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American Tan: Modernism, Eugenics, and the Transformation of Whiteness

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by

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September 2015

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American Tan: Modernism, Eugenics, and the Transformation of Whiteness

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ABSTRACT

American Tan: Modernism, Eugenics, and the Transformation of Whiteness

by

Patricia Lee Daigle

This dissertation explores the emergence of the suntanned white body in the United States between the World Wars and its dual significance to modernism and the eugenics movement. The suntan serves as a revealing lens for examining the nexus of health, class, gender, and race in early American modernist art and visual culture. Rather paradoxically, as Euro-Americans were trying to preserve certain racial boundaries through eugenics, they also experimented with their own skin color in unprecedented ways. Yet through the popular practice of suntanning, Euro-Americans often transgressed the very racial color lines they sought to maintain. Suntanning—a physical transformation whose most visceral form is the visual—has yet to be critically examined as a subject of art history. This study considers the nineteenth-century medical origins of suntanning as heliotherapy, modern notions of the skin as surface in the consumer culture of the 1920s and '30s, and the primitivist impulse of early American modernist artists in their appropriation of Native American cultural references as well as skin tone. I examine a broad spectrum of visual material ranging from travel, fashion, and cosmetic advertisements to Alfred Stieglitz's photographic portraits of a suntanned Georgia O'Keeffe "playing Indian." I also assert that suntanning is a visual phenomenon in and of itself, a performative process by which skin changes color and texture and becomes a natural canvas. The tanned white body, therefore, serves as a floating

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Introduction

This dissertation explores the emergence of the suntanned white body in the United States between the World Wars and its dual significance to modernism and the eugenics movement. In my analysis, the suntan serves as a revealing lens for examining the nexus of health, class, gender, and race in early American modernist art and visual culture. The 1920s ushered in a new, modern era when American socialites Gerald and Sara Murphy famously sunbathed in the French Riviera with Pablo Picasso while deeply bronzed Hollywood stars such as Joan Crawford set the trend back home.[1] American artists of the period too were eager to embrace the ideals of health and physical perfection especially after World War I, rendering nude subjects, beach scenes, portraits, and even landscapes that expressed robust and vital forms.[2] What complicates this otherwise glamorous and positive interpretation is that suntanning as a popular practice among Euro-Americans[3] also arose during a time of heightened race consciousness as well as racial anxiety. This was a period marked by nationwide race riots, the zenith of the eugenics movement, anti-miscegenation laws, and restrictive immigration quotas. Rather paradoxically, then, as Euro-Americans were trying to preserve certain racial boundaries, they also experimented with their own skin color in unprecedented ways. In other words, through suntanning, Euro-Americans at times transgressed the very racial color lines they sought to preserve.

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[1] See Deborah Rothschild, ed., *Making it New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press; Williamstown, MA: Williams College Museum of Art, 2007); Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 109.

[2] Teresa A. Carbone, "Body Language: Liberation and Restraint in Twenties Figuration," in *Youth and Beauty: Art of the American Twenties*, ed. Teresa A. Carbone (New York; Brooklyn, NY: Skira Rizzoli; Brooklyn Museum, 2011), 15.

[3] I use the term "Euro-American" to refer to Americans of European descent existing in a time when "white" as a racial category was actively being defined.

Suntanning—a physical transformation whose most visceral form is the visual—has yet to be critically examined as a subject of art history and visual culture more broadly.[4] This study analyzes a broad spectrum of visual material ranging from travel, fashion, and cosmetic advertisements to Alfred Stieglitz's photographic portraits of a suntanned Georgia O'Keeffe "playing Indian." Images of the suntan circulated in the mass media as prolifically as they did in the highest circles of Modernist art. How did artists visualize the rapidly changing world around them, and how did they themselves partake in this rising trend? What were the racial, class, and gender implications intertwined in this transformative process? In addition to this material, I analyze suntanning as a visual phenomenon in and of itself, a performative process by which skin changes color and texture and becomes a natural canvas for the sun's rays—linking it to both artistic practice as well as consumer culture.

Temporally, this dissertation focuses on the decades from late nineteenth century to the early 1940s with an emphasis on the interwar period of the 1920s and '30s, a time when suntanning and eugenics found widespread appeal in the U.S. I investigate the simultaneous emergence of eugenics and modernist culture in the U.S. in relation to the rise of the urban metropolis in the nineteenth century and the antimodern, "back to nature" responses that soon followed. Geographically, my investigation traverses the dark tenements of Manhattan to the grand sun-drenched mesas of the American Southwest. While each chapter explores a distinct facet of suntanning—health, leisure, and American nativist authenticity—these motives inform one another and must be understood collectively. Several key concepts emerge in the following chapters. First, the notion of transformation is inherent to

[4] Literary scholars Toni Morrison has delved into the racial impulses of suntanning for Euro-Americans in modernist literary works such as Ernest Hemingway's *Garden of Eden*, published posthumously in 1986. See Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 87.

suntanning and mirrors the desire for dramatic changes witnessed during the interwar period. Suntanning combined the natural power of the sun with the very modern concept of physically altering one's skin color. Whether referencing the ancient Greeks or present-day Native Americans, tanned skin was indicative of a seemingly older, pre-modern time in which people were perceived to be stronger, healthier, and in some cases, closer to nature. More than simply taking on the habits and costumes of another culture, suntanning was a bodily transformation. I address such physical, psychological, racial, and gender transformations that are inherent to the very act of changing one's skin color.

Another conceptual framework informing my analysis is the historical division between Victorian authenticity and modern artifice. This distinction is significant in the realms of art and culture, but more generally in human self-perception. As will be shown in the following chapters, alongside industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of modernist culture, discerning the difference between the authentic and the artificial became paramount yet increasingly difficult to do. As American society dealt with the new cultural changes brought forth by modernity's march of progress, each decade witnessed ever-changing views of authenticity, character, ethnicity, and race, and their relationships with the human body. This ranged from the comportment of confidence men and other urban tricksters in the second half of the nineteenth century to the Euro-American belief that Native Americans were somehow more authentic or "natural" in their lifeways. At the crux of these issues was the desire for naturalness in an increasingly manufactured world. Human skin and its visual representation was a contentious site in which the debate over authenticity occurred.

Broadly speaking, this thesis also examines the gradual yet fundamental shift in the perception of Euro-American skin in the decades bracketing the turn of the twentieth century

from pale to tan and its implications in the realm of visual culture. While delicate and transparently pale skin connoted everything from candor to a genuine, blue-blooded lineage in the nineteenth century, tanned white skin was seen as impure, disingenuous, and working class—the difference between a fine veil and a heavy cloak. This distinction between transparent and opaque flesh was grounded in the Victorian belief that a person's true nature and human value rested in their inner soul. Pale skin, in its most reduced state of thinness and translucency, lacks a sense of physicality and serves merely as a window to the immaterial soul. At the heart of these Victorian arguments was the ability for whites to show variation in color, not permanently through changes in pigmentation, but on an emotional level through bashful blushing, grief-stricken pallor, or "seeing red" in a fit of rage. Conversely, black people and other darker-complexioned minorities were perceived as fixed in their skins quite literally, and unable to change their low-ranking positions on a racial hierarchy based on skin color that for centuries had been determined by whites. And yet, as Americans began to shift away from Victorianism by the 1910s, perceptions of white skin also transitioned from being a transparent window into the soul to a health-endowed, opaque shield for the body—moving closer to the black skin from which many Euro-Americans had sought to distance themselves.

With modernism's social upheaval, particularly in the wake WWI's mechanized devastation, came the desire for the real, the material, and the whole. Suntanning operated on multiple levels in this pursuit. It provided a way to physically imbue the pale, nineteenth-century body with color—making skin a highly visible, material surface instead of merely a transparent layer. The centrality of the body in early modernist art as well as mainstream advertising unites these realms of cultural production. As advertising reached new levels of

sophistication by the 1920s, this newfound materiality of the human body made it host to a broad range of new products, fashions, and devices engineered to make people look their best. However, as this consumer culture and its ever-expanding range of new products grew, the artifice of the body gradually began to triumph over the authenticity of the inner self and became merely a simulacrum. Suntans became signifiers of healthy, athletic, and sexualized bodies whether achieved through playing outdoor sports or merely lounging poolside. Thus, the notion of an artificial tan became an option for consumers, ranging from indoor sunlamps simulating the natural sun to the fully artificial use of bronze-colored makeup and stockings to give the impression of suntanned skin. In modern consumer culture, the line between reality and representation became increasingly blurred and in some cases the two were indistinguishable. While this was cause for great concern in the Victorian Era with their disdain for artifice, there was general acceptance and even celebration of this conflation by the 1920s.

This dissertation also explores the interstices between eugenics and modernism in the United States. How did these seemingly disparate movements and corresponding schools of thought and practice share certain agendas and for what purpose? As the following chapters uncover, eugenics and modernism both sought to develop a robust, national identity in the body politic and arts respectively. Eugenicists and modernist artists, like many of their time, were transfixed with the body, its form, and its potential for physical perfection and efficiency. In this process, both invoked primitivist elements including a view of nature and the outdoor life as a remedy for modernity's over-industrialization—whether in the name of race betterment or creative genesis. Both also viewed Native Americans nostalgically as engaging in a purer, more "authentic" way of living more intimately connected to the earth.

My analysis extends the purview of eugenics beyond politics and immigration to examine its widespread influence on the realms of American modernist art and visual culture.[5]

Instead of addressing the eugenics movement as a discrete section or chapter, I will interweave its various aspects and ideologies throughout my analysis in a manner that resembles its actual historical presence and prevalence in American society at the time. While eugenics is often conceived of as a contained movement with its international congresses held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and its numerous professional journals, it was in effect a much broader ideology of racial preservation and "race betterment" ignited by fears of physical and racial degeneration—perhaps conceptually more useful if termed "eugenic thinking"—that permeated various aspects of Progressive Era political, medical, social, and cultural discourse. In particular, eugenic health, which called for the strengthening and strict regulation of the body, was a decisively mainstream facet of eugenics. Although the eugenics movement had its greatest impact during the years from 1905 through the late 1920s, I will address various stages of the movement from earlier nineteenth-century iterations of eugenic thought to its height in the 1920s and its gradual decline in the 1930s.[6] My analysis strives to provide a more holistic view of eugenics that captures the truly pervasive nature of this movement in American culture and politics during the early decades of the twentieth century.

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[5] Randall R. Griffey has articulated this position in, "Marsden Hartley's Aryanism: Eugenics in a Finnish-Yankee Sauna," *American Art* 22, no. 2 (June 2008). Donald J. Childs provides a literary analysis of the impact of eugenics on several major English and Irish modernist writers. See Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) Christina Cogdell provides a fascinating look at the confluence of eugenics on American design in the 1930s. See Cogdell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[6] Ruth C. Engs, *The Progressive Era's Health Reform Movement: A Historical Dictionary* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 115.

Eugenics was historically understood in multiple ways. Most commonly, it was seen during its time as a modern science of race preservation and betterment through selective breeding. Its main theories were first expressed by the British statistician Sir Francis Galton in such influential texts as *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences* (1869) and *Natural Inheritance* (1889), which were widely read in both Europe and the United States. Galton, the cousin of Charles Darwin who published his *The Origin of Species* in 1859, coined the term "eugenics" in his 1883 book *Inquiry into the Laws of Inheritance* by combining the Greek words for "well" and "born."[7]

Galton's theories quickly found an eager audience in the United States, which by the last decade of the nineteenth century had witnessed a drastic transformation in the ethnic composition of its rapidly increasing population. Eugenics had far-reaching effects in the U.S. ranging from federal immigration legislation to personal habits of eating, exercise, and hygiene dictated by weekly magazines, university lectures, and children's textbooks. In its nascent years, eugenicists defined two types of eugenics: positive and negative. As historian Laura L. Lovett describes, "Most of the history of eugenics has concerned the enactments characteristic of 'negative' eugenics: voluntary and involuntary sterilization, segregation of the supposedly 'unfit,' immigration and marriage restriction, and euthanasia."[8] However, her research, as well as mine, "also considers what was called 'positive' eugenics, which sought to promote reproduction among those considered to be 'fit.'"[9] It is within this desire for eugenic health and fitness that suntanning in its earliest forms—from heliotherapy to simply outdoor recreation—arose in the United States.

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[7] Mark B. Adams, ed., *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 4.

[8] Laura L. Lovett, *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family in the United States, 1890-1938* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 9.

[9] Ibid.

One of the most prominent and vocal supporters of eugenics was President Theodore Roosevelt, who warned that the failure of couples of Anglo-Saxon heritage to produce large families amounted to what he termed "race suicide."[10] In the first two decades of the twentieth century, several national organizations were established to promote eugenics at professional and popular levels; these include the American Breeders Association in 1903, Race Betterment Foundation in 1911, and the American Eugenics Society in 1922, among a host of others. Eugenic theories also heavily influenced a variety of Progressive Era social uplift organizations including the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and its philosophy of "muscular Christianity." Historian Clifford Putney's apt description of "the muscular Christian notion of using primitive bodies to advanced civilized ideas"[11] is one that can be applied to a much broader transformation of the Anglo-American body at the turn of the century. Eugenicists sought to strengthen what they deemed the weak body of an over-civilized society, starved of natural light and sapped of all vitality, by integrating certain aspects of preindustrial living.

The influx of Southern and Eastern European immigrants around the turn of the twentieth century was the largest driving force behind early eugenics in the United States. The political and social clout of eugenics was confirmed through two critical legal victories in the 1920s: The passage of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act in 1924 (also known as the National Origins Act), which set a restrictive 2% quota on all immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe based on census numbers from 1898 and essentially closed off all new

[10] Ibid., 7.

[11] Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 6.

immigration from Asia;[12] and Buck v. Bell in 1927, the U.S. Supreme Court case that upheld the constitutionality of Virginia's sterilization law, which was drafted with the help of eugenicists and passed in the state legislature in 1924.[13] These legal victories cemented the influential role of eugenicists in American politics and culture, as I detail below.

Moreover, eugenics was not the purview of white men of Anglo-Saxon lineage alone, continuing recent scholarship that has investigated the involvement of women and people of color in the eugenics movement. Although known best as a pioneering advocate for birth control, Margaret Sanger was also a vocal proponent of eugenics. Sanger, the daughter of Irish immigrants, published articles such as "The Eugenic Value of Birth Control Propaganda," stating, "...the most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective."[14] She capitalized on the eugenic fervor of the day to promote the legalization of birth control. Less than a year after the passage of the restrictive 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, Sanger welcomed attendees of the Sixth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference with the following remarks: "While the United States shuts her gates to foreigners...no attempt whatever is made to discourage the rapid multiplication of undesirable aliens—and *natives*—within our own borders."[15] She selectively classifies "undesirable aliens," generally understood as foreign-born immigrants, as "idiots, defectives, diseased, feeble-minded and criminal classes"—

[12] Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 16–17.

[13] Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 110–112.

[14] Margaret Sanger, "The Eugenic Value of Birth Control Propaganda," *Birth Control Review* 5, no. 10 (October 1921): 5.

[15] Sanger, "Address of Welcome" to Sixth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference, reprinted in *Birth Control Review* 9, no. 4 (April 1925): 100; emphasis in original.

degenerate groups that eugenicists sought to weed out through forced sterilizations among other forms of negative eugenics.[16]

Additionally, literary historian Daylanne K. English and others have uncovered that eugenics extended beyond the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon race and was promoted by black intellectuals like W. E. B. Du Bois and others in widely read black publications such as *The Crisis,* the official journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.[17] The racial preservation and betterment of eugenics resonated with Du Bois's call for racial uplift and cultural production, which later in the 1920s became tenets of the Harlem Renaissance (or New Negro Movement as it was called at the time). Du Bois's foundational concept of the "Talented Tenth" stressed the importance of intelligence in race betterment. He believed that it would require a small fraction of highly educated, cultured African American men leading by example to solve the "Negro Problem." Du Bois argued, "The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst."[18] Although Du Bois's Talented Tenth was achieved primarily through higher education, his writings nonetheless echo the sentiments of Francis Galton's theories on hereditary genius and more contemporary eugenic literature that also employed metaphors of disease to describe the contamination of racial stock.

I seek to dispel the notion that the eugenics was a provincial, conservative movement limited to Fitter Families contests held at county fairs and visualized solely in the rural,

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Daylanne K. English, *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 37-38.

[18] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York: James Pott & Company, 1903), 33.

antimodern art of Regionalism. Eugenics was a national interest that knew no boundaries of class or geography. Many of movement's most powerful leaders came from considerable wealth and resided in urban centers. In 1904, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, known for his philanthropy and promotion of the arts for social betterment, funded the creation of the Station for the Study of Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in Long Island, New York, which between 1910 and 1940, was home to the Eugenics Record Office headed by biologist and prominent eugenicist Charles B. Davenport. Similarly, lawyer, New York socialite, and amateur naturalist Madison Grant wrote the 1916 bestseller *The Passing of the Great Race*, considered during its time as a foundational text on eugenics.[19]

Alongside the ascendance of eugenics, American artists of the early twentieth century were also seeking to define an authentic, distinctively American art—an objective with origins in the late nineteenth century.[20] One of the leading proponents in this regard was photographer, gallery owner, and patron, Alfred Stieglitz, and the circle of artists and writers that formed around him in the teens and twenties. As art historian Wanda Corn asserts: "Cultivating a rhetoric that was both separatist and evangelizing, they pictured themselves as the first artists to feel the warmth of the American sun and Stieglitz as the 'supernatural and winged' genius leading them to renewal and greatness."[21] Much of the discourse on early American modernist art, like that of eugenics, incorporates nature-based metaphors, in particular notions of growth and rootedness in the American soil in which the sun served as a

[19] Grant's book was immensely popular, went through multiple printings in the United States, and was translated into a number of other languages. Most notably, the 1925 German translation was admired by Adolf Hitler. Grant's version of Nordic theory influenced the racial hygiene movement in Germany in the early 1920s and 1930s. By 1937 the book had sold 16,000 copies in the United States alone.

[20] Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 2.

[21] Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 14.

vital source of strength and nourishment. Critic Paul Rosenfeld, a central figure in Stieglitz's circle of modernists, describes New York as a city that is at once industrial and organic in both his book *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (1924) and observes the shifting tide in modern art from Europe to the U.S by way of New York City. "It seems we have taken root. The place has gotten a gravity that holds us. The suction outward has abated…In the very middle of the city, we can feel the fluid of life to be present."[22] Imbued with the organicism and vitality associated with Stieglitz's philosophies on art, Rosenfeld's text also speaks to an anthropomorphized city alive with energy. The port is a fixture of not only industrialism but also of immigration; a point emphasized by the Jewish-American Rosenfeld, who was writing during a period of rampant xenophobia and anti-immigration debates. The sun and rebirth imagery employed by Rosenfeld is featured prominently in the work of fellow Stieglitz circle members Arthur G. Dove, Marsden Hartley, and Georgia O'Keeffe.

While scholars continue to debate the purview of modernism, my discussion confirms the notion that there were in fact various modernisms at play, each reacting critically and creatively to the modern world around them. While some modernists celebrated the fast-paced life and technologies of modernity, others shunned the "over-civilized" world of man-made materialism for one that was seemingly more natural and authentic. What is critical to modernism in the American context is its oppositional relationship to nineteenth-century Victorianism, which persisted into the early twentieth century in the United States. Modernism critically evaluated the deeply entrenched tenets of Victorianism: the urban bourgeois class values of thrift, diligence, and persistence (key to a successful capitalist

[22] Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (1924; reprint, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1924), 292–293.

economy), optimism about progress of industrialism, and stability. It disrupted, and in some cases merged, the Victorian moralizing dichotomies between human and animal, man and woman, civilized and savage, black and white.[23] I am interpreting suntanning as a distinctively modernist practice that sought, in certain contexts, to equalize men and women, and bring the supposedly civilized white world closer to that of the "bronzed savage." Marking a drastic visual as well as psychic departure from the powder-pale complexion idealized during the Victorian period and centuries before, suntanning can be viewed as a modernist gesture that had the potential to destabilize deeply entrenched social divisions based on sexuality, race, class, and gender. From a once black-and-white world of rigid polarities, the modern world was one in which whites could be colored.

Some like Gerald and Sara Murphy, considered quintessential moderns (discussed in Chapter 2), illustrate that one could simultaneously espouse both extremely avant-garde as well as mainstream ideas. The fashionable couple, close friends with the best known modernist artists and writers of the day, were strong believers in heliotherapy and keeping up with the latest American trends—from household gadgets to jazz music—while living as expatriates in the French Riviera. Moreover, as the following chapters demonstrate, one could vacillate between these extremes in a way that highlights the fluid nature of modernism as well as the extensive reach of eugenics.

Eugenics and modernism, thus, were two international cultural and social movements at their apex during the 1920s in the United States. Though ostensibly representing opposing ideals of conservatism and progressivism respectively, both were fueled by similar reactions to what was deemed the over-civilized conditions of modernity. Their philosophies were

[23] Daniel Joseph Singal, *Modernist Culture in America* (Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1991), 4.

developed during the first three decades of the twentieth century—a period known as the Progressive Era that sought to regulate and reform everything from the effects of rapid industrialization to large-scale immigration and population growth. Both eugenics and modernism and had a profound impact on social and cultural dynamics in the United States. As art historian Randall R. Griffey rightly asserts, "Eugenics constituted the dominant—and, therefore, largely invisible—ideological paradigm through which many individuals and groups on both sides of the Atlantic understood race from the late nineteenth century through World War II."[24] However, more fundamental than race alone, eugenics was also the lens through which people more broadly perceived health and the human body. It is in this context that the suntan became a physical, visual manifestation of health. Suntanning, or heliotherapy, was a featured cure at Battle Creek Santarium in Michigan run by influential eugenicist Harvey Kellogg, but it was also practiced by modernist artists, writers, and thinkers as a means of regenerating what was seen as the withered, weakened body of nineteenth-century indoor life.

While much of the discourse on eugenics, heliotherapy, and modernism was largely borne out of and propagated in Western and Northern Europe, I argue that these developments took on more multifaceted meanings in the United States. The ever-present racial tensions in the U.S. derived from slavery, the forced removal and decimation of Native Americans, and discriminatory immigration bans and quotas, among other factors, further complicate the racial and color-based issues I investigate. The historical legacy of these developments has had profound consequences and has rendered the U.S. a nation preoccupied with race and its boundaries. How does the science of better breeding take

[24] Randall R. Griffey, "Marsden Hartley's Aryanism: Eugenics in a Finnish-Yankee Sauna," *American Art* 22, no. 2 (June 2008): 66.

effect in a nation with such a racially and ethnically varied population? What racial or ethnic references are invoked when white people begin intentionally darkening their skin? When are these references deliberately ignored or overlooked? It is not my aim to produce a seamless social history of these movements and trends in art, literature, medicine, science, and politics. Instead, I demonstrate that associations between health and suntanning developed gradually due to influences from numerous intersecting discourses involving race, gender, and class and their manifestation in the human body. Moreover, prior to the twentieth century, the U.S. was viewed by European cultural critics as a young nation, lacking a fully developed, deeply rooted national culture. Increased immigration and industrialization were key factors in the effort to define a national identity and, likewise, a national art. As youth and beauty became paramount to the image-based culture of the early twentieth century, this national youthfulness, once perceived as an unrefined naïveté, was transformed into a positive trait and became a defining aspect of American art and the nation's cultural exports such as Hollywood films and jazz music.

Suntanning did not emerge overnight as a modern phenomenon of the Roaring Twenties, but in fact grew out of much less glamorous circumstances of the nineteenth century. Chapter 1 explores representations of suntanning in relation to health and exposes its early roots in the second half of the nineteenth century when exposure to the sun was promoted by physicians in Europe and the United States to treat tuberculosis, rickets, neurasthenia, and other ailments—a practice known as heliotherapy.[25] This chapter considers the changing associations signified by pale Euro-American skin throughout the nineteenth century ranging from romanticized pallor to blue-blooded wealth to tubercular

[25] Kerry Segrave, *Suntanning in 20th Century America*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2005), 12.

infection and urban enervation. I examine the significance of skin complexion in the paintings of Charles Wilson Peale, James McNeill Whistler, Thomas Dewing, and Winslow Homer. The complex intersections between race, health, and the modern body prevalent in the turn-of-the-century Anglo-American discourse of hygiene and eugenics are foundational to the cultural significance of suntanning—viewed as a cleansing, health-boosting activity removed from the polluted, overcrowded conditions of urban life. Furthermore, the enduring association between suntanning, vitality, and leisure that was established by the 1920s is indebted to the turn-of-the-century relationship between health and travel, where wealthy families vacationed for entire seasons, often seeking warmer climes and cleaner air as a therapeutic cure.

Chapter 2 investigates the suntanning craze of the 1920s and '30s, a period in which suntanning became a form of leisure and the human body was treated as yet another modifiable surface in a sea of colorful consumer goods. This chapter traces how the tan became desirable—shedding much of its earlier medical associations for a more alluring and appealing image. While the fashion for suntanning was cultivated in the French Riviera by wealthy expatriates such as Gerald and Sara Murphy, it soon found widespread appeal stateside through various forms of mass media. The concept of leisure, or free time, was not new to the 1920s, but became widely available to the burgeoning middle class, and with it came an explosion of recreational sports, municipal pools, beach resorts that each encouraged people to spend more time outdoors. In the images of leisure found in painted beach scenes as well as sun cream advertisements, artists and advertisers constructed an idealized white body on which a tanned skin became a sign of vitality, wealth, and privilege. Artists such as Joseph Stella, Florine Stettheimer, and Thomas Hart Benton were profoundly moved by the

transformative and regenerative power of the sun on the body—producing works that engaged deeply with this subject. This chapter also investigates the concurrent trend of African American skin lightening in relation to white suntanning, and its impact on black visual artists, writers, and performers of the Harlem Renaissance.

The final chapter discusses the relationship between primitivism and tanned skin by considering the work and lives of two early American Modernist artists: Georgia O'Keefe and Marsden Hartley. These artists strongly identified with Native American culture and viewed indigenous art production and customs as a more spiritual, direct, and authentic form of expression in comparison to the industrialized, commercialized life in cities like Manhattan where both lived and worked throughout the 1910s. The conflation between Native American (or American Indian) and 'native American' (old-stock Anglo-Saxon American) found in political rhetoric in this period also influenced these artists in striving to forge an authentically "American" art. This chapter offers a reexamination of Hartley's oeuvre, recasting the suntanned Euro-American figures found in his Maine works in the light of his ostensibly profound admiration for Native Americans and their cultural forms. For Hartley, the tanned skin of the Native American signified a primitive authenticity and Americanness that he transferred to his paintings of darkly tanned, "racially-pure" white men from Maine—a demographic he wistfully viewed as a dying race. O'Keeffe, in a more direct way than Hartley, literally began to embody her surroundings, spending considerable time in New Mexico every year from 1929 until she permanently relocated there in 1949. The public image she fashioned in the second half of her life was one of a desert mystic, disseminated through widely circulated photographs and films of and about the artist. As Corn observes, "With her hair pulled back, and her skin brown and weathered, she increasingly came to look

like a native, as at home in this landscape as Native Americans or Hispanics."[26] Although ostensibly poles apart from glamorous suntanned Hollywood starlets, O'Keeffe's intimate interaction between the sun and her body shares the common associations between suntanning, health, and renewal.

The most powerful and peculiar dimension of whiteness is that it can be any color it desires. Scholarly forays into the field of whiteness studies tend to examine the representational power of the color white (and by extension, white people) and its associations with purity and virtue in the Western world. Richard Dyer, a scholar of film studies, has argued that white skin continues to be the standard setting for filmic and photographic color calibration—whiteness almost invisible in its presence and authority.[27] In this dissertation, however, I argue for a different view of whiteness: white bodies can be colored in a way that *heightens* their visibility. The tanned white body serves as a floating signifier drifting from eugenic health to primitivist desire in the visual culture of the interwar period. This analysis adds richer dimension to our understanding of early American modernism, especially in relation to race, and uncovers the colored side of whiteness.

[26] Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 284.

[27] Richard Dyer is one of the few scholars who explores the multiplicitous and dynamic color of whiteness, although this is not the main focus of his study. See Dyer, *White*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 48-49.

Chapter 1

Health and Whiteness: The Nineteenth-Century Transformation of Pale Skin

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> First, there is its [the sun's] action on the skin, which gains in tone and pigments progressively when it is placed in immediate contact with air and sun, its natural milieu. It regains its many important physiological functions (indispensable for the normal life of the organism: protection, innervation, excitation, elimination), and becomes once more the real garment provided by Nature. Pigmentation confers a progressive resistance to heat and cold, and prevents the penetration of disease germs.
>
> Auguste Rollier, M.D.[1]

A "healthy tan" is a concept so deeply engrained in the United States that it has resisted the barrage of criticisms from medical specialists and researchers that ensued after World War II and have endured to the present.[2] What makes this concept so potent, so unshakable? Swiss physician Dr. August Rollier, the leading heliotherapist of the early twentieth century, animatedly describes the process of suntanning in the context of returning skin back to its natural state, which had presumably been lost. While suntanning in the United States, commonly associated with swimming pools, beaches, revealing bathing suits, and vacations, did not come into full fruition until the 1920s, its origins are entrenched in the late-nineteenth century Anglo-American discourses on public health, hygiene, and eugenics.[3] This chapter explores how sunshine and its health-giving properties were forged gradually

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[1] Auguste Rollier (1874-1954) was a Swiss physician and pioneering proponent of heliotherapy. His writings, speeches, and renowned sanatorium in Leysin, Switzerland, were influential for the practice of heliotherapy in the United States. See Rollier, "Heliotherapy: Its Therapeutic, Prophylactic and Social Value," *The American Journal of Nursing* 27, no. 10 (October 1, 1927): 815-823.

[2] The harmful effects caused by overexposure to sunlight include skin cancer and premature aging. While these warnings were regularly mentioned from the 1950s through the 1970s, a more vociferously negative view of suntanning developed in the 1980s that continues into the present. For more, see Kerry Segrave, "The Sun as Killer: 1946-2004" in *Suntanning in 20th Century America*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2005), 61-73.

[3] I use the term Anglo-American to refer to Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent who view themselves as "old-stock" Americans in contrast to European immigrants who arrived more recently like those from Southern and Eastern Europe.

through the various body-regulating projects of the Gilded Age and into the Progressive Era as a means of cleansing and fortifying the weakened American body and, by extension, body politic. Through this examination of early suntanning, I seek to uncover the complex intersections between race, skin, physical culture, eugenics, and the notion of the "modern body" in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The degree to which these categories overlap and inform each other is considerable and will be highlighted throughout the chapter.

I claim that the blithely perceived practice of suntanning was first conceived in racialized terms as a eugenic, vital force to strengthen and shield the Anglo-American body—a body that had gradually become enfeebled by the literal and metaphoric darkness and over-civilization of modern, city life. Undergirding this discourse was the growing Anglo-American concern over immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. With newly forged associations with disease and the perils of rapid industrialization, pale skin gradually began to signify the weakening of the Anglo-Saxon race throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. From the outside inward, the sun's penetrating rays were also thought to cure and prevent diseases of modernity like neurasthenia and tuberculosis. Moreover, the transformation of healthy white skin from translucent and pale to opaque and tan signals a broader shift in the way Anglo-Americans visually read their own racial identity. In this chapter, I seek to address the following questions: How did paleness gradually lose its primacy as the signifier of health and wealth for Anglo-Americans? What is the significance behind the medical aspects of heliotherapy? How was the newly tanned white body represented in text and image? What role did gender, class, and race play in these transformations?

Visual culture documented changing attitudes towards sunlight and the rise of heliotherapy but, more importantly, helped solidify their legitimacy in American culture. Additionally, these changes had a dramatic impact on American public and domestic architecture with factories, hospitals, schools, and homes shifting designs to best accommodate the sun. Finally, as a visual culture phenomenon, the actual process of exposing skin to sunlight was also conceived as a photographic process. This is an early iteration of the notion of the skin as an artistic medium—a broader theme that I will explore again in subsequent chapters.

Gaining advocates as early as the late 1860s, heliotherapy gained widespread popularity by the turn of the century in Europe and the United States. Heliotherapy included curative sunbaths and other sun-based treatments and was seen as a cure-all that could treat tuberculosis, rickets, anemia, and neurasthenia, among a host of other ailments associated with modern life.[4] This form of 'natural' and non-surgical treatment was often administered in the spa-like environment of the modern sanatorium which had flourished in Europe since the 1860s, and in the United States beginning in the mid-1880s. However, by the 1910s, heliotherapy had been integrated into most major hospitals across the nation. Likewise, factories, schools, and homes were similarly outfitted with larger windows and oriented to maximize the amount of sunlight entering into the structure.

One of the key forces driving heliotherapy and the outdoor movement were theories of degeneration—physical, moral, and cultural—and the utilization of natural light to combat these ills spawned by modernity and urban life. Instead of addressing the eugenics movement which developed in the United States around the turn of the twentieth century as a

[4] Kerry Segrave, *Suntanning in 20th Century America*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2005),12.

discrete sub-section, I will interweave its various aspects and ideologies in a way that resembles its actual historical presence and prevalence. While eugenics is often conceived of as limited to a specific historical movement, it was in effect a much broader ideology of racial preservation fueled by fears of degeneration—perhaps conceptually more useful if termed 'eugenic thinking'—that permeated various aspects of Progressive Era political, medical, social, and cultural discourse. Although the movement was most structured and had its greatest impact during the years from 1905 through the late 1920s, this chapter will address earlier nineteenth-century iterations of eugenic thought.[5] It is not my aim to produce a seamless social history of these movements and trends in art, literature, medicine, science, and politics. On the contrary, I strive to demonstrate that associations between health and suntanning developed gradually due to influences from numerous intersecting discourses involving modernity, race, gender, class, and the body.

Foundational to heliotherapy was a longstanding campaign encouraging outdoor activities in a rapidly industrializing nation, gaining fervent support after the Civil War. This chapter also investigates the shifting views of the industrialized city and its attendant reputation as a densely populated breeding ground for disease and vice—degenerative to both body and mind. This discussion highlights the prevalent view of the city as a dark place ridden with filthy, sickly immigrants working in dusty, dim factories and living in equally squalid tenements. The presence of light—whether natural or artificial—was critical to public health reform in ways that were both literal and symbolic, as a killer of bacteria but also a radiant and enlivening force. The notion that a healthy body represented a healthy society formed the main tenets of various late-nineteenth and early twentieth century

[5] Engs, 115.

reformist body projects ranging from the eugenics movement, to public health and sanitation, to muscular Christianity, to parks and recreation. These movements all demanded the strict regulation and maintenance of the body from the state level down to the self, and sought to promote the value of sunshine as a healthy, sanitizing force both inside the home, school, office, factory, and hospital as well as exposure through outdoor activities. The health and strength of an individual's body was a metonym for the American body at large.

In order to comprehend the modern impulses behind heliotherapy and the gradual championing of tanned skin as a signifier of health, it is first necessary to consider perceptions of paleness during the nineteenth century and their relationship with health, disease, and the body. As nature's fixed garment, our skin—in its color, texture, and even smell—has for centuries served as an indicator of race, class, and gender.[6] Throughout the nineteenth century, pale skin, like its tan counterpart, underwent significant changes in meaning and was a malleable signifier ranging from romanticized pallor, to blue-blooded wealth, to tubercular infection. Delicately depicting blushing or ruddy translucent skin was particularly significant for American portrait painters throughout the nineteenth century. This virtuosity in pigment-mixing and paint application served to capture the inner life of the sitter. However, as cities grew overcrowded with immigrants during the second half of the nineteenth century, pale complexions began to develop negative associations with unhealthy indoor, aristocratic life in the eyes of the growing middle class who fueled the social reform of the Progressive Era. Pale skin gradually began to lose its cultural cachet by the later decades of the nineteenth century, first for men and later for women. By the 1910s, the

[6] For more on the cultural history of skin from the eighteenth through twenty-first centuries, see Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World*, trans. Thomas Dunlap, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

suntan had become thoroughly entrenched in medical literature and practice and had become a nationwide trend by the 1920s. Although the practice was not adopted unilaterally, it did leave a lasting imprint in the popular imagination as modern and healthy—a notion that persists even today.

Finally, this chapter also explores the nineteenth-century confluence of health and travel, a historical legacy that has forged the common association between a suntan and vacationing established in the 1920s. This was a period when wealthy families left their homes for entire seasons, often seeking warmer climes and cleaner air as a therapeutic cure—news which was reported regularly in periodicals and newspapers. Sanitariums like the one in Battle Creek, Michigan, offered a resort-like experience complete with tropical palm gardens, while at the same time offering the latest medical treatments and equipment.[7] However, as I will show, this hybrid form of health-leisure was not limited to the wealthy elite. Charitable institutions like Sea Breeze Hospital on the beaches of Coney Island offered poor women and children with tuberculosis from New York City's tenements a safe-haven where they could receive the "sun cure." While it is easy to associate sunbathing with the wealthy leisure-class, examining its early roots in public health and medicine demonstrates that this practice reached a far wider audience than is commonly perceived.

Transparently White

While scholars have long discussed the purity of pale, white skin and its striking visual significance, few have dissected its purported transparency and shifting cultural meaning. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, skin was a medium through which to

[7] John Harvey Kellogg, *The Battle Creek Sanitarium System* (Battle Creek, MI: Gage Printing Company, 1908): 27.

view and assess human emotion. The ability to see the inner body through the outer skin was considered a paramount feature of whiteness and marker of humanity. In contrast, on the far end of the racial spectrum, blacks were considered by eighteenth and nineteenth-century naturalists as less human due to what was perceived as their thick, opaque skin.[8] While this may seem to contradict the Victorian belief that one's true nature resided in the emotive inner soul rather than the exterior body or flesh, white skin was afforded distinctive potential—namely the ability to render visible invisible traits like character and virtue.

The quest to understand variations in human skin color spurred myriad physiological experiments and racial theories from the Enlightenment into the nineteenth century. In these theories, which we now deem as scientific racism, racial distinctions were based first and foremost on skin color, followed by other physiological factors ranging from hair texture, facial features, and even bodily odors. Thomas Jefferson, while a firm opponent of the slave trade, nonetheless owned hundreds of slaves during his lifetime and believed that blacks were inferior, ugly, and required the supervision of whites. He, like many of the naturalists of his era, found the most striking difference among the races to lie in skin color. He asks his reader in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* to ponder the difference between white and black skin:

> And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of greater or less share of beauty in the two races? Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immovable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race?[9]

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[8] Benthien, 239.

[9] Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London: John Stockdale, 1787), 230.

Jefferson accords blushing, or the ability to see shades of reds and pinks through transparently white skin, as more beautiful and expressive of human emotion. In contrast, he imagines black skin as a thick, impenetrable veil that masks the various human emotions. He also emphasizes the inherent ability of white skin to show variation in contrast to the fixed nature of black skin. Jefferson thus views black skin as containing a physical and material substantiality that made black people less expressive, and by implication, less human. The Euro-American desire to fix the racial color boundaries of blackness while relishing in the variability of their own whiteness is thus, not unique to the twentieth century and the phenomenon of suntanning.

The desire to render a sitter in their true essene, or their "flesh and blood," was a primary objective of American portrait painters in the early Republic and throughout the nineteenth century. As it appeared in racial theories, the naturalistic rendering of blushing was a testament to a portrait painter's ability to capture not only one's physical likeness, but also intangible qualities such as one's soul or character. This is evident in Charles Willson Peale's *Portrait of Thomas Jefferson* (1791) [Fig. 1.1]. This masterfully rendered portrait of the then Secretary of State Jefferson was praised for its lifelike authenticity and detail. Jefferson's own belief in the beauty of transparent skin as a window into human passions is made visible in the ruddiness of the statesman's face, representing health, vitality, and virtue. Even one-hundred years after Peale's portrait, the naturalistic rendering flesh and blood remained a paramount objective of portrait painting. In an 1891 address to the Worcester Art Society, artist, collector, and patron Helen Bigelow Merriman emphatically states: "the artist

must…be able to paint *us,* not some flimsy vision, but the actual flesh and blood people about him…."[10]

In addition to distinguishing the humanity of whites from the sub-humanity of blacks, the transparency of pale skin was also critical to the visibility of blue veins of the American aristocracy. Peale painstakingly rendered the fine blue veins on Jefferson's temples—again only visible through his delicate white skin—as a visible sign of Jefferson's noble and revered lineage. The Oxford English Dictionary defines blue-blood as:

> That which flows in the veins of old and aristocratic families, a translation of the Spanish *sangre azul* attributed to some of the oldest and proudest families of Castile, who claimed never to have been contaminated by Moorish, Jewish, or other foreign admixture; the expression probably originated in the blueness of the veins of people of fair complexion as compared with those of dark skin; also, a person with blue blood; an aristocrat.[11]

Coming into use in the English language in 1834,[12] this idiom was commonly referenced in the United States well into the twentieth century as an indicator of "pure" Anglo-Saxon ancestry—untainted by any non-Anglo immigrant blood, not to mention that of Native Americans or African Americans. This notion of blood purity became increasingly important throughout the second half of the nineteenth century with the conquest of Mexican territories in 1848, the influx of immigrants from China, Europe, and elsewhere, and the abolition of slavery. Anti-miscegenation laws, many of which were in place as early as the Colonial Era, sought to protect racial purity on the basis of blood before the popular rise of genetics in the late nineteenth century.

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[10] Helen Bigelow Merriman, *Concerning Portraits and Portraiture*, (Worcester, MA: Press of Chas. Hamilton, 1891), 19.

[11] "blood, n.". OED Online. November 2010. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/view/Entry/20391 (accessed March 07, 2011).

[12] Ibid.

Renowned German naturalist Lorenz Oken (1779-1851) further articulated Jefferson's sentiments on human emotion, race, and skin color in his 1811 treatise *Lehrbuch der Naturphilosophie*:

> The ape man [African] is the moor. The interior of his body does not show through his skin, which, like plants, is characteristically colored—he is black and cannot display his inner emotions by means of color. The human man is the white. His inside shows through the skin because the latter is transparent and uncolored. A person who is able to blush is a human being the person who is not, is a moor.[13]

By positing black skin as opaque and white skin transparent, Oken's theory, typical of racial discourse of the nineteenth century, goes a step further to imprint physiognomy with moral judgment. Within this theoretical framework, it is the outward visibility of one's inner body—in this case, the increased flow of blood to the head through blushing—that makes one human. In other words, it is not only the blood itself but the ability to see it through the skin that confers humanness. Charles Darwin would later confirm this view by calling blushing "the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions."[14]

The translucency of white skin and the opacity of black skin were widely held assumptions in the United States by the nineteenth century, and were continually wielded to justify the institution of slavery during the Civil War. Dr. John H. Van Evrie, a physician from Washington D.C. and part owner of *The Old Guard*, a journal published in New York that defended slavery and the South during the Civil War, elaborated on this distinction in his 1868 book *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination*:

> The face of the Caucasian reflects the character, the emotions, the instincts, to a certain extent the intellectual forces, and even the acquired habits, the

[13] Lorenz Oken, *Lehrbuch der Naturphilosophie*, Vol. 3. (Jena, Germany: Frommann, 1811), 355, quoted in Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World*, trans. Thomas Dunlap, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 152. Oken's work was translated to English and published by the Ray Society in London as *Elements of Physiophilosophy* in 1847.

[14] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, (London: John Murray, 1872), 310.

