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# Biological Inheritance and the Social Order in Late-Victorian Fiction and Science

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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BIOLOGICAL INHERITANCE AND THE SOCIAL ORDER  
IN LATE-VICTORIAN FICTION AND SCIENCE

(Spine title: Biological Inheritance and the Social Order)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Sherrin Elaine Berezowsky

Graduate Program in English

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

**CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION**

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The thesis by

**Sherrin Elaine Berezowsky**

entitled:

**Biological Inheritance and the Social Order  
in Late-Victorian Fiction and Science**

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
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**Doctor of Philosophy**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the heightened interest in heredity as a kind of biological inheritance that arises after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and how this interest intersects with concerns about class mobility and the shifting social order. Within this framework, this project considers how heredity became a means of organizing and regulating bodies in keeping with what Michel Foucault terms bio-power. It unearths the cultural work within literary and scientific writings as they respond to narratives of self-help and self-improvement by imagining heredity as a means of stabilizing the social order, and by extension the nation, at the very moment that it was undergoing significant change. In studying diverse texts, this project highlights the shared ideological concerns behind both literary and scientific narratives.

This study begins by examining Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861–2) for the way in which this sensation novel, published so soon after *Origin* reflects the tension between hereditary determination and the figure of the self-made man. The second chapter on George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) explores the limits and possibilities of biological inheritance as expressed within the confines of the realist novel. The third chapter turns to Francis Galton's work on heredity, exploring the way in which his scientific research and program of eugenics are underscored by a desire to develop a narrative for British progress. The final chapter focuses on two eugenic romance novels—Ménie Muriel Dowie's *Gallia* (1895) and Grant Allen's *A Splendid Sin* (1896)—that reflect the way in which biopolitical concerns enter the domestic space by transposing biological inheritance onto the framework of financial inheritance.

## Keywords

Literature; English literature; nineteenth century; Victorian; heredity; inheritance; science; class; biography; biopolitics; *bildungsroman*; evolution; George Eliot; Mary Elizabeth Braddon; Francis Galton; Méné Muriel Dowie; Grant Allen; Charles Darwin; *Daniel Deronda*; *Lady Audley's Secret*; *Hereditary Genius*; *Gallia*; *A Splendid Sin*; *On the Origin of Species*

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## **Introduction**

### **The Evolution of the Biological Inheritance Narrative**

Though a legal mechanism, inheritance looks to natural laws to support its authority to govern the way in which property is transferred from one generation to another. Legal inheritance in Victorian England was governed primarily by common law, and as such, it emerged relatively organically, revealing roots in the intersection of social custom and natural lineage. This melding of natural laws and social constructions underlies William Blackstone's concept of the common law in his definitive guide, *Commentaries on the Law of England* (1765–69) which envisions the common law, as William L. Miller puts it, as “men's approximation of the laws of nature,” “subject to incremental efforts by jurists to move nearer the ideal” (577). This perspective on the law would have been in keeping with the general movement from the eighteenth century onward (evidenced in Adam Smith's vision of the Invisible Hand and Darwin's explanation of the laws that govern evolution) to understand the world—including human society—as operating according to the principles of nature. This vision of the common law strengthened custom as the laws of the country became rooted in some greater, if somewhat opaque, natural law.

Yet while Blackstone's general approach to the common law might seek to find its roots in natural laws, this tendency surprisingly does not hold true when it comes to his understanding of inheritance:

The right of inheritance, or descent to the children and relations of the deceased, seems to have been allowed much earlier than the right of devising by testament.

We are apt to conceive at first view that it has nature on its side; yet we often mistake for nature what we find established by long and inveterate custom. It is



certainly a wise and effectual, but clearly a political establishment; since the permanent right of property, vested in the ancestor himself, was no natural, but merely a civil, right. (9)

Despite Blackstone's clear articulation that inheritance is customary and not natural, the drive to align lineage and social custom by naturalizing inheritance continued in the Victorian era. In his 1871 revised edition of Blackstone, Thomas M. Cooley ventures beyond the mandate of updating the *Commentaries* to reflect current legal practices in his vehement contradiction of this passage: "I cannot agree with the learned commentator, that the permanent right of property vested in the ancestor himself (that is, for his life), is not a natural, but merely a civil right" (9n). The animation with which Cooley delivers his denouncement of Blackstone's commentary, later invoking "God himself," is reflective not only of the unclear boundaries between custom and nature in determining the understanding of inheritance in the Victorian period, but also of the power and importance vested in inheritance.

Inheritance certainly had a powerful effect in influencing the next generation by bestowing property, titles, and wealth that might affect the position and opportunities of the heir. In essence, inheritance could determine one's social position. Such a model was certainly important in an aristocratic context where ancestry and real property determined wealth and position in the community and the nation. While such succession was not done away with in the Victorian era, inheritance might be assumed to have a lesser role as members of the middle class saw themselves as having to earn their position through effort and skill, determining their own lot rather than resting on the ancestry of their parents and grandparents. Yet at the very moment of increased social mobility—and thus

social instability—inheritance maintained an important place in the imagination of Victorian Britain, creating a connection to the past that seemingly contradicted the widespread faith in the future that characterized the period.

In some regards, it is surprising that inheritance would captivate a Victorian public so bent on the idea of progress, yet its continued presence as a narrative problem within the Victorian novel suggests that something still remained to be worked out with regard to the anxieties and hopes that are incumbent upon inheritance. The novel is an important site of investigation in considering the changing role and meaning of inheritance in the nineteenth century both because inheritance is such a well-worn plot device within the novel and because the novel is so closely tied to that sector of society most affected by and most clearly affecting the changing possibilities of inheritance—the middle class. As Jürgen Habermas argues, “the needs of a bourgeois reading public...would find genuine satisfaction in the literary forms of the domestic drama and the psychological novel” (43). Novels thus not only reflect the experience of middle-class society but are a means of imagining the world as conformed to its desires or expressing its own concerns. The continued presence of inheritance as a crucial plot device suggests that, despite the desire for the kind of upward mobility that the increasingly open marketplace allowed, the middle class was concerned about the potential of downward mobility and looked to narratives of inheritance as a means of further authorizing their position and prosperity. Yet while inheritance within the purview of the middle class might transmit wealth, it lacked the authority of ancestry or the divine organization of the great chain of being that solidified the position of the aristocracy. For inheritance to exert

the kind of stabilizing force that the middle class desired, it likewise needed to be tied to the workings of some greater power.

Thus, a new narrative of inheritance was required, one that, like legal inheritance before it, could occupy a central place in the nineteenth-century novel, not only to create drama, but also to provide the middle class with a sense of solidity as it mimicked the authority of aristocratic inheritance while addressing the concerns and ambitions of its largest segment of readers. Concurrent with the middle class's rise to power and the increasing instability of the class system, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* (1859) in which he equates inheritance with heredity and claims biological inheritance as a natural law. Darwin's focus on heredity as a form of inheritance not only suggests the possibility of legal inheritance being aligned with natural laws, but also allows for the possibility of imagining biology as invested with the same consequences as legal inheritance in its ability to determine one's prospects and position in life. In the framework of natural selection in which the fittest specimens thrive and reproduce, biological inheritance offers the imaginative possibility of authorizing the positions of individuals in the present as products of their heredity, reasserting the organizing principles of the class system and the middle class's position within it. The shifting sands that characterized class mobility might be firmed up such that the middle class's position in the social order might be imagined to be due not simply to hard work and ingenuity but to something within their bodies that asserted their increasing superiority.

Yet this desire to authorize position rests on a need to determine authenticity; with regard to biological inheritance, such authenticity is to be found within the body, resulting in an examination of bodies within fiction that mirrors the kind of biopolitical

concerns of the liberal state of Victorian Britain. Novels concerned with the right of individuals to occupy social positions scrutinize characters' bodies for what they might reveal about heredity, attempting to organize and categorize these fictional bodies in much the same way as the legislation of bodies through the census, the factory acts, and the contagious diseases act organized and categorized the bodies of British subjects. Where the state might be concerned with the health of the national body, the novel expresses concern with the health of the ideal of the middle class and the stability of its position. By turning to modes of inheritance, the novel might reflect a kind of conservative force that authorized the right of those who occupied a middle-class position, creating a lineage for future generations while excluding those from the lower echelons who might still be aspiring to elevate their own positions.

This dissertation examines texts from the latter half of the nineteenth century to consider the impact of the concept of biological inheritance that emerges following the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin's framing of biological inheritance had the effect of merging the organizing function of inheritance in society with the power of natural laws. This merger provided a narrative framework for both literary and scientific texts that came to offer the middle class a way of imagining a degree of stability in the midst of increasing change, change that might no longer bear the kind of positive associations with progress that it had in the early Victorian era. Yet as biological inheritance might be imagined to order the population based on biological concerns, it is also reflective of the increasing biopolitical power in the liberal state of Victorian Britain. In this study I trace the way in which biological inheritance is leveraged as a means of authorizing position and stabilizing the social order in literary and scientific discourse,

returning to *On the Origin of Species* as a turning point in constructing heredity as a kind of inheritance, and I explore the relationship between Darwin's theory of inheritance and the desire for ordering bodies found within Michel Foucault's concept of bio-power.

Legal inheritance in the nineteenth century was based on the common law, which exhibited very little change from the late medieval period until the twentieth century. Prior to the Norman Conquest, the tradition was equitable distribution between offspring, but after this period, the tendency was toward primogeniture: "Titles of nobility having been introduced, and a sub-division among every member of the family would have reduced its importance to support the dignity and maintain uninterrupted the family position" (Beal 28). Primogeniture, meaning the inheritance by the first-born, typically implied the first male child. Nevertheless, female children were preferred to more distant male relations if there was no male child: "The eldest son succeeds to the real property to the exclusion of females, but if there be no son or descendent of such a son, females succeed in equal shares" (Lloyd 40). This preference for male heirs is a function of patriarchal systems, but it only extended so far as to discriminate between potential heirs that were the same distance of relation: "the common law did not exclude female inheritance, because it gave greater weight to the parentelic system [by which bloodlines were traced back to the ancestor] than to the exclusion of females"<sup>1</sup> This preference toward blood ties exemplifies the common law's connection to the workings of the natural world for, "[i]n the absence of male heirs in the same generation, [the daughter] was the only means of continuing the lineage, the only legitimate route whereby her father's blood could be transmitted. Her children were his grandchildren just

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<sup>1</sup> The 1833 Inheritance Act outlines the means of tracing lines of descent for the purposes of inheritance under the common law. Eyre Lloyd examines what this might mean in real terms, tracing possible heirs through many connections of relationship in *The Succession of Laws in Christian Countries* (40-42).

as her brother's might have been" (Holt 3). While the common law governing inheritance may have been a function of custom, as Blackstone argues, this custom, at least on the surface, had the appearance of being derived from nature.

Nevertheless, the common law was generally superseded by other legal enactments that could qualify the inheritance of property. Entails were a means of creating terms for inheritance that did not exist under the common law and were generally intended to protect the family's holdings through subsequent generations: "Entails, which originated as devices to prevent impoverishment of the landed classes as a result of improvidence or forfeiture for treason, were legal contrivances under which an heir, unless he took steps to break the entail, could not sell property or encumber it with debt, but had to pass it on simply in the capacity of life-tenant" (W. Miller 571). While entails might limit the possibilities with regard to who could inherit, it was for the purpose of the preservation of the family's holdings, and not, indeed, to limit female children from inheriting, as Lady Catherine de Bourgh, herself the mother of an heiress, makes quite clear in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813): "I see no occasion for entailing estates from the female line.—It was not thought necessary in Sir Lewis de Bourgh's family" (189–90). While *Pride and Prejudice* is famous for depicting how an entail prevents the Bennet sisters from inheriting, entails could easily be broken. Rather, it is another legal mechanism on top of the entail that fixes Mr. Bennet's position in the novel.

The problem regarding inheritance in *Pride and Prejudice* is due to the addition of another, more stringent, legal mechanism known as strict settlement. Mr. Bennet, upon his marriage, expected a future son who "was to join in cutting off the entail, as soon as

he should be of age, and the widow and younger children would by that means be provided for” (315). The necessity of his son’s action to end the entail demonstrates that “[t]he entail that Mrs. Bennet never ceased to rail bitterly against was a strict settlement” (Spring 33). Strict settlement, a settlement at marriage that developed in the seventeenth century, was not, in fact, for the groom, but for his future son:

According to strict settlement, the nominal owner of the estate settled the property on his eldest son, leaving the estate in tail to that son’s eldest son. This arrangement left the nominal owner and his eldest son life tenants of the estate with only limited power to change it. When the son’s eldest son came of age, pressure was exerted for him to renew the strict settlement arrangements. (Reed 160)

Strict settlement tied the hands of the property owner, but such a step was considered necessary to prevent one individual member of the line from squandering a family’s wealth.

However, as is seen in *Pride and Prejudice* and countless other nineteenth-century novels, such legal mechanisms had the potential to divorce legal inheritance from bloodlines as they imposed conditions that the closest descendents of the property owner might not be able to meet. Where common law approximated bloodlines (though less so with the shift toward primogeniture), entailment began to privilege property and title above the well-being of future generations, and the development of strict settlement in the seventeenth century demonstrated the way in which British customs of inheritance became more sharply divided from any potential claim to a foundation in natural law. Eileen Spring characterizes this shift as “a change of attitude to blood here, nothing less

indeed than a flying in the face of nature....[since] [t]he succession of a female came to be held not the natural means of continuing the family, but the end of the family, its very dying out” (19). Inheritance thus shifted from following a biological or natural line to a nominal line where an heir was chosen for his ability to carry on the patriarch’s name rather than his blood, suggesting the way in which inheritance had become increasingly divorced from heredity, more an act of consolidation of power than of providing for one’s offspring.

While these legal mechanisms aimed at keeping property together and distributing it to male heirs comprised the prevailing aristocratic model in the nineteenth century, the common law’s preference for primogeniture applied to all citizens, suggesting similar outcomes among all classes. J. H. Baker notes that these modes of inheritance are just as much in play for the tenants of the landed gentry as for the gentry themselves. Additionally, Eyre Lloyd observes that “[t]he tendency to keep landed property in families is to be found not merely among the aristocracy of England, but among all classes of the community, especially among those who have acquired such property either by the exercise of their industry or by their intelligence” (2). Those in the middle class who desired to buy their way into the leisured gentry emulated the inheritance model of the aristocracy, a logical move since “the very wealthy remain rich from generation to generation by *not* dividing their estates among offspring,” and in reality, those members of the middle class who had used their wealth to purchase estates would face the same concerns as the aristocracy in making decisions about how to distribute real property (Hepburn 7, emphasis in original). The possibility that the middle class might adopt this model suggests its interest in stabilizing wealth over multiple generations. As



James Beal observes, “the middle class largely adopt it [primogeniture], from a spirit of vanity and a desire to ape the presumed virtues of their social superiors; and it is tolerated because we are essentially an aristocratic people” (32). This is hardly accurate, since primogeniture applied by default unless there was no son, but Beal’s suggestion does draw attention to the fact that the middle class generally divided their wealth in a different way. Nevertheless, while the aristocratic model was not adopted by the majority of middle-class individuals, its presence in the middle-class novel suggests its continued importance and narrative potential.

While primogeniture and the additional legal mechanisms that surround it did not disappear in the Victorian era, for the majority of middle-class families, inheritance was determined by testament.<sup>2</sup> Though primogeniture might be an important plot device in fiction, “[i]t is common error to suppose that a general compulsory law of primogeniture exists in England, in other cases than intestacy” (Lloyd 1). The mechanism of the will predominated most succession of property in the nineteenth century, breaking from the narrowness of the common law of primogeniture in favour of “the great liberty which the law allows in disposing of every kind of property by deed during life, or by last will and testament to take effect upon property after death” (Lloyd 2). The result was that many middle-class families reverted to an older tradition of inheritance wherein blood ties surpassed the desire to keep family fortunes together: the gentry “used strict settlement and entail, partly to keep their estates, houses, heirlooms, and titles (if any) together, and partly to ensure that they descended intact in the direct male line. Middle-class people, by

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<sup>2</sup> In a strictly legal sense, “inheritance” and “heir” belong to the descent of property by the common law or by the legal mechanisms meant to shift its workings slightly. Bequests by will are legally given by a testator to a devisee. However, given the similar symbolic nature of these acts, for the purposes of this study, I will not uphold the distinction and will, by default, use “inheritance” and “heir” in keeping with common parlance.

contrast, tended to divide their money equally and had no sense of the elder son's importance in carrying on the line" (Cannadine, *Decline and Fall* 12). In this way, inheritance could be realigned with heredity by incorporating the artificial legal mechanism of the will as many middle-class families used this construct to divide their fortunes among all their offspring. The dark side of the will, however, is the ability to use it to cut people off, but as Lloyd notes, "[t]he term disinheritance, it should be observed, has no proper place in English law...free disposition of the same [real and personal property] being allowed by law, the exercise of that power to the exclusion of a relative is not considered to be an act whereby a person, whom the law does not recognize as having a right in the inheritance, is disinherited" (Lloyd 9). Disinheritance is not a legal issue, but rather a plot point, one by which the artificial legal mechanisms of property distribution might be used to create divisions between blood kin.

Inheritance continued to be important not only in the lives of Victorians but also as a narrative device in the novel. In the novel, inheritance often operates as a means of enacting justice and establishing or re-establishing a character in the position that he or she might be seen to deserve. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane rights the wrong of the will by dividing the money along partible lines, allowing the wealth to match hereditary connections. Jane insists that since "half [their] blood on each side flows from the same source," the money should be divided equally between the four cousins, enacting what even St. John admits is "a certain justice" though "contrary to all custom" (482, 485). But greater than the justice that Jane strives to mete out all her life is the larger justice of the narrative in which Jane is rewarded with wealth and family—the two elements of identity that she was denied by the Reeds. As Franco Moretti suggests,

inheritance in the novel can be a form of “fairy-tale justice” where wealth and status are not gifts of grace, but rather something characters “*have a right to*. And this ‘something’ is not only a vast rural estate, or a nice sum of money, or a title: it is their very identity—better yet, their identity as people endowed with rights. They had been deprived, we could say, of the right to have rights: restoring it to them is nothing more than an act of justice” (205). Inheritance, thus, has a symbolic function: restoring a sense of order to the world of the novel, it is associated with questions of heredity and ancestry and often operates to align the social position of the heir with that of the family into which he or she was born.

While legal inheritance had a very real impact on the lives of individuals and contains great narrative potential, the conflation of the transmission of riches with heredity found in the concept of biological inheritance has the potential to further organize bodies in the social order. As inheritance governed the transmission of titles and property, dictating class divisions, biological inheritance might expand to cement those divisions as a result of natural differences expressed by the body. In this way, biological inheritance could be understood to further the aims of bio-power or biopolitics, “the growing inclusion of man’s natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power,” as it emerges in the context of liberal state, a state ostensibly built on minimal government intervention and itself reliant upon laws from the Invisible Hand to, arguably, Malthusian population control (Agamben 119). The liberal state gains legitimacy through its seeming lack of interference in the processes of its citizens. The old order in which the sovereign exerted power through his decision about whether one lived or died was replaced by an increasing concern with how people lived: “Power would no longer be dealing with legal

subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself' (Foucault, *Sexuality* 142–3). Thus the development of the liberal state is in keeping with the general tendency of British society through the eighteenth and nineteenth century to rest on the mechanisms of a natural order while increasingly considering how to manage the very laws of the natural world through techniques of bio-power.

The increasing interest in the potential limits of biological inheritance as a means of organizing and managing bodies must be understood as emerging in relation to the development of evolutionary thinking as evolutionary theories influenced understandings of heredity. Additionally, such consideration of the workings of the laws of the natural world had an impact on how the Victorians understood their social world. Evolutionary theories facilitated the development of a new, larger framework by which the connection between the natural world and the distribution of wealth could be further cemented as it offered the possibility of understanding hereditary characteristics as themselves a kind of riches. Thus, heredity might be naturalized as the means by which to determine succession in the social realm much as it did in biological terms.

Though Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's *Philosophie Zoologique* (1809) was not translated into English in the nineteenth century, his ideas still entered the British consciousness second-hand, and the model of development and inheritance that he presented was one that resonated deeply in the Victorian period. Lamarck, rather than accepting the plethora of species that inhabit the earth as received, argued that the gradations between species suggest the way in which living organisms change over time:

The almost universally received belief is that living bodies constitute species distinguished from one another by unchangeable characteristics, and that the existence of these species is as old as nature herself...It is continually being discredited for those who have seen much, who have long watched nature, and who have consulted with profit the rich collections of our museums. (35–6)

This very assertion was what brought him to the attention of British readers of scientific texts, yet in a means that was less than flattering, for Lamarck's work was received by the British public primarily through the synopsis given by Charles Lyell, who presented Lamarck's theories only to establish a foundation from which to attack organic evolution (Ruse 75–76). Lyell's bias against development theories, despite the way in which his work with the fossil record contributed to their development, caused him to offer his English readers a version of Lamarck's theories that was less persuasive than the original.

Nevertheless, in this way, the most well-known aspects of Lamarck's theories did reach the British public. Lamarck developed two laws that undergirded his theory of adaptations:

In every animal which has not passed the limit of its development, a more frequent and continuous use of any organ gradually strengthens, develops and enlarges that organ, and gives it a power proportional to the length of time it has been so used; while the permanent disuse of any organ imperceptibly weakens and deteriorates it, and progressively diminishes its functional capacity, until it finally disappears.

All the acquisitions or losses wrought by nature on individuals, through the influence of the environment in which their race has long been placed, and hence through the influence of the predominant use or permanent disuse of any organ; all these are preserved by reproduction to the new individuals which arise, provided that the acquired modifications are common to both sexes, or at least to the individuals which produce the young. (113)

In essence, Lamarck argues that individual organisms can undergo change in response to their environment, and that this change can be passed on to successive generations. These laws accounted not only for the ability of species to change, but also provided a reason for that change that was easy for the public to understand and accept. This pre-Darwinian model of development would be further strengthened in the public imagination by evolutionary philosopher Herbert Spencer and would continue to exist alongside Darwin's theory and even shape the thinking of Darwin himself until the end of the century.

This remainder of Lamarckian thought in Darwin is perhaps best exemplified by Darwin's theory about the mechanism of inheritance—pangenesis:

This important distinction between transmission and development will be best kept in mind by the aid of the hypothesis of pangenesis. According to this hypothesis, every unit or cell of the body throws off gemmules or undeveloped atoms, which are transmitted to the offspring of both sexes, and are multiplied by self-division. They may remain undeveloped during the early years of life or during successive generations; and their development into units or cells, like those

from which they were derived, depends on their affinity for, and union with other units or cells previously developed in the due order of growth. (*Descent* 264)

Such a method accounts for the possibility of transmitting inherited characteristics without being entirely fixated on this possibility. Nevertheless, this viewpoint is less pervasive in Darwin's work at time of the publication of *Origin* and does not seem foundational for Darwin but merely a means of trying to understand the gaps created by a lack of understanding of the mechanism of heredity.

The presence of Lamarck's theory in Darwin's work is an effect of its pervasiveness in the Victorian era, having been introduced to a wider Victorian reading audience through Spencer's "Development Hypothesis" (1852) which remained influential through the rest of the century. In this short piece, Spencer argues against "[t]hose who cavalierly reject the theory of Lamarck and his followers" (280). While Spencer's name would not have been present to sway readers, given that this article was initially published in *The Leader* anonymously, the magazine's circulation of 98,000 in 1852 certainly indicated the possibility that this short article did much to popularize a version of Lamarck's theory of adaptation. Spencer sums up the theory briefly: "any existing species—animal or vegetable—when placed under conditions different from its previous ones, *immediately begins to undergo certain changes fitting it for the new conditions*....in successive generations these changes continue; until, ultimately, the new conditions become the natural ones" (280, emphasis in original). Spencer lacks the scientific rigour of Darwin or even of Lamarck, merely referencing others who "can show" this to be true, yet his argument convinced many people through its appeal to common sense and the way in which the Victorian public viewed themselves as adapting

to new modes of production and new spaces of empire. John Lubbock might have been correct in his claim that “Spencer needed only to observe more, and think a little less, to be a very great man,” but this did not seem to hamper Spencer’s effect on the concept of evolution (qtd. Irvine 166). Spencer did in fact observe, but as a social scientist whose major contribution to evolutionary thought centred on its application to societies, his assertions about evolutionary change were ill-applied to organisms. However, in observing social structures that were so central to Victorian life, Spencer’s views easily resonated with his audience.

A good deal of what popularized Lamarck’s adaptation theory was the way in which it could be so easily understood by Victorian audiences who, like Spencer, transposed the ideas of the natural world onto their own existence. Lamarck’s theory that individuals could pass on characteristics that they developed during their lifetimes proved accessible for a Victorian audience for two reasons. First, unlike natural selection, which was based on random variation, Lamarckian evolution was teleological, and “the idea of progress was used to make evolution acceptable. Divine creation could be replaced by natural evolution if the process was seen to embody the Creator’s purpose by advancing inexorably towards a morally significant goal” (Bowler 86). Secondly, Lamarckian evolution “allowed the effects of individual effort and initiative to play a role in evolution” (Bowler 92). The Victorian period saw growing industrialization, expanding empire, and the solidification of the middle class, all expressions of progress as a reflection of individual effort.

The ability for the individual to bring about change through work and application was entrenched in Victorian thinking about social mobility and the image of the self-



made man found in the popular forms of biography and *Bildungsroman*. Both these forms of writing rely on tracing the connections between the choices made by exemplary figures and their achievements in life. Thus two of the most popular forms of nineteenth-century literature were deeply invested in diminishing the impact of heredity on an individual's life and destiny. While heredity is important in Lamarck's theory, in his schema, action affects heredity rather than the reverse. As the middle classes were growing and strengthening, it is unsurprising that an evolutionary theory that spoke to the far-reaching consequences of one's individual effort would gain general popularity. Darwin's theory left no room for individual effort, and thus natural selection was not as easily adopted as a general sense of evolutionary development.

Yet while Lamarckian theory was easily understandable by a Victorian audience and appealed to many of its values, the real shift, not only in evolutionary thinking but in a concept of biological inheritance, undeniably comes with Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species*. The recent scholarship accompanying the sesquicentennial of its publication certainly attests to its longstanding importance not only as a scientific text but also as a milestone in the public imagination. As Peter Bowler argues, "*The Origin of Species* played a crucial role, not because it convinced everyone of the power of natural selection, but because it catalysed a transition to evolutionism within a still largely developmental world view" (135). As such, it carries a weight that is even greater than the impact of the text itself. *On the Origin of Species* sparked a new interest in heredity as the theory of natural selection made the connection between the intimate and immediate way in which offspring inherit characteristics from their parents and the larger process of

evolution. In his approach, Darwin tied together the laws of the natural world and the idea of inheritance.

Darwin, importantly, is the first recorded writer to use the term “inheritance” to denote the passing on of biological characteristics from one generation to another.<sup>3</sup> Lamarck’s theory is commonly referred to as the “theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics,” but, while summing up the salient points of this mode of thinking about development, it is, in a way, misleading as it was applied in retrospect. The shift in thinking about the transmission of characteristics from generation to generation as a form of inheritance comes with Darwin’s conflation of the term in the publication of *Origin*. Darwin suggests heredity’s formative power to shape identity as well as its connection to a historical line by the use of the term.

Additionally, in his use of the term “inheritance,” Darwin establishes it as a natural law, strengthening the link between inheritance and the natural world that the common law already was attempting to establish. Darwin suggests how heredity works to bring about change over the long span of evolutionary history as the most successful organisms of a given generation reproduce and leave progeny. For Darwin, this is one of the key laws that shape the natural world:

these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent upon each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. These laws, taken in the largest sense, being Growth with reproduction; Inheritance which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the indirect and direct action of the conditions of life, and from use and

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<sup>3</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the first usage of the term inheritance to mean “natural derivation of qualities or characters from parents or ancestry” in print to *On the Origin of Species*.

disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less improved forms. (360)

While the struggle for life clearly appealed to a public excited by the laissez-faire marketplace and the prospects of the self-made man, such competition could not support evolution without the continuity created by the law of inheritance. While natural selection is about change and mapping the change of species through time, its model of incremental change is not directly corollary to the rapid changes that characterized the Victorian period. Additionally, Darwin's theory of natural selection relies as much on the conservation of the fittest characteristics of a species over generations: the change that a species underwent was directed by which characteristics survived in subsequent generations. Thus, while natural selection was about slow, evolutionary change, embedded in Darwin's theory was an element of fixity and continuity in keeping with Edmund Burke's vision of inheritance where "the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission; without at all excluding a principle of improvement. It leaves acquisition free; but it secures what it acquires" (29). Darwin's model of inheritance in the natural world is not so much a *conservative* force as it is a *preservative* force, able to sustain the best characteristics of a species.

While *On the Origin of Species* cemented the importance of inheritance as a means of shaping the evolution of species, Darwin did not by any means explain the workings of heredity, admitting that "[t]he laws governing inheritance are quite unknown" (13). Darwin later posited his theory of gemmules in *The Descent of Man and*

*Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871),<sup>4</sup> but in the very same text he still recognizes that his theory is far from proven, and that making wise decisions regarding human selection “will never be even partially realised until the laws of inheritance are thoroughly known,” confirming that, despite his theory, the workings of heredity remained far from being understood (688). Without Mendelian genetics, which would not be connected with natural selection until the turn of the century, the mechanism of heredity was still up for interpretation allowing much space for imaginative play, including the continuation of Lamarckian evolutionary thought. Though the workings of heredity remain unknown in the Victorian era, heredity’s importance in the public imagination is supported by Darwin’s publication of *On the Origin of Species* which marks an important turning point, its contribution to its era lying not only in its popularization of evolutionary theory but also, and perhaps equally importantly, in linking the ideas of development and inheritance.

Such a conflation opened up new narrative possibilities for the understandings of the implications of biological inheritance, implications that would be strengthened with the publication of *The Descent of Man* where Darwin extends his thinking about evolution and selection to human beings. By the 1870s, just over a decade since the publication of *Origin*, “the great debate over human origins was over...Evolution was accepted, and the progressionist view was hailed as the only way of salvaging the belief that the operations of natural law fulfilled a divine purpose” (Bowler 77). These circumstances created an environment into which Darwin could introduce *Descent*, positioning humans as animals that had likewise developed through evolutionary processes and addressing the role of social structures that governed the workings of

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<sup>4</sup> See pages 16 – 17.

inheritance in human populations. Much as he did with artificial selection in *Origin*, in *Descent* Darwin shows the implications of sexual selection on subsequent generations. In moving to discussing human beings in *Descent*, Darwin signals the way in which evolution and inheritance could offer a narrative through which humanity could be understood.

While *The Descent of Man* reflects biopolitical concerns as Darwin considers the way in which sexual selection and social constructions shape human evolution, his publication of *On the Origin of Species* had already helped shape biopolitics. Michel Foucault credits Darwin with an important innovation in the understanding of the relationship between the individual and the population: “Darwin found that population was the medium between the milieu and the organism, with all the specific effects of population: mutations, eliminations, and so forth. So in the analysis of living beings, it is the problematization of population that makes possible the transition from natural history to biology” (*Security* 78). While the population must be understood to mediate the relationship between the individual and the environment, Darwin’s theory also depended upon individual variation as the means by which change was ushered in. In Darwin’s schema, individuals were not important in and of themselves but merely as part of the aggregate as the population was shifted and species developed based on the successful characteristics carried by individuals. Variations were meaningful not intrinsically, but for how they might shape the direction of evolution as certain variations proved more successful than others. Though the liberal state rests on the idea of individuality, it exerts its power in reference to the larger whole. In the management of the population by the

state then, such differences need to be categorized as a component of managing the population.

The life of the population became the site where power was applied, and the questions surrounding biopolitics became, “[h]ow can the phenomena of ‘population,’ with its specific effects and problems, be taken into account in a system concerned about respect for legal subjects and individual free enterprise? In the name of what and according to what rules can it be managed?” (Foucault, *Biopolitics* 317). Thus states become engaged in the management of life and lives, and institutions such as the police, schools, and the military became centralized under the state. While Foucault traces these institutions of the state back to the eighteenth century, bio-power became increasingly prevalent in the Victorian era as the ways in which bodies moved through spaces changed with industrialization and urbanization and as the general acceptance of evolutionary theory that followed Darwin’s publication of *On the Origin of Species* altered how bodies and populations were understood. New means of counting and categorizing bodies were developed in the Victorian period, and legislation that governed the health and well-being of its citizens demonstrated the way in which bodies and populations were increasingly managed by the state in the nineteenth century.

The Census of England and Wales began with simply counting heads in 1801, but it increased its scope through the Victorian period to include the categorization of bodies in terms of health and social position as an overt means of exercising bio-power. Bio-power operates through categorization, something that Ian Hacking observes increased in prominence in the British imagination from 1820 to 1840: “The subversive effect of this transition [from counting hearths to counting bodies] was to create new categories into

which people had to fall, and so to render rigid new conceptualizations of the human being” (281). By the census of 1841, this counting of bodies translated into a categorization of bodies to include approximate age (to nearest five years for adults), sex, occupation, and whether one was born in Great Britain. In 1851, this extended to include marital status and health concerns such as whether one was blind, deaf, or dumb and by 1871 if one was a lunatic or imbecile.<sup>5</sup> Through the development of the census in the Victorian period, bodies came under greater classification by the government than had hitherto been the case. In the implementation of the census, individuals were understood as members of populations, but for that information about the population to be useful for the state, it needed to be divided into subcategories. While categories of sex, age, and disability point to markers within the body, the attention paid to social divisions such as marital status and occupation—and by extension potentially income and class—suggests that the ordering of bodies was both biological and social in nature, the two operating together in order to best manage the population.

While the census, in its concerns for demography, is ostensibly about the categorization of bodies, government legislation also gave bodies meaning through acts such as the series of Factory Acts. The Factory Acts not only provided an intervention by the state into the health of workers, in itself a biopolitical act, but by specific intercessions into the lives of women and children, it also marked their bodies as being different than those of men. The Factory Act of 1833 limited the ages and working conditions of children. This also brought the bodies of children under scrutiny in the Factory Act of 1844 where the ages of children were supposed to be verified by a

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Higgs provides facsimiles of examples censuses from 1841 to 1901 in the appendix of *A Clearer Sense of the Census*.

surgeon. The 1844 act also extended the same benefits of restricted hours to women, suggesting their similarity to children, at the very least as bodies that needed greater intervention from the state to ensure their protection. Such regulations of bodies not only played a large role in the construction of the idea of childhood and femininity through this legislation but also reflected the social power at work in creating those concepts.

The legislative movements of Victorian Britain indicate the way in which the state was increasingly concerned about the regulation of population and its health, which reaches a new height in the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts (1864, 1866, 1869). This government intrusion into issues of health and sexuality “reflected a new interventionist approach to social problems” (Walkowitz 72). These acts drew upon the regulatory strengths of both the police and doctors, professions that gained increasing power in the Victorian era. Like the Factory Acts, these laws designated women’s bodies as different and encouraged their further categorization: the Contagious Diseases Acts regulated the bodies of suspected prostitutes, holding the power to identify a woman as a prostitute and her body as a potentially dangerous site of disease.

But as much as these acts demonstrate the furthest extent of the biopolitical action undertaken by the state in the Victorian period, they also expose the complexities of the interrelationship of the state and the private sphere in the workings of bio-power. Though the initial acts emerged from concerns to do with the military, “[o]n the national level, the political initiative for this change [to far-reaching social legislation] came from civilian doctors and authorities who organized a campaign to extend the acts to the north in 1867” (Walkowitz 69). In this way, the initiative to increase the policing power of the laws comes, not from the state itself, but from a faction of its citizens, suggesting the



complicity of individuals in state biopolitical measures. Bio-power was not simply an organized state apparatus, but a means by which society began to shape itself. Indeed, the concern over the moral and physical health of the population associated with the Contagious Diseases Acts was not simply a concern with the present population but also a concern about the future population as syphilis—one of the key diseases targeted—had a hereditary impact: “Infants under one year old accounted for thirty of fifty-three reported deaths due to syphilis in London during the first six months of 1846. During the decades to follow, the devastating effects of hereditary syphilis continued to be a persistent theme of regulationist propaganda” (Walkowitz 49). The involvement of private citizens in the shaping of the Contagious Diseases Acts and the concern expressed in the acts about issues of sexuality and reproduction reveal the relationship between the state, the public sphere where such debates and campaigns took place, and the private sphere from which the threat emerged and, in the case of the bourgeois home, which might be most threatened by such dangerous bodies.

The bourgeois distinction between the public and the private is a foundational element of liberalism, the political condition out of which biopolitics emerges. The imagined separation between the public, the private, and the state shapes their relationships with one another. Habermas notes that “[the] bourgeois public sphere arose historically in conjunction with a society separated from the state” (127). The public sphere is the space in which public opinion could be generated as a means of directing the state and thereby limiting the intervention of government control, yet it rests on the precondition of the private realm, “the patriarchal conjugal family’s intimate sphere that was oriented to a public” (Habermas 85). The private sphere is a place that is notably

separate from the public sphere and which enables it as it is, in theory, beyond the reach of governmental control. It also functions to enable entry into the public sphere by supporting the ideal of bourgeois individualism due to the way in which property ownership delineates the private space of the home.

As much as the distinction between public and private is important in liberalism, the two cannot be considered to be separate in the modern era, and indeed, the very nature of biopolitics is to break down this distinction. Giorgio Agamben notes the way in which “simple natural life is excluded from the *polis* in the strict sense, and remains confined—as merely reproductive life—to the sphere of the *oikos*, ‘home’ in the classical world,” but that this distinction is not maintained in the modern world (2). As the private sphere is oriented toward the public, so too does the public realm invade private life through biopolitical pressure: “the realm of bare life—which is originally situated at the margins of the political order—gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoē*, right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction” (Agamben 9). Life, as a biological rather than a social concept, is the object of the power of the modern state.

As seen with the Contagious Diseases Acts, potentially the greatest intervention of public life into the private sphere occurs around issues of sexuality. Foucault argues that “[t]he medicine of perversions and the programs of eugenics were the two great innovations in the technology of sex of the second half of the nineteenth century,” both of which monitor the management of reproduction: the medicine of perversions as it documents non-reproductive sexuality, and eugenics as it aims to harness sexuality for the betterment of the nation (*Sexuality* 118). Perhaps the most private expression of home

life, sexuality has the greatest potential to impact the state due to its connection with reproduction since Darwin's Law of Inheritance shapes not the individual, but the population, which is the nation. But while such considerations were of concern to the state for the way in which they impacted the population, this is not to say that the way in which bio-power operated surrounding sexuality was only an effect of state-down legislation. In fact, as it operates in relation to sexuality and reproduction, the multiple angles from which bio-power is exerted is perhaps most clear.

Foucault recognizes that discipline in the liberal state operates through the acceptance of power and that bio-power must be recognized to operate fluidly through the populace. While the state may develop and control the institutions of power, techniques of power can and do emerge throughout society:

If the development of the great instruments of the state, as *institutions* of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations, the rudiments of anatomo- and bio-politics, created in the eighteenth century as *techniques* of power represented at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them. They also acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and the effects of hegemony. (*Sexuality* 141, emphasis in original)

The desire to understand and regulate bodies by state intervention gains its power from the complicity of citizens with their own impositions of the categorizations of bodies.

Foucault identifies the family, the centre of the private sphere, and perhaps what might be seen as the most benign institution, as a site where techniques of power are practiced. It is within the family, particularly as it operates to regulate marriage and reproduction, that the effect of bio-power is consistently felt: “The concern with genealogy became a preoccupation with heredity; but included in bourgeois marriages were not only economic imperatives and rules of social homogeneity, not only the promises of inheritance, but the menace of heredity” (*Sexuality* 124). Such concerns, as I will argue in chapter four, do not need the power of state legislation behind them to exert power in the management of lives, but rather depend upon individuals internalizing the concerns of the state.

While bodies might be investigated to determine their biological inheritance, this was not distinct from the social structures in place but incorporated into previous regulations governing marriages and reproduction. Bio-power, in its concern for biological inheritance and its effects on the population at large as well as (in the private sphere) on the family, turns back to older models of inheritance. As Foucault suggests, the concerns of heredity do not supersede economic concerns, but rather become paired with them. This pairing offers the possibility that biological inheritance might be imagined in much the same way as the inheritance of wealth or property, as something that might contribute to establishing one’s position in life. In connecting previous models of inheritance with biological models, legal models became further naturalized as they likewise become connected to the laws of inheritance modeled on those of Darwin. As such, the transmission of wealth through generations might be imagined as a kind of

natural succession that, like Darwin's laws, fits one, not only for survival, but for the social position that one was to occupy.

As traditional social structures that had previously stratified society began to erode in the mid-Victorian era, biopolitical forces began to emerge to reassert differences and regulate bodies on the basis of class. Through the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867, the English government removed more and more regulations regarding who could vote and be elected, recognizing the increased power and importance of industrialized cities and the capitalists and workers who built them, resulting in a further lack of differentiation between classes. In breaking down the pre-existing boundaries wherein the privileged gentry selected the government and were the government, there was unease among the higher ranks of society about such a move. Even for those who benefited from these new freedoms, there remained an anxiety that what authorized their position in society could be undercut as further freedoms were allowed to the classes beneath them. The regulation of bodies through a class system was a major tenet upon which British society was based, but with increasing class mobility, such divisions seemed to lose their influence. Yet while political action deregulated populations, bio-power could re-establish social divisions centred on the regulation of individual bodies.

