of science, environment, and sexuality which interrogate ‘nature,’ the agency of matter, knowledge production, and the relationship between capitalism and the preservation and conservation of natural resources. I look to historians of the environment who have considered the ways ‘natural’ landscapes, wilderness, and Edenic myths have been historically constituted.27

Historian David Matless refers to “landscaped citizenship” in the context of the aesthetic, moral, political, spiritual, and economic values that mapped bodies onto lands. In doing so, Matless draws attention to “landscaped citizenship” in terms of presumed bodily capacities to connect with the environment. Matless’s account of Englishness and landscape ties these capacities to class, racial, and gender relations defined through the ways land is used, planned, occupied, and/or preserved as pristine space. However, I would suggest that “landscaped citizenship,” then, highlights nationally specific affective capacities and ways of consuming resources that are tied to topographical differences. While both British and American white middle class intellectuals invoked garden metaphors, they generally imagined Britain as a more settled, older, and historic landscape whereas the United States tended to be imagined as a fluctuating, ‘wild’, as yet unsettled space with an uncertain and shifting internal frontier.

I intervene in the prevalent theme of capitalist exploitation of natural resources by situating energies at the site of relations of production and consumption wedded to class, racial, sexual, and gender hierarchies. In drawing attention to a white middle class affective


29 Ibid., 68, 73.
30 See for example, Matless, Landscape and Englishness, 14, 27, 30, 32, 35-36, 52, 67.
31 American environmental historians have focused on how capitalism worked in tandem with environmental developments in the shaping of the nation while British environmental historians have focused on how capitalistic imperial policies shaped the environmental history of Britain. On American histories connecting capitalism to environmental history, see for example Carolyn Merchant, Ecological Revolutions: nature, gender, and science in New England (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 5. John Warfield
consumption and production of resources, I want to stress that this affective relation to
environment was mediated by the specific entangled yet distinct national histories of British
and American capitalism. The early twentieth century was a pivotal historic moment in these
histories as both British and American intellectuals regarded the United States as a
burgeoning economic power overcome by critical transformations in industrial capitalism,
namely corporatization, consumerism, and materialism. Such developments, however,
British and American intellectuals tied to a kinship between their nations as early British
critics of industrial capitalism denounced the factory system while early twentieth century
critics of capitalism looked to American business, materialism, and corporatization as
threatening to engulf bodies and nations in mechanization to the destruction of ‘human’ and
spiritual feeling. I look to historians of science for ways of understanding the making of
‘nature’ and the production of knowledge of both bodies and environments. Finally, I look
to historians of sexuality for their insights into the political and historical shaping of desires,
normative constructions of the body, and the production of sexual knowledge. These three


historiographies come together through my question of how late nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific inquiries into plant breeding, evolution, and ecology converged with sex reformers’ attention to cultivating sexual energies through romanticized connections to ‘nature’. This chapter traces the making of affective potential in terms of what Bruno Latour has considered the relations on the ground.\textsuperscript{34} In this chapter, I draw attention to sex reformers’ politics of love as material encounters with the world, marked by flights to the farm, walks in the woods, labour on the land, and agricultural experiments. In doing so, I consider how sex reformers’ politics of love contributed to a historically specific shaping of the role and importance of nonhuman actors.\textsuperscript{35}

In this chapter, I will show how sex reformers’ efforts to maximize affective experience prompted specific material encounters with the world that make nonhuman actors a critical part of the environmental history of sex reform. By tracking sex reformers movements as they pursued opportunities to engage with specific environments and nonhuman actors, I plot the points of an affective mapping where routes, territories, and zones came to be defined through a view of the body as open, permeable, fluid, and connected to environments. In doing so, this can be considered a historical episode in what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have insisted on as making maps rather than tracings.\textsuperscript{36}


\textsuperscript{35} Some historians have turned specific attention to writing histories that focus on nonhuman actors. See Steinberg, \textit{Down to Earth}; Jim Endersby, \textit{A Guinea Pig’s History of Biology: The plants and animals who taught us the facts of life} (London: William Heinemann, 2007).

Deleuze and Guattari claim that contrary to tracing, the map is “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real.”\textsuperscript{37} They further explain that “the map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions.”\textsuperscript{38} I would argue that as sex reformers pursued connections to ‘nature,’ they positioned their bodies as unfinished, open-ended, and connectible with their surroundings. As such, their geographies were also dictated by affective encounters that exceeded traditional demarcations of place. I show how sex reformers’ mobility in pursuing material encounters provides evidence of an intimacy between bodies and environment that can be called eco/ontologies. In the first section of the chapter, I indicate how spiritual and romanticized connections to the earth, fostered affective connections that undid boundaries between humans and nonhumans. Through the lens of spirituality, I show how the environment was brought closer to human bodies. In the second section, I focus on how environmental sciences were informed by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century cultural politics of reproduction. In doing so, I suggest that human and plant bodies were brought into close ontological proximities as the same mechanisms for controlling reproduction cut across a scientific agenda to engineer perfect bodies in both plant and human kingdoms. In the third and final section of the chapter, I bring together the spiritual and scientific making of ‘nature’ in an account of sex reformers’ ambivalent attitudes toward machines which threatened to turn the human body into a machine while also posing possibilities for augmenting human feeling, particularly through technologies to intensify sexual vitality. As such, I pose a different way of conceiving of what Richard

\textsuperscript{37} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 12.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
White has called the ‘organic machine.’\textsuperscript{39} In keeping with an intervention in an environmental historiography that has been preoccupied with how humans act on, intervene, or shape the environment, my account of organic machines appropriately brings to a close this chapter’s prevailing theme of unfinished and interpenetrating eco/ontologies.

I. Cultivating Sex Instincts in the Garden: Flights to the Farm, Restoring Sexual Vigor on the Frontier, and Preserving a Pristine ‘Race’ in a Pristine Environment

In the early twentieth century, sex reformers interpreted conventional sex morality as both a spiritual and material alienation from the ‘natural’ body and from a foundational harmonious connection to the Earth. What sex reformers identified as the toll of capitalism and patriarchy on white middle class emotional lives, profoundly implicated capitalism and patriarchy in changed and harmful relations between bodies and the Earth. Emma Goldman’s naming of her periodical, \textit{Mother Earth}, which targeted white middle class intellectuals, exemplifies how environmental relations came to the attention of sex reformers. In March of 1906, Emma Goldman and Max Baginski situated the alienating effects of dominant Christian morality and capitalism in the context of a story about Mother Earth. The story began with man’s birth from “the womb of Mother Earth” which, over time, he came to reject as “there arose the dreary doctrine that he was not related to the Earth, that she was but a temporary resting place for his scornful feet and that she held nothing for him but temptation to degrade himself.”\textsuperscript{40} Soon, he came to believe that only through ignorance and asceticism would he be able to reach Heaven which was “the very antithesis of Earth which


\textsuperscript{40} Emma Goldman and Max Baginski, “Introduction,” \textit{Mother Earth} 1(no.1) (March 1906): 1.
was the source of sin.” Baginski and Goldman claimed that this belief in the sinfulness of the Earth encouraged man’s devastation of it. However, in spite of this, Mother Earth continued to “come again each Spring, radiant with youthful beauty, beckoning her children to come to her bosom and partake of her bounty.” These calls, however, were resisted by man who equated them with the beckoning of a seductress. To this extent, Goldman and Baginski tightly bound environmental relations to sexual morality where the attitude toward the Earth as sinful and corruptible matter was inextricably interwoven with attitudes toward female sexuality. Construed as an alluring female temptress, Mother Earth became a despised, dangerous, and exploitable ground entangled in sexual politics.

As Baginski and Goldman turned to Mother Earth as a ground for affirming a New Sexual Morality, they did so at a time when the early twentieth century American conservation movement and country life movement, backed by Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, had come to tie women’s duty to procreate to the white racial health of the nation. This American country life movement intertwined the revival of an idealized former connection to the land with the procreative family and the purity of white racial stock also had its counterpart in British organicism which advocated a return to the soil as also a return to the agricultural procreative family unit. In the American context, however, there was a much greater emphasis on the stakes of the country life movement as a response to the perils of race suicide in light of high levels of immigration to the United States. While

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41 Ibid., 2.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
46 Matless, Landscape and Englishness, 103, 136, 142, 168-169.
historians have typically aligned the country life movement and British organicism with conservative gender norms, I show here that there was a dimension of radical sex reform that combined an organic vitalist connection to the land with radical reinventions of gender and sexual norms.

What Goldman and Baginski cast as a story of the origins of Christian morality and environmental relations also had an economic narrative of capitalist exploitation. As we have seen in previous chapters, Goldman regarded capitalism as inseparable from patriarchy. She believed that women’s sexuality was bound to the devaluation of her labour in the home and workplace. Unsurprisingly, then, Goldman and Baginski drew capitalism into the sexualized story of Mother Earth. They suggested that economic motives inspired another relation to the earth where “if the priests decried the Earth, there were others who found in it a source of power and who took possession of it.”47 Goldman and Baginski cast this as a peculiarly American story of possibilities to exploit the earth’s wealth as Thomas Paine, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson uniquely construed America as a paradise of abundance. In these new developments, Mother Earth was “stripped of her freedom, fenced in, a prey to those who were endowed with cunning and unscrupulous shrewdness.”48 This attitude to the Earth, according to Goldman and Baginski, came to be entrenched in social and political order of the new republic which “subdued a vast number of its people into material and intellectual slavery.”49 As we saw earlier, both Goldman and Edward Carpenter discussed marriage as a form of slavery that turned women into possessions, not unlike the story here of the capitalist male’s use and exploitation of Mother Earth. In this story,

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 3.
49 Ibid.
Goldman and Baginski cast Mother Earth as a material source of energy which promised to restore the toll taken on white middle class bodies under Christian, capitalist, and patriarchal norms that repressed and exhausted sexual energies.

While Goldman and Baginski framed Mother Earth as a peculiarly American narrative, the themes of this story had a wider application in the context of the transatlantic reach of sex reform. Both British and American sex reformers pursued encounters with the world informed by the logic that redefining attitudes to bodily matter also entailed redefining the body’s intimate connection to nonhuman matter. While environmental historians have generally romanticized affective relations to ‘nature,’ I suggest that these connections could be deeply politicized, romanticizing while reinforcing gender, race, and class hierarchies. Sex reformers’ search for ‘natural’ spaces to restore sexual energies amounted to the emergence of new forms of capitalist exploitation at the level of the use, extraction, and distribution of energies. The simultaneity of the rise of consumerism and white fears of neurasthenic decline, sexual energies came to be commodified. This was manifested in

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white middle class intellectuals’ pursuit to renew energies through contact with both human and nonhuman resources. While this common objective of revitalizing white middle class energies shaped and facilitated cooperation between American and British sex reformers, the sense of a severed connection to the land and the concomitant alienation of the labourer appeared to both American and British intellectuals as a much more dire situation in the United States with its fast-paced capitalistic growth which seemed to be spiraling out of control. This distinction was particularly felt by Goldman, Baginski and other radicals in the United States who witnessed a greater scale of labour violence and working-class militancy than in Britain. In advocating a return to Mother Earth, Goldman and Baginski’s campaigns were situated in a moment where intellectuals’ anxiously looked to the past to re-connect with the land at a time when consumer capitalism had seemed to intensify the distance between land, labour, and productivity. As intellectuals perceived a difference between unbridled American capitalism and much more restrained British capitalism, this early twentieth century moment of modernity became intertwined with former myths of American abundance and unsettled land and British order, enclosure, and village life.

In this section of the chapter, I consider the formation of eco/ontologies in terms of sex reformers’ spiritualized connections to nature which intimately located and attached their bodies to environments as energy sources. Here I draw attention to a sex reform politics of love in terms of the uses of nonhuman others to power white middle class emotional

and the shaping of the nation through the circulation of commodities and practices of consumption, see Mona Domosh, American Commodities In An Age of Empire (New York & London: Routledge, 2006) and Kristin Hoganson, Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007). This historiography significantly leaves out how an ethic of consumption also pointed to the permeabilities of bodies as the concern with materialism extended to worries over bodies as consumable entities and the way desires brought bodies and commodities into intimate associations which profoundly conflated subject/object distinctions.
experience. The racial politics of these intimate spiritualized connections to the environment played out in the establishment of national parks such as Yellowstone in 1872, the Yosemite Valley in 1874, and Glacier National Park in 1910 which essentially cordoned off space for white middle and upper class tourism while denying uses and occupation of the land to Indians. Historian Laura Lovett has suggested how early twentieth century conservation efforts in forestry management intimately tied racial health and reproduction to the environment, specifically in the American Department of Agriculture’s chief forester, Gifford Pinchot’s view of country life and conservation as an “organic whole.”

John Muir, a leading figure in late nineteenth and early twentieth century preservation used the importance of space for restoring white middle class energies as one argument for preservation. Goldman and Baginski’s story of Mother Earth drew on this cultural context of white middle class bodily intimacies with environments to articulate an environmental ethic for sex reform.

Rather than dispense with the Christian mythology of an Edenic Paradise, sex reformers reinvented Eden as a healthful, fertile, abundant space where sexual energies could be cultivated through the intimate engagement between bodies and land. As discussed in the previous chapter, Edward Carpenter suggested that the real Fall occurred at the moment of the turn to vilifying sexual energies. Instead, Carpenter advocated a New Sexual Morality which affirmed sex as a return to a “lost Eden.”

This reinvention of Eden, however, had important implications for encouraging new intimacies between bodies and environments. When Carpenter envisioned the body in the new Eden, he positioned it in:

52 Lovett, “Men As Trees Walking,” 114.
53 Edward Carpenter, Civilisation; its causes and cure and other essays (London: Allen & Unwin, 1921), 58.
The life of the open air, familiarity with the winds and waves, clean and pure food, the companionship of animals – the very wrestling with the great Mother for his food – all these things will tend to restore that relationship which man has so long disowned; and the consequent instreaming of energy into his system will carry him to perfections of health and radiance of being at present unsuspected [my emphasis].

Like Goldman’s story of the sexual and economic working of man’s alienation from Mother Earth, Carpenter pointed to how the immersion of the body in the atmosphere amounted to reclaiming a kinship that had been “so long disowned.” This spiritual and material communion with the land was mediated by affects as “instreaming energy” which indiscriminately coursed through and looped together human and nonhuman matter. Carpenter’s comments must be taken in the context of his commitment to overturning capitalist and patriarchal sexual morality. In *Love’s Coming-of-Age*, Carpenter denounced a conservative sex morality that denied physical satisfaction as a drain on “higher love-forces.” Deeply concerned about the state of white middle class sexual energies, Carpenter advocated connecting with Nature as a step toward achieving these “higher love-forces” whereby “there are grounds for believing in the transmutability of the various forms of passion, and grounds for thinking that the sacrifice of a lower phase may sometimes be the only condition on which the higher and more durable phase can be attained.” Carpenter also used a story of the alienation from Nature to argue for the unnaturalness and artificiality of capitalist and Victorian sexual morality. Carpenter’s attacks on capitalism and patriarchy ambivalently reinforced gender differences by claiming that man goes to woman “to return as to his primitive home and resting-place to restore his balance.” Consequently, for

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54 Ibid., 60.
56 Ibid., 8.
57 Ibid., 40.
Carpenter, as well as for Goldman, overturning capitalist and Victorian sexual morality also implied reaffirming intimacies between bodies and Nature.

As Sheila Rothbotham has argued, Carpenter’s socialist and sexual radicalism that embraced unconventionality was deeply intertwined with his advocacy of the simple life through communion with nature by means of farm labour, self-sufficiency in the production of one’s own food, gardening, vegetarianism, and walking preferably barefoot or in sandals.\textsuperscript{58} Carpenter, a Cambridge mathematician and former clergyman, turned to market-gardening in the countryside. Carpenter’s purchase of the farm at Millthorpe put into practice his efforts to embrace the simple life wherein his socialist beliefs and uncomfortable sense of upper-middle class guilt led him to claim that middle class consumption unjustly perpetuated the exploitation of workers.\textsuperscript{59} According to Rothbotham, Carpenter cited Thoreau instead of Marx as the theorist of needs whereby Thoreau showed the possibility of balancing leisure and supporting oneself.\textsuperscript{60} Carpenter’s various social causes such as sex reform, prison reform, socialism, anti-pollution, vegetarianism, Eastern mysticism, and feminism were integrally tied to his interest in new ways of living which, Rothbotham stresses, were tied to the influence of American poet Walt Whitman, German Idealism, the British Romantic poets, and American Transcendentalism that redefined bodily and spiritual expression as a relation to ‘nature.’\textsuperscript{61} An environmental ethic inspired by currents of Romanticism and Transcendentalism was an important dimension to both American and British sex reform campaigns. This transatlantic ethic can be explained in terms of the simultaneity of the rise

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 88.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} See for example, Rothbotham, \textit{Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love}, 22, 29, 52, 61
of conservation and preservation movements in both Britain and the United States. In Britain, the early twentieth century was a formative period for environmental politics with the founding of the British Ecological Society in 1919 and the development of the Forestry Commission in 1919 which founded the first National Park in Argyllshire Scotland. What Carpenter called a Law of Transmutation whereby bodies transformed sexual energies into love, he construed as requiring specific material practices for white middle class bodies in redefining sexual, economic, and environmental relations.

Sex reformers’ politics of love had an environmental ethic that constructed love as both an orientation to nonhuman matter and that which can be produced through material connections. What sex reformers considered as sex-communion or ‘cosmical harmony’ was not simply about relations between human bodies but encompassed broader and intense connections to nonhumans as sources of energy. Hutchins Hapgood explained love in profoundly environmental terms, claiming that:

> If we are capable of this larger growth, if we become tall and variously flowering trees, we cannot stop with the love for our mate, with the love for our family, with the love of our more limited success, with the love for our country: but we will pass on, without loving these things less, to love for other individuals, men, women, and children, to other families, to the success of others, the spirit of cooperation; to the love of all countries, with love for the whole world, to the love for art, nature, God.

Hapgood’s friend, Mabel Dodge whom we saw romanticized Native American spirituality for its connections to the earth, also materially situated her body in a communal and harmonious relationship to nonhumans from trees to animals to roots. She claimed that “land desire is in every one and dates back to the time when men were trees and had roots in the earth. I may be exaggerating, but there is such a sense of homogeneity or all-one-kindness in

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63 Carpenter, Love’s Coming-of-Age, 79.
64 Hutchins Hapgood, “Love.” Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 27, File 745.
life that it seems to me we are all one thing with the animals and the trees, and sharing the instincts of all.” Like Carpenter and Goldman, Dodge posited an original and primal connection to the earth that came to be artificially separated through the development of ‘civilization.’ Dodge’s claims point to affects in the form of instincts as the medium of connection across domains of life, traversing seemingly separate kingdoms of vegetable, animal, and human life.

To the extent that sex reformers’ located love within an environmental ethic that romanticized connections to a land untouched by ‘civilization,’ their politics of love partook of what environmental historians have shown as the politics of wilderness. As historians have shown, white middle and upper classes romanticized wilderness and their projects of preservation and conservation exacted a toll on those who occupied and lived off the land, resulting in policies of dispossession, removal, economic deprivation, and disenfranchisement which fell particularly heavily upon Native American populations in the United States. In the British context, historian John Mackenzie has discussed the imperial hunt in terms of the influence of nineteenth century Romanticism and white elite men’s search for “genuine wilderness” on imperial frontiers which marked racial and class privilege. In drawing attention to the imperial dimensions of late nineteenth and twentieth century British conservation and preservation, Mackenzie highlights the dispossession and disenfranchisement of Africans’ rights to land in a colonial context. Sex reformers’

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66 See for example, Lewis, American Wilderness; Merchant, Reinventing Eden; Cronan, Uncommon Ground.
68 Ibid., 201-220, 297.
interests in cultivating sexual energies through material connections to rocks, soil, and trees as opposed to steel, glass, and coal can be seen in light of what historian Benjamin Johnson has dubbed the modernity of wilderness. Sex reformers’ specific projects can be situated in light of what Johnson has described in terms of wilderness advocates who “sought refuge from the modern world in America’s wildlands, and thus understood themselves as opponents of the artificiality and unhealthiness of life in the industrial era, in an important sense wilderness did not exist until they invented it.” Carpenter, Goldman, Hapgood, and Dodge’s conceptions of Nature point to a sexual and affective history of wilderness as a white middle class politics of love that was embodied, environmental, and spiritual.

What sex reformers cast and practiced as love through relations with the environment, also left a material trail of their retreat to farms, their work on the land, and the tracks they left as they pursued opportunities to restore their energies in the countryside, frontier, or ‘wild’ spaces. This was a peculiarly white middle class narrative of environmental intimacies which contrasted with what Kimberly Smith has discussed as black environmental thought. Smith indicates that the black community drew upon scientific racism, primitivism, and vitalism in the context of concerns over urban reform and preserving a connection to the land in light of the early twentieth century African American experience of mass urban migration.

Several sex reformers such as Emma Goldman, Mabel Dodge, Havelock and Edith Ellis, Marie Stopes, the Russells, and the Hapgoods established separate residences in the

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70 Ibid.
country as a necessary and healthful retreat from the city. As they relocated to the countryside, many sex reformers experience an affective connection to the environment which registered physiological effects. Havelock Ellis’s wife, Edith Ellis, who was also involved in feminist activities and a close friend of Carpenter, wrote to Carpenter described how her own body merged with the environment. She told Carpenter that “The spring is in my blood” and “the sea blue and the sky too and my lungs are healed at last and my spirits getting up again.”72 These energies, however, seemed to be explicitly tied to sexuality. Edith confessed that “The sex question is forever with me in my farm and I’ve come to the conclusion that if some of these spiritual dames and man hating shrews would only farm they’d know more in a year than all their lectures and big books can teach them.”73 In his autobiography, Havelock Ellis discusses how he and Edith’s move to the Count House in Cornwall occurred due to “Edith’s new impulse to farming, which might, it seemed, alike benefit her health and assist her finances, while it certainly seemed to gratify her native instincts for practical activity and close contact with Nature and Earth.”74 Such a pursuit of encountering Nature to boost native instincts, involved material transformations in the landscape and bodies of nonhuman others. Havelock Ellis describes how Edith set to work on the farm, undertaking activities such as plowing, pig-breeding, making hay, cultivating flowers and vegetables, caring for cows, donkeys, and fowl, and occasionally undertaking the carving of a pig’s carcass to distribute among friends and neighbours.75 Ellis’s account suggests that this was driven by an imperative to materially engage with the earth as a way of

72 Edith Ellis to Edward Carpenter, 20 April 1896. Havelock Ellis Papers, BL, Item 70536.
73 Ibid.
74 Ellis, My Life, 279.
75 Ibid., 279-280.
opening an affective channel between bodies and the environment. He described Edith’s “deep, congenial love of the earth and its creative energies.” To this extent, the presence of creative energies in both human bodies and the environment provided an affective common ground that redefined human and nonhuman relations as eco/ontologies.

In tracking sex reformers’ pursuit of destinations and opportunities to reinvigorate nervous bodies, points like Cornwall, the Russells’ Carn Voel property in Wales, and Beacon Hill’s location in the countryside plot an affective cartography. Historian Robert Colls has claimed that the upper and middle classes who primarily resided in the London and Home Counties region dominated this movement of a search for authenticity. Colls points out that, in the English context, this search amounted to situating authenticity both in relation to the greater geographic distance from London and the distance from commercialized wage labour. Colls sites destinations such as Devon, Cornwall, and Northumberland which were not only tied to authenticity for their distance from London but also their identification with a particular laboring class. What white middle class intellectuals identified as outposts away from ‘civilization’ in England were inextricably linked to class and labour relations whereas within the United States, such outposts or frontier zones were integral to the shifting status and racial making of the nation itself. Not only did Edith and Havelock Ellis find Cornwall an appropriate retreat, but Helena Wright and Marie Stopes also sought refuge there. Cornwall also came to Dora Russell’s attention later in the mid-twentieth century as she became involved in a Conservation Society to raise awareness of issues of nuclear power.

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76 Ibid., 280.
stations, pollution, and the incursion of a sports stadium on rural land. In 1973, she wrote that she had been one of the first to raise awareness of conservation in Cornwall. However, early on in the twentieth century, Dora tied her environmental concerns to a discourse on bodily health and the seeming permeability between bodies and the land. As the Russells began to divide their assets in the divorce negotiations of the 1930s, Dora wrote to Bertrand that the location of Beacon Hill School had primarily been to benefit his and their son John’s health. In these negotiations, Dora also looked to retain the residence at Carn Voel which was also deeply implicated in Dora’s own responses to the mystique surrounding nature, wilderness, and the country. Writing to Evelyn Brown in 1968, Dora referred to the “anti-biological nature of the machine age.” She recalled returning to Carn Voel, “All the time I have been away earning my living, I have come back here like Anteus, to renew contact with the soil. I am sure that human beings, like others of animal life, cannot live and remain sane in concrete jungles.” Like Edith Ellis, Dora’s concerns over the restoration of energies were inseparable from a freer sexual morality and cultivating the body’s sexual instincts. In 1968, writing to fellow conservationist, John Goodland, Dora claimed that her work 1927 publication, _The Right To Be Happy_, was about “the nonsense of mind controlling matter, man conquering nature etc. and the need for a social system to be based on human biological needs.” In other words, Dora inextricably linked bodily matter to the broader set of

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78 Dora Russell to Anne, 6 March 1973. Dora Russell Papers, IISH, Amsterdam, Box 315, File 315.
81 Ibid.
environmental relations. This suggests that *The Right To Be Happy*’s attack on Christian and capitalist morality for suppressing sexual instincts was also a call for a new intimate relation to Nature.

