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Angels and Degenerates: Artistic Virtuosity and Degeneration Theory in Fin de Siècle Fiction

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Angels and Degenerates: Artistic Virtuosity and Degeneration Theory in Fin de Siècle Fiction

DISSERTATION

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for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in English

by

Rosanna Nunan

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Hugh Roberts, Chair
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2015

DEDICATION

To

Susan and Tom Nunan,
in thanks for all of the
wonderful opportunities
they've given me.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Angels and Degenerates: Artistic Virtuosity and Degeneration Theory in Fin de Siècle Fiction

By

Rosanna Nunan

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Hugh Roberts, Chair

My aim in "Angels and Degenerates: Artistic Virtuosity and Degeneration Theory in Fin de Siècle Fiction" is to complicate the popular image of the fin de siècle as uniformly pessimistic by examining the continuities between a range of novelists, as well as other late nineteenth century writers from such disparate fields as psychology and cultural criticism, as they critique degeneration theory. Some of these writers, like Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, and Sarah Grand, are typically read as promoting a degenerationist agenda, while others, like George Bernard Shaw and Mona Caird, are recognized today for their outspoken opposition to degeneration theory. In uniting these apparently contradictory perspectives, I demonstrate that skepticism of degeneration theory, awareness of its inconsistent logic, and discomfort with its implications is a more important feature of fin de siècle culture than has hitherto been acknowledged.

The writers are further united by a common impulse to utilize the figure of the artistic genius to defy degeneration theory. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Wonderful Visit*, *Trilby*, *The Beth Book*, and *The Daughters of Danaus* incorporate protagonists whom we can identify as either incipient or realized artistic geniuses through the telltale signs of genius that originated in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Romanticism. Added to the familiar conception of

Romantic genius in the late Victorian era is a newfound emphasis on the biological and hereditary dimensions of the genius's innate creative wellspring. By concentrating on the conventionally constructive qualities of the genius figure, including visionary power, aesthetic perceptiveness, intuitive sympathy, and artistic virtuosity, the novelists produce a system of values that both degenerationists and antidegenerationists uphold in their writings. I argue that the novelists expose this shared value system and interrogate its inconsistent usage in scientific contexts, using the genius to reject widespread pathologization and destructive applications of evolutionary theory to the human population at the end of the nineteenth century.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this dissertation, degeneration and the artist at the fin de siècle, developed out of my initial interest in representations of fallen women in late nineteenth century novels. As my research took shape, the project evolved in the direction of examining representations of degenerate genius rather than fallen women, although the basic contours of my approach to the subject remained the same, as did two of the characters, fallen women Tess and Trilby. The popularization of the theories of degeneration and eugenics, though not explicitly a feminist issue, is so intimately tied to what Angelique Richardson terms the "biologization of morality" and the related pathologization of sexual deviance that there is no way to study the implications of degeneration without taking into account its relationship to women's rights and other sexual liberation efforts in the late Victorian era (*Love and Eugenics* 48). In *Love and Eugenics*, Richardson provides an account of the origins of the social purity movement and rational reproduction, which developed not only out of fears of the growing slum conditions in cities, but also out of a desire to police the activities of London prostitutes. Purity activists associated prostitution and other acts of sexual transgression with the spread of venereal diseases, especially syphilis, that were increasingly figured as physical markers of hereditary moral depravity. Moral depravity, perhaps the most conceptually elastic and physically indeterminate form of degeneration, could be stretched to accommodate all manner of unconventional sexual behavior, or any unconventional behavior, period, when perpetrated by women, homosexual men, or other oppressed groups whose identities were inextricable from their sex or sexuality (the working class population, when hypersexualized as uncontrollably fecund and reproductive, also fits within this category).

Considering degeneration's value as an ideological instrument to police sexual liberation efforts and challenges to conventional morality, it came as no surprise to me that the novels that critique the false science behind degeneration also tend to incorporate characters whose social positions make them particularly vulnerable to the influence of degeneration theory. Thus, the novels I analyze in the forthcoming chapters exhibit commonalities pertaining to the concept of fallenness or questionable virtue, a theme that in turn links the protagonists to theories of hereditary moral depravity at the fin de siècle. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Trilby* explore the plight of the fallen woman in bourgeois society. H.G. Wells's work of fantasy, *The Wonderful Visit*, similarly portrays a fallen Angel of questionable sexual identity and his encounter with the bourgeois Philistines. The two novels that are the focus of my last chapter, Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* and Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, concentrate explicitly on New Women heroines, feminist characters who consciously transgress the parameters laid out for members of their sex in Victorian culture. What was curious to me about fin de siècle representations of fallen virtue or moral depravity was the deliberate equivalence novelists repeatedly make between moral depravity and the Romantic conception of artistic genius. As this pattern emerged, I realized that to reconstitute the fallen heroine or hero it was for some reason expedient to cast them in the familiar role of artistic genius, characterized by the traits of aesthetic sensibility, visionary power, virtuoso musical or poetic ability, and other conventional attributes. Soon it became apparent that the use of genius is not simply a bid to rewrite the fallen protagonist as virtuous, but in fact serves as the central feature of a complex campaign that fin de siècle novelists were waging against the popular scientific theories of degeneration and eugenics. By decking morally complex protagonists in the garb of genius, fin de siècle novelists recapitulate one of the original uses of genius in English Romanticism. David Higgins claims

that the concept of genius in Romanticism "offer[ed] a theory of human value based on mental aptitude rather than rank or wealth" (5). Similarly, genius in the fin de siècle novel helps to reassert the human value, innate worth, and the mental and moral health of individuals disowned as degenerate by Victorian culture. Moral upheaval and radical reconsiderations of convention are two of the defining elements of the fin de siècle. A return to Romantic genius is merely one method novelists alight upon to facilitate their defenses of individuals subject to the reactionary ideologies cultivated in a climate of moral panic and exacerbated by popular appropriations of scientific theories.

Originally theorized by the French psychiatrist Bénédict Augustin Morel in his 1857 work, *Traité des degenerescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives*, the concept of hereditary degeneration gained wider transnational acceptance after Darwin's introduction of evolutionary theory in *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Zoologist Edwin Ray Lankester's response to Darwin, *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1880), represents the growing fascination at the end of the nineteenth century with the darker side of Darwin's theories, the potential for human regression implicit in the otherwise optimistic narrative of favorable adaptation and progress that evolution seemed to promise. As William Greenslade explains, for Morel, "degeneration was a morbid deviation from a perfect primitive type—a deviation subject to a law of 'progressivity' which compounded deviation through the generations" (Greenslade 16). Morel theorized that degeneration "produced three categories of symptoms: physical deformity, perversion of the organism, and disturbance of emotional faculties" and that the level of degenerative illness would escalate over the course of generations within an afflicted family, proceeding from nervousness to neuroticism, psychosis and, at the end of the hereditary line, idiocy (16-17). Morel's conception of

degeneration as a morbid deviation from a standard type or norm and his belief in both the physical and mental or emotional origins of the disease remained characteristic of later understandings of degeneration.

Following Herbert Spencer's successful dissemination of the ideology of "social Darwinism" among the Victorian public, Morel's concentration upon isolated instances of hereditary madness in families proliferated elsewhere into a wholesale displacement of all social, economic, or political ills onto the bodies of individuals by those seeking an explanation for the widespread degradation present in urban centers in the wake of industrialization. As Daniel Pick argues, degeneration theory's popularity in part sprang from the rising threat of democracy itself. Elitists found in degeneration theory a scientific justification for resistance to the various democratizing movements that had gained increasing traction throughout the nineteenth century. Pick writes, "'Democracy' in any form indeed tended to pull civilisation towards the primitive 'homogeneity' from which, like an organism, it had slowly differentiated itself" (Pick 93). In Pick's example of the pathologization of democracy, degeneration theory has the material effect of imposing limitations on the lived realities of people who stood to benefit from progressive movements at the end of the nineteenth century by marking them as ill, incurably so due to degeneration's hereditary nature. It is no coincidence that the popularization of degeneration as a concept corresponded with the passage of various democratizing acts and laws, the rise of the feminist movement, radical developments in the realm of art and literature, the public emergence of homosexuality, and other rapid changes for which the fin de siècle is known. As Pick demonstrates, by affixing the term "degenerate" onto members of the urban working class and other troublesome populations, the late Victorian public employed a narrative of biological and

hereditary illness familiar from Darwinian theory to avoid any closer scrutiny of the social, economic, or political origins of widespread poverty, mental illness, or discontent.

Degeneration theory's popularity escalated over the course of the century, and there is a causal connection between theories of degeneration that insisted society was marching toward ruin and theories of eugenics, selective breeding, or rational reproduction, which concentrated above all else on speeding up the march of progress toward evolved perfection. While they appear to offer distinct viewpoints, degeneration and eugenics share the same fundamental ideological commitments. Angelique Richardson explains:

> The idea of rational reproduction has its origins in the social purity movement which developed apace in the 1880s…. By [1886] the social purity movement, a loose association of religious and moral crusaders, had become increasingly interventionist, adopting a new, more coercive, policy towards the residuum, and becoming more likely to use the instruments of the state to enforce their moral code. (*Love and Eugenics* 46)

She further adds that the movement "played a significant role in the post-Darwinian biologization…of morality. Turning its attentions to male promiscuity, and endorsing fundamental sexual difference, social purity began to feed off discourses of degeneration" (48). Donald J. Childs also locates the origin of eugenics in degeneration. He writes,

> Before eugenics was born as a science in the work of Francis Galton late in the nineteenth century, the concerns that it would address were gathering…. [I]n Galton's Britain, increasing urbanization confronted the middle class with an apparently permanent underclass of poor people—beggars, thieves, prostitutes—often in poor health, apparently indolent and lazy. (Childs 1)

Because "Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection and his cousin Francis Galton's studies of heredity made it possible to understand these problems in biological terms," the fear of degeneration led directly to the popularization of eugenic theory, in which, "judged unfit to propagate, human weeds are to be eliminated by segregation, sterilization, or euthanasia; judged fit to propagate, the flowers of humankind are encouraged to have large families" (Childs 3). While it would seem that subscription to eugenic theory would not necessarily entail a corollary subscription to theories of degeneration, ultimately eugenics is inextricably linked to its more pessimistic forebear. Granted, many eugenicists, including Galton, attempted to distance themselves from degeneration by advocating exclusively for "positive eugenics," or the breeding of fit individuals, rather than "negative eugenics," or elimination of unfit individuals, the idea being that simply increasing the overall strength of the gene pool was intervention enough without resorting to the more macabre practices of sterilization or euthanasia (Childs 3). However, even positive eugenics rests on the notion that some people are essentially fit while others are essentially unfit, and its advocacy for the selective breeding of the fit betrays its allegiance to degeneration.

William Greenslade, Kelly Hurley, Daniel Pick, and Angelique Richardson have provided foundational cultural and literary histories of degeneration in the nineteenth century, focusing on the remarkably pessimistic trajectory of Darwinism at the end of the Victorian era. While in *On the Origin of Species* Darwin himself resisted any ascription of good or bad to the biological processes involved in structural adaptations of organisms to their environments, Greenslade writes that, despite his cautiousness, "the value-loaded meanings could not be kept out" of later interpretations of his theories (Greenslade 36). Hurley similarly emphasizes the Victorians' corruption of the early iterations of evolutionary theory as the century wore on. She

writes that Darwinism "demolish[ed] the model of human centrality in the universe, and replaced it with one of human ephemerality, relativity, and potential 'degradation'" (56). As a result, "The human race could not assure itself of its own stability and continuity, for like any other species it could regress into 'lower' forms as well as evolve into 'higher' ones, or simply disappear from the face of the earth" (57). The "later nineteenth century" was "a period of accelerated taxonomical activity," but in the presence of increasingly pessimistic interpretations of Darwin's theory of adaptation, "the sum effect of this drive towards organization [was] disorder" (26). In a similar vein, Pick exhaustively charts the explosion of degeneration theory's popularity over multiple transnational boundaries in the late nineteenth century, examining its specific variations in France, England, and Italy. Part of his project is to demonstrate that, rather than being limited to a conservative and reactionary fringe, as historians previously assumed, allegiance to degeneration theory was in fact so pervasive as to have no particular social or political affiliation. Pick aims "to recover the intersection between positivism and a section of the 'Left' in the late nineteenth century" by paying close attention to the consistency between degenerationists, their writings, and their reception across a vast geographical and political terrain (122). Referencing Gareth Stedman Jones's *Outcast London*, Pick agrees that, in England, "it [was] in the 1880s…that the theory of hereditary urban degeneration first received widespread support from the middle classes and found its authoritative backing in the work of Booth, Marshall, Langstaff, and Llewellyn Smith." Pick emphasizes the general public's acceptance of these "authoritative" and "sober" accounts of degeneration alongside the existence of a more extreme "populist literature which saw the social problem in truly cataclysmic terms" (Pick 202).

The critical consensus that emerges from these histories of degeneration is one that is committed to forwarding an image of fin de siècle culture as almost totally dominated by

pessimistic fervor and exclusionary social practices. While scholars do mention some of the rare critics of degeneration, these amount to little more than passing references. Pick writes, "By the 1890s, the critique of *dégénérescence* was gathering pace. Many doctors and psychiatrists from both France and abroad, including the young Freud, treated the model with a new caution and skepticism" (101). He also specifically alludes to literary resistance to degeneration:

> Where the work of doctors like Morel, Magnan, Lombroso and Maudsley sought in various ways to refine the taxonomic codes of insanity and criminality, a number of fictions in the later-nineteenth century characteristically probed the discrepancy between form, character and history, and implicitly interrogated the validity of any determinist methodology. (163)

However, Pick's discussion of literary answers to popular medicine is limited to a survey of the usual suspects, *Dorian Gray*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, and *Dracula*, and their ambivalent representations of scientific authority. Greenslade similarly lists some of the negative responses to Austrian physician Max Nordau's bestseller *Degeneration*,[1] including those of H.G. Wells, Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, and William James (125-129). He concludes that "Nordau's very polemical success helped undermine the status of degeneration as a serious diagnostic category, particularly in the area of mental pathology" (128). Despite this acknowledgment of resistance from certain quarters, Greenslade's priority is to illustrate the prevalence and popularity of

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[1] Greenslade writes of *Degeneration*: "*Entartung* was a sensation in Germany, and, shortly after, it reached Italy as *Degenerazione*. It was translated as *Dégénérescence* in France the following year, and as *Degeneration* in 1895 in America and England, where it ran to seven editions in six months and was the most spectacular of a clutch of literary successes of that year" (120). He adds, "*Degeneration* was a wholesale denunciation of tendencies in modern art—particularly literature. Nordau's targets included Wagner, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Tolstoi, Zola…. Nordau's central thesis concerns the pathology of artistic production. The artist produces his art as if the brain emitted vapours; both the act of production and the work manifest the pathological condition" (121).

degeneration theory in nineteenth century literature, a mirroring of the enthusiasm for degeneration in Victorian culture as a whole. Writing of Nordau's popularity in America in the 1890s, Linda L. Maik determines that the preposterousness of Nordau's theory can be traced to his infelicitous reliance on "a psychology too much in its infancy." His popularity, however, can be similarly traced to an audience that "also struggled in the psychological dark." Emphasizing Nordau's universal appeal, Maik claims that "the only one prescient enough to doubt the validity of the criminal stigmata theory was [George Bernard] Shaw" (621). The pattern repeats in other histories of degeneration, where brief concessions are made to the existence of protestations against the validity of degeneration theory at the end of the nineteenth century, only to be subsumed by the familiar refrain that scientists, novelists, and the general public were equally swept up by its allure in the years preceding the rise of eugenics and the World Wars.

If prior studies of degeneration at the fin de siècle leave some gaps to fill, this is because their avowed purpose is to demonstrate that degeneration was a pernicious ideological weapon enthusiastically wielded by nations and individuals. These historians, for the most part, have not been focused on teasing out the nuanced contemporary response to degeneration theory and have instead concentrated their efforts on accurately portraying an era overcome by fear of disease and moral degradation. Angelique Richardson in *Love and Eugenics*, however, devotes one of her chapters to a fin de siècle critic of degeneration and eugenics, Mona Caird, and gives us a rare glimpse of a different fin de siècle, one that is aware of its own pessimism and its destructive application of scientific theories to human subjects. For the most part, though, critics dwell exclusively on the escalation and endurance of degeneration theory's popularity. As Pick writes, "It may well be that we have to look to 1945 rather than 1914 to find degeneration really in

retreat, truly and consistently a matter of mainstream scientific disavowal and embarrassment" (237).

My aim in this dissertation is to complicate the popular image of the fin de siècle as uniformly pessimistic by examining the continuities between a range of novelists, as well as other late nineteenth century writers from such disparate fields as psychology and cultural criticism, as they critique degeneration theory. Some of these writers, like Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, and Sarah Grand, are typically read as promoting a degenerationist agenda, while others, like George Bernard Shaw and Mona Caird, are recognized today for their outspoken opposition to degeneration. In uniting these apparently contradictory perspectives, I demonstrate that skepticism of degeneration theory, awareness of its inconsistent logic, and discomfort with its implications is a more important feature of fin de siècle culture than has hitherto been acknowledged.

The writers are further united by a common impulse to utilize the figure of the artistic genius to defy degeneration theory. I examine five works of fin de siècle fiction that incorporate protagonists whom we can identify as either incipient or realized artistic geniuses through the telltale signs of genius that originated in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Romanticism. David Higgins points out that there were competing definitions and ideas of genius in the Romantic period (Higgins 5). However, a few key features of these definitions endured into the late Victorian period and are central to my argument, including the following: the "restricted, 'elitist' sense" of genius as that which "refer[s] to a small group of special individuals whose creativity was supposedly unbound by material considerations"; the genius "as a highly spiritualized being who is completely separate from the debased everyday world"; the idea of fame or "posthumous reputation" as markers of genius; genius as possessing "sensibility

and intuition"; and genius as "offering a theory of human value based on mental aptitude rather than rank or wealth" (Higgins 3-6). Added to these familiar conceptions of Romantic genius in the late Victorian era is a newfound emphasis on the biological and hereditary dimensions of the genius's innate creative wellspring. The intersection between the Romantic conception of artistic genius and theories of degeneration in the fin de siècle novel is significant, I argue, because geniuses are represented as possessing unique talents that arise spontaneously within them; the "naturalness" of the genius makes it the chosen topos by which novelists combat conceptions of degeneracy. To defy such a hopeless concept of degeneracy (hopeless because hereditary, incurable, and fixed), an extreme solution, the natural genius, is reimagined by novelists, cultural critics, and scientific or psychological theorists at the fin de siècle. Those who revisit the naturalness of genius at the turn of the century do so with the aim of exposing the false logic behind an influential biopolitical discourse.

In Victorian studies it almost goes without saying that at the end of the nineteenth century the figure of the artist or artistic genius became the object of unfriendly scrutiny and speculation, especially when associated with homosexuality or the New Woman, the prime victim being Oscar Wilde. A narrative of artistic pathology emerged in the 1890s with the rise of experimental techniques in modern art and literature as well as the increasingly frank inclusion of sexually explicit or controversial content among avant-garde playwrights, novelists, composers, and visual artists, a group that self-consciously defied Victorian decorum in their works. As Greenslade writes,

> It was only in the mid-nineteenth century that the idea of genius, particularly the artistic genius, became gradually medicalised; the revered Romantic figure was displaced by the

post-Romantic deviant. But by the late 1880s, there had developed a newly focused fascination with the artist as a deviant subject. (123)

If innovative artistry was reviled at the end of the century as deviant and degenerate, how could the genius topos be an effective mechanism for challenging the claims of degenerationists? After noticing the proliferation of representations of genius in texts concerned with degeneration theory, this became one of the main questions guiding my research. For if the modern artist is simply another type in a long list of people categorized as degenerate (among them prostitutes, hooligans, criminals, idiots, hysterics, aristocrats, and the urban poor), then the degenerate artist would presumably be no more capable of exposing the fallacies of degeneration than these others. However, the unique quality of the innovative artist that ultimately secures her distinction from the degenerate rabble is her indivisibility from the conception of the natural genius. Although degenerationists like Max Nordau spill much ink in their effort to prove that modern artists and the canonical geniuses of the history books are essentially different in kind, the scientific dependence upon the idea of natural genius in a variety of contexts in the late nineteenth century opens a door through which emerges a shrewd critique of degeneration and its theoretical underpinnings.

The contradictory representations of artistry in Victorian culture facilitate the fin de siècle novel's challenge of degeneration theory. Namely, the glorification of what I am going to call "canonical" or historical geniuses among proponents of degeneration theory weakens their claims against modern or unconventional artists, a fissure in logic that the novelists I examine manipulate for their own purposes. This strategy is most apparent in H.G. Wells's *The Wonderful Visit*, Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*, and Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, but is ultimately observable in all the novels treated in the forthcoming chapters.

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, for instance, Thomas Hardy yokes recognizable features of the genius, including aesthetic sensibility, visionary capacity, and natural responsiveness to music, to Tess, an individual especially vulnerable to accusations of pathology within degenerationist discourse. My analysis of *Tess* begins the dissertation because the novel enacts the process by which fears of urban environments were escalating in the late nineteenth century. It illustrates how Victorians increasingly attributed hereditary degeneracy to individuals rather than allowing for poor living conditions and economic turmoil to account for the chaos of city life. In *Tess*, Angel Clare is represented as a follower of the social purity movement, and the purity activists' selection of the city as the focal point of their sexual reform agenda was motivated not only by high rates of prostitution, but also by the increasingly popular concept of urban degeneration. Moral reform was intimately tied to mounting fears of degeneration in London because the problem of prostitution and the spread of disease (especially syphilis—categorized as hereditary—the physical manifestation of moral depravity that could be passed on to children[2]) were, like the supposedly shorter statures or inveterate laziness of city dwellers, used as evidence that slum conditions in London resulted from the growing biological inferiority of its inhabitants rather than a broken economic or political system.[3] A consequence of the pathologization of the city was the idealization of the healthiness of the countryside. In *Outcast London*, Gareth Stedman Jones explains that late nineteenth century social scientific studies on the condition of London display a common "belief in the innate superiority of the country immigrant over the London born" and social scientist "Llewellyn Smith connected the

[2] See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 188-193, for a discussion of prostitution and syphilis at the fin de siècle.

[3] See Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, 129.

demoralization of the East End with the comparatively low proportion of provincial immigrants to the district" (129, 130).

Hardy situates the action of *Tess* within this fraught historical context. Through Angel, Hardy formulates a critique of determinist and degenerative ideologies by focusing on Angel's displacement of fears of urban decay onto Tess's individual body. While other texts commenting upon degeneration and the city in this era might debate the legitimacy of degenerationist accounts of urban dwellers,[4] Hardy instead develops a narrative centered upon a degenerationist's approach to the countryside and a country dweller to reveal the problematic consequences of a conception of degeneracy increasingly biologized and distanced from its original ties to environment. Furthermore, Hardy introduces what in other fin de siècle novels becomes a central feature: the use of the "innate" trait of artistic genius as a means to combat degenerationist logic. Hardy highlights Angel's extreme interpretation of theories of urban degeneracy in order to reveal the consequences of a discourse that burdens the bodies of oppressed individuals with the ills born of poor social and economic conditions. Tess's possession of the Romantic traits of aesthetic sensibility, sensitivity, and intuitive vision is the means by which Hardy signifies her uniqueness and humanity against Angel's reductive interpretations of her character through heredity.

It is in H.G. Wells's *The Wonderful Visit* that we see a more deliberate and systematic use of artistic genius to articulate a forceful argument against the legitimacy of degeneration theory. I compare Wells's novel with George Bernard Shaw's rebuttal of Max Nordau's *Degeneration*

[4] See Greenslade's chapter on "Degenerate Spaces" (47-64). He mentions George Gissing's *The Unclassed* and Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* as examples of this perspective, and analyzes Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* for its representation of the "'urbanising' of rural life," a major concern of degenerationists fearful of the city's power to corrupt (48-52, 54).

published in the American periodical *Liberty* in 1895 (later republished in book form as "The Sanity of Art" in 1908). Both Wells and Shaw exploit the degenerationists' contradictory approach to art, characterized by their celebration of "canonical" or historical genius and their simultaneous repudiation of modern artists as degenerate. Nordau and the degenerationists are always at pains to explain how canonical geniuses differ fundamentally from so-called degenerate artists of the late nineteenth century. To further this end, Nordau in his transnationally popular pseudo-scientific study, *Degeneration*, discusses a number of established artists from the historical canon, including, for example, Goethe, Shakespeare, Schiller, Mozart, Beethoven, Leonardo da Vinci, and Cervantes (Nordau 14, 178, 202). These are the "healthy" geniuses whose names should never be uttered in the same breath as those of the degenerate artists of the late nineteenth century, such as Wagner, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Wilde (193). Beethoven, Nordau writes, "was such a stupendous genius that it is, in fact, difficult to imagine how he can be surpassed, or even equalled…. It is also conceivable that there are limits which it is impossible for any given art to pass at all, so that a very great genius says the last word for it, and after that no progress can be made in it" (202). But even Nordau has difficulty maintaining the distinction between the two species of artist, canonical and degenerate. Nordau references the visionary powers of these authentic geniuses from history, which renders their art a "glimmer of light…[that] projects itself into the future, and gives us at least a dream-like idea of the outlines and direction of our further organic developments" (333-334). Recognizing that this statement comes too close to the manner in which degenerate artists and their fans characterize the role of modern art at the fin de siècle, Nordau immediately qualifies it with the claim: "This is not mysticism, but a very clear and comprehensible fact" (334). Whereas the visionary pretensions of degenerate artists can be reduced to a sickly "mysticism," true visionary power exists in

canonical geniuses alone, though here, as elsewhere, Nordau knows himself to be on shaky ground as he creates these distinctions. Nordau is disgusted that the modern artist "believes himself to be possessed by a peculiar insight lacking in other mortals," but delights in the idea of visionary power when it is attached to Beethoven or Shakespeare (19). Writing of Wagner's musical innovations of the *leit-motif* and the unending melody, Nordau is scandalized that these manifestations of the degenerate composer's "aesthetic delirium" have resulted in "Wagnerian fanatics…plac[ing] him above Beethoven" (197). Nordau contemptuously recognizes that Wagner "designates unending melody as an advance in music," but rejects the belief of Wagner's audiences that it is a musical innovation that leagues him with the likes of Beethoven. "It is really," Nordau writes, "a return to [music's] primeval starting-point…a morbid reversion to the most remote and lowest grades of evolution" (201).

The contradiction between the degenerationists' glorification of visionary power and their denial of its possible existence in any individuals other than the canonical artists of history is a gap in logic that H.G. Wells and Shaw utilize to challenge the core tenets of degeneration theory. Shaw's strategy to expose the absurdity of Nordau's pathologizing interpretations of modern artists is to question Nordau's expertise as an art critic, providing a genealogy of artistic movements in order to demonstrate the continuities between canonical and modern genius. Wells similarly includes both good and bad art critics among his characters whose different reactions to the Angel's performances of modern music on the violin signal their differing levels of sensitivity to modern art. Wells suffuses the Angel with the same visionary powers, aesthetic sensibility, and extraordinary artistic ability that degenerationists erroneously claim are reserved for the canonical artist alone. Chronicling the tribulation of the noncanonical or unconventional artist is thus a tactic Wells employs to interrogate the entire logical structure that undergirds

degeneration theory because, if this theory can mistake artistic vision and innovation for degeneration, it is equally likely to mistake other forms of advancement, health, or evolutionary progress for degeneration as well.

The Wonderful Visit undermines degeneration theory by redefining modern music and critical expertise; the novel is primarily an attack on false science and interpretation and uses artistic genius to mobilize this attack. *Trilby* by George Du Maurier similarly reclaims its heroine from the stigma of hysteria, understood to be a degenerative illness at the fin de siècle, but does so by examining the origins of musical virtuosity in the subconscious mind. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *The Wonderful Visit* focus on erroneous external interpretations directed against the supposed degenerate based on faulty evidence (an urban aristocratic lineage in the case of Tess and production of modern music in the case of the Angel), demonstrating the parallels between the pathologization of the urban poor and modern artists at the apex of degeneration theory's popularity. In *Trilby*, Du Maurier turns inward, speculating on the psychological makeup of hysterical individuals and their affinity with artistic geniuses. I read *Trilby* in comparison to works from the developing field of psychology, F.W.H. Myers's *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* and E.S. Dallas's *The Gay Science*, to explicate a trend observable in all of these texts: interrogation of pathological approaches to hysteria and degenerative illness by way of an examination of the extraordinary and artistic emergences of the hysteric.

In *Saint Hysteria*, Cristina Mazzoni explains that a late nineteenth century tendency, exemplified best by physician Jean-Martin Charcot in his 1886 work *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art*, to reduce mystical experiences to mental pathology by way of the blanket explanation of hysteria instigated a new approach to hysterical phenomena by theorists who wished to

recuperate not only the mystical experiences of the historical saints who were the objects of Charcot's retrospective hysterical diagnoses, but also the everyday victims of a symptomatology that would reduce complex psychological response to mere madness and degeneracy. Thus, Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer in their medical reformulation of hysteria would include "an exaltation of the mental endowment of hysterics against the frequent accusations of degeneracy and intellectual deficiency which plagued these patients at that time" (Mazzoni 43). While Wells and Shaw defend modern art and artists through representations of genius, Du Maurier, Myers, and Dallas adopt a similar strategy but in the process expand its application from defense of modern artists to defense of hysterical or otherwise mentally compromised individuals. The "automatic utterances" of hysterics (examples of these would be clairvoyance, automatic writing, unexpected language fluency, or, in the case of Trilby, unprecedented musical ability) are redefined as sharing a kinship with the poetic and artistic inspirations of Wordsworth and other canonical geniuses. By comparing Du Maurier's bestseller to emerging psychological theories, we can see how the use of artistic genius to combat accusations of degeneracy has transformed from a suggestive possibility in *Tess*, to a targeted rejection of Nordau's pathologization of the artist in *The Wonderful Visit*, to a total reversal of the meaning of degenerative illness in *Trilby*.

Both *The Wonderful Visit* and *Trilby* examine the integrity of unconventional artistic emergences: modern art in Wells's Angel and subconscious musical ability in Trilby. By concentrating on the beauty and transcendence of unconventional artistic production, which is otherwise pathologized in Victorian culture, the novelists suggest that, when interpreted correctly, art can provide the necessary evidence to prove degenerationists wrong and undermine their sweeping claims. But artistic ability, more commonly referred to as "genius" in the late nineteenth century, could also be used by proponents of degeneration and eugenics to legitimize

their claims that some individuals are inherently special and should be systematically reproduced through selective breeding, while lesser humans with no such special traits of genius should be eliminated. The questionable glorification of canonical genius among degenerationists and eugenicists is the subject of Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* and Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus*, the two feminist fin de siècle novels I analyze in chapter four. *Trilby* and *The Wonderful Visit* both reject the logic of degeneracy by exploring the parallels between unconventional artistry and canonical genius. Grand and Caird, to a certain extent, share the same tendency, portraying their New Woman heroines as Romantic geniuses who are pathologized and disowned by their societies. However, these feminist novelists are more direct in their opposition to the definitions of canonical genius that are used by eugenicists like Francis Galton to assure the public of the benignity of selective breeding. Their use of the conventions of Romantic genius to prove the worth of their heroines against the assertions of degenerationists thus moves a step beyond the representations of genius in Hardy, Wells, and Du Maurier because, rather than primarily defending a pathologized protagonist, Grand and Caird also reveal the large-scale implications of a scientific discourse that only allows for the existence of inherent or natural ability in a small percentage of the human population.

Natural genius was such a popularly held belief in post-Darwinian Victorian culture that theorists frequently invoked the most tried and true names to appear in the rolls of canonical genius to illustrate the efficacious powers of heredity and the desirability of reproducing the genetic material of these superior natures; Nordau's love of Beethoven, described above, is an example of this trend. Francis Galton, eminent social scientist who coined the term "eugenics" in 1883, argued in his *Hereditary Genius* of 1869 that selective breeding of human genius would ensure evolutionary advancement, whereas leaving breeding to chance or choice would

perpetuate social and intellectual stagnation. The concept of natural genius was integral for eugenicists, who used it to argue that well-managed selective breeding would eventually yield a utopian world populated by exclusively superior individuals. In *Hereditary Genius*, Galton writes:

> The world is always tormented with difficulties waiting to be solved—struggling with ideas and feelings, to which it can give no adequate expression. If, then, there exists a man capable of solving those difficulties, or of giving a voice to those pent-up feelings, he is sure to be welcomed with universal acclamation. We may almost say that he had only to put his pen to paper, and the thing is done. I am here speaking of the very first-class men—prodigies—one in a million, or one in ten millions, of whom numbers will be found described in this volume, as specimens of hereditary genius. (Galton 79)

Just as Nordau reserves for the canonical genius the visionary powers that act as a "glimmer of light…[that] projects itself into the future, and gives us at least a dream-like idea of the outlines and direction of our further organic developments," so does Galton claim of rare prodigies that they are the only ones among millions that can "give adequate expression" or "voice" to the evolving ideas of the age, while all other mediocre people stumble about blindly, utterly incapable of this kind of extraordinary insight or contribution to evolutionary advancement (Nordau 333-4).

The indispensability of the concept of natural genius for those Victorian theorists who planned to use tenets of Darwinian evolution to aid their proposed eugenic changes to social policy cannot be overstated. Though proponents of positive eugenics were more likely to focus on the mediocrity rather than the depravity of certain groups in the human population, whereas degenerationists were certainly more interested in their depravity, the difference in degree

between depravity and mediocrity when it comes to the aims of eugenic theory is slight indeed. Degenerationists hoped that the depraved human "residuum" would die out because their hereditary conditions meant they were beyond help or rehabilitation (Stedman Jones 283, 288-9). Both positive and negative eugenicists hoped very much the same thing for the mediocre or unfit majority. Negative eugenicists hoped it rather more aggressively, perhaps, but this does not mean that the race improvement strategies articulated in positive eugenics were not motivated by the same conviction of determined inferiority that also served as the founding principle of degeneration.

Chapter four examines the feminist response to the eugenicist argument of natural ability as it was conceived by Francis Galton in *Hereditary Genius*. I argue that Grand and Caird both chronicle the development of the female artist in a milieu that constantly affirms her degeneracy and, in doing so, reveal the flaws of Galton's facile eugenicist conception of natural ability, which will "rise to the top" regardless of circumstance. Caird, a staunch anti-eugenicist, is more assertive than Grand in her claim that latent genius potentially lives in anyone, but cannot emerge as a result of the misogyny, entitlement, and arrogance that throws constant doubt on its existence. Caird's plea for the particular artist, Hadria, contains within it the plea that *everyone* be treated as a potential artist, because this is the only way to ensure the extrication of the human race from the brutalizing forces of unjust domination inherent in the discourses of degeneration and eugenics. While Hardy, Wells, and Du Maurier all use the figure of visionary or virtuoso genius to expose the limitations of theories of biological degeneration, the importance of the artist in an anti-degenerationist context reaches its apex in Caird's chronicle of the experience of the genius in a member of a pathologized population, women. Ultimately, Caird provides her

readers with a method of actively reconsidering the unjust pathologization of all dominated individuals through her representation of the suppressed female artist.

Victorian scholars will no doubt wonder where the decadents and their self-fashioning as depraved geniuses appear in my argument. Along with the fin de siècle pathologization of modern artists that Greenslade discusses, the decadents' response to this pathologization is a familiar strand in the history of artistic genius in the Victorian era. Naming themselves "decadents," modern artists who championed the aesthetic movement or "Art for Art's Sake" valorized the degenerationist pathologization of artists. In their effort to demonstrate their contempt for all middle class values and Victorian conventionalities, the decadent artists reveled in the very qualities that the bourgeois Philistines abhorred: sensuality, pursuit of pleasure, privileging of form over content and beauty over morality. Arthur Symons, in his 1883 article for *Harper's Magazine* entitled "The Decadent Movement in Literature," writes of decadence that "this representative literature of today, interesting, beautiful, novel as it is, is really a new and beautiful and interesting disease. Healthy we cannot call it. And healthy it does not wish to be considered" (Symons 72). More recent commentators point to the decadents' espousal of the Victorian pathologization of their lives and art as a mode of resistance to the biopolitical form of social ostracism exampled in Nordau's *Degeneration*. Mazzoni writes of the "decadent exaltation of malady and neurosis as privileged, albeit destructive, states of being" (119). Queer theorists have examined the kind of phenomenon that Symons describes—a decadence that "does not wish to be considered [healthy]"—and read it as a response to the late nineteenth century taxonomization and condemnation of transgressive sexual identities.[5] By fulfilling the

[5] For instance, John Stokes discusses the decadent response to the Philistines using the example of the word "morbid" in Wilde's "The Soul of Man Under Socialism": "Wilde's aim was to exploit, to invert, rather than directly to refute, the ideal of organic totality. He did so paradoxically, by insisting that it was the capacity of artists to express the morbid that guaranteed

degenerationists' accusations of disease, madness, and depravity in their works and modes of self-representation, decadents attempted to transform an imposed identity into a self-determined one through the only means at their disposal, that is, by operating within the hegemonic formulation of depraved artistry and sexuality laid out for them in mainstream Victorian culture.

The decadents are largely absent from my dissertation about novelistic resistance to degeneration theory precisely because of their desire to fashion themselves as pathological, if paradoxically exalted, beings. A significant aspect of the five novels I have chosen is the authors' commitment to making their claims against degeneration applicable to vulnerable groups and individuals beyond their genius protagonists, and for this reason it is not in their best interest to embrace the pathological dimension of degenerationist discourse as the decadents frequently do. The novelists use the genius topos in a restricted Romantic context, differing from convention primarily in the degree of emphasis they place upon the innate or hereditary quality of genius. The unequivocally constructive features of the genius are always foregrounded in these works because inherently constructive qualities distance morally complex individuals from accusations of degeneracy when little else can. While the decadents prioritize the self-fashioning of their identity and do so by antagonizing their opposers, integrating pathological elements into their valorization of art and genius, the novelists I consider concentrate on the conventionally constructive qualities of the genius figure because these qualities produce a system of values that both degenerationists and antidegenerationists consistently uphold in their writings. By exposing this shared value system and interrogating its inconsistent usage in scientific contexts, the novelists diverge from the main concern of the decadents, whose value system is diametrically

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them a place in universal discourse. This was a typically Wildean move, but not uncommon in the nineties, when many of the great aesthetic debates took their shape from the interaction between minority and majority, elite and mass, margin and centre" (Stokes 28).

opposed to that of the Victorian public, and who therefore aim to represent the destructive potential of pathologized genius in their works.

In *Degeneration*, Nordau writes of one of his least favorite modern artists: "Wagner is the last mushroom on the dunghill of romanticism" (194). Such was the prevailing attitude among certain late nineteenth century theorists and the Victorian middle class public, both of whom believed the glories of genius to be restricted to the history books and modern or unconventional art to be nothing but the diseased productions of so many degenerate mushrooms. One happy outcome of the inordinate hostility degenerationists direct toward modern artists is the occasion it provides for renewed ruminations on the nature of art and genius. Though appearing in different guises and contexts at the fin de siècle, the figure of the artistic genius becomes for many novelists the one "type" of organism that is capable of conveying the hopeless inadequacy of popular late nineteenth century scientific schemas that allow for the easy but destructive arrangement of human beings into deterministically inferior or degenerate types. With the help of the genius, novelists are able to expose the inconsistencies, injustices, and potential outcomes of degeneration theory. My first chapter will start by providing a more nuanced history of the development of large-scale pathologization in the late nineteenth century by considering Thomas Hardy's representation of Tess's victimization at the hands of Angel Clare in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

CHAPTER 1

Urban Depravity, Rural Unsophistication: Hereditary Taint in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

In the 1890s, according to Angelique Richardson, "hereditarian discourses were moving away from Darwin, and increasingly underplayed environmental factors, coming to focus on the biology and biological history of the individual" to account for apparent instances of degeneration among humans (*Love and Eugenics* 202). As "the debates between hereditarians and environmentalists over the role of biology escalated," Richardson points out that "the argument increasingly developed into a circular one, in which bad living conditions were taken as proof of bad heredity" ("Eugenics and Freedom" 275, 276). Shifting their emphasis from the environment to individual bodies as the self-contained source and locus of degenerative pathologies, observers of urban decay were better able to exonerate themselves of responsibility for the poverty, disease, and social unrest among the lower classes that resulted from industrial upheaval and overcrowding in cities. Though replacing environmental accounts of urban decay with increasingly hereditarian ones, the significance of environment could not be divorced entirely from narratives of degenerative illness due to the strong association between the pathologized "residuum" and their geographic location, the city slums of the East End of London (Stedman Jones 283). The strength of environmental association even within a newly articulated conception of hereditary pathology resulted in a bifurcated vision of environment forwarded by degenerationists and social purity activists in which rural inhabitants were seen as healthy and free from contagion, while urban dwellers were seen as biological degenerates, circulating disease among themselves within their urban setting.

Daniel Pick discusses the increased responsibility individual bodies shouldered within discourses of degeneration as a result of the conceptual relocation of the source of disease from unhealthy environments to the persons who inhabited these environments. He writes, "What we begin to see is an insistent cross-referencing of social preoccupations about the city with the specifically physical description of an impoverished nervous system and circulation" (Pick 191). He claims that "it is the degenerate rather than degeneration which was most deeply opposed. The notion of society as an organism…becomes an increasingly 'dead metaphor', in other words a metaphor used literally, in the social criticism of the late-Victorian period…. The body itself was symbolized in new ways, its dramatized image standing as a figure of society" (180). Richardson similarly writes that the fin de siècle witnessed "a new emphasis in fiction on the link between sexuality and disease, and a new focus on the body as a marker of health" (*Love and Eugenics* 122). As Pick's comment about the "dead metaphor" of the social organism makes clear, the fin de siècle's pathologization of urban dwellers was not the same as the conceptualization of a metaphorical "body politic," in which the condition of society is represented through an abstracted diagram of the human body, familiar from history.[6] Instead, the bodies of urban dwellers themselves were diseased; they were a scourge on the health of the nation because of their hereditary illnesses and needed to be segregated and ultimately erased, eventually leading to the formulation of the theory of negative eugenics as a solution to urban poverty and disease. As eugenicist Arnold White writes in 1885, there is "nothing that the nation

[6] See, for instance, the frontispiece to Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*, published in 1651. As Kenneth Olwig explains, Hobbes's image is "a particularly famous example of the depiction of the body politic as an assemblage of bodies within a larger body of a figure representing the state" (Olwig 87).

can do for these men except let them die out by leaving them alone" (quoted in Stedman Jones 288-9).[7]

In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), Thomas Hardy critically examines the displacement of environmental concerns onto the bodies of individuals within degenerationist discourse. Hardy represents Angel Clare's conflation of an idealized rural environment with Tess's rural body as a result of his fears of degeneration. Angel requires consistency between Tess's body and environment; her body needs to be pure, healthy, and free from the sexual contamination that stands for a variety of what Victorians categorized as hereditary urban illnesses, both physical and moral. When faced with the knowledge that Tess is not a virgin, this sign of her physical and moral depravity further symbolizes for Angel Tess's inconsistency with the rural ideal of health and purity in degeneration theory. Angel blames what he understands to be her depravity on the hereditary influence of the aristocratic D'Urbervilles, whom he associates with both aristocratic and urban degeneracy. Hardy's representation of Angel as a follower of the social purity movement situates his rejection of Tess within fin de siècle fears of urban degeneracy and the increasing pathologization of urban individuals through arguments of hereditary transmission of vice. Though a country-dweller, Tess's descendance from the medieval D'Urbervilles allows Angel to explain her apparent viciousness through competing but intersecting accounts of aristocratic and urban degeneration. Hardy highlights Angel's extreme interpretation of theories of urban degeneracy in order to reveal the consequences of a discourse that burdens the bodies of oppressed individuals with the ills born of social and economic chaos. Through the topos of the Romantic genius, Hardy represents an ideal mode of perception that allows for recognition of value and resistance of unjust pathologization in a degenerationist context, features of the genius

[7] See Arnold White, "The Nomad Poor of London," *Contemporary Review* xlvii (May 1885): 715.

that Angel noticeably lacks. Furthermore, Tess's possession of the traits of aesthetic sensibility, sensitivity, and intuitive vision is the means by which Hardy signifies her uniqueness and humanity against Angel's reductive interpretations of her character as fixed through heredity and environment.