My concern with bio-power is how it extended from and responded to the increasing influence of the middle class in Britain as a means of understanding and regulating both the bodies that might fall within that class and outside of it. The pressures of the emerging middle classes suggest a shift in power that was potentially upsetting to the aristocracy, but potentially even more upsetting to established members of the middle class who recognized the potential this continued expansion might have to unseat them or

diminish the importance of their position. Thus, in the wake of Darwin's collapsing of heredity and inheritance, there was an interest in how to understand bodies and their relationship to the hierarchy of the social order as something potentially fixed or shaped by hereditary lines. In many ways, this may seem a reversion to the estate model, the reliance on ancestry that marked aristocratic inheritance of position as "[t]he no longer liberal bourgeoisie, converting to liberalism, had recourse to the safeguards of pre-bourgeois structures, those defensive rights of estate liberties of the bourgeois rights of man" (Habermas 131–2). Heredity asserts itself as a the means by which to do this, not effacing the gains made by the upper middle classes, but standing in place of the ancestry of the aristocracy, bearing a strong resemblance to older models that ordered the social structure.

Such a narrative of hereditary determination offered great possibilities for the middle class, which by the 1860s had been well established as the most influential segment of the British population, yet this relatively new position did not come without anxieties. Unlike those above or below them, the place of the middle class was "merely positional—a space, a 'between'; not something that exists in its own right but a grouping that fails, or refuses, to fit the dominant social division between upper and lower, rich and poor, land and labour" (Seed 115). As such, the middle class lacked the kind of stability of the aristocracy above it, or even the working class beneath it. The potential for a shift in position was ever-present. Even within the middle class, "[f]ew Britons believed that there was one single middle class," suggesting that even if one's position in the class was secure, one might easily move within its more subtle hierarchies, and the difference from an industrialist to a shop clerk was considerable (Cannadine, *Class in Britain* 65). The

reality of social mobility and the increasing prominence of the middle class meant that, as Kevin Swafford notes, “[d]espite the pervasive contemporary belief in—or, perhaps more accurately, desire for—a stable, static, and naturalized social hierarchy, the boundaries and significations of station and class were increasingly more fluid and hazy as Victorian society slowly progressed toward greater democratization, urbanization, and economic/political equality” (xi). In coming to prominence, the middle-class became anxious about their newfound position. The form that these anxieties took was two-fold, both of which might be adequately answered by a turn to inheritance whereby concerns of position were tied up with biology.

Firstly, as the rise of the middle class was tied to new industry and capital, anxieties surrounding wealth plagued many members of the middle class. As Hilary Fraser and Daniel Brown note, “a society that allowed one to rise from poverty to wealth and position in a generation could easily make it a round trip back to the poorhouse” (9). Indeed, more than a feeling that one *could* fall, a pessimistic vision might imagine falling to be *inevitable* as the continued progress of the nation and individuals were coming into question: “Even in the era of mid-Victorian prosperity, the middle-class family remained financially vulnerable, and the stigma of bankruptcy remained a severe one. The theme of economic insecurity runs through much of the culture of the age” (Finn et al. 16). Importantly, while the middle class may have increased due to economic gains, such gains became linked to a position that was also about refinements, and “financial failure threatened to spell the loss of position in respectable society” (Finn et al. 20). While the loss of money might necessitate the loss of buying power and lifestyle, the loss of position and esteem was also threatening.

The second anxiety that plagued the middle class was linked to the way in which position might only be performance. If it were merely money that gained one a position in polite society, the acquisition of such wealth made transitions relatively instantaneous, suggesting that class itself was artifice or a product to be purchased: “The sense that one must *perform class*, through a host of symbolic actions, practices, beliefs, tastes, and desires, was an unspoken sources of anxiety that was often avoided and repressed within the ruling classes of Victorian society and culture” (Swafford 3, emphasis in original). If anyone might improve himself (as the gospel of self-help preached by Samuel Smiles certainly indicates), there was no reason to believe that one’s position was an indication of anything particularly special or unique. Indeed, for Smiles, self-help resides primarily in adopting the values of a gentleman, and in doing so, one might elevate oneself above the position one had been born into, suggesting the flexibility of social hierarchies.<sup>6</sup>

The rise of the middle class had the result of instigating many economic and social changes, yet while this wave of change was significant, the authority of the middle classes depended on, to a certain extent, denying the degree of this change. The middle class might embrace its newfound position and the social mobility that allowed it to attain that position, but at the same time, it clung to a sense of fixity in the social order. Christine DeVine notes that “[d]espite having newly come to power, the flourishing bourgeoisie of the mid-nineteenth century benefited from an ideology that saw the middle class as part of a hierarchy, a thinking more suited to the older system of rank” and that fiction supported this solidity in that “the middle class hubris of the Victorian realistic novel seemed to regard even these new divisions as permanent and fixed (3–4). Middle-

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<sup>6</sup> See the beginning of chapter one for a more lengthy discussion of the anxieties governing class and performativity.



class Victorians needed to negotiate what was essentially a contradictory world view, one that was able to encompass the winds of change that had made their new position possible and was also able to exert a sense of stability. As Eric Hobsbawm articulates it, “[i]n the minds of the triumphant bourgeois world the giant static mechanism of the universe inherited from the seventeenth century, but since amplified by extension into new fields, produced not only permanence and predictability but also transformation. It produced evolution (which could be easily identified with secular ‘progress,’ at least in human affairs)” (244). *On the Origin of Species*, itself concerned with both progress and continuity, provided a window through which this contradiction might be understood. While the middle class relished social mobility, the very kind of mobility that Darwin’s “survival of the fittest” might suggest, too much fluidity was concerning. At the same time as evolutionary thought suggested the naturalness of class mobility—leaving room for the fittest specimens to rise to the top of society—the mechanism through which evolution works, inheritance, offered the contradictory possibility that class position might be an effect of hereditary characteristics.

Biological inheritance thus offered a narrative that might counteract instability of the class system while at the same time supporting the strengths of the middle class, assuring it that its position was natural and deserved. As “[c]onceptions and representations in this period of personal identity, risk and entitlement all hinged fundamentally upon distinctions between the spurious and the genuine”; by turning to Darwin’s law of inheritance, to the workings of the natural world, the middle class might find a scientific support for their genuine entitlement to the position that they occupied (Finn et al. 20). Swafford recognizes that “[i]n order to dispel the very idea of the

contingent and performative nature of class, a host of ideas regarding innate or natural distinctions were offered through a variety of discourses and cultural productions” (3). Yet Swafford and DeVine, in their recent studies of class and literature that attest to the way in which writers challenge the idea that class is natural, fail to illuminate how class was previously naturalized. My focus on biological inheritance suggests one of the ways in which Victorian literature worked to naturalize the social position of the middle class, bridging the great chain of being that preceded the nineteenth century with the challenges to its very notion that increased at the turn of the twentieth century.

Prior to the *Origin*, the naturalization of class position as a hereditary trait was developed as a fantastical attribute in the novel that would prepare the way for such narratives that sought to ground such concerns in more a more scientific framework. In Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1837), Oliver’s inheritance is not merely in line with his heredity, it *is* his heredity. As Goldie Morgentaler explains, “*Oliver Twist* is a fairy tale in which the magical element is located within the domain of heredity. It is his biological inheritance which protects Oliver from the corrupting effects of his surrounding, and it is this same biological inheritance which ensures his happy ending, safely ensconced within the middle-class milieu of his parents” (37). This protection is a sort of predestination in the sense that Oliver can be nothing but good, as his biology determines him to be: Oliver is born “an item of morality” (23). Oliver lacks proper nurturing throughout most of his childhood, yet his good character emerges in juxtaposition with the lowlifes by which he is so often surrounded, attesting to this hereditary gift of morality. While Oliver’s inheritance is unknown to him, its residence in his body indicates the possibility of reading the body for markers of inheritance. *Oliver Twist*’s “mug is a fortun’ to him” as

innocence that can be read in his face; while Oliver's thieving companions see the possibility for deception in Oliver's face—being read by others as honourable and of a good family, unlike the orphaned thief they understand him to be—the reality is that his face is entirely honest about his own class position and morality (200). While Oliver is born outside of marriage, within his body Oliver carries not the mark of his parents' sin—in what might be a Lamarckian inheritance of character—but rather their character, unaffected by the actions that might so mar them in their lives. Thus, such narratives of fairy-tale inheritance of character can be seen to align with the later mode of Darwinian inheritance which denies the possibility of acquired characteristics.

Despite the way in which Oliver's biological inheritance might seem to align with evolutionary theories of the time, its purpose within the novel is to support the moral imperative of the book rather than reflect contemporary scientific thought. While Oliver is clearly blessed with a class-based hereditary gift, the metatextual intrusion of Dickens' narrator draws attention to the fictive nature of the narrative, constantly reminding his audience that such an inheritance is a literary device, a trick of narrative, not fact or scientific theory. Dickens immediately establishes the grounds by which many critics recognize this novel as a fairy tale, an act of fancy that establishes the furthest extent of narrative possibilities that biological inheritance can attain. Yet given the pervasiveness of middle-class anxieties, the desire for such a narrative wherein biological inheritance might naturalize class position is undeniable. Despite their roots in fantasy, novels explore the fictive potential of this understanding of biological inheritance as a means of establishing some stability in the midst of a shifting social order, establishing a vision of inheritance that is shored up by being in conversation with contemporary science. Thus,

while the texts I study are shaped by contemporary scientific understandings of heredity, the fairy-tale narratives of lost inheritance continue to be present in these late-Victorian narratives, establishing the expectations surrounding how bodies are to be read for their belonging in a certain class position and directing plot trajectories wherein one's birthright will inevitably be worked out.

Narratives of biological inheritance allow for success without diminishing the stability of the position of the middle class, suggesting that those who have attained such a position have a kind of wealth contained within their bodies that fits them for it. The body might be made to confess something about its position in the social order as a means of maintaining the class divisions that existed throughout the nineteenth century. In this way, biological inheritance mimics older models of inheritance while drawing on the increased interest in heredity that emerged in the wake of Darwinian and Lamarckian evolutionary theories: "biology was essential to a theoretically egalitarian bourgeois ideology, since it passed the blame for visible human inequalities from society to 'nature.' The poor were born inferior" (Hobsbawm 252). Such a vision of the social world as determined by biological differences made it possible to uphold the class system and its internal hierarchies as a means of sorting which individuals possessed the best and worst hereditary traits. The narrative of biological inheritance, as developed in literature, offered a way of imagining a new connection between the natural world and the social world. Given this possibility, it is important to recognize the way in which this narrative emerged out of and was reflected by both fiction and science.

In her seminal work *Darwin's Plots*, Gillian Beer lays the groundwork for discussing the intersection of nineteenth-century science and literature. For Beer, this is

clearly a two-way street as she argues that while “Darwin’s theories profoundly unsettled the organising principles of much Victorian thinking...it is all the more worth registering...the extent to which the relations of structures in his work initially share common concerns, and draw on orderings of experience learnt from other writers of the time” (44). Thus Beer provides a model that emphasizes that while scientific theories and discoveries alter society, and by implication the literature produced, science simultaneously returns to patterns of thinking that have been constructed and conveyed through other modes, including fiction. Nevertheless, despite the popularity of Beer’s assertions, contemporary critical discussions of science and literature of the Victorian era have tended to view the relationship between these two disciplines as one-way, wherein literature reflects the (scientific) culture of the day.<sup>7</sup>

In Victorian literature, with its realist bent, this reflection of contemporary culture is certainly to be expected, but the recent lack of attention to the literary aspects of science is a loss. As George Levine argues, “it is possible and fruitful to understand how literature and science are mutually shaped by their participation in the culture at large—in the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, social, economic, and political communities which both generate and take their shape from them” (“One Culture” 5–6). To remove science from such study places it on the pedestal of complete objectivity and fact where Victorian scientists, in their efforts to professionalize, were eager to see it. Yet such a limited examination of the mutual relationship between science and literature results in an incomplete picture of Victorian science. Levine, in *Dying to Know*, addresses the impetus

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<sup>7</sup> For example, though Peter Morton’s *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860–1900* (1984) and William Greenslade’s *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel, 1880–1940* (1994) do admirable jobs of tracing the way in which Victorian literature is shaped by scientific ideas, the corollary is not present in their work nor in other critical studies. Thus, though the conversation regarding the relationship between literature and science has been continuous, it has remained rather one-sided.

behind such a gap by suggesting that there is an anxiety created by associating science with narrative, as if to do so might somehow undermine science's authority. However, he sees "a persistent tradition of scientific epistemology that is profoundly affected by narrative" and thus believes the question is "not how to eliminate narrative in the interests of pure science but how to come to terms with its inevitability, to make it visible, to understand that it is not only not incompatible with science...but a condition of its work" (17, 41). Thus, in delving into a subject that is narrative and imaginative yet draws on and is inspired by science, it is important not only to address texts that fit into the category of fiction, but also to look at how the narrative is expressed in scientific texts.

In this study I focus on narratives of biological inheritance for the way in which they provide order and stability to a Victorian bourgeoisie in need of confirmation of their continued right to occupy their position in the social order. How, then, do Victorian texts understand inherited characteristics, and how are they used to recirculate or renegotiate the means of enclosure that are entrenched in the British class system? How is heredity brought into play as writers understand how bodies fit into the social order? Such narratives reflect and build on evolutionary models of the Victorian period, most particularly Darwin's model, which provided a turning point due to the way in which it both solidified evolutionary thinking and also because it connected inheritance with heredity, the transfer of wealth with natural laws. Yet in reflecting on Darwin's understanding of the natural world, the narrative of biological inheritance also operates to reflect and employ the tenets of bio-power as its concerns demonstrate the categorization of bodies and the negotiation between individual bodies and the population.

In tracing works from the four decades that follow the publication of *Origin* and across diverse genres, this project undertakes a study of the way in which biological inheritance was understood and imagined in the wake of the rise of the middle class in Britain. Spanning from the 1860s to the *fin de siècle* and covering sensation fiction, realism, scientific writing, and Romance, the texts I examine offer a chronological and generic diversity that enables me to better map how differing ideas of biological inheritance and the social order developed over time. Despite the diversity of genres I explore both within the novel and through scientific writing, the texts that I approach are to a certain extent all held together by the way in which they all respond to the definitive middle-class form of the *Bildungsroman*. In many ways this cannot but be understood as a project wherein the narrative of biological inheritance offers a counterpoint to the narrative of the self-made man, another means of understanding position in society that is both outside of traditional indicators of class yet offers the possibility of re-establishing order by drawing on the workings of natural laws.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861–62), the focus of my first chapter, suggests the way in which, despite the optimism of the 1860s, biological inheritance emerges as both a source of anxiety and also, potentially, a means of addressing the concerns that arise from the instability of bourgeois existence. The rapid rise and fall of sensation fiction at the beginning of the 1860s suggests how this form of literature responds to a particular moment in the Victorian era; the rise of the middle class seemed not to result in a new order but a destabilized society that was marked by continual change. Sensation novels as a genre operate to contain increased anxieties over the domestic space—both the nation of England and the home itself—to fictionalize it

and manage it in order to mitigate the potential anxieties that lie outside the novel as the true terror of the sensation novel is the way in which it locates “its shocking events and characters firmly within the ordinary middle-class home and family” (Hughes 261).

While sensation fiction demonstrates concerns about the kind of crimes that were ripped from the headlines, it also illuminates the anxieties about class position that were ever-present for the middle class. As one of the most popular sensation novels of its time, *Lady Audley's Secret* serves as an apt starting point from which to consider the way in which concerns about class mobility and the implications of *On the Origin of Species* impacted how bodies might be imagined to be regulated in the social realm.

While members of the Victorian middle class wanted to believe in the safety and security of their station in life, the sensation novel undercut this wishful thinking and the artifices that supported it: “The sensation novelists made the assumption that any society so much obsessed with respectability and appearances as their own was bound to be populated by impostors of various degrees” (Hughes 271). One could reinvent and represent oneself in ways that did not correspond with one’s origin and upbringing, leading to a sense of mistrust that others were not who they said they were: “Far from being a period of rock-like respectability, it was a time when identities did change and pasts were buried as individuals clawed their way up the class ladder” (Uglow xvi). Such assumed identities can hide secrets and even danger, posing a threat to those who were unable to see beyond the disguise.

In its recognition of the increase of assumed identity, *Lady Audley's Secret* engages with the extent to which identity might be biologically inherited and fixed, something solid and detectable underneath all the artifices. The ties to the laws and



workings of the natural world expressed in *Origin* could operate counter to a practice where identity was performative by rooting identity in one's very body: "In a society increasingly troubled by duplicity, alienation, and permeable social boundaries, the discourse of heredity seemed to offer the body as solid ground for various aspects of identity" (Stern 40). As such, bodies are read and organized in a fictive representation of the possibilities of bio-power in relation to the social order, reasserting the importance of ancestry in determining the social order. However, as an early reflection of the impact of biological inheritance after *Origin*, *Lady Audley's Secret* is not clear-cut in its approach to inheritance and wrestles with the equally powerful force of the self-made man. For this reason, I examine it for how it responds to two of the most important books published in 1859: *On the Origin of Species* and Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*.

My second chapter examines George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876), which, as a realist novel, investigates the potential of knowing both the individual and the world that he or she inhabits. According to Pam Morris, "the reader's epistemological progress through novels imitates the way we acquire empiricist knowledge of the actual social and physical worlds by means of observation of factual details, behaviour and events," yet in its exploration of biological inheritance, *Daniel Deronda* also explores the limits of empiricism (11). While grounded presenting a world that is realistic and potentially knowable, Eliot uses the realist genre to explore the boundaries of what might be known; within the novel biological inheritance is the key to knowledge that might not be observable but might still be crucial in its ability to shape the world. Daniel looks to the past to find his identity, but he uncovers the truth of this past not through the archives of human history, but within his own body. What reads as a mystical element in how

Daniel's Jewish heredity shapes a yearning in him and seems to preordain him for following Mordecai's dreams must be troubled by realism's attempt—even if it is always failed—to be truthful and factual. Instead, the nature of the genre points to how Eliot's construction of Daniel's past is shaped by scientific thoughts about the possibility of inheriting habit and memory that emerge from Spencer and even Darwin himself.

Though identity in the novel is not only shaped by biological concerns that arise from recent scientific theories, its concerns with inheritance also reach back to models of class and financial inheritance that are akin to those found early in the century, establishing the continued importance of social hierarchy in determining identity despite the class mobility that was widespread by the 1870s. Gwendolen, particularly, looks to class as a marker of her own identity, a position that she believes to be natural even at the very moment that she exercises the classic means of climbing the social ladder for a woman, marrying up. Nevertheless, the desire to maintain order in her world, and in the world of the novel, is paramount. Set within the country estates of Sir Hugo and Grandcourt, the novel explores the sense of God-given order that the aristocracy depend upon, but this setting, as in *Lady Audley's Secret*, is meant to assert a kind of stability as a message to its primarily middle-class readers.

The necessity for the characters to maintain order in their social realm collides with bodies that assert their connection to the past through organic memory to support the biopolitical concerns of the novel. Bodies order themselves and are ordered by others, placed within certain classes and national groups in the social order, based upon their own inability to deny their heredity. Yet as much as this desire for order persists in the novel, from the disorder of the gambling establishment to Daniel's departure for the

Middle East, it is also troubled by the same epistemological problems that trouble the novel. While the bodies of characters in the novel may seem to scream their position, such clarity of categorization is complicated by the fluid class structure and national boundaries that have already resulted in class and racial mixing in the mobile Victorian era.

My third chapter examines Francis Galton's work, stretching from "Hereditary Talent and Character" (1865) to his utopian fiction of the early twentieth century and addressing how his studies of heredity and his imagined program of eugenics aim to undo the mythology of the self-made man expressed in the *Bildungsroman*. I trace the narrative influence in Galton's body of work as a means of suggesting the cultural reciprocity of fiction and science that wrestled with issues of biological inheritance in keeping with the approach to texts advocated by Beer and Levine. Galton not only explored heredity as a scientist and developed eugenics as a social scientific theory, but he began a utopian eugenic novel, "Kantsaywhere" (1910), in which he traces the results of the application of his theories in an imagined future. Galton's choice to delve into fiction as well as science points to the way in which fiction can be a productive means of working through scientific ideas and also suggests the narrative properties that have always been a part of Galton's project.

Yet far before Galton engaged in the writing of fiction, he was already entrenched in a narrative aimed at naturalizing the class system through the mapping of biological inheritance. His initial studies on the subject betray their interest in narrative as he turns to the form of biography, "the real-life *Bildungsroman*," for his data (Fraser and Brown 134). As such, Galton's work is inherently tied up in narrative. Yet the narrative aspect of

his project is made clearer by his own assertions of his attempt to undo the common belief that “the sole agencies in creating difference between boy and boy, and man and man, are steady application and moral effort (*Hereditary Genius* 21). His goal is to employ scientific methodology to not only refute this narrative, but to replace it with a narrative of biological inheritance that operates as a means of organizing bodies.

Galton’s concerns with heredity and biological inheritance arise from his own desire to identify an “aristocracy of genius,” and thereby establish a new ruling class for Britain. Yet this is not unconnected with the pre-existing classes that might at least partially represent the inherent differences between human beings. While biological inheritance might be primarily a literary model of the social order that reasserts stability in fiction, the intersection of such fictional concerns with the science and social programs of the real world indicate the potential that such narratives might have for shaping society outside the pages of the novel. Galton develops a biopolitical mandate to organize bodies according to their hereditary gifts such that the fittest and most intelligent might be encouraged to beget many offspring while those with poor hereditary material “would be considered as enemies to the State” should they choose to reproduce (“Improvement” 129). Galton’s work is important to consider in tracing a lineage of writing that responds to the model of inheritance proposed by Darwin since Galton’s research into heredity and his program of eugenics were so clearly inspired by his reading of Darwin. In this way, Galton’s science and utopian vision demonstrate an extreme manifestation of the imaginative possibilities of biological inheritance and bio-power.

While Galton’s program of eugenics was never adopted by the British state, many thinkers and writers of his time were interested in the possibilities it presented. In my

fourth and final chapter, I examine Mérie Muriel Dowie's *Gallia* (1895) and Grant Allen's *A Splendid Sin* (1896), novels that look backward to a long-established Romance tradition, but in doing so reveal how Romance becomes rewritten at the *fin de siècle*, as fears of degeneration, the counterpoint to evolution, had taken greater hold. While much of the increase in the Romance form at the *fin de siècle* included a kind of looking outward to colonial or imagined spaces in adventure romances or scientific romances, in exploring the application of eugenics, writers often turned to the domestic space, rewriting the Victorian marriage plot into a new form of the romance novel. These novels offer an exploration of the idea that Foucault acknowledges, where heredity becomes a concern of marriage, taken to its fullest extent when the characters in these novels consider mates on the basis of their reproductive potential. It is in these novels that the way in which biological inheritance can supplant older models of inheritance is most directly expressed.

While the work in this chapter is deeply indebted to the work of Angelique Richardson and her study of eugenic romance novels, Richardson's focus is on how such novels fit into the eugenic activism of New Woman writers. However, in keeping with the aims of this project, I understand the turn to the domestic space not as individual activism, but rather as a necessary function of bio-power. The novels I examine demonstrate the working out of Galton's eugenic ideas within the domestic space, practiced by individuals, rather than the large-scale implementation by the state that Galton's social policies and utopias imagined. This action is the result of the structure of the liberal state and the complex interactions between the state, the public sphere, and the private sphere. Such novels demonstrate the way in which such eugenic debates might be

brought into the public sphere through imaginative writing at the same time as they demonstrate how public-sphere concerns can result in private-sphere actions. They also illuminate the way in which bio-power necessitates the complicity of the family: while Galton dreams of the implementation of *institutions* of power, such eugenic romance novels can put into place the *techniques* of power through the already well-established conventions of courtship and marriage.

Though much of what allows for the incursion of biopolitical concerns into the private sphere in the eugenic romance novel is enabled by the generic conventions of the form as it focuses on reproductive union, the romance novel, as rewritten in light of eugenic concerns is not merely focused inward on the domestic family but in fact fills a similar psychological need as other Romances of the *fin de siècle*. For as much as *Gallia* and *A Splendid Sin* centre on the middle-class family as a reproductive unit, they are also novels that continue to explore the kind of dreaming of Galton's "Kantsaywhere." Underlying the conventional romance plot in both these novels is a concern for the larger dreams of the nation and eugenic considerations as a means of fulfilling such goals.

Inheritance had for centuries operated through legal discourses to shape the passage of wealth and determine an individual's position in society. Legal precedents and documents served as a way of organizing the potential chaos of the transmission of real and personal property and titles. Such modes of inheritance represented stability for the aristocracy who kept lands and titles together over generations. Likewise, the narrative of biological inheritance, influenced by the new focus on heredity that emerged following the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, seemed to provide an answer to the new chaos that came with increasing social mobility in the Victorian era. The laws that

Darwin posits as shaping the natural world offered the possibility of envisioning order for the social world as well. In weaving together legal ideas about inheritance with a sense of natural law, natural law could be made to infuse the legal mechanisms of wills and the common law. Perhaps more importantly, the way in which biological inheritance was distributed could be understood to follow the laws of nature, authorizing the very underpinnings of the class system as just, both legally and naturally—a sort of scientific return to divine ordination—so long as class position could be attached to hereditary gifts, following a circular argument that supports those classes which already occupied the top of the social ladder.

The imaginative potential of inheritance and the importance of narrative in determining identity and position are felt in their consistent presence in the nineteenth-century novel. While aristocratic models of inheritance troubled and rewarded characters early in the century, the new possibilities for understanding position as tied to biology began to be reflected in the novels that emerged after the publication of *Origin*. From the 1860s onward, the middle class was well established, but, as a class that quickly rose to power, the question remained whether that position might just as quickly be lost. Thus a strain can be found in novels of the late nineteenth century that aimed to assure middle-class readers of the naturalness of their own position. Rather than resting on divine right and ancestry, as the aristocracy might, the narrative of middle-class entitlement rested on science, a discipline whose own prominence rose alongside that of the middle class, and indeed, in becoming a profession, was itself a practice of members of the middle class. As such, the science itself was not immune to narratives that favoured the middle class, and biological inheritance and its ability to solidify the social order also began to shape

the thinking of some scientists of the time. This continued relationship between fiction and science, narrative and fact, shaped the way in which the construction of biological inheritance would be understood in the late nineteenth century.

Inheritance is thus always about social position, power, and wealth. Where inheritance might take on new biological meanings in the wake of *Origin*, these new meanings do not undo previous concepts of inheritance as related to human beings but rather open up new possibilities about how biological inheritance might further shape the lives of individuals and populations along the traditional lines of class. Ostensibly, biological inheritance offers to further undo the traditional class system by positioning the value of the individual in his or her hereditary material rather than caste. Yet the relationship between heredity and class that follows is more complicated, suggesting the ways in which biological inheritance might both undermine the class system or shore it up, how it might support the idea of social mobility or show that it is merely wishful thinking.



**Chapter 1**  
***Lady Audley's Secret and the Menaces of Heredity***

With the development of the liberal state from the late eighteenth century onward, the individual's position in the nation was increasingly a topic of concern. This was not only an important question for the individual trying to understand his or her own role in society, but also a question that plagued the state. How did individuals—whose sense of distinctive identity was increasingly important as the middle class gained power and prestige—fit into the larger whole of the nation? Individuality was a constituent component of the liberal state, but in a population of over twenty million, individuals in Britain were made sense of as their bodies were categorized by the state and by each other. In the older estate model, categorization of individuals governed relationships, but such relationships were amongst small groups that occupied the limited space of the country estate and its environs. In an increasingly urbanized landscape, people needed to be categorized to determine their relationship not to each other as individuals, but to the population as a whole. This drive correlates with the rise of bio-power which “brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculation,” increasingly managing the individual's relationship to the population through categorizing and regulating bodies (Foucault, *Sexuality* 143). This categorization was not merely an effect of state institutions such as the census but was also a measure of identity employed by those inhabiting the cities. Bio-power understood bodies in new ways, but it also worked through established models of categorization, the most prevalent of which in nineteenth-century Britain continued to be the class system. Thus at the very same time that class mobility was increasing, social position still asserted itself as a means of understanding an individual's place in society.

The place of the individual in the larger population in the 1860s can be read through two intersecting yet conflicting narratives published in 1859: Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*. The publication of these two books both troubled and supported an idea of the nation's progress being achieved through the individual, an issue that would continue to shape Victorian ideas of the self through to the end of the century. *Self-Help* suggested the potential within each man for bettering himself, his position, and the nation, affixed to an idea of progress, but with no direct association with class position. Where class might still be applied to the individual, it was a marker of achievement rather than something fixed, supporting an idea of class mobility and, by extension, the possibility of the individual determining his own destiny and role in the larger population. *Origin* similarly stressed the importance of individual success in shaping the population, but its grimmer message of competition and war between individuals suggested the possibility that all change was not progress and that even forward motion was bought at the cost of the failure of weaker individuals. The potential for any individual to succeed in the struggle for existence was not in his or her own hands, but rather fixed in large part by heredity. Resting on a sense of inborn qualities, the laws of inheritance that form part of Darwin's theory of natural selection might be seen to offer a kind of stability that contradicted the social mobility evidenced in Victorian society and lauded by such writers as Smiles.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861–2), published so soon after Smiles's and Darwin's texts, stands at the confluence of numerous anxieties over the changes to social class and identity that were arising in Victorian society. Where Darwin and Smiles offered means by which to understand what shapes the individual's place in

society, it is an uncertain wavering between predetermination and self-determination that underlies *Lady Audley's Secret*. *Lady Audley's Secret*, as sensation fiction, is particularly poised to reflect and dramatize the anxieties of understanding and regulating individual identity, and it draws attention to both the possibilities of self-help and its limits with respect to its potential artifice and performativity. The novel taps into concerns about identity and authenticity that find expression in the pressure to scrutinize and regulate Lady Audley's body in a form of biopolitical control that is invested in the maintenance of the social order. Typically read as a woman who pushes the boundaries of acceptable femininity, Lady Audley is also a woman who is interested in understanding the boundaries of individual possibility within the novel and Victorian society. Lady Audley's ambitious campaign of self-help is countered by Robert Audley; the rise of the professional classes as those poised to be the new inheritors of power is worked out within his body in a way that wrestles with both a Smilesian work ethic and Darwinian inheritance. Despite reflecting the cultural capital of both self-help and hereditary determination within its pages, *Lady Audley's Secret* ultimately contains the anxieties of social instability and disguise that might arise from the practice of self-help by returning to the body as a site of identity and resting on the constancy of biological inheritance, wherein the body forecloses on the possibilities of self-improvement, in order to assert a sense of the continued stability of the social order for its readers.

Samuel Smiles certainly did not invent the idea of self-help, the means by which individual aspiration could be applied to shape one's future, but rather codified a predilection for ambition and progress in one's life that had come to be a component of British identity. Where improvement in the early nineteenth century might have rested on

a broad definition of culture, Smiles transcribed the kind of vision that reflected the established industrial age: “By mid-century...[t]he universal applicability of improvement gave way to a much narrower interpretation of culture that emphasized equally both aspiration and hard work....It was this new ideal—the result of a generation of effort—that Smiles articulated so clearly in *Self-Help*” (Rodrick 42). Such a vision of how the individual might engage in hard work fitted in with a nation that was increasingly powerful and wealthy. The nation thus set an example for the individual, who, in turn, established himself as a component of a growing nation since “[t]he strength, the industry, and the civilisation of nations—all depend upon individual character; and the very foundations of civil security rest upon it” (Smiles 315). This character could exert a powerful influence over Victorian Britain since, according to Smiles, it could be found through every stratum of society.

Smiles’s vision erased the divisions between classes, instead viewing national identity and spirit as superseding the social distinctions that had been and continued to be used to categorize individuals. Smiles contends that “it is not to one rank or class alone that this spirit of free action is confined, but it pervades all ranks and classes; perhaps its most vigorous outgrowths being observable in the commonest orders of people” (8). Such a vision coincided with the increasing social mobility of Smiles’s age. While social mobility was not something new to the 1860s, as Julie M. Barst argues, this decade contained “more positive portrayals of economic advancement,” normalizing and valorizing this shift (91). Class is not non-existent for Smiles, but is rather malleable, as even the English peerage has “been fed from time to time by the best industrial blood of the country” (132). Such malleability thus marks individuals according to their own

efforts and determination rather than by other indicators that might define their place in society. Certainly, this is reflected in an age where the great capitalists made their fortunes in the railways and in the textile trade. One's wealth and importance in society might not only be determined by who one might be born, but by what one could make of oneself or, perhaps more insidiously, what one could make oneself. For Smiles, "[i]t is not accident, then, that helps a man in the world, but purpose and persistent industry" (80). The "accident" of birth into one class or another cannot make a man great nor impede his greatness. Nevertheless, despite the seeming openness of class mobility and the liberal state, individuals continued to be understood based on the position they occupied within the class system, something reinforced by the new attention paid to occupation in the 1841 census of England and Wales.<sup>1</sup>

In this era of class mobility, class was still important as it continued to be used to categorize individuals, but instead of merely establishing an ancestral tie to social position, class might now attest to the extent of the development of the qualities that Smiles values. While greatness might emerge from men who are born into any rank in life, society recognized their achievements as connected to wealth and increased social standing. This is the narrative trajectory embraced by the popular Victorian genre of the *Bildungsroman*. Yet Franco Moretti observes that "[t]he legitimacy of a ruling class and through it of an entire social order: whatever its domain...this is always the distinctive framework of the *Bildungsroman*. No socialization of the individual will ever be convincing if it lacks a symbolic legitimation: if it cannot justify itself with values held to be fundamental" (208). While the *Bildungsroman* is so often associated with the idea of

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<sup>1</sup> Though the early censuses of the nineteenth century were primarily headcounts, the census of 1841 introduced questions that would categorize the population, including approximate age (to nearest five years for adults), sex, occupation, and whether one was born in Great Britain.

the self-made man rising above his birth and situation, it simultaneously relies on the preservation of a class system such that his eventual position may be legitimized. As in fiction, the class system must be upheld to attest to the rise of an individual, so its function needed to be preserved within Victorian society. Class mobility is thus something that is offered not simply for anyone who might want it, but rather as a marker of those who show themselves to be worthy and fit to occupy the position to which they have risen.

Thus, the increase of the middle class could be considered a marker of the development of the nation as a whole as more and more individuals entered a higher class position, attesting to their hard work and vision. In “The Importance of Being an Earnest Improver,” Anne Baltz Rodrick traces the way in which the spirit of self-help was tied to self-improvement societies, suggesting a communal striving that would benefit the community and ultimately the nation. But if one could remake himself to establish his role in society, the ability to do this was, in fact, hampered by community. Smiles’s model of self-help, with its stress upon hard work and individual effort, suggests that the communal aspect of improvement is subservient to the role of the individual. In order to raise one’s position, one must rise above others who hold that same position. At its fullest realization, individual effort in creating success ends in competition. It is this tendency of self-help to result in competition—as indeed it must in the capitalist system that supports it—that coincides with “the survival of the fittest” as expressed in Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. The term that famously defines natural selection to a lay audience was not originally Darwin’s but was coined by Herbert Spencer as a means of clarifying Darwin’s argument, which was at times lost on his audience, and Darwin adopted it in his

1869 edition of *Origin* (Beer xix). It was successful in reaching Darwin's audience in that it aligned with the idea of individual achievement and hard work that the public had already embraced. While the term might be unfortunate in evoking the sense of strength rather than aptness, thus obscuring Darwin's theory, it does highlight the competitive picture of the world that Darwin paints, one that emerges "from the war of nature, from famine and death," images that would resonate with urban Victorians and the frequently unemployed and generally underpaid employees of the factory system who suffered while the factory owners grew rich and lived comfortably (360). Thus while Smiles stressed gentility and self-motivation, the material gains of self-improvement were sure to be in the minds of his readers who rightly recognized the competition of which they were a part.

While *Origin's* focus on competition might have spoken to those attempting to inch their way up the social ladder, it could also, upon superficial reading, be made to align with the general sense of progress and improvement that pervaded Victorian thought and was integral to the idea of self-improvement. Read for its theory of natural selection, Darwin's text does not suggest a teleological end; as "natural selection can act only through and for the good of each being," it has no great plan for the species or the natural world (66). However, as a text that popularized evolutionary thought, *Origin* allowed the public to transpose social progress into a kind of natural law of Lamarckian inheritance where the strivings of one generation were passed on to the next. The thread of inheritance is so key in *Origin*, and this inheritance, when assumed to have Lamarckian undertones (which were already fixed in the public's imagination) could lead only to improvement: "as our forefathers laboured for us, and we have succeeded to the

inheritance which they have bequeathed to us, so it is our duty to hand it down, not only unimpaired, but improved, to our successors” (Smiles 4). Such hopeful improvement in Smiles coincides with Lamarckian ideas of evolution, which, while at odds with Darwinian natural selection, were increasingly common as evolution became more widely accepted in the wake of the publication of *Origin*.

Self-help, like Lamarckian development theory, suggested the possibility of real, not merely superficial, change within lifetime of the individual. This hopeful ambition, primarily of the working class and lower-middle class, however, disregarded the materiality of Victorian life as it was based on an idea of citizenship that was believed to grant access to the public sphere: “This new incarnation of self-improvement linked less lofty intellectual standards to active social engagement. It deliberately married self-culture to a popular model of citizenship that was divorced from the political franchise” (Rodrick 43). Yet, as Jürgen Habermas makes clear, entry into the bourgeois public sphere is not merely a case of intellect or culture but is rooted in material concerns: “[ideology’s] origin would be the identification of ‘property owner’ with ‘human being as such’ in the role accruing to private people as members of the public in the political public sphere of the bourgeois constitutional state” (88). Failure to recognize the role that material possessions played in permitting access to the public sphere limited the possibility of effecting change in an individual’s position. Nevertheless, the hopefulness of Smiles’s message was maintained: “the propertyless were excluded from the public of private people engaged in critical political debate without thereby violating the principle of publicity. In this sense they were not citizens at all, but persons who—with talent, industry, and luck—some day might be able to attain that status” (Habermas 111). Those



without property might not access the public sphere, but the myth continued that hard work could grant access (so long as that hard work and self-help resulted in material gain) thereby authorizing the bourgeoisie as the voice of the people because, while not all people were members, they all could still aspire to that end.

While Habermas focuses on property, the way in which materiality shapes identity also emerged through Darwinian understandings of inheritance as Darwin's theory of natural selection shifted the focus away from acquired characteristics to those that were inborn. *On the Origin of Species* offered a new way of understanding organisms as the product of biological processes rather than as God's individual creation. Such a tie to the laws and workings of the natural world thus could supersede the ties of community and place. Darwin allows for very little impact of the environment, noting research that suggests "how unimportant the direct effects of the conditions of life are in comparison with the laws of reproduction, of growth, and of inheritance" with the implication that one is born what one will be (11). Where Smiles acknowledges a truth that Victorians must have surely been aware of, that "[a]ll may not rise equally," Smiles's assumption that "each, on the whole, [rises] very much according to his deserts" operates counter to the vision presented in *Origin*: that "individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving," their "rise" a reflection of inborn qualities (Smiles 132; Darwin 63). Applying the laws of variability and inheritance found in Darwin to human beings refocuses attention upon the materiality of the body and biological inheritance. The change that natural selection brought about was slow, and, with human observers unable to see anything "of these slow changes in progress, until the hand of time has marked the long lapse of ages," excluded the possibility of humans not

only begetting change, but also in observing it within their lifetimes (Darwin, *Origin* 66). Thus, Darwin's view of the natural world offered a competing vision to the optimism found in the prevalent ideas of self-help and progress, where change proceeded at a snail's pace, without reference to the wishes and desires of human beings, resting rather on random variations that were already fixed at birth.

This sense of inborn gifts offered a potential counter-narrative to unregulated class mobility operating in conjunction with self-improvement: the possibility that the class system reflected the laws of the natural world rather than individual achievement, thereby stabilizing the Victorian social order. Darwin's focus on inheritance suggested the possibility of inborn characteristics that extend beyond aspirations and even achievements to offer stability through heredity thus, in a way, reviving the role of ancestry in establishing social position. This time, however, it was not the ties that connected families and communities through shared history for which ancestry was privileged but the way in which heredity might shape an individual. While this extension of inborn qualities as demarcating position in the social order can, to a certain extent, support an aristocracy that had built much of its stability on ancestry, suggesting the impossibility of class mobility, it can also be read as authorizing the position of the middle classes, and it was particularly aligned with the professional classes who credited their position to intelligence and skill, something potentially inborn that could separate them both from the lower-middle class and from the merchant class for whom success might be seen as purely financial. As populations were becoming increasingly unregulated due to new acts of government and the freedom for social mobility that results under capitalism, those concerned with the stability of their own position on the

social ladder embraced a narrative that might re-establish social divisions based on correlation of heredity with social position.

This potential to root social position in one's hereditary gifts could call into question the possibilities of unlimited social mobility and expose the artifices that supported such a belief and practice. Christopher Clausen summarizes the conviction in the Victorian era that

the class system, while real and on the whole unquestioned, was widely seen as permeable at every level. No matter how humble one's origins or how limited one's education, he—or she—*could not merely imitate gentlemen or ladies but actually belong to their number*, provided one worked diligently to acquire middle-class values and habits. To do so required *no special gifts of intelligence or ability* but merely hard work and the right kind of instruction. (405, emphasis added)

This message of improvement suggests a true remaking of the self, coinciding with the message of Smiles. However, the self that succeeds in this schema is by no means exceptional, having no inborn qualities that suggest merit and thus no difference from any other individual. Nevertheless, this ability to remake oneself is supposedly not artificial, and Smiles critiques those “affecting a degree of ‘style’ which is most unhealthy in its effect upon society at large. There is an ambition to bring up boys as gentlemen, or rather ‘genteel’ men; though the result frequently is, only to make them gents. They acquire a taste for dress, style, luxuries, and amusements, which can never form any solid foundation for manly or gentlemanly character” (225). At this moment, Smiles both recognizes the possibility of claiming the status of gentleman by adopting the signifiers

of that position and also attempts to foreclose on the possibility that readers would take such a message from his text, signalling that such an experiment could never be successful. Yet the implication that one might choose to become a gentleman by adopting the characteristics of a gentleman allows for the possibility that character itself might be just as superficial as dress, something an enterprising reader of Smiles might “put on” to look the part. But if the qualities that enable one to succeed are inborn and hereditary, one cannot remake oneself to be a gentleman by sheer will. If hereditary gifts are what allow one to claim a certain class position, those lacking such gifts might only access the privileges of that class through imitation, invalidating the hope that Smiles offers his readers. If biological inheritance determines one’s success or failure in the world, much as it is heredity that shapes the success or failure of organisms in the natural world, social mobility must rest on this artifice of imitation that would become one of the anxieties expressed in the sensation novel.