For the Russells, the establishment of an estate at Carn Voel in Wales promised to restore the health of bodies mired in the pressures and noise of professional life in the city. Both these flights to the countryside to engage with nature and the flights away from the city, emphasized the sensitivity of white middle class bodies to urban and rural environments. As sex reformers on both sides of the Atlantic navigated cities and countryside, they intimately engaged with environments in ways that considered the common condition of white bodies in specific settings rather than closed national borders. Like the Russells, Hutchins Hapgood lamented the effects of New York City’s urban setting where, he told Neith, he would have to “regulate my affective nature into a pleasing coolness through a proper use of a vast complex of counter-irritants.”

Hapgood described New York City in relation to this “affective nature” combined with his work where “hard work, varied instincts, and the old reckless picturesqueness” intimately tied this urban scene to Hapgood’s white educated nervous body. White middle class energies then affectively extended the body into space, opening it to physiological transformations in its intimate connection to its surroundings.

The Russells and the Ellises environmental encounters were shaped by a broad transatlantic cultural phenomenon that occurred in the tradition of British and American relations as part of a transition from the original Puritan attitude toward wilderness as

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83 Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 11 June 1898. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 11, File 349.
84 Ibid.
dangerous, hostile territory to the nineteenth-century romanticization of wilderness.\textsuperscript{85} This transformation also involved an attitudinal shift from the Enlightenment exaltation of ordering the landscape to a celebration of wild and untamed nature. While the British landscape offered many opportunities for sex reformers to escape to the countryside, the United States was generally believed to afford better opportunities for primal encounters or testing the body on the rough terrain of frontier areas. Like Edith Ellis, Hutchins Hapgood seemed to have been invigorated by a bodily connection to work on the land. During one of their sojourns at the Hapgood farm, Neith Boyce wrote to Dodge that “Hutch bids me tell you that he has become a perfect countryman, + that the other day walking down Main Street in Winchester, in boots and flannel shirt, he was taken for a wood-chopper! He loves this place, works hard + seems perfectly well here.”\textsuperscript{86} In an article on “The Anarchist Farmer,” Hapgood indicated that farming inspired an attitude toward life. To Hapgood, farming as a practice where bodies and land intermingled was part of a broader set of relations that extended to his anarchist philosophy which exalted sexual freedom and socialism. Hapgood argued that working on the land allowed one to fully appreciate “the constructive element in the anarchist philosophy.”\textsuperscript{87} To Hapgood, the farmer was instinctively rather than consciously inspired by living a life of “constructive work.”\textsuperscript{88} Hapgood specified that the anarchist farmer was different from other farmers in his recognition of “how sensitive Nature is to human


\textsuperscript{86} Neith Boyce to Mabel Dodge, undated. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke, Box 3, File 95.

\textsuperscript{87} Hutchins Hapgood, “The Anarchist Farmer.” Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 26, File 681.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
intelligence, and how it responds to it.” In doing so, Hapgood framed the anarchist farmer as a privileged educated white middle class body.

As a journalist and reformer, Hapgood moved among educated and influential reformers who participated in the conservation and preservation debates which foregrounded lower classes, immigrants, Native Americans, and greedy businessmen as poor managers and exploiters of the land. Like a number of conservationists and preservationists, Hapgood looked to the land as not only intrinsically or socially valuable but as an important source of bodily renewal. At this time, these concerns over conserving and preserving land were tied to concerns for future generations, particularly the land’s importance to white middle class sexual energies and reproduction which were inextricably tied to the future of “civilization.”

Hapgood reclaimed the soil and earth as a site for teaching radicalism through the observation of cultivating the earth and the scientific breeding of animals which radicals in New York cafes may not so easily grasp. Hapgood’s mention of scientific breeding tied the connection to land with white racial reproductive anxieties and eugenics. Sex reformers reinvented an ethic of purity through a connection with the earth that was not so much about chastity as it was about pure lineage and sexual pleasure for white middle class couples.

As white middle class sex reformers like the Russells and the Hapgoods conceived of re-connections to Nature as restoring sexual energies to weakened neurasthenic adult bodies, they also envisioned a parental responsibility to nurture children’s purportedly closer and more instinctive connection to nature. In the interests of securing and shaping the future of white middle class civilization, sex reformers looked beyond merely encouraging a healthy

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89 Ibid.  
90 Lovett, “Men As Trees Walking.”  
91 Ibid.
economy of sexual energies among adult bodies. Instead, they suggested that parenting should involve facilitating a subtle and intimate relation between children’s bodies and ‘Nature.’ Drawing on a tradition made popular by Transcendentalists and Romantics in looking to the sublime qualities of the mountain, Hapgood took his daughter, Miriam, to the mountains for health reasons. He wrote to Neith in 1928 of his parental obligations which kept him in the mountains. Despite the fact that he hoped to return home, he claimed, “I am not sure it is best for Miriam – She has been suffering for years with constipation and nothing we did for it helped.”3 This flight to the mountains in the hopes of this atmosphere’s relief of physiological ailments also profoundly connected to the early twentieth century preservationist movement, notably John Muir’s prominence and his insistence on the beneficial effects of trips to the Sierras in California to restore nervous energies. In pursuit of opportunities to energetically exploit the frontier regions of the United States, and by extension the Native American bodies associated with those regions, Neith Boyce took her children to Taos New Mexico to visit Mabel Dodge among the Pueblos. At first, Neith was disappointed with Taos which proved to be “too stimulating nervously but not tonic, as I’d hoped.”4 She associated its unhealthiness and over-stimulation with “an exotic quality – the Mexicans are mostly very poor + diseased – the Indians seem better off, though even

3 See for example, Dane Kennedy, The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Kennedy’s work points out how elevation was linked to white health and imperial status in British India. On the spiritualized environmental connections to the mountain, Peder Anker has discussed South African botanist and General Jan Smuts’s spiritual connections to mountains as central to his understanding of ecology. See Peder Anker, Imperial Ecology: environmental order in the British empire, 1895-1945 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 51-53. Also, the nineteenth century Romantic and Transcendentalist, Henry David Thoreau had his first spiritual encounter with wilderness when he climbed close to the summit of Mount Katahdin in Maine. Thoreau described mountains as “among the unfinished parts of the globe, whither it is a slight insult to the gods to climb and pry into their secrets.” See Bradley P. Dean, “Natural History, Romanticism, and Thoreau,” American Wilderness: A New History, ed. Michael Lewis, 78.

4 Hutchins Hapgood to Neith Boyce, 29 April 1928. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 13, File 388.

4 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 18 July 1929. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 20, File 513.
poorer." However, Neith’s later account of son Charles and daughter Miriam’s active engagement with the land and the Indian life suggest an energetic colonization of these spaces and the bodies associated with them. Neith proudly described Charles as a cowboy riding up the mountain. She wrote to Hutchins that Miriam and Charles as: “crazy about the riding and are out most of the time – Miriam went up to Miss Brett’s ranch yesterday – a ride of 17 miles up the canon.” This was likely Neith’s way of reassuring Hutchins of the beneficial effects on Miriam and Charles’s energies which were a subject of concern throughout the Hapgood correspondence on the children. In this same letter to Hutchins, Neith’s mention of Mabel Dodge’s Pueblo husband, Tony, indistinguishably tied Native American bodies to the same ground that white middle class bodies returned to as an affective opportunities for exploitation. She discussed Tony as “at home. He moves in this atmosphere with grace + dignity – busy with affairs of the place and of the Pueblo.” These activities on a frontier among the Pueblos suggests a practice of eliciting bodily energies through material relations with the world which put human and nonhumans into affective communication. Whether heading to farms or frontier zones of the American landscape or the British empire, sex reformers affectively dotted the landscape. The routes and trails left by sex reformers are material evidence of an environmental ethic tied to their politics of love, shaped by the health concerns of white vulnerability, sexual pleasure, and reproduction.

It is important to recognize that sex reformers contributed to a specific early twentieth century condition of bodies as eco/ontologies which significantly overlapped with early

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95 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 1929. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 20, File 513.
96 Neith Boyce to Hutchins Hapgood, 1929. Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 20, File 513.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
twentieth century rise of ecology as a system of energies. In this period, professionals that addressed nervous energies as medical and political concerns could find common cause with environmental scientists who began to conceive of environmental intimacies along the lines of energy flow. In other words, sex reformers and environmental scientists could find common ground in the mutuality of cultivating sexual energies as bodies extended into the environment and the environment quite literally flowing into bodies. British ecologist, Arthur Tansley, is famous for coining the term ‘ecosystem’ in 1935 but began to think of the environment along these lines as early as 1922. Tansley is less known for his interests and work in psychoanalysis. He was, in fact, trained as a psychoanalyst by Sigmund Freud. Tansley’s interest in the libidinal energies of psychology and the energies joining nonhuman others in the ecosystem blurs the human/nonhuman ontological boundaries in terms of circuits of energy.

Tansley’s work is further evidence of an early twentieth century way of being as eco/ontology where to study the body’s sexual energies was also to study energies circulating in the environment and vice versa. While a student at Cambridge, Tansley was already positioned at the crossroads of developing scientific ideas and bohemian critiques of sexual morality. At Cambridge, Tansley became acquainted with Bertrand Russell, participating in the elite social life of debating societies and discussions on sex. Aside from his connection to Bertrand Russell and other Cambridge Bloomsburies, Tansley was also acquainted with a wider circle of sex reformers given that he lectured on Freudian theory at a BSSSP.

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Historian Peder Anker has highlighted Tansley’s work on psychoanalysis as inextricably linked to his ecological thinking. Anker points out how Tansley became mired in early controversies over shifting the study of ‘nature’ from one based on classification systems to one rooted in empirical study of specific sites to comprehend the dynamic interaction of entities. Tansley’s work in psychoanalysis points to an approach to the body as another form of matter to be located within the nexus of energies circulating through environments, intimately joining humans and nonhumans.

In Tansley’s writings on psychoanalysis, he claimed that there was a common derivation of energy from sex instincts across evolutionary stages, he was careful to claim that sex instinct was manifested in different ways. In doing so, Tansley drew upon another paradigm, namely evolutionary theory, which early twentieth century environmental scientists and sex reformers alike invoked to highlight the intimacies across forms of life. Tansley wrote on the psychic forces of the body as an organism, drawing together the strands of Freudianism, Darwinism, and ecology. Tansley gave an account of the mind which intimately intertwined it with not only the body but the environment, claiming that “our minds, like our bodies have developed primarily in practical relation to the external world, and we cannot possibly escape from the conditions thus imposed upon us.” According to Tansley, the attributes of self-consciousness, reasoning, ethics, and artistic taste were effects of civilization but there existed a common groundwork of “non-rational instincts, desires, and

101 Ibid., 23.
102 Ibid., 8.
103 Ibid., 54.
106 Ibid., 21.
emotions, which are inherited from primitive man and from man’s non-human
forerunners.”107 In many ways, the early twentieth century rise of ecology as a discipline
concerned with the dynamism of entities overlapped with sex reform projects of cultivating
sex instincts which drew together human bodies, minds, animals, plants and ‘primitive’
others into a complex ecological balance. Historian Cynthia Russett has suggested that the
theories of evolution and the conservation of energy shaped late nineteenth and early
twentieth century conceptions of sexuality as gendered and racialized expenditures of energy
that integrally linked human bodies with the wider material universe.108 To this extent,
Tansley’s views of ecology, psychoanalysis, and evolution partook of broader transnational
trends in biology, physics, and medical discourses on sexuality and neurasthenia. As such,
Tansley is an important example of how minds, sex instincts, and human physiology could be
brought into the early twentieth century shaping of ecological thinking in Britain and the
United States.109

Through pursuing and constructing a cultural imperative to pursue affective
experience through the material world, sex reformers contributed to an environmental
narrative that re-imagined Eden as a paradise for cultivating sexual energies. Influenced by
Romanticism and the Transcendentalists, British and American sex reformers often explained
love as an embodied experience that occurred as much through a spiritual connection to other
bodies as a spiritual renewal facilitated through Nature. While sex reformers like Hutchins

107 Ibid., 13.
108 Cynthia Russett, Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard
University Press, 1989), 90, 104.
109 On histories of the rise of ecology in the early twentieth century United States, see Gregg Mitman, The State
of Nature: Ecology Community, and American Social Thought, 1900-1950 (Chicago and London: The
University of Chicago Press, 1992). Joel B. Hagen considers key examples of British and American scientists in
the early twentieth century rise of ecology, see Joel B. Hagen, An Entangled Bank: The Origins of Ecosystem
Hapgood, Neith Boyce, and Edward Carpenter discussed love in terms of relations to soil, rocks, trees, pure air, and flowers, they also left material traces of how this vision of love could transform environments. From flights to farms to travels to frontier regions, sex reformers searched for spaces untouched or untrammeled by industry, machines, and the effects of ‘civilization.’ In doing so, they constructed love as a white middle class fantasy which can be seen as the ‘nature’ narrative of what I discussed in the first chapter as a white emotive imaginary. What I earlier described as an affective compass shaped not only urban primitivism but inspired white middle class intellectuals engagement with nonhumans in ways that can be used to plot an affective topography of white mobility.

In the early twentieth century, the very forms that environmental activism took were shaped by gender and racial politics. While white middle and upper class women’s leisure and resources shaped their environmental activities as preoccupied with the preservation of forests, the Hetch Hetchy, and campaigns to save the birds, middle class African American women were more concerned with local environmental problems. These different forms of activism underpinned not only the racial politics of space but a racial politics of energies, instincts, and emotions that tied white middle class energies to conceptions of a spiritualized experience of wilderness. While environmental historians have drawn attention to the gender, racial, and class politics of intimate environmental connections, less work has been done to consider how these stories of the environment folded into the human sexual body at a time when sex reformers and environmental scientists both focused on energies. What I have

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aimed to show in this section is that ways of understanding the environment through ecological thinking and ways of understanding the human body’s sexual energies turned affective experience into a powerful channel that contributed to a vision of how human and nonhuman bodies flowed together as eco/ontologies.

II. Agricultural Wizards: The Creation of Species, Mutants, and Plant Hybridization Experiments

While the previous section explored the affective channels of communication that interwove bodies and environments, this section focuses on the making of natures whereby human and plant bodies were acted on, manipulated, interfered with, and mixed together. I consider specific cases where sex research, botany, and agricultural science overlapped in terms of similar goals and methods for breeding more perfect bodies across human and plant kingdoms. Throughout this section, I draw attention to how the popularity of eugenics and evolutionary theories traversed investigations into human and nonhuman bodies which entangled them at their most intimate parts. Here, my story of sex reformers’ eco/ontologies takes the form of turning from the spiritual connections of the previous section to considering

how human and nonhuman bodily matter also came to be knotted together.\textsuperscript{112} What Marie Stopes referred to as the “mechanisms concerned with reproduction” brought human and nonhuman bodies into one overarching project of perfecting ‘life’ through controlling reproduction.\textsuperscript{113} In other words, Stopes as well as other botanists and sex reformers applied eugenics and evolutionary theory to order, perfect, and remake human and nonhuman natures.

Although historians have generally treated Stopes’s work as a botanist and her birth control activities as separate, even discontinuous, interests, she looked to cells, evolutionary processes, and sex as factors materially connecting humans and nonhumans.\textsuperscript{114} To this extent, her early work as a botanist tracking down plant specimens in Japan, Canada, and England’s Coal Measures can be related to her later more popular campaigns for birth control and eugenics.\textsuperscript{115} Early on in her life, Stopes met and was influenced by Charles Darwin and Francis Galton. When she pursued botanical work, becoming the first woman in the British empire to earn a doctorate in botany, she inspected plant specimens for evidence of

\textsuperscript{112} Haraway uses the term knotted throughout a number of her works. See for example, Haraway, \textit{Modest Witness @ Second Millennium. FemaleMan Meets Oncomouse}, 268.

\textsuperscript{113} Marie Stopes, \textit{Ancient Plants} (London: Blackie & Son Limited, 1910), 175.


reproductive processes and used this evidence as fundamental criteria for ordering plants along an evolutionary continuum. In her 1912 work, Botany, Stopes discussed how animals and plants have “wonderful unity in the fundamentals of their structure.”\textsuperscript{116} In this same book, Stopes suggested that evolutionary processes were at work across seemingly separate animal and plant kingdoms, showing “how it all hangs together and bears on the one great problem in biology – the evolution of life.”\textsuperscript{117} What Stopes discussed as mechanisms of reproduction provided a way to grasp life in ways that applied to humans and nonhumans alike.\textsuperscript{118} In 1926, Stopes’s work on The Human Body and its Functions paid considerable attention to connections across the human/nonhuman divide rather than taking a stand on the human body’s distinctiveness. She specifically focused on gender, sexual, and cellular behavior which joined human and nonhuman physiologies, stating that:

\begin{quote}
Not only in man and woman, but in cow and bull, buck and doe rabbit, in fact in all the higher forms of life and in nearly all the insects and lower forms of life; indeed also in nearly all higher plants, and ultimately in most of the lowly and microscopic plants, there are two such differentiated sets of cells – the egg cells and the sperm cells.\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quote}

Although Stopes admitted that human reproduction had a higher consciousness, she maintained that reproductive function was nonetheless “comparable with one that is found in all primitive animals and plants.”\textsuperscript{120} In other words, as Stopes investigated plant sex to determine how fitter plant specimens survived in an evolutionary struggle over time, she construed this as possible ways for also understanding human evolution as governed by the

\textsuperscript{116} Marie Stopes, Botany; or the Modern Study of Plants (London: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1912).
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Marie Stopes, Ancient Plants (London: Blackie & Son Limited, 1910), 175.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
same ‘natural laws.’ To this extent, through the lens of Stopes’s microscope which observed traces of plant male and female cells, she brought together human and nonhumans at the site of sex as a process.

Stopes’s work exemplifies the mutual relatedness of human and nonhuman bodies in two ways: firstly, plant breeding informed and even ‘naturalized’ understandings of human sexuality including eugenic and birth control campaigns and secondly, human sexual politics informed and shaped botanical investigations. Stopes’s interest in plant sexuality partook of broader trends in the field of botany which developed in tandem with the growing popularity of eugenics and evolutionary theories such as mutationism, Darwinism, and Mendelism.

While Stopes’s work marks an important episode in relations between plant and human sexualities, there has been a longer history of intimacies between the study of plants and human sexual desire. Most historians who have studied the connections between plant and human sexuality have focused on the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, highlighting the controversies and long term repercussions over Linnaeus’s introduction of a sexual system for classifying plants. Much of this controversy in Britain occurred over the concern over how this system might undermine female sexual modesty, given that middle

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and upper class women dominated botany prior to its institutionalization as a scientific discipline. As Andrea Wulff claims, many British botanists regarded the Linnean system as smutty whereas American colonists were more receptive to the Linnean system for its practical advantages in clarity and simplicity. This distinction between greater American receptivity and enthusiasm for Continental theories and British caution and reticence continued into the early twentieth century scientific climate of breeding experiments. While both American and British scientists shared common interests in genetic selection, breeding experiments, and the predictability of the racial course of evolution, neo-Lamarckism was a much more accepted and popular framework in the United States than in Britain. This difference mapped scientific methods onto racial, reproductive, and economic anxieties over the United States as a modern and uncertain experiment in making the nation where immigration, African American migration, and the perception of race suicide among white Anglo-Saxon Protestants shaped an interest in preserving the alleged ‘progress’ of bodies over time.

As botany developed as a discipline in the mid to late nineteenth century, male academics increasingly dominated the field, excluding women by requiring academic degrees, and putting growing emphasis on experimentation. This emphasis became institutionalized in botanical gardens as well as in the global establishment of agricultural stations which marked a new dimension of imperial politics. As botanists has primarily participated in earlier imperial projects of collecting the world’s diverse specimens in botanical gardens, there was a new dimension to botany as a scientific and eugenic

125 See for example, Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 149-169.
imperialism of creating plant life through agricultural experiments. As historian Sharon Kingsland has shown, the eugenics movement and developments in botany and agricultural science were interrelated through the goal of breeding for quality by controlling reproduction. At a time when eugenicists warned that careless, unwise selection of mates in human reproduction was contributing to an unfit, degenerate population and weakening Anglo-Saxon stock, Stopes extended these concerns to the difficulties of controlling unruly and promiscuous plant sex.

Stopes conveyed these concerns in a textbook she wrote for beginning students in botany. She emphasized the importance of “care at time of pollination and in the collecting of seeds are the main things in plant breeding.” Stopes’s discussion of a Mendelian experiment on plants grounded plants within early twentieth century immigration, imperial, and class politics of degenerating races. Stopes condemned amateur gardeners for the “haphazard crossing” of plants which were of little scientific importance in the greater goal of determining “the great laws that underlie the production of the new forms and their bearing in evolution and heredity.” She stressed the importance of precision and care to control the unruly promiscuous behavior of plants, illustrating this point by describing a

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128 Stopes, Botany, 72.

129 Ibid., 70.
Mendelian experiment where “two races of Stocks…were crossed in the usual way, and all
outside pollen carefully kept from them.”

Historian Philip Pauly has shown that these concerns also plagued American horticulturalists who “struggled to respond to the novel evolutionary trajectories taken by plants whether promiscuous strawberries, miscegenistic grapes, or rapidly adapting parasitic fungi.” These concerns over controlling plant pollination to more precisely determine how to breed for particular desirable qualities were at the very heart of Charles Darwin’s own thinking on evolutionary processes. As Peter Ayres has pointed out, Charles Darwin’s family’s legacy in botany from his grandfather, Erasmus Darwin’s interest in the sexuality of plants to his son, Francis Darwin’s scientific career as a botanist.

As Ayres indicates, much of Charles Darwin’s activities between 1855 and 1881 focused on botanical work. Darwin’s two volumes on Variation in Plants and Animals devoted specific attention to the problems of wind and the scattering of pollen that made it difficult to control plant breeding. In considering the mysteries of evolution across kingdoms, Stopes and other botanists were in line with Darwin’s own thinking in investigating processes of natural selection which initially required using artificial selection like breeding experiments to observe its effects, given that the gradual process of natural selection would span far beyond the lifetime of a scientist.

Around the turn of the century when the Austrian monk, Gregor Mendel’s experiments on pea plants grew in popularity as ways of understanding human heredity, the

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130 Ibid., 72.
131 Pauly, Fruits and Plains, 79.
133 Ibid., 11.
134 Charles Darwin, The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication Vols. 1 & 2 (1868; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998). Also, see Charles Darwin, On the various contrivances by which British and foreign orchids are fertilized by insects, and on the good effects of intercrossing (London: J. Murray, 1862).
connections between plant and human physiologies seemed inextricably bound. In botany, Mendelian experiments on breeding to discover how to reproduce certain desirable hereditary traits through mate selection became an important strategy in the cultivation of fruit, wheat, and other plants which informed eugenic ambitions to create the perfect garden. This resonates with what Carolyn Merchant has discussed as reinventing Eden through the resources of labor, science, technology, and capitalism. Although Merchant indicates that this version of redeeming a fallen land through the transformation of wilderness into a garden arose in the early modern period, this version existed alongside the romanticization of wilderness in the early twentieth century. Both British and American white middle class intellectuals went in search of wilderness as a necessary temporal and geographic distance from ‘modern’ metropolitan spaces but British intellectuals generally identified wilderness with imperial frontiers including the United States. Despite this distinction, however, the British and American intellectual and professional elite were united in their joint concerns with unruly reproduction and the production of desirable genetic traits in plant, animal, and human breeding. Both scientific experimentation and retreats to the wild were compatible as strategies for cultivating an Eden, populated by energetic, sexually vigorous, and more perfect human, plant, and animal bodies. Yet, far from Merchant’s vision of an idealized partnership between humans and nature, my view of eco/ontologies as an early twentieth century human/nonhuman relation highlights a kind of partnership caught in a complicated tangled mess of science, sex, and politics.

