

# Introduction

*Susan Currell*

Published in 1929, the year of the economic crash that heralded the onset of the Great Depression, Southern writer Erskine Caldwell's short novel *The Bastard* follows the downward spiral of the dysgenic life of Gene Morgan. Gene is the bastard child of a hoochie-coochie dancer and an unknown father. Illustrating the evils of dysgenia, his fictional world epitomizes the random, violent, and diseased life that propelled eugenicists' fears of the era. Gene proceeds to drink, mutilate women, have sexual intercourse with his mother (who does not recognize him), rape a child, have sexual intercourse with a black woman who shares his surname, contract syphilis, and casually murder and mutilate a black co-worker. Finally, Gene falls in love with a decent girl and marries poor but "clean" Myra Morgan. The match, however, hints of inbreeding (she, too, shares his surname), and Gene's dysgenic past returns to haunt him. The baby they produce is a "freak," a monstrous, hairy epileptic who fails to grow but also will not die. The doctor tells Myra that she should not have any more children, that "there was something wrong somewhere."<sup>1</sup> Unable to escape his diseased inheritance, Gene kills the child and returns to the brothel and his old ways.

*The Bastard* shows, in barely disguised form, how some popular literature engaged with the issues of eugenics at the start of the Great Depression.

The novel ushered in Caldwell's literary career and a continued fascination on his part with degeneracy and decline as depicted in subsequent novels such as *Tobacco Road* (1932) and *God's Little Acre* (1933)—through which he became one of the most celebrated and popular writers of the 1930s. Despite the presence of these ideas in his books, virtually all criticism of Caldwell has ignored the presence of eugenics in his work.<sup>2</sup> Just as he repressed his first novel, later claiming that his debut novel was *Tobacco Road*, critics of American culture in the 1930s have failed to address the influence of eugenics on the cultural productions of the era. It is not easy to say why this should be—like the ugly, extreme, Gothic tale of Gene and his monstrous progeny that was repressed and censored by both Caldwell himself and the censors at the time, the history of eugenics has become a twentieth-century horror story that does not fit neatly or clearly into liberal paradigms of the past or historical representations of the Great Depression. Characterized as a period of social reform in which cultural workers strove to highlight societal problems and document images of poverty, the 1930s have not been fully examined for vestiges of the eugenic movement that were clearly part of the intellectual climate of the time.

By the 1920s, eugenic thought permeated modern cultures and societies on a global scale. It affected the way that national identities were constructed and represented in many countries. As a *scientifically* acceptable theory and method for genetic reform, eugenics had already passed its heyday by the time Adolf Hitler gained power in 1933. Yet despite the scientific questioning of its methods, eugenics had become an international ideological construct by that point, as well as the scientific discourse through which the Nazis justified their state and foreign policies to the rest of the world. Until recently, many scholars have presumed that by the early 1930s, eugenics in the United States had gone into decline.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to established historical opinion, however, as historian Edward Larson has pointed out, “the 1930s represented the pivotal decade for compulsory eugenic sterilization in the United States.” And because of Supreme Court approval in 1927, more legal eugenic sterilizations took place during the 1930s than in any other decade in U.S. history.<sup>4</sup> Sterilization rates climbed throughout the 1930s and reached record numbers, even though eugenic beliefs were supposedly on the wane.<sup>5</sup> By the thirties, then, the concerns of earlier decades—that hereditary defects caused crime, mental illness, and disease—had “resulted in an intensive campaign for custodial care and

sterilization of the unfit.”<sup>6</sup> The essays in this volume therefore concentrate on a variety of representations of eugenics in the 1930s to illustrate the fact that eugenics was a continuing presence in the public psyche. Though not contending that eugenic thought was as scientifically popular in the United States as it had been in the 1920s, the contributions here illustrate an open engagement with eugenics in the realm of popular culture that has been overlooked.