Sensation novels fulfill the desire of the reading public for a safe space in which to encounter and expel those fears and anxieties that most trouble it. The scenarios they depict may be extreme, but they suggest the anxieties that were pressing in the lives of its readers: “Instead of removing its readers from their daily lives, the sensation novel brought them closer to grim reality by bringing them closer to home and to themselves” (Hughes 261). While sensation fiction was read by people of all classes, its object was the middle-class home, suggesting the uncertainty of this space that, in many ways, provided the linchpin for the majority of Victorian values.<sup>2</sup> The middle-class home was a space of

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<sup>2</sup> Although the Audleys are presented as members of the gentry in *Lady Audley’s Secret*, and are thus members of the upper class, the values and anxieties that they reflect are more properly middle-class. In order to draw a distinction between the world of the novel and the concerns of the outside world that it expresses, when referencing their social position within the context of the novel, I will refer to them as

retreat and safety from the problems outside it; therefore, by placing “its shocking events and characters firmly within the ordinary middle-class home and family,” the sensation novel increases its sense of terror by suggesting that no place is safe (Hughes 261). This threat to Victorian domesticity has implications for the public sphere, as “the patriarchal conjugal family’s intimate sphere that was oriented to a public” authorized one’s ability to enter into the public sphere (Habermas 85). In destabilizing the domestic space, the sensation novel suggests the instability of the nation. Indeed, its terror is domestic in both senses of the word, recognizing both threats to the home and to the nation from outside as England and one’s place in it were not fixed and understandable.

The rapid rise and fall of sensation fiction in the 1860s points to the way in which this form of literature responds to a particular moment in the Victorian era. Unlike the Gothic that had come before, sensation fiction expresses a kind of cultural currency by exploring the terrors of the contemporary domestic space. Thus the rise of the sensation novel shortly after the publication of Darwin’s and Smiles’s texts positions it as a forum for commentary on the conflicting ideas of identity that these non-fiction works suggest. Indeed, Heather L. Braun recognizes the way in which “[s]ome of the most potent fears expressed in sensation and vampire novels were also threats provoked by a Darwinian model of evolution and degeneration: the threats included female sexuality, sexual disease, and male corruption, which came together forcefully in the fatal woman who poisons her victims” (239). While this is the case, the sensation novel goes beyond the most thrilling repercussions of Darwinism to focus on population and the individual’s role within it. It is additionally informed by the anxieties created by the ideals of self-

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upper class, whereas when I refer to the values that underpin the novel, I will refer to their middle-class nature. For example, while Lucy Graham aspires to marry into the upper class, she does so through a performance of middle-class femininity.

determination promoted by Smiles. Where the realist genre that overwhelmingly characterizes the nineteenth century novel might explore one or other of these possibilities (though more likely the hopeful optimism of Smiles's account before such grim biological determinism as found in Thomas Hardy in the 1890s), as Elizabeth Langland points out, the sensation genre with its lack of commitment to realism is more comfortable in exploring the tensions between different viewpoints (3). It indeed troubles the potential of reading the 1860s as entirely hopeful and optimistic as it unearths latent fears.

The anxieties that surround the instability of identity are very much products of the industrialized society that stands outside the door of the middle-class home. The wealth and innovation that resulted from widespread industrialization came at the cost of increased alienation and uncertainty as the concurrent rise of capitalism created increased social mobility. Industrialization had unseated ancestry from its position as the main determinant of individual identity as it caused individuals to move into the anonymous space of the city. Thus, industrialization and urbanization resulted in a significant shift in relationships between individuals. People were more mobile, and this meant that one would encounter strangers on a daily basis as anonymity became the norm for those moving within urban populations who lacked access to the historical markers of identity that living in a smaller, rural community encouraged. It is in this space where people are separated from their roots and constructed through their appearances that Lucy Graham<sup>3</sup> can claim that she is orphaned, and because there is a general acceptance of the decrease of other community ties, her lack of connections is not questioned. This lack of

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<sup>3</sup> While I will, by default, refer to Lady Audley by that name, I will also use her other names (Helen Maldon, Helen Talboys, Lucy Graham, Lucy Audley) as the context demands.

community makes cities dangerous places and ensures that the family home is no longer the sanctuary it might have been thought to be.<sup>4</sup>

Recognizing others' positions on the social ladder became more and more difficult as individuals' very identities became malleable. While members of the Victorian middle class wanted to believe in the safety and security of their station in life, the sensation novel undercut this wishful thinking and the artifices that supported it: "The sensation novelists made the assumption that any society so much obsessed with respectability and appearances as their own was bound to be populated by impostors of various degrees" (Hughes 271). One could reinvent and represent oneself in ways that did not correspond with one's origin and upbringing, leading to a sense of mistrust that others were not who they said they were. The spirit of class mobility and the anonymity of the city made it possible to pass as a gentleman if one could convincingly play the role, a possibility that caused anxiety for those in the middle class who might be insecure about their position. Such artificial identities can hide secrets and even danger, posing a threat to those who were unable to see beyond such the disguise. As Jennifer Uglow notes, "Far from being a period of rock-like respectability, [the 1860s] was a time when identities did change and pasts were buried as individuals clawed their way up the class ladder" (xvi). The terror in *Lady Audley's Secret* is created as an impostor enters the sacred space of the home, but she is only authorized to enter the home by the complicity of a society that is bound up in performativity.

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<sup>4</sup> Though the majority of *Lady Audley's Secret* takes place within the country home, as with the class anxieties of the middle class being transplanted onto this upper-class family, the concerns about the urban space are imposed upon the country house. However, while the country house is made to stand in for the middle-class suburban home, it simultaneously must be read as what it presents itself to be, for as Langland argues, "country houses, which are architectural, domestic sanctuaries...function as visible signs of the social order" (3).

Indeed, what is even more threatening than the potential for individuals to pass as members of a class that they might not otherwise belong to by adopting artifices that can simply be stripped away is an underlying awareness that class is always performative. According to Judith Butler, “[p]erformativity is thus not a singular ‘act,’ for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimilates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (*Bodies That Matter* 12). In recognizing class identity as a performance, the stability of one’s position in the class system is undermined as it no longer derives from the material but from the social as it repeats socially established norms. Not only might those who began below one adopt such norms, but anyone claiming middle-class identity can be seen to be engaged in such repetition, suggesting the inability to differentiate those who might be born into the middle class and those who make themselves middle class through adopting the performance later in life. If class, like gender (and, indeed, the two are intimately tied in *Lady Audley’s Secret*), is performative, “then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured” (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 180). Certainly, the rapid rise of the middle class and the constant images that are presented in the fiction and advertisements of the day suggest that Butler’s ideas of performativity hold true when applied to class in the 1860s. But such a possibility would be entirely unnerving to those who were insecure about their own position, leading to the development of a narrative that might confirm a pre-existing class identity. Novels of detection such as *Lady Audley’s Secret* turn to reading the material in an attempt to differentiate identity from performance, to suggest something stable and unrepeatable that differentiates those who



are entitled to inhabit the middle-class domestic space and the impostors who do not belong.

In the Victorian city, with little direct access to markers such as ancestry that might affirm one's social position, it was the material remnants that must be read, but the ability to do so accurately had diminished. Commodity culture added to the ability to pass off one's class identity as something other than what might be earned through work or merited through hereditary qualities. As the wealthier members of the middle class gained the financial means to purchase the trappings of a higher class position (country estates, public school education, marriage to members of the gentry), those below them were increasingly able to purchase cheap reproductions that could also contribute to the appearance of a higher class position (clothing, accessories, make-up). Increased industrialization created and supported market demands for such items. New consumer goods and increasing access to education made it possible for individuals like Lady Audley to present themselves as products of a background they could not truthfully claim. Middle-class identity could be performed with the aid of purchases that required a much smaller outlay. Indeed, novelists such as Braddon certainly knew it to be the case, recognizing the fashions and products that could improve one's appearance that were sold alongside their stories:

advertisements in *Robin Goodfellow*, where *Lady Audley's Secret* first appeared, construct images of femininity that specifically appeal to working-class women in order to generate a female consumer market. By purchasing the product, middle-class and working-class women figuratively became more desirable

representations of the Victorian feminine ideal—a sophisticated bourgeois woman free from exploitative labor conditions. (Hedgecock123)

This reaching after material affirmation in an age of social flexibility created anxieties over the performative nature of identity. *Lady Audley's Secret* plays up these anxieties, reflecting them back to the audience in the guise of entertainment, capitalizing on the market that had itself played an integral role in creating many of these anxieties by enabling individuals to buy markers of a class position to which they did not belong.

The superficiality of class mobility is exposed throughout *Lady Audley's Secret* and, indeed, as Katherine Montwieler asserts, in the pages of the magazine in which it was published. Montwieler offers a reading of *Lady Audley's Secret* that recapitulates the idea of the model of the self-made man in fact and fiction as an exemplar of how to move up in the world, conceiving of Braddon's book as a guidebook for the working-class woman who wants to rise above her station. Montwieler argues that "Lady Audley's (Helen Maldon's) secret is Braddon's complicity in a radical discourse that undermines social stratification. Through the variety of cultural artefacts that appear in the novel, Braddon teaches women readers how to pretend to be members of a class into which they were not born" (43). Nevertheless, while there are detailed descriptions of the products in the Audley home in the novel, these are exposed to be merely artifices, unable to truly transform the people attempting to move up the social ladder.

Such artifices are presented as one of the layers of Lady Audley's secrets, but they are not, in fact, much of a mystery, laid out as they are for the entire reading public. Lady Audley's own artifice is highlighted in her conversation with Phoebe Marks, her former workmate turned servant who has "something of the grace and carriage of a

gentlewoman” despite being “only a simple country girl” (65). As Chiara Briganti points out this “suggests the possibility that what are usually thought to be qualities bestowed only by birth may in fact be acquired” (196). Yet Phoebe does not try to acquire them and has to be informed about the possibility by her mistress. Phoebe tells her mistress that, to her surprise, others have commented on their likeness. Lady Audley replies, “Why, with a bottle of hair dye, such as we see advertised in the papers, and a pot of rouge, you’d be as good-looking as I any day, Phoebe,” owning up to the way such middle-class femininity can be purchased and performed, indeed has been purchased and performed or at least enhanced by her own employer (95). Where Smiles is critical of the application of such artifices, he in fact encourages the mentality that will buy into them by suggesting the unlimited potential of the individual to better his own position in life, regardless of the fact that, for most Victorians, class mobility was restricted to minimal steps up the social ladder.

While Smiles presents exemplars of men who have achieved great things and truly bettered themselves, structures remained in place that necessitated that, for some, improving their position in life could only be pretence. Helen Maldon could not possibly, as Smiles might suggest, become a lady through transforming her mind and applying herself. Whereas the possibility for actually improving oneself and one’s class position may be at least somewhat open to the men to whom Smiles is speaking, a woman who desired to better her class position had no real possibility of achieving actual change and had to resort to artifice. In his comparison of *Self-Help* and Isabella Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* (1861), Clausen himself breezes past the reality that “in order for a Victorian lady to be the mistress of a middle-class household, she must first (unless

she is lucky enough to be an heiress) have a middle-class husband” (407). Where it is possible to argue that for men class mobility is created by some interior improvement, women could not but dress for the job that they wished to have in the hopes of attracting a middle-class husband. Indeed, where the census of 1841 categorizes members of the population according to their occupation, and by implication social status, for women, this categorization was only possible when they were engaged in paid work, which, for the most part, would position them as working class. Their social standing was primarily as woman with the implications of shared social standing with the male head of household. Thus, the only way for a woman to move into the upper echelons of society remained to marry up. If the performance of middle-class femininity is to be associated with the material conditions of that position, it can only be complete after her performance has been authorized by marriage: “With her unknown past, her innocent beauty, and her modesty, Lucy Graham does resemble Cinderella: by marrying Sir Michael Audley, she goes from poverty to riches and enjoys the luxuries of her fairy palace” (Talairach-Vielmas 3). Yet, as Cinderella is not a rags-to-riches, but rather a riches-to-rags-and-back-again story, the implication of Lucy Graham’s marriage to Michael Audley is that she is a true lady and not a governess who married up, erasing the superficiality of any markers that she had thus far employed to gain his attention. Lucy is forthright about the implications that a marriage to Sir Michael would have for her, telling him, “I cannot be disinterested; I cannot be blind to the advantages of such an alliance. I cannot, I cannot!” thus hiding her own motivations for improving her position by placing them out in the open (52). She does not hide the way in which this match

improves her life, but she does hide her own awareness of her performance of the idealized femininity that wins his love.

When she accepts Sir Michael, Lucy Graham dreams of her new life with “every trace of the old life melted away—every clue to identity buried and forgotten—except these, except these,” putting her hand to a ring that hangs off the ribbon around her throat (53). The old identity is that of Helen Talboys, but it is also the working-class position that she had occupied. Her adopted identity thus can be absorbed as her sole identity with the reality of Helen’s birth and early life hidden behind the new class markers that she will gain as Sir Michael’s wife: “More than being simply available for viewing, Lady Audley is herself decked out to invite scrutiny, her garments and jewels metonyms for class privilege, luxury, and idleness” (Langland 9–10). Where Lucy Graham’s pretence of child-like femininity invited the gaze of Sir Michael, as Lady Audley, her performance of middle-class respectability is complete as she has access not just to the simulacrum of wealth, but to its actual indicators.

Yet as much as the novel may seem to suggest the possibilities of emulating the upper classes and offers its readers a means of doing so, the facades that are involved are always exposed. Fiona Peters suggests that “Lady Audley’s mistake lies...not in her fraud or duplicity, but rather in her inability to *totally* remake herself, thus she leaves clues” (198). While this may be interpreted as a failure of Lady Audley, due to her oversights, she is a savvy impostor. She has learned from her first unsuccessful attempt to marry into money by marrying George Talboys, and she has perfected her art insofar as it is possible. Yet Lady Audley cannot efface the markers of her body, much as she might be able to cover them up. She fails because the limitations of inheritance mean that she

cannot totally remake herself, and a trace remains in her handwriting, which “resembles that of Helen Talboys so closely, that the most dexterous expert could perceive no distinction between the two” (286). For all the difference and the distance that Lady Audley has attempted to create through her movement about England and her name changes, the physical traces left by her body cannot be changed. Rebecca Stern notes the cultural desire to understand identity in biological terms as emerging from “[a] desire to have things *be* as they *seemed*, a search for ontological stability.... In a society increasingly troubled by duplicity, alienation, and permeable social boundaries, the discourse of heredity seemed to offer the body as solid ground for various aspects of identity” (40, emphasis in original). Darwin’s insistence on “how strong hereditary tendency is” offers something of a balm in an age where it is uncertain if the position one exhibits is ancestral, the result of hard work, or merely performative (*Origin* 63). The ability to see heredity as shaping individuals confirms the biopolitical drive to categorize and control bodies based on biological inheritance.

Robert Audley emerges as the investigator of the material traces that might be found in Lady Audley’s body, the enforcer of the aims of bio-power in the novel. He is the one who is positioned as able to discern between artifice and inborn qualities, in other words, to properly categorize her body as authentic or deviant. Robert’s authority comes from his own position in the social order, his own claim to superiority, which is doubly authorized by Smiles and Darwin for its inborn qualities and the effort he exerts as a professional man. Lacking either of these claims to her own position, Lady Audley’s status as an impostor is brought into crisp relief.

Robert's position is secured by his ability to exemplify the ideals of Smiles in truly becoming active and productive irrespective of his class position. While Lady Audley fails in her attempts at self-help, Robert Audley embodies the ideal of the self-made man. He undergoes a change from a lazy layabout to a driven man of action. Robert must go beyond earning the professional designations that he could claim at the beginning of the novel, which themselves mean nothing without action, and put his mind and effort to a task so as to achieve a singular goal. Though Robert may have "shrunk from those responsibilities and duties, as...from all the fatigues of this troublesome life," he acts when called upon (Braddon 152). Similarly, George Talboys, in losing his financial inheritance, is driven to greater action, and like Robert, he succeeds. By travelling to the colonies and engaging in the imperialist exercise that has made Britain so powerful as a nation, George demonstrates his own superiority, through hard work and perseverance to become "the richest man in all the little colony," regaining the social status that he had lost (62). Not unlike Lady Audley, Robert and George gain this new identity through a repetition of norms, this time those of active masculinity. Yet the novel attempts to assuage concerns that arise from the power of performativity in discerning class by linking their success to their birthright. These men do not only succeed because they correctly apply the writings of Smiles, but rather because their position is ultimately authorized by their birth.

Much as the trajectory of the self-made man is generally one of class mobility, *Lady Audley's Secret* reflects Smiles's view that self-improvement is not limited to any one class, and indeed, might even be found within the members of the gentry. Such a view, however, reads as somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy when high social status is

aligned with self-help. Yet in a Darwinian schema, the ability to succeed may well be inherited by the offspring of those who have already attained success. Within the novel, only those who have been born into a high position can shore up their position by their own efforts, whereas the ambitious Lady Audley has no hope of truly raising her own lot in life. Although we glimpse the popular vision of the crumbling aristocracy—in the space of Audley Court, a relic of the past that seems ill-fitted for England's bright future, and Robert Audley, a lazy young gentleman with no motivation due to his anticipated inheritance—no one of high birth ever falls through the cracks. These high-born men are instead reborn as the increasingly powerful professional and capitalist. Despite the setting of a country house and the title that Sir Michael possesses, the experience of the Audleys is in many ways middle-class, resulting in a kind of melding of the height of the old order and the new ruling class. Robert's success is not in fulfilling the role of gentleman, but rather in eschewing the sloth that can be associated with his privileged upbringing and adopting the work ethic of the professional. Similarly, George Talboys, when cut off from his inheritance, demonstrates an entrepreneurial spirit and hard work as makes his fortune in Australia. Despite losing his position when travelling to the less differentiated space of the colonies, George rises again to his proper position suggesting the inevitability of those of high birth attaining high position. George Talboys and Robert Audley inherit their position by birth and secure it by becoming men of action in their own right. Their ability to do so where Lady Audley fails is in part a function of gender, but it also suggests an inborn quality. Indeed, what identifies Robert with the lack of aspiration in the aristocracy is, in fact, what ultimately lays the groundwork for his success: "The lazy bent of his mind, which prevented him from thinking of half a dozen



things at a time, and not thinking thoroughly of any one of them, as is the manner of your more energetic people, made him remarkably clear-sighted upon any point to which he ever gave his serious attention” (124). What reads as laziness paradoxically allows him to be successful when he finally becomes active, for it is not, in fact, laziness, but a quality of his mind that ensures success through the kind of focus needed by the professional and the capitalist rather than the mere blind expending of energy needed by the members of the working class. In this way, class can be seen as already having organized bodies according to inborn ability, lending stability to the class system that aligns with the laws of reproduction and inheritance described by Darwin.

Robert’s inherited characteristics, established by a long ancestral line of Audleys whose social rank reflects their inborn superiority, not only establish his own position in the social order but also allow him the authority to discern impostors who do not possess the qualities that would fit them to be his social equals. What motivates Robert’s transformation into a man of action is, in fact, the threat to the social order by the infiltration of the lower-class Lucy Graham. Robert’s heroism, his becoming a man of action, is paired with his ability to see, to reveal the artifice of Lady Audley. This necessary revelation, which proves to be the undoing of Lady Audley’s attempts at becoming a self-made woman, simultaneously provides the opportunity for Robert to legitimate his position in society. As Hedgecock argues,

[b]ecause of her poor socioeconomic class, lack of social status, and unlawful activity, the femme fatale is always ‘a marginal’ creature who occupies the space outside of familiarity, structure, and light, villains emphasizing a common subtext: the detective, always a male protagonist, must subdue the dangerous

woman in order to restore male dominance and patriarchal power. In essence, he proves his heroism by unmasking, unveiling, and making legible the threat of the femme fatale. (110)

Robert's ability to reveal is paired with the power of the professional man. He can recognize the artifices of Lady Audley, and he can do so because he has the right to occupy the class position that she has infiltrated. This legitimizes his power and social value by suggesting that he has the inborn qualities that she does not: he himself is not playing a part. It is his inherited ability, not his putting on of character traits or clothes that earn him his position in society. Lady Audley may look like the embodiment of idealized middle-class femininity, but that is only artifice. She cannot change the secrets hidden within her body: neither her class nor her hereditary taint.

In this way, Robert exercises the kind of hegemonic role of bio-power within the social structure whereby those in a position of social power can maintain the stratification of the nation and the proper categorization of bodies by the inference that their bodies have already been attested to by fitness. This offers stability to those already on the top of the ladder by implying that they deserve such a position but that newcomers do not. Indeed, class was an arena where the population (or at least the most powerful part of it) could be counted on to carry out the aims of bio-power since the threat to the state could be equated with the threat to one's own position on the social ladder. Robert thus becomes the character who stands in for a form of biopolitical surveillance in a kind of reciprocal relationship wherein Lady Audley herself invites the gaze. Her artifice suggests that her status as a lady is available to be seen, particularly after she marries and can replace replicas with authentic markers of class. This gaze is supported by the space

she occupies: by setting itself apart as a marker of high social position, “the country house functions as would Bentham’s proposed Panopticon, a space in which one could be under continuous anonymous surveillance” (Langland 6). This distance from the anonymity of the city puts Lady Audley under closer scrutiny, indeed, something she is only able to escape on her trips to London and the seaside along the mass transit lines of the train. However, while Lady Audley invites Sir Michael to view her and authorize her position through his affection—something which she also extends to Robert—ultimately, the keen detective can see beyond the artifice to properly understand the characteristics of her body.

The kind of surveillance that Robert exercises on Lady Audley’s body is, however, not merely juridical, but rather must be understood as biopolitical because of its association with sexuality and reproduction. Indeed, Robert’s gaze is in many ways an extension of sexual selection. Like brightly feathered birds that “show off in the best manner, their gorgeous plumage; [and] likewise perform strange antics before the females, which, standing by as spectators, at last choose the most attractive partner,” Lucy Audley encourages a gaze that might consider her as a reproductive body (Darwin, *Origin* 69). While Sir Michael and Robert are both sexually attracted to her, Robert’s ability to see beyond the showiness demonstrates his recognition of the more complex factors governing human sexual selection. This anxiety about the role that such a display of finery plays anticipates the concerns that Darwin will have in *The Descent of Man* where he considers the repercussions of people marrying based on considerations of beauty and wealth. Though sexual selection in Victorian Britain, where males choose their partners based on beauty and other superficial considerations, would favour the

success of Lady Audley, the novel also expresses the anxiety about what happens when, as it were, “[b]eauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration,” when finery overwhelms the concern for the health of future offspring (Keats 61).

While Lady Audley poses a threat to the family, her threat is far greater as it extends to the British race. Superficially, she seems to be the very woman who will continue the national type: with her “fair face, surrounded by its bright aureole of hazy, golden hair” she resembles both an aristocratic lady and the ideal of English beauty (151). Here heredity suggests her fitness to represent the nation as a member of its ruling class. Yet Aeron Haynie notes that “[o]n the one hand, Lady Audley’s effect on others is described as a result of an organic phenomenon, her beauty; yet Lady Audley’s beauty—like her alleged madness—is hereditary and is marked as both genuine and contrived, organic yet constructed” (64). Indeed, Lady Audley’s mother’s madness not only coincides with her beauty, but actually manifests itself in English beauty and ideal femininity rather than lunacy. In meeting her mother at the asylum, Lady Audley recalls, “I saw no raving, straight-waist-coated maniac, guarded by zealous jailers, but a golden-haired, blue-eyed, girlish creature, who seemed as frivolous as a butterfly, and who skipped toward us with her yellow curls decorated with natural flowers, and saluted us with radiant smiles, and gay, ceaseless chatter” (358). In the image she paints of her mother, the outward signs of madness closely mirror her own performance of middle-class femininity. While Lady Audley laments “the only inheritance I had to expect from my mother was—insanity!” she has also inherited her mother’s beauty (359). Though it is her claims of insanity that ultimately exclude her from the Audley’s upper-class home, it

is her beauty that allows her to dream of entering it: “I learned that my ultimate fate in life depended upon my marriage, and I concluded that if I was indeed prettier than my schoolfellows, I ought to marry better than any one of them” (359). While her heredity might be helped along by contrived means, this dual aspect of Lady Audley’s hereditary make-up suggests the complexity of inborn characteristics and challenges the fairy-tale-like conventions that would suggest that what appears to be good must be good.

Whatever part of her beauty might be inherited, “the detectives must read and decipher the construction of the modern ‘lady,’ the perfect face that outsmarts the codes of physiognomy” (Talairach-Vielmas 113). This furthers the potentially destructive picture that the novel paints of sexual selection within human social structures, drawing attention to the way in which female beauty, like the plumes of a peacock, may be detrimental to the survival of the species, much as it might add pleasure.

While Robert ultimately asserts himself as the one who can properly categorize Lady Audley’s body, his sexual desire hampers his ability to recognize her for what she truly is. If it is the case that Robert’s position as a professional man is authorized by his inborn qualities that allows him to see through Lady Audley’s disguise, Alicia Audley’s merit as an upper-class woman makes her even more attuned to an impostor amongst the Audleys: “The real lady—who sports the blood of the Audleys in her veins—recognizes an impostor (a woman tricked out for a masquerade) when she sees one” (Montwieler 49). Alicia Audley, not persuaded by Lady Audley’s ability to reproduce the markers of English middle-class femininity that would guarantee her success in the field of sexual selection, knows that a lady is more than her appearances. Even those seemingly biological markers of class, if purely visual and not matched by the kind of achievements

that someone like Robert or George can attain, can be deceptive. Lady Audley's beauty that suggests wholesome English origins is particularly deceptive, and Alicia is not fooled because her own appearance is at odds with her class position. The true aristocratic lady, who is "a generous-hearted, bouncing, noble English lassie" with a "rosy English face" is more often described in terms that suggest her difference, a beauty that is exotic rather than domestic (278–79, 343). Alicia, while attractive in her own way, has an appearance that is the opposite of Lady Audley's fairness, the sum of her parts being "[t]he black curls (nothing like Lady Audley's feathery ringlets, but heavy clustering locks, that clung about your slender brown throat), the red and pouting lips, the nose inclined to be *retrousee*, the dark complexion" (98). While Alicia may be Hermia to Lady Audley's Helena, the difference in her appearance is cast as foreign as well as outside of the social order as she is twice referred to as "gipsy-faced" (72, 98). Thus, the woman whose appearance suggests a kind of foreign incursion into the English country home is, indeed, the one who truly belongs there. She does not look as much the English lady as her impostor step-mother does, nor even, potentially, the lady's maid who is a pale reflection of Lady Audley, suggesting the way in which even what is written on the surfaces of the body can hide a true biological inheritance.

Despite the indication to the contrary in her appearance and demeanour, Lady Audley cannot cover up her birth. The lock of hair and baby bootie that she keeps as remnants of her old life are not the only physical clues left to her identity. Just as she stores the mementoes of her own son in her desk, she also carries her identity as her mother's daughter in her body. In relating her past to Sir Michael when she becomes engaged to him, Lady Audley brings up her mother, only to immediately repress the

figure that will haunt the novel, suggesting the importance of this secret: “My mother— But do not let me speak of her” (52). Sir Michael, blinded by her beauty, reflecting a modern urban experience of the world where ancestry has waned in its importance, lets this pass by and never presses her. Yet she is unable to cut the ties with her past that are established through her heredity. This is one of the secrets that Robert’s investigations reveal. When Lady Audley’s identity as Helen Talboys is discovered, she unveils another hidden identity—that of the daughter of a madwoman and thus potentially mad herself.

Although Elaine Showalter has convincingly argued that “Lady Audley’s real secret is that she is sane,” which is supported by Dr. Mosgrave’s diagnosis that “[t]he lady is not mad,” the novel and the doctor do nothing to contest “the hereditary taint in her blood” (Showalter, *Literature* 167; Braddon, 385). While my argument rests on a discussion of Lady Audley’s madness, I do so in keeping with D.A. Miller who offers the most productive reading of her insanity:

the best way to read a madwoman would be not to derive the diagnosis from her social psychology...but rather to derive her social psychology from her diagnosis: from the very category of madness that, like fate, lies ever in wait to ‘cover’—account for and occlude—whatever behaviours, desires, or tendencies might be considered socially deviant, undesirable, or dangerous. (169)

Where most critics are concerned with Lady Audley’s transgressive gender, I read Lady Audley’s madness as a cover for her class position, the madness standing in as a marker of her deviance from the social order of the day. Thus, along with Miller, I acknowledge “[t]he ‘secret’ let out at the end of the novel is not, therefore, that Lady Audley is a madwoman but rather that, *whether she is one or not*, she must be treated as such” (Miller

169–70, emphasis in original). Lady Audley thus must be contained as her body is emblematic of menace, whether it is actual madness or simply the madness of aspiring above the station into which she was born. Additionally, as madness was understood to be a hereditary disorder, this marker of deviance must necessitate the removal and restriction of Lady Audley’s body from the space of the middle-class home and from the nation of Britain, an enforcement of biopolitical exclusion. Lady Audley’s madness—or claims to that nature—act as a revelation. In claiming it, she can finally bring to light her ancestry.

Where madness is made to stand in for Lucy Audley’s lack of the inborn qualities that would authorize her position as an upper-class wife, there would be ample support to view madness as something linked to class position. Early nineteenth-century ideas about the relationship between class and mental illnesses are split. Some argue, as Sir Alexander Morison does in *Outlines of Mental Diseases* (1824), that “professions requiring great mental exertion, and those which lead to hazardous speculations, are more liable to insanity than others” (qtd. in Teachman 128). This positions madness as the result of the exertion of active professional and capitalist minds. Sir Michael supports the idea that madness may belong more properly to the educated classes, stating, “I believe it’s generally your great intellects that get out of order,” his reason why the lazy Robert Audley could not possibly be mad (300). Despite such a consideration, the statistical evidence regarding the population of insane asylums could be interpreted to suggest that mental illness predominantly affected the lower classes: “Between 1844 and 1890, the number of pauper lunatics in public asylums quadrupled. By the end of the century, they were 91 percent of all institutionalized mental patients” (Showalter, *Malady* 27). Such a



statistic supported the interpretation of madness as a symptom of class position. Despite the fact that “middle-class and upper-class patients continued to be treated for a fee in private asylums and licensed hospitals,” pauper lunatics in public institutions provided the public face of madness (27). This impression was supported by spectacles whereby madwomen and madmen could be viewed in asylums, cementing a vision of difference from their middle-class viewers and suggesting the prevalence of madness as a disorder of the poor.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, those who were mad could not properly integrate into anything but the lowest position in the class system, reinforcing the schema whereby the class system reflects the inherited fitness of individuals.

It is in this way that Lady Audley’s madness—real or imagined—operates as the marker of her lower-class standing in the novel. This is a kind of moment, as Foucault suggests, “when madness was perceived on the social horizon of poverty, of incapacity for work, of inability to integrate among the problems of the city. The new meanings assigned to poverty, the importance given to the obligation to work, and all the ethical values that are linked to labor, ultimately determined the experience of madness and inflected its course” (*Madness* 64). Madness is associated with lack of labour and thus those unable to provide for themselves, the poorest classes. This is heightened by the way that the members of the middle class understood their position as the reward for their labour under Smiles and as a marker of inherent superiority in a Darwinian schema. Lady Audley is thus doubly marked as mad: she comes from the lower classes, and unlike her

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<sup>5</sup> “Although the old Augustan custom of exhibiting madmen in Bedlam for a penny was officially regarded as barbaric, Victorians continued to visit public asylums. However, visitors no longer went to titter or gape; instead they went to admire, to inspect, to report, to lecture, and to participate” (Showalter, *Madness* 37). Though the sense of spectacle may have decreased, the biopolitical containment of bodies is normalized in such a scenario, supporting the difference between the bodies contained within the asylum, and those who visited freely.

nemesis Robert, she does not make for herself a new identity out of labour, but rather out of a desire to avoid it, marking a kind of unfitness in herself. In portraying Lady Audley as mad rather than simply criminal, Braddon suggests the way in which the body can be the site of regulation and contain markers of class anxieties.

Lady Audley's madness may never be confirmed in the novel by anyone but herself, but her hereditary taint is supported by Dr. Mosgrave and a lineage that is traced back to her mother and grandmother. As Natalie Schroder and Ronald A. Schroder argue, "[w]hat's more important, perhaps, than the accuracy of her self-diagnosis is the fact that the madness links Lucy to other generations of females' experience. Her mother's madness (and grandmother's) was triggered by the very event that ideologically confirmed her authenticity as a woman—childbirth" (55). While we might label their mental illnesses as post-partum depression today—and even in the Victorian era, there was a sense that women were susceptible to puerperal madness—it is telling that reproduction and madness go hand in hand for Lady Audley. In part, this is certainly a further indication of the regulation of women's bodies, but it also heightens the anxiety around her heredity as birth is a moment of self-replication, particularly in the lineage of beautiful mad women that Lucy comes from. If Lady Audley's madness is a symptom of her class and her class transgression, it is perhaps felt nowhere more clearly than around the possibility of procreation, the point where bloodlines are inexorably and inappropriately mixed.

As much as Lucy Audley is herself the danger inside the domestic space, inside Lucy Audley lies the greatest danger. She bears a particularly insidious and invisible terror within her body, for she is the carrier of "the taints of hereditary insanity" (Braddon

383). This hereditary taint within the individual is a threat not only to the domestic sphere—to the Audley family—but to the very nation of England itself. The sensation genre, focused as it is on that which is hidden in the very space of the English home, likewise reflects that which might be hidden in the English body, uncovering the anxieties that surrounded it. As Stern argues, “[e]merging alongside evolutionary theory in the 1860s, sensation fiction seems peculiarly crafted to address concerns about dissimulation, segregation, and social stability as well as to appeal to popular interests in recorporealizing madness” (42–3). At the same time that Britain was establishing its dominance across the world through empire and industrialization, the emergence of the kind of hereditary taint that Lady Audley possesses could undo the heretofore imagined superiority of the British race, an early expression of the fears of degeneration that were already emerging on the continent and would take hold of the British imagination in the 1880s. Following Darwinian thinking and its shaping of bio-power, the threat that individuals with inferior characteristics posed to the population was beginning to become a concern.

Thus as madness, a malady that was understood to be hereditary, becomes linked to class, the possibility of such deviance suggests that the deviants themselves must properly belong to the poor and that any incident where madness emerged in the upper and middle classes might, in fact, be due to a cross-mixing that weakened the blood of a family by bringing in those from the other class. Lucy Audley’s madness, the symptom of her biological class inheritance, threatens to replicate itself were she to bear children to Sir Michael; Lady Audley, coming from an unknown and inferior breed, could undo the family through reproduction. The anxiety around her body is the result of a belief in

“heredity that was burdened with various maladies” (Foucault, *Sexuality* 18). The potential for mixing good and bad stock, the kind of concern is expressed decades later by eugenicist Karl Pearson, is realized as Lady Audley has gained entry to the Audley family:

you cannot change bad stock to good; you may dilute it, possibly spread it over a wider area, spoiling good stock, but until it ceases to multiply it will not cease to be. A physically and mentally well-ordered individual will arise as a variation in bad stock, or possibly may result from special nurture, but the old evils will in all probability reappear in a definite percentage of the offspring....In each generation the same sort of proportion of cases of drunkenness, insanity, and physical breakdown arising to distress and perplex their kinsfolk. (*National Life* 19)

The Audley family’s stamp of good mental health speaks to the fact that they are “good stock” with a right to occupy the class position that they do: “The Audleys have never peopled private lunatic asylums of fee’d mad doctors,” Sir Michael brags, the freedom from mental illness equating with the stature of the family in general (300).<sup>6</sup> They are the kind of family whose lineage is integral to strengthening Britain. Lady Audley poses a threat not only to the inhabitants of the Audley household in the present day, but to their future generations and, beyond that, in weakening a strain of the good stock, to the nation. Just as whatever taints of madness and drunkenness have reduced her family (which claims some upper-class heritage) to marginal figures within the nation, so too

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<sup>6</sup> This may be wishful thinking on Sir Michael’s part as “[a]mong the wealthier classes, bizarre behaviour would be described as nervousness or eccentricity until the patient became unmanageable, suicidal, or violent” suggesting a difference in the nomenclature rather than the appearance of mental illness. This ability to disassociate the family with madness is a mark of respectability for Sir Michael (Showalter, *Malady* 26).

might the Audley family be tainted by her hereditary material thereby weakening the best stock of the nation.

As the strength of the population was of benefit to the state, identifying and regulating fit and unfit bodies became an undertaking for individuals, and in determining how to recognize them, heredity and class became intertwined. Where Robert's fitness to occupy the professional class seems inborn, Lady Audley's lack of fitness is likewise a product of her birth. Foucault acknowledges that "[t]he concern with genealogy became a preoccupation with heredity; but included in bourgeois marriages were not only economic imperatives and rules of social homogeneity, not only the promises of inheritance, but the menace of heredity" (*Sexuality* 124). The battle for the strength of the nation is thus, like the sensation novel, situated within the middle-class home as the emblem of British progress. This shift in the understanding of heredity was important as the long-standing institutions that exerted bio-power—particularly those that “acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony”—waned in their influence (*Sexuality* 141). *Lady Audley's Secret* reflects this change as it is not institutions that ultimately segregate her from the Audleys, but rather her very body and its hereditary taint. However, this segregation of bodies can both shore up the class system and be readily understood by the public by associating it with the existing class system.

While Lady Audley's expulsion from the home suggests the way in which the reproduction of bodies must be regulated under biopolitics, little attention is paid to her living offspring, suggesting the limits of heredity in the novel. Though there is a well

established link of madness between Lady Audley, her mother, and her grandmother, the characters in the novel fail to consider whether Georgey Talboys carries this trait.

Presumably, he is saved by virtue of his sex from the hereditary taint of his mother since Lady Audley herself asserts that “madness is more often transmitted from father to daughter, and from mother to daughter than from mother to son” (Braddon 294). While resting in such an assurance may be of comfort within the context of the novel, it also highlights the anxieties of inheritance that might underlie such a simplistic vision of heredity. Certainly, Darwin can attest that

[t]he laws governing inheritance are quite unknown; no one can say why a peculiarity in different individuals of the same species, or in individuals of different species, is sometimes inherited and sometimes not so; why the child often reverts in certain characters to its grandfather or grandmother or other remote ancestor; why a peculiarity is often transmitted from one sex to both sexes, or to one sex alone, more commonly but not exclusive to the like sex. (Darwin, *Origin* 13)

While, commonly, Lady Audley’s taint might only be threatening in female offspring, there insufficient knowledge about heredity at the time to suggest that there is not a terror growing within Georgey that will be unleashed at some future time. However, though the spread of such bad stock is anxiety-provoking, should Georgey contain the taint, given the tendency for the novel to out such biological inheritance, it would surely come to light in time.

Yet perhaps this is not the case, for while Lady Audley’s madness finds expression in her deceit and her attempt to murder George Talboys, it does not compel

itself to be made known. Though the novel suggests a return to a natural order in associating class position with hereditary qualities, such an order does not function so perfectly that it forecloses on the power of performance. The return to the hereditary order that follows a Darwinian schema fails in that Lady Audley is accepted into the very heart of the middle-class home. It is, in the end, a system that requires the active power of the self-made man, demonstrated by Robert Audley, to reset it.

Lady Audley does not self-identify as a madwoman until she is compelled to by Robert's detection. While the idea of biological inheritance is appealing for its ability to categorize bodies and stabilize the social order, it is not overarching. Though heredity might impress itself as that which precedes all other forms of identity,

[a]ccording to the understanding of identification as an enacted fantasy or incorporation, however, it is clear that coherence is desired, wished for, idealized, and that this idealization is an effect of a corporeal signification. In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.

(Butler, *Gender Trouble* 173)

Even the body itself, the product of heredity, cannot be read as an expression of something that exists outside of society as it is something that reflects the norms by which social identity is understood. Bodies are understood and categorized in keeping

with the norms that have become socially established. The desire to understand class as something related to inborn qualities is undercut by the performative nature of class.

Nevertheless, in constructing class as something that is associated with heredity, the novel manages to contain the anxiety that an awareness of performativity creates in offering up Lady Audley's body as deviant and something that must be identified, contained, and expelled from the space of the home and the nation, suggesting that her success, while a failure of the system, is anomalous. Robert acts as an extension of the state, categorizing and segregating Lady Audley's inferior body. At the conclusion of the novel, he steps in to identify that which has hitherto gone unidentified, returning an order that can be read as natural and good. He resets the system that Lady Audley has managed to deceive: the bad stock will sink into madness, poverty, or mechanical labour, whereas the good stock will always be able to lay claim to the position of active professional and gentleman. This division is firmly felt in the conclusion as Lady Audley is not only removed from the position that she has been determined unfit to occupy but also from the very space of England in an attempt to preserve both the Audley family and the nation itself.