> virtues or vices of the individual. This, to a certain extent, depends on the mobility of the facial muscles, and the general anatomical structure and outline of the features; but without our color, the expression would be very imperfect, and the face wholly incapable of expressing the inner nature and specific character of the race.[15]

Van Evrie builds upon Jefferson's sentiments of the previous century. And although his understanding of racial character is based on various traits including intellect, habits, and physical features, color still remains the most determining factor. He goes on to elaborate on how this blushing functions in white women in comparison to black women:

> What is there at the same time so charming and so indicative of inner purity and innocence as the blush of maiden modesty? For an instant the face is scarlet, then, perhaps, paler than ever in its delicate transparency; and these physical changes, beautiful as they may be to the eye, are rendered a thousand times more so by our by our consciousness that they reflect moral emotions infinitely more beautiful. Can any one [sic] suppose such a thing possible to a black face? That [sic] these sudden and startling alternations of color, which reflect the moral perceptions and elevated nature of the white woman, are possible to the negress? And if the latter cannot reflect these things in her face—if her features are utterly incapable of expressing emotions so elevated and beautiful, is it not certain that she is without them—that they have no existence in her inner being, are no portion of her moral nature? To suppose otherwise is not only absurd, but impious; it is to suppose that the Almighty Creator would endow a being with moral wants and capacities that could have no development—with an inner nature denied any external reflection or manifestation of its wants or of itself...she has not *the* moral nature of the white woman...[16]

The white woman's transparent skin makes visible inner sentiments and emotions by transitioning from pale to blushing. And while the physical transformation of blushing seen through the skin is pleasing to the eye, what is infinitely more beautiful, according to Van Evrie, is the intangible moral emotion it signifies. Yet Van Evrie's primacy of the invisible over the visible in determining moral virtue is not applied to the black woman or the

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[15] John H. Van Evrie, *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination* (New York: Van Evrie, Horton & Co., 1868), 89.

[16] Ibid., 89–90.

"negress" as he calls her. He claims that since the darker skin of black women shows little to no signs of blushing, she therefore must lack all inner "emotions so elevated and beautiful." In the case of black women, seeing is believing for Van Evrie.

Moving beyond aesthetics and beauty, Van Evrie's discussion of white men imbues pale, translucent skin with a politicized, racialized meaning. He observes:

> The white man is flushed with anger, or livid with fear, or pale with grief. He is at one moment so charged with the darker passions as to be almost black, and the next so softened by sorrow or stricken by grief that his face is bloodless and absolutely white. All of these outward manifestations of the inner nature—of the moral being with which God has endowed us—are familiar to every one [sic].[17]

> Finally, as color is the standard and the test of the specific character, revealing the inner nature and actual capabilities of the race, so, too, is it the test and standard of the normal physical condition of the individual. The highest health of the white man is distinguished by a pure and transparent skin, and exactly as he departs from this, his color is clouded and sallow; while that of the negro is marked by perfect blackness, and the departure from this is to dirty brown, almost ash-color…[18]

Here, we see paleness contextualized within a decisively masculine, idealized discourse of health, written in a time of war. Moreover, for Van Evrie, the white man can be nothing less than truthful and honest because his emotions and virtue are plainly visible through his transparent skin. The farther he departs from this pure color (or lack thereof), his character likewise becomes sullied and dishonest. Thus, as the Negro is completely dark, he is able to conceal his emotions and true sentiments in a way that is depraved and deceitful. Finally, Van Evrie claims that "it is only when disease and unnatural conditions prevail that a certain approximation to color or to equality become possible," with white men becoming sallow and black men become ash-color.[19] Hence, it is only the negative states of illness and other

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[17] Ibid., 90.
[18] Ibid., 91.
[19] Ibid.

"unnatural conditions" when the polar opposites of white and black begin to shift towards each other.

While Van Evrie speaks to a specific pro-slavery agenda, the visibility of candor or sincerity was of utmost importance broadly speaking in early Victorian America—a time when many viewed these virtues as threatened by the encroaching vices and lures of the industrialized city. Thus, new social practices sought to promote sincerity, especially in the unsullied youth tempted to leave small towns for work in the big city, by cultivating an open and transparent nature through everything from dress to personal manners. A guidebook on morals and manners suggests:

> Candour is opposed to many other vices, all of which are unfriendly to truth. Disingenuousness, which would conceal the truth by some deceptive veil; artifice, which could make falsehood pass for truth; improper concealment, which could make hide the truth where it is required; moral cowardice, which makes one fear the truth, these mean yet dangerous and besetting vices are all opposed to candour.[20]

Like Thomas Jefferson, the author of this guide articulates a similar understanding of veils and artifice as concealing the truth and he warns readers of their detrimental effects. For virtuous Victorian men and women, one's true nature resided within.

Even though Victorian character manuals were written for both young men and women, with titles like *Guides and Guards in Character-Building* (1884), the realization of these ideals in everyday life for men was not feasible, and paradoxically, even unwise. The major obstacle for men on the path to true sincerity and candor was their inability to avoid the public realm. Being completely transparent was not only impossible in the street or office, it potentially left men even more vulnerable to the corruption and deception of

[20] Samuel G. Goodrich, *What to Do, and How to Do It, or, Morals and Manners Taught by Examples*, (New York: Sheldon, 1859), 68.

confidence men—gamblers, speculators, and other deceptive tricksters prowling the city—the very urban villains that these manuals warned against. Thus, during the second half of the century, transparency did not take on such literal meaning with men's complexions but rather took on more symbolic forms like taking off a glove before a handshake to remove all impediments of direct and honest engagement.[21]

The cult of sentimentality was thought to be most pertinent for Anglo-American women, who were, in the eyes of sentimentalist reformers, more naturally inclined to generate and express emotions. Critical of all forms of artifice and obstruction, including veils and ostentatious clothing of bright colors, and heavy makeup, sentimental guidebooks and journals encouraged women to wear open-faced bonnets and simpler dresses of pastel hues. However, the skin was the purest, most natural garment one could wear and thus the most essential feature of a sentimental woman was a clear complexion. For it was through the transparent surface of clear skin that one could see "the blush of honesty and purity, the sudden glow of love, [and] the hues of sorrow and despair."[22] Thus, the use cosmetics, especially white face paint, powder, and rouge, which merely sought to imitate natural transparency and blushing, was harshly criticized in popular journals for women. Makeup served to veil and mask the skin and thus disguise all honest emotions. Instead, sentimental women were encouraged to "cultivate a beautiful complexion through a rigorous program of ablution, exercise, and temperance in food and drink."[23]

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[21] Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 60.

[22] Ibid., 88.

[23] Ibid.

Shining Light on the Dark City

The cult of sincerity that began in the 1830s was part of a broader stream of nineteenth and early twentieth-century U.S. religious and social reform movements—physical culture, parks and recreation, scouting, muscular Christianity, eugenics, pronatalism, among a host of others—that were highly critical of the industrialized city and viewed small-town country life with nostalgia. As the century wore on, the degradation and degeneration of the Anglo-American body became the primary concern for these movements, as opposed to character which was the main focus of sentimentalists. These discourses relied on the infallible Christian dualism of light and dark to underscore the vices of the city and the paucity of fresh air and sunlight—two factors thought to exacerbate, if not cause, diseases like neurasthenia and tuberculosis. It is within this larger ideological framework of light and dark, good and evil, nature and civilization, that heliotherapy arose as a cure for modernity's ailments. Sunlight was increasingly viewed by social reformers and physicians as a healthy, sanitizing, Christian force—the antidote to the ills of modernity. In the same vein, pale skin came to negatively signify disease, city life, and paradoxically poverty and extreme wealth. By the turn of the century, exposure to the sun's curative powers became a common feature in American schools, factories, hospitals, sanatoriums, and homes.

With burgeoning immigration from Europe and Asia to major American cities during the second half of the nineteenth century, native-born, Anglo-Americans increasingly began to feel threatened as their numbers declined in relation to the rise in immigrants. New York City alone had a foreign-born population of 42% in 1890.[24] The national rate of foreign-born

[24] New York City Department of Planning, "Total and Foreign-Born Population, New York City, 1790-2000."

population rose steadily from 9.7% in 1850 to 14.8% in 1890.[25] "Old-stock" Americans grew anxious about crowded and unsanitary city life and viewed factories and tenements as dark, unsightly breeding grounds for disease. The city represented darkness, literally in the smoke-filled skies and shadowy physical spaces created by densely situated buildings and narrow alleys, but also metaphorically as a place teeming with moral depravity and vices like gambling, drinking, prostitution, and political corruption. Concurrently, moral and social reformers of the Progressive Era began to see the weakening of the Anglo Saxon race in the United States in direct correlation with the dramatic increases in immigration that continued into the twentieth century. The popularity of theories such as Herbert Spencer's "social Darwinism" and movements such as eugenics are indicative of the ways in which Anglo-Americans sought to maintain their supremacy, both culturally and biologically, during this period.

One of the earliest expository books on city life, *Sunshine and Shadow in New York* (1868) by Matthew Hale Smith aimed to reveal both the good and evil aspects of the city through almost ethnographic descriptions of neighborhoods and customs coupled with the author's personal anecdotes. The book was illustrated with detailed engravings of various neighborhoods and set the standard for the genre of urban literature. In the frontispiece [Fig. 1.2], a Park Avenue mansion with an orderly street scene represents the "sunshine" of the city with the words written in organic, sentimental lettering on the top half of the page—the higher and morally upright side of city life. Inhabiting these good and decent sectors of the city, according to Smith, were wealthy and pious philanthropists and ardent reformers. In

[25] Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-1990" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999).

contrast, "shadow" is written on the lower half of the frontispiece in stark and modern sans serif typeface, and is represented by the Bowery—a crowded immigrant neighborhood ridden with cheap wares, raucous entertainment, and rampant prostitution. The street scene that occupies this space is much more unruly and varied than the one above it. Women and children walk alongside lascivious couples and brawling men in front of the Old Brewery. Smith also emphasizes the distinction between the innocence of the countryside and the immorality of the city in his text. "The vicious arms of New York stretch themselves hundreds of miles away into the country" in order to bring these young men and women into the city for work.[26]

By the late nineteenth century, accounts of the dark side of city life were a mainstay in sensationalist muckraking journalism as well as social reform literature. The widely read article turned book *How the Other Half Lives* by photojournalist Jacob Riis (1889/90) fulfilled the notion of the exposé in quite literal terms. Riis, himself an immigrant from Denmark living in New York City, was the first to employ magnesium flash powder to shine light on the impoverished people found in the dark tenements and alleyways he photographed. Engravings were produced directly from his photographs and illustrated his writing, thereby imbuing his work with a sense of authenticity and immediacy that was lacking in earlier urban stories and reports. Riis was interested in showing his middle and upper-middle class readers only how the "other half" lives—the dark life, both literally and figuratively, of working-class immigrants and the urban poor. Riis asks his reader to share in the miserable view of an alley:

[26] Matthew Hale Smith, *Sunshine and Shadow in New York* (Hartford, CT: J.B. Burr and Company, 1868), 709.

> Take a look into this Roosevelt Street alley; just about one step wide, with a five-story house on one side that gets its light and air—God help us for pitiful mockery!—from this slit between brick walls. There are no windows in the wall on the other side; it is perfectly blank. The fire-escapes of the long tenement fairly touch it; but the rays of the sun, rising, setting, or at high noon, never do. It never shone into the alley from the day the devil planned and man built it.[27]

This passage conveys, in strictly visual terms, the sheer density of tenements in New York as well as the complete absence of sunlight from these urban spaces. Riis, an ardent Methodist, couches his account of darkness in biblical terms by implicating modern man in realizing the devil's plans. He describes Blind Man's Alley, known for its colony of blind beggars, as a similarly "sunless" place:

> Sunless and joyless though it be, Blind Man's Alley has that which its compeers of the slums vainly yearn for. It has a pay-day. Once a year sunlight shines into the lives of its forlorn crew, past and present. In June, when the Superintendent of Out-door [sic] Poor distributes the twenty thousand dollars annually allowed the poor blind by the city, in half-hearted recognition of its failure to otherwise provide for them, Blindman's Alley takes a day off...That night it is noisy with unwonted merriment. There is scraping of squeaky fiddles in the dark rooms, and cracked old voices sing long-forgotten songs.[28]

As demonstrated elsewhere, sunlight and darkness are both literal and figurative. Sunlight in this instance comes in the form of $20,000 of aid for the blind from the city. Riis' work and his pioneering use of flash-photography inspired other accounts such as *Darkness and Daylight in the City; or Lights and Shadows of New York Life*[29] which also included engravings produced from photographs.

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[27] Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), 40.

[28] Ibid., 33.

[29] *Darkness and Daylight in the City; or Lights and Shadows of New York Life* was written by "city missionary" Helen Campbell, journalist Thomas W. Knox, and Chief Inspector of the New York Detective Bureau, Thomas Byrnes. The first edition was published in 1891 with a handful of illustrations. It was not until 1896, with the second edition, that over two hundred illustrations drawn from photographs were included.

Poor lighting conditions due to small or sometimes nonexistent windows were also found in urban factories, cellars, and basements, which were brimming with unskilled urban laborers, including children. In addition to straining the eyes and causing injury,[30] the paucity of natural sunlight in these spaces caused working-class laborers to develop a pallor that was commonly coupled with illness. For many factory laborers, these conditions followed them from dawn till dusk, as the boundaries of home and workplace were blurred, with women taking work, especially sewing, into dark basements and cellars rented by middlemen, or into their tenement houses if they owned their own sewing machine.[31] Before the advent of factory reform in the second decade of the twentieth century, factories remained dark and poorly ventilated.

However, working-class tenements and factories were not the only spaces plagued by darkness. The wealthy elite that epitomized the overindulgence and moral bankruptcy of the Gilded Age similarly represented a source of metaphoric darkness and corruption—falling into disfavor with growing middle-class social reformers and critiqued in the popular press and academic literature, none with greater social impact than Thorstein Veblen's book *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899). By the turn of the century, many critics had viewed the current state of American society as a realization of Thomas Cole's moralizing and prophetic series *The Course of Empire* (1833-36), five paintings depicting the American artist's view of the various stages of empire. The last canvas depicting the empire's spectacular demise was intended to be a warning to the young, industrializing nation. The amassment and concentration of wealth among a select few, often

[30] George Moses Price, *The Modern Factory: Safety, Sanitation and Welfare* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1914), 235.

[31] Helen Campbell, Thomas Wallace Knox, and Thomas Byrnes, *Darkness and Daylight* (Hartford, CT: The Hartford Publishing Company, 1895), 260.

earned dishonestly at the hands of others or through monopolies, and the fierce materialism that it engendered became a national concern throughout the course of the nineteenth century. In the Gilded Age, men of capitalist industry no longer made their money and lived their lives through the Puritan and later Victorian middle-class virtues of hard work and thrift.[32] As one writer voiced in the progressive political magazine *The Arena*, "The democracy of darkness that is due to the triumph of sordid materialism over moral idealism must be overthrown or the doom of the Republic will have sounded and we will go the way of Babylon and Nineveh and Rome."[33] As light exposed the plight of the urban poor, the press also sought to reveal the dark and debauched behavior of these supposed gentleman and their disreputable gathering places, which included gambling houses and brothels.[34]

Fashionable middle and upper-class Victorian homes were also dark and heavily decorated spaces with all traces of natural light shut out. While the domestic realm of the home was viewed as a respite from the polluted outside world, it was in many ways hermetically sealed off from it as well.[35] Thick curtains and blinds in the parlor—a vast departure from the diaphanous window treatments of the eighteenth century—were typically drawn during the day to keep the sun away from carpets and other fabrics prone to fading. A poem by Lydia Very reads:

> O Room! where daylight never pours
> Its sunny showers of golden wine,
> Shedding upon the meanest things
> A halo shining and divine,—…
>
> The sunlight glideth off elsewhere,

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[32] Thomas H. Pauly, "American Art and Labor: The Case of Anshutz's 'The Ironworkers' Noontime,'" *American Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (September 1988): 343.

[33] Benjamin Orange Flower, ed., "The Democracy of Darkness: A Fruit of Materialistic Commercialism," *The Arena* 36, no. 201 (August 1906): 192.

[34] Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 13.

[35] Ibid., 63.

To tinge the leaf, and gild the flower;
For gorgeous carpets cannot bear
The sun's warm glances for an hour.[36]

Very's verses indicate a budding desire for sunlight—conceived in familiar Christian imagery—in the Victorian home but also reveal the constraints posed by the so-called civilized world of the indoor, domestic life. Caroline Wells Healey Dall, a Unitarian feminist writer and lecturer, comically recalls a severe case of this domestic darkness in her experience visiting an urban home in the American South:

> I was ushered into a room so completely dark, that I stumbled over a large Newfoundland dog, without in the least comprehending the nature of the obstruction. Far off, a few glowing coals dimly revealed the outline of the grate and hearth. After sitting some minutes, I determined to ascertain by what means the light of heaven had been so successfully excluded. Giving a shrewd, Yankee guess as to the locality of the window, I groped my way across the room. I lifted first a heavy drapery of crimson damask, falling in folds, and lined as it afterwards appeared, with white silk; then a thick holland blind; and lastly, close fitting to the glass, and kept down by a piece of lead sewed into the hem, a screen of close serge heavier than coffee-bagging. On the outside, the green venetian blinds were shut.[37]

Dall's exhaustive and nearly hyperbolic peeling-away of these various impediments to the "warm glory of the sun"[38]—what she considered a manifestation of God—points to the home fashions of the period and the extremes they could reach. Even with the introduction of light bulbs for home use in the 1890s, artificial light, likewise, had to be domesticated for the indoors through heavy lampshades so as not to "fatigue the optic nerve" as one writer commented.[39] At the turn of the century, it was still common practice to shut out the harsh

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[36] Lydia Very quoted in Caroline Wells Healey Dall, epigraph to *Sunshine: A New Name for a Popular Lecture on Health* (Boston: Walker, Wise and Company, 1864).

[37] Dall, 29-30.

[38] Dall, 12.

[39] Judith Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 210. As Flanders notes, the first light bulbs commonly used in American homes were a mere 25 watts, yet appeared "terribly bright" to early users.

sunlight of the summer months due to the fading of curtains, upholstery, and rugs, despite a growing knowledge of the health-giving properties of this "most valuable natural agent."[40]

In the widely read book *Light: Its Influence on Life and Health* (1868), British psychiatrist Forbes Winslow similarly voices his concern for the light-deprived spaces of the city and their detrimental effects on both mind and body. Although part of the medical and scientific community, Winslow's writing caters to a broad audience, utilizing much of the same Christian rhetoric espoused by Dall. He opens his essay "On the Influence of Light" with the biblical verse from the Book of Genesis, "'God said, Let there be light: and there was light.'"[41] He goes on to describe the degenerative effects of darkness on humans: "Where light is not permitted to permeate, there are found, in the highest state of manifestation, bodily deformities, intellectual deterioration, crime, disease, early and often sudden death. A material, as well as a *moral* and *mental*, etiolation or blanching occurs when the vital stimulus of light is withdrawn."[42] Winslow uses the horticultural terms "etiolation" and "blanching," both typically used to describe plants grown in little to no sunlight, to describe the same process in humans. This blanching that occurs implies both pallor and weakness in one's physical, moral, and psychological condition.

Soon thereafter, in 1871, former American brigadier general Augustus J. Pleasonton presented his recent discoveries regarding the positive effect of blue and violet rays in plant and animal growth. After conducting experiments for over decade, he found that both plants and livestock placed in a greenhouse fitted with alternating panels of blue glass grew markedly faster and stronger than those under clear glass alone. As art historian Tanya

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[40] "Sunlight in the House," *House Beautiful*, 10, no. 3 (August 1901): 172.

[41] Forbes Winslow, *Light: Its Influence on Life and Health* (New York: Moorhead, Simpson & Bond, Publishers, 1868), 1.

[42] Ibid., 4.

Sheehan explains, "In his application to the U.S. Patent Office later that year, Pleasonton extended his claims about blue light's health benefits to humans, who suffered from a host of ailments that the American medical profession had failed to cure...prescribing approximately four hours a day of sunbathing under panes of blue glass."[43] Pleasonton's findings were published and widely circulated in the United States in 1876 and rapidly spawned a popular craze for blue glass panes installed in the windows of American homes—an early iteration of domestic heliotherapy.

The rise of the middle-level management in the capitalist system produced a new, distinctively modern type of worker: the office clerk. Like factory workers, the urban clerk was similarly confined to the indoors but carried out entirely sedentary work. One Cincinnati newspaper warned against this ubiquitous new type: "…we see the pallid, anaemic[44] clerk, whose thin limbs, hollow chest and stooped shoulders are due to the constant leaning over the desk, want of muscular exercise and fresh air."[45] Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., similarly decried the prevalence of "such a set of black-coated, stiff-jointed, soft muscled, paste complexioned youth as we can boast in our Atlantic cities never before sprung from loins of Anglo-Saxon lineage."[46] Pale skin—once a prized trait of Anglo-American heritage—had now acquired a new signification of disease and weakness. Negatively associated with working-class immigrants, pallor in middle and upper-middle class office types and the stifled elite proved to be a problematic symptom of over-civilization for many American reformers.

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[43] Tanya Sheehan, *Doctored: The Medicine of Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 81–82.

[44] Anemia, a deficiency of red blood cells, was associated with pallor in both men and women during this time. Factory girls were also often described as anemic.

[45] "Editorial: Shop Girls," *Cincinnati Lancet and Observer* 21, no. 3 (March 1878): 284.

[46] Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table: Every Man His Own Boswell* (F.M. Lupton Publishing Company, 1858), 177.

When the United States was largely an agrarian society, differences in complexion among Anglo-Americans, between field hand and gentry was distinct and clearly observed. Moreover, associations between slavery, outdoor labor, and dark skin were so firmly entrenched in American culture that sun-darkened skin would have also signified something far worse in the minds of most Anglo-Americans, the taint of blackness. Yet, as unsanitary, indoor factory labor gradually began to replace agrarian field work, the outdoors became a privileged place of leisure and health. By the late-nineteenth century, nostalgia for rural America, with its abundance of clean, fresh air and sunshine, and physical labor was at its zenith:

> A hundred years ago—seventy years ago—there was more done to make our men and women hale and vigorous than there is to-day. Over eighty per cent [sic] of all our men then were farming, hunting, or fishing, rising early, out all day in the pure, bracing air, giving many muscles very active work, eating wholesome food, retiring early, and so laying in a good stock of vitality and health. But now hardly forty per cent are farmers, and nearly all the rest are at callings—mercantile, mechanical, or professional—which do almost nothing to make one sturdy and enduring.[47]

In contrast, factories, tenements, offices, and even middle- and upper-class homes were seen as dim and oppressive indoor spaces that weakened the body and exposed it to illness and disease. As the correlation between darkness, the city, poor health, and immigrants began to cement in the minds of many Americans through the illustrated press and photojournalism, cities across the nation began constructing public parks that served to literally open up dark, congested urban centers to fresh air and sunshine.

New York City's Central Park, which began construction in 1858, designed by Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux, offered the people of New York various public outdoor activities over the years and typified the rising interest in outdoor activity and open-

[47] William Blaikie, "Is American Stamina Declining?" *Harper's Weekly* 79 (July 1889), 241.

air exercise. Following suit, cities across the nation launched public park programs in the 1880s and '90s—often tearing down tenements in the most crowded neighborhoods for these new "natural" recreational sites. The construction of urban parks sought to literally open up the city to let in more sunshine and fresh air.[48] However, these projects also had a more veiled purpose of displacing the working class while simultaneously trying to expose and elevate them through healthy outdoor leisure activities. Using Central Park as a model, city parks across the country were designed to be democratic public spaces that would expose urbanites to nature and uplift the working classes.

One of the most visible manifestations of light as a sanitizing social tool is the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (also known as the World's Fair) in Chicago. Celebrating the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World in 1492, the fair was famous for its White City—an orderly collection of pristine Neoclassical structures covered in white stucco, which contrasted dramatically to the city's soot-covered buildings located outside the gates. The fair's utopian vision, lauded for its "visual climaxes, parks, lagoons, recreational facilities, [and] streets" served as a model for the nationwide City Beautiful movement in modern city planning.[49] The organization and layout of the exposition grounds, designed by Olmstead and others, created a racialized sense of order based on proximity to the White City's Court of Honor comprised of expansion Neoclassical exhibition halls. As one visitor observed in the ethnological villages located on the carnivalesque Midway Plaisance, "Nearest to the White City were the Teutonic and Celtic races, represented by the two German and two Irish enclaves. The midway's middle contained the Muhammadan and

[48] Laura L. Lovett, *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family in the United States, 1890-1938*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 61.

[49] David F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 312.

Asian worlds." Then, continued the visitor, "we descended on the savage races, the African of Dahomey and the North American Indian, each of which has its place at the remotest end of the midway."[50] This physical ordering of the world's people at the fair mirrored Eurocentric racial taxonomies in which whiteness represented civilization and order while blackness connoted savagery and chaos (or in this case, entertainment).[51]

Painting White Women

During the socially tumultuous period following the Civil War to the turn of the century, paintings of pale, white women became a contested site in which health and aesthetics were intertwined. The whiteness of these female subjects signify a variety of meanings ranging from romanticized pallor to high-society status. James McNeill Whistler, the leading proponent of aestheticism in the United States, and followers such as Thomas Dewing viewed their art and its elevated cultural status as a means of transcending the material world around them. Anglo-American anxieties over rapid industrialization and encroaching immigration were exacerbated by fatalistic views of human evolution triggered by the influence of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, published first in England in 1859 and republished several times in the United States beginning in 1860. Whistler and later Dewing sought to dematerialize the body—especially those of women—in their paintings as a means of rendering both subject matter and the act of viewing a quasi-spiritual or transcendental experience. Women were the primary subjects for these artists and

[50] Thomas J. Schlereth, *Victorian America: Transformations in Everyday Life, 1876-1915* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1992), 173.

[51] The Chicago World's Fair was also the first major display of electricity on the world stage as artificial lights were used to illuminate the stark white structures of the Court of Honor at night. Although the electric light bulb had been discovered in 1879, it had not come into common use until the 1890s with the development of the more efficient and cost-effective alternating current system by Nikola Tesla in the mid-1880s.

represented domestic refinement and culture. The women in these works are often depicted as extremely pale—reiterating the ongoing association between paleness and transparency. However, these idealized women are represented as immaterial and are not intended to evoke a sense of flesh-and-blood corporeality or sincerity. As in Peale's portrait of Thomas Jefferson, pale skin relegates the Anglo-American woman to a higher realm, socially and psychically above the material world and all of its contemporary ills.[52]

Following in the Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite tradition of valorizing consumptive pallor, Whistler's tonal explorations of the color white abandon the material reality of industrialized society in search of the immaterial spirit—a central tenet of spiritualism that flourished in the period of disillusionment following the Civil War. In particular, the artist's painting *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* (1862) [Fig. 1.3] speaks to the Pre-Raphaelite propensity for pale, consumptive muses.[53] The large-scale oil painting debuted in 1863 at the controversial Salon des Refusés, which featured other avant-garde works. The *Symphony in White* series features Whistler's favorite model of the period, Joanna Hiffernan, a young Irish woman the artist met in London in the early 1860s and with whom he began an ongoing romantic relationship. From her pale skin to her white dress, the painting is a study in the tonal qualities of white paint.

Influenced by Whistler, Thomas Dewing's tonalist paintings of young, frail, Gilded Age women in sparse interiors and vague pastoral settings impart an even greater sense of transcendence in the hazy, ethereal atmosphere and gauzy gowns created by delicate

[52] For more on this topic, see Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010).

[53] Hiffernan would accompany Whistler to séances at the home of Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti at Cheyne Walk in West London. She also noted in her letters that Millais greatly admired the painting *Symphony in White, No. 1* (1862). See Patricia de Montfort, "Joanna Hiffernan," in *Dictionary of Artists' Models*, ed. Jill Berk Jiminez (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), 275-78.

brushstrokes [Fig. 1.4]. Moreover, as art historian Kathleen Pyne argues, these works reaffirmed the status of Anglo-American as arbiters of culture and taste—intangible qualities that Darwin's alarming theory of biological evolution did not account for. However, as influential art critic of the period Charles Caffin harshly observes:

> Generations of repressed emotion have made them incapable of passion; strenuousness survives only in supersensitive nerves; their sole religion is the worship of self…They are motionless in an atmosphere from which all human warmth has been sucked, in a vacuum drained of intellectual and emotional nourishment. These bodily shapes are not of flesh and blood; they are the essence distilled from the withering of what is womanly, the mere fragrance of dead rose-leaves.[54]

Caffin, like many of his generation, was keenly aware of this ever-growing, distinct type of "contemporary femininity."[55] A fateful product of the Gilded Age, Dewing's fragile and spiritless women have been reduced to mere "bodily shapes" and no longer represent the flesh and blood expected from the painted human likeness. To critics like Caffin, they personify the Victorian disease of neurasthenia, an exhaustion of the nerves.

Out of Victorian sentimentality emerged another idealized type of Anglo-American woman in art during the second half of the nineteenth century. These women were often dressed in white gowns that emphasized their pink cheeks and moral purity—suggesting Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic lineage as well as the privileges of wealth and gentility.[56] The portraits of prolific American society portrait painters John Singer Sargent and Cecelia Beaux exemplify this idealized type—rendering fair-complexioned, high society women in white, diaphanous gowns, nearly dissolving into whiteness. As historian Richard Dyer

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[54] Charles Henry Caffin, *The Story of American Painting: The Evolution of Painting in America from Colonial Times to the Present*, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1907), 189.

[55] Caffin, 190.

[56] Bailey Van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876-1914* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) 205.

contends, "The white woman as angel was in these contexts both the symbol of white virtuousness and the last word in the claim that what made whites special as a race was their non-physical, spiritual, indeed ethereal qualities."[57] These portrait painters rendered their sitters as racially and morally pure through an all-over whiteness. These paintings were a critical statement in a period of increased racial and socioeconomic anxiety among Anglo-Americans, spurred by increased immigration from the so-called undesirable countries of Southern and Eastern Europe as well as the rise of the corrupt and diseased city. As a result, the 1890s witnessed the emergence of a number of genealogical societies like the Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the Revolution, Society of the Colonial Dames, and the Society of Mayflower Descendants. These groups endeavored to reaffirm and consolidate a racialized, Anglo-Saxon national identity through the ostensible authority and exclusivity of aristocratic bloodlines. Shawn Michelle Smith posits the development of such organizations "within the context of racial segregation, a dramatic rise in the incidence of lynching, and the growing influence of the science of eugenics in the United States."[58] More than ever, Anglo-Americans felt the need to define themselves racially and socioeconomically in a time where they felt attacked from every angle.

However, alongside idealized "lily-white" American beauties arose works such as John Singer Sargent's infamous portrait of Madame Pierre Gautreau known as *Madame X* (1884) [Fig. 1.5], which critics at the time lambasted for its portrayal of the sitter's shockingly pale, overly exposed skin. For some American critics, the painting presents whiteness that has exceeded its physical limits—too white to be healthy—and associated this

[57] Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), 127.

[58] Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 136.

with disease, artifice, impropriety, and materialism intimately tied to Europe. Both Sargent and his sitter, Madame Gautreau, were American expatriates who found fame and fortune in Europe, he as a high society portrait painter in London and Paris, and she as a Louisiana-born socialite married to a French banker. For many critics striving to define a distinctly American art, *Madame X* was a testament to the sullying effects of European decadence. She is not naturally pale, but rather, painted white with makeup to an almost lavender-white, a process condemned in character manuals for young women at the time.

Outdoor Complexions for the Muscular Christian Man and the "Real Woman"

Unlike artists such as Whistler and Dewing who sought refinement, spiritual escape, and dematerialization in their art as a means of transcending harsh realities of modernity, proponents of muscular Christianity sought to address the troubles of the world around them with a decidedly physical and embodied response. Muscular Christianity, most commonly associated with organizations like the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA), was a socio-religious movement with its roots in England that flourished in the United States between 1880 and 1920 as a masculine response to the purportedly feminizing influence of sentimentalism on Victorian Christianity and culture as a whole. During the Gilded Age, Christianity was in an extreme state of crisis in the U.S.— seeking to maintain its relevance in an ever-changing modern, scientific world influenced by Darwinism among other theories. These Anglo-Saxon Protestant reformers utilized the male body as its primary vehicle for revitalizing what they saw as a weakened, feminized Christian faith and manhood more generally. This was seen as a particularly pressing concern in a period when middle-class Anglo-Saxon men felt threatened from a

number of angles, from the rise of immigrant politicians to women suffragists and professionals. While the Victorian model for manhood encouraged "stoicism, gentility, and self-denial,"[59] muscular Christianity demanded raw and physical bodily strength through competitive sports, physical education, camping excursions, and sexual abstinence with the goal of using their "primitive bodies to advance [the] civilized ideals" of Protestantism.[60]

In what historian T. J. Jackson Lears calls the "weightlessness" of Gilded Era culture, the physical culture championed by muscular Christianity answered the call "for intense experience to give some definition, some distinct outline and substance to their vaporous lives."[61] Muscular Christianity, with its emphasis on outdoor activity, imbued the American body with a hardness and material presence colored by the healthy rays of the sun. One minister from Toledo encouraged his fellow clergymen to "lose the sickly white color of the speculative realm of study, and take on the more attractive brown of the actual life of men."[62] Spurring this discourse was the notion that the overly intellectual work performed by modern, middle-class men confined them to the indoors and had lost the physical rigor of outdoor manual labor performed in the countryside. This nostalgia over the loss of "real work" or the "actual life" for men was a frequent topic in discussions of muscular Christianity.

Likewise, the cult of "the strenuous life" emanated from muscular Christianity as a decidedly Progressive-Era philosophy aimed at reconstructing manhood. Encouraging outdoor activity as a means of combating degenerative city life and Victorian gentility, the

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[59] Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 5.

[60] Ibid., 6.

[61] T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 5, 32.

[62] Allen A. Stockdale, "Pitching and Preaching," *Association Men* 38, no. 9 (January 1913): 467.

movement had been gaining ground for several years and was galvanized by a speech given to Republican supporters at the prestigious Hamilton Club in Chicago by Roosevelt during the Spanish-American War, entitled "The Strenuous Life."[63] It stressed the importance of a virile and robust national body, both literally and metaphorically, in the march of American overseas expansion. Like other body-centric movements of the period, Roosevelt's philosophies crystallized the notion that the health and strength of the individual body represented the nation as a whole:

> The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues...shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties; shrink from seeing us build a navy and an army adequate to our needs; shrink from seeing us do our share of the world's work, by bringing order out of chaos in the great, fair tropic islands from which the valor of our soldiers and sailors has driven the Spanish flag. These are the men who fear the strenuous life, who fear the only national life which is really worth leading. They believe in that cloistered life which saps the hardy virtues in a nation, as it saps them in the individual; or else they are wedded to that base spirit of gain and greed which recognizes in commercialism the be-all and end-all of national life, instead of realizing that, though an indispensable element, it is, after all, but one of the many elements that go to make up true national greatness.[64]

Not only did this speech reiterate the value of the outdoors and the desire for strenuous, physical exertion, it also served as Roosevelt's battle cry for American imperialism—situating the American male body within this particular geopolitical system. Roosevelt envisioned a new, vital American body, capable of thriving both in the U.S. and in tropical climates abroad. Like many reformers of his time, Roosevelt lambasts the modern, wealth-driven, "over-civilized man" who leads a "cloistered life," sapped of all virtue and strength.

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[63] Roosevelt's interest in this cause was a personal one. Born into a wealthy New York family, he was nonetheless a sickly child with asthma. Picked on by other children, he took up gymnastics, shooting, and boxing to strengthen his body and protect himself.

[64] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Company, 1902), 7.

This can be read literally as a person confined to the civilized, indoor world of modernity, but also metaphorically as one who shirks the imperialist desire for outward expansion. Fueling this drive, as Roosevelt claimed, were "duties to the nation and duties to the race."[65]

In stride with muscular Christianity and the cult of the strenuous life was the broader popularity of physical culture (more commonly known today as fitness and physical education) in the U.S. and Europe (England and Germany in particular) beginning in the 1880s. The desire to strengthen the body, both inside and out emerged with force during this period. The suntan is situated within this discourse of the body that demanded the strict regulation of body through exercise, diet, and hygiene, among other factors. While the pervasive trend of physical culture found followers of various classes and ethnicities, a major impetus behind physical culture was a eugenic one—the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon race in the United States. Physical culture, with its drive to physical perfection through bodily regulation and development was eagerly adopted by the eugenics movement which was similarly invested in the fitness of the human mind and body for reproduction and racial preservation.[66]

Masculine, body-centered rhetoric found its way into the arts as critics discussed paintings and artists in terms of health and disease. The Aesthetic Movement in the arts, with its "art for art's sake" credo championed by the expatriate Whistler, was viewed by conservative critics as a sign of degeneration exported from Europe. Critics praising the manly and wholesome art of American landscape painter Edward Redfield (1869-1965) note:

> He neither epitomizes nor philosophizes, nor is his work touched by any of that dreamy and speculative hyperaestheticism that is emasculating a section of our art. The fads and fancies, the frills and follies of the enemic [sic]

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[65] Ibid., 8.

[66] The term "eugenics" was coined by Sir Francis Galton, a British scientist and half-cousin of Charles Darwin, in his book, *Inquiries in Human Faculty and Its Development* (London: Macmillian and Co., 1883).

> worshippers of the pale shrine of art have no appeal for him….His color is fresh, alive and truthful, laid on with a crisp, trenchant touch that bespeaks a robust, masculine vigor.[67]

Couched in the same language and ethos of muscular Christianity, Redfield's paintings are read as "truthful," "robust," and "masculine" as opposed to the feminized "frills and follies" that captivate aesthetes. Moreover, proponents of aestheticism are viewed as anemic (thus pale and marked by disease) and heathen, worshipping "the pale shrine of art" instead of a Christian God. Both worshipper and shrine are constructed as pale and uncanny. In contrast, Redfield's work imparts a sense of vitality and masculinity achieved through color applied with forceful precision.

In the years following the Civil War, the emergence of the "Real Woman" offered an alternative to the Victorian middle-class "True Woman" and the Cult of Domesticity to which she belonged. While the traditional True Woman was seen as physically weak and confined to the dark and stifling indoors of the domestic sphere, much like the women in Dewing's canvases, the Real Woman was spirited and ventured outdoors to engage in healthful activities such as croquet, tennis, horseback riding, and ice skating. Winslow Homer's *The Bridle Path, White Mountains* (1868) [Fig. 1.6] features the artist's view of the Real Woman who, as art historian Sarah Burns notes, is not the brazen "Girl of the Period"—a defiantly forward-thinking type of young woman who, to many opponents, symbolized all that was wrong with American girlhood in the late 1860s.[68] Critic Eugene Benson praised Homer's painting of the young, blonde woman riding a white horse atop Mount Washington in New Hampshire as fresh, robust, and quintessentially American:

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[67] J. Nilsen Laurvik, "Edward W. Redfield—Landscape Painter," *The International Studio* 41 (August 1910): xxix-xxxvi.

[68] Sara Burns, "Homer's Ambiguously New Women," *Off the Pedestal: New Women in the Art of Homer, Chase, and Sargent*, ed. Holly Pyne Conner, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 61

> We are before Mr. Homer's best picture, the girl on horseback, just at the top of Mount Washington. It is so real, so natural, so effective, so full of light and air…so simply, broadly, vigorously drawn and painted…. [T]his is the picture of a man who has the seeing eye—an eye which will never suffer him to make pictures that look like "sick wall-paper," the elaborate expression of mental imbecility and a mania for pre-Raphaelite art. Here is no faded, trite, flavorless figure, as if from English illustrated magazines; but an American girl out-of-doors, by an American artist with American characteristics…[69]

Benson's 1870 critique establishes several telling dichotomies common in art and politics during the time between Americans and Europeans as healthy and diseased, natural and artificial, and simple and elaborate, respectively. Specifically, Benson describes Homer's "American girl out-of-doors" as active (on horseback) and healthy in a natural setting—a refreshing contrast, in his view, to the pallid women that proliferated in the canvases of Whistler, Homer's contemporary, and others. While she engages in healthful outdoor activity, she nevertheless wears a bonnet to shield her face from the harsh sunlight. Moreover, Homer's broad and vigorous paint handling similarly evokes the notion that the American artist, like the American girl, is more natural, energetic, and healthier than his European counterpart.[70]

By the late nineteenth century, physical culture and the outdoor movement had extended to young women as well. Extending the ethos of Muscular Christianity to women, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) actively promoted athletics in branches across the country beginning in1884 with the construction of a gymnasium at the Boston Association. By 1890, the YWCA had become "the country's foremost purveyor of

[69] Eugene Benson, "The Annual Exhibition of the Academy," Putnam's Magazine 5 (June 1870): 699, 702-3.

[70] Winslow Homer's works featuring male subjects—often fisherman, hunters, and trappers of New England—similarly evoked a sense of vigor and substance that critics were eager to deem characteristically American in nature.

women's athletics."[71] Advice manuals also began to promote outdoor activities to young women and the health-bestowing properties of sunlight:

> Very likely, girls, while trying to make yourselves healthy in body, mind, and character, you will find out just what your gifts are, what you can do best. In doing all you can to get physical strength, your walks will often bring you into the fields, perhaps, or along by the river-side; and in these outdoor recreations, if you give yourselves fully up to the freedom of the air, to *the light of the sun* and to the beauty of the earth, may be you will grow so fond of nature that you will observe the loveliest of her creations—the way-side flowers, the blossoms in the fields and on the hillsides…Then your efforts to grow hardy, your determination to brave all changes of wind and weather, your development of muscle through walking, driving, boating, house-work, gymnasium practice, may make you able to endure such trial of nerve and of strength as to fit you for nurses, for instructors in physical culture, for work that demands exposure and fatigue in the street and in the carriage.[72]

While the manual encourages women to strengthen their bodies and nerves to become successful, working women, the author nonetheless relies on the common Victorian trope of comparing women to blossoms. Like flowers, girls were encouraged to "grow hardy" by exposing themselves to fresh air and abundant sunlight. This stemmed from the popular belief that, like plants, the human body needed sunlight to thrive.[73]

Popular literature of the period also prized outdoor complexions for women in tales contrasting the sickly and overdressed city girl with her unsullied and vigorous country-bumpkin cousin. In Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Little Pussy Willow* (1870), Pussy Willow, is described as industrious country girl, yet does not possess the "rough, red hands, or big feet" that the reader might imagine.[74] Instead, "her complexion, it is true, is a healthy one; her skin, instead of being waxy-white, like a dead japonica, has a delicate shade of pink

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[71] Putney, 148.

[72] Annie H. Ryder, *Go Right On, Girls!: Develop Your Bodies, Your Minds, Your Characters* (Boston: D. Lothrop Company, 1891), 9-10; emphasis added.

[73] Mary Treat, "Botany for Invalids" *Herald of Health*, 8, no. 6 (September 1866): 39.

[74] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Little Pussy Willow* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1870), 94.

in its whiteness, and her cheeks have the vivid color of the sweet-pea, bright and clear and delicate; and she looks out of her wide clear blue eyes with frankness and courage at everything."[75] It is also no small coincidence that she is named after a flower, "a perfect March blossom,"[76] that grows wild in the woods and marshlands of the northeastern United States and unofficially marks the beginning of spring.[77]

Men such as American cultural critic Henry Theophilus Finck agreed that women would appear more beautiful and youthful if they stopped shielding themselves from the sun. In his treatise on what he deemed the modern concept of romantic love, Finck states:

> How many women are there who preserve their youthful beauty after twenty-five—the age when they ought to be in full bloom? They owe this early decay partly to their indolence, mental and physical, partly to their habit of shutting out every ray of sunlight from their faces as if it were a rank poison instead of the source of all Health and Beauty. If young ladies would daily exercise their muscles in fresh air and sunshine, they would not need veils to make themselves look younger.[78]

Finck's plea harkens back to the sentimentalist disdain for veils—both in their literal form as head coverings and makeup, as well as a metaphor for false pretenses and feigned manners. Comparing healthy women to blossoming flowers, Finck voices the dual benefits of sunshine and exercise for the modern woman.