136 Merchant, Reinventing Eden, 36, 65.
137 On Merchant’s concept of partnership, see Merchant, Reinventing Eden, 223-232.
As Stopes intrusively gazed at coal ball and other rock specimens of plant impressions for signs of plant sexual practices, she did so at a time when scientists shared a faith in controlling reproduction as a way to unlocking the mysteries of the rise and decline of species while using science to control the future and the randomness of natural selection. Given Stopes’s position at the crossroads of botany, eugenics, and the birth control movement, I would argue that her mention of a debased ‘fine’ tree in *Radiant Motherhood* was much more than “mere metaphor.” Stopes juxtaposed the ‘fine tree’ debased by a parasite with the “debasing power of the inferior, the depraved, and feeble-minded” who were “appallingly prolific.” Although Stopes’s *Radiant Motherhood* focused on sex advice for “the young, happy, and physically well–conditioned pair,” there were traces here that Stopes positioned refining reproduction in the broader context of reforming bodies across ontological divides. Despite stressing that human couples mate and breed for quality in their offspring, Stopes also mentioned universal elements at work intertwining these processes in human bodies with nonhuman bodies. She referred to what laid “underneath the intense passion of love and all its rich dreams of beauty is the slow building, chemically molecule by

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140 Ibid., 3.
molecule, biologically cell by cell.” ¹⁴¹ In this sense, Mendel’s pea plants, human sexual physiology, and the politics of breeding a better race became interwoven in the chemical movement and biological building of cells.

As Stopes told stories of the evolutionary dramas of the plant world, she held plants to standards of heterosexual norms and gendered behavior in determining their advance, decline or extinction. In this sense, plants were made to re-enact the imperial and racial politics of white sex reformers who identified allegedly primitive, less civilized, and ‘vanishing races’ with promiscuous, uncontrolled sexual behavior. As historians have shown, both the morphology and labour of allegedly ‘primitive’ people were cast as less sharply differentiated by gender than the more ‘civilized’ populations. ¹⁴² These assumptions also informed Stopes’s botanical analysis of the evolution of plants. Stopes, in fact, privileged sexual processes as the most valuable criterion for determining evolutionary status. She searched for traces of plant sexual organs and sex lives because “in judging the place of any plant in the scale of evolution it is to the reproductive organs that we look for the principal criteria, for the reproductive organs tend to be influenced less by their physical surrounding than the vegetative organs and are therefore truer guides to natural relationships.”¹⁴³ But, Stopes explicitly defined which kinds of sexual practices and reproductive structures placed a body in a higher or lower evolutionary position. When Stopes turned to the subject of “plant pathology,” she explained the signs of the Dodder’s degenerate anatomy in terms of gender ambiguity. Using the Dodder as an example of

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 5.
¹⁴³ Stopes, Ancient Plants, 51.
bodily signs of degeneracy, Stopes claimed that it showed that “a number of the higher plants have degenerated and lost the differentiation of their parts.” Stopes’s discussion of the Lycopods classified them as a family of “lower plants” consisting of lichens, mosses, flat green liverworts, moulds, and parasites. The Lycopods lacked a clear differentiation of gendered anatomy due to their huge sporangia or simple celled spores. For Stopes, the Lycopods’ ambiguously gendered reproductive structure was lower on the evolutionary scale in comparison to flowering plants which showed “how the differentiation of size in the spores resulted in sex; and in the higher plants in the modifications along widely different lines of the male and female.” What Stopes identified as the degeneracy of the Lycopods, she directly tied to the inability to cross-fertilize which was “the secret of the strength and advance of the races of plants.” In the field of botany, the angiosperms or the flowering plants began to receive a lot of attention as the most advanced races which overlapped with increasing scientific attention to maintaining white racial health. Stopes’s discussion of the angiosperms also provides a window onto how botanical investigations could be tied to a sexual politics of botany and evolutionary theory. Stopes claimed that “in the most advanced type of flowering plant we get back again to the separation of the sexes in separate flowers”

146 Ibid., 178.
147 Ibid., 180.
148 W.G. Chaloner has pointed out Stopes’s important contributions to the studies of the angiosperms. See Chaloner, “The palaeobotanical work of Marie Stopes,” 130. Dukinfield Henry Scott, a well-respected botanist who also served as the President of the British Linnaean Society, indicated in 1909 that in the field of botany there was “the great question of the origin of Angiosperms.” Scott also cites Stopes’s work and thanks her for agreeing to permit him to quote material from it. Stopes’s interest in plant sex reflected a broader trend among botanists who studied the angiosperms. Dukinfield Scott’s *Studies in Fossil Botany* claimed that “in the classification of recent plants, systematic botanists, so far at least as the Flowering Plants are concerned, are accustomed to rely chiefly on the morphology of the reproductive organs.” See Dukinfield Henry Scott, *Studies in Fossil Botany* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909), vii, 10, 13.
in order to “ensure the crossing of male and female of different individuals.”\textsuperscript{149} Through her botanical work, which preceded her fame as a birth controller, Stopes drew attention to heterosexual sex as an important condition of evolutionary and racial advancement.

Although Stopes denounced amateur gardeners who experimented with plant breeding, there was an internationally renowned American gardener who had much more in common with Stopes’s botanical interests than she may have wanted to admit. On his farm in Santa Rosa California, Luther Burbank’s experiments with breeding new variations of plants earned him international fame as an “agricultural wizard.”\textsuperscript{150} Dutch botanist, Hugo DeVries, whose mutation theory became a well known paradigm in botanical work, visited Burbank’s Santa Rosa and Sebastopol farms where Burbank had raised varieties of plants, fruits, and vegetables by experimental crossings.\textsuperscript{151} DeVries visited Burbank twice in 1904 and again in 1906. DeVries, however, was no stranger to the United States, having lectured at Stanford University which brought him into contact with Stanford President and eugenicist, David Starr Jordan. Jordan, in fact, was also connected to cooperative networks between British and American eugenics societies but, specifically, through his interest in agriculture and breeding. Jordan was involved in the American Breeders’ Association, a forerunner of the American Eugenics Society. Like de Vries, Jordan was also aware of Burbank’s experiments. Jordan, in fact, wrote the foreword to Burbank’s 1914 publication

\textsuperscript{149} Stopes, Ancient Plants, 179.
\textsuperscript{150} Paolo Palladini shows that the intervention in the creation of new forms of better plant breeds was a British and American phenomenon. Palladini uses two case studies of plant breeders and entrepreneurs, American Luther Burbank and British Edwin Sloper Beaver. See Paolo Palladini, “Wizards and devotees: On the Mendelian theory of inheritance and the professionalization of agricultural science in Great Britain and the United States, 1880-1930,” History of Science 32(98) (December 1994): 409-444.
\textsuperscript{151} Hugo de Vries, Plant-Breeding; comments on the experiments of Nilsson and Burbank (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1907), 164.
on *How Plants Are To Be Trained To Work For Man*.\(^{152}\) Despite what Stopes might have seen as Burbank’s unscientific crossings to fulfill entrepreneurial objectives, Burbank shared with Stopes a faith in manipulating reproduction to create more perfect bodies. These scientific experiments in plant breeding had a much wider audience than just the botanical community, specifically in the ways such experiments pointed to an imagined better future encapsulated in popular fiction. British sex reformer, Naomi Mitchison who engaged with sex reform and scientific networks in early twentieth century Britain, imagined not only a future of perfected human breeding in *Solution Three* but perfected forms of life extended to the genetic perfectibility of wheat in a utopia governed by the purported wisdom of genetic selection.\(^{153}\) Although Burbank was not identified as a sex reformer, his gardening practices drew on the intellectual trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century intellectual climate of faith in the power of controlling sex to determine future bodies.

Although Burbank’s interest was partly framed as a tradesman who sold his profitable plant hybrids, both Burbank and de Vries’s breeding experiments were informed by a cultural imperative to shape new species and chart the course of evolution. Hugo de Vries’s work discussed the aims to purify races of plants such as corn and rye, referring to the “principle of corn selection” and the potential that “a pure and constant race may be derived.”\(^{154}\) In an entire chapter devoted to Burbank’s work, Hugo de Vries maintained that the aim of Burbank’s hybridization experiments was to determine “the combination of the desirable

\(^{152}\) David Starr Jordan wrote the foreword to Luther Burbank’s first volume on *How Plants Are to Be Trained To Work For Man* and mentions attending a dinner with Hugo DeVries in San Francisco in 1904. See David Starr Jordan, Prefatory Note to *How Plants Are Trained To Work For Man*, by Luther Burbank, vol. 1 (New York: P.F. Collier & Son Company, 1914), 34.


\(^{154}\) Ibid., 105, 118.
qualities of two or more species and varieties into one strain, and the elimination of the undesirable characters.” Burbank’s crossing experiments were partly guided by the goals of increased agricultural productivity and the creation of a more profitable ‘pedigree-culture’ of potatoes, apples, or plums. According to de Vries, Burbank described his projects as both economic and philanthropic endeavours of contributing to the abundance of the American landscape and the beauty to be enjoyed by future generations. De Vries’s claim that engineering fitter, economically, socially, and aesthetically more desirable plant bodies would produce a more vital and productive nation can be seen as a botanical narrative haunted by early twentieth century anxieties over white racial vitality and reproduction.

Burbank’s plant breeding experiments shared a common theme with Stopes’s work, namely the ways in which plant breeding and plant evolution were part of similar mechanisms with similar danger and possibilities that tied together plant and human ontologies. Burbank’s 1907 publication on The Training of the Human Plant bound the principles of plant-breeding to the production of a future human race. At the outset of his work, Burbank confessed to his fascination with the similarity of plant and human life. Given the early twentieth century concerns of middle and upper class intellectuals over devitalized bodies, it is striking that Burbank discussed the plant-breeder’s experience of “sometimes merging an absolutely wild-strain with one that, long over-civilized, has largely lost virility.” Burbank went on to assert that these principles of plant-breeding were equally applicable to creating a better race. In a particularly striking passage where Burbank

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155 de Vries, Plant-Breeding, 174.
156 Ibid., 164, 172, 188.
157 Ibid., 159.
159 Ibid., 9.
advocates the restriction of marriage to the physically, mentally, and morally fit, he interweaves the spectre of the “degenerate vegetable” with that of the degenerate human offspring. Burbank posed the following case: “suppose we blend together two poisonous plants and make a third even more virulent, a vegetable degenerate, and set their evil descendants adrift to multiply over the earth, are we not distinct foes of the race?” In what Burbank may have pictured as his future Garden of Eden, there were neither unfit plant bodies nor unfit human bodies. Burbank’s work as an “agricultural wizard” was not limited to the world of plants but used plants to exemplify what Stopes viewed as a “mechanism of reproduction” that tied together human and plant sexual practices to breed fitter bodies.

Both Stopes’s work in botany and Burbank’s gardening experiments exemplify the advent of specific early twentieth century intimacies between plant and human bodies. Stopes and Burbank investigated plant breeding in the shadow of Anglo-transatlantic cultural concerns over breeding for quality among human populations and controlling the course of evolution through regulating reproduction. In discerning desirable qualities in plants, Stopes and Burbank looked to plant sex as potentially governed by the same mechanisms as human sex which meant that plant breeding could yield important results on the possibilities of eugenics across ontologies. However, Stopes and Burbank’s experiments on plants were also shaped by political investments in human eugenics with their observations structured through the lens of frustrations over unruly, uncontrolled mating and promiscuity in human populations. The spectre of anxieties over human reproduction loomed large in Stopes and Burbank’s observations of plant sexual organs and the regulation of plant pollination. Similarly, Stopes and Burbank are two cases of how the workings of human sexual

160 Ibid., 58.
reproduction, particularly in the understanding of hereditary mechanisms, were haunted by plant bodies. Stopes and Burbank are examples of how plant sex and human sex were drawn together in a project of making natures in a paradoxical fashion. This paradox was exemplified in how Stopes and Burbank looked to allegedly universal ‘natural’ laws governing sex which then suggested that methods for intervening in sex also traversed human and nonhuman divides. This was an internalized version of what I have called eco/ontologies where the mixing of human and nonhuman occurred at the site of sexual organs and reproductive processes. This then would be the internal topography of eco/ontologies.

III. Building Organic Machines: Affective Technologies of Flesh, Metal, and Electricity

As botanists, zoologists, physiologists, and sex researchers increasingly turned to experimentation on reproductive processes in the early twentieth century, they treated ‘nature’ as a potentially governable and disciplined machine. At the heart of sex reformers’ campaigns, the machine served as a paradoxical symbol. Historian T.J. Jackson Lears discusses this ambivalence toward the machine as an attitude among transatlantic antimodernists between 1880 and 1920.\textsuperscript{161} According to Lears, antimodernists’ critique of material progress uneasily existed alongside their praise for the advantages of machines.\textsuperscript{162} Donna Haraway has pointed to this ambivalence in the context of dioramic displays of ‘nature’ in the early twentieth century American Natural History Museum which constructed nature through visual and material technologies.\textsuperscript{163} Mark Dyreson, in fact, suggests that the

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{163} Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy,” 54-55.
ambivalence of the machine permeated the physical culture movement and the built
environment as reformers, economists, and progressives looked to scientifically manage
bodies and environments to stimulate ‘natural’ vital energies. As sex reformers’ invoked
the machine as a symbol of the potentially alienating and destructive effects of
industrialization and capitalism on human feeling, they also turned to science and technology
as tools for maximizing feeling and restoring the body to allegedly ‘natural’ rhythms which
had been disrupted by ‘civilization.’ This was particularly true in the advent of birth control
movement whereby sex reformers advocated a number of interventions such as iron rings,
rubber, sponges, quinine, cocoa butter, and electrical currents to augment or facilitate sexual
energies, vitality, pleasure, and love. In other words, the introduction of chemicals,
electricity, and mechanical devices into the body ultimately contributed to a specific early
twentieth century cyborgian body that produced affects through intimate interdependent
workings of bodies and technologies.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the sex reform movement arose
partly in response to concerns over depleted sexual energies as the damage incurred by
civilization. Sex reformers engaged with technologies and scientific knowledge through the
aim to productively employ them to reverse the affective costs of ‘civilization’ and,
paradoxically, return but at the same time reinvent the body’s natural rhythms. In doing so,
the early twentieth century marked a particular historical episode where a network between
bodies, science, and ‘nature’ came together in ways that shaped the reproductive body as an

164 Mark Dyreson, “Nature By Design: Modern American Ideas About Sport, Energy, Evolution, and
165 See Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (London: Free Association
organic machine. Richard White has used the term organic machine to describe the blurred boundaries of the mechanical and the natural in the case of the Columbia River where human bodies, fish, wind, water, and machines operated together in the joint distribution of energy throughout this system.\(^{166}\) While White attends to mapping the energetic relations between human communities, salmon migrations, and mechanical interventions in the flow of the river, I look to the body itself as an organic machine where mechanical devices, scientific tools, flesh, hormones, and organic cycles intermeshed as an ecosystem tied to producing and regulating an affective economy. I argue that this organic machine was specific to the early twentieth century confluence of sex reform, ecology, and technological developments.

Sex reformers ambivalently located the energy crisis of late nineteenth and early twentieth century white middle class bodies between the poles of the threat of being consumed by the machine and the promise of using the machine to maximize human feeling. Both Bertrand and Dora Russell were deeply concerned about the effects of city life on white middle class bodies which, as I showed earlier, inspired their retreats to the countryside.\(^{167}\)

In their jointly authored work, *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization*, they lamented that “civilized life has exhausted men’s vigour and initiative, in which case a long period of primitiveness and uninhibited instincts may be required to restore the energy needed for fresh construction.”\(^{168}\) While exalting primal energies, the Russells did not suggest an abandonment of science or technology but, instead, advocated their paradoxical deployment

\(^{166}\) White, *The Organic Machine*.

\(^{167}\) On the ways white middle class nerves were believed to be intimately linked to the built environment, see for example, Karin Bijsterveld, “The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age: Technology and Symbolism of Sound in European and North American Noise Abatement Campaigns, 1900-1940.” *Social Studies of Science* 31(1) (Feb. 2001): 37-70.

\(^{168}\) Ibid., 82.
toward augmenting the vitality of the body. Bertrand Russell, in fact, explained the body in terms of the smooth functioning of a machine where vitality supplied the energy for sustaining the harmonious working of cellular parts. Discussing how the body operated, Russell invoked a machinic description of “the whole assemblage of cells can be killed by one vital wound, and that therefore a human body has a more precarious life than a crowd of protozoa.” While the Russells had suggested that the Machine Age had the potential to destroy bodily vitality and exhaust white middle class energies, Bertrand Russell also mapped vitality and industrial society onto each other as vital systems. He described industrial society as a system of “vital organs, the destruction of which paralyses the whole organism.” Here Russell drew together the intimate relations between white middle class energies and the politics of ‘civilization’ where both seemed to be vitally and interdependently tied to each other. Russell himself used the language of an organic machine to emphasize these intimacies between bodies, machines, and politics. Attacking what he regarded as a narrow-minded view of discrediting all mechanization, Russell argued that “Men who advocate what they call the ‘organic’ view of the State always imagine that what they believe in is an antithesis to mechanism. This is a most curious delusion.” Instead, Russell looked to bring bodies and machines together into a harmonious relationship where the ‘natural’ was augmented by the machine and the machine became part of navigating the flow of the ‘natural.’ Russell intimately associated bodies and machines and the organic and inorganic in ways that made their ontologies co-dependent as part of the same system of

170 Ibid., 36.
171 Ibid., 258.
energies. According to Russell, “A machine is essentially organic, in the sense that it has parts which cooperate to produce a single useful result, and that the separate parts have little value on their own account.” Although Russell condemned the bodily neurasthenic effects of the Machine Age, he ultimately called for a delicate balance of technologies, science, bodies, and politics rather than a yearning for a primal state untouched by ‘civilization.’

Russell, however, was not alone in bringing together the early twentieth century romanticization of the primal as a source of white middle class energies and the possibilities of scientific interventions in engineering the organic. As we saw earlier, Havelock Ellis’s spiritual relationship to Nature did not involve a rejection of the machine but a reinvention of how machines could be intimately interwoven into spiritual feeling. For Havelock Ellis, Christianity and the specific machine of the factory were joined as philosophies rooted in death, killing any ‘vital’ principle. Ellis saw hope in James Hinton’s work which, he commended for Hinton’s view of the world as a mechanistic order which “was not the mechanism of a factory, it was vital, with all the glow and warmth and beauty of life; it was, therefore, something which not only the intellect might accept, but the heart might cling to.” To Ellis, the specificity of the machine mattered. Ellis conceived of a productive intimate engagement between science, technologies, and bodies which would facilitate “the readjustment of psychic elements to each other, enabling the whole machine to work harmoniously.” It was not the case that in exalting ‘nature’ sex reformers condemned all

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172 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
machines, technology, and science. In fact, they attempted to use the tools of modernity to retrieve the primal energies of the past and pour them into projects of ‘civilization.’

Ellis’s and Russell’s contributions to the vision of the body as an organic machine were part of a transatlantic theme which was particularly salient in the United States as American sex reformers grappled with the newly emerging status of the United States as a world power, internationally identified with the speed, prominence, and investment in capitalism, industrialization, and harnessing science to the nation. In the early twentieth century, sex reformers helped to shape a view of a common affectively oriented Anglo body entangled in the shared yet distinct histories of industrial capitalism, mechanization, and labour in Britain and the United States. For many British white middle class intellectuals, late nineteenth and early twentieth century American capitalism seemed to be the extremes to which Britain’s earlier experience of the effects of the factory system had been pushed. In other words, early twentieth century British and American sex reformers turned to emotions and instincts as a way of grappling with the re-articulation, intensification, and transformation in capitalism’s effects on white middle class bodies.

Hutchins Hapgood’s writings on “Science and Society” provide a glimpse of how the theme of the organic machine exceeded national boundaries as a historically specific dilemma of white middle class bodies seeking to reconcile legacies of ‘civilization’ with the value of primal energies. Hapgood’s article specifically pointed out the shared physiological kinship of Anglo-Saxon bodies as particularly vulnerable to the dangers of mechanization. On the theme of “Sex and Society,” Hapgood referred to well known psychologist, Dr. Felix Adler, who claimed that the Anglo-Saxon tends to discuss sex in terms of “cold science” and
runs the risk of becoming mechanized. Adler drew particular attention to the Anglo-Saxon’s mechanization in terms of the materialistic aims of turning a profit and satisfying popular interests of consumption rather than indulging personal artistic impulses. This interview taken alongside another interview Hapgood conducted with Dr. Alex Carrel shows an ambivalence at the heart of what seemed to be an incompatibility and tension between science and mechanization on the one hand and art and human feeling on the other.

Hapgood’s interview with Dr. Alex Carrel, a Nobel Prize winner for his work in animal sex research highlighted Carrel’s vision that science need not be viewed as antithetical to religion or art. Summarizing Carrel’s position, Hapgood claimed, “Science, he thinks, does not destroy any of our emotional convictions.” Hapgood suggested that Carrel’s position confirmed that “religion and transcendental art as direct or intuitional expressions of truth play their eternal role. The impulses of the human heart and of the human imagination have their rights as means of getting truth.” Hapgood negotiated both Adler’s and Carrel’s visions by considering the possibilities of science to cure and mend the very gulf between mechanized Anglo-Saxons and emotional but primal others. Hapgood’s interview with Carrel suggested the possibilities of science to revive emotion in mechanized Anglo-Saxons or, put another way, to build an organic machine.

Sex reformers’ agenda to encourage the cultivation and affirmation of ‘natural’ sex instincts made the ambivalence of a body/machine and nature/culture dichotomy particularly

175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Hutchins Hapgood, “Science and Intuition,” (Interview with Dr. Alex Carrel, 18 October 1912). Hapgood Family Papers, Beinecke, Box 27, File 791.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
salient. Advocates of birth control on both sides of the Atlantic encouraged the introduction of mechanical devices and chemicals to enable the experience of ‘natural’ sexual feelings in contrast to the ‘unnatural’ repression of these feelings. Emma Goldman, Dora Russell, and Margaret Sanger all supported birth control and the affirmation of women’s ‘natural’ sexual instincts as synonymous with scientific motherhood. Dora Russell juxtaposed the organic and science in a symbiotic relation, arguing that parenthood as a “growth principle” which “like sex, it must be intelligently manipulated, rather than destroyed or ignored.” In Hypatia, Dora also regarded love, birth control, and science as inseparable at the site of women’s bodies. She argued that “the love of motherhood is a science” which “begins with birth-control, which to many seems the negation of motherhood, but which to the creative mother is the keystone of her work.” Sanger also suggested that birth control would enhance motherhood and produce love and happiness, maintaining that:

there will be no more ‘dumb, driven cattle’ in the guise of men. When we can visualize out of the surging love and happiness of the creative act the strong, healthy, happy mentally and spiritually vigorous child, we shall produce individuals with intellectual and spiritual gifts beyond those of any race that has yet appeared on earth.

Along similar lines, Goldman imagined a future of women regulating their bodies through birth control as synonymous with a Nietzschean affirmation of vital primal sexual instincts. In her 1916 article entitled “Marriage and Love”, an angry Emma Goldman demanded “can there be anything more outrageous than the idea that a healthy, grown woman, full of life and passion, must deny nature’s demand, must subdue her most intense craving, undermine her

health and break her spirit, must stunt her vision, abstain from the depth and glory of sex experience until a ‘good’ man comes along to take her unto himself as a wife?” In this same article, Goldman suggested that marriage eventually perpetuated this alienation insofar as sex was treated for procreative purposes. Goldman then implicated the use of birth control technologies into both maximizing the fulfillment of this “intense craving” and “nature’s demand” while also tying this to the production of fitter bodies. She claimed that “woman no longer wants to be a party to the production of a race of sickly, feeble, decrepit, wretched human beings” and “instead she desires fewer and better children, begotten and reared in love.” Through prominent figures in the birth control movement on both sides of the Atlantic, a discourse was shaped which conceived of intimate workings of bodies and technologies to produce ‘natural’ sexual feelings.