In *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel*, William Greenslade argues that as Thomas Hardy was forced to revise *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* to make it palatable for the Victorian public, he increasingly relied on the deterministic concept of hereditary degeneration to account for Tess Durbeyfield's fall from virtue. Describing the changes to the novel that were "intended to sharpen the influence of heredity" as "an elaborate authorial strategy," Greenslade demonstrates that they were "directed at strengthening the influence of heredity in order that [Tess] be held less responsible for her actions" (Greenslade 160-162). Although other aspects of the novel indicate that Hardy was critical of hereditary degeneration, his increasing reliance on heredity to shoulder the blame for Tess's behavior contributes to a reductive account of her character as biologically determined and fixed. While Tess's own resistance to deterministic discourses constitutes "a radical affirmation of the autonomy of the self in the face of the stories which the genes are made to tell," Greenslade concludes that in both *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy is unable to extricate himself fully from the ideology of determinism, notwithstanding the fact that he frequently shows characters like Tess, Sue Bridehead, and Jude "struggling to free [themselves] into autonomy and self-awareness" (159, 174). Citing an additional example of Hardy's critical distance from hereditary determinism in his poem "Proud Songsters" from *Winter Words* (1928), Greenslade points to "the awesome power of the reproductive cycle" in the poem, claiming that "in its sheer randomness, this potent reappearance of life…is, surely, neo-Darwinism at its least reductive" (111). Angelique Richardson similarly emphasizes Hardy's

resistance to deterministic accounts of human life, claiming that "Thomas Hardy appreciated the close relations between organism and environment and valued the complexities of the natural world. [He] share[s] ground with postgenomic science which emphasises the dynamic relations between world and organism, questioning traditional boundaries, rejecting essentialism" ("Darwin and Reductionisms," no pagination).

Other critics, however, are less certain that reductive scientific discourse and biological determinism are rejected in *Tess*. Sally Shuttleworth writes of Hardy's "subscription to theories of hereditary transmission of character traits" and notes that "in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy left it open to question whether heredity itself, or merely the *idea* of heredity, functioned as a determining cause" (Shuttleworth 136). Additionally, in her account of Hardy's "concessions to culture and science" in his incorporation of deterministic conceptions of the gendered brain in his novels, Rachel Malane writes that Hardy "challenges gender norms that he perceives as 'man-made' but succumbs to or bolsters gender norms that he believes have a biological basis" (189, 159). He "enforces an inequality in the sexes' brain function, an inequality that was ubiquitous in Victorian literature and science" (188). Whether to uphold popular conceptions of feminine emotionalism and weak intellect or to provide explanations for unconventional behavior through biology, Hardy incorporated deterministic theories into his novels despite adopting a critical stance in many instances.

Greenslade, Shuttleworth, and Malane draw attention to Hardy's ambiguous relationship with determinism, reductionism, and one of the most pervasive examples of determinist logic at the end of the nineteenth century, hereditary degeneration. While he may be suspicious of the legitimacy of determinist ideologies, or at least cognizant of their potentially devastating effects, Hardy, as these critics indicate, does not go so far in his novels as to deny their possible

influence on his characters' behaviors and fates. However, Greenslade's and Richardson's similar commitment to acknowledging the complexity of Hardy's approach to ideas of autonomy and the "dynamic relations between world and organism" suggests that Hardy's conflicted investment in nineteenth century theories of heredity and determinism continues to be a tantalizing area of study for Hardy scholars.

While Greenslade focuses on Tess, Sue, and Jude in his effort to forward an understanding of Hardy as a thoughtful critic of degeneration in addition to its strategic advocate, less attention has been given to Angel Clare's place in Hardy's deployment of determinist logic in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Through Angel, Hardy critiques degenerative ideologies by representing Angel's displacement of fears of urban decay onto Tess's individual body. Though Angel's objectification of Tess has been commented on extensively, the manner in which this objectification fits within a larger problem of environmental and hereditary determinism has yet to be accounted for in terms of Angel's complex attempt to inhabit a world ruled by fears of urban degeneration.[8] While other texts commenting upon degeneration in this era are more interested in the plight of urban dwellers or characteristics of urban spaces,[9] Hardy instead

[8] See, for instance, Margaret R. Higgonet's discussion of Tess and her "voice" in "A Woman's Story: Tess and the Problem of Voice," 18-19. Penny Boumelha writes of the "male images and fantasies" directed at Tess, including the "pink cheeks and rustic innocence of Angel's patronizing pastoralism" (*Thomas Hardy and Women* 125). Lovesey discusses Angel's idealization of Tess in "Reconstructing Tess" and writes, "Angel's passionate idealism…leads him to naively overvalue superficial signs of purity and wholeness in the world" (915). I would like to suggest further that Angel receives an impetus for his idealizing tendencies from scientific theories of the time, which he uses both to formulate and then to justify his bifurcated view of the world. For Angel, superficial signs of purity and wholeness, such as virginity, become excessively important because of their extrapolated significance within the context of degeneration and eugenics.

[9] See Greenslade's chapter on "Degenerate Spaces" for a discussion of the fixation on urban decay in both fictional and non-fictional writings in the late nineteenth century (47-64).

focuses on a degenerationist's approach to the rural to reveal the consequences of a conception of degeneracy increasingly biologized and distanced from its original ties to environment.

I. **Degeneration, the City, and Social Purity**

The tension between Clare's supposedly modern, secular viewpoints that he exhibits in the beginning of the narrative and his unexpected return to a conservative and misogynistic ideology upon Tess's confession of her "fall" puzzles readers, fellow characters, and perhaps even the narrator of the novel itself, who accounts for the alteration as simply the hypocrisy of a man who "was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings" (Hardy 265).[10] With such an assessment at play within the narrative, it comes as no surprise that historically the reception of Clare by readers has been largely unfavorable. James Hazen provides a summary of the standard reaction to Angel in early criticism:

> Critics of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* have always been extremely harsh on Angel Clare. Albert J. Guerard, for example, refers to the "insufferable" and even the "nasty" Angel Clare…. Dorothy Van Ghent, echoing Guerard, writes of Angel's "prudish perversity," and says that in his "conceited impotence" he manages to "violate Tess more nastily than her sensual seducer." (Hazen 129)

Though the novel certainly invites these kinds of negative responses to Angel's hypocrisy, the body of criticism also displays scholars' steady attempts to explain his behavior in terms of the contemporary social or cultural problems, especially in relation to religion, that it is meant to reflect. In a 1967 article on "the ache of modernism" and Hardy's novels, for instance, David de Laura proposes that "Hardy's exposure of Angel's 'conventional standard of judgment' seems directed, not simply against a monolithic Victorian or 'Christian' moralism, but in particular

[10] Unless otherwise noted, all citations for *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* refer to the Penguin edition, edited by Tim Dolin, 1998.

against a special variety of late nineteenth-century compromise" between "the new creedless religiosity and the old morality" (De Laura 391, 390). More recently, Oliver Lovesey suggests that the reason "Clare somewhat bombastically renounces his father's Christianity, but… still stumbles on elements of traditional social morality" and why he "bypasses the resurrection, but cannot negotiate around Tess's 'unintact state'" is because Tess's "virginity replaces the resurrection in his religion of unbelief" (Lovesey 913-914). Lovesey argues that Angel displaces religious faith in Christ's resurrection onto a material substitute, Tess's virginity, and that the revelation of her lack of virginity then catapults him into a despair akin to the despair of annihilated spiritual belief, "the void of an unbeliever's hell" (924). While I am also concerned with Angel's problematic fetishization of virginity in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, I believe that it is significant that his obsession with purity extends beyond Tess's virginity to encompass rural space as a whole, a space in which Tess's virginity constitutes but one part. The very capaciousness of Angel's devotion to purity is what situates him squarely within the environmental binaries characteristic of later theories of urban degeneration.

As De Laura claims, specific circumstances in late nineteenth-century culture inform Hardy's response to society in the novel, and the best place to look for such a local treatment of social problems is in Angel, described by Hardy in later editions of the novel as "a sample product of the last five-and-twenty years."[11] I propose that we can elucidate Angel's rejection of Tess when he realizes that she is not a virgin, and thus a fallen or unvirtuous woman, by examining it in the context of the medically motivated "social purity movement" of the 1880s and 1890s. As others have demonstrated, social purity activists diverged from their progressive women's rights agenda in the era before the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1885 and

[11] See Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1909. 302.

became increasingly conservative adherents of theories of degeneration, eventually committing to eugenics as their movement's main platform.[12] Referring to determinist theories of degeneration in late nineteenth century works of the naturalist genre, Angelique Richardson explains a popular social purity novelist's difference from the naturalist writers of the same period. She writes, "In striking contrast to the naturalists, who had no aim, or belief in the past or future, [Sarah] Grand's aim was future certainty, through the application of knowledge gained through close reading and interpretation of the past" (*Love and Eugenics* 127). Social purity activists set themselves in sharp distinction to the positivist materialists of the era, such as naturalist writer Emile Zola. Unlike positivist materialists, social purists retained an interest in assuring "future certainty" through the identification and perpetuation of favorable hereditary traits through the examination of individuals' ancestral history, ultimately seizing upon eugenics as the only way to save society from degeneration. Angel, like late nineteenth century social purity activists, attempts to resolve the all-encompassing destruction forwarded by degenerative theories by positing the existence of diseased and healthy spaces. Though Hardy emphasizes that Angel's belief in the countryside as a pastoral ideal of healthiness and purity is an imaginative construct built upon Angel's exposure to classical pastoral poetry and other myths, Angel's approach to the country and his fear of the city also illustrate the damaging effects of a conception of tainted urban environments that can be easily displaced onto individual bodies with the rising influence of hereditarian explanations for disease and mass poverty.

[12] Richardson writes, "The idea of rational reproduction has its origins in the social purity movement which developed apace in the 1880s…. By this time the social purity movement, a loose association of religious and moral crusaders, had become increasingly interventionist, adopting a new, more coercive, policy towards the residuum, and becoming more likely to use the instruments of the state to enforce their moral code" (*Love and Eugenics* 46).

A brief summary of the origins and main concerns of the social purity movement will help clarify Angel's relation to hereditary determinism, urbanization, and degeneration in the novel. In his history of the social purity movements, Edward J. Bristow describes how the activism against the Contagious Diseases Acts and against the low age of consent for young women reached a peak in July 1885, as social purity activists organized a demonstration to help pass the Criminal Law Amendment Act in Parliament: "Estimates ranged up to 250,000 [participants], though the sponsors claimed half that many. While there was always controversy over the estimated size of Victorian crowds, this was certainly the most unusual spectacle of the period." The demonstration included different activist groups marching "with white roses for purity; with banners proclaiming 'Protection of young girls; Men, Protect the Girls of England'…. There were wagonloads of young virgins in white flying the pathetic oriflamme, 'The Innocents, Will They Be Slaughtered?'" (Bristow 113). As a burgeoning movement with an increasingly vigorous public following at the time of *Tess's* inception and composition, this particular manifestation of the mania for social purity, which flares up in different forms periodically throughout history (Bristow discusses instances in Britain from 1700 to the early twentieth century), is likely to have received Hardy's attention. Christine DeVine connects the two when she claims that "in this novel [Hardy] exposes [the] deployment of gendered morality to enforce class identities, not only in fiction, but in the social purity movement generally," although the specific ramifications of the existence of this movement for a character like Angel have yet to be explored (DeVine 80).[13] While the movement's main source of momentum was

[13] Additionally, Oliver Lovesey situates *Tess* within the context of the social purity movement and explains how Tess's position as a child-like victim of rape mirrors William T. Stead's journalistic and sensational exposé of child prostitution in "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," which had the direct effect of raising the age of consent in 1885 (Lovesey 917-925). However, Lovesey does not discuss the later development of the movement toward eugenics or what implications the geographical concerns of the movement have in the novel.

the desire, especially among women's reform groups, to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts (which punished women for the spread of venereal disease when men were equally or more responsible), the proposed solutions to problems of disease, prostitution, abduction, and what was seen as the overall sexual profligacy of modern life included a widespread reevaluation of male sexual identity that extended beyond the repeal of the unfair laws and sought to transform core beliefs about standards of male and female sexuality. Organizations like the National Vigilance Association emphasized the necessity for male chastity and Ellice Hopkins, the founder of several purity groups, "focused much of her efforts on the maintenance of moral purity in men. Her White Cross Army and later White Cross League solicited pledges of chastity from young men (15,000 in 1885) and harked back to the times of medieval chivalry" (Rasor 656). Ann Sumner Holmes writes that "purity organizations…rejected the notion that men were incapable of sexual continence. Instead, they emphasized a man's ability to remain chaste through reliance on his conscience and the exercise of self-control" (Holmes 612).

That Angel embodies many of the principles that Ellice Hopkins at least nominally inculcated in 15,000 young men in 1885 helps us understand the oppositional poles at war in his nature and the function he ultimately serves in the novel. In her 1892 review of the novel, Margaret Oliphant writes that it "is perhaps not less unlikely that a parson's son in Wessex should carry a harp about with him, than that he should be named Angel Clare. He is truly worthy of the name, being the most curious thing in the shape of a man whom we think we have ever met with—at least outside of a young lady's novel." Referring to a similar character from another work she adds, "We can at our ease gently deride David Grieve for being feminine, for he is the creation of a lady. But before Mr. Clare we stand aghast. What is he?" (quoted in Nemesvari, 96). In his discussion of this remark, Richard Nemesvari notes that "at first it may

seem counter-intuitive to describe Angel as 'effeminate'…. But in terms of his ability to control, and when necessary deny, [sexual] arousal, he embodies ideologies used to police *female* sexuality" (96, his emphasis). Because the social purity movement encouraged that the same methods and standards be applied to both sexes to achieve sexual self-control to prevent the spread of diseases like syphilis, which were increasingly associated with hereditary and urban degeneration,[14] it is easy to read Clare's various austerities as conventionally feminine, though by the mid-1880s a large cross-section of English society insisted that this was an appropriate and necessary component of masculine, middle-class identity. Additionally, while Angel's apparently radical rejection of Christian doctrine seems to be at odds with his investment in moral and bodily purity, this contradiction was also legitimized by the movement. R. Danielle Egan, quoting Lesley Hall and Ronald Walters, writes that "attempting to 'investigate sexual phenomena in an (ideally, if not always actually) dispassionate manner using the tools of rationality,' social purity reformers sought a more scientific, as opposed to a solely religious, approach. Ultimately, it was their hope that 'sex, put under rational guidance, might well save the world'" (Egan 446). Tess notices Angel's "care to avoid compromising the happiness of [the dairymaids] in the least degree" and considers it to be "the self-controlling sense of duty shown by him, a quality which she had never expected to find in one of the opposite sex" (Hardy 141). Similarly, in one representative instance, Angel resists kissing Tess's "too tempting mouth" for "tender conscience's sake" (151). Angel exhibits the "dispassionate rationality" of the social

[14] Elaine Showalter writes, "Feminists viewed syphilis as scientific evidence that the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children. It was well known that the worst physical as well as mental effects of syphilis were hereditary. During the nineteenth century, the infant mortality rate for children of syphilitics was exceptionally high; from sixty percent to ninety percent died in their first year. Often described as a 'small, wizened, atrophied, weakly, sickly creature,' resembling a 'monkey or a little old man,' suffering, apish, shriveled, and prematurely aged, these syphilitic children appeared to feminists as living symbols of the devolutionary force of male vice" (Showalter 197).

purists on many occasions, resolving to leave Tess after her confession because he believes his decision "stood on a basis approximating to one of pure reason" (250).

A multitude of examples might serve to illustrate how Angel reflects the foundational concerns of the movement, particularly those surrounding male chastity, though the way in which he grapples with other aspects of the contemporary discourse of social purity lends greater insight into Hardy's purpose. Because of the movement's association with the problem of prostitution and the spread of venereal disease, the social purity activists believed that their biggest responsibilities lay with the city, and high rates of prostitution and engagement in illegal or unadvisable sexual activity were seen to be afflictions of city life and modernity particularly. Lesley Hall writes that "social purity and sex reform" in the last decades of the nineteenth-century "had common roots as responses to the phenomena of urbanization and modernization" (Hall 37). Danielle Egan similarly explains that "modernization and the breaking down of traditional norms and mechanisms of social control signaled a significant societal turning point for purity reformers" and that "urbanization offered a unique condition for reform" (Egan 449). The purity activists' selection of the city as the environment most in need of sexual reform was motivated by the increasingly popular concept of urban degeneration. Victorians conceived of prostitution and the spread of disease as hereditary moral afflictions.[15] Like the supposedly shorter statures or inveterate laziness of city dwellers, the prevalence of prostitution and venereal disease in urban centers was used as evidence that slum conditions resulted from the biological

[15] Elaine Showalter writes that in the late nineteenth century, "the major source of infection, men were told, was the body of the prostitute. The prostitute was the agent of corruption and contamination, whose putrid body bred stench and disease" (193). Syphilis "provided the occasion for sexual and social purity campaigns and for a retreat from the liberalization of sexual attitudes" (188). Syphilis was a "symbolic sexual disease that [took] on apocalyptic dimensions and [was] interpreted as signaling the end of the world" (Showalter 190).

inferiority and hereditary moral depravity of its inhabitants.[16] A consequence of the pathologization of the city was the idealization of the healthiness of the countryside. In *Outcast London*, Jones writes of a common "belief in the innate superiority of the country immigrant over the London born" (129). As in the texts Stedman Jones examines, in *Tess* Hardy alludes to a conception of innate urban weakness when Angel tells Tess that the milk that urban dwellers receive from the country needs to be watered down before they can drink it. Londoners will drink the milk "not as we send it. When its strength has been lowered, so that it may not get up into their heads" (187). Angel's quip about the sale of watered down milk to city dwellers to increase profits also situates the novel in a context of urban overpopulation and degeneration. Writing of the 1880s, Megumi Kato explains that "in late Victorian Britain, the redistribution of the population to cities created a demand for milk far removed from its source. In the intervening period from farmers to consumers, milk was subject to contamination and infection" (Kato 5). The contamination of milk between country and city gave rise to essays like "Milk and National Degeneration" and "Discussion on the Control of the Milk Supply" at the turn of the century (Childs 34). Although Angel does not explicitly connect milk with the ideas of contamination or degeneration, his insinuation that urban dwellers are not strong enough to handle country milk, unlike hardy rural inhabitants, connotes the same conception of urban weakness and decay that Stedman Jones reveals to be prevalent in the social scientific texts at the time.

Similarly, Richardson describes the development of a "Garden City Movement" at the turn of the twentieth century, which, influenced by the rural utopian imaginings of William Morris in *News From Nowhere*, envisioned "improving the conditions of working-class lives

[16] For instance, in 1871 the *23rd Annual Report of the Poor Law Board* cited "the failure of 15-year-old London boys to reach the required standards of height and girth" and it determined that "a stunted growth is characteristic of the race" (Stedman Jones 129).

through the marriage of town and country" (*Love and Eugenics* 134). On the one hand, social purity activists entertained the idea that integration of country elements into the city, either through immigration of rural laborers or the redesign of urban spaces into a "garden city," would have the effect of mitigating urban degeneration; on the other hand, however, many believed that quarantining working class urban spaces was the only solution to the spread and self-perpetuation of degeneration. Stedman Jones claims that "the absence of a proper historical explanation" for urban poverty "drove [social scientists] to mythological conclusions" based on the traditional opposition of country and city (138).

Theorists emphasized the risk of contamination should degenerate urban dwellers and healthy country dwellers come into too close contact with each other. The Victorian middle class, using the hypothesis of rural superiority, concluded that "the long-run consequences of the [rural] migration into the towns would be a progressive deterioration of the race" because hardy rural dwellers would be tainted by urban contact (Stedman Jones 286). Richardson writes that "the theory of degeneration underpinning analyses of the urban poor came increasingly to focus on the division between country and city, bringing environmental and biological concerns together in the name of regeneration" (*Love and Eugenics* 132). The fear of contamination of the as yet healthy countryside through urban contact created a desire for the containment of poor urban dwellers. The increasingly hostile approach to the urban poor was reflected in the abandonment of programs to moralize and rehabilitate this population, hitherto a popular practice within Victorian charity organizations: "Through their exposure of the extent of over-crowding, misery, 'vice,' and crime among the poor, [propertied London] put into question the whole stock of assumptions upon which the work of moralizing the casual poor in the 1870s had been based" (Stedman Jones 282). Giving poor urban dwellers up for lost, degenerationists concluded that

maintaining a safe distance from the city's contaminating influence was the only viable protection for those outside the slums. As Stedman Jones writes, "In the mid-1880s, the more predominant feeling was not guilt but fear. There was little empathy or even sentimentality in the descriptions of the poor that came out of the growing literature on 'Outcast London'" (285).

The double threat of hereditary and environmental contagion in an urban context is apparent in the degenerationists' designation of the city as a space that was not only aberrantly immoral, but one that also facilitated the transmission of sexual profligacy through birth in an endless cycle among its inhabitants. Egan writes that "employing…contemporary scientific discourses on heredity, purity campaigners produced a highly ambivalent narrative on sexuality" (447). She adds, "Purity discourses conceptualized the etiology of vice as the result of contagion within the life of the child…. Girls raised by prostitutes were believed to 'catch' the deviance from their mothers." Speculation about the sources of sexual depravity produced a theory of both environmental and hereditary contagion that needed to be managed as best as possible through self-control and avoidance of the perils of city life. In Egan's example about the prostitutes, for instance, the daughters may either develop deviance through imitation or inherit it through blood. Childs points out that in 1895 criminologist and degenerationist R.L. Dugdale claimed that "harlotry may become a hereditary characteristic and be perpetuated without any specially favoring environment to call it into activity" (Childs 72).[17] Dugdale's statement perfectly reflects a state of affairs in which a problem initially associated with the untoward conditions of a city environment, prostitution, is reconstituted in hereditary terms at the end of the century. Angel in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* can be read as Hardy's enactment of the theories of the countryside to emerge from the growing fear of "Outcast London." Through Angel, Hardy displays the

[17] For original passage see R.L. Dugdale, *The Jukes*, 26.

consequences of a view of the world that is predicated upon fear of urban contact and hereditary degeneration: the pathologization and subsequent destruction of Tess, a country dweller who, despite her ruralness, is subject to Victorian conceptions of "Outcast London" due to the displacement of environmental concerns onto individual bodies toward the end of the nineteenth century.

While social purity reformers found the city to be of special importance in the definition of their cause and motives, their perspective on modernity is most relevant to *Tess* and Angel Clare when we consider what it signified for social purists' conception of rural culture. As I suggested above, if city conditions were increasingly biologized and displaced onto the bodies of "degenerate" individuals, then the country served as the touchstone against which this degeneracy could be compared and validated as aberrant. Referencing several well known social purity activists from the nineteenth-century, including Henry Varley, Elizabeth Blackwell, and Samuel Gregory, Egan discusses the city/country dichotomy present in the discourse of social purity:

> Societal influence was thought to be particularly perilous for children who lived within the confines of the city. The omnipresent danger of a corrupt social order and over abundance of "licentious" individuals produced an atmosphere that parents needed constantly to defend against. Henry Varley in his *Private Address to Boys* cautioned that society was "honey-combed" with immoral and prurient influences which were particularly dangerous to children. Unlike the strict social norms which governed rural living, modern society imparted "no fixed standard of right or wrong, in relation to sex." American physician and purity reformer Samuel Gregory lamented that the sexual

> instinct "appears two or three years earlier in the city than in the country; and four years younger, there, than nature ever designed." (448)

Although Egan's study focuses on the concept of "childhood" within the social purity movement, her points about the reformers' beliefs surrounding rural living are crucial for a complete understanding of Angel. Idealizations of rural life were certainly nothing new at the end of the nineteenth-century and Angel has clearly internalized some of his rural prejudices from a vast literary tradition stretching back to "pastoral life in ancient Greece," which he attempts to talk to Tess about in chapter nineteen (125). Furthermore, one of the constitutive characteristics of the rural in the pastoral tradition is that it is a particularly "moral" space. Jeffrey Duncan explains that in eighteenth-century novels such as *Joseph Andrews* "the value of the rural life…is that it is a setting wherein, because of its simplicity, a character can best develop and lead the good, i.e., the moral life. Simplicity renders it subject to the control of reason and good nature; therefore the intellect can fashion the institutions appropriate to the practice of virtue" (Duncan 520). Angel undoubtedly subscribes to what Hardy represents to be this somewhat false or over-simplified understanding of rural life, but his vision of the country does not appear to be strictly limited to the literary idealization we see operating in Duncan's description. The interesting point to take away from the social purity activists' rhetorical implementation of the rural as a particularly moral space in a time of degenerate modernization is that they, too, seem to have internalized portions of the cultural and literary myth of the idealized countryside, but they have transformed this myth into a specifically sexual reality, positing that what makes the rural more "moral" than the city is that in rural spaces sexual initiation occurs later, chastity is easier to maintain, and people in the countryside, unlike those in the metropolis, are not beset by irresistible sexual desires, unnatural and premature, that mark the biological degeneration of these city dwellers

from healthy and normal to sexually perverse and diseased. As Donald Childs notes, "The very pursuit of sexual gratification as an end in itself was taken as a sign of degeneracy" (Childs 72). Thus both Angel and the social purity reformers ignore an equally integral portion of the literary pastoral—where wanton sexual liaisons are frequently celebrated or taken lightly (as in the carpe diem tradition)—in their effort to construct a space that, juxtaposed to the corrupt city, acts as proof that physical and moral purity is possible and natural. Angel's inability to view the country outside of his rigid conception of sexual control and renunciation becomes apparent when he and Tess are courting each other, and the narrator says that Angel did "not fully [trow] that in the fields and pastures to 'sigh gratis' is by no means deemed waste; love-making being here more often accepted inconsiderately and for its own sweet sake than in the carking anxious homes of the ambitious" (174). To "sigh gratis," or to love for "its own sweet sake" before an official engagement, establishes the character of the countryside as far other than Angel's chaste understanding of it.

A hypothetical result of social purity's form of rural idealism within the movement is represented by Hardy in his treatment of Angel's perception of the country in opposition to the city and the degree of urgency with which he sets out to prove to himself that the country and its inhabitants conform to a particular conception of healthy pastoralism. Hardy alludes to a developing conception of the rural that combats the threat of degeneration's contaminating influence by positing the existence of a space that is removed from urban vice. Minutely documenting Angel's thought processes and experience of the rural allows Hardy to render his treatment of Tess as a predictable, if unfortunate, outcome of the increasing influence of degenerative theories on late Victorians. Hardy emphasizes the troubling implications of Angel's perspective and the possibility for oppression and cruelty inherent in his investment in the moral

and physical purity of rural inhabitants as a result of his expectation that individual bodies conform to his bifurcated conception of environment.

Hardy figures the results that follow upon the adoption of a degenerationist worldview in his representation of Angel's conflicted approach to Tess as a country dweller in the episodes leading up to and including their marriage. Keeping in mind the role that the city and modernity played both in the social purity movement and in theories of degeneration, Angel's youthful indiscretion, his torrid "eight-and-forty hours' dissipation" in London with a Londoner, occupies a more significant place in the narrative than a simple anecdotal backstory that establishes Angel's status as a hypocrite (225).[18] What we learn from this detail in Angel's history is that his ability to control his sexual desire is figured principally as a spatial matter. Fearing that urban vice can be contracted through either heredity or immersion in a metropolitan environment, Angel considers an affair he has with a woman in London to be proof that the city must be avoided to combat the widening reach of sexual depravity.

Angel's association of vice with urban environments comes to the fore when he describes the risk he ran to his own moral health when he visited London and had a sexual affair with an urban woman. Before the incident in London occurred, Angel tells Tess, "I loved spotlessness, and hated impurity, as I do now" (224). Nevertheless, the perils, temptations, and conditions of the city were too much for him, and in this particular environment he found it all too easy to renege on his principles. Describing his experience as being "tossed about by doubts and difficulties like a cork on the waves," Angel's prized talent for self-control was no match for the

[18] Angel's widely acknowledged hypocrisy is based on the fact that, though he is not a virgin either before he marries Tess, he abandons her because he finds out that she is not a virgin. This plot point is typically explained as Hardy commenting on the frustrating Victorian double standard that says women must be virgins before they are married when the same criterion never applies to men, an assessment that I do not contest, although I believe this moment in the novel has additional layers of complexity.

"much-older" woman who "entrapped him," and whom forever after Angel associates with urban profligacy (116). Disgusted with himself for a mistake that, in his mind, the city of London engendered, Angel consequently develops "an unconquerable, and almost unreasonable, aversion to modern town life" (116).

Social purity reformers in the 1880s and 1890s taught young men like Angel Clare that the city's activation of sexual impulses was a thing to be feared and shunned for the sake of society as a whole, and Angel's permanent removal to the countryside signals that, in his imagination, he has lighted on a space that stabilizes the necessarily unstable ethic of male chastity that is integral to his identity, because he believes it to be an enduring component of this environment. In the country, he finds that he can resist his sexual impulses with little trouble as long as his faith in the purity of the country is maintained, reinforcing our sense of the association in Angel's mind between the countryside and the possibility of safety, health, and purity in an otherwise unmanageably blighted and degenerating world. Angel's removal to the countryside after his experience in the corrupt city reflects a popular belief among social purists, that "environment could have a negative effect, but if the biological material was sound then the effects might be reversed through transplantation to a new environment" (*Love and Eugenics* 144). The importance that Angel ascribes to the myth or understanding of the countryside as a space in which sexual self-control, and thus both goodness and health, can thrive is illustrated by instances in which he associates Tess with metropolitan women. Angel finds these moments singularly confusing because he has committed himself to a vision of humanity that does not allow for the elision of the two spaces. As Tess vacillates between accepting and rejecting his proposal, Angel says to her,

> I *cannot* think why you are so tantalizing. Why do you disappoint me so? You seem like a coquette, upon my life you do—a coquette of the first urban water! They blow hot and blow cold, just as you do; and it is the very last thing to expect to find in a retreat like Talbothays…And yet…I know you to be the most honest, spotless creature that ever lived. So how can I suppose you a flirt? (177)

Flirtation is antithetical to his conception of the rural, or a "retreat like Talbothays," because, from his point of view, coquetry "of the first urban water" insidiously seeks to undermine his self-control when he is supposed to be protected from such undermining in the countryside, if, that is, social purity's conception of spatial reality holds true. In what amounts to one of his most Alec D'Urbervillian moments, [19] Angel says to Tess, "Now, Miss Flirt, before you go down…, it is a fortnight since I spoke, and this won't do any longer. You must tell me what you mean, or I shall have to leave this house…. For your own safety I must go" (182). Although this passage is somewhat similar to benign instances in which Angel stops himself from kissing Tess for "tender conscience's sake"—both functioning as illustrations of his chivalrous power to resist temptation—we can see that his association of flirtation with metropolitan women, and his association of both of these with Tess at times when she appears other than his rural conception of her, threatens to collapse his ethic of chastity into an ethic of sexual license.

If Angel's commitment to chastity is brittle at best when what he sees as Tess's "flirtatious" behavior throws the integrity of the rural into question, his latent licentiousness manifests itself even more dramatically after Tess reveals her past and he has to face "the terrible and total change that her confession had wrought in his life, in his universe" (230). When Tess returns to her mother's house after Angel abandons her, Angel briefly returns to his parents'

[19] Alec D'Urberville justifies his rape of Tess in similar terms, though his capitulation to sexual license does not appear to be spatially determined, as Angel's threatens to be here.

home as well. Encountering his former and devotedly religious love interest, Mercy Chant, in the street, the narrator tells us that Angel "called her close to him, and fiendishly whispered in her ear the most heterodox ideas he could think of" (267). Clare's chivalrous code of honor and chastity are similarly absent in the incident following his cruel treatment of Mercy, when he asks Izz Huett to journey to Brazil with him as his mistress, saying to her, "Remember, you are not to trust me in morals now" (270). Richard Nemesvari suggests that Angel solicits Izz because

> [his] masculine identity has been destabilized just enough for him to try on the part of middle-class seducer and scoundrel.... It is as if the knowledge of Alec momentarily creates for Angel the possibility of a whole other way of being 'manly', but of course this would only replace his own particular destructive vision with a different one. (Nemesvari 104)

Though Angel's behavior here may be partly attributable to his new-found knowledge of Alec and the threat that this poses to his own masculinity, it is important to remember that the libertine side of Angel is not as novel a manifestation as Nemesvari proposes. When Angel tells Tess that she must stop appearing flirtatious "for her own safety," when he whispers "the most heterodox ideas he could think of" to Mercy Chant, and when he nearly enters into an illicit relationship with Izz Huett, what Hardy shows us is that Angel's ethic of chastity conceals a decidedly unchaste sexual propensity that, associated with the city, rises to the surface whenever his faith in Tess's rural purity falters.

II. **The Aristocracy and the City versus the Unsophisticated Country**

Allusions to Angel's hatred of the London metropolis are so sparse in the novel that reading a corresponding fear of urban degeneracy into his disdain for the city and its sexual depravity may seem farfetched; however, empirical evidence of London's sexual depravity is not

Angel's only means of rationalizing his idealization of the health of the rural. Hardy also creates a web of associations between the aristocracy of the past (represented by Tess's D'Urberville ancestors), the aristocracy of the present (represented by Alec D'Urberville's family), and the contemporary city. Angel's fear of hereditary degeneration is primarily figured through his conviction that the D'Urbervilles are the originators of the same sexual depravity that now manifests itself in their rural descendant. Though Alec D'Urberville resides in the countryside with his mother at the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes him as "a gentleman not altogether local" (83). Michael Millgate explains that the "Norman-sounding D'Urberville…also manages to suggest the urban origins of the *nouveau riche* family by whom the name has been appropriated" (*Biography* 294). Hardy alludes to Alec's infiltration of the countryside from an urban context on several occasions. Alec's father originally adopted the name D'Urberville to obscure the scandals associated with his own name of Simon Stoke. Relocating to the "South of England" before the action of the novel, "he felt the necessity of recommencing with a name not quite so well remembered there" (39). Though the narrator implies that the scandals appertain to Stoke's underhanded business dealings, we later learn that he was also a sexual profligate, an attribute that Hardy represents as having been passed down to Alec, who has "touches of barbarism in his contours" and "riotous" cheeks, qualities described as "hereditary" (40, 306). Alec's inheritance of sexual depravity can be read in the context of urban degeneracy because Simon Stoke's profligacy is also syphilitic, the conventional emblem of sexual depravity and urban degeneration in the 1880s and 90s. The narrator recounts Alec's history midway through the novel. We learn of Alec that "after the death of the senior so-called D'Urberville the young man developed the most reckless passions, though he had a blind mother, whose condition should have made him know better" (166). His mother's blindness, which "should have made

[Alec] know better" than to indulge his "reckless passions," is the blindness of tertiary syphilis, originally contracted from her profligate husband.

In the late nineteenth century, syphilis was the epidemic of naval towns and cities and the disease that provided the main impetus for the passage of the Contagious Diseases Acts, applied to garrison towns with high populations of transient military personnel and prostitutes, but which the government intended to expand to include London, igniting furious controversy among women's reform groups that led ultimately to the repeal of the Acts in 1886.[20] Hardy gestures to the urban associations of syphilis not only through Mrs. Stoke-D'Urberville's blindness, but also through an itinerant evangelical man who devotes himself to frightening people away from sexual profligacy in both cities and rural areas. He says to Tess of the biblical warnings he blazons on rocks and fences, "You should read my hottest ones—them I kips for slums and seaports" (80). "Slums and seaports" very specifically refers to the areas that were most strongly associated with venereal disease and the Contagious Diseases Acts. The evangelical exhibits the common attitude toward these areas among Victorians: they are sites of sexual depravity that require special attention if the spread of disease is to be stopped. In *Tess*, Hardy systematically equates the sexual depravity of Alec D'Urberville's family with the sexual depravity of the ancient D'Urbervilles. Additionally, by virtue of Alec's oblique association with syphilis and the Contagious Diseases Acts, the two iterations of aristocratic depravity, ancient and modern, are

[20] Judith Walkowitz writes that the "London Metropolitan police eagerly awaited the extension of the Acts to London, where they hoped to institute a system of *police de moeurs* to supervise and contain the street disorder of West End prostitutes" (Walkowitz 23). Following the repeal of the Acts, however, "with regulation and confinement out of the question, London police found themselves increasingly under pressure from social purity and antivice groups to suppress all the indoor resorts of the West End prostitutes…as well as clear public thoroughfares and theaters of streetwalkers…. Crackdowns and ensuing scandals would keep prostitution before the 'public' eye as a confusing and protean identity" (23-4).

also linked to urban degeneration, though the ancient D'Urbervilles may have lived in mansions on "estates" rather than a city in the modern sense.

The associative links between the aristocracy, biological degeneracy (signified through sexual depravity), and the city developed through the alarmist rhetoric of degenerationists and social purity activists at the end of the nineteenth century. It was not only urban dwellers in the slums of London whom degenerationists pathologized, but also aristocratic individuals, these two groups occupying the extreme outer poles on a social continuum at the midpoint of which stood the middle class. In addition to targeting poor urban dwellers, social purity activists, a primarily middle class group, believed that "the inheritance of wealth, combined with the rule of primogeniture, operated in a dysgenic way, protecting the old aristocracy from the laws of natural selection" (*Love and Eugenics* 151). Angel's ultimate disdain for the D'Urberville ancestry reflects precisely the same tenets touted by social purity. According to the narrator, after Tess's and Angel's rupture:

> [Angel] was embittered by the conviction that all this desolation had been brought about by the accident of her being a D'Urberville. When he found that Tess came of that exhausted ancient line, and was not of the new tribes from below, as he had fondly dreamed, why had he not stoically abandoned her, in fidelity to his principles? (260)

Angel's contempt for "material distinctions of rank and wealth" stems from his conviction that wealth creates the conditions through which the aristocracy inevitably becomes biologically "exhausted" or degenerate, much like disease becomes self-perpetuating in city slums within social purity rhetoric (116).

Throughout *Tess*, the urban is equated with the aristocratic, and both of these are identifiable by virtue of their difference from the rural, unworldly, or "unsophisticat[ed]"

qualities attributed to Tess and her environment (203). When Tess quits her job at the dairy to get married, the dairy workers wonder "who would make the ornamental butter-pats for the Anglebury and Sandbourne ladies," Sandbourne being a fashionable "city of detached mansions" newly "spr[u]ng up" (202, 376). The market for luxuries like "ornamental butter pats" in Sandbourne links the city to the aristocracy. Likewise, Tess associates London with "noble men and noble women," and Angel somewhat unconsciously shares this perspective, divining in the portraits of the aristocratic D'Urbervilles, "women of middle age" and of "merciless treachery," a continuity with the woman, "much older than himself," who "nearly entrapped him" in London (216-217, 116). When Tess receives her wedding clothes from London, her immediate reaction upon trying them on is to imagine herself as a member of the medieval aristocracy: "Suppose this robe should betray her by changing colour, as her robe had betrayed Queen Guenever" (206). The allusion to Queen Guenever's adultery and the symbolic connection between a medieval aristocratic robe and a fashionable London wedding dress crystallizes the association between the ancient aristocracy, the modern aristocracy, the city, and sexual depravity in the novel.

Angel's anxious response to what he sees as the powerfully negative qualities of the city causes him to look at the country as his saving grace—a place in which he can successfully live out the ethic of chastity and validate his chosen course of existence. On the brink of marrying Tess, Angel remembers that "he had entertained no notion, when doomed as he had thought to an unintellectual bucolic life, that such charms as he beheld in this idyllic creature would be found behind the scenes. Unsophistication was a thing to talk of; but he had not known how it really struck one until he came here" (203). "Unsophistication" in the novel is a euphemism for rural purity, and Angel conceives of it as the reward he is guaranteed by marrying Tess instead of a worldly woman with "social standing" (meaning aristocratic, non-rural, and potentially

depraved). He rebukes Tess after she confesses: "I thought…that by giving up all ambition to win a wife with social standing, with fortune, with knowledge of the world, I should secure rustic unsophistication as surely as I should secure pink cheeks" (237-8). Angel's devotion to this vision of the "unsophisticated" and pure rural in contradiction to the aristocratic and depraved city plays a part in determining his complex reaction to his knowledge of Tess's aristocratic lineage. The manner in which Angel's attitude toward the D'Urberville ancestry mutates after Tess confesses her fall stems from the tenets of social purity and sexual determinism that were current at the time of the novel's publication. Shirley A. Martin analyzes Angel's interest in Tess's D'Urberville ancestry in terms of degeneration when she writes that "not only the phenomenon of 'degeneracy,' but the fascination exercised by it, can be read as psychopathology." She suggests that Angel's eventual obsession with the D'Urbervilles, his "rational if excessive contempt for 'old families,'" betrays his own mind's diseased state and can be "put down to…neurosis" (Martin, no pagination). The significance of Angel's excessive "fascination" for Tess's aristocratic lineage extends, I believe, beyond this potential reflection of his own psychopathology and rather serves to reveal the consequences of theories of degeneration: their widespread application to vulnerable individuals such as Tess due to degenerationists' creation of intersecting narratives of urban and aristocratic hereditary pathology.

While Martin and other critics examine the aristocratic associations of the D'Urbervilles, their association with urbanization has received less attention. It would be inaccurate to say that Tess's feudal lineage represents "modernity" in any strict sense of the word since the D'Urbervilles' medieval reign and the perils of late nineteenth-century urbanization could hardly be farther apart temporally and categorically, and yet the double metropolitan roots of the name,

urbs and ville, suggest that this linkage is not the farthest thing from Hardy's mind and, more to the point, Angel's mind. After the pivotal scene in the Chase where Alec rapes or seduces Tess, the narrator mentions the sexual licentiousness of the medieval D'Urbervilles and uses it to explain Tess's experiences in terms of karmic retribution (74). But while for the narrator Tess suffers the equivalent of what her ancestors dealt to others (rape for rape), for Angel Tess embodies the D'Urbervilles' licentious quality itself: after her confession, Tess is unchaste because her ancestors were unchaste in their worldly decadence that corresponds to Angel's experience of the contemporary city. The combination here of not only urban decadence, but inherited urban decadence, indicates that Angel perceives sexual licentiousness to be a biologically transmitted trait that is associated with urban (or worldly, Angel's euphemism for non-rural and depraved) contact, no matter how far removed this contact is in history from one's current existence.