Published in the early 1860s, *Lady Audley's Secret* negotiates a space between the shaping influence of biological inheritance as expressed by Darwin and Smiles's influential call to individuals to shape their own destinies. The hope that Smiles's vision might offer to those of the working and lower-middle classes is exploited within a novel that reveals the possibilities of adopting class position in a time of increased social mobility, both as it sells the products that support such artifice and as it capitalizes on the anxiety that these very same products create about the possibility of knowing those who



share the space of the city, or indeed the domestic space, with its reader. While the sensation novel is more keenly invested in exploring tensions between Darwin and Smiles rather than resolving them, the way in which Lady Audley is made to fail in her attempt to prove herself to be an upper-class lady where Robert Audley succeeds—not only in discovering the truth about her, but also in authorizing his own position in the social sphere—suggests the shortcomings of self-help. While Braddon offers characters that embody the self-made man and at least attempt self-improvement, she also demonstrates the limitations of aspiration and the way in which these limitations are a function of biological inheritance.

The madness displayed by Lady Audley is certainly one of the sensational dangers that can infiltrate the domestic space, the kind of concern that is the very foundation of the sensation novel. Yet it also suggests the way in which the “menaces of heredity” are of increasing concern in the Victorian era. In associating Lady Audley’s fault with the taint of madness, Braddon’s novel is more in line with Darwinian inheritance, demonstrating her unfitness to occupy the position of lady within the Audley house. While inheritance was not well understood at the time that Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, early nineteenth-century doctors had already established a hereditary link in cases of madness. Thus, while Lady Audley’s declaration of madness may be as artificial as the powder and hair dye that she uses to augment her beauty, its hereditary implications indicate that it must also be read for its demonstration of how biopolitical concerns emerge early after the publication of *Origin* as bio-power asserts itself as a way of shaping the nation that contradicts the unremitting hope and aspiration of self-help.

In the discussion of the relationship between biological inheritance and the social order in the wake of Darwin, examining the 1860s provides a useful entry as the literature of this decade exhibits both the continued importance of the class system as well as the increase of social mobility and self-improvement, the kind of concerns that destabilized the social order in their own time, and became the very sources of danger that eugenic writers such as Francis Galton and Karl Pearson would most try to contest and disarm. The consideration of the hereditary menace that Lady Audley carries in her body demonstrates the way in which bio-power regulates considerations of reproduction, particularly in the bourgeois home. Lady Audley may exploit sexual selection through her performance of idealized femininity, and while the men in the Audley family are initially swayed by such demure beauty, her body ultimately must be contained. Though the terror in the novel surrounds this deviant woman, the sensation novel's concern for the broader domestic space, the nation, is rehearsed on the individual level with its pages. These early biopolitical concerns about how inheritance will shape the population are felt in the connection between the domestic space of the home and the domestic space of the nation. Lady Audley's removal from the domestic space—both the home and England—suggests the way in which her intrusion into Audley Court was a threat to both. To expel this hereditary taint from the home suggests the possibility and necessity of expelling it from the nation. Ultimately, the dangerous body is confined in the asylum outside of England, preventing it from further infecting the population just as the terror may be safely contained within the book. Yet despite the happy ending, the unknown workings of heredity continue to haunt the mind of the reader.

**Chapter 2**  
**Invisible History and Inherited Identity in *Daniel Deronda***

But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

– Deuteronomy 4:20

The central theme of identity is established early in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) when Daniel begins to consider his origins as the possible illegitimate son of Sir Hugo. Daniel, like any good boy brought up in an aristocratic home, knows that identity is largely determined by one's relationship to a long line of ancestors. He attempts to understand himself in relation to the past by reading the bodies that represent the Mallinger lineage as he visits the family portrait gallery. These portraits provide a visible history through the representation of the bodies of the men and women who have come before him. Condensed in space and time, collected in a series of frozen moments, expressing their historicity through their attire and the brush with which they were painted, these men and women assert the power of their legacy in the present:

Two rows of these descendants, direct and collateral, females of the male line, and males of the female, looked down in the gallery over the cloisters on the nephew Daniel as he walked there: men in armour with pointed beards and arched eyebrows, pinched ladies in hoops and ruffs with no face to speak of; grave-looking men in black velvet and stuffed hips, and fair, frightened women holding little boys by the hand; smiling politicians in magnificent perruques, and ladies of the prize-animal kind, with rosebud mouths and full eyelids...till the line ended with Sir Hugo and his younger brother Henleigh. (147)

Daniel's walk amongst the Mallinger family portraits exemplifies the way in which history can be simultaneously far-reaching and ever-present through its connection with

ancestry and inheritance. Sir Hugo's collection of family portraits both establishes an extended history for the family, tracing it back generations, and makes the past present as the portraits seem to come alive, looking down on Daniel.

Yet this moment does not provide the answers that Daniel is looking for. Daniel's effort to understand himself by reading these bodies that stretch back through time proves futile. These physical representations of the Mallingers are connected to one another by their proximity, collected to indicate belonging. But more than this, there is also the "nose of the family" that attests to the belonging of at least some of its members (147). Though Daniel himself is not troubled by the disparity, Daniel's body does not indicate that he is a member of the family for "in the nephew Daniel Deronda the family faces of various types, seen on the walls of the gallery; found no reflex" (147-8). Try as he might to convince himself that he is Sir Hugo's nephew and then his son, the visible aspects of his body indicate that he is not one of the Mallinger line. Nevertheless, Daniel rejects this empirical evidence as the yearning of his body to find its place in history through its connection to other bodies overwhelms his powers of observation.

Yet while understanding the body as a site of identity is not presented as unproblematic in the novel, Daniel's body speaks to the power and the possibility found in biological inheritance as an alternate means of understanding identity. Inheritance exerts great power in its ability to establish an individual's place and position in life. While in a legal sense, an inheritance negotiates the succession of land, titles, or money from the bequeather to an heir, such transmissions of wealth create connections over time in a lineage of property transfers. Yet the power of inheritance to connect the present to the past is amplified in biological inheritance. Darwin's use of inheritance to convey the

concept of passing on characteristics through heredity extends the possibilities of inheritance to create almost limitless links through time that extend far beyond recorded history. In speaking of all living beings tracing their ancestry back to the life “breathed into a few forms or one,” Darwin draws attention to the long lineage of the natural world (*Origin* 360). In this way, biological inheritance offers the possibility of understanding one’s relationship to this extended ancestry, considering how one’s current experience might be shaped by a past that, while as yet unremembered, might still be accessed by reading the body for traces of this inheritance.

Nevertheless, unlike the portraits of the Mallingers that exert their influence by their looming presence in the present, the seeds of biological inheritance found in the novel’s characters are often more difficult to access, given the different modes of history that Eliot presents. In her epigraph to Chapter 16, Eliot proclaims that “[m]en, like planets, have both a visible and invisible history”: there is the recognizable history of one’s life and the lives of one’s ancestors as recorded in the annals of a family, and there is the longer, hidden history that is written on the body through heredity (145). This difference, I argue, is the difference between the history that can be documented by human means of recollection, writing, and the law, and the biological history that is only documented through heredity and remains on the periphery of human understanding. Visible histories, the recorded histories of men, have long been employed to shape and understand how social position is established by inheritance. Such human constructions are, of course, not indistinct from the natural ties of blood. Yet such ties of blood can become invisible, unseen, or unseeable if they are not supported by legal ties, such as in the cases of illegitimacy; similarly, they can be constructed or strengthened by such legal

mechanisms as entail. The invisible history of men, on the other hand, offers biological ties that may either support or challenge the visible ties between individuals. However, their ability to do so is problematic due to the invisibility of the history they proclaim. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot explores the potential of accessing this invisible history as a biological inheritance that takes the form of organic memory, a means by which the body might contain within it the memories of previous generations like an acquired habit:

In each case, the corollaries of the biogenic law made the past available for the study of the present. Like Lamarck's law of the inheritance of acquired characters, it implied that the present organism contained its past within it, and that one could thus read phylogeny, or ancestral development, by observing ontogeny, or individual development, if one could only read the individual in the right way.

(Otis 7–8)

Nevertheless, while physical features and family likeness seem to attest to the biological history of individuals, reading them proves challenging in the novel, suggesting the limits of understanding heredity empirically and opening up the possibility of accessing the past through the body in ways that extend beyond physical evidence.

While Daniel is mistaken in assuming a hereditary connection to the Mallingers despite the physical evidence before him, his inability to correctly read his body and those of others points to the limitations of empiricism for revealing knowledge, and Daniel's epistemological troubles are dramatized through Eliot's particular approach to the realist form. While "the epistemology that lay behind realism was empiricist," and "the reader's epistemological progress through novels imitates the way we acquire empiricist knowledge of the actual social and physical worlds by means of observation of

factual details, behaviour and events,” the information that the reader and the characters lack show the failings of understanding the world through purely empirical means (Levine, *Imagination* 18; Morris 11). George Levine recognizes the limits of this way of knowing in Eliot’s fiction, where “the question of consciousness, of who is perceiving the external fact and under what conditions, becomes for her an indispensable aspect of the realist project” (“Art of Realism” 9). Thus, the novel explores the impossibility of fully knowing the world—a project akin to the impossibility of fully representing it through realism—which conversely allows for the explorations of what can be known and represented, including alternate means of accessing history as it manifests itself in the body.

*Daniel Deronda* is in many ways a conventional Victorian novel, concerned with marriage, inheritance, and class position, but in its investigation of the relationship of biological inheritance to the social order, it infuses these traditional elements with Eliot’s own interest in contemporary science and epistemology. In her use of the realist form, which in many ways is resistant to such uncertainties, Eliot expands the possibility of what may be known and also challenges the possibility of fiction to fully represent reality. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot represents the social conventions surrounding property inheritance and class position while simultaneously exploring the way in which the growing awareness of the biological understanding of inheritance intersects with these older constructions. In teasing out the tensions of identity through both history and the body, Eliot explores the way in which biological inheritance might offer a means of establishing the individual’s place in society in a more profound way than that offered by the superficial means of establishing position found through legal inheritance. Such an

influence of the past, however, extends beyond the easily accessible history of a family to awaken something more deeply rooted in the body, suggesting the potential power of invisible history and the role that the body plays in transmitting it through generations. While such an awakening may provide the kinds of answers to identity that Daniel seeks at the beginning of the novel, in inserting itself into the present, the past exerts an organizing influence that has the potential to limit individual autonomy, a kind of regulatory influence akin to the biopolitical pressures from the state as it naturalizes and codifies the divisions in the social order that the narrative seems unable to escape.

The power that the past might have to determine the present is challenged in the Victorian era by increasing social mobility paired with the increasing power of the middle class. If achievements and hard work were to be what determined position, the past markers of inheritance and ancestral ties might lose their potency. Even within the protected enclave of Sir Hugo's estate, such possibilities creep in to suggest the incursion of a middle-class ethos. Sir Hugo himself, frustrated by his lack of control over his own estates, finds solace in the increasing class mobility of his age, at least as it might affect those he cares about. While Sir Hugo clings to his position as an established member of the nobility, he sees the potential that class mobility might have in his visions for Daniel's future, telling Daniel, "[i]f man is not born into public life by his position in the country, there's no way for him but to embrace it by his own efforts" (345). Though not undercutting his own rank, he acknowledges the possibility that the Reform Acts had in opening up places for men such as Daniel. When Daniel brings up the continuing power of the class system, stating that "pedigree and land belong to a fine match," Sir Hugo reproaches him, telling him that "[t]he best horse will win in spite of pedigree, my boy"



(145). Here, Sir Hugo suggests that middle-class work ethic and the figure of the self-made man have a place in his world, which is still very much ordered along ancestral class lines.

Yet such positive representations of middle-class achievement in the text are rare, a quiet background that unsettles what remains a primarily aristocratic model in the foreground. Many middle-class characters populate the countryside, yet their status in the community is always peripheral as the capital or work that allows them access to the community is continually presented as exclusionary. This is the case with the Arrowpoints, about whom Lady Pentreath remarks, “we all know how the mother’s money came” (367). Aristocratic inheritance is upheld as the proper way to determine position, and certainly, aristocratic inheritance continues to shape the lives of characters such as Grandcourt. But even those characters (such as Gwendolen and the Arrowpoints) who lack solid claims to the position of gentry attempt to follow such a model, suggesting its overarching determination of the lives of the characters in the community. Sir Hugo might suggest the possibility of social mobility to Daniel, but he himself remains utterly convinced of the importance of inheritance, though he is troubled by the way in which it operates in his own life. He may desire the best for Daniel and imagine the possibility that Daniel will be able to claim the status of a gentleman that he was raised for, but acknowledges “[r]eform as not likely to make any serious difference in English habits of feeling, one of which undoubtedly is the liking to behold society well fenced and adorned with hereditary rank” (721). In suggesting that Daniel might achieve greatness through individual effort and in his desire to undo the entailed inheritance that has given him only

a life interest in his estate, Sir Hugo is not agitating for great reforms but is maintaining an affective reaction to the position of his disinherited ward.

The importance of inheritance in *Daniel Deronda* is felt in its characters' anxiety over how it might shape their own or their children's lives and prospects. Sir Hugo, for example, is concerned with the entail placed upon his estates that will prevent his daughters from inheriting his fortunes. Though the portraits of the Mallingers suggest the way in which inheritance had historically been tied up with the heredity, the concern that Sir Hugo has about his natural children being cut off from their inheritance reflects the way that, by the nineteenth century, aristocratic inheritance had become a legal matter, which Eileen Spring describes as "flying in the face of nature," where an heir was chosen for his ability to carry on the father's name rather than his blood, where it was more important to keep fortunes together rather than to benefit one's offspring (19). Sir Hugo, "having produced nothing but girls," faces having only a lifetime interest in his estate due to the strictures of entailment bound up in strict settlement (79). Operating within these aristocratic legal mechanisms rather than through the more flexible mechanism of the will employed by the middle class, Sir Hugo is unable to bequeath his fortune to either his ward, Daniel, or his daughters who face the possibility of becoming unpropertied gentry upon his death.

Legal inheritance under an aristocratic model is a problem for how it diverts wealth with little consideration for biological ties or affection, yet while heredity is in some regards at odds with legal inheritance, biological inheritance might continue to support the preference for the transmission of wealth through the male line. In attempting to understand the workings of heredity, Darwin notes that "a peculiarity is often

transmitted from one sex to both sexes, or to one sex alone, more commonly but not exclusively to the like sex” (13). Such an understanding of biological inheritance opens up the possibility that both daughters and sons might equally be gifted with their father’s biological inheritance, yet at the same time, this is presented as less common than the transmission of characteristics from father to son. While Sir Hugo is concerned about the position of his daughters, his preference toward biological lines is not blind to sex. After Grandcourt’s death, Sir Hugo finds “pleasure in being now master of his estates, able to leave them to his daughters, or a least—according to a view of inheritance which had just been strongly impressed on Daniel’s imagination—to take makeshift feminine offspring as intermediate to a satisfactory heir in a grandson” (647–8). The male line is still preferable to Sir Hugo. While close blood ties might be stronger than ties to a distant relative, the son is confirmed as the natural heir to the father.

Nevertheless, throughout the novel the incursion of legal mechanisms that divert the line of inheritance away from biological lines is painted as sickly. Sir Hugo’s property must legally be transmitted away from his direct descendents to his nephew, Grandcourt, a man with a complexion of “faded fairness” and “extensive baldness” of whom the narrator states that “it was perhaps not possible for a breathing man wide awake to look less animated” (93–94). Such descriptions embody the “dwindling energy of England” that Gillian Beer identifies as “related directly to the insistence on descent through the male line” (*Darwin’s Plots* 187). While the end of the male line of the Mallingers is painted in an unhealthy light, it is even more strongly depicted as immoral. Grandcourt, as the recipient of Sir Hugo’s wealth, is himself a decadent figure, a gambler who has had an affair with a married woman. Yet a greater moral issue than the character

who might receive the wealth is the way in which Grandcourt's inheritance comes as others are disinherited. Not only will Grandcourt's inheritance rob Sir Hugo's children, but his affair with Mrs. Glasher disadvantages her and Grandcourt's own natural children. In his affair with Mrs. Glasher, Grandcourt has shown wanton disrespect for lineage and the proper transmission of wealth as this affair has resulted in illegitimate offspring that cannot inherit since "a child born out of wedlock was in the exclusive custody of its mother; such a child was supposedly *fillius nulli*, the child of no (known) father" (Shanley 132); even though his parentage is not a mystery, it requires legal intervention for Grandcourt's son to have the possibility of inheriting his father's wealth since legally he has no father and thus no legal right to his fortune. Additionally, in winning her away from her husband, Grandcourt removes Mrs. Glasher from any legal expectation of provision. The unhealthy and immoral nature of legal inheritance contrasts with a strong natural drive behind biological inheritance. This anxiety over moments when legal inheritance does not follow biological inheritance suggests the importance that characters attribute to hereditary ties, opening up the possibility that heredity may have great power even separate from its ability to determine legal inheritance and prospects.

Gwendolen, though cut off from any legal inheritance by her family's dwindling fortunes, believes that she still holds a birth-right to a certain class position, the evidence of which she finds in her body. Gwendolen upholds the upper-class ideal of inborn position and believes herself "very well equipped for the mastery of life" by the virtue of her birth: the class it had connected her with, the education that class cultivated, and the beauty she displays (32). Thus Gwendolen develops no real achievements or work ethic, gaudy qualities that would be for her unfitting markers of merit. She is ultimately

repulsed by the idea of moving in a social realm where she is not valued for anything that she was born into but instead for the middle-class values of work and skill. When Gwendolen approaches Klesmer as she investigates the possibility of a career as an actress, “being taken on some other ground than that of her social rank and her beauty [becomes] bitter to her,” and she cannot accept his evaluation of her poor prospects in that profession and the work that would be required to be able to begin earning a living by the stage (229). The paired markings of beauty and social class reflect Gwendolen’s own pairing of these two elements, believing herself fitted for the class that her beauty reflects. Although she may be considering the world of work to establish financial independence, Gwendolen is surprised that she might be judged on anything other than the beauty and bearing that have hitherto gained her much admiration.

Gwendolen’s beauty and social rank are the sole aspects of her person by which she desires to be judged, and for her they are somewhat interrelated. While her family fortunes are lost, her beauty remains to testify to the social position that she believes it is her inborn right to inhabit, and indeed, it is her beauty that will enable her to make the kind of marriage match to Grandcourt that would allow her to realize that position. Her beauty might be debatable to others—certainly, the novel opens with this question, and it is then debated by those around the gaming tables—but it is not debatable to Gwendolen: “In Gwendolen’s habits of mind it had been taken for granted that she knew what was admirable and that she herself was admired. This basis of her thinking... was not easily to be overthrown” (5–6). With such an idea about her beauty and rearing fitting her for the upper classes, Gwendolen easily pictures herself as a

princess in exile, who in time of famine was to have her breakfast-roll made of the finest-bolted flour from the seven thin ears of wheat, and in a general decampment was to have her silver fork kept out of the baggage. How was this to be accounted for? The answer may seem to lie quite on the surface:—in her beauty, a certain unusualness about her, a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones. (33)

By understanding her role in life as reflected solely by her beauty, something that might easily be read on the surface, Gwendolen fails to understand herself or her body as consisting of more than her external appearances. Instead, she constructs a narrative for herself that will enable her to reconcile her beliefs about herself and her present situation.

Such beauty seems to Gwendolen evidence of her exceptionality, writing her elevated position on her very body. As Franco Moretti suggests, inheritance can be a form of “fairy-tale justice” where wealth and status are not gifts of grace, but rather something characters “*have a right to*” (205, emphasis in original). Gwendolen’s inheritance is lost, but she believes herself to be entitled to a certain position in society. Thus she positions herself, if not as the heroine of a family romance, orphaned and returned to correct position in society, as one who has undergone a similar fate. Instead of accepting the signs around her of her lower estate, she instead writes herself into a fairy tale where the truth of her identity is not reflected by her current position, but something internal. In marrying Grandcourt, she gains what she believes to be her rightful inheritance: “not only a vast rural estate, or a nice sum of money, or a title: it is [one’s] very identity” (Moretti 205). Gwendolen’s aim in life is to reclaim the social status that she believes she has inherited from her father allowing the appearance of her class

position to match her innate sense of identity (though, indeed, if social position might be tied to heredity, Gwendolen would have been more likely to inherit this from her maternal line). It is her unremitting desire to associate her identity with those above her inherited social rank that causes her to so misread her body and the inheritance that she might be due.

Gwendolen's desire to establish her own position is dependent upon the idea that bodies can be properly read to establish their position. Consequently, she extends this idea to others' bodies in order to verify its practicability. Gwendolen views this as a means of ordering the world, ensuring not only her own position in it but also authorizing the positions of those around her. Gwendolen likes to "call things by their right names, and put them in their proper places" as she does with her duller sister: "she has no ear for music, or language, or anything else. It would be much better for her to be ignorant, mamma: it is her *rôle*, and she would do it well" (22). These are not markers of merit or accomplishment; in pointing to her sister's lack of "ear," Gwendolen suggests that there is some innate inability to succeed in these areas of life, something that is carried within her body and shaped by her heredity as, notably, she is only her half-sister, the daughter of the inferior (in Gwendolen's mind) Captain Davilow, whose marriage to her mother Gwendolen resented.

Gwendolen's approach to ordering bodies is akin to the work of biopolitics where life itself comes under greater scrutiny as the state attempts to incorporate bodies into mechanisms of power in service to the state. While biopolitics is associated with the institutions of the liberal state such as censuses and laws, as Foucault acknowledges, the liberal state itself grows out of society: "[l]iberal thought does not start from the existence

of the state, find in government the means for achieving that end that the state would be for itself; it starts instead from society, which exists in a complex relation of exteriority and interiority vis-à-vis the state. It is society—as both condition and final end” (*Biopolitics* 319). This relationship between the state and society implies the role of social expectations in shaping the institutions through which the state will execute its biopolitical aims, but also the way in which society itself is a political entity capable of carrying out biopolitical actions. Gwendolen’s appropriation of the organization and management of bodies—if only in her head—is a reflection of the social workings of bio-power. The organization of bodies in *Daniel Deronda* is primarily along class and racial lines as established by the communities in which the characters live, but such an interpolation of order is both a reflection and extension of the biopolitical pressure to organize bodies and so structure the state. Given Gwendolen’s own attraction to the way in which birth serves as an ordering principle for her own life, it is unsurprising that she should categorize and rank those around her by their birthrights.

Though class far predates the emergence of the modern liberal state that is best associated with the bourgeoisie and, by extension, social mobility, class continued to serve a function in its support of bio-power in the nineteenth century because of how it provided a structure to organize bodies on economic grounds. It is, in this way, still a viable technique of power:

If the development of the great instruments of the state, as *institutions* of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations, the rudiments of anatomo- and bio-politics, created in the eighteenth century as *techniques* of power represented at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the



family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them. They also acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and the effects of hegemony. (Foucault, *Sexuality* 141)

The power of social hierarchies such as the class system supports the segregation necessary under bio-power. For Gwendolen, the class system is important as it can prevent unauthorized mixing as well as authorize her position as it separates her from those she considers beneath her, something that is of grave concern to her as she fears her own potential downfall and integration into lower social strata. In this way, Gwendolen internalizes the economic organization of bodies on which the economic production of the state relies as she adopts this organization as something that determines her identity.

As with her own claims to a class position on account of her heredity, Gwendolen sees the roles of others as related to their heredity. Such a form of sorting reflects the increasing importance of heredity in scientific investigations of the time: “In the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, a whole series of transformations take place [in natural history and biology] that take us from the identification of classificatory characteristics to the internal organization of the organism, and then from the organism in its anatomical-functional coherence to the constitutive or regulatory relationship with the milieu in which it lives” (Foucault, *Security* 77). Bodies are thus not only characterized in accordance with their own qualities, but by their relationship to the natural world as members of populations, which in the sphere of upper-class Victorian

life, is best expressed through ancestry. Yet while ancestry and social position might be a common way of ranking one's social connections in the past, Gwendolen's ideas are shaped by an understanding of the body as the site of hereditary transmission in such a way that one's inheritance can be read on the body. Gwendolen is thus constantly reading the physical aspects of those around her. This goes beyond a simple fairy-tale-like insistence that good people are beautiful and bad people are ugly—though this dichotomy would likely align with Gwendolen's construction of the world—to her intricate positioning of individuals based on their physical characteristics.

The descriptions of Gwendolen's aunt, uncle, and cousins, while spoken in the narrator's voice, convey Gwendolen's ideas about roles and emphasize the way in which these roles can be read in the body. Gwendolen acknowledges the role of the physical in determining identity through her exploration of familial likeness, but she extends beyond this to consider whether one's physical features may betray a biological inheritance that might truly fit one for certain roles. Mrs. Gascoigne is noted to bear "family likeness to her sister," the physical reflection of lineage, the lack of which troubles Daniel's sense of belonging early in the novel (22). Indeed, all the Gascoigne children carry this lineage, "each with a face of the same structural type—the straight brow, the nose suddenly straightened from an intention of being aquiline, the short upper lip, the short but strong and well-hung chin: there was even the same tone of complexion and set of the eye" (74–75). In such a context, the children's features contribute to their identity as they speak to the inherited characteristics that mark them as belonging to their family. However, the narrator expresses the way in which Gwendolen extends the possibility of the connection of physical characteristics to social identity in the description of Mr. Gascoigne:

One of his advantages was a fine person....There were no distinctively clerical lines in the face....he could not have been identified except as a gentleman with handsome dark features, a nose which began with an intention to be aquiline but suddenly became straight, and iron-grey hair. (23)

Gascoigne may be a clergyman, but his appearance betrays his ancestral class position, making his present position somewhat ill-fitting. Yet at the same time, Gascoigne is valued more highly in his role for the way in which he appears to belong above it. While this passage suggests that Gascoigne's appearance does not fit his role, it simultaneously implies that generally people do: that the gentry look like the gentry. Within *Daniel Deronda* there is not merely an association between physical attractiveness and rank, but there is a sense that one's belonging to a family and to a class can be read in the body, giving such differences biological authority.

But while Gwendolen believes in the possibility of using visual cues to order bodies, the limitations of this approach are shown in her and others' attempts to understand what Daniel's body reveals about his identity. Gwendolen is well aware of Daniel's physical attractiveness, that he is "young, handsome, distinguished in appearance" (5). Since, for her, an attractive appearance is a marker of position, or at least of her own entitlement to an upper-class position, she has no cause to doubt that he is an English gentleman. Indeed, this is commonly accepted by the community who, like Daniel, believe that it is a not-so-well-kept secret that, despite his foreign appearance, he is the illegitimate offspring of his guardian since "every one says he is the son of Sir Hugo Mallinger" (298). This myth overwhelms the community's inability to read Mallinger ancestry in Daniel's face. Yet as Sir Hugo's lack of the Mallinger nose is

somewhat concerning, they likewise acknowledge this problem with Daniel's appearance. As Lady Pentreath, speaking with the authority of the aristocracy, proclaims, "if he had been the heir, it would have been regretted that his face was not as unmistakably English as Sir Hugo's" (400). There is a clue to Daniel's identity that can be read on his body, if only one has the knowledge to read properly: "He puts me in mind of Italian paintings. One would guess, without being told, that there was foreign blood in his veins," opines Mrs. Davilow (298). Yet while she recognizes this difference, she cannot pinpoint it. Nevertheless, Mrs. Davilow demonstrates her openness to this foreignness as she places it in the frame of exoticism rather than the xenophobia, associating him with high art rather than menace.

Yet while those around Daniel lack the background knowledge that is necessary to read his body, Gwendolen also manages to misread her own body despite her access to all the information she might need to properly understand it. Gwendolen's body is perhaps the most misleading, as she sees it as a marker of her upper-class status and a link to her father. Gwendolen cannot see herself beyond the physical aspect of her body, "reducing the fullness of her being to the dimensions of her bodily image," not only as she poses before the mirror, but in every aspect of her life (Shuttleworth 196). But by focusing on the physical aspects of her body, she denies half her lineage by ignoring the background of her mother: "[s]he had no notion how her maternal grandfather got the fortune inherited by his two daughters, but he had been a West Indian—which seemed to exclude further question" (16). She does not know her father, as he died before her birth, but she knows that "her father's family was so high as to take no notice of her mamma," which is enough to give her a "sense of superior claims" (17, 10). As Sally Shuttleworth

argues, Gwendolen's "lack of hereditary roots is associated with her psychic disunity, her lack of an unquestioned centre of value" (189). Her inability to remember her father and her unwillingness to acknowledge her mother's ancestry results in Gwendolen's failure to develop an identity that is in conversation with all the details of her past. Gwendolen focuses on what she believes to be the evidence of her own body to the exclusion of other knowledge.

If Gwendolen, when faced with fairly extensive knowledge about her ancestry, misreads her body, it is unsurprising that Daniel, lacking all knowledge of his parentage, cannot read his body properly. He cannot see that his face fails to reflect his believed connection to the Mallinger family. Yet Daniel's failure to read the body is more than a simple lack of knowledge. Rather, he expresses a desire to know the body in a way that accesses more than the impressions given by physical appearance. Daniel attempts to read Gwendolen when he first meets her, asking himself, "[w]as she beautiful or not beautiful?" (1). Though opinion might vary as to the answer, and it is certainly debated by others in the casino, such an aesthetic question should be easy for Daniel to answer given that the object of his question was right before his eyes. But Daniel does not choose to form such an opinion by mere observation. It is in keeping with this desire for more information that Daniel cannot recognize his Jewish identity. Steven Marcus remarks in his oft-cited note that Daniel "never looked down. In order for the plot of *Daniel Deronda* to work, Deronda's circumcised penis must be invisible, or non-existent" (Marcus 41n). However, if Daniel was circumcised,<sup>1</sup> the limitations of reading the body in the novel support the idea that Daniel might not be able to trust himself to read his body correctly.

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<sup>1</sup> I am, rather, swayed by Jane Irwin's note to Eliot's correspondence that "[i]n context, however, a more likely conjecture would be that Deronda's mother dictated the non-observance of the practice" (Eliot, [*Daniel Deronda Notebooks*] 341n)

If faces can be so deceptive, how could an external choice like circumcision be trusted? Since “it was unquestionably an acquired characteristic and therefore not inheritable,” Daniel dismisses its importance in determining ancestry in much the same way as contemporary race scientists did (Novak 106). Without some other form of confirmation as to his identity, Daniel’s circumcision, like his lack of resemblance to Sir Hugo and his foreignness, is impossible for Daniel to read. As Shuttleworth maintains, “Eliot is not arguing, in *Daniel Deronda*, that reason should be abandoned for a vague, implausible, mystical faith, but that appearances should not be accepted unchallenged” (181). While observation of physical characteristics might provide clues to be investigated, for the characters in *Daniel Deronda*, they cannot provide a full explanation of the body whose invisible history attests to the limitations of trusting in only empirical ways of knowing.

Daniel’s body, while misconstrued by both himself and others, is more accessible to those who can read it outside of the context of an English country home. Daniel’s body is read incorrectly by those around him, partly because of the assumption about who fathered him, but partly because of a gap in knowledge. He thus remains a mystery in his own social circles, but when Mirah shows up and Daniel begins to move amongst the Jews in his search for her family, his identity is more easily read on his face. When he begins to travel among the Jews, they recognize Daniel as one of their own, reading his body as he cannot due to his previous prejudices: “What is your parentage—your mother’s family—her maiden name?” he is asked as he is leaving the synagogue, gesturing toward the traditional Jewish law by which Jewish belonging is passed through the mother. Daniel cannot answer this, but he eschews his potential ethnicity by stating, “I am an Englishman,” collapsing family heritage into his nationality and therefore, by

extension, his race (331). Daniel's ignorance of his birth makes him incapable of understanding himself and his position in the world. His identity is caught up in what he has been raised to be by Sir Hugo: an English gentleman. Lacking the knowledge of any inheritance beyond this one, he cannot but cling to it. Yet his very presence at the synagogue indicates that there is something contained within the body, still hidden to Daniel, that is attempting to draw him toward this unremembered ancestral connection. Daniel's body—the vessel of his cultural inheritance and the outward expression of his ancestry—is finally read correctly by the German Jews that he encounters who can read his hitherto unaccessed identity on his face. At this moment Daniel's two inheritances—his physical appearance and the invisible history that he carries inside himself—are finally connected. His spiritual yearning, created by this inherited history, draws him to the synagogue, and his physical appearance authorizes his previously unknown identity.

Daniel's ability to recognize his ancestry increases as he encounters Mirah and is able to begin to access his invisible history. Not only is she herself enchanting, but she introduces Daniel to a picture of Jewishness that speaks to the yearning within him. It is clear that Daniel's sympathies are moving toward accepting himself as Jewish, that he carries his people inside himself. When Mirah sings a Jewish hymn, Daniel recalls his trip to the synagogue in Frankfurt and the service he observed; she asks, “[d]id it go to your heart?...I thought none but our people would feel that” (337). The inherited connection to his people thus extends beyond Daniel's physical features to the “unmapped country within us which would have to be taken into account in an explanation of our gusts and storms” (248). Daniel might not yet know his own ancestry, but it provides the explanation for the emotional reactions he has to the music and the

way he is so keenly drawn to Mirah and the mystery of her family. While there is something about Daniel's past that can be read in his body, there is something inside him, invisible, that connects him to the past.

It is here, through Daniel, that Eliot begins to investigate the invisible history contained within the body, questioning the limits of heredity and the understanding of what an inheritance might be. What Daniel can know about himself through observation is incredibly limited, but the information exerts its presence through the longings and yearnings within his body. As Levine argues, in Eliot's later novels:

Without abandoning "realism," she increasingly allied it, not with a simple empiricism, certainly not with materialism, but with what we might call a positivist idealism. "Definite substantial reality" was growing less definite, less substantial. "Forms bred on the mists of feeling" might well turn out, under the discipline of scientific control and verifications, to be more true than what our commonsense tells us is substantial reality. (Levine, *Ethics* 29)<sup>2</sup>

Within Daniel's yearnings and sympathetic response to the music he hears is the truth of his inheritance that he is unable to access through empirical means. And yet such seeming mysticism is not wholly fanciful. Rather, the novel demonstrates "a theory of scientific method that stresses deduction and the role of imagination" (Shuttleworth 179). Shuttleworth links such an approach to Darwin, and indeed, the influence of Eliot's reading of Darwin can be felt in her investigation of Daniel's inheritance.

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<sup>2</sup> Levine alludes to Eliot's review of John Ruskin's *Modern Painters* published in the *Westminster Review* 65 (1856) p. 626 in which she states, "The truth of infinite value that he teaches is *realism*—the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality."



The mystery of Daniel's family and inheritance is aligned with the scientific theories of heredity that were circulating in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The narrator's treatment of Daniel's emerging awareness of his cultural background suggests the way in which such unconscious memories may simply be aspects of the world science has yet to explain:

The average man may regard this sensibility on the question of birth as preposterous and hardly credible; but with the utmost respect for his knowledge as the rock from which all other knowledge is hewn, it must be admitted that many well-proved facts are dark to the average man, even concerning the action of his own heart and the structure of his own retina. A century ago he and all his forefathers had not had the slightest notion of that electric discharge by means of which they had all wagged their tongues mistakenly; any more than they were awake to the secluded anguish of exceptional sensitiveness into which many a carelessly-begotten child of man is born. (426)

In writing this summary of the progress of science, Eliot demonstrates her keen awareness of emerging theories of biological inheritance. While Beer points to the fact that Eliot was an early reader of *On the Origin of Species* and that her understanding of Darwin's work influenced her own writing, Eliot did not necessarily whole-heartedly subscribe to the theory of natural selection nor represent Darwin's ideas with precision. Indeed, while Eliot did read Darwin with interest, she was also close friends with Herbert Spencer, and as Nancy L. Paxton notes, "it was in Spencer's early essays, and not in the *Origin*, that Eliot first encountered the 'developmental theory'" (16). Even outside of her friendship with Spencer, it would be anachronistic to suggest that Eliot's own reading of

*Origin*—or even Darwin’s writing of it—was in line with twenty-first-century evolutionary theory and current knowledge of genetic predispositions. As Peter Bowler argues, “*The Origin of Species* played a crucial role, not because it convinced everyone of the power of natural selection, but because it catalysed a transition to evolutionism within a still largely developmental world view” (135). With the publication of *Origin*, evolution became more commonly accepted, but it was still very much shaped by earlier ideas of the inheritance of acquired characteristics proposed by Lamarck and supported by Spencer. Eliot’s own exploration of heredity in *Daniel Deronda* reflect this popular understanding of evolution and allows her to apply her own scientific knowledge and approach to depict an understanding of heredity that reads as mystical at times.

Though Daniel has so much trouble reading his body to discern his identity, when his ancestry is confirmed by his mother, Daniel is immediately able to recognize himself as Jewish despite not being raised in the culture, a dramatization of the unknown limits of biological inheritance throughout the nineteenth century. Even after Darwin’s publication of *On the Origin of Species*, with its insistence on “how unimportant the direct effects of the conditions of life are in comparison with the laws of reproduction, of growth, and of inheritance,” popular conceptions of evolution often relied on an understanding of the inheritance of acquired characteristics (11). Indeed, even Darwin allows for such a possibility: “If we suppose any habitual action to become inherited—and I think it can be shown that this does sometimes happen—then the resemblance between what originally was a habit and an instinct becomes so close as not to be distinguished” (156). Where characteristics that affect the physical body are, for Darwin, more an effect of variation and inheritance, and physical changes within an individual’s life are, for the most part,

not passed on to the next generation, he leaves room for an understanding of habit as heritable that aligns with Spencer's established ideas about the inheritance of habit.

Working within this Lamarckian framework, evolutionary thinker Herbert Spencer considers memory and instinct to be similar in that both are internal responses of the organism to external, or environmental, experiences, memories being established when the relations were uncommon but shifting to instinct when sufficiently repeated. Lamarck had already framed characteristics as habits, noting that "every species has derived from the action of the environment in which it has long been placed the *habits* which we find in it. These habits have themselves influenced the parts of every individual in the species, to the extent of modifying those parts and bringing them into relation with the acquired habits" (35, emphasis in original). In so doing, Lamarck opens the possibility of understanding evolution as shaping more than merely physical characteristics, although Lamarck himself tends to focus on the organs of living beings. Spencer, with his own interest in the social and psychological, picks up on this use of "habits" and argues, "[b]y further multiplication of experience, the internal relations are at last automatically registered in correspondence with the external ones; and so, conscious memory passes into unconscious or organic memory" (*Psychology* 563). If instincts derive from habits repeated in the individual's lifetime and memory has the possibility of operating along the same lines, the invisible history that extends beyond human records might inhabit the body through such organic memory. More than that, such instinct or organic memory seems to extend beyond the lineage of individual families to the greater population as "[e]very one of the countless connections among the fibres of the cerebral masses, answers to some permanent connection of phenomena in

the experience of the race” (*Psychology* 581). What begins as the habit of the individual thus can be written in the bodies of its offspring and can tie together larger segments of the population by a sort of shared, though potentially difficult to access, memory.

The belief in the possibility that heredity might contain strains of memory can be found throughout European thought in the nineteenth century as the limits of biological inheritance were still undetermined. Laura Otis takes Spencer’s phrase, “organic memory,” as the title for her book that explores the way in which the theory of acquired characteristics was extended by thinkers and writers in nineteenth-century Europe to encompass the idea of hereditary cultural memory:

The inheritance-of-acquired-characters argument made it possible to view memory and heredity, habit and instinct, as points on a continuum. One absorbed one’s environment, breathed it in, to use Emile Zola’s metaphor, responded to it by strengthening a limb or forging a new habit. Because of this steady accumulation, the body of an individual was a record, a palimpsest, perhaps, of its interaction with its environment, in its own lifetime, in its grandparents’ lifetimes, and in the lifetimes of its distant ancestors. (6)

Otis demonstrates how in the nineteenth century memory could be seen as extending beyond the individual to encompass generations as it was constructed as a biological form of inheritance. History was thus no longer hidden away in the past, but a condition of the present, the extensive expanse of time made tangible as ancestral history could be condensed within the individual. Daniel’s race and cultural background is not only marked in his face as something visible to others, but it is something that he carries within him: “Representing an embodied link between past, present, and future, the Jew is

an historical type and a type of embodied history” (Novak 104). In this schema, Daniel is capable of carrying within him not only his own experience, but also that of his parents, grandparents, and, indeed, that of the whole Jewish people.

Indeed, Daniel Novak asserts that there is something peculiar about Jewish identity that impels Eliot to write such a narrative of racial identity founded in organic memory. In his analysis of *Daniel Deronda* in relation to Francis Galton’s composite portraits, Novak highlights the problems of constructing the Jews as a race even in the nineteenth century. Rather, he sees connections forming along different lines in the novel:

Eliot refines and redefines a technique of racial identification no longer dependent upon visible difference in order to legitimate (and produce) a new form of racial difference. In other words, the inheritance of Jewish peculiarity gives way to the peculiar inheritance of the Jew. The Jewish “type” emerges only as a sign of a spiritual inheritance and a future embodiment in a “new individuality” of the composite national body. (94)

Given this association with a spiritual inheritance that does not necessarily align with the nation-state, Jewish identity—in contrast to English, Italian, or German identity—is particularly apt for exploring the possibilities of organic memory.