In practice, the advice of birth control physicians and sex researchers’ investigations into modifying birth control technologies contributed to ways of conceiving of the reproductive body as an organic machine. Historian Andrea Tone’s Devices and Desires specifically indicates that the early twentieth century was a critical period in the marketing, research, and commodification of reproductive technologies. This suggests that early twentieth century sex reformers lived at a time of heightened awareness of the intimacies of sexual physiologies and machines. Using Marie Stopes as a case study, Peter Neushal has argued that there was a “technological ferment surrounding contraception during the early

184 Ibid.
Both physicians and sex researchers discussed the effectiveness of birth control technologies in the body as an ecosystem of flesh, blood, organs, rubber, springs, sponges, and chemicals. Physicians and birth control clinicians discussed the problems of rashes, blotches, irritations occurring in both men and women through heterosexual sex, the flow or blockage of seminal fluid, and the possible slippage of the device where improperly fitted to the woman’s uterus. While working in China to disseminate birth control, Helena Wright wrote to Stopes, expressing some concern that the Pro-Race pessary, so highly endorsed by Stopes, had presented some difficulties. Wright asked Stopes whether the pessary snugly fit around the cervix and which percentage of women could actually reach the cervix to insert the pessary. Sex reformers’ discussions of birth control highlighted a technologically mediated body-ecology and the intensification of intimacies between bodies and machines. Dr. Norman Haire’s description of the ineffective and harmful gold-pin method which was being used by American physicians, suggests how contraceptive devices became integrally linked to the body’s geography. Haire described the inefficacy of the gold-pin which kept the cervix canal open and allowed spermatozoa to travel along the inside of the spring-coil directly into the uterus. In one case, Dr. Harold Chapple, Stopes’s own gynecologist, likened the contraceptive device of the rubber ring to “a foreign body” which could easily be inserted or removed from the body’s


188 Ibid.


190 Norman Haire to Marie Stopes, 1 January 1922. Marie Stopes Papers, BL, London, Item 58567.
cavity without any harm.\textsuperscript{191} When he spoke at the Royal Institute for Public Health, Chapple also highlighted how birth control technologies intervened or physically channeled a flow between men and women’s bodies. He denounced ‘male methods’ of coitus interruptus and the use of condoms because of how these methods deprived the female body of seminal fluid.\textsuperscript{192} In his lecture, Chapple also indicated how birth control technologies interacted with the female body. He advocated the rubber Dutch cap pessary while rejecting intra-uterine devices which by keeping the vagina opened left it susceptible to infection.\textsuperscript{193} Chapple was also deeply concerned about questions of female satisfaction which he pointed out was reportedly achieved through the use of the silver ring despite it leaving the vagina dangerously open to infection.\textsuperscript{194} Stopes also addressed similar concerns when she discussed the Gretenberg ring which inflamed and thickened the uterine walls.\textsuperscript{195} Stopes’s speech also drew attention to the mutation of flesh through an encounter with the Gretenberg ring which “keeps the uterus in a state of permanent hypertrophy of the inner tissue, and the fact that the fertilized ovum does not settle down, and the woman does not conceive, depends on this semi-thickening of the uterine wall.”\textsuperscript{196} Robert Latou Dickinson, an American physician and leading member of the Maternal Health Committee in New York City, wrote to Stopes to ask her advice on the proper technique for inserting a Pro-Race pessary and which cases this was

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
best suited for. In other words, Dickinson suggested that care, tact, and a certain art were involved in harmonizing body and technology which was also specific to certain kinds of physiologies. Whether physicians addressed the snug fit of a pessary, the travel of the gold-pin’s forceful opening of the cervix or the metamorphosis of uterine walls that hugged the Gretenburg ring, they suggested intimate connections as bodies and technologies were reshaped, modified, and functioned in relationship to each other. Physicians and sex researchers looked to find and create technologies to conform to the body but at the same time, the body was also altered or adjusted in relation to the technologies.

Aside from attending to the physical intimacies between bodies and birth control technologies, physicians and sex reformers more generally also pointed out how this encounter also produced emotional effects. One physician, W.J. Dowling, considered the ways birth control technologies and bodies worked in concert to produce a particular emotional experience that could be specific to the type of method and type of body involved. Dowling discussed the case of a tubercular ‘lady’ who had high sensibilities regarding the aestheticism of sex. Dowling told Stopes that this patient had been using an ointment and having her husband use a sheath but this particular unaesthetic method caused a loss of desire. Dowling suggested that a check pessary might be suitable except that:

The adjustment process seems to offend her in that it points out too brutally the clayey side of sexual desire. She would like the act to be the unpremeditated and unarranged-for culmination of a mutual flow of affection between herself and her husband. This would indicate the suitability of an appliance which need not be changed at frequent intervals.

198 W.J. Dowling to Marie Stopes, undated, Marie Stopes Papers, Wellcome Library, File A264.  
199 Ibid.  
200 Ibid.  

Such concerns over offended sensibilities, aestheticism, eliciting sexual desire, and affection marked this ‘lady’ as a white middle class woman. Dowling’s identification of this woman’s high sensitivity drew on the medical discourse of white middle class nervousness. What Dowling referred to as the goal of “a mutual flow of affection” needed to be elicited by making choices about the right type of technology and the kind of body it was being inserted into.

As I have shown throughout the previous chapters, nervousness was inextricably tied to gendered conceptions of white middle class sexual energies. These connections between white middle class nervousness and sexual experience also took the form of technologically mediating white middle class emotional experience using electricity. American physician, George Beard, who became famous for his diagnosis of neurasthenia as the American malady, treated a number of his middle class patients with electrotherapy. Historians have suggested that the therapeutic use of electricity to restore white middle class energies was far from a marginal or eccentric practice. Carolyn Thomas de la Pena has demonstrated that white American middle class men addressed the concern over sexual energies by purchasing electric belts in the efforts of “powering the intimate body.” Tom Lutz has also claimed that the significance of electric belts should be understood in terms of cultural concerns over the expenditure of nerve capital within the “spermatic economy.” Rachel Maines’s work on The Technology of Orgasm discusses white middle class women’s electrical treatments.

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201 See for example, George Beard and A.D. Rockwell, A Practical Treatise on the Medical and Surgical Uses of Electricity (New York: William Wood & Company, 1881).
therapies for treating problems of sexual desire. Sex reformers were not immune to these broad cultural trends in the use of electricity. In London, Marie Stopes’s close friend, birth control advocate, and physician, Dr. Jane Lorimer Hawthorne used electricity on one of her wealthy female patients. In a letter to Stopes, Hawthorne recounted some of the most intimate details of the patient’s life. Hawthorne informed Stopes that the patient had a separate room from her husband. The patient had been in an unhappy marriage for the past 25 years and used her son to fulfill this absence. This situation typically described what sex reformers argued were the effects of an ignorance of sex or frigidity generally ascribed to middle and upper class women. To diagnose an evident case of a failure to indulge or express sex instincts, Hawthorne deployed “electric treatment – High Frequency – to tone up her whole nervous system.” Hawthorne saw her work as a benevolent enterprise, priding herself on feeling “glad to be able to help women to a fuller + richer life.” In fact, Stopes used electric treatments on herself which Hawthorne encouraged her to do regularly.

While sex reformers generally regarded the use of technology as a kind of tool for reviving sex instincts, the technological devices highlight the intimacy of bodies and machines in the creation of the ‘natural’ body in this historical moment where nerves became indistinguishably and interdependently linked to electric currents.

Birth controllers, sex researchers, and physicians expected bodies and technologies to harmoniously work together to produce an idealized affective experience consisting of


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

intensified sexual desire, pleasure, and love. This affective experience was one sign of a functioning organic machine. W.J. Dowling’s case is one example of a broader concern that birth control technologies as scientific tools requiring discipline and planning would eliminate sexual excitement and spontaneity. Historian Kate Fisher has suggested that this consideration of spontaneity was a salient concern for many working class couples who chose withdrawal as a preferred practice of birth control. This issue also came to the attention of prominent sex reformers who were key propagandists for birth control. At the 1929 World League for Sexual Reform Congress in London, Naomi Mitchison, a novelist, sex reformer and sister of biologist J.B.S. Haldane, discussed the problem that birth control might have the opposite effect from its intention to encourage sexual desires. Mitchison specifically addressed her concerns to the intelligent classes, namely white middle and upper class couples, in a lecture entitled “Some Comments on the use of Contraceptives by Intelligent Persons.” At the very outset of the paper, Mitchison suggested that love was primarily the concern of the middle and upper classes. She told her colleagues, an audience dominated by white middle class intellectuals, that “I am speaking here, on the whole, of the comparatively well-off classes who can afford such luxuries as the finer shades of emotions and ideas.” At this gathering of experts and influential figures in the field of sex reform, Mitchison took the opportunity to draw attention to an important aspect of the “thrill of the accident” in the sexual experience of some couples. She juxtaposed the value of

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212 Ibid., 183.
spontaneity to the more “civilized way” of planned children.\textsuperscript{213} Mitchison clarified that “I do not say that in any of this I am arguing against the use of contraceptives. I only say that, though altogether admirable on social grounds, they do make emotional difficulties which were not there before.”\textsuperscript{214} Mitchison’s comments indicate that birth control technologies not only navigated physical relationships but also an affective climate between bodies. This network of bodies and birth control technologies functioned as an organic machine to produce affective experience while also physically melding with skin, organs, blood, and semen in the aim to prevent conception.

Birth controllers construed the specific concerns of “mutual affection” primarily in the context of cases of white middle class couples in contrast to lower class, colonized, and nonwhite others. For these ‘others,’ physicians and birth controllers usually emphasized that the ineffectiveness or failure of a birth control technology had to do with laziness, technological incompetency, and undisciplined routines. In June of 1920, Stopes asked friend, physician, and birth control clinician Jane Hawthorne, “Do you know anything about the gold pin method used so much now in America? It appears to be extremely suitable for the lazy or rather unreliable class which is so apt to make mistakes with ordinary methods.”\textsuperscript{215} When Stopes delivered a lecture on public health, she told her audience that “There is an enormous number of women who ought to use a contraceptive, both from the point of view of their own health and from the point of view of the public interest, who are frankly too lazy to trouble about it, or who resent the necessary care with which it has to be

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 186.
used.” Stopes claimed that many of these women lacked the mental capacity to use the cervical cap. Maud Kerslake, a physician who closely worked with Stopes and operated a birth control clinic, gave a speech at the Royal Institute of Public Health. To her audience, Kerslake recalled her encounters with the problematic clientele of poor women. Kerslake claimed that “The woman who has a poor home and an immense lot of work to do and worries with her financial condition, has not much energy or much intelligence left very often for applying a difficult method.” Kerslake’s comment highlights how class, technological competency, and Stopes, however, also suggested effective birth control was also specific to race. When she wrote to Dr. Hingorani in July of 1928, Stopes suggested that the unique and expensive birth control methods in Britain would not be suitable for poor Indian women. She suggested that birth control techniques should be modified to suit Indian customs and cater to the preferences of Indian women. Greasy suppositories, messy sponges, and oily rags were some of the methods employed by poor women who generally could not afford the more highly developed technologies. With the growing popularity, research, and propaganda for birth control, physicians, birth control clinicians, and sex reformers contributed to the materialization of race, class, and gender categories at the site of prescribed birth control methods.

In the early twentieth century, a constellation of experts including scientists, physicians, and sex reformers considered the effectiveness of birth control in relationship to

217 Ibid.
220 Ibid.
concerns over an affective economy of the body’s vital energies and emotional experience. Conversations among these experts and with the wider public drew attention to complex and subtle interactions between bodies and birth control technologies which were expected to meet the ideal of a smoothly functioning organic machine. A number of historians across different fields of history have addressed the importance of energies in this period as connective forces. Environmental historians have discussed the emergence of ecological thinking which turned scientists’ attention toward the interdependence between forms of life. Historians such as Anson Rabinbach who have focused on the capitalist management of the body’s capacity to work as tied to late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrialization and patterns of work. Historians of the body and sexuality have also addressed this period as a critical time of medical and cultural attention to nervous energies as tied to white middle class citizenship, health, and sexual reproduction. However, this section has considered how these disparate areas of concern over energies came to be manifested in the use, manipulation, manufacture, and evaluation of birth control technologies which compelled the body to work in emotional and physical ways with technologies in ways that illustrate an imagining of the body as ‘natural’ and contrived ecosystem. What sex reformers identified as a more perfect or organic machine that did not alienate but strengthened the powers of human feeling, specifically turned on an ambivalence

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at the heart of concerns over white middle class bodies seeking to salvage ‘civilization’ while
reviving primal energies. While sex reformers condemned the possible dangers of the
Machine Age, they also looked to the promise of machines for refining without eradicating
primal sexual instincts. In birth control propaganda, clinical practice, and patient
consultation, the ways that birth control technologies came to differentially mark the
capacities of women’s bodies along the lines of race and class highlight these technologies as
tools for eliciting an affective potential in white middle class bodies while preventing
undesirable births in others.

Conclusion

This chapter began with Marie Stopes’s 1918 Married Love where plants set the
scene for a story primarily featuring a white middle class couple’s journey toward achieving
love. But, eight years before Married Love was published, Stopes pointed out that the silent
evolutionary battles of plants had long been overlooked as their quiet struggles got lost in the
noise of animal and human evolutionary dramas. When Stopes wrote Ancient Plants in 1910,
she showed how plant and human lives were entangled as they shared in the governing
processes of evolutionary struggle. Stopes suggested that plants were unobtrusively and
intimately joined to humans, sharing in the same processes of evolution as they competed,
advanced, declined, and reproduced. For quite some time, Stopes contended, humans failed
to notice their intimate connections to the plants which “so quietly and slowly do they live
and move that we in our hasty motion often forget that they equally with ourselves belong to
the living and evolving organisms.[my italics]"\textsuperscript{223} For Stopes, humans and plants were mutually invested in processes that governed life. Across plant, animal, and human kingdoms, Stopes claimed that “we must accept life as we find it, endowed with an endless capacity for change and a continuous impulse to advance.”\textsuperscript{224} Throughout this chapter, I have drawn attention to eco/ontologies by illustrating how sex reformers attended to and forged human and nonhuman intimacies. Therefore, it seems only appropriate to start with a narrative devoted to the white middle class couple and conclude with a narrative that insists on paying attention to the silences of the plants. This story of eco/ontologies has also been about the ways ‘life’ was made at the interstices of human and nonhuman bodies.

As I have shown throughout the chapter, the early twentieth century marked an important historical episode in human and nonhuman intimacies. At this time, the confluence of sex reform, politics, botany, ecology, agricultural science, and machines threw into question the boundaries between human and nonhuman life in what has been called an age of uncertainty. What I have called eco/ontologies denotes a particular way of being in the early twentieth century that was informed by developing knowledge and interest in energies, emotions, and instincts as connective forces which turned bodies and environments into mutual extensions of one another. As I have argued, sex reformers’ flights to farms, trips to the mountains, retreats to the countryside, and visits to frontier zones can be seen as an environmental ethic that underpinned a politics of love. These engagements can be seen as an affective mapping whereby destinations, routes, and landmarks emerged through sex reformers’ pursuit of cultivating sexual energies in relation to the environment. This practice

\textsuperscript{223} Stopes, \textit{Ancient Plants}, 174.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 43.
treated nonhuman life as a resource for powering white middle class intimacies. While sex reformers’ spiritual connections to the environment inspired a heightened awareness of interdependencies between humans and nonhumans, these spiritual connections also enacted an intimate environmental politics at the level of racial and class privilege through policies of preservation and conservation. In the early twentieth century, sex reformers’ turn to a popular discourse on romanticized wilderness and pristine space existed in mutual relation to ideals of making pristine, pure, evolutionary superior bodies across forms of life. Both the examples of Marie Stopes’s investigations into plant breeding and Luther Burbank’s agricultural wizardry highlight the scientific practices of making nature that brought together human and nonhuman elements in the larger project of creating better ‘races’ to repopulate and reinvent Eden. Stopes and Burbank also exemplify how a politics of reproduction informed environmental sciences which entangled humans and nonhumans at the site of their most intimate parts. While the politics of reproduction in the human world shaped botanical investigations, physicians, birth control advocates and sex researchers also seemed to have been shaped by a climate of ecological thinking that reconfigured the human body as an ecosystem that could be intervened in, regulated, and transformed into an organic machine through birth control technologies. Both the goals and practices of a constellation of experts involved in propagating birth control unraveled the boundaries between the natural and artificial, the human and the nonhuman, and the body and the environment as they looked to technologically perfect, augment, and intensify the body’s emotional and sexual experience. I have used the term eco/ontologies to show an environmental dimension to sex reformers’ politics of love which grounded white middle class affective potential in spiritualized
connections to the earth, scientific experiments in breeding fitter bodies, and fitting technologies with bodies to rejuvenate white middle class bodies.
Chapter 6
‘Becoming-Animal’ in the Early Twentieth Century:
Physiologically Engineering Affects Through Human/Nonhuman Intimacies

In January and February of 1922, Mr. Brough’s grave concerns over his impotency prompted a series of visits to the London medical practice of British gynecologist and sex reformer Dr. Norman Haire. Haire understood Brough’s case in light of the common early twentieth century transatlantic medical discourse on sexual rejuvenation.1 At this time, physicians drew on a variety of resources from new technologies to animal bodies in the efforts to respond to what emerged as the cultural crisis surrounding white middle class sexual energies. As historian Chandak Sengoopta has pointed out, by the 1920s rejuvenation was more than merely a fad as scientists, journalists, physiologists, clinicians and novelists expressed enthusiasm for glandular science as evoking magical properties of the body.2 Initially, Haire attempted to sexually rejuvenate Brough by injecting a serum of bull’s testicles into him. According to Haire, Brough showed some improvement through this boost of sexual force.3 He began eating better, putting on weight, and sleeping well.4 Although Brough’s sexual performance was only temporarily restored, these other physiological improvements pointed to how physicians understood the effects of sexual energies on overall bodily health. With the problem of impotency still uncured, Haire

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2 Chandak Sengoopta, The Most Secret Quintessence of Life: Sex, Glands, and Hormones, 1850-1950 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 4, 70. Historian Elizabeth Watkins has indicated that women were largely excluded from the early rejuvenation craze. According to Watkins, ovarian therapy, beginning in the 1890s, was tied to the medicalization and pathologization of women’s reproductive bodies. See Elizabeth Watkins, The Estrogen Elixir: A History of Hormone Replacement Therapy in America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 16-17.
4 Ibid.
suggested that Brough undergo psychoanalysis which Haire himself could perform in an “amateur way.” Haire, therefore, drew on both physical and psychological methods for diagnosing impotency as an affective dysfunction that indistinguishably interwove body and mind.

Haire’s methods exemplify early twentieth century sex reformers and medical experts’ attitudes toward the body’s openness to material and psychic interventions in its composition and possible transformations. Brough, however, was not receptive to the idea of undergoing psychoanalysis, expressing his fears that it may, ironically, bring on insanity. Instead, Brough opted for physically altering the body’s parts in the hopes of producing sexual feelings. As a last resort, Brough requested Haire to perform a double vasectomy for two reasons: firstly, Brough believed that, given his former bout with insanity, it was irresponsible for him to risk the chance of procreation and secondly, he hoped the vasectomy would sexually rejuvenate him. Brough, therefore, turned to Haire for a physiological solution to his own perceived inadequacies to meet what sex reformers had propagandized as the eugenic and sexual expectations of white middle class manhood. In this sense, sex reform campaigns which shaped white middle class intimacies were more than mere ideology but had material bodily effects, like vasectomies, in the personal practices of those who measured their own marriages, sexual performance, and social obligations according to sex reform ethics. Brough’s impotency here can be conceived as not simply a problem of physical sexual performance but a matter of reconstituting the body’s emotional economy which was critical to overall bodily health, happiness, racial fitness, and national strength.

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
Haire’s choice of methods for medically treating Brough’s impotency and Brough’s own search for this treatment exemplifies how the importance of sexual feelings and energies inspired material reconstructions of bodies that undermined human/nonhuman distinctions.

In the moment that Haire injected the serum of bull’s testicles into Brough, human and nonhuman relations were redefined at the site of the potential to transform the material composition of bodies, engineer life, and mix human and nonhuman elements to produce affects. Haire’s tactics were situated in a transatlantic medical context where testicular transplants for sexual rejuvenation exemplified a concrete material reworking of bodies that drew inspiration from shared Anglo-American concerns over white middle class sexual energies. Haire was, in fact, aware of American medical research and procedures, mentioning to Havelock Ellis that “Lydston of Chicago has used testicles from criminals and people accidentally killed for the cure of Eunuchism, Eunuchoidism, and Homosexuality.”

At this time, G. Frank Lydston, a surgeon in Chicago, had been using the testicular material from dead bodies to rejuvenate older and younger men with failing testicles. Brough’s case, therefore, illustrates a wider transatlantic practice of subjecting bodies to material, especially sexual, reconstruction. In Haire’s correspondence with Havelock Ellis, he recounted other cases of sterilization. In January of 1922, Haire told Ellis, “I sterilized a woman by salpingectomy last week, and have a man waiting for a testicular transplantation as soon as I can get a testicle.” By 1922, sex reformers had succeeded in popularizing ideals of sexual

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8 Ibid.
intimacy, companionate marriage, and the importance of sexual pleasure for marital happiness.

Haire’s interest in performing sterilizations, testicular transplantations, and animal extract injections as part of his medical practice must be seen as one particular episode in an Anglo-transatlantic culture of flourishing endocrine research that intertwined the United States, Britain, and Central Europe as key sites for investigating possibilities to sexually rejuvenate similarly constituted Anglo bodies. Although endocrine research fostered communications and shared practices among scientists, sex reformers, and physicians between these nations, there were significant national conditions that shaped the constraints, stakes, and possibilities of such research. In the United States, there was an enthusiastic popular reception for sexual rejuvenation which integrally linked the possibilities for augmenting sexual energies in white middle class men to the highly corporatized, business, and consumerist ethos of imagined American identity.11 This particular social and economic distinction of the United States also played out in the popularity of sexual rejuvenation in the press which turned sexual energies, animal bodies, and medical procedures into commodities for capitalist consumption. Despite this, Harry Benjamin, a New York City physician, involved in sexual rejuvenation contended that the United States was marked by “puritanical complexes” as a country with a much more conservative sexual morality than Britain and Central Europe.12 Benjamin essentially complained that the American medical community failed to respect sexual rejuvenation as a medical practice.13 In fact, most rejuvenators were born in Europe, a leading area in this work. Haire’s sterilization operations, however, would

13 Ibid.
have been much more supported in the United States where state sterilization laws sanctioned the prevention of so-called ‘unfit’ births whereas sterilization laws continued to be debated in Britain. Within the institutional channels of sex research, sex reformers seemed to find a much more supportive climate in Britain and Central Europe whereas the United States was more distinctively marked by a popular craze for rejuvenation tied to a burgeoning consumer-capitalist economy.

In this climate, Brough’s grave concerns were tied to fears of threats to marriage, race, and civilization where impotency marked the physical symptom of declining male sexual energies. Haire’s mention of sterilizing a syphilitic woman also highlighted how eugenics and concerns over reproducing a fitter race had come to inform scientific and medical interventions in the body.¹⁴ Yet, I argue that Haire’s medical responses to Brough’s requests for treatment – injections and then sterilization – amounted to a physiological intervention in Brough’s body which treated his condition as an affective dysfunction. As such, Brough’s medical treatment under Haire’s guidance is an important moment in a chapter of medical history that inextricably interwove emotional and physiological normative constructions of the body. Brough’s treatments involved medical strategies for stimulating, redistributing, and altering the body’s flow of energies, emotions, and instincts. Haire’s treatment of Brough’s condition as a problem of sexual energies marks a historically specific episode in how early twentieth sex reformers’ attention to affects profoundly disturbed and challenged ontological distinctions between humans and nonhumans.

This story of Brough’s medical treatments for impotency is important for what it tells about how sex reformers provoked radical intimacies between human and animal bodies. In this chapter, I explore the specific historical dimension of how sex reformers’ politics of love drew on animal bodies as resources in ways that materially and scientifically constituted what I have been calling affective potential, that is, bodily capacities to experience a range of feelings such as instinct, energies, and emotions. As I have argued in previous chapters, these bodily capacities were tied to racial, sexual, and gender hierarchies that organized bodies and politicized intimacies. Moreover, I argue that this politics of love was manifested in physiology, animal experimentation, and psychoanalysis in ways that unraveled human/animal distinctions while privileging white middle class bodies as more ‘human’ than others by virtue of their entitlement to animal bodies as affective resources. To historicize what happened in the early twentieth century, I consider sex reformers’ turn to instincts, energies, and emotions as an important historical episode that presented new possibilities for re-conceiving human/animal relations.¹⁵ I show how ontological boundaries between the human and animal were both risked and defended through an affective politics to produce white middle class love, pleasure, and energies. This chapter attends to the entanglement of human and animal bodies in efforts to produce white middle class love. As I argue, this paradoxically drew together animal and human bodies in radical intimacies that mark both their kinship and their difference. These ontological intimacies, however, also remapped

¹⁵This presents a historical narrative in light of themes among animal studies, environmental studies, science studies, and feminist studies scholars who have turned attention to the ethical implications of rethinking human/nonhuman boundaries. See Jodey Castricano, ed. Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008); Nora Giffney and Myra J. Hird, eds. Queering the Non/Human (Aldershot, Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008); Stacey Alaimo and Susan Hekman, eds. Material Feminisms (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).
geo-political relations as the intimate ties of Anglo nations came together in the sexual remaking of the a presumed similarly constituted Anglo-middle class body that circulated between Britain, Germany, and the United States. While sex reformers cast the imperial and racial stakes in similar evolutionary terms, there were distinctions in the meaning of sexual rejuvenation for national identity. In Britain, anthropological and ethnographic conceptions of the Anglo-body’s racial history were deeply implicated in British imperial power whereas in the United States, such conceptions were integral to defending the nation’s internal frontiers.