Angel's idea of heredity functions as a determining cause in his rejection of Tess. When Angel enters the scene at Talbothays Dairy, his position on aristocratic ancestry is evidently deeply ingrained in him. He garners a certain amount of notoriety for his opinion on this subject and Dairyman Crick and the dairy employees consider his viewpoints to be common knowledge. Crick tells Tess that on one occasion Angel learned of a dairymaid's aristocratic lineage and "spoke quite scornful to the poor girl for days. 'Ah!' he says to her, 'you'll never make a good dairymaid! All your skill was used up ages ago in Palestine, and you must lie fallow for a thousand years to git strength for more deeds!'" (127). Based on this evidence, Tess is rightfully frightened that Angel will reject her if she reveals her own aristocratic ancestry to him. During their courtship his response to the news, however, is unexpectedly favorable, and he even becomes more enthusiastic about it as time passes, hiring their honeymoon rooms at an ancient

D'Urberville estate, eagerly planning how he will use this "grand card" to impress his parents with his new bride (210). "I am extremely interested in this news—you can have no idea how interested I am," he says to Tess, and it is evident that Angel himself also does not know how interested he is in Tess's aristocratic history, or what particular reasons inform his interest (188). He believes he values her ancestry because it will make her more socially acceptable to his family, but the dramatic change from disgust to enthusiasm, and then back to disgust, that he undergoes during his relationship with Tess indicates that social legitimacy is not all that her lineage conceptually offers him (the superficial status value of the name does not go away with her confession, after all, though his ardor for it does). His statement about the unnamed dairymaid, who must "lie fallow for a thousand years to git strength for new deeds," reveals the significance that the D'Urbervilles ultimately hold for him. Angel's love for Tess and his belief in her absolute purity allow him to come to the conclusion that her family has "lain fallow" long enough for it to have broken its association with urban decadence. In her pure state, Tess acts as a representation of the renewable quality of human nature and proves that the perils of degeneration can be overcome through restitution in the countryside. As a social purist nervous about the power of the city to corrupt and the transmission of promiscuity through both hereditary and environmental forces, he is enthusiastic about the possibility of the sexual redemption of society represented in the pure Tess. After her confession, however, when, in spite of all appearances Tess turns out to have perpetuated her ancestors' legacy (strengthening Clare's sense of environmental and biological determinism), Tess's function as the source of Angel's hope for the future of civilization vanishes, largely as a result of concepts he has absorbed from social purity and hereditary determinism.

Angel's zealous interest in the D'Urberville background when he still believes Tess to be pure cannot withstand the news of her rape or seduction by Alec. When Tess reveals her past he is quick to blame her impurity on her ancestral lineage and, more importantly, on its concomitant urban degeneracy. After she confesses he says to her,

> I cannot help associating your decline as a family with this other fact—of your want of firmness. Decrepit families postulate decrepit wills, decrepit conduct. Heaven, why did you give me a handle for despising you more by informing me of your descent! Here was I thinking you a new-sprung child of nature; there were you, the exhausted seedling of an effete aristocracy! (232)

Angel's reference to her "decrepit will" and "want of firmness" indicates either that Tess represented her fall to have been at least partially voluntary in the confession that we do not witness, or that he simply interprets it as such, but the important point is that he now associates her lack of an ethic of chastity with the hereditary transmission of promiscuity and, more specifically, environmentally determined degenerate ("effete") character traits. On the verge of returning to his sleeping wife after he has heard her confession, Angel notices the portrait of one of Tess's female D'Urberville ancestors: "Sinister design lurked in the woman's features, a concentrated purpose of revenge on the other sex—so it seemed to him then. The Caroline bodice of the portrait was low—precisely as Tess's had been when he tucked it in to show the necklace; and again he experienced the distressing sensation of a resemblance between them" (235). The "sinister design" and, earlier, the "merciless treachery" (217) that he observes in the female faces of these paintings remind him of the woman who "nearly entrapped" him in London, or metropolitan debauchery in general, and the appearance of flirtation that he once considered an inexplicable feature of the pure Tess now, unfortunately, makes all too perfect

sense to him. As one of the primary arguments that the social purity activists used to emphasize the necessity for vigilant self-control, the fragility of chastity and its vulnerability to hereditary and environmental forces frighten Angel away from a woman, as he was earlier frightened away from the city, whose essential ability to monitor vigilantly her own sexual impulses has now been called into question.

A wary approach to the effects of hereditary transmission of urban degeneracy is surely one of the reasons Angel is first to bring up the subject of children after Tess's confession. He says to her:

> Now I put it to you. Don't think of me or of yourself, my feelings or your feelings. That's not all the difficulty; it lies in another consideration—one bearing upon the future of other people than ourselves. Think of years to come, and children being brought to us, and this past matter getting known—for it must get known…. Well, think of wretches of our flesh and blood growing up under a taunt which they will gradually get to feel the force of with their expanding years. What an awakening for them! What a prospect! Can you honestly say Remain, after contemplating this contingency? (243)

Ostensibly concerned with the response of other people toward children with a mother of dubious history, Clare's wording here is suggestive. "Growing up under a taunt" could either refer to ridicule, the most apparent reading, or urban sexual profligacy itself, which, having inherited from their mother, they will "gradually get to feel the force of" along with the sexual development of their "expanding years." Inasmuch as he uses the singular noun, "a taunt," to denote this ridicule, it seems more likely that "a taunt," linked explicitly to "flesh and blood," refers rather more directly to a hereditary affliction, or *taint*, that for Clare, a degenerationist and incipient eugenicist, is a harbinger of more dire consequences than public scandal. According to

Egan, “purity activists believed they could assure a virtuous future if they could guarantee the protection of children,” and Angel would have no way of protecting his children—or the strangely collective “future of other people than ourselves”—if they inherit what he perceives to be promiscuous tendencies from their mother and so perpetuate the cycle (Egan 447, Hardy 243). To procreate with Tess would have the apocalyptic effect of jeopardizing the health and safety of all futurity through hereditary contamination, perhaps especially because the urban taint is deceptively obscured by her aesthetically convincing rural appearance.

III. Sensibility and the Degenerate: Tess as Artist

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Angel regards Tess as a component of the rural environment that he idealizes as a pure and healthy alternative to the corrupt city in the context of late nineteenth century theories of degeneration. His inability to see her as an individual apart from his conception of her ruralness is cited by Hardy again and again as a reason for his ill treatment of her once her moral and physical purity are called into question. Tess’s remonstrance, “I thought, Angel, that you loved me—me, my very self,” reveals Angel’s limited apprehension of her as an individual; she only makes sense to him through his formula of rural “unsophistication” and once she no longer aligns with this formula he can read her as nothing but depraved (228). Tess struggles against his rural idealization of her so that he might see her as an individual and not a component of her environment or a product of her hereditary line. She writes to him, “I am the same woman, Angel, as she you fell in love with; yes, the very same,” negating the importance he attaches to her worldly and depraved lack of virginity (336). But Angel finds it impossible to interpret her character according to her “aims and impulses” rather than her past deeds until he belatedly learns to in Brazil (340).

Throughout the novel, Hardy plays with ideas of sensibility and artistry in relation to both Tess and Angel in order to illustrate the limitations of the reductive forms of thinking which Angel adopts as a degenerationist and applies destructively to Tess. The Romantic genius's visionary capacity, intuition, and sensibility represent an ideal mode of perception that is capable of recognizing the beauty and value of unique phenomena through sympathetic insight. In Victorian literature, this ideal of sympathetic perception is often embodied in a human artist who possesses otherworldly angelic traits. Greta Perletti explains that the "body of the artist" is aligned with the otherworldly or angelic through Victorian representations of the artist as possessing rarefied sympathetic powers and sensitivity to beauty (280). The Victorians imagine Keats and other Romantic poets as "fragile and ethereal genius[es] that can soar high in the realm of supreme art" and who possess a "deeply sympathetic understanding of their fellow beings" (Perletti 281, 283).

Hardy engages with the Victorian reinscription of the genius as sympathetic, insightful, and angelic in multiple ways, the most obvious of which is his characterization of the hero, aptly named "Angel," as an ironic reversal of the Keatsian ideal Perletti describes. Like the Victorians' conception of the Romantic genius as ethereal, angelic, sensitive, and artistic, Angel is at once a transcendent being in human form (in Tess's eyes), a musician, and a supposed visionary. However, like his lack of virtuosity (or even competence) when playing the most angelic of instruments, the harp, Angel's other pretensions to sympathetic genius are consistently undermined (122). We are told that, "though not cold-natured, he was rather bright than hot—less Byronic than Shelleyan; could love desperately, but his love more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal" (192). Angel's "bright," "ethereal," Shelleyean love is really no love at all, only a deceptive approximation of love that, with its catastrophic lack of sympathetic insight,

is unable to see past the reductive categories of heredity and sexual depravity. Angel's ethereality is ultimately a perversion of its Romantic prototype; it obliquely stands for the prudery and narrowness of the social purist rather than the rarefied angelicness of the sensitive artist. Like the sympathetic genius, Angel desires to cast off convention in favor of more refined values. He believes that he has achieved this goal by abandoning the narrow prejudices of his family and cultivating an egalitarian approach to lower class individuals, a self-conceit we know to be false when he abandons Tess. Early in their relationship, when Angel first learns of Tess's ancestry, he says to her "I should have been glad to know you to be descended exclusively from the long-suffering, dumb, unrecorded rank and file of the English nation, and not from the self-seeking few who made themselves powerful at the expense of the rest" (189). Angel reveals his lack of sympathetic insight through his ignorance of Tess's poverty and the reality of her subjugated social position, misreading her absurdly through heredity as having more direct kinship with her rich and powerful ancestors than with the "long-suffering" and destitute masses. Angel's misapprehension of Tess's character and her social vulnerability betrays his lack of sympathetic insight or visionary intuition. The Romantic genius for the Victorians is characterized by an "abnormally acute physiological perception" that allows for his immediate and "authentic apprehension of the world" (Perletti 283). Hardy instead emphasizes that coldness and cruelty are the main characteristics of his anti-genius, leading to Angel's reliance on the inert category of hereditary pathology to explain the complexities of the subjugated Tess. Angel approximates but never meets the ideal of the sympathetic genius, who is supposed to "respond passionately to the external world" in a way that allows for "a sophisticated refinement of sensibility," a quality that is "essential to the ideal self of the future" (Perletti 283, 289).

Angel's lack of angelic genius denotes a corresponding lack of sympathy toward others; this is the first indication in the novel that genius, because it is associated with intuition, sensitivity, and a future ideal, is a useful topos with which to counter the restrictive logic of degeneration theory. Lacking a certain kind of intuition and sympathy has a destructive effect in a world overrun by scientific ideologies, and the concept of the genius allows Hardy to demonstrate not only the consequences of reductive logic, but also the ideal of perception to which flawed humans like Angel should aspire.

Additionally, Tess's possession of the very artistic qualities that Angel lacks signals that genius serves the further purpose of rescuing the victims of reductive logic from devaluation of their individuality. In both Tess's case as an individual and in the case of country dwellers as a whole population, Hardy draws attention to Angel's gradual apprehension of rural inhabitants as unique beings to shed light on his middle class prejudices and their effects on Tess. Additionally, Angel's misunderstanding of country dwellers lays the groundwork for Hardy to ruminate on the nature of Tess's uniqueness, which Angel fails so disastrously to acknowledge. When Angel first begins work at the dairy, "The ideas, the modes, the surroundings [of the rural] appeared retrogressive and unmeaning" to him, and he caricatures country dwellers collectively as "Hodge" or vacuous bumpkins (118). But as he spends more time there, the dairy workers "began to differentiate themselves as in a chemical process…. The typical and unvarying Hodge ceased to exist. He had been disintegrated into a number of varied fellow-creatures—beings of many minds, beings infinite in difference; some happy, many serene, a few depressed, one here and there bright even to genius" (118). Directly following this description of Angel's growing cognizance of the individuality of his fellow dairy workers, we witness an instance of this process of differentiation as it unfolds in Angel's mind. Tess, of course, is the individual being

differentiated from the group in the moment when Angel first notices her. Angel "was ever in the habit of neglecting the particulars of an outward scene for the general impression," and so fails to notice Tess at the breakfast table with the other workers, just as he failed to notice her during the "club-walk" at the very beginning of the novel (another oversight of Tess's individuality that Hardy later implies is partly to blame for the disastrous outcome of her life[21]). As in the club-walk, when Angel "attempted some discrimination" but was unable to differentiate the country girls and so fatefully chose his dance partner at random, at the breakfast table Angel still only apprehends the general "Hodge" or tableau of country people rather than the particular individuals that surround him (17). However, the morning that Angel is "conning one of his music-scores" as the dairy workers eat breakfast is also the morning that he discovers a "new note" among them. Absently daydreaming about the score he is studying, Angel likens the "new note" of Tess's voice to an orchestral part. He says, "what a fluty voice one of those milkmaids has! I suppose it is the new one" (119).

The moment Angel begins to grasp Tess's uniqueness as an individual is also a moment in which he associates her with art, or the figurative artistic productions of her "fluty voice" that stands out among the "babble" of the dairy-workers' conversation. Angel's lack of musical and ethical genius, represented in part by his indifferent harping abilities, is counterpoised to Tess's decidedly more authentic and angelic "fluty voice." Tess's inchoate but manifest artistic inclination is one means by which Hardy emphasizes her uniqueness against interpreters like Angel who would overlook her or reduce her to a fixture of an idealized rural landscape. Tess possesses "an innate love of melody…[that] gave the simplest music a power over her which could wellnigh drag her heart out of her bosom at times" (84). When Angel inelegantly plays the harp at his window, Tess "undulated upon the thin notes as upon billows, and their harmonies

[21] See Tess and Angel's conversation on pages 195-6.

passed like breezes through her, bringing tears into her eyes" (123). As in the passage describing her "fluty voice," in Tess's response to Angel's harp performance what is emphasized is not any literal artistic talent or even sound artistic sense (Angel does not play well), but simply an enhanced sensitivity to stimuli and the unique quality of her mind that gives rise to this sensitivity.

Tess's fluty voice stands out so clearly for Angel at breakfast because of the unusual train of thought it conveys; she describes how "our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive" by "fixing your mind upon…[some big bright star]," to the astonishment of Angel and the other workers (120). Similarly, roused by Angel's harp music, Tess voices thoughts that strike Angel as singular and beyond her years, giving her a "touch of rarity" and making her "impressive, interesting, pathetic" in his eyes (124). Angel observes that among country dwellers there is "one here and there bright even to genius," and the "new note" offered by Tess's philosophizing fluty voice marks her as one of these bright individuals, as Angel begins to recognize but fails to appreciate fully. Her "bright" genius bears the stamp of authenticity in contrast to Angel's inadequate approximations of genius, his "bright rather than hot" Shelleyan love. Confounded by her sensitivity and brightness, Angel determines that "such a daughter of the soil" acquired her ideas "by rote," disbelieving that they could be products of her own imagination (126).

Hardy's characterization of Tess in these moments draws upon traditions of genius and artistic sensitivity. Her responsiveness to music and her disquisition on the soul's ability to leave the body, which she describes from personal experience, follows "a typical late Romantic account of genius as a sort of spiritual energy and sensibility to beauty which leads to strong passions" (Higgins 44). The ethereal dissociation of her soul from her body leagues Tess with the

angelic geniuses Perletti discusses and their "climactic ascent towards an ever more subtle sublimation of matter" (279). Whereas Angel's ethereality is linked to coldness, purity, and unsympathetic restrictiveness, Tess's ethereality is instead a mark of her physiological sensibility and sympathetic intuition. In the novel Tess thinks "how strange and godlike was a composer's power, who from the grave could lead through sequences of emotion, which he alone had felt at first" (84). But this affective power is one that Tess also possesses. The narrator tells us that her "personality…was so far-reaching in her influence as to spread into and make the bricks, mortar, and whole overhanging sky throb with a burning sensibility" (154). Tess's "sensibility," which reveals itself in her affective response to music and which she unwittingly transmits to everything in her surroundings, is similar to the eighteenth century conception of sensibility as refined "aesthetic perception" and "susceptibility to delicate passional arousal" associated with members of the upper class (Van Sant 1).

As a member of the working class, Tess already defies the typical definition of sensibility as that which belongs to upper class refinement; however, Hardy's representation of Tess in this vein is even more novel when considering that the widespread pathologization of working class individuals in the Victorian era meant they were specifically understood as lacking sensibility. As Peter Logan argues in *Nerves and Narratives*, "Unlike the middle class, the Victorian working class is a body in need of sensibility" (Logan 147). An "absence of culture" or "medicalized resistance to culture" was the hallmark of the insensible working class individual in writings advocating for sanitation reform in the early and mid-Victorian period (158, 147). Although Logan does not dwell on the link between sensibility and aesthetic perception in his argument, through Tess we can see that Hardy dismisses the Victorian notion of working class insensibility and replaces it with heightened sensitivity to beauty, drawing on traditions of

Romantic genius to emphasize Tess's individuality and precious rarity when Angel only sees her resemblance to the degenerate D'Urbervilles or worldly city dwellers. Hardy's allusions to Tess's untrained or latent artistry, while not a fully developed theme in the text, situates *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* among other novels written at the fin de siècle in which the artist's plight against degenerationst discourse becomes the central feature.

Furthermore, Tess's possession of sympathetic insight distinguishes her from the false-genius, Angel, and reinforces the idea that Hardy uses the genius topos not only to reassert the value of individuals victimized by scientific discourse, but also to promote a particular mode of perception. The Romantic genius's mode of perception is one that is capable of recognizing beauty and suffering in the world through the same sensibility that allows for aesthetic appreciation in the realm of art. When Angel learns of Tess's past he tells her "you are an unapprehending peasant woman," implying that she lacks the intuitive powers of more refined people who are able to understand the gravity of a loss of virginity (232). However, Angel's misapprehensions of Tess are manifold, and his mistaken designation of her as "unapprehending" is another example of his lack of intuitive vision. Tess's sensitivity to beauty and art, her similarity to the composer, who "could lead through sequences of emotion, which he alone had felt at first," are supplemented by sensitivity to suffering and an "abnormally acute physiological perception" that signify her possession of an ideal of sympathetic insight that Angel so egregiously lacks (Perletti 283). In the famous moment when the abandoned Tess lies alone in a dark wood with the wounded pheasants dying all around her, the narrator remarks,

> With the impulse of a soul who could feel for kindred sufferers as much as for herself, Tess's first thought was to put the still-living birds out of their torture…"Poor darlings—

to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the presence of such misery as this!" she exclaimed, her tears running down as she killed the birds tenderly. (279)

Tess's sympathetic "impulse" for the tortured birds and her authentic display of sensibility through her tears bespeak a physiological response to suffering that is thematically related to her pronounced aesthetic sensibility. Angel is incapable of "apprehending" Tess in the way that Tess apprehends the birds, just as he is incapable of playing the harp angelically or loving through sympathetic intuition. The delicate responsiveness of the Romantic genius to both beauty and suffering provides a model for perception and interpretation that degenerationists like Angel would do well to cultivate in themselves.

As we can see, Angel's acclimation to the countryside consists of several stages. Following the example of his middle class family, he is at first prejudiced against country inhabitants for their lack of education and lower class status. His reduction of country dwellers to "Hodge" then shifts to an opposite extreme when he begins to fetishize the "unsophistication" of the rural Tess to spare himself the contaminating influence of worldly, aristocratic, and urban women, whose supposed sexual depravity is figured as hereditary. Considering Angel's commitment to a vision of the world defined by a spatial opposition between urban and rural, it is fitting that what finally changes his mind about Tess is essentially just another lesson in geography. His companion in Brazil, discussing Tess's fall, says, "Such deviations from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than are the irregularities of vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve" (341). The moment that Angel is forced, by his radical geographical and cultural displacement to Brazil, to view the world as a single "terrestrial curve" that contains within it the "irregularities" of both vales and mountain-chains, both cities and countrysides, he is in a position to reevaluate his conception of rural unsophistication and

abandon its concomitant strictures. Once again, Angel comes to a realization that in his treatment of Tess, as in his treatment of the rural population as a whole when he first moved to Talbothays, he had been "allowing himself to be influenced by general principles to the disregard of the particular instance" (341). Tess understood this to be the case from the moment Angel rejected her upon learning of her past life. Although Tess is an individual possessed of "a personality…so far-reaching in her influence as to spread into and make the bricks, mortar, and whole overhanging sky throb with a burning sensibility," she discovers that, with Angel, "her personality did not plead her cause so forcibly as she had anticipated" because he is blinded by her ancestry (154, 244). Hardy dwells on Angel's misapprehension of Tess's "mighty personality" to strengthen his case against the reductive application of degenerative theories to individuals (154). Tess's strength of personality, her uniqueness, and the heightened sensitivity and sensibility that establishes her affinity with artistic genius all serve to highlight the injustice committed against her when Angel fixates on her D'Urberville forebears above all else in his assessment of her character. Falling under the influence of the "cosmopolitan mind" of his fellow traveller in Brazil, Angel finally begins in earnest to appreciate Tess's "particular" and forceful individuality rather than simply reducing her to a depraved issue of her D'Urberville ancestry; he concludes that "oblivion would fall upon her hereditary link" and that "what still abode in such a woman as Tess outvalued the freshness of her fellows" (342).

IV. Conclusion

Early in the novel Tess frequently rejects the idea of hereditary influence from the ancient D'Urbervilles: "not a thing that had been theirs did she retain but the old seal and spoon" (102). Empty symbolic objects of a lost aristocratic family, the old seal and spoon and their historical resonances are the only attributes of the D'Urberville family that Tess believes can affect her.

However, Hardy does not deny that hereditary influence may play some part in the life of an individual. On more than one occasion the narrator implies that Tess's fate could be the karmic or hereditary outcome of her ancestors' violent and sexual excesses. However, Angel's pathologization of Tess as sexually depraved due to her D'Urberville blood is represented as an extreme subscription to theories of hereditary influence that Hardy is at pains to denounce regardless of his many concessions to heredity in his works.

Hardy questions the extreme pathologizing impulse of degeneration theory through portions of the novel that symbolically connect the rural paradise of the Valley of the Great Dairies to the D'Urbervilles and the city. Though Angel loses faith in rural unsophistication once it has been tainted by urban contact based on the evidence of Tess's lost virginity and "want of firmness," the novel rejects his conclusion by suggesting that the rural environment is made healthier by its figurative commingling with the urban and the aristocratic. Angel seeks a "new-sprung child of nature" in Tess, and values her for her "untraditional newness," comparing her to an inexperienced "wild convolvulus…that opened itself this morning for the first time" (232, 128, 177). The floral and vegetative language refers to his mania for virginity, of course, but also has the effect of figuring Tess as a plant that grows in rural soil. Angel believes that it is possible for plants and people cultivated in rural environments to be totally free from outside influence, to be "new" and untainted expressly because of their newness.

In contrast to Angel's ideal of rural separation from urban worldliness, Hardy repeatedly imagines the contribution of a mythical city to the very soil of the Valley of the Great Dairies. At the beginning of the novel, we learn that the bones of the ancient D'Urbervilles lie beneath a church located in Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill. John Durbeyfield calls this place "a city," while the boy he is talking to replies, "'Tisn't a city…leastwise 'twasn't when I was there—'twas a little

one-eyed, blinking sort o' place" (10). The notion of a lost "city" lying underneath the current countryside ("sub-Greenhill") becomes something of a leitmotif in the novel. Talbothays, in the Valley of the Great Dairies, "stood not remotely from some of the former estates of the D'Urbervilles, near the great family vaults of [Tess's] granddames and their powerful husbands," the same site that Durbeyfield ignorantly terms a city, but in reality is a rural village (100). The narrator describes the flat mead of the Valley of the Great Dairies as "a level landscape compounded of old landscapes long forgotten, and, no doubt, differing in character very greatly from the landscape they composed now" (108). The present landscape differs from the old landscapes from which it was "compounded" because the new site is rural while the old had associations of worldly sophistication. One night when Tess and Angel are walking through the countryside in the Valley of the Great Dairies, they stop to listen to the murmur of the streams:

> From the whole extent of the invisible vale came a multitudinous intonation; it forced upon their fancy that a great city lay below them, and that the murmur was the vociferation of its populace.
>
> "It seems like tens of thousands of them," said Tess; "holding public meetings in their market-places, arguing, preaching, quarrelling, sobbing, groaning, praying, and cursing." (201)

Not only does the valley conjure impressions of an ancient metropolis populated, as Tess imagines, by "tens of thousands," its lushness, greenness, beauty, and fertility can be attributed to the effects of this lost city on the current soil. Rivers and streams, as in the above passage, are associated with the valley's worldly aristocratic history more than once. The Var River in the valley "had stolen from the higher tracts and brought in particles to the vale all this horizontal land; and now, exhausted, aged, and attenuated, lay serpentining along through the midst of its

former spoils" (105). The current landscape, originally inhabited by worldly aristocrats, flattened out into rural fields due to the action of this "exhausted, aged, and attenuated" river that is described in the same terms of pillage and conquest (spoils, stolen) used to characterize the ancient D'Urbervilles (105). Though the river has degenerated (or exhausted itself, the same word that Angel uses to describe Tess, "the exhausted seedling of an effete aristocracy"), it has made the countryside into the lush environment that Angel treasures. The narrator makes this explicit when he describes the soil that the farmers are shoveling in the valley: "The shovelfuls of loam, black as jet, brought there by the river when it was as wide as the whole valley, were an essence of soils, pounded champaigns of the past, steeped, refined, and subtilized to extraordinary richness, out of which came all the fertility of the mead, and of the cattle grazing there" (193). Throughout these passages Hardy emphasizes a long process of flattening, of a variegated landscape becoming a level one, of the soils of the past "pounded" into champaigns, or open fields, and the gradual depletion of a powerful river that represents the former power of the D'Urbervilles. Explicitly contradicting Angel's investment in "untraditional newness" and a "new-sprung child of nature," Hardy proposes that the rustic countryside carries traces of worldly sophistication that in the course of time results in lushness, beauty, and health.

Through these images of a historical city underlying or commingling with the countryside, Hardy questions degenerationist ideals of separation in the present day. Hardy is aware of the increased migration to urban areas and alludes to it in Angel's commentary about the country milk transported to London and toward the end of the novel, when the narrator mentions that country tradesmen, "who had formed the backbone of the village in the past, had to seek refuge in the large centers; the process, humorously designated by statisticians as 'the tendency of the rural population toward the large towns,' being really the tendency of water to

flow uphill when forced by machinery" (352). Overcrowding in cities, the subject of endless commentary by "statisticians" and social scientists at the end of the century, was the source of the same theories of hereditary degeneration that Angel attaches to individuals with urban or worldly associations. In his representation of the Var River and its murmuring streams that intone the "vociferation of [a great city]" within the rural valley, however, Hardy suggests that examining the historical continuity between the ancient aristocracy, the modern aristocracy, and present countryside will also help reveal the interconnectedness of the modern city and the rural, challenging degenerationists' conception of the latter.

Hardy's critique is leveled at the means by which scientific discourses of the late nineteenth century contributed to the ostracism of the more "desperate among mankind," like Tess (301). Perpetuating fears about environmental determinism or hereditary transmission of urban degeneracy, according to Hardy, was a counterproductive method that caused the social purity reformers to move beyond their original humanitarian goals and usher in another era of cruelty. It was the belief of the reformers that social purity "might well save the world." Similarly, Angel tells Tess shortly before she confesses that purity "is the only safeguard for us poor human beings" (224). Such apocalyptic visions heightened the already deleterious effects of theories of degeneration by discouraging the rehabilitation of city spaces and encouraging hereditary conceptions of urban degeneracy. Resisting degeneration's powerful impulse toward spatial bifurcation and hereditary determinism, Hardy insists that Tess had "[broken] no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly" (86). Through her husband's incapacity to see Tess as an individual with a "mighty personality" due to his reduction of her to a component of the rural landscape or, later, as a product of her hereditary

line, Hardy underscores the inescapable and detrimental effects of degeneration theory on those vulnerable to middle class prejudice.

Tess's remarkable artistic sensibility and force of personality, though "bright even to genius," are ultimately no match for a view of the world that so easily accommodates the attribution of degeneracy to individuals based on the biologization of environmental concerns. Angel fails to grasp the significance of his lack of sympathy and intuitive vision, resulting in the unjust pathologization of Tess and other working class individuals. Angel's deceptive approximation of genius serves to highlight the importance of a particular mode of perception that is characterized by both aesthetic appreciation and sympathetic insight in a context of scientific reductionism. The perspective of the Romantic genius is exemplified in Tess, who both possesses the traits of sensibility and aesthetic appreciation, distinguishing her as an individual for the benefit of middle class individuals like Angel, and embodies the genius's sensitivity toward suffering. The traits of genius—apparently spontaneous, physiological, and of transcendent origin—model a proper approach toward the interpretive difficulties posed by hereditarian discourses in addition to offering an alternative cultural framework for accurately "apprehending" pathologized individuals in the late nineteenth century. Early in her relationship with Angel Tess contemplates "what might have been with me" (125). She says, "My life looks as if it had been wasted for want of chances!" (125-6). Chronicling the victimization of a woman of great potential at the hands of both her society and her degenerationist lover signals Hardy's participation in a particular late century effort to counter degeneration's growing popularity through representations of misunderstood genius.

CHAPTER 2

The Innovations of Art and Science in H.G. Wells's *The Wonderful Visit*

The early works of H.G. Wells are primary examples of fin de siècle degenerationist literature. It almost goes without saying that two of his most well known works from the 1890s, *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), are pessimistic responses to the optimism evident in post-Darwinian theories of evolutionary progression. From the *Time Machine's* grim prognosis for the future of the decadent Eloi to *Moreau's* collapsing of the distinction between human and animal life, Wells's works, in Steven McLean's words, "[challenge] the optimistic (or 'excelsior') contemporary interpretations of evolutionary theory" (McLean 42).[22] However, while critics are quick to point out that Wells rejects the optimistic evolutionary narratives that otherwise dominate post-Darwinian conceptions of both individual and collective development, the complexity of his pessimistic response has not been sufficiently accounted for in prior readings. Interpretations of Wells's fin de siècle works imply that a rejection of evolutionist optimism neatly correlates with an allegiance to degenerationist pessimism, the latter necessarily proceeding from the former. In these readings Wells's pessimistic texts act as dark warnings to humanity of the folly of evolutionist optimism and the related futility of "positive eugenics" (McLean 27). Although I agree that *The Time Machine* and *Moreau* are critical of evolutionary narratives of progress, the critique of eugenics cannot be

[22] Similarly, Simon J. James writes that "many of Wells's books are concerned with contradicting received wisdom," highlighting *The Time Machine's* insistence that "humanity is not indubitably progressing towards an indefinite future but might in fact be degenerating" (James 39). Kelly Hurley, describing Wells as "a champion of Darwin who labored to explain evolutionist science to a popular audience and expounded, with some insistence, even the least popular, least palatable implications of evolution theory," claims that "the purpose of Wells' evolutionary speculations is always the same: to explore the ideas of human impermanence, imperfection, insignificance, and, most especially 'degradation,' or liability to evolutionary regression" (Hurley 55, 58).

easily elided with a critique of evolutionist optimism, but rather constitutes a more complex critique of degeneration theory itself. Wells's critique of degeneration theory and its frequent misapplication among scientists and the public receives its most thorough treatment in his novel published in the same year as *The Time Machine*, *The Wonderful Visit*.

Mistaken for a degenerate by all who encounter him on earth, the Angel of *The Wonderful Visit* plays the violin more beautifully than any inhabitant of the material realm. Although no friend to the aesthetic movement and impatient of the growing notion of "Art for Art's Sake," Wells nevertheless incorporates a representative of the aesthetic movement into this novel in the figure of the Angel. Wells is aware that interpretations of biological degeneration in individuals, increasingly prevalent in the last decade of the nineteenth century, rely for their legitimacy on spurious forms of classification and the scientific reduction of all unusual phenomena to pathology. In *The Wonderful Visit* Wells therefore aims to expose these false forms of "logic" as the townspeople and the avowed degenerationist, Dr. Crump, direct them against the anomalous individual of the tale, the Angel. As we have seen, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* Hardy explores the link between artists and angelic figures in order to emphasize Tess's possession of qualities associated with Romantic genius. Wells's also explores the kinship between angels and genius in the popular imagination by making the hero of *The Wonderful Visit* both a modern artist and an angel. Wells's Angel fulfills one of the typical roles of angelic figures in modernist literature. According to Suzanne Hobson, an angel's "relevance…inheres in its ability to figure the 'new', both the technologically advanced and the unexpectedly avant-garde as regards moral and sexual identity." She adds, "This figure is often called upon to take up a position in relation to 'modernity' understood in liberal humanist terms as technological or social progress; the angel appears to support, or conversely to oppose, the advance of science,

industry and even history itself" (Hobson 495). These conventional features of the modernist angel are both reflected and transformed in Wells's characterization of the Angel. Like the modernist angel, Wells's Angel implicitly opposes the "new technology" of degeneration theory through his demonstration of its flawed logic and application. His representation as a miscategorized degenerate means he functions as a dramatic symbolic repudiation of a reductive scientism that is associated with "modern" and innovative applications of evolutionary theory to humans. However, the Angel simultaneously embodies the avant-garde value of modern experimentation in music. The constructive experimentation of musical innovation vies with the destructive experimental use of scientific classification for mastery in the text. By positioning the Angel in dichotomous relation to these two forms of innovation, Wells is better able to express the limitations of apparent advances in modes of scientific inquiry. To elucidate Wells's argument against what he believes to be false classificatory logic in the realm of scientific inquiry, I will examine the novel against one of Wells's own essays, "Scepticism of the Instrument," and George Bernard Shaw's refutation of the degenerationist Max Nordau in his article for *Liberty*, "A Degenerate's View of Nordau" of 1895, which was retitled "The Sanity of Art" in 1908. Because "The Sanity of Art" and *The Wonderful Visit* respond explicitly to the English translation of Nordau's *Degeneration*, also released in 1895, a comparison of the treatment of modern art by both Shaw and Wells in response to the popularization of degenerationism will more fully explain the latter's complex usage of theories of degeneration in *The Wonderful Visit*.

Shaw's strategy to expose the absurdity of Nordau's pathologizing interpretations of modern artists is to question Nordau's expertise as an art critic; Shaw provides an explanation of the genealogy and interconnectedness of art movements to undermine Nordau's assertion that

modern music is simply derivative of healthy classical music. Wells follows suit by including both good and bad art critics among his characters whose different reactions to the Angel's performances on the violin signal their relative powers of interpretation and differing levels of sensitivity to modern art. Proper receptiveness to modern art for both Shaw and Wells depends on acceptance of momentary confusion and willingness to concede the limitations of one's own knowledge of a subject, even if one is a supposed expert on that subject, such as a music critic or scientist. Failing to be properly receptive to modern art in both works is related to the charlatanism of false scientists, Dr. Crump and the townspeople in *The Wonderful Visit*, and Nordau in "The Sanity of Art." Good art criticism in Shaw's essay and Wells's novel thus models proper scientific reception and interpretation of anomalous phenomena. A comparison of the two works demonstrates that Wells introduces the concept of modern art into his novel about the pathologization of an Angel by degenerationists in order to question the very methods of this pathologization, which, in many cases, targeted modern art explicitly. Far from conceding the logic of degeneration in his works, as many scholars argue, Wells's representation of the problem of modern art in *The Wonderful Visit* indicates that the novelist uses the particular example of degeneration theory to censure the false forms of reductive logic characteristic of classificatory thought and improper scientific inquiry. The result is Wells's proposal of a new mode of understanding and engaging with apparently anomalous, unconventional, or degenerate individuals. Wells indicates that rejection of reductive classification is simultaneously a transcendence of cruelty. Resistance to taxonomies contributes to the moral advancement of the human race, allowing for progress in the modern age, while reliance on supposedly "enlightened" classifications only results in destruction and moral stasis.

I. Classificatory Thought through the Lens of Degeneration Theory

Zoologist Edwin Ray Lankester's *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* illustrates the turn from the biological analysis of organisms to the demonization of troublesome humans that marks the efflorescence of degeneration theory throughout Victorian culture, a problem that Wells draws upon in his characterization of the Angel. Lankester begins his explanation of degeneration in strictly biological terms as a process whereby an "organism becomes adapted to *less* varied and *less* complex conditions of life" (Lankester 32, his emphasis), using as his example the barnacle, whose "organs of touch and sight had atrophied" due to its undemanding environment (Greenslade 32).[23] Despite this initially neutral emphasis on biological process, Greenslade points out, "like other Darwinian scientists of his time…, Lankester did not hesitate to suggest an analogy with the human species" (32-33). Greenslade explains that "the features [Lankester] observed in the nauplius [barnacle] in its backward evolutionary track also 'disfigure our modern civilization.' 'Possibly we are all drifting', he said, 'tending to the condition of intellectual Barnacles or Ascidians'" (Greenslade 33, quoting Lankester 60). Lankester's formulation relies on a conception of an initial unfavorable deviation from a more perfect norm, a regression from a state of achieved complexity to a state of diminished complexity.

One of the most popular targets of degeneration theory in the last decade of the nineteenth century was the modern artist, and locating the marks of madness in the art, literature, and music of the age became an end in itself for many proponents of degeneration less interested in urban degeneracy generally than in degeneration's possible cultural infiltration. In the estimation of the theorists most fixated on the degeneration of the artist, the prime example being Austrian physician Max Nordau, modern art signaled both the madness and moral depravity of its producers. Like criminals, prostitutes, hysterics, hooligans, poor urban dwellers, and other

[23] Lankester's discussion of the barnacle begins on page 35 of *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism*.

"degenerate" populations, modern artists betrayed the insane and depraved quality of their minds and morals through unconventional behaviors and practices, including an emphasis on "style" over substance in their literary productions, the rejection of realism in visual art, or abandonment of standard patterns and structures in musical composition. In *Degeneration*, Nordau writes:

> There might be a sure means of proving that the application of the term "degenerates" to the originators of all the *fin-de-siècle* movements in art and literature is not arbitrary, that it is no baseless conceit, but a fact; and that would be a careful physical examination of the persons concerned, and an inquiry into their pedigree. […] Science, however, has found, together with these physical stigmata, others of a mental order, which betoken degeneracy quite as clearly as the former; and they allow of an easy demonstration from all the vital manifestations, and, in particular, from all the works of degenerates, so that it is not necessary to measure the cranium of an author, or to see the lobe of a painter's ear, in order to recognize the fact that he belongs to the class of degenerates. (Nordau 17)

Calling upon the authority of an infallible "Science," Nordau insists that evidence of the body's physical degeneration is not necessary in the quest to prove the pathology of the artist. The "works of degenerates," as expressions of mental aberrations within artists' minds, are sufficient enough representations of the degenerate state of both mind and body to foreclose any further debate on the subject. Nordau's shift of the burden of proof from degenerate body, to degenerate mind, to, at last, the degenerate work of art attests to the extremity of the pathologizing impulse against artists at the end of the nineteenth century. In *The Wonderful Visit*, Wells's devotion to legitimate scientific inquiry and his discomfort with the growing popularity of degeneration theory both emerge in his representation of a modern artist.

Wells's fascination with the sciences, initiated during his time as a student at the National School under Darwinist T.H. Huxley in 1879, means that many of his novels illustrate his personal curiosity regarding scientific processes along with his sophisticated knowledge of current scientific theories. Aware of some of the wide-reaching implications of classificatory thought in the sciences and its persistent application to vast swathes of the English population, Wells depicts the consequences of viewing the modern artist through the lens of degeneration theory. He uses the contentious battle between modern art and degenerationists as the ideal context for challenging all forms of reductive thinking that are misconstrued as innovative at the end of the century. In the novel, Wells especially interrogates the universal impulse to categorize and classify phenomena, an impulse that reaches new heights among the degenerationists of the late nineteenth century who, like Nordau, are only able to assimilate unusual phenomena to their current experience and taxonomical categories by pathologizing them. I have demonstrated that in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy suggests that Angel's reduction of particular individuals in the rural dairy community to the prejudiced caricature of "Hodge" is symptomatic of a larger middle class tendency at the fin de siècle to pathologize the more "desperate among mankind," like Tess, through the categories of hereditary and urban depravity (Hardy 301). In *The Wonderful Visit*, the problem of reductive categorization becomes the primary concern of the novel. Wells, like Hardy, finds degeneration theory to be a particularly useful ideology for elucidating the consequences of reductive categorizations, but while Hardy is concerned with the biologization of urban depravity and its unjust application to individuals, Wells prioritizes the concept of categorization itself, examining its limitations in a period characterized by "accelerated taxonomical activity" (Hurley 26).

From the first sentence of *The Wonderful Visit*, Wells addresses a problem of limited vision that will become a systematic theme throughout the work. Describing the fall of "the Strange Bird," the narrator writes, "many people at Sidderton (and some nearer) saw a Glare on the Sidderford moor. But no one in Sidderford saw it, for most of Sidderford was abed" (*TWV* 1). The novel begins with this initial gap in perspective in order to showcase the subsequent reaction of a variety of townspeople to a mysterious and anomalous individual who enters their midst. The Glare represents a distant angel, who has somehow become dislodged from the "Angelic Land" and now flies above earth, until he is shot in the wing by the Vicar of Siddermorton, who mistakes him for a flamingo. After the Vicar binds the wound and escorts the Angel to his house, the novel proceeds to record a series of responses to the Angel's presence in the town by representatives of various institutions: the church, medicine, and the arts. With the exception of the Vicar, no one believes that the Angel is an Angel, despite the evidence of his wings and other inexplicable attributes. Mark Daniel Chilton discusses the purpose of the townspeople's response to the Angel when he writes that "each of these Dickensian caricatures exposes a restrictive prejudice against imagination" (Chilton 7). Incapable of fitting the Angel into their limited realm of experience, the townspeople reject the possibility of the Angel outright, though the Vicar attempts on multiple occasions to recount the story of the Angel's fall and show them his wings. Late in the novel the town's physician, Dr. Crump, says to the Angel, "You are either one of two things—a lunatic at large…or a knave. Nothing else is possible" (*TWV* 201-2). Dr. Crump's inability to perceive the Angel as occupying anything other than the two limited categories of lunacy or knavery is reflected throughout the work in the townspeople, who similarly fail to respond appropriately to this mysterious being. As Chilton points out, the curate Mendham will not even "examine the physical evidence" of the Angel's wings, and, in a telling moment, replies

to the Vicar's pleas to hear his explanation with "I don't wish to understand" (Chilton 7, *TWV* 65). The townspeople's limited perspective and unwillingness to entertain supernatural possibilities, Chilton claims, illustrate the value of imagination, which the townspeople lack to a hopeless extent. While the reductive mentality observable in the townspeople is certainly rooted in their lack of imagination, as Chilton claims, the scientific implications of the townspeople's behavior ultimately extend beyond Wells's comment upon the imagination and go right to the heart of his beliefs regarding the significance of individuality and uniqueness in a destructively taxonomical world.

The representative of the institution of medicine in the novel, Dr. Crump, though unlike the townspeople in that he is willing to examine the Angel's wings, proves to possess no more sophisticated or scientific approach to mystery than the unprofessional townspeople. Crump is a self-professed devotee of the notorious degenerationist Max Nordau (*TWV* 58). Crump examines the wings and immediately reduces them to pathology, calling the Angel "a mattoid," "an abnormal man" as he declares that the wings are "quite natural, quite…if a little abnormal" (58, 55). He describes them as "osseous outgrowths" that he likens to bird and plant structures, a suggestion that refers to his belief that the Angel's wings are representative of degeneration from a more complex (mammalian) to a less complex (avian or herbaceous) form of life (52-3).