Indeed, it is important to understand how Jewishness, generally understood as racial in the nineteenth century,<sup>3</sup> encompasses a deep-seated cultural component that further heightens the possibility of understanding this identity as more than superficial. While Carolyn Lesjak’s assertion misses the nuances of the forces that impact destiny, she is aware that “[i]n search precisely of such ‘internal continuity,’ *Daniel Deronda*’s

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<sup>3</sup> “It was only toward the end of the nineteenth century that anthropologists had begun to deny that the Jews were a race at all” (Novak 107).

narrative grounds itself is an *innate* sense of race” (37, emphasis in original). Marianne Novy elucidates Eliot’s use of the word “race”: “[i]ndeed, when Eliot used the word *race*, the meaning was partly cultural, because of her belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics—experience transmitted by heredity. The most important part of Jewishness for Daniel is not simply biology but the Jewish culture that his mother has rejected” (47, emphasis in original). This ancestral memory of Jewish traditions is much stronger than that of the English gentleman that his own experience encompasses. Daniel may seem to have the option of turning his back on Judaism and returning to his life as Sir Hugo’s ward, but this discounts the intense pressure he finds written in the body. Thus, what reads as choice is not really a choice for Daniel, for it would mean fighting against an inexorable identity, in fact denying the only identity that his invisible history would allow him to claim.

The technique of employing such organic memory, influenced by her reading of scientific thinkers of the time, allows Eliot to bring a certain authenticity in her means of accessing the past in *Daniel Deronda*. Matthew Beaumont, speaking of Eliot’s contract with the reader at the beginning of *Adam Bede*,<sup>4</sup> notes “the inherent contradictions of realism’s attempt to reconstruct or resurrect a past that has effectively been lost” (5). Though *Daniel Deronda* is Eliot’s only novel set in a contemporary time period, by bringing to light Daniel’s invisible past, she nevertheless resurrects the past within its pages. Where realism may still break down in its inability to truly represent the past, within the context of the novel, the resurrection of the past gains veracity through the

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<sup>4</sup> “With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen, I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799” (Eliot, *Adam Bede* 61).

invocation of such organic memory. Its details may not surface except through detection, but its power in the present of the storyline attests to its real presence in the lives of the characters, and by extension to the reader.

Yet while this concept of history as accessible seemed to offer great potential for knowing the past, its presence within the individual could also be a burden in the present. Otis states that “[i]f the individual inherited his or her ancestors’ memories, as one inherited facial features, a feeling of continuity, even of immortality, could be achieved” (xi). This immortality, though providing a sense of identity, comes with expectations, projecting into the future at the same moment as it reaches into the past. Daniel’s invisible history is a gift that, like an entail, comes with certain expectations of preservation. Due to its biological nature, its rootedness in the body, this sense of history can become inescapable. For Daniel Deronda, this organic memory passed on from his family shapes his course in life, exerting pressures and inciting desires, preventing him from practicing the kind of autonomy that is preached in the bourgeois gospel of self-help.

Daniel is unable to know his Jewish heritage early in the novel because of his inability to properly read the clues of his body and information that has been withheld from him, yet traces remain that draw him toward Mirah and Mordecai and their Jewish history. His inability to recognize his invisible history through physical features coincides with the way in which his culture is implanted in him: “Instead of a physical inheritance, Eliot emphasizes the Jewish national consciousness” (Novak 94). This kind of national consciousness is not merely something that must be developed, but something that seems to reside in Daniel’s body, which Mordecai identifies as “an inherited yearning—the

effect of brooding, passionate thought in many ancestors” (681). When in Frankfurt, Daniel is drawn to the synagogue, not because he expects to find Mirah’s family there, but because knowing her has awakened his desire to know more about the Jewish people. Even before encountering Mirah and Mordecai, Daniel already knows of his missing spiritual and cultural inheritance; though he did not know where it lay, the awareness of this void suggests the way in which cultural inheritance is deeply ingrained in a form of invisible history. Given the context of Mordecai’s vision, this realization seems almost mystical, yet in Daniel’s story it is not presented in a superstitious matter, but rather as a reflection of the uncertain limits of biological inheritance as understood in the nineteenth century.

While Daniel at first rejects this identity, he comes to recognize this invisible history through his relationship with Mordecai, for it is through Mordecai that Daniel gains his spiritual inheritance, an inheritance that is more powerful in its ability to shape his identity than his mere physical aspect. Cabbala doctrine in which spirits are born again (489) indicates that Deronda can take up a spiritual inheritance from Mordecai who tells him, “[y]ou are even as my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother—the heritage is yours—there is no doubt to divide us” giving Daniel “[a] spiritual destiny” (517, 451). While Daniel carries an innate Jewishness inside himself throughout the novel, in his contact with Mordecai, Daniel is able to receive a further inheritance from his mentor that, like Daniel’s own organic memory, derives from the accumulated experience of generations of Jews. Though Daniel’s body contains his organic memory, his body does not contain this spiritual inheritance but can only make him ready to receive it. Mordecai thus commissions Daniel:



You will be my life: it will be planted afresh; it will grow. You shall take the inheritance; it has been gathering for ages. The generations are crowding on my narrow life as a bridge: what has been and what is to be are meeting there; and the bridge is breaking. But I have found you. You have come in time. You will take the inheritance which the base son refuses because of the tombs which the plow and harrow may not pass over or the gold-seeker disturb: you will take the sacred inheritance of the Jew. (453)

Mordecai recognizes the way in which time—the past and the future—meet to become an inherited calling in his own life. This inheritance, like an entailed inheritance, not only requires the receiver to meet certain criteria, criteria that Mordecai identifies in Daniel, but it also places certain obligations on him. While such an inheritance may seem like a burden, it exactly the type of yoke Daniel wishes to take up: “Many of us complain that half our birthright is sharp duty: Deronda was more inclined to complain that he was robbed of this half” (425). This is largely due to the way in which he has no future laid out for himself other than Sir Hugo’s call to office which does not seem to fit him. Daniel owns his Jewish heritage in the end because, through Mordecai, he is able to experience not only the belonging that an inheritance suggests, but also the sharp duty that he has lacked all his life. He becomes willing to take this yoke despite the limitations it would impose, for without the yoke, Daniel would lack both identity and purpose. When he is finally able to meet his mother, he tells her “you have restored me my inheritance...you have been saved from robbing my people of my service and me of my duty” (601). Despite her desires to the contrary, Daniel accepts the duty that his grandfather required. Duty and inheritance are thus inextricably linked for Daniel as he only fully comes to

terms with his ancestry by answering the call to become the instrument through which the invisible history of the Jews can be ushered into the future.

While Daniel's inherited yearning pulls him toward an acceptance of his Jewish heritage and a full commitment to it, Daniel's own mother provides a contrast as someone who forges an identity for herself by rejecting her invisible history. The Princess Halm-Eberstein sees her inheritance as a burden and tells Daniel "the bondage I hated for myself I wanted to keep you from. What better could the most loving mother have done? I relieved you from the bondage of having been born a Jew" (569). The tie that is so strong in Daniel's life, the one that pulls on him despite being reared outside the culture, is one that the Princess manages to successfully cut. She does what Gwendolen cannot: employs and develops her talents for singing to succeed in a realm where women are not prized merely for their ancestry, but rather for their skills and hard work. The Princess is an example of taking on an identity other than that which reflects her invisible history, and she attempts to force this onto Daniel, assuring him, "[y]ou are an English gentleman. I secured you that" (569). Yet Daniel knows the impossibility of adopting an identity that is at odds with his organic memory: "You did not know what you secured me. How could you choose my birthright for me?" (569). The Princess mistakenly thinks her individual autonomy can supersede the call of hereditary destiny, failing to recognize the farce of her assumed identity. Daniel, on the other hand, recognizes that his invisible history is too strong to be quickly painted over, suggesting that, while the Princess can choose to remake herself, such a revision is mere artifice, not something that has passed into instinct such that it could be passed on to her son. Though Daniel is completely cut

off from his biological heritage, the actions of his mother are not capable of overriding the identity that is written in his body.

Nevertheless, the Princess's rejection in her own lifetime suggests the possibility of eschewing one's biological inheritance and choosing a new path through the freedom that class mobility and the marketplace afford. Much as Lady Audley remakes herself through the successful negotiation of artifice and performance, the Princess, skilled in acting is, if nothing else, able to adopt a new character. While the Lamarckian aspects of Daniel's invisible history shape what seems to be an unwavering destiny, they likewise suggest the possibility of the kind of change that the Princess envisions. As Bowler contends, "Lamarckism played a major role in nineteenth-century evolutionism because—unlike Darwin's natural selection of random variation—it allowed the effects of individual effort and initiative to play a role in evolution" (92). While his mother's choice does not have an impact on Daniel's inheritance, the freedom she feels she has to do so is supported by this belief in the effect of individual effort. But Lamarck recognizes that

*[p]rogress in complexity of organisation exhibits anomalies here and there in the general series of animals, due to the influence of environment and of acquired habits...Nevertheless, in spite of the apparent directions that I have just mentioned, the general plan of nature and the uniformity of her procedure, however much she varies her methods, are still quite easily distinguished. (70, emphasis in original).*

The Princess's attempts to shift the course of her development away from the influence of her organic memory read as an anomaly, and her decision to cut herself off from both her

past and her future in Daniel reads as tragic and disadvantageous, a line that is best off dying out. Indeed, the Princess is perhaps the very embodiment of anomaly, for despite her hereditary tie to Daniel, there is little similarity between them: “He had often pictured her face in his imagination as one which had a likeness to his own: he saw some of the likeness now, but amidst more striking differences” (567). While the Princess sees giving Daniel up as the best way to break him of his Jewishness, it is this very act that contributes most strongly to his desire to embrace it. With no other sense of familial identity, Daniel clings to what his body reveals to him through the yearning he has experienced.

While Daniel’s invisible history is such a strong pull in his life, the possibility of an unbroken connection to an ancient past is not supported by either his life or that of the other characters in the novel. Though Daniel and Gwendolen wish to seize on the way in which their connection to previous generations is written in their bodies, Gwendolen’s misreading of her own body, for example, points to what she wishes to repress and the winding ways of heredity. The inter-class marriage of her own parents, Grandcourt’s affair, the Arrowpoints’ attempt to marry their daughter to a fortune, and Klesmer, the “felicitous combination of the German, the Slave and the Semite,” suggest that it is a challenge to read the body for hereditary lineage for due to the intermingling of ancestral lines (38). Deronda has trouble recognizing his own Jewishness because, though he may appear Jewish to the man in the Frankfurt synagogue (or at the very least be assumed to be Jewish due to his presence there), others who identify as Jewish do not necessarily fit expectations of physical appearance. When Deronda goes to Mordecai’s meeting with the other mostly Jewish intellectuals, the narrator states that “pure English blood...did not

declare itself predominantly in the party at present assembled,” yet at the same time, few are clearly Jewish either, being “Scotch,” “Celtic,” or “easily passing for Englishmen of unusually cordial manners” (473, 474). Though at this point in the novel Daniel believes he can now discern Jewishness, the melange of characters before him suggests that such simple classifications are impossible.

It is, in fact, this possibility of mixing that causes Mordecai to court Daniel so fervently, to encourage him to connect with his invisible history so that his own remembered past might support Mordecai’s vision for his people. As Novak points out, “Deronda is a model Jew, then, not despite, but because of his composite and abstract body” (115). What makes Daniel’s role so important at the end of the novel is that he is shaped by both nature and nurture. Daniel’s combination of Jewish blood and English education allows him to become Mordecai’s ideal spokesman for the Jewish race. He exemplifies Mordecai’s vision of an English Jew who can lift his people up by presenting a face of Judaism that is—if physically somewhat foreign-looking—in almost all other ways attractive and comfortably English: “he must be a Jew, intellectually cultured, morally fervid...but his face and frame must be beautiful and strong, he must have been used to all the refinements of social life, his voice must flow with a full and easy current, his circumstances be free from sordid need: he must glorify the possibilities of the Jew” (428). Mordecai’s quest for this representative of his race is ultimately fulfilled as it aligns with Daniel’s quest to find his purpose. In offering Daniel a spiritual and cultural inheritance, Mordecai gives him this purpose, but with the expectation that he will be an emissary for the Jewish people in England.

Yet as much as Daniel is well integrated into the English culture at the beginning of the novel and later represents a seemingly unthreatening representation of Judaism, there is no place for him within England's borders once he claims a Jewish identity. As much as *Daniel Deronda* appears liberal in its respect for the commingling of races and classes, as much as it challenges the possibility of clear distinctions between such organizing principles, its conclusion suggests a narrative imperative to maintain a traditional sense of order through segregation. Klesmer may make an intriguing figure, m elange that he is, yet he remains on the edges of polite society. As Bernard Semmel argues, "the narrator views, sympathetically but not approvingly" Klesmer's vision of "a fusion of the races" (120). While Gwendolen tells Daniel, "You are just the same as if you were not a Jew," this is not borne out in the novel (729). Once Daniel accepts his Jewish heritage, his relationships with the English gentry change and become more distant. Most notably, Sir Hugo does not fulfill the role of surrogate father at Daniel's wedding. Rather, he looks on at a distance, considering how "it was as pretty a story as need be that this fine creature and his favourite Dan should have turned out to be formed for each other" (694). This seemingly romantic sentiment also serves to naturalize racial segregation. Biological inheritance thus proves to be an organizing principle over generations, restricting the futures of the people it shapes not only in their own lifetimes but in directing their reproductive futures.

Yet the pressure to maintain divisions between Englishness and Jewishness is not one-sided. While discovering his heritage is crucial for Daniel, as with all inheritances, his discovery of his Jewish blood necessitates a looking forward to the inheritance of his children as much as a looking backward to his ancestors. Daniel and Mirah ensure any

potential children's racial inheritance—an inheritance that they both almost lost—by pairing blood and culture. Certainly, if, as this novel would lead us to believe, culture can be transmitted biologically, to marry a non-Jew would dilute the child's inheritance, something that, for a people that have constantly lived among other nations, is a very real threat. Thus the segregation of Daniel from the people among whom he was raised is naturalized, and he accepts and extends this division by leaving England with the hopes of creating a new political reality for the Jewish people.

In embracing this form of segregation as the endpoint of his biological inheritance, Daniel demonstrates the way in which anxieties about the commingling of different races and classes are manifested in the Victorian era in a form of biopolitics. Daniel's body becomes a site of bio-power, not simply because it might be ordered and organized by the state, but also as it seems to exert its own power of ordering from within. The drive inside Daniel to find a national identity outside of England naturalizes biopolitical institutions that might organize bodies: if bodies themselves exert pulls to associate with like bodies, surely state intervention is merely extending the workings of nature to create order. As Foucault notes, "Liberalism... is imbued with the principle: 'One always governs too much'—or at least, one should always suspect that one governs too much" (*Biopolitics* 319). If the body exerts such pressure to categorize itself through this understanding of the past, the liberal freedom of the state can be maintained as government regulations and institutions are not necessary to secure the categorization of bodies. Indeed, it is the very freedom of bodies such as Daniel's to categorize themselves that contributes to state goals of understanding individuals as members of populations. Though he is the one excluded by it, Daniel has so internalized this biopolitical pressure

that he willingly removes himself from the liberal state of Britain to support its attempts to organize its population in such a way that affirms the pure English heritage that characters like Klesmer challenge.

While Daniel will not remain in England, he still serves to bring his Jewish and English roots together as he strives to remake Judaism in England's image. Daniel can uphold Englishness as he states, "[t]he effect of my education can never be done away with. The Christian sympathies in which my mind was reared can never die out of me....But I consider it my duty...to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people" (600). Under the umbrella of supporting Jewish identity through the political enfranchisement associated with a homeland, Daniel attempts to suppress the troublesome aspect of Jewish identity, that of being a wandering people who can easily mix and mingle with a variety of nations. Daniel chooses to travel to the east "to become better acquainted with the condition of [his] race in various countries there.... Restoring a political existence to [his] people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, such as the English have, though they too are scattered over the face of the globe" (730). Daniel furthers his support of the British state by replicating it in his vision of a new homeland for the Jews, predicated on the same organizational model as the nation he is leaving, supplanting its techniques of management onto this imagined Jewish state. This Jewish state supports British biopolitical aims in a rather imperialist fashion: while Daniel will not remain in England, he still brings his Jewish and English memories together as he strives to remake Jewish identity in the image of British identity in the Middle East. His invisible history gives Daniel the identity he is seeking by connecting



him to the past but at the cost of denying him a future as an English gentleman, the path that his mother and Sir Hugo hoped to prepare him for.

His body's ability to assert history and determine destiny seems to give a purpose to Daniel's life that he hitherto had lacked, but such unchecked direction also contains bleak overtones. In *Rassenhygiene als Wissenschaft und Staatsaufgabe* (1936) eugenicist Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer wrote that "[b]iological heredity is certainly a destiny, and accordingly, we prove ourselves masters of this destiny insofar as we take biological heredity to be the task that has been assigned to us and which we must fulfill" (qtd. in Agamben 148). This sentiment, which gives Daniel hope for a future for himself and the Jewish people, was paradoxically employed by Verschuer in support of racial hygiene under National Socialism and would lead to the deaths of millions of Jews. Where Daniel sees hope in tracing a destiny from his invisible history, this foreclosure on other possible futures through accessing the past is potentially deadly, suggesting the extremes of bio-power that Agamben reveals in his exploration of *homo sacer* which is, "in its capacity to be killed but not sacrificed, a living pledge to his subject to a power of death," a possibility that lies beneath the surface of strong biological determinism (99). Daniel does not face such issues within the novel, yet his trip to the Holy Land suggests his own expulsion, where his lack of belonging means he, like Lady Audley, must be excluded from the English nation, not for any crime, but because of a hereditary inheritance that speaks to a history that is not of England.

While Eliot explores the Jewish culture with great sympathy and sensitively presents characters such as the Arrowpoints and Klesmer who represent the shifting nature of the English nation both socially and ethnically, the novel finishes by reasserting

and naturalizing established social and cultural divisions through the action of biological and legal inheritance. Though Eliot challenges negative stereotypes of Jewish people as well as the traditional institutions of legal inheritance that work to create Gwendolen's unhappiness, through the workings of biological inheritance, her characters are returned to their "correct" position in society.

The turn to biological inheritance expressed in the novel serves to segregate its characters in much the same way as older models of inheritance, delineating between segments of the population in order to uphold the existing power structure. In pairing inheritance with heredity, the resolution of the novel can be read as natural and, if not morally correct, at the very least to be expected. Gwendolen's aim to take up the role that she believes is written on her body ultimately fails. Her lack of sufficient inborn claim to that social position results in it being stripped away in favour of a biological heir. Grandcourt's son, who carries Grandcourt's blood, is presented with a financial inheritance that aligns with his biological one. Additionally, Grandcourt's decision to accept a payoff of £50,000 to give up his claims to Sir Hugo's estates ensures that Sir Hugo's daughters can inherit his wealth, at least for another generation. But most importantly, in discovering his true parentage, Daniel Deronda comes into an inheritance where financial gains are superseded by the spiritual and cultural inheritance that already runs through his veins.

This correct position reads as "right" and "natural" as it is affirmed by other characters, particularly Sir Hugo, the character that stands in as the representative of the landed gentry and the arbiter of the necessity for and the importance of continued social divisions. While the Arrowpoints have great ambitions for marrying their daughter into

the gentry, Sir Hugo thinks “it shows the Arrowpoints’ good sense, however, to have adopted the affair,” after she runs away with Klesmer, a sentiment that is expanded upon by Lady Pentreath, since “[a]s to *mésalliance*, there’s no blood on any side” (367). Thus, in marrying Klesmer, whose foreignness attests to his lack of belonging in the English gentry, the Arrowpoints are affirmed as still assuredly middle class and therefore outsiders in the country home despite their fortunes. Additionally, while he notes his disgust at the pittance that Grandcourt leaves Gwendolen, Sir Hugo ultimately admits that “since the boy in there, this was really the best alternative for the disposal of the estates. Grandcourt had nobody nearer than his cousin. And it’s a chilling thought that you go out of this life only for the benefit of a cousin....it’s the next worse thing to having only a life interest in your estates” (687–8). And, of course, Sir Hugo attests to the appropriateness of Daniel’s marriage to Mirah, whose Jewish blood likewise alienates her from the English country home.

The chaos emerging in Victorian era through such suggestions as a fusion of the races and increased class mobility creates an unsettling feeling that is pushed back against in the narrative. As the narrative of *Daniel Deronda* wraps up, so too do many of the problematic instances of social climbing and racial mixing within the novel. Order prevails, and biological inheritance presents itself in the text as a new means of asserting these old ideals, preserving the class and racial boundaries that have long been entrenched in the English social order.

*Daniel Deronda*, centred on the lives of Daniel and Gwendolen and focused on the space of the country estate seems at times very limited in the scope of its interests, yet the novel paradoxically opens up onto the greater space of the nation and the world as

these characters search for markers of their identity within their own bodies. In doing so, the novel touches on the concerns of the nation that exist just beyond the doorstep of the country house, a nation that continues to be very much dependent on the solidity and power of this old order at the same time that it not only benefits from the economic changes brought about by industrialization and imperialism but also recognizes the instability that these changes bring about. Eliot, in exploring the world in a realist mode, seeking to represent it as it is, peoples her novel with diverse characters that represent this changing face of Britain. Nevertheless, the novel does not unsettle its readers in following this thread to its fullest expression, instead seeking to affirm the strength of Britain by buttressing the position of the ideal English gentleman by carefully erecting barriers between this privileged position and those who stand apart from it.

Biological inheritance comes to operate like the aristocratic concerns for ancestry and entail, shaping the position and destiny of the characters in the novel. More than simply a means of transmitting physical characteristics, biological inheritance in the novel reflects the interest of Spencer in the way in which it is a means of transmitting organic memory, an invisible history that allows the past to influence the presence. As it is received by the characters, most noticeably Daniel, this invisible history is made to shape his destiny and determine his identity. It is in this way that organic memory operates to allow people to sort themselves, contributing to the state's desire to ensure the strength and purity of the English race, tied up in class, as the aristocracy sets example for country. And it is in this way that the biopolitical concern that underlies Darwin's project in *Origin*—that of understanding species and races, the divisions that exist between living things—becomes fully fleshed as social differences are painted as

biological differences that are ultimately inevitable, operating according to grand overarching laws that cannot be escaped.

**Chapter 3**  
**The Literary Inheritance of Francis Galton:**  
**From Statistical Criticism to Eugenic Utopia**

I was just going to ask a very foolish question, “What should we read for?” For? why to know the facts; but I should read in a quite different manner now from what I did when I had my great early fit of reading. Then ’twas only for the diversion of the story, now it should be to make myself and others better.

– Pope<sup>1</sup>

Present people with statistics or stories: stories are more basic to who we are.

– Margaret Atwood

Inspired by the power and influence that Charles Darwin attributed to heredity in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Francis Galton developed a program of eugenics that he believed could shape Britain’s progress as a nation by managing the evolutionary development of the British race. In *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (1883), Galton summarizes this aim as “to learn how far history may have shown the practicability of supplanting inefficient human stock by better strains, and to consider whether it might not be our duty to do so by such efforts as may be reasonable, thus exerting ourselves to further the ends of evolution more rapidly and with less distress than if events were left to their own course” (1). While this project, Galton’s life’s work, was largely a process of research and analysis and the development of dictates that could be put in place to shape the reproduction of the nation, it was also a project of imagination; not only was Galton himself imagining a different future for Britain, but in promoting his program, he appealed to the imaginations of his readers in an attempt to get them to share his vision.

Only a few pages into *Inquiries*, Galton assists his readership in imagining what the British race might look like if the nation were to subscribe to his program by

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> Qtd. in Spence 45.

providing them with the image of “health” derived using his technique of composite photography. By exposing image after image of human faces on the same plate for the same amount of time, Galton created the portrait of an individual that encompassed the mean characteristics of the group. While Galton’s collection of images begins with compositing portraits on coins and in melding the faces of family members, these experiments are secondary to his real desire to apply the technology to search for visible cues regarding good and bad stock in support of his program of eugenics. The images of “disease,” “criminality,” and “consumption” most certainly capitalize on fears of degeneration as they operate to identify those weak elements that he believes need to be bred out.<sup>2</sup> However, in keeping with his primary goal of creating a better, stronger British race, Galton begins his discussion of the photographs that represent different stocks by explaining the image of “health” to his readers:

The individuals from whom this composite was made...differed considerably in feature, and they came from various parts of England. The points they had in common were the bodily and mental qualifications required for admission into their select corps, and their generally British descent....This face and the qualities its connotes probably gives a clue to the direction in which the stock of the English race might most easily be improved. (*Inquiries* 10)

These diverse men, authorized as good stock by their admittance into the Royal Engineers, are compiled into a single image, an image that enables Galton’s audience to

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<sup>2</sup> These images have been the focus of criticism that traces the way in which eugenics and photography can operate to segregate bodies and establish types. See Sekula, Allan. “The Body and the Archive.” *October* 39 (1986): 3-64. Daniel Novak also focuses on the racial implications of Galton’s composite photography in *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.

visualize the product of the eugenic program for which he is campaigning, allowing them to imagine a future for Britain that is shaped by such superior men.

What Galton gives his readers in this image of Britain's future is notably different than that to which the nation had previously been encouraged to aspire. Rather than an honorific of a great man, Galton offers a statically derived image of above-average men, condensing them into a type since "[t]he effect of composite portraiture is to bring into evidence all the traits in which there is agreement, and to leave but a ghost of a trace of individual peculiarities" (*Inquiries* 7). Galton thus offers as his ideal an everyman made of the best qualities of real individuals brought together for a singular purpose. This, Galton suggests, is a means of creating an accurate image of a eugenically superior man through statistical methodology: "An assurance of the truth of any of our pictorial deductions is to be looked for in their substantial agreement when different batches of components have been dealt with, this being a perfect test of truth in all statistical conclusions" ("Composite Portraits" 140). This project of composite photography gives life to Galton's vision of the hero that will continue to usher Britain forward in the future: not an individual, but a race of individuals capitalizing on their hereditary gifts.

In addition to its focus on the population rather than the individual, Galton's work in composite photography demonstrates his twinning of scientific research and imaginative dreaming. Galton was well regarded as a scientist, being elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1860. He was at times incredibly methodical and innovative, responsible for important developments in statistics and fingerprinting, and he engaged with Charles Darwin, performing experiments that challenged Darwin's idea of



gemmules<sup>3</sup> and also persuading Darwin of his own hypothesis that talent and character might be inherited.<sup>4</sup> Yet while he engaged in diverse scientific research throughout his career, after becoming interested in heredity, his research constantly reflects his concern for developing a new national narrative for Britain, one in which the nation will embrace its hereditary gifts by implementing a program of eugenics.

This chapter investigates the narrative underpinnings of Galton's work, focussing on his first article on heredity, "Hereditary Talent and Character" and his early book, *Hereditary Genius* (1869), examining the narrative and ideological threads that tie them to Galton's final work on heredity, the eugenic utopia "Kantsaywhere" (1910).<sup>5</sup> For indeed, in addition to an interest in understanding the workings of heredity, the theme in Galton's work is harnessing that knowledge for the improvement of the British race, and in doing so, he constructs a national narrative that he hopes Britain will adopt. This narrative responds to the pre-existing story of the self-made man as presented in the *Bildungsroman* and biography, which focuses on transcending social boundaries through the individual's improvement of himself. Galton's project, however, focuses not on the individual but on the biopolitical management of the population through the

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<sup>3</sup> Galton transfused the blood from dissimilar rabbits in an effort to demonstrate that the blood did not contain gemmules that would impact the characteristics of the rabbit.

<sup>4</sup> Darwin wrote in *Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication* (1869) that "[s]ome writers have doubted whether those complex mental attributes, on which genius and talent depend, are inherited, even when both parents are thus endowed. But he who will read Mr. Galton's able paper on hereditary talent will have his doubts allayed," referring to Galton's "Hereditary Talent and Character" (ii. 7). Galton clearly saw this as an enormous boon to his project, as he mentions it in his introduction to *Hereditary Genius*: "I feel assured that, inasmuch as what I then wrote was sufficient to earn the acceptance of Mr. Darwin...the increased amount of evidence submitted in the present volume is not likely to be gainsaid" (11).

<sup>5</sup> This work was never published, and only a portion survives. Karl Pearson, Galton's friend and biographer, documents the remnants: "Only a fragment of this *Utopia*, which was termed 'Kantsaywhere,' has reached me, it deals with 'The Eugenic College of Kantsaywhere.' The book purports to be 'Extracts from the Journal of the late Professor I. Donoghue, revised and edited in accordance with his request by Sir Francis Galton, F.R.S.'" (Pearson, *Life, Letters, and Labours* 411). I shall refer to it throughout simply as "Kantsaywhere," the title of the larger project, though my citations reference "The Eugenic College of Kantsaywhere" as transcribed and edited from the fragments in the Galton Archive by Lyman Tower Sargent.

categorization of bodies. However, while Galton's desire is to order bodies based on hereditary merit, his attempts to do so are not divorced from the concerns of the Victorian class system. While Galton privileges genius above all else, his writing betrays his belief that genius is connected to class, suggesting both the naturalness of the class system and its ongoing evolution into a meritocracy.

In response to the influential narrative of self-help, Galton presents his arguments for a society structured around a hierarchy founded on innate characteristics, presenting a narrative about the nation as a whole whereby Britain becomes even greater by increasing the overall genius of British subjects through selective breeding. Such breeding rests on the privileging of great men (and strong, intelligent women) and encouraging their reproduction, something he hopes to accomplish by equating intellectual hierarchy with a class hierarchy, forming an aristocracy of genius. Nevertheless, the extreme incursion into the private sphere that Galton's project might envision remains at odds with the lack of state intervention associated with the liberal state. In order to forward his vision for the future, he recognizes the way in which Britain's citizens must internalize the values of eugenics in much the same way that Daniel Deronda internalizes racial segregation in Eliot's novel. In his attempt to understand the British race and to shape its future, he draws on, employs the discourse of, and responds to literary forms that populated the imaginative landscape of the Victorian era. Galton's prolonged interest in the literary as both a writer and a reader—an interest that precedes his statistical work, is infused in it, and ultimately comes to full fruition in his utopian writing—is necessary in order that he might influence his readers such that they would internalize the aims of the state to manage their own biological inheritances for its continued prosperity and power.

Galton's work is an example of the reciprocal relationship between science and literature that exist in the nineteenth century. Galton not only explored heredity as a scientist and developed eugenics as a social scientific theory, but he also recognized the correlation with literature in writing "Kantsaywhere." Such an alliance exists as early as Galton's first work on heredity, "Hereditary Talent and Character," where Galton begins to explore his statistical method at the same time as he begins to envision what the impact of his findings might mean to the British population. However, before beginning his writing on heredity, the passion that would shape the rest of his career, Galton was already well experienced in writing that blurred the boundaries between science and narrative. The publication of his 1853 book *Tropical South Africa* earned him a gold medal from the Royal Geographic Society, establishing his career as a scientist; yet while Galton describes areas that had not yet been explored to any great degree, adding to geographers' knowledge of the continent, the book itself is personal recounting of Galton's travels, suggesting the continued relationship between Victorian scientific discovery and narrative.

While science was increasingly professionalized from the mid-nineteenth century onward, the importance of narrative speaks to both the remnants of its amateur status and the popularity of the subject amongst a general population who still might be made to grasp new innovations in scientific thinking. Early in the nineteenth century "[m]ost professional scientists were men of private initiative," something which was particularly apparent since science was generally excluded from educational institutions (Altick, *People and Ideas* 260). Science, outside of medicine, was thus often a gentlemanly

pursuit, the work of interested amateurs. Its audience was likewise untrained. Such circumstances resulted in an increased blending of literary discourse into scientific texts:

Ironically, it is precisely because of the amateur status of science in the first half of the century that so much brilliant scientific writing was produced. In the absence of a specialist professional audience, scientists were forced to make themselves understood to a lay public; more, to inform, to persuade, to excite their non-scientific but literate audience, to bring their abstruse knowledge into the realm of public discourse, to represent the significance of their material discoveries in as compelling a way as possible. (Fraser and Brown 31)

Thus, the discourse of science was made approachable by shaping it to conform to the expectations of popular literary discourse. Not only was its language and form accessible to the general public, but scientific writing often appeared alongside literary works in some of the most popular publications of the Victorian period.

Galton found in the popular press a testing ground for his new ideas as well as a useful way of disseminating his theories and programs.<sup>6</sup> Periodicals were filled with scientific articles: those that brought forth new ideas, those wishing to disseminate scientific findings to the larger public, and those whose scientific merit was questionable (White 85–86). As Paul White explains, “[t]he periodical was thus a highly important, if volatile, medium for the negotiation of scientific authority outside of the restricted

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<sup>6</sup> “Hereditary Talent and Character” *Macmillan’s Magazine*. 12 (1865) 157-66, 318-27 consisted of much of the groundwork for *Hereditary Genius* (1869). A preview of the volume was also given in “Hereditary Genius: the Judges of England between 1660 and 1865,” published in *Macmillan’s* in 1869. “On the Causes which Operate to Create Scientific Men” appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1873, a year prior to his publication *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture*. “Hereditary improvement” (1873) and “The History of Twins, as a Criterion of the Relative Powers of Nature and Nurture” (1875), both of which appeared in *Fraser’s Magazine*, would introduce ideas that appeared in *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (1883). While Galton increasingly published in emerging scientific journals, he continued to write for mainstream publication throughout his career.

spheres of specialist journals, societies and laboratories” (78). In publishing “Hereditary Talent and Character” in *Macmillan’s* in June of 1865, Galton reached beyond the scientific community to the general population. *Macmillan’s*, a shilling monthly that “published a wide variety of material, including poetry, serialized fiction, articles on politics, travel, etc.,” was to be the first home for Galton’s ideas on heredity (Drabble 627). Given both the roots of Victorian scientific discourse and Galton’s decision to publish his first writings on heredity alongside a diverse array of genres including fiction, it is unsurprising that Galton, from the very first, should have himself adopted a deeply narrative style in his scientific writings.<sup>7</sup>

Galton’s publication in popular magazines, while it did reach a general population, was not targeted at the broad reading public, but rather those readers that might be most amenable to his vision of the future and who might likewise be in a position to shift the thinking and policies of Britain. As Richard D. Altick notes that “[t]he older critical periodicals and the new-style magazines, such as *Blackwood’s* and *Fraser’s*, [where Galton often published] ranged from 3,000 to 8,000, seldom exceeding the latter figure” (*Common Reader* 319). In a country with a population of almost 50 million, Galton was reaching mere thousands. However, this was a conservative “middle-class audience of superior education,” those people who might most agree with a program for asserting a stable social order, particularly were it to prize their education and intellect more highly than the wealth and titles of the aristocracy (*Common Reader* 359). The

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<sup>7</sup> Galton’s “Hereditary Talent and Character” was published in the June and August 1865 issues of *Macmillan’s Magazine* alongside the serialized novels *The Dove in the Eagle’s Nest* by Charlotte Younge and *Cradock Nowell: A Tale of the Forest* by R. D. Blackmore; the poem “Queen Sophia” by Arthur J. Munby; a review of Eliza Meteyard’s *The Life of Josiah Wedgewood*; a number of articles on Abraham Lincoln and American presidents following Lincoln’s assassination; Rev. John Earle’s travel piece “From Bristol to Caerleon”; pieces on salmon and the Scotch deerhound; and articles on “The Negro Suffrage” and “Our New Zealand Conquests,” among others.

popular press was important for Galton, for, though he asserted scientific objectivity in his research, his platform was primarily ideological. As his ideas on heredity cemented themselves, he became more and more engaged in disseminating his program of eugenics, recognizing that the only way to effectively do so was to win over the hearts and minds of England, or at least of the English middle class. For this, the popular press continued to play a vital role that scientific journals and society proceedings could not fill.

Galton's work in *Hereditary Genius*, the book-length project that grew out of his first article "Hereditary Talent and Character," is undergirded by his desire to put forth a new national narrative for Britain, and in the course of doing so, he turns to the form of biography that had become so intimately tied to Britain's existing narrative of self-help. Biography, the real-life story of the eminent man, was immensely popular in the Victorian era, prompting Altick to term it the "age of biography," but Galton was concerned about the way in which biographies were read and the implications this had for the nation. As codified by Samuel Smiles in *Self-Help* (1859), eminent men were cast as self-made men who succeeded due to "purpose and persistent industry," and the stories of their lives were conceived of as "most instructive and useful, as helps, guides, and incentives to others" (81, 5). But Galton was concerned about how this moralizing of biography led to a false impression of the possibilities borne in the individual and misdirected British progress toward self-help rather than to eugenics. In response, he proposed another way of reading biography, a way that would have important implications for shaping the nation, as he applied statistical method to the emerging form of the multibiography as a means of determining the cause of greatness by scientific

means. In *Hereditary Genius* Galton hoped to reappropriate the eminent man from the singular man of achievement and effort lauded in biographies such as Smiles's and insert him into a new narrative for Britain that placed its emphasis on inborn qualities and the progress of the nation rather than the individual. While Galton aimed to expose the fiction inherent in reading the lives of great men through a lens of self-improvement, at the same time, he himself practised a kind of criticism that, while claiming objectivity through employing statistical method, was just as guilty of creating fiction as it moralized biography in a new way.

The way in which biography was read in the nineteenth century had implications for the nation's character and future. By reading the eminent man as a self-made man, Britain could extrapolate a narrative for the entire nation wherein its progress and superiority were affirmed by the hard-working individual who was made to stand in synecdochically for the nation. In Smiles's view, individuals figured prominently in shaping the story of the nation since "[t]he strength, the industry, and the civilisation of nations—all depend upon individual character; and the very foundations of civil security rest upon it" (315). To read the success of the hero of biography as a result of hard work is to imply that the strength of the nation lies in application. Following Smiles, many Victorians believed themselves to be a part of a great nation, not due to inborn superiority, but because of the "industry, energy, and the spirit of independence" of the British people (133). In order to capitalize on the progress that had come to characterize the Victorian era, Britain would have to continue to seize this spirit of self-improvement; if it did so, it could continue to write its national narrative as one of progress and supremacy through each citizen's individual effort.

This reading of biography as a narrative of moral application and hard work both influenced and was influenced by the fictional form of the *Bildungsroman*. The close relationship between biography, read as a narrative of self-help, and this fictional form draws attention to the way in which the writing of biographies were often shaped by the generic conventions of fiction. Hilary Fraser and Daniel Brown gesture at the indistinct nature of these boundaries as they equate “the multi-volume biography of an exemplary figure” to “the real-life *Bildungsroman*” (134). Indeed, if biography “was immensely popular in a period when the reading aloud of improving and uplifting literature was a significant middle-class family leisure activity” this suggests that the role of biography was primarily not to reveal unbiased truth but to teach (134). Biography was commonly interpreted didactically to trace the connection between the moral choices made by an exemplary figure and his achievements in life, not unlike the hero of the *Bildungsroman*. Where such a cause-and-effect of plot in which the hero is shaped by his choices can be clearly controlled by the author of fiction, the way in which biography is aligned with such conventions suggests the inherently fictionalizing work of reading biography in this manner. By harnessing these life stories to support a call for self-improvement among his readers, Smiles’s *Self-Help*, while itself a collection of brief biographical sketches, consistently structures the lives of real men in such a way as to support his argument about the potential of self improvement.

The argument that Smiles makes is shaped by socio-economic concerns, tied up with the same interests about social mobility as the *Bildungsroman*. As George Levine suggests, the *Bildungsroman* reflects the attitudes of the Victorian era as it “characterizes those transformations, and gives fullest expression to the concerns, desires, and ideals of



the new middle class” (*Novel* 81). Such desires and ideals are founded on a belief in one’s ability to change one’s social position through hard work. Nevertheless, such narratives rest on a teleology that is a reflection of desire more so than of any inherent superiority. Fraser and Brown view the pervasiveness of the narrative of class mobility expressed in the *Bildungsroman* as fulfilling a psychological need for readers whose own social status seemed so tenuous: “its popularity can be attributed, at least in part, to the optimistic resolution it furnished to anxieties about the security of the individual’s social position; for a society that allowed one to rise from poverty to wealth and position in a generation could easily make it a round trip back to the poorhouse” (9). Such an optimistic yearning highlights the lack of stability in the increasingly permeable class system of Victorian England. Smiles’s vision of reading biographies capitalizes on this optimistic vision as the examples he provides of self-help are meant to appeal to the masses wherein anyone can fill the shoes of his exemplars: “For it is not to one rank or class alone that this spirit of free action is confined, but it pervades all ranks and classes; perhaps its most vigorous outgrowths being observable in the commonest orders of people” (8). The irrelevance of social and hereditary background is taken even further within the fictional form of the *Bildungsroman* where “[t]he ideal emblematic figure is not only a child, but an orphan. Orphans are unconstrained by the conditions of their parents. They have to define themselves in the world as they grow, to choose which way to go, and their identities are not bound up with traditional inheritances, of trade, or of social status” (Levine, *Novel* 24). However, while Smiles rejects the importance of background and the *Bildungsroman* seeks to erase it, Galton argues that to reject history and heredity is to overlook what distinguishes the truly eminent man. He contests the

correlation between the eminent man and the self-made man, suggesting that this narrative offers nothing more than a fantasy.

In *Hereditary Genius*, after briefly outlining his hypothesis and approach, Galton immediately launches into a form of literary critique levelled at stories of self-made men. He disparages the morals implied by such narratives as a misreading of what makes men great:

I have no patience with the hypothesis occasionally expressed, and often implied, especially in tales written to teach children to be good, that babies are born pretty much alike, and that the sole agencies in creating difference between boy and boy, and man and man, are steady application and moral effort. It is in the most unqualified manner that I object to pretensions of natural equality. (21)

Galton's critique cuts to the heart of his problem with Smiles's reading of the eminent man as a product of self-help. In such a trajectory, the protagonist is not born great but must, instead, be common. Franco Moretti argues, "if the English hero [of the *Bildungsroman*] wants to have a destiny, he must preserve precisely those 'common' qualities—anonymous, ordinary and widespread—that characterize him right from the start" (191). The characteristic of commonness thus became an expectation in British narratives of greatness. Were readers to imagine this assumption inherent in the *Bildungsroman* to be likewise a part of biography, Galton believed it would have dire consequences for the nation. This narrative of progress rooted in nurture over nature concerned Galton as, in his estimation, it was lending a false understanding about the method necessary for the improvement of the human race that would be detrimental if it

were allowed to continue. For Galton, common characteristics, even if combined with uncommon effort, could not lead to an extraordinary life. Such an idea is so comic to him that he rewrites the story of the common man in his own retelling of a narrative of development.