Although the Real Woman did not fully welcome darkened or browned suntans, typically shielding direct sunlight with a fashionable sun-bonnet (as seen on the young girl in Homer's *Bridle Path*), she nonetheless was encouraged to seek the outdoors for health purposes. Despite various calls for women to bask in the sunlight, factors like freckling and

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 10.
[77] Harry Philip Brown, *Trees of New York State: Native and Naturalized* 21, no. 5 (February 1921): 105.
[78] Henry Theophilus Finck, *Romantic Love and Personal Beauty: Their Development, Causal Relations, Historic and National Peculiarities* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1887), 463.

modesty of dress prevented them from completely embracing the notion of sun hitting their skin. *The Land of Sunshine*, a journal founded by Charles Fletcher Lummis boasting the natural splendor of California and the American West contained advertisements for bath products like California Cream of Lemon, which "cures and prevents sunburn, freckles, tan, chapped hands and lips…and leaves the skin delightfully soft, white, smooth, and velvety."[79] Tellingly, most recommendations typically did not call for the browning or bronzing of pale skin, but rather used terms like "fresh, clear and sparkling hues of health" [80] or rosy or pink to describe outdoor complexions for women—a much milder, palatable image for Victorians to consume.

Although physical culture initiatives were masculine responses to the increasingly feminized—code for "weakened"—body in Gilded Age America, women were nonetheless active participants of this new way of life, especially after the turn of the century. The physical fitness and robustness of the female body was a key determinant of fitness for reproduction. This relational link was paramount to pronatalism—the policy of promoting child bearing—advocated by Roosevelt and the eugenics movement. *Physical Culture* magazine, published in the United States between 1899 and 1955 and founded by American bodybuilder and Bernarr Macfadden, featured the nude bodies of male bodybuilders (even Macfadden himself on occasion) in the early years. However, by 1910, the magazine began depicting women on their illustrated covers to appeal to female readers as well as men. The cover from an October 1917 issue is dedicated to Mrs. Hawley, one of the winners of the magazine's Youth-Beauty Prolongation Contest [Fig. 1.7]. In her photograph, supported by

[79] California Cream of Lemon, Advertisement, Charles Fletcher Lummis, *The Land of Sunshine* (F.A. Pattee, 1898): 228.

[80] A. L. Wood, "Answers to Correspondents' Notes and Queries: Sunlight and Sunshade," *The Herald of Health and Journal of Physical Culture* 9, no. 4 (April 1867): 195.

her corresponding quote, she boasts a full head of dark hair, good teeth and complexion, and a youthful figure (difficult to discern from the photograph as she is covered by her long hair and loose gown) despite—or perhaps, in the eyes of pronatalists, due to—bearing eleven children. By returning the body to a more natural state free from restrictive corsets and high heels, Mrs. Hawley's embrace of physical culture is directly correlated to her fertility. While difficult to see her as a paragon of athleticism and health as defined by today's standards (of which a deep tan is often a major component), she nonetheless represents a transitional figure between the prudish, pale Victorian woman and the lithe, suntanned bodies of women participating in that frequented the covers of *Physical Culture* in the 1920s.

The Great White Plague: A Closer Look at Tuberculosis[81]

While tuberculosis, also commonly known as consumption, was a deadly epidemic that affected millions worldwide, the disease itself, the pallor it often produced, and the languorous existence it created were frequently romanticized in European and American art and literature produced between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While pallor was indeed indicative of illness, it nonetheless was perceived positively by many Romantic artists and writers. Tuberculosis had achieved an elevated status as a disease of a higher order. Romantic poets and artists (many of whom were consumptive themselves) such as Edgar Allan Poe upheld a vision of languid pallor for female muses while he himself represented the tortured, pale, and gaunt genius.[82] As the prime target of heliotherapy, it is

[81] Tuberculosis was also commonly known as consumption before the identification of the tuberculosis bacillus in 1882 by Robert Koch.

[82] René Jules Dubos and Jean Dubos, *The White Plague: Tuberculosis, Man, and Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 55.

essential to examine how tuberculosis was regarded in earlier decades as and how its treatment served as a precursor for future associations between health and travel.

Before the discovery of the tubercle bacilli by Dr. Robert Koch in 1882, tuberculosis had long been considered a disease that was thought to run in families like a curse mysteriously passed down from one generation to the next. However, it was not until 1907 that tuberculosis was declared a communicable and infectious disease—a public health concern to be reported to authorities.[83] With Koch's revelation that the disease was in fact transmitted through bacteria, tuberculosis increasingly became associated with foreign, slum-dwelling immigrants. Dr. Allan McLaughlin of the U.S. Public Health and Marine Hospital Service states: "The remarkable prevalence of tuberculosis among recently landed immigrants is the effect of overcrowding in infected, filthy tenements by immigrants whose poor physique makes them ready prey for communicable diseases."[84] As tuberculosis shed its Romantic mystique in the late nineteenth century, it became the primary focus of various Progressive Era campaigns. Symptomatic of over-industrialization and the importation of cheap labor, tuberculosis was at the crux of debates on eugenics, immigration, personal hygiene, public sanitation, and other types of social reform.

Despite these developments, the well-established association between pale skin and tuberculosis continued to prevail in the early twentieth century, however, taking a much less glorified tone, as evidenced in a medical description from 1909:

> A considerable number of patients have, and have had for years previous to their sickness, a delicate, transparent skin, through which the blue veins show, and which flushed easily and quickly, as well as fine silky hair. While this speaks for a poor resisting power, it occurs in many who do not develop tuberculosis, and is only useful as an index to the constitution. The majority

[83] Engs, *The Progressive Era's Health Reform Movement*, 335.

[84] Allan McLaughlin, "Immigration and the Public Health," *Public Opinion* 39, no. 13 (September 23, 1905): 394.

> of patients in the beginning show no unusual texture or quality of their skin, but as the disease advances, and wasting occurs, trophic changes in the skin very commonly appear, and in advanced cases are very pronounced, the skin being thin, relaxed, and pale. In such cases the skin is practically never normal, being either unduly dry or moist and clammy.[85]

The author further problematizes the once stable value of pale, transparent skin as a marker of wealth and entitlement by likening it to patients with tuberculosis. In fact, since "the majority of patients in the beginning show no unusual texture or quality of their skin," there is very little physiologically to distinguish them from healthy, blue-blooded, Anglo-Saxon Americans—playing into the modern fear of crowds and social anonymity. Moreover, this excerpt reveals a larger shift in the construction of the normative, Anglo-American body. Behind this observation of consumptive skin also lies a gendered undercurrent. The author posits delicate and transparent skin prone to flushing as feminine and potentially diseased while implying that healthy skin should be the opposite—opaque, robust, colored, and masculine.

Although tuberculosis was in fact declining during the latter nineteenth century, it remained the major cause of death in the United States at the beginning of the Progressive Era in the 1890s.[86] Infamously labeled the "great white plague" by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., in 1869 after the pallor that forms in its final stages, tuberculosis was closely linked to skin tone—a visible manifestation of an airborne disease that spreads invisibly. While typically associated with urban poverty and immigrants, tuberculosis in it's actual transmission knew no boundaries of race, gender, or class. Charles Dickens notes the

[85] Arnold Carl Klebs, *Tuberculosis* (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1909), 192.

[86] Engs, *The Progressive Era's Health Reform Movement*, 333. Tuberculosis had plagued nations since the beginning of the century.

pervasive reach of tuberculosis in his novel *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), "a disease which medicine never cured, wealth never warded off, or poverty could boast exemption from…."[87]

By the early 1900s, the Holmes's "white plague" took on new eugenic meaning as a crisis of the increasingly deteriorating Anglo-Saxon race—in the disease's infectious attacks on the white body but also in the encroaching presence of undesirable immigrants who were targeted as agents of infection. Although the term "great white plague" was coined in 1869, it did not see frequent usage in medical texts until after 1900, which I maintain is a consequence of the burgeoning eugenics movement. The campaign to eradicate tuberculosis, commencing in 1895 and continuing into the 1930s, was one of the most successful health reform movements of the Progressive Era.[88] In his 1897 address titled "Are We a Dying Race" at the Civic-Philanthropic Conference in Battle Creek, Michigan, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg points to a growing fear that while "we"—meaning Anglo-Americans here—have amassed great wealth and advanced technologically, it has been at the expense of the physical body:

> The great number of men, women, and children confined in counting rooms, stores, and factories, and at various sedentary employments is developing a deformed creature which might be termed "the sedentary man," who is known by his round shoulders, his flat hollow, feeble chest, his weak heart, his sunken stomach, his lax and puny muscles, his sallow, sunken, and lusterless eye. The consumptive variety of the genus homo is so rapidly increasing in numbers that at the present time one-seventh of all who die, die of that dread disease, "the great white plague"—consumption.[89]

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[87] Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1839), 481.

[88] Engs, *The Progressive Era's Health Reform Movement*, 336.

[89] John Harvey Kellogg, *Index to Good Health* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Publishing Company,1898), 2.

Kellogg's "sedentary man" represents the degeneration of the human body caused by modernity. Like many of his contemporaries, Kellogg advocated the outdoors as a form of therapy at the renowned Battle Creek Sanitarium he ran in Michigan.

Eugenicists drew upon the fervent support and coercive power of the public health movement that sought to eradicate tuberculosis. They likened the obliteration of the disease to their own parallel crusade to preserve the Anglo-Saxon race in the United States—striving to rid the nation of its very own "great white plague" of Southern and Eastern European immigrants, African Americans, and other non-Anglo "stock." Rockwell D. Hunt, renowned economics professor at the University of Southern California writes in 1909:

> Those strong hearts that have enlisted in the war against tuberculosis, the "great white plague" whose victims number annually some 138,000 in this country alone, are stanch [sic] friends of real eugenics. The conservation of the health of the American citizenship, which Roosevelt has declared to be "physically our greatest national asset," is being systematically urged by the great committee of one hundred headed by Professor Irving Fisher of Yale.[90]

Hunt establishes a clear correlation between health and citizenship in which tuberculosis merge with immigrants and people of color into a single threat to Anglo-American dominance. The National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, founded five years prior to Hunt's article in 1904, led the movement to eradicate tuberculosis and made it one of the most successful Progressive Era causes. They were formed from the unification of various competing organizations into a single powerful national entity.[91] The National Association successfully attracted and educated a broad audience by admitting non-physician members, fundraising through the sale of Christmas seals, and producing accessible educational materials—making

[90] Rockwell D. Hunt, "Eugenics: A Nobler Breed of Men," *Twentieth Century Magazine* 1, no. 2 (November 1909): 137.

[91] Engs, *The Progressive Era's Health Reform Movement*, 137.

it a prototype for future public health-oriented organizations.[92] Eugenicists saw their anti-immigrant, pro-health agenda as overlapping with many of these fighters of disease.

Consumptive African Americans soon came to represent the disease itself in a manner that tied the larger racial battle of some eugenicists to fears of contagion. In a 1908 editorial published in *Modern Medicine*, a monthly journal published in Battle Creek, Michigan, edited by Kellogg, a piece titled "Exterminating the Great White Plague" was printed one page before another called "The Tubercle Germ Fatal to Tobacco Users." The second article opened with findings presented by a speaker at the International Congress on Tuberculosis that had recently been held in Washington, D.C. His first finding was that users of tobacco and alcohol were twice as likely to contract consumption or pulmonary tuberculosis. However, this point was followed by a second observation: "The same speaker called attention to the fact that the negro who was formerly practically immune from tuberculosis, remaining so so long as he lived a simple life with simple and regular habits, has now become more tuberculous than any other race in the United States, and that the negro race has become affected with this malady to such a degree as to imperil whites who are associated with them."[93] Implicit in the immediate juxtaposition of these articles is that while tuberculosis itself is the "Great White Plague" so too are the consumptive African Americans, and by extension, healthy African Americans as well since the disease is an invisible killer.

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[92] The National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, after several name changes, eventually became known as the American Lung Association in 1973, and remains called so today.

[93] John Harvey Kellogg, ed., "The Tubercle Germ Fatal to Tobacco Users," *Modern Medicine* 17, no. 11 (November 1908): 292.

In much of the literature on tuberculosis, the disease was frequently understood to be a disease of civilization associated with the indoors while the outdoors and rural life were seen as healthful and regarded with nostalgia:

> Tuberculosis, or "The Great White Plague of the North," as Oliver Wendell Holmes so aptly called it, is preeminently a disease of civilization, of confinement, if you please. Tame the savage of the forest, confine him to the houses of modern civilization, and he verily speedily becomes exceptionally susceptible to tubercular infection, and often a victim of disease. The lot of the North American Indians who are now rapidly disappearing is a striking illustration. Domesticate the beasts of the field, and they, too become peculiarly susceptible to tubercular disease. Cage the wild birds of the air and subject them to the vitiated atmosphere of the average home, and they show the same susceptibility. There can be no questions but that the close life of partial imprisonment in cages, which we call houses, of itself renders the human being more susceptible to the white plague, and aids materially in multiplying its ravages.[94]

The anonymous author voices concern for this "disease of civilization" and points to the "average home" as a domesticated prison for the Anglo-American body. In doing so, the author points to the rapid "disappearance" of North American Indians as a warning to his Anglo-American readers. This Anglo-American appropriation of the concept of Native American extinction to describe the imminent threat of their own racial decline is explored further in Chapter 3.

Heliotherapy: Sunlight as Modern Medicine

Alongside social and cultural developments, the field of modern medicine was also quickly adapting to harness the beneficent qualities of sunlight. The Progressive Era witnessed the rapid construction and modernization of hospitals, sanatoriums, and health resorts from coast to coast—treating patients from the seriously ill to the urban dweller

[94] Alfred B. Olsen, "How to Escape the White Plague," *Life and Health* 27, no. 5 (May 1912): 278.

looking for respite from the congested conditions of city. These institutions embraced the emerging trend of heliotherapy to treat their patients or guests with a variety of "cures" ranging from sun-lamp sessions, to open-air sunbaths, to outdoor exercise. Emerging from prevailing views of sunlight as God's life-force as well as Niels Finsen's Nobel Prize-winning use of ultraviolet rays to successfully treat *lupus vulgaris* in 1903, doctors in Europe and the United States began using heliotherapy (both through natural and artificial means) by the turn of the century to treat patients with tuberculosis.[95] Heliotherapy quickly became a cure-all for various diseases of modernity like rickets, anemia, and neurasthenia by the 1920s.[96] The sun's rays were seen as a new sanitizing force, often discussed as killing disease from the outside inward while literally toughening the skin to form a protective layer.

The positive transformation of sickly, transparent flesh of patients into physically strengthened, bronzed skin, was supported by broader changes starting in the late nineteenth century in the way people perceived of the human body. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the body could not be penetrated safely for examination, with doctors relying on the word of their patients as well as touch-based disciplines like phrenology. However, by the early twentieth century, there were a host of devices such as x-rays, speculums, and microscopes that allowed doctors to view and explore the interior of the body with a depth

[95] Jay Frank Schamberg, "The Present Status of Phototherapy," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 49, no. 7 (August 1907): 543.

[96] Charles Woodruff's *The Effects of Tropical Light on White Men* (1905) was one voice of contention for this burgeoning trend. Woodruff, an Army surgeon stationed in the Philippines, professes the danger of sun exposure from an imperial perspective. He proclaims, "The way we expose our poor little babies to excessive amounts of sunlight is a great mistake. No wonder they cry so much out of doors. An inspection of the school rooms which are modern "light baths" fully explains the headaches and nerve storms which the children have after a few hours' exposure." Woodruff's warning indicates the extension of heliotherapy into modern American schools. Ultimately, however, Woodruff's scathing volume could not arrest the momentum of suntanning. For more, see Charles E. Woodruff, *The Effects of Tropical Light on White Men*, (New York: Rebman Company, 1905), 331.

and specificity never before possible.[97] These developments in modern medical technology began to render the Cartesian mind-body duality irrelevant as the material body came to merge with one's mental state or soul. As the physical body became more knowable through medicine and science, the mystique or superiority of the inner soul was often trumped by the exterior physique. The notion that health could be physically manifested and visible in one's exterior appearance was a driving force of the physical culture movement but also of heliotherapy—where darkened skin became a marker of health and vitality.

The nineteenth-century sanatorium (also spelled sanatarium) was a type of health resort or convalescent home that provided a more favorable climate, often drier and warmer for consumptive patients and invalids and open-air treatment away from crowded, polluted cities. By the twentieth century, sanatoriums began adopting heliotherapy as a primary treatment. Most notably, Swiss physician Auguste Rollier opened the first sanatorium to treat serious cases of surgical tuberculosis using heliotherapy in 1903. His clinic was located in the mountain town of Leysin high in the Swiss Alps and admitted both children and adults—many of whom were successfully treated. Patients who often developed painful lesions on their skin were gradually exposed to direct sunlight, beginning with just a few minutes on the feet and wrists and working towards several hours of full-body contact with the rays of the sun.

With the advent of heliotherapy to treat the frail white body, a striking reversal in a long-established racial paradigm rooted in skin color emerged. Rollier believed that a visible darkening of the skin's pigment was essential to the success of heliotherapy as it made the

[97] Mike Featherstone, "The Body in Consumer Culture," *Theory Culture Society* 1, no. 2 (September 1982): 18.

skin more resistant to heat and cold and "prevents the penetration of disease germs."[98] As one American physician by the name of John W. Brannan describes, "With the development of pigmentation the cure progresses until recovery is complete."[99] Thus, Rollier and his followers in the United States and elsewhere began to establish a direct correlation between increasingly darkened pigmentation and restored health. This is not to say that dark pigmentation conferred health in their view, but rather it was the very act of transformation from pale to deep tan that was seen as healthful. It was believed that "Negro" skin was already too opaque to begin with to absorb any of the purportedly beneficial ultraviolet light. It was the supposedly transparent nature of white skin that allowed for its gradual toughening. Doctors believed that the darkening of the skin imparted a robust materiality and visibility to white skin that had for centuries been perceived as translucent and nearly invisible—taking on a new sheen and imperviousness that had long been associated with people of color, namely people of African descent.[100]

It is with heliotherapy that we begin to see the first instances of the dramatic darkening of pale skin. Dr. Edward O. Otis of Boston had the privilege of visiting one of Rollier's sanatoriums in the summer of 1912 and was impressed by the extraordinary behavioral and physical condition of the young patients: "I never have seen happier and more rollicking children than those in these wards of Rollier's. It was difficult to tell to what race they belonged, they were so pigmented, the majority being a mahogany or chocolate colour."[101] While Dr. Otis does not explicitly mistake the children as African in descent, he

[98] Auguste Rollier, "Heliotherapy: Its Therapeutic, Prophylactic and Social Value," *The American Journal of Nursing* 27, no. 10 (October 1, 1927): 815-823, 816.

[99] John W. Brannan, "Heliotherapy in Tuberculosis of the Bones and Joints," *Transactions of the American Climatological and Clinical Association* (Philadelphia: American Climatological and Clinical Association, 1914), 151.

[100] Benthien, 152.

[101] Brannan, 160.

nonetheless implies this astonishing (and potentially disruptive) transformation by describing them as shades of brown traditionally reserved to describe black people. Although the photographs of patients from this period are black and white, tonal differences are clear, especially in the side-by-side comparison of photographs of patients taken before and after heliotherapy treatments [Fig. 1.8]. These before-and-after photographs, commonly reproduced in books and journals extolling the curative powers of heliotherapy, underscore the transformative nature of the therapy through stark visual contrasts. The darkened white body of the cured patient, for these early viewers, represented a liminal racial state—a gray area in which race became visually ambiguous.

Photography was the primary medium that visualized the transformative process of heliotherapy, stemming from the growing field of medical photography in the second half of the nineteenth century. Heliotherapy itself was often conceived of as a photographic process, and was often interchangeably called phototherapy and light therapy.[102] Terms such as "baths" and "exposure," common to photography, were similarly employed in the nascent practice of heliotherapy. For example, in the wet-collodion photographic process, a glass plate is coated with a transparent layer of collodion that was often described in this period as a "skin." A silver nitrate bath sensitizes the plate, which darkens when exposed to light. Moreover, collodion also had a medical function—commonly used for preparing human skin before surgery to add a protective layer.[103] Thus, the transferal of the language and metaphors used to describe photographic processes to heliotherapy and its effects on human

[102] "Phototherapy is the employment of natural or artificial light to influence a diseased or disordered organism in the attempt to restore integrity of structure and function" whereas heliotherapy is limited to sun baths using natural sunlight. For more, see Solomon Solis-Cohen, *A System of Physiologic Therapeutics: Hydrotherapy, Thermotherapy, Heliotherapy and Phototherapy* (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston's Son & Company, 1902), 49.

[103] Robert Hunter, *The Encyclopaedic Dictionary: A New Original Work of Reference to All The Words in the English Language* (London, Paris, and New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1882), 331.

skin was a logical direction that both physicians and the educated readers of their journals could follow.

In 1872, a year following General Pleasonton's "discovery" of blue glass, photographer Robert Chute of Philadelphia began to draw direct connections between phototherapy and photography, their shared used of light, and the health-bestowing effects of both. "Some rather singular revelations have recently been made in this city, which seem to indicate that the same property of light by which the photographic plate is impressioned, is also a very potent remedial agent for disease."[104] Following Chute's article, commercial photography studios began installing blue glass in their skylights, providing clients with a healthful experience, one in which they could be portrayed as their best selves.

Physicians too were beginning to make more direct comparisons between the two types of photographic exposure—one involving a glass plate and the other, human skin. In an article on the benefits of vacationing, Dr. Mary Taylor Bissell writes, "The light on the seashore has been eighteen hundred times stronger than that of shaded rooms. A photographic plate requires only one-tenth of a second's exposure on the shore to fix it…Bathing in such a flood of light must have a stimulating effect upon tissue change and good blood making."[105] Bissell suggests an equivalence between human skin and the photographic plate, both as chemically receptive to sun exposure. Dr. Miramond de Laroquette, a French colonial military physician stationed in Algiers, also recognized the similarity but suggested that sunlight has an even greater effect on human skin than on photograph paper. He observes:

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[104] R. J. Chute, "Health and Actinism," *Philadelphia Photographer* 14, no. 162 (June 1877): 161.
[105] Mary Taylor Bissell, "The Use and Abuse of Vacations," *Outlook* 54, no. 1 (July 4, 1896): 16.

> There is thus an evident parallelism between the degree of erythema[106] and of pigmentation, and the degree of the photochemical actions of light; it is only remarkable that in free air or under quartz and plain glass or blue glass, the difference of erythema and of pigmentation is even greater than the difference of the chemical effects on the photograph paper.[107]

The association made between photography and heliotherapy emphasized the ways in which light exposure and the notion of developing were fundamental to both processes. More than mere painting with powders and makeup, heliotherapy offered a bodily transformation to its practitioners that seemed more authentic and tangible, less artificial. No longer merely a surface on which to paint, the suntanned body presented a complete and physical manifestation of art and image.

By the 1910s, doctors across the U.S. had begun to adopt and adapt Rollier's pioneering methods for their own patients. The renowned Battle Creek Sanitarium in southern Michigan, a Seventh Day Adventist institution run by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, employed heliotherapy as a significant feature of their wellness regimen. The Sanitarium attracted tens of thousands of patients during its years in operation from 1866 to 1942, including such notable figures as Thomas Edison, Clara Barton, Sojourner Truth, Henry Ford, Warren G. Harding, and Johnny Weissmuller (the actor who famously played the deeply tanned Tarzan in 1932). Kellogg praised the therapeutic effects of light in an 1899 article in the Sanitarium's journal *Modern Medicine and Bacteriological Review*. Kellogg, perhaps most famous today for his eponymous dry digestive corn cereal, went on to found the Race Betterment Foundation at Battle Creek in 1906 with Charles Davenport and Irving Fisher, which became one of the major centers for the rapidly growing eugenics movement in

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[106] "Erythema" is the medical term for redness of the skin, in this case caused by sunburn.

[107] Miramond de Laroquette, "The Action of Natural and Artificial Light Baths," in *Journal of Advanced Therapeutics* 32, no. 9 (September 1914): 392.

the United States.[108] Kellogg was instrumental in establishing heliotherapy and the outdoor life as pillars of the eugenics movement. In a prominent figure like Kellogg, issues of health, eugenics, and politics converge and inform each other.

Heliotherapy was not limited to sanatoriums but gradually became integrated into hospitals catering to the full socioeconomic spectrum. In the spring of 1912, Sea Breeze Hospital, as it was popularly known, located on Coney Island, New York, instituted heliotherapy to treat poverty-stricken, tubercular children from New York City's tenements. The small hospital catering to immigrants was modeled after a sanatorium in Berck on the northern coast of France.[109] The children and Sea Breeze even adopted the same white, diaper-like breech cloth and hat that were made fashionable by Rollier at his sanatorium Leysin. Dr. John W. Brannan president of Bellevue and Allied Hospitals of New York City, in his visit to Sea Breeze, observes that while the little children "do not mind running about on the porches or lying on the beds in a state of nature," the older children who have reached about eight years of age and beyond are more apprehensive to this type of bodily exposure.[110] Nevertheless, the inclusion of rooftop wards, sunbaths on the beach, and open-air classrooms at Sea Breeze for the recovering children proved to be so successful in the treatment of tuberculosis that the city of New York, just two years later, acquired a plot of land on Rockaway Beach with 1,000 feet of beach front to build a $2.5 million hospital primed for heliotherapy for impoverished children and adults.[111]

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[108] Engs, *The Progressive Era's Health Reform Movement*, 275.

[109] *Annual Report of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor.* (New York: New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, 1907), 37.

[110] Ibid., 155.

[111] Guy Hinsdale, *Atmospheric Air in Relation to Tuberculosis*, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, 63, no. 1 (1914): 46.

In the ensuing years, American hospitals in their architectural design as well as procedural practice began to incorporate sunlight and artificial light into non-surgical treatments, a standard already set in Europe to treat millions of undernourished children after World War I.[112] Architects Edward Fletcher Stevens and his partner Frederick Clare Lee, educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Yale respectively, had offices in Toronto and Boston and were the leading voices in North American hospital architecture during the first quarter of the twentieth century—a period of sweeping reforms that shaped the modern hospital. Stevens promoted many of the duo's concepts in his influential treatise on modern hospital design, *The American Hospital of the Twentieth Century* (1918). When planning the orientation of a hospital building, Stevens points to the sun as the guiding principle. He believed that hospitals should face southward to maximize the amount of sunlight in and around the hospital. Moreover, he held that "the grounds surrounding the hospital building should be flooded with sunlight, as well as the rooms occupied by the patients…."[113]

In addition to numerous hospitals in the United States and Canada, Stevens and Lee were also responsible for the U.S. Overseas Army Hospitals during World War I where they experimented with various design elements that would be implemented in hospitals stateside if they proved successful.[114] The modern hospital which they and other architects of their time promoted was not only outfitted with large windows, sun parlors, balconies, and porches, but also was equipped with the latest instruments like sun lamps and electric light

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[112] Segrave, 17.

[113] Edward Fletcher Stevens, *The American Hospital of the Twentieth Century* (New York: The Architectural Record Co., 1921), 2.

[114] Annmarie Adams, "Modernism and Medicine: The Hospitals of Stevens and Lee, 1916-1932," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 1 (March 1999): 44.

bakers that simulate the sun's professed healing powers. Much of what American architects like Stevens and Lee promoted regarding the effects of sunlight and fresh air were indebted largely to hospitals in Europe (particularly France and Germany) that had already incorporated heliotherapy into their treatment regimens.

In addition to structural design, the wall color and décor of hospitals, convalescent homes, and sanatoriums were designed to simulate sunlight and the outdoors in an effort to further promote health and recovery. In a 1919 essay titled "The Therapeutic Value of Colour," British designer H. Kemp Prosser discusses the curative effects of color in the recovery of injured soldiers. He urges hospitals to move away from the use of red and brown in their wall colors as they are thought to symbolize bloodshed and autumnal decay. Instead, he proposes that the colors found in the hospital should remind the patient of spring:

> It may be interesting to know that the following colours have proved beneficial in cases of neurasthenia and shell-shock: (1) sunlight yellow; (2) sunlight primrose; (3) firmament blue; (4) spring green; (5) anemone mauve; (6) apple blossom pink. Yellows are used to produce on the mind the sense of sunlight; blue the vibration of the firmament; pink and green the early spring; mauve and violet are used in special cases where rest and quiet are required for the overwrought brain. It must be remembered that the colours must live, so to speak. They must vibrate with life. All life is pulsation.[115]

In Prosser's findings we see the merging of nature, science, and aesthetics in a way that each field bolsters the other. The colors Prosser recommends exude the regeneration and freshness of springtime with references to the sun, sky, animals, and plants. This had particular resonance with soldiers as well as common patients seeking health in a time of war and degeneration.

[115] H. Kemp Prosser, "The Therapeutic Value of Colour," in *Color and Health 1919*, edited by John J. Pool (1919; reprint, Whitefish, MO: Kessinger Publishing, 2004, 14.

The rise of heliotherapy in the medical field and its ability to effectively treat tuberculosis also had a major influence in the design of factories, school buildings, and residential homes by the late 1910s. Larger windows, solariums, sun rooms, and roof-top gardens, all of which had been implemented in hospital and sanatorium design, were now common features in these structures and were considered to be healthful, efficient, and modern additions. The pervasive reach of modern medicine is a testament to the rising authority of medical science and was part of a larger initiative during the Progressive Era to utilize medical developments for public sanitation and hygiene.[116] The fact that modern medicine so deeply affected even domestic life illustrates how Progressive-Era policies and campaigns extended far beyond the public sphere. From hand washing to dust removal, the once private American home was infiltrated by personal obligations for the public good. Responsibility was placed on each individual for upholding these healthy habits at all times, whether at work, school, or home.

Modern factories were equipped with larger windows to allow for greater ventilation and light—an attempt to bring the rustic purity of fresh air and sunshine into the industrial sphere. The illumination of factories with abundant natural light was seen as clean and sanitary. George Moses Price, a leading figure in New York City's public sanitation movement wrote, "Light, and especially sunlight, has a direct influence upon the destruction of various bacterial organisms, especially tubercle bacilli. Moreover, there is a certain psychological effect of plenty of light in a factory upon the cheerfulness and well-being of the workers."[117] Thus, increased sunlight not only acted as a sanitary force—killing invisible

[116] Sanford Schram, *After Welfare: The Culture of Postindustrial Social Policy* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 39.

[117] George Moses Price, *The Modern Factory: Safety, Sanitation and Welfare* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1914), 233.

bacteria in workspaces—but also provided workers psychological relief. An advertisement for Clark's Canned Food's found in a 1919 issue of *Modern Hospital* boasts, "The preparation and canning take place in a plant that is a model of sanitation, with an abundance of fresh air and bright sunlight."[118] This claim brings the open-air farm where the fruits and vegetables were picked into the modern factory, nostalgically appropriating rural life to sell its products.

By the turn of the century, schools were also constructed to face southward to maximize sunlight and avoid cold, northerly winds. George F. Loring, a Boston architect, in his study of school construction and the relationship between architecture and hygiene, was a major proponent of sunlight in American schools. In the weekly education journal *The School Journal*, Loring asserts, "Sunlight is the only disinfectant which sustains man, while it kills the microbe. We all know the agreeable sensation of direct sunlight, and you cannot but agree, from the standpoint of health and economy, that our conclusion is correct."[119] Loring even includes a "sun compass" to emphasize the importance of a sun-filled southern exposure. Again, as in discourses on modern hospital and factory architecture, sunlight possesses both a very pragmatic function as a disinfectant but also one of pleasurable sensation—both physical and psychological.

From construction to decoration, modern homes were designed with sunlight in mind. In a book of floor plans of "moderately priced" bungalows and cottages, Minnesota-based architect Glenn L. Saxton upholds the sunroom a key element of any modern home:

> The sunroom is a feature that has become very popular with the building public in the last four of five years and is adapted to most any style of house. It is really the most valuable asset of the entire home on account of its light,

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118 Advertisement, *Modern Hospital* 12, no. 1 (January 1919): 74-75.

119 George F. Loring, "School Architecture," *School Journal* 21, no. 3 (January 1899): 7.

> sunshine and fresh air. It is converted into a pleasant porch in the summer time and is the most delightful room throughout the winter.[120]

Sunrooms became a ubiquitous part of domestic architecture, providing people with a dedicated space to experience sunlight throughout the entire year. In addition, the heavy draperies of the Victorian Era were cast aside to let in light. A 1914 article entitled "The Shadeless Window" points to the new trend in interior design of shadeless windows already "being adopted in many New York homes."[121] The author, Mrs. Nelson Henry Herrick, announces the budding trend by boldly denouncing the old one, "No obstacle in the way of house decoration has occasioned more unhappiness than has the offending window shade."[122] This new look did not simply remove all traces of window coverings, but rather replaced the stiff window shade with a more diaphanous "sun-curtain." More than just another fleeting trend, the author also emphasizes the significant health benefits of increased sunlight within the home: "…shadeless windows have a more serious side than just the caprice of the whimsical decorator—health-keeping sunlight has fair play."[123] This not only represents the pervasiveness of heliotherapy in every facet of American life, but also affords an air of legitimacy to Mrs. Herrick's conventionally feminized work as a decorator—in turn empowering women as keepers of the home.

In the essay "Every Home a Sanatorium" published in the *Journal of the Outdoor Life*, a publication of the National Tuberculosis Association, author Dr. Daniel Lichty expounds upon the importance of the home in disease prevention:

> The home is the unit of society and the integer of the state. It is the Eden of the race today as it was in the beginning. Here must be the ethical and

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[120] Glenn L. Saxton, *The Plan Book of American Dwellings*, (Minneapolis, MN: Glenn L. Saxton, 1914), 11.

[121] Mrs. Nelson Henry Herrick, "The Shadeless Window," in *Good Housekeeping* 58, no. 3, (March, 1914): 369.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid., 370.

> ethnical salvation of the race. Here the prevention of disease. The home is the state's offering, the Nation's armament.[124]

In Lichty's view, we again see the nexus of eugenics, public health, and hygiene as well as the desire to turn back modernity's relentless march of progress to an Edenic past. He details the immense financial support for the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis, with approximately 600,000 sanatoriums in the United States in 1917, but argues that the home be the first, most elemental, line of defense. Essential to the Progressive Era's sanitation movement, the home served as a unit of state control and regulation. Unlike the hospital, school, office, or factory, the home was a private space to develop sanitary practices, especially among children, in a manner reminiscent of republican motherhood. It had long been the task of women to keep the house tidy, but it was now their responsibility to keep the house sanitary and healthy as well. This required staying abreast of the latest products from soaps to plumbing fixtures and cleaning advice in magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and *House Beautiful*. However, very much like public spaces, the state was able to infiltrate and command even this most sacred, private sphere. Regarding the construction of modern homes, Lichty gives an even stronger admonition: "the architect who plans and offers sunless houses for dwelling is a foe to hygiene, an enemy of sanitation and an ally of the army of the millions of tubercle bacilli."[125] As mentioned earlier, the fight against tuberculosis was conceived of as a war—one that often was conflated with the eugenic fight against immigrants, people of color, and others deemed degenerate.

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[124] Daniel Lichty, "Every Home a Sanatorium" in *Journal of the Outdoor Life* 14, no. 2 (February 1917): 38.

[125] Lichty, 39.

Reconstructing the Body after the Great War

The violence and destruction of World War I, known as the Great War during its time, fundamentally changed the way Americans (as well as those of all nations involved) perceived their bodies. This global conflict resulted in decreased birthrates and sparked a rise in tuberculosis. Most profoundly, however, the Great War mutilated bodies at a scale and severity only possible through modern technological warfare. As historian Ana Carden-Coyne suggests, artists sought to reconstruct the body through a combination of classical and modernist motifs in cultural production, most famously evidenced by Pablo Picasso's turn to whole-bodied, classicized figuration after his pre-war penchant for cubism. Working in tandem to reconstruct and perfect the human body, classicism provided what Carden-Coyne describes as "aesthetics of healing" while modernism offered a sensual and vibrant hope for the future.[126] Heliotherapy, an ancient practice revived in modern times, is situated within this reconstructive paradigm and was often conceived as such in various realms of visual culture. The sun's rays physically and psychologically healed feeble bodies and offered a renewed connection to what was perceived as a rapidly diminishing natural world.

Like neurasthenia and other nineteenth-century diseases of modernity, World War I generated new psychological conditions caused by modern warfare—most notably, shell shock. English psychologist Charles Samuel Meyers coined the term to differentiate it from its nineteenth-century counterpart neurasthenia and hysteria which were predominantly coded as feminine. Instead, shell shock was a decisively twentieth-century, masculine shattering of the nerves by the forces of modern warfare.[127] Heliotherapy was often

[126] Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.

[127] Sander L. Gilman, *Hysteria Beyond Freud* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 321.

suggested both in the United States and Europe as an effective form of treatment for this new condition. As *The Medical Council* published in Philadelphia advises:

> Among the many aids to a satisfactory and early recovery from surgical operations, also the tremendous nerve strain and exhausting influence of shell-shock, army surgeons have found that Alpine Sun Lamps stand in the front rank. These lamps are being used in French and British and our own base hospitals.[128]

Here, the sun lamps are personified as soldiers in the front rank, poised to fight a larger war of restoring the health of injured and weakened soldiers. As will be shown in the following chapter, sun lamps became popular in domestic use between the World Wars.

While the Great War shattered the psyche, it also physically ravaged bodies. This destruction was strikingly manifested in the surviving soldiers who lost limbs to grenades and other explosives or had parts of their faces blasted away in the trenches.[129] Moreover, the war also exacerbated tuberculosis which had been on the decline in the United States due to rigorous public health and sanitation campaigns. Crowded, unsanitary encampments and trenches were the new breeding grounds for tubercle bacilli. Additionally, heliotherapy was also used to treat other types of topical war wounds and injuries from gangrene to frost bite.[130]

The notion of post-war reconstruction of the body was also deeply entrenched in the notion of bodily perfection especially prevalent in the burgeoning consumer culture. As modernist literary scholar Tim Armstrong argues:

> Modernity, then, brings both a fragmentation and augmentation of the body in relation to technology; it offers the body as lack, at the same time as it offers technological compensation. Increasingly, that compensation is offered as

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[128] "Helpful Points: Desirable Results in Convalescence," *Medical Council* 23, no. 8 (August, 1918): 626.

[129] Allen S. Weiss**,** *Shattered Forms: Art Brut, Phantasms, Modernism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 45.

[130] "War Notes: Heliotherapy for the Wounded," *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 65, 15 (October 9, 1915): 1293.

> part of capitalism's fantasy of the complete body: in the mechanisms of advertising, cosmetics, cosmetic surgery, and cinema; all prosthetic in the sense that they promise the perfection of the body.[131]

The rise of suntanning fits precisely within this concept of the modern body. It reinvigorates and strengthens a body starved from the health-giving properties of sunlight. Heliotherapy offered both physical and psychological reconstruction in the aftermath of the Great War. But, with the coming of the 1920s, the sterile, at times eugenic, heliotherapy transformed into the sexualized, modern leisure activity of suntanning, the topic of the following chapter.

The Sun Cure: Modernist Health

"'Take her away into the sun,' the doctors said."[132] So opens D. H. Lawrence's short story simply titled *Sun*, first published in 1926, with a slightly longer version published in 1928.[133] The narrative paints a vibrant portrait of the sun as a healing and regenerative force. While it reiterates the well known benefits of the sun cure as a treatment for various ailments of over-civilization, it also introduces readers (published both in England and the United States) to a dramatically more sexualized rendering of sunbathing—an association that seems obvious today but would have been shocking for audiences at the time. The story speaks to the prevalence of heliotherapy in the popular imagination but also recasts it in the realm of modernist literature by revealing its potential for blurring the boundaries of Victorian conventions.

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[131] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

[132] D. H. Lawrence, *Sun*, in *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories*, ed. Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19.

[133] The first version of *Sun* was written by D. H. Lawrence in Spotorno, Italy, where he was treating tuberculosis. The short story, thus, has autobiographical parallels with Lawrence's own illness and treatment.

The story centers on Juliet, a wealthy young mother and wife from New York City who suffers from depression and anxiety with the "incapacity to feel anything real,"[134] who, at the order of doctors, reluctantly sails to a rural, coastal village in Italy with her young son to live in a "house built for the sun" for several weeks during the winter.[135] Although initially hesitant to lie in the sun without clothing as prescribed and skeptical of its benefits, Juliet develops a gradual desire "have intercourse with the sun," which she personifies as "he."[136] After finding a remote spot on the rocky bluff, she finally undresses, exposing her pale body to the sun:

> She could feel the sun penetrating into her bones: nay, further, even into her emotions and thoughts. The dark tensions of her emotion began to give way, the cold dark clots of her thoughts began to dissolve. She was beginning to be warm right through….And she lay half stunned with the strangeness of the thing that was happening to her. Her weary, chilled heart was melting, and in melting, evaporating.[137]

Juliet's transformation is both physical and psychological—unifying her outer and inner self. The last to open up from the penetrating rays of sunlight is her womb, which is conceived of as a tightly closed flower bud. In subsequent sunbathing sessions, it finally opens in "rosy ecstasy, like a lotus flower."[138] While the associations between women and flowers was common in Victorian discussions of sunlight, the sexually charged language and exotic reference to the open lotus blossom—central to the Buddhist philosophy of nirvana[139]—is far removed from the soft and rustic North American pussy willow described by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

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134 Ibid., 20.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid., 21.
137 Ibid., 21.
138 Ibid., 28.
139 Ibid., 397.

Reinvigorated by her sessions of laying in the sun, Juliet implores her timid son play in the sun naked, determined that "he shall not grow up like his father…like a worm that the sun has never seen."[140] Eventually, "his little body was pink too, his blond hair was pushed thick from his brow, his cheeks had a pomegranate scarlet, in the delicate gold of the sunny skin. He was bonny and healthy, and the servants, loving his gold and red and blue, called him an angel from heaven."[141] Lawrence describes the little boy by his appearance and his primary colors, emphasizing his newfound material presence. Juliet's desire for her son to develop a rich suntan points to a generational shift between father and son, between old Victorian values and the renewed promise of modern life.

By the story's end, when Juliet's husband Maurice arrives, completely out of place in his dark city suit, she has fully transformed into a "woman of flesh."[142] Maurice is rendered "powerless to her rosy, wind-hardened nakedness."[143] In a gesture of modernist primitivism, Lawrence reduces Juliet to flesh alone, aligning the white, Anglo-American woman with the colored bodies that for centuries had represented the antithesis of civilization. As her robust materiality is galvanized, she is now physically unable to see Maurice. His "grey city face...Being so sunned, she could not *see* him, his sunlessness was like nonentity."[144] As Juliet's rosy gold flesh becomes a vibrant, hardened surface, Maurice literally becomes transparent, immaterial, and thus irrelevant. This sense of the material body will be explored further in Chapter 2, as suntanning became an integral aspect of American consumerism as well as modernist cultural production. A healthy body, and more significantly, the

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140 Ibid., 22.
141 Ibid., 25.
142 Ibid., 33.
143 Ibid., 35.
144 Ibid., 36.

appearance of such, became increasingly important in the early twentieth century—impacting everything from the eugenics movement to Hollywood films.

Chapter 2

When the Suntan was in Vogue: Leisure, Consumerism, and the Modern Body

Chapter 2

When the Suntan was in Vogue: Leisure, Consumerism, and the Modern Body

An August 1928 headline in the *New York Times* signaled the ascendance of a bold new trend: "All Shades of Tan are Now Seen on New York's Streets."[1] The unnamed author marvels, "Slowly the city's population is changing color as Summer vacationists drift back to New York streets, their faces heavily coated in varying tints of golden brown." The article emphasizes the pervasiveness of this practice in terms of gender and class as "clerk and typist, bond salesman and showgirl return from country and seashore."[2] The author's keen description of this vivid and utterly modern phenomenon touches upon several points that I will examine in this chapter. First, the article highlights the popularity of suntanning in the general public by the late 1920s and its newly forged associations with leisure. Second, the article's placement in what would later become known as the "Arts & Leisure" section as well as its subtitle, "There Is Art in Acquiring Sunburn and Some People Practice It Successfully," locates the practice of sunbathing in the realms of art and leisure, which became increasingly integrated during the interwar period. Finally, the author describes faces that are coated in a variety of "coats" of color as if they were the latest kitchen stove or automobile—bringing the human body into the realm of advertising. Conflating the natural with the manmade, human skin became the latest commodity that could be manipulated, transformed, perfected, and marketed to consumers. How did the medical practice of heliotherapy transform into the fashionable leisure activity of sunbathing? How did this seemingly natural practice interact with modern technology and consumerism, and what

[1] "All Shades of Tan Are Now Seen on New York's Streets: There is Art in Acquiring Sunburn and Some People Practice It Successfully," *New York Time*s, August 19, 1928, sec. 10.