In the thirties, many observers connected the visible decay of the social fabric resulting from the economic crash to the ongoing genetic decline of the multiethnic American population. The decline and descent of humankind that had been predicted by eugenicists for so long appeared to have reached its apotheosis in the manifest degeneration of culture and society at the start of the Great Depression.<sup>7</sup> During that time, the physical health and eugenics movements gained increased momentum due to intensified fears of racial decline, male passivity, low levels of intelligence, moral and physical degeneracy, and low fertility. These concerns were manifested in contemporary culture in prominent public discussions about high divorce rates, low marriage rates, low birthrates, low literacy levels, high mental illness rates, and the causes and effects of widespread poverty. Hopes for the future strength of the nation were often linked to hopes for stronger and more robust mental and physical responses to the challenges of the era, on a personal as well as a political scale. The contributors to this book contend that those popular debates channeled ideas about eugenics in the thirties, revealing a shifting trend in eugenic thought as well as a more lively interaction with eugenic theory than has previously been discerned. After two decades of popular promotion, it is perhaps not surprising that ideas about eugenics had filtered into the rhetoric of decline and recovery that dominated discussions about the future of U.S. society at the start of the New Deal. What is surprising, however, is that the historical discourse surrounding “official” eugenic theory in the realm of the popular has been almost entirely ignored.

By 1932, concerns over the future recovery of U.S. society reflected the widespread belief that the country was not just economically depressed but also “diseased” in some way. This belief was fueled by the production of popular texts that indicated cultural stagnation and stasis on a broad scale. Eleanor Wembridge’s *Life among the Lowbrows* (1931), for example, offered a contemporary tour of “Moronia,” where 5 to 10 percent of the people were

verbal and financial illiterates; “they and their pale babies are recognized as disasters,” she claimed.<sup>8</sup> As in the economic Depression (another disaster of imbeciles, according to one writer), the parallel between personal and political stagnation was apparent.<sup>9</sup> At a time of increasing welfare costs and decreasing state revenues, the nation appeared to be facing bankruptcy unless it could improve its stock of human beings. In many states, sterilization of those deemed unfit was seen as one way that welfare costs could be cut, for “degenerates” could be released into the community without fear that their offspring would be returned to state institutions and further swell the burgeoning welfare budget.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the Depression created an awareness of extreme poverty and social problems that fueled reformers’ adoption of eugenic beliefs. Edward Larson, in fact, has claimed that contact with squalid conditions for the first time during the Depression via relief work led many prosperous women to champion eugenics as a way of ending poverty and squalor.<sup>11</sup>

The essays in this volume push forward the contention that rather than killing off eugenic thought, the Depression extended and transformed it. In that period, the popular press disseminated a version of eugenics to readers that cast it as a renewed topic for social debate. As Wendy Kline indicates in the first essay of this collection, popular debates over the “right” and “wrong” uses of eugenics were hashed out in the mass media and contributed to a widespread discourse on modernity that focused on the social and political uses of the American body. Kline’s study of the Cooper Hewitt trial of 1936 illustrates the shift into the new phase of eugenic strategies that characterized the movement in the 1930s, which emphasized the importance of motherhood and reproduction over genetic inheritance. The rise of reform eugenics, she argues, was a response to changing ideologies of social responsibility and welfare reform—an effective survival strategy for eugenicists during the period. Eugenics in the thirties thus figured not as a separate “scientific” discourse propagated by a few adherents but as a central, underlying feature of the modern state wherein recovery (economic, social, and personal) and reproductive control were inseparably linked.

To some observers, the Depression was a result of the unrestrained forces of capitalism, in which base instincts and greed had reigned without check. Others went further and paralleled the uncontrolled greed, individualism, and lust for profit of the business community with a lack of control over the willful libido. The perceived threat to the nation’s health

and financial well-being was not just the rhetoric of an extreme Right or of supporters of fascism; for reform eugenicists, capitalism itself was dysgenic by allowing the “race suicide” of an elite and producing at the same time an uncontrolled surplus of humans, made all too apparent by the breadlines and dole queues.<sup>12</sup> Unprecedented middle-class poverty likewise posed the most serious threat yet to the project of positive eugenics, which had aimed to increase births among the educated and prevent the race suicide of the white middle classes for several decades.

By adding to the popular interest in sterilization an additional focus on self-improvement, mass leisure, and the family, eugenic ideals became broadly compatible with wider social ideals of the New Deal and the Popular Front. The formation of the New Deal, the interaction of the modern citizen with the modern state, and personal interpretations of eugenics thus underlay much of the shift in eugenic discourse at that time. As this book indicates, the Depression necessitated new responses to social and political organization and personal choices. In 1932, then, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt was campaigning for election and the Third International Congress of Eugenics was being held in New York, popular entertainment reflected awareness of the important eugenic role played by personal action. Popular dramas of eugenic promise and failure were played out in films that appeared on cinema screens that year. A good example is the movie *A Bill of Divorcement* (1932), in which Katharine Hepburn, as Sydney Fairfield, the daughter of a genetically insane father, breaks her engagement and vows not to marry or have children for fear of passing on this genetic inheritance. Her heroic actions can only be understood in relation to the common discourses surrounding popular eugenics at the time. As Angela Smith’s essay in this collection also shows, popular horror movies at the start of the Depression played out the repressions and anxieties surrounding eugenics in more Gothic ways.