Throughout this chapter, I draw on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s term becoming-animal to explain what happened in events like the injection of a serum of bull’s testicles into a human body.16 I use the term, becoming-animal, to highlight the disassembling, reassembling, and recombination of human and animal ontologies made possible by an attention to affects. For Deleuze and Guattari, the term ‘becoming-animal’ has important stakes for disturbing the ‘human’ as a fixed essence and, instead, showing both the construction of the ‘human’ and the possibilities for exceeding the ‘human’ by locating it within a flow of ontological fragments that assemble, disassemble, and reassemble. To this extent, Deleuze and Guattari’s work deterritorializes the ‘human’ by turning it into a collection of parts that can be detached, attached, and reattached to other bodies or worlds. By using the term ‘becoming-animal,’ Deleuze and Guattari situate the ‘human’ as part of an ontological process in the making or constitution of bodies which can edge it toward the

‘animal’. In this sense, multiple human capacities can be understood as the range of feelings from emotions, substances, and energies that can flow between human and animal bodies. For my purposes, Deleuze significantly cites affects as a domain of becoming, where affects, are moving and changing elements that redefine the parameters of a body’s extension and its capacities for entering into multiple worlds. Deleuze and Guattari use the term becoming-animal as part of a political and philosophical commitment to undermining the human subject as finished, complete, unique or superior. I tie the term becoming-animal, however, to the precise historical conditions of the early twentieth century insofar as it helps to highlight and historicize the radical intimacies between human and animal bodies that came into being through the rise of animal sex research and physiology. While these radical intimacies are close to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming-animal, I emphasize how these radical intimacies were not wholeheartedly embraced and cannot be celebrated or exalted. In fact, early twentieth century sex reformers pushed animal and human bodies closer to one another only in the paradoxical project of using this intimacy to further a complex and non-innocent white middle class affective politics in a moment of eugenics and empire. In doing so, I focus on a historically specific instance of becoming-animal where the possibilities for undermining human and animal boundaries were tailored, restricted, and limited to investments in producing white middle class love; a project which differentially marked the affective potential of animal and human bodies in terms of use.

Although the concept of becoming-animal has not been employed by historians, there is a prevalent historiographical theme of addressing human and animal relations through the

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17 Ibid., 252, 253, 255, 272.
18 Ibid., 256-257.
lens of emotions. Historians have focused on emotions, particularly compassion or sympathy, as the site that made possible new ways of rethinking the human/animal divide. A number of historians who have addressed nineteenth and twentieth century animal rights movements, animal experimentation, pet-keeping, hunting, and the exhibition of animals have situated these developments in sentimental culture and changing emotional ideals of what it means to be ‘human.’ Much of the historiography on human and animal relations can be divided into two themes: the first theme of animal bodies as symbolic images deployed to reinforce human political and social order and the second theme of ways that the human/animal divide has been configured and reconfigured over time through emotionally informed notions of kinship. My story of an early twentieth century episode of becoming-

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20 On the use of animals to display imperial power, civic pride, and class, racial, and gender status see Elizabeth Hanson, *Animal Attractions: Nature on Display in American Zoos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 97-98. Harriet Ritvo has also shown how the classification of animals reinscribed human social and political values. See Ritvo, *The Animal Estate;* Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). Some work on the vivisection debates have shown how the meaning of the ‘human’ was reconceived in terms of ethical and emotional
animal builds on and introduces a new narrative into both of these historiographical themes. I show that early twentieth century sex reformers’ interests in producing love provoked new animal and human intimacies which not only figuratively imagined a closeness to the animal but materially entangled animal and human physiologies in the efforts to engineer feeling. In doing so, I look to historicize affect in the context of specific early twentieth century scientific practices of blending animal and human bodies such as breeding experiments, sex research on animals to shape understandings of human sexual physiology, and the ties of the eugenics movement to agricultural science. This reworks the second historiographical theme in new ways. In addition, these material reconstructions of animal/human relations were tied to a larger affective project of upholding white middle class civilization by using animal bodies in research, medical operations, and new understandings of ‘human’ physiology.

In this chapter, I explore two sites of an amalgam of human and animal mixing where ontological separation unraveled and these bodies interpenetrated one another. Firstly, I consider the dismantling of the ‘human’ as sex reformers contributed to reconfiguring the relations to animals. See for example, Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).


22 Science studies scholar Sarah Franklin has drawn attention to the ontological stakes of biotechnologies in re-conceiving the human/nonhuman relations. Sarah Franklin, in particular, uses the term of mixing. See Sarah Franklin, *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
human body as an ecosystem of flowing chemicals, blood, and organs open to and potentially joined with animal parts and passions. The chapter then moves from dismantling the ontology of the ‘human’ to interrogating how animal experimentation mirrored and informed the ‘human’. In this second section of the chapter, I consider the significance of Darwinism in this period for enabling a translation between human and animal bodies in what Paul White has called an ‘evolutionary kinship.’ Apart from the popularized kinship to apes, I show how animal experimentation across a range of animals from rabbits to guinea pigs to sheep point to a greater depth in how Darwinism provoked a range of human/animal intimacies extending far beyond the seeming physiological similarities of humans and monkeys. These two sections highlight a process of becoming-animal in the early twentieth century that was informed by sex reformers’ interests in both the knowledge and consumption of animal bodies as affective resources.

I. Sexological Ecosystems: Sexual Physiology, Balancing Energies, and Navigating the Chemical Flows of the Body

When sex reformers addressed widespread cultural concerns over white middle class couples’ emotional lives, their campaigns to cultivate sexual instincts drew upon a developing conception of the body as a messy sexual geography. As sex reformers turned to the problem of how to shape instincts, energies, and emotions, they considered how the body’s physiology worked to produce such forces and, conversely, how these forces could also transform physiology. While Adele Clarke and Chandak Sengoopta have considered the early twentieth century as a key period where scientists optimistically looked to engineer life,

the project of engineering life also needs to be located in the context of sex reform campaigns on instincts, energies, and emotions. Because of the need to figure out the body’s physical apparatus to produce affects, sex reform, physiology, and endocrinology were inextricably linked in an emerging conception of the body as a loosely organized conglomeration of interactive parts. Historian Chandak Sengoopta has argued that hormones were not simply relegated to the laboratory or medicine but permeated early twentieth century Western culture as “the secret quintessence of life” in an age of “glandular magic.” Taking this argument further, sex reformers’ investment in physiologically producing their affects exemplified and contributed to a politically charged sexual geography, that is, a historically specific sense of the co-development of the world through the body. Thus, the relation and movement of tissues, chemical messages, organs, the flow of blood and semen, vaginal walls, blockages, secretions, uterine linings, testicles, and ovaries had ecological and political amplifications. While I argued in the previous chapter that environmental sciences and sex reform converged to position the body in dynamic relation with environments, I suggest here that sex reformer practices also dovetailed with developments in endocrinology whereby the hormonal body partook of the same dynamic ecological relations. Historian Adele Clarke has shown that between 1910 and 1963, “the human/nonhuman distinction is of decreasing

26 While Nelly Oudshoorn shows how the science of endocrinology materially constructed the sexed body in terms of a regulatory mechanism in the early twentieth century, this can be mapped onto Cynthia Russett’s insights into how early twentieth century ecology was tied to views of the gendered body as a metabolic system where male bodies were conceived as katabolic managers of energy and female bodies as anabolic managers. See Nelly Oudshoorn, Beyond the Natural Body: An archaeology of sex hormones (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 37-38; Cynthia Russett, “Chapter 4: The Machinery of the Body,” Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 104-129.
relevance to reproduction and genetic scientists as reproduction is more fully rationalized.”

In this section, I suggest that this conception of the body as an ecosystem undermined the boundaries of the ‘human’ by turning body parts into a site for relations with nonhumans.

What Adele Clarke has shown as the complex network of sex reformers, scientists, pharmaceutical industries, governmental institutions, and corporate funding sources had an Anglo-transatlantic dimension that wove the intimacies of these nations into the fabric of a common set of interests in reproduction, science, and the circulation of Anglo bodies. Yet, this cooperative network which formed through concerns over the affective condition of white middle class bodies was also internally differentiated by specific national circumstances. In the United States, there was considerable private financial support for research into reproduction for eugenic betterment which partly grounded the construction of a body as a sexological ecosystem in American economic, political, and social conditions. Wealthy industrialists, John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie both funded social hygiene and eugenics research which intertwined American capitalism with reproductive control and an international investment in securing a dominant white birthrate. While Clarke shows the growth of separate disciplines surrounding reproductive science, Chris Polge emphasizes the financial issues surrounding the study of animal morphology at Cambridge whereby the consolidation and diversification of disciplines could undermine existing areas of research.

These economic conditions which underpinned the production of the body as a sexological

27 Clarke, Disciplining Reproduction, 11.
28 Clarke, Disciplining Reproduction, 6-7, 17.
ecosystem were, in turn, fuelled by specific national political, social, and moral contexts wherein such research was invested with considerable importance for fuelling American imperial expansion and addressing what appeared to be a particularly acute problem of devitalized American businessmen.

The brush between human and nonhuman physiologies circulated in the international channels of the sex reform movement. In February of 1920, Margaret Sanger’s internationally recognized *Birth Control Review* published Gideon Diedrich’s article on “Biological Reasons for Family Limitation.” Diedrich not only addressed the body as a coordinated system of parts but grounded this conception of the body in evolutionary history, contemporary gender and racial politics, and nonhuman relations. According to Diedrich, early human ancestors selfishly pursued their own interests which explained the early history of sex as a process of cell-division rather than fusion between bodies.\(^{30}\) Diedrich claimed that “during the historical playful associations of ego-living units that they soon realized the rejuvenating, re-balancing, catalytic effect upon themselves by coming into close contact with each other.”\(^{31}\) In this sense, then, the body’s internal economy was hardly static but functioned as a momentum of distributed energies with differing levels of intensity and degrees of balance, harmony, or equilibrium with other elements of the body. Furthermore, Diedrich highlighted sexual forces, specifically sexual attraction, as an evolutionary force that transformed both the process of sex and human physiology. Just as we saw Marie Stopes identify heterosexual forms of plant sex as a distinguishing feature of higher organisms, so Diedrich suggested that the evolutionary development of a “copulating association” marked


\(^{31}\) Ibid., 18.
higher organisms.\textsuperscript{32} Observing a kinship between human copulation and the higher marine and land animals, Diedrich explained:

That a distinct copulating association between parent organisms has only been developed at such a late stage in the evolution of life also makes it clearly evident that its development must have been caused by some powerful attractive force within the selfish individual to draw the male and female parents together into such an association. Understanding what this force is will enable us to clearly understand the nature of sex attraction and sex passion.\textsuperscript{33}

Diedrich, therefore, looked to sexual attraction as an evolutionary force that transformed the physiological process of sex itself.

Diedrich’s article significantly argued that as sexual attraction brought organisms into relation with one another, it transformed the individual physiologies of those organisms. For example, Diedrich claimed that the mother developed a womb only as cells began to attach themselves to her body as a “parasitic habit of mammal embryos.”\textsuperscript{34} Describing the embryo as a parasite feeding off the tissues of the mother, Diedrich located this physiological development in the birth control politics of the period to argue that “no human society has any moral, ethical, or biological right to dictate to a mother when and how often she shall allow a parasitic embryo to feed in her womb.”\textsuperscript{35} To this extent, Diedrich framed pregnancy in ways that situated the embryo as both an organic intimately entwined entity yet also a foreign body that burrowed itself within the body’s internal economy. This introduced ambivalence between growth and parasitism at the site of how energies were distributed in terms of donors and recipients of life force and bodily matter.\textsuperscript{36} Far from discouraging

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} This suggests an early historical episode of what some scholars have seen as the material traffick of bodily matter in transnational networks of biotechnological developments, capitalism, and politics. See Catherine
motherhood, however, Diedrich used this notion of the parasitic embryo to exalt the importance of motherhood whereby it was “through Mother that all the civilizing and humanizing influences have been brought into the world.”\footnote{Diedrich, “Biological Reasons for Family Limitation,”18.} Diedrich not only situated voluntary motherhood as ‘civilized’ and more truly ‘human’ but simultaneously joined human and nonhuman physiologies insofar as mammals shared a similar birthing process.

In 1920, Diedrich’s article in the Birth Control Review told an evolutionary tale of a much wider transatlantic conversation on the moving sexual terrain of the body. While Diedrich’s story situated sex attraction and its transformative effects on physiology in the evolutionary past, sex reformers showed that these physiological transformations continued in their present. Marie Stopes’s correspondence with a number of physicians, sex researchers, eugenicists, and scientists shows how interests in sexual physiology were wedded to concerns over affective experience. Stopes corresponded with prominent British physiologist William Bayliss who had been involved in a famous anti-vivisection case where Bayliss was accused of breaking the law for experimenting on a dog that had already been subjected to vivisection. \footnote{On Bayliss and the vivisection case, see Lansbury, The Old Brown Dog.} Stopes consulted Bayliss on a number of occasions concerning scientific research, animal experiments, and the application of these findings to human bodies. \footnote{See for example, Marie Stopes to William Bayliss, 13 October 1920. Marie Stopes Papers, BL, London, Item 58482.} Stopes’s respect for Bayliss’s opinion seemed to be mutual given that he praised Stopes’s books, particularly her attention to the spiritual significance of sex. \footnote{William Bayliss to Marie Stopes, 3 August 1922. Marie Stopes Papers, BL, London, Item 58483.} Writing to Stopes in August of 1922, Bayliss described sex as “mutual love and trust between husband and wife.”

\footnote{Waldby and Robert Mitchell, Tissue Economies: blood, organs, and cell lines in late capitalism (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).}
and wife [which] is prolonged and intensified." In this same letter, Bayliss interwove the physiological and emotional, claiming that one of the objectives of sex was “the mere satisfaction of a more or less imperative demand for relief of accumulated secretion.” In his list of objectives, Bayliss included “the pleasure derived from the act itself” and “the supreme manifestation of love.” Drawing attention to how love or pleasure might physiologically appear in the body, Bayliss claimed that “there is perhaps also to be added the direct bodily or mental comfort, sometimes of importance. I like to believe that there is actual absorption of substance because it makes even more closer union.” Bayliss also, in fact, suggested a profoundly gendered physiological exchange claiming that “there may be more doubt as to the absorption by the man of any substance from his wife, but the skin of the penis is thin and delicate.” Bayliss, much like a number of other physicians and sex reformers, suggested that wives benefited more from the exchange and secretion of fluids or substance than husbands. In doing so, Bayliss pointed out a dynamic gendered physiological momentum manifested in “the supreme manifestation of love’ or this “closer union” which gendered the substances or fluids of exchange as well as imposing a patriarchal interpretation on the circuit of this flow.

Although physicians, physiologists, and sex reformers emphasized the physiological benefits of sex for women’s bodies in the context of feminist campaigns for insisting on the capacity and right to sexual pleasure for white middle class women, their attention to vaginal secretions ultimately endowed semen or male substance with magical, nourishing properties

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
while devaluing female substance, fluids, or contributions. This theme of the beneficial properties of semen for female bodies seemed to be widespread among physicians as seen across the range of Stopes’s correspondence. Well known for her authoritarian personality, Stopes took the opportunity to point out to Professor Arthur Thomson the flaws and lack of ingenuity in the paper he presented at a conference on “Problems Involved in the Congress of the Sexes in Man.” In January of 1922, Stopes told Thomson that he essentially only reiterated a view that she first put forward in 1918 when he acknowledged that artificial checks might “be the means of depriving the female of certain secretions which may exercise a far-reaching influence on her economy.”

By referring to the female body as an economy influenced by vaginal secretions, Stopes tied sex to the overall functioning of the body as a series of interactive parts which were permeated by sexual desire. Stopes indicated that she had insisted on the beneficial effects of the vaginal secretion of semen when she discouraged the use of sheaths in *Wise Parenthood.* Stopes’s bluntly told Thomson that his argument was weak because of its failure to address the “absorptive property of the vagina and elaborating a theory of the uterine absorption.”

Another physician, George Jones, corresponded with Stopes on this very subject of vaginal secretions, highlighting the instability of a body as it negotiated physiological functions and sexual desire. Writing to Stopes on December 13th in 1919, Jones referred to the nourishing properties of semen and how this could be facilitated by strategic sexual positions. Jones claimed that “the position in sexual intercourse most favourable retaining as much semen as possible in the deeper parts of the vagina, at once it is clear that the unpopular

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
knee elbow position is clearly the best, though its other disadvantages clearly outweigh this.\textsuperscript{49} In October of 1920, Jones wrote to Stopes of the revolutionary impact of hormonal research on the old sexual double standard that held women to a higher ideal of chastity while urging necessary sexual outlets for male desire.\textsuperscript{50} Jones’s interest in female sexual physiology was shaped by the early twentieth century climate of sex reform which had done so much to stress the importance of women’s affirmation of sexual instincts. This climate of sex reform was, in turn, shaped by scientific developments in endocrinology which could be used to substantiate sex reformers’ claims by offering hormonal evidence of women’s sexual desire. As Jones contended, “the advent of hormones has upset all this. If sexual excitement stimulates the production of useful Hormones then the growth & the development of women will be stimulated by such excitement just as much as in the case of men.”\textsuperscript{51} Jones took this a step further. He went on to profoundly disagree with too closely tying maternity to sexual desire, arguing that what was at stake here was not just passion or sexual excitement but bodily survival as “the fullest satisfaction and gratification that any & every woman needs & ought to have!!”\textsuperscript{52} Although a less dramatic change than the evolutionary formation of the womb, Jones nonetheless pointed out physiological transformations in female sexual physiology that emerged from the affective experience of sexual excitement.

While pointing out the prospects of emancipating female sexual desire through new physiological understandings, Jones not only clearly demarcated physiologies and bodily health along the lines of gender but he also entrenched heterosexual norms by tying female

\textsuperscript{49} George Jones to Marie Stopes, 13 December 1919. Marie Stopes Papers, BL, London, Item 58561.
\textsuperscript{50} George Jones to Marie Stopes, 3 October 1920. Marie Stopes Papers, BL, London, Item 58561.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
health to heterosexual intercourse. In discussing ‘Lesbian Love’, Jones highlighted the inadequacy of such love in physiological terms of the necessity of the vaginal secretion of semen. According to Jones, ‘Lesbian Love’ ‘gives them an orgasm and only their own internal secretions and no mate attraction or friendship. Homosexual relations cannot be as good as Heterosexual.’ While this was not a new view of female sexual satisfaction bound to heterosexuality, it became entrenched in emerging medical and scientific understandings of endocrinology, sex reform, and physiology.

Close associations and communication between scientists, physicians, and sex reformers on both sides of the Atlantic facilitated normative conceptions of a physiological scientific truth of the body bound to the privileging of heterosexual desire. American eugenicist, physician, and sex reformer, Robert Latou Dickinson wrote a Medical Manual that discussed “normal sex activity” in terms of the reciprocal relations between male and female sexual physiologies. Working on the Maternal Health Committee in New York City alongside prominent advocates of birth control and sex reform such as Margaret Sanger and Louise Bryant, Dickinson’s medical practice and views on physiology were shaped by the cultural context of the sex reform movement. Dickinson’s manual focused on providing physiological instructions for marital happiness through mutually satisfying heterosexual activity. These instructions highlighted gendered problems of sexual activity bound to middle class norms as well as “racial reasons.” As an obstetrician and eugenicist, Dickinson encouraged examinations for fitness whereby physicians would determine the

55 Ibid., 1.
eugenic fitness of potential couples for marriage and procreation. Dickinson’s manual took white middle class sexual morality as his point of departure by devoting attention to the importance of freeing women from sexual inhibitions and relieving male nervousness. While Dickinson assured men and women that masturbation was not a harmful activity, he warned against its excessive practice and focused on guiding men and women toward pleasurable heterosexual activity. He advised men that impotence and premature ejaculation could be due to nervousness while quick emission could be caused by a wife’s frigidity. As such, Dickinson highlighted specific sexual physiological effects in men that were produced by desires, emotions, or a distribution of energies. Similarly, in his advice to women, Dickinson urged physicians to allay women’s fears of childbearing and sexual inhibitions. Dickinson’s medical manual therefore pointed to the necessary emotional work that physicians were called upon to perform to enable women’s bodies to reach the full capacity for experiencing sexual pleasure. At a time when sexual pleasure was inextricably tied to marital happiness, love, and white middle class health, Dickinson’s manual exemplified the transatlantic convergence of biological sciences and sex reform in new understandings of relationships between desires, emotions, and physiology.

What sex reformers discussed as the wave-crest model mapped a reciprocal relationship between fluctuating levels of sexual desire and fluctuating gendered physiologies. To this extent, sex reformers suggested that sexual desire could be studied, observed, produced, located, mapped, and measured through a precise attention to
physiology. Historian and psychiatrist Laura Davidow Hirshbein has argued that the popularity of surgical rejuvenation in the early twentieth century characterized this period in terms of “struggles to map out what appeared to be essential qualities of masculinity and femininity (such as men’s intellectual powers and women’s domestic talents) onto specific organs.”

Havelock Ellis took a particular interest in mapping sexual desire among the women of the “educated class” in a paper on “The Menstrual Curve of Sexual Impulse in Women.” Ellis explained that this association between menstruation and sexual desire had first been raised in the eighteenth century but recently received considerable attention by medical authorities who disagreed on whether heightening of desire occurred immediately before or after the menstrual period. In his paper, Ellis gave Marie Stopes credit for the theory of two wave-crests which plotted the curve of female sexual desire according to precise times of the menstrual cycle. As sex reformers, like Ellis and Stopes, devoted attention to sexual physiology, they investigated physiological signs for producing and mapping sexual desire. As noted earlier in chapter two, Stopes suggested that the erotically skilled husband would adjust the timing of his sexual advances to female body’s wave-crests which ultimately joined the production of ‘married love’ to the delicate balance between physiology and desires. Both Ellis and Stopes’s projects were invested in augmenting white middle class sexual experience. Ellis pointed out that plotting the menstrual curve was intended to establish an “objective criterion of genuine organic sexual impulse, of a truly autoerotic nature, so far as possible independent (it can never be entirely independent) of all

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
those slight erotic stimuli by which in civilization men and women alike are solicited.”

Ellis, however, suggested that a specific curve also existed for ‘civilized’ men. By considering experiences of erotic dreams and masturbation, Ellis argued that he could “construct a menstrual cycle of sexual desire in man.”

Ellis’s interest in graphing the curve of male sexual desire circulated as part of a wider scientific and sexological agenda in transatlantic networks. In the United States, college-educated women’s sexual desires had also been the focal point of some studies, notably that of Katharine Bemont Davis. Like Ellis, Robert Latou Dickinson acknowledged that much work had already been done to map the curve of female sexual desire and turned to the problem of mapping a male sexual curve. Dickinson wrote to fellow eugenicist and leading American biologist Raymond Pearl in March of 1925 to express his anticipation of “your visit which will determine how best to dig out from my histories of the last forty years data on the sex life of women to match up with your remarkable curves for men.” In another letter to Pearl, Dickinson suggested the need for further research on male sex life which could be dealt with through a commitment to urological study. These studies which mapped the curves of male and female sexual desire presented a mathematical model, measurement, and illustration of affects as well as bodies in transition insofar as the curve itself was made possible by close examination of physiological effects. In other words, the curve represented fluctuating human physiologies in relation to others and the environment

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
68 Robert Latou Dickinson to Raymond Pearl, 18 May 1925. Raymond Pearl Papers, AMPL, Philadelphia.
as the material or empirical evidence which made it possible to map sexual desire. While Dickinson, Pearl, Ellis, Stopes and others abstractly identified sexual desire as a mathematical curve, this curve was an embodied set of coordinates that tracked the movements of a gendered, raced, educated body in accordance with varying levels of energies, intensities, and emotional experience.

Through their turn to specific human bodily parts as desire-producing mechanisms, physiologists, sex reformers, endocrinologists, and other medical experts relocated these parts in networks of nonhuman intimacies. Ironically, at a time when many of these experts situated their efforts to maximize energies in eugenic projects of pure breeding, they drew the human and nonhuman into closer intimate relations. While treating nonhumans as exploitable resources for augmenting white middle class energies, medical experts from physiologists to sexologists and sex researchers developed a normative concept of human sexual physiology through studies of nonhumans. In 1894, Havelock Ellis’s work, *Man and Woman: A Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters* situated the relationship between human sexual physiology and emotional experience in an evolutionary narrative. For Ellis, the development of ‘civilization’ was manifested in bodily transformations toward more highly sexually differentiated bodies which related to one another in the form of heterosexual attraction. Ellis mentioned how secondary sexual characters evolved to augment sexual attraction for the purpose of reproduction while insisting that the “womanly qualities of the woman which are attractive to the man, the manly qualities of the man which are attractive to the woman.”

eventually became entrenched in the science of endocrinology when in the 1930s endocrinologists claimed that male and female hormones existed in all human bodies, albeit in differing degrees. However, from the mid-nineteenth century up until the 1920s, scientists who experimented on the sexual organs of animals suggested that the gonads were the source of sexual differentiation which, through the removal and transplantation of ovaries and testicles, scientists pointed out the surgical manipulability of sex.