[2] Ibid.

implications did this have on peoples' bodies? To what extent did a bevy of new products and devices enable people of various backgrounds to partake in a process of bodily modification, and by extension, racial self-formation?[3] And as a broader question, how did these developments occur in the same decade in which the eugenics movement was at its height?

This chapter investigates the suntan as a marketable commodity between the World Wars ranging from a fashionable aspect of leisure to a home-care health remedy. Travel, a major component of leisure, already had longstanding associations with health, as evidenced by the rise of sanatoriums across the United States and Europe offering visitors with a restful experience somewhere between hospital and resort. By the mid 1920s, the suntan shed much of its cold, medical associations in exchange for eroticism and exoticism, while still retaining the vitality and health championed in earlier decades.[4] A deep suntan became a visible sign of healthful leisure, while sunbathing became a leisure activity in itself. Ironically, while a suntanned complexion implied a healthy, active lifestyle, it could be achieved largely through sedentary lounging at the pool, beach, or even at home. By the 1920s, leisure became widely available to the growing middle class—increasingly bringing recreational sports and more affordable travel to greater segments of the population. Historian Lawrence Culver's view of leisure as a broader phenomenon extending to people of varying socioeconomic levels as

[3] Weinbaum, Alys Eve, et al., the authors of *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), argue that the "Modern Girl"—the new young woman found in various countries during the 1920s and '30s—was actively engaged in a bodily self-fashioning "knit into processes of racial formation." (38) Although there were arguably a wider variety of products for women, my analysis also considers the role of men as consumers equally conscious of their bodies and skin color and the potential for modern technologies to aid in self-improvement.

[4] However, many products, especially those that relied on modern science for credibility, still maintained a medical rationale in their advertisements.

well as people of color, rather than the affluent few, serves as an apt model for my analysis.[5] While more accessible to a wider variety of peoples, leisure in the interwar period was often tied to strict to racial and socioeconomic boundaries that the practice of sunbathing inadvertently challenged.

For the wayward Lost Generation of artists and writers, the sun was a life-giving force that symbolized a primal rejuvenation and rebirth after the Great War. Freed from the Christian, medical rhetoric deployed at the turn of the century, suntanning by the 1920s was positioned as a leisurely activity and suntanned bodies represented health, sensuality, wholeness, and newness. The French Riviera in particular was the carefree playground for many young, forward-thinking Americans, most notably, Gerald and Sara Murphy who called their home in Cap d'Antibes "Villa America." This was an international gathering place for moderns like Pablo Picasso, Fernand Léger, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Cole Porter, among others. Although these artists, writers, and composers were part of the cultural avant-garde, their lifestyles meshed with those wealthy, cosmopolitan individuals of the so-called "international set," often running in the same social circles.

Yet the promise of the suntan was an image and ideal sold to middle and working-class Americans stateside as well. From the fashion magazine *Vogue* to the film fan magazine *Photoplay,* and even to daily newspapers such as the *New York Times,* various publications chronicled the trendsetting, elite "international set" and their choices in fashion and lifestyle for a broader set of American consumers. The late 1920s and early 1930s witnessed the efflorescence of municipal pools in cities and towns across the country with lawns explicitly set aside for sunbathing, rooftop sunbathing in cities, and the increased

[5] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 8.

popularity of beachside lounging.[6] Alongside developments in infrastructure and public and private activities, new trends in fashion also arrived, which exposed more of the body, and thus, more skin, so as to absorb as many rays as possible during the daytime and to proudly display the day's "work" at night. New fashions for women ranging from sportswear to evening gowns accommodated and revealed the body, rather than restricting and shrouding it with thick, uncomfortable layers. Men's and women's bathing costumes were increasingly pared down to simplified garments made of modern synthetic materials including rayon, allowing the body to move more freely in a way that merged exercise with fashion.[7] While the majority of goods were promoted to women as primary consumers, advertisers also targeted men by exploiting issues of body image ranging from feelings of physical inferiority to sex appeal.[8]

The arrival of modernism therefore liberated the Euro-American body and mind from Victorian constraints—from physically binding corsets to psychologically rigid dualities of gender and race.[9] It is with this newfound sense of freedom that tanning arose as a temporary means of experimenting with the self, expanding the physical boundaries of whiteness. In this process, the stereotyped attributes of other peoples who were viewed as darker in complexion, most commonly ancient Greeks, Native Americans, Polynesians, Latin Americans, Middle Easterners, and Africans, were often invoked by Euro-Americans.

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[6] Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 88, 100.

[7] Angela J. Latham, *Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s* (Hannover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 69–70.

[8] In this process, advertisers relied on the trope of the pale weakling of the indoor life as physically and socially inferior to the robust and suntanned modern man.

[9] Daniel Joseph Singal observes a moral dichotomy in Victorian culture between what was deemed human/civilized and animal/savage. This lens caused Victorians to view the world in rigid pairs: male/female, black/white, and so forth. See Singal, "Towards a Definition of American Modernism," in Modernist Culture in America, ed. Singal (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1991), 4-5.

However, associations were generally not made with contemporary people from these cultures given that the implications of American slavery and imperialism would be far too problematic. Instead, these references were made innocuous through a constructed sense of cultural and temporal distance.

However, the dramatic transformation of physical whiteness was not met without its critics, many of whom were African-American. It is not by chance that the 1920s was also the decade when "the Negro was in vogue."[10] Tied to a Euro-American desire for the primitive, suntanning can be seen as a physical manifestation of primitive darkness. While Euro-Americans were entertained by the tan-skinned chorus girls they saw in stage shows such as "Shuffle Along," and emulated their coloring, many fought virulently to uphold racial hierarchies that placed whites on the top and blacks on the bottom. In this chapter, I will also examine the implications of the Euro-American vogue for suntanning in African-American and immigrant communities. In particular, how did the African-American trend for skin lightening, which gained popularity during this period, relate to suntanned whites as well as idealized images of the bronzed "New Negro"?

This chapter considers visual material from the realms of modernist art, popular entertainment, and advertising to underscore how the suntanned, healthy body was integral various forms of cultural production. The widespread popularity of sunbathing—both natural and artificial—during this period suggests mutual engagement between modernist and consumer cultures, which are often seen as separated or even in opposition with one another. Thus, in a broader sense, this chapter serves to mend the rift that has traditionally existed

[10] Poet and writer Langston Hughes described the Harlem Renaissance using this phrase in his 1940 autobiography, *The Big Sea*. Langston Hughes, *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, ed. Dolan McLaren (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 175.

between avant-garde modernist culture and mainstream consumer culture. Instead of viewing vanguard, modernist thought and practice as gradually filtering down to the mainstream "masses," my analysis suggests that this was often in fact a dynamic, multidirectional process in constant flux. With this in mind, I seek to uncover the nuanced cultural relationships between the avant-garde and the everyday, the wealthy elite and the middle and working classes, and the expatriate and stateside American. While modernist literature was being marketed to the middle class and advertisements pitched everyday goods through avant-garde, abstract design, American modernists too were aware of, and in some cases, dictated by, consumer trends and mainstream American culture. By the end of the 1920s, suntanning was as popular on the Côte d'Azur as it was on Coney Island.

"Living Well is the Best Revenge": Gerald and Sara Murphy on the French Riviera

During the interwar period, France remained the dominant voice in the international fashion world. Popular magazines like *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* would report back the latest modes of the Parisian fashion houses such as Chanel, Lanvin, and Dior [Fig. 2.1] to readers in the U.S. While these editorials focused on fashion, they also promoted fashionable lifestyle more broadly—in other words, not just what people wore, but the kind of activities they engaged in while wearing the clothes they described. While *Vogue* had established its itself as the voice of fashion, it never lost sight of its late nineteenth-century origins as gazette of high society and social decorum.[11] In the 1920s, vacationing was particularly intriguing to general audiences, as more of the rich and famous took to sports and leisure. The phrase "going South" was commonly used to describe the southward movement of

[11] Daniel Delis Hill, *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), 8.

Americans and Europeans in the winter months to warmer, beachside resort towns ranging from Palm Beach, Florida, to the Venice Lido in Italy. The grand casinos, restaurants, dance halls, and beaches of the French Riviera provided the ideal foil to city life in Paris and New York. However, it took a pair of fashionable Americans to popularize sunbathing on its shores during the hot summer season.

Gerald and Sara Murphy, in their lifestyle, artistic production, and fashion, epitomized the new modern American abroad [Fig. 2.2]. As art historian Deborah Rothschild observes of the Murphys, "Together, they created a distinctly modern, elegant style of living that ranged over art, literature, music, theater, fashion, design, gardening, child rearing, and entertaining."[12] Like many of their generation, their modern sensibilities emanated from a traditional Victorian upbringing. Sara was born to Frank and Adeline Wiborg of Cincinnati in 1883 and was the eldest of their three daughters. Her father was a successful businessman whose Ault and Wiborg Company produced high-quality printing ink. Their father's successful business coupled with her mother's family fortune provided a very privileged life for the young Wiborg girls. The family traveled extensively, from Santa Barbara, California to India and Ceylon. When Sara and her sisters reached their teenage years, they lived in London and became fixtures of the European society circuit. While back in the U.S., Sara pursued her interest in drawing at the Art Students League, studying with William Merritt Chase. Gerald, was born in Boston in 1888 to Patrick and Anna Murphy and raised in New York City. Patrick, the owner of the luxury goods business Mark Cross, had a keen eye for trends, which Gerald inherited. Gerald and his older brother Frederick were held to their

[12] Deborah Rothschild, "Masters of the Art of Living," in *Making It New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy*, ed. Deborah Rothschild (Berkeley; Williamstown, MA: University of California Press; Williams College Museum of Art, 2007), 11.

parent's high standards and strict discipline, often feeling inadequate in their quest to prove themselves. Gerald struggled academically in prep school, but he nevertheless was accepted to Yale's Class of 1912.[13]

Although Gerald was only sixteen years old when he met the twenty-one-year-old Sara at a party in East Hampton, New York, in 1904, the two maintained a friendship for years and confided their deepest insecurities and highest hopes. Gerald had long kept his possible attraction to men concealed from those around him. However, it was in the older, more self-assured Sara that he was able to finally speak honestly and openly about his sexual ambivalence as well as his growing desire for her. She did not seem taken aback by Gerald's intimate confessions, but rather, found in him a sensitive, kindred spirit, sharing her interest in art and independent thinking.[14] They were married in 1915, despite facing resistance from both sets of parents. Their younger days summering in the Hamptons, with the fresh sea air and sunshine, served as a model for the life they would one day build for their own family on the French Riviera.

Gerald continued to work for his father's company Mark Cross where he had been employed after graduating college. He briefly attended flight-training school in 1917, but never was sent overseas as Germany surrendered just before his deployment. After the war, Gerald decided not to return to Mark Cross and instead began taking courses at the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture to fulfill a lifelong interest in gardens. He envisioned that Sara would soon join him in Cambridge with their two children, Honoria and Baoth, and that she would enroll in similar classes. Together, they would build a future together for their family on equal footing as husband and wife—strikingly progressive for the time. He wrote

[13] Ibid., 12–22.
[14] Ibid., 23.

to her in 1919: “We are now trying to make possible a future which will mean that when we wake up in the morning *the* question and work of the day will *belong* to *both* of us. *Think* what this means!! To be able to work *together* over the *same* thing. What husbands and wives can do this?!”[15] However, this optimism waned as Gerald struggled with his coursework during his second year, ultimately leading to a break from his studies.

While attempting to leave the concerns of the real world behind them as they sailed off for England with their three young children in 1921—eventually making their way to Paris three months later—the Murphys were nevertheless deeply influenced by contemporary issues in American society. In particular, eugenics, immigration, and consumerism continued to impact their daily lives and work while abroad. Gerald Murphy's love for the Spanish proverb “living well is the best revenge” has largely been interpreted as indicative of the carefree attitude championed by this quintessential modern family.[16] However, I claim that also fueling the Murphys' lifestyle was an almost obsessive desire for physical health that was informed by the latest trends in health and exercise, often paralleling those promoted by eugenicists. While scholars have focused on the quintessentially American and modern aspects of the Murphys' open-minded and progressive approach to life, few have acknowledged its eugenic dimensions. Of particular interest to my discussion will be three specific works: the Murphys’ home Villa America in Cap d'Antibes, the jazz ballet *Within the Quota* Gerald Murphy produced with Cole Porter in 1924 [Fig. 2.3], and Gerald Murphy's final painting *Portrait* (1928) [Fig. 2.4]. Spanning the realms of ballet, architecture, and fine art respectively, these works underscore the Murphys' fascination with health and its relationship to the body politic and the self.

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15 Ibid., 27.

16 Calvin Tomkins, *Living Well Is the Best Revenge* (New York: Viking Press, 1971).

Prior to the Murphy Family's arrival in the French Riviera in 1922 as guests of Linda Porter, wife of famed American composer and songwriter Cole Porter, the Riviera had exclusively been a winter resort without a dedicated summer season.[17] In a January 1922 issue of *Harper's Bazar*, the article "The Parisienne Packs and Goes South: The Grand Maisons Concentrate on Clothes for South and North" discloses the latest fashions found in the French Riviera while also vividly depicting the carefree, fashionable lifestyle where these fashions were on display. The author notes that the heart of life in the Riviera was the casino, not the beach:

> The life of all the southern resorts centers in the Casinos and sporting clubs, and, except for motoring, golf and the brief racing season, Casino frocks are more necessary than beach clothes, and evening gowns ore important than either. At Monte Carlo a tiny cluster of bath-houses are tucked away carefully out of sight—hidden, in fact—and instead of leading to the beach, all roads lead to the Casino and to the Casino terraces.[18]

Although it may seem impossible today to dissociate the French Riviera with images of sunbathing on the beach, prior to the 1920s, tourists in fact prioritized evening activities rather than spending the day lounging and swimming in the sun. However, the Murphys and the Porters brazenly took to vacationing in the hot summer sun in the Riviera.

Life on the beach provided the natural setting and ease of living the Murphys had dreamed about. The Riviera provided the ideal backdrop for their new life that embodied the ethos of modernist primitivism. Numerous photographs of the family and their friends from the period show their ruddy, dark complexions. Gerald even took to sailing nude on the family boat The Weatherbird. Fernand Léger's portraits of friends Gerald and Sara Murphy from his *Weatherbird Portfolio* (1934) [Fig. 2.5] of twenty-four watercolors painted from

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[17] Rothschild, 47.

[18] "The Parisienne Packs and Goes South: The Grand Maisons Concentrate on Clothes for South and North," Harper's *Bazar* (January 1929): 49.

scenes aboard the Murphy's new boat offer, comparatively, a more modest display of suntans. Unusual as portraits for their faceless quality and spare surroundings, the sitters are nonetheless identified through their characteristic poses, dress (or lack thereof), and their distinctive suntans. Gerald is pictured wearing only his trademark white skullcap, which, with the lone white chair in which he is seated, offer a vibrant contrast to the orange tone of his skin and the cerulean waters of the Riviera. The cap also serves to highlight Gerald's state of undress as it is the only garment that covers his skin. Sara too is painted from behind, with her loose, blue and white polka-dot dress slipping off her shoulders to bare her entire back, as was her custom when sunbathing. It is hard to imagine this is the same woman in the formal portrait by William James Jr. from 1921 [Fig. 2.6] in which the tone of Sara's face and décolletage are so pale it borders on a light gray with the only hint of color coming from her pink lips and cheeks. James's portrait represents a vestige of the previous century—an image exuding the stifling propriety and social codes that the Murphys left behind in the U.S.

Towards the end of the summer in 1923, the Murphys decided to buy a modest chalet of their own and spent the next two years renovating it to fit their tastes and lifestyle. The strategic selection of their new home in Cap d'Antibes—uniquely within a short walk to La Garoupe beach—was also clearly guided by a desire to live in the sun. While most beaches on the Riviera were rocky, La Garoupe was distinctive for its soft sand, which was ideal for the various leisure activities the Murphys engaged in from picnicking with friends to playing games with the children. While many scholars have dwelled on the minimalist, modern design of the Murphy's Riviera home, less attention has been paid to how the popular desire for health and wellness literally shaped the physical structure. The turn-of-the-century chalet

was remodeled and "modernized" by two American architects, Hale Walker and Harold Heller, who among other adjustments, enlarged the small windows with large glass panels, added terraces leading off the ground-floor living rooms, and replaced the pitched roof with a flat one to serve as a sundeck—one of the first ever seen on the Riviera.[19] Rechristened by the Murphys as "Villa America," the sun-filled home and its lush environs represented the full integration of health, nature, architecture, and lifestyle—modern in its simple, open design but also in the latest health trends it boasted. Le Corbusier, creator and prophet of the high modernist International Style, praised the Murphys' renovation, particularly the new rooftop sundeck.[20] Its minimalist décor with white walls and black tiled floor inside and a whitewashed stucco exterior provided a simple backdrop that heightened the colorful spectacle of the family and its numerous guests.[21] Villa America manifest modern American health, vitality, and technology in its very design.

Beyond the architectural features of the home, Villa America also became a place where both fellow Americans and Europeans could keep abreast of the latest American trends:

> Gerald had an arrangement with the drummer in Jimmy Durante's band to send them, in monthly shipments, the latest jazz records. He imported the new household gadgets being produced in America (an electric waffle iron, for one), knew the latest American dances, and read the new American books. The French, who were fascinated by anything American, used to love to hear the Murphys sing Negro folk songs and spirituals, which Gerald had been collecting for years.[22]

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[19] Paul Overy, *Light, Air and Openness: Modern Architecture Between the Wars* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 105.

[20] Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 115.

[21] Ibid., 118.

[22] Tomkins, 28.

The Murphy's were keen to share the uniquely American aspects of their home culture with an eager French audience. Villa America and the Murphys came to stand for the new cultural position of the United States after the Great War, which had left much of Europe in ruins.

Unlike the rowdy cafe scene of the expatriate Montparnasse neighborhood in Paris, the lifestyle the Murphys cultivated in the Riviera was largely centered around family life, which was also a primary focus of the eugenic movement. The Murphys were active and engaged parents. The Gerald and Sara Murphy Archive at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library contains countless family photo albums and personal journals which reveal the Murphys' deep dedication to their children. While the family seemingly lived a carefree life, much of the Murphys' interest in health, especially that of their children, was largely guided by the burgeoning Progressive Era interest in physical culture and popular science. Gerald conducted daily calisthenics routines on the beach with his children who dressed in loincloths held up with suspenders to maximize their exposure to the sun [Fig. 2.7]. These garments were commonly worn by adults and children during heliotherapy treatments. In describing life at Villa America, Rothschild notes that the Murphys built "a *vacherie* for two cows so the children could have fresh milk."[23] Her casual mention of this fact renders it as a quaint anecdote of a healthy, free-spirited family living close to nature. However, the Murphys, like many American parents of their time, were most likely guided by scientific studies proclaiming the ability of sunlight and milk to stave off common childhood diseases such as rickets caused by Vitamin D deficiencies. The treatise *Milk: The Indispensable Food for Children* by Dorothy Reed Mendenhall was published in 1918 by the

[23] Rothschild, 56.

U.S. Department of Labor's Children's Bureau as a part of their "Care of Children" series. The Murphys were concerned with diseases such as rickets and tuberculosis, which often preyed on children, including two of their own. Their youngest son, Patrick, was diagnosed with tuberculosis in 1929 and spent several years receiving open-air and sun treatments in the Palace Hotel, a sanatorium located in Montana-Vermala in the Swiss Alps. Meanwhile, their otherwise healthy, athletic son Baoth, the second of the three children, suddenly died from meningitis at the age of fifteen in 1935 while at St. George's, a preparatory school in Newport, Rhode Island. This tragedy was compounded by Patrick's gradual decline and eventual death from tuberculosis in 1937.[24]

Along with their interest in health, the Murphys were also informed by the ongoing immigration debates in the U.S. while they were abroad in Europe. In 1923, while in Paris, Gerald Murphy was commissioned by Rolf de Maré, director of the Ballets Suédois, to create an "American" ballet. Murphy wrote the libretto and designed the set and costumes for the jazz ballet *Within the Quota*, the first of this genre, and enlisted his longtime Yale classmate and friend Cole Porter to write the score. The ballet is a satire on contemporary American culture and politics with its title referencing immigration debates surrounding the proposed Johnson-Reed Act, federal immigration legislation that set restrictive quotas on the number of immigrants entering the U.S. According to historian Matthew Frye Jacobson, the Johnson-Reed Act was "the most significant revision of immigration policy,"[25] and was the crowning achievement of eugenicists who had fought for decades to curtail immigrants on a federal level. The quota provided immigration visas to two percent of the total number of

[24] Rothschild, 75.

[25] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, 10.

people of each nationality in the United States found in the 1890 national census and completely excluded immigrants from Asia. This strategic formula effectively led to the dramatic decline in the number of new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Murphy and Porter's ballet premiered on October 5, 1923, at the Théatre des Champs Élysées in Paris, a few months before the Johnson-Reed Act was signed into law by President Calvin Coolidge.

Within the Quota centers on the story of a wide-eyed Swedish immigrant who, is "within the quota" and thus is able to immigrate to the U.S. Upon arriving in the U.S., he encounters a range of colorful characters "already familiar to him," including the American Heiress, the Coloured Gentleman (played a white performer in blackface), and the Jazzbaby, the Prohibition Agent, and the Cowboy. The Immigrant, played by Jean Börlin who also choreographed the ballet, eventually achieves his American Dream by becoming a movie star and falling in love with the Sweetheart-of-the-World, a character modeled directly on the American actress Mary Pickford's status as "America's Sweetheart." Gerald was attuned to the Immigrant's sense of difference and strangeness. He was occasionally the butt of ethnic jokes while at Yale and remained keenly conscious of his family's immigrant background throughout his life. His choice of a Swedish immigrant was most likely a nod to the Swedish dance company that commissioned the ballet, but also perhaps a reference to Sara's paternal grandfather who was a Norwegian immigrant.

The stage set Gerald designed and painted for *Within the Quota* was a floor-to-ceiling backdrop featuring a blown-up front page of a fictional American newspaper [Fig. 2.3].[26] The sensationalist, punchy headlines were derived from topical and autobiographical

[26] Gerald and Sara Murphy had trained with Natalia Goncharova, set designer for the Ballets Russes, while in Paris.

references, and parodied the hyperbolic nature of American popular journalism at the time. The most dominating headline reading "Unknown Banker Buys Atlantic" shares the page with "Gem Robbers Foil $200,000 Swindle" highlight the high stakes of American wealth, while "Rum Raid Liquor Ban" takes aim at Prohibition, which the Murphys strongly opposed and escaped by coming to Europe. The backdrop also features an image of a skyscraper with headlines referencing planes, automobiles, ocean liners, and other feats of American engineering that intrigued the rest of the world. In sum, the ballet hones in on the ironies of life in the U.S. in the 1920s, as witnessed through the innocent and hopeful eyes of an immigrant.

Gerald Murphy's creative pursuits also extended into the visual arts. *Portrait* (1928) [Fig. 2.4] was the final painting produced by Gerald Murphy during his brief ten-year career as an artist in France. The modestly sized painting, which has not been located since 1944, has been interpreted by art historian Kenneth E. Silver as a psychological rendering of careful self-scrutiny, and ultimately, "a portrait of the artist as a gay man looking out from the closet."[27] While Silver's analysis investigates certain aspects of Murphy's identity, what is absent is the influence of eugenics—particularly its insistence on anthropometry in the pursuit of human perfection—and its formative imprint on Murphy. The painting is a fragmented self-portrait featuring a traced outline of Murphy's foot around his ink footprint, his thumbprints painted using a single camel's hair, and a magnified and rather effeminate depiction of the artist's eye and thin lips.

[27] Kenneth Silver, "The Murphy Closet and the Murphy Bed," in *Making It New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy*, ed. Deborah Rothschild (Berkeley; Williamstown, MA: University of California Press; Williams College Museum of Art, 2007), 114–115.

The anonymous quality of Murphy's *Portrait* is enhanced by the inclusion of segments of rulers and a small copy of a conglomerate facial profile of Caucasian Man from the archives of the Bibliothéque Nationale.[28] Both the rulers and the facial profile make direct reference to anthropometry and composite portraiture—two methodologies frequently used by eugenicists to make generalized claims about different racial types and socially undesirable groups such as criminals and the "feeble-minded."[29] Anthropometry, or the measurement of the human body and its proportions, had long been utilized by doctors, scientists, and physical anthropologists to determine differences among the races through the seemingly objective act of measuring. Sir Francis Galton, the founder of eugenics, and American eugenicists such as Madison Grant relied heavily on anthropometry as the basis for their eugenic theories.[30] Specifically, craniometry and the cephalic index—a ratio of a skull's length and its breadth—became a central metric used in eugenics, among other forms of scientific racism.[31] Murphy's inclusion of a conglomerate facial profile of a Caucasian man references the composite photographic portraits and sculpted busts used throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by eugenicists to visualize specific types of people ranging from different racial groups to criminals. In these composite images and sculptures, actual individual likenesses were reduced into a single "representative" type—either by overlaying multiple photographic portraits or sculpting from averaged measurements—standing in for an entire heterogeneous body of people.

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[28] Ibid., 114.

[29] Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 159.

[30] Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2009), 101.

[31] Frank Spencer, ed., *History of Physical Anthropology* (New York: Garland, 1997), 85–86.

It is both the meticulous measurement of anthropometry and the flattened sense of individual personhood of the facial profile that Murphy deemed apt metaphors to express his own sense of self—or lack thereof. Throughout his life, Gerald was preoccupied with his appearance and the way he was perceived by others, from his scrutinizing father to his competitive classmates—an obsession that made him feel at times like an empty shell with no real self. He wrote in confidence to friend Archibald MacLeish in 1931: "Eight years of school and college, after my too willing distortion of myself into the likeness of popularity and success. I was left with little confidence in the shell that I had inhabited as another person."[32] Thus, Murphy's *Portrait* can be viewed as a self-portrait broken down into a series of parts. Although some of the features of the painting are specific to Murphy, his painting is more detached and impersonal than a conventional self-portrait. Here, Murphy reveals the limits of the racial perfection heralded by eugenics by highlighting its obsessive measurements and treatment of human beings as formulaic calculations.

Although it is not known whether the Murphys spoke or wrote explicitly about eugenics, their circle of friends certainly did. Most notably, F. Scott Fitzgerald, a close friend who vacationed at Villa America with his wife Zelda, modeled the main characters in his novel *Tender is the Night* (1934) on Gerald and Sara. Fitzgerald wrote about eugenics in his famed *The Great Gatsby* (1924) in a conversation Tom Buchanan, "a sturdy, straw-haired man of thirty," strikes up with protagonist Nick Carraway:

> "Civilization's going to pieces," broke out Tom violently. "I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read 'The Rise of the Colored Empires' by this man Goddard?"
>
> "Why, no," I answered, rather surprised by his tone.

[32] Gerald Murphy quoted in *Making It New: The Art and Style of Sara and Gerald Murphy*, ed. Deborah Rothschild (Berkeley; Williamstown, MA: University of California Press; Williams College Museum of Art, 2007), 23.

> "Well, it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be — will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved."
>
> "Tom's getting very profound," said Daisy, with an expression of unthoughtful sadness. "He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word we ——"
>
> "Well, these books are all scientific," insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things."
>
> "We've got to beat them down," whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.
>
> "You ought to live in California —" began Miss Baker, but Tom interrupted her by shifting heavily in his chair.
>
> "This idea is that we're Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and ——" After an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me again. "— And we've produced all the things that go to make civilization — oh, science and art, and all that. Do you see?"[33]

Tom's mentioning of "'The Rise of the Colored Empires' by this man Goddard?" is most likely a reference to Lothrop Stoddard's widely read book *The Rising Tide of Color: The Threat Against White World-Supremacy* (1920) and perhaps also to Henry H. Goddard, a prominent American psychologist and eugenicist. By inserting this discussion of eugenics and Nordic dominance into Tom's ham-handed ramblings, Fitzgerald, like Murphy's *Within the Quota*, makes light of the fear-mongering and racial anxiety typically associated with the movement. As Tom falls back on what he views as the irrefutability of science, his companions seem less than interested and even tease him. In Tom, Fitzgerald points to the amateurish yet devoted following that fueled eugenics into a nationwide movement.

[33] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 14.

Suntans: The Imprint of Health and Leisure

In addition to the French Riviera, Palm Beach, Florida, was the other fashionable spot for winter vacations throughout the 1910s and 1920s. In fact, the entire January 1922 issue of *Harper's Bazar,* "The Fashions for the South Number," is dedicated to the latest trends to be worn in the French Riviera and Palm Beach—putting the two beach locales on par with one another. As early as 1916, Palm Beach was known for it's illustrious Browning Club—a men's club whose sole interest was to socialize and suntan. *Collier's* describes the club in it's earliest days:

> So, too, certain gentlemen of swarthy skin make their way to the casino sun parlor, where they disrobe and bake until the bathing hour. The object of this practice is to acquire, as nearly as a white man may, the complexion of a mulatto, and it is surprising to see how nearly the skins of some more ardent members of the "Browning Club," as this group is called, match those of their chair boys. The underlying theory of the "Browning Club" is that a triple-plated coat of tan, taken north in March advertises the wearer as having been at Palm Beach the entire winter, thus establishing him as a man not merely of means, but of great endurance.[34]

The author's words reflect the shocking reactions to the practice in its early days as a leisure activity—and compares the tanned white men to mulattos and the presumably African-American "chair boys" that serve them. The white man's tanning also requires hard work and endurance, although in the name of leisure. He never actually becomes racially black, but his darkened skin establishes him as a man of means and vitality. And although suntanning was common for men as a sign of leisure and wealth in 1916, white women in Palm Beach were still divided into two camps: those who tanned as much as the men of the Browning Club, and those who preserved their fair skin using a parasols, hats, and sun-veils to shield themselves from the sunlight.[35]

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[34] Julian Street, "Palm Beach," *Collier's* 58, no. 21 (February 3, 1917): 31.
[35] Ibid.

In a 1929 article titled "Will the Vogue for Tan Last?" from *Printer's Ink Monthly*, author Donald S. Cowling directs readers to the origins of the explosive trend: "It is generally credited with having started on the Riviera, or rather among those women who, returning from their winters there, or in Florida, wished to flaunt before their less fortunate, stay-at-home sisters a coat of tan as prima facie evidence of their stay at those socially correct centers."[36] Cowling's remarks suggest the direct influence of the trendsetting elite—individuals that can afford to travel to warmer climates in the winter months—on marketing fashionable styles to middle-class consumers. The author employs the Victorian trope of likening women to flowers to soften the strikingly modern image of the suntan: "Underneath their tawny exteriors the roses and the lilies bloomed undisturbed, and the consciousness of this lent an added zest to the verve with which they displayed their tropic charms."[37] The modern woman, in Cowling's estimation, could be both innocent yet alluring.

While the Murphys and other wealthy Americans could afford leisure as a way of life, spending entire seasons away from home, middle-class Americans sought leisure through day trips to the beach on the weekends or vacations in various sunny climes from Florida to California—with increased accessibility due to the opening of the Florida East Coast Railway and the addition new lines on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway around the turn of the century. The American vacation of the interwar period, as it was in earlier decades, was guided primarily by health. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the sanatorium and heliotherapy, or the "sun cure," were precursors to modern travel, which often included sunbathing as an integral part of one's vacation. For New Yorkers seeking reprieve from the stifling summer heat, even closer to home were seaside and lakeside retreats on Long Island,

[36] Donald S. Cowling, "Will the Vogue for Tan Last?," *Printer's Ink Monthly* (August 1929), 31.
[37] Cowling, 32.

in upstate New York, and further along the New England coastline. Promoted during the mid to late nineteenth century as ideal settings for the outdoor life, resort towns from East Hampton, New York, to Gloucester, Massachusetts, continued to be popular vacation spots as the value of nature and sun exposure permeated American society. Artists too escaped frenetic city life in these natural settings, as many joined artist colonies that had formed in these communities throughout the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Such was the case with Thomas Hart Benton, who, before finding fame as a Regionalist painter, spent his early career as a struggling artist in New York City who found respite in the summer in Martha's Vineyard. His *Self-Portrait with Rita* (1922) is a portrait of himself and his wife Rita Piacenza on the beach at Martha's Vineyard [Fig. 2.8], a place where the couple would spend their summers for the next fifty years. Benton portrays himself as a hulking, bronzed Adonis, firmly grasping a staff while standing confidently and staking claim to his young, attractive wife whose hands are lyrically draped with what appears to be a sea sponge. The double portrait presents an image of Benton that is almost unrecognizable when compared to an earlier self-portrait from 1912 where the artist presents himself essentially as a pale, Europeanized dandy [Fig. 2.9]. Benton's 1922 portrait is an early expression of the healthy, muscular bodies that would come to dominate his Regionalist canvases and murals.

Benton's physical transformation, however, began several years before landing on Martha's Vineyard. Although growing up in a privileged Midwestern household, the son of U.S. congressman Colonel Maecenas Benton, he nonetheless lived an active, rugged life, attending military school at his father's request. However, Benton's true passion was art, not politics, which led him to enroll at the Art Institute of Chicago at the age of nineteen, with his

mother's support, and continued his studies at the Académie Julian in Paris. The nearly three years he spent in Paris from 1908 to 1911 seemed to have a profound effect on him. Paris was the obvious choice for many talented young American artists to seek the best formal and informal training in the arts. *The Kansas City Star* ran a feature story on the artist a few weeks after he had moved to Kansas City in January 1912 upon his return to the U.S. The article opened with a description of the twenty-two-year-old artist's appearance: "an agile, nervous little man," with long, disordered black hair under a rakish, baggy velvet cap. He wore a long black tie, which cascaded over his soft negligee shirt, and sat in an ancient rocking chair, beside a candle in a brass candlestick, which he used to light his cigarettes."[38] This description, in every way, fits the nineteenth-century image of the brooding artist-as-genius and was certainly in no way modern. Benton's *Self-Portrait* (1912), mirroring the newspaper's account, was painted soon after he moved from Kansas City back to his hometown of Neosho, Missouri. The dark and moody portrait, rife with psychological depth, was influenced by Manet and epitomized the stereotype of the effete, tortured European artist.

By June of 1912, Benton decided to start afresh and make a living as a portrait painter in New York. Unable to shake off the influence of Paris, Benton continued to feel and look out of place in his new surroundings. Thomas Craven, who would later become a leading American art critic, befriended Benton during this time, and remembered him as "'a sight' and 'the antithesis of everything American,' with his tight French clothes, his French hat, and his Balzac stick. 'He was only twenty-three...but he looked old and sad: his face was deeply lined and drawn, and I cannot remember that he ever laughed. He was, I felt, the victim of

[38] Henry Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 58.

some strange irregularity of development.'"[39] As described in Chapter 1, the quest to define a distinctively American art often invoked a negative view of Europe in a manner that paralleled the xenophobia of eugenicists. Thus, to Craven, Benton's weariness and haggard appearance are symptomatic of his time in France, and thus perceived as developmental abnormalities.

It would take Benton's experience in the Navy during WWI followed by his retreats to Martha's Vineyard to free him of what he considered "the stultifying effects of those theories of art which, born in the confused struggles of my era, made me see all aesthetic effort as directed toward the exemplification of principle"[40] Benton was stationed in Norfolk, Virginia, and was sent to the nearby Cherrystone Island in Cape Charles to study naval signaling. It was during this period where Benton returned to the physical exertion of his youth and began transforming his slight stature. He wrote boastfully to his younger sister Mildred:

> I am getting to be somewhat of a privileged character on this island...I escape all the daily jobs and am able to do whatever I please to get a rowboat or canoe for exploring trips. This is accounted for by the fact that I go into all athletics and that I am generally known, by now, as an artist unlike the usual type. The popular idea of an artist is summed up by a consumptive appearance coupled with feminine habits. The fact that I do not fit that idea has given the boneheads a better opinion of the profession and consequently signaled me out as a person worthwhile.[41]

Benton is conscious of his potentially problematic identity as an artist, let alone the cultured, well-traveled son of a congressman, amongst the "boneheads" around him. However, it is his embrace of physical culture that transforms not only his body, but his perception of

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[39] Ibid., 63.
[40] Thomas Hart Benton, *An Artist in America* (New York: Halcyon House, 1939), 63.
[41] Thomas Hart Benton, quoted in Henry Adams, *Thomas Hart Benton: An American Original* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 84.

himself as an artist. Benton wrote similarly to Craven, who was also in the Navy, and taunted him with the supposed ease of his duties:

> Well, Craven, old top, I have fallen into a much softer dump than yours...With the exception of three hours in the morning which I put in on the "blinkers" and flags...I spend my entire time here swimming, rowing, sailing and sleeping. This is not a regulation camp and my garb is limited as a general rule to a pair of bathing trunks...
>
> I am being taught to handle a cutter in the afternoons. We cross the bay to the mainland, get in some inlet or on the beach, signal for a while, smoke, swim, fish for clams or crabs and then row the cutter back. All this is not very hard. In fact, I am having a real vacation and am getting tough as a nigger. I am sunburnt worse than I was at Ft. Lee.[42]

Benton's description of daily life in the Navy conflates hard work with leisure—perhaps as a means of exaggeration to further inflate his sense of masculinity. His claim that he is "getting tough as a nigger" reveals the artist's complex relationship to race, which he held throughout his life and career.[43] While the term describes Benton's new physical and psychological toughness, it may also be a crude reference to the stereotype of black slaves as lazy and carefree. Whatever his intention, what is clear is that he likens his newly darkened skin to a race other than his own. He is dramatically transformed into a deeply suntanned, athletic man—a far cry from his sickly pale days after returning from Paris. For Benton, his Naval experience and the "real" men that surrounded him, provided a sense of liberation from the over-civilized, cerebral artists of the cities.

Summers in Martha's Vineyard provided a similarly liberating and restorative experience for Benton. It was Rita Piacenza, Benton's student and model, who first invited Benton and Craven to spend the summer of 1920 in the village of Chilmark on Martha's

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[42] Ibid., 86.

[43] For more on the subject of race in the work of Thomas Hart Benton, see Austen Barron Bailly, "Art for America: Race in Thomas Hart Benton's Murals, 1919-1936," *Indiana Magazine of History* 105, no. 2 (June 2009): 150–66.

Vineyard. The seaside community provided a welcome escape for the city dwellers during the hot summer months. Benton relished "'getting out of the damn city and living an open life...on the beaches and doing work'."[44] Martha's Vineyard had a "profound effect" on the artist, physically, psychologically, and artistically, which were interdependent for him: "The relaxing sea air, the hot sand on the beaches where we loafed naked, the great and continuous drone of the surf, broke down most of the tenseness which life in the cities had given me."[45] It was during this first of many summers on Martha's Vineyard where he began to hone his painting style, abandoning any residual experiments in Cubist-inspired abstraction in favor of classicized, representational forms. He painted the landscape as well as "the old Yankees of the island" whom he found noble, picturesque, and real: "Painting these plain American people and their environment, I got clear of all the hang-overs of France and the isms of modern aesthetics."[46] This marked a major shift in his direction as an artist—spurring what would become a lifelong quest for American authenticity: "It was in Martha's Vineyard that I first really began my intimate study of the American environment and its people."[47]

Painted a few short months after their wedding, Benton's *Self-Portrait with Rita* (1922) features the newlywed couple on the beach at Martha's Vineyard. The artist appears as a new man—robust, tanned, and brimming with confidence. With wind-swept hair and defined musculature, he is reminiscent of a Greek god, presiding over his youthful, similarly statuesque wife. Classicized in their Michelangelesque contours and physical heft, they also, in many ways, represent the modern. She is dressed provocatively in a daring bathing suit

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[44] Justin Wolff and Thomas Hart Benton, *Thomas Hart Benton: A Life* (New York: Macmillan, 2012), 166.

[45] Thomas Hart Benton, *An Artist in America* (New York: Halcyon House, 1939), 63.

[46] Ibid., 62.

[47] Ibid., 63.

for the period, with her bare legs dominating the foreground. The sleek, black, one-piece suit was popularized by Australian professional swimmer turned vaudeville performer, Annette Kellerman and was considered very modern in the early 1920s, even when they covered the legs to the knee. The fact that Piacenza's suit bears her stocking-less thighs would have been viewed as particularly brazen. The one-piece suit appealed to many young American women and their newfound sense of equality emanating from the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which finally gave women the right to vote. More revealing bathing suits, like Piacenza's, were prohibited from beaches in cities such as Atlantic City and Chicago, with ordinances upheld by Beach Patrol officers.[48] Proudly baring his broad chest, Benton too sports fashionable swim trunks instead of the full body suit men wore in the previous decade.

Moreover, the dual portrait is a defiant gesture legitimizing their union as vital, modern, and American. With his rich suntan and black-brown hair, Benton appears darker than his wife Rita, a young woman who had immigrated to New York City as a child with her immediate family from a small Italian town north of Milan.[49] While perhaps guided by the centuries-old convention of portraying men as darker than women or by their actual skin tones seen in photographs from the period, his darkness also serves to downplay Rita's ethnicity at a time when immigration debates and the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon race were at the forefront of American politics. Benton, and all those around him, including Rita and her family, were keenly aware of the ethnic and class differences between the couple.[50] Benton described his wife in ethnic terms: "Rita was an Italian, a Lombardian. Her people

[48] Latham, 69–70.
[49] Adams, 103.
[50] Despite his privileged upbringing, Benton spent much of his early adulthood struggling financially. At the time of his marriage to Rita, the couple lived primarily off Rita's meager income designing and modeling hats and writing a sewing column for the *Ladies' Home Journal*.

spoke no English."[51] He was from an established Anglo-American family, while she was a recent Italian immigrant. Theirs was the kind union that eugenicists most feared. The increasing number of newly arrived immigrants in the early twentieth century led to a cultural crisis of American identity. This prompted a nationwide Americanization movement beginning in World War I that sought to establish Anglo-American, Protestant culture as the hegemonic model on which to base a national identity. Historian Matthew Frye Jacobson claims that while the 1924 passage of the Johnson-Reed Act "may be the high-water mark of the regime of Anglo-Saxon or Nordic supremacy, in other words, and not its proper closing date...[it also] laid the way for a redrawing of racial lines, and so that year does mark the beginning of the ascent of monolithic whiteness."[52] In other words, as the new act "solved" the immigrant problem and eugenics shifted its focus to the "Negro Problem," existing immigrants would have to be Americanized through cultural assimilation. Thus, Benton's double self-portrait subsumes Rita and her Italian ethnicity into a singular, white American identity through the shared practice of sunbathing. For the Bentons, the suntan is the great equalizer.

Critic Thomas Craven would go on to bolster Benton's new public image as a populist American painter, noting Benton's "resplendent physical condition" in contrast to Alfred Stieglitz's "pallid abstractionists," a mixed group of European and American modernist artists.[53] Thus, Craven establishes a direct correlation between Benton's tanned physique and his vibrant, pulsating canvases swirling with dynamically modeled forms—a stark contrast to what the duo perceived as the flat, lifeless shapes of abstraction and their equally anemic

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51 Benton, *An Artist in America*, 48–49.
52 Jacobson, 93.
53 Thomas Craven, "Thomas Hart Benton," *Scribner's Magazine* 102, no. 4 (October 1937): 36.

makers. It was precisely this embodied sense of vitality that enabled Benton to see and feel, for the first time, the "real" America, as he perceived it. He viewed these summers on Martha's Vineyard as an elemental, primitivist return to the natural world: "Rita and I lived in the Vineyard like savages...We hardly ever put on respectable clothes and when our son, T. P., was born he ran naked over the dunes and was sunburned the color of mahogany."[54] Taking on the color of "natives" through such physical and psychological embodiment was an increasingly common feature of modernist art (the focus of the following chapter), not to mention the American vacation.