A closer examination of these representations of hereditarian theories reveals that beneath the desires for economic and social rationalization that characterized the modern welfare state lay repressed fears of decline and debility that fit well with the earlier eugenic rhetoric of degeneracy. New Deal plans to regulate capitalism were thus also welcomed by some supporters of eugenics as part of the social planning that would control all libidinous excesses. Just as laissez-faire economic policy was coming under heavy criticism in 1932, laissez-faire, or unregulated, responses to personal

decisions were perceived by many to be equally unacceptable; they were to be replaced by “self-insight, self-planning, and self-control,” assisted by the insights of instructional manuals, educational texts, and popular science.<sup>13</sup> How humans would adapt to the modern environment and climate of political change was of paramount concern to sociologists in the early thirties, and that issue was the focus of Chicago sociologist William Ogburn’s speech to the American Society of Naturalists in 1931. “The lower animals have a simple natural environment toward which to make an adaptation, as was also the case of early man,” he stated. “But modern man has a huge cultural environment to which he must adapt himself, a huge culture that is whirling through time, gaining velocity as it goes.”<sup>14</sup> Ogburn constantly stressed the importance of adapting to modernity, inventing the term *cultural lag* in the 1920s to describe the process by which humans biologically failed to keep pace with their inventions. As Susan Currell discusses in her essay on popular self-help and eugenic rhetoric, fitting in and adapting to changes related to Depression culture—to overcome cultural lag and “streamline” oneself for the future—was central to the notion of creating modern citizens who could cope with the vicissitudes of the age. This adaptation was addressed most commonly in the texts that were popular at the time, distributed in schools, popular journals, and the mass media.

Throughout the decade, educational and scientific discourses were permeated with eugenic rhetoric. In the pages ahead, Andrés Reggiani shows how the formulation of popular ideas about eugenics was taken up in the form of the best-seller *Man, the Unknown*, by Nobel Prize-winning scientist Alexis Carrel. Popular science explored modern social problems within a “biologizing” framework that often owed much to the eugenics movement of the twenties. Exploring common fantasies about the possibility of renovating and modernizing society, success literature, science fiction, comics, and films all employed eugenic discourses, even if the writers did not always agree with them or represent them with scientific accuracy. Utopian fiction, for example, prominently featured societies created by eugenic engineering and rationalized social planning. In *New Industrial Dawn* (1939) by A. T. Churchill, the protagonist—Fenton, a banker—falls into a drunken stupor in 1929 and awakens in the future to a eugenically streamlined, perfectly balanced, and rational society. As the United States prepared for a war against fascism in 1939, the *New York World’s Fair* fetishized the “typical American family” in a display that, as Robert Rydell has illustrated,

evolved directly from the eugenic “better babies” contests of the twenties. Eugenics was on display at the fair as one way to make the nation modern, as Rydell and Christina Cogdell have asserted in previous studies, and it cohabited neatly with the futuristic vision of fair planners and designers.<sup>15</sup>

How to adapt and survive in this brave new world became a subject that many writers addressed. As cultural historian Warren Susman has shown, the thirties saw an increased preoccupation with the problems of cultural lag and growing anxieties over the adaptation to modernity. Yet questions about how much this anxiety involved long-standing concerns over genetic inheritance and to what extent these ideas were disseminated in popular locations have not been addressed.<sup>16</sup> In his chapter, Michael Rembis reveals how the promotion of the eugenic textbook and the development of new school curricula based on eugenics expanded during the decade, illustrating that even though eugenics as a science may have been on the wane, it was reaching a huge audience of schoolchildren via a changing course of study. Instructional manuals, then, comprise a largely overlooked popular medium that provides a valuable alternative vision of the history of eugenic ideological diffusion. The eugenic influences in even more closely scrutinized writings, such as the canonical works of Southern literature, have been virtually ignored.