Additionally, Crump's unmoved reaction to the Angel and his wings when he examines him puzzles the Vicar and signals to the reader that the average Victorian scientist, like the average townsperson, is too blinded by his preconceived beliefs and his assurance of his own scientific expertise to understand that certain phenomena need to be approached with an appreciation and acceptance of their mysterious qualities in order for them to be understood properly. "Staring without a shadow of surprise at the Angel's radiant face," Dr. Crump sizes up

the Angel and begins to explain the wings in terms of birds and plants (50). Pathologizing the wings, Dr. Crump also insists that the "excessive brilliance" of the Angel's radiant face is "almost worse as a symptom than excessive pallor" (54). When confronted with the Vicar's assertion that the Angel claims in earnest to be an angel, Dr. Crump responds with, "*Ah*!...I expected as much," and rationalizes this too by stating:

> Many of this type of degenerate show this same disposition to assume some vast mysterious credentials. One will call himself the Prince of Wales, another the Archangel Gabriel, another the Deity even. Ibsen thinks he is a Great Teacher, and Maeterlink a new Shakespeare. I've just been reading all about it—in Nordau. (58)

Through Dr. Crump, Wells introduces the falsity of many claims to scientific objectivity. For Wells, Crump's succinct "I expected as much" is emblematic of a serious problem in the realm of scientific inquiry, most evident among degenerationists: the tendency to claim prior knowledge and the corollary failure to consider mysterious phenomena appropriately by simply acknowledging their mysteriousness and potentially variable meanings. For each unusual aspect of the Angel with which Crump is presented (radiant face, wings, the claim to be an Angel), the doctor insists that he already knows the proper explanation for it based on his medical expertise and scientific readings. Thus, the "vast mysterious credentials" that the Angel claims are significantly no mysteries at all for Dr. Crump. Although he later validates the uncommon health of the Angel by stating, "your blood and flesh must be as clean and free from bacteria as they make 'em," he clings to his degenerationist diagnosis because, as he says to the Angel, "[you] can't alter our ideas," even when the evidence warrants a more receptive acknowledgement of the limitations of current scientific taxonomies (135, 140). Wells expands upon the problem of blind faith in one's own expertise and unreceptive attitudes toward mystery later in the novel

when the issue of modern musical performance comes to the foreground. It is through Dr. Crump, however, that Wells firsts establishes a connection between false expertise, false scientists, and degenerate artistry in the doctor's equation of the Angel with Ibsen and Maeterlink. In his use of jargon and references to Nordau, Crump also constitutes a satirical and extreme representation of scientific fads and complacent modernity. The interactions between Crump and the Angel convey Wells's disdain for Crump's false forms of scientific innovation. Though initially limited to a negative reflection of degeneration theory specifically, Crump's behavior and beliefs are ultimately more significant for the argument Wells's constructs throughout the work against all forms of classificatory thought in a misnamed "enlightened age," a project for which degeneration theory simply serves as the most illustrative example (*TWV* 70).

Through the portrait of Dr. Crump Wells critiques medical quackery and fashionable scientific trends (the Vicar significantly can bind wounds just as effectively as this doctor), but the parallels between Crump's narrow-minded subscription to theories of degeneration and the townspeople's inability to consider available evidence in the presence of a mystery can be elucidated by their further connection with an essay Wells's appended to *A Modern Utopia* in 1905. In "Scepticism of the Instrument," Wells argues that the human mind is fundamentally driven to categorize and taxonomize all phenomena within human experience due to the mind's incapacity to process the limitless range of unique individualities that constitute the world. The mind has no choice but to "[obscure] the objective truth that every individuality, both material and organic, possesses its own unique character" as a result of its fundamental limitation of vision and understanding (McLean 157). The mind then proceeds to categorize phenomena based on superficial similarities, ignoring evidence of uniqueness, which Wells believes is of the utmost significance for a true scientific understanding of the myriad beings that populate the

universe. Wells's grandly states that "number, definition, class, and abstract form," or the "regrettable conditions" of the mind's unavoidable taxonomical tendency, serve as the false foundation of logical thought and that, therefore, he "den[ies] the absolute validity of logic" (*A Modern Utopia* 382). Any "logic" that has classification for its basis, including "Hindoo thought," "Greek thought," Plato's ideal forms, and, indeed, all reasoning that relies uncritically for its legitimacy on our flawed "instrument" of classificatory thought, is incorrect and illogical. He writes, "my opening skepticism is essentially a doubt of *the objective reality of classification*" (379, his emphasis).

In *The Wonderful Visit*, Wells initially foregrounds the mind's mania for classification through a description of amateur insect and species collectors among middle class Victorians, including the Vicar. In the fourth chapter, Wells alludes to these relentlessly taxonomizing amateur scientists, who kill rare butterflies because, within a necessarily limited classificatory scheme, rarity and eccentricity can stand for nothing but immorality, just as the unusual but arguably beautiful executions of the modern artist can stand for nothing but depravity and madness in the eyes of a diagnosing physician or scientist (*TWV* 11-12). Wells's impatience with the devotees of classificatory thought, the butterfly-slayers of the Victorian period, aligns him closely with other anti-degenerationist figures of the era and their revelations of the perniciousness of scientific reductionism, especially when it is used to pathologize large populations of people and mark them as incurably depraved. While degenerationists like Lankester employ a conception of morbid deviation from a more perfect norm to define and diagnose instances of degeneration in organisms, in "Scepticism of the Instrument," Wells rejects the suggestion that a more perfect norm can be used to classify morbid deviations from it, because any norm is, in fact, a chimerical production of the flawed instrument of human thought.

Wells writes, "For the most part [Plato] tended to regard the idea as the something behind reality, whereas it seems to me that *the idea is the more proximate and less perfect thing*, the thing by which the mind, by ignoring individual differences, attempts to comprehend an otherwise unmanageable number of unique realities" (*A Modern Utopia* 382, my emphasis). While, on the face of it, Plato's ideal forms and a norm or "average" are contradictory concepts (an ideal presupposes transcendence of mere "normalcy"), in the realm of degeneration theory the "norm" is in fact the ideal for which all organisms should strive. Wells's use of Plato here thus questions the value of norms through the implication that both Plato and the average human mind are mistaken in their assumption that apparent perfection or normality can be used as a guide by which to classify correctly all deviations from this ideal state.

Death and destruction are the only possible results of relying on "norms" to classify unique phenomena. Wells laments, "If it were not for collectors England would be full, so to speak, of rare birds and wonderful butterflies, strange flowers and a thousand interesting things" (*TWV* 11). The slaughter of beautiful and unique beings is "the work of the collector and his glory alone. In the name of Science," and this work is done primarily because amateur scientists believe that "eccentricity, in fact, is immorality…just as eccentricity in one's way of thinking is madness…; and if a species is rare it follows that it is not Fitted to Survive" (11-12). The mind's inability to resist taxonomy and categorization is figured in the species collectors, who cannot process uniqueness as such and only view it as immoral eccentricity, as madness, in order to fit it into their current taxonomies and norms. The "camphorated little drawers" and "glass cases" of the collectors are "the graves of the Rare and the Beautiful," who have been ritually murdered because the flawed logic of classification mandates that they are not meant to live (12). Because of the mind's incorrect and destructive method of taxonomizing in terms of normal or perfect

and abnormal or deviant, Wells instead advocates for proper attention to be paid to the significance and reality of each organism's uniqueness and for largely ignoring the concept of norms altogether.

The Angel, or the "Strange Bird" of the opening chapter, is, of course, one of these rare and beautiful individualities that is shot out of the sky by a species collector (the Vicar) who categorizes him as a possible flamingo, desiring to taxonomize him further by publishing his biological variety as a new discovery in *The Zoologist* (7-8). The narrator laments that the collectors, through their slaughter of rare species, have ensured that nature-lovers will only encounter "commonplace wild flowers, and the commoner butterflies, and a dozen or so common birds, and never be offended by any breach of the monotony, any splash of strange blossom or flutter of unknown wing" (12). Similarly, when the Vicar shoots the Strange Bird from the sky the narrator casts the Angel as one of the rare "breach[es] of monotony" and "flutter[s] of unknown wing" in nature, evident in the description of his "iridescent wings": "not stained glass windows, not the wings of butterflies...no colours on earth could compare with them" (15). The townspeople's treatment of the Angel replicates the attitude of the Victorian collector toward rare species and reveals the taxonomical impulse that is largely unavoidable in the average human mind. The misinterpretations and misdiagnoses of the townspeople allude to the mind's taxonomical impulse, but, more importantly, the townspeople's reaction to the Vicar's many attempts at explanation highlight the deceptiveness of supposed "logic" in a world constituted by a flawed "instrument" of thought.

The townspeople who are confronted by the Vicar's assertion that the Angel fell from the sky, that he has wings, and that he hails from another world, reply with the hostile wish that the Vicar provide a "straightforward" explanation that will account for the Angel in a manner that

will conform with their known experience of the world. As the curate Mendham interrogates the Angel upon his first appearance at the vicarage, he repeatedly asks that the Angel explain his origins, and the Angel repeatedly replies "I really *am* an Angel," the Vicar interjecting, "But Mendham—he has wings!" Because Mendham refuses to entertain any explanation that does not fit his current experience, the circular conversation finally leads the Angel to ask the Vicar, "What *is* the matter with this man?" (69). Mendham's flaw is one that he shares with the rest of the townspeople, who all believe themselves to be "straightforward" individuals, and who use this self-attribution of logical thinking to prevent productive discussion and shut down opportunities for expansion of their own limited vision. The Vicar points out the townspeople's reluctance to "believe [their] own eyes" and give proper credence to available evidence due to their preconceived beliefs, regretting that, to an extent that takes skepticism too far, "nowadays people are so very particular about evidence" (75, 77). Moreover, when he does not receive the preconceived answer he desires, Mendham exclaims, "Surely my question is straightforward enough!" (69.) It is his belief in his own straightforwardness that determines his incapacity to examine available evidence and consider possible explanations for the mystery of the Angel. Mendham also states, "I am convinced there is something discreditable at the bottom of this business. Or why not tell a simple straightforward story? ...Why, in this enlightened age, you should tell this fantastic, this far-fetched story of an Angel, altogether beats me" (70). Mendham's belief that there is "something discreditable" about the Angel and his relationship with the Vicar refers to Wells's statement in the novel about the false belief of species collectors or misled scientists like Dr. Crump, that "eccentricity is immorality," and underscores the potentially harmful and prejudicial effects of classification according to "straightforward" logic.

Additionally, Mendham illustrates that faith in the "enlightenment" of one's own age is a similar failure of the "instrument" of thought to recognize the taxonomical impulse, Wells using "logic" and "enlightenment" as equally specious concepts that lead to further taxonomizing rather than the "doubt of *the objective reality of classification*" characteristic of true enlightenment and understanding (*A Modern Utopia* 379). Early in the novel the Vicar says to the Angel, "Nobody here, you know, has ever seen an Angel, or heard of one—except in church. If you had made your *debut* in the chancel—on Sunday—it might have been different. But that's too late now…(*Bother!*) Nobody, absolutely nobody, will believe you" (73). Unwittingly, the Vicar refers to the stranglehold "straightforward" thought has on the villagers. If the Angel had first appeared in church on Sunday, he would have more convincingly conformed to the townspeople's preconceived notions about angels. Without fulfilling this generic and arbitrary expectation, the Angel becomes a logical impossibility according to the flawed instrument of human thought. The Angel's descent upon the town, here reimagined in the familiar angelic context of a church service, is a conventional image of "enlightenment" to which the townspeople are completely oblivious, though they supposedly live in an "enlightened age." Wells ridicules the complacency of modernity and late Victorians who are satisfied of their own enlightened superiority. The figure of an otherworldly angel is alone is able to convey the possibilities of true modernity and innovation against the strangled logic of false enlightenment.

While the "simple straightforward [stories]" demanded by both species collectors and narrow-minded individuals betray the human mind's reliance on a delusive conception of logic that determines a false understanding of the world, "plain and sensible" readers are similarly conjured by Wells in opposition to the credulous reader of fantasy in order to highlight the merits of a truly reasonable approach to mysterious phenomena. In his analysis of the imagination,

Chilton discusses Wells's engagement with his audience in the novel and his purpose of expanding the imaginations of his readers. He writes, "We are challenged to respond to the vision of the Vicar, who has come to believe in the Angel. Such vision, however, comes at the cost of reason. In other words, our system of rational defenses will identify and reject impossibilities like…angels" (5). He then suggests that the novel proceeds to weaken these "rational defenses" gradually through the rhetorical use of "satire, caricature, allusion, and parody," putting the Angel into the position of Lewis Carroll's Alice and thus turning the mundane Victorian world into a fantasy realm from the Angel's perspective. "A Man!" the Angel exclaims upon falling to earth. "Then I was not deceived. I am indeed in the Land of Dreams!" (*TWV* 18). Such a strategy defamiliarizes the prosaic world of Victorian England and expands the reader's imagination accordingly: "The inversion of Carroll challenges the reality of our material world, positing *it* as Alice's wonderland. …For the moment, all claims on reality are provisional" (Chilton 10, 11).

While Chilton provides a compelling interpretation of the use of allusion in the intended expansion of readers' imaginations in the novel, I believe it is also significant that Wells does not include the reader of fantasy in the category of "plain and sensible" readers, who are so devoted to "reason" that the narrator expects them to refuse to continue with the book, once they realize it includes apparent impossibilities: "Now there are some things frankly impossible. The weakest intellect will admit this situation is impossible. The *Athaneum* will probably say as much should it venture to review this. …Plain sensible people will scarcely go on with such an extravagant book" (*TWV* 17). While Chilton sees all readers implicated in the narrator's category of "plain sensible people," and further sees imagination presented to these readers as an alternative to reason and science, the valence of this passage is that plain and sensible readers who would

refuse to read a fantasy book on the basis of its fantastical elements are absurd, just as the *Athaneum* would be absurd to draw attention to the novel's impossibilities. Wells pits the receptive reader of fantasy, who is not absurd enough to reject the novel on the basis of its "extravagan[ce]," against plain and sensible readers, professional reviewers at a notable publication, and all the "straightforward" townspeople of the novel, suggesting that the reader of fantasy is, in fact, more reasonable than these devotees of a hopelessly flawed, classificatory logic. Though the *Athaneum* would not be likely to review the novel poorly on the basis of its fantastical elements alone, just as most readers, aware of its genre, would not be likely to reject fantasy simply because it is fantasy, Wells's point here is to exaggerate the "reasonable" quality of the average reader so that the receptive reader, willing to suspend disbelief, can ask along with the Angel, "What *is* the matter with [them]?" By highlighting the true reason of fantasy readers against the false reason of plain and sensible readers, Wells simultaneously legitimizes fantasy as more reasonable than non-fantasy, because in this genre mysteries, or apparent impossibilities, can be approached the way all phenomena should be approached in the real world, with an awareness of the limitations of the mind's false form of logic. The novel provides not so much a rejection of reason in favor of an oppositional "imagination," but a total redefinition of reason according to the terms Wells sets forth in "Scepticism of the Instrument."

The illogical classificatory impulse of the human mind is figured through the apt example of the modern craze for degeneration theory. The townspeople's restrictive thinking causes them to miscategorize the Angel as a mad, degenerate hunchback. As Mrs. Mendham remarks, "It's the only way of explaining it in a sensible way," her use of the phrase "the only way" illustrating the function of the concept of degeneracy as a detrimental maintainer of the mind's current mode of operation (91). When confronted with anomalous phenomena, the mind must reduce them to

degeneracy or risk the collapse of the entire classificatory system upon which human logic is built. In addition to emphasizing the faulty classification system of the townspeople and Dr. Crump, who view anything anomalous as degenerate, Wells also reveals that the concept of degeneracy is a useless construct through the townspeople's failure to recognize occurrences of more convincing imperfect adaptations in their midst. When the Angel first encounters a chair in the Vicar's house, he asks, "You're not square, are you? ...We never double ourselves up. We lie about on the asphodel when we want to rest" (47). The Vicar then reveals that "the chair…to tell you the truth, has always puzzled *me*. It dates, I think, from the days when the floors were cold and very dirty. I suppose we have kept up the habit. It's become a kind of instinct with us to sit on chairs" (47).[24] The Vicar's explanation presents the human use of the chair as a lack of proper adaptation to changing surroundings. Originally an example of a favorable adaptation to the demands of an inhospitable environment, the chair is no longer a useful adaptation because floors in the modern age are not cold and dirty, as the Vicar indicates. Though the surroundings have figuratively "progressed" in complexity (the implication is that better floors represent an

[24] Wells's digression about the chair is likely an allusion to William Cowper's "Book I: The Sofa" from his poem *The Task* (1785). Cowper describes the development of the chair in human history before providing a moral critique of the luxury of chairs (specifically, the sofa, or the chair's most evolved form) in favor of a Romantic embrace of nature. Writing in a pre-Darwinian context, Cowper describes the development of the chair, "So slow / the growth of what is excellent; so hard / to attain perfection in the nether world. / Thus first Necessity invented stools, / Convenience next suggested elbow-chairs, / And Luxury the accomplish'd SOFA last" (Cowper 13, his emphasis). He posits that the sofa is yet another example of how it is hard "to attain perfection in the nether world" because, notwithstanding the sofa's improvement from stools, sofas cause gout in the people who recline on them: "The sofa suits / the gouty limb" (14). Moral transcendence of the imperfection of the nether world's destructive luxuries is represented through the speaker's Romantic enthusiasm for nature and love of "rural walk[s]" (14). Wells borrows heavily from Cowper's conceit by resituating it in a Darwinian context, similarly emphasizing the chair's destruction of the human body and its unevolved state, despite having been an example of favorable human adaptation at an earlier time. True evolution and enlightenment for Wells resides in the Angel, who, like Cowper's speaker, symbolizes Romanticism, genius, and a return to nature. Eschewing chairs, the Angel "lie[s] about on the asphodel when [he] want[s] to rest" (Wells 47).

advancement from primitivism), humans have remained developmentally static. The benefits of sitting "doubled up" in order to avoid the floor no longer outweigh the harm chairs do to posture and comfort; recumbence, now rendered possible through other advances in middle class living spaces, is the healthier choice, but despite this fact humans continue to damage their bodies by sitting on chairs.

Humans behave as if they still inhabit the less complex or less advanced environment symbolized by chair usage, resulting not only in bodily deformity but also in intellectual backwardness. The Vicar's use of the word "instinct" turns chair usage into a biological phenomenon, rather than a mere custom among unreflective humans. Wells implies that behaviors that the townspeople view as simply respectable, such as sitting on a chair rather than the floor, in fact conceal acquired instincts that signify a failure to adapt progressively to one's environment. Lankester believed, based on the evidence of the barnacle's atrophied eyes, that humans could regress when an environment became less demanding. Here Wells reimagines degeneration in the context of manmade, respectable objects to show that humans degenerate by being uncritically accepting of supposedly modern, respectable (or civilized), and advantageous appendages of human "culture." The only sign of degeneration worth considering, for Wells, is the one that denotes human reliance on the classificatory thought of false enlightenment. The way to stave off degeneracy is to combat the impulse toward restrictive thinking, an impulse that is symbolically instantiated in the endurance of chair usage among humans.

Once again, the Angel acts as a spokesman for true modernity and progress. The Vicar similarly reveals himself to possess rare intuitive powers that league him with the modern Angel; though continuing to sit on chairs, the Vicar nevertheless senses their primitiveness when nobody else can. Both characters illustrate that critical awareness of one's surroundings and skepticism

of prevalent classifications are the signs of evolutionary advancement and modern progress. Lacking this power of insight is obliquely related to the phenomenon of degeneracy: sitting on chairs, an acquired "instinct," is destructive to bodily health, just as lacking the critical awareness that chairs are an unfavorable adaptation is akin to intellectual and spiritual stasis in comparison to the sensitivity and insight of Vicar and Angel. Wells selects degeneracy as a useful concept for interrogating current modes of unsophisticated thought, which are associated with the resilience of primitivism in the conversation between the Vicar and Angel. Wells's revelation of the respectable or civilized as potentially degenerate in contrast to the falseness of superficial signs of degeneracy in the Angel, who lies promiscuously on the floor but also displays intellectual and spiritual promiscuity in comparison to the restrictive townspeople, serves to expose the complexity of any instance of downward adaptation, and its proximity to the supposedly normal and everyday rather than the anomalous. Wells's portrayal of the chair constitutes a rejection of common classificatory systems in favor of a more case-by-case examination of both mysterious and seemingly unmysterious phenomena, such as chairs.

While typical humans are not able to recognize instances of true degeneracy in their midst due to their uncritical acceptance of their own classificatory logic, Wells demonstrates that they are also not able to recognize uniqueness or potential biological advancement due to the equally classificatory social code, which requires conformity to classification to an extent that effectively obscures any evidence of advancement that might exist in the world. Following the Angel's disastrous first encounter with the ladies at the Vicarage, the Vicar decides that the only way the Angel may be able to coexist peacefully with the residents of Siddermorton is to don the Vicar's clothing and concede to the demands of respectability in the village. As a result of the cut of the Vicar's coat, ill-tailored for an angel, the townspeople all believe the Angel is a

"hunchback" and a "cripple," concluding that his hunchback signifies hereditary retribution for illegitimacy (214, 130). Just as in the Vicar's remarks about the chair, in the Angel's assumption of the Vicar's coat Wells aims to convey that seemingly mundane objects or individuals may contain unexpected traits, whether degenerate or advanced. Just as sitting on a chair may be evidence of the average human's intellectual stasis, so may hunchbacked individuals or questionable looking vagrants contain traits of potential advancement.

II. Modern Art and Proper Scientific Inquiry

In the preceding discussion, I have sought to demonstrate that *The Wonderful Visit* registers Wells's impatience with classificatory thought and his use of the theory of degeneration to emphasize the extremity that classificatory thought has reached in the Victorian era. Max Nordau and his followers, represented by Dr. Crump, are easy targets of the criticisms Wells later levels in "Scepticism of the Instrument" against reductive classificatory systems and norms. Wells's critique of degeneration and reductive scientific thinking does not stop at the light use of satire evident in the townspeople's misapprehension of the Angel and his wings, however. The Angel's status as an artist and musician is central to Wells's development of an argument against facile scientific thought of the kind disseminated most obviously by Nordau and unknowingly perpetuated by all uncritical proponents of "logical" thinking. While the aesthetic movement is often understood as being antagonistic to science, in *The Wonderful Visit*, the aesthetic power of the Angel's musical performances is rather used to exemplify a truly scientific receptiveness in the listeners who are not in thrall to false classificatory systems. Creating in the Angel an exponent of the very modern and decadent art movement that Nordau and degenerationists derided, Wells equates aesthetic appreciation with a true scientific perspective against the pathologizing reductionism of the false science of degeneration.

Aesthetic appreciation and sensitivity to beauty in art are historically thought of as antagonistic to a scientific approach to phenomena. Aesthetics in the Victorian era in particular allowed for a potential escape from the materialist doctrine of Darwinian evolution without returning to the superstitions of religion. Beauty and its splendor, whether in art or nature, defied science and, as Hilary Fraser writes, following the Darwinian revolution, "Man's aesthetic sense…seemed to be beyond the reach of empirical explanation and to need philosophical reinvestigation" (Fraser 4). Ailing religious institutions, Fraser argues, leaned upon art to regain legitimacy to such an extent that John Henry Newman feared that "man's sense of the beautiful would become a substitute for true faith" (28). Similarly, Anne Dewitt argues that in his later novel, *Ann Veronica*, Wells suggests that "beauty…lies outside the bounds of science, and biology's radiating influence cannot illuminate it" (Dewitt 185). Although many attempts were made among Victorian theorists to explain both "human perception of beauty" and "the beautiful features of animals" in evolutionary and scientific terms, other writers, including Alfred Russel Wallace and H.G. Wells, were not satisfied by these arguments: "*Ann Veronica* questions science's ability to provide a complete account of human experience. As in Wallace's work, the problem of beauty leads [Wells] to the conclusion that science is wanting" (Dewitt 186-8).

Wells approaches the antagonism between science and beauty present in *Ann Veronica* differently in *The Wonderful Visit*, although at first glance the same antagonism appears to persist, leading to Chilton's analysis of the novel as an exploration of the value of imagination in a world ruled by science and reason. Indeed, the novel posits the existence of a supernatural realm populated by angels who also happen to be artists; in this regard, there can be no doubt that *The Wonderful Visit* figures the same return to the divine through beauty and art discussed by Fraser, and represents incompetent scientific thinkers, such as the townspeople and Dr.

Crump, to foreground the limitations of scientific explanation on the subject of beauty. However, it is significant that Wells chooses to represent specifically the modern art associated with decadence in the Angel's musical performances. Modern art was the most pathologized form of art at the fin de siècle, and nowhere is this more evident than in Nordau's *Degeneration*, which fixates on modern art as the apotheosis of degeneracy in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Wells's glorification of the modern artist in the Angel on the one hand constitutes a strategy with which to counter the anti-artist beliefs of the degenerationists. On the other hand, however, audience response to the modern musical performances in the novel figures an equally important aspect of the scientific debate against degeneration and reductionism that Wells engages with in *The Wonderful Visit* and "Scepticism of the Instrument": the importance of receptiveness to new or unusual phenomena and acknowledgement of one's own potential limitations as a confused observer in the realm of scientific inquiry.

Wells's complicated response to the aesthetic movement manifests itself repeatedly throughout his writings. His disagreement and eventual rift with Henry James on the subject of novelistic style is well known, but, as Simon J. James points out, "Wells never downplayed the importance of art: his target is reverence of art for its own sake" (James 33). James also argues that the Eloi in *The Time Machine* represent Wells's conception of "hyper-evolved Wildean aesthetes" in a world where the "need for the evolutionary adaptation that is art has atrophied like its physical strength" (60). Wells's assessment of art in *The Time Machine* is pessimistic, exemplified by the Time Traveller's observation of the place of art in the future world:

> No doubt the exquisite beauty of the buildings I saw was the outcome of the last surgings of the now purposeless energy of mankind before it settled down into perfect harmony with the conditions under which it lived…. This has ever been the fate of energy in

security; it takes to art and to eroticism, and then come languor and decay. (*Time Machine* 75-6)

The remnants of deep aesthetic appreciation in the Eloi are evinced in "the exquisite beauty of the buildings" constructed presumably before the Eloi lost their intellect, as well as in their childish love of flowers and other objects of visual appeal, such as fire. At the bottom of the Eloi's representation as decayed aesthetes is Wells's impatience with the concept of "art for art's sake," which he rejects due to his belief in the moral and social purpose of art. As James argues, Wells aims to convey in *The Time Machine* that "art…that does not serve a purpose greater than being merely beautiful for its own sake will prove an evolutionary disadvantage" (61).

Oddly, the same aesthetic movement that comes under such negative scrutiny in *The Time Machine* and *Ann Veronica* (in the form of the egotistical aesthete, Manning), reappears in a new guise in *The Wonderful Visit*. James claims that the decayed and frivolous artistry of the Eloi signifies that they constitute a race of "hyper-evolved Wildean aesthetes." Yoonjoung Choi similarly reads *The Wonderful Visit* in the context of Oscar Wilde and the fin de siècle aesthetic movement. She writes, "Wells deliberately insinuates Wilde's conviction in the text without mentioning his name," equating the Angel with Wilde and the townspeople's pathologization of him with Nordau's denomination of "Wilde's eccentric costume as a symptom of hysteria and degeneracy" (Choi 49). However, while Wells himself pathologizes the artistic decadence of the Eloi, in *The Wonderful Visit* he defends the Angel's Wildean artistry because, as Choi claims, "Wells deplores the philistinism of the late-Victorian public opinion of literature" (47). In Choi's reading, Wells's defense of the Angel's status as an aesthete thus amounts to a defense of art and literature more broadly against the unreasonable prejudices of the public, a defense that was directly influenced by the injustices of the Wilde trial.

The superficial similarities between the Angel and Wilde, however, while they partly explain Wells's more charitable approach to modern art and aestheticism than his suspicious approach to the same in *The Time Machine*, do not fully account for Wells's choice of music for the artistic medium of the Angel, or explain how modern music in particular functions in this novel about the perils of classificatory thought, reductionism, and theories of degeneration. Throughout his works, Wells exercises caution against most art forms, especially linguistic forms because, for Wells, "the signification of language should not be given too great a credence" (James 42). While Wells criticizes the romance genre because it "cheaply amuses, sapping the desire to make the real world better instead," his characters similarly exhibit "arsonist tendencies toward art and architecture" due to these visual art forms' failure to improve the world or its social conditions, reflected also in the Time Traveller's disapproval of the beautiful but degenerate architecture of the future (James 81, 123). In his discussion of Wells's *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, James notes that "interestingly, however, music is excepted in this novel and elsewhere from Wells's critique of artistic culture, acting beneficially on Lewisham's emotions" (93). While James does not pursue the anomaly of music in his analysis of Wells's treatment of art due to the scant representations of music in his works, the unusual centrality of music in *The Wonderful Visit* indicates that Wells's approach to art and aestheticism differs in certain respects in this novel from his suspicion of it elsewhere.

The Angel's music in *The Wonderful Visit* is unmistakably modern, and though nineteenth century readers would associate his performances with decadence and aesthetics, Wells does not color his descriptions of the Angel's art with the same reservations found in *The Time Machine*. Wells's interest in modern music in *The Wonderful Visit* has its corollary in his interest in modern literature elsewhere in his writing. Though impatient with the doctrine of "art

for art's sake" frequently associated with the move toward modern literature at the end of the century, Wells does not necessarily resist modernization when its art forms maintain a social consciousness and purpose. As James writes, "Unlike those of most Victorian writers, [Wells's] canon privileges contemporary writing over that of past ages…. Too much attention to writing from past generations risks the possibility that the literature of the future will become degenerate or even extinct" (18-19). Wells's embrace of modern movements in literature is reflected in his representation of modern music in *The Wonderful Visit*. However, while it may be relatively easy to distinguish modern literature that serves a social purpose from the purely formal experiments of "art for art's sake" that Wells associated with Henry James and the aesthetes, the case of modern music is not so "straightforward," to borrow Wells's preferred term for the classificatory townspeople of Siddermorton. Wells chooses music instead of literature or another medium as the art form best suited to counter Nordau and the degenerationists because, though modern, experimental, and identifiably "decadent," the Angel's music acts upon the emotions in a manner that proves its authentic and morally beneficial effect on listeners who have "ears to hear," as I will show below (*TWV* 169). Modern music, unlike other modern art forms, can easily occupy the realms of both "art for art's sake" and social purpose due to this moral influence, and it is for this reason that the Angel's performances are central to Wells's sustained critique of degeneration theory and reductionism.

To elucidate Wells's treatment of modern music in *The Wonderful Visit*, it will be useful to examine the novel against George Bernard Shaw's essay of 1895 (titled "The Sanity of Art" when released in book form in 1908), published in response to Nordau's *Degeneration* after it was released in English that same year. Shaw describes the circumstances of his composition of the essay in his revised preface of 1908, stating that he began it in "the Easter of 1895, when

Nordau was master of the field, and the newspaper champions of modern Literature and Art were on their knees before him, weeping and protesting their innocence" (Shaw 10). The editor of the "American paper called *Liberty*" was so indignant at the popularity of Nordau, the "doctor who had written manifest nonsense," that he sought out Shaw to write "a review of *Degeneration* in the columns of *Liberty*" (10-11). The essay includes sections on "Impressionism," "Wagnerism," "Ibsenism," "Nordau's Book," and "Echolalia" and aims to address the broad categories of modern art against which Nordau levels his complaints of pathology in *Degeneration*. Shaw examines literature, visual art, drama, and music and calls upon his authority as a professional art critic to point out Nordau's lack of expertise in the field of art. His sections on Wilhelm Richard Wagner and music share important similarities with Wells's representation of the Angel in his novel of the same year. Shaw seeks to denounce the false scientist through his explanation of the genealogy of art movements, illustrating the value of modern art in a larger context. Wells similarly suggests that the critic's receptiveness to modern music emblematizes a truly scientific approach to anomalous phenomena in opposition to the universal tendencies of reductionism and classification characteristic of the flawed instrument of human thought.

In "The Sanity of Art," Shaw denies Nordau's pathological interpretation of Wagner's experiments in music by situating the composer within a large musical tradition characterized by cycles of complacency and experiment, emphasizing the fact that most musicians who become accepted members of the Western musical canon were at one time just as revolutionary for their audiences as Wagner is for late nineteenth century listeners. Despite evidence of this pattern of experimentation among visionary composers throughout history, Shaw argues that each new experiment builds upon the old and leads to increased use of dissonance and decreased use of repetition or musical patterns characteristic of purely "decorative" music. The aural unfamiliarity

generated by the formal and tonal experiments of each musical age routinely sparks outrage, and, in this sense, the controversy surrounding Wagner's concentration on the "dramatic" rather than the "decorative" possibilities of music has ample precedence in novel uses of dissonance among the now most canonical of composers, such as Mozart (33-35).

Providing this genealogy of music as a professional art critic is the primary strategy Shaw employs to defend Wagner and other "decadent" musicians, including Franz Liszt, Hector Berlioz, and Richard Strauss, from the degenerationists' accusations of pathology and madness against modern art. Shaw highlights the place that unfamiliarity plays in audience's negative reception of a musical experiment throughout the ages. Once listeners become accustomed to new uses of dissonance or abandonments of conventional patterns and repetitions, experimental music leaves the realm of the experimental and becomes widely accepted as ears are increasingly attuned to these developments. It is the place of the art critic to be receptive to changes in the field of experimental music before the ears of average listeners are able to discern the merits of the new music out of sheer unfamiliarity with its tone and structure. However, before both critics' and average listeners' ears become accustomed to the changes implemented in modern music, a period of utmost confusion reigns. Music critics, in their effort to recognize the merits of musical experiments that have real value, go too far in their acceptance of hacks whose attempts to mimic masterful experimental composers prove infelicitous:

> Wagner, Berlioz, and Liszt, in securing tolerance for their own works, secured it for what sounded to many people absurd; and this tolerance necessarily extended to a great deal of stuff which was really absurd, but which the secretly-bewildered critics dared not denounce, lest it, too, should turn out to be great, like the music of Wagner. (42)

It is this period of confusion that generates the hostile climate against modern music among average listeners, and that Nordau and the degenerationists seize upon to forward their theories. Recognizing the factors that generate widespread hostility toward modern music, Shaw argues, allows the critic to see and hear the real developments achieved by modern and skillful composers in the current age. Refusing to perceive that the composers are part of a larger tradition, or that their dissonances and apparent stylistic aberrations jar the ear due to the ear's limitations and not the composition's, is to legitimate an interpretation of pathology through a false belief in one's own critical expertise.

Similarly, in *The Wonderful Visit*, Wells first establishes that the Angel, a consummate violinist and composer, belongs to the very modern art movement that includes Wagner, Liszt, and Berlioz in its ranks at the end of the nineteenth century. Central to Shaw's analysis of Wagner is the observation that modern music meets with resistance among average listeners due to the unfamiliar abandonment of structural repetition and pattern characteristic of earlier "decorative" music, the music, Shaw specifies, of Palestrina and other Baroque and Classical composers (35). Shaw elaborates:

> You will understand why all the professional musicians who could not see beyond the routine they were taught, and all the men and women (and there are many of them) who have little or no sense of drama, but a very keen sense of beauty of sound and prettiness of pattern in music, regarded Wagner as a madman who was reducing music to chaos…and substituting an incoherent, aimless, formless, endless meandering for the old familiar symmetrical tunes like Pop Goes the Weasel, in which the second and third lines repeat, or nearly repeat, the pattern of the first and second. (35-6)

In its technical execution, the Angel's music resembles Shaw's description of Wagner's resistance to structural repetition and his substitution, at first glance, of "incoherent, aimless, formless, endless meandering" for this repetition. The first time the Angel plays "an air the Vicar had never heard before" on the violin, the narrator describes the Vicar's experience as a listener:

> The Vicar tried to follow the music. The air reminded him of a flame, it rushed up, shone, flickered and danced, passed and reappeared. No!—it did not reappear! Another air—like it and unlike it, shot up after it, wavered, vanished. Then another, the same and not the same…. There are two airs—or *motifs*, which is it?—thought the Vicar. He knew remarkably little of musical technique. (102, Wells's emphasis)

In this passage Wells emphasizes the lack of straight repetition of melody that listeners are accustomed to hear in more conventional compositions. The air, while it threatens to reappear, significantly fails to do so, unlike the symmetrical repetitions standard in familiar tunes such as "Pop Goes the Weasel," to use Shaw's example. Just as in the modern music that Shaw analyzes, in his song the Angel weaves two short airs in and out of a larger piece but resists any conventional form of strict repetition. They alter slightly but retain their basic shape as they are recast again and again to fit the contour of the larger musical narrative: "the same and not the same." That the Vicar "trie[s] to follow the music" illustrates the unfamiliarity of this new form of musical execution that resists repetition and, as Shaw would say, comes across as "incoherent, aimless, formless, and…meandering" to listeners who expect the predictability of more familiar tunes.

However unfamiliar the new music is to him, the Vicar, like a good critic, strives to understand the workings of the melody and recognizes the advanced nature of the music he hears despite his experience of confusion at its almost magical qualities. Avowing his own ignorance

on the subject of "musical technique" allows the Vicar to be receptive to the musical experiments he hears and paradoxically turns him into a more astute art critic than any of the self-professed musical experts in the novel. The Vicar declares to the Angel after the performance, "I did not know anything of music until I heard you play…I have never felt anything of this kind with music before…. I shall never play again" (105). The Vicar's refusal to play the violin ever again after hearing the superior musical execution of the Angel sets him apart as a listener who is able to discern the musical advances of the modern age despite his initial state of confusion, and to cast off outmoded and inferior traditions accordingly. This is precisely the role Shaw prescribes for the art critic in a world beset by uncritical and supposedly scientific interpretations of modern art as pathological. Seeing beyond one's own state of confusion and the limitations of one's own ears, conceding one's own ignorance of "musical technique" at a time when all listeners, in fact, are ignorant of modern and visionary experiments in music, constitutes the ideal response of the good art critic to unfamiliar music, and, in *The Wonderful Visit*, the Vicar fulfills Shaw's prescriptions for effective art criticism.

Unlike the Vicar, who admits that he knows very little of musical technique, several characters in the novel claim to be arbiters of artistic creation and believe that their expertise legitimizes their critical assessment of the Angel's music. Wells illustrates that, in reality, they are average listeners whose unfamiliarity with modern musical techniques leads to rejection and hostility rather than the receptiveness characteristic of the good critic. Toward the end of the novel, the townspeople compel the Angel to perform for them because the wealthiest woman in Siddermorton, Lady Hammergallow, has heard that he might be a "genius in disguise," and they all decide to listen to his music and determine his true status as an artist. Lady Hammergallow "had always had a secret desire to play the patroness to obscure talent. Hitherto it had not turned

out to be talent when it came to the test" (160). By subjecting the Angel to a "test" of his artistic talent, Wells frames the episode as an exercise of the townspeople's critical abilities in order to demonstrate that blind faith in one's own expertise is the surest source of misapprehension and senseless rejection of worthiness in a time of confusion and change.

In the Angel's final performance before Lady Hammergallow and the cultivated townspeople of Siddermorton, Wells emphasizes the contrast between the townspeople's belief in their own expertise as critics and their corresponding conviction of the Angel's ignorance of musical technique based on the fact that he does not play from "ordinary notation" or notes (175). Before he begins to play, Lady Hammergallow "[tells] him the particulars of the incomes made by violinists—particulars which, for the most part, she invented as she went along" (164). Like Lady Hammergallow, Mrs. Jehoram and other townspeople affect knowledge of the musical sphere that they do not possess, and consider themselves to be legitimate authorities on the subject of musical performance and artistry. During the Angel's performance, Mrs. Jehoram "sat and looked rapt and sympathetic as hard as she could (though the music was puzzling at times)." Mrs. Jehoram has developed a reputation for being "artistic" within her social circle and fancies herself "a judge" of art and artists, though her feigned interest and secret confusion at the Angel's music betray her charlatanism (167). Another listener, George Harringay, confidently rejects the Angel's status as an artist because, as he says, "There seems to be no *tune* in [his music]. There's nothing I like so much as simple music." The mediocre piano player, Mr. Wilmerdings, later asserts, "The thing he played…was merely *drifting*" (172, 185, Wells's emphasis). Both statements again emphasize the unpredictable quality of the Angel's meandering style and the townspeople's resistance to modern music (172, 185, Wells's emphasis).

While Hammergallow, Jehoram, Harringay, and Wilmerdings experience the same confusion earlier emphasized in the Vicar's response to the Angel's unconventional musical style, the townspeople, unlike the Vicar, are unable to see past this confusion because of their faith in their own authority on the subject of music. Their obstinacy is thematically connected to Dr. Crump's arrogant faith in his scientific expertise in the face of mystery, and it only heightens when the townspeople learn that the Angel does not read notes. The Angel's performances in the novel are improvisatory in addition to being experimentally similar to the modern music represented by Wagner, Berlioz, Liszt, and others, and he makes no pretense of reading music in any of his performances. It is only because of their belief that the Angel is *able* to read music that the townspeople grant him a hearing, and, operating under the assumption that he possesses a foundational and conventional musical education, many of them concede that his music is beautiful (not including the tone deaf Lady Hammergallow or the staunchly conservative Harringay, who are incapable of appreciating his music at any stage). Once they determine that he is "ignorant" of musical notation, they no longer believe or affect to believe that his music is music, and in fact consider his music to be a logical impossibility. Faced with the fact that the Angel cannot read music, Mrs. Pirbright exclaims, "Impossible!... After that *beautiful* music" (175). Lady Hammergallow adds, "He cannot play from Notes!… Non—sense!" (175). Ignoring the evidence provided by their own ears that the Angel is able to play music, the townspeople reveal their absurd devotion to convention, which rejects the artistic validity of any music that does not follow the accepted laws of music.

Although Shaw does not discuss any musicians that favor improvisation rather than knowledge of notes in the modern art movement, he emphasizes a similar reaction to music that breaks the known "laws" of this art form among conventional listeners. He writes, "Music in the

academic, professorial, Conservative, respectable sense always means decorative music, and…students are taught that the laws of pattern-designing are binding on all musicians, and that violations of them are absolutely 'wrong'" (35). Shaw, of course, rejects the notion that abandonment of "pattern-designing" or repetition is wrong simply because such violations of musical law have been rare in the past, but his statement sheds light on the response to unconventional music among the townspeople in *The Wonderful Visit*. Like the "students" to whom Shaw alludes, the townspeople, too, consider the known "laws" of music to be "binding on all musicians," and the Angel's "ignorance" of musical notation betrays his corollary ignorance, in the minds of the townspeople, of the laws of music. Simply knowing the laws would have legitimized the Angel's performance for them to a certain extent, but ignorance of the laws, despite the proof of musical ability he provides through performance itself, leads to their rejection of his music and his eventual ostracism from the community. For Shaw, this is simply bad critical practice. To rely on the authority of past laws alone in order to formulate judgments of art is to foreclose any possibility of recognizing advancement or salutary emendations to the "laws" of music, or any other art form. Arrogant belief in their own expertise leads the townspeople to define "ignorance" according to their own limited knowledge of music, and the Angel can never be redeemed in their eyes after they apply this label of ignorance to him. Harringay says, "If a man pretend to practice an Art…he ought at least to have the conscience to study the elements of it" (177). Wells's point is that music that has not been generated through conventional application of known laws or "elements" will not be received by the public, even if the public does not initially realize that it has been so produced, because devotion to laws and one's own knowledge of them trumps the evidence of one's own ears among average listeners. Similarly, for Shaw, the modern music of Wagner, Berlioz, Liszt, and Strauss, because it does

not reflect the laws of "pattern-designing," is subject to pathological interpretations by average listeners because they believe they possess a complete understanding of the laws of music, when this arrogant belief, in fact, is what guarantees the perpetuation of their own state of ignorance. After his performance, the townspeople wonder, "Was the Angel grossly ignorant or only grossly impertinent?" (177). Ignorance and impertinence are both grounds for the artist's exile among both reductive scientists and bad critics, because both ignorance and impertinence are associated with the violation of known laws, which can only be accounted for among self-professed experts by the concepts of anomalousness and degeneracy.