While sunbathing further established its links to travel and vacationing, a suntan became a sign of a successful vacation. For those who could afford it, ocean liners were the most fashionable means of travel in the first two decades of the 1900s, as it entailed traveling long distances to exotic, faraway locales. To accommodate the growing demand for sunbathing, ships offered sundecks for sunbathing and shuffleboard. Travel advertisements and articles often featured this fashionable new leisure activity to entice potential travelers. However, by the 1930s, travel by boat became more affordable, especially as old steamships used to transport immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were converted into cruise liners. A 1935 ad for Dollar Steamship's "Round the World" cruises [Fig. 2.10] features women sunbathing on the deck as the only depiction of the ship, followed by three images of exotic locations where the ship docks. The text box titled "ALONG THE SUNSHINE ROUTE" states, "World-famed President Liners have broad playdecks and an outdoor swimming pool..." The four sunbathers depicted represent various shades of tan—creating a visual dynamic of tonal contrasts. In particular, the woman in the foreground as

[54] Benton, *An Artist in America*, 63.

well as the next woman are both blonde. However, the second woman in line is tanned to a deep brown, offset by her light-colored hair. The two blondes serve as a sort of before and after image—presenting white women with the potential physical transformation offered by the cruise. A photographic ad from Dollar Steamship Lines of the President S.S. Hoover shows a woman in a bathing suit and swim cap laying in a sandbox on the ship's deck [Fig. 2.11]. The cruise now can simulate the beach experience for travelers even while at sea.

As travel often was advertised as a form of escape, so to did a suntan offer the white body a means of temporarily experimenting in a new look, one marked by the thrilling prospect of a taking on the physical characteristics of exotic races and perhaps some of the stereotypical attributes associated with them. These included the nostalgic notion of working the land and thus being more natural and uncivilized, which as described in Chapter 1, had become an increasingly positive attribute in the over-industrialized Machine Age. Travel to distant locales ranging from Hawaii to India offered Euro-American tourists with a sexualized, savage, and restorative experience. The association between such places and transposable racial identities filtered into other realms of consumerism, including fashion. A 1936 ad in *Vogue* for Du Pont's "Congo Cool Suits" from their Carolyn label [Fig. 2.12] features a conflation of modernist primitivism and archaism. Three white models stand confidently in light-colored suits at the ledge of the fountain surrounding Paul Manship's iconic sculpture *Prometheus*, which was completed two years prior in 1934 and installed in the plaza at the Rockefeller Center in Manhattan, New York City. The text below proclaims, "To the sun—three stars! Again, Carolyn suits you smartly. Again, Congo Cool Cloth stands first in tropical chic." Du Pont's "Congo Cloth" was a synthetic fabric composed of spun rayon yarn that promised to keep wearers cool in warm temperatures. The ad transports the

rain forests of the Congo to the urban jungle of Manhattan, adapting colonialist fantasies of being comfortable and chic in the sweltering tropics to an urban setting.

Moreover, posing this fantasy in front of Manship's *Prometheus* further reinforces associations of modernity and modern bodies with a more vital, ancient past. The interwar period witnessed the emergence of a modernistic style of archaism that borrowed the stylized abstraction from archaic Greece and other eastern cultures that were seen as preceding classical naturalism. Manship became known for his sculptures of streamlined, gilded bodies. His use of gold patina focused attention on surface, and did so in a manner consistent with mass market designs that privileged "glossy metallic and exotic veneers."[55] This archaistic impulse can also be viewed in conjunction with advertisements and literature featuring the contemporary suntan craze, which frequently mentioned bronzed Greek gods and goddesses and ancient sun worship. While the "Congo Cool" suits show a turn toward more modest fashions in the 1930s, they nonetheless are intended to mimic the chic, chiseled lines and forms of the artist's sculpture. With its idealized, abstracted form, Manship's *Prometheus*, like the popular Art Deco style with which it was associated, was seen as modern without being too controversial or avant-garde.

Throughout the 1920s, leisure increasingly became an integral part of daily life across class and racial lines. For city dwellers, apartment balconies and rooftops became makeshift sundecks. Cities across America constructed swimming pools catering to the middle class with sand beaches and pool decks for laying out in the sun.[56] Immersed in the suntan vogue, modernist artists began depicting tanned bodies and elements of consumer culture around

[55] Susan Rather, *Archaism, Modernism, and the Art of Paul Manship* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993), 160

[56] Jeff Wiltse, 88.

them. In particular, beaches became a vital source of subject matter for artists as it offered the unparalleled opportunity to view the human form, in all its variety, unobstructed by clothing. Artists such as Reginald Marsh, Guy Pène du Bois, and Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and countless others each sought to capture the human tableaux on display at the beach as sunbathing came to represent a distinctly American pastime. Beachgoers in their various states of undress and social mixing proved to be a spectacle of modern life worth depicting.

Florine Stettheimer, an American artist, set designer, poet, and patron of the arts who circulated in the upper echelons of New York society explored the suntan vogue on a personal as well as societal level. Although perhaps best known for hosting avant-garde salons in Manhattan and inviting artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and Georgia O'Keeffe, she was an artist in her own right. Her works not only provide a playful, often fantastical glimpse into her wealthy and privileged lifestyle but also reveal her interest in aspects of modern life outside her own immediate experience that cross class and racial boundaries. Born in 1871, Stettheimer was raised in a wealthy Victorian household, making her modernist inclinations all the more shocking. Always abreast of the latest fashions, Stettheimer was quick to promote the daring bathing costumes of the 1920s. The artist even likened her own figure to the physique of champion swimmer Annette Kellerman. While vacationing at Sea Bright, New Jersey, in 1923, Stettheimer, in her fifties, wrote in her diary: "The beaches are wonderful—America's youth have discarded all they can—and look well..."[57] She painted several beach and swimming pool scenes throughout

[57] Florine Stettheimer quoted in Teresa A. Carbone, "Body Language: Liberation and Restraint in Twenties Figuration," in *Youth and Beauty: Art of the American Twenties*, ed. Teresa A. Carbone (New York; Brooklyn, NY: Skira Rizzoli; Brooklyn Museum, 2011), 35.

her career, often focusing on the variations of skin color on display. In an undated poem titled *A Golden God*, Stettheimer writes:

> I adore men sunkissed and golden
> Like gold gods
> Like Pharaoh amber-anointed
> Thus I mused aloud
> Lying on a lace-cushioned-couch
> On my veranda overhanging Lake
> Placid –
> My August-guest
> Heard me and smiled
> And rose lazily from the turkey-red
> Cushions
> He became a golden speck
> Paddling into the blazing sun-baked
> Hours later he came back
> Looking self-conscious and parboiled[58]

The poem addresses not only her attraction to suntanned men, but also her vacation guest's botched attempt to fit her model of attractive, healthy athleticism.

Stettheimer's painting *Natatorium Undine* (1927) [Fig. 2.13] one of the artist's largest canvases, depicts a fantastical swimming and lounging experience. Sunbathing and the interest in physical culture were seen as revivals of Ancient Greece in the modern world. Like many American artists of the period, Stettheimer merged classical references with the modern. In the single space of the natatorium, with its green curtains drawn to let in the sunlight, individuals wearing chic swimsuits and loungewear ride on mythical sea creatures, float on giant clamshells, practice eurythmics, and dive off springs, all the while listening to black jazz musicians.[59] She names this enchanting place after undines, the female elemental water spirits found in classical Greek literature. Her figures span the full spectrum of skin

[58] Florine Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers: Poems and a Libretto*, ed. Irene Gammel and Suzanne Zelazo (Toronto: BookThug, 2010), 92.
[59] Ibid., 37.

tones, although the darkest seem to either be performing or serving whites—as seen with the black woman who appears to be massaging the reclining white woman at the center of the composition. Art historian Linda Nochlin observes, "Although Stettheimer can hardly be counted among the ranks of notable activists in the cause of racial equality, it is nevertheless true that black people figured quite regularly in her work...."[60] She was nonetheless sympathetic to black causes, evidenced by her close friendship with Carl Van Vechten, a Euro-American critic, photographer, and patron of the Harlem Renaissance. One of Stettheimer's most ambitious paintings *Asbury Park South* (1920) [Fig. 2.14] features Stettheimer and her white friends at Asbury Park South, a segregated black beach in New Jersey, mingling in a lively crowd of African Americans of various complexions. In a generally scathing review of the Society of Independent Artists' 1920 annual exhibition in New York City, critic Henry McBride wrote satirically of his friend Stettheimer's submission:

> Mr. Sloan's picnic is by moonlight, but perhaps to be moonlight by contrast with the burst of sunlight that emerges from Miss Florine Stettheimer's careful and realistic study of the beach at Asbury Park. There was never such sunlight as appears in this picture. It is so powerful that many persons with normal eyesight assure that they can see great sun rays protruding beyond the frame.
>
> Though not a pre-Raphaelite, Miss Stettheimer does everything from nature, particularly the figures. By way of precaution she takes them with her on her painting trips. Consequently one sees telling studies of Mme. Alvarez, Mr. Carl Van Vechten, and Mr. Marcel Duchamp and others in the foreground of the illuminated and illuminating study. The picture is remarkable in being the first of Miss Stettheimer's in which no refreshments have been served. The guests get only sunlight, but they get plenty of that.

[60] Linda Nochlin, "Florine Stettheimer: Rococo Subversive," in *Florine Stettheimer: Manhattan Fantastica*, ed. Elisabeth Sussman (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995), 105.

The painting itself glows golden, literally capturing the essence of the sun she so desired.

Stettheimer's interest in the sun was not only driven by popular culture but also resonated on a personal level for the artist. Her painting *Portrait of Myself* (1923) [Fig. 2.15], like *Asbury Park South,* physically embodies the sun's vitality in a portrait of modern womanhood. It reflects the artist's deep, physical and psychological connection with the sun and its definitive imprint on her sense of self. The artist's somewhat androgynous self-portrait is compositionally sparse, but intense in color. She depicts herself floating towards the sun in a cape formed by flames. However, she is not entirely aloft, as her fingers tenuously attach to flowers tracing back to a single stem. Wearing a diaphanous gown with a plunging neckline, she appears almost nude, with large blossoms and a garland cover her genitalia. As her name evokes, flowers were a constant presence in her paintings, and like her own body, needed sunlight to be nourished. She rests beneath the arch of her signature, which ends in a radiant sun and dancing mayfly.

Skin as Surface: Advertising and the "Color Explosion"

The popularity of sunbathing and the new vogue for suntans sent shockwaves through the commercial world. Although gradually gaining popularity throughout the 1920s, its impact only became a topic of major discussion in trade literature in 1928 and 1929. A flurry of articles in advertising magazines in the late 1920s with titles like "The Sun-Tan Mode Arrives"[61] and "Will the Vogue for Tan Last?"[62] traced the impact of this new trend in

[61] Marie Du Bois, "The Sun-Tan Mode Arrives," *Advertising and Selling* (May 1, 1929): 28, 76, 78, 80.
[62] Donald S. Cowling, "Will the Vogue for Tan Last?" *Printer's Ink Monthly* (August 1929), 31-31, 82, 84.

various industries. In addition to the various creams, liquids, powders, and other topical preparations produced by cosmetic companies as well as devices such as indoor sunlamps to aid the tanning process, the newly browned white woman, in particular, required a bevy of other goods to match her newly bronzed self, including accessories such as scarves, hats, gloves. What unites the diverse array of goods and services found in these advertisements is the transformative effect each promised to have on the body of the consumer. While health, beauty, and lifestyle industries offered consumers increased exposure to natural sunlight—whether achieved through a sundeck aboard a cruise ship or in the latest bathing suit—they also offered products such as face powder, hosiery, and sunlamps that sought to simulate these natural effects in varying degrees.

Consumers were also undeniably influenced by the magnetism and fanaticism surrounding Hollywood and its stars, with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and Joan Crawford perhaps being the most visible of those that sported deep, golden tans [Fig. 2.16]. This iconic photograph by Nickolas Muray of the famous newlyweds, graced the cover of the October 1929 issue of *Vanity Fair*, and further illustrate how forward thinking Thomas Hart Benton and his Wife Rita Piacenza Benton were in 1922. Crawford and Fairbanks, Jr., were both highly visible in the public eye, and their marriage only magnified their popularity. Crawford is credited with spreading the trend of suntanning amongst Hollywood flappers and to young women across the country as she became one of the most photographed stars in Hollywood by the decade's close.[63] In 1929, the same year as her wedding to Fairbanks, Jr., Crawford starred in *Untamed*, her first major talking-picture after transitioning from silent films. She starred as the film's main character Alice "Bingo" Dowling, the wealthy daughter

[63] Robert Dance and Bruce Robertson, *Ruth Harriet Louise and Hollywood Glamour Photography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 126.

of an American oil magnate who was raised her in the jungles of South America. After her father is killed, Bingo inherits his fortune and is transplanted from the South American tropics to a Manhattan mansion, but soon finds she lacks the sophistication and social graces people expect from a woman of her status.[64] In the film's opening scene, a deeply bronzed Crawford sings the "Chant of the Jungle," surrounded by the Spanish-speaking oil workers. She then engages in a high-kicking, barefoot dance, wearing in the same short dress she appears in for the film's publicity photos [Fig. 2.17]. Resembling a female version of the *Tarzan* narrative, *Untamed* unwittingly explores the boundaries of race, class, and gender. Outside of her films, Crawford preferred to maintain a deep suntan. She later recalled:

> I loved sunbathing...the most foolish practice imaginable for anyone, especially for anyone with skin as fair as mine.... I especially liked it in southern California, where there was hot, dry sun with a cool ocean breeze...Douglas loved the sun as much as I did. His skin was as fair as mine, but he never burned and he always developed a wonderfully healthy-looking glow. If he kept sunning, it developed into a nice even tan, which was very sexy.[65]

Together, she and Fairbanks, Jr., fortified the notion that suntans conveyed health, prestige, and sex appeal, and spread the practice of sunbathing to every corner of the U.S. through their films as well as their widely publicized lifestyle.

At the core of advertising in the 1920s is what historian Roland Marchand refers to as the "color explosion."[66] Color had the power to immediately transform mundane, utilitarian objects into dazzling, stylish commodities. In a visual culture saturated with illustrated advertisements, human skin became the ultimate commodity. Like a new oven, automobile,

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[64] Lawrence J. Quirk and William Schoell, *Joan Crawford: The Essential Biography* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 48.

[65] Joan Crawford, quoted in Charlotte Chandler, *Not the Girl Next Door: Joan Crawford: A Personal Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008).

[66] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985)120.

or bathroom sink, pale flesh could now be painted in a variety of colors, whether by sunlight, ultraviolet rays from a lamp, makeup, or hosiery. But, unlike these products, skin, of course, is innately and intimately part of our being. It is, after all, the human body's largest organ. This penchant for color found its way into the myriad health and hygiene advertisements as tan skin became an outward expression of inward health. Simone Weil Davis refers to this emerging sense of personhood in the thriving 1920s commodity culture as the "advertising self."[67] As first impressions weighed heavily one's success in the office or at love, clear, healthy skin with a healthful tan was imperative.

Women's clothing, from evening gowns to sport frocks were designed to expose the shoulders, arms, and back, in an unprecedented way, to maximize sun exposure. Marchand states, "The crowning achievement of advertising's emphasis on color, beauty, and style in the 1920s was its popularization of the idea of the ensemble. A passion for harmonies of color and style among a variety of accessories swept through one product area after another, resulting by 1929 in a number of major merchandising successes."[68] Skin too, became the latest accessory to be incorporated into the ensemble. However, unlike a jacket or scarf, which could be put on or taken off with ease, the permanence of skin rendered it a foundational element of the ensemble. Thus, everything from hosiery, to makeup, to clothing had to be "recalibrated," so to speak, to match suntanned shades. Vibrant color ads such as the one for Forstmann's Woolens textile company, helped women envision themselves in lively, tropical worlds of luxury and comfort [Fig. 2.18]. The deeply browned figures in the ad are as richly colored as the textiles they wear.

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[67] Simone Weil Davis, *Living Up to the Ads: Gender Fictions of the 1920s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000) 2.

[68] Marchand, 132.

Taking the ensemble a step further, advertisers were keenly aware that white people naturally spanned a variety of skin tones and thus marketed their colorful products accordingly. This enabled companies to produce an even vaster array of products tailored to individual coloring. As Marchand pointedly observes, "The popularization of the idea of the ensemble not only expanded the definition of consumer 'necessities' and schooled the eye in the recognition of obsolescence; it also represented a notable success in the transfer of elite tastes and ideas to the consumer masses and provided a new vehicle for the 'personalization' of mass-produced goods."[69] The ability for consumers to buy and use products that were ostensibly customized for their individual needs was an empowering act for many middle and working-class Americans who previously could only afford dull, mass-produced items and galvanized the American ideal of the individual.

In Fownes Gloves's 1930 "Fashion Forecast" in the trade journal *The Glovers Review*, the company paints a picture of their ideal customer: "The scintillating woman chooses Palm Beach for summering in the winter season. Moonlit patios; sun-baked sands; languorous restlessness—All are counterparts to the panorama of America's playground—Palm Beach!"[70] The article suggests different gloves for various Palm Beach activities—from tennis in the afternoon to dancing in the evening. The company's portrait of the smart and stylish American woman strives to put the fantasy of vacationing in Palm Springs—summering in the winter—within reach of middle-class Americans. More importantly, the gloves themselves become a simulacrum of that luxury experience, if say, worn in exclusively the city without ever gracing the Florida sun. The "Fashion Forecast" also predicts the popular trend of white gloves and other accessories that would provide a stark

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69 Ibid.

70 "Fownes Fashion Forecast," *Glovers Review* (1930): 50.

contrast with the darkness of tanned skin, drawing attention to both skin and apparel as fashionable, wearable, and changeable.

As white skin became another modifiable surface to match a multi-colored ensemble, the modern emphasis on color and materiality was not limited to design and the commercial world, but also speaks more broadly to the way Euro-Americans viewed their own bodies in the Machine Age. The suntan represented a modern sense of youthfulness and health, and a decisive break from what was viewed as Victorian pallor caused by the sedentary indoor life. Color in the form of suntans bestowed the white body with a sense of robust materiality and visibility, which had increasingly become a major concern of early twentieth-century eugenic discussions of "race suicide." The prevalence of modern science in advertising during this period also was embraced by sun-enthusiasts. Countless products and devices were developed and advertised promising for healthier, more hygienic bodies and homes—essential to the "race hygiene" championed by eugenicists.[71]

Sunlamps and Liquid Sunshine: Sunning the Body Inside and Out

Alongside the popularization of suntanning as a leisure activity arose the home sunlamp. One of the major catalysts behind suntanning's transition from medical treatment to everyday leisure was the commercial production of sunlamps for home use. Modern technology claimed to find innovative ways to simulate, and in some cases contain, the sun's vital forces. These devices, first used in sanatoriums, hospitals, and doctor's offices, were later manufactured and shipped to homes across the country—providing a hybrid experience

[71] Christina Cogdell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) 158.

that brought medical health into the domestic realm. As one *New York Times* article from 1929 noted:

> It was the invention and manufacture of the sun lamp that raised an obscure theory to a popular belief. Where a few ernest [sic] doctors read in their medical pamphlets that sunlight would help in curing certain types of tuberculosis, rickets and anemia, thousands were suddenly deluged with that information when the manufacturers began scattering their pamphlets. The opinion of a few became the cure-all of many.[72]

When getting out into the sun was not possible due to lack of time or good weather, sun seekers often looked to indoor sunlamps as a solution. Although the benefits of suntanning were typically articulated as a healthy return to nature and a remedy to the ills of urban life, for many the modern city could not be completely abandoned for pastoral utopias or the French Riviera as the Murphys had done. The sunlamp, most popular from 1929 through 1934 during the Great Depression, offered the outdoor life in the convenience of one's home.[73]

Fervent eugenicist and breakfast cereal magnate John Harvey Kellogg's Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan developed and marketed their own ultra-violet sunlamp called the Sunarc in the late 1920s with the slogan "Sunshine at the Snap of a Switch"—claiming that their device not only mimicked the sun, it surpassed it [Fig. 2.19-2.21]. According to its makers, unlike the sun, which was "at its best fickle," artificial sunlight from their sunlamp offered full-body exposure in the privacy of the home, regardless of the weather outside. Sunarc advertisements from 1928 featured white men, women, and children as potential users. As evidenced by both the image and copy, the Sunarc was marketed very differently

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[72] Mildred Adams, "Modern Worshippers of that Old God, the Sun," *New York Times*, July 7, 1929, p. 70.

[73] Kerry Segrave, *Suntanning in 20th Century America* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), 50.

to each of these consumer groups, conforming to and propagating certain gender stereotypes. However, all three advertisements emphasize the health benefits of heliotherapy and feature semi-nude figures seated in the home, starkly cast in a ray of light.

The ad featuring the middle-aged man [Fig. 2.19] is intended to appeal to busy fathers and the prototypical office type (pale with ill-defined muscles—presumably the "before" image that the Sunarc will transform), relaxing in the privacy of his home. He is seated comfortably in a brocade armchair, dressed in loose-fitting pants and house slippers. The text stresses the convenience and time-saving aspects of having "'man-made' sunshine in your own home day or night." The ad featuring the woman alone [Fig. 2.20] is far more sensual and attempts to blend hard science with glamour. At first glance, the woman resembles a pin-up girl in a boudoir scene—wearing a luxurious robe pulled to expose her upper chest and legs and high-heeled bedroom slippers. She is perched in front of her vanity, but faces the imposing metal sunlamp. Atop the vanity lies a perfume bottle and an indistinguishable portrait, perhaps of her boyfriend or possibly herself. The text stresses the importance of beauty through good health: "A complexion glowing with the rosy hue of health—eyes that sparkle—hair with a glossy lustre, thick and luxuriant—these are the true attributes of natural beauty. Science now brings them within the reach of every woman…." Although promoting modern technology, the ad nonetheless relies on the Victorian metaphor of women as flowers, natural beauties with rosy complexions. Finally, in the ad featuring the child seated on the mother's lap [Fig. 2.21], the two are seated in the same brocade chair that appears in the ad for men, but the room in which they are seated is far sparser and indistinguishable. Unlike the ad with the single woman, the woman in this ad is clearly a mother, and as such is clothed with only her calves exposed, while the child appears to be

completely naked. The pair are also wearing sun goggles which were often seen in medical photographs featuring heliotherapy administered in sanatoriums and hospitals—giving the ad a far more clinical feel than the others, which stress male and female individuality and consumer power. Instead, the ad appeals to the modern parents' desire to strengthen their vulnerable children by all means necessary.

In a 1931 *New York Times* article, journalist Henry D. Hubbard proclaims, "We are just learning to appreciate the fact that sunburn and tan are indications of inward as well as outward health."[74] A healthy outward appearance became equally as important as actually being healthy in a more holistic sense. Regarding the new UV-lamps, Hubbard raved, "the lamps now commercially available for producing ultra-violet rays at home are reported to be as effective, perhaps even more effective, than the sunlight itself."[75] These machines claimed to harness and contain the natural powers of the sun, which could be turned on at the whim of the modern consumer at any hour of the day, any season of the year. A true feat of modernity, these lamps simulated the sun and brought the Côte d'Azur or Palm Beach into homes across America.

In particular, ads for sunlamps targeted the male readership of magazines such as *Physical Culture* and men's latent insecurities over their bodies. A 1936 advertisement for the Palm Beach Deluxe Sun Lamp [Fig. 2.22] utilizes color printing to enhance the message of improving one's appearance with a "healthy tan that everyone admires." The primary image features a photographic reproduction of a suntanned man shaking hands and exchanging smiles with a woman, while her companion, presumably her husband, glares at

[74] Henry D. Hubbard, "New Vistas Opened by Invisible Rays," *New York Times*, October 18, 1931, sec. 9.

[75] Ibid.

him, fuming with jealousy. Although the husband figure is physically at the crux of the handshake, he is pushed into the background, gray and rendered almost invisible due to his lack of color.[76] In contrast, the suntanned man and attractive young wife shaking hands are tinted with red-orange ink coloring all exposed flesh—particularly concentrated on the man's face. This unites the man and woman by their shared color of health, attractiveness, and modernity. The jealous husband is physically and visually excluded from the scene and depicted as old fashioned, in black and white. Not only is a tan healthy, it is "handsome" as the text asserts. The ad also stresses ability to tan year-round with the sunlamp, as evidenced by the woman's fur-trimmed winter coat.

The presence of two men presents male consumers with two distinct choices—a life in robust color or one in drab grayscale. The suntan seen here exudes confidence, sexual virility, and modish masculinity. However, the stark distinction between the two men presented in the image is much more nuanced in the ad's copy. Beyond merely "getting the girl," the text further elucidates insecurities facing the modern man in the 1930s in relation to the workplace and the importance of making a good first impression not only with women, but, potentially with other men, such as business partners or a boss. The ad suggests that male attractiveness can not only enhance one's personal life, but also perhaps more importantly, further one's professional career. This is reinforced in the ad by smaller individual images of a man, woman, and child using the sunlamp—presumably the family that the man works to support.

[76] Grayness became a common way to connote pallor during the late nineteenth century into the twentieth, as it connoted a whiteness gone awry, no longer pure. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the husband Maurice in D. H. Lawrence's 1926 short story *Sun*, possesses a "grey city face…Being so sunned, she could not *see* him, his sunlessness was like nonentity." D.H. Lawrence, *Sun*, in *The Woman Who Rode Away and Other Stories*, ed. Dieter Mehl and Christa Jansohn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36.

By the late 1930s, male attractiveness became untethered from its associations with professional success and became marketable in and of itself. As a 1939 General Electric sunlamp ad [Fig. 2.23] asks, "Beauty may only be skin deep...but how are you going to enjoy life unless you stop 'em with an appearance of health and wellbeing?" As seen elsewhere, in a highly visual culture, the appearance of health was paramount. The ad features a suntanned man outside basking in concentric circles of sunlight on a palm-lined beach as two women eagerly sit by his side while a third races towards him from a distance. The "lucky beachcomber," as he is described, literally radiates rays of sunshine from his exuberant face and his suntan represents athleticism, sexual prowess, and wealth. The three women pictured—a brunette, redhead, and a blonde—further suggest the versatility of the sunlamp and its ability to be used across a variety of white complexions. As the copy promises, the sunlamp allows consumers to "keep that outdoor complexion" long after they have left the beach. The same man is depicted again in the lower register of the ad, this time resting under the artificial UV light of the sunlamp. The ad also likens the sleek, copper-toned sunlamp to the tanned bodies it produces: "Your favorite G-E dealer is ready with the latest G-E Sunlamp models. Stop in and look them over. See how attractive they are."

Following a similar marketing trajectory, "liquid sunshine" in the form of radium-infused water was a staple in middle-class households across the country during the 1920s and '30s. The growing medical and popular interest in radium as a cure-all emerged at the turn of the century in stride with the similar views of ultraviolet rays and sunlight. The popular notion that the sun was composed of radium made the discovery of the element in

1902 a monumental feat of modern science. Sunshine could now be bottled up and consumed—literally casting rays from the inside of one's body outward.[77]

Simulating the Suntan Look

> The outdoor complexion has now met with consumer recognition. Inquiries toward this new vogue are directed by the never-failing interest in the new, but they are prompted by the desire to imitate leisure—that leisure which may go to Florida, Bermuda or California and bask in the sun.[78]

While sunlamps sought to mimic the sun and darken skin with ultraviolet rays, hosiery and makeup instantly provided women with a deep, golden tan throughout the year. Further removed from any actual, physiological transformation of the skin, these products merely rested on the skin's surface, coating it with a layer of tan. These products also highlight the pervasiveness of the "suntan look" during the interwar period and how accessible it became to people of various socioeconomic levels. Simulating suntans and the "desire to imitate leisure" as described above, highlight the social value of artifice in the modern, consumer-driven world—a striking departure from Victorian faith in the inner soul.

The year 1929 marked a major year for the suntan in the commercial world. In 1929, "suntan" was first advertised as a shade for hosiery by the Washington D.C.-based department store Woodward & Lothrop and the word "Sun-Tan" was announced as a color designation by the Textile Color Card Association of the United States. These developments in the hosiery industry signaled the rising popularity of suntanning as a practice as well as the suntan look as a mainstay in American fashion and beauty. As *Advertising and Selling*

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[77] Carolyn Thomas de la Peña, *The Body Electric: How Strange Machines Built the Modern American* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 173.

[78] Marie Du Bois, "What Is Sun-Tan Doing to Cosmetics," *Advertising and Selling*, June 12, 1929; 19-20, 62.; 19.

observed, “A glance about one this spring indicates the overwhelming adoption of sun-tan in hosiery colors. We find sunburn colors, sun-tan shades, sun-pastels, sun hues in every unit of the wardrobe.” The company Best & Co. applied to register “sun-tan” as a trademarked term to exclusively describe their bathing suits, sweaters, bathrobes, and other apparel in 1929. However, the applicant's request was denied, stating:

> The popular meaning of the term "suntan" is the effect produced upon the human body by the rays of the sun, and, by extension of the meaning of the term, it now designates not only a color simulating that produced by the sun but also the characteristic of wearing apparels which permits the direct action of the sun's rays upon portions of the body in order to produce a tanning effect. The term "Suntan," therefore, when applied to wearing apparel, is believed to be descriptive of the "character" of such apparel.[79]

The commissioner's rejection is predicated on the popular use of the term “suntan” several years prior to Best & Co.'s trademark application. The statement clarifies that the term describes not only the effect produced by rays of sunlight upon the skin, the resultant color it produces, and any clothing that permits suntanning. The interchangeable use of the term “suntan” underscores the modern value placed on appearances and material manifestations as equal to the actual actions or intangible qualities they simulate.

However, as Harry Walker Hepner states in his book *Psychology in Modern Business* published in 1930, “The sun-tan mode did not arrive full-fledged in some mysterious manner, but was heralded several years in advance, as shown by the statistics based upon reports in *Women's Wear Daily,*” which showed the leading hosiery colors worn in consecutive summers from 1924 to 1929[80]:

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[79] *The United States Patents Quarterly*, vol. 5 (Washington, DC: The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., 1930), 97.

[80] Harry Walker Hepner, *Psychology in Modern Business* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1930), 423.

1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
White	White	Grain	Grain	Nude	Sun-tan
Black	Black	Nude	Nude	White	Lido Sand
Grain	Beige	White	White	Grain	Grain
L. Gray	Grain	Atmosphere	Atmosphere	Atmosphere	Nude
Shell	Nude	Beige	Sandy Beige	Mirage	Sun Shades

The data indicates the gradual incorporation of sandy shades, perhaps reflecting the similarly growing popular adoption of sunbathing throughout the 1920s. By the decade's close, the best-selling hosiery colors demonstrate a more unified array of shades, all of which are related to either suntanning or the beach.

A 1929 Realsilk hosiery advertisement [Fig. 2.24] in *Ladies' Home Journal* introduces the company's five-woman "fashion committee" comprised of a Paris-based American fashion designer, a well-known stylist, a visual artist, a stage star, and a young debutante-turned-actress. The ad, illustrated in full color, visually stresses variety as the women of the committee differ in age, profession, and even hair color—an effect emphasized by the vibrant swaths of color that frame each woman's portrait. The ad strives to promote a sense of American individualism and diversity in color, and yet only features white women, more or less of the same peach-colored skin tone. These women, and the white women they speak to, however, are encouraged to be various in skin tone: "To be burned as brown as a Hindu if it suits us. To be fair as Elaine, if nature made us so." The copy implies that while it is nature that makes one fair, brown skin can be achieved through burning or tanning in the sun. This is the modern mode: to be able to choose and modify everything from the color of a blouse to one's own skin to create a truly individualized look.

The Realsilk advertising campaign also seeks to merge high and mass culture on multiple levels. The ad's tagline, "Modernism—the new creed in dress," attempts to bring

high modernist culture into the realm of everyday fashion. Neysa McMein, a member of the Realsilk Fashion Committee featured in a separate spotlight ad [Fig. 2.25], is an artist "whose color work...placed her in the front rank of contemporary American painters," the ads copy reads.[81] Her status as an artist lends an air of expertise in color creation: "In choosing colors for Realsilk Hosiery, we take the ensemble into account...We blend them with skin tints, changing here and there, until we have the perfect result." Stylistically the portrait of McMein combines the soft, rounded forms of commercial illustration with a geometric, Precisionist background akin to the paintings of Charles Demuth—another attempt to blend consumer culture with high art.

Along with hosiery, makeup, consisting of liquid foundation and powders, promised Euro-American women bronzed complexions. A common marketing strategy of the period was to advertise to brunettes, blondes, and occasionally, redheads. These distinctions were derived from centuries-old racial theories that were taken up again by the early eugenics movement and the division of the Caucasian race into three sub-races: Alpine, Nordic, and Mediterranean. Madison Grant's influential book on eugenics, *The Passing of the Great* Race, first published in 1916, provided a detailed account of what he viewed as Europe's racial history and expressed concern for the state of Nordic racial purity in the United States and its demise through "breeding" with a more recent wave of undesirable immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Generally, it was believed that hair color and skin tone were correlated in such a way that while fair-haired and skinned individuals would burn more easily, those with darker hair and pigmentation would more readily tan.[82]

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[81] Neysa McMein (1890-1949) was best known as a commercial illustrator.

[82] It was common in nineteenth-century European and American racial theory to discuss blonde and brunette types among Europeans and Euro-Americans as racial subcategories. This reified the notion that "pure" blonde types had fair skin, light-colored hair, and blue eyes, while "pure" brunettes had darker pigmentation,

Cotytan, a tan-colored makeup available in liquid and powder form "for blondes and brunettes," was introduced in the late 1920s to artificially darken the face, arms, and legs. A black-and-white Cotytan ad from 1929 [Fig. 2.26] markets the product as "the smartest coat of tan" and promises, "the perfect shade of summer chic—golden, smooth, even—glorifying faces, slim bare legs and arms, shoulders and backs—in the fashions of the season." Although the ad lacks color, the woman's white racial identity is suggested through her light, presumably blonde hair. This, coupled with her light-colored dress and jewelry are intended to offset her dark skin. As one advertising journal described: "Necklaces, chokers, bracelets, earrings—all had to be designed to accompany fittingly the gypsy type coloring. Exotic bangles and rings, entirely out of place against a roses and lilies skin, are completely *au fait* when worn in connection with a darkened skin. Pearls show well by contrast...."[83] The copywriters have posited Cotytan as a necessity to successfully wear the "fashions of the season," which included shorter hemlines, bare legs, and sleeveless dresses with plunging backs. Moreover, they have created the fantasy of putting on and taking off the guise of the daring modern woman of the 1920s: the flapper. More carefree and bold in her dress, behavior, and sexuality, the flapper soon became distilled into the mainstream by the mid-1920s.[84] As the copy states, "Just a few moments to put it on—and less to take it off when you want to be yourself again." With products such as Cotytan, any woman could easily dab on a layer of Cotytan to achieve the "flapper look" for an evening.

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and black or brown hair and eyes. These traits generally were thought to correspond to geographic and environmental conditions, with blondes concentrated in Northern and Western Europe and brunettes in Southern and Eastern Europe. For more on blondes and brunettes in nineteenth-century racial theory, see William Z. Ripley, "The Racial Geography of Europe: A Sociological Study," *Popular Science* 1 (April 1897): 757-780.

[83] Cowling, 82, 84.

[84] Bruce Bliven, "Flapper Jane," *New Republic* 44 (September 9, 1925): 65–67.

Another Cotytan ad from 1929 [Fig. 2.27] features in full color a stylized rendering of a blonde woman who epitomizes the flapper with her short, bob hairstyle, thin eyebrows, and heavy makeup. The suntan vogue became synonymous with the trendsetting flapper: "[Flappers] flocked to the beaches day after day in bathing suits as close to the ultimate zero as was permitted, slipping the straps off rounded shoulders when opportunity afforded, and return[ed] to their Northern and Western haunts to display an expanse of deeply tanned skin that would arouse the envy of an Indian."[85] Like sunlamps, the ad beckons: "Tan yourself—in a few moments Cotytan, liquid and powder gives a glorious, even tan that beats the sun at his own game—and livens you with a new exotic beauty utterly thrilling." The ad plays into the adventurous flapper's desire achieve an exotic, suntanned look and subsequently embody the primitivist associations with sex, nature, and freedom that accompanies it.

The sleek exoticism in espoused by Cotytan's ads is even more explicit in Elizabeth Arden's 1936 Chinese and Copper summer makeup ad, which features illustrations of presumably the same white woman made up as a "Manchu princess" and a deeply tanned Copper beauty [Fig. 2.28]. The ad racializes white women through the allure of temporarily taking on a look vastly different than one's own natural appearance. Cosmetic companies in the 1930s took their cues from Hollywood, which glamorized ethnic exoticism through the rise of dusky, dark-haired stars such as Dolores Del Rio, Dorothy Lamour, Hedy Lamarr, and Rita Hayworth who often played Latin, Asian, Native American, and South Seas characters.[86] Naturally fair-skinned actresses such as Joan Crawford and Marlene Dietrich were made to look more "foreign" and alluring through sun tanning and cosmetics. Hollywood fan

[85] Cowling, 31.

[86] Sarah Berry, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 95.

magazines filled with photographs of actresses provided American women with idealized images and lifestyles to which they could aspire.[87]

A product perhaps furthest removed from actual sunbathing was Woodbury's facial soap, which had been on the market since the late nineteenth century, but was reformulated in the mid-1930s, claiming to contain rays of sunlight, very much like radium-infused water. A comparison of two advertisements for Woodbury's facial soap from 1904 and 1936 [Fig. 2.29 and 2.30] provides a bold contrast between the late-Victorian and modern woman. The 1904 advertisement [Fig. 2.29] features a photograph of a woman in a nightgown, although modestly shown from the shoulders up. The text below emphasizes the natural beauty that the soap brings to the complexion, leaving "the skin like a baby's cheek—fine, smooth, showing the clear pink and white of health." As shown in Chapter 1, at the turn of the century, while women were encouraged by some progressive advocates to abandon their corsets and adopt a healthy, active lifestyle, their complexions were to remain transparent and blushing with the innocence of a baby. Here, a healthy complexion is connoted by the colors described as pink and white. The photograph reiterates the innocence and purity outlined in the text. The woman's frontal pose and subtle smile are indicative of the candidness valued in Victorian culture. Her face is bare and natural—the ideal visage of virtuous femininity during a time when women who wore makeup were disparagingly labeled "painted women." The soap is marketed alongside Woodbury's facial cream to soothe sun-burned skin. The implication here is to maintain a delicate, transparent complexion—not a tough, suntanned one.

[87] Ibid., 105.

Three decades later, the Woodbury's advertisement from 1936 [Fig. 2.30] presents a markedly different image of womanhood and along with the newly redeveloped facial soap based on "a new scientific discovery." The ad belongs to a series featuring photographs of nude women in swimming pools by eminent photographer Edward Steichen who brought his bold photographic style to the advertising world—blurring the boundaries between high modernism and consumerism. With this provocative series, Woodbury's became the first American company to use an image of fully nude women in advertising, with ads featured in mainstream publications like *Good Housekeeping* and *Ladies' Home Journal*.[88] The tagline proclaims, "Now, as you bathe, enjoy the benefits of 'filtered sunshine.'" The ad claims that "the beneficent rays of the sun...those gentle, kindly rays which help to enhance the skin's loveliness...are irradiated into an ingredient in this fine soap," and according to tests conducted at a "leading university" are "readily absorbed by the skin."

The Woodbury's ad presents consumers with a modern bather: a suntanned woman lathering her back with soap in what appears to be an outdoor setting (other Woodbury's ads from 1936 series feature similar compositions with women lounging nude, in outdoor swimming pools) [Fig. 2.31]. Unlike the modest innocence of the 1904 ad, the woman here is presented as a sensual modern woman. While still touting health, the full-body depiction emphasizes the svelte physique of the modern woman, angular and firm, unlike the soft curves of the model found in the 1904 ad. In addition, the visual attention shifts from the face in 1904 to the body in 1936—paralleling the broader transition from the Victorian emphasis on the soul (knowable through one's countenance) to the modernist notion of the whole, healthy body. Although reproduced in black and white, the model's darkened

[88] Geoffrey Jones, *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.

complexion is inferred through the stark contrast created by the crisp brightness of her swim cap [Fig. 2.30]. The bar of soap depicted as an inset photograph in each of the 1936 ads is dramatically presented in the direct photographic style promoted by other modernist photographers such as Paul Strand. The stark lighting creates clean lines and angled shadows that make the banal bar of soap into a sleek, graphic work of art.

The advertisement cleverly plays with the notion of bathing in its traditional and modern conceptions. Bathing has been a conventional subject in Western art for centuries, providing artists with an opportunity to explore the nude human form.[89] Steichen plays on this trope with his models in swim caps or lathering up with soap in swimming pools. In both text and image, the 1936 Woodbury's advertising campaign strives to conflate different notions of bathing—from sunbathing, to actual bathing with soap, to bathing as swimming and as a refined subject of art. The reference to bathing also conjures commonly held associations between sunlight and hygiene as well as soap and hygiene, combining their virtues into a single, potent product.

Artist Joseph Stella, known for his machine-age, Precisionist impressions of the Brooklyn Bridge, skyscrapers, and other New York feats of modern engineering, also took cues from the beauty and hygiene advertisements in the 1920s. Like many other artists of his generation, Stella turned away from abstraction and toward figuration during the interwar period. In fact, he returned to his native Italy for several months in 1922 (he had immigrated to New York at the age of eighteen in 1896) where he was inspired to paint *The Birth of Venus* (1925) [Fig. 2.32] with a classicizing realism far removed from his earlier work. Unlike the fair-skinned, flaxen-haired goddess in Sandro Botticelli's iconic version, Stella's

[89] Linda Nochlin, *Bathers, Bodies, Beauty: The Visceral Eye* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 16–17.

Venus represents a subtly suntanned modern woman with dark tresses emerging from a vibrant pink lotus blossom. Her pose and sleek form mirrors the women in the glamorous cosmetic ads of the period, promoting depilatories and deodorants to craft the perfect body. Her visible tan lines reveal an idealized body, stripped of all body hair with no trace of nipples or genitalia. Stella's Venus embodies the modern desire for hygienic sensuality—appealing to the drug and cosmetics magnate Carl Weeks of Des Moines, who purchased the painting, and commissioned other works by the artist.[90]

Suntanning and the Color Line

> The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line—the relation of the darker to the light races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.
>
> - W. E. B. Du Bois

A 1937 article in the popular monthly fan magazine *Motion Picture* reported that Joan Crawford had allegedly been told by her studio MGM to stop suntanning: "She sun-tans her lithe body until it could pass for a native African's, and a cult of sun-bathers from Miami to Medicine Hat is formed. The studio calls a halt to her browning — she looks like a lineal descendant of Sheba, and contrasts strangely with the pale Nordics in her films."[91] Given the myriad ways people could tan their bodies both naturally or artificially by the end of the 1920s, skin color had been proven to be entirely mutable. The scale in which such transformations was occurring was unprecedented, and found its proponents and opponents on both sides of the color line. The 1920s witnessed the rise of great race consciousness and pride on the one hand, and anxiety and xenophobia on the other across the racial spectrum.

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[90] Barbara Haskell and Joseph Stella, *Joseph Stella* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994).

[91] Dorothy Spensley, "The Most Copied Girl in the World," *Motion Picture* 53, no. 4 (May 1937): 30–31.

Along with the eugenics movement, the growing popularity of suntanning in the U.S. coincided with several other major cultural and political developments—namely the Harlem Renaissance, or New Negro movement as it was called during the period. Similar to eugenics, the New Negro movement was formed on the notion of race pride, although focusing on uplift from centuries of oppression instead of fears of race suicide. Does the new trend of suntanning have any bearing on what it means to be a "colored" person? In a racially stratified society that had long conceived of race in terms of skin color, how and when do "colored" whites become problematic? How did whites negotiate the racial boundaries of their newfound color? How did African Americans respond to the trend of suntanning?