Galton follows his critique of the underlying assumptions of self-help with a short synopsis of the life of an average upper-middle-class man. To support his point that intellectual capabilities are inherent and not developed, Galton includes a generic coming-of-age narrative in which a man comes to grips with his advantages and his limitations:

The eager boy, when he first goes to school and confronts intellectual difficulties, is astonished at his progress. He glories in his newly developed mental grip and growing capacity of application, and, it may be, *fondly believes it to be within his reach to become one of the heroes who have left their mark upon the history of the world*....The years go by; he completes the examination of school and college...he leaves his University and enters a larger field of competition.... Opportunities occur. (*Genius* 22, emphasis added)

Galton here employs the markers of development common to many stories of eminent men, but unlike the *Bildungsroman* in which such dreams of the common boy can come true, the boy in this story meets not only with success but also with failures. For, indeed, while opportunities occur, they are not always within the grasp of the young man, and his inability to seize them demonstrates his mediocrity. In reaching manhood, he does not achieve the status of hero, even with steady application and moral effort. Like the

protagonist of the *Bildungsroman*, his development is still into one who knows himself, but he knows himself to be mediocre: “he limits his undertaking to matters below the level of his reach, and finds true moral repose in an honest conviction that he is engaged in as much good work as his nature has rendered him capable of performing” (22). In this sense, the model that Galton espouses reads much like a fatalistic story or even a fairy tale. The novel of discovery is thus about discovering the limits of one’s inborn talents, not about unearthing the immeasurable amount of talent to be found in every man and realized through will and work.

Yet this is not to suggest that biography is not rich with meaning for Galton. Rather, it is to point to the way in which Galton recognizes how biography is fictionalized as it is made to conform to an inspirational message. In attempting to shape a new direction for Britain, Galton must not only forward his own progressive vision for the nation, but he must also address the forms of the *Bildungsroman* and biography that had hitherto shaped British identity. Too great a focus on social mobility implies the possibility of change that is borne within the individual, and for Galton, the possibility of change is only viable in the race. Yet in distinguishing his ideal class of men whose hereditary gifts might be used to shape the nation in the future, Galton demonstrates a concurrence with the idea of the eminent man that corresponds with the lives that Smiles presents. He must thus respond to the fantasy he sees circulated through these accounts where greatness is the result of hard work and good choices rewarded with social mobility in order to support his hypothesis that greatness is an effect of hereditary gifts.

Though biography was likened to the *Bildungsroman* and was likewise often read as a narrative to be emulated, Galton believed that biography could offer a counter-

narrative to the self-made man, providing it was read correctly. However, while writers like Smiles suggest the way in which great men are constructed through experience, in Galton's estimation, men of eminence are born and not made. His turn to biography rests on the premise that eminent men do present themselves as good subjects since, according to Galton, "high reputation is a pretty accurate test of high ability" (*Genius* 11).

Underlying this examination of biography is the supposition that fame and success rise out of intellectual gifting rather than experience or social position. However, these eminent men are not subjects to be emulated, but rather subjects to be studied in accordance with recent scientific developments.

Rather than using eminent men as a model, Galton understands them as members of a population, in accordance with Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Galton was not only swayed by the idea of evolution and its relationship to natural and artificial selection, but also by the relationship between the individual and the population in directing the shape of the species. Galton's reading of *Origin* aligns with what Michel Foucault observes, that "Darwin found that population was the medium between the milieu and the organism, with all the specific effects of population: mutations, eliminations, and so forth" (*Security* 78). Though Darwin highlights the competition between each individual organism in the struggle for survival, survival does not come down to active, individual effort, but rather hereditary characteristics that fit organisms for their environment. Galton incorporates these implications from *Origin* in his approach to understanding biography and how it might direct the population and the nation as a whole rather than the lives of individuals who, in this schema, could not effect change in themselves. In *Hereditary Genius*, Galton combats the fiction of self-help through the

statistical analysis of great men, suggesting that their lives must be read differently, as members of a population, and that if this is to inspire change in his audience, it cannot happen at the level of the individual, but must instead take effect at the level of the nation.

Thinking of individuals as members of a population also allows them to be quantified and counted and understood by statistical means, an effect of the intersection of this developing branch of science and the biopolitical interests of the state. Statistics interested Galton for the purposes of shaping his eugenic program as it “appealed to the same spirit of rationality that lead the educated to believe in science, progress, and the perfectibility of man,” since, indeed, the very core of Galton’s project rested on the belief that progress necessitated perfecting man through science (Headrick 84). But statistics was also important for Galton for the way in which it could counteract the idea that a great man’s life could be read through a narrative of self-help and moral effort. From the early establishment of statistical societies in Britain, statistics claimed a sense of truthfulness rooted in facts and objectivity. The Prospectus of the Objects and Plans for the Statistical Society of London, which would later become the Royal Statistical Society, were laid out in 1834: “The Statistical Society will consider it to be the first and most essential rule of its conduct to exclude carefully all *opinion* from its transactions and publication,—to confine its attention rigorously to facts,—and, as far as it may be found possible, to facts which can be stated numerically and arrayed in tables” (British Assn. for the Advancement of Science 492, emphasis in original). The italicization of “opinion” lends the word a sense of distaste, privileging facts and negating any subjectivity in the work of statistics. Given this, in turning to statistics in his reading of biography, Galton

conceived of the possibility of reading biography for the objective facts it revealed rather than as a fantastical narrative of hoped-for progress.

Galton positions himself as a critic of popular beliefs, undercutting narratives that have no foundation in the facts. In doing so, he both recognizes the influence of cultural beliefs on the public imagination and attempts to retrain his readers by disputing those he disbelieves. For example, Galton acknowledges that “[i]t is commonly asserted that children of eminent men are stupid; that where a great power of intellect seems to have been inherited, it had descended through the mother’s side; and that one commonly runs away with the talent of a whole family,” but contradicts this belief with a gesture at scientific research, stating, “[m]y own inquiries have led me to a diametrically opposite conclusion” (“Talent” 157). Galton hereby constructs himself as someone who will interpose facts derived from research in places where long-held beliefs are determined to be fictional. He refutes such popular wisdom in favour of the larger narrative about genius and the future of the English race that he wants to tell, leveraging a degree of credibility that is weightier than Smiles’s anecdotal collection of exemplars. Galton thus must undercut the common understanding of biography as a morally instructive narrative in order to support the superiority and veracity of his own project.

While Galton’s turn to the literary form of biography for source material may seem at odds with his insistence on the preference of fact over opinion, his belief in the authority conferred by the genre is a reflection of its position in the Victorian era. In this “age of biography,” as Altick terms it, to view biography as an unbiased historical document could be supported since, “insofar as encyclopedias reflect standard current opinion, it remained for many years ‘only a branch of history,’ as the *Penny Cyclopaedia*

(1835) called it” (Altick, *Lives and Letters* 78–9). While Galton’s analysis of biography occurred later in the century when single-subject biographies were more generally understood as a literary genre, Galton relied on the emerging form of multibiography that could more properly claim objective detachment.

Multibiographies were indeed very popular in the Victorian era, prompting Alison Booth to refine Altick’s phrase to state that “the Victorian age was prosopographical,” interested in lives collected as groups in multibiographies or series (41). The most important of the Victorian multibiographies, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, emerged at the end of the nineteenth century with the first volume published in 1885 and its final volume appearing in 1901. Though it appeared too late to act as a sourcebook for Galton’s initial studies, the position of this text speaks to the specific place in the literary culture of the Victorian era that multibiographies occupied: “[t]he *Dictionary of National Biography* bore witness to the importance of the fact in an age whose values and methodologies were shaped by the developing disciplines of science and history” (Fraser and Brown 135). The multibiography, even at the end of the century, bore the kind of detachment better associated with history and science than with literature. Prior to the emergence of historiography as a discipline and a widespread awareness of the workings of discourse, it was possible, and indeed common, to believe in the objectivity of biographies even at the very moment that those writing and reading them were discussing the need to edit out displeasing facts.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Galton’s turn to pre-existing collections of the lives of great men at his disposal (*Biographie Universelle des*

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<sup>8</sup> Ira Bruce Nadel includes a number of contemporary articles that take up the question of who should be the subject of biography and what should be written for public consumption in his edited volume *Victorian Biography: A Collection of Essays from the Period*.



*Musicians, Dictionary of the Poets, Men of the Time, The Judges of England*)<sup>9</sup> did lend a degree of scientific credibility to his work, removing his own viewpoint and giving the “objective” viewpoint of an editor of a multibiography (and by extension “the common judgement of the leaders of opinion”) (*Genius* 16). The mark of greatness of the subjects of his study is not the fictional construct of a single author, but a consensus of other men of eminence, attesting to their true greatness.<sup>10</sup> As such, in recounting individual lives, multibiographies speak more greatly to the life of the nation, what will truly be Galton’s focus throughout his work.

The claims to scientific detachment that the multibiography suggested were furthered by Galton’s own scientific approach. The majority of *Hereditary Genius* focuses on the statistical analysis of the familial relationships between men of great achievement including judges, “Commanders, men of Literature and of Science, Poets, Painters, and Musicians” (12). Since “characteristics cling to families,” Galton argues, there would be an increased probability of biological relationships between eminent men in a field, proving that “a man’s natural abilities are derived by inheritance, under exactly the same limitations as are the form and physical features of the whole organic world” (9, 11). He applies statistical analysis to the relationships between those men who have made notable accomplishments in various sectors of society, employing mathematics to eliminate any remaining traces of literariness from his project.

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<sup>9</sup> While this method is primarily employed in Galton’s first studies, “Hereditary Talent and Character” and *Hereditary Genius*, Galton maintained a continued interest in biography. His 1874 book, *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture* was inspired by his reading of Alphonse Pyrame de Candolle’s *Histoire des sciences et des savants depuis deux siècles* (1873). Although Galton turns to surveys in this later work, reflecting the evolution of data gathering as statistics become more established, he refers to the answers to his questions as “autobiographical replies,” suggesting he continues to value the mode of life writing as data.

<sup>10</sup> Though Smiles’s *Self-Help* suggests the move toward multibiography with the inclusion of numerous life sketches, as they primarily operate as “illustrations of character and conduct,” they suggest the bias inherent in Smiles’s reading rather than the detachment of a work of history.

The foundation that underlies Galton's book is the connection between reputation and natural gifts. He begins by establishing the relevance of reputation in his chapter "Classification of Men According to Their Reputation" to establish the usefulness of biographical dictionaries in his research. His premise is that, like the examinations held at Cambridge, "[t]he world, in the same way, but almost unconsciously, allots marks to men" (15). These "marks," unconscious as they are, can be best seen through high reputation, and Galton clarifies, "[b]y reputations, I mean the opinion of contemporaries, revised by posterity—the favourable result of a critical analysis of each man's character, by many biographers" (39). Thus even the building of reputations is determined by the literary intervention of an editor. The end result of this consideration is that, using *Men of the Time* as a marker of greatness, Galton establishes that the kind of genius that leads to eminence is found in 250 out of one million men.<sup>11</sup>

In his next chapter, "Classification of Men According to Their Natural Gifts" Galton begins to employ his statistical method. Borrowing Adolphe Quetelet's tables of measurements of height and chest circumference, Galton draws his readers' attention to the way in which physical characteristics congregate around an average and get more and more uncommon the further away from the average one proceeds in either direction. This establishes the notion of deviations from the average that he will use to mark eminence as a statistically uncommon characteristic by transposing these numbers as recognizable in

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<sup>11</sup> Galton derives this number by comparing the number of entries in *Men of the Time* to the population of Britain: "It takes time for an able man, born in the humbler ranks of life, to emerge from them and to take his natural position. It would not, therefore, be just to compare the numbers of Englishmen in the book with that of the whole adult male population of the British isles; but it is necessary to confine our examination to those of the celebrities who are past fifty years of age, and to compare their number with that of the whole male population who are also above fifty years. I estimate, from examining a large part of the book, that there are about 850 of these men, and that 500 of them are decidedly well known to persons familiar with literary and scientific society. Now, there are about two millions of adult males in the British isles above fifty years of age; consequently the total number of the "Men of the time" are as 425 to a million, and the more select part of them as 250 to a million."

characteristics of intelligence: “there must be a fairly constant average mental capacity in the inhabitants of the British Isles, and that the deviations from the average—upwards towards genius, and downwards towards stupidity—must follow the law that governs deviations from all true averages” (34). However, this leap is pure conjecture on Galton’s part with little supporting data, and the result is a table that is entirely fictional:

The number of grades into which we may divide ability is purely a matter of option. We may consult our convenience by sorting Englishmen into a few large classes, or into many smaller ones. I will select a system of classification that shall be easily comparable with the numbers of eminent men, as determined in the previous chapters. We have seen that 250 men per million become eminent; accordingly, I have so contrived the classes in the following table that the two highest, F and G, together with X (which includes all cases beyond G, and which are unclassified), shall amount to about that number—namely, to 248 per million.

(35)

His deviations are not based on mathematical calculations of the data, for indeed, Galton has no data whatsoever to populate his table, which is an imaginative extension based on the assumption of how many men per million are great derived from his reading of biography. Likewise, his conclusions about this imagined statistically rare genius’s connection to eminence is only speculative: “To conclude: I feel convinced that no man can achieve a very high reputation without being gifted with very high abilities; and I trust I have shown reason to believe, that few who possess these very high abilities can fail in achieving eminence” (47). Galton’s beliefs thus not only drive his hypothesis, but the very data that he analyzes, drawn from both biography and his own imagination.

His first chapter, “The Judges of England Between 1660 and 1865,” establishes his methodology in the greatest depth and sets a pattern that will be followed in subsequent chapters about men of eminence in other fields. Galton takes up Edward Foss’s *The Judges of England*<sup>12</sup> and identifies 286 judges to study. He establishes that “[o]ut of the 286 Judges, more than *one in every nine of them* have been either father, son, or brother to another judge, and the other high legal relationships have been even more numerous. There cannot, then, remain a doubt but that the peculiar type of ability that is necessary to a judge is often transmitted by descent” (65, emphasis in original). Yet Galton realizes that this may not sway his readers who might believe that this connection is purely nepotistic or otherwise established. In order to convince his audience that “[t]hey did not hold their high positions by mere jobbery, nor obtain their reputations through the accident of birth or circumstance,” Galton does not point to his statistical tables but instead resorts to short biographical excerpts (67). While his analysis of statistics is meant to show the truth of his assertions, these assertions only seem to gain rhetorical sway insofar as they can be incorporated into a narrative framework. It is for this reason that Galton’s first chapter on eminent men is the longest, for he believes he must fully explore the narrative behind the statistics to convince his audience: “It is necessary to analyse characters, and to go a little into detail. I will do this, and when it is concluded I believe many of my readers will better appreciate than they did before, how largely natural intellectual gifts are the birthright of some families” (67). This turn suggests that, as much as Galton’s work in *Hereditary Genius* is statistical, he ultimately cannot escape the narrative nature of his data and the imaginative nature of the underlying premise of eugenics that drives his project.

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<sup>12</sup> Galton misidentifies this work, referring to it as “Lives of the Judges.”

Though Galton's plethora of examples and statistical tables suggest the rigorous scientific methodology of his own biological relation, Charles Darwin, *Hereditary Genius* remains more an act of statistical literary criticism than of science. Galton's turn to statistics is not divorced from opinion in the way that the Statistical Society of London's framing of the work of statistics suggests. While Galton's work with statistics was incredibly important in shaping the discipline as he was one of the early statisticians that Stephen Stigler identifies as the "idea man" who "helped create a statistical revolution," Galton's approach to statistics is not without bias (266). It is important to note that for Galton (and his protégé Karl Pearson), "eugenics did not merely motivate their statistical work, but affected its content. The shape of the science they developed was partially determined by eugenic objectives" (Mackenzie 12). As such, in his attempt to reread biography through a statistical method, Galton does not offer an objective perspective, but rather uses statistics to demonstrate the hereditary correlation of genius. Yet even beneath his attempt to scientifically prove this hypothesis, Galton's aim in *Hereditary Genius* is to read biography as a narrative that supports eugenic improvement by capitalizing on the nation's hereditary strengths.

While Galton claims his turn to multibiography is a removal of his critical voice from the selection of the men (and occasionally, though to a far lesser extent, women) whose lives form the basis of the study, he continues to insert himself as critic of the work that he draws from. He pronounces that *Men of the Time* "fairly and honestly" carries out its intention "to include none but those whom the world honours for their ability" yet insists "I do not mean to say that Sir Thomas Phillips's selection [in *The*

*Million of Facts*]<sup>13</sup> is the best that could have been made, for he was a somewhat crotchety writer” (*Genius* 16; “Talent” 159). Yet it is not merely that Galton critiques these biographies; his act of statistically analyzing their content also bears the mark of criticism. Although Levine recognizes the way in which the following equation simplifies the relationship between disciplines, he states that “it probably makes sense to think of science being on an analogy more with criticism than with ‘literature.’ That is, as science attempts to understand nature, so criticism attempts to understand literature” (“One Culture” 5). If science takes nature as its object of study, by taking biography as his object of study, Galton reverts to a form of criticism even as he is expounding the strength of his scientific method.

Additionally, even though Galton states that he puts his trust in other editors who have compiled the multibiographies that he draws from, he occupies the position of editor of what is reproduced in his own volume. *Hereditary Genius* may be focused on tables and analysis, but it is also replete with brief biographical sketches, sketches that, due to their secondary role in the book, have been edited for brevity to bring out those points that Galton, presumably, deems most important in supporting his argument. Try as he might to insist on his scientific objectivity (and to a certain extent, Galton can be commended for excluding himself as one of the great men of science in his study),<sup>14</sup> this is at odds with the findings that Galton draws from the biographies that he includes.

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<sup>13</sup> Galton again misidentifies the work, which is actually *A Million of Facts* by Sir Richard Phillips. Indeed, he seemed to have had a penchant for revising the titles of works as he also refers to Darwin’s *Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication* as “Domestication of Plants and Animals” (*Hereditary Genius* 11). Such inattention to detail is perhaps telling of Galton’s privileging of the greater aims that he wishes to achieve over the facts before him.

<sup>14</sup> Galton was a cousin to Charles Darwin and grandson of Erasmus Darwin. In his section on scientists, he traces the Darwin relations back to Erasmus. Though he notes many of the Darwin line, the only grandson he mentions explicitly is Charles Darwin. There is, however, the suggestion that the Darwin family tree holds more men of eminence among its branches in the veiled statement “I could add the names of others of

In identifying those who possess the greatest genius in Britain, Galton demonstrates his bias toward the class of men to which he belongs as he makes a case for the overall fitness of these men. In supporting his endeavours to create a hierarchy of talent, he contests anecdotal wisdom that operates in opposition to his claims: “There has been a popular belief that men of great intellectual eminence are usually of feeble constitution, and of a dry and cold disposition. There may be such instances, but I believe the general rule to be exactly the opposite....There is no reason to suppose that, in breeding for the highest order of intellect, we should produce a sterile or feeble race” (“Talent” 164). Galton’s assertion that it is the opposite, that intellectuals are in fact strong, is supported by his descriptions of the strong constitutions and long lives of many of the scientists that he writes about. However, in doing so, Galton passes over just as many scientists that are, by his own admission in the included brief biographies, feeble and ill. According to Galton, Sir Isaac Newton was “exceedingly puny as a child,” James Watt “was very delicate as a child” and “ailed continually,” and Edward Forbes “died young, aet. 39, of kidney disease” (201, 204, 193). William Harvey, M.D., Albert von Haller, Augustin Pyrame De Candolle, and George, Baron de Cuvier all have similar health ailments. Of the forty-five entries on scientists, seven are noted to have questionable health, a number that is comparable to those noted to have strong constitutions, suggesting that both exceptional illness and health are outliers rather than the norm. Nevertheless, in order to further a program of eugenics that emphasizes the propagation of intellectual gifts, Galton must insist on findings that support the association between intellectual gifts and overall fitness.

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the family who, in a lesser but yet decided degree, have shown a taste for subjects of natural history” (*Genius* 192).

Similarly, since Galton frames the implementation of eugenic programs as a moral imperative, he necessarily excludes what his middle-class Victorian readers might deem to be moral weaknesses in the lives of the men he profiles. In much the same way that he draws attention away from their physical weaknesses, Galton continues to abide by established editorial practices in the recounting of biographies: “The practice of excluding reference to sexual irregularities, alcohol and drug dependence, mental instability and other such skeletons in the cupboard of the life under investigation was in the interests not only of the biographical subject and his surviving family and associates but also of the reading public” (Fraser and Brown 137). There is, for example, no mention of Benjamin Franklin’s frequenting of prostitutes, something that is well documented in Franklin’s own autobiography. Such editorial interventions contradict the supposed scientific disinterest of Galton, speaking to the way in which literary choices continue to impact Galton’s own biographical depictions. While Galton challenges the moralizing of Smiles, he also takes advantages of the well-established conventions of biography that contribute to such moralization insofar as they support his own project’s dependence upon the portrayal of eminent men as wholly superior.

While biographical narratives of individuals are more skewed to presenting their subjects as exemplars, even multibiography, while claiming a closer correlation to science and history, is influenced by a narrative structure that belies its supposed objectivity. Multibiography in its very nature contributes to the kind of narrative of an improved Britain that Galton imagines. Taken as a whole, the collective biography of men of achievement in sciences, politics, and the arts can create a picture of the future Galton imagines for Britain since prosopographies serve as “positivist methods of



composing the history of elite groups through comparative life narratives” (Booth 41). This is not merely a composite elaboration of the synecdochic move by which great individuals are meant to represent the nation, but rather, given the breadth of the multibiography, a means of establishing a sense of national character and eminence through the examination of the kind of citizens the nation begets. According to Booth, the creation of multibiographies is at its heart a somewhat politicized move as “[e]very literate society has generated multibiographies or prosopographies with more or less overt aims of propagating civility” (41). As Galton engages with the biographies of his day, he takes up the aim of propagating civility, or more accurately, the betterment of the British race. Rather than encouraging his readers to see the virtues of individual men as Smiles does, Galton sees within these multibiographies a vision of what Britain could look like if all its citizens capitalized on their hereditary gifts.

The way in which multibiographies respond to the growing markers of importance connected to achievement rather than rank supports Galton’s vision of recognizing and propagating the best of the British race. As the preface to the 1872 edition of *Men of the Time* states, “[w]e have records of the aristocracy of birth and wealth, in the form of Peerages and Histories of the Landed Gentry, but the aristocracy of intellect had been left, until this work first appeared, without any special record” (iiv).<sup>15</sup> Galton’s turn to *Men of the Time* is thus no mistake since, as Michael Rogin puts it, “Galton rejected the aristocracies of title and wealth in favor of an aristocracy of talent” (79). While those of aristocratic birth may merit a mention in multibiographies (and certainly, high birth guaranteed one entry into the *Dictionary of National Biography*

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<sup>15</sup> Indeed, this paralleling of intellect with aristocracy seems to run through various editions of *Men of the Time*; Alison Booth notes that the first edition in 1859 is a “‘special record’ of ‘the Aristocracy of Genius’ being ‘limited to no particular class’” (qtd. in Booth 46)

regardless of accomplishment),<sup>16</sup> biography as a form, particularly in the Victorian period, depended on exceptional accomplishments rather than the mundane. This focus on accomplishments—due, in Galton’s mind, to hereditary genius—rather than mere aristocratic ancestry suggests that this is the sphere of the increasingly powerful middle class, but more properly of the professional classes: the judges, the lawyers, the doctors, and, most importantly, the scientists with whom Galton identifies.

By choosing biographies as his source material, Galton ends up drawing on material that has already been sifted through by an editor, shaping the conclusions he is able to make about the relationship between social position and hereditary genius. Choosing the subjects of biography for the purpose of studying hereditary gifts naturalizes the idea that greatness can only be found in certain classes, most particularly the upper-middle class and those of the upper class that have chosen to apply themselves to properly professional or artistic pursuits:

In starkly political terms, biography is a tool by which the dominant society reinforces its values. It has ignored women; it ignores the poor and the working class; it ignores the unprivileged; it ignores noncelebrities. Such formulation is useful only up to a point, because in fact biography ignores almost everyone. As a genre, it is much more elitist than the novel, which has always taken middle-class and middling characters as subjects. (Rose 191–2)

This exclusion of wide swaths of the public traces back to the kind of moral story of application found in Smiles: “Nineteenth-century biography valorises precisely those experiences which were denied to women, the poor, and the working class: self-determination and self-development, personal heroism of a kind that gains public

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<sup>16</sup> See Collini, Stefan. *Common Reading: Critics, Historians, Publics*.

recognition, a significant destiny considered worthy of the recording” (Fraser and Brown 137). The characteristics recorded in biography and respected by Galton are not easy to find within the lower classes; thus Galton can project the idea that the people that reside there are incapable of attaining them because their class reflects their inferior heredity rather than because they are subject to a social structure that, despite its seeming openness, still limits those on the bottom rungs of the ladder, precluding the possibility of education and the freedom to pursue intellectual activities. For though Galton argues that for those men who have “achieved distinction in the more open fields of science and literature. There is no favour here beyond the advantage of a good education,” even this advantage, a good education, already suggests that Galton is outright ignoring the men of the “lower ranks” since “in Victorian England higher education, wherever provided, was reserved for a tiny minority. It was from the upper and upper-middle classes, who alone had access to it...that the learned professions, notably the clergy and the law, were recruited” (“Talent” 161; Altick, *People* 254). Galton can thereby proceed to create a new narrative for Britain by interpolating from the multibiographies he reads, effectively ignoring the lower classes and even the non-professional middle-class subjects who are more properly at home in the fictional *Bildungsroman*.

In identifying those individuals whose hereditary gifts he would like to capitalize on to strengthen the population, Galton reverts to earlier means of ordering bodies with the result that issues of heredity and class become intertwined. Just as the success of the self-made man is measured by wealth and position, so too does Galton’s project for an improvement of the race rely on the authority of the class system. For him, however, rather than attesting to one’s personal success, class and social eminence are markers of

great hereditary gifts. Rather than completely rejecting the established social order, Galton only suggests a subtle shift of power from an aristocracy of wealth to an aristocracy of intellect. While such a suggestion reads as somewhat egalitarian, or at least divorced from previous measures of social standing, Galton both imposes the structure of the old social order onto this new hereditary order and also bases this new social order on preconceived differences found within the existing class system. He frames his sense of hereditary hierarchy in terms that reflect the existing class system: for those concerned about hereditary gifts, “in addition to the old-established considerations of rank and wealth there is another and a higher one, namely of poverty of blood” (“Improvement” 128). As wealth had long passed along roughly hereditary lines to maintain aristocratic rank in England, so too could intellectual gifts form a new means of securing a family’s position in society as hereditary gifts were passed down through the generations.

The intersection of class and ability are laid out in three points that he uses to sum up his argument in *Hereditary Genius*. Galton’s first point is that “men who are gifted with high abilities...easily rise through all the obstacles caused by inferiority of social rank” (43). In some ways, this shares an affinity with the narrative of the self-made man, though the movement to a higher class position can, in Galton’s view, only be attained through inherited characteristics, not individual effort. Here, Galton seemingly embraces a fluid class system as that which allows gifted men to gain eminence. But in his second point, Galton indicates that a fluid class system does not, in fact, result in more men rising through the ranks: “Countries where there are fewer hindrances than in England, to a poor man rising in life, produce a much larger proportion of persons of culture, but not

of what I call eminent men” (43). Thus Galton implies that a fluid class system is not, in fact, necessary for men of lower ranks to achieve eminence. Combined with his first point, this seems to indicate the possibility for those of genius to overcome astounding obstacles, but Galton’s third point suggests that something different is at work: “Men who are largely aided by social advantages are unable to achieve eminence, unless they are endowed with high natural gifts” (43). This third point might suggest Galton’s vision of crumbling aristocracy—that wealth and social position do not equate to greatness—but it does not imply that those with social advantages will fall in rank in the way that great men can rise in rank. Upon closer examination, this point suggests a defence of the great men of high social position, countering any arguments that social position leads to eminence. In Galton’s view, it is only the hereditary gift of genius that leads to eminence, but this argument must be made because the great men whose lives he documents are concentrated in the upper-middle class and the gentry. While Galton insists on the importance of hereditary gifts as determining a man’s worth, it is clear that this is not unconnected to the class that he is born into.

By invoking heredity as the determiner of success, Galton offers a means of stabilizing the class system at a time when it had become increasingly unstable. To preserve the nation, Galton recognizes the continued importance of the social order, but the social order must be reshaped to privilege intelligence and innovation, ensuring that the professional classes, scientists, and artists become the new aristocracy of genius. Indeed, Galton had a vested interest in elevating the professional classes and equating them with a new aristocracy of genius; as Kevles suggests, Galton’s “proto-eugenic pronouncements celebrated the social milieu—and met the psychic needs—of Francis

Galton” (5). However, this personal interest is also an important part of reshaping Britain’s national narrative. Galton focuses his attention on the middle class who have most fully embodied the ideals of self-help, but concentrates on their intellectual abilities rather than on the idea of hard work. Through his deployment of heredity, Galton shores up the position of the middle class—who lack the history of the aristocracy—and positions them as the new ruling class. What they lack in ancestral property, they make up for in hereditary gifts for “the professional classes...correspond with the class of English worthies better than any of the others from which returns have been collected” (*Inquiries* 5). In this way, Galton’s narrative still appeals to Britain’s increasingly most powerful citizens, yet offers something even more appealing than Smiles’s vision as he asserts the naturalness of their position. Thus science—one of the disciplines encompassed by the professional class—can support the middle class in confirming that which they want to know and already believe that they do: that their class position is assured and deserved. In this way evolutionary discourse can imply the naturalness of the rise of the educated middle class yet at the same time preclude the possibility of further incursion by the lower middle class and working class by suggesting that the class system reflects an evolutionary process that, if not complete, has already succeeded in separating the wheat from the chaff.

Galton’s investment in the analysis of multibiographies, much like his work with composite photography, aims to establish a national narrative that is to be guided by scientific goals rather than blind optimism, yet his reliance upon science does not diminish the fictional nature of this aspect of his project. This vision of genius that emerges from Galton’s investigation of biographies gains a kind of veracity through its

creation from real-life components, yet its end goal is the imaginary future race of Britain. Allan Sekula notes that for Galton, “[e]ugenics can be seen as an attempt to push the English social average toward an imaginary, lost Athens, and away from an equally imaginary, threatening Africa” (44). This foundation that rests on imagining the future of the British race undercuts the scientific distance that he suggests underlies his statistical project. Indeed, it is its very inspiration. As Daniel Novak notes of Galton’s composite photographs, “Galton’s scientific ‘realism’ and the racial identity captured (or rather created) by photography are only made possible by and defined through their opposite—abstraction, anonymity, and fiction” (93). This paradox is also key to Galton’s approach to biography. The statistical reading that Galton provides of the biographies he analyzes is only made possible by Galton’s dream of a nation shaped by eugenic precepts.

Galton’s final project at the end of his life suggests the way in which, despite his scientific investigations, his lifelong project was more properly fictional than factual. In 1910, the year leading up to his death, he began to write “Kantsaywhere,” a vision of a colony in which eugenic principles are applied in an institutional manner. Much of the manuscript was burnt by Galton’s nieces, and only fragments survive, but those fragments reveal how Galton’s ideas and projects find their culmination in this eugenic utopia. Pearson, as Galton’s friend, protégé, and editor of his letters and papers, expresses Galton’s motivation to write such a work:

his active mind was still busy with the idea of spreading, even more widely than his Eugenics Education Society could achieve his creed for the regeneration of mankind. Thinking over the problem of books that had a lasting influence on mankind, his thoughts turned to those ideal polities, Plato’s *Republic*, More’s

*Utopia*, Harrington's *Oceana*, and Butler's *Erewhon*. Why should he not exercise a similar influence on generations to come by writing his own *Utopia*, a story of a land where the nation was eugenically organized? (411)

While Galton's statistical criticism and composite photography allowed him to lay the groundwork for a practicable vision for Britain's future, he recognized the way in which such a narrative could gain more force in a form that was more properly fictional rather than scientific. Fiction thus became a way of disseminating, if not his scientific findings, the kind of vision that his practice of science has led him to—or what had driven those findings in the first place. While Galton had seen in his lifetime the way a work of science could change the world, as *Origin* undoubtedly did, he recognized how philosophic and social ideas expressed in a narrative form have staying power, something that he wished to achieve for his eugenic principles.

Galton only wrote "Kantsaywhere" in the last year of his life, but the thread of social dreaming is found throughout his work on heredity and eugenics. Rooted most deeply in a vision for Britain's hereditary progress that would never be realized, Galton had from the very first imagined a vision of the future. Certainly, he was already experimenting with utopian fiction almost ten years earlier with "The Donoghues of Dunno Weir" (1901), a series of notes and false starts that lay the groundwork for a eugenic utopia. However, Patrick Parrinder's claim that "the fact that Galton, a distinguished statistician and student of heredity, was also a dedicated utopian did not become evident until the last decade of his long life" overlooks the strands of utopian thought visible in his earlier work ("Eugenics and Utopia" 2). "Dunno Weir" and



“Kantsaywhere” may have marked Galton’s first attempts at writing utopian fiction, but dreaming of utopias comprised a key element in Galton’s writing from the beginning.

In his first article on heredity, “Hereditary Talent and Character,” ostensibly about tracing genius through hereditary lines, Galton imagines the potential of harnessing hereditary talent through the practise of eugenics. He does not trust his audience to extrapolate the possibilities themselves. Rather, he impels them to “give reins to [their] fancy, and imagine a utopia—or a Laputa if you will,”<sup>17</sup> which he then lays out in surprising detail, given the limited space (165). He describes a society organized by eugenic principles where “a system of competitive examination for girls, as well as for youths, had been so developed as to embrace every important quality of mind and body, and where a considerable sum was yearly allotted to the endowment of such marriages as promised to yield children who would grow into eminent servants of the State” (165). This is not merely a proposal of dictates that can be put into practise (though it undoubtedly was intended to serve that function as well) but a society that is peopled with “deeply-blushing young men” and a “Senior Trustee of the Endowment Fund” who proceeds to issue a long speech at an annual ceremony (165). In putting words in the mouths of such imagined characters, Galton’s article reveals its narrative tendencies even as it attempts to assert its reliance on statistical fact. Despite his aversion to the moralistic interpretation of biography and his own attempt to read biography statistically, Galton’s

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<sup>17</sup> Galton equates Jonathan Swift’s Laputa with a utopia, populated as it is with such models of mathematical and musical genius. He seems to completely overlook, however, the dysfunctional nature of its society as these “geniuses” are incapable of basic daily operations, and he discounts the role of the Flappers, those servants of the intellectual elite of Laputa that ensure its smooth functioning. Pearson will follow Galton’s vision of a eugenically organized society with one that recognizes the need for a variety of classes to support Britain’s economic and imperial goals. For Pearson, racial strength across all classes, rather than trending the entire population toward an educated middle-class ideal, offers stability through variation, equipping individuals to supply all the needs of the nation through differentiated breeding and training.

writing in *Hereditary Genius* is inherently fictional and moral, but the moral of his reading of biography still stands at odds with that of Smiles: that the greatness of a man rests on the hereditary gifts that he is born with, and that the nation, should it wish to progress, should record and develop these gifts through a regulated program of eugenics.

Though Galton returns time and again to this idea of examinations in his vision of a eugenic society—indeed, this will resurface in “Kantsaywhere” forty-five years later—such moments of pure speculative fiction are rare. Nevertheless, Galton’s commitment to utopian vision is consistent, even if more subtle, as he often sparks his readers’ imaginations in encouraging them to picture “[w]hat an extraordinary effect might be produced on our own race, if its object was to unite in marriage those who possessed the finest and most suitable natures, mental, moral and physical!” (“Talent”165). As Gregory Claeys and Lynman Tower Sargent define it, “[u]topian thought construed more widely...is not restricted to fiction and includes visionary, millenarian, and apocalyptic as well as constitutional writing untied by their willingness to envision a dramatically different form of society as either a social ideal-type or its negative inversion” (1). More than a scientific approach to understanding heredity—something that was at best guesswork before the incorporation of Mendel’s findings with Darwin’s theories—Galton’s ongoing project is the visioning of a different form of society, a society that would move human reproduction from random pairing to a means of building a stronger nation.

“The Eugenic College of Kantsaywhere,” the fragment that remains of Galton’s larger project, expands on the ideas that Galton first presented in “Hereditary Talent and Character,” but it does so through the framework of a visitor-guide utopia. The English

professor I. Donoghue ends up in the community of Kantsaywhere, where he is introduced to the beautiful and intelligent Miss Augusta Allfancy. She acquaints the narrator with the brave new world that he has encountered, but he becomes intimately acquainted with the Eugenic College as he soon falls for her and must undertake examinations in order to determine if he is fit enough to marry her.

The College is the centre of this portion of the narrative but also of Galton's eugenic vision as "[t]he College was to grant diplomas for heritable gifts, physical and mental, to encourage the early marriages of high-diplomaed parents by the offer of appropriate awards of various social and material advantages" (192). While Galton's non-fiction writing urges his readers to know their hereditary gifts and capitalize on them, the extent of biopolitical state intervention and of the hegemonic internalization of such power that is necessary to carry out a program of eugenics is made clear in Galton's fictional work where "everybody is classed by everybody else according to their estimate (or knowledge) of his person and faculties" (193). Such classification is integral to rational reproduction in Galton's state: "The refusal to grant a Pass certificate is equivalent to an assertion that the person is unfit to have any offspring at all. By a second-class certificate, that permission is granted, but with reservations" (194). Galton's utopia is thus relies on both the techniques of bio-power that had already made hereditary menaces of concern within marriage, but extends beyond the family to imagine the impact that eugenic institutions would have in shaping the population.

Yet Galton's utopia in "Kantsaywhere," unlike the majority of visitor-guide utopias, is still a work in progress rather than a vision of perfection. It is not a land peopled entirely with eugenically exemplary individuals (though these are the only

characters we meet). In projecting eugenics forward, Galton does not stretch so far as to imagine the end result of his program after it had been followed for many generations, but a society beginning to implement eugenic laws and develop eugenic institutions. Galton does provide a plan, a blueprint to follow, but he imagines this plan as part of a process, which is highlighted by his own adaptation of utopian conventions. While one might question why citizens of utopian realms so often wish to marry the presumably inferior visitor to their land as Parrinder does, this for Galton is a necessary move since the goal of his utopia is also to inspire his readers to recognize that such change is within their grasp (“Utopia and Romance” 158). Professor Donoghue, a resident of early twentieth-century England, already has the kind of hereditary gifts that can be of use in a eugenic utopia. The superiority of the residents of Kantsaywhere is not truly in their hereditary superiority, but in their recognition of the importance of seizing their hereditary gifts, something that is immediately accessible to the British public.

This sense of progress, while somewhat foreign to the genre of utopia, is rather akin to that in the *Bildungsroman*. The *Bildungsroman*, as a novel of development, does not begin with a sense of completion, but rather of work to be done. While Galton’s early critiques of the form focused on its exaltation of effort, in his final rewriting of the *Bildungsroman* through the form of utopia, it is its focus on individuality that Galton aims to undo. In response to the popularity of the *Bildungsroman*, which offers a narrative for the nation by tracing the development of the individual, Galton envisions a progressivist narrative that takes the nation as its subject, giving his readers “a scheme for its improvement whose seeds would be planted almost without throwing it, and would slowly and steadily grow, until it had transformed the nation” (“Improvement” 116). In

such discourse of growth and development, the basic plot of transformation is transferred from the individual to the nation since, as Galton articulates, “it seems perfectly clear that our individual lives are little more than agents towards attaining some great and common end of evolution” (“Improvement” 119–20). Where Darwin displaced mankind from its central position in the natural world in *The Descent of Man*, Galton displaces the individual from the centre of the narrative of development. The eugenically exemplary individual’s perfection has already been achieved through breeding; there is no room for his personal development through choices made in his life. If Galton is to rewrite the *Bildungsroman* eugenically, it cannot be the story of the individual but must be the story of the nation.

The nation is, in Galton’s view, in a position to make choices about its future. It is still in a position of development, and should it make sound choices, Britain might prove itself to be an exceptional nation in the way that the heroes of the *Bildungsroman* or biography are shown to be exceptional individuals. The only way to achieve this for Galton, however, is to “try to render our individual aims subordinate to those which lead to the improvement of the race,” the belief in a story bigger than one’s own individual destiny (“Improvement” 120). Indeed, this is what the citizens of Kantsaywhere provide a model of, accepting the negligible importance of individual lives and desires in relation to the state, such that “the propagation of children by the Unfit is looked upon by the inhabitants of Kantsaywhere as a crime to the State” since this individual desire might have negative consequences at the level of population (202).<sup>18</sup> For Galton, where it would

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<sup>18</sup> Again, this is another instance where Galton’s earlier imagining of a future society work into his fiction. In “Hereditary Improvement” he had already imagined the social expectations that would be necessary to operate a eugenic society: “I do not see why any insolence of caste should prevent the gifted class, when they had the power, from treating their compatriots with all kindness, so long as they maintained celibacy.

be a mistake to believe that self-help shaped the course of a man's life, it would be a far graver mistake for the nation to fail to recognize its responsibility to work actively toward its own betterment, expecting that progress would continue unabated. Where the individual's success is determined by his hereditary gifts, in order to capitalize on the gifts of its citizens, the nation must engage in steady application and moral effort in the enforcement of eugenically sound practices for the nation.