Ellis had specifically suggested that with increasing stages of evolution, bodies became more sharply differentiated along the lines of gender. Yet, the view of a point of origin, primary, or ‘natural’ mix of male and female qualities in one body can also be found in a number of sex reformers’ suggestions on how to cultivate white middle class intimacies by encouraging a feminine element or ‘maternal’ love in both sexes while also acknowledging that male, egoistic, proprietary, impulses also existed in both men and women. To this extent, sex reformers’ construction of intimacy also returned to this sense of a foundational gender ambiguity while, at the same time, specifically grounding its possibilities for cultivating the ‘feminine’ or ‘maternal’ to evolutionary, racial, and middle class goals.

What Ellis construed as an evolutionary momentum towards heterosexual attraction, did not merely occur among static or unchanging physical bodies. Isolating the evolutionary development of the ‘civilized’ woman’s pelvis, Ellis situated human sexual physiology in a network of hierarchical relations between the ‘civilized,’ the ‘primitive,’ and the nonhuman. Ellis maintained that “The pelvis has developed during the course of human evolution; while in some of the dark races it is ape-like in its narrowness and small capacity, in the highest
European races it becomes a sexual distinction.”\(^{70}\) In *Man and Woman*, Ellis employed Darwinian tales of human and animal kinship to explain how the female pelvis morphologically evolved towards wider proportions to allow for the births of larger headed infants.\(^{71}\) This suggested the evolutionary superior reproductive bodies of ‘civilized’ woman considering that Ellis was influenced by nineteenth century phrenology and its connections between intelligence and cranial capacity. Ellis also indicated that the higher development of the pelvis implied an evolution in emotion whereby “The persons best adapted to propagate the race are those with large pelvises, and as the pelvis is the seat of the great centres of sexual emotion the development of the pelvis and its nervous and vascular supply the greater heightening of sexual emotions.”\(^{72}\) Consequently, the ‘civilized’ woman’s reproductive morphology and emotional experience ambivalently signified both her evolutionary superiority and intimacies with nonhuman others. Ellis suggested that specific physiologies allowed for the production, maximization, and refinement of affective experience while his discussion of the growing attraction to qualities of the opposite sex also pointed to desire as an agent in physiological transformations.

Throughout Ellis’s study on man and woman’s physiologies, animal bodies repeatedly surfaced both in the context of explaining the normative body and in the context of differentiating the bodies of ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ others as animal-like. What early twentieth-century physiologists, sex reformers, and endocrinologists helped to construct as the normative body was pieced together out of fragments of nonhuman, non-white, lower class, and colonized others. At the outset of Ellis’s work, he established the criteria for

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\(^{70}\) Ellis, *Man and Woman*, 54.
\(^{71}\) Ibid., 66.
\(^{72}\) Ibid., 67-68.
judging the evolutionary significance of the secondary sexual characters in ‘civilized’ man
and woman by using the comparative standard of first of all, the infant and secondly, the
combined and undifferentiated bodies of apes, ‘savages’ and senile humans.\textsuperscript{73} When Ellis
discussed the man and woman’s metabolism as a “vital process” that brought together the
sciences of chemistry and physics, he emphasized blood as the most important fluid in this
process.\textsuperscript{74} At the site of blood composition, Ellis traced how the human and nonhuman
literally flowed together in the evolving varieties of blood composition from the ‘primitive’
to the ‘civilized’.\textsuperscript{75} Ellis claimed that out of the three elements of plasma, white corpuscles
and red corpuscles, “the plasma is the most primitive, and the red corpuscles the latest to
appear in the course of evolution.”\textsuperscript{76} In other words, blood materially and physiologically
inscribed the evolutionary status of the body and attested to the physiological possibilities for
‘civilized’ bodies to engage in primitivism. Ellis, in fact, suggested that the blood’s very
composition marked an evolutionary and biological aristocracy in that “Nature indicates her
own aristocrats nowhere more clearly than in the blood.”\textsuperscript{77} Taking the example of female
sexual physiology, Ellis used the rituals surrounding menstruating females in ‘primitive’
races of New Guinea, Guiana, Portugal, and Germany to reinforce his claims that there were
racial physiological differences corresponding to stages of evolution.\textsuperscript{78} Ellis, therefore,
construed ‘civilized’ blood as an evolutionary buildup of human and nonhuman bodies
entwined in one another in blood’s composition. As such, he situated ‘civilized’ bodies in

\textsuperscript{73} Ellis, \textit{Man and Woman}, 21.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 196.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 14.
the paradoxical ontological relation of asserting kinship with nonhuman and ‘primitive’ others who were part of this blood and asserting evolutionary superiority over these same others.

With the aim to enlighten his readers on human sexual physiology, Ellis privileged the white middle class Anglo body as the model for this normative construction yet entangled its functions with those of its allegedly evolutionary inferiors from nonhumans to ‘primitive’ others. By comparing animal and human physiologies, Ellis’s work suggested that human and nonhuman were intimately bound together as kin. This presumption of material, historical, and evolutionary ties between humans and nonhumans then enabled translations across animal experiments and human bodies. At one point in a book devoted to the subject of *Man and Woman*, Ellis discussed the gender-specific physiology of women’s larger thyroid gland in the context of thyroid glands in dogs, cats, sheep, goats and deer. Ellis also drew gender and racial parallels between the larger thyroid gland in women compared to men but very large in “Negroes” which separated black men from normative male physiology. These comparisons had a long history of associating women, racialized others, and animals as inferior and subordinated others in white ‘civilized’ patriarchal societies. However, these comparisons had a historically specific meaning in the context of early twentieth century developments in physiology, endocrinology, evolutionary theory, and eugenic breeding experiments. In this climate, Ellis’s association of the human and nonhuman materially intertwined their bodies and bound them to projects of investigating sexual desire and reproduction.

79 Ibid., 233.
80 Ibid., 231.
Ellis’s work on *Man and Woman* depicted entangled human and animal sexual physiologies which also served as ground for their psychic and emotional connectedness. When Ellis turned to the subject of affect in *Man and Woman*, the evolutionary bonds across human and nonhuman physiologies held implications for emotional bonds insofar as body parts could be attributed to the production of affect. In a chapter on “The Affectability of Women,” Ellis drew upon animal comparisons to illuminate gender differences in emotionality. According to Ellis, “We know by experiments on the lower animals that all the manifestations of emotion may be called forth even in the absence of the cerebral hemispheres which are the basis of consciousness, so that it is superfluous to suppose that emotion is created as well as registered in the brain.”

Ellis’s point in referring to animal bodies was to highlight his claims that emotions were inextricably defined by physiology. Consequently, Ellis’s work on *Man and Woman* which looked to elucidate their respective sexual physiologies can be considered alongside his interests in love and sexual desire insofar as physiology could be a gateway to the production of affect. In fact, Ellis referred to American psychologist, William James’s theory on emotion as the perception of physiological states which, to Ellis, established the connection between mental life and the “corporeal frame.”

However, in maintaining the importance of this connection, Ellis entangled human and animal bodies in their emotional, mental, and corporeal states.

Ellis’s *Man and Woman* not only knotted together human and animal sexual physiologies but it also knotted complex shared yet different American and British national histories. In a British context, Ellis’s assertion of racialized morphologies drew on former

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81 Ibid., 298.
82 Ibid., 299-300.
nineteenth century scientific claims of phrenology, a longer history of blood associated with aristocratic pedigrees, and the rise of ethnographic and anthropological narratives of British whiteness on an imperial stage. While Ellis’s *Man and Woman* posited a common typology of white middle class health, the meaning of racialized morphology drawn with comparisons to animals had a specific meaning within American histories of slavery, “one-drop rule” laws of racial classification, miscegenation laws, and racial segregation. Although Ellis’s construction of the bodies of *Man and Woman* must be situated in the context of early twentieth century bonds formed through the attention to the global condition of Anglo bodies, his invocation of human/animal proximities particularly at the site of emotions must also be placed in specific political histories. Given that Ellis and his work circulated in both American and British contexts, the implication of drawing on animals resonated in an American context with the period’s racial violence of lynching campaigns equating uncontrollable animal passions with black male bodies. Within England, however, white middle and upper classes primarily associated animality with the lower classes. These distinctions also resonated with the position of animals and breeding in Britain’s national political history whereby Britain had a long tradition dating back to the eighteenth century of breeding animals as intertwined with aristocratic breeding, purity of lineage, and class status.

As I have argued throughout this section, physiologists, sex reformers, and sexologists found common ground in investigating normative human sexual physiology to manage the body as a conglomeration of parts for producing affective experience. Conversely, as these professionals committed to elucidating sexual functions constructed a model of the human body, they also highlighted how affective experience had evoked
physiological transformations over time. What emerged as a predominant, scientifically legitimated model of human sexual physiology was shaped by racial, gender, sexual, and class politics whereby white middle class Anglo-Saxon bodies were constituted as the highest order with the most refined levels of affective experience. As I have suggested, this introduced a paradox at the heart of scientific and politicized understandings of human sexual physiology in that it depended on both the proximities of kinship and the distances of evolutionary superiority in relation to nonhuman others. When physiologists, sex reformers, and other medical experts devoted attention to specific human physiological components, they located these components in networks of the body’s own system of fluids, organs, and energies, its evolutionary history, and its kinship to animal sexual behaviours. I suggest here that through their research, campaigns, and political projects, a group of middle class professionals and activists contributed to a conception of the body as a sexological system which veered toward the process of ‘becoming-animal.’ This sexological system marked a deterritorialization or dismantling of the body as a complete or closed unit insofar as it came to be construed as a series of interactive parts which could be dislocated and relocated in evolutionary, nonhuman, and machinic networks. However, insofar as human sexual physiology came to depend on the animal experimentations and its links to nonhuman ancestral origins, this ambivalently position what stood for human sexual physiology at the crossroads of both asserting kinship relations while also asserting evolutionary superiority. To this extent, physiologists and sex reformers joined in constructing a normative human sexual physiology that was neither entirely ‘human’ nor entirely ‘animal’ but looked to a becoming or a metamorphosis that particularly relied on the movement of affect or the
management of energies which could productively engage both sides of this human/animal dichotomy.

II. “This Preposterous and Bestial Fusion of Human and Ape Stock”: Becoming-Animal in the Crossings of Sex Reform, Physiology, and Sex Research

Charles Darwin’s work profoundly influenced the generation of early twentieth century sex reformers but his initial claims of human and animal kinship grew uncomfortably closer when sex researchers and physicians turned to animal parts in their aims to sexually rejuvenate exhausted white middle class bodies. While a number of scholars have considered animals in capitalist networks of their consumption as food and their labour use for production, I would argue that early twentieth century concerns over white middle class energies also involved the capitalist consumption of animals as affective resources. One sign of this affective consumption of animal bodies can be seen in the late 1910s marketing of animal organ extracts by the pharmaceutical industry. As a number of professionals and intellectuals turned attention to the importance of sexual energies, they physiologically and affectively interwove human and animal bodies so that ontological boundaries became virtually indistinguishable. Perhaps most surprisingly in a climate of a rising eugenics movement, human and animal sexual physiologies were increasingly interlocked. On October 17th in 1925 at a meeting of Marie Stopes’s Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress, Dr. M. Deddow Bayly addressed the gathering to express his grave

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83 A number of scholars have shown how the history of scientific interest in animal bodies has been tied to their use as economic resources. Susan Jones, for example, has highlighted the origins of the veterinary science in the concern over the economic uses of animals. See Jones, Valuing Animals. Sarah Wilmot has considered the receptivity to using artificial insemination on animals in terms of capitalist interests. See Wilmot, “From ‘Public Service’ to Artificial Insemination,” 411-441.
concerns over sexual rejuvenation experiments. Bayly’s speech on “Voronoff and His Rejuvenation Experiments” warned against Dr. Serge Voronoff’s work on using monkey organs to revitalize human bodies. Voronoff had a respectable international reputation as the Director of the Department of Experimental Surgery in France whose technique of grafting ape glands was being taught to surgeons all over the world. For this express purpose, Voronoff established a monkey farm in Grimaldi to supply monkey body parts while appealing to Belgium, British, Spanish, and French colonial governments for legal protection of chimpanzees. What Darwin had traced as the close connections between primates and humans became in the early twentieth century a concrete material reconfiguration of the physiological boundaries between them that took kinship to a radically new level.

In the venue of the 1925 CBC meeting, birth controllers and eugenicists did not uncritically or unproblematically embrace animal kin but ambivalently looked to the promise of animal kinship for invigorating white middle class sexual energies while also seeking to protect the human from degenerating into the animal. To an audience deeply concerned with the purity of racial stock, Bayly invoked the spectre of “this preposterous and bestial fusion of human and ape stock on the future of the race.” Bayly worried about the future offspring that would result from these glandular transplantations, citing the case of Voronoff’s work on grafting the ape Norah with a human ovary and impregnating her with human sperm. Also

85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
deeply disconcerting to Bayly, Voronoff proclaimed to have achieved success in rejuvenating a number of men in the last nine years. Such success, Bayly claimed, should lead a woman to question whether “her husband’s power for becoming a father of her children is due to his possessing ape’s glands in addition to his own.” Finally, Bayly suggested that while everyone could agree on the desirability of grafting ape glands on homosexual persons “to render these unfortunate people normal,” he cautioned “we must ensure that the cure is not more dangerous than the disease in so far as the integrity of racial life is concerned.” While Bayly and Voronoff might disagree on whether the risks of ‘bestial fusion’ were justifiable, neither of them questioned the exploitative use of animal organs for augmenting white middle class sexual vitality. Such use capitalized on evolutionary insights of human/animal kinship without necessarily implying that kinship entailed egalitarian relations. In other words, to risk the ‘human’ by mixing with the animal was a dense site of racial, gender, and sexual politics in the early twentieth century context of birth control movements, eugenic campaigns, sex research, and millennial concerns over the future of white middle class civilization.

Bayly’s speech at the CBC meeting exemplifies how sex and reproduction in this period proved to be a contested ground of ontological politics. Bayly’s fears of a future atavistic species of amalgamated ape and human stock must be situated in climate of animal and sex research which profoundly disturbed and eroded ontological boundaries. To some extent, Bayly’s warnings were too late. The relationship between early twentieth century physiology and sex reform redefined the human body as a becoming-animal, powered by

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89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
monkey organs, informed by animal experiments, and sometimes injected with extracts of animal testicles. What can be identified as a historically specific emergence of a process of ‘becoming-animal’ was grounded in an early twentieth century ambivalent affective orientation to kinship where the use of animals simultaneously risked and reaffirmed the ‘human.’ In this period, the projects to sexually invigorate the ‘civilized’ body which put a premium on affective experience veered this body toward the edges of its boundaries in a process of ‘becoming-animal.’ Neither fully human nor fully animal, the ‘civilized’ body that consumed animal energies, organs, and fluids emerged as a system of human/nonhuman parts working together to produce affective experience. While in the previous section I explored how sex reformers engaged with physiology to shape an image of the body as a moving sexual terrain, this section points to how these disembodied parts could be relocated in intimate networks with animal parts.

Within early twentieth century intellectual circles of birth control, eugenics, zoology, agricultural and environmental sciences, the popularity of Darwinism introduced an array of nonhuman relations which could be explored to inform human bodies. David Starr Jordan and Vernon Kellogg, two leading American academic figures in the eugenics movement, discussed the impact of Darwinism on positioning the human in an extended family of nonhuman relations. In their co-authored work, Evolution and Animal Life, which they published in 1907 prior to the founding of the American Eugenics Society, Jordan and Kellogg pointed out Darwin’s revolutionary impact in that:

We no longer think of the human race as a completed entity in the midst of Nature, but apart from it, with a different origin, a different motive, a different destiny. Man is like the other species, an inhabitant of the earth, a product of the laws of life; his characters are phases in the long process of change and adaptation to which all organisms are subject.  

By considering how Darwinism contributed to a conception of the human race as incomplete, Jordan and Kellogg suggested that the boundaries of the human had been opened, rendered permeable, vulnerable, and extended into the nonhuman. Acknowledging this kin, however, Jordan and Kellogg imagined a new extended family tree while also trying to retain and differentiate the human. Jordan and Kellogg insisted on both the convergence and divergence of the human and nonhuman insofar as “the kinship of man with the lower forms, and his divergence from them through the operations of natural laws, forces and conditions more less perfectly understood, all this must now be taken as settled by the investigations and discoveries of Darwin and his coworkers and successors.”  

By Jordan and Kellogg’s account, recognizing this kinship was made possible through Darwinism. Although neither Jordan nor Kellogg identified as sex reformers, their discussions of evolution bridged the gulf between human and animal in terms that show the intercrossing sex reform and what Jordan and Kellogg deemed bionomics or the study of “organic evolution.” As I have discussed in previous chapters, sex reformers’ emphasized instincts, sexual energies, and emotions as connective forces that positioned bodies in intimate relations with each other, the environment, and the cosmic realm. In arguing that humans and animals were connected at the site of their very physiologies, Jordan and Kellogg drew upon this same way to explain the human/animal kinship. Undermining reason as a 

94 Ibid., 466.
peculiarly human trait, Jordan and Kellogg suggested that “nerve impressions” were sources of knowledge for organisms whereby the choice between two possible options in the realm of a sensorium amounted to a form of reason.\(^9^5\) Just as prominent sex reformers argued for the importance of instincts, energies, and emotions for civilization, Jordan and Kellogg located feeling as critical to the organism’s survival in the broader narrative of the evolutionary struggle of lower forms of life. In considering the human and nonhuman relations, Jordan and Kellogg emphasized feeling as a common bond wherein “if an organism is not to act, it cannot feel, and the intensity of its feeling is related to its power to act.”\(^9^6\) These powers of an organism to feel as the ground for survival and action in the world resonated with profound cultural concerns over the future of a civilization where white middle class sexual energies seemed to be depleting to dangerously low levels. Jordan and Kellogg, both involved in the eugenics movement shaped their account of human/nonhuman relations in the context of anxieties over white middle class sexual energies and sex reform campaigns for cultivating sex instincts.

What I showed in previous chapters as sex reformers’ ethical opposition to egoism and its association with property, oppression, and immaturity, also emerged in Jordan and Kellogg’s differentiation of animal instincts as either egoistic or altruistic. Much like sex reformers’ texts on marriage and parenthood, Jordan and Kellogg classified courtship, reproduction, parenthood and nest-building as altruistic whereas play, strife, feeding, and self-definition constituted egoistic instincts.\(^9^7\) In chapter three what playground reformers, ‘modern’ educators, and child psychologists defined as the ‘play instinct’ also arose in Jordan

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 427, 443.
\(^{96}\) Ibid., 427.
\(^{97}\) Ibid., 432.
and Kellogg’s work to highlight the kinship to animals. This kinship went far beyond the popular connection to apes given that “the play instinct is developed in numerous animals. To this class belong the wrestlings and mimic fights of young dogs, bear cubs, seal pups, and young beasts generally.” While Jordan and Kellogg’s association of children’s play with animals can be seen as part of classifying children in an evolutionary inferior position, this can also be regarded as an affective crossing of the human/nonhuman ontological divide. At this time an array of experts from entomologists like Vernon Kellogg to sex reformers like the Russells, suggested that in moments of play, children and animal bodies were affectively entwined whereby purportedly lower instincts and energies persisted and joined these bodies despite their seeming ontological, physiological, and evolutionary distance. Drawing attention to these affective connections, early twentieth century sex reformers and scientists suggested that energies joined humans to their nonhuman kin. As such, early twentieth century campaigns and cultural discourses on the cultivation or re-enactment of these energies can be seen as a historically specific framing of ‘becoming-animal’ marked by an increased degree and intensity of human and animal intimacies.

What sex reformers identified as the transformative effects of instincts, energies, and emotions like love on the course of civilization also shaped and were shaped by the kinds of evolutionary narratives that were told in the early twentieth century. Henry Fairfield Osborn was a prominent figure in the eugenics movement and the head of the Natural History Museum in New York City from 1908 until 1933. As historian Donna Haraway has indicated, taxidermist, Charles Akeley’s dioramas at the Museum of Natural History during

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98 Ibid., 435.
Osborn’s tenure blurred the lines between human and animal and nature and culture. Such displays at the Museum offer perhaps a visual site of Osborn’s own conception of the emergence of the ‘human’ through physiochemical processes that connected all forms of life in an evolutionary narrative of development. Osborn gave a series of lectures at the Washington Academy of Sciences in 1916 which charted the very formation of animal and human bodies as the evolutionary momentum and material effects of energy. Osborn suggested that his view of evolution departed from traditional accounts in that “the evolution of life may be rewritten in terms of invisible energy, as it has long since been written in terms of visible forms. All visible tissues, organs, and structures are seen to be the more or less simple or elaborate agents of the different modes of energy.” In this sense, Osborn’s story of evolution can be seen as a historical example of the way affects were constructed in the early twentieth century as critical historical, political, economic, social, and millennial forces which both joined and, over time, also separated ontologies. Osborn’s evolutionary narrative destabilized the fixity of bodies and, for that matter, also their seeming ontological separation by showing how the indiscriminate movement of energies intimately linked bacteria, climatic factors, animals, and plants in an evolutionary family bonded by affects.

Writing in 1916, Osborn did not simply tell a story of the human past but pointed to an embodied, continuous, and felt history of evolution that drew together past, present, and future tenses at the site of affective experience. Osborn’s version of evolution as physiochemical processes that shaped bodily forms can be seen as a history that defined the

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‘civilized’ body as a ‘becoming-animal’ in its relation to the past, its present, and its future as part of this ongoing momentum of energies. According to Osborn, “adaptations in the motions necessary for the capture, storage, and release of plant and animal energy continue to control the form of the body.” To this extent, Osborn located both animal and human bodies in the flow of time marked by energies whereby these bodies were effects of forces that ultimately joined them in their origins. Such a view of evolution undermined the any certainties of human uniqueness or ontological separation from the world and, instead, suggested how all organisms interpenetrated one another in an intricate web woven by physicochemical actions and reactions. Osborn framed his interpretation of evolutionary history as a series of physiochemical processes in the context of scientific developments in the United States where scientists increasingly looked to explain vital processes in terms of chemistry and physics. What was human or nonhuman could not be guaranteed in light of how energies had moved over time to effect and form these bodies.

What I referred to in the previous section as an early twentieth century shaping of the perception and experience of bodies as sexological ecosystems was given a historical and scientific grounding in Osborn’s story of evolution. Osborn not only discussed how existing bodies flowed into one another in the movement of energy but cast a critical lens on the organism’s sexual functions as open to and interpenetrating with nonhuman kin. In other words, Osborn suggested the organism itself was in evolutionary flux, unstable, and connected to nonhumans in its most intimate parts. Osborn’s evolutionary narrative mentioned endocrinology’s advances by pointing to the chemical messengers, internal secretions, endocrine organs or ductless glands as the physiological ties of the organism to

101 Ibid., 152.
the world at large. These physiological aspects marked both material connections to the world because of their function in producing sexual energies. As part of a network of eugenicists, birth controllers, evolutionary theorists, and other scientists, Osborn’s framing of evolution partook of an intellectual climate deeply concerned with the value, production, and channeling of sexual energies. Osborn situated the developments in endocrinology within his energetic account of evolution, maintaining that:

all these inhibited characters may be restored successfully transplanting or grafting with some part of the body the ovary or testicle, either from the same or another individual thus proving that in both sexes the secondary sexual characters are dependent upon some internal secretion from the ovaries and testes.\(^{102}\)

Furthermore, Osborn’s conception of how bodies were interrelated by energies seemed to inform his consideration of endocrinology’s importance, particularly in its empirical evidence from animal experimentation. Osborn’s formulation of the human organism’s sexual functions as ties to the world can be considered a historically specific early twentieth century framing of what Deleuze and Guattari have referred to as being plugged into the environment as desiring-machines.\(^{103}\) Osborn’s attention to endocrinology in the context of an evolutionary history guided by energies constructed the body as an incomplete, interdependent, and relational unit that was being continuously shaped and reshaped in the connections it formed.

The stories sex reformers and scientists told about human/nonhuman evolutionary entanglements in the early twentieth century had a physical, ‘real’ concrete material presence in animal experimentations. Evolutionary stories did more work than merely imagine

\(^{102}\) Osborn, *The Origin and Evolution of Life*, 76.

connections across space and time. These stories informed how sex reformers and scientists both experienced and thought of affective connections that contributed to new early twentieth century forms of mixing bodies that can be described as ‘becoming-animal.’ For both sex reformers and scientists, sex was a key site of investigation where human and nonhuman sexual parts were intertwined. In the early twentieth century, scientists investigated animal fertility, infertility, estrus cycles, and genetic transmissions to inform human sexual physiology and reproductive practices. Sarah Wilmot and Chris Polge have specifically cited the Cambridge Research School which experimented on animals to develop artificial insemination.\(^{104}\) In the American context, Barbara Kimmelman has emphasized the connections of the American Breeders’ Association to eugenics and political ties to the Country Life Movement which intertwined the breeding of more perfect forms of plant and animal life to strategies for breeding fitter human bodies.\(^{105}\) The American Breeders’ Association, in fact, lasted from 1903 to 1913 when it became the American Genetics Association. Through early twentieth century breeding experiments, scientists quite literally intertwined the material and sexual compositions of human and animal bodies.\(^{106}\) Although Deddow Bayly had expressed reservations about Voronoff’s experiments, these reservations

\(^{104}\) Wilmot, “From ‘Public Service’ to Artificial Insemination,” 411-441; Polge, “The Work of the Animal Research Station, Cambridge,” 511-520. Also, Helen Blackman has shown that the Cambridge School was a leading national centre for studies in animal morphology which dominated British zoology in the 1870s and shaped some of the country’s leading scientists in the field. See Blackman, “The Natural Sciences and the Development of Animal Morphology in Late-Victorian Cambridge,” 71-108.