Before they realize that the Angel cannot read notes, but after his confusing modern performance, the townspeople voice their displeasure with his unfamiliar music by requesting that he abandon his improvisatory style and play conventional pieces such as the "Barcarole of Spohr's," a "Polonaise of Chopin's," "Imitations" (in which the player imitates the sounds of barnyard animals), and the familiar tune "Home Sweet Home." The townspeople's requests for conventional tunes emphasizes their inability, shared with Nordau, of appreciating or understanding modern movements in art despite these movements' unequivocal value in the minds of the good critics of the tale, the Vicar and, later, the servant Delia. Moreover, once the townspeople discover the Angel's ignorance of the laws of music, Lady Hammergallow issues him an "ultimatum": "If you cannot play [duets] with Mr. Wilmerdings I am afraid I cannot ask you to play again" (176). The society matron's dismissal of the Angel and prevention of any further public performances of modern music due to its incompatibility with the conventional, mediocre, and derivative performances of Wilmerdings provides a local example of the universal problem explored by both Wells in "Scepticism of the Instrument" and Shaw in "The Sanity of Art." Wells's emphasis earlier in the novel on the townspeople's refusal to examine evidence and

their belief in their own logical and rational interpretations of an anomalous individual is thematically linked to their reception of the Angel's music. Lady Hammergallow and her followers reject modern music out of their arrogant confidence in their own expertise and ability to categorize correctly when, in actuality, their categorizations amount to a crude reduction of the complex phenomenon, "music," into that which only includes the familiar. They fail to account appropriately for the novel or unfamiliar, just as the species collector invoked at the beginning of the novel crudely reduces the animal and plant worlds to understandable categories that fail to account for "the rare and the beautiful," which the species collector unreflectively destroys. Good criticism of art in the novel, exemplified best by the Vicar, thus models a proper scientific approach to anomalous phenomena while bad art criticism is likened to bad science. Wells's exploration of the difference between good and bad art criticism shares a similar purpose with Shaw's display of good art criticism in "The Sanity of Art": invalidation of the pathological diagnoses of anomalous individuals performed at will by the false scientist.

III. Conclusion: Modern Music and Morality in a Taxonomical World

In addition to questioning the validity of the reductivist practices of adherents to the false logic of classificatory thought by using the example of poor criticism of modern music, Wells, like Shaw, creates an equivalence between moral advancement and receptiveness to modern music. In doing so, both writers defy the pathological interpretations of degenerationists, for whom decadent art means moral decay both in the artists who produce it and the public that responds favorably to it. In defending Wagner's technical "discipline" against Nordau's accusations of his being an "'inattentive mystic, abandoned to amorphous dreams,'" Shaw writes:

> The severity of artistic discipline is produced by the fact that in creative art no ready-made rules can help you. There is nothing to guide you to the right expression for your thought except your own sense of beauty and fitness; and, as you advance upon those who went before you, that sense of beauty and fitness is necessarily in conflict, not with fixed rules, because there are no fixed rules, but with precedents, which is what Nordau means by fixed rules. (90-91)

The advanced modern artist, in Shaw's understanding of the concept, appears undisciplined to those who are expecting a recapitulation of old technical "precedents," misconceived as rules. But he asserts that the modern artist, in fact, exercises even more discipline in his attempt to convey a new and more complex "sense of beauty and fitness" that refuses to be contained by the old styles and precedents. It is not only their discomfort with the artist's misuse of supposed rules or conventional musical laws that irks average listeners, but also the artist's "expression," through music or other art forms, of a new definition of "beauty and fitness" that defies the accepted morality of the age. New standards of morality, like the new standards of performance or expression initiated in modern art, for Shaw are both often ahead of what people are ready to hear or accept. In his opening to his chapter on "Ibsenism," Shaw writes:

> There is no need for me to go at any great length into the grounds on which any development in our moral views must at first appear insane and blasphemous to people who are satisfied, or more than satisfied, with the current morality…. Every step in morals is made by challenging the validity of the existing conception of perfect propriety of conduct; and when a man does that, he must look out for a very different reception from the painter who has ventured to paint a shadow of brilliant lilac, the composer who ends his symphony with an unresolved discord. (44)

Shaw suggests that the public's outcry against the unconventional morality of Ibsen's plays was far more furious than its reaction to Impressionist paintings or the "unresolved discords" of Wagner and Liszt due to the more direct and obvious assault on standards of moral conduct in Ibsen's works. Nevertheless, whatever their chosen medium, all these visionary artists share a "new sense of beauty and fitness" for which they seek the "right expression," offending the average listener's sense of propriety whether the violation is strictly in form, as in modern music, or in content, as in Ibsen's plays.

The production of modern art is thus intimately connected to advances or changes in moral conduct, and both artists and receptive listeners assume responsibility for these changes in humanity's quest to develop morally, though such changes may appear "insane and blasphemous" when compared to the old standards. Shaw explicitly states that "art should refine our sense of character and conduct, of justice and sympathy, greatly heightening our self-knowledge, self-control, precision of action, and considerateness, and making us intolerant of baseness, cruelty, injustice, and intellectual superficiality or vulgarity" (76). And for Shaw, it is Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz, the Impressionists, Ibsen, and other modern artists who best fulfill the moral purposes of art: "the great artist is he who…, by supplying works of a higher beauty and a higher interest than have yet been perceived, succeeds, after a brief struggle with its strangeness, in adding this fresh extension of sense to the heritage of the race" (77). Shaw emphasizes the moral intuition of the modern artist who "refines our sense of character and conduct, of justice and sympathy" through works of "higher beauty and higher interest than have yet been perceived." Implicitly, Shaw also contrasts the inappropriate and short-sighted rejection of advanced art by listeners such as Nordau with the receptiveness of the ideal listener, whose

capacity to discern the merits of modern music also betokens her capacity for moral refinement and "intoleran[ce] of baseness, cruelty, injustice, and intellectual superficiality or vulgarity."

Wells also emphasizes the exemplary morality of the modern artist through the Angel while creating in the Vicar and the servant Delia two characters whose receptiveness to modern music signals their moral superiority and, additionally, their capacity for further moral growth. Their exemplarity as listeners throws into sharp relief the moral philistinism of the townspeople, who neither appreciate modern music nor exhibit any capacity for moral refinement. That the Vicar is the most obviously moral of the townspeople is readily apparent in the text. He sees good in the Angel when others see only a hunchback and degeneracy, and he strives to help the Angel become acclimated to the earth, affiliating himself with the controversial stranger against his own best interests. Evidence of the Vicar's advanced sense of morality is not limited to his good deeds as a religious man, however, but manifests itself further in his experience of listening to the Angel's performances on the violin, which mysteriously allows the Vicar to access on some spiritual level the perfect world from which the Angel has arrived. As John Huntington writes, "There is an ideal of humaneness represented by the Vicar and the Angel, and that humaneness is linked to their ability to see both worlds. All the other characters in the novel are limited to the vision of a single world" (Huntington 243). Though Huntington does not pursue the connection between this "ideal of humaneness," the ability to see the Angel's world, and modern music, it strikes me as significant the Wells makes a point to limit the Vicar's access to the other world to those moments in which the Angel plays the violin. Appreciation of modern music thus becomes a signal of moral superiority and sensitivity, qualities shared by both the modern artist and the good critic. On earth, the narrator states, only "our composers, our original composers, are those who hear, however faintly, the dust of melody that drives before [the

Angelic Land's] winds" (29). The Vicar similarly believes that it is "the artistic dreamers who see such things most clearly" (25). Original composers and artistic dreamers, like the Angel and Vicar, have special access to an ideal realm and are uniquely able to transport pieces of that realm to the earth. Like Shaw's modern artist, the Vicar and the Angel gain a new "sense of beauty and fitness" via their access to the music of the Angelic land that translates into moral consciousness on earth.

During the Angel's final performance for Lady Hammergallow and the townspeople, attended also by the Vicar, Wells highlights the contrary responses of the listeners and the lack of visionary experience for most of them. Following the townspeople's applause of the Angel's piece, "The Vicar woke up again [from his vision] and stared round the saloon. Did other people see these visions, or were they confined to him alone? Surely they must all see…and have a wonderful command of their feelings. It was incredible that such music should not affect them" (170-1). The vivid and dynamic effects of the music, the visions of an ideal world that it produces, are so strong for the Vicar that he is astonished that the other listeners do not betray any disturbance of their equilibrium. Though the Vicar gives them the benefit of the doubt, the townspeople, it is clear, do not experience the music in the same way the Vicar does, and fail to see any visions of the perfect world, because their moral inferiority and devotion to familiar classifications render them incapable of doing so. Shaw is careful to emphasize the moral attributes of modern music in order to refute the insistence among degenerationists of the immoral nature of modern art, its practitioners, and its followers. Wells similarly connects modern music to moral advancement through both the transcendent and otherworldly Angel, who also happens to be a musician, and the more mundane but also markedly moral Vicar, whose astuteness as a music critic correlates to his expansive visionary capacity and

"humaneness" (Huntington 243). Thus, rather than simply denying the pathological interpretations of modern artists by representing the superior morality of the Angel, Wells takes the argument a step further and indicates that rejecting classificatory thought in and of itself is morally beneficial. Receptiveness to modern art is linked to a humanitarian impulse in the Vicar; his ability to avoid the perils of classificatory thought is simultaneously an ability to promote kindness and sympathy while reductive classification, in Dr. Crump and the townspeople, is repeatedly aligned with cruelty.

The servant Delia's climactic attempt to rescue the Angel's violin from fire acts as perhaps the greatest testament to the moral nature of modern art and its importance for the development of human love and sympathy of any representation of music hitherto encountered in the novel. Like the Vicar, Delia is set apart from the townspeople because she is receptive to the Angel's music and also displays qualities of moral advancement, including kindness to the Angel and sympathy for his plight. The narrator facetiously states, "I know that to give a mere servant girl…the refined feelings of a human being…places me outside the pale of respectable writers," and his deliberate allusion to her "refined feelings" and genuine kindness in this and other passages is meant to set her apart from the respectable but morally impoverished townspeople (197-8). As in his representation of the Vicar, through Delia Wells similarly emphasizes an important connection between her moral refinement and her ability to appreciate the Angel's music. Secretly listening to the Angel play at the vicarage toward the end of the novel, the narrator describes her experience of falling in love with the Angel as made more intense by her response to his music:

> Now the music seemed to bring his very face before her, his look of half curious solicitude, peering into her face, into her eyes, into her and through her, deep down into

> her soul. He seemed now to be speaking directly to her, telling her of his solitude and trouble. Oh! That regret, that longing! For he was in trouble. And how could a servant girl help him…. The music was so sweet and keen, it came so near to the thought of her heart, that presently one hand tightened on the other, and the tears came streaming down her face. (196-7)

Unlike the townspeople, whose immediate reaction the Angel's improvisatory music is to request that he perform something more conventional, Delia's indifference to conventional artistic taxonomies allows her to experience a heightening of sympathy for the Angel that sounds very similar to Shaw's definition of the purpose of modern art, that it "should refine our sense…of justice and sympathy, greatly heightening our…considerateness, and making us intolerant of baseness, cruelty, injustice" (Shaw 76). Through the Angel's music Delia understands more fully "his solitude and trouble" because, in Shaw's terms, it acts as the "right expression" for the Angel's thoughts and feelings, and conveys these even better than language could in that it is the music and not language that is able to "[speak] directly to her" and bring her to a more perfect state of sympathy with the Angel.

At the end of the novel, Wells crystallizes this connection between modern art and the higher human quality of sympathy into a single symbolic act: Delia's attempted rescue of the Angel's violin. The Angel's sojourn in Siddermorton comes to an abrupt end following his disastrous improvisatory performance and, later, his cutting of a barbed wired fence on the property of a landed gentleman, Sir John Gotch.[25] The Vicar reluctantly plans to send the Angel

[25] The Angel's cutting of this fence precipitates the townspeople's exile of him from the community. Their fear of his socialistic tendencies, coded as fear of his degeneracy or lunacy, connects Wells's critique to the fin de siècle pathologization of democracy and the use of degeneration theory to curb progressive movements, which Pick discusses in *Faces of Degeneration* (Pick 93). Gotch's assertion that the Angel "has done this wire-cutting as a demonstration…a socialistic demonstration," directly leads to the Angel's ostracism from the

away to London (where he is unlikely to survive) because the townspeople refuse to allow the Angel to stay in Siddermorton any longer, Dr. Crump threatening him with prison or the madhouse if he remains. Before the Angel leaves, however, the vicarage catches fire and Delia impulsively rushes into the flames to save his violin. As the vicarage burns, bystanders reveal to the frantic Angel:

> "There's a girl in the house, and she can't get out!"
>
> "Went in after a fiddle," said another. […]
>
> "I was standing near her. I heerd her. Says she: 'I *can* get his fiddle.' I heerd her—Just like that! 'I *can* get his fiddle.'" (245)

Following this revelation of Delia's brave deed, the narrator describes the Angel's reaction: "For a moment the Angel stood staring. Then in a flash he saw it all, saw this grim little world of battle and cruelty, transfigured in a splendor that outshone the Angelic Land, suffused suddenly and insupportably glorious with the wonderful light of Love and Self-Sacrifice" (245-6). While throughout the novel Wells has emphasized the moral inferiority of the earth in comparison to the Angelic Land from which the Angel comes, in this final scene the earth unexpectedly "outshines" the Angelic Land due to Delia's selfless act and her experience of total sympathy for another's suffering. The Angel comes to a dramatic realization about the value of the earthly world and the wondrous "splendors" it is capable of producing, despite its abundant cruelties. His view of the world undergoes this transformation explicitly because an appreciator of modern music has risked her life to ensure that the violin which makes this music possible will not be

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community (*TWV* 210). Dr. Crump additionally states that "there ought to be a quarantine on mischievous ideas" before threatening the Angel with the madhouse if he refuses to move to London (206). Collectively, the community decides that the Angel is too much of an "unhealthy influence" as a result of his socially incendiary behavior and uses degeneration theory to rationalize its exile of him (207). In this scene Wells illustrates the larger political implications of classificatory thought through the example of degeneration theory.

destroyed. The townspeople read Delia's act simply as the outcome of a "mad girl['s]" infatuation for a man who would miss his violin were it incinerated (245). However, given the thematic importance of modern music throughout the work and this particular violin's symbolic association with the unique music the Angel creates, Delia's attempted rescue must also be seen as a comment upon the importance of modern art in the cultivation of love and sympathy. Just as in the earlier passage, where the Angel's music conveys a more profound understanding of his suffering to Delia than language does, heightening her sympathy for him, here in the culminating scene the memory of the Angel's music and its effect on her powers of sympathy compel Delia to perform a deed that rivals in moral quality even the perfect splendors of the Angelic Land. Delia's receptiveness to modern music demonstrates the moral superiority of resistance to current taxonomies. Her lack of devotion to "enlightened" classifications is a true index of progress, moving the world closer to a humanitarian ideal.

While many of Wells's works certainly display the token fin de siècle fascination with theories of biological degeneration, *The Wonderful Visit* and "Scepticism of the Instrument" together provide one of the most thoughtful retaliations against degenerationist logic to appear in this pessimistic era. In his novel, Wells not only questions the excessive pathologizing tendencies of the notorious Nordau, but also implicates the "straightforward" logic of typical humans in his critique of a fundamentally taxonomical world. Though they believe themselves to be straightforward and rational, the townspeople's similarity with Dr. Crump and the species collectors, for whom all "eccentricity is immorality," reveals the dangerous possibilities that arise when one defers to one's own logic or powers of classification at the expense of expansion of vision and understanding. Significantly, Wells turns to modern art and experimental music in his endeavor to invalidate the narrow approach to anomalous phenomena forwarded by both

false scientists and perpetuators of the false logic of the flawed instrument of human thought. Acknowledgement of the value of confusion and acceptance of the unfamiliar are qualities that the good scientist can emulate in the good critic. Receptiveness to modern art in the novel stands for resistance to destructive taxonomization, and the characters who acknowledge the beauty of modern art are also the characters who contribute to the moral advancement of the world. Devotees of classificatory thought, on the other hand, destroy not only rare butterflies, but also the bare possibility of true enlightenment and human transcendence of cruelty. Wells uses the vivid example of a degenerationist's attack on a modern and musical Angel to illustrate the splendors that are lost to the world when Victorians uncritically accept the ideological apparatuses of evolutionary theory and fail to recognize the limitations of unenlightened scientific innovation.

CHAPTER 3

Rethinking Hysteria through Artistic Genius in *Trilby* and *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*

In his second and most popular novel, *Trilby* (1894), George Du Maurier provides an account of the transformation of a woman with a medically recognizable case of hysteria from a common Parisian grisette to a virtuoso vocal performer. Through the complex representation of the possible explanations for Trilby's newfound vocal ability that accompanies this transformation, Du Maurier engages with contemporary theories of art and artistic genius that can be examined in the context of theoretical redefinitions of hysteria at the end of the nineteenth century. In this chapter, I examine Du Maurier's investigation of his heroine's identity alongside the writings of one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research in England, F.W.H. Myers, whose works constitute a representative example of a developing, non-pathological approach to hysteria in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In his posthumously published *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (1904), Myers provides an argument against the universal pathologization of hysteria in the Victorian era by creating a link between artistic genius and hysterical trance, positing that the work of art produced by a man of genius and the hysteric's extraordinary performances in a trance state are two manifestations of the same mechanism: traffic between the subconscious and conscious strata of the mind.[26] In this work,

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[25] A familiar conception of artistic geniuses in the late Victorian period is one that already classes them with hysterics, although emphasizing their similar degeneracy in explicit contradiction to the theories of Myers. Max Nordau's *Degeneration* and the works of famous physician and degenerationist Henry Maudsley are two examples of Victorian era theories that include denunciations of the artist as degenerate, not to be distinguished from hysterics, criminals, prostitutes, and lunatics. See Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* for an example of this perspective (297). While I do not deny that this was an influential conception of artistic genius in the late Victorian era, theorists like Myers and E.S. Dallas in *The Gay*

Myers illustrates the attempt within psychical research to theorize scientifically the artist or genius as a being uniquely capable of harnessing the power of the subconscious (or in Myers's terms, "subliminal") mind for their artistic ends,[27] an ability that, to a certain extent, they share with entranced hysterics. Like Myers, Du Maurier takes as his subject artistic production and hypnosis, exploring what the work of art may signify when it is generated through an entranced hysteric's body.

Though Jill Galvan, Phyllis Weliver, and Hilary Grimes have discussed the theoretical continuities between Du Maurier and Myers, the intersection between Myers's treatment of hysteria and the artist and Du Maurier's second novel is an area that has not been addressed to any significant extent.[28] In *Trilby*, Du Maurier engages with the problematic status of the hysteric

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Science rather regard works of art as creations that can be objectively denominated as constructive. Dallas writes, "Art comes of inspiration—comes by second nature. Nevertheless, it comes according to laws which it is possible to note and which imperatively demand our study" (Dallas 64). Myers shares a similar view of artistic creation and begins with the premise that works of art represent the level of constructive capability in the minds from which they spring. The producers of these creations, artists, are thus essentially constructive also. The constructive work of art becomes a way for Myers to legitimize his claim for constructive mental process in geniuses and hysterics in repudiation of almost universal pathological interpretations of these groups within medical discourse.

[26] I use the term subconscious rather than unconscious throughout this analysis because of its more accurate reflection of the pre-Freudian approach to mental processes employed by theorists like Myers. See Jill Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium*, 123. Myers's use of the term "subliminal" rather than unconscious situates him within this alternative conception of the hidden and powerful regions of the psyche. The term unconscious is retained when other writers use it or in sections concerned with the Freudian approach.

[27] Weliver writes that "Trilby's performance seems to prove Myers's argument in 'Multiplex Personality' that disturbances of the normal state (somnambulism, personality alteration, or other states that exhibit the unconscious mind) might reconstitute individuals 'after an improved pattern, [they show us] that we may be fused and recrystallized into greater clarity'" (Weliver 261). Weliver indicates that Myers's essay "Muliplex Personality" and the works of Victorian theorist of mesmerism William B. Carpenter help explain the contradiction between the "supposed morbid effects" of mesmerism on Trilby and her "glorious singing" (Weliver 253, 261). Similarly, Hilary Grimes alludes to Myers when she writes, "By the late nineteenth century, many researchers believed that actions and speech displayed during the trance state were

at the end of the nineteenth century in his representation of the heroine's transformation from a mentally ill woman to an apparent artistic genius under hypnotic trance. Though most critics see Trilby as operating as the empty repository for the hypnotist Svengali's own talent, which he funnels through her as though playing her as a mere instrument,[29] I propose that Du Maurier, like Myers, entertains the possibility that the hysteric's extraordinary productions, like the genius's work of art, attest to the constructive quality of the subconscious mind in defiance of widespread pathological conceptions of hysteria or, in its more spiritual formulation, mystical experience.

In Myers's scheme, the work of art, whether literary, musical, visual, or even mathematical, is essentially constructive and serves as evidence of a rare convergence between conscious and subconscious mental strata, a convergence that he specifically claims is observable in its most developed form in "certain traditional saints or sages" (Myers 83). The notion of the work of art as a manifestation of mental convergence is alluded to in Wells's *The Wonderful Visit* when the Angel plays the violin and both he and the Vicar temporarily become "abstracted," losing consciousness and accessing the otherworldly Angelic Land on some

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products of the hypnotic subject's subliminal self" (Grimes 77). While these claims inform my own argument, I would like to situate *Trilby* more specifically within Myers's conception of the artist in his most comprehensive work on subconscious phenomena, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*. Galvan's alignment of Du Maurier with Myers is more concentrated on dreams in *Peter Ibbetson*, to the exclusion of *Trilby*. No critic discusses Du Maurier in the context of Myers's formulation of artistic genius.

[28] For examples of this perspective and analyses of Trilby's automatism, see Fiona Coll, "'Just a singing machine': The Making of an Automaton in George Du Maurier's *Trilby*," Jill Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium*, Russo, *The Female Grotesque* for a discussion of Trilby as a "stunt singer" (154), Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity* for Trilby as "passive nightingale through whom [Svengali] can express his artistic talents" (35). For a departure from these perspectives see Phyillis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction*, who argues that while Trilby begins by being colonized by Svengali, eventually she comes to author her own performance: "This is not an imitative automaton, but an equal who likes to sing" (264). See also Hilary Grimes, *The Late Victorian Gothic*. Grimes argues that *Trilby* illustrates "the dynamic interchange of power between Trilby and Svengali during scenes of mesmerism and hypnotism" and that Trilby is a subject who "cannot be dismissed as a powerless, passive victim of mesmerism" (Grimes 65, 71).

mysterious mental level (*TWV* 102-104). While *The Wonderful Visit* is primarily concerned with interpretation and categorization of anomalous phenomena rather than psychological theories of artistic production, Du Maurier almost exclusively emphasizes the latter in *Trilby* in order to provide a more nuanced reconsideration of degenerative illness. Rejecting the Victorian fad of "spiritism," or popular attempts through séance, table-turning, spirit channeling, and the like, to communicate with the inhabitants of a spiritual realm, Du Maurier, Myers and other theorists at the end of the Victorian era distanced themselves from an explicit focus on problematically spiritual concepts like sainthood and mysticism. They held, instead, that study of "uprushes" of the "subliminal self" in special individuals, including both artistic "geniuses" and entranced hysterics, would furnish more empirically verifiable evidence that human consciousness is composed of a complex of layers, some of which, being ungoverned by the limitations of material embodiment, indirectly act as proof of the existence of a spiritual plane of being (Myers *passim*).

Although Du Maurier was skeptical of religion himself and, according to Leoneé Ormond, "had never been a Christian" and "was an early disciple of Darwin, whose ideas tended to confirm his own," he nevertheless shared with Myers a scientifically inflected interest in the possibility that the undiscovered regions of the psyche would provide evidential proof of a spiritual realm continuous with the observable realities of the material plane (Ormond 327). His first novel, *Peter Ibbetson*, for instance, dwells obsessively on the likelihood that dreams will eventually be isolable and available for study, furnishing new insights into the construction of the mind and its ability to access a transcendent realm.[30] Additionally, in an early letter to his

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[29] In a representative passage, Peter says, "Now, these dreams of mine…are they not a proof that there exist in the human brain hidden capacities, dormant potentialities of bliss, unsuspected hitherto, to be developed some day, perhaps, and placed within the reach of all, wakers and

friend, Felix Moscheles, Du Maurier explicitly links mesmerism with the concept of spiritual disembodiment when he complains to Moscheles of the latter's occultism, asking "why should you make nervous fellows' flesh creep by talk about mesmerism, and dead fellows coming to see live fellows before dying, and the Lord knows what else?"[31] (Mosheles 59-60). Du Maurier's exposure in his youth to the practice of mesmerism by Moscheles established a connection in his mind between subconscious phenomena and the possibility of spiritual disembodiment, a connection that aligns him closely with the theories of Myers. As I will demonstrate, both Du Maurier and Myers concentrate on hysterical individuals to illustrate their beliefs surrounding the function of the subconscious mind due to hysterics' known susceptibility to the practice of hypnosis or mesmerism and thus the easy accessibility of their subconscious selves for outsiders. Both writers also emphasize the unexpected revelation that hysterical subconscious emergence can testify to the mysterious and extraordinary powers latent within these supposedly pathological and demented individuals, a paradox that became an important focal point for anti-positivist theorists at the fin de siècle.

I. Victorian Reconsiderations of Hysteria and Degenerative Illness

Trilby, set in the 1850s and 60s, is a novel about a lower class woman, Trilby O'Ferrall, who befriends three English artists in bohemian Paris. Drawing from the example of Henri

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sleepers alike" (*Peter Ibbetson* 80). Peter's highly evolved ability to enter a lucid dream state of "ineffable joy" confuses him at first, but leads him to conclude he has found a portal into the transcendent realm through his mind, saying that "some instinct told me that this was not death, but transcendent earthly life" (206). Du Maurier uses the subconscious phenomenon of lucid dreaming to explore the accessibility of a transcendent realm of ineffable joy through the as yet undiscovered "hidden capacities" of the brain in *Peter Ibbetson*. He revisits the mysterious physiology of the mind in *Trilby* through the heroine's gradual development and display of the "hidden capacities" of her subliminal self under hypnosis, using the subconscious phenomenon of her musical performances in a similar fashion to the way he uses lucid dreaming in *Peter Ibbetson*.

[30] This letter is transcribed by Moscheles in his memoir about his time with Du Maurier in the 1850s, suggesting that it was written sometime in that decade.

Murger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème* and other works of the self-styled bohemian genre for certain character types and plot points, the novel nostalgically represents the lives of three English bourgeois artists in the years when they happily suffered for their art in Paris. Regular visitors to their Paris studio include the pianist who goes only by the name of Svengali and his violinist Gecko. Svengali attempts to win Trilby's affections with his piano performances and his talent for hypnosis, which helps alleviate her neuralgia, but Trilby falls in love with one of the English artists, Little Billee. Midway through the novel, Trilby is forced to abandon her relationship with Little Billee due to her checkered and unrespectable past, involving previous lovers and nude modeling. Though Trilby then disappears from the artists' lives, she later resurfaces as a world-renowned virtuoso singer under the hypnotic mastery of Svengali.

The terms of the debate regarding Trilby's status as a hypnotized automaton and the source of her vocal ability in the second half Du Maurier's novel closely resemble a specific debate regarding hysteria in the last decade of the nineteenth century. While modern critics discuss Trilby's transformation under hypnosis in terms of mental fracture, loss of acuity, absolute powerlessness and vulnerability to invasion by outside forces, theorists of hysteria at the end of the nineteenth century overwhelmingly used the same terms to discuss those (primarily women) who exhibited symptoms of hysteria in all its possible stages. Trilby's exhibition of classic hysterical symptoms from early in the novel up to and including her musical performances in her trance states thus closely allies her with the principal historical conception of hysteria as mental pathology, as others have argued.[32] In his representation of Trilby's

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[31] While critics such as Athena Vrettos and Michele Mendelssohn have focused on the pathological dimension of Du Maurier's treatment of trance states and (degenerative) mental process in *Trilby*, I would like to examine the constructive dimension, and the role that Trilby plays in furnishing evidence of the potential disembodiment of the mind through the opportunity for observation of her mental processes and trance states, and her artistic productions, provided

symptoms, including neuralgia and bodily pains of psychological origin, mysterious physical weakening, suicidal tendencies, and susceptibility to hypnotism, Du Maurier appears to validate the conventional assessment of hysteria as illness forwarded by many high profile nineteenth century physicians and psychologists, an assessment that both early and current critical proponents of Trilby's automatism rightly identify as being central to Du Maurier's exploration of subconscious phenomena. However, the novel also demonstrates an alternative conception of hysteria at work, one that was developed in order to counter hysteria's unquestioned association with pathology by the medical and psychological establishments at the end of the century.

In *Saint Hysteria*, Cristina Mazzoni writes of "the turn-of-the-century revisitation of a characteristically medieval genre, hagiography. Most frequently, the principal purpose for revisiting this genre was to redeem saintliness from positivist accusations of hysteria" (119). Whether to uphold the legitimacy of mystical experience or to undo the damaging effects of reductive pathological assessments of female patients, theorists concerned with establishing an alternative understanding of hysteria did so by concentrating on the extraordinary phenomena to emerge during the hysteric's trance states, implicitly raising the question of how to reconcile the interpretation of hysteria as pathology and degeneracy with the reality of the hysteric's performance of seemingly impossible and constructive, rather than destructive, feats despite her apparent mental illness. Mazzoni gestures to this impulse among hysteria's revisionists, writing, for instance, that "the practical accomplishments of the great mystics prevent their classification as incapable madwomen" for anti-positivist writers in the nineteenth century (159). She cites

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by the novel. See also Laura Vorachek for theories of degeneration in the novel. See Nathalie Saudo-Welby, "The 'over-aesthetic eye' and the 'monstrous development of a phenomenal larynx': Du Maurier's art of excess in *Trilby*," for a discussion of the tension between fear of and attraction to degeneration in *Trilby* and, specifically, the narrator's "effort to correct the pathological and demoralizing aspects of his book" within the narrative (Saudo-Welby 49).

decadent novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans as a representative of this perspective, who writes of a famous historical mystic in his novel *En Route* (1895) that "to assimilate the blessed lucidity and incomparable genius of Saint Teresa with the extravagances of nymphomaniacs and madwomen, that was so obtuse, so inane, that one could really only laugh about it!" (Mazzoni 38, Huysmans 273). Significantly, the essence of Huysmans's statement is that the "blessed lucidity and incomparable genius," which allude to clairvoyance and are thus concomitant with St. Teresa of Avila's allegedly hysterical ecstasies, are precisely what delegitimize Charcot's claims against the mystic in *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art* of 1886. We can observe a similar approach to hysterical trance in other anti-positivist contexts of the period, indicating that the hysteric's extraordinary feats under trance in and of themselves play a more central role in fin de siècle recuperative theories of hysteria than has hitherto been recognized.

Freud and Breuer in their path breaking psychological work *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) provide perhaps the most notable example of hysteria's reconceptualization at the turn of the twentieth century, and we can further look to the psychologist William James and the lectures comprising his volume, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, for a more strident denunciation of hysteria's widespread pathologization and, perhaps more importantly, the widespread trivialization of artistic or religious expressions to spring from the minds of supposedly hysterical or otherwise unbalanced individuals. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg explains, at the end of the nineteenth century, "emotional indulgence, moral weakness, and lack of willpower characterized the hysteric in both lay and medical thought," and, additionally, popular conviction of her moral deficiency "denied the hysteric the sympathy granted to sufferers from unquestionably organic ailments" (Rosenberg 205). In this unfriendly environment for sufferers of hysteria, Freud and Breuer articulated a surprisingly sympathetic approach toward the first

patient in their study, Anna O., and also attempted to remove hysteria from the realm of hereditary determinism and degeneracy, focusing instead on trauma as the source of hysterical illness.[33] In his account of Anna O., Breuer writes that this hysterical patient's increasing susceptibility to hypnosis and her development of hysteria (some of her symptoms included paralyses, hallucinations, and mutism) had as one of its "predisposing causes" a "monotonous family life and the absence of adequate intellectual occupation" that "left her with an unemployed surplus of mental liveliness and energy." "This," Breuer adds, "found an outlet in the constant activity of her imagination," leading to day-dreaming and, eventually, the hysterical "dissociation of her mental personality" (Breuer 41). As Elaine Showalter writes, such an emphasis on Anna O.'s "mental liveliness" and active imagination as the source of her subconscious emergences under hypnosis means that

> in strong contrast to the hostile portraits of hysterical women produced by most English and French physicians of the period, Freud and Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria* presented a sympathetic and even admiring view. They maintained that hysterics were neither weak nor mentally deficient, as Charcot and Pierre Janet had said, but included "people of the clearest intellect, strongest will, greatest character and highest critical power." Based on his experiences with Anna O., Breuer argued that the hysterical predisposition lay in an excess, rather than in a lack, of energy, drive, and talent. (Showalter 158)

Showalter demonstrates that *Studies on Hysteria* emphasizes the "intellectual" acumen and "artistic gifts" of the women described in the case studies (158). The work's repeated allusions to

[33] See William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel*, page 128. Greenslade writes, "Freud had also come to view degeneration as a nuisance. Back in the mid-nineties he had expressed reservations about how the 'French school of psychiatrists' would diagnose the symptoms of his hysterical patients. …Degeneracy had ceased to have any use for Freud, although he still called on heredity to explain sexual abnormalities in the family" (128).

the energy, talent, and "mental liveliness" of these women, I further suggest, reflect a wider preoccupation at the fin de siècle with countering hysteria's pathologization specifically through an examination of artistic production as proof of mental strength in hysterical individuals. Freud's and Breuer's approach to hysteria in their early formulations of the illness merely gestures toward a theoretical revision that was to become a central consideration of other psychological writers in this era, including F.W.H. Myers and William James.[34]

A brief account of psychologist William James's refutation of the prevailing pathological assessments of atypical mental states touted by mainstream medicine and high profile theorists of degeneration like Max Nordau will demonstrate the urgency with which this topical issue was addressed in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The first lecture in James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, "Religion and Neurology," delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1901, encapsulates many of the concerns discussed by Cristina Mazzoni in relation to the late nineteenth century reaction against Charcot's *Les Demoniaques dans l'Art* among decadent writers. James, like Huysmans, takes particular issue with the pathologizing of Saint Teresa of Avila, a popular target of "medical materialism," as James terms the "too simple-minded system of thought which we are considering" (James 20). Indeed, James's main concern is for the reputation of such mystical personages whose visions, voices, intuitions, and "automatic utterances generally" are under the attack of the medical materialists, who interpret these phenomena "in a destructive rather than an accreditive way" in order to delegitimize their origins and reduce mystics' "inner illumination[s]" to sheer psychosis (24, 22).

[34] Showalter explains that later Freud reneged on his initially egalitarian treatment of hysterical patients. She discusses Freud's "Fragment of an analysis of a Case of Hysteria" and his treatment of the patient, "Dora," whom he antagonized in a manner foreign to the treatment of the women in *Studies on Hysteria* (158-161).

In the lecture, James analogizes the "automatic utterances" of "hysterical" mystics with the "productions of genius" in his discussion of the pathologization of artistic geniuses by the representative "medical materialists" Cesare Lombroso, John Nisbet, and Max Nordau (24, 23). He claims that, just as the medical materialists attempt to malign the automatic utterances of mystics, so do they insist that "the works of genius are fruits of disease" (22). The only difference between these two prime victims of pathological and degenerative theories of hysteria, genius, and mysticism is that, in most cases, works of art themselves are able to escape the victimization of their creators, while automatic utterances and the individuals who produce them are both reduced to pathology in the case of religious mysticism. He asks, regarding the medical materialists and their interpretation of works of art,

> Now, do these authors, after having succeeded in establishing to their own satisfaction that the works of genius are fruits of disease, consistently proceed thereupon to impugn the *value* of the fruits? … Do they frankly forbid us to admire the productions of genius from now onwards? and say outright that no neuropath can ever be a revealer of truth? (22-3, James's emphasis)

He answers this question by saying that, with the exception of Max Nordau, who "has striven to impugn the value of works of genius in a wholesale way…by using medical arguments," other proponents of medical materialism and degeneration do not go so far as to attack the value of works of art themselves, and thus "for the most part the masterpieces are left unchallenged," though their creators continue to suffer charges of mental illness (23).

James determines that naysayers of the "automatic utterances" of hysterical individuals and mystics should use the work of art as an example of how the *product* of mysterious mental processes can have an inherent value that transcends any signs of pathology or hysteria in the

individual from whom it originates. He calls this reliance on the observable qualities of both artistic and mystical productions the "empiricist criterion" upon which artists, mystics, and hysterics should be judged, rather than judging them based on their possession of a "psychopathic temperament," which, he affirms, when combined with a "superior quality of intellect" actually creates the "best possible condition for the kind of effective genius that gets into the biographical dictionaries" (25, 27). He summarizes this "empiricist criterion" in the phrase, "by their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots" (James 25). This is an allusion to the book of Matthew: "You will know them by their fruits…A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit" (*MacArthur Study Bible*, Matthew 7.15-18). In James's essay, his emphasis on artistic geniuses and works of art ultimately serves his larger purpose of reaffirming the legitimacy of religion and mysticism in the wake of the devastation wrought against spiritual authenticity by the medical materialists. However, his primary argument, that neuropaths *can* be revealers of truth, and that this truth can be observed through either the work of art or hysterical automatic utterance, situates him within an important and overlooked revisionary account of hysteria that blossomed in a variety of contexts in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

In George Du Maurier's *Trilby*, the heroine's automatism under hypnosis can, in my view, be read with this late nineteenth century reconsideration of hysterical phenomena in mind. Even current critics are apt to raise the question of why such an incongruity exists between Du Maurier's representation of the morbidity of hypnotic susceptibility and the results of this susceptibility, Trilby's "glorious singing" (Weliver 261). But the contrast Du Maurier creates between the pathological associations of subconscious phenomena and artistic transcendence under trance is more explicable when examined through the lens of alternative approaches to

hysteria. Central to both the Freud/Breuer camp and the mystically oriented camp of hysteria's redefinition is the insistence that the emergence of hysterical symptoms or trance phenomena in either patients or mystics is not necessarily an indication of mental weakness. Myers fully develops this argument in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* in preparation for his larger hypothesis regarding the continuity between the constructive work of art and the constructive nature of subconscious phenomena produced by the hysteric, whose mental weakness and degeneracy in mainstream medical contexts is already presupposed. An examination of Myers's treatment of the problem of mental weakness and hysteria serves to reveal that Du Maurier also works to deny the reader's assumption of mental weakness in Trilby in order to question the wisdom of pathological approaches to hysteria.

II. Writing the Moral Hysteric

Myers's account of hysteria in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* hinges on a refutation of its strictly pathological connotation that was widely disseminated by the end of the nineteenth century by medical practitioners such as Pierre Janet and Jean-Martin Charcot, an attitude that is addressed by Du Maurier in his chronicle of the progress of Trilby's mental illness.[35] Just as James, Huysmans, and the anti-positivists discussed by Mazzoni challenge late Victorian medicine by redefining mysticism as non-pathological, so does Myers

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[34] See John Warne Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith*, for a discussion of the fin de siècle debate in the psychological community regarding the subconscious phenomena of hysteria. One camp held that such phenomena denoted the existence of an unhealthy psyche that "had a tendency to fly into fragments or 'disaggregate'" (Monroe 214). The opposite camp, represented by Myers in England, argued that the subconscious phenomena of hysterics formed "the terrain where scientists would finally discover the soul, and the task of psychical research was to serve as the portal to this transcendent realm" (213). Like Myers, Du Maurier participates in this contemporary debate and explores in his chronicle of Trilby's career as a hypnotized musician the constructive quality of the subconscious mind, which fin de siècle scientists were attempting to study with the "experimental techniques of empirical psychology" and the "controlled use" of trance states in mediums and mesmeric somnambulists (Monroe 214, 212).

spearhead an attack against the positivist rejection of a spiritual realm by beginning with an examination of hysterical phenomena and the mental processes underpinning them. Writing that "there are in hysteria frequent *acquisitions* as well as *losses* of faculty," Myers denies Janet's assertion that symptoms of hysteria necessarily indicate a "fragmented" or "disaggregated" psyche by claiming that, in some hysterical subjects, "we are looking for integrations in lieu of disintegrations; for intensification of control, widenings of faculty, instead of relaxation, scattering, or decay."[36] "Our 'degenerates' may sometimes be in truth *progenerate*," he also states (Myers 53, 41, his emphasis). Myers further refutes the proponents of hysterical degeneration by suggesting that it is a mistake to attribute "initial weakness of mind" to subjects who succumb to psychological distress, and to do so is like attributing an "Artic explorer's frost-bite" to "bad circulation." He writes:

> In the case of hysteria, as in the case of frost-bite, the inborn power of resistance may be unusually great, and yet the stimulus may be so excessive that that power may be overcome. Arctic explorers have generally, of course, been among the most robust of men. And with some hysterics there is an even closer connection between initial strength and destructive malady. (40)

If we consider the "widenings of faculties" observable in the paradoxically strong hysteric rather than concentrating on the decay of the weak hysteric, Myers posits, "we shall then reach the point where the vague name of *hysteria* must give place to the vague name of *genius*" (53, his emphasis). Overturning the Victorian categorization of artistry as madness or degeneracy, Myers creates an alternative continuum on which both artistry and hysteria are attributes of a constructive subconscious.

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[35] See Monroe, 214, for Janet's perspective.

Before examining the way in which Trilby's musical career engages with scientific theories of the fin de siècle man of genius, I would like to analyze her case of hysteria in the first half of the novel as a refutation, similar to that of Myers, of the notion that atypical mental states necessarily follow from "initial weakness of mind." In order to turn Trilby into an artistic genius later in the novel, Du Maurier first illustrates that, like the Arctic explorer in Myers's account, "excessive" psychological "stimulus" is responsible for the development of hysterical symptoms in a hitherto especially "robust" woman (Myers 40).