This focus on the nation's development through the regulation of the bodies of its citizens might seem out of step with the majority of *fin de siècle* socialist utopias that stress equality. It is a further expression of Galton's insistence that the betterment of the nation must focus on the population as a whole rather than as an assembly of individuals. Nevertheless, Galton's utopia maintains a sense of harmony by exploiting the authority of the natural world in achieving its biopolitical aims. Galton smoothes over any potential opposition to the new hierarchy imposed in Kantsaywhere by imagining a world in which those of the lower orders are not discontent, or at the very least, where such discontent might be easily masked by the seeming benevolence of the hereditarily superior: "As regards the insane and mentally defective, suitable places for their life segregation are maintained in Kantsaywhere. With so small and Eugenic a population, the cases are few and easily dealt with" (202). The artifice of the traditional class system has been worn away and everyone accepts their place because they know that they are fitted to it by their birth. Though Galton's vision is ostensibly at odds with other social dreaming of his era, as Claeys notes, eugenics and socialism are both constituent elements in late-Victorian

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But if these continued to procreate children, inferior in moral, intellectual, and physical qualities, it is easy to believe that the time may come when such persons would be considered as enemies to the State and to have forfeited all claims to kindness" (129).

utopias: “From the early 1880s, however, the fictional genre becomes dominated by the promises of these two, often interwoven, ideals of social and individual improvement” (111). The perfect society is thus also a society of perfect people, as “eugenics was indeed a component in most of the Utopian writing after 1870” (Morton 129). Galton’s “Kantsaywhere,” however, provides a blueprint for the state management of reproduction, suggesting the way in which dreams of better people are only that, for better people cannot be created without the state management of the reproduction of the nation.

Where Britain had come to see itself as the most powerful nation on earth, such claims to superiority came with the constant uneasiness about whether it would last. Galton recognized the possibility of degeneration found in Darwin before it became a widespread anxiety in Britain and knew that progress could not be expected to continue unabated without intervention. Responding to such concerns with the hope that inheritance might provide, Galton suggested a means by which the strengths of Britain’s population might be understood and implemented to assure the continued development of the nation. The answer was not merely hard work, but applying the resources of the hereditary gifts of the nation to its benefit as a means of reinforcing the deeply held Victorian belief in progress. While the emphasis on progress and development resonates with the popular narrative of self-help that had become entrenched in the Victorian imagination, Galton’s vision diverges in its focus on the nation as a population that needs to be managed rather than a collection of individuals whose individual effort could contribute to the betterment of the nation, suggesting the danger that the veneration of the individual posed to the state. Galton authorized his vision for Britain by resting on the

increasingly powerful authority of science. However, while acknowledging the power of narrative as a means of defining and directing the nation, Galton also recognized its limitations if it is not tied to application. Galton imagined a new narrative for the nation, complete with a blueprint for the implementation of eugenic principles, so that, through steady application and moral effort in the management of its citizens, Britain might continue to pride itself as the expression of the very pinnacle of human evolution.



## Chapter 4

### The 'Birthright of Being Well-born': Biological Inheritance at the *Fin de Siècle*

[T]he least children can demand of their parents is the birthright of being well-born.

– Frances Swiney, *The Awakening of Women, or Woman's Part in Evolution*

**Jack.** Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

**Algernon.** It usen't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

– Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Though the publication of *On the Origin of Species* had an immediate and profound effect on Victorian understandings of inheritance as a shaper of destiny, the *fin de siècle* was the period in which biological inheritance became more clearly understood as a constitutive element of human life. This effect was shaped in part by Charles Darwin's publication of *The Descent of Man* (1871) wherein human beings and sexual selection came to the fore of discussions of evolution. Additionally, understanding biological inheritance became more pressing as new readings of Darwin's work challenged the possibility of fitting evolution into the teleological framework that had enabled it to become more widely accepted. Edwin Lankester's *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1880) drew attention to the reality of natural selection's ambivalence to progress and the kind of physical and social devolution that might be seen through the natural world and in human history. This increasing focus on humans as the product of evolution and the dark shadow of degeneration increased the stakes of managing human heredity, and the possibilities that biological inheritance offered for influencing the future of the nation for well or for ill was thus an increasingly pressing concern in the public imagination. Francis Galton's program of eugenics ushered in a new way of understanding and regulating humans as products of biology, figuring their reproductive potential as the means by which the nation as a whole could be strengthened if its

biological capital could be seized and properly managed. Accordingly, in the 1880s and 1890s, Galton's ideas gained greater attention from the public at large, offering a means of thinking through the possibility of humankind intervening in its own evolution to ensure the continued march of progress and the sustained power and prestige of the British nation.

Galton's vision for eugenics understood population as the necessary point of state intervention, yet despite the ideological and practical aspects of his theories, he did not embark upon a campaign to change the public policies of the British government. Instead, Galton concentrated on both continuing his research into heredity—a subject he pursued in the diverse areas of composite photography, statistical tables, fingerprinting, and research into twins—and in publishing his findings in both scientific journals and popular magazines. In 1908, toward the end of his life, Galton founded the Eugenics Education Society, yet even then, it was not Galton himself who directed the teachings of eugenics toward the government; rather, in the last year of his life, as we have seen, he chose to reach out to even a broader segment of the populace in undertaking the writing of his eugenic utopia, "Kantsaywhere" (1910). Galton's vision in the novel was of a superior population, a nation where sexual selection was governed not by social conventions or romantic impulses but by the state's intervention, which entailed the cataloguing of hereditary gifts and the imposition of regulations surrounding marriages. In order to grant the reader access to this imagined country that imposed eugenic measures on the large scale, Galton uses the visitor-guide trope, and as is common with this trope, the British visitor, Professor I. Donoghue, falls in love with his guide, Miss Augusta Allfancy.

Galton's foray into fiction points to the way in which certain narrative structures already established in fiction are particularly well suited, and perhaps even inescapable, when translating eugenics into a fictional form. Certainly, as Patrick Parrinder has suggested, "we may question whether eugenic considerations can ever be absent from visions of utopian perfection which speak to us of beauty as well as happiness, of the satisfactions of the eye as well as the satisfactions of the mind" (10). Of course the social engineering imagined by eugenics begets the kind of social dreaming of utopias. Yet as much as utopias may feature eugenically superior individuals, Galton's invocation of the courtship plot points to the way in which the concerns of eugenics are perhaps best expressed in the more over-arching form of the Romance.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the courtship and social dreaming found in "Kantsaywhere" expose how eugenic narratives may by necessity be bound up in both the generic conventions of Romance<sup>2</sup> as well its psychological imperatives as "'Romance' implies wish fulfillment and is bound up with dreams and illusions" (Brantlinger 15). And while the larger discourse of Romance increases in popularity at the *fin de siècle* through the multiplication of adventure romances such as those of H. Rider Haggard and the scientific romances of H. G. Wells, one subset of Romance, that of the romance novel, is particularly apt for exploring

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<sup>1</sup> Angelique Richardson might perhaps over-interpret Galton's statement "let us then give rise to our fancy and imagine a Utopia—or a Laputa if you will" which would be published in "Hereditary Talent and Character" (1865) when she states that "[i]n 1864 [when the article was drafted], Galton contemplated writing a eugenic utopia" (*Love and Eugenics* 79). This is rather, as I argue in chapter three, a function of the narrative work of Galton's project than a specific moment of inspiration to draft a fictional tale. However, Richardson's classification of Galton's imaginative forays as "eugenic romance" might indeed be a useful means of thinking through how Galton's utopian writing, while different in its focus on the nation, shares much in common with the romance novels that will form the focus of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> While my discussion of Romance will in some respects rely on Northrop Frye's explanation of the conventions of Romance, I am inclined to view these conventions as "tactics" (as Barbara Fuchs frames them) or as a "discourse" (in Edward Dudley's terms) rather than as archetypes as Frye employs them. This also allows me to create a more precise distinction between the larger idea of Romance that extends from the classical period to the present and the idea of the romance novel, as defined by Pamela Regis, that begins in the mid-eighteenth century.

eugenics. Unlike the scientific romance and the adventure romance that sought refuge in the imagination as a reaction to the reason of the high Victorian period and as a response to the uncertainties of the *fin de siècle*, the romance novel was already a well-established form that, for all its interest in the imagination, still bore strong ties to the realist form. Nevertheless, as it was adopted by writers exploring the impact of eugenics, the romance novel's roots in dreams and desires are brought to the fore.

The romance novel with its focus on affect may seem an unlikely place to investigate rational scientific and social debates about degeneration and eugenics, yet the selection of a marriage partner and thereby a mate that forms the underlying plot pattern of the romance novel is both the very premise of the genre and the very heart of the workings of bio-power. The romance novel serves to focus attention on the domestic space and the concerns of the family. While eugenics had the potential to shape populations, and indeed was most effective if applied to populations, with the government failing to implement eugenic programs, those concerned with how it might impact the British nation in the present brought the concerns of eugenics into the home to understand how individual action might affect the state. With its concerns in regulating reproduction, eugenics was likewise tied to betrothal and marriage as the concern for the reproductive body is at the same time both a national concern and a domestic one. The practices surrounding marriage provided a useful means of understanding the regulation of human heredity as “included in bourgeois marriages were not only economic imperatives and rules of social homogeneity, not only the promises of inheritance, but the menace of heredity,” allowing that, through courtship, individual citizens might contribute to fulfilling the biopolitical aims of the state (Foucault, *Sexuality* 124).

Additionally, the elements of the Victorian marriage plot were also a mainstay of fiction, giving this part of family life great cultural capital as well as biopolitical potential. This turn to the domestic sphere from the larger national space is reflective of the workings of the public sphere and the way in which bio-power operates not only in the private sphere, but also through the private sphere in the liberal state.

Thus as *fin de siècle* novelists translated the ideals of eugenics into fiction, their focus was often on characters who attempted to employ eugenic principles in their own lives and the impact this choice might have upon their relationships. Both M<sup>é</sup>nie Muriel Dowie's *Gallia* (1895) and Grant Allen's *A Splendid Sin* (1896) exemplify the way in which popular novels addressed the biopolitical concerns about the nation's well-being within the domestic sphere, framing these around the well-worn Victorian marriage plot. At the same time as Dowie and Allen maintain a certain fidelity to the marriage plot, they revise it and in doing so suggest how marriage, which has, in the past, been leveraged as a means to transmit wealth and create connections between families, can be reworked to uphold future generations' biological inheritance and preserve the health of the nation. Dowie and Allen explore the impact of reproductive choices on future generations as they re-envision heredity both as a new form of wealth and as the underlying determinant of social standing. These eugenic romance novels mark the ground on which popular eugenic battles are fought as bodies are assessed and accredited for biological potential in keeping with the scientific writing of Galton's protégé Karl Pearson. In *Gallia* and *A Splendid Sin*, Dowie and Allen demonstrate the ways in which biopolitics can enter the home space and be internalized by citizens by exploiting the conventions of the romance novel in such a way that the structures that determined appropriate unions that were

implicit in the marriage plot might be redirected to sort individuals based on their hereditary gifts, imagining biological inheritance as akin to financial inheritance in its ability to shape the future of their characters and their offspring. By mapping biological inheritance onto already established conventions of social segregation established by the class system and modified by the emergence of professionalization, these novels dramatize how individuals might be empowered to exercise the categorization necessary to make the sound biological choices that would be of service to the nation.

The necessity of framing eugenic concerns within the domestic space is a function of the complex relationship between the domestic space, the public sphere, and the liberal state that develops with the rise of the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas outlines the historical relationship between these spheres. As Habermas argues, “[t]he bourgeois public sphere arose historically in conjunction with a society separated from the state,” yet it is this separation from the state that allowed for the possibility that the public sphere might exert influence over the state as the space where bourgeois citizens might debate ideas of relevance to the nation (127). At the same time, the ability of citizens to enter the public sphere was authorized by the possibility of retreat into the domestic sphere, “the patriarchal conjugal family’s intimate sphere that was oriented to a public” (85). The domestic space is thus never simply private and cut off but always connected to the larger public sphere. However, given the increase of bio-power, this relationship was not unidirectional, as the state increasingly intervened in the affairs of domestic sphere, the supposed refuge from public concerns. Giorgio Agamben observes that in the modern state “the realm of bare life—which is originally situated at the

margins of the political order—gradually begins to coincide with the political realm” (9). Concerns such as reproduction that were hitherto simply biological became politicized in the modern era, cementing the domestic sphere as a space of biopolitical action.

Additionally, biopolitics, while concerned with the regulation of the population by the state, did not merely operate as a top-down model. While the state developed institutions of power, Foucault notes the importance of the “*techniques of power* represented at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies)” (Foucault, *Sexuality* 141, emphasis in original). Such techniques are not merely relegated to state-run institutions, but are found even within the family, the heart of the domestic sphere. The family, the institution that governs the domestic sphere, is important when considering the implementation of eugenic schemes for its potential to exercise biopolitical techniques of power.

The late nineteenth century saw a heightening of the state’s interest in the concerns of biological life. While interventions such as the Factory Acts and the Contagious Diseases Acts reveal the way in which the Victorian state’s biopolitical control operated in and through a liberal state, greater state intervention became increasingly imaginable in the 1880s and 1890s. Habermas sees the liberal state, where government must be seen to be limited as it seemingly allowed individuals authority over their own lives, giving way to the social welfare state around 1875. The social welfare state was ultimately an offshoot of the liberal state, “compelled to shape social conditions to continue the legal tradition of the liberal state, because the latter too wanted to ensure an overall legal order comprising both state and society,” yet it had more scope for

involvement into the lives of its citizens should those interventions be seen to be of benefit to the public (Habermas 224). In this new order, emerging at the *fin de siècle*, government controls and regulations became more widespread and accepted as the potential solution to issues such as poverty and disease. This increased acceptance of state intervention into the private lives of its citizens is related to the health, employment, and social issues that plagued cities in the last decades of the nineteenth century, concerns that also fed the public's growing anxiety about degeneration. The increased role of the state in the lives of its citizens combined with concerns about the degeneration of the nation made late-nineteenth-century Britain ripe for discussions of eugenic interventions.

In the 1880s and 1890s, eugenics was increasingly debated in the public sphere. The press was an integral part of these debates, central as it was to the construction of the public sphere: "The public was expanded, informally at first, by the proliferation of press and propaganda; along with its social exclusiveness it also lost the coherence afforded by the institutions of sociability and a relatively high level of education" (Habermas 132). The public sphere, as a space of ideas and debates, had a great potential for influence, something that Galton capitalized on through his publication in popular magazines, generally growing a potential audience as he previewed upcoming monographs with shorter articles.<sup>3</sup> From "Hereditary Talent and Character" (1865) to "Kantsawhere," it is clear that Galton envisioned eugenics as functioning best when put into practice by the state, with institutions much like the Eugenic College of Kantsaywhere governing human

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3, note 6.



reproduction.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, as I have argued, both these pieces are fictional or contain a strong fictional drive, yet Galton's understanding of the necessity of implementing change at the level of population supports his vision as one that relied on state intervention, particularly because private citizens would lack the scientific knowledge to adequately assess all aspects of their and others' individual fitness. Nevertheless, Galton did recognize the importance of public opinion in the liberal state and thus took his ideas to the public sphere in the hopes of empowering the state by winning over the minds of Britons. While Pearson speaks directly to individual citizens in *National Life from the Standpoint of Science*, he recognizes the reciprocal relationship between individuals and the state wherein individuals might make sound eugenic choices for the betterment of the nation but only with the support of the state "that the latter shall make the conditions of life favourable to the rearing of healthy, mentally vigorous men and women" (29). Indeed, Pearson applauded state intervention in a speech in 1934 in which he saw the future of eugenics lying "with Reichskanzler Hitler and his proposals to regenerate the German people" (qtd. in Bordett 227). Both Galton and Pearson believed in the importance of eugenic improvement for the nation and not only recognized the state's role in supporting such improvement, but the necessity of bringing eugenic concerns to the forefront of people's minds in the public sphere.

But while the public sphere was a place of debate, ultimately the workings of eugenics, tied as it was to ostensibly private concerns about sexuality and reproduction, needed to be considered as a domestic concern as much as a national one. If the nation was to be imagined to be better, and if it were to be possible to envision a better nation,

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<sup>4</sup> For a fuller account of how Galton envisioned eugenics as a state practice, see my discussion of "Kantsaywhere," in chapter three beginning on page 168.

the principles of eugenics might first be implemented within the private sphere. While the theoretical writings of proponents of eugenics like Galton and Pearson might imagine the nation as shaped by the widespread application of eugenic principles, the domestic form of the novel and the strategies of Romance were better positioned to imagine the role of eugenics within the private sphere.

The discourse of Romance offers grounds for exploring domestic concerns as it may be defined as “the adventures or experience of one or more individuals in their private capacities and from the viewpoint of their private interests and emotions” (Perry 44). The concern for individuals allows Romance to focus state concerns about population in the more limited space of the domestic sphere. Such an interest in the concerns of the individual is paradoxical when considering the way in which bio-power is an effect of the state and eugenics is concerned with the improvement of the nation. It is important to recognize, however, that the hero or heroine in Romance is not a fully fleshed individual and thus, while representing recognizably individual concerns and experiences, he or she can also be made to stand in for the experience of a nation of individuals. Additionally, as Romance is organized around a quest, the goals of the individuals that it portrays may imitate those of the nation, working out the goals of the nation in the scope of their individual lives.

This ability to see the concerns of the nation playing out in the story of individuals is possible since, despite Romance’s focus on the lives of individual characters, it nevertheless works out the desires and values of the society in which it was written. Northrop Frye believes Romance to be the “nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream” (186). In this way, Romance offers a space where the ideas of

eugenics might find fulfillment through the workings of fiction. Additionally, eugenics, in imagining a society populated by individuals who express desired characteristics, necessarily will reflect the ideals of the society that would be in charge of selecting for those characteristics since “[i]n every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy” (Frye 186). The writers of eugenic romances thus project the established values of intelligence and health that would comprise heroes’ and heroines’ biological inheritance. However, if the heroes and heroines represent good hereditary material, in extending the vision of the world they present beyond their domestic romance, it is worth considering that the threat to their ascendancy is not found in individual villains but rather the kind of poorly selected breeding that brings about degeneracy, that which might waste away health and vigour, beauty and intelligence.

Such a concern with hereditary gifts and menaces is well fitted to the Romance with its interest in love and fertility. Frye argues that “[t]ranslated into ritual terms, the quest-romance is the victory of fertility over the wasteland. Fertility means food and drink, bread and wine, body and blood, the union of male and female” (193). Indeed, this is the concern of eugenics: fertility in the union of male and female and also fertility as it extends to the larger nation, preventing its erosion into a wasteland. Understandably, this bears some relationship to the way in which “the pursuit of love, the special realm of the individual, is the particular but by no means the only subject of the romance” (Sanders 2). In this regard, eugenics is certainly an ill fit with Romance as its concern with securing good reproductive material is generally understood as intellectual rather than emotional:

its domain is purely good heredity. However, given that love is so elemental to romance and the outcome of the marriage plot is the union of male and female, by adopting the trajectory of this plot, eugenic aims may be served well. Indeed, while eugenics is not concerned with love, so long as love supports eugenic aims, it is not problematic, and it might even be helpful, as in Allen's schema where love is the human response to the awareness of a good hereditary match.<sup>5</sup> Despite eugenics' disinterest in emotions, the importance it places on fertility and heterosexual pairing suggests the appropriateness of the popular form of the romance novel as a forum for imposing eugenic concerns in the domestic space. As Angelique Richardson argues, "[t]he converging ideologies of degeneration and eugenics provided the novel with a new romance plot by replacing 'love and marriage' with marriage as a mediator of genealogy" (*Love and Eugenics* 86). The late nineteenth century saw a great rise in the Romance form, particularly in adventure romances, but this increase was a reaction to the "heterosexual romance of courtship, manners, and marriage that had been the specialty of women writers" (Showalter 79). Nevertheless, the well-established form of the romance novel continued to remain important because it not only concerned the sphere that was particular to woman but also allowed for an imaginative exploration of the space of the politicization of bare life. The romance of courtship was a genre that lent itself to writing about eugenics where concerns of reproduction were worked out in this more limited sphere.

The idealized society and focus on the individual that characterize the Romance continue to be present in the more narrow genre of the romance novel, but identifying more concrete elements specific to this genre demonstrates the importance of the fidelity to the genre for accessing the domestic space of Victorian England. Pamela Regis

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<sup>5</sup> See an extended discussion of this concept beginning on page 216.

provides a useful definition of the romance novel that extends beyond the genre fiction of the twentieth century to encapsulate the nineteenth-century novels that Dowie and Allen are responding to. For Regis, there are eight narrative elements that define the genre: “a *definition of society*, always corrupt, that the romance novel will reform; the *meeting* between the heroine and hero; an account of their *attraction* for each other; the *barrier* between them; the *point of ritual death*; the *recognition* that fells the barrier; the *declaration* of heroine and hero that they love each other; and their *betrothal*” (14, emphasis in original). The corrupted representation of society implicitly affirms the potential of the romance novel as a politicized form, one that, despite its often conventional position, is willing and able to challenge social conventions, allowing Dowie and Allen to adapt its other elements to create a romance shaped along eugenic lines. Such hope of reform also affirms the romance novel’s continued connection to the wish-fulfillment of the larger Romance form as well as its potential to respond to the anxieties that pervaded the late nineteenth century. In *Gallia* and *A Splendid Sin*, eugenic concerns are clearly felt through the attraction, declaration, and betrothal, yet they are most strongly felt in the barrier between the lovers, where in both cases it is the heredity of the heroes that stands in the way of the couple marrying.

Allen’s *A Splendid Sin* is not particularly romantic; nevertheless, it follows the conventions of the romance novel fairly closely. The hero and heroine, Hubert and Fede, are lovers in a society that is corrupted by its insistence on marriages arranged along non-romantic lines: money, social position, advancement, convenience. While many of the elements such as meeting, declaration, and betrothal occur before the novel begins, it is marked by the barrier of Hubert’s paternity: his father is found to be a degenerate

drunkard, a characteristic that Hubert expects to inherit. Hubert dies, ritually, in anticipating his own degeneracy but is recognized to be the biological son of another, fitter man and thus is able to fulfill his promise and marry Fede. Hubert and Fede are most definitely types, idealized characters who reflect the increasing value of science and education in addition to conventional values of beauty and strength, but in their journey, the dream of individuals adopting eugenic concerns as their own concerns is made real. Paradoxically, Allen's choice relies more firmly on the emotions rather than on reasoned eugenic selection, yet as it does it complies more directly with the dictates of Romance where reason is subverted by something less tangible.

Allen's choice to explore the practicalities of eugenically sound mating in the medium of the romance novel is unsurprising. "The hardest-working man in England" was certainly well-versed in both popular science and popular fiction, having turned his hand to both on numerous occasions. However, in considering the impact of sexual selection, the romance novel is particularly apt for Allen; in an article entitled "Falling in Love" from 1886, Allen argues,

[w]hile parents and moralists are for ever saying, "Don't marry for beauty; don't marry for inclination; don't marry for love: marry for money, marry for social position, marry for advancement, marry for our convenience, not for your own," the romance-writer is for ever urging, on the other hand, "Marry for love, and for love only." His great theme in all ages has been the opposition between parental or other external wishes and the true promptings of the young and unsophisticated human heart. He has been the chief ally of sentiment and of nature. (14)

For Allen, the only way to ensure hereditarily sound choices in selecting a mate is to follow one's heart since instinct, equated with love, driven by beauty, associated with good health, serves as nature's best selector. Thus his take is both eugenic (in the sense that he advocates for good breeding) and yet anti-eugenic (in the sense that he opposes a program of artificial selection).<sup>6</sup> It is appropriate to term this novel eugenic insofar as it is concerned with the appropriate pairing of the hero and heroine and considers faulty heredity a barrier to their romance; however, it lacks the kind of rational reproduction that might be more clearly an extension of Galton's vision.

Dowie's *Gallia*, on the other hand, is nothing if not rational. In this way, it may not neatly fit all the conventions of the romance novel, but it does still play with its main narrative elements. The barrier in the romance in *Gallia* is also hereditary taint, but this barrier is not overcome by the original lover. Gallia falls for Dark Essex but finds her love unreciprocated, though it is later revealed that he returns her love but will not marry because he suffers from a heart condition that would make him an unfit mate. She overcomes the barrier to her betrothal by settling on another man, Mark Gurdon, who embodies the ideals of masculine health and vigour, making him, ideologically at least, an attractive mate. There is no declaration of love, but rather one of intention on Gallia's part, and the unromantic romance concludes with the betrothal of the heroine and her new

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<sup>6</sup> Allen himself uses the term eugenics alternatively with admiration and distaste. He at times aligns himself with Galton's vision: "One of the most striking among the innumerable inconveniences of our existing marriage system is the fact that it makes practically no provision for what Mr. Galton aptly terms 'eugenics'—that is to say, a systematic endeavour towards the betterment of the race by the deliberate selection of the best possible sires, and their union for reproductive purposes with the best possible mothers" ("The Girl of the Future" 53). At other times, he opposes such programs adamantly: "Even so, if eugenic principles were universally adopted, the chance of exceptional and elevated natures would be largely reduced, and natural selection would be in so much interfered with or sensibly retarded" ("Falling in Love" 12).

eugenically fit hero. Like Allen, while Dowie writes a eugenic novel, she is not necessarily committed to Galton's vision: "Dowie's text is playful, both in its structure and in its toying with extremes of ideology: there is no evidence from her other works or from her biography that she had any great interest in eugenics" (Cunningham, "'He-notes'" 105). Instead, Dowie's work might best be considered, as she herself put it, as "studies, as faithful as [she] could make them, of women who made a rather grotesque little mess of trying to rearrange life" (qtd. in Heddle 18). However, Gallia's life is only a mess insofar as it contradicts the tenets of the romance novel where success is equated with happiness. In its failure to achieve this emotional release, it opens up on the larger dreaming of Romance as Gallia adopts a vision of a eugenic world and attempts to implement it as she is able.

While Dowie and Allen might not be invested in Galton's program of eugenics nor follow the structure of the romance novel with complete fidelity, considering *Gallia* and *A Splendid Sin* to be eugenic romances is fruitful because of the way these two elements align strongly in the novels' concern with the appropriate mating of their main characters. Both authors focus on the romance novel for the way in which the genre relies not only on the implication of a productive heterosexual union in telling "the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines" but also on its exploration of the barrier to this union (Regis 9). In a eugenic schema, this barrier is not the problem of an insufficient financial inheritance—a common shortcoming in the Victorian marriage plot—but that of an unsuitable biological inheritance. The barrier in both novels is akin to the villain that Frye describes, that which stands in the way of the ascendancy of the idealized hero and heroine. The spectre overshadowing both novels is the concern about



degeneration, what can happen when individuals do not accurately assess the biological health of potential mates or make choices that go against hereditary merit. Allen embodies this villainy in the person of Colonel Egremont who disrupts the betrothal of Hubert and Fede and later attempts to steal Hubert's financial inheritance, but his real villainy is manifested in his degeneracy and the possibility that he could have passed his drunkenness on to Hubert. *Gallia* provides no real nemesis to the couple—Dark Essex is by no means a villain, for other than his refusal of Gallia, he is for the most part a sympathetic character—yet contained in Essex's body is a threat to the health of her future children. While Gallia and Hubert may not explicitly voice a concern about biological degeneration, their insistence on the importance of a strong biological inheritance for future generations and their revulsion at the less biologically fit characters in their midst emphasizes the villainous role of degeneration in the novels.

A great concern at the fin de siècle, degeneration was of was instrumental in gaining support for eugenic programs. The supposed death knell of a teleological vision of the future was sounded in Lankester's *Degeneration*, initially given as a lecture to the British Association at Sheffield on August 22nd, 1879. Lankester's book is based on the fact that Darwin's theory of natural selection rests on laws rather than purposes:

It is clearly enough possible for a set of forces such as we sum up under the head "natural selection" to so act on the structure of an organism as to produce one of three results, namely these; to keep it in status quo; to increase the complexity of its structure; or lastly, to diminish the complexity of its structure. We have as possibilities either BALANCE, or ELABORATION, or DEGENERATION. (28–29)

Lankester stresses that natural selection can be understood to move living things either toward the more complex or the more simple and cannot be read as an interested, benevolent force moving always toward improvement and complexity. In addition to calling into question the widespread belief that natural selection moved always to elaboration, Lankester's book exposes the vast arenas in which degeneration theory was applied as he covers every aspect of life from micro-organisms to human civilization. What begins as a scientific message about the laws of natural selection quickly turns to a form of Social Darwinism as Lankester applies degeneration theory to sociological concerns. Lankester was not alone in his concern about how degeneration might affect human beings. While rooted in an understanding of the mechanism of natural selection, the effects of degeneration on the day-to-day life of the nation drew the greatest attention from the general public. As Britain weakened economically and the greatest empire on earth failed to halt the growth of slums in the midst of its great cities, "the theory of urban degeneration was used to explain away the nation's economic decline after the boom of mid-century: Britain was faltering because it was forced to draw both its labor force and its recruits for the imperial army from a class of degenerates" (Hurley 197). The new face of Britain at the *fin de siècle* was no longer one of unquestionable superiority.

The threat to the nation that such degeneration would pose is undeniable, but within the context of the domestic space, it becomes even more terrifying, as evidenced by the eugenic romance novel. Like the sensation novel that drew on fears about the incursion of criminals and impostors into the home, eugenic romance novels bring the concerns about degeneration into the very heart of the family. These fears of degeneration seem to occupy a marginal position in *Gallia*, not appearing until the end, but they

nevertheless haunt the narrative, affecting Gallia's ideas and relationships. Though initially unconcerned about the fitness of Dark Essex, his rejection of her causes her to reverse her approach to marriage, finding a very different mate—one that is physically fit and virile rather than intellectually interesting—in a very different way—using her intellect rather than her emotions. The real villainy of degeneration only emerges toward the end of the novel as Essex reveals that he was not rejecting Gallia, whose love he reciprocates, so much as the institution of marriage: “A man with pronounced heart-disease ought not to marry. Nothing is more inevitably hereditary” (200). Gallia is not made aware of this fact until she has picked another man to marry, but there is a suggestion that she might suspect it since “she had observed that his hands were too small. It was a blemish in so handsome a man; a blemish that gave her a feeling of discomfort” (167). It is this discomfort, later confirmed by Essex to mark a hereditary disease, that might be the reason she is so drawn to making a match based on eugenic principles. While Gallia does not confront degeneration head-on throughout most of the novel, underlying her actions may be a sense of possible disorder and decay, a sense that directs her to order individuals as she attempts to apply the tenets of her vision for a better future for the British race.

Degeneration, however, is much more central in Allen's *A Splendid Sin* where Hubert's long-lost father reinserts himself into the family that he has left, bringing with him knowledge of a devastating biological inheritance. This is a common romantic element where “[t]he hero being of mysterious origin, his true paternity is often concealed, and a false father appears who seeks the child's death” (Frye 199). But the death of Hubert is a symbolic one, marked by his own potential degeneration and that of

any future offspring. Colonel Egremont is the very poster-child for degeneracy, a snapshot of the devolution of a family's bloodlines over generations. He is undoubtedly of upper-class ancestry—" [f]rom a little distance, he looked at first sight like an English gentleman"—yet such remaining markers of his ancestral class position are fading fast (47). Despite his class background, he is not of good stock. While Hubert's father figure, Sir Emilius, is possessed of the biological inheritance that allows him to rise in society, Colonel Egremont is grasping at straws, attempting not to fall from the position he was born into. His alcoholism is not meant to be taken as a superficial habit but rather a marker of his inbred weakness: "This is not mere make-up. It runs in the blood with all my family to be hoary old reprobates... We've been hoary old reprobates, now, for five generations... We go to the dogs with accelerated speed in each new century" (51). This accelerated decline of the Egremont family offers an image of the degeneration theory as laid out by Bénédict Augustin Morel in *Traite des degenerescens physiques, intellectuelle et morale de l'espece humaine* (1857) where he frames degeneration as increasingly progressive: "They [the doctors] know that a simple neuropathic state in the parents could cause a natural predisposition in the children that results in mania and melancholy, nervous affections that, in turn, can give birth to more serious degenerative states and result in idiocy or imbecility in those who compose the last years of the hereditary chain of transmission" (565, translation mine). In this way, Colonel Egremont's family history exemplifies this trajectory of "evolution reversed and compressed" that characterizes degeneration (Hurley 193). The Colonel marks how his grandfather died at 80, his father died at 70, and he expects to die at 60 in "an interesting example of what Darwin calls the law of accelerated inheritance" (Allen, *Splendid Sin* 52). But it is clear that Morel's

influence on this picture of degeneration is more pronounced than Darwin's as the degenerative hereditary disease of the Egremont men snowballs such that Hubert unknowingly utters "if that man has a son, the son is doomed to insanity before thirty!" (59). Such a vision of degeneration creates a greater urgency for Hubert to stop it in its tracks. As the potential sixth generation of hoary old reprobates, Hubert finds his destiny assured, and he knows he has a strong impetus not to marry lest he father a child even more depraved than his father.

Hubert and Gallia make choices that reflect their investment in ensuring a strong biological inheritance for their potential offspring, exemplifying the way in which biopolitical concerns might be worked out by individuals through the implementation of eugenic principles in their lives. The widespread concerns over the future of the nation enabled the possibility of shaping private life for the benefit of the state, and fears of degeneration can be seen as evidence of, as Ann Barbara Graff argues, the way in which degeneration operated as the main discourse of bio-power at the *fin de siècle* (272). Degeneration gave a context through which the management of bodies became increasingly naturalized, interposing an order where Britons saw and feared disorder. Bio-power inherently operates through categorization, something that Ian Hacking observes increasing in prominence in the British imagination from 1820 to 1840: "The subversive effect of this transition [from counting hearths to counting bodies] was to create new categories into which people had to fall, and so to render rigid new conceptualizations of the human being" (281). Yet while the early part of the Victorian era created a desire to count and organize bodies, in the latter half, this same predilection for statistical operations becomes a part of understandings of heredity: Galton's early

attempts to apply statistics to biography become a more fully fleshed science of hereditary statistics in mathematician Karl Pearson's biometrics.

Such a move toward categorization suggests how fears of degeneration speak not only to fears of degradation but also to fears of diversity. Degeneration in humans thus concerned itself with unauthorized mixing. Any force that seemed to remove boundaries between social groups was a potential threat: "Degeneration was linked to the rise of democracy, class mobility, and racial miscegenation, and thus could explain the social instability that seemed to be sweeping across fin-de-siècle Europe and postbellum America" (Hurley 197). The widespread industrialization that marked Britain's superiority and progress also begat the kind of mixing that sparked fears of degeneration. As Nancy Stepan notes, "as industrialization brought about new social mobility and class tensions, and new anxieties about the 'proper' place of different class, national, and ethnic groups in society, racial biology provided a model for the analysis of the distances that were 'natural' between human groups" (98). Though Britain's colonial expansion created concerns about miscegenation in the colonies, at home the greater fear was the mixing of classes, exemplified in both increasing enfranchisement by those outside the aristocracy and class mobility. Thus the difference within Britain that most required categorization was class, yet this class difference might be cast as race to heighten its visible presence. Stepan concludes:

In Europe, just as class divisions had helped prompt racial speculation in the early nineteenth century, now classes and other social groups were in the process of being socially reconstructed as alien races in the midst of society who threatened civilization with racial degeneration and adulteration of stock. Was the European

race, the progressive race by definition, destined to undergo its own decay within, from the unnatural confusion of different race and classes? (109)

Casting class difference as racial difference allowed it to be read as something biological and the divisions, by implication, as potentially natural. The only means of preventing it, therefore, was to breed it out, but before it could be bred out, it had to be categorized and contained.

That class might be racialized in order to give it a sense of biological difference suggests the way in which constructions of class were adapted in a world increasingly aware of heredity as well as the continued importance of class as a means of ordering society. As I have argued in chapter three, Galton's program of eugenics melds these concerns, opting to produce a nation that is not only intellectually and physically superior, but one that also aligns well with the professional classes to which he belonged. The domestic space, the retreat of the bourgeois home, becomes an important site for the implementation of biopolitical strategies as its order was necessary for the health of the public sphere and thus the nation, and the romance novel likewise proved fertile ground. The romance novel was already ingrained with the strategies for recognizing and differentiating individuals based on class, concerned as it was with the potential of marriage to consolidate or improve wealth and rank. By associating biology with class difference, characters in the novels—and by extension their readers—might be able to implement biopolitical differentiation along eugenic lines with but a little adaptation.

While such categorization reads as mathematical and rational, and therefore unromantic, its end goal, that of creating a better nation, is very much the realm of the Romance. Gallia and Hubert imagine the potential for a different future for their offspring

and the nation—one where idealized characteristics come not only to mark heroes and heroines, but the entire population. Indeed, while Allen's and Dowie's use of the romance novel to explore ideas of eugenics feels somewhat anachronistic, reaching back to a high Victorian form rather than embracing the forms of Romance that were emerging in the late nineteenth century, this dream of a better race through differentiation aligns with the concerns of other *fin de siècle* Romances such as novels as Rider Haggard's *She* (1886–7) with its fears of miscegenation and Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) which takes the contrary view of envisioning what such strong differentiation might inadvertently do to shape the future of the British race. This imaginative dreaming that underlies the motivations in the novels suggests the way in which the class concerns that governed the romance novel might continue to play a part in shaping the future of the British nation when aligned with the new interest in heredity. As Gallia, Hubert, and Fede attempt to ascertain the worth of their potential partners, their concerns about heredity become structured as concerns about biological inheritance that imitate, intersect with, and oppose the financial concerns that play a part in governing class distinction.

*Gallia* reproduces the old order insofar as it is the old ties of money and connections that enable the Gallia to make a biologically fit match. Gallia's ability to determine her own fate, particularly as a woman who refuses to challenge the social institution of marriage, is only achievable because she is not constrained by financial concerns. Additionally, Gallia's own attractiveness as a potential mate is not found within her body but rather in her pocketbook; in this sense, her role as a heroine is determined by her embodiment of an ideal financially more so than physically. It is her wealth alone that allows her the possibility of marrying Mark Gurdon, a man whose concern with



marriage must be primarily financial. Much as Gurdon may believe he has the hereditary gifts to rise to great heights in the civil service, he also recognizes that he lacks the connections of family and the wealth that would enable him to do so: “Money, and money only, and a great deal of money at that, would have helped him....He could, with the help of a rich wife, buy a capital position as a junior politician” (74). Though Gurdon expresses more passion toward Gallia than she does toward him, her romantic appeal lies primarily in her finances, not in embodying the idealized femininity of Margaret Essex, who was the first to win Gurdon’s heart. Since Gallia is not herself traditionally beautiful, she must rely on the other traditional method of winning a spouse. While Gallia’s attraction to Mark might be based on his biological fitness, this is not necessarily a two-way street.

Operating as it does within the upper middle classes and the aristocracy, *A Splendid Sin* is also not divorced from class concerns. As he is preparing to meet his future father-in-law, Hubert is concerned since “the Tourabuoni were great folk in Florence...when the Egremonts were nothing more than Lancashire farmers!” speaking to the way in which social position is still shaped by ancestry (37). Yet Hubert has nothing to fear as the Marchese’s interest is not in the aristocratic concern of rank so much as the capitalist concern of finances. Despite the promptings of Hubert’s and Fede’s shared attraction, their union could not be authorized by her father if Hubert’s finances proved insufficient. While in constructing the barrier to Hubert and Fede’s marriage Allen’s first and largest concern is that of Hubert’s parentage, he nevertheless recycles the barrier of insufficient financial inheritance: Mrs. Egremont’s husband appears to be in a position to take her land away from her, stripping Hubert of his right to inherit her land

since he is not, in fact, Colonel Egremont's son. Though Allen's concern is with biological inheritance, he also includes this concern with older models of inheritance, perhaps revealing the power that they still had at the turn of the century, but also juxtaposing the two modes to suggest the way in which biological inheritance should also be treated as a great store of riches.

Despite his interest in both class and biological inheritance, Allen recognizes the ability for movement between class positions. Allen, like Pearson, sees "selection repeated for several generations, of able individuals from the lower ranks," but unlike Pearson, who believes that this has already occurred "under conditions which seem no longer possible," Allen sees the continued possibility that those of good stock might rise and those of poor stock fall (75–76). Seemingly advocating for a society that has no social boundaries, Hubert encourages marriages between the social classes. Yet such intermingling is not about social integration, but rather a means of allowing biology to drive the determination of social position: "‘If a man *wants* to marry his cook,’ Hubert answered, with plain common sense, ‘one of two things, I think, is pretty certain. Either he’s a man just fit to marry a cook, or else his cook is a woman quite fit for him to marry...there’s no reason why the woman shouldn’t rise to her proper station’" (85). For Hubert, "proper" does not equate to the position one is born into, expressing some kind of recognition-inheritance narrative wherein the cook is the long-lost child of a duchess. Rather, one's proper station is the one which one's hereditary gifts and weaknesses best fit one to occupy.