The fear that the human body and mind could not be made to fit in with modern times was most intense in the South, where the discourse of social and economic decline resulting from the Civil War still permeated mass culture and regional identity in the 1930s. The Depression merely heaped another disaster onto that earlier one, from which the South had never fully recovered. Fears of decay and degeneracy as well as cultural lag reappear over and over again in discourses about the South in the 1930s. The relationship between modernity, eugenics, and cultural production was proposed as early as 1915, when H. L. Mencken first published his call for a renaissance of Southern literature in his essay “The Sahara of the Bozart.” Mencken claimed that “the South has not only lost its old capacity for producing ideas; it has also taken on the worst intolerance of ignorance and stupidity.” The essay went on to describe the dysgenic conditions of the South that had led to this situation. “As for the cause of this unanimous torpor and doltishness, this curious and almost pathological estrangement from everything that makes for a civilized culture, I have hinted at it already, and now state it again. The south has simply been drained of

all its best blood,” he asserted. “The vast blood-letting of the Civil War half exterminated and wholly paralyzed the old aristocracy, and so left the land to the harsh mercies of the poor white trash, now its masters.”<sup>17</sup> Explicitly associating what Mencken saw as a lack of modern culture and aesthetic progression with the genetic inheritance of bad blood, the essay was a call for cultural modernity in the literature and culture of the South. The call for a modern Southern aesthetic was met through the emergence of the Southern writers of the 1930s. But amazingly, the fact that Mencken’s essay was almost wholly about the inability of the South to produce humans who were eugenic (or “wellborn”) has barely been examined in studies of this Southern renaissance. Other Southern writers were not all such strong promoters of eugenic ideas as Mencken. Yet even where modern writers showed ambivalence to the inheritance of this genetic discourse, their reflection of the discourse itself still proved its ongoing influence on contemporary thought.

The essays on the South in this book explore this ambivalence and the inheritance of eugenic rhetoric as a repressed discourse that emerged at the level of narrative and structure within modern Southern writing. Betsy Nies examines characterizations of the South as dysgenic—and varied responses to those characterizations—through her analysis of the writings of Mencken, Caldwell, and other Southern Agrarian writers. According to Stephen Fender’s contribution, the very drive to modernize the inhabitants of the South was imbued with unwitting eugenic discourse adopted from earlier sociological studies of “white trash.” As these two essays illustrate, the interaction between the South and eugenics emerged in its literature and culture in complex ways, through the themes and narratives of decline and degeneracy that became so popular in the 1930s. Barbara Ladner’s essay carries this analysis even further, showing that the tropes of William Faulkner’s fiction are better understood within this context of eugenic discourse surrounding family histories and inheritance, phrased in a rhetoric critiquing the objectives of racial purity that characterized period sociological and scientific studies. Southern literature as a whole, then, indicated a more complex interaction with the so-called aesthetics of eugenics than the one depicted by Erskine Caldwell in *The Bastard*. By looking at the way the tropes of scientific discourse were taken up and rewritten in the cultural imagination, a more complex vision of eugenics in the thirties emerges—one that enables a transgressive and multilayered response not always

available to straightforward analyses of scientific documents and historical records. Because such celebrated Southern writers developed their oeuvres at the height of eugenic theories and wrote during their most extensive implementation, it is important to reread these texts in the light of perceptions about eugenics in the 1930s.

The second section of this collection shifts from popular printed texts, whether scientific, educational, or literary, to a different locus of popular eugenic inscription: the modern aesthetics of visual culture, particularly with regard to the modern body. By reconfiguring and rearticulating notions of the modern American body, a few of the essays in this section illustrate that “fitting in” was not only a psychological, political, and intellectual demand but also a physical one. Mary Coffey’s essay on the history of the sculptural exhibit of the “Average American” (Man) demonstrates that judging and assessing what was average became an obsession intertwined with eugenic ideas of success. This ideological thrust explains the popularity of exhibits of the “Average American,” while at the same time indicating a shift in eugenic thought from the 1920s to the 1930s. As Christina Cogdell discusses in her essay on streamlining, the national concern with bodily efficiency and “smooth flow” illustrates how eugenics entered into the discourse of the body as well as the visual aesthetics of modern design at the time. Through these essays, then, we see a manifestation of eugenics as an unwritten text, visible within ideologies of the body that defined the average and ideal shapes that still remain central to Western culture.