For centuries, in a complex hierarchy devised in the context of slavery, African Americans with lighter complexions generally were in a more socially advantageous position than those with darker skin. Colorism, or discrimination based on skin color, was not only imposed by whites, but also played a major role within black communities—a legacy that still exists today. While the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s ushered in a wave of cultural pride and racial self-reflection among African Americans, its visual culture, dominated by light-skinned, urban blacks—the idealized image of the "New Negro"—reinforced the notion that lighter was better and more attractive. Rather ironically then, both whites and blacks were seeking to achieve the same tanned look—meeting in the middle, so to speak. Many of the Harlem Renaissance's most renowned artists, writers, and performers such as Sargent Johnson, Archibald J. Motley, Jr., Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen, Jean Toomer, and Josephine Baker were light-skinned and, in many cases, mixed-race individuals with European ancestry. Photographs of these prominent voices of the movement circulated

widely in black and white media. Motley's paintings of attractive, fair-skinned black women such as *The Octoroon Girl* (1925) [Fig. 2.33] favorably portray the New Negro woman as educated, cultured, and fashionable. If not for the title, the woman's glowing, lightly tanned complexion and short bob hairstyle, could confuse her with a white flapper girl.

As suntanning for Euro-Americans was on the rise, skin lighteners and bleach creams were becoming increasingly popular among African Americans and flooded the market during the 1920s and '30s. While some African Americans decried the trend, claiming it was betraying the race, the vast majority found little wrong with the practice of skin lightening. In fact, black-owned hair care and cosmetics company Madam C. J. Walker's advertisements for face powders and skin lighteners, often featuring photographs of light-skinned black women; they generally "proved to be particularly pleasing to the majority of the Negros [sic] of all occupation classes interviewed" in a 1932 study by Fisk University economics professor Paul K. Edwards.[92] These ads portrayed African-American women as refined, respectable, beautiful, and glamorous instead of as repulsive, stereotypical black caricatures frequently employed by advertisers.

While most African Americans did not actively engage in suntanning and its various darkening products and devices with the fervor that Euro-Americans did, the suntan craze nevertheless informed African-American consumer culture. In a 1935 ad for Fan Tan Bleach Creme in an issue of the Baltimore-based weekly newspaper *The Afro-American* includes two contemporary African-American women in the comic Fan Tan Anne [Fig. 2.34]. Fan Tan and other such products relied on the suntan vogue to frame their products. The comic itself features a darker-skinned African-American woman in a dark dress, who, while

[92] Paul Kenneth Edwards, *The Southern Urban Negro as a Consumer* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1932), 252.

window shopping, asks Fan Tan Anne, if the bleach cream really works. Fan Tan Anne, having already tried the affordable bleach cream with great success, is depicted as lighter than the other woman. In the comic's final frame, the woman with the darker skin has been lightened. These African-American women represent tan, modern women. The comic is juxtaposed by a small, stylized drawing of an Egyptian woman in the bottom right-hand corner of the ad. Like ads for bronzed makeup or stockings catering to white women, the ad for Fan Tan similarly employs exotic, archaistic references to sell their products. Yet instead of the allusions to ancient sun worship, the Egyptian reference here emphasizes skin lightening: "5000 years ago when the little Egyptian wanted to lighten her natural sun tan she called in her court chemist. But now Fan Tan bleach crème is within the reach of all who wish it."

Although most African Americans during this period did not actively desire to be darker, the modern popularity of physical culture and the outdoor life did not evade them. African-American resorts, beaches, and municipal pools, while segregated from whites, nonetheless flourished throughout the nation, from coast to coast. However, bleaches and sun protection creams from African-American cosmetic and drug companies claimed to prevent skin from further darkening in the sun. Madam C. J. Walker's Tan-Off, as it's name suggests, promised black women to take off any trace of suntan, keeping their skin "clear and unblemished," removing blackheads, pimples, and even freckles. An advertisement for Apex bleach featuring a slim African-American woman at the beach in a one-piece bathing suit, under the shade of a parasol, assured consumers, "Don't Fear the Beach; Use Apex Bleach." The cream promised to lighten the skin, remove tan, and cause users' "complexion to glow with youthful vitality." Thus, while products aimed at African-American women, like those

for white women, similarly promoted clear complexions and the healthful glow garnered through the outdoor life, they also had to assure black consumers that they could do so with no additional darkening. Skin lightening was a key component of these products but less emphasized than the product's ability to remove tan. In this way, the product fit more seamlessly into the white, hegemonic discourse of healthful leisure and sunlight rather than implying that dark skin was fundamentally unattractive or that racial blackness was somehow mutable.

However, for some African-American reformers, the new fad of suntanning amongst Euro-Americans was met with confusion and even outrage over its obvious ironies. Despite the successful treatment of African Americans with tuberculosis and rickets using heliotherapy, the inexorable associations between the sun and slavery as well as the negative associations and real repercussions of darkening black skin were two major impediments to the suntan vogue catching on in the black community. In a November 1932 issue of *The Crisis*, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, John Haynes Holmes, a white Unitarian minister and founding member of the NAACP, wrote a brief but powerful article highlighting the absurdity of suntanning by whites. He begins by recounting a recent experience at the beach:

> He was sitting on the beach, a giant of a man, bronzed on legs and arms. Day after day, for a succession of weeks, he had sat there, patiently tanning as much of his skin in the hot rays of the sun as the laws of Maine would allow. He was plainly succeeding in his quest; his body was getting blacker every hour.
>
> A friend chanced to see this man one afternoon, and was impressed. "Tell me," he said, "Is that man a Negro? Can the races bathe on this beach indiscriminately, together?"

> "I don't know," I replied, "there are not enough Negroes here to test it out. But that man's not a Negro! He's just a white man trying to look as much like a Negro as he can."[93]

While it was uncommon for most whites to admit they were tanning to look more black, for African Americans and those like Holmes who sympathized with their struggles, it was impossible not to make this connection. Holmes continued, "It's a curious world. The beaches and mountains of America this summer are crowded with men and women the majority of whom desire no fellowship with Negroes, yet all of them crazy over sun-bathing and its quick darkening of the skin!"[94] For Holmes and many others, it was hard to comprehend how segregated beaches and swimming pools, not to mention outright violence against and lynching of black people, could coexist with a fad in which whites wanted to grow closer, in terms of outward appearance, to blacks. He even alludes to the eugenics movement: "Suppose...we all suddenly became nudists! After a season or two, no doubt, we would all become as Negroes in appearance. But in that case, how could the whites preserve their precious racial integrity, and how could our organization be saved?"[95] The title of the article, "Bronze and Plaster," may also be a reference to the recent display of the white plaster sculpture *The Average American Male* (1921) by Jane Davenport earlier that year at the Third International Congress of Eugenics, held at the American Museum of Natural History. Modeled after measurements taken from U.S. Army recruits during World War I, the sculpture was intended to show the degeneration of the Nordic type in the U.S. caused by breeding with other, undesirable European immigrants.[96] The sloped shoulders and slightly

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93 John Haynes Holmes, "Bronze and Plaster," *The Crisis* 39, no. 11 (November 1932): 345.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 Mary K. Coffey, "The American Adonis: A Natural History of the 'Average American' (Man), 1921-32," in *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s*, ed. Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 185.

distended stomach of the white plaster sculpture would have been laughable in comparison to the bronze sculptures of muscular African and African-American figures by Richmond Barthé, a leading sculptor of the Harlem Renaissance. African Americans who critiqued the suntan almost invariably invoked the racist dimensions of the eugenics movement to make their case. They often also did so with a satirical tone. In the article "White Society Craves Brown Skin" published in the African-American newspaper *The Pittsburgh Courier*, the author opens with lyrics from "a popular Negro melody of some years back": "Gee, I'm glad I'm brown skin...Chocolate to the bone." Using the terminology of white eugenicists, he states "the vogue of sun-tan is capturing all Nordic society," and even mentions that the Lothrop Stoddards of the country are fighting a losing battle to keep the white race "pure."[97]

For some black opponents of the white suntanning craze, this was a complex issue of race, skin color, and identity that reached far back into American history. To some African Americans, the 1920s ushered in a modern era in which whites were adopting Negro spirituals and black jazz music as part of their own national heritage, without actually placing African Americans on equal footing. With suntanning, even their dusky complexions could be appropriated and put on for their own use. These issues were further complicated by the long history of blackface minstrelsy, another form of racial performance. In 1929, at the height of the suntan craze, the influential black newspaper, *The New York Age*, ran an article titled "Who's the Imitator Now?" drawing correlations between the recent suntan vogue with minstrelsy. The article quotes journalist Lester A. Walton, an active member of Harlem's theater world:

> In the past fun was poked at colored women who used face preparations to whiten their skins. Now white women, in and out of the theatrical profession, are sporting a brownish complexion with the aid of sun-tan powder.

[97] "White Society Craves Brown Skin," *The Pittsburgh Courier* (May 25, 1929) p. 12.

> As white actors have no compunction about appearing in Negro characters and singing Negro songs on the stage, is not criticism of Negroes "trying to act like white people" before the footlights inconsistent and fallacious?[98]

Walton's comparison makes clear that these issues of race, skin color, and performance were not going unnoticed. Moreover, it confirms that the suntan vogue was not merely a carefree "sign of the times," but rather could provoke and expose contentious debates over racial identity and ownership.

As white women took their cues from Hollywood actresses, black women similarly looked to the emerging African-American singers, dancers, and actresses on the Harlem stage. These attractive, svelte, predominantly light-skinned performers provided African-American women with a model to emulate. In particular, the wildly popular, all-black musical *Shuffle Along* opened on Broadway at the Cort Theatre for racially mixed audiences in 1921, spawning a widespread demand among white New Yorkers for black musicals. It also launched the careers of Josephine Baker, Adelaide Hall and Paul Robeson. While Baker was part of Shuffle Along's glamorous all-female chorus, her next major role came in 1924, playing a blackface clown in *The Chocolate Dandies* in New York City, and showcasing her strong comedic abilities.[99] However, it was in Paris where she achieved worldwide fame, unprecedented for black female entertainers at the time. For her blockbuster show *La Revue Nègre* at the Theatre des Champs-Elysées opening in Paris on October 2, 1925, French producer Jacques Charles modified and expanded Baker's role—inventing a "new, more 'African,' dance routine, the *Danse Sauvage*, featuring a scantily clad Baker and a male

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[98] "Who's the Imitator Now?," *The New York Age* (July 20, 1929): p. 4.

[99] Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Josephine Baker in Art and Life: The Icon and the Image* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 58–59.

partner, Joe Alex, gyrating to rhythms of the jungle."[100] Her image as a sensual and exotic/erotic icon of black primitivism was one that was guided by preexisting French stereotypes of blacks. The following summer, Baker's performance in *La Folie du Jour* at the Folies-Bergére catapulted the young performer to stardom in the City of Light. Here again, she portrayed a pleasant and sexually uninhibited savage, wearing only a skirt made of glittering bananas (which would become her trademark) and strands of round beads—both of which emphasized her nudity.[101]

Given her history of playing to a variety of Euro-American and French stereotypes of blackness, Baker's 1932 performance of her song "Si j'étais blanche! (If I were White!)" in *La Joie de Paris* at the Casino de Paris stands out. It captures the irony of the coinciding vogues for the Negro and the suntan. For this number, Baker donned a blonde wig over her signature pressed black hair and had lightened her skin using milk and lemon juice [Fig. 2.35].[102] The limits of her physical transformation are further explained by the song's lyrics, which were originally performed in French;

> Me, if I were white,
> Know that my happiness
> Which explodes near you,
> Would guard its color
> Under the sun, it's by one's exterior
> That one tans
> But for me, it's the flame of my heart
> By which I am colored.[103]

She implies that while white women now tan their exteriors and thus can hide their emotions—a far cry the transparent, blushing Victorian white woman—Baker is colored

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100 Ibid., 53.
101 Ibid., 54.
102 Jules-Rosette, 63.
103 Ibid., 64.

from the inside out with a fiery, innate passion. By constructing herself as naturally inclined to a primitive exoticism, "whiting up" cannot mask her inner color.

Artists and advertisers of the 1920s and '30s constructed an idealized white body, in which tanned skin, whether authentic or artificial, became of sign of health, wealth, and privilege—often relying on archaist, primitivist, and Orientalist motifs. In this process, the white body "othered" itself in the most fundamental way possible by changing its very pigmentation. On the one hand, the potentially temporary nature of such racialized transformation is a testament to the sense of freedom and choice Euro-Americans had to experiment with their skin color. Film scholar Richard Dyer posits:

> A tanned white person is just that—a white person who has acquired darker skin. There is no loss of prestige in this. On the contrary, not only does he or she retain the signs of whiteness (suggesting, once again, that skin colour is not really just a matter of the colour of skin), not only does tanning bespeak a wealth and life style [sic] largely at white people's disposition, but it also displays white people's right to be various, literally to incorporate into themselves features of other peoples.[104]

And yet, the racial confusion surrounding Euro-Americans suntanning and conversely, skin bleaching in the African-American community, was a serious issue in the 1920s and '30s that complicates Dyer's claim. Viewing a tanned white person as simply "a white person who has acquired darker skin" does not account for the intricate ways in which the fad of suntanning had the potential to disrupt the color line.

[104] Dyer, 49.

Chapter 3

Sun Worship: Modernist Primitivism and the Native American Body

Chapter 3

Sun Worship: Modernist Primitivism and the Native American Body

> Every people selects from the experience of every other people whatever contributes most vitally to its own development.
>
> – Van Wyck Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past"

Since the Renaissance, Europeans have sought to forge a cultural lineage back to the great civilizations of Greek and Roman antiquity. This genealogical legacy defined physical ideals of the human body, epitomized in sculptures such as the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Venus de Medici*. However, in the United States, these classical European cultural and physical forebears have coexisted, and in certain cases, been usurped by a more unique, indigenous counterpart: the American Indian.[1] In 1760, the young American artist Benjamin West was invited to Rome to study the work of great masters. Upon viewing the *Apollo Belvedere*, West purportedly exclaimed, "My God, how like it is to a young Mohawk warrior!"[2] His comparison focused on the impressive physiques of Apollo and West's estimation of a Mohawk warrior, as both were avid archers who shared an active, vigorous lifestyle.[3] He further elaborated to his undoubtedly shocked Italian hosts that the Mohawks were unlike typical Indians in that they were, in his estimation, educated, nimble, and magnificently formed. And like the Greek god Apollo, the Mohawk warrior was a venerable

[1] For centuries in the United States, the term "American Indian" was the common term to collectively describe the various indigenous peoples of the Americas. However, by the early twentieth century, "Native American" was also used, sometimes interchangeably within the same text. The uncapitalized term "native American" has been used historically to describe white native-born Americans, particularly in the context of immigration and eugenics to differentiate this group from recent immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe.

[2] John Galt, *The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1820), 150.

[3] West claimed he had seen Mohawk warriors in person although there is no biographical evidence that he did so before his trip to Rome.

figure worthy of praise, according to West. Since the colonial era, the nation's first peoples have often held a precarious position in the forging of a white, Anglo-American national identity. Although continuously denied the agency required to shape the hegemonic national narrative, Native Americans in their cultural practices and even their physical attributes have been continually and strategically invoked by Euro-Americans since the nation's founding to construct a national identity and assert a claim to authenticity through supposedly shared native roots.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the American eugenics movement continued to build modern conceptions of healthy male and female bodies on the Greco-Roman ideal of physical perfection, due largely to the British foundations of this modern pseudo-science. Eugenics itself emerged from a centuries-long tradition of Eurocentric scientific racism aided by the late-nineteenth-century study of biometrics. Marble statues of Apollo and Venus appealed to the harmony of proportion promoted by eugenicists—appearing in scholarly and medical essays as well as a variety of popular exhibitions and advertising in which the science of selective breeding and wholesome living could serve as a modern-day means of sculpting perfect bodies fit for reproduction. As discussed in Chapter One, the strength of the body politic was measured very literally by the physical health of its constituents during the Progressive Era. Towards this end, certain "racial types" served as models to represent these ideals. Sculptures of ideal human forms at world's fairs well into the 1930s continued to provide convincing material evidence that such physical perfection was attainable. Beyond the body, the eugenics movement also promoted elements of ancient Greco-Roman lifestyle—especially sunbathing and athletic activities that promoted health and bodily vigor in the name of race betterment and preservation. In particular, the

movement praised the Romans for their discipline, patriotism, and strong emphasis on the family unit. Dr. John Harvey Kellogg relates:

> In ancient Rome the home of every citizen had a solarium, and Pliny, a naturalist and commander of the Roman fleet, tells of his friend Firpo who kept himself young by taking daily sun baths; and history tells us that the messenger who was sent to him with an order to go with his fleet to the relief of Pompeii and Herculaneum at the time of the great eruption of Vesuvius which buried them, found him taking his usual daily sun bath.[4]

Kellogg, in this 1930 brief account, conveys the mutual relationship between heliotherapy, citizenship, military prowess, and youth. He resurrects the heroic lore of Rome—a soundly European empire—for his present-day Anglo-American readers, suggesting a sense of healthy patriotism.

Alongside the rise of eugenics in the first decades of the twentieth century, American artists and writers were on a quest to define and produce a distinctively American art and culture. A cultural identity crisis had been developing in the U.S. gradually since the late nineteenth-century, but became a clearly articulated concern in the years following WWI. Literary critic Van Wyck Brooks describes the origins of this dilemma and proposes a possible solution in his seminal essay "On Creating a Usable Past" (1918). He admits that the United States, unlike Europe, has "had no cumulative culture," yet the younger generation of his day should invent its own usable past drawn from various sources informed by personal resonance rather than trite convention.[5] In this cultural climate, Americans experienced a revived engagement with Native American cultures or, more often than not, a white-generated fantasy of a singular American Indian race—from the booming tourism in the American Southwest by way of the Santa Fe Railway to traveling Wild West shows.

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[4] John Harvey Kellogg and Florida Department of Agriculture, *Florida Land of Health* (Tallahassee, FL: State of Florida, Department of Agriculture, 1930), 4.

[5] Van Wyck Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past," *The Dial* 64, no. 764 (April 11, 1918): 337.

Numerous artists and writers rediscovered what Benjamin West had asserted in 1760: a more authentic, primordial source supposedly could be found in the American Indian. In this process of appropriating indigeneity, Euro-Americans have often treated various Native American tribes homogeneously, flattening cultural complexities and idiosyncrasies into easily consumable types such as the singular American Indian or the "redman." In an era in which the nation's cultural, national, and racial identity was actively called into question through eugenics and subsequent immigration reform, the effort to define what was distinctively American—and by contrast, not European—often exploited the very people of color who continued to be excluded socially, politically, and economically by the federal government.[6]

This chapter investigates tanned white skin as a visual signifier of modernist primitivist desire. The renewed interest in Native American culture during the first decades of the twentieth century intersected with the burgeoning American modernist and eugenic cultures in myriad ways. I will examine the phenomenon of Euro-Americans engaging on various levels with real and imagined aspects of Native American culture, dress, and perceived skin color. In doing so, I argue that these impulses, like heliotherapy itself, can be traced from the early health and outdoor movements of the late nineteenth century to the suntan vogue of the 1920s and 1930s. Morthan than merely adopting Native American practices and dress, the physical manifestation of sun-bronzed skin, was, for some Euro-Americans, an act of racialized embodiment. What distinguishes merely putting on Native American dress from the bodily transformation of suntanning is the intimacy of becoming.

[6] In addition to Native American cultures, the Euro-American interest in jazz music—invented by African-American musicians—was likewise fueled by a primitivist attitude that distinguished the modernity of the United States from a seemingly outmoded Europe.

This merging of physical and psychological transformation is at the core of the primitivist desire driving both the modern consumer and the modernist artist.

From eugenics to modern art, defining a characteristically American racial type or aesthetic form was a major preoccupation of the early twentieth century. In this pursuit, the issue of nativeness—a claim to nationhood and belonging—was paramount. I will examine the term "native" and the ideological slippage between white and Indian in its use, ranging from eugenic nationalism to Native American claims to indigeneity to artist Marsden Hartley's return to his home state of Maine as its "native son." In this historical discourse, "native" can refer to Euro-Americans or American Indians, and in some instances, the two are strategically conflated. Beyond language, this amalgamation or confusion over nativeness was also expressed in visual terms as tanned white skin became a signifier for a primitive, indigenous nativeness appropriated from the American Indian.

Following World War I, modernist artists embarked on the quest for a quintessential American art rooted in a uniquely American place. The Southwest was, for some, the ideal region to encounter this authentic sense of Americanness, due in large part to the living presence of Native Americans. Two early American modernist artists, Marsden Hartley and Georgia O'Keeffe, both key figures in Alfred Stieglitz's circle, approached the American Southwest on differing levels of engagement. Hartley, in Taos, New Mexico, for eighteen months, was positioned more like an amateur ethnographer looking in from the outside, while O'Keeffe spent a considerable amount of time in New Mexico every year beginning in 1929 until her permanent relocation to the state in 1949. Nevertheless, both artists strongly identified with and even revered the local Pueblo Indians and viewed indigenous art production and customs as a more spiritual, direct, and authentic form of expression in

comparison to the industrialized, commercialized life of New York City, where both artists lived and worked throughout the 1910s. Their experiences in the Southwest not only informed their art but also their bodily self-perceptions, spirituality, and understanding of American culture and identity. Art historian Marcia Brennan uses the term "embodied formalism" to describe the manner "in which representations of the body served as a primary vehicle of signification within Stieglitz's modernist project, as corporeal elements often became conjoined with abstract and naturalistic forms."[7] I extend Brennan's concept of embodied formalism to examine the role of sunlight and the desire for tan skin in the work of Hartley and O'Keeffe. I consider not only the transformative process of suntanning but also analyze the visual dimensions of the suntan it produces. Taken together, the white suntanned can be understood in this context as a primitivist means of seeking American authenticity and rootedness.

What was once deemed primitive and thus undesirable in previous generations—seemingly living without the aid of modern technology, dressing in scant clothing, practicing pagan rituals—were precisely what over-civilization and industrialization had destroyed and modernists were seeking. These very characteristics, deeply rooted in stereotypes of Native American, were more positively recontextualized with modernist primitivism as closeness to nature, sexual freedom, and a deeper, more authentic sense of spirituality. Some scholars have termed this process as antimodernist in nature. However, it is necessary to make the distinction that the attraction to the so-called primitive coupled with a disdain for modernity are, in fact, defiantly modernist gestures or antimodern forms of modernism. Primitivism can be considered uniquely modernist because of its oppositional stance towards modernity.

[7] Marcia Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 8.

Thus, modernism can more effectively be understood as less a question of what is modern, but rather as cultural responses to the conditions of modernity.

In addition to primitivism, my examination of the modernist interest in Native American culture and the pagan notion of "sun worship" underscores its parallels to the antimodern currents of the eugenics movement, which similarly called for a return to the outdoors, simpler ways of living, less restrictive clothing, and an emphasis on family life among other recommendations. The major difference between the Euro-American view of Native American life and a eugenic lifestyle was the exotic sense of sexualized liberation that the former seemingly afforded. While eugenics did call for a loosening of corsets and nearly nude sunbaths, it did so in the name of fitter families and offspring, stressing the conservation of sexual energies only for procreation.[8] As emphasized elsewhere in this dissertation, attempting to neatly compartmentalize eugenics into a bounded set of practices guided by a singular philosophy overlooks the very nuanced and innocuous manner in which it pervaded everyday life. Thus, contradictions and conflations are inherently part of this discussion.

Early Antecedents

The white desire to invoke the perceived veritable native qualities of the American Indian was not a new phenomenon in the 1920s. In addition to the Benjamin West anecdote, the Boston Tea Party of 1773 is another early documented example—an iconic event in the American fight for independence that has become ingrained in our national history and narrative. However, unlike West's comparison of a marble statue of an ancient Greek god to

[8] Fae Brauer and Anthea Callen, *Art, Sex and Eugenics: Corpus Delecti* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 21.

a living, yet primitive, Mohawk warrior, the Boston Tea Party involved a more direct transformation of the white self through embodiment. A group of white Bostonian men, in protest of the British-imposed Tea Act, donned feathers and war paint and chanted "war cries" before dumping tea into Boston Harbor. Historian Phillip J. Deloria contends, "Dressing as an Indian allowed these pretend Mohawks to translate texts, images, and ideologies into physical reality. In doing so, they enacted and embodied the Noble Savage with concrete gestures that possessed physical and emotional meaning."[9] For these white men, this sense of savagery and revolutionary spirit was undoubtedly heightened by the notion of racial difference. The appropriation and physical donning of "Indianness" by the rebels can be viewed as a defiant gesture, further distancing themselves from the British (and their own European origins) by embracing a distinctively indigenous one. During the revolutionary period in the U.S., "playing Indian," as Deloria calls it, was a strategic means of defining national identity.[10]

By the late nineteenth century, interest in all things Native American became a preoccupation of Euro-American culture on various levels, ranging from armchair anthropology and collecting Native American artifacts to a more dedicated pursuit of Indian lifeways and dress. The "Indian Craze" (1890-1915) for collecting Native American art and handicrafts swept over nearly every middle and upper-middle class Anglo-American home, turning Victorian parlors into "Indian Corners" outfitted with Native American rugs, blankets, and pottery.[11] First bolstered by the flourishing tourism industry in the American Southwest, Native American art by the turn of the century could be purchased from

[9] Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 6.
[10] Ibid., 7.
[11] See Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

department stores in every major American city—integrating itself into everyday consumer culture as well as the domestic realm.

Some Americans took their appreciation for Native American culture beyond mere collecting and into mimesis by dressing and living in ways modeled after Native Americans. Journalist Charles Fletcher Lummis is arguably one of the best documented of these individuals, known for his editorial work and advocacy for Native American cultural preservation. Born in 1859, Lummis traded his Yankee origins in New England for the Indian and Hispanic cultures encountered in the Southwest.[12] While a job as the first city editor of *The Los Angeles Times* brought him out West, Lummis chose an unconventional means to get there. As one of thousands of health-seekers attracted to Southern California, it was his desire for adventure and physical feats that led him on a cross-country barefoot trek from Cincinnati to Los Angeles in 1884, which took him 143 days, traversing 3507 miles.[13] Following the railroad tracks as his guide, Lummis encountered Native Americans and Mexicans along his westward journey, writing dispatches back to Ohio of his impressions.[14] Upon his arrival, "despite a broken arm, self-set in the desert and cradled in a colorful bandana, Lummis was the picture of health—lean, tanned, fit...."[15] He viewed his newly acquired suntan as a visible sign of his closeness to nature, having traversed the wilderness like the Native Americans he met along the way. Yet after a few months of the indoor life at the city desk of the *Los Angeles Times*, the young editor lamented:

> And so I sit and scratch away at the inoffensive paper as if I owed it as a grudge while my thoughts go drifting out of the open window and across

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[12] Sherry L. Smith, *Reimagining Indians: Native Americans through Anglo Eyes, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 119.

[13] Charles Fletcher Lummis, *A Tramp Across the Continent* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), 2.

[14] Smith, 122–23.

[15] Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 76.

> the purple mountains to—well, I call it *life*...However, by the time this Indian complexion fades out—as it is doing tolerably fast under the regimen of all-night work—I shall have gotten over the sharp edge of my hunger for the wilderness, probably.[16]

Probably was right. Lummis pleaded with his boss, Harris Gray Otis, to assign him to cover the Apache war, and was eventually sent to Arizona in March 1886 to follow General George Crook's campaign, forcibly bringing back the formerly mountain-dwelling Chiricahua Apaches to their new desert reservation.[17] After suffering a paralytic stroke, Lummis decided to convalesce in New Mexico, living with a prominent Pueblo Indian family for nearly four years beginning in 1888.

In California and the Southwest, Lummis became one of the nation's pioneering conservationists and supporters of Indian lifeways—a project intertwined with promoting life in the western United States more generally. Between 1895 and 1909, Lummis was editor and frequent contributor to the richly illustrated regional magazine *The Land of Sunshine* (later called *Out West*), an early form of boosterism designed to draw East Coast readers westward but also an outlet for sharing his critical views of the Federal Indian Policy. Latching on to the growing support for the outdoor life and heliotherapy, as well as his own formative experience living in nature, Lummis's main selling point for California and its neighbors was the abundance of sunlight in the region and its potential for physical and psychological health—an enduring notion that has brought millions westward ever since.[18]

Lummis's embodied practice of living in the ways of Native Americans, took more mainstream form in the various children's summer camps and scouting groups that emerged

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[16] Charles Fletcher Lummis, *Letters from the Southwest, September 20, 1884 to March 14, 1885* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1989), 283.

[17] Smith, 124–25.

[18] Starr, 83.

in the late nineteenth century. The popularity of all things Native American increased in the early twentieth century, and were foundational to scouting groups such as the Woodcraft Indians (later known as the Boy Scouts of America) and Camp Fire Girls of America. These groups aimed to bring adolescent city boys and girls out of the stifling Victorian indoor life into nature, promoting healthy living and hard work, while still reinforcing normative gender roles. In this effort, they modeled their organizational structure and activities around what they perceived as Native American precedents. The earliest of such scouting groups, the Woodcraft Indians, was founded in 1901 by prominent Canadian-born illustrator, author, and naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton at his Connecticut estate. Seton had long believed Indians served as patriotic exemplars for American youth: "The Red Man is the apostle of outdoor life, his example and precept are what young America needs above any other ethical teaching of which I have knowledge."[19] As the outdoor life offered American youth with an escape from the industrialized world, Native American culture was for many, the natural model to follow, particularly by the twentieth century as nostalgia for this "vanishing race" began to develop. As historian Leslie Paris contends, "White campers explored the world of supervised, corporeal darkness in casual ways, including summer tans, Indian war-cries, and racial slurs, as well as in organized community performances."[20] At the end of the summer, these young campers returned to their urban homes "healthily bronzed and hearty as only life in the open air can make boys."[21] As discussed in the previous chapter, the suntan became an

[19] Ernest Thompson Seton, *The Gospel of the Red Man: An Indian Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1936, 1-2.

[20] Leslie Paris, *Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 193.

[21] "A Boys' Camp by One of the Campers," *St. Nicholas* 13, no. 8 (1886): 612.

imprint of one's healthful, rugged experience of the outdoors, and in the case of camp, often bespoke a temporary Native American identity.

Indian play became a significant part of American childhood. The three children of Sara and Gerald Murphy, discussed in the previous chapter, took their fascination with Native Americans all the way to the French Riviera, christening their home Villa America with a primitive sense of American authenticity. Family photographs from November 1926 [Fig. 3.1] show Honoria, Baoth, and Patrick Murphy on the terrace of Villa America donning homemade feather headdresses and jewelry layered over their bathing costumes, and holding decorated shields, spears, and other weapons. In one of the boys' diaries, a page titled "Making camp equipment" includes clippings from children's magazines on how to make an Indian bow, carve a wooden duck, and a "keep-alive fish box."[22] Part of the Murphys' modern sensibility was also their interest in the primitive.

In addition to their association with the outdoors, Native American practices filled a significant cultural void in Euro-American society. Following the 1924 enactment of restrictive immigration quotas for Southern and Eastern Europeans and the complete barring of immigration from Asia, eugenicists shifted their attention to the "Negro Problem" while negotiating how to approach the vast number of European immigrants already living in the U.S. Even staunch eugenicists such as Lothrop Stoddard softened their views of these once unwelcome immigrants and sought to homogenize various European ethnic groups into a single, more powerful Caucasian race.[23] With xenophobia rampant in the interwar period, many immigrants were forced to assimilate to Anglo-American culture and purge aspects of

[22] Sara and Gerald Murphy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[23] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 98.

their Old World heritage from their identity. In contrast to the immigrant's foreign customs, Native American life, in the eyes of many Anglo-Americans, was perceived as pure, untainted, and most importantly, indigenous to the United States. The preface to the 1916 Camp Fire Girls book on Indian names attests to this developing trend:

> During the last few years great interest has been manifested in the American Indians, particularly among our young people, and especially since the development of the organization known as the Camp Fire Girls. With this interest has grown a demand for Indian personal names, and names for clubs and camps. It is chiefly to meet such demand that this little book has been prepared. In compiling the material presented in the following pages, therefore, the needs of Camp Fire Girls particularly have been borne in mind, as it is understood their activities are patterned largely after those of the Indians, respecting whom so much misinformation has been cast abroad and so many popular fallacies have been absorbed by old and young alike. It is hoped that this attempt to correct a few of the misconceptions concerning our Indian tribes will be welcomed by those who are interested in any way in these first people of America.[24]

Along with Indian costumes and activities, the act of taking on an Indian name also allowed young Euro-American girls to develop a personal and intimate sense of Native American identity. Little Margaret from New York could at least temporarily become Aweont, the Seneca name meaning "growing flower."[25] The above excerpt also highlights the growing desire for greater cultural specificity regarding Native Americans by 1917. Organizations such as the Camp Fire Girls saw themselves as in a position to rectify misconceptions of Native Americans and to uphold them as nation's first peoples. These views stemmed from the group's Progressive Era mission as well as from the emergence of cultural relativism in the field of anthropology led by German-born Columbia University anthropologist, Franz Boas, which called for the salvaging of distinct cultural forms before they disappeared.

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[24] Florence Maude Poast, preface to *Indian Names, Facts and Games for Camp Fire Girls* (Washington, DC: The James William Bryan Press, 1917).

[25] Poast, 51.

The booming tourism industry also utilized the exotic allure of Native American culture to entice Euro-American travelers to warmer climes, from Florida to California, during the first decades of the twentieth century. Building on consumer expectations for warm weather, sunshine, and subsequent suntans, promoters neatly folded Native Americans and their supposed penchant for sun worship into selling vacation packages. The rhetoric and imagery used in travel guides and advertisements often relied on familiar Native American tropes—reframing once negative impressions of indigenous peoples as desirable. The tongue-in-cheek travel guide *Sun Hunting: Adventures and Observations among the Native and Migratory Tribes of Florida, including the Stoical Time-Killers of Palm Beach, the Gentle and Gregarious Tin-Canners of the Remote Interior, and the Vivacious and Semi-Violent Peoples of Miami and Its Purlieus* (1922), utilizes the notion of "native and migratory tribes" to describe different types of tourists and locals in Florida, while characterizing their primary activity as "sun hunting."[26]

Inherent in the popular fascination with indigenous life in the early twentieth century is what cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo calls "imperialist nostalgia," or "yearning for what one has destroyed."[27] Only after Frederick Jackson Turner's landmark speech declaring the closing of the Western Frontier at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair was it truly "safe" in the eyes of Anglo-Americans to praise Native American culture. A deep reverence and respect for a culture and people seen as passively lost obscured the dynamic and rapacious processes characterizing historical and contemporary white and Indian relations. This included the

[26] Kenneth Lewis Roberts, *Sun Hunting: Adventures and Observations among the Native and Migratory Tribes of Florida, Including the Stoical Time-Killers of Palm Beach, the Gentle and Gregarious Tin-Canners of the Remote Interior, and the Vivacious and Semi-Violent Peoples of Miami and Its Purlieus* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1922).

[27] Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 71.

spread disease, forced removal of indigenous people off their land, violent raids led by the U.S. military, and Indian schools that sought to assimilate Native American children to Anglo-American culture and the English language by any means necessary. The term "nostalgia" aptly describes this peculiar sentiment of conquest, as it simultaneously evokes innocence in loss. The children's scouting programs and carefree tourism centered around a Euro-American understanding of Native North American lifeways serve as prime examples of imperialist nostalgia employed to mask any culpability in the nation's unseemly past and appropriate native culture for future progress.

"The Vanishing Race": Nativism and Nativeness

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth, racial decline and nativist claims to nationhood were often intertwined discourses. The notion of the American Indian as a "vanishing race" nearing extinction was a common trope. Like the mastodon, the American Indian was seen as a species no longer fit to survive. The 1840s in the U.S. were characterized by calls for westward expansion, Indian resettlement, and the emergence of nativist political factions. The decade also witnessed increased visibility of the Indian-white conflict rooted in concurrent and conflated dialogues of nativeness. From 1844 to 1855, the Native American Party commanded the national political scene, arguing that Catholic immigrants, in particular, the Irish, had no place in American politics.[28] While the Euro-American men who comprised the Native American Party were trying to assert their claims to nativeness, many also simultaneously and hypocritically supported the campaign to expunge the indigenous, native peoples of North America. By declaring the Indian race as

[28] Angela F. Murphy, *American Slavery, Irish Freedom: Abolition, Immigrant Citizenship, and the Transatlantic Movement for Irish Repeal* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2010), 175.

"vanishing," human decimation could be recast as a scientific, and thus, inevitable, aspect of Darwin's natural selection. Moreover, aside from the very real decimation of indigenous people, their languages, customs, and material culture were also simultaneously being supplanted by those prescribed by the Euro-American hegemony. The myth of racial and cultural purity was central to these developments, and further perpetuated the stereotype that Native Americans were primitive and, therefore, could not adapt to or survive in the rapidly industrializing modern world. Modern scholarship, on the other hand, show us that encounters between indigenous peoples and other racial and ethnic groups, and even other tribes, were in fact highly syncretic experiences, both biologically through intermarriage and culturally through hybridized artistic practice.

The inevitable demise of the American Indian was a prominent theme in national exhibitions and visualized in paintings such as Tompkins Harrison Matteson's *The Last of the Race* (1847) [Fig. 3.2], which features a group of four Native Americans, resting at a rocky precipice facing the ocean. Literally pushed to the ends of the continent, the figures in the painting point to the consequences of Manifest Destiny's westward expansion and the forced Indian removal and relocation on which it was predicated. However, Matteson's canvas evinces little sense of the struggle and violence that characterized this contentious process. Displaced with nowhere to go, the final remaining Native Americans in Matteson's canvas are meant to quietly succumb to their inevitable fate of extinction. As the title suggests, they represent "the race" rather than any specific tribe. While all the figures encircle the central male figure standing tall in the center of the group, which includes a mangy dog (who appears the most dynamic of all the characters), he offers no course of action. With his hand resting on his chin, Matteson suggests that he—and by extension, the entire Native American

"race"—has run out of ideas and places to go. The painting visualizes the verses of a poem penned the year prior by H. B. Matteson in the *New York Illustrated Magazine* titled "The Last of His Tribe."[29] In the despondent final lines, Matteson laments:

> And yet he speaks not—he will speak no more;
> From the far land of exile he hath trod,
> (Gray devotee) a weary pilgrimage,
> To give a last farewell—a lingering look—
> To his Jerusalem, his loved and cherish'd land—
> His mission done, upon his tatter'd robe
> He'll lay him down in clam serenity,
> And leave his bones to molder where they grew;
> The only tear—should one perchance to fall—
> Will be his own, that glitters on his grave,
> In that, to him, vast loneliness.[30]

While sympathetic in tone, and reverently referencing Christian motifs, Matteson's verbal and visual expressions nevertheless reinforce the notion that native decline was inevitable, and was in fact a noble death akin to Jesus Christ's martyrdom.

The American Art-Union, a New-York based organization aimed at cultivating public appreciation of the fine arts, selected Matteson's *The Last of the Race* (1847) to be engraved for nationwide distribution among its members.[31] The Union's selection of the work is a testament to the popular appeal and the political and cultural weight of the "Indian Problem" in American society at the time. The year 1847 brought an unprecedented rise in its membership, adding almost 7,000 new subscribers in one year to total 16,475 nationwide. In it's annual plan from that year, the Union states that its five-dollar membership fee would be put towards the production of an original engraving but would also be applied to "the

[29] It is unclear what kind of relationship, if any at all, existed between Tompkins Harrison Matteson and H. B. Matteson.

[30] H. B. Matteson, "The Last of His Tribe," *New York Illustrated Magazine Annual* 2 (1846): 317.

[31] Gail E. Husch, *Something Coming: Apocalyptic Expectation and Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Painting* (Hannover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), 122–123.

purchase of paintings and sculpture by native and resident artists."[32] Thus, within the same conceptual space, a reader would be able to view the reproduction of Matteson's "natives" (Native Americans) as well as read the Union's call for the support of native (Euro-American) artists. This kind of juxtaposition was by no means a trivial coincidence, but rather, a very deliberate editorial gesture inciting subscribers to support Euro-American artists so they may escape the same fate that befell the Indian.

By the 1910s, American Indians had been removed from the living present and safely relegated to the historical past. With growing temporal distance, a nostalgic and largely favorable, yet overwhelmingly stereotypical, view Native Americans permeated the Anglo-American popular imagination. As national politics shifted away from the "Indian Problem" to the "Immigrant Problem," the powerful rhetoric of racial extinction popularized in the context of Native Americans and the American frontier was soon appropriated by the eugenics movement. However, instead of being applied to the Other, it became a self-referential concept utilized by Anglo-American leaders of the movement to describe the imminent threat posed by immigrants and people of color to Nordic race. The notion of "vanishing"—disappearing or becoming invisible—as a race had even greater impact in the early twentieth century with society's emphasis on the physical body and bold materiality.

In his essay "National Eugenics in Relation to Immigration," author Robert DeCourcy Ward, a Harvard professor of climatology and vocal eugenicist, argues for the application of eugenics to immigration reform. He states, "There are those who believe that the Anglo-Saxon American will disappear as the American Indian and the American buffalo have

[32] *Transactions of the American Art-Union For the Year 1847* (New York: G. F. Nesbitt, 1848), 5.

disappeared, and they have some basis for their belief."[33] While eugenicists argued that the American Indian was vanishing due to Darwinian natural selection, they also believed the same fate would be wholly "unnatural" for Anglo-Americans. Many thought that with the modern science of eugenics, selective breeding within the race could overpower the determinism of natural selection and prevent racial extinction. Eugenicists also adopted the wave metaphor, which had already been commonly used in the nineteenth century to describe the movement of people—from the westward expansion of Manifest Destiny to the "rising tide" of immigrants reaching American shores. By sustaining a familiar dialogue, the eugenics movement in the U.S. can be also be viewed in the context of the ostensible closing of the western frontier in the early 1890s. This discursive continuity represents the strategic effort of Anglo-Americans in positions of power to shift a racial discourse once convincingly used to navigate the "Indian problem" to the contemporary issue of defending the Anglo-American self against immigrants and people of color.

In the influential treatise *The Passing of The Great Race; or, The Racial Basis of European History* (1916), leading eugenicist Madison Grant uses the term "native American"[34] to describe a distinctively American racial type descending from early colonial settlers of Northern European ancestry:

> The native American by the middle of the nineteenth century was rapidly becoming a distinct type. Derived from the Teutonic part of the British Isles, and being almost purely Nordic, he was on the point of developing physical peculiarities of his own, slightly variant from those of his English forefathers, and corresponding rather with the idealistic Elizabethan than with the materialistic Hanoverian Englishman.[35]

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[33] Robert DeCourcy Ward, "National Eugenics in Relation to Immigration," *The North American Review* 192, no. 656 (1910): 57.

[34] This term was also used in a similar fashion by the Know-Nothing Party; Its present-day usage to refer to people of indigenous descent did not come about until the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

[35] Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 79.

Grant develops this distinct type of "native American" throughout his tome, but the matter occasionally gets complicated by the multiple understandings of the term "native" circulating in Grant's own time. He states, "There has been little or no Indian blood taken into the veins of the native American, except in States like Oklahoma and in some isolated families scattered here and there in the Northwest."[36] This suggests that Grant generally used the term "Indian" to refer to American Indians and "native American" to describe white, Anglo-Saxon Americans.[37] And yet Grant nonetheless confuses his use of the term "native" in his discussion of the colonial U.S.: "The Nordic blood was kept pure in the Colonies, because at that time among Protestant peoples there was a strong race feeling, as a result of which half-breeds between the white man and any native type were regarded as natives and not as white men."[38] He typically employs the term "white man" when discussed in relation to "negroes or Indians"—when racial difference is ostensibly more visible and obvious. In contrast, the term "native American" is generally used in contexts related to the recent influx of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe who Grant deemed undesirable. In other words, Anglo-American nativeness only became necessary in the face of a subtler racial threat wielding immense potential for cultural, social, and political domination.

