I. Eugenealogies

The previous chapters of *The Sanitary Arts* have worked to undo a series of standard narratives about aesthetic revolutions and scientific discoveries, demonstrating, above all, the ideological complexity and interdisciplinary context of such seemingly straightforward epistemologies. This sixth chapter begins, accordingly, with a conventional story that should already be on shaky ground, given the late-Victorian shift in sanitary attention from the environmental to the biological, from places to people as the epicenter of social cleanliness and aesthetic perfectibility. The standard narrative for the rise of eugenic theories in nineteenth-century England begins, predictably enough, with Sir Francis Galton, and in short goes something like this. In the 1870s, Galton developed a methodology he termed the science of biometrics, which eventually spawned the field of statistics, which, in turn, became a mechanism for measuring and mapping the basic principles of human heredity. In 1883, Galton coined the term eugenics in his book, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, as a concise referent for the “science of improving stock” though both “judicious mating” and the increased breeding of the most “suitable races and strains of blood.” Galton’s work inspired not only Karl Pearson’s statistical mathematics, but Havelock Ellis’s sexology, Edward

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Intensive Culture

John Ruskin, Sarah Grand, and the Aesthetics of Eugenics

Our first duty then, is not to mend the arts—you cannot mend a cripple. But it is rather to mend the parents who bring forth this cripple—to mend Life itself, and above all Man.

—Anthony Mario Ludovici, *Nietzsche and Art* (1912)

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Carpenter’s theories of civilization, the War Office’s pursuit of imperial and bureaucratic “efficiency,” The Fabian Society, and, most uncomfortably, the late-Victorian feminist purity campaigns and novels like the two by Sarah Grand I will discuss here: Adnam’s Orchard (1912) and The Winged Victory (1916).

This chapter does not intend to deny this distilled and depressingly dystopic narrative. The specter of Sir Francis Galton as the father of a eugenic reform movement that continued to inspire theories, philosophies and novels right up until the second world war (and even beyond) provides a pseudo-scientific teleology with an appropriately mad scientist; a necessary Dr. Frankenstein for another story of medical depravity and human improvement. But within late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century eugenic discourse itself, I have found an interesting and common tendency to repress the scientist in favor of a more gracious and genial figure, and in doing so to deny the inhumanity and, indeed, the very ugliness of statistical thinking. In Karl Pearson’s 1891 The Grammar of Science, for example, we find that eugenic methodology depends not on statistical mathematics, but on aesthetic judgment. “All great scientists,” he insists, “have, in a certain sense, been great artists; the man with no imagination may collect facts, but he cannot make great discoveries.”

Moreover, because “our aesthetic judgment demands harmony between the representation and the represented . . . science is more artistic than modern art” (17). Harmony, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was endemic to the language of preventive medicine as it emerged from mid-Victorian sanitation reform, and referenced a scientific method that understood human perfectibility to be an aesthetic project. As early as 1876, B. W. Richardson was urging sanitarians to extend their goals of preventive medicine into the province of the “unborn,” promising that his coming city of Hygeia would be populated by a new order of human beings sculpted, in effect, by the Art of scientific progress and sanitary perfection. Just as “in the highest development of the fine arts the sculptor and painter place before us the finest imaginative types of strength, grace and beauty, so the silent artist, civilization, approaches nearer and nearer to perfection, and by evolution of form and mind develops what is practically a new order of physical and mental build.”