Similarly, Gurdon's ambition may in some ways read as an expression of the trajectory of the self-made man, but any ambition he displays is in attempt to realize the

position that he believes himself to be born for. He is the very epitome of a professional man, endorsed by his education at Oxford “where he passed his examination for the Civil Service” and demonstrating his validation according to merit rather than circumstances and connections (though he continues to exploit what he can in this regard, visiting Mrs. Leighton because she was “a connection of the Secretary of State for the Colonies”) (3). Gurdon’s qualifications, however, are not attained primarily through education or hard work—though both of those elements are certainly part of his story—but rather are pressed upon him by a biological inheritance that he traces back to his parents. Having died shortly after giving birth to him, his mother cannot be understood to have shaped him through his rearing, yet she had been able to give him so much more through that single act than through many years of care: “she had given him a splendid constitution, a very nice nose, which was not too suggestive of talent to be handsome and even aristocratic, and a very useful kind of name” (18). Gurdon believes himself to be “born to be a successful, honourable, gentlemanly, ‘decent’ kind of fellow; just as some men were born to be low, ruffianly devils, or seedy, pitiable failures,” and from an early age he possesses the “notable feature of his mind was a peculiar power of forming small but effective combinations,” suggesting his future status as a civil servant is inborn (20, 17). This biological inheritance overwhelms Gurdon’s financial inheritance—“£1500 which was all the money he had to expect”—which could not shape his future in any useful kind of way (19). Although Gurdon demonstrates the hard work and education of the self-made man, he is driven to do so by the momentum of his biological inheritance, that sets him apart, not as the kind of princely ideal of fairy tales, but as the useful professional man, the very ideal of *fin de siècle* Britain.

Gallia does not need to struggle for her position as Gurdon does, already occupying the middle-class position that her heredity marks out for her. She does not see wealth as a means of establishing social position, a way of feigning aristocratic connections, and thus is not bound by an aristocratic need to marry into a family with good ancestry (she doesn't "care for family" in this regard) (177). Gallia recognizes that, were she to examine her own ancestry, it would come up short: "My dear Dark, *we* haven't any family ourselves. Nice middle-class people raised to uncomfortable prominence by a vulgar title" (178). Gallia lacks interest in the social climbing that requires one to aspire to be what one is not. Rather, she embraces her heritage: "Gallia was essentially a middle-class creature; her father's father had been a business man, her mother, the daughter of a monumentally successful London physician. Both these grandparents had made places for themselves in society owing to the possession of something society had not got, that mixture of energy and the instinct of success and advancement" (38). Gallia's grandfathers are models of self-made men, the pinnacle of the capitalist enterprise, exemplars of what one has to show for hard work. Yet they are, nevertheless, men whose success came due to "instinct," suggesting something innately present within them that allowed them to find their proper place in society.

The key in both novels, then, is to recognize the characteristics that fit one for a particular station in life, a model that is akin to the rise of professionalism that occurs at the *fin de siècle*. Birthed from the middle class that had sought a break from position as divinely ordained, seeing its role as won alternatively by hard work or in-born superiority, professional society enabled the possibility that an individual's worth could be measured:

A professional society is more than a society dominated by professionals.... The professional idea, based on trained expertise and selection by merit, differed...in emphasizing human capital rather than passive or active property, highly skilled and differentiated labour rather than the simple labour theory of value, and selection by merit defined as trained and certified expertise. (Perkin 3–4)

While Perkin focuses on trained and certified expertise, in the biopolitical realm, bodies—human capital—can also be considered to be certified and differentiated according to inherent qualities. It is here that professionalization intersects with developing understandings of heredity as a means of exerting bio-power to further categorize people, not only as fit or unfit, but as fitted for different roles in service to the state.

Indeed, the concerns of professionalization are brought together with biopolitical interests in Pearson's *National Life from the Standpoint of Science*, a work that balances eugenics with education in hopes of providing the differentiated work force necessary for the success of the nation. Though he is sympathetic to the interests of a professional society “based on human capital created by education and enhanced by strategies of closure, that is, the exclusion of the unqualified,” for Pearson, education is secondary, for “[w]here the brains already exist, there training will work wonders; but we shall not make the product of inferior stock capable men by merely teaching them the tricks of their trade”; for Pearson strategies of closure must focus on biology (Perkin 2; Pearson 33–4). Using the example of race—often understood to operate much like class in the nineteenth century—Pearson explains that “[i]f you bring the white man into contact with the black....They naturally sink into the position of master and servant, if not admittedly or

covertly into that of slave-owner and slave” (22). This essentialist view of inherent divisions between human beings is transposed onto Pearson’s understanding of class and ability. Nevertheless, while there are differentiations, Pearson believes in the importance of both slave and master for the nation, “for science realizes that the nation is an organized whole, in continual struggle with its competitors” and recognizes the necessity of diversity in the nation, so long as that diversity does not intermingle such as to weaken the best examples of those fitted to various areas of life (55). While human capital was shaped by expanded education and regulated by new forms of policy such as the civil servants’ exam under the model of professionalization,<sup>7</sup> the same concern with human capital depended upon a certain degree of biological fitness, supporting further categorization of bodies along the lines of hereditary fitness.

Gallia’s desire to categorize individuals comes out of the kind of social dreaming that Pearson and Galton engage in, an expression of the way in which, despite its dependence on rationality, eugenics is also inherently linked to Romance. She imagines that “[i]n the next century we shall have organised things more perfectly, and shall be able to get even more people in, in other capacities” the real advance being “the getting in of father and mothers, or rather husbands and wives to be fathers and mothers... There are people fitted, for instance, to be mothers, which every woman isn’t; there are women fitted to bring up children, who may not be mothers” (113). Such hired mothers would be “accredited,” assuring the fitness of future generations, allowing the state to intervene in the reproductive future of the nation (114). Yet, like Galton, Gallia is true to her position, and her dreaming remains infused with presumptions of hierarchy associated with the

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<sup>7</sup> Though the first civil servants’ exam was held on 30 June 1855 (Buchanan 18), it established a new structure of accreditation that would contribute to the rise of professionalism toward the end of the century.

class system. Regarding the poorer classes, she argues that “there isn’t a political economist living who wouldn’t say that if the increase of the lower classes could be taken out of their own hands and supervised on scientific lines, crime as well as a number of diseases would be stamped out” (114–5). While she seeks to implement her eugenic viewpoints for the betterment of the nation, she is not a new version of Elizabeth Gaskell’s Margaret Hale who spends her spare time, the result of her class position, engaged in philanthropic activity. Such contact would not be uncommon for many middle-class ladies in the nineteenth century, but Gallia’s lack of engagement in such social issues is a reflection of her intellectual rather than personal approach to the world. Gallia’s vision of the future, much like Galton’s, imagines the state intervening in the ordering of individual lives, a role that, in the interim, she takes on herself.

Gallia’s eugenic stance about good breeding is shocking to her friends, and in examining individuals for their fitness to certain roles, she often holds views in contradiction to social expectations. Gallia’s organization of individuals is in keeping with Pearson’s as she acknowledges the importance of those who fulfill roles outside of the middle or upper classes insofar as they can contribute to the nation as a whole, or at the very least to the comfort of their betters. This is most clear in her response to Cara. Cara, a peasant girl from France, does not fit into English society. She is, at best, destined to be working class or, at worst, unclassed. Yet Gallia’s successful plan rests on her willingness to know of this girl and the role she plays in the life of Gurdon by meeting his sexual needs. Cara, a “round, well-developed creature,” is fitted for her role as mistress, somehow naturally sexualized as though it is her inherent function in life (15). The first time he meets Cara, she “[cuts] a steep step towards Gurdon, [flings] both her arms round

his head, and [kisses] him on his severe, neatly-shaven lips,” positioning herself as sexually available, willing and able to fulfill the role of mistress (15). When Gallia becomes aware of Cara and Mark’s relationship, unlike the proper middle-class ladies of the high Victorian era who condemned prostitutes and mistresses at the same time as they might be grateful for their services, she accepts the role that such women played: “And what would you do with people like that in your world?” one of Gallia’s acquaintances asks her, pointing to a “vile creature” driving around in a “brilliant barouche.” Gallia replies, “I have no quarrel with her. . . .you have the greatest possible reason to be grateful to her whole class and to pity them,” implying that the role that they fulfill is of great benefit to those who are integrated into proper society (115). The key for Gallia, then, is not to breed the lower classes out, but to manage them by identifying their proper roles and ensuring that they are the fittest specimens possible. It is this impetus to correctly categorize those around her that will shape her search for a husband so that not only may the nation be properly ordered, but that it might also be improved for future generations through such organization.

In acknowledging that different individuals fulfill different roles in society, Gallia can thus observe the men around her to ascertain who might be best fitted to the role of father. While Allen argues that “[a] man is not a horse or a terrier. You cannot discern his ‘points’ by simple inspection,” this is precisely what Gallia does (“Falling in Love” 9). Gallia observes Mark like a horse-breeder. Indeed, she has an eye for horses, and knows that different breeds are suited for different purposes: she has a “pair of skewbalds and double dog-cart,” a “little Norfolk trotter in the dark-green cart,” “a very fleet jackass,” and a “half-breed Arab, capable of a ten-mile canter” (147–8). The men around her are



likewise fit for different purposes. Dark Essex may be fit for love, but he's not fit for marriage, or at least the reproduction that marriage implies. In noting that "his feet were too small" and "his hands were too small," Gallia employs the detached eye a breeder might use to examine a horse with bad conformation (167). Gurdon, however, excites more interest under the same keen observation:

He's got virility, alertness, no vague nebulous tract of country between the place where his ideas are born and the place where they are shaped for practice. He is keen and gamey and lifey. Then he's got self-control, a princely obstinacy, an imperial power of faithfulness....Added to which, he is a handsome fellow, with all the bone and muscle and blood and fibre that a man ought to have—not wasted by athletics, nor injured by slothfulness. (178)

These words are clearly not that of a lover and most might be equally well applied to a horse or hound. The comparison of Gallia to a horse breeder is apt since "[m]astery of horses was from the beginning almost always associated with power, status and masculinity and so...might be something New Women had their eyes on" (Wintle 66). Where Gallia lacks the power to effect change outside of the domestic sphere, she asserts a greater authority within that sphere through not only her literal mastery of horses but her mastery of Gurdon in her treatment of him as a piece of horseflesh.

Allen's *A Splendid Sin* is similarly concerned with the fitness of individuals for certain roles. Allen does not express the same kind of overarching idea of a society peopled by individuals who fulfill different functions, but his characters carry within themselves the traits that suit them for particular occupations. The opening conversation between Sir Emilius and Mrs. Egremont reads as a treatise on hereditary types and the

hereditary nature of character. As they prepare to meet her son's fiancée, they consider what Hubert Egremont's character is and will be. Mrs. Egremont has a great anxiety, the cause of which is not fully revealed at this time, about her son's lineage: "Might he not reproduce his father's brains without—without reproducing any moral defects his father may have exhibited?" she asks of her brother, but he assures her, "Judge a man as a whole, and he's half his father and half his mother" (11). Hubert is nicely broken down in such halves for the reader: "he's half a poet and half a physiologist" (12). These terms suggest something of his approach to the world, but they also correspond with his ancestry. The part of him that is physiologist is certainly from his mother, the sister of the eminent Sir Emilius.<sup>8</sup> Where the poet in him comes from is the mystery of the novel.

As much as these expressions of character can simply be seen as an expression of personality, Allen also touches on the correlation between character and one's place in the social order. Sir Emilius's character not only fits him to the role of doctor, but it also assures his success at that role, success that will further elevate his social position through financial gain: "Sir Emilius was bland, like all his class; without blandness of manner and a deferential smile, you cannot succeed in medicine" (2). Sir Emilius is quite at home with this position, rightfully earning and maintaining it by living up to the expectations of his profession in the full expression of his character, for it is Sir Emilius's inborn qualities that allow him to attain this role in life, not his inherited wealth: "His

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<sup>8</sup> While the intellectual side of Hubert is tied to his mother's family, it is interesting to note that his uncle's father, the doctor from whom his uncle gets his brains, is not related to Hubert by blood. Mrs. Egremont's father was a squire, affirming Hubert's right to marry into a titled family in keeping with traditional aristocratic marriage values. However, Mrs. Egremont's ability to engage with her brother in such discussions suggest that she herself might bear the mind of a physiologist, even if she is uneducated and filled with stereotypically feminine concerns about Hubert. Alternatively, this is an oversight in Allen's narrative: despite his own interest in biological inheritance, in attempting to arrange a situation of legal inheritance wherein Hubert would be the heir to his grandfather's land and fortunes, he overlooks how the family relations fail to account for where the half of him that is a physiologist arises.

own father, Dr. Rawson of Ipswich... had died when Emilius was a boy of twelve, leaving his widow not very well provided for” (4). However, despite the lack of financial inheritance, Sir Emilius’s biological inheritance of “what brains [he] may possess” enables him to rise in position and wealth (67). Heredity thus becomes akin to capital as the Marchese Tornabuoni frames these gifts in financial terms, telling the doctor “you made a fair interest on the brains which you tell me were all the inheritance your father left you” (67). The brains are unlike monetary treasure that moth and rust doth corrupt, but something that will always be capable of drawing interest.

While these novels suggest that eugenically successful mating can only be achieved by selecting a mate who is fitted for that role, despite Gallia’s desire to order the lives of others to create an improved society, she does not stop to categorize herself and question her own fitness; she aspires to a position that she lacks any hereditary drives to occupy, that of mother. Unlike the mothers of the future that she imagines, Gallia is not accredited. She believes herself to be eminently suited to the role of mother, but the novel suggests that this is perhaps more a product of her intellectual and emotional desires than any inbred qualities: “As a child, Gallia had never had a doll; had never played at keeping house, teaching school, having callers, as most other girl-children do. If there was a baby about, she had shivered and left the room” (39). As her mother likewise lacks maternal characteristics, Gallia would have had no hope of gaining them by nature or nurture: while Gallia praises her mother, Lady Hameswaite has not succeeded in motherhood in such a way as to rouse the love of her daughter who “felt herself almost a stranger” (90). Indeed, as Gail Cunningham notes, Gallia “feels herself naturally deficient in femininity,”

something that might make her ill-fitted for the role of mother (*New Woman* 74).<sup>9</sup> It is not Gallia's fitness for this position that drives her to strive for it but rather the opposite: maternity would allow her to assume an identity as feminine, in essence allowing her to become a proper woman by performing proper femininity. Gallia makes a mess of the traditional romance plot, dooming herself to marriage to a man she does not love, but perhaps she also needs to be seen as making a mess of eugenics. She concentrates on finding the perfect eugenic specimen to marry, but she does not consider herself as a product of breeding. As an heiress, she has the freedom to choose her mate, but she fails to consider Darwin's warning that "the daughters of parents who have produced single children, are themselves, as Mr. Galton has shewn, apt to be sterile" (*Descent* 161). Gallia has no inborn claim to the title of mother in her own schema where motherhood should be carried out by those qualified to do so.

Yet Gallia is perhaps responding to the thinking of her age where it became the woman's role to assess potential husbands rather than the reverse. Grant Allen expounds these ideas in several magazine articles in the 1880s and 1890s. For Allen, women are the key to the future of the nation not only as the mothers of future generations but also as the sex more capable of proper sexual selection: "The free and educated woman, herself most often sound, sane, and handsome, would feel it incumbent upon her if she brought forth children for the State at all, to bring them forth in her own image, and by union with a sympathetic and appropriate father" ("Girl" 61). Emancipation and education—the freedoms that Gallia has—are best used, according to Allen, in bettering future

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<sup>9</sup> This certainly also increases the distinction between Dowie's novel and those written by eugenic feminists for the purposes of education, since, as Richardson argues, many eugenic feminists base their argument on the biological drives of women as mothers as that which gives them both the impetus and moral authority to be in the position of selecting mates.

generations through mothering. As a woman, Gallia may well feel that her only opportunity to impose the kind of idealistic changes she envisions is in the space of the domestic sphere, by her own marriage and by mothering. Indeed, if this is not the role that she is cut out for, there is no real role for her in society: “A woman ought to be ashamed to say she has no desire to become a wife and mother... They ought to feel they have fallen short of the healthy instincts of their kind, instead of posing as in some sense the cream of the universe, on the strength of what is really a functional aberration” (Allen, “Woman Question” 452). Despite the advances made by the New Woman, men like Allen—superficially aligned with women’s freedom—still reiterated ideas that reasserted a woman’s proper role as that of wife and mother, something that might equally be affirmed by many eugenic feminists. Gallia likely sees that there could be something outside of this, but in some ways this would be as marginal a role in the social order as that of mistress. Thus to effect change, she must remain within mainstream middle-class society, which for her constitutes adopting the role of wife and mother despite her seeming lack of biological or hereditary pre-disposition for the role.

Darwin’s *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* played a major role in shaping Allen’s vision of women’s roles as it served to highlight and question the role of sexual selection in contemporary society. The naturalness of the role of woman as the selector was suggested by Darwin’s observation that in most species it is the role of the female to choose the mate. However, Darwin notes that “in civilised nations women have free or almost free choice, which is not the case with barbarous races,” suggesting that civilization paradoxically allows for a return to a more natural state in which the female is granted choice (653). Such affirmation of the laws of the natural world gave

weight to arguments made by eugenic feminists—or those like Allen who likewise saw the importance of the woman’s role in sexual selection—who “stressed that males were sexually irresponsible: in fact, the eugenic need for women was predicated on this belief” (Richardson, “Nonsense” 186). Certainly, such a vision is borne out in *Gallia*, where Gurdon is first drawn to the old-fashioned Margaret Essex and then to the unclassed Cara.

Both novels dramatize the role of woman as the one who exercises choice on the basis of fitness, yet they reflect opposing views about what should shape sexual selection in the civilized world: natural drives or scientific knowledge. Darwin observed that sexual selection as it operated in English society had been corrupted: women’s choice was “largely influenced by the social position and wealth of the men,” resulting in pairings that were neither natural nor thought-out (653). Though wealth cannot be reproduced biologically, as Darwin conveys in *Origin*, “the modifications [that] are accumulated by natural selection for the good of the being, will cause other modifications, often of the most unexpected nature” (67). In selecting for one trait, such as wealth, the generations that follow may propagate another unselected-for trait. Concerned with these non-biological drives that shape human sexual selection, Darwin forwards Galton’s ideas and encourages his reader to eschew wealth and rank that “he might by selection do something not only for the bodily constitution and frame of his offspring, but for their intellectual and moral qualities” (*Descent* 688). Such a plea acknowledges that, despite being the product of natural selection and sexual selection, human beings have the ability to shape their own destiny by the rational selection proposed in eugenics. However, the question that this raises is whether selecting for what

is best is a purely intellectual exercise or whether biological drives might support it, despite the way they have been suppressed by the artificial influence of money.

Grant Allen certainly believed in the importance of natural drives in directing healthy reproduction, something that he portrays through the character of Fede. While marginal to much of the action of the novel, Fede demonstrates the way in which biological fitness can be authorized in Allen's schema. Though Allen believes good hereditary material to be of the utmost importance, he also questions a formal program of eugenics: "If sexual selection among us is more discriminative, more specialized, more capricious, and more dainty than in any other species, is it not the very mark of our higher development, and does it not suggest to us that Nature herself, on these special occasions, is choosing for us anatomically the help most meant for us in our reproductive functions?" ("Girl" 55). While Hubert is concerned with applying intellectual principles to mating—refusing to marry Fede once he meets his supposed father—he is proven to be in the wrong, questioning the way in which an intellectual pursuit of eugenic aims might be less effective than a naturalized one. Fede tells Hubert, "I know you better than you know yourself....you are not that man's son" (135). She is able to naturally recognize something that Hubert has to uncover through the revelation of information. Hubert stands his ground, saying, "A man must guard the woman he loves against herself and her womanly instincts," but it is, in fact, Fede's instincts that are correct, and certainly there is no likeness in looks, temperament, or character between Hubert and Colonel Egremont (135). The underlying tendency is toward a sense of naturalness where "it's all been arranged that Fede and [Hubert], the exact two people intended by nature for one another,

should meet at the right time, and spring at one another like magnet to magnet” (35).<sup>10</sup> Hubert himself recognizes this early in the novel but loses sight of it when his rational, scientific brain overwhelms the poet within him. It is thus Fede’s instinctual attraction to Hubert that correctly authorizes him as a suitable father for the next generation, providing information that is true as much as it may seem to fly in the face of rational thought.

Hubert’s mother, likewise, is ruled by her womanly instinct in matters of reproduction. Unwittingly, she has married his degenerate father, but the union is never fruitful: “I lived with him, and hated him; but, thank God! I was childless” (153). Mrs. Egremont has obeyed her duties by the letter of English law, but not by a higher natural or spiritual law: she has not been fruitful and multiplied. Yet Allen is not advocating a barren existence for women, but rather the selection of a fitting mate; in fact he believes, as he expresses through Mrs. Egremont’s lover, that “maternity [is] a sacred right and duty of womanhood” (154). Mrs. Egremont appeals to this higher calling in diminishing what might be considered a sin by naturalizing her extramarital affair: “The voice of God within us had joined us, he said; man’s laws and conventions should not avail to sever us” (156–7). This is the fictional embodiment of the way in which Allen understands sexual attraction: “the divine impulse of the moment, which is the voice of Nature within us, prompting us there and then (but not for a lifetime) to union with a predestined and appropriate complement of our own being” (“Girl” 55). Yet Allen is not so forthright in his fiction, which still subscribes to traditional marriage. Like Herminia Barton in *The*

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<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Allen’s thoughts may be supported by recent scientific studies. Although Allen categorizes the factor that influences a woman’s choice as “love,” there is evidence that attraction may be a function of sexual selection that has a direct impact on the health of future generations. In “MHC-Dependent Mate Preference in Humans,” Wedekind et al. found that women were more attracted to the body odour of men whose major histocompatibility complex was genetically dissimilar to their own, a difference that, in reproduction, would result in offspring with greater immunity to infections.



*Woman Who Did* (1895), it is the older generation whose mating is paired with social sin, something that is redeemed for propriety's sake through a socially sanctified marriage in the subsequent generation. The feminine instinct in Mrs. Egremont and Fede allows them to act as authorities on appropriate sexual selection. By implication, Allen's version of eugenics is strengthened by its reliance on nature and natural law: by removing all social constructs, eugenically superior matches would emerge should females of the human species be allowed to choose freely in sexual selection.<sup>11</sup>

Allen's vision of sexual selection is very much influenced by the kind of narrative of Romance, where idealized heroes and heroines come together, expressing the best of a society. They fulfill the wishes and the dreams of the nation through their union, one that is fertile not only in its implied reproduction, but also in its ability to breathe new life into the nation. Allen's romantic novel, while fulfilling the parameters of the romance novel of the high Victorian period, not only focuses on love, but also, in moving past the barrier to the romance, completely eschews rationality. Yes, a rational explanation is required, but it is not this explanation that fits Hubert for Fede. Rather, it is a drive deep within them that is both emotional and sexual and perhaps even supernatural. The nation finds its deepest wish-fulfillment in this novel as, not only does the liberal state find its management for the perfection of the population expressed through the domestic choices of the characters, but such management is so internalized by them—not only intellectually accepted, but even written into their very make-up—as to make the state's desires invisible.

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<sup>11</sup> Although this is a contradiction in terms, it is perhaps the best way to express Allen's vision of eugenics. His views might be best understood as a desire to see the improvement of the British people through better breeding, but he believes that this improved breeding can be best achieved by a return to a more natural form of sexual selection.

*Gallia*, however, provides a counterpoint to the idea that one's natural instinct can appropriately direct human evolution, representing the continued rational strain in eugenics. Gallia may subscribe to Allen's prescription that women be wives and mothers, but this is not a sacred right and duty, an instinct she has felt growing in her. Where Fede's naturalized sexual selection is aligned with love, for Gallia the appropriate accreditation of a future husband must be done by study rather than by instinct, suggesting the repression of emotion. This seemingly strips all romance from the romance novel, embodying the trend in eugenic romance novels that Richardson notes where "[t]he converging ideologies of degeneration and eugenics provided the novel with a new romance plot by replacing 'love and marriage' with marriage as a mediator of genealogy" (*Love and Eugenics* 86). In choosing to select a mate on eugenic lines, Gallia may make a mess of the romance novel and of her own life. Nevertheless, though romantic love is replaced by rational selection, the rational aspect of *Gallia* is a condition of its larger imaginary aims since, at its heart, the novel still dreams of the positive repercussions of such rational selection. While ostensibly this is the shift in the organizing principle of the narrative, from romance to rationality, it also allows for the larger goals of Romance, those of wish-fulfillment, to be met in new ways, as the wishes of individuals that are fulfilled in finding a love match are replaced by the dreams about a better nation played out in the more limited space of the domestic sphere.

In dreaming about a better nation, Gallia's own desire and happiness are made subordinate to the larger ideological gain that could be made in selecting a husband that could provide her future offspring with sound biological gifts. Her interest in maternity is less about familial duty as it is a duty to the ideals upon which she wants to build the

nation: “Eugenic love was the politics of the state mapped onto bodies: the replacement of romance with the rational selection of a reproductive partner in order better to serve the state through breeding” (Richardson, *Love and Eugenics* 8–9). Yet while Richardson explores such “eugenic love” as primarily a kind of active citizenship taken on by some New Women, I see this narrative turn as a continued expression of bio-power that pervades the late-Victorian period and the hegemonic pressures of the liberal state’s techniques of power that shape and order the population. As such, the participation of the individual is decentred and her agency is subsumed under the larger umbrella of the state’s power.

Nevertheless, in focusing on the lives of individuals and their choices, the novel combines such dreaming with the practicalities of implementing eugenic change. Gallia’s choice dramatizes the means by which eugenic selection—without the support of the kind of government program that might be at odds with the understanding of the liberal state—can only be adopted by moving it into the domestic sphere. In elevating the hereditary good of the nation above her own personal happiness, Gallia exemplifies the desire that Pearson lays out for his readers: “I want you to see selection as something which renders the inexorable law of heredity a source of progress which produces the good through suffering, an infinitely greater good which far outbalances the very obvious pain and evil” (23). Whatever personal pain Gallia may have to go through in renouncing Dark Essex is overridden by the contribution she can make to the progress of the nation by carrying Gurdon’s child. In realizing the state’s aims of a healthier, more productive, more middle-class population, Gallia must be guided by her intellect and her ability to correctly assess the fitness of potential mates. Her instinct led her astray as she was

attracted to Dark Essex, but her logical search for a man leads her to a partner who embodies the ideals of masculinity and eugenic fitness. In this way, while maintaining the traditional roles of wife and mother, she can participate in the remaking of the nation.

The fear of degeneration reads often as a fear of disorder, a disorder that the class system might be able to stand against if melded with concepts of heredity. While social mobility suggests disorder among the classes, at the turn of the century, the greatest fears of degeneration arise from fear of the unclassed. In the face of degeneration, this ability to recognize individuals as fitted for a certain position maintains the order of the earlier nineteenth century. Hacking illuminates the way in which “the social classes are not something into which a society is intrinsically sorted. On the contrary, it is the early nineteenth-century counting-bureaucracies that designed the class structure in terms of which we view society” (280). The very artificiality of their origin, however, seems to give the class system strength as it imposes order. To belong to one of the classes, to be biologically suited to it, suggests not only that one fits in society, but also that one is fit enough to be part of society. As Eric Hobsbawm observes, “biology was essential to a theoretically egalitarian bourgeois ideology, since it passed the blame for visible human inequalities from society to ‘nature.’ The poor were born inferior” (252). Thus as the divisions between classes became increasingly malleable, class still continued to exert influence for the way in which it suggested a division between the productive economic value of bodies that could occupy a position within its hierarchy and those bodies that lacked the hereditary gifts to contribute to society.

The urban poor were excluded from the vision of Britain as a superior nation that was continually progressing since they were unqualified and as such unclassifiable, a

view that was buoyed up by the vision of them as biologically unfit. By the end of the century, the class anxieties that predominated no longer surrounded the relationships between the working, middle, and upper classes, but between those classes and the outcast: the unemployed and unemployable, the diseased, alcoholics, and the mentally ill. Though the outcast may be most closely related to the working class, often comprising its members who have been unable to keep even the bare minimum of employment due to the lack of opportunities provided them, the association of the outcast with disease of all kinds suggests that what makes one unfit to occupy a relatively respectable place in society is no longer related to external forces such as social or familial connections but what rests within the individual. As biological unfitness was so often equated with the widespread disease associated with the slums, it provoked segregation of the urban poor from other classes. However, by connecting unfitness with disease—and with the hereditary nature of many diseases increasingly being recognized—the middle class could no longer consider themselves immune to the workings of degeneration. Degeneration might have produced the urban poor, but the continued emergence of mental illness and alcoholism in other classes suggests that social ordering could not be primarily directed by education and wealth if those classes—and indeed all of Britain—were to not be swept aside in a wave of degeneration. Thus at the *fin de siècle*, while class divisions continue to be recognized, as biopolitical ideation spreads, concerns about the racial health of the nation increasingly affects how such divisions might be understood and applied.

The growing concern about degeneration and how degenerative hereditary material might be found across social strata were reshaping ideas about marriage and

reproduction at the *fin de siècle* in more pressing ways than had been seen earlier in the Victorian era. The middle classes became increasingly concerned with hereditary material such that, as Foucault notes, “many of the themes characteristic of the caste manner of the nobility reappeared in the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, but in the guise of biological, medial, or eugenic precepts” (*Sexuality* 124). But while Foucault identifies this more vaguely with the entirety of the nineteenth century, the *fin de siècle* provides the impetus and modes of organization that allow the concerns of earlier in the century to become more widespread and powerful: degeneration was pressing, and the new model of professionalization supported the organization of bodies according to biological merit. Where Darwin’s theory of natural selection had for decades inclined scientists and the general public to reconsider the importance of biological inheritance, in the late-nineteenth century, individuals were applying a growing understanding of the importance of heredity such that old models of inheritance might now be supplanted by biology in considerations of marriage and reproduction.

It is in this context that Dowie’s *Gallia* and Allen’s *A Splendid Sin* emerge, dramatizing such concerns through the genre of the romance novel. By using this form Dowie and Allen demonstrate the way in which biopolitical considerations, while deployed in service to the liberal state, if they are to have any impact, can and must be internalized by the populace as they consider their own reproductive lives. What strengthens the home and the social structure—keeping disease and disorder out—strengthens the British nation amidst the uncertainty that arises at the end of the century. While Dowie and Allen may not be committed to eugenics, at least not in the manner that Galton or Pearson might practice it, they expose the power that sensible reproduction

might have. These novels, like any good romance, thus provide a happy ending for the nation as much as for the lovers within them as the corrupted society—a society where marriages are made without consideration for biological inheritance—is reformed through the betrothal. As Fede and Hubert and Gallia and Gurdon begin their lives together, fulfilling the expectations of the romance novel, the nation can envision a future in which marriages based on sound hereditary mating present a bright future, as much as that vision might itself be the kind of sentimental fiction of the romance novel.

## Conclusion

It is perhaps fitting that I should be writing this conclusion in the province of Alberta, a place where one of the “two greatest innovations in the technology of sex of the second half of the nineteenth century” was put into practice by the state (Foucault, *Sexuality* 118). Though not alone in its decision to do so, Alberta is notable for its implementation of eugenic controls under the Sexual Sterilization Act of 1928. This act allowed the province to sterilize the inmates of mental institutions before their release in cases where “the patient might safely be discharged if the danger of procreation with its attendant risk of multiplication of the evil by transmission of the disability to progeny were eliminated” (117).<sup>1</sup> In the Sexual Sterilization Act of Alberta, state biopolitical intervention is laid bare. The province’s mandate to intervene in the reproductive lives of its citizens is undeniable. Though there is mention of consent in the original Act, a nod toward the continued freedom of the citizens of the liberal state, even then, the state could still have the final word, for when the inmate was declared incompetent and “where the inmate [had] no husband, wife, parent or guardian resident in the Province,” it was the Minister of Health that provided consent (118).

Of course, what makes this act most shocking is not that it was enacted in 1928, around the time where Karl Pearson could praise Germany’s eugenic programs as forward-thinking without being labelled a promoter of hate, or even that the necessity of consent would be removed in the 1937 amendment, but that, despite the atrocities of the

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<sup>1</sup> This eugenic concern for mental health is a reflection of the different directions in which eugenics would develop; as Angelique Richardson notes, “[e]ugenics was deeply inflected by different national concerns, so that while in Germany [and, I would add, Canada] it centred on issues of mental health and in the United States it was a discourse on race, in Britain it was primarily a discourse on class” (xvii). While I would agree that the primary focus shifts as eugenics is applied in different contexts, these distinctions are perhaps too clear cut. As I suggest in my fourth chapter, since the concern with all eugenic movements is to breed better people, discourses of race, class, and health intermingle in the rhetoric employed in disseminating such visions.



Holocaust and the Second World War that cast a permanent shadow on eugenics, the act would not be repealed until 1972. Nevertheless, despite its almost fifty-year span, it might still be possible to consider the Act as a product of its time: a legacy of Galton and the dream of creating a stronger nation by breeding better people, a by-product of women's liberation and the availability of birth control,<sup>2</sup> a result of the devastating economic conditions of the 1930s. It is, perhaps, the last wheezing breaths of *fin de siècle* dreaming, a social scheme that had far outlived its time.

Indeed, there is a case to be made—a case I have endeavoured to make in this study—that the confluence of scientific progress and social concerns creates an environment that shapes the possibilities of how one might think about the nation and population. I see the moment when Darwin applied the term “inheritance” to heredity, aristocratic inheritance still served as an important model for the transmission of wealth, and Mendelian genetics had yet to be resurrected, as a moment that allowed Victorian writers and scientists to envision heredity as a new kind of riches, capable of establishing one's position in the social order. It is, to a certain extent, a part of my premise to argue that this time of uncertainty when heredity was known to be important but when its workings were very much up for debate, that narratives about heredity and inheritance would abound, that scientists and novelists might equally imagine the possibilities that such a space opens up, and this is, I believe, something that shapes the literature of the late Victorian period.

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<sup>2</sup> Just as Angelique Richardson demonstrates is the case in Britain, eugenics in North America is linked to women's rights. Proponents like Margaret Sanger in the United States and Nellie McClung in Canada also advocated the use of birth control, which in addition to supporting women's ability to work, also had the potential to shape the direction of the population.

Yet if the abundance of such narratives is only a product of gaps in knowledge, if increased scientific knowledge is really antithetical to the increase of narratives of inheritance, such narratives would surely have diminished over the years, particularly as the turn of the last century saw the mapping of the human genome. But we continue to hear repeated the same refrains in films like *Gattaca* (1997), which brought to life the possibilities of how our increasing understanding of genetics might be used to shape the human race. Although such scientific romances might no longer feel quite as far-fetched as Galton's own utopia, as science fiction, such ideas remain temporally distanced from our present reality, a picture of a world other than the one we live in.

Nevertheless, narratives of categorizing and containing bodies to affect subsequent generations are not merely found within science fiction. As in the *fin de siècle*, we might still see such narratives in the more contained space of the home. In the *Law & Order: SVU* episode "Design" (2005) a customer of a sperm bank is seen complaining to the management because her daughter is not a musical prodigy despite the fact that the mother supposedly chose the sperm of an accomplished musician. This is a rather humorous example of a mother attempting to determine her offspring's biological inheritance, a moment in the background of the television show that satirizes the extremes to which a New York yuppie will go to maintain or better her position in the social world through the production of exceptional progeny. Such a depiction, however, is important for how it draws attention to the way in which, despite the different context, concerns about how bodies might be categorized and regulated for their biological inheritance continue to be infused with class considerations.

The Victorian era was ripe for a conflation of heredity and class, class being the primary means of ordering the population, but concerns about class diminish in importance in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, we are far from living in a classless society. Members of the middle class in the twenty-first century, much like their nineteenth-century counterparts, feel the pressures and anxieties that come with occupying the middling position. With a recent report of the Conference Board of Canada affirming the growing division between the richest and the poorest citizens in most countries—“[s]eventy-one per cent of the world’s people live in countries where income inequality has been increasing” over the past twenty years, including Canada and the United States<sup>3</sup>—it is no wonder that those in the middle position might be concerned about their relative economic and social position (21). It is not only the poor who are negatively affected by such discrepancies: while the rich got richer, the poor got poorer, but “[m]iddle-income Canadians also lost share” (18). Given the continually unstable position of the middle class, it is perhaps understandable that the desire to associate social position with heredity in order to affirm one’s position in the social order has not disappeared.

Indeed, considerations of class, heredity, and population may be all the more keenly felt in this era of globalization. In the article, “Health Canada Inadvertently Discloses Facts Planned Parenthood Would Like to Suppress” (2002),<sup>4</sup> Ted Byfield argues that, due to falling birth rates, Canada is threatened by “serious population

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<sup>3</sup> According to the study, the United Kingdom saw this disparity decrease in the years studied; nevertheless, it continues to have the largest income disparity among developed countries.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, the irony of Byfield taking on Planned Parenthood cannot go unrecognized. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, was herself a supporter of eugenic views. The difference is that Sanger promoted negative eugenics (inhibiting the reproduction of the unfit) where Byfield is promoting positive eugenics (promoting the reproduction of the fit).

decline” (60). However, in noting “our failure to have children,” Byfield is not addressing all Canadians, but rather a certain segment, the very same segment that Galton addressed as those who might bequeath to the nation their best hereditary gifts (60). “[Forty percent] of women in professional jobs have not started a family because of work,” Byfield tells readers, warning them that “[i]f many of the best potential parents of any society won’t produce offspring, or perhaps only one child late in life, the intelligence level of the next generation will surely decline” (60). Byfield, like Gallia, in identifying who the best potential parents might be, does not stop to consider who might be the most loving and nurturing; no, Byfield insinuates that “the best potential parents” are those of a certain class—professionals who display a certain “intelligence level.” Byfield implies that women (more accurately, educated, professional women) need to produce more children: “To maintain zero population growth in developed countries, each woman must have an average of 2.1 children” (60). One hundred thirteen years earlier, Grant Allen said the same thing: “the vast majority of the women must become wives and mothers, and must bear at least four children apiece” (“Woman Question” 449).<sup>5</sup> Though Byfield may not represent the voice of the majority—just as Allen may not have a century ago—the similarity of his words to Allen’s suggests that the desire to imagine a world shaped by the harnessing of the best hereditary gifts, the desire to see heredity as an inheritance that shapes future generations and the nation, goes unabated.

Of course, while this thread remains, like Galton’s precepts, it might be more likely to be applied by concerned individuals who share Byfield’s vision than to be adopted by the state. Such concerns about how the population should be managed might

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<sup>5</sup> The discrepancy in numbers, of course, only reflects the decrease in child mortality in developed countries since the turn of the century.

still, like *Gattaca* remain at a safe distance as pure speculation. However, as I have established, through the space of the public sphere, the private lives of citizens become public concerns, and public concerns might shape state technologies of power as literature and science perform the kind of cultural work that has very real implications. Much as with the longstanding Sexual Sterilization Act that failed to receive much press until its victims began to sue the Government of Alberta in the 1990s, biopolitical action in the liberal state is made possible by the complicity of its citizens.

Such is the case with recent campaigns in Britain to offer the long-acting birth control Depo-Provera to teenage girls “as young as 13” “without parental consent”<sup>6</sup> to curb teenage pregnancy (“Contraceptive Injections”). Far less extreme than sterilization, such intervention is nevertheless a means by which the state is engaged in the management of the population. As teen pregnancy is almost consistently painted in a negative light, such interventions may be approved by public opinion, the only qualms being moral, with concerns that such measures encourage promiscuity. An unaddressed consideration, however, is the way in which this state intervention into the lives of young women is a means of population management and social programming since the rates of teenage pregnancy are highest among those from working-class neighbourhoods. This current program, in fact, might be considered a belated adoption of Galton’s precepts: Galton provides calculations in *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* to show how early marriage (read: sexual activity) results in women producing more offspring, a fact that, combined with his observation that intellectuals marry later in life,

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<sup>6</sup> I include this quotation not to dispute the right of teenage girls to make decisions about their own bodies but rather to highlight the language of “consent” that mirrors the language used in the Sexual Sterilization Act. Certainly, “consent” affirms the freedom of citizens of the liberal state, obscuring the hegemonic way in which such attitudes of biological management are adopted in support the aims of the state.

leads to the implication that the poor and uneducated were out-breeding their betters. Galton believed this could be reversed: “if the races best fitted to occupy the land are encouraged to marry early, they will breed down the others in the few generations” (323). If professional women in developed countries cannot be persuaded to bear children in service to the state, perhaps the solution is to limit the reproduction of the “unfit” working classes.

The presence of such biopolitical considerations of class in the twenty-first century suggests the sustained influence of the problems I have explored in this dissertation. Nevertheless, the late Victorian period offers a fruitful imaginative and political landscape in which a variety of texts were shaped by such issues. In envisioning heredity as inheritance, it becomes tied up with class and the social order, and while class continues to be a concern today, its ability to sort and contain bodies is limited by the increasingly blurry boundaries around all classes that middle-class Victorians recognized and responded to. As changes occurred in the social order in the latter half of the nineteenth century, shifting importance from the aristocracy to the middle class and finally resulting in professionalism, biological inheritance offered a means of understanding this shift and creating stability in the midst of change.

Though much of my argument rests on one little word, “inheritance,” that Darwin would imbue with new meaning, Darwin’s very project, indeed, the very development of evolutionary thinking, suggests that biology presented itself as the new means to order bodies, for evolutionary thinking is inherently biopolitical: both Darwin and Lamarck began their studies to answer the question of where the boundaries between species fell. This new investment in biology and heredity as a means of connecting past, present, and

future, changed the way in which Victorians were able to imagine themselves and their relationship to others in the social order. Just as Darwin's theory of natural selection has irreversibly impacted the way in which humans see themselves in relation to the natural world, so too has Darwin's use of the word "inheritance" impacted the ways in which humans could imagine themselves in relation to each other.

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## Curriculum Vitae

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Romanticism and Evolution Conference, London, ON, May 14, 2011



“Cause or Cure: Love and Degeneration at the *Fin de Siècle*”  
Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada, Banff, AB,  
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