In *Trilby*, Du Maurier's investigation of mental processes and, specifically, mental weakness, begins with his establishment of Trilby as a woman with a recognizable case of hysteria, which she develops as a result of her failure to conform to the bourgeois conception of "virtuous" womanhood, that quality which belongs only to virgin women (if unmarried, as Trilby is) in Victorian culture. Other scholars have discussed Du Maurier's representation of Trilby as specifically related to the medical theorization and treatment of hysteria at the end of the nineteenth century.[37] In *Trilby*, excessive psychological stimulus resulting in hysteria takes the specific form of social condemnations against "fallen" women, or unmarried women whose lack of virginity or participation in taboo sexual behaviors (like Trilby's nude modeling) translates to a permanent loss of womanly "virtue" under the standards set by bourgeois Victorian culture. Du Maurier's interest in Trilby's fallen state is partly due to the opportunity it provides to examine the gradual mental weakening of a powerful individual through the internalization of "excessive stimulus" in the form of a bourgeois code of morality. Like many other novelists at the fin de siècle, Du Maurier makes it a priority to rewrite fallenness as virtue.[38] In the case of *Trilby*,

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[36] See, for instance, Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque*, 149.

however, rewriting fallenness also provides an opportunity to rewrite hysteria due to the similarity between the Victorian conceptualization of these two amoral mental "illnesses" (Anderson 23).[39] *Trilby* self-consciously critiques the social stigmatization of fallenness by intimating that it is by internalizing a social construction of herself as fallen that Trilby develops a mental illness, but that, like Myers's Arctic explorer, this capitulation to psychological distress is no indicator of initial weakness of mind. Including Trilby's added distress over the death of her brother, Jeannot, allows Du Maurier to showcase her reaction to breaches of various standards of morality, highlighting her exemplarity and further distancing her from stereotypes that equate hysteria with derangement, nymphomania, and general moral decay.

An overview of Myers's treatment of the intersection between hysteria and morality will help elucidate Du Maurier's approach to the same subject. In Victorian medical discourse, the hysteric is widely understood to be an amoral or immoral being as a result of her derangement and what is characterized as her uncontrollable sexuality. Hysterical symptoms themselves are often interpreted in Victorian writings on the subject as elaborate deceptions engineered by their sufferers in order to gain sympathy as well as confound and thwart the efforts of attending physicians, who thus oftentimes equated hysterical women with falsehood, immorality, and inauthenticity even before examining them.[40] Additionally, Mazzoni writes of nymphomania

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[37] The thematic similarities between *Trilby* and Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* on the subject of fallenness are substantial, for example.

[38] As Amanda Anderson argues in *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces*, in the Victorian era, fallenness, rather than referring exclusively to moral laxity or viciousness, was perceived to be a sort of permanently broken mental state of "attenuated autonomy or fractured identity" that followed upon one's "fall," a term that at its base means to "lose control" (Anderson 23, 2). An incurable mental illness of sorts, loss of will, loss of autonomy, or a "deadening of the mind," were among the main effects that "inexorably descend[ed] upon the lapsed woman" (51-2).

[40] See Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 202-207, for a discussion of physicians' interpretation of hysteria as manipulation and deception perpetrated by patients. She writes that

and hysteria that "the two are almost synonymous diagnoses in the nineteenth-century popular imagination and often, in spite of many proofs to the contrary, even in medical opinion" (39). The widespread equation of hysteria with not only mental pathology, but, specifically, sexual pathology and immorality, is a problem for Myers for the same reason that equating hysteria with mental illness is: if it is true that the hysteric can be reduced to pathological sexuality, then the constructive quality of the subconscious phenomena to emerge during her trance states can be automatically delegitimized due to their essentially amoral and pathological origins. Thus, Myers's solution to this difficulty is to argue that not only is hysteria not necessarily an indication of mental weakness, but, also, that hysterical response is inherently moral. He writes:

> It has often happened that the very feelings which we regard as characteristically civilised, characteristically honourable, have reached a pitch of vividness and delicacy which exposes their owners to shocks such as the selfish clown can never know. It would be a great mistake to suppose that all psychical upsets are due to vanity, to anger, to terror, to sexual passion. (40)

He later adds, "Who shall say how far we desire to be susceptible to stimulus? Most rash would it be to assign any fixed limit, or to class as inferior those whose main difference from ourselves may be that they feel sincerely and passionately what we feel torpidly" (41). Just as Tess's sympathetic responsiveness to the dying pheasants stands as one of the signs of her authentic genius temperament, so does the hysteric's heightened sensitivity signify sincerity, delicacy, honor, and civilization (Hardy 279). It is not because the hysteric lacks a moral basis, but because she is in fact more sensitive to ethical questions that she becomes ill.

"the hysteric might mimic tuberculosis, heart attacks, blindness, or hip disease, while lungs, heart, eyes, and hips remained in perfect health. The physician had only his patient's statement that she could not move or was racked with pain" (203). She adds, "As might be expected, conscious anger and hostility marked the response of a good many doctors to their hysterical patients" (207).

Like Myers, Du Maurier concentrates on the intersection between susceptibility to shocks or stimulus and morality, indicating that the origin of Trilby's hysterical symptoms is her sensitivity to moral mandates despite the fact that she is a conventionally "fallen" woman. Concentrating on the complex origins of Trilby's hysteria helps Du Maurier overturn the Victorian expectation that hysterical symptoms spring forth from a darkly deceptive and immoral core. Just as Anna O.'s hysteria "signif[ied] through the body … the protest that social conditions made unspeakable in words" and registered "her rejection of the patriarchal orthodoxy" that constricted her daily life, so do Trilby's hysterical symptoms mark her as a woman who unconsciously resists patriarchal mandates regarding respectable behavior (Showalter 157). Trilby's ultra-sensitivity to moral transgression is developed in the novel through her unconscious internalization of strictly constructed rules for women and her hysterical revelation of the oppressive nature of these rules through neuralgic symptoms. Such a reading helps explain the narrator's description of Little Billee's early encounter with Trilby, when, with a "[quick flash] of intuitive insight," he "divined far down beneath the shining surface of [Trilby's] eyes…a well of sweetness; …and under that—alas! at the bottom of it all—a thin slimy layer of sorrow and shame" (36). "Far down beneath" her exemplary qualities of "compassion, generosity, and warm sisterly love," in the deep, embedded recesses of her mind, is where Du Maurier tellingly chooses to locate Trilby's "layer" of shame about moral transgression. The term layer here suggests graduated levels of consciousness, and shame has been repressed to the lowest level of consciousness available, i.e., the unconscious. Her unconscious attempt to resist capitulating to others' categorization of her behavior as shameful proves to be impossible in this Victorian milieu and thus results in hysterical attacks.

Trilby's first episode of neuralgic pain occurs early in the novel when she descends from the sculptor Durien's apartment, "eyes…red with weeping." "The pain was maddening, and generally lasted twenty-four hours" (55). As one of the three men specifically named for whom Trilby "sits promiscuously" (77), or models nude, Durien triggers neuralgic pain because, for Trilby, modeling for him is associated with sexual and moral transgression. Trilby's guilty emergences of neuralgic pain springing from her repressed knowledge of the unrespectable categorization of modeling in bourgeois and patriarchal thought is not represented as proof of "erotomania," but rather as sensitivity to ethical questions.[41] Mazzoni writes that, in psychoanalytic theories of hysteria and mysticism, "the 'body' holds a knowledge that is other or in excess of conscious knowledge," that is, the physical symptoms of hysteria act as representations of an otherwise inarticulable state of mind (187). Rather than figuring the moral decay of nymphomania or erotomania, Du Maurier's allusions to psychological repression suggest that Trilby's neuralgic pain can be read as a bodily representation of repressed distress regarding conventional morality, highlighting the heroine's sensitivity to ethical questions even as she transgresses laws of bourgeois respectability. Emphasizing the hysteric's guilt and moral sensitivity is one strategy both Myers and Du Maurier use to undermine conventional

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[40] Trilby's neuralgia in these episodes appears to be generated by what is represented as her community's largely arbitrary categorization of nude modeling as immoral, and the arbitrariness of this social prescription serves to deny the typical association of nude models and thus Trilby with prurient sexual desire or "erotomania." Du Maurier emphasizes the arbitrariness of the stigmatization of nude modeling when, on several occasions, the novel rejects the bourgeois notion that nude modeling is an immoral sexual exploit. See, for instance, the passage in which Du Maurier represents the immorality of nude modeling to be a misconception perpetuated by the ultimate bourgeois moralist in the novel, Mrs. Bagot, who cites nude modeling as Trilby's cardinal sin and is subsequently ridiculed by the text for this stuffy error (326). The possibility that nude modeling is also a euphemistic stand-in for more serious taboo sexual behaviors, such as when Trilby is said to "sit promiscuously" for the artists with whom she is known to have had affairs, suggests that Du Maurier aims to imply that moral rules against sexual transgression in general are similarly arbitrary, social constructions.

expectations of hysteria and align it with genius. To prove that the hysteric's subconscious emergences under hypnosis are constructive, non-pathological, and extraordinary, it is first necessary to legitimize the hysteric herself, and liberate her from charges of immorality, deception, nymphomania, and similar destructive attributes.

Trilby's sensitivity not only to questions of sexual ethics for women but also to morality in a more general sense is reinforced by her reaction to the death of her younger brother, Jeannot. When Trilby recounts the aftermath of his unexpected death, she describes her grief and guilt as having maddened her to the point of suicide, although before this comes to pass her altered mental state and the return of her neuralgic pain lead her back to Svengali, who had successfully relieved her neuralgia in the past through hypnosis (296, 57). The full story of this most intense of her hysterical emergences of madness and neuralgic pain is not divulged until Trilby explains the nature of her guilt over Jeannot's death to Little Billee's mother, Mrs. Bagot, at the end of the novel. Revealing the details of an event that occurred before her brother died, an event that she significantly describes as "the lowest and meanest thing I ever did," Trilby tells the following story:

> I'd promised to take Jeannot on Palm Sunday to St. Philippe du Roule, to hear l'abbe Bergamot. But Durien (that's the sculptor, you know) asked me to go with him to St Germain, where there was a fair, or something…. And I went on Sunday morning to tell Jeannot that I couldn't take him [to St. Philippe du Roule]. (324)

Her little brother's disappointment and tears over her decision to renege on her promise to him haunts her for life and she says, "It was six or seven years ago, and I really believe I've thought of it every day, and sometimes in the middle of the night. Ah! and when Jeannot was dying! And when he was dead—the remembrance of that Palm-Sunday!" After she concludes, Mrs. Bagot

writes off the incident by saying, "What nonsense! That's nothing; good heavens!—putting off a small child! I'm thinking of far worse things…sitting to painters and sculptors" (326). Although a minor incident, Trilby's story illustrates two points. One is that Trilby's guilt and resulting hysterical attack following the death of her brother reinforces her sensitivity to morality, not only to potentially artificially constructed standards of bourgeois female sexuality, but, as Du Maurier represents her neglect of Jeannot here, to genuine moral "truths" that, even if she has transgressed them, she is able to divine and repent of when others are not.[42] The second point is that, as in Myers's theory of the constructive and moral hysteric, Du Maurier's contrast between Trilby's tortured and Mrs. Bagot's blasé reaction to this transgression exemplifies Myers's contention of sensitive hysterics that "they feel sincerely and passionately what we feel torpidly" (Myers 41).

III. The Psychology of Hysteria and Musical Virtuosity

The preceding paragraphs have served to illustrate Myers's and Du Maurier's similar investment in the sensitive and moral nature of hysterical response through an examination of a woman who would stereotypically be consigned to the degenerative category of nympho- or erotomaniac due to her affairs and nude modeling, or, more comprehensively, her "fallenness." However, in order to prove that hysteria is not necessarily an indicator of initial mental weakness, and that the woman of genius in Myers's sense is not a pathological but rather a constructive being, it is not enough for Du Maurier to establish Trilby's illness as originating from the excessive stimulus of the Victorian moral code; he must also demonstrate that Trilby

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[41] I believe that the story of Trilby's abandonment of her little brother Jeannot on "Palm Sunday" and her lifelong guilt over the incident is included as an example of a transgression of a genuine rather than an arbitrary moral rule (such as rules against nude modeling). Trilby's remorse and sickness over this transgression of a moral "truth" (it is wrong to hurt others) when Mrs. Bagot cannot even identify it as transgression illustrates the exemplary morality of hysterical response as well as the exemplary morality of fallen women.

possesses a unique strength of mind that can map neatly onto the "transcendent" conception of the man of genius within the contemporary camp of psychical research represented by the theories of Myers. Positing that a redirection of mental "attention" through hypnotism allows for the activation of latent potentialities in the subconscious self of certain individuals, Du Maurier uses Svengali's hypnosis of Trilby to reorient our understanding of her from a fractured, fallen, or hysterical woman to its opposite, the artistic genius in Myers's theorization of the subconscious mind.

Before Trilby undergoes her hypnotic transformation and becomes the famed singer known as "La Svengali" midway through the novel, Du Maurier is careful to highlight her unusual strength of mind and personality, inscrutable in her entranced states but nevertheless evident. Elizabeth Hollander's discussion of modeling provides a useful paradigm for understanding Du Maurier's representation of Trilby as a model and, later, a virtuoso singer. Hollander explains that, "over the past two centuries," artists' models have typically been considered "an object, or a servant, even a private audience," whereas the "creative process, the activity of making, belongs exclusively" to the artists who draw them (133-4). Denying this oversimplification of the model's role within the artist/model relationship, Hollander claims that a model "is both the occupant and author of her pose," possessing an "authority as subject" that is an "inescapable element of the medium" (134, 138). She writes that, in the artist's studio, a model "removing [her] robe [is] a rite of commencement, like a conductor tapping or raising his baton to start the music, a preamble to the activity in which students, teacher, and model [are] all participating" (137). The artistic authority that the model possesses is inextricably linked to her "bodily authority": "a clever model will always pay attention to what issues or problems concern the draftsman most, and adjust her poses accordingly to lead the way" (134, 138). In *Trilby*, Du

Maurier engages with this ambiguous status of the artist's model, which, along with the continuities between Trilby's conscious and unconscious selves, undermine the common interpretation of her lacking authority as a virtuoso singer under the control of Svengali.

Trilby is in great demand as an artist's model in Paris. The painting master Carrel at one point "ask[s] Trilby as a great favor to be the model" for his students and there is much emphasis in the novel on Trilby's unique body and her cultivation of it as a model (92). Trilby's feet are described in platonic terms as "astonishingly beautiful feet, such as one only sees in pictures and statues—a true inspiration of shape and colour, all made up of delicate lengths and subtly-modulated curves" (16-17). Trilby refers to their exalted status when she says, "It's the handsomest foot in all Paris. There's only one in all Paris to match it, and here it is," gesturing to her other foot (16). The narrator remarks that, as a model, "Trilby had respected Mother Nature's special gift to herself—had never worn a leather boot or shoe, had always taken as much care of her feet as many a fine lady takes of her hands" (19). The perfect nature of her feet inspires Little Billee to sketch "a three-quarter profile outline of Trilby's left foot" on the wall. The narrator continues:

> Slight as it was, this little piece of impromptu etching, in its sense of beauty, in its quick seizing of a peculiar individuality, its subtle rendering of a strongly received impression, was already the work of a master. It was Trilby's foot, and nobody else's, nor could have been, and nobody else but Little Billee could have drawn it in just that inspired way. (22)

While Little Billee's mastery of drawing is foregrounded in the passage, in line with Hollander's assertion that the artist's authority supersedes that of the model throughout history, Trilby's "peculiar individuality" is essential to the artistic success of the etching and is capable of actively giving a strong impression that is passively "received" by the artist. In the last sentence, Du

Maurier puts equal emphasis on Little Billee's creativity and Trilby's bodily authority as a model. It is only the particular combination of this specific artist and model that allows for the production of the transcendent etching.

In other parts of the novel, Trilby's authority is frequently conveyed through reminders of her formidable will, an important feature of her personality. Writing of Trilby's sculptor friend, Durien, Du Maurier describes Trilby as "his Galatea—a Galatea whose marble heart would never beat for *him*!" (107, Du Maurier's emphasis). Likened to a sculpture that, typically, would be an emblematic example of total malleability to the sculptor's will and desire, Trilby differs from Galatea because she resists sculpting both as a model and a person; she outmaneuvers the sculptor because she possesses a unique strength of will. Additionally, Trilby's feet, described as "uncompromising and inexorable," stand in for Trilby's own uncompromising and inexorable will, connecting her individuality and efficacy as a model with her whole personality (35). The narrator later tells us that Trilby "dearly loved her own way," and that this was "the aggravating side of her irrepressible Trilbyness" (76). And, later, her "confounded Trilbyness" is defined as "assuming an authority that did not rightly belong to her, and of course getting her own way in the end" (129). In these descriptions Du Maurier reiterates that Trilby's erotic attractiveness and her very "Trilbyness," or individual identity, are best understood through the dominant position her powerful will occupies in her psyche.

Just as Du Maurier aims to show that Trilby's development of hysteria is due to the excessive stimulus of Victorian morality rather than initial weakness of mind, so does he create continuity between her unique strength of will and her artistic authority as a model in the first half of the novel and her unparalleled musical abilities of the second half, ultimately suggesting that the latter are a more "concentrated" realization of the former when under hypnosis. The

concepts of concentration or attention are important in Myers's account of hypnotic phenomena, and in his chapter on hypnosis he writes, "many of the most important hypnotic results will be best described as modifications of *attention*" (138, his emphasis). He further explains:

> Any modification of attention is of course likely to be at once a check and a stimulus;--a check to certain thoughts and emotions, a stimulus to others. And in many cases it will be the *dynamogenic* aspect of the change—the new vigour supplied in needed directions—which will be for us of greatest interest.[43] (138)

Du Maurier is also intrigued by the possibility that hypnosis can redirect attention and supply "new vigour in needed directions," activating latent potential in certain individuals with powerful subconscious selves. In the novel, Du Maurier forwards a theory of creativity in which certain "faculties" need to be "lost" in "over-rich and complex natures" in order for the "supreme faculty" of creativity to have "elbow-room to reach its fullest" (140). Several passages in the novel indicate that Du Maurier sees the development of creative genius as a contest between self-consciously developing one's individual identity and unconsciously developing one's creative skill, whether as a painter, musician, or other artist. Little Billee's growing success as a painter is related to his loss of interest in his individuality when, following his growing fame in the art world, we are told, "his vanity about himself had become as nothing, and he missed it almost as much as his affection." Du Maurier elaborates:

> Yet [Little Billee] told himself over and over again that he was a great artist, and that he would spare no pains to make himself a greater. But that was no merit of his own.

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[42] Myers's definition of "dynamogeny", provided in the glossary appended to *Human Personality*: "the increase of nervous energy by appropriate stimuli, often opposed to inhibition" (Myers xiv).

> 2 + 2 = 4, also 2 x 2 = 4: that peculiarity was no reason why 4 should be conceited; for what was 4 but a result, either way?
>
> Well, he was like 4—just an inevitable result of circumstances over which he had no control—a mere product or sum; and though he meant to make himself as big a 4 as he could (to cultivate his peculiar *fourness*), he could no longer feel the old conceit and self-complacency. (169, Du Maurier's emphasis)

We have seen that, in the first half of the novel, Trilby's strength of will is almost synonymous with her "Trilbyness," or individual identity. Fiona Coll writes that, in the first half of the novel, Trilby's "unconventionality can, in fact, be understood as a concerted attempt to carve out something by way of an individual, independent subject-hood" (758). Just as Tess attempts to teach Angel her value as an individual apart from her hereditary line, and fails miserably, Trilby, according to Coll, has a similar goal of "carv[ing] out…[a] subject-hood" that will allow her to transgress the bounds of respectability without suffering repercussions. While Coll sees this individuality being gradually eroded as a result of the social pressures that would have Trilby become an automaton rather than an independent subject, Du Maurier's account of Trilby's "concerted effort to carve out…[a] subject-hood," frequently referred to as her "Trilbyness," by way of her strong will may have implications beyond the novel's critique of society's disciplinary control of unconventional behavior. If Tess's "fluty voice" in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* figuratively represents her possession of genius and helps to establish her value as an individual for the middle class Angel, then this conceptual move from pathologized woman to valuable individual through markers of genius is literalized in Du Maurier's novel with Trilby's "apotheosis of voice and virtuosity" as La Svengali (Hardy 119, *Trilby* 245). Moreover, Du Maurier, unlike Hardy, provides a psychological theory to explain precisely how Trilby's

valuable individuality can manifest itself through the markers of genius to strengthen the connection between these two ideas in the context of hysteria's popularity as a diagnostic category.

For Little Billee, losing his "vanity about himself" or becoming indifferent to his "peculiar *fourness*" somehow correlates to a spontaneous increase in creative faculty. In Myers's terms, a "check" to his self-conscious attention on individuality acts as a "stimulus" to the development of creative faculty. By extension, we might infer that Trilby's conscious direction of attention, or will,[44] toward establishing her individuality or "Trilbyness" in the first half of the novel means that it is not available for other uses, such as the development of her rare creative capacity, until her attention is no longer concentrated in this direction.

The theory of the inverse proportion between attention to "the individual" and the realization of one's creative genius that Du Maurier alludes to in his representation of Little Billee's illness and Trilby's musical abilities can be usefully contextualized by Victorian psychologist E.S. Dallas's thoughts upon the subject in his 1866 work, *The Gay Science*. *The Gay Science* also engages extensively with the creative subconscious and automatism in a manner that suggests that both Myers's and Du Maurier's works conceptually followed closely upon the ideas introduced by Dallas. Dallas claims that creative imagination is "but a popular name given to the *unconscious automatic action* of the hidden soul" (Dallas 245, my emphasis). The "hidden soul" is Dallas's name for the subconscious or hidden regions of the mind, or the subliminal self in Myers's works. As for Myers, for Dallas creative inspiration and resulting artistic productions are the province of the hidden soul and require some level of suspension of

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[43] Myers uses attention and will almost interchangeably as terms that denote the part of the personality that determines one's degree of "direction and persistence" in an endeavor (Myers 151). Du Maurier's representation of the function of the will as capable in varying degrees of directing one's attention to a particular object follows suit.

consciousness to manifest themselves, thus appearing automatic in nature. The extraordinary artistic productions to emerge from poets, musicians, painters, as well as those of supposed hysterics or people in trance states, all originate from the hidden soul. Additionally, Dallas claims that while the conscious self is primarily focused on "the individual" or local, the hidden soul is rather concerned with "wholes" or the universal. He writes,

> There is no reason why in conscious judgment we should not compare wholes with wholes; but this sort of comparison belongs to the automatic and unconscious action of the mind. Left to itself, in the freedom of unconsciousness, the mind acts more as a whole, and takes more to wholes. It is not much given to the splitting of hairs and the partition of qualities. To make the partitive assertions and comparisons of every-day judgment, there is needed a certain amount of abstraction; to abstract needs attention; and attention is but another name for the rays of consciousness gathered into a sheaf or focus. (270)

He describes the creative subconscious as being a part of the mind that "leaps to wholes—leaps from the particular to the universal, from the accidental to the necessary, from the temporary to the eternal, from the individual to the general" (292). Du Maurier describes Little Billee in a similar vein following his experience of brain fever: "So his powers of quick, wide, universal sympathy grew and grew, and made up to him a little for his lost power of being specially fond of special individuals," including being fond of himself (183). The narrator adds, "And I think all this genial caressing love of his kind, this depth and breadth of human sympathy, are patent in all his work" (184). Little Billee's illness after Trilby abandons him is represented as a similar sort of deadening of consciousness of himself and others that Trilby experiences through hypnosis. His loss of interest or attention to the individual following his altered mental state is replaced by

a grander grasp of the universal, which Du Maurier directly correlates to an increase in creative faculty. Mirroring Little Billee's increased expertise as a painter, Trilby's wide appeal as a singer and the transcendent quality of her performances is a second example of an unprecedented improvement in creative ability that is associated with a diminishment of her focus on the individual or local that characterizes the conscious state, in which the necessity to particularize means that the "rays of consciousness are gathered into a sheaf" and directed at mundane matters that the subconscious self, with its universalizing impulse, ignores.

The important role that a change of attention and the subduing of her conscious self plays in Trilby's rise to stardom as a musician is observable in a comparison of the descriptions of her singing ability before and after she is hypnotized. Through Trilby's "tone-deaf[ness]" at the beginning of the novel, Du Maurier suggests that her powerful will is directed toward establishing her own individuality or "Trilbyness," or, as Coll puts it, "carv[ing] out…[a] subject-hood," and that this conscious attention on individuality is preventing her from cultivating her unique talent, singing (*Trilby* 21). After she first sings "Ben Bolt" for her artist friends at the beginning of the novel, a performance "too grotesque and too funny for laughter," she says to Little Billee, "Some people think I can't sing a bit…. *I vary it, you know—not the words but the tune*" (21, my emphasis). She further says that the "great composer" Litolff, recently hearing her sing the same song, told her that

> Madame Alboni couldn't go nearly so high or low as I did, and that her voice wasn't half so big…. He said I breathed as natural and straight as a baby and all I want is to get my voice *a little more under control*. (20-21, my emphasis)

Du Maurier suggests that even in Trilby's pre-hypnotized state, when she apparently possesses no musical talent and shocks everyone with the grotesqueness of her voice, in actuality it is her

attention on her individuality that causes her to "vary the tune" and make it her own (a concrete example of "dearly lov[ing] her own way"), thus stamping it with her "Trilbyness." Her unusually wide range, ideal physiology, and powerful vocal ability indicate that Trilby could supersede the legendary singer Madame Alboni if, in Myers's words, she underwent a "modification of attention" (Myers 138). Once hypnotism allows for a redirection of her attention, Trilby is able to reach an unprecedented level of creative transcendence because the conscious attention that she once used to exercise agency in other arenas has now been rechanneled by her powerful subconscious toward a new objective, vocal performance.

The concept of redirected attention of the subconscious mind under hypnosis may also help account for the thorny difficulty of Trilby's reproduction of Svengali's own songs during her hypnotized performances. The identical content of Svengali's piano recitals, his later performances on his "flexible flageolet" and Trilby's vocal performances under hypnosis is one of the primary details of the novel that is marshaled as evidence for Trilby's status as empty repository through which Svengali funnels his own talent, a seemingly incontrovertible argument. However, that Trilby's subconscious is able to regenerate Svengali's music under hypnosis despite the fact that her conscious self explicitly pays him no heed during his many piano recitals indicates that she is in possession of a uniquely powerful subconscious self in the manner explicated by Dallas and Myers. Svengali finds Trilby's lack of attention to him to be very bothersome during his musical performances, as he does when anyone fails to direct "attention to himself" (48). He says to Trilby,

> When I play the "Rosemonde" of Schubert, matemoiselle, you look another way and smoke a cigarette…You look at the big Taffy, at the Little Billee, at the pictures on the

walls, or out of the window, at the sky, the chimney-pots of Notre Dame de Paris; you do not look at Svengali! (60)

Trilby's lack of musical ear throughout the first half of the novel means that her conscious self has no interest in listening to Svengali's music; "his grandest music…was as completely thrown away on Trilby as fireworks on a blind beggar, for all she held her tongue so piously" (38). Through Trilby's dramatic and reiterated lack of attention toward Svengali in the first half of the novel, Du Maurier underscores the puzzling but formidable power of her subconscious mind, which is somehow able to reproduce Svengali's songs under hypnosis, though they fail to register in her conscious mind at all. Du Maurier emphasizes a concept of obstructed sensory perception, highlighted by his description of Trilby's auditory perception of music as analogous to "fireworks [thrown away upon] a blind beggar" (38). Trilby's failure to register Svengali's songs in her waking memory is a problem that is rectified by the suspension of her obstructing consciousness. The extraordinary results of this suspension, Trilby's inimitable performances under trance, attest to the astonishing capacity of her subconscious self to organize and reproduce what are otherwise nonsensical imprints made in her waking state on her conscious mind.

Curiously, E.S. Dallas, in his explanation of the precise phenomenon of singing in a subconscious state the music that does not register at all while conscious, closely approaches Du Maurier's representation of Trilby and further corroborates Du Maurier's illustration of the constructive power of a musical subconscious rather than its degeneracy. Beginning with the statement that "whether we know it or not, the senses register with a photographic accuracy whatever passes before them, and that the register, though it may be lost, is always imperishable," Dallas recounts a case of somnambulism:

> A dull awkward country girl…who in particular showed not the faintest sense of music…had to sleep next a room in which a tramping fiddler of great skill sometimes lodged. Often he would play there at night, and the girl took notice of his finest strains only as a disagreeable noise. By and by, however, she fell ill, and had fits of sleep-waking in which she would imitate the sweetest tones of a small violin…[and] dash off into elaborate pieces of music, most delicately modulated. (215-216)

All of the elements of Trilby's performances are anticipated here: the girl has no ear for music, is unable to register it as music in her conscious state, and then produces these instrumental compositions vocally and virtuosically when her consciousness is suspended in trance. Dallas continues to explain what such performances signify about the mind: "The memory grips and appropriates what it does not understand—appropriates it mechanically, like a magpie stealing a silver spoon, without knowing what it is, or what to do with it" (216). The "mechanical" quality of the mind as it is exhibited through entranced musical performance, however, does not constitute for Dallas a loss of agency in the way that critics typically consider Trilby. He writes,

> Nor must we have *mean ideas* as to the nature of the existence in the mind of things preserved beyond our knowledge and without our understanding…. On the contrary, the mind is an organic whole and lives in every part, even though we know it not….The stars are overhead, though in the blaze of day they are unseen; they are not only overhead, but also all their influences are unchanged. So there is knowledge active within us of which we see nothing, know nothing, think nothing.[45] (216- 217, my emphasis)

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[44] Considering the strange parallels between Dallas's turn of phrase here, "see nothing, know nothing, think nothing," its proximity to his anecdote about the singing somnambulist, and Svengali's mantra "you shall hear nothing, see nothing, think of nothing, but Svengali, Svengali, Svengali" (*Trilby* 245), it seems possible that Du Maurier read *The Gay Science* and engaged directly with its ideas.

Comparing the activity of the subconscious to powerful stars that are present but invisible in the light of day (or in our conscious states), Dallas underscores the mistakenness of having "mean ideas" about subconscious phenomena and the proof they offer that the mind has machine-like qualities. For Dallas, automatism is no argument against the authenticity of artistic inspiration or artistic production because he defines the term "imagination" as "a name given to the automatic action of the mind or any of its faculties—to what may not unfitly be called the Hidden Soul," Dallas's term for the subconscious or subliminal self (194). Dallas believes that to denigrate subconscious phenomena as indicative of illness or insanity constitutes a fundamental misunderstanding of the way in which *all* artistic inspiration functions, that is, as an operation of the "hidden energy of the brain…directing like any musical conductor" (245). While individuals in trance states, like Trilby, betray machine-like behavior, this is due to the fact that the conscious self is being directed by a more powerful subconscious self that is able to emerge under certain conditions.

Because of the results of Trilby's suspension of her obstructing consciousness when her subconscious self rises to the surface, the chronicle of her career as a hypnotized singer under the tutelage of the pianist Svengali enacts the theories forwarded by Myers surrounding the transcendent "man of genius," whose "subliminal uprushes," or the realization of inspirations and abilities normally latent in the subconscious strata of the mind, attest to the existence of spiritual plane of being that can be more easily accessed as control is increasingly gained over this mysterious mental region. Myers's examples of "subliminal uprushes" extend from the instantaneous calculations of mathematical savants (or "calculating boys") to "Wordsworth's moments of inspiration" when composing his poems (64, 81). Because these are moments in which "the maximum of faculty is…manifested," they are evidence of an "extension…of mental

concentration which draws into immediate cognisance some workings or elements of the hidden self" (Myers 61). "Flash[es] of genius," like the instantaneous performance of normally impossible mathematical calculations, provide a kind of low-level example of latent constructive and transcendent mental faculties that are indicative of "an integrative […] and not a dissolutive" process in the mind, "a gain and not a loss of power over the organism" (72). Because experiments on hysterical subjects under hypnosis had demonstrated them performing similar party-trick type feats, Myers refutes the argument that these are indications of mental degeneration by classing the hysteric with the man of genius and claiming that the similarities between their latent abilities prove that the subconscious phenomena in both cases constitute "widenings of faculty, instead of relaxation, scattering, or decay" (53). If the feats of the "calculating boy" and the poetic inspirations of Wordsworth are both examples of "widenings of faculty" that can be attributed to the workings of the same hidden mental region inhabited by the "subliminal self," then the party-tricks of hysterics under hypnosis in addition to their more impressive reputed feats of clairvoyance, telepathy, or, in Trilby's case, the display of musical virtuosity, are all instances of "subliminal uprush" that have as their shared source a portion of the mind that is not governed by the normal limitations of material reality.

Like the calculating boy or the Romantic poet, Trilby exhibits an "emergence of hidden faculty" under hypnosis that can be evaluated in artistic terms as evidence of a "subliminal uprush" from a mind that is especially powerful and constructive. According to Myers, the subliminal self's "widenings of faculty" or integrative actions, frequently observable in the feats performed by men of genius or hysterics, "[are] performed with almost no conscious intervention of thought or judgment, but [involve] a new and complex adaptation of voluntary muscles such as would need habitually [a] man's most careful thought to plan and execute" (62). Trilby's

aesthetically perfect and technically unparalleled musical performances under hypnosis are an instantiation of Myers's theoretical "widenings of faculty." Acts of genius require "a new and complex adaptation of voluntary muscles" that in typical individuals take considerable conscious effort (sometimes over the course of years) to effect. But the untold powers of the subliminal self, when unobstructed by the conscious self, can work these changes at an accelerated pace, with astonishing results.

Thus, Trilby's performances under hypnosis are not necessarily an indication of mental fracture and pathological, hysterical susceptibility. As I explained earlier, Trilby's will in her conscious state is concentrated on her individuality or "Trilbyness," to the detriment of her singing ability. Hypnotic redirection of attention away from individuality, however, allows for her subliminal self to emerge, discernible by an unprecedented increase in control over the voluntary muscles of her vocal cords. Early in the novel, when Trilby's attempts to sing are described as "too grotesque…for laughter," a seasoned musician intuits that if she were to get her voice "a little more under control," she would be a virtuoso. Svengali has the same intuition when he looks into her mouth and examines her like a physician examining an hysteric, calling her voice a "very good production" and realizing (as we later find out) that putting her into a trance state will facilitate her rise to stardom (Russo 149, *Trilby* 58). Although Svengali too is a musician and a virtuoso himself, his inability to "evolve from some inner recess a voice to sing with" is contrasted to the dramatic emergence of just such an artistic "inner recess" from Trilby's subconscious (47). Additionally, Svengali's repeated assertion that he found *il bel canto* "in a dream" after it had been lost to earth for "a hundred years" indicates that his own musical talent is functionally the same as Trilby's; that is, he accessed it via dream through the suspension of his own consciousness, just as Trilby accesses her ultimately more impressive talent through the

suspension of her consciousness (27, 245). Because Du Maurier already established his views on the possibilities provided by dreaming in his sustained treatment of the subject in his first novel, *Peter Ibbetson*, Svengali's use of dreams to develop his musical skill is analogous to Trilby's ability to perform under trance. Du Maurier indicates that both Svengali and Trilby are in possession of uniquely integrative and powerful subconscious selves, but because singing ability is portrayed as the gold standard of all possible artistic talents, Trilby's control of her vocal cords ultimately supersedes Svengali's talent as a pianist in the novel's hierarchy of artistic production.

IV. Conclusion

If *Trilby* is a novel about the untapped and constructive resources available in the complicated psyches of women exhibiting symptoms of hysteria, why, one might ask, does Du Maurier go to such lengths to describe Svengali's apparently manipulative control of Trilby, his channeling as though through an inert object the wonders of his own artistic mastery? Because the terms of the debate regarding the pathology or non-pathology of hysteria so closely resemble the reader's encounter with an interpretive conflict surrounding Trilby's status as impressible, colonized object or as virtuosic and artistic genius, we can, I argue, read the novel as staging the difficulty of resolving the stigmatization of hysteria as illness even as it provides a thorough account of how the emergence of the subconscious might function differently than has been typically claimed by nineteenth century science and medicine. The predominance of the pathological interpretation of hysterics that says they function as examples of fractured and degenerative psyches, and are thus easily overtaken by their bodies or the influence of others, is perfectly encapsulated by the violinist Gecko's revelatory statement at the end of the novel: "With one look of his eye—with a word—Svengali could turn her into the other Trilby, his Trilby—and make her do whatever he liked…you might have run a red-hot needle into her and

she would not have felt it" (352). A common experiment performed in front of rapt audiences upon hysterics by physicians like Charcot, poking Trilby with a needle to prove her unreasonable and thus pathological insensibility to pain under the hypnotist's control firmly establishes Gecko's position as a parrot for the voice of late Victorian medicine (Winter 3).

However, a suggestive passage earlier in the novel tells a different story about hysterical response, artistry, and agency. Coded as a charming digression that describes Little Billee's friendships with women, in which stringed instruments metaphorically stand in for "responsive" (read, hysterical) females, this passage, given the novel's more general obsession with treating responsive women as inert instruments, is significant in that it reveals two competing ways of perceiving responsive women and emphasizes the limitations of the way employed by readers of women like Gecko in the novel. Du Maurier writes:

> One man loves his fiddle (or, alas! his neighbor's sometimes) for all the melodies he can awake from it—it is but a selfish love!
>
> Another, who is no fiddler, may love a fiddle too; for its symmetry, its neatness, its colour—its delicate grainings, the lovely lines and curves of its back and front—for its own sake, so to speak. He may have a whole galleryful of fiddles to love in this innocent way—a harem!—and yet not know a single note of music, or even care to hear one. He will dust them and stroke them, and take them down and try to put them in tune…and breathe his little troubles into them, and they will give back inaudible little murmurs in sympathetic response, like a damp Aeolian harp; but he will never draw a bow across the strings, nor wake a single chord—or discord!

> And who shall say he is not wise in his generation? It is but an old-fashioned philistine notion that fiddles were only made to be played on—the fiddles themselves are beginning to resent it; and rightly, I wot! (177)

Although it appears to be a simple denunciation of a mode of "playing" women selfishly that can be easily mapped onto Svengali's treatment of the hypnotized Trilby elsewhere in the novel, this passage operates on several different registers. On the face of it, there is little difference between these two ways of treating the responsive woman. Both involve explicit objectification, regarding her either as an instrument from which to elicit one's own melodies, as Gecko, an actual "fiddler," perceives the hypnotized Trilby to be an instrument for Svengali's melodies, or as a repurposed instrument that is a work of art itself, to be hung on a wall and stared at from time to time. Despite the continuity between an objectifying impulse in these two descriptions, the important departure Du Maurier makes from his own overt representation of Trilby's objectified automatic "responsiveness" elsewhere in the novel emerges from the ultimate contrast between woman as "producer of my own melodies" and woman as paradoxical "producer of her own sympathetic response."

While both modes of perceiving women rest on a conception of their essential responsiveness, Du Maurier emphasizes the gulf between men that believe women are mere objects "made to be played on" and men that recognize these "instruments'" own potential for inherent aesthetic perfection of physical organization, an allusion to both Trilby's physical body and the artistic productions that, given their connection to her physical "voice," are indivisible from this body. Because Du Maurier emphasizes the importance of Trilby's body and feet to her artistic authority as a model in the first half of the novel, this reference to the fiddle's physical perfection, its "delicate grainings, the lovely lines and curves of its back and front," further links

Trilby's artistic authority as a model to her artistic authority as an "instrument" or hypnotized musician.[46] The comparison to an Aeolian harp conjures an image of an instrument playing itself, contrasted to the image of a man "draw[ing] a bow across" it; though the sounds the harp produces are facilitated by the wind, it requires no master pulling the strings, so to speak. At a basic level, the sustained personification of the instruments throughout the passage attributes an unlikely level of agency to instruments that are, in reality, agentless objects made to be played upon. The absurdity of repurposing the instruments and refusing to play them highlights the corollary absurdity, largely unquestioned by Victorians, of reading responsive women in any other way than the way they are usually read, that is, as fractured and colonizable, conventionally "responsive" psyches. By the end of the passage, however, the allusion to women's rights agitation means that a new way of reading, despite its apparent absurdity, is gaining more ground in the rising generation. Though Gecko's revelation of Trilby's mere reproduction of Svengali's artistry may appear to offer the last word on the subject in the novel, this reiteration of the dominant perspective of the "fiddler" toward hysteric trance serves to figure the difficulty of reading Trilby in any other fashion when the medical voices that Gecko represents continue to maintain interpretive control of hysteria. Gecko parrots the physicians in his explanations and he is, importantly, the only living witness of Trilby's relationship with Svengali after both Svengali and Trilby are dead, emphasizing his questionable authority through his total domination of how the mechanics of her artistry is represented. In the woman-as-instrument passage, Du Maurier imagines that the interpretive difficulty generated by the dominance of science and medicine may be overcome when, like the man who is "no fiddler," more people change their notions of hysterical response or "responsiveness."

[46] The description of the fiddle, its "delicate grainings, the lovely lines and curves of its back and front," is very similar the description of Trilby's feet: "A true inspiration of shape and colour, all made up of delicate lengths and subtly-modulated curves" (16-17).

Ultimately, the novel illustrates that scientific interest in hypnotic phenomena in the last decades of the nineteenth century was often motivated by the possibility of establishing the reality of the constructive nature of the subconscious mind in defiance of its widespread pathologization by mainstream science and medicine. In writers that sought to circumvent the problematic stigmatization of mysticism and divine contact as hysterical debility, the work of art theorized as subconscious emergence became a potent tool for revisiting the reduction of hysteria to illness and potentially drawing nearer to the ineffable realms suggested by mysticism but debunked by positivist skeptics. Choosing a fallen woman for his heroine allows Du Maurier to create a striking contrast between the perceived absence of agency, loss of mental control, and immorality attributed to both fallen women and hysterics in Victorian culture, and the exercise of a profoundly constructive psyche when the fallen woman is proven to be a woman of genius with latent artistic faculties. Cutting short the traditional narrative of the fallen woman's progress in the second half of the novel, Du Maurier does not continue with an account of Trilby's descent into abject poverty, prostitution, moral profligacy, and despair, but, in an odd turn, makes the revelation of her musical virtuosity the centerpiece of the story. "It has been supposed," Myers writes, "that the mere fact of being hypnotized tended to weaken the will; that the hypnotized person fell inevitably more and more under the control of the hypnotizer." Rather than diminishing willpower, he asserts that hypnosis merely allows us to "get the subliminal self concentrated upon some task which may be as difficult as we please," enabling us to "draw out to the uttermost the innate powers of man" (154). To "draw out to the uttermost the innate powers": such is the special talent of the hypnotized woman of genius within Du Maurier's scheme of mental and artistic advancement.

CHAPTER 4

Artistic Suppression and the Woman of Genius: The Feminist Response to Francis Galton

In my final chapter, I will examine the late nineteenth century feminist response to the eugenicist argument of natural ability or genius as it is evinced in Francis Galton's apologia for selective breeding, *Hereditary Genius*, of 1869. While fin de siècle feminist writers Sarah Grand and Mona Caird have rightfully been read as having contrary agendas and promoting highly disparate feminist visions, I argue that representations of artistry in their novels serve the same purpose within the larger context of the popularization of degeneration and eugenic theories. Sarah Grand, as Angelique Richardson demonstrates, was a supporter of the conservative rhetoric of degeneration, eugenics, and hereditary determinism despite her commitment to women's rights and liberation. Richardson writes that "Grand's enthusiasm for eugenics perpetuates biological essentialism in its most powerful form," and that she was "concerned less with examining the unstable, socially constructed nature of selfhood and the body, than with grounding both the body and sex roles in the flesh and blood of evolutionary narrative" ("Eugenization" 228). While Richardson contends that eugenic discourse and its concomitant prejudices constitute the main shaping force behind Grand's works, other scholars qualify this reading. Naomi Lloyd concedes that "Sarah Grand's fictional work exemplifies an undeniable appropriation of eugenic discourse," but reveals some of the complicated elements within this appropriation. Writing of Grand's bestselling novel *The Heavenly Twins*, Lloyd argues that "eugenic discourse is mobilized primarily to counter masculine sexual privilege; it is evoked in relation to upper-class, military men…and focuses singularly on the putatively hereditary effects of syphilis and sexual dissipation" (Lloyd 184). Despite Grand's invocation of Francis Galton in

the epigraph to *The Heavenly Twins*, Lloyd determines that the "differently gendered mobilization of eugenics" in the novel illustrates Grand's sensitivity to environmental impact on the shaping of character, particularly female character, rather than heredity and proposes that her allegiance to eugenics is primarily governed by her fear of the spread syphilis and hereditary disease, associated with privileged men in late Victorian society (183-4).