However, unlike the decimation of American Indians, Grant, like his predecessors framed this new vanishing Anglo-American native as an issue of mere passivity that ultimately could be rectified. Portrayed by eugenicists (and numerous historians and anthropologists) as lacking any sense of agency, American Indians were destined for inevitable demise due to their perceived lack of intelligence and industriousness. For Anglo-

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[36] Ibid., 78.
[37] However, Grant goes on the describe East Asian Indians as simply "Indians" as well.
[38] Ibid. 76.

Americans, their extermination was seen as self-imposed with power and agency never fully ceded to the hands of immigrants:

> These immigrants adopt the language of the native American; they wear his clothes; they steal his name; and they are beginning to take his women, but they seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals, and while he is being elbowed out of his own home the American looks calmly abroad and urges on others the suicidal ethics which are exterminating his own race.[39]

Grant is echoing the theory of "race suicide" conceived by sociologist Edward A. Ross and popularized by Theodore Roosevelt at the turn of the century, in which Anglo-Americans were passively and meekly allowing immigrants to overrun their country and weaken the gene pool.[40] In this framework, eugenics was essentially a call to arms.

In Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920), commonly viewed as the second major treatise on eugenics, Stoddard builds on Grant's work, shifting the focus towards the rising tide of the so-called colored races (yellow, brown, black, and red) against a unified white race. Written in 1920, Stoddard posits World War I as a civil war of the world's white (European) races—a worldwide race suicide. However, despite detailing a considerable list of ostensible threats from these colored races, Native Americans (the "Red Man" as he calls them) generally does not pose a major threat in contemporary times. Stoddard's chapter "The Red Man's Land" focuses solely on the indigenous peoples of Latin America and the perils of miscegenation, without addressing the historical and current-day presence of Native Americans in the United States. Thus, by the 1920s, as the Indian problem of the nineteenth century had been replaced by the immigrant problem of eugenics, the concept of the vanishing race continued to hold a powerful place in American racial politics.

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[39] Ibid., 81.

[40] Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1992), 15.

Marsden Hartley: Facing the Sun Forever

Throughout his life, Marsden Hartley wrote profusely on the relationship between race, artistic production, and national identity. He, like many of his generation, was keen to describe people in terms of essentializing racial differences, which found visual expression in much of his art. In particular, the conflation of Native American (or American Indian) and "native American" (old-stock Anglo-Saxon American) common in political discussions from this period similarly informed Hartley's own quest to forge an authentically American art. This shared rhetoric finds its most robust visual form in Hartley's paintings of the North Atlantic folk—a term art historian Donna M. Cassidy uses collectively to describe the various Anglo-Saxon, German, and French Canadian racial types Hartley encountered towards the end of his career upon returning to his home state of Maine. With an air of lamentation, Hartley deemed the North Atlantic folk a dying race, like the Native Americans he witnessed earlier in his career. In his writings, he wrote about both groups and praised each for their distinct cultural forms that were innately tied to their racial purity. Hartley painted the majority of his brawny North Atlantic figures [Fig. 3.3, 3.4] with deep, tanned complexions not only to provide an outer reflection of inner health but also, I would argue, to imbue them with the primitive authenticity and Americanness associated with Native Americans. Produced in the last years of the artist's life, these bold, figurative paintings of equally muscular male fisherman, lumberjacks, and athletes (with the occasional female figure) evoke a sense of American indigeneity, primitive physicality, and racial purity rooted in the outdoor life.

In order to understand Hartley's conception of race and nationalism, one must first dissect his complex views of his own racial and cultural identity vis-a-vis his ever-changing

American narrative. Hartley was born in 1877 to working-class, English-born parents in the mill town of Lewiston, Maine.[41] Throughout his peripatetic career—spent primarily in European cities and various corners of North America—his racial and cultural identity often shifted depending on his surroundings. In Europe, he sought to emphasize his Americanness based on the thrilling sense of cultural difference he experienced while abroad. During his sojourn through the American Southwest, he considered himself white and American in contrast to the "Red Man" as he called the Native Americans he observed. And finally, in Maine, he sought to construct himself as "the painter from Maine"—the artistic descendent of other great Yankee painters such as Winslow Homer and Albert Pinkham Ryder. This nomadic, restless lifestyle is manifest in Hartley's multivalent visual references that defy the boundaries of time, culture, and place.

An eighteen-month journey through the American Southwest beginning in 1918 left an indelible impression on Hartley and would greatly impact his art as well as his conception of nativeness in the U.S. However, his initial interest in the indigenous people of his own country was in fact cultivated while abroad in Europe between 1912 and 1915. After several months back in New York to open his third solo exhibition at Stieglitz's 291 gallery, Hartley returned to Berlin in April 1913 and began working on his *Amerika* series (1914-15), comprised of four paintings with Native American motifs. The paintings in the series feature similar formal elements and compositional strategies: a central, triangular tipi surrounded by brilliantly colored forms, stylized seated figures with striped headdresses and robes, and swaths of bold patterning. The abstract, somewhat geometric designs and imagery found in these vibrant canvases are Hartley's interpretation of the extensive collection of Native

[41] Townsend Ludington, *Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 15.

American artifacts he viewed at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin and earlier at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris.[42]

Couched between abstract paintings with military subjects, the *Amerika* series exhibits the artist's penchant for cultural conflation through a visual amalgamation of form, which I will demonstrate, also appears in his later paintings of the North Atlantic folk. Paintings from the series such as *American Indian Symbols* (1914) [Fig. 3.5], draw upon Native American as well as German military motifs, which Hartley has transcribed into his own cohesive visual language. The central tipi and seated figures—topped with headdresses and wrapped in such a way so as to also resemble royal Egyptian mummies—make clear yet generalized reference to Native Americans. Integrated into this world of tipis and Indians are elements of German military and court parades and uniforms—a dazzling public spectacle that fascinated Hartley. The checkerboard and striped pattern along the right edge of the canvas and the blue cross on the central tipi are reminiscent of various military banners and seals, the white stars decorating the tipis refer to the eight-pointed star of the High Order of the Black Eagle of the Prussian military, while the wagon wheel motif dotting the top of the composition point to the horse-drawn carriages parading triumphantly down Berlin's main avenues. Hartley first came to Berlin in 1913, following Carl von Freyburg, a young Prussian officer he had met in Paris. Although never explicitly expressed in writing due to the illegality of homosexuality in Germany at the time, it is likely that the Hartley and von Freyburg had a brief but intimately devoted relationship.

For Hartley, these visual quotations were both universal but also profoundly personal. In *Indian Fantasy* (1914) [Fig. 3.6], the immense bird dominating the top register of the

[42] Donna M. Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 172.

canvas, backlit by an abstracted, blazing sun, conveys multivalent meanings. Its expansive wings are reminiscent of the mystical thunderbird of the Kwakwaka'wakw of the Northwest Coast, often seen as carved totem poles. Interpreted as an eagle, the bird in the painting suggests the reverence of the creature prominent in several Native American tribes, but also brings to mind the eagle as national bird of the U.S. as well as its centrality in the German Empire's coat of arms. These were all cultural and historical references that would have been familiar and relevant to Hartley. The visual amalgamations of the *Amerika* series are early expressions of Hartley's deft ability to transcend culture, time, and place on the picture plane.

For Hartley, Native Americans and German soldiers were colorful, richly decorated, and honorable people he deeply admired. Just weeks after learning of von Freyburg's death in battle, Hartley pays tribute to the young officer in a letter to Stieglitz: "If you knew Freyburg you would understand what true pathos is—there never was a man more beloved and more necessary to the social well-being of the world—in every way a perfect being—physically—spiritually and mentally beautifully balanced—24 years young—and of all things—necessary."[43] For Hartley, von Freyburg represented an idealized, quasi-messianic figure whose kind spirit and overall perfection could have saved the modern world from its destruction. Thus, his death marked a catastrophic loss for Hartley, conceived not just as personal, but as universal in its scope. However, Hartley found redemption in the Native Americans whose symbols and figures he had been incorporating into his paintings. He soon wrote again to Stieglitz discussing the horrors of war and his desire for a new reality:

> Everyone directly engaged in this war is suffering terribly—Death is taking the most heart rending toll—and there is nothing but silence to offer. I find it's personally the most unspeakable humiliation ever offered to a sincere human being. I find myself wanting to be an Indian—to paint my face with

[43] Hartley to Stieglitz, October, 29 1914, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter YCAL).

> the symbols of that race I adore[,] go to the west and face the sun forever—
> that would seem the true expression of human dignity.[44]

Although never actually seeing combat, Hartley was certainly connected to the war on an emotional level through von Freyburg and other friends, and was noticeably affected by its destructive effects. The immediate transition from his discussion of war to the desire "to be an Indian" suggests that, for Hartley, these two forms of existence represent the two extremes of the human condition: cold, modern warfare and death on the one hand, and the warm glow of a preindustrial, indigenous spiritualism on the other. For the distraught young artist, the inhumanity of war could only be combated by the sincerest, humblest, and most elemental form humanity he knew: the Native American. He not only expresses an admiration for the "race I adore" but a desire to *become* an Indian, painting the same symbols he adapted for his canvases onto his face, and using the natural paintbrush of the sun's rays to color his body. Aligning himself with Matteson's Native Americans who similarly face the setting sun, Hartley desires to exist eternally, outside of the boundaries of time.

Hartley's *Amerika* series is undoubtedly informed by his own experiences of being a young American artist in a European city with a rich cultural legacy and in a country whose people had long been intrigued by Native Americans. German novelist Karl May's popular *Winnetou* series of the late nineteenth century was instrumental to the construction of a sympathetic Germanic view of Native Americans as noble savages and cultivated what would become a national interest.[45] Keenly aware of this well-established German fascination Native Americans and their perceived culture, Hartley appropriated designs and iconography from various Native North American tribes for the paintings in his *Amerika*

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[44] Marsden Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, November 12, 1914, YCAL.

[45] Colin Gordon Calloway, Gerd Gemünden, and Susanne Zantop, *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 3.

series as a means of rendering his art and himself, as a uniquely and authentically American. Although just as foreign to these American Indian artifacts as his German contemporaries, Hartley's deliberate use of the German spelling "Amerika" to name the series posits himself as an authority with insider's view of Native Americans. Despite the presence of other American artists such as Charles Demuth in his Berlin coterie, Hartley nonetheless viewed himself as unique: "I am probably the only American in Germany certainly the only so-called ultra-modern."[46] Hartley's German friend, poet Else Lasker-Schüler, even called him "Firebird Sioux," and sketched the artist with his hooked nose—a prominent feature he as well as others caricatured in portraits—as an Indian wearing a headdress and decorated with facial markings.[47] It is also possible, then, that the giant bird in *American Indian Symbols* (1914) may also be the artist including himself in the canvas—a fantastical space in which Native American, Anglo-American, and German symbols harmoniously converge.[48] The nickname Firebird Sioux was derived from Hartley's "copper-red mane," which Lasker-Schüler so admired as well as his "native" abilities, which included "a great deftness for producing paint, which he knew how to extract from the different barks of the trees, from the gay-colored leaves."[49] Their Indian play, mirroring the activities of summer camps back in the United States and also in Germany, was on the one hand, part of an imaginative and amusing world they created. Yet on the other, it profoundly influenced Hartley's artistic

[46] Hartley to Stieglitz, August 5, 1915, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive. YCAL.

[47] Dieter Scholz, "Marsden Hartley in Berlin," in *Marsden Hartley: The German Paintings 1913-1915*, ed. Dieter Scholz (Berlin; Los Angeles; New York: Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, 2014), 61–64.

[48] Ilene Susan Fort also suggests this parallel between Hartley and birds: "Hartley used bird imagery to create symbolic portraits (probably self-portraits, since his beaklike profile often led to a comparison with birds." See Fort, "Hartley's Spiritual Education and the German Paintings," in *Marsden Hartley: The German Paintings 1913-1915*, ed. Dieter Scholz (Berlin; Los Angeles; New York: Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, 2014), 121.

[49] Else Lasker-Schüler, *Der Prinz von Theben*, collected in Lasker-Schüler, *Werke und Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 1996), 397.

work as well as his own sense of self. Only in Berlin was he was finally afforded the opportunity to escape his Anglo-American upbringing to become a primitivist modern.

During these early years in Europe, Hartley was exposed to the bold modernist works of Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Henri Matisse, Paul Cézanne, Robert Delaunay, and others, and was drawn to the power of color, not just in art, but in every facet of his written work. In particular, he expressed a keen interest in skin color. In 1918, two erotic poems by Hartley appeared in the American avant-garde journal *The Little Review*: "The Ivory Woman" and "Sunbather." Intended to be read in succession, the poems together present the reader with a stark contrast between women and men, conceived as pale and dark, civilized and savage, dead and alive. "The Ivory Woman" explores the vices of a pale and delicate, yet sexually-charged woman.[50] Caught between lust and loathing, Hartley paints a portrait of a woman whose thoughts and behavior are at once repulsive and alluring:

> It was her high orgy to hear his voice thunder about
> Her frail body, white and waxlike, absorbed in a cool
> And almost imperceptible hysteria
> From which rose her rarest ecstasies.[51]

Hartley vividly portrays the quintessential pale Victorian woman such as those found in paintings by Thomas Dewing or John Singer Sargent—frail, pallid, and susceptible to hysteria if under duress—yet emerging, even if only in her imagination, to a savage, modern world of sexuality.

Immediately following "The Ivory Woman," the poem "Sunbather" offers a sharp visual contrast to "The Ivory Woman," written in first-person narrative from a male voice.

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[50] In the poem "The Ivory Woman" (1918), Hartley also codes the woman as French (or at least Europeanized) by using words such as "étagère," "bijouteries," and "boudoir" within the first stanza. Hartley was fond of Europe in his early years, particularly Berlin. However, his time in Paris was mostly spent with expatriate Americans and Germans as he felt excluded by French and increasingly became resentful of them. For more on Hartley in Paris, see Ludington, 76.

[51] Hartley, "Poetic Pieces: The Ivory Woman," *Little Review* 5, no. 8 (December 1918): 26–27.

As in the previous poem, "Sunbather" also merges pain and pleasure, as the narrator describes the visceral experience of laying on the beach in the sun as similar to pressing one's flesh into the spiny back of a rock saurian, a type of lizard:

> I would be the swirl that glides over your claws
> With a savage excellence, I would be the sun
> That heats us all to one vastiness [sic], void of mercy;
> I would have all things hold me down with pain
> As deliciously as you do with your spine...
>
> When I left your back, dried my tanned flesh
> And went home to the sound
> Of the conchshell [sic], I said
> "Beasts — What an hour!"[52]

Although never explicitly stated, this erotic encounter between man and sun was perhaps derived from Hartley's own experience. According to local Maine accounts, Hartley was known to sunbathe in the nude.[53] Describing a trip to Bermuda in the winter of 1916-17 with fellow artist Charles Demuth,[54] Hartley reminisced, "But Bermuda is itself and will never change—a little bijoux of a place, a glorious place for sunbathing where for once at the military beach we could lie about in the sun with nothing on and be undisturbed and that was my daily routine every morning all winter—sunning at the beach, painting—when it could be

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[52] Hartley, "Poetic Pieces: Sunbather," *Little Review 5*, no. 8 (December 1918): 27–28.

[53] Donna M. Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 353n14.

[54] Charles Demuth, a central member of Alfred Stieglitz second circle of American modernists, perhaps best known for his delicate floral watercolors or his precisionist renderings of industrial buildings, began painting erotic watercolors of gay men during World War I. In 1915, he began his *Turkish Bath* series, which art historian Jonathan Weinberg suggests, were most likely intended for private audiences. In works like *Turkish Bath with Self-Portrait* (1918), visible tan lines heighten the sexual nature of the image by visually highlighting private areas typically covered by clothing—or at the very least by a swimsuit. Pale regions offer striking contrast with deeply browned limbs and torsos—a trace of where clothes once were. This is also vividly apparent in Demuth's sexualized watercolor scenes of sailors in various states of undress dockside—perhaps a vision from his imagination. See Jonathan Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 89–90.

done..."[55] Similarly, in July of 1925, he spent five weeks in Cannes, where he enjoyed sunning himself. A photographic postcard of Hartley sitting on the beach in a suit is scrawled with the artist's own handwriting: "This is what Cannes did to me. I am brown all over like my face" [Fig. 3.7]. Having struggled to treat carbuncles earlier that year with daily dressings and serum injections, the sun was most likely a welcome remedy to expedite the healing process.[56]

Hartley's fascination with suntanned skin was heightened during his stay in New Mexico from 1918-19. Mabel Dodge, a wealthy art patron whose salons Hartley had attended in New York, invited Hartley to her ranch in Taos, New Mexico. Dodge had recently moved to there in 1916 with her husband Maurice Sterne to establish a utopian arts colony predicated on a primitivist, antimodern view of society, attracting like-minded modernist artists and writers. During and after his time in the Southwest, Hartley published extensively on Native American subjects—in particular their cultural and artistic offerings to the American people. Finally, with direct access to living Native Americans who were once only experienced through artifacts, the artist began to elaborate on what he viewed as the very real and tangible power of the sun and its effects on the body.

In his numerous essays from this period, the suntanned Native American body is seen as a physical and spiritual manifestation of man's complete harmony and unification with nature. In particular, the "redman," for Hartley was "a genius in plastic expression"[57] and thus, the creative paragon for American artists to emulate.[58] Hartley lauded what he viewed

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[55] Marsden Hartley, *Somehow a Past: The Autobiography of Marsden Hartley* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 106.

[56] Ludington, 174.

[57] Hartley, "The Red Man," in *Adventures in the Arts: Informal Chapters on Painters, Vaudeville and Poets* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921), 18.

[58] Hartley, "Aesthetic Sincerity," *El Palacio* 5, no. 20 (December 9, 1918): 332–33.

as the "redman's" sincere and deeply embodied forms of expression. In contrast, he accused the modern artist as being irreligious and superficial—leading him to be a mere copyist of what he observes.[59] Constantly thinking in visual terms, Hartley describes the sophistication and expertise with which color is employed in Native American dance:

> It calls for nothing short of the finest perception of nuance, and it is the redman of America who knows with an almost flawless eye the natural harmonies of the life that surrounds him. He has for so long decorated his body with the hues of the earth that he has grown to be a part of them. He is a living embodiment in color of various tonal characteristics of the landscape around him. He knows the harmonic value of a bark or a hide, or a bit of broken earth...Even if he resorts to our present-day store ribbons and cheap trinkets for accessories, he does it with a view to creating the appearance of racial ensemble. He is one of the essential decorators of the world.[60]

This passage highlights the fluidity with which Hartley conceives nature, earth, color, skin, and race, and how these elements form a cyclical relationship with each other. He admires the hyper-visual world he witnesses in the pueblos of New Mexico and characterizes the "redman" as a natural artist, starting with the decoration of his own body. To Hartley, this was achieved not only through accessorizing and adorning the body with paint and ornamentation, but also through his own skin colored by the sun. For Hartley, the Indian is "a living embodiment in color" and has become contiguous with the natural world around him.

One of Hartley's most significant essays on Native Americans, "The Scientific Esthetic of the Redman" was published in two parts in the March and September 1922 issues of *Art and Archaeology*, each dedicated exclusively to Native American archaeological sites and artistic production. In the first installment of the essay, Hartley effusively praises Native American cultural practice for its complete unification of body and spirit. In vivid detail, he

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[59] Ibid., 118.
[60] Ibid., 20.

describes the great Corn Dance at the pueblo of Santo Domingo located between Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Throughout, Hartley contrasts the primitive ways of the "redman" with the modernity of the white man: from the "beautiful aspects of the pagan religion" to the "Christian formulas of the past lingering so distressingly over into our modern era."[61] Like many of his contemporaries growing weary of the modern world, Hartley viewed Native Americans as a pristine and still-active source of vitality seemingly untouched by modernity. In particular, he was most impressed by Native American religious expression and its emphasis on the body: "When a man can so attune his body that every part of it not only aspires but accomplishes the perfect fusion of the song, the poem, and the dance, then he may be said to achieve the perfect notion of what a real religion should be...."[62] Although his essay is not illustrated, Hartley nevertheless couches his observations in visual terms—a necessity in this "age of the eye," as he describes it. He contrasts the prudish puritanism of Christians with the embodied spiritualism of Native Americans by way of color: "The redman of the seen [sic] to be yesterday will have taught our pale mentality what the red understanding of the universe is."[63] While rooted in skin color, these tones extend beyond the physical properties of flesh to also describe immaterial faculties such as cognition.

Although Hartley expressed a thorough appreciation and respect for Native Americans, these sentiments were nonetheless generated from the position of an outsider looking in and were influenced by certain commonly held Euro-American views. While Hartley argues to establish Native Americans and their culture as national treasures, he was

[61] Hartley, "The Scientific Esthetic of the Redman, Part I: The Great Corn Ceremony at Santo Domingo," *Art and Archaeology* 13, no. 3 (March 1922): 113.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 118. It is possible that Hartley meant "soon" and that "seen" is a typographical error.

by no means revolutionizing the language with which he expressed his reverence. Although trying to uphold Native American culture as part of a broader American culture—one that imbues the United States with a venerable sense of age and cultural legitimacy—he still considers the "redman" a guest of his host, the white man.[64] His fervent calls for other Americans to share in his view were marked by the stereotype of Native Americans as a "vanishing race"—a rare and fleeting presence in the modern world, potentially lost forever. His perception of Native and Anglo-Americans was rooted in various dichotomies that reinforced racial difference. He conceived of the "redman" as childlike, pure, and innocent—left relatively isolated from the modernizing influences of Anglo-American society. The sun, described by Hartley as a father, literally painted his children below who bowed down in worship: "Is it any wonder then, that the redman hold to him, this majestic solar entity, with parental reverence, just as the child clings to the knee, calling him father."[65] While Hartley's infantilization of Native Americans is inherently demeaning, he does so primarily to emphasize what he viewed as their uncorrupted purity and instinctual genius, a view Stieglitz had similarly promoted in his children's art exhibitions at 291 from 1912 to 1916.[66] Moreover, in Hartley's estimation, whites and Native Americans are not coeval, existing in separate times. He considers himself and his Anglo-American readers as "Americans of today"[67] and "we whites of the present hour"[68] while Native Americans are likened to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians. Assuming the role of amateur ethnographer, Hartley constructs a clear dichotomy between self and other on the basis of racial and

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64 Hartley, "The Red Man," 27.
65 Hartley, "The Scientific Esthetic of the Redman, Part I," 115.
66 Sarah Greenough, *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 47–49.
67 Hartley, "The Red Man," 23.
68 Ibid., 15.

temporal difference. As cultural anthropologist Johannes Fabian observes, "...anthropology has been constructing its object—the Other—by employing various devices of temporal distancing, negating the coeval existence of the object and subject of its discourse."[69]

Although never mentioned explicitly by name, eugenics clearly informed Hartley's worldview and lexicon, using phrases like "race achievement" to describe the invaluable "dance of the redman"[70] and "race suicide" to describe the assimilation of Native Americans to Anglo culture during the 1910s and '20s.[71] In particular, he was influenced by the eugenics movement's calls for bodily perfection and race betterment, which were pervasive in American society during this period of his career. Hartley's emphasis on the physical and embodied aspects of Pueblo culture are intertwined with his perception of Pueblo Indians as a racial specimen:

> You were impressed at once with their fine estheticism, and the notable athleticism of the men and boys, so strong of muscle and of sinew...they ran with the agility and the rapidity of panthers and all of the grace of the shapely animal in the race. They are tense men of brawn and terrific energy...They keep their bodies in the key of life around them, these high mountains and high plains, clear sunlight and wide skies. They are among the most normal in health and show signs of the strict morality and ethics which they impose upon themselves, evolved out of their own history.[72]

Hartley's account reads like a page out of a YMCA manual, and he would later transfer this kind of brawny vitality to his paintings of the North Atlantic folk. In addition to their aesthetic sensibility, Pueblo Indians, in Hartley's estimation, possess the impressive eugenic combination of both physical strength and strict morality.

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[69] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1983; reprint, New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 50.

[70] Hartley, "The Scientific Esthetic of the Redman, Part I," 119.

[71] Hartley, "The Red Man," 24.

[72] Hartley, "The Scientific Esthetic of the Redman, Part II: The Fiesta of San Geronimo at Taos," *Art and Archaeology* 14, no. 3 (September 1922): 138.

Hartley also alludes to the broader nationalistic agenda of eugenics by lauding Native Americans as a beautiful race with vast cultural achievements:

> We encourage every other sign and indication of beauty toward the progress of perfection. Why should not we encourage a race that is beautiful by the proof of centuries to remain the unoffensive guest of the sun and the moon and the stars while they may? As the infant prodigy among races, there is much that we could inherit from these people if we could prove ourselves more worthy and less egoistic.[73]

This passage reveals several aspects of Hartley's eugenic vision for Native Americans. He extends his discussion of Native American aesthetic production and performance to their racial beauty more generally—a testament to the centrality of race and the body in Hartley's view of art. The notion of "encourag[ing] a race" points to the basic eugenic concept of race betterment. His push for native expression aligns with the eugenic movement's nationalistic agenda and is manifest in healthy, browned bodies:

> We have nothing more native at our disposal than the beautiful creations of this people. It is singular enough that the as yet remote black man contributes the only native representation of rhythm and melody we possess. As an intelligent race we are not even sure we want to welcome him as completely as we might if his color were just a shade warmer a shade nearer our own. We have no qualms about yellow and white and the oriental intermediate hues. We may therefore accept the redman without any of the prejudices peculiar to other types of skin, and we may accept his contribution to our culture as a most significant one.[74]

In discussing African-American jazz as the nation's only native cultural form, Hartley reiterates a longstanding hierarchy of races in which people of African ancestry assumes the lowest, most inferior rank, and Hartley's white race, "an intelligent race," as he states, its most superior. While rather open-minded in certain aspects of his praise for Native American culture, racism nonetheless permeates Hartley's views. For him, race is still rooted

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[73] Hartley, "The Red Man," 26.
[74] Ibid., 26–27.

in skin color—a system where "yellow and white and the oriental intermediate hues" are more acceptable to whites. However, Hartley is not so literal in this formulation and white does not necessarily mean pale. He believes that if the black man's "color were just a shade warmer a shade nearer our own" that his cultural achievements would be more readily accepted as a national treasure. The use of the term "warmer" instead of "lighter" to characterize the transition from black to white indicate Hartley's understanding of whiteness as a warm hue rather than a cold, pale one, and his desire to lessen the color gap between Native Americans and native Anglo-Americans.

Hartley also defines Native American cultural production as a "scientific esthetic"—thereby thrusting the vanishing race discourse into the realm of modern science.[75] Merging science, religion, and art, he pleads with fellow artists to recognize and possibly adhere to a way of life and a spiritual understanding that is simultaneously primitive and modern: "I am a devout and everlasting convert to the science of the redman this morning, the redman as artist."[76] Hartley recasts the spiritual and primitive characteristics of indigenous life with the authority and ingenuity of modern science—much like the manner in which eugenics purportedly offered a more natural way of living yet also presented itself as the science of better breeding. Furthermore, his emphasis on the primacy of the body in experiencing a holistic sense of spirituality can be seen as the confluence of indigenous beliefs and eugenic thought. Unifying the outer body with the inner soul, Hartley states, "All primitive peoples believe in and indulge the sensuous aspects of their religions. They provide for the delight of their bodies in the imagined needs of the soul...To keep the body in a perpetual state of clear

[75] The inclusion of scientific rhetoric also appeals to the archaeological and ethnographic interests of the readership of the journal *Art and Archaeology*.

[76] Hartley, "The Scientific Esthetic of the Redman, Part I," 113.

and clean delight."[77] These sentiments could similarly be found in eugenics, in which cleanliness of mind, body, and home were major linchpins of eugenic theory and practice. Yet Hartley's view disrupts the conventional associations between cleanliness, lightness, and whiteness by expanding such qualities to people of color.

Hartley's desire to absorb Native American contributions into the national culture fit within the larger call put forth by literary critic Van Wyck Brooks in his seminal essay "On Creating a Usable Past" (1918). Brooks implored a younger generation of modernist writers and artists to seek out new sources to invent their own past, one that is usable in the present. Brooks's essay had a major cultural impact in the development of American modernism. Paul Rosenfeld profiles Brooks in his *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns (*1924), along with Marsden Hartley, and others. Hartley alludes to Brooks in his chapter "The Red Man" in *Adventures in the Arts* (1921): "We are in a position always of selecting details in the hope of constructing something usable for ourselves...I want merely, then, esthetic recognition in full of the contribution of the redman as artist, as one of the finest artists of time...."[78] He likens Native Americans to the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, but rare and unique as they are "in our midst, a part of our own intimate scene."[79] Hartley's pleas are fueled by a dual drive to save the American Indian from cultural extinction, but also to firmly establish a unique, national, American art. He appeals to his reader: "We need, and abjectly so I may say, an aesthetic concept of our own."[80] Native Americans offered the nation at large a sense of time-honored legitimacy, especially as modernists in the Western world were learning to appreciate the value of so-called primitive art.

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77 Ibid.
78 Hartley, "The Red Man," 29.
79 Ibid., 27.
80 Ibid.

A decade later, Hartley's sentiments regarding the national cultural value of Native Americans became mainstream, and even voiced by some eugenicists. In a paper presented at the Third International Congress of Eugenics held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in 1932, Native Americans art and eugenics coalesced.[81] In his paper "Special Capacities of American Indians," author W. Carson Ryan, Jr. (Director of Education, United States Indian Service), argues that contrary to popular belief, contemporary scientific research shows race did not account for differences in mental abilities. Ryan continues to praise Native Americans for their various "contributions to civilization," citing art historian Herbert J. Spinden to demonstrate that in addition to the domestication of a variety of crops, Native Americans had also left an indelible mark on American culture.[82] "It is in the this realm of the fine arts," according to Ryan, "that the Indians of today have the greatest possibilities."[83] He continues with greater specificity: "Americans of the future will surely realize an epic grandeur in the song sequences and world stories of the first Americans....The Night Chant of the Navajo and the Hako of the Omaha will take their place in the foreland of our national literature as mysterious and beautiful dramas which somehow prefigure the American ideal."[84] Ryan inserts Native American ceremonial practices as not only part of an American cultural genealogy, but places them at the beginning, as the genesis of all subsequent national achievements in the

[81] This was the third and final meeting of the International Eugenics Congress. While the first was held in 1912 at the Cecil Hotel in London, the second (1921) and third (1932) were held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City—an institution that for decades had been collecting and displaying the bones of Native Americans as archaeological specimens. See David H. Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[82] W. Carson Ryan, Jr., "'Special Capacities of American Indians,'" in *A Decade of Progress in Eugenics: Scientific Papers of the Third International Congress of Eugenics* (Baltimore, MD: Williams & Wilkins, 1934), 160.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

arts. Like Hartley, he calls the Indian "a true artist unusually qualified by natural abilities in several provinces of esthetic expression," thereby rooting his talents—in this case artistic—in biology.[85]

In addition to their cultural contributions, the social organization and lifeways of Native American tribes also resonated deeply with eugenicists, who for decades had been preaching the benefits of outdoor living. In the Third International Eugenics Congress in 1932, Native American life was officially upheld as a eugenic model for healthy living: "It is not merely that Indian social organization may be interesting historically to students of western democracy; it is rather that in its survivals of community arts, village industry, and wholesome rural life, there may be a way out for American industrialism with its mass production and mass living."[86] Native Americans reminded Anglo-Americans of an earlier, pre-industrial way of life that was more communal, creative, closer to nature, and in all aspects healthier than present-day standards.

Beyond his writings on Native Americans, Hartley's paintings of the New Mexican landscape similarly reference sturdy, suntanned bodies, despite being completely void of human figures. With mountains, hillsides, mesas, and canyons painted in rich tones of reds and browns, these paintings suggest the human form, and were influenced by the robust, sun-baked bodies of Native Americans that he witnessed firsthand. Hartley's oil painting, *The Last of New England—The Beginning of New Mexico* (1918/19) [Fig. 3.8], is in various ways, an autobiographical depiction of his Southwestern revelations. Using a contrast in landscapes, it conveys Hartley's pursuit of a new beginning the invigorating, uncharted land that was New Mexico and the sense of departure from the green fields of New England. The

[85] Ryan, Jr., 160.
[86] Ibid., 162.

painting collapses space and time into a single scene, an imagined world where one can palpably feel Hartley's transition from New England to New Mexico. Art historian Julia B. Rosenbaum emphasizes the physicality of the work: "In this vision, the Southwest stretches out across the picture plane like an animate body, its voluptuous curves enlivened by the artist's undulating lines of paint," contrasting with New England, which appears as a "desiccated, skeletal structure of the fence, which, like the bones of some great mastodon, extends into the air."[87] The viewer positioned at the cusp of this portal between past and future—invited into a vital, sun-drenched landscape.

The anthropomorphized, pulsating landscape is most apparent in Hartley's 1923 *New Mexico Recollections* series, painted in Berlin from his memories of the Southwest. In works such as *New Mexico Recollection #12* (ca. 1923) [Fig. 3.9], the curves of the hills and mountains resemble the smooth, hardened forms of the Native Americans he observed a few years prior at a Pueblo dance of mercy: "Its protagonists are two men of excellent physique, and of very gifted powers of expression—the body of each of them painted in halves, one half a warm tawny reddish earth tone with black stripes painted tigerlike at intervals down their right half; and the other half a light greenish hue...."[88] The lush greens and reddish earth tones striped with rich black lines of Hartley's painting vividly recall his descriptions of Native American bodies, which he believed to be fully integrated into the landscape they so revered. Soon thereafter in the summer of 1923, he began drawing male nudes, some executed in reddish sanguine pastels. His model was a young former wrestler whose hulking

[87] Julia B. Rosenbaum, *Visions of Belonging: New England Art and the Making of American Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 154.

[88] Hartley, "Tribal Esthetics," *The Dial* 65, no. 777 (November 16, 1918): 400.

build foreshadowed the athletic North Atlantic folk found in his late Maine paintings.[89] Perhaps motivated by his muscular, sinewy landscapes, this was the first time Hartley approached the human form in his work since his art school days and would not pursue again until his final years of his life.

Despite his affinities to the Southwest and Berlin, Hartley struggled to find the genuine sense of rootedness that he and so many of his contemporaries were searching for. During the early 1930s, he continued to refine his identity as an American artist. Recognizing the growing national popularity of Regionalist art, Hartley began promoting himself as "the painter from Maine."[90] His 1932 exhibition at the Downtown Gallery in New York City was entitled *Pictures of New England by a New Englander*, and its catalogue included a poem by Hartley called "Return of the Native."[91] After more than a decade traversing the globe from France to Mexico to Bermuda, he finally settled permanently in his native Maine in 1937, where he would remain until his death in 1943 at the age of sixty-six. This was the aging artist's opportunity to claim his nativeness as a "Yankee"[92] and to lay roots in his authentically American place. In doing so, he actively inserted himself into an artistic lineage of great New England artists such as John Singleton Copley and Winslow Homer. Hartley described Homer's work: "His pictures are yankee in their indications, as a work of art could be, flinty and unyielding, resolute as is the yankee nature itself...."[93] Hartley was keen to take on the masculine and Anglo-American aspects of a Yankee artistic

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[89] Bruce Robertson, *Marsden Hartley* (New York; Washington DC: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers in association with The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1995), 85.

[90] R. Scott Harnsberger, *Four Artists of the Stieglitz Circle: A Sourcebook on Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, and Max Weber* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 84.

[91] James M. Dennis, *Renegade Regionalists: The Modern Independence of Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and John Steuart Curry* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 234.

[92] For Hartley, the term "Yankee" connoted both a patriotic American and New Englander identity.

[93] Hartley, "Winslow Homer," in *Adventures in the Arts: Informal Chapters on Painters, Vaudeville and Poets* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921), 43.

lineage, although considered himself to be providing a more poetic universal vision. His creation of an artistic lineage was not only motivated by the traditional art historical convention of constructing forebears, but also, I would argue, an example of Hartley's eugenic thought. The emphasis on heredity and racial purity, so critical to eugenics, was echoed in the artist's self-promotion of his Yankee artistic lineage—merging aesthetics with race and nativism.

During this last phase of his career in Maine, Hartley began to seriously explore the figure in his paintings, in particular muscular male fisherman, lumberjacks, and athletes such as the broad-chested boxer in *Madawaska—Acadian Light-Heavy* (1940) [Fig. 3.3]. He portrayed a range of white ethnic types such as Yankees, Acadians, and Canucks—individuals of Anglo-Saxon and French-Canadian descent in Maine and neighboring Nova Scotia. This region was commonly seen by many Americans as racially pure, where the last vestiges of uniquely North American ethnic types still held on to fading traditions. Maine, in particular, was popularly understood to be "the last stronghold of the Puritan" with a sizable Anglo-Saxon population that for generations tenaciously held on to their racial purity.[94] Hartley shared in this view, describing eastern Canadians as people who possessed "a strong character for sea fishing and for breeding excellent mental and spiritual virtues as well as physical and you see only strong normal faces and bodies."[95] Writing from the mid-1930s, Hartley's nostalgia and reverence for the North Atlantic folk is a far cry from the early eugenic observations of the 1910s. European folk or peasant types had been lionized by the American eugenicists for decades for their racial and cultural purity. However, they did not

[94] Robert Herrick, "The State of Maine, Down East," in *These United States: A Symposium* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 119–20.

[95] Hartley to Stieglitz, August 24, 1936, YCAL.

view North American European types, except for Anglo-Saxon Americans, with such regard: "It is no argument against practising [sic] eugenic ideas in the selection of our alien immigrants to say that our New England country towns are full of hopelessly degenerate native Americans who are inferior, mentally, morally and physically, to the 'sturdy peasants of Europe.'"[96] The change in tenor of eugenic ideals in this roughly twenty-year period reveals the impact of the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 and its ability to homogenize various European ethnicities into a singular white race. In the North Atlantic folk, Hartley envisioned a "native American" that was athletic, tanned, and authentic—a direct comparison to the Native Americans he once observed.

In the brochure accompanying the 1937 exhibition of his recent paintings at Stieglitz's New York gallery, Hartley wrote the essay "On the Subject of Nativeness—a Tribute to Maine." He conceived of the people of New England and Nova Scotia as a rare breed in modern society, "fine types of hard boned sturdy beings, [that] have the direct simplicity of these unique and original places," very much like the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico.[97] He describes these North Atlantic folk in a primitivist fashion: "These people, the kind one expects to encounter in the forests where the moose and caribou range, and who, sauntering toward the nearer south in search of food which deep snows deny them, are on perilous ground, doomed to decrease in numbers."[98] He compares the "hardiness of gaze and frank earnestness of approach which is typical of all northerners" to "the encounter with the indians in the southwest."[99] For the artist, both the North Atlantic folk and Native Americans are

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[96] Robert De Courcy Ward, "National Eugenics in Relation to Immigration," *The North American Review* 192, no. 656 (1910): 63.

[97] Hartley, "On the Subject of Nativeness—a Tribute to Maine," in *Marsden Hartley: Exhibition of Recent Paintings*, 1936 (New York: An American Place, 1937); reproduced in Donna M. Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 297-300.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid.

"vanishing races," simple, gentle people, living off the land, and most of all, indigenous to North America. Despite his Yale education and journeys around the world, Hartley manages to write himself into this narrative, or ethnography, of white, northern nativeness: "Nativeness is built of such primitive things, and whatever is one's nativeness, one holds and never loses no matter how far afield the traveling may be." He concludes the essay by stating, "This quality of nativeness is coloured by heritage, birth, and environment, and it is therefore for this reason that I wish to declare myself the painter from Maine."[100] These sentiments translated to the canvas appear as a shared visual language in which bronzed skin became synonymous with native authenticity.

Like the merging of Native American and German iconography in his *Amerika* series, Hartley considered the various native North Atlantic types to be interchangeable or even conflated—often using multiple ethnicities in his titles to refer to a single figure, such as *Canuck Yankee Lumberjack at Old Orchard Beach, Maine* (1940-41) [Fig. 3.4]. He describes the new hybrid types of Maine with great enthusiasm:

> There is a surface variation in types at this time, since foreigners have come in, the French coming down from Canada have assumed new movements, there are many Finns and Swedes up and down the coast, some Portuguese, for all or nearly all of these people are of sea origin and so cling to any coast for natural reasons, and the fusion of Yankee with these various bloods produces a fine new type with Viking appearances, and Yankee behaviours.[101]

For Hartley, this "fine new type," visible through their surface or outward appearance, came to represent the folk of New England and Nova Scotia collectively. They represented an idealized, healthy white race that was native to the United States—possessing the most superior aspects of each ethnic admixture.

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Hartley, "This Country of Maine," c. 1937-38, unpublished; reproduced in Donna M. Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 301-305.

As eugenicist Lothrop Stoddard foretold in his *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920), after the immigrant problem was more or less contained by the mid-1920s, African Americans would be the primary threat to white Americans. In a 1933 letter from Berlin, Hartley expresses his distaste for the changing color of New York's racial landscape in:

> Strange that it should be so difficult to see real Americans in America, but I have found it so that is in N.Y. for my eye has for long been so tired of types in the throes of transformation, and N.Y. has so long been so black, what with the ever increasing number of black people of one kind or another, that it seems as if the good old anglo-saxon were sort of being stamped out there. I thinks that is probably why I stick so strenuously to this end of the world for the blond races always represent light to me, and the others the absence of it.[102]

In this statement, Hartley places Anglo Saxons and Germans on equal footing as far superior to African Americans. And yet in his paintings, these "blond races" who "represent light" can be represented by dark, swarthy men with jet black hair.

Hartley's fascination with skin's ability to take color is manifested in his expressive manipulation of flesh tones in his paintings. Skin, in Hartley's images, is not a neutral, naturalistic element, but rather is charged with deeper meaning rooted in a physical and racialized sense of spiritualism. According to art historian Donna M. Cassidy, the tanned, swarthy figures paintings such as *Madawaska—Acadian Light-Heavy* and *Canuck Yankee Lumberjack at Old Orchard Beach, Maine* "relate to the analogy between sunlight, the mystical, and racial regeneration, which influenced not only [D. H.] Lawrence but early-twentieth-century German culture from the countless nudist cults to the German Youth Movement."[103] While these references are certainly true, Cassidy's analysis does not fully

[102] Hartley to Charles Kuntz, December, 12 1933, reel X4, Marsden Hartley Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

[103] Cassidy, 276.

consider the impact of Hartley's quasi-ecstatic experience with Native Americans and their vivid coloring. Similarly, while art historian Randall R. Griffey has examined Hartley's eugenic views and nativist attitudes leading to the artists "Aryanism" in his Maine paintings, he does not address the fundamental ways in which eugenics appropriated elements of Native American cultures and lifeways.[104] For Hartley, tanned skin signified a healthy, eugenic primitivism, one in which the primitive was an amalgam of Native Americans and the North Atlantic folk who were both seen as racially pure, noble, and physically impressive.

Along with primitivist references, some of Hartley's tanned subjects from this period also allude to the physical culture and beach culture still prominent in the 1930s and '40s. In *Canuck Yankee Lumberjack at Old Orchard Beach, Maine* Hartley frames the Yankee in the context of the modern beach, represented not as an ax-wielding lumberjack as the title would suggest, but rather as a monumental, bronzed lifeguard. The red cross on the rescue buoy, the stripes on the beach towel, and the anchor resting in the sand recall the patterns and symbols of Hartley's *Amerika* series, which were culturally specific yet also universal. *Madawaska—Acadian Light-Heavy* was part of a series of works featuring the same model, a prizefighter of Acadian descent from Madawaska, Maine, who Hartley met at the local YMCA. These and other works featuring burly athletes were ideally intended to be hung in gymnasiums.[105] In this setting, Hartley's outward expressions of his inner homoerotic thoughts could be safely masked as healthy, masculine inspiration for young physical culturists.