What is so striking about eugenic discourse as it emerges from the sanitary reform movement is that it invents itself through aesthetic discourse, recasting the suspicious scientist as a judicious artist, and translating the project of racial regeneration into an aesthetic cultivation thoroughly in keeping with natural selection and the survival of the fittest. The German doctor Heinrich Lehmann had dubbed these aesthetic practitioners “hygienic physicians,” and had argued that their intervention was necessary to revive mod-
ern art by allowing a harmonious (rather than “dysaemic”) conception of
the world to shape the future of mankind.4 “Ugly men are not influenced by
beauty,” he explained, in the 1901 translation of his book *Natural Hygiene*,
effectively dismissing environmental reform as an inadequate instrument of
aesthetic improvement.5 Beauty is once again the disinterested goal of the new
cleanliness campaigns at the turn of the century, and even when eugenicists
begin suggesting more aggressive approaches to race culture than sewerage
and slum removal, they are advocating social warfare in the decorous guise
of aesthetic perfectibility. “One might wear any passion out of a family by
culture, as skilful gardeners blot a color out of a tulip that hurts its beauty,”
Havelock Ellis explains in his 1921 tract *Eugenics Made Plain*. “We are only
today beginning to accept seriously the great principle they embody, and to
apply it earnestly for the heightening of man’s physical and spiritual beauty.”6

Of course, one could look outside the sanitation reform movement to
find aesthetics and science so paired, and one could also look farther back in
Victorian intellectual history for an argument that Science was really Art in
disguise. Even before germ theory turned sanitary attention from the envi-
ronmental to the biological, Herbert Spencer’s famous synthetic philosophy
was already paving the way for science to be understood as the key to aes-
thetic progress and human perfectibility: in his 1860 *Education: Intellectual,
Moral, Physical* he cited the Pre-Raphaelite painters as obvious evidence that
the highest art of every kind is founded on scientific knowledge.7 But by the
end of the century, in the hands of racialists and statisticians, Spencer’s posi-
tivist synthesis of science and art enabled eugenics to emerge as an aesthetic
imperative rather than a scientific experiment; a way to ameliorate ugliness
and impose harmony on degenerate bodies, degenerate families, degenerate
nations. Once it was retrofitted as aesthetic philosophy, moreover, eugen-
ics required a story of origins that began not with science but with beauty,
bypassing Sir Francis Galton, Benjamin Ward Richardson and even Herbert
Spencer, in order to espouse a parentage that began instead with John Ruskin.
In a wide variety of eugenic materials published at the turn of the century,
Ruskin is invoked as both totem and touchstone, authorizing a brand of
racialism that looks like liberal enlightenment and civic virtue.

Dr. Caleb Saleeby’s 1909 *Parenthood and Race Culture*, for instance, opens
by dismissing the unfortunate idea that eugenics is actually a subset of math-
ematics; for Saleeby, eugenics is both a science and a religion based on the
laws of life, and as a religion it “proposes to rebuild the living foundations
of Empire. To this end,” Saleeby writes, we shall preach a new imperialism,
warning England to beware lest her veins become choked with yellow dirt,
and demanding over all her legislative chambers there be carved the golden
words, “there is no Wealth but Life” (33). While Ruskin’s 1862 Unto This Last provides the motto for racial hygiene Ruskin’s other writings provide the methods, and Saleeby quotes liberally from the economic texts of his new sanitary Moses, emphasizing most particularly those passages from the 1867 Time and Tide that focus on environmental reforms, and, yes, on a kind of social conditioning that would improve the stock of the British nation. Eugenics “finds abundant warrant and support in Ruskin’s own wonderful writings,” effuses Saleeby, and some of the sentences, require to be read and remembered by the majority of our present advisors. He says . . . “Make your nations consist of knaves, and as Emerson said long ago, it is but the case of any other vermin—the more the worse. . . . The French and British public may and will, with many other publics, be at last brought . . . to see farther that a nation’s real strength and happiness do not depend upon properties and territories, nor on machinery for their defence, but on their getting such territory as they have, well-filled with none but respectable persons, which is a way of infinitely enlarging one’s territory, feasible to every potentate.” (109–10)

Just as eugenics becomes a new imperial strategy for Saleeby, Ruskin becomes indispensable reading for rising genetic imperialists, and Saleeby closes his text by recommending not just Time and Tide and Unto This Last, but Munera Pulveris (1872) as “some of the most forcible and wisest things to be written on race-culture, and its absolutely fundamental relation to morality, patriotism, and true economics” (320).