While I acknowledge Grand's patent eugenic sympathies in her works and life, I, like Lloyd, qualify interpretations of Grand's perspective in order to account more fully for the contribution Grand and other conflicted late nineteenth century feminists made to the interrogation and rejection of popular, and frequently destructive, scientific discourses. Writing of Grand's vacillations between essentialist and antiessentialist conceptions of women, John Kucich points out that "Grand was one of many New Woman novelists who seem to have entertained both ways of thinking about sexual identity" and accounts for her novels' inconsistent messages by suggesting that "Grand does typify something fundamental about all New Woman writing: that is, the ways it operated within contradictions that late-century feminism simply could not resolve" (199, 196). Similarly, Lyn Pykett writes, "New Woman writers may…be seen as challenging, but also as being contained by contemporary discourses of femininity" (Pykett 145). Grand and many feminist writers at the fin de siècle "struggle[ed] with irresolvable ideological problems," which informed the frequent commingling of conservative politics with progressive ideas in their works (Kucich 196). Grand's resistance to the destructive power of degeneration and eugenics as they were conceived by scientific theorists in the nineteenth century becomes evident when we examine her writings against those of another fin de siècle feminist novelist, Mona Caird. As Richardson demonstrates in *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Caird's politics were far more coherently radical than Grand's and

her works explicitly oppose the rising popularity of eugenic theory. Richardson teases out the important differences between these two authors and writes that Caird, unlike Grand, "appropriated the scientific rhetoric of the social purists and eugenists in order to rework their arguments, exposing the biases inherent in the new discourse of biology and reclaiming the importance of environment and culture in shaping individuals" (*Love and Eugenics* 182).

While Richardson provides a compelling reading, I argue here that Grand and Caird also share important similarities; both use the figure of the female artist to articulate the limitations of degenerationist and eugenicist logic. Many fin de siècle feminist writers recognized that degenerationist discourses were used by the scientific establishment and the general public to pathologize and subsequently control inconvenient or troublesome populations of people, especially women clamoring for rights at the turn of the century. As I show, both Grand and Caird reveal their shared commitment to undermining degenerationist pathologization through their representation of the female artist. They emphasize the primacy of circumstance rather than heredity in determining whether or not a born "genius" will rise to the top in his or her generation. Both writers thus reject Francis Galton's contention in *Hereditary Genius* that "few who possess these very high abilities can fail in achieving eminence" (Galton 88). By representing the suppression of genius in individuals who naturally possess it, Grand and Caird illustrate the unintended consequences of the eugenicist perspective: the erasure rather than emergence of favorable traits. Caird, furthermore, extends the implications of the artistic suppression of her heroine to the wider world and uses the figure of the genius to illustrate the untenability and destructiveness of a theory that fails to acknowledge the potential for genius in disadvantaged groups, especially women, but also the urban poor.

I. Feminists and Degeneration Theory at the Fin de Siècle

Theories of degeneration and eugenics are often a central subject in late nineteenth century feminist writings. The rising popularity of these theories throughout Victorian culture partly explains their frequent appearance in feminist fiction; it is, after all, difficult to find any late Victorian novel that does not allude to ideas of biological degeneration in some way. In many fin de siècle feminist novels, however, the authors' interest in degeneration is not as casual as it often is in mainstream Victorian fiction. Degeneration theory instead provides fruitful ground for the exploration of the ideological underpinnings of women's debased status in Victorian culture. Recent studies of the New Woman have emphasized the pathologization of feminism in the late Victorian era. Kucich, for instance, writes of the proliferation of New Woman fiction at the fin de siècle that mainstream "reviewers in England…were quick to link women's more imaginative literary efforts with hysteria" (Kucich 201). Ann Barbara Graff argues that Victorians believed the New Woman to be "the cause of cultural and racial degeneration of the English 'imperial race'" (Graff 273). Fin de siècle feminists who adopted the sartorial style of "rational dress" or who asserted their independence through "r[iding] bicycles, smok[ing] cigarettes in public, and refus[ing] traditional marriages in favor of career or maidenhood" were lampooned in Victorian periodicals as sexual "inverts," a label betokening the New Woman's biological degeneration from her more conventional sisters (Graff 273).

While Victorians' articulated their fear of or contempt for the New Woman through attributions of degeneracy, this, as many feminists at the time realized, was merely an extreme and more insistently vocalized version of the same species of pathologization that Victorians unreflectively directed against all women. Max Nordau himself provides representative examples of this wholesale pathologization of women in *Degeneration*. He takes women's biological inferiority so much for granted that he believes it warrants hardly any explanation at all. He

writes that "the enthusiasts [of poets and artists] are youths and women—*i.e.*, those components of the race in whom the unconscious outweighs consciousness; for artist and poet address themselves first of all to emotion, and this is more easily excited in the woman and the adolescent than in the mature man" (Nordau 332). The superiority of the (masculine) conscious mind over the (feminine) unconscious and (masculine) rationality over (feminine) emotionality, the most commonplace of misogynies, is also one of Nordau's foundational principles. He insists upon the degeneracy of individuals who appear to privilege the unconscious over the conscious mind, or who allow the influences of the senses to overrule rationality (adolescents are theorized in this era as being closer to animals than to the fully human on the evolutionary scale, which is why Nordau classes them with women here). "All progress rests on this," he writes, "that the highest centres assume more and more authority over the entire organism, that judgment and will control and direct ever more strictly the instincts and passions, that consciousness encroaches ever further on the domain of the unconscious, and continually annexes new portions of the latter" (313). Evolutionary "progress" is unequivocally dependent on the colonization of the unconscious domain with the conscious and masculine tools of rationality, will, and judgment. Therefore, all women, in whom the emotional centers supposedly reign supreme, are by default pathological individuals that hinder evolution, *i.e.*, degenerates.

It is of little moment to fin de siècle feminists that some unconventional women are singled out explicitly as degenerate in the popular press due to their behavior when women as an entire class also exist within a discourse of naturalized inferiority imposed upon them by patriarchy. Though unconventional women may bear the brunt of degenerationist abuse in the late Victorian era, the pathologization of women as a class receives its momentum from the same scientific ideologies that are leveled against the New Woman in the 1890s. Late nineteenth

century feminist writers incorporate degeneration theory into their novels in the service of repudiating the kind of pseudo-scientific, casual misogyny that is rarely given a second thought in mainstream Victorian culture. For instance, in *The Beth Book*, Sarah Grand responds directly to the same wholesale pathologization that Nordau uncritically endorses. She writes of the "days of brave unhonoured endurance, when women, meekly allowing themselves to be classed with children and idiots, exacted no respect, and received none" (260). Drawing a distinction between the days past and present, Grand intimates that women are starting to challenge the dominant conception of their nature and capabilities as deterministically inferior to those of men and categorically commensurate with the lesser mental development of "children and idiots." Similarly, in *Daughters of Danaus*, Mona Caird questions the ideological uses of the scientific conception of "maternal instinct" as a "monomania" (a degenerationist term) that, Victorians believe, creates in all women an innate desire to bear and rear children (*DOD* 69). In response to a supporter of this argument, Hadria reflects on women's experience of such theories and says, "One presumes to look upon oneself, at first—in one's earliest youth…as undoubtedly human, with human needs and rights and dignities. But this turns out to be an illusion. It is as an *animal* that one has to play the really important part in life" (69, Caird's emphasis). By critically examining the subhuman status universally attributed to women in Victorian culture, and, furthermore, by illustrating the new life that scientific ideology has breathed into old misogynies at the end of the century, feminist writers display the power that degenerationist discourse wields over all women, not only radical New Women who attract attention in the popular press.

In their emphasis on the global implications of scientific ideology, feminist novelists' frequently invoke "Nature" rather than the more specific degenerationist terminology that we have observed in other novels of the period. Whereas Hardy, Wells, and Du Maurier are more

likely to focus on the meaning of such ideas as exhausted hereditary lines, effete character traits, mattoids, deformity, hysteria, double personality, and other forms of congenital "mental weakness," Grand and Caird spend more time countering the forms of pathologization that are less explicitly recognizable as "degenerate" but, using the same logic of determined inferiority, are nonetheless oppressive for that. This is not to say that specific ideas related to degeneration, such as "monomania" in the Caird excerpt above, or the premature baldness of a recognizably degenerate character in *The Beth Book*,[47] are absent in these feminist texts; they are, in fact, prevalent. Their thematic importance, however, is subordinate to the critical examination of the more global usage of concepts like biologically determined instincts or characteristics within the female sex to foster inhibitive understandings of motherhood, the domestic sphere, women's intellect, work, sexuality, and political representation. Frequently, feminist novelists introduce the topic of determined inferiority through popular abuses of the concept of "Nature" in an evolutionary context. While their frequent allusions to Nature in this manner may not immediately appear to be related to degenerationist discourse, Caird's and Grand's purposes in such moments are arguably the same as those of Wells, Hardy, and Du Maurier when they interrogate the ideological uses of "mattoid," hysteria, or hereditary "exhaustion." Feminist writers' main priority, however, is to expose the permeation of oppressive scientific discourses of determined inferiority into the most basic forms of human interaction rather than the more localized implications of specific theories of degeneracy. As such, Grand's and Caird's explorations of the experience of the ostracized female artist concentrate upon the everyday assertions of women's inferiority just as much as the particular accusations of degeneracy

[47] Beth references Alfred's premature baldness when she says, "What a falling off! ...He was refined as a boy and had artistic leanings; I should have thought he might have developed something less banal in the time than a bald forehead" (452).

directed toward artistic types at the fin de siècle. Both of these forms of pathologization spring from the same ideological foundations and, for feminist writers, one is no less necessary to challenge than the other.

Perhaps the most vocal proponents of determined inferiority as the century reached its close were eugenicists. Nineteenth century eugenicists adopted the main premises of degeneration theory and used them to argue that the processes of human reproduction required deliberate intervention on the part of the state in order to facilitate evolutionary progress and eliminate genetically inferior members of the human population. In their emphasis on the determined inferiority, or, significantly, the determined *mediocrity* of the vast majority of the population, eugenicists developed a theory that slightly altered the pernicious tenets of degeneration, in that it made mere mediocrity, and not moral or physical depravity, the marker of one's divergence from evolutionary progress. The utopian visions of eugenicists generated their glorification of extraordinary individuals at the expense of mediocre individuals, inspiring plans for the selective breeding of the former in order to decrease the prevalence of mediocrity in the human race. This is Galton's message in *Hereditary Genius*, in which he writes of the extraordinary individuals who he believes would be fit for selective breeding,

> If the "eminent" men of any period, had been changelings when babies, a fair proportion of these who survived…would, not withstanding their altered circumstances, have equally risen to eminence. Thus—to take a strong case—it is incredible that any combination of circumstances, could have repressed Lord Brougham to the level of undistinguished mediocrity. (Galton 78)

Feminist writers take up the problem of the explicit privileging of the hereditarily "eminent" over the hereditarily mediocre in Galton's writing precisely because women are a group of people

routinely devalued as evolutionarily undeveloped and deterministically inferior, thus falling within the categorical "vast abundance of mediocrity" which inhibits the realization of the eugenic utopian ideal (Galton 74). Feminist writers therefore use the figure of the woman of genius to question the tenability of the eugenic conception of eminence and its pathologization of mediocrity in the general population and, in the process, they expose some of the negative implications and consequences of the eugenicist devaluation of human life on a large scale.

Galton's theory in *Hereditary Genius* relies on premises that are untenable for Caird and Grand based on their experience and observation of women's oppression in Victorian society. Penny Boumelha writes that "probably the leading British theorist of genius [at the fin de siècle] was Francis Galton, a pioneer in genetics" who "supported his theory of the hereditary quality of genius by reference to empirical research" ("The Woman of Genius" 168). Galton argues that natural genius will assume its rightful place in society regardless of external circumstance, environment, or milieu. He aims to show that "high reputation is a pretty accurate test of high ability" in order to support his main claim that observable instances of extraordinary ability, or genius, in "illustrious" or "eminent" men prove that certain humans are endowed with great natural ability that can be prioritized in the selective breeding process, ultimately to increase the aggregate power and evolutionary advancement of the human race (Galton 45-6, 53). His argument rests not only on the indisputable existence of natural or hereditarily determined ability in certain specially endowed humans, but also on this ability's guaranteed emergence in society by virtue of its undefeatable force and power. The insuppressible quality inherent in his conception of natural ability is necessary for his argument because if natural genius sometimes fails to emerge and reach a high level of "reputation," then there is a risk that selective breeding would in fact stamp out true genius that never had an opportunity to emerge, revealing the more

sinister possibilities latent in his proposed system of "positive" eugenics. Galton concedes that for the "thousand per million best men," "accident and opportunity" may have "had an undue influence" on their success, and thus they do not qualify as natural geniuses (53). However, scaling the hereditary ladder, once the 250 per million best men, or one in four thousand, are identified by their reputations, men "who have distinguished [themselves] pretty frequently either by purely original work, or as [leaders] of opinion," their possession of natural genius is indisputable because of how far their abilities extend beyond the abilities of those who fail to reach the top 250 per million best men (53, 51). Galton staunchly believes in determined mediocrity and repeatedly analogizes physical and mental strength to impress upon his readers the reality of the insuperable barrier that exists between the vast majority of the population (999,750/1 million) and the greatness of natural genius. He writes, "There is a definite limit to the muscular power of every man, which he cannot by any education or exertion overpass. This is precisely analogous to the experience that every student has had in the working of his mental powers" (57). Selective breeding is not a risky endeavor for Galton because there is no chance that true but unidentifiable genius would be erased. Genius cannot be suppressed; it is identifiable and quantifiable. Its guaranteed emergence in those who possess it also provides the one guarantee for the soundness of his theory and the benign nature of selective breeding or positive eugenics, which is why genius and artistry constitute the central theme of his defense of eugenic practices.

Significantly, Galton states that "literary men and artists…form the bulk of the 250 per million…that attain to eminence" (84). In his chapter on "Literary Men," he includes lists of approximately fifty-two canonical authors, almost exclusively male, from ancient times to the nineteenth century that he has determined are natural geniuses through the evidence of their

reputations and examinations of their hereditary lines. He writes that "the general result of my inquiries is such as to convince me, that more than one-half of the great literary men have had kinsmen of high ability" (221). When he is unable to make any solid determination of the hereditary origin of genius in some cases, Galton explains this aporia by writing, "Our ignorance is in many cases due to mere historical neglect rather than to the fact of [their ancestors'] abilities or achievements being unworthy of record" (221). Galton does not entertain the possibility that the lack of evidence for the hereditary quality of genius in some cases of demonstrable ability contradicts his argument, and, furthermore, he fails to recognize that the "abilities or achievements" of potential geniuses themselves may be lost to history due to circumstance or "historical neglect" (an oversight that is extremely significant for feminist rebuttals of Galton). Limiting invisible achievements to the *relations* of literary men rather than the men themselves allows Galton to maintain his position that, though the relations likely possessed certain heightened abilities, and thus contributed to the ultimate hereditary advancement of their children or grandchildren, they themselves had not reached a level of achievement that would class them with the 250 per million, who are visible regardless of circumstance. Galton's favoring of artists and literary men of high reputation to prove the insuppressible nature of advanced hereditary ability attests to the unique burden evolutionary theorists placed upon canonical writers, poets, musicians, and painters throughout history (Galton indeed devotes separate chapters to each of these categories of creative types) to legitimize their proposed changes to social policy. The women writers Galton includes in his lists of "Literary Men" are Maria Edgeworth, Charlotte Bronte, Frances Trollope, Anne Germaine de Stael, and the Marquise de Sevigne. Other women appear in the lists as relations to the great "Literary Men,"

including Emily and Anne Bronte, as Galton tracks the number of talented persons present in particular families (221-242).

For feminist writers at the end of the nineteenth century, Galton's theory of the guaranteed emergence of natural genius was offensive because it refused to acknowledge the power of circumstance and environment in an individual's quest to fulfill his or her potential. Unlike Galton, women of the nineteenth century could not blithely ignore the crushing power of circumstance, and feminist writers denied the guaranteed emergence of natural genius by examining the development of the female artist in their novels, highlighting her vulnerability to the pathological interpretations of women prevalent in her society and the inhibitions designed by that society expressly to prevent the emergence of genius in women. As Boumelha argues, the feminist reaction to Galton and other misogynistic accounts of natural ability often manifests itself in the phrase "woman of genius," which "recurs with startling frequency in the writing at this time" (167). Pykett situates both Beth from *The Beth Book* and Hadria from *Daughters of Danaus* in the context of the fin de siècle resurgence of "genius," explaining that these heroines "are represented at some point in terms of the discourse of the romantic artist or genius; they each display aspects of the egotistical sublime; they possess innate genius and negative capability" (141). Prior readings of the representation of female genius in New Woman writing have concentrated on its use as a tool to gain legitimacy for New Women writers and prove their "authenticity" as artists because their works were reviled in popular media and constantly compared with mainstream novels, as Kucich and others explain.[48] I will instead examine the

[48] For instance, Boumelha argues that "the concept of innate genius…enables the representation of achievement without conscious ambition," and that the use of genius in New Woman writing repeatedly enacts "the delegitimization of women's ambition in the name of artistic authenticity" (172, 178). Pykett expands on this interpretation by arguing that "New Woman writers also use [the woman of genius] as a way of exposing the contradictions of female desire, and the tensions between women's desires and aspirations, and the nineteenth century gender system in both its

proliferation of the woman of genius in the context of eugenic theory, using Galton's *Hereditary Genius* as a representative example of a destructive conception of genius that feminist writers consciously or implicitly repudiated in an effort to reveal the discriminatory underpinnings of propositions for selective breeding.

II. Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book* and the Genius Temperament

Sarah Grand's most successful novel, *The Heavenly Twins*, famously begins with an invocation of Galton and a disavowal of the shaping power of environment.[49] While Grand's support of certain eugenic precepts is undeniable in all of her works, however, I argue that her representation of the artist in her Kunstlerroman, *The Beth Book*, reveals Grand's recognition of the incompatibility of eugenics with a feminist or egalitarian worldview and her rejection of the logic underpinning Galton's defense of eugenics in *Hereditary Genius*. *The Beth Book* is a semi-autobiographical but fictional account of the development of the heroine, Beth Caldwell, from an odd and ostracized child, to an exploited young wife, to a feminist writer and orator. Although in other works, and even in places in *The Beth Book*, Grand denies the power of environment to mold character in order to buttress her claims for heredity, *The Beth Book's* concentration on the growth of the female artist leads Grand to emphasize the influence of the events of early life in the development of artistry. She writes of Beth's childhood experiences at the beginning of the novel:

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ideological and social and material forms" (142). While Pykett's reading of the use of the genius to expose the "tensions between women's desires and aspirations" informs my argument, these "tensions" have additional implications when examined through eugenic theory. In particular, I would like to explore further Ann Heilmann's suggestion that *Daughters of Danaus* "indicates wilful human sabotage [is] a major factor in the demise of female genius" (Heilmann 219).

[49] Grand includes this quotation from Darwin in the epigraph to *The Heavenly Twins*: "I am inclined to agree with Francis Galton in believing that education and environment produce only a small effect on the mind of anyone, and that most of our qualities are innate" (*Heavenly Twins* 1).

> To me…these earliest impressions are more interesting than much that occurred to her in after life, and I have carefully collected them in the hope of finding some clue in them to what followed. In several instances it seems to me that the impression left by some chance observation or incident on her baby mind, made it possible for her to do many things in after life which she certainly never would have done but for those early influences. It would be affectation, therefore, to apologise for such detail. Nothing can be trivial or insignificant that tends to throw light on the mysterious growth of our moral and intellectual being. Many a cramped soul that struggles on in after years, vainly endeavoring to rise on a broken wing, might, had the importance of such seeming trifles in its development been recognized, have won its way upward from the first, untrammelled and uninjured. (*The Beth Book* 11)

In this passage, Grand tasks the form of the novel itself with cataloguing, in painstaking detail, all the events or impressions that may have had the slightest impact on Beth's childhood and adolescent development. Grand acknowledges the frustrating complexity of an individual's "moral and intellectual being" and the impossibility of understanding the origin of artistry without taking into account even the most seemingly "trivial or insignificant" events to befall the artist in early life. Underscoring the likelihood of artistic suppression, Grand describes the "cramped soul" of an artist with natural ability who, had she been more cognizant of the impact of her surroundings, would have been in a better position to avoid a "broken wing" and win her way "upward from the first, untrammelled and uninjured," as Galton claims all true geniuses do regardless of circumstance. Failing to appreciate the instrumentality of external event and circumstance to shape character, however, means that the artistic individual is bound to "struggle on in after years, vainly endeavoring to rise," in explicit contradiction to Galton's insuppressible

genius. That trivial external events render it "possible" for the artist to do "many things in after life that she never would have done but for those early influences" testifies to the power of external event to act as the catalyst that elicits genius from an individual in whom it was not initially apparent. However, the "cramped soul" grounded by her broken wing points to the corollary power of circumstance to suppress natural genius where it does in fact exist.

While Grand indicates that her choice of the Kunstlerroman genre is at least partially motivated by the important role the events of childhood play in the emergence of artistic genius, Galton's argument is contingent on the dismissal of *all* events to occur in the early life of people with remarkable abilities.[50] If genius's emergence is guaranteed, then consideration of circumstances in the artist's early life is a waste of interpretative energy, as Galton is careful to remind his readers. He writes,

> First, it is a fact, that numbers of men rise, before they are middle-aged, from the humbler ranks of life to that worldly position, in which it is of no importance to their future career, how their youth has been passed. They have overcome their hindrances, and thus start fair with others more fortunately reared, in the subsequent race of life…. They compete for the same prizes, measure their strength by efforts in the same direction, and their relative successes are thenceforward due to their relative natural gifts. (78)

Galton's rise-to-the-top argument relies for its legitimacy on the negligible influence of the entirety of childhood and adolescence on the ultimate success of the natural genius. "It is of no importance" for the natural genius "how his youth has been passed," an assumption that Grand denies in her adoption of the Kunstlerroman form. At first glance, the outcome of *The Beth Book* appears to corroborate Galton's rise-to-the-top theory because Beth, a member of the "humbler

[50] Teresa Mangum, Ann Heilmann, and other critics have used the term Kunstlerroman to describe *The Beth Book*. See for instance, Teresa Mangum, *Married, Middlebrow, and Militant*, 9-10.

ranks of life" by virtue of her poverty and womanhood, eventually emerges to assume her "worldly" position of famous feminist orator and writer. However, as in the "broken wing" passage, Grand consistently reiterates that Beth's near destruction by circumstance attests to the fragility of genius and its likely erasure within oppressed populations. Galton insists that men of privilege and men of humbler ranks, if they possess true genius, "stand on equal terms, when they have reached mature life" (78). But this supposition, which Galton relies upon for the validity of his rise-to-the-top argument, is absurd for Grand and Caird when the terms shift slightly and one compares men of privilege to women.

In addition to emphasizing the significance of the events of early life in the emergence or erasure of genius, Grand indicates that apparent mediocrity is often an illusion created by others' misapprehension of the genius, whose sensitivity makes her susceptible to nervous decline despite her natural abilities. Grand revisits the traditional link between artistic sensibility and illness that is a familiar feature of discourses of sensibility from its origins in the eighteenth century. However, writing in the context of the late nineteenth century, Grand does not stop at a historical representation of artistic sensibility as nervous illness, but further connects her artist-figures to conceptions of degeneracy as a challenge to the deterministic accounts of degenerative illness popularly circulated in Victorian culture. Early in the novel, Beth's precocious artistic sensibility is explicitly equated with illness. Focusing on Beth's responsiveness to nature and beauty in a clear allusion to conventional notions of Romantic genius, Grand writes, "Beth's highly-strung nerves, already overstrained by excitement, broke down completely under the oppression of those heavy clouds, and she became convulsed with sobs" (33). In another instance, "there was the grey of stonework against a bright blue sky, and green of grass and trees against the grey, and mountainous clouds of dazzling white hung over a molten sea; and because

of the beauty of it all, Beth burst into a passion of tears" (22). Beth's childhood doctor says to her parents, "That's a peculiarly sensitive, high-strung, nervous child; you must be gentle with her" (25). But Beth's parents do not understand her unique sensitivity (especially her mother, who raises her): "They were matter-of-fact creatures themselves, comparatively speaking, with a notion that such nonsense as nervousness should be shaken out of a child" (25). Mrs. Caldwell is appalled by Beth's displays of "nervousness," which are also manifestations of artistic sensibility and genius. Nervousness in Beth takes the form of extreme sensitivity to beauty, nature, music, and religious ritual, traits that Mrs. Caldwell considers indicative of "insanity" (47). Misunderstanding Beth's nervousness, Mrs. Caldwell attempts to "shak[e]" it out of her through physical abuse, which only exacerbates the problem and threatens to turn Beth's sensibility into a destructive rather than constructive trait. Mrs. Caldwell's hostility toward Beth's sensitivity escalates until she precipitates an "acute nervous crisis" in Beth, who jumps into a harbor in a moment that is indeed represented as temporary insanity (149). Beth's "acute nervous crisis" is linked to both the heightened emotions she experiences when listening to music and to her mother's insistence on "shak[ing]" it out of her: "Beth was always peculiarly susceptible to music. Her ear was defective; she rarely knew if any one sang flat; but the poorest instrument would lay hold of her, and set high chords of emotion vibrating, beyond the reach of words" (149). Just as the "tone-deaf" Trilby contains musical knowledge in her subconscious mind that is eventually realized as virtuosity despite its initial inscrutability, so does Beth possess a "defective" ear that marks Beth's latent genius (*Trilby* 21). Beth's genius, like Trilby's, only manifests itself fully later in life, a device that both Du Maurier and Grand employ in order to emphasize the easy suppression of genius and the complexity of its signs. While the Parisian bohemians only perceive the "grotesque[ness]" of Trilby's voice in her conscious state as she

sings “Ben Bolt” at the beginning of the novel, Beth’s artistry is also fundamentally misunderstood by those who surround her in childhood (*Trilby* 21). Because Mrs. Caldwell is disturbed by Beth’s transported state, Beth, the “victim of brute force, was hustled off to the end of the pier, and then slapped, shaken, and reviled” (149). As a result, “she wrenched herself out of her mother’s clutches, and sprang over into the harbour.” Beth’s sensibility and its affinity with nervous illness and mental instability serve to highlight the potentially transcendent origins of apparent nervous illness and, more importantly, the liability of such qualities to be tragically misunderstood by the “matter-of-fact creatures” who surround the sensitive genius.

Beth’s precipitous plunge into the harbor is only one instance that demonstrates the destructive potential of a sensitive temperament when it is not properly cultivated in its environment. In other places in the novel, Beth’s propensity for nervous decline runs alongside her unique potential to embody all the transcendent qualities of genius and artistic sensitivity. Beth’s uniquely sensitive personality serves in this novel, as it does for Tess in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, to establish Beth’s value and potential in a milieu that can perceive neither. Like Tess’s, Beth’s sensitivity to music at the harbor is not that of a discriminating critic: “Her ear was defective; she rarely knew if anyone sang flat.” What is emphasized instead, as it is for Tess, is simply Beth’s pure sensitivity and responsiveness to stimuli. In comparison to her companions, “[Beth] was the only one of the three that throbbed responsive to the beauty of the wonderful scene before them, or felt her being flooded with the glory of the hour” (16). Beth’s unique sensitivity, however, can turn at once to illness should it fail to be acknowledged or perceived for what it is. The tension between Beth’s transcendent sensibility and potential for nervous decline is figured as part and parcel of the genius temperament: “Beth was a fine instrument, sensitive to a touch, and, considering the way she was handled…it is probable that

every conceivable impulse was latent in her, every possibility of good or evil" (43). The narrator's statement, "hers was a nature with a wide range," possessing "every possibility of good or evil," establishes the genius temperament as one characterized by extremes (43). Beth has the potential to become a great visionary precisely because of her unique "nature with a wide range." However, it is equally possible that the extremity of evil rather than good will be the one to manifest itself, depending upon the outside "influences of these early years" (43). In the brutalizing company of her mother and, later, her husband Dan Maclure, Beth shows how artists degenerate among people who misunderstand and subjugate them.

Each time Beth finds herself in circumstances that stifle her creativity and moral instincts, she and the people around her wonder if she is going insane. Jumping into the harbor is one example of this, but at school, too, Beth is so circumscribed by the intellectual narrowness and rigid rules of the school that one evening she escapes out of a high window to run around in the moonlight and collect apples to eat. After the first such escapade, "all through the weeks that followed she kept herself sane and healthy by midnight exercises in the moonlight (311). While in the case of the midnight exercise Grand emphasizes that Beth is instinctively preserving her health when school threatens to destroy it, here, as in the moment when Beth jumps into the harbor, Beth's delicate mental state again establishes her peculiar propensity for deterioration when her abilities are not given full scope for expression.

Her tendency to degenerate becomes most acute in her relationship with Dan Maclure. Dan is a morally repugnant individual and living with him causes Beth to "tak[e] on something of the colour of her surroundings involuntarily, inevitably, as certain insects do, in self-defence" (408). Weakening and atrophy, characterized as an unfavorable adaptation to a hostile environment, are the results of her marriage to Dan. He initiates "the brutalisation of Beth":

> It was as if she had been innocent then, and was now corrupted…. The effect of [him] was a shock to her nervous system—one of those stunning blows which are scarcely felt at first, but are agonising in their after effects. When the reaction set in, Beth's disgust was so great it took a physical form, and ended by making her violently sick. (379)

Beth's physical, mental, and moral deterioration escalates until she finally becomes convinced that she is exhibiting the same symptoms of hereditary madness that claimed the health and artistic potential of her grandmother. Unconsciously bursting in upon her husband and his unsavory friends one night in her nightgown, Beth exclaims to herself, "What a mad thing to do!" (429). The narrator continues:

> The words, when they recurred to her, were a revelation. What had she been doing all day Mad things! What was this sudden horror that had seized upon her? Why, madness! … The change was in herself, and only madness could account for such a change. There was madness in the family…doubtless this misery which had come upon her had been communicated to her before birth. (429)

As others have pointed out, Grand's views on the relative powers of heredity and environment to shape character are ambivalent. We see something of this ambivalence in the power Beth's environment and milieu exercise over her sensitive temperament. Her mother, school, and husband are all brutalizing forces that threaten to corrupt her unique sensitivity into a degenerative quality, because the twin potentials of genius and degeneration lie latent within her. However, it is not so much Grand's inconsistent approach to heredity that causes her to highlight the influence of environment on the emergence of hereditary madness in Beth. Instead, she illustrates, through the example of the artistic genius, the susceptibility of even the most constructive qualities to degeneration under commonplace circumstances (a misapprehending

mother, school, and husband). Genius may be a natural, inborn trait in certain individuals, as Beth proves, but the sensitivity of the artist means that the potential to degenerate is also inborn and must be guarded against by cultivating a more sympathetic view of unusual qualities like nervousness. Trying to force the sensitive individual into the contours of conventional society only ends in disaster, as Beth's near descent into madness on multiple occasions demonstrates. The plight of the sensitive artist illustrates the two possible outcomes of natural genius—triumph and destruction. Either outcome is the birthright of artistic sensitivity. While Beth ultimately overcomes the "degenerative" side of her sensitivity, her struggle to do so is in itself an important departure from Galton. The mundane forces of a restrictive and patriarchal social structure can easily inhibit the emergence of genius because of the precarious nature of sensitivity. There is no guarantee that such sensitive natures will rise to the top, despite Galton's insistence that they will.

The universal lack of acknowledgement of the twin potentials of genius and degeneration in sensitive natures leads to the destruction of genius in hostile environments. Grand further suggests that Beth prevails in becoming a successful orator and writer because her fragile genius is protected by the few people in her life with incipient feminist sympathies who understand the universal hostility directed against women in society. These characters contribute to Grand's ultimate argument that an inclusive worldview, which recognizes the potential for genius in seemingly unlikely quarters, alone will facilitate the preservation and emergence of genius in a complex world. Beth's father is the first to adopt a feminist stance in his encouragement of his daughter's cultivation of artistic genius. When she is still a child, he tells her:

> Beth, I want you to remember this. When you grow up, I think you will want to do something that only a few people can do well—paint a picture, write a book, act in a

> theatre, make music—it doesn't matter what; if it comes to you, if you feel you can do it, just do it. You'll not do it well all at once; but try and try until you *can* do it well. And don't ask anybody if they think you can do it; they'll be sure to say no; and then you'll be disheartened—What's disheartened? It's the miserable feeling you would get if I said you would never be able to play the piano. You'd try to do it all the same, perhaps, but you'd do it doubtfully instead of with confidence. (69)

Beth then asks:

> "What's confidence?"
>
> "You are listening to me now with confidence. It is as if you said, I believe you."
>
> "But I can't say 'I believe you' to arithmetic, if I want to do it."
>
> "No, but you can say, I believe I can do it—I believe in myself."
>
> "Is that confidence in myself?" Beth asked, light breaking in upon her.

Their conversation highlights the critical importance of developing an awareness of the power of prevailing attitudes toward women to destroy women's artistic potential. In this passage, Beth's father is the unlikely source of a feminist perspective and "the light breaking in upon" Beth marks the moment she learns what many women in the novel never do: that a misogynistic environment will do what it can to crush a woman's spirit and prevent her from fulfilling her potential, that such spirit-crushing is not a negligible force but will convince a woman that she should not try unless she remains conscious of its erroneous origins, and that simply to proceed "doubtfully" rather than with confidence in one's reaction to misogyny may have the devastating outcome of stifling one's natural abilities. Grand writes of women's internalization of their own abjection at the hands of their families: "Usually by the time [the woman] has suffered enough to be able to blame those whom it has been her habit to love and respect, and to judge of the wrong

they have done her, it is too late to remedy it. Even if her faculties have not atrophied for want of use, all that should have been cultivated lies latent in her…and her life is spoilt" (157). The norm in families, to say nothing of misogyny in society at large, is to inhibit a woman's development under cover of love and affection by denying her opportunities outside of the domestic sphere; they say "no" when she "ask[s] if they think she can do" something else. Grand uses the degenerationist term "atrophy" to posit a worst case scenario in which a woman's abilities will literally degenerate under misogynistic conditions, but she also emphasizes that a mere lack of "cultivation," typical of the lives of women at that time, will culminate in mediocrity rather than flourishing genius. The outcomes of degeneration and mediocrity are equally unacceptable and situate Beth in the context of Galton's theory, in which mediocrity is both perceived as inevitable for the majority of humans and ideally avoided through selective breeding. Grand illustrates that there is nothing inevitable about mediocrity or degenerative "atrophy." Instead, Victorian culture creates the conditions for mediocrity by denying the possibility for genius in unlikely quarters.

In addition to her father, Beth's great aunt is a second incipient feminist who, early in life, witnessed the suppression of another potential woman of genius, her sister (Beth's grandmother), and devotes herself to preventing a recapitulation of this suppression in Beth. The narrator tells us that "Aunt Victoria nowadays would have struck out for herself in a new direction. She would have gone to London, joined a progressive women's club, made acquaintance with work of some kind or another, and never known a dull moment" (187). Aunt Victoria has the egalitarian impulses that would have suited her to feminism had she been born a few decades later. Old-fashioned in some of her Victorian principles and religious leanings, she nevertheless encourages Beth's development of genius. Most of the other characters in the book,

however, drawing upon the discourse of inevitable mediocrity in pathologized populations, deny the bare possibility of genius in women, including Beth's mother, Jim, Alfred, Sam, and Dan.

Typically, the denial of potential genius in women takes some form of Sam's reply to Beth when she provides evidence of female artistic geniuses from history. Beth says, "Women *do* write books, and girls too. Jane Austen wrote books, and Maria Edgeworth wrote books, and Fanny Burney wrote a book when she was only seventeen, called 'Evelina', and all the great men read it." "'Oh!' said Sammy, jeering, 'so you're as clever as they are, I suppose!'" (172). In a similar exchange with her husband later in the novel, Beth says, "Yet how many women have written, and written well, too." Maclure replies, "Oh yes, of course—exceptional women." Beth asks, "And why mayn't I be an exceptional woman?" (366). The "exceptional woman" argument that both the child Sam and the adult Maclure marshal against Beth is used in Victorian society to inhibit the emergence of genius in women under the guise of accepting its possible existence, but only in the rare women of history who have managed to enter the canon. While there have been some extraordinary women in history, the logic goes, any woman who thinks she can achieve this level of greatness is vain and deluded because the vast majority of women are constitutionally mediocre—an important aspect of Galton's rise-to-the-top theory of genius, in which 999,750/1 million people are similarly constitutionally mediocre (Galton 53). It is critical for Beth that she receives validation from the incipient feminists in her life who believe that genius in women might be more widespread, but easily stamped out by circumstance.

Just as Beth's father makes a point to demonstrate to Beth the fallaciousness and brutal power of the exceptional woman argument ("they'll be sure to say no"), so does Aunt Victoria recognize the fragility of genius in disadvantaged populations, and she raises Beth accordingly. Witnessing the abuse (both psychological and corporeal) that Beth suffers at the hands of her

mother and family members, Aunt Victoria takes it upon herself to steer Beth toward a path of hard work and self-respect. Because Beth's life at home with her mother threatens to warp her character and morals, or initiate the "atrophy" of her "faculties," Aunt Victoria treats her with kindness and respect to counterbalance this potentially irreversible damage. Aunt Victoria "dreaded to leave Beth at this critical time, lest she should relapse, just as she was beginning to form nice feminine habits" (193). Consequently, Aunt Victoria takes Beth with her on her holiday, though she can scarcely afford to do so, and the narrator remarks, "The next weeks, in their effect upon Beth's character, were among the most important of her life" (193). Grand reveals that Aunt Victoria's devotion to Beth is motivated by the girl's similarity to her late sister, Beth's grandmother, who also exhibited artistic tendencies, but was never able to bring them to fruition. Beth asks, "How was it grandmamma learned drawing and painting, and playing, and everything?...Mama knows tunes she composed." Aunt Victoria replies, "Your dear grandmamma was an exceedingly clever girl." Beth asks, "I am supposed to be like grandmamma, am I not?" To which Aunt Victoria replies: "You *are* like her" (197-198). Though a potential artistic genius, Beth's grandmother was ultimately entrapped in a worthless marriage that made her go "quite mad" (200). The important point to take away from Grand's inclusion of the grandmother's history is that artistic tendencies are easily crushed in a misogynistic culture that does not give women the ability to follow their own pursuits and natural "bent" (246). Recognizing the process that destroyed her sister's artistic potential, Aunt Victoria takes control of Beth's environment, nurturing her so that familial abuse does not warp her character, as it did for her sister. While Aunt Victoria still lives, the narrator tells us that "it was through the influence of this time that the most charming traits in Beth's character were finally developed—traits which, but for the tender discipline of the dear old aunt, might have remained latent

forever" (203). The "latent" traits of genius would have no means of emerging in Beth if it were not for her father and Aunt Victoria, who reject the inevitability of mediocrity in women and who, therefore, also reject a rise-to-the-top conception of genius.

Sarah Grand's exploration of genius in women in *The Beth Book* refutes the principal tenets Galton relies upon for his argument in *Hereditary Genius*, including the insuppressible and visible nature of genius and the measurability of genius by common patriarchal standards. Grand recognizes, in explicit contradiction to Galton, the *likely* suppression of true genius in sensitive natures and its degeneration in a hostile environment, which sabotages the moral and artistic advancement of the human race.

III. Destruction of Musical Genius in *The Daughters of Danaus*

Mona Caird's beliefs are in some ways diametrically opposed to Grand's because Caird's anti-eugenic stance is explicit in her writings. Caird's more conscious repudiation of eugenics means that her novel, *The Daughters of Danaus*, addresses, in a profound and striking manner, the troubling implications of the rise of degeneration theory and eugenics. As in Grand's novel, however, Caird's critique of eugenics can be elucidated most effectively through an examination of her representation of the artist, Hadria, in *Daughters of Danaus*. While exploring some of the same major themes present in *The Beth Book*, including the misogynistic basis of rise-to-the-top conceptions of genius, the destructive use of exceptional or canonical women artists to inhibit the emergence of artistry in "ordinary" women, and the power of seemingly trivial circumstances rather than heredity to prevent the emergence of genius, Caird also demonstrates the dangerous consequences that result when true genius is inadvertently suppressed through the application of Galton's theory. Caird is more insistent than Grand in her assertion that inclusive and supportive practices in all forms of human interaction is what will truly allow genius to flourish. Because

genius exists in unpredictable quarters and among disadvantaged people where it often goes unrecognized, the best practice is not to preserve the erroneous belief that genius will rise to the top, but to treat *all* individuals as if they are potential artists, according them the necessary space and opportunity to pursue their gifts to the greatest extent possible. Like Grand, Caird does not dispute that some individuals are especially gifted or naturally possessed of genius; both Beth and Hadria are unequivocally represented as natural geniuses beset by crushing circumstance. Caird, however, renders the concept of natural genius largely irrelevant when she removes it from an elitist realm and intimates that all individuals should be given the ability to determine for themselves their own proclivities and talents. Artistry in the novel serves the purpose of conceiving a uniquely expansive vision of human rights against the destructive popularization of racist, classist, and sexist scientific discourses that rely upon conceptions of natural genius to legitimize their reductive arguments.

Like Grand, Caird emphasizes the uniqueness of the genius temperament and its twin potentials of triumph and destruction. Hadria's sensitive temperament means that "[she] is at the mercy of all things. Every wind that blows uses [her] as an Aeolian harp" (61). "What a dangerous temperament you have!" Valeria says to her (62). Hadria "had at least two distinct natures that were at war with one another," and these extremes of constructiveness and destructiveness lead Valeria to say, "One can generally see at a glance…the general trend of a character. But not with you. Nothing that I might hear of you in the future, would very much surprise me. I should say to myself, 'Yes, the germ was there'" (90-91). The "germ" of destructiveness is an essential component of Hadria's natural genius temperament. Like Beth, she has the potential to degenerate morally and artistically as a result of her natural sensitivity.