\(^{105}\) Kimmelman, “The American Breeders’ Association,” 163-204.

\(^{106}\) This literal mixing of human and animal bodies in early twentieth century breeding experiments can be seen in the work of Il’ya Ivanov’s human-ape hybridization research through the technique of artificial insemination. Kirill Rossiiianov has shown that Il’ya Ivanov’s work with inseminating female chimpanzees with human sperm eventually led to a request to use native women at a Congo hospital for experiments involving the sperm of chimpanzees. Rossiiianov shows the international context of Ivanov’s work which generated interest among American primate researchers even as his work aroused anger among the KKK and led some of his American correspondents to discourage a lecture tour in the United States at the time of the Scopes Trial. See Rossiiianov, “Beyond Species,” 295, 299, 302.
suggested how closely human and animal bodies had seemed to interpenetrate one another in popular and scientific venues. Carlos Paton Blacker, a British psychiatrist, eugenicist and birth control advocate, wrote to Marie Stopes in 1931 of the promising research being undertaken by Dr. John R. Baker. Blacker informed Stopes that Baker conducted experiments on guinea pigs which showed the power of a particular spermicide.\textsuperscript{107} Baker’s work was also mentioned at a birth control meeting in London which suggests how sex reform projects to shape human reproduction drew upon animal bodies.\textsuperscript{108}

Although Baker’s study of animal sexual practices can be said to have re-inscribed the heterosexual and gender norms of ‘civilized’ human societies, it also did more than that. Through Baker’s attention to the evolutionary classification of the sexual practices and the degree of gender differentiation of a range of nonhuman others, he also situated normative human sexuality and perversions within this web of nonhuman others. By sorting out sexual perversions and normative heterosexuality in terms of lower and higher organisms, Baker also ‘naturalized’ heterosexuality and gender differentiation as marks of triumphant fitter species in the struggle to survive. Baker’s study on \textit{Sex in Man and Animals} was published in 1926 while he was working at the Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy at Oxford University’s Museum. In this study, Baker drew on a vast array of nonhuman bodies and sexual practices to argue that secondary sexual characters which differentiated gender and underpinned heterosexual attraction were also instrumental to natural selection.\textsuperscript{109} Early on in his work, Baker cited heterosexuality as a product of the evolutionary development of

higher organisms. Charting this development, Baker claimed “No doubt the power to
develop without fertilization was the earliest condition. Then, sexual reproduction having
evolved, the ability to develop without fertilization was taken away by natural selection, so
that the advantages of sexual reproduction could not be escaped.”

By locating heterosexuality and its reliance on gender differentiation, beauty, and
attraction within the momentum of evolution, Baker situated human sexuality as a practice
held in common with higher organisms over time. Research in the sex hormones of animals,
for Baker, easily translated across the higher organisms. By 1926, when Baker published his
work, significant advances in endocrinology had developed in an international context of sex
research and animal experimentation. In 1889, Charles Brown-Sequard had announced that
his mental alertness and vigor were substantially improved through the injection of animal
testicles. This marked a pivotal moment in the history of sexual rejuvenation and what came
to be called organotherapy. However, the beginnings of endocrinology are generally traced
to Britain where, in 1905, Ernest Starling first coined the term hormone. It was in early
twentieth-century London that one of the first laboratories for studying the ovaries
developed. In the early twentieth century, scientists turned to animal experimentation for
investigating castration, transplantation, fertility, the estrus cycle, and infertility. At the time,
Baker placed endocrine research along animal and human planes, arguing that “the interest of
these glands for us is that the testis and the ovary of the higher animals secrete hormones,
whose functions is to call forth the development of the characters of the appropriate sex.”

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110 Ibid., 19.
111 Baker, Sex in Man and Animals, 65.
Upon discussing the effects of castration on a young boy, Baker drew this human body into the network of nonhuman sexual physiologies, observing that:

in just the same way castration in other mammals results in a reduction of the penis and various glands, in the accumulation of fat, in greater growth by certain of the long bones and in loss of the sexual instincts. The tendency to fight other males and to copulate with females in heat is never developed or is lost.\textsuperscript{112}

To illustrate this point, Baker used a number of examples such as castrated sheep which failed to develop horns, castrated frogs without the instinct to croak or clasp the female in copulation, and castrated cocks unwilling to fight other cocks, crow, or copulate with the hens.\textsuperscript{113} This array of disparate nonhumans indicated the range of nonhumans bonded by sexual experiences to their human kin.

When Baker turned to the subject of the removal and grafting of ovaries and testis, he suggested that how the effect of glands on the production of sexual energies transformed animal and human gendered physiologies in similar ways. Baker claimed that ovariotomies in women resembled those in mammals.\textsuperscript{114} Juxtaposing the effects of ovariotomies in birds and in ‘primitive’ women, Baker discussed the woman’s growth of hair at the corners of her mouth and the decrease in sexual instinct and the bird’s growth of plumage and loss of sexual instinct.\textsuperscript{115} Using the example of grafting on rats, Baker also suggested that gender physiology depended on the glandular production of sexual energies. Baker contended that grafting an ovary onto a castrated male rat or guinea pig would ‘feminize’ it.\textsuperscript{116} The visible bodily markers of this transformation included the castrated rat or guinea-pig’s growth of

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 66-68.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 70.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 69-70.
\textsuperscript{116} Baker, \textit{Sex in Man and Animals}, 76.
large teats, lactation, a female mating and suckling instinct, and the stagnation of male organ growth.\textsuperscript{117} Conversely, when testis were implanted in ovariотomized female rats or guinea-pigs, male copulating organs and male sexual instincts develop, female sexual organs fail to develop, and the coat becomes coarse like the male coat.\textsuperscript{118} As Baker’s lens narrowed on animal sexual behavior and grafting, the line between human and nonhuman receded as heterosexuality and gendered bodies emerged as sites of the functioning of ontologically interchangeable parts.

In many ways, Baker’s work positioned affects as pivotal to the course of evolution insofar as increased gendered differentiation, particularly to effect beauty, and encourage heterosexual practices depended on the force of sexual attraction. In doing so, Baker relegated same-sex attraction and ambiguously gendered bodies to the realm of primitive, lower forms of life. Indeed, Baker identified there were important lessons to be learned from ‘sex-intergrade pigs’ and hermaphrodite ‘freemartin’ calves which exemplified “a tendency to sexual abnormality is certainly inherited in mankind.”\textsuperscript{119} According to Baker, the human anatomy of an abnormal individual resembled that of intergrade pigs and goats so that “it is reasonable to conclude that they are of similar in origin.”\textsuperscript{120} However, rather than use examples of hermaphroditism and sexual perversion to interrogate heterosexual norms, Baker suggested that “the important point is to prevent the birth of sexually abnormal individuals; and all who are not steeped in bigotry will admit that married people who have produced an abnormal individual or who have abnormal relations should be strongly encourage to practice

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 87-90.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 90.
contraception.” In this sense, Baker exemplifies how work in zoology on animal sex which entangled human and animal physiologies also entangled domains of zoology and sex reform.

Baker’s work was situated in an early twentieth century intellectual climate where questions of how to produce affects undermined human and nonhuman distinctions. Far from an anomaly in his time, Baker was part of an internationally recognized field of experts whose research drew the human and nonhuman into increasingly intimate contact. In August of 1930, a number of these experts gathered in London for the meeting of the Second International Congress for Sex Research. The delegates were scheduled to meet at the headquarters of the British Medical Association House in Tavistock Square where they would hear a range of papers that brought animal bodies into the pressing conversations over human sexuality. The topics of the scheduled presentations included hormones, birth control, venereal disease, testicles, sterility, children’s sexual development, hermaphroditism, and evolution. Several papers focused on the sexual behavior of animals such as turkeys, guinea-pigs, hens, and rabbits to inform understandings of human sexual physiology.

Just as scientists like Baker and Voronoff looked to grafting as the interchangeable sexual parts between animals and humans, this interchangeability where physiology and affects were bound together also carried implications for the psychical activity in animals. Professor C. Ceni, a presenter at the 1930 sex research congress in London, proposed to discuss “Experimental Studies on the Transformation of the Sexual Instinct into the Maternal Instinct in the Female and in the Male.” Ceni’s paper essentially placed turkeys on the

\[121\] Ibid. 
proverbial Freudian couch, arguing that there was a transformation of the repression of sexual instinct and stimulation of maternal instinct in the turkey. This is evidence of a site of scientific experimentation that corresponded to a cultural phenomenon of the exaltation of both men and women’s capacities for mother-love which I considered in my argument on sympathetic connectivity in chapter two. While discussing psychical activity in the turkey, Ceni also grounded psychical activity in the physiological functioning of the turkey’s endocrine glands thus suggesting visible material evidence of psychical sexual energies. Ceni’s paper is one example of how the disassembling and reassembling of the human and nonhuman sexual parts in animal experimentation also scrambled their ontologies. On the one hand, sex researchers’ observed the potentiality of animal parts to fuel human sexual energies while, on the other hand, human psychical activity could be attributed to animals that sexually and physiologically functioned in similar ways through endocrine glands.

For European, British, and American sex reformers, endocrinologists, physiologists, and sex researchers, the boundary-transgressions of animal and human sexual physiologies through scientific practices provided a common forum for also transgressing national boundaries. Yet, these early twentieth century white middle class experts and intellectuals mixed animal and human bodies with an acute awareness of the limits and possibilities presented within their particular national social and political contexts. Despite cooperative alliances, these researchers and sex reformers were also shaped and differently constrained by national conditions such as a stronger and better established anti-vivisection movement in

124 Ibid.
Britain. In the United States, the vivisectionists come to pathologize the anti-vivisectionists as suffering from a mental disease of zoophil-psychosis, named by American neurologist Charles Loomis Dana.¹²⁵ To this extent, Dana suggested that sympathy could be pathologized where obsessively directed toward animals, particularly where women held more compassion for animals than for children. This association of an unstable, irrational sympathy with animals drew upon patriarchal designations of women as hysterical, over-emotional, and often in the forefront of anti-vivisection movements. In the United States, American capitalism allied with vivisectionists, particularly through the Rockefeller Institute as a center for vivisection. In contrast, British vivisectionists tended to be supported through academic or institutional channels rather than private corporate funding. This, in fact, also exemplified the differences in the development of zoos in the United States as tied to corporate investments whereas, in Britain, zoological gardens were typically linked to academic institutions as research sites.¹²⁶ Sex reformers both cultivated a community of like-minded individuals interested in engineering new possibilities for animal/human intimacies and worked within the constraints of nationally specific ethical, economic, and scientific contexts.

Worlds of sex reform and science converged not only in how scientists like Ceni, Voronoff and Baker gazed at animal bodies through the lens of white middle class normative values but also in how sex reformers drew upon animal bodies to shape sex reform politics. Thus far, this section has suggested that sex researchers’ conclusions took the form of both powerful fictions that narrated the meanings of animal sex in the context of evolutionary

¹²⁶ Hanson, Animal Attractions, 3, 7.
narratives that told the story of racial advancement, heterosexuality’s triumph, and kinship across human and nonhuman worlds. Such fictions, however, also took on visible concrete material forms where human and nonhuman matter intercrossed in the practices of cutting, grafting, and breeding in the efforts to investigate physiological productions of affect. As sex reformers engaged with and contributed to the changing world of scientific developments in zoology, endocrinology, and physiology, they drew animal bodies into the matters of human intimacies. Although prominent sex reformer and novelist, H.G. Wells, is primarily known for his imaginative stories of science fiction, his fictional character, the English physiologist, Dr. Moreau was not so very different from Voronoff, Baker, and even Norman Haire. In Wells’s *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, the protagonist, Edward Prendick gets stranded on an island where he encounters the Beast People, creatures of half human and half animal forms, which have been surgically created by Dr. Moreau. In the early twentieth century context of endocrine research, animal experimentation, and sex reform, Wells’s story, like the framing of evolutionary narratives, pieced together multiple strands of the worlds of sex reform and science which Wells himself moved between. Wells, in fact, had studied with zoologist, Thomas Henry Huxley, who was also known as Darwin’s bulldog for his vigorous defence of Darwinism in the face of theological opposition. To this extent, Wells’s formulation of a narrative exposing the fragility of human/animal boundaries had some basis in the ways Darwinism had extended the boundaries of the human family. Wells’s life as novelist, student of zoology, and sex reformer exemplifies how the worlds of science and sex

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reform were entangled in the fictions and material forms of an early twentieth century reconfiguration of human/nonhuman ontologies as a ‘becoming-animal.’

Naomi Mitchison, another novelist, who was part of the same circle of British sex reformers surrounding H.G. Wells, imagined worlds of porous human/animal boundaries that went beyond Wells’s Moreauvian theatre of surgical fusions. Mitchison, a socialist and feminist activist, took the maternal body as a crucible for the mixing and gestation of such hybrids. Instead of conceiving of a fusion of already born animal and human bodies, Mitchison’s work looked to the emergence of such forms which interrogated the very concept of origins, births, and evolution. Although Mitchison wrote her novel, *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* in 1963, her story drew upon a scientific climate that shaped her early twentieth century involvement in sex reform. Mitchison tells the story of Mary, a communications expert, who makes trips to distant worlds where she endeavours to communicate with different forms of life such as Martians who communicate through the sensations of their sexual organs and caterpillars who employ an auditory-based mode of communication. In the novel, Mitchison’s heroine, Mary, and the other explorers, a team which includes mathematicians and geologists use experimental animals for grafting experiments. As Mary narrates her story, she explains “I got it across to the dogs agitated.” Mitchison’s own views on marriage and motherhood emerge in the novel through this imagined world of Mary’s many children of multiple fathers. Mitchison was shaped by the early twentieth century feminist framings of Darwinism and eugenics in an imagined world of female sexual selection. This emerges through the character of Mary who makes reproductive choices in

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129 Ibid., 51–55.
130 Ibid., 52.
the selection of fathers or scientific methods of fertilization; in one case, Mary decides to become the human host of a grafting experiment with alien tissues and, in another case, she decides not to terminate her conception of a part-Martian child. Mary, in fact, treats her reproductive body as an experimental gestational host when her concerns of mating with a Martian which resonates with Mitchison’s own earlier involvement in early twentieth century sex reform concerns over eugenics, emotion, and hybridization. Mitchison’s provides a fictional construction of her own earlier concerns of birth control and reproductive decisions when Mary contemplates the birth of her child with the Martian, Vly:

If this activation resulted in a living haploid what would it be like? Probably small, female, infertile. The brain? The body? What right had I to create this entity? I knew it could never be normal, but could it be happy? Could it love? Could it be loved? By me? No doubt the thing could be stopped not in the usual way with complete safety and certainty, but somehow. Yet would not this be interrupting an interesting and perhaps valuable experiment?  

In Mitchison’s fiction, this theme of questioning the ontological boundaries between humans and animals could also take on mythic forms such as in her earlier 1952 novel, *Travel Light*. Throughout the novel, Mitchison’s protagonist, Halla, consistently renounces her connection to being human. In *Travel Light*, Halla is abandoned shortly after her mother dies and her father remarries. To protect Halla, her nurse Matulli takes the form of a bear and raises Halla among the bears but, eventually, turns Halla over to the care of the dragon, Uggi, who promises to raise her in the “principles of dragonhood.”  

Mitchison’s work introduces the question of the extent of environmental compared to biological influence on shaping being where Halla insists on her kinship through bearish qualities, feeling like a

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131 Ibid., 64.
dragon, and consistently expresses her hatred for human heroes and knights.\textsuperscript{133} Through Halla’s ability to communicate with a series of mythic characters as well as animals and the Marob Christians, Mitchison explores the possibilities of ontological crossings. These ontological questions, however, are mediated through Mitchison’s own particular political investments in feminism, socialism, and sex reform. Mitchison raises socialist themes through the example of the dragons’ industrious collecting and saving of treasure which is squandered by heroes and knights but renders economics and mathematics as integral to knowledge within dragon culture. At one point, Mitchison invokes a Christian figure of the All-Father as a Wanderer who proclaims that the future hinges on how treasure is used.\textsuperscript{134} Through the lens of Halla’s separation from human society, Mitchison raises feminist questions of socially constructed gender roles that form barriers toward relationships based on partnership, mutual work, and egalitarianism. Towards the end of \textit{Travel Light}, Mitchison suggests that being raised in non-human worlds has shaped Halla that introduces a tension between her human female form and her inability to socially identify with expected gender roles, leading her to question whether she would not prefer to live in a cave or a den rather than a small house.\textsuperscript{135} A Marob Christian, Tarkan Der, who considers marrying Halla, in fact, wonders “what was she then, what at all was she, Halla, travelling friend, his helper, what was she?”\textsuperscript{136} Tarkan Der is initially puzzled over the fact that he senses Halla as different as a Godsgift:

\begin{quote}
and yet he had seen her cook and clean; she had washed his shirts for him, after the way of women. She did not do any of these things well, as a girl should who had been brought up in a careful
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 12, 23, 24, 26, 31, 124.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 57.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 128-129.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 135.
household by a good mother, and he knew all that, and when he was going to marry her he had
weighted it and found it did not matter to him at all.\textsuperscript{137}

Throughout the story, Mitchison invokes the All-Father’s advice to Halla, to “travel light” as
both advice that suggests relinquishing material possessions as well as established norms of
ontological being that could provoke barriers to an ontological wandering between worlds.\textsuperscript{138}

Much like \textit{Memoirs of a Spacewoman}, Mitchison insists on the capacity of feeling to
transcend ontological barriers and to communicate with other worlds which also allows for a
metamorphosis into different types of being.

In early twentieth century birth control clinics, physicians and sex reformers
repeatedly transgressed human and nonhuman boundaries. Deeply concerned with what I
have called affective potential in human bodies, physicians and sex reformers drew upon
animal bodies as affective resources both through literally mixing animal extracts in human
bodies and by applying insights into animal sex to human sex. From animal bodies, sex
reformers and physicians developed tactics to be used in shaping and maximizing human
sexual intimacies. This seems to have been a fairly common and accepted practice. As we
saw earlier, Haire performed what could be likened to the chemical operations of a Dr.
Moreau where animal testicular extracts were injected into human bodies. Haire also
conducted sterilizations based on evidence derived from experimentations on rats.
Developing contraceptive techniques through animal bodies, Haire’s sterilization procedures
on some women could be seen in light of a process of becoming-animal. Haire’s medical
practice was not unlike Moreau’s experimental space for shaping new hybrid bodies.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 57.
Confiding in Havelock Ellis, Haire indicated “I am at present trying to sterilize about a dozen women by a course of hypodermic injections of human semen. It has been done successfully in rats.”  

Quite likely Stopes had heard of Haire’s tactics and grew suspicious of these procedures. In September of 1923, Marie Stopes wrote to physiologist and renowned vivisectionist, William Bayliss, to inquire whether he knew of any successful animal experiments on sterilization by injecting male semen into a female. Stopes’s question arose because she had heard of a doctor practicing a contraceptive technique involving six injections of a husband’s semen into the arm of the wife. Stopes suggested that if there had been evidence of this success on animals then it would give the medical practice on humans scientific legitimacy. Both Stopes and H.G. Wells supported the aims of the Research Defence Society which organized its members in opposition to anti-vivisection campaigns. Stopes, a pioneer of the birth control movement, a sex advice expert, and an authority on contraceptive practices turned to zoological texts to shape her understanding of human sexual physiology. On March 31st of 1920, Stopes wrote to Professor Hill that she had been researching the time of gestation and uterus retraction in common animals. Stopes brought human and animal bodies into the same field of vision for investigating human sexual reproduction. She told Hill that she had an interest in tigers, lions, wolves, foxes, leopards, pumas, apes, chimpanzees, other monkeys or any “nice truly wild and graceful animals.” What Stopes found to be frustrating gaps in the investigations into

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141 Ibid.  
142 Marie Stopes to George Jones, 23 October 1922. Marie Stopes Papers, BL, London, 58561.  
144 Ibid.
animal sexual reproduction, she suggested also amounted to gaps in understanding human sexual reproduction. She confessed her amazement “to find gaps in the knowledge of about fertilization and the earliest stages in the higher animals. Is it true or is it merely that I do not know where to look, that the first divisions of human embryos, apes, and so on, are really not known?”

While Hill affirmed that these facts were largely unknown, he appropriately directed Stopes to F.H. Marshall’s well known and authoritative text on gestation. Marshall’s work which became the recognized standard text on physiology was filled with examples of animal reproduction which suggests that human sexual physiology was only constructed through the intrusive gazes into the intimacies of their nonhuman kin.

By the time the National Birth-Rate Commission met in Britain in 1920, animal sex had gained sufficient attention from sex reformers, sex researchers, and other scientists to intrude upon national conversations on the advisability of birth control for national welfare. At 2:30 in the afternoon on January 16th 1920, J.C. Bond offered evidence to the Commission in support of birth control for the purpose of ensuring racial quality and controlling human life which hitherto “has been largely left to chance adjustment under the sway of emotional impulse.” Bond advocated birth control on the basis that, without it, human communities were at the mercy of “a life and death struggle with nations which have taken adequate steps to promote the welfare of their young citizens and by so doing to safeguard the future of their

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145 Ibid.
race."\(^{148}\) Invoking sex and reproduction into the sphere of national politics, it seemed unlikely that this was a place for animal sex to be mentioned. Yet, Bond’s evidence to the Commission referred to the studies on the sex glands of both man and animals which ontologically bound them in the sexual functioning of their parts. Bond stressed human and animal similarities in the development of secondary sex characteristics such as hair growth and tone of voice which could be attributed to how sex glands affected the entire organism.\(^{149}\)

While Bond’s testimony began with the problem of the unruliness of emotional impulse, he suggested that investigations of animal sex glands looked to the physiological production of emotions in both humans and animals. Describing the secretion of sexual matter in human bodies, Bond claimed that “it is this secretion which so largely affects the welfare of the individual and is associated with the development of those secondary sex characters of the body and those emotional attributes of the mind which we regard as characteristic of the male and female sex.”\(^{150}\) Although Bond gave his testimony at a national hearing on the value of birth control for Britain, Bond’s speech also showed how these concerns reached beyond Britain to the pressing issue of white middle class health and the reach of endocrine research across national boundaries. Bond’s specific example of the effects of nervous strain and mental shock on the thyroid gland suggests that concerns over white middle class neurasthenia, overwork, and devitalization shaped sex research agendas.\(^{151}\) Furthermore, he noted that American and other observers have shown “the

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\(^{148}\) Ibid.
\(^{149}\) Ibid.
\(^{150}\) Ibid.
\(^{151}\) Ibid.
influence which powerful emotion exerts on the suprarenal glands.” Bond’s observation exemplifies how sex research on animals was informed by and shaped the construction of what I have called affective potential which highlighted the greater sensitivity and emotional capacities of white middle class bodies. Bond’s testimony to the National Birth-Rate Commission suggests that human/nonhuman intimacies were facilitated by the prominent attention turned to emotion, sex, and reproduction as matters of political, scientific, and social concerns.

In the early twentieth century, it was possible for sex reformers and zoologists to find an ontological meeting ground between the human and the animal. As endocrinologists, sex researchers, evolutionary theories, sex reformers, and scientists closely examined the physiological mechanisms of the production of sexual energies, the more closely they investigated sex glands the more the line between human and animal receded. What the first section of this chapter explored as the joint contributions of scientists and sex reformers in framing the body as a sexological system, the second section took up as the available parts that could be reassembled, scrambled, and reattached in new ontological combinations between animal and human parts. From Jordan, Kellogg, and Osborn’s evolutionary narratives to the Dr. Moreau like experiments of Voronoff, Baker, and Haire, this period can be considered an important historical moment of human/nonhuman kinship as a ‘becoming-animal.’ Throughout this section, I have shown how endocrinology, evolutionary narratives, animal experimentation, and birth control methods simultaneously used invoked kinship while also maintaining human superiority in terms of the use and interrogation of animal bodies. As scientists and sex reformers were particularly concerned with sexual reproduction

152 Ibid.
and eugenics, the term of ‘becoming-animal’ highlights sex as a domain where animal and human parts were intertwined. However, sex reformers and scientists also drew together animal and human ontologies without the intention of making this an egalitarian kinship but an effort to use animal bodies in ways that benefited and challenged the ‘human’ without allowing it to collapse into the ‘animal’ and, conversely, to inform studies of animal behavior through the lens of human social values without enabling the ‘animal’ to gain full consideration as ‘human.’