According to Nicole Rafter’s essay, this notion extended even to the discourse on American teeth, which to anthropologist Earnest Hooton represented the “softening of American bodies and the erosion of civilization” (260). Understanding the fears of cultural decline and decay is crucial to understanding the social and cultural climate of the 1930s. How such scientific information was channeled into expressions and ideologies of the body is also shown in Kerry Soper’s study of popular imagery, in particular the *Dick Tracy* comic strip. Soper examines the ways in which visual metaphors of the body and face, derived from eugenic ethnic stereotypes, were used to express fears of genetic decline in the thirties. During the Depression, as he indicates, cartoons expressed prevalent concerns that the perceived crime wave was a result of dysgenic breeding and not just a result of desperation caused by widespread unemployment. His close analysis of the style and history of Chester Gould’s comic strip shows that the

popular culture of the era attempted to mediate and imagine the concerns of eugenicists of the earlier part of the century—putting them into a modern context and updating them for the masses. These essays illustrate the benefits of looking beyond the traditional “documents” of history and reading the nontextual or material environment for an engagement with eugenics, whether from an ambivalent, supportive, or critical position.

This engagement with eugenics is apparent in the films and popular exhibitions of the decade. The emergence of the eugenic movement in the late nineteenth century paralleled the emergence of the U.S. film industry, and by the 1930s, the representation of eugenics on the screen was a tried and tested way of promoting eugenic messages to a multilingual or illiterate audience. In her analysis of *College Holiday* (1936), Karen Keely establishes that by the 1930s, eugenics had also become a subject for madcap comedy, which both critiqued and colluded with eugenic ideology. Keely shows that simple or reductive readings of eugenics cannot be made in the realm of popular culture. Films, whether humorous or horrific, contained overt and repressed narratives of eugenics that attempted to subvert, as well as negotiate, the problematic heritage of a science of racial purity. For this reason, examining popular representations provides a new way of negotiating the problematic and often contradictory heritage of eugenics within U.S. culture during this period. Horror films, as Angela Smith addresses in her essay on the role of eugenic discourse in *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1932), also offered both a classic presentation of genetic inheritance and more subversive readings of the eugenic message—illustrating, for example, the dangers of scientific experimentation. The importance of readings such as those by Keely and Smith is that they allow us to see the influence of eugenic thought on the cultural imagination while still making room for the “rupture” of that discourse at the point of transmission and reception.

The final essay in this collection, by Robert Rydell, Christina Cogdell, and Mark Largent, illustrates, however, that monolithic eugenic theories of “race hygiene” were still being disseminated as scientific fact as late as 1943. While popular culture played with, reaffirmed, or dismantled eugenic ideas, an exhibition about Nazi eugenics toured the United States, providing allegedly factual underpinning to fictional ideas of race supremacy. This essay serves to remind us that although eugenics returned in repressed forms in the aesthetics and social and literary narratives of American mass

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culture, a real eugenics movement continued to operate and legitimate the widespread sterilization programs that took place during the 1930s. As a popular “road show,” the eugenics exhibit had official and respected scientific and medical sponsors. Just as important, it became a popular “educational” show that transmitted a eugenic message in an unambivalent way to the masses of exhibit viewers.

The essays in this volume, then, all depict the multifarious ways that popular culture disseminated eugenic concepts over the 1930s, illustrating that the impact of eugenics on U.S. cultural productions and public perceptions was far from over. Even as scientists and anthropologists began to divest their discourses of eugenics, the popular sector continued to advance these ideas, albeit in contradictory, piecemeal, ambivalent, and often erroneous ways. For this reason, the ways in which the essays register eugenics are not always consistent or identical. These readings reflect the contradictions and internal inconsistencies of the eugenic movement out of which the representations came. Some cultural sectors relied more heavily on late-nineteenth-century criminology (influenced by the criminologist Cesare Lombroso), for instance, whereas others were more conversant with the reforms taking place among eugenicists in the 1930s. And some merely adapted and distorted key concepts from eugenics (an interest in norms or ideals, ideas of race and environment, or concerns over natural reproduction), dispensing with other aspects of the discourse that would have complicated their agendas. The essays illustrate that even though eugenics coexisted with popular perceptions of the modern subject, these ideas were never monolithic, and they therefore serve to reflect this contradictory popular uptake of what was never a fully scientific or rational discourse anyway.