Caird establishes the unstable nature of the genius for the same reasons that Grand does, that is, to illustrate the consequences of misunderstanding sensitive temperaments in a society that gives no quarter to uniqueness and visionary artistry, and to posit the existence of genius in unlikely or externally deceptive individuals. *Daughters of Danaus* begins with a meeting of the "Preposterous Society," the name the progressive Fullerton siblings assume when they desire to debate the pressing questions of the age. At the meeting, they debate the validity of a passage from Emerson: "But the soul contains the event that shall befall it, for the event is only the actualization of its thoughts…. The event is the print of your form. It fits you like your skin. What each does is proper to him. Events are the children of his mind and body" (*DOD* 8). Interpreting the passage as an essentialist defense of the power of heredity to shape one's course through life, Hadria denies the absolutism of Emerson's claim in spite of the opposition of her brothers and sister. Using the example of the artist to prove her point, Hadria asks, "Given (say) great artistic power, given also conscience and a strong will, is there any combination of circumstances which might prevent the artistic power (assuming it to be of the highest order and strength) from developing and displaying itself, so as to meet with general recognition" (11). "No," her brother Ernest replies. Ernest adopts the same position as Galton in *Hereditary Genius*, asserting the insuppressible nature of genius and its invulnerability to circumstance. Hadria positions herself against the rise-to-the-top theory of genius and states that, in fact, many artists, because they are in possession of "the very noblest and very highest qualities" are bound to be "swamped by maladjustment of character to circumstance" (12). Their superiority and genius are what, paradoxically, prevent their achievement of "general recognition" because "present conditions are inharmonious" with their high natures. Just as F.W.H. Myers claims of the strong hysteric in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* that her capitulation to

psychological distress is analogous to a robust Arctic explorer's capitulation to frostbite, so does Hadria claim of the artist that, often, he is like a giant "in a room full of carbonic acid instead of ordinary air" who "succumb[s] as quickly as a dwarf, and his strength…avail[s] him nothing" (Myers 40, *DOD* 11). While Galton frequently analogizes physical and mental attributes to support his claim that both can be traced to hereditary origins, Caird employs the same strategy to emphasize the instrumentality of circumstance in the success or failure of both mind and body, and the unpredictability of success regardless of one's level of physical or hereditary strength.

Continuing her train of thought despite Ernest's opposition, Hadria's advocacy of the likely suppression of artistry rapidly becomes gendered. She exclaims, "Emerson never was a girl!... If he had been a girl, he would have known that conditions *do* count hideously in one's life" (14). Ernest: "Surely it only wants a little force of will to enable you to occupy your life in the manner you think best." Hadria: "That is often impossible for a girl, because prejudice and custom are against her" (15). Like Grand, Caird centers her narrative upon the tribulations of the woman artist in order to illustrate the oppressive foundations of degeneration and eugenics. Later in the novel, when Hadria's friend Valeria Du Prel voices her eugenic belief that "our care of the weak, by interfering with the survival of the fittest, is injuring the race," Hadria objects by saying,

> It is not the protection of the weak, but the evil and stupid deeds that have made them so, that we have to thank for the miseries of disease. And for our redemption…it is not to the cowardly sacrifice of the unfortunate that we must trust, but to a more brotherly spirit of loyalty, a more generous treatment of all who are defenceless, a more faithful holding together among ourselves—weak and strong, favoured and luckless. (104)

Like the giant in the room full of carbonic acid or the woman artist beset by "prejudice and custom," the weak and unfortunate populations targeted for erasure by eugenicists find a rare defender in the novel's heroine. Caird uses artistic suppression, obliquely connected to disenfranchised populations in the novel, to realize her idea that a "more brotherly spirit of loyalty, a more generous treatment of all who are defenceless" are the constitutive elements of a healthy and advancing human race.

While Grand focuses primarily on the childhood and adolescence of the artist to explicate Victorian society's widespread indoctrination of misogyny and its inhibiting effect on talented individuals, Caird instead turns her attention to the post-marital experience of the woman artist to examine the devastation wrought by thwarted artistic impulse, taking Galton's rise-to-the-top conception of genius to its logical extreme. Beth Caldwell prevails to become an influential feminist orator at the end of *The Beth Book*, illustrating that Grand's commitment to displaying the ultimate worth and power of women despite inhibiting circumstances exceeds her commitment to representing misogynistic and exclusive worldviews as nigh insurmountable forces. In this she is not alone. Boumelha argues that in most New Woman representations of the artist "the claim to equality and worth staked in the person of [the heroine] rests upon [her] singularity. It derives, in fact, from an argument from exception" (173). In *Daughters of Danaus*, however, Hadria enjoys no such final triumph and, by the end of the novel, has nothing to do but mourn the deterioration of her musical genius through want of practice and cultivation, the material consequences of a forced life of exclusively domestic labor. The contrary endings of the two novels tell us much about Caird's aims. Though Grand's representation of the artist indicates that she was critical of many precepts Galton forwards in his rise-to-the-top theory, Beth's ultimate success has the effect of preserving faith in exceptionalism because Beth's natural

ability so obviously exceeds that of any other character in the novel: "She is the genius for whom we are waiting," Ideala says of Beth (390). Hadria's natural ability, too, receives its fair share of laudatory remarks in *Daughters of Danaus*. Professor Fortescue says of her, "If I am not very greatly mistaken, here is real musical genius of the first order, going to waste: strong forces being turned in upon nature, to its own destruction" (267). The difference between Beth's and Hadria's genius is not so much a matter of quality as a matter of opportunity for expression. Grand only goes so far in her suggestion that true genius is vulnerable to oppressive forces whereas Caird commits herself to destroying her own artist figure for the purpose of revealing the devastating implications of eugenic theory. In his description of Hadria's genius, Professor Fortescue alludes to a problem that becomes central in the novel: while Hadria's genius appears to be "real" based on available evidence, it is possible that Fortescue and any reader of genius could be "mistaken." The signs of genius are present in Hadria, but without opportunity to devote her laboring efforts to the development of artistry, they will remain signs without referents (musical compositions, performances). By introducing an element of doubt into what is otherwise as clear a representation of natural genius as any other in fin de siècle literature, Caird is able to broaden her argument about artists and apply it to all individuals who struggle to fulfill their potential in an oppressive social structure calcified by scientific rhetoric.

Late in the novel, Hadria encounters one of many misogynists that deny the possibility of artistic genius in women. He says to her,

> There was a failure in original work in every direction. This was no blame to women; they were not made that way, but facts had to be recognized. Women's strength lay in a different domain—in the home. It was of no use to try to fight against Nature. Look at music for instance; one required no particular liberty to pursue that art, yet where were

> the women-composers? If there was so much buried talent among women, why didn't they arise and bring out operas and oratorios? (372)

Using the scarcity of female artists to make sweeping claims about "Nature" and the biological limitations of women, the man rehearses an argument proposed by Galton decades earlier. Intimating that there is no such thing as "buried talent" because, if it is real talent, it cannot be buried, the man tells Hadria that if women were capable of artistry, they would produce operas and oratorios without any difficulty. The individual possessing true talent does not require any "particular liberty to pursue [her] art," especially in the realm of music, because genius is insuppressible and produces evidence of its existence (operas and oratorios) spontaneously. Similarly, Galton writes in *Hereditary Genius*, "By natural ability…I mean a nature which, when left to itself, will, urged by an inherent stimulus, climb the path that leads to eminence, and has strength to reach the summit—one which, if hindered or thwarted, will fret and strive until the hindrance is overcome, and it is again free to follow its labour-loving instinct" (77). Despite a grudging acknowledgement that the path to artistic success may prove difficult through his mountain-climbing metaphor, Galton rejects any suggestion that true geniuses can be "hindered or thwarted" because these individuals are naturally possessed of an "inherent stimulus" that protects them from inhibitive forces. Galton adds, "It follows that the men who achieve eminence, and those who are naturally capable, are, to a large extent, identical" (78). The man in *Daughters of Danaus* takes Galton's precepts to their logical extreme when he states that the non-existence of eminent women composers corresponds to the non-existence of naturally capable women composers. He naturalizes the apparent mediocrity of women, suggesting that the absence of artistic production among them is constitutional (the same argument of determined mediocrity that Galton lobs against the majority of humankind to forward his eugenic

agenda) and justifying their limited lives in the domestic sphere. We may summarize the man's comments as the inevitable mirror-reflection of Galton's: it follows that women who do not achieve eminence, and women who are not naturally capable, are identical. Had talented women been true musical geniuses and not constitutionally mediocre, they would have scaled the mountain of artistic development despite any trifling inhibitions encountered along the way.

Caird has no patience for the kind of abuse of scientific theory illustrated by the man's use of "Nature" to deny the existence and easy suppression of artistic genius in women. In order to prove misogynists of this type wrong, Caird explores in painstaking detail the trivial inhibitions that are woven into the day-to-day life of women. While Galton appears to concede that certain events could have a troublesome impact on the development and fruition of genius, their aggregate power is not enough to overcome the "inherent stimulus" that all geniuses possess to "fret and strive" until they succeed. As I mentioned earlier, in *The Beth Book* Grand chooses the Kunstlerroman form because of the opportunity it provides to investigate the effect the events of early life have on the artist's development and success in repudiation of Galton. Caird takes this method a step further by shifting the content of her narrative forward in time, limiting it to Hadria's experience of young adulthood and marriage. While the shift may seem incidental to the overarching purpose of both novels—to chronicle the tribulation of the artist—the ultimate effect is a less individualized approach to artistic genius in *Daughters of Danaus*. In *The Beth Book*, as in other Kunstler- or bildungsromans, the exclusive focus on the development of a single individual and the overdetermination of the uniqueness of this individual, the significance of events in her childhood, and her indispensable public or artistic role as an adult, detracts from her ability to serve as a representative of "ordinary" men and women. To a certain extent, Caird, unlike Grand, deliberately avoids a form, such as the Kunstlerroman, that would

emphasize too severely the uniqueness of her artist figure. Hadria often equates herself with the larger population to emphasize the universality of artistic suppression and the unjustness of a eugenic belief in widespread mediocrity. In this vein, Hadria remarks that "there is nothing to prove that thousands have not been swamped by maladjustment of character to circumstance" and "the world is full of abortive, ambiguous beings," using the word "muffled" to convey the prevalence of thwarted artistry, especially among women (12, 37). She also says, "I believe that there are thousands and thousands of women whose lives have run on parallel lines with mine" (451). By shifting the narrative forward in time, Caird adopts a strategy of representing the painfully mundane routines and customs that control all Victorian women's lives, even the life of a natural genius. In her afterword to the novel, Margaret Gullette writes, "Here finally is an exposé of the endless distractions of ordinary domestic life and the wearing down of a strong woman's will and constitution by family demands" (*DOD* 503). By turning her novel into a study of the effects of dull routine, household management, child rearing, and other conventional inhibitory tasks on the development of the artist, Caird renders visible the otherwise unnoticeable power daily life wields against the emergence of genius in *all* members of disadvantaged populations. Extending the implications of the artist's suppression in this manner is something *The Beth Book*, with its focus on a unique individual with a unique history, rarely attempts.

Through Hadria, Caird illustrates the unacknowledged and unexpected repercussions that a life of subjugation will have on the development of artistry to draw attention to genius's tragic latency throughout the world. As the Fullerton children debate the wisdom of confining women to the domestic sphere at the beginning of the novel, Ernest supports traditional family structure by stating, to his sisters' dismay, "I never met girls before, who wanted to come out of their cotton-wool…I thought girls loved cotton-wool. They always seem to" (23). Hadria objects to

his line of reasoning by remarking, "Girls *seem* an astonishing number of things that they are not," but Ernest brushes this off: "You two are exceptional, you see." Using a version of the exceptional woman argument to reduce all women beyond his interlocutors to mindless domestic implements, Ernest infuriates Hadria, who denies this apparent lauding of her own exceptionalness. She says, "Oh, *everybody's* exceptional, if you only knew it!" (23, Caird's emphasis). Hadria leagues herself with other subjugated women and, in effect, all people who possess valuable talents and "exceptional" characteristics that, for whatever reason, are not identifiable, quantifiable, and likely lie latent in them. As the novel unfolds, her life becomes the case study that exemplifies a principle that can be applied expansively to other individuals: in the current social structure, it is impossible to know who is and who is not an artistic genius, because the opportunity for artistic development is denied to all members of disadvantaged populations. Furthermore, Hadria's life shows that the only way to ensure the emergence of artistic genius is to dismantle the social structure completely and rebuild it to include opportunity as one of its constitutive elements.

Daughters of Danaus replicates the tedious, dull slog of typical women's domestic work in the exceptional woman's life to demonstrate the impossibility of artistic emergence under such inhibiting conditions for all women. Although Ann Heilmann does not consider Caird in the context of Galton or degeneration theory, she points out that Hadria's "failure to realise her artistic potential is a matter of psychological and environmental rather than biological imperatives; it is rooted not so much in the dictates of her body as in the enormous familial pressures that are brought to bear on her" (200-201). Caird represents the competing claims of artistic inclination and the menial labor of subjugated individuals, reiterating throughout the novel that only one of these forms of work can take precedence in a person's life if she is forced

to shoulder the burden of the trivial tasks that allow a flawed social structure to maintain its functionality, an end which, in and of itself, is not worth such wasted effort.

Moreover, Caird complicates the idea of the degenerate "germ" of the sensitive temperament by portraying the literal decay of Hadria's artistic power as a result of the contest between two ideals of the Victorian era that are similarly legitimated through popular scientific discourses: the Angel in the House and the genius.[51] *Daughters of Danaus* engages with the ideal of the Angel in the House by examining Victorian rationalizations of this ideal through the combined rhetoric of scientific theory and religion, which hold that a woman's natural and transcendent role in society is one of sacrificial subservience to men and children. The prevailing belief is represented by Hadria's brother, Fred, who cites the scientific justification of a woman's role: "He thought that there were instincts implanted by Nature, which inspired Mrs. Gordon with a yearning for exactly the sort of existence that fate had assigned her" (27). This belief recapitulates the argument found in *Hereditary Genius* that an individual's circumstances have no effect on her trajectory in life because she instinctively "yearn[s] for exactly the sort of existence" into which she is born, here used to justify and naturalize a woman's inferior social status. That women naturally "yearn" for the domestic role ultimately transforms it into an exalted, angelic position according to popular belief. Hadria characterizes this so-called natural yearning as a martyrdom that has been so exalted by middle class Victorians that women will "endure [it] with the expression of a seraph," envisioning themselves in the performance of the domestic role as naturally transcendent beings (472). Hadria repudiates the natural transcendence of the Angel in the House, however, by characterizing it as an artificial veneer that women adopt

[51] Coventry Patmore originally coined the term "Angel in the House" in an 1854 poem, but John Ruskin famously appropriated it in 1865 for his lecture "Of Queen's Gardens" in *Sesame and Lilies*. In the lecture he describes at length the ideal Victorian woman characterized by self-sacrifice (Ruskin 87).

to cope with their social degradation. "Most women" idealize their degrading sacrifices "with lavish use of halos and gilding in their honour, feeling perhaps…the dire need of such external decoration" (168).

Though Hadria's assertion of the artificiality of supposedly naturally transcendent domesticity is a familiar feminist subversion of the Angel in the House ideal, Caird's treatment of the topos is remarkable because she employs another ideal envisioned as natural by the Victorians, the genius, to undermine the pretensions of the Angel in the House. Caird literalizes the process of artistic decay in the genius, Hadria, who is defeated by the domestic ideal, as a counterpoint to the empty threat of "morbidness" leveled against women who deviate from the naturalized role of domestic angel. By participating in the same glorification of the genius upheld by Galton, other degenerationists, and Victorian culture in general, Caird appeals to a shared system of values surrounding the genius to dismantle tenets of naturalized mediocrity, the motive force behind the Angel in the House ideal.

The battle that Hadria wages against the naturalized Angel in the House ideal is figured grandly as a battle to the death between the truly transcendent and inborn quality of genius and the false ideal of a socially constructed but obdurately tenacious model of feminine self-sacrifice that is incompatible with the claims of flourishing artistry. Caird in many ways anticipates the characterization of the Angel in the House that Virginia Woolf would vividly provide in her essay "Professions for Women." Woolf personifies the Angel in the House as a beautiful but deceptive angel that Woolf needs to murder brutally before she can move forward with an independent life as a woman writer. According to Woolf, it was this "phantom" with whom she had to battle to the death: "It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me until at last I killed her" (Woolf 278). The horror and violence of this figurative murder is

conveyed through the angel's possession of the supposedly virtuous qualities of "intens[e] sympath[y]," unselfishness, daily sacrifice, and purity (278). Woolf writes, "I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defence. Had I not killed her, she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing" (279). Woolf highlights the violent core of the Angel in the House, who "would have killed [her]" if Woolf had not killed her first, in addition to the angel's antagonism toward artistry: "She would have plucked the heart out of my writing." Woolf also establishes the angel's tenacity as an artificially naturalized and popular ideal: "She died hard. Her fictitious nature was of great assistance to her…. She was always creeping back when I thought I had despatched her…. The struggle was severe" (279).

Caird provides a more thoroughly developed version of this same violent conflict with the Angel in the House. The impulse toward artistic creativity in the genius temperament is thwarted by the domestic ideal, leading to the necessary exercise of cruelties on the part of the genius. Attempting to kill the Angel in the House is represented here as the murder of the affections of family members and friends who uphold the ideal and do not understand Hadria's rejection of the domestic role. Believing that her parents will "die of grief" if she defies conventions of angelic domesticity, Hadria asks of her artistic aspirations, "What if one's stars and kingdoms lay on the further side of a crime or cruelty?" (46, 44). Her sole "chance of escape" is "in ruthlessly trampling upon the bleeding hearts of two beloved parents" (30). The battle between the domestic ideal and the transcendent genius is further figured in the antagonism between Miss Temperley, Hadria's conventional sister in law, and Jouffroy, the Parisian musician who mentors Hadria when she attempts to cut her domestic ties and launch a music career in France. Jouffroy intuits that Miss Temperley is "a lady, elegant, well-dressed,

but, ah! a woman to destroy the soul of an artist merely by her presence" (334). Jouffroy believes that Miss Temperley, the embodiment of the Angel in the House, is capable of "destroy[ing] the soul of an artist" because she touts the virtue of indulging the maternal instinct regardless of individual inclination, a course of action that Jouffroy regards as "the scourge of genius" (319). He asserts that "this 'reproductive rage' held [women]—in spite of all their fine intuitions and astonishing ability—after all on the animal plane; cut them off from the little band of those who could break up new ground in human knowledge, and explore new heights of Art and Nature." The domestic ideal is a "monster who will not spare us even one [woman]!" (319). To defeat this paradoxically monstrous Angel in the House, Jouffroy counsels Hadria to exercise a certain amount of cruelty and ignore her family's pleas to return to her domestic life devoid of art. He says, "Your family has doubtless become ill…. Bah, it is easy to become ill when one is angry, and so to make oneself pitied and obeyed, it is a common usage. Madame, beware […]. I know what feeds and rouses [genius], and I know what kills it…. [I]f you return to your fogs and your tea parties—ah, then, Madame, your genius will die and your heart will be broken" (335-336).

By representing Hadria's struggle as a deadly contest between the domestic ideal and unrealized genius, Caird demonizes the Angel in the House, suggesting that the revered ideal in actuality does nothing but kill elements of true value in the personality, symbolized in Hadria as natural genius. Furthermore, in focusing on the debate surrounding the naturalness of the domestic ideal, Caird aims to shift Victorian cultural investment in The Angel in the House to the natural genius, whose innate creativity is portrayed as the authentically natural trait that stands to be wiped out irrevocably through enforced mediocrity. The Angel in the House's destructive force is revealed in the literal decay of artistry. Caird emphasizes the tragedy of artistic decay by describing natural genius in angelic terms, veritably replacing the false Angel in

the House with the authentic Angel of Art, who cannot prevail despite great ability due to the resilience of the domestic ideal. Hadria is likened to a delicate "winged creature" who is crippled by the "spider-webs" of convention and family (268). She is also a bird who longs to "stretch [her] cramped wings to the sun," but "little creaks and hindrances…made flight in the high air not quite effortless and serene" (307). She has "evident talent…and the power over Fortune that talent ought to give," although "the gift was of that kind which lays the possessor peculiarly open to her outrageous slings and arrows" (148). Comparing herself to Icarus, Hadria laments that her "wings are wet and crippled, in the blue depths" (388). Like the Angel of modern art in *The Wonderful Visit*, she is likened to "a gorgeous butterfly…a symbol of the soul; fragile, beautiful, helpless thing that any rough hand may crush and ruin" (*DOD* 430, *TWV* 11). "Originality" is "ever a miraculous phenomenon" in the few people, like Hadria, who possess it, but its miraculous nature cannot protect it from decay when its development is inhibited (58).

While Victorian culture insists upon the "morbidity" of women who deviate from the domestic ideal, Hadria experiences the degeneration of her own transcendent natural genius, the genuinely morbid outcome of being forced to conform to deceptively angelic domesticity. Many varied characters in the novel, including Miss Temperley, Lady Engleton, Valeria Du Prel, and Hadria's brothers, all subscribe to the scientific argument of naturalized domesticity and charge those who deviate from this conventional path with morbidity, the amorphous degeneracy of those who pervert their true natures. Lady Engleton, for instance, who likes to toy with radical ideas but "retreat[s]" to "pure orthodoxy" when they make her too uncomfortable, uses the rhetoric of morbidity to preserve her own faith in the social structure. She says to Hadria, "I fear there is an element of the morbid, in all this fretful revolt against the old-established destiny of our sex" (260). Similarly, when Hadria provocatively exclaims that "a woman with a child in her

arms is, to me, the symbol of an abasement, an indignity, more complete, more disfiguring and terrible, than any form of humiliation the world has ever seen," Miss Temperley is disgusted by what she perceives to be Hadria's "twisted…sentiment" (341). She says, "You must be mad! ... That symbol has stood to the world for all that is sweetest and holiest…. What you say is rank heresy against all that is most beautiful in human nature" (341). Like Lady Engleton, Miss Temperley regards any deviation from the Angel in the House ideal as a degenerate perversion of nature, a morbid madness that has clouded Hadria's perception of reality. Mrs. Fullerton, too, worries that Hadria's divergence from the maternal ideal betokens "some taint of madness in her daughter's mind" (368).

Professor Fortescue, however, reconsiders the meaning of morbidity and reverses its common application. For Fortescue, the self-doubt of oppressed women is "morbid" because it is synonymous with the destruction of their nature for the benefit of their families. When Hadria is reluctant to take her musical ability "too seriously" he declares this to be "one of the first morbid signs of the evil at work upon [her]" (271). Hadria similarly compares herself to a "gnarled tree" that is "forced to become twisted, and crooked, and stunted and wretched" (271). This metaphor of the "sapling" that had a "natural impetus for happy growth" becoming twisted and stunted is literalized in the decay of Hadria's artistic ability. A natural "gift," artistry is prone to the same decay as other natural traits and becomes habituated to a level of mediocrity if it is not cultivated. Fortescue points this out when he says, "Life…offers her gifts as the Sybil her books; they grow fewer as we refuse them" (270). At the end of the novel, Hadria reflects on the decline of her musical powers, which have "grow[n] fewer as [she has] refuse[d] them," and attributes it to habituation to unfavorable circumstances:

> Like a creature accustomed to the yoke, she had found it increasingly difficult to use the moments of opportunity when they came. The force of daily usage, the necessary bending of thoughts in certain habitual directions, had assisted the crippling process, and though the power still lay there, stiffer than of yore, yet the preliminary movements and readjustments used up time and strength, and then gradually, with the perpetual repetition of adverse habits, the whole process became slower, harder, crueler. (478)

Elsewhere, this "necessary bending of thoughts in certain habitual directions" related to angelic domesticity causes Hadria to gesture to her head, saying "I feel a miserable number of holes here…a loss of absorbing power, at times, and a mental slackness that is really alarming" (275). Degenerationists like Edwin Ray Lankester theorized that the degeneration of an organism could be traced to its habituation to an undemanding environment. Lankester cites the example of the barnacle, whose "organs of touch and sight had atrophied" as it became accustomed to "*less* varied and *less* complex conditions of life" (Lankester 35, 32). Caird applies this theory of habituation to Hadria to display the morbid effects of the Angel in the House ideal on the genius temperament. Performed mediocrity in the domestic sphere eventually culminates in constitutional mediocrity, even in a natural genius. In answer to Valeria's assertion that "I don't believe [instincts] *can* be suppressed," Hadria says, "I believe they can be not merely suppressed, but killed past hope of recovery" (174, Caird's emphasis). Hadria's musical power is an instinct that is "killed past hope of recovery" as it degenerates to a level of mediocrity. Because she represents this decline as irredeemable, Caird situates it within the discourse of degeneracy, creating an associative connection between Hadria's acquired mediocrity and determinism. While the "morbidness" of unconventional women who deviate from the Angel in the House ideal is represented as a reactionary accusation on the part of conservative individuals who desire

to uphold the social structure, Caird does not completely discount the possibility of degeneracy in the women who must negotiate their place in relation to the domestic sphere. However, she undermines the common use of morbidity by portraying the literal degeneration of artistic ability in those who abide by the socially constructed domestic ideal. By participating in the Victorian glorification of the natural genius, Caird suggests that the preservation of the genius trumps whatever social utility may be offered by the Angel in the House or maintaining a status quo of enforced mediocrity. Furthermore, by focusing on the "mental slackness" and "necessary bending of thoughts in certain habitual directions" as the locus of degeneracy in the genius, Caird highlights the perilousness of a rise-to-the-top conception of genius, which is instrumental in the suppression of women and thus in the destruction of genius where, though potentially invisible, it does, in fact, exist.

Caird showcases the degeneration of artistry to emphasize the risk of subscribing to a view of the world that accepts as fact the mediocrity of a vast percentage of the population, instantiated in the man who asserts that "there was a failure in original work in every direction" among women (372). It is by uncritically accepting mediocrity as inevitable that a culture paradoxically *produces* mediocrity where genius, if given the opportunity, could flourish. Additionally, Caird examines the consequences of thwarted artistry on both an individual and a global level to move beyond Galton's limited perspective. Whereas Galton's main purpose is to demonstrate the insuppressibility of genius and thus its usefulness as a measure of worth in a eugenic context, Caird relies upon a shared cultural understanding of the unequivocal value of genius to illustrate the damaging effects on the world that accrue from its needless decay and loss.

Early in her marriage, Hadria attempts to maintain the same optimism Galton displays regarding the artist's ability to prevail despite untoward conditions. But, unlike Galton, Hadria recognizes that artistic development requires "stupendous labour" that is incompatible with the daily household tasks of a subjugated wife and daughter (191). Hadria wastes her efforts trying to "win" opportunity to do her real musical work, representing the chore of simply gaining time for herself as a competition with her family that drains her of the energy she should devote to music (109). That average daily life, and not catastrophic events, is what impedes Hadria's progress shows that one of Caird's aims is to demonstrate the necessity of a complete reconsideration of daily life that most characters in the novel take for granted and consider to be "natural." Caird's emphasis on "opportunity" remains the central focus of her call for a reconsideration of daily life, while Galton suggests that the average human being, or "a nature… left to itself," requires no special opportunity to develop his skill, if he possesses true artistry (Caird 191, Galton 77). Caird demonstrates that, among women, there is no such thing as "a nature…left to itself," intimating that the Victorians' first priority should be to create new conditions of opportunity that would allow genius to flourish in all quarters of the world.

Using artistic suppression as the vehicle for this critique of patriarchy allows Caird to raise the stakes of the debates surrounding women's liberation for her readers. That household tasks amount to nothing and "[leave] no mark behind them, no sign of movement or progress" introduces the concept of squandered energy and value that is detrimental not only to the individual artist, but to the human race that would benefit as a whole from the artist's productions (191). While the phrase "no sign of movement or progress" applies most obviously to Hadria's individual failure to fulfill her artistic potential as a result of enforced domesticity, it also alludes to a more global concern in the novel. Forcing an entire subjugated group of people

to perform trivial and superficial tasks of household management and social calls, primarily for the sake of protecting the existing social structure itself, prevents the entire society from advancing artistically, intellectually, or morally. Individual and collective stagnation in *Daughters of Danaus* is the high price exacted by society's suppression of the artist and, more broadly, of all subjugated populations that contain many suppressed artists within their ranks. Caird employs apocalyptic language to describe the dangers of artistic suppression, using Hadria again as the representative case. Midway through the novel, Professor Fortescue says of Hadria's musical genius, "Truly, this is not the sort of power that can be safely shut up and stifled. It is the sort of power for which everything ought to be set aside." Algitha replies, "I know…what explosive force that musical instinct of hers has. Yet, it is impossible, as things are, for her to give it real utterance. She can only open the furnace door now and then." Fortescue replies, "It won't do: it isn't safe" (267).

Suppression of Hadria's artistic genius is dangerous both to her as an individual, because it contributes to her and her family's unhappiness and moral atrophy, and to collective humanity, because it contributes to an endless cycle of suppression among disenfranchised populations that keeps them in an abject position. As in her reconsideration of morbidity, in her representation of the abjectness of women Caird draws from the discourse of degeneracy to suggest that what is often interpreted as faulty heredity is actually the internalization of social constraint and subjugation. Mrs. Fullerton, for instance, possesses a "nervous system [that] had been wrecked by the accumulated strains of a lifetime. The constitution had been broken up, once and for all" (366). Heredity is replaced by a cycle of abjection in which "women are so ready to oppress each other" because "they have themselves suffered oppression" (450). Hadria speaks of this tendency deterministically as "a law that we cannot evade." It is difficult to distinguish the wrecked

nervous systems of socially oppressed women from true hereditary affliction due to the likelihood of both forms of pathology to be passed from one generation to another. But by recognizing the signs of thwarted artistry, one can see that, just as in Hadria's battle with the Angel in the House, these women have been defeated in spite of their natural abilities as a direct result of the enforced mediocrity of their domestic lives. Although Heilmann notes that Caird portrays young women being "socialised into abjection by their mothers," she does not explore the relation of this theme to Caird's representation of genius in the novel (214). Of Hadria's mother, the narrator says, "In her youth, Mrs. Fullerton had shewn signs of qualities which had since been submerged. Her husband had influenced her development profoundly, to the apparent stifling of every native tendency. A few volumes of poetry, and other works of imagination, bore testimony to the lost sides of her nature" (33). And later: "Having allowed her own abilities to decay, Mrs. Fullerton had developed an extraordinary power of interfering with the employment of the abilities of others" (44). Although Mrs. Fullerton once possessed the same artistic temperament that now manifests itself in her daughter, the suppression of artistic inclination in disadvantaged populations becomes a self-perpetuating phenomenon akin to hereditary degeneracy, depleting the "riches" of the individual and the world, reducing both to "beggary" (450). Caird writes, "This was what Hadria dreaded in her own case: that the loss [of her desires and talent and will] would not end with her…. Everyone who came under her influence must share in it" (370). Growing more conscious of this mechanism of women's abjection as she experiences its effects, Hadria fears that she will be unconsciously drawn into the same pattern of behavior and exclaims, "Oh, no, no…don't let me begin *already* to impoverish other lives!" (447, Caird's emphasis). She resolves, "I will not be one of those vampire souls, at least not while I have my senses about me." Though Galton believes that mediocrity is the biological

norm among human beings, Caird suggests that mediocrity is artificially created through patriarchal acts of suppression that lead to more acts of suppression in an endless cycle within disadvantaged groups, ultimately contributing to collective and preventable degeneration rather than evolutionary advancement. Caird uses Mrs. Fullerton to show that, in Hadria's words, "*everybody's* exceptional, if you only knew it," but highlights the destructive ends of misdirected and thwarted exceptionalness on a large scale. The morbidity of thwarted genius and its irrevocable loss in Hadria is replicated in Caird's characterization of the larger population. Caird's description of Mrs. Fullerton's genius temperament, "broken up, once and for all," is an appropriation of the deterministic logic of degeneracy. She uses it here to emphasize the morbidity, on a grand scale, of a eugenic view of the world that refuses to allow for the latent existence of genius in unlikely quarters. Galton's precepts inadvertently contribute to an artificially created (but no less destructive) form of degeneracy as a result of its misguided insistence on widespread mediocrity.

While suppressed artistic genius is a scourge on all who come into contact with it, genius that receives adequate scope for its powers benefits the human race. Midway through the novel, Hadria tries the experiment of cutting her family ties and moving to Paris to pursue her musical education. Leaving husband and children behind, she rents an apartment and studies under the master Jouffroy. When relations arrive to coerce Hadria to return to her domestic duties, a panicked Jouffroy attempts an interception: "He had come to save her…. *Mon Dieu*! was he to allow her to be taken away from her work, dragged back to a narrow circle, crushed, broken, ruined—she who could give such a sublime gift to her century—but it was impossible! It would tear his heart" (334). Jouffroy recounts his remonstration with Miss Temperley: "I pointed out to her your unique power. I reminded her that such power is a gift supreme to the world, which the

world must not lose" (335). Hadria's music, like the Angel's music in *The Wonderful Visit*, is modern and jarring to the conventional ear. Hadria's husband, Temperley, cannot stand her music; as Algitha points out, "Her compositions set his teeth on edge. His nature is conventional through and through" (267). Although other musicians say that her compositions "sh[ow] a development of musical form and expression extremely remarkable," Hadria struggles to find a publisher: "This supreme recompense of genius was apparently hard to achieve" (314-15). Divining that her modern music will likely fail at first despite its excellence, Jouffroy asks, "Can [Hadria] bear to be misunderstood; to be derided for departure from old rules and conventions; to have her work despised and refused, and again refused, till at last the dull ears shall be opened and all the stupid world shall run shouting to her feet?" (316). Modern music in *Daughters of Danaus* carries with it the same symbolic meanings represented at length in *The Wonderful Visit*. As emblems of moral and intellectual enlightenment, Hadria's compositions contribute to the health and beauty of the world; they are "gift[s] supreme" that assist with the cultivation of receptiveness in "dull" and "stupid" ears though they are misapprehended as regressive rather than advanced. Those who are incapable of understanding her music, including her husband, sister-and-law, and other family members, are also the ones who fail to recognize the merits of women's liberation and force others to live life according to the "old lines" (439). Granting individuals wider scope to develop artistry improves the human race on a grand scale, while limiting these chances spells backwardness, stagnation, and intellectual impoverishment for the world that stands to benefit from suppressed artists' "sublime gift[s]."

IV. Conclusion

In *The Beth Book*, Grand makes it possible for Beth to succeed by not writing any children into Beth's marriage and by giving Beth several distinct and serendipitous advantages,

including a room and money willed through Aunt Victoria, progressive friends outside of her family, and, again, a room to herself in her husband's home (a secret room she discovers in the attic, because Dan Maclure refuses to allow Beth a private space). Beth's eventual triumph illustrates that Grand believes it is possible, with certain assistances like these, for women to fulfill their potential. Caird, on the other hand, does not believe that, with the way society is currently structured, it is possible to escape the harassing power of the Angel in the House ideal and the crushing claims of family, even if, as Hadria does, a woman does manage to assert herself and leave home. Margaret Gullette notes that aspects of *Daughters of Danaus* anticipate "[Virginia] Woolf's much later creation of Judith Shakespeare in *A Room of One's Own*," but it is significant that, in Hadria's case unlike Beth's, a private space is not enough to secure the suppressed artist's success. Hadria moves to Paris precisely to ascertain if freedom from domestic duties and dominion over a private apartment will be sufficient resources in the quest to pursue a musical education. They are not. In Paris, Hadria notices that "even here, where she seemed so free, the peculiar claims that are made, by common consent, on a woman's time and strength began to weave their tiny cords around her" (322). Hadria finds she is expected to return calls and navigate her social network in Paris just as much as she was in England. She contemplates her community's claims upon her: "To give pain or offence for the sake of an hour or two, more or less, seemed cruel and selfish, yet Hadria often longed for the privilege that every man enjoys, of quietly pursuing his work without giving either" (322). When she returns to England a failure, she says, "I might have known I could not succeed, as things are. How *could* I?...It is my impression that in my life, as in the lives of most women, all roads lead to Rome" (376, Caird's emphasis). The "tiny cords" of women's oppression are so insidiously woven into the fabric of daily life that women themselves do not understand the cords' power until they have

tested them through experience. For Caird, no simple reallocation of domestic duties or private space will be enough to rescue oppressed individuals and the suppressed artists among them; razing and rebuilding society on entirely new lines is the only way to alter the Victorians' "common consent" to women's subjugation.

Caird provides a glimpse of how such a societal transformation could be accomplished through her characterization of Professor Fortescue, who, to a greater extent than Beth's proto-feminist father and aunt, advocates for kindly encouragement of all individuals, acknowledgment of their latent talents, and furnishing opportunity to bring those talents to fruition. Fortescue, though "greatly looked up to in the scientific world," risks his reputation by becoming an ardent anti-vivisectionist: "This idea of saving pain to animals…was becoming a sort of mania with [him], and one feared it might injure his career" (180). Fortescue's kindness to animals is only one of the forms his expansive sympathy takes, and other characters use his existence to prove that primitive instincts and hereditary determinants are not the sole ingredients of human nature. In a conversation about Fortescue, Valeria Du Prel and Hadria assess his character:

> "He is carrying a fishing-rod. They have been fishing," said Valeria.
>
> "Not Professor Fortescue, I am certain. He does not find his pleasure in causing pain."
>
> "This hero-worship blinds you. Depend upon it, he is not without the primitive instinct to kill."
>
> "There are individual exceptions to all savage instincts, or the world would never move."
>
> "Instinct rules the world," said Miss Du Prel. "At least it is obviously neither reason nor the moral sense that rules it."

"Then why does it produce a Professor Fortescue now and then?" (211-12)

Fortescue's very presence in the world proves that it is more complex and indeterminate than eugenicists like Valeria believe it to be. Additionally, Fortescue's kind treatment of individuals has the effect of reversing apparently natural mediocrity. When Fortescue first arrives at her parents' house early in the novel, Hadria is "astonished to see how animated her mother had become under his influence" (84). Hadria says to herself, "We thought him a good and kind magician when we were children…and now one is grown up, there is no disillusion. He is a good and kind magician still" (85). The narrator continues:

> He seemed indeed to have the power to conjure forth from their hiding-places, the finer qualities of mind and temperament, which had lain dormant, perhaps for years, buried beneath daily accumulations of little cares and little habits. The creature that had once looked forth on the world, fresh and vital, was summoned again, to his own surprise, with all his ancient laughter and his tears. (85)

Fortescue's magical power is to revitalize oppressed individuals like Hadria's mother. The latent qualities that unfair circumstances, or "daily accumulations of little cares and habits," bury in subdued "creature[s]" will rise to the surface again when they simply come into contact with this kind and expansively sympathetic man. Fortescue, "the best and most generous human being [Hadria] ha[s] ever met," embodies her prescriptions for an advancing world that rejects eugenicist practices (85). He says, "Let people talk as they please about the struggle for existence, it is through the development of the human mind and the widening of human mercy that better things will come" (272). If the world would emulate Fortescue, genius's tragic latency would be a blight of the past rather than the future.

Although Caird's feminist agenda means she focuses primarily on the suppression of genius in women, particularly middle class women like Hadria and Mrs. Fullerton, instances exist in which she expands the implications of her argument about genius to include members of other disenfranchised groups as well. Toward the end of the novel Hadria and Algitha revisit the debate that occupied the Fullerton siblings at its outset. Hadria asks, "Do you remember our famous discussion on Emerson in the garret?... And how about Emerson's doctrine? *Are* we the makers of our circumstances? *Does* our fate 'fit us like a glove'?" (462, Caird's emphasis). Algitha replies:

> I doubt it…. I have seen too much of a certain tragic side of life to be able to lay down a law of that sort. I can't believe, for instance, that among all those millions in the East End, not one man or woman, for all these ages, was born with great capacities, which better conditions might have allowed to come to fruition. I think you were right, after all. It is a matter of relation. (462)

Working in the poverty stricken slums of the East End has convinced Algitha of the universality of genius's tragic suppression. Algitha highlights the absurdity of crediting the premise, as Galton does, that among the "millions" of the urban poor, none possess the "great capacities" that would league them with Galton's canonical exemplars of genius had oppressive conditions been ameliorated. Alluding to the popular conception of urban degeneration in the East End of London extends the significance of Caird's case study of the individual woman of genius not only to all women, but also to all disadvantaged groups whom eugenic theorists target for erasure through selective breeding. At the very end of the novel, as Fortescue lies on his death-bed, he and Hadria discuss "the lives that never fulfill themselves…in such numberless instances" and the prevalence of "wasted" genius (488-89). He offers Hadria some parting advice:

> Hold fast to your own colours. Don't take sides, above all, with the powers that have oppressed you. They are terrible powers, and yet people won't admit their strength, and so they are left unopposed. It is worse than folly to underrate the forces of the enemy. It is always worse than folly to deny facts in order to support a theory. Exhort people to face and conquer them…. And the helpless, human and animal—how they wring one's heart! Do not forget them; be to them a knight-errant. You have suffered enough yourself, to know well how to bind their wounds. (489-90)

Fortescue's statement, "it is always worse than folly to deny facts in order to support a theory," is a damning interpretation of Galton and the eugenicists, who fail to foresee the consequences of a worldview that denies the possibility of genius in disadvantaged groups for the sake of forwarding an erroneous and destructive theory. Fortescue's poignant call to Hadria to be to the victims of these theories "a knight-errant" recasts the woman of genius as chivalric hero; no other can fill this role in a misogynistic and discriminatory culture unreflectively hostile to artistry, the "gift supreme" to the world (335). By the novel's end, Hadria's "neglected gift was beginning to show signs of decay and enfeeblement…the famine had told upon it at last. It was dying" (477). Hadria's own experience of artistic suppression and eventual destruction means that she can work to prevent the same destruction in others, as long as she does not "take sides" with "the enemy" as her mother did, unconsciously perpetuating her own and others' abjection (489). While Galton's *Hereditary Genius* fixates upon the great literary, musical, and artistic men from history to prove the benignity and riskless nature of selective breeding, Caird instead represents the plight of the living, female, and oppressed modern artist to reveal the unequivocal risks the world runs when it forgets the fallacious origins of the eugenicist perspective, which is predicated upon an absurd understanding of the insuppressible quality of genius.

Midway through the novel, Hadria comes to a realization about genius: "Nature scattered her gifts wildly and cruelly: cruelly, because she cared not into what cramped nooks and crannies she poured her maddening explosives: cruelly, because she hurled this fire from heaven with indiscriminate hand, to set alight one dared not guess how many chained martyrs at their stakes" (317). The image of "Nature" that Hadria conceives is striking in that it preserves the same sense of randomness and cruelty familiar from post-Darwinian conceptions of the organism's relation to its environment. Once evolutionary theory had popularized the notion of a godless, disorganized natural world in defiance of such works as William Paley's *Natural Theology*, the door was open for eugenicists to step in and advocate for human intervention in and control of the godless chaos of natural process. For Hadria, though, the cruelty of Nature only confirms genius's tragic latency throughout the world. The "cramped nooks and crannies" and the "chained martyrs" into whom Nature has "poured her maddening explosive" of exceptional ability refer to myriads of unfortunate individuals, trapped by circumstance, who suffer despite their exceptionality precisely because natural process is random and cruel. Rather than attempting to improve humanity through the identification, isolation, and breeding of genius, human intervention should be directed toward mitigating Nature's cruel practice of bestowing humans with exceptional thoughts, feelings, and abilities when circumstances prevent their fruitful emergence. Insisting on the mediocrity of the vast percentage of the population, as Galton does, will do nothing to facilitate genius's triumph in an already hostile environment. Recognizing the potential for genius in all individuals and proceeding accordingly, however, will do much to offset the cruelties of Nature. Portraying Nature as that which wantonly hides its geniuses in "nooks and crannies," Caird encourages her readers to extrapolate the implications of Hadria's devastating failure as a musician to the wider world. For Caird, the figure of the artistic

genius acts as a powerful rhetorical force against the momentous claims of degeneration and eugenics, allowing for the conceptualization of an advancing society that recognizes the rights of all individuals to the privileges of the artist: freedom, space, opportunity, and kindly encouragement.

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