Conclusion

What scholars have considered to be an era of profound faith in glandular science describes the climate that sex reformers and scientists jointly constructed by imagining affective potential through the human uses of animal parts as sources of sexual energies. In this period, the popularity of endocrinology can be attributed to its possibilities for probing the potential inherent in bodily matter for producing energies and emotions. Physicians, scientists, sex reformers, sex researchers, and zoologists worked within and helped to shape a white middle class research agenda that ambivalently embraced animal bodies as sources for restoring white middle class energies. As an array of white middle class intellectuals turned their attention to the possibilities for engineering vitality, energies, and emotions, they shaped an affective project which introduced new sexual and physiological linkages between the human and the animal. While H.G. Wells’s Island of Dr. Moreau presented a fictional space grounded in the material realities of how human and animal bodies bonded in ‘real’ spaces

like Haire’s clinic or Voronoff’s monkey farm, Bertrand Russell’s *Icarus; or the future of science* presented the utopian possibilities for how physiologically producing emotions might form the basis of a new international order. Although Russell’s millennial vision of a utopic state offered an exaggerated view of the possibilities of endocrinology, this vision held up a distorted mirror of the existing connections between love, politics, and turning the body into a physiological machine. Russell’s vision, perhaps, was a propos to the turn-of-the-century faith in animal experimentation. According to Coral Lansbury, scientific optimism in animal experiments posited a new role for the physiologist who “Like Dr. Moreau he had only to learn the intricacies of the animal machine to be able to fabricate new and more complex machines from the living tissue and become the creator of a second genesis.”\(^{154}\)

In Bertrand Russell’s imagined future world, what was nature and what was culture were increasingly blurred in a political order based on ductless glands, secretions, and the physiological production of love. In *Icarus*, Russell suggested that physiologists wielded extraordinary power through their discovery of secrets to producing emotions. Russell considered what this might mean for shaping a utopian political order. He suggested that advances in endocrinology were significant because they showed “the possibility of controlling the emotional life through the secretions of the ductless glands.”\(^{155}\) For Russell, this discovery held prospects for shaping future citizens and strategies of governance. He pointed out that:

> It will be possible to make people choleric or timid, strongly or weakly sexed, and so on as may be desired. Differences of emotional disposition seem to be chiefly due to secretions of the ductless glands, and therefore controllable by injections or by increasing or diminishing the secretions.\(^{156}\)

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\(^{154}\) Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, 154.


\(^{156}\) Ibid.
In this millennial vision, Russell imagined emotions as the very substance of social and political order. Russell conceived of the importance of physiology through the lens of what this science could yield for maximizing energies, intensifying emotional experience, and determining which kinds of emotions were produced. Perhaps also influenced by the enthusiasm over endocrinology, Russell imagined a shift in power from traditional political rulers to “an international secret society of physiologists [who] could bring about the millennium by kidnapping, on a given day, all the rulers of the world, and injecting into their blood some substance which would fill them with benevolence towards their fellow-creatures.”\(^{157}\) Through the physiologists, this political regime would be built on the management of glands, secretions, and flows of bodily fluids in the efforts to produce desirable emotions, notably love. So that the physiologists would not exploit their power, Russell suggested that “the physiologists would first have to administer the love-philitic to themselves before they could undertake such a task.”\(^{158}\) Although Russell failed to acknowledge it, this biologization of politics and politicization of biology was largely indebted to the animal bodies that contributed to endocrine knowledge. To this extent, Russell’s new international order reconfigured ‘culture’ through the ‘natural.’ By positing such a future, Russell drew on the emergence of new ways of intervening in bodily matter that treated animal and human ontologies as malleable, fluid, and bonded as kin. Russell’s interest in such a world of emotional possibilities pervaded the mutual relations between sex reform and science which drew the human and the animal closer together through practices

\(^{157}\) Ibid., 61.
\(^{158}\) Ibid., 62.
such as animal extract injections, animal sex experiments, and treating the human
reproductive body as a sexological ecosystem of distended parts.

This chapter has discussed the ontological stakes of a sex reform politics of love that
looked to physiologically engineer affective potential while such interest in affective
potential also informed research agendas. What I have considered a historically specific
episode of a Deleuzian ‘becoming-animal’ highlights a materialized, concrete shaping of a
subjectivity caught in the interstices of being-human and being-animal. While Deleuze and
Guattari cite affects as the mode through which these becomings are facilitated and bodily
boundaries are challenged, reconceived, and recombined, I show that ‘becoming-animal’ is
particularly relevant to understanding the early twentieth century when white middle class
intellectuals focused much of their attention on the transformative effects of affect such as
vitality, sexual energies, and emotions. The fact that this attention coincided and drew upon
scientific developments that ambivalently looked to maximized the affective capacities of the
‘human’ through the ‘animal’ points to the early twentieth century as an important period for
introducing new human/nonhuman intimacies. As I have shown, the crossings of sex reform
and endocrinology also point to the historically specific materialization of these
human/nonhuman intimacies in the literal mixing of human and animal bodies through
animal extract injections, the ways of navigating human sexual physiology through
understandings of animal bodies, and the integration of animal and human bodies through
political investments in white middle class energies. While not identical to the optimistic
Deleuzian philosophy of ‘becoming-animal’ as a radical critique of the ‘human’ subject, how
sex reformers, sex researchers, scientists and physicians jointly constructed a ‘becoming-
animal’ shows both the possibilities of affective connections and their politicization. For early twentieth century white middle class intellectuals, intimacies with animals across evolutionary narratives, birth control technologies, and laboratories registered the same ambivalences of proximity and distance as the attraction of primitivism, the exaltation of the child’s ‘savage’ state, the ties to Christianity while turning to the occult, and the attraction to ‘nature’ while breeding for eugenic purity. To this litany of ways that sex reformers construed love in ways that both guarded and risked the boundaries of white middle class ‘civilized’ bodies, this chapter has introduced the materialized and physiological ways that human and animal became ambivalently intertwined in the efforts to engineer affective experience.
Conclusion

A small dinner party of academics including an Editor, a Psychologist, and a Medicine Man convened and awaited the arrival of their colleague, a Mathematician, who had been involved in mysterious experiments of time travel. The host of the dinner party was well aware of the Mathematician’s seemingly radical views that geometry had been founded on a misconception with lines having no real existence. The Mathematician believed that there had been a mistaken faith in geometry as an objective and true measurement of space. The Mathematician not only disturbed certainties in the conception of space by contending that this was a largely imaginary construction but time was also subject to similar misconceptions. In an earlier conversation with the host of the party, the Mathematician had contended that “There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of Space, and the fourth, Time.” Such views had led the dinner party’s host to assume that the Mathematician’s tardiness might be explained by a possible adventure into exploring the fourth dimension. When the Mathematician arrived at the door, he was dishevelled, covered in debris, and possessed a wild look in his eyes, entering the room determined to find and feast on meat. He proceeded to tell his colleagues that he had visited the future.

What that future looked like presented a point of departure in H.G. Wells’s 1895 novel, *The Time Machine* for commenting on what it meant to tread on the precarious edge of the virtual in an age of uncertainties over biologically reproducing the future. In doing so, Wells’s *The Time Machine* exemplifies the tenuous boundaries between the ‘real’ and the

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2 Ibid., 4.
3 Ibid., 19, 27.
‘unreal.’ He imagined the future through the questions of eugenics, sex, birth control, socialism, and marriage which shaped his involvement in transatlantic sex reform networks. At the crossroads of these networks, Wells is one example of how national boundaries appeared artificial as concerns over bodies, evolution, science, sex, and economics tracked relationships that exceeded these boundaries. Wells was, in fact, both personally and politically involved with leading birth control activists on both sides of the Atlantic; having an affair with Margaret Sanger, defending Sanger to Marie Stopes, and becoming one of Dora Russell’s confidantes after her divorce with Bertrand while also supporting Dora’s projects in ‘modern’ education and birth control. Much like Wells’s protagonist, the Mathematician/Time Traveller, sex reformers engaged in projects that seized on the present moment as one that elided temporal divisions of past, present, and future where the stories of Darwinian ancestors and natural selection merged with eugenic possibilities for sexually determining future types.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, sex reformers were key participants between the 1890s and 1920s in radicalizing the domain of intimacy where energies, sex instincts, and emotions were considered integral to the making and remaking of worlds. As historians have noted, sex reformers highlighted the importance of cultivating sex instincts and particularly mutual sexual pleasure as the key to marital happiness. Even more, sex reformers insisted on an ethics of love that underpinned their campaigns, promising a future of harmonious social and political relations. However, as I have shown, sex reformers’ claim to an ethical project of producing more love in the world reconstructed gender, racial, class,
and sexual hierarchies along the lines of specific bodily capacities to achieve the physical, mental, and spiritual experience of love or what I have termed affective potential.

This dissertation has shown how new approaches to connecting with the world emerged in the early twentieth century through a sex reform politics of love, invested in cultivating white middle class sexual energies as the key to upholding ‘civilization.’ As sex reformers grounded their vision of a utopian world based on love, their imaginings of such a world were tied to a concern for securing white middle class leadership of the future through emotional ties of love that would curb resistance, conflict, and challenges to such authority. In light of sex reformers’ promises of a more loving future, their politics of love must be considered by asking who would mix what Bertrand Russell called the love-philtre in *Icarus*? And, who would get to administer it? In the case of Wells’s Time Traveller, the questions we might ask are: who has the capacity to time travel and does the Time Traveller possess a kind of affective potential linked to mobility, communication, and the actual making of the future which depends on colonizing the domain of intimacy? What the Time Traveller reveals about the future presents an important opportunity to reflect on how sex reformers like Wells radicalized intimacies as the ground of a present politics of love invested in shaping the future but also mired in the past and present constructions of race, class, gender, and sexual hierarchies.

In Wells’s *The Time Machine*, the Time Traveller’s body affectively apprehends its movement through temporal registers, highlighting the connective force of feeling to transcend past, present, and future. To his colleagues at the dinner party, the Time Traveller

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seeks to explain his experience by focusing on the feeling of such travel. He tells them, “I am afraid I cannot convey the peculiar sensations of time travelling.”\(^5\) However, it is precisely through this domain of feeling that the Time Traveller tries to relate his experience. He describes the experience in terms of “gaining velocity,” “the palpitation of night and day,” and “the jamming of myself, molecule by molecule into whatever lay in my way; meant bringing my atoms into such intimate contact with those of the obstacle.”\(^6\) Wells’s Time Traveller is an example of what I called an affective compass of white middle class bodies, which moved in metropolitan zones in search of encounters with racialized, ‘primitive’ and lower class others. Here, however, the Time Traveller highlights the temporal as opposed to geographic momentum of white middle class bodies seeking to augment, cultivate, and enhance their affective potential.

The Time Traveller’s mobile body is implicitly a white educated middle class body which Wells situates amid the cultural concerns over declining devitalized, neurasthenic white middle class men. When the Time Traveller discusses the distinctive species of the future, the Eloi and the Morlocks, he sympathizes with the Eloi as seemingly more ‘human’ than the Morlocks. In his description of these two species, Wells remaps what I discussed as a white emotive imaginary of the present onto the future. Wells discusses the Eloi and the Morlocks within the frame of class, racial, and sexual relations where the Eloi, “the beautiful race,” pursue pleasure and comfort as Upperworlders while the Morlocks provide the labour and service for such a lifestyle as they inhabit the Underworld.\(^7\) According to the Time Traveller, the Eloi have frail but shiny white limbs, wear brightly coloured robes, and

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\(^5\) Wells,\textit{ The Time Machine}, 19.
\(^6\) Ibid., 19, 20.
\(^7\) Ibid., 49.
intertwine their speech with laughter. Wells’s description of the Eloi strikingly recalls the cultural concerns over neurasthenic white bodies. The Time Traveller observes that upon seeing the Eloi, “I thought of the physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins, and it strengthened my belief in a perfect conquest of Nature.”

He hoped that “after the battle comes Quiet. Humanity had been strong, energetic and intelligent, and had used all its abundant vitality to alter the conditions under which it lived.” While the Time Traveller hoped that the concerns over neurasthenia may not matter in the future, his later discussion of the danger of the Morlocks who sometimes feast on the occasional Eloi, showed that “Man [as represented by the Eloi] had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labours of his fellow man, had taken Necessity as his watchword and excuse, and in the fullness of time Necessity had come home to him.”

Calling the Eloi an “aristocracy of decay,” Wells claimed that “these were frail creatures who had forgotten their high ancestry.” Within the fictional space of the Time Traveller’s movement between worlds, Wells amplified the message of sex reformers who urgently looked to the cultivation of strong, energetic white middle class bodies through the Darwinian glasses of species survival and the fate of civilization in the course of evolution.

Wells’s depiction of the Time Traveller’s sensory body and the devitalized, frail bodies of the Eloi in contrast to the labouring Morlocks highlighted the stakes of cultivating the affective potential of white middle class bodies in the present to avert such a future. These concerns over the importance of managing white middle class energies, instincts, and
emotions were central to sex reformers’ imagining of new social and political worlds where sexual freedom permitted the pursuit of other sexual partners, easy divorce, and relinquishing claims to ownership of partners. Wells’s own integration in transatlantic sex reform networks shaped what his fellow sex reformers and leading birth control advocates, Dora Russell, Margaret Sanger, and Marie Stopes would have recognized as utopian Eloi families, reproduction, and sexual relations. At first, the Time Traveller optimistically observes the Eloi’s frequent lovemaking alongside the management of fertility. He noted “the ease and security in which these people were living, I felt that this close resemblance of the sexes was after all what we would expect; for the strength of the man and the softness of a woman, the institution of the family, and the differentiation of occupations are mere militant necessities of an age of physical force.” While Wells here commented on the desirability of egalitarian relations between the sexes, peace, and the cessation of the traditional family, he also highlighted the Eloi’s management of fertility “where population is balanced and abundant, much child-bearing becomes an evil rather than a blessing to the State.” For Wells, then, the family, reproduction, maternal bodies, and sex were domains of intimacy that were critical to the making of the future. Yet, despite the Eloi’s seeming sex reform utopia, Wells’s consideration of the Morlocks introduced ambivalence into this utopia where frailty, weakness, lack of energies, and the dullness of survival instincts suggested that a world based on love could not do without evolutionary struggle. Despite what Wells construed as the utopian State of the Eloi’s sexual norms and practices, the affective state of their bodies cast a shadow across utopia. In other words, Wells’s work suggested the

13 Ibid., 29-30, 41,
14 Ibid., 29-30.
15 Ibid., 30.
importance of strenuousness, tests of the body, sharp instincts, and vitality in contrast to the Eloi’s placidity, weakness, apathy, indolence, and fatigue. In other words, on this futuristic stage, Wells made a case for the necessity of ‘savagery’ in ‘civilization’ and the Nietzschean superman of vital instincts of ‘primal’ blond beasts in a ‘civilized’ frame.

Wells’s discussion of the Time Traveller’s disappointment in the Eloi, the “daylight race,” situated the failed Eloi bodies in the context of broader early twentieth century modern education movements to cultivate the ‘savage’ instincts of children. As I discussed in the third chapter on “Love’s Taming of Wild Animals,” several child psychologists, education reformers, and sex reformers, including Wells, emphasized that children’s young age put them closer to ‘primitive’ lower classes and races. What I discussed as affective maturity highlighted modern education as a process that presupposed a white middle class ‘civilized’ child whose body could affectively move through stages that recapitulated the evolutionary ranking of different races. Yet, Wells’ discussion of the Eloi showed a childlike population who had failed to incorporate, work through, and productively confront and integrate the ‘savagery’ of their ancestors. Instead, Wells indicated that the Eloi were childlike, innocent, possessing the average intelligence of a five year old, and through their life of ease lost much of the intelligence of their ancestors. Furthermore, Wells introduced the theme of childhood at another level; namely, that of kinship, parentage, origins, and descent. These were burning ethical and ontological questions for the Time Traveller, ambivalently positioned between the two species of the Morlocks and the Eloi. This question of kinship registered at an affective level of the Time Traveller’s sympathetic identification with the

16 Ibid., 47.
17 Ibid., 25-26, 28, 41.
Eloi. He guiltily observed his desire to kill a Morlock as “very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing one’s own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things.”18 When considering the childlike simplicity of the Eloi, the Time Traveller explained that “However great their intellectual degradation, the Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my sympathy, and to make me perforce a sharer in their degradation and their Fear.”19

Wells’s work, however, not only commented on the significance of familial intimacies in producing the future world but he also grounded those intimacies in an environmental and spiritual context. Just as I emphasized the importance of considering the trees, rocks, woods, tides, seasons, and moons in Marie Stopes’s *Married Love*, Wells also located the beauty, perfection, and love of Eloi bodies in a pristine Edenic environment. According to the Time Traveller, “there are no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights, no evidences of agriculture; the whole earth had become a garden.”20 Wells’s story projected what I described as the eco/ontologies of sex reform into the future, with the exception that the Eloi inhabited an Edenic Paradise yet failed to properly use that garden to cultivate the sexual instincts and vitality their bodies could have potentially revived from primal ancestors. In other words, the Eloi were not the vital spirits who aspired to tap the spiritualized and sexual energies of the earth through their labour on the land, farming ventures, and rugged frontier existence. In fact, what the Time Traveller noted as the absence of agricultural labour pointed out the Eloi’s dependency on the Morlocks, highlighting the importance of such labour to cultivate the affective potential of white middle class bodies.

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18 Ibid., 67.
19 Ibid., 62.
20 Ibid., 30.
Wells further highlighted the intimacies of bodies and environments insofar as regulated sexual practices among the Eloi also amounted to regulated and perfected plant breeding. The Time Traveller tells his friends of a luscious land of “hypertrophied raspberry and orange” which he related to how “we improve our favourite plants and animals – and how few they are – gradually by selective breeding; now a new and better peach, now a seedless grape, now a sweeter and larger flower, now a more convenient breed of cattle.”

These signs of bodies entangled with environments also occurred at the site of the dichotomized dietary regimes of the Eloi and the Morlocks; the Eloi as strict vegetarians and fruitarians whereas the Morlocks were carnivores and, occasionally cannibals, in their consumption of the Eloi. While Wells showed that this future world had harnessed the science of eugenics to both plant and human bodies, the importance of degrees of feeling, particularly the binding of ‘savage’ or ‘primal’ feeling to civilization consistently appeared to be the Original Sin of the Eloi and Morlock ancestors.

Throughout *The Time Machine*, Wells constructs time as the Darwinian evolutionary momentum of shifting metamorphoses of human/animal kinship in ways that disturb and dismantle any clear distinctions between human and animal bodies. In this sense, what I discussed as becoming-animal in the specific early twentieth century entanglement of human/animal sexual physiologies shaped Wells’s imagined future of Eloi and Morlocks. The Time Traveller, in fact, observes time through the lens of the continuous eternal momentum of Darwinian transformations in human/animal bodies. Wells blurred such lines between human and animal ancestry in ways that also disturbed identifications of kin. The

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21 Ibid., 27, 31.
22 Ibid., 54, 58, 61.
Time Traveller conceived of time through this Darwinian lens, pointing out that “Man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful children of the Upperworld were not the sole descendants of our generation, but that this bleached, obscene nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me was also heir to all the ages.” While this registered a certainty that bodies located in the passage of time would move according to a Darwinian logic, the Time Traveller, like Wells’s contemporary sex reformers, observed the uncertainty over the variation and forms future species might take with a considerable degree of anxiety.

For Wells, then, the animal continued to haunt the human. In the climate of early twentieth century sex research and animal experimentation, Wells further problematized entangled human/animal sexual physiologies whereby the branching of humanity into the two species of the Eloi and the Morlocks threw into question the very classifications of human and animal. Wells pointed to this inescapability of the human from the animal, describing the Eloi as “mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon-probably saw to the breeding of .” But, if the Eloi could be depicted as animal-like, the Morlocks could also be depicted as treading on the ‘human’ in terms of their industry and affinity to working and lower classes. Wells, in fact, suggested that these two species showed the “widening of the present merely temporary and social differences between the Capitalist and the Labourer”; differences which in the Darwinian passage of time came to be consolidated in bodily types. Amid the shifting forms of human and animal, Wells suggested that the mode of identifying ‘human’ kin rested on the capacity for feeling,

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23 Ibid., 46.
24 Ibid., 62.
25 Ibid., 48.
particularly distinctive racial and class affinities for sympathy. Indeed, prior to visiting the future, the Time Traveller worried that perhaps “the race had lost its manliness, and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful?” In other words, the ‘inhuman’ was also incapable of sympathy. As I noted above, the Time Traveller identifies his kinship with the Eloi through the feeling of sympathy. For the Time Traveller, feeling ultimately defined the reality of bonds of kinship and the very meaning of the ‘human’ which registered an uncomfortable sense of whom or what should be admitted as kin.

In this dissertation, I have explored kinship as part of a broader theme of how an influential group of early twentieth century white middle class sex reformers drew attention to the radical possibilities of transforming the world by transforming how we affectively inhabit it. In doing so, I have examined sex reformers’ radicalization of intimacies at the sites of both reinventing the sexual ethics of the family and disturbing ontological distinctions. By telling the story of early twentieth century sex reformers as a politics of love, I have situated energies, instincts, energies, and emotions as historical objects. Although Wells’s Time Traveller affectively apprehends the universe in ways that transcend time, this project points to the very historicity of this apprehension, particularly in an early twentieth century moment when the affective potential of bodies designated their position within gender, race, class, and sexual hierarchies. This dissertation, however, does more than merely insist on the historical specificity of affective experience but looks to the political investments and the cultural work of how we relate to others and the world. As I have shown, the sex reformers were unique historical actors in the painstaking, precise, and detailed

26 Ibid., 22.
attention they paid to how relations are formed and how engineering these relations can be a site for politically and socially transforming worlds. I have drawn attention to what sex reformers’ attention to love revealed about the extraordinary work of how connections are made in specific and different worlds from the home to metropolitan space and cosmic realms. However, through my focus on a sex reform politics of love, this dissertation also insists on the need to maintain a critical ethos toward the political and, often uncritical, deployment of positive affects such as love which, as the case of early twentieth century sex reformers shows, can be mired in the political and social investments of a racialized, classed, gendered, and sexualized ordering of the world.  

Note on Sources

In researching this dissertation, I have tracked how sex reformers contributed to a historically specific embodied experience and discursive construction of affects. With affect as my object of inquiry, I have found that the personal and family papers of sex reformers have been particularly important to shaping my narrative. This dissertation makes extensive use of archival material. More specifically, I have relied heavily on the Hapgood Family Papers at the Beinecke Library, the Bertrand Russell Papers at McMaster University, and the Dora Russell Papers at the International Institute for Social History. The rich personal correspondences between the Hapgoods and between the Russells were valuable for what they revealed about their particular experiences of instincts, emotions, and energies woven through their marriage experiments, child-raising, education, and social movements. As educated, influential, and politically active individuals, the Russells’ and the Hapgoods’ writings situated emotional experience within the prevailing intellectual and political climate shaped by transatlantic white middle class concerns. These sources importantly demonstrated historically specific cases of sex reformers’ production of affective experience through cultural discourses and, at the same time, how experiencing such affects can transform these same discourses.

While the letters between sex reform couples offered an important insight into an early twentieth century moment of experimenting with family life in the context of radical left politics, they wrote to each other from within a particular intellectual culture of white middle class privilege, conventions, and bodily experience of desires, emotions, and energies. By casting a wider net in terms of my source base, I compared how sex reformers’
constructions of energies, desires, and emotions changed in the context of discussing birth control, eugenic fitness, and familial relations among working-class, immigrant, colonized, racialized or more the more broadly defined category of ‘unfit’ populations. I have found that the Marie Stopes Papers at both the Wellcome Library and the British Library, the Margaret Sanger Papers in the Sophia Smith Collection and the records of American and British eugenics societies and organizations at both the American Philosophical Library and the Wellcome Library were critical to positioning sex reformers’ expressions of love within the context of this wider universe of class, racial, sexual, and gender politics of reproduction. In addition to these archival sources, the *Eugenics Review* and the *Birth Control Review* were particularly useful sources for illustrating the transatlantic connections among sex reformers who used these periodicals to share news of the birth control movement and eugenics. Because sex reformers were also invested in deploying a new sexual ethics that affirmed an ideal of a more loving society, their published works have also been important to understanding the ways their attention to affects in terms of energies, emotions, desires, vitality, and instincts profoundly shaped early twentieth century transatlantic bohemian communities. I have drawn on a variety of sex reformers’ published and publicly performed works such as plays, novels, academic and popular books, articles, conference papers, lectures, minutes of meetings, marriage manuals, and debates to show how sex reformers’ specific construction of affective experience circulated in ways that highlight emotions, instincts, and energies as pivotal to early twentieth century concerns on ‘civilization’ and the shaping of new normative practices of family life, sexuality, work, and citizenship.
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