Central to both eugenics and Marsden Hartley's work and psyche is the preoccupation with the body. While a pervading sense of the spiritual is apparent in his work, so too is the

[104] Randall R. Griffey, "Marsden Hartley's Aryanism," *American Art* 22, no. 2 (June 2008): 64–84.
[105] Robertson, 126.

primacy of the body. Hartley's interest in the sun's fortifying powers is framed in the context of his own physical inadequacies. Since childhood, Hartley expressed negative views of his physical condition and appearance and experienced myriad ailments throughout his life. In a letter to Stieglitz from July 1911, Hartley explains to his mentor that he is not feeling well in Paris and feels isolated and alone. He professes, "I hope earnestly for a change in life routine before another year I want to strike out and get something of outer life into my blood—this inward life is depleting so much of it—influx is necessary at all times and to live fully is to have reserve force...which I have but little of..."[106] Hartley suggests the common modern desire to bring the "outer life" inwards—merging the physical with the mental, exterior with interior. He also mentions the stifling and enfeebling effects of the indoor life on himself as an artist and a desire to experience the outside world on physical and spiritual levels, thus linking psyche and body through the suntan. Hartley described his Southwest environment in a letter to Stieglitz: "I like the country very well for it is big and clean and true, and there is nothing dirty standing between one and the sunlight, as there is in the east."[107] A reference to the clear air, free from smoke and pollutants, Hartley stresses the cleanliness of the land. Echoing hygiene manuals, Hartley's sentiments equate clean air and sunlight with truthfulness and moral purity. Even in the final years of his life, the sun continued to play a vital role. Katie Young, with whom Hartley boarded in Corea, Maine, paints the following picture of the aging artist:

> He was bareheaded in the sun, his blue shirt open at the throat. He seemed to have been sitting there for some time: his whole attitude had the stillness of meditation and his hands hung relaxed as he leaned forward, resting his arms on his knees. There was almost a sculptured look about his head with its

[106] Hartley to Stieglitz, July 1911, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive. YCAL.

[107] Hartley quoted in Judith A. Barter, et al., *American Modernism at the Art Institute of Chicago: From World War I to 1955* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2009), 81.

> dominating nose and the color of his browned skin merging with his thinning hair.[108]

In his final years, Hartley came to embody in a physical and spiritual way, the browned primitivism he long admired in Native Americans and the North Atlantic folk.

Stieglitz/O'Keeffe: Light/Dark

> Such days—such days—When you think of me with hands like dark brown gloves—very dirty finger nails—my nose sore on the top today from sunburn—Tony says it will come off—meaning that it will peel—Mabel looks at me and says—"I wouldn't believe anyone could change so much in a few days"…[109]

The image of Georgia O'Keeffe as a sagacious, weathered desert mystic has come to be an iconic representation of the artist in the latter half of her career [Fig. 3.10]. However, few scholars have thoroughly explored the cultural circumstances that produced this image and the attendant identity it projects. O'Keeffe's darkened, New Mexican coloration, in myriad ways, summarizes the themes and issues explored throughout this dissertation. The suntanned artist represents the confluence of primitivism, health, and sexuality, heightened in contrast to her pale, anxiety-ridden husband, Alfred Stieglitz. While O'Keeffe's summer visits to New Mexico, which began in 1929, signaled a renewed sense of health and creativity and unleashed a newfound independence, Stieglitz, conversely, struggled with myriad health problems, depression, stymied creativity, and paranoia over O'Keeffe's absence. I argue that O'Keeffe's suntan, in a very physical way, represents the dramatic transformation occurring in the artist as well as her evolving relationship Stieglitz during this

[108] Polly Scribner Ames and Katie Young, *Marsden Hartley in Maine (through the Eyes of Katie Young of Corea, Maine)* (Orono, ME: University of Maine Press, 1972), 2.

[109] Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, May, 10, 1929; Sara Greenough, *My Faraway One: Selected Letters of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 419.

period. O'Keeffe was painted, drawn, sculpted, filmed, written about, and most notably photographed, perhaps more than any other twentieth-century American artist, male or female.[110] As such, my analysis focuses on O'Keeffe's physical appearance, visual and written representations of her by others, and her own art. Stieglitz promoted her work as innately linked to her body, and critics followed suit, much to O'Keeffe's displeasure. Thus, far removed from Stieglitz and the critics in New York, O'Keeffe was also able to rediscover and repossess her own body in the Southwest.

"My White One" was a nickname Stieglitz gave to O'Keeffe, which he expressed in writing as early as 1923. Throughout the 1920s, as their relationship progressed and her career advanced, he "increasingly exalted her as the personification of 'White'—an almost holy state of spiritual, moral, and even physical purity."[111] Several critics during this period echoed Stieglitz's impression of O'Keeffe in their reviews, which also tended to emphasize a direct correlation between the young artist's body, sexuality, and her art. Critic Paul Rosenfeld, Stieglitz's close ally and mouthpiece for his circle of artists, further elaborated on this sense of white purity by equating it with an essentialized construction of O'Keeffe's gender and its inextricable rootedness in her work. In Rosenberg's influential 1921 essay "American Painting" in *The Dial* (this was the first time her works had been reproduced) he wrote, "The pure, now flaming, now icy colours of this painter, reveal the woman polarizing herself, accepting fully the nature long denied, spiritualizing her sex. Her art is gloriously female."[112] Critics not only discussed the clean lines and pure colors of her work, but also extended this discussion to descriptions of her physical appearance, which often appeared in

[110] O'Keeffe et al., *Georgia O'Keeffe, Art and Letters* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1987), 135.

[111] Greenough, 314.

[112] Paul Rosenfeld, *Dial* 71, no. 6 (December 1921): 666.

reviews and articles. Although O'Keeffe was never literally white in complexion,[113] critics nonetheless described her as such. As Robert Coates observed, "She retains, at forty-two the pale profile and blue-black hair, the sense of inner vitality that made her a famous beauty at the [Arts Students] League."[114]

While this salient, early impression of the artist as a pure and white was partially formed by critics, it was galvanized by Stieglitz's striking black-and-white photographs of O'Keeffe, which comprised his iconic photographic series *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait*. The extensive body of photographs, begun in 1917 and continuing into the mid-1930s was meant to be viewed as an aggregate portrait of O'Keeffe through various stages in her life and career. The series became the primary lens for critics and other audiences to perceive O'Keeffe and her work. In a portrait from 1919, O'Keeffe's expressive, pale hands are set against the crisp blackness of her dress like a marble sculpture against a dark backdrop [Fig. 3.11]. Stieglitz's portraits of O'Keeffe from the following year feature the artist in various stages of undress in a diaphanous white kimono [Fig. 3.12], which she often wore in the summer to paint in the hot, fifth-floor studio they shared. Although her skin contrasts with the white robe, the overall image is one of softness and purity—a virginal sensuality—as O'Keeffe's hair is down and she gently rests her hands on her exposed breast. Marsden Hartley extolled, "She is far nearer to St. Theresa's version of life as experience than she could ever be to that of Catherine the Great or Lucrezia Borgia. Georgia O'Keeffe wears no poisoned emeralds. She wears too much white; she is impaled with a white consciousness."[115] Hartley likens his fellow artist to St. Theresa, a pure yet sensual mystic,

[113] O'Keeffe was born to a Hungarian mother and an Irish father.
[114] Robert M. Coates, "Profiles: Abstraction—Flowers," *New Yorker* 5, no. 20 (July 6, 1929): 21-24.
[115] Hartley, "Some Women Artists in Modern Painting," *Adventures in the Arts: Informal Chapters on Painters, Vaudeville and Poets* (Boni and Liveright, 1921), 117.

in contrast to the lustful and corrupt Catherine and Lucrezia. For him and many others, O'Keeffe was white through her entire pure being.

In 1928, shortly before her first summer in New Mexico, critic Louis Kalonyme wrote positively about O'Keeffe's pale complexion as she sat in her studio at her new home on the thirtieth floor in Manhattan's Shelton Hotel:

> And when you see O'Keeffe in that light gray little room among her paintings, the relationship is almost too blatant. Naturally, the paintings, like children, have their own individual life. But the paintings are like her, forthright and simple. They have the same free smile that curves on O'Keeffe's thin, large lips and that twinkles in her deep, searching eyes. Her face you might say is colorless, its formation could be seen as Chinese, but it is painted by quietness, and what one rather emptily speaks of as experience in life. You see in her noble white face, framed as it is by her black hair and set off by the black garments she almost always wears, the same radiance perceived by Gaston Lachaise. In his sculpture portrait of O'Keeffe your eyes follow a head rising like a white sun, whose flaming tranquility is fed by that same beauty which is communicated by O'Keeffe through those marvelous flowers she paints. You see too in the features of that sculptured face, its poised, affirmative lines, the sources of that beauty.[116]

Kalonyme paints a picture in black and white for readers—contrasting the darkness of O'Keeffe's hair and clothing to her white face. Like other critics, he likens O'Keeffe to art. First, she is compared to her own paintings, which he describes are "like children," and then to a life-size white alabaster sculpture portrait by the modernist French sculptor Gaston Lachaise [Fig. 3.13]. This type of description moves beyond mere objectification, and underscores O'Keeffe's creative, generative power—an art object herself who is able to enliven her own works of art as well as works by others featuring her likeness. She is "like a white sun" giving life to the flowers in her paintings. In essence, according to Kalonyme, it is her unique and pleasing appearance that allows her to paint beautifully.

[116] Louis Kalonyme, "Georgia O'Keeffe: A Woman in Painting," *Creative Art 2* (January 1928): xxxiv-xi; reprinted in Barbara Buhler Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916-1929* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 280.

The attempt to establish O'Keeffe as the quintessential American woman artist was, I would argue, largely influenced by the eugenic fervor of the period. As pronatalism swept the nation, the desire to generate and produce a native-born, American art was a prime focus of the art world. O'Keeffe, although never bearing any children in her lifetime, was heralded by Stieglitz and critics as the quintessential American woman artist and her work, as Kalonyme mentions above, her offspring.[117] She was lauded paradoxically for her almost virginal purity and innate sensuality. In Stieglitz's review of O'Keeffe's first exhibition at 291— featuring ten of her charcoal drawings—he includes a short critique from artist Charles Duncan stating:

> The story of aesthetic is song of a widening consciousness. One contradiction is the Puritan fathers making brittle halos from narrowness. Pedantry burnished and with the nervousness of combined duty and unintelligence distributed them...Among the few incomparable assets are the fire and flow of a fresh sensualism; tremulous, giving—a flower, opening...Its beauty in Anglo-Saxon cultures today pays the cost of an insufficiency that must be incomparable in history. Miss Virginia [sic] O'Keeffe's drawings in the season's last exhibit at "291" make this reflection unavoidable.[118]

Duncan frames O'Keeffe's work as a fresh awakening from centuries of stifling Puritanism. She was the antithesis of the other modern of the period: the indulgent, hypersexualized flapper with her heavy makeup, short bob hairstyle, and revealing dress. O'Keeffe presented the art world and the American public at large with an alternative type of modern womanhood as natural and sensual and sporting long hair and simple clothing. Despite her Irish and Hungarian ancestry, she was incorporated into an Anglo-Saxon cultural legacy. Duncan and many others compared O'Keeffe to the organicism and vitality of flowers.

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[117] Stieglitz refused to have a child with O'Keeffe due to what he viewed as her more significant role generating art as well as his estrangement from his daughter Kitty from his first marriage. See Greenough, 315.

[118] "Georgia O'Keeffe—C. Duncan—Réné [*sic*] Lafferty," *Camera Work,* no. 48 (October 1916): 12-13; reproduced in *Barbara* Buhler Lynes, *O'Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916-1929* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989), 166–67.

Randall R. Griffey has elaborated on the use of such metaphors by critics of the period who demonstrated "a distinct tendency to describe artists in terms of plant life and conversely, to interpret plant life in their art as parts of the human body."[119] Critics were not only influenced by the enduring association between women and flowers, but also by the widely read work of Luther Burbank, a horticulturist and eugenicist who popularized the parallels between plant and human life, and the power of selective breeding.[120]

With bouts of rheumatism in her painting hand and undergoing two surgeries in 1927 to remove benign cysts from her breasts, O'Keeffe was by no means an image of health as she approached her forties. Exacerbating her poor physical health, O'Keeffe's marriage had been strained by allegations of Stieglitz's infidelity with his new, younger muse, Dorothy Norman, which surfaced the following year. Thus, by 1929, O'Keeffe was physically and emotionally broken down and in need of a drastic change. She decided to spend the summer with close confidante Rebecca Strand (wife of photographer Paul Strand) at the ranch of Mabel Dodge in Taos, New Mexico. By the time of O'Keeffe's arrival at the beginning of May, Mabel had divorced Maurice Sterne and married her chauffeur Antonio "Tony" Lujan, "a full-blooded Pueblo Indian" and her fourth and last husband.[121] Mabel not only took his name—although she Anglicized it to Luhan, but also superficially adopted his Pueblo culture in terms of her clothing and jewelry.[122] In relation to race, culture, and class, their marriage shattered a multitude of contemporary expectations—balking at the sense of propriety Mabel

[119] Randall R. Griffey, "Reconsidering the 'Soil': The Stieglitz Circle, The Regionalists, and Cultural Eugenics in the Twenties," in *Youth and Beauty: Art of the American Twenties*, ed. Teresa A. Carbone (New York: Skira Rizzoli; Brooklyn Museum, 2011), 269.

[120] Ibid., 268.

[121] Lois Palken Rudnick, *Mabel Dodge Luhan: New Woman, New Worlds* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), xi.

[122] For the sake of clarity, I will henceforth refer to Mabel Dodge Luhan as "Mabel" and Tony Lujan as "Tony."

was raised to uphold—and would have been considered illegal in the thirty States that had anti-miscegenation laws at the time.[123]

Within O'Keeffe's first week in New Mexico, she immediately took to sunbathing in little to no clothing on almost a daily basis. As the epigraph to this section suggests, her transformation was so rapid, it shocked even the renegade Mabel, and it was something she eagerly wanted to convey to Stieglitz. Not surprisingly, as artists writing to one another, O'Keeffe and Stieglitz often described their worlds in graphically visual terms. In her letters, she recounted the sweeping vistas around her, from the fields of alfalfa outside her studio to the vivid sun-drenched mesas. Highlighted in these descriptions is O'Keeffe's palpable desire for Stieglitz to visualize her and how her appearance has changed along with her physical and psychological health. She writes, "I can't tell you how far away I feel—and I feel too that it is very good for me. I just wish you could see what a grand color I have."[124] Both O'Keeffe and Stieglitz describe New Mexico as the natural, "right" place for her, as it allowed her the freedom to explore, think, and create in an unprecedented way. It was also the ideal place for her to heal. Her desire to sunbathe was as much fueled by the general cultural understanding of sunbathing as a healthful activity as it was by the desire to alter the color of her skin. The practice and its effects were at once primitive, natural, and visceral—appealing to her newfound sense of liberation. The potent New Mexican sun transformed O'Keeffe both internally and externally, from psyche to skin.

Letters exchanged between O'Keeffe and Stieglitz between 1928 and 1929 while she was based in Taos and he in New York (Manhattan and Lake George) show strains in their

[123] See Margaret D. Jacobs, "The Eastmans and the Luhans: Interracial Marriage between White Women and Native American Men, 1875-1935," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, no. 3 (January 1, 2002): 29–54.

[124] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, May 10, 1929; Greenough, 420.

already tenuous relationship and a tangible polarization exacerbated by distance. From their exchange, it is evident that O'Keeffe's darkening skin also represents a very real, physical transformation—one that she wishes she could visualize for Stieglitz:

> "I wish I could actually picture to you the details of all that has happened—it is quite impossible—I wish you could be sitting here beside me under a huge green pine tree on the side of the hill—in my red coat—nothing under it—waiting to continue the sun bath that was interrupted by a cloud—There is a scrub oak and small cedar and sagebrush about—and a sort of feeling that no one will ever come here—that I can sit forever—"[125]

Recalling Hartley's desire to "sit and face the sun forever," O'Keeffe similarly constructs a primitivist vision of the timeless, indigenous idyll—natural and yet to be spoiled by the ills of modernity. Both she and Stieglitz acknowledge the primacy of sunlight in both her work and her metamorphosis as an artist and woman, but ultimately he determines that New Mexico is not the place where he belongs: "Yes, I can imagine how grand nature is where you are—& what the white light must do...But somehow for the present I still feel it is not for me."[126] As ambivalent as Stieglitz was about O'Keeffe's transformation, he was very much aware, albeit begrudgingly, of how right this new state of being was for her—for her independence as an artist and as a person.

Even their views of sunlight and its relationship to their own artistic practice was at odds. Much of O'Keeffe's work in New Mexico was done outside amidst nature. O'Keeffe states, "This morning was a colorless morning—No real sun and a sandy wind blew up early so I didn't go out to work—I was quite disappointed—I spent the day in the studio—stretching and scrubbing canvases."[127] While the sun is integral to O'Keeffe's ability to paint the illuminated landscape around her, it impedes Stieglitz in developing his photos. He

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[125] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, July 29, 1929; Ibid., 499.
[126] Stieglitz to O'Keeffe, July 13, 1930; Ibid., 544.
[127] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, June 15, 1929; Ibid., 436.

complains to O'Keeffe, "Two prints are under pressure...The yellow reflected light from the buildings makes it all very trying. A gray day would have been easier. But I can't wait forever."[128] In contrast to O'Keeffe's natural setting, Stieglitz relates a completely urban, built environment in which natural light bounces off skyscrapers. O'Keeffe's painting *The Shelton with Sunspots, N.Y.* (1926) [Fig. 3.14] foreshadows her affinity for sunlight. It prominently features the high-rise Shelton Hotel where she and Stieglitz lived from 1925 to 1936.[129] Her view of the towering building was captured outside looking up from the street. O'Keeffe embraces the blazing sun behind the Shelton, which appears to carve out a corner of the structure, and recreated the sensation of staring at the sun by dabbling her canvas with painted sunspots.

For O'Keeffe, sunbathing and the rich color it gave her skin were intimately associated with sensuality and sexuality. She would often lay nude in the sun outside on the doorstep of her studio or even in the sunlight coming through the window inside for long periods of time. Although there were photographs by Stieglitz of O'Keeffe semi-nude in the sunlit studio they shared in Manhattan or swimming nude at Lake George produced before her Southwest period, the almost daily practice of laying in the sun outdoors partially or completely nude was unprecedented and amplified by the intensity of the New Mexican sun. Sunbathing quickly became an integral part of her artistic practice. Just ten days after her arrival in New Mexico, she relayed to Stieglitz: "I take off my waist and just cook in the sun as I work".[130] A routine soon developed. When the sun came out, O'Keeffe would venture outside to sketch and paint while simultaneously exposing her skin to the rays of the sun.

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128 Stieglitz to O'Keeffe, October 18, 1931; Ibid., 602.
129 Ibid., 360.
130 O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, May 10, 1929; Ibid., 419.

After approximately a month of living Taos, she wrote, “I have been working a bit—am glad I got out in the morning to do work—I do hope the sun shines—I don't think I have ever enjoyed working more.”[131] O'Keeffe's merging of artistic practice with the outdoor life fostered a period of prolific and unbridled creative production.

Inextricably linked to the erotic nature of suntanning is a sense of engaging in the perceived sexuality and nudity of the so-called primitive. From New York, Stieglitz imagines the effect the sunlight is having on O'Keeffe, down to her pubic area, which he called “Fluffy”: “My love to Fluffy—With all the sun she is getting she must be looking quite a wild one—Will I ever be fit enough again to make a real picture of her.—Of you?”[132] Stieglitz's comment's about Fluffy's new suntan exposes his fear that O'Keeffe might become more sexually adventurous while in New Mexico—equating dark skin with heightened sexuality. While on the one hand seen as erotic banter, implicit in Stieglitz's comments is his interest in her physical and emotional health in relation to his own. Known for his tendency towards hypochondria, Stieglitz wrote often about his various ailments, but now began to worry that he would never be fit enough for the newly revived O'Keeffe. Meanwhile, O'Keeffe had for years referred to Stieglitz as a helpless boy, despite being twenty-three years younger than him, writing from York Beach, Maine, in 1923: “I feel almost as though I am asking a child in the cradle to take care of itself—You are such a dear little thing—and your mind is so far away from your dear little body that you are not apt to take very good care of the little smooth white body.”[133] After being in New Mexico, he fears her browned, healthy body stands in stark contrast to his.

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131 O’Keeffe to Stieglitz, June 14, 1929; Ibid., 435.
132 Stieglitz to O’Keeffe, June 21, 1929; Ibid., 438.
133 O’Keeffe to Stieglitz; September 22, 1923, Ibid., 351.

O'Keeffe's primitivist desires were fueled by the Native American people with whom she interacted. In particular, Tony Lujan provided O'Keeffe with direct access to Native American life and culture, but also opportunities for prolonged visual examination that bordered on fetishized reverence. O'Keeffe viewed Tony with respect, but also a sense of curiosity and awe:

> Mabel's place beats anything you can imagine about it—it is simply astonishing—there is no end to it—and Tony is really its crowning glory—He is very grand here…He drives the car and is a very good driver—and you should see him sitting with another Indian—two profiles against the window—both beating the same drum.[134]

While acknowledging that Tony is modern through his proficiency driving a car, O'Keeffe also objectifies him as yet another feature of the ranch that Mabel has taken under her ownership. Immediately following this statement, O'Keeffe mentions that "the color Mabel has built is lovely,"[135] thereby linking Mabel's suntan with her other desirable possessions, such as Tony and her ranch. O'Keeffe is fixated by what she deems Tony's more primitive, Indian traits: "Tony wears wonderfully—He really is fine—and he and Mabel together make a gamut of life—ranging from his fine simple primitive quality—quite unchanging—through her charming—sophisticated—ever changing—laughing—weeping—questioning ways."[136] O'Keeffe implies that Tony is wearable, like a piece of jewelry or woven cloth—that he himself, in his appearance, is decorative and refined. She delights in the very modern juxtaposition of Tony and Mabel as a series of contrasts: male/female, primitive/sophisticated, red/white, unchanging/ever-changing, and stoic/emotional.

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134 O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, May 2, 1929; Ibid., 412-13.
135 Ibid., 413
136 O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, OK May 10, 1929; Ibid., 420.

But beyond mere appreciation, O'Keeffe wanted to embody many of the Native American qualities Tony possessed, including his bronzed complexion. Within a single letter to Stieglitz from June 13, 1929, O'Keeffe opens by describing Tony's wise simplicity, before moving on to an account of her day: sunning herself in her hammock after lunch and watching an Indian corn dance in the pueblo. She concludes by stating her desire to be like the various Indian men she had observed: "I want to wear a sheet like Tony—and ride like the Indian men that came tearing through the Pueblo gate in a body—all riding like mad—They have a real man's life."[137] It is evident from this series of events that part of becoming Indian is becoming dark and entering into a union with the sun. This was not only a surface-level transformation of the flesh, but also an absorption of the sun's blazing energy. O'Keeffe describes John Marco, a local Pueblo Indian and friend of Tony's, as "one of the tallest Indians...very fine long hair—and very beautiful face—not just features—but beautiful from the inside—and such a beautiful body—and what a change from his smiling softness—All—every fiber seemed to go off like fire" when he began dancing.[138] It is worth noting that O'Keeffe's primary interactions with Native Americans, at least those she relayed to Stieglitz, were primarily with men. She did not want to become an Indian woman, but rather, a man—a modernist sense of androgyny that clashed with her status as America's most celebrated woman artist.

As the summer pressed on, both O'Keeffe and Stieglitz found parallels with Tony and Mabel, respectively, and their similarly tumultuous marriage. In a letter written on July 1, 1929, O'Keeffe expressed to Mabel: "Something you are—and something Tony is—is helping me much with something between Stieglitz and myself—It is smoothing away many

[137] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, June 13, 1929, Ibid., 433.
[138] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, July 4, 1929; Ibid., 454.

things for me—Tony just being what he is—seems to pull out of me the best things that are in me....”[139] Again, O'Keeffe found a kindred spirit in Tony, not Mabel. O'Keeffe's frank praise of Tony and their close friendship aroused great suspicion from Mabel. She who became intensely jealous of O'Keeffe's friend's relationship with her husband, which formed with an ease and naturalness she envied.

O'Keeffe's transition from light to dark, are apparent in both Stieglitz's black-and-white photographic portraits of O'Keeffe from 1917 to 1931, as well as in O'Keeffe's paintings produced in the late 1920s and 1930s in New Mexico. After almost four months in New Mexico, O'Keeffe returned to New York at the end of August. Together, they decided she would return to New Mexico the following summer. They reunited again at Lake George in September of 1930, which afforded Stieglitz the opportunity to photograph her once again. This new body of portraits highlights the “new Georgia,” who, like a photograph, was darkened with exposure to the light of the Southwest. The series includes photographs of the O'Keeffe's hands touching the contours of a horse skull, the artist wrapped in an Indian blanket, and nude photographs from her knees to her upper torso laying horizontally. Each subject serves to emphasize her darkness, her closeness with Native American culture, and her body as a landscape.

In particular, the portrait of O'Keeffe's dark hands wrapped around a white horse skull from 1931 [Fig. 3.15] follow Stieglitz's characteristic straight photography with its clear forms and intense contrast. But beyond formal concerns, her hands and the skull also suggest a weathered sense of time-worn wisdom developed in the sunlit desert. Regarding one of the hand/skull photographs, curator Weston Naef suggests:

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[139] O’Keeffe to Stieglitz, July 9, 1929; Ibid., 469.

> In this photograph, Stieglitz apparently used a blue or green filter to darken the skin tones. The hands do not appear to be of the same flesh as the person shown in the next picture (pl. 47), but rather of someone of African or Native American ancestry. We can only speculate about what Stieglitz's motivation may have been in causing this transformation to occur.[140]

The dark hands in Stieglitz's photograph are not merely the result of manipulations in the dark room. Rather, they bear witness to O'Keeffe's psychological and physical transformation in New Mexico and Stieglitz's desire to visualize these changes in formal terms—in black and white. This work is literally an inverse of Stieglitz's earlier portraits of O'Keeffe's hands from the late 1910s, where her expressive, pale hands are dramatically set against her black clothing.

And yet while Stieglitz was pleased by the striking photographs he produced of O'Keeffe, he could see that these new impressions of his beloved wife were not the same as his earlier portraits of her. In a letter from October 18, 1931, he reminisced:

> There is an early print of you peeping out from other prints. Lord it's beautiful. What a pair we were. Really so innocent—very beautiful.—When I think of the things I did of you during this autumn my real feeling for you is in only a couple of the very fine nudes...The Black Hands [Fig. 3.15] are extraordinary but they do not actually express my feeling about you underlying all temporary feelings.—My feeling for you is a much deeper one than you know.

Stieglitz is drawn to the beauty and innocence of his "White One" of the past that seems to have been replaced by a pair of black hands. His feelings for and impressions of O'Keeffe extend far beyond the surface into a much deeper realm of spirit and soul.

In her own art, O'Keeffe ventured into a vast territory of new subjects and compositional schemes during her early New Mexico period. Her intimate interaction with the sun and its profound physical effects on her body bore a direct influence on her work.

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[140] *Alfred Stieglitz: Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Malibu, CA: Getty Publications, 1995), 96.

Stemming from her own interest in sunbathing, she also became fascinated with other sun-drenched forms including the red hills and the bleached bones she found in the desert. Likened to her own suntanned body, she viewed them as natural and full of new life. According to Rosenfeld, writing in 1924, O'Keeffe referred all natural forms in her work back to the "grand white surfaces" of a woman's body.[141] As a defiant gesture to Rosenfeld and other critics who viewed her work as intimately associated with her pale body, she went to the very source of this unwanted attention by literally darkening herself in a rather dramatic way. By the end of the 1920s and into the new decade, O'Keeffe began painting the rolling hills of the Southwest in the rich orange-browns of her newly reclaimed body. The physicality of her work would now be expressed in her own terms.

In her first summer in New Mexico, she also completed several paintings featuring large black crosses superimposed on the arid desert landscape, which evoke a sense of power and spiritual awakening mirrored in the artist's own experiences. The sheer physicality and flatness of the dark cross in *Black Cross* (1929) [Fig. 3.16] dominates the composition, a blackness intensified by the fiery horizon line peeking from behind it. O'Keeffe's interest in black as a dominant color is apparent not only in her paintings from this period, but also in her new, darkened self. In her letters to Stieglitz, she frequently mentions her changing skin tone: "I wish you could see what a grand color I have." What began as "bright pink cheeks from sunburn"[142] in one of her first letters from Taos, quickly turned into a vivid description of how black she was becoming—eventually replacing words such as tan, browned, or bronzed. She recounted to Stieglitz, "When I saw myself in a real mirror in a real hotel room

[141] Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (1924; reprint, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 205.

[142] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, May 2, 1929; Greenough, 411.

I realized I looked pretty black—I tell Tony I'm trying to catch up to him for color—and he tells me I'm doing pretty well—but I see I'm several shades behind him yet."[143] Gradually, O'Keeffe viewed herself as moving further away on the chromatic spectrum from Stieglitz's pure "White One." The stark contrast between Stieglitz's whiteness and O'Keeffe's blackness is reinforced by a number of other parallel factors ranging from climate to geography. The urbanity of Stieglitz's Manhattan and the civility of Lake George are seemingly poles apart from the unbounded sensuality, freedom, and exoticism O'Keeffe experienced in New Mexico. By July of 1929, Stieglitz began to reminisce about the early years of their relationship: "And what existed for some years was pure & extraordinarily beautiful & productive in spite of differences with our natures. You the wild child of the soil, I city-bred of the city."[144] He spoke of O'Keeffe as innately untamable, a prediction proven by her time in New Mexico.

As expressed throughout this dissertation, as the suntan allied itself with the modern, a pale complexion was seen as a relic of the past. The issue of modern opacity opposed to Victorian transparency is strikingly apparent in the letters of O'Keeffe and Stieglitz. Despite his pioneering efforts in cultivating an American avant garde, Stieglitz retained vestiges of his Victorian upbringing—basing relationships with the artist's in his circle on a patriarchal model with a strong demarcation of male/female capabilities and sensibilities.[145] Meanwhile, O'Keeffe's status as a thoroughly modern woman and artist becomes increasingly apparent, and even visible, during her transformative time in New Mexico. In the midst of a

[143] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, June 27, 1929; Ibid., 447.
[144] Stieglitz to O'Keeffe, July 14, 1929; Ibid., 478.
[145] Corn, 239.

particularly tumultuous period during the summer of 1929, O'Keeffe explains to Stieglitz the profound changes that have been occurring to her while in New Mexico:

> And now you cry for the center of me that has been pushed away for so long—so long—that to tell you the truth—I am not sure that it exists anymore—Nobody else has ever seen it—or ever will—I seem to meet people here with my skin—that doesn't mean anything when I say it—but it is the best I can say—Maybe I accept the human being in a different way than I could before—The thing you call holy—I do not feel any less holy—but I feel more like the rocks in the bottom of the stream outside my door.[146]

O'Keeffe questions the very existence of an inner soul or "center" that Stieglitz so prized alongside her body. Unlike Stieglitz who firmly believes that true personhood lies in the soul, O'Keeffe's understanding of the mind/body duality seems to be a more holistic one, rooted in nature and shared by various Native American religions. As the sun darkened her skin, so too did she become solid and hardened like a rock or a cow's skull, no longer fragile, soft, and weak. For O'Keeffe, her identity rests not in her center, or soul, but rather in her skin. Moreover, her fearless independence and unrestrained sensuality—miles away from Stieglitz—do not make her "feel any less holy." She continues in the same letter, demystifying Stieglitz's idealizations with a frank self-acceptance: "An untouched whiteness has been soiled—maybe it isn't a very practical thing to try to go through life with—Maybe blackness is the pure thing after all—the thing you cannot soil."[147] O'Keeffe, in essence, became one with the dark soil. Her transformation from light to dark blurs the boundaries between body and psyche.

[146] O'Keeffe to Stieglitz, July 11, 1929; Ibid., 472.
[147] Ibid., 473.

Conclusion

A recent advertisement for the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades, California [Fig. C.1], features a profile shot of a Roman marble sculpture known as the *Lansdowne Herakles* (ca. 125 CE) against a radiant, yellow background. The bold text proclaims: "THE ORIGINAL CHISELED ABS." The copy goes on to say: "Sunshine, beaches, and hard bodies abound in Los Angeles, drawing natives and tourists alike to the splendor of the coast. Discover your own peaceful oasis from the city with lush gardens, ancient art—and the original chiseled abs of Malibu." I discovered the ad in a May 2015 issue of United Airlines *Hemispheres* magazine on my way flying from the East Coast to Los Angeles and found it to be the most fitting way to conclude my dissertation. The ad touches on various themes and issues I have explored throughout this project. With its glowing backdrop, the ad recalls Charles Fletcher Lummis's promotion of Southern California as the "Land of Sunshine" and the lure of its abundant sun-filled landscape for pale-complexioned Easterners. It playfully forms a lineage of physical perfection extending from Herakles, the original, ancient source, to present-day, "native," "hard-bodied" (presumably suntanned) Californians, much like eugenicists had done in their own advertisements and exhibition displays. By describing the Getty Villa's lush gardens and refined galleries as "your own peaceful oasis from the city," the copy harkens back to the nineteenth-century origins of viewing travel to sanatoria or even a daytime stroll through a public park as a healthful, nature-inspired escape from over-civilized and sunless urban life. Much like the ad, this dissertation has strived to demonstrate how through the seemingly innocuous practice of suntanning, physical culture, eugenics, health, travel, and consumerism have historically informed and intersected with American modernist

art and visual culture. These multivalent references are flattened through the Getty's cheeky text and slick design, yet speak to the enduring potency of eugenic health found in the bronzed white body of our own time.

The suntan vogue, which steadily gained a nationwide following during 1920s, provides a lens to further explore the nexus of eugenics and modernism. By focusing on the cultural dimensions of eugenics and the health-based aspects of modernism, I have shown how these seemingly distanced movements often shared an anti-European, nativist stance and a desire for bronzed, robust bodies. During this period, skin itself became a modernist canvas—manipulated in myriad ways. Like various strains of modernism, the suntan spoke to both urban, machine-age enthusiasts as well as antimodern nature seekers. It engaged with consumer culture by simulating artificial color and embracing innovative technologies in bold new ways. Yet in other instances, the suntan signaled an antimodern, primitivist return to nature. While these issues have been explored more recently by scholars of various disciplines, they have never been brought together as one narrative, particularly in the scope of modernist American art and visual culture.

Suntanning as a popular practice did not explode onto the scene suddenly in the 1920s, but emerged gradually out of the Civil War Era. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the social value of pale skin became increasingly ambiguous, and even problematic as a signifier of disease and over-civilization. Heliotherapy, harnessing both natural and artificial light, was the powerful new treatment for tuberculosis, rickets, neurasthenia, and countless other diseases of modernity. The browned bodies it produced became signifiers of robust health and vigor. Social reformers eagerly promoted the healthful outdoor life and the rosy and bronzed complexions it bestowed upon Victorian

women and men respectively. By the time the eugenics movement galvanized as a political and cultural force at the turn of the century, overlapping developments in recreation, scouting, camping, and tourism also capitalized on sunlight as a cure-all for the ills of modernity.

No longer conceived as a transparent layer in the early twentieth century, human skin became a material medium—an artifice primed and perfected in the color-obsessed consumer culture of the 1920s and '30s. As suntanning became a fashionable leisure activity in itself, its nineteenth-century medical origins merged with a newfound sense of sensuality and prestige. Instead of conjuring up images of consumptive patients lying on sun beds, sunntanning in the interwar period posited outward health as a sign of sexual appeal. Yet while the vogue for suntanning among Euro-Americans reached new heights in the 1920s, so too did the eugenics movement, with its anti-immigration, anti-miscegenation stance. Thus, while Euro-Americans experimented with their own skin color—willfully darkening it in unprecedented ways—many also sought to police the color lines for other races and ethnicities. The irony and hypocrisy of such a dual endeavor was not lost on some African-American social reformers and their sympathizers. Further complicating this issue was simultaneous rise in the use of skin bleach creams in the African-American community, especially among women. While advertisers of these products promised to lighten the complexions of their users, they nonetheless employed elements of the suntan craze in their campaigns.

Beyond consumer culture, a primitivist impulse drove Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, and other modernists to physically manifest tanned skin as a signifier of American indigeneity. Stemming from nineteenth century conflations of American nativeness, tan skin

became a very literal embodiment of the supposedly primitive qualities of the Native American for these Euro-American artists. The American Southwest, from its natural splendor to the presence of actual Native Americans, was viewed as an untouched source of authenticity and primal spiritualism that so many modernist artists and writers were desperately seeking. This of course was a primitivist fantasy—one in which the unseemly facts of history were masked by the ostensibly timeless pleasures of living simply in nature. Hartley, who had long imagined the Native American cultures behind the artifacts he encountered in European museums, was transfixed when he finally witnessed Pueblo dancers performing the Corn Dance at Santo Domingo Pueblo, New Mexico. For O'Keeffe, northern New Mexico was a recuperative and liberating environment—one that she and Stieglitz both considered the most fitting place for her to thrive both physically and emotionally. Hartley and O'Keeffe imagined new chromatic possibilities for whiteness, whether found in the figures of their paintings or on their own bodies.

While this dissertation focused primarily on the transformation of whiteness through suntanning, there is still further investigation that needs to be done regarding the impact of the suntan vogue in African-American as well as other minority communities in the United States. In particular, African-American artists were encouraged by Alain Locke and other philosophical leaders of the New Negro movement to explore the legacy of their "ancestral arts" of Africa during the Harlem Renaissance. These artists were guided by a deeply reverent, yet often primitivist view of Africa that in some ways mirrored the trend of Euro-American artists such as Marsden Hartley and Georgia O'Keeffe invoking Native American cultures and physical embodiment in their work and lived experiences.

Contemporary Dimensions

As it was in the early twentieth century, the psychophysical phenomenon of suntanning preoccupied artists in the post-WWII period continuing into the present. Dennis Oppenheim's performance piece *Reading Position for Second Degree Burn* (1970) [Fig. C.2] involved the artist lying out in only swim trunks on Jones Beach in New York for five hours with a book resting open on his chest. The medium of the work—listed as "book, skin, and solar energy"—highlights the use of the skin as a canvas or as a substrate for a photographic print. The now iconic documentary photographs of Oppenheim's performance, showing his pale body at the beginning of the process, and his red, sunburned body at the end recall the before-and-after photographs of heliotherapy patients of the early twentieth century, although brought out in bold color. The pale imprint of the book is, in essence, a photogram—a photographic process achieved without a camera in which objects are laid down on sensitized paper and exposed to light. Part of the then-emerging genre of body-centric performance art pushed to its limits by artists such as Chris Burden and Marina Abramović, Oppenheim's experimental performance and subsequent photographic documentation utilizes suntanning as an artistic process and his own skin as his primary medium. The title of the book spread open on his chest, *Tactics: Cavalry and Artillery*, at once conjures historical as well as contemporary military references, but also the notion of suntanning as a potentially painful practice with its own set of carefully honed techniques.

During the 1980s and '90s, artists provoked and questioned seemingly fixed notions of identity—ranging from those socially constructed to personally defined. The mutability of skin color, experienced and expressed by artists in the interwar period, became a topic of interest for artists such as Byron Kim whose multi-panel work *Synecdoche* (1991-ongoing)

[Fig. C.3] was exhibited in the landmark Whitney Biennial in 1993, known commonly as the "multicultural biennial" due to its focus on issues of race, gender, sexuality, the AIDS crisis, and other topics that had been long disregarded by the institutional gatekeepers of the art world. Kim's ongoing series consists of a grid composed of hundreds of small panels painted in a variety of flesh tones. Each panel corresponds to the color of a specific person's skin. Influenced by minimalism and conceptual art, Kim treats *Synecdoche* as both a portrait of those around him as well as a broader investigation of color and its aesthetic and racial implications.

The same year as the watershed 1993 Whitney Biennial, conservative politician and television host, Pat Buchanan, fresh off his unsuccessful presidential run, lambasted multiculturalism as "an across-the-board assault on our Anglo-American heritage" in a speech to the Christian Coalition.[1] Delivered one-hundred years after Frederick Jackson Turner declared the closing of the western frontier, Buchanan's speech evoked the anti-immigration, anti-miscegenation sentiments of eugenicists of earlier generations—attempting to make the antiquated notion of Anglo-American heritage relevant once again. Like Marsden Hartley and others, Buchanan viewed Anglo-American heritage as the culture of a vanishing race, a term once used to describe Native Americans. In the same vein, Buchanan's 2002 book *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization* reads like a page out of eugenicist's Madison Grant's tome *The Passing of the Great Race* from 1916.

In more recent years, contemporary artist Erica Lord, like Oppenheim, has utilized suntanning as part of her process for her self-portrait photograph *(Untitled) I Tan to Look*

1 Curtis Stokes, Theresa Meléndez, and Gernice Rhodes-Reed, *Race in 21st Century America* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 228.

More Native (2006) [Fig. C.4]. Of Athabascan, Inupiaq, Finnish, Swedish, English and Japanese heritage, Lord explores the fluidity of her mixed race identity in a defiantly provocative way. The message on her back, the pale imprint of presumably her European ancestry is made strikingly visible through suntanning. Her work questions society's prescriptive assumptions about skin color, race, and perceived identities. What precisely does "native" refer to in such a complex context? How does her claim to nativeness through suntanning expose the authenticity and artificiality of such an identity? These are the questions that her work asks of its viewers.

Racial Politics in a Deeply Colored World

While knowledge about the risks and dangers of suntanning has become widely known, many people throughout the world continue to use UV tanning beds, lotions, creams, sprays, and the natural rays of the sun to darken their bodies. Yet despite its quotidian place in popular culture, the suntanned white body continues to transfix Americans of the twenty-first century—with headlines about Patricia Krentcil of New Jersey, better known as "Tan Mom," to Speaker of the House John Boehner's infamous deep orange glow. Most recently, Rachel Dolezal, the "faux black" white woman who was serving as president of the Spokane, Washington, chapter of the NAACP, caused an uproar with her racial masquerade as African-American, which has been described as everything from "reverse passing" to a "transracial identity" to "blackface." In addition to the conceptual complexities of taking on a new racial identity, what seems equally engrossing to many are the physical aspects of what Dolezal has deemed makes her black—attributes that also have allowed her to rather convincingly allude her colleagues and peers. There has been much speculation whether her

tanned complexion and tight curls are natural or artificial. Her image has often been shown in the media alongside an earlier photograph of her as her blonde-haired, fair-skinned, white former self. The public outcry over her physiognomic transformation and her identification as a black woman are reminiscent of John Haynes Holmes's outrage over the white fad for suntanning in his 1932 article "Bronze and Plaster" in *The Crisis*.[2] Inherent in both critiques is the potentially disruptive notion of the mutability of race and the problematic relationship between racial identity and appearance. However, while historical examples of deeply browned whites have shown the elasticity of the physical boundaries of whiteness, Dolezal's case is unique in that her physical transformation is ostensibly for her, a completely racial one as well.

We continue to struggle with many of the political and cultural issues stemming from skin color, race, and ethnicity that proliferated nearly one-hundred years ago. Immigration continues to be at the forefront of American politics. Anxiety over the year 2042—the year in which researchers have projected white people will become a minority in the United States—is this century's call to action for many anti-immigrant, conservative politicians. This fear has undoubtedly, for some, been heightened by the election of Barack Obama—the son of a Kenyan immigrant and an American woman of predominantly English ancestry—to the office of President of the United States of America. Obama's mere existence, let alone his rise to power, represents the realized fears of eugenicists such as Lothrop Stoddard who warned white Americans in the 1920s and beyond about such a threat in his influential book *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*. In addition to immigration, the value of one's skin color still bears significant consequences in American society. While

2 John Haynes Holmes, a white, Unitarian minister, was also a founding member of the NAACP.

Obama, the nation's first African-American president, represents a significant shift toward racial inclusion by the American public, we are still very much living in a world where skin color matters for those who are disenfranchised yet remains flexible for those who are in positions of power. Recent instances of police brutality on people of color have exposed the great disparities that persist in our country and have spurred the Black Lives Matter movement. As this dissertation has shown, the suntanned white body serves to complicate the visual dimensions of whiteness and continues to provoke issues relevant to a society optimistically deemed by scholars in the 1990s as "color-blind."

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