While showing the divergent ways that eugenics was manifested in the popular imagination, as well as the ways that eugenic ideas were dismantled or deflated by culture, this book illustrates how fundamental eugenics is to an understanding of mass culture of the thirties. By repressing the eugenics component, previous scholars have misunderstood a key aspect of the history of eugenics that existed outside of mainstream scientific discourse. But here, by documenting the influence of eugenic ideology on U.S. culture and society during the 1930s, the authors have closely examined instances in which such tendencies emerged within the rhetoric, ideology, and visual aesthetics of mass culture. Often, this investigation has

meant looking at trivial or forgotten cultural sites—teeth and toilets rather than science and politics. Yet the apparent triviality is all the more significant for demonstrating not only how pervasive eugenic precepts were in U.S. culture but also the extent to which the concepts eugenics linked (beauty, biology, environment, race, class, ability, and gender norms) touched nearly every aspect of American life. This very pervasiveness and diffusion demonstrates how broad the effects of eugenics were on the development of a modern U.S. culture. And however much we would like to limit its effects to a few pseudoscientists in the 1910s and 1920s, to do so would obscure not only the past but also the extent to which its legacy is still with us.

Consequently, this book makes an original contribution to our understanding of the workings of eugenic ideology as it permeated debates in the arenas of popular literature, science, art, and film. In the process, it furthers discussion on the ways that eugenic discourses were reconfigured in the 1930s and how they negotiated the shock of the Great Depression and the proliferation of popular mass media. Furthermore, it shows that the notions of modernity and progress that characterized much of the 1930s were often informed by eugenic theory and that a heightening of eugenic thinking at that time was, in many ways, a response to the national problems encountered and made visible by the Depression.

### Notes

1. Erskine Caldwell, *The Bastard* (New York: Heron Press, 1929), 67.
2. The exception is Karen Keely, who has examined Caldwell's relationship to eugenics in her essay "Poverty, Sterilization, and Eugenics in Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*," *Journal of American Studies* 36, no. 1 (2002): 23–42.
3. Although Diane Paul, in *Controlling Human Heredity, 1865 to the Present* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995), and Daniel Kevles, in *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), have examined the ways in which eugenic ideals influenced the politics and research of the scientific community in the interwar period and beyond, few related studies have looked at how these ideals reemerged within popular culture. Similarly, although studies by Steven Selden, Martin Pernick, Nicole Hahn Rafter, and Betsy Nies have indicated the ongoing popularity of eugenics into the 1930s, the primary focus of such works has been on the 1920s and earlier years. Few studies have focused on eugenics in its

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popular manifestations during the Depression era. Those that have—Stefan Kühl's on politics, Robert Rydell's on world's fairs, Wendy Kline's on sexuality and motherhood, and Christina Cogdell's on streamline design—have been all too rare. In her article "The Futurama Recontextualized," *American Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (June 2000): 193–246, for example, Cogdell noted that "eugenics experienced a resurgence during the 1930s in the realm of popular culture" (202) and that "eugenic thinking in the U.S and abroad underwrote key legislation, hotly debated social issues, basic high school education, and various facets of popular culture" (205). There are a number of excellent books on the history of eugenics in U.S. culture. See, for instance: Cogdell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Ian Robert Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in the United States and Canada, 1880–1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Nicole Hahn Rafter, ed., *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877–1919* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988); Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963); Kevles, "Eugenics in North America," in *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, ed. Robert A. Peel (London: Galton Institute, 1998), 208–25, and *In the Name of Eugenics*; Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Nancy Ordovery, *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Martin Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures since 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 1870–1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Steven Selden, *Inheriting Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1999); Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Betsy Nies, *Eugenic Fantasies: Racial Ideology in the Literature and Popular Culture of the 1920's* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

4. Larson, *Sex, Race and Science*, 119.

5. *Ibid.*, 120; Kevles, "Eugenics in North America," 220.

6. Haller, *Eugenics*, 92.

7. This idea is discussed in more detail in Susan Currell's *The March of Spare Time: The Problem and Promise of Leisure in the Great Depression* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

8. Eleanor Wembridge, *Life among the Lowbrows* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 21.
9. Walter B. Pitkin, *A Short Introduction to the History of Human Stupidity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1932).
10. This terminology comes from the publications of the era and is not my own, but hereafter, the authors of this volume will not use quotes around terms such as *degenerate*.
11. Larson, *Sex, Race and Science*, 132.
12. See Diane Paul, "Eugenics and the Left," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, no. 4 (Fall 1984): 568.
13. Walter B. Pitkin, *Life Begins at Forty* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1932), 89.
14. William Fielding Ogburn, *How Man Will Live in the Future* (Girard, KS: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1931).
15. Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 38–61. Cogdell, in *Eugenic Design*, 111–27, addresses numerous other exhibits at the Chicago and New York World's Fairs that included eugenic ideas in the visions of the future.
16. Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 156.
17. H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices: A Selection*, ed. James T. Farrell (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 74.