Robert Reid Rentoul uses Unto This Last similarly in his sensationally titled Race Culture or Race Suicide? A Plea for the Unborn (1906), deploying “There is no wealth but life” as a seemingly obvious epigraph to a chapter called “Some Causes of National Deterioration and Degeneracy: The Use of Abortion Drugs, Etc.” Rentoul is also happy to extend Ruskin’s quotation for another line, concluding with the utilitarian refinement to Ruskin’s poetical redefinition of wealth as life: “The country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings.” Throughout his text, Rentoul employs a set of architectural metaphors that might aim to provide an appropriate rhetorical home for Ruskin’s dislodged eugenic sentiments. Children begotten by the diseased, by idiots, imbeciles or epileptics, by the insane and by the deformed, have been “jerry built” by unlicensed and unregulated designers, parents too degenerate and “backward” to be entrusted with the sacred duties of race culture: “As Empire builders,” Rentoul explains, “they are decidedly jerry” (29). A few chapters later, Rentoul
turns again to Ruskin for a vivid illustration of race culture at its strongest and most promising (if not its most English), citing Ruskin’s retelling of the ancient story of the barbaric Queen who was reproved by another Queen for her lack of jewelry. “She replied by sending for her seven strong sons, manly in health and grace, and presented them with the short but immortal speech—These are my jewels” (65).

Somehow, the citation of “There is no Wealth but Life” became a protocol for eugenic writers in the early twentieth century, providing an unimpeachable epigraph for chapters on eugenic marriage and the limitation of offspring in books like Anna Mary Galbraith’s 1920 *The Family and the New Democracy: A Study in Social Hygiene*. It also surfaces as a token of shared philosophy for eugenic writers who casually use the phrase to authorize a form of race culture that seems jarringly disconnected from Ruskin’s Victorian contexts. In “The Science and Practice of Eugenics; or Race Culture” (1912), Dr. Meyer Solomon speaks of fostering and treasuring the best types of humanity, and passing a brighter light on to future generations: “Since we believe with Ruskin that ‘there is no wealth but life’ . . . no stone should be left unturned to arrive at the means of producing the best type of men and women, and of purifying, bettering, and advancing the race.”10 Again, in *The Mothercraft Manual* (1922), Mary Lillian Read imagines a similar audience of devout racial Ruskinites when she happily heralds the dawn of a eugenic moment where the elimination of all causes of criminality and imbecility is finally possible: “‘There is no Wealth but Life,’ we are realizing with Ruskin.”11

But as ubiquitous as Ruskin’s famous phrase becomes in early-twentieth-century eugenic discourse, it is also the case that Ruskin texts in general are perpetually at the service of eugenic writers. Other lines from *Unto This Last* are also popular, as Scott Nearing demonstrates in *The Super Race: An American Problem* (1912) when he heralds the coming Nietzschean superhero with Ruskin’s assurance that “there is as yet no ascertained limit to the nobleness of person and mind which the human creature may attain.”12 But Nearing also harnesses *Time and Tide* to his racial argument, using Ruskin to summarize the self-evident value of what he terms “Positive Eugenics”: “As Mr. Ruskin so well observes—‘It is a matter of no final concern, to any parent, whether he shall have two children or four; but matter of quite final concern whether those he has shall or shall not deserve to be hanged’” (33). Even *The Stones of Venice* resounds with eugenic wisdom for advocates of race culture in the early decades of the twentieth century, providing a slogany advertisement in a volume of *The Bookman* magazine for Helen Baker’s forthcoming *Race Improvement, or Eugenics* (1912): “Eugenics means an answer to a cry that
Ruskin heard, “rising from all our cities . . . that we manufacture everything there except men.”

Certainly Ruskin had turned a disciplinary corner when the words and works that most interest these eugenicists were composed. Generically speaking, Unto This Last, Time and Tide and Munera Pulveris are works of political economy rather than art criticism, and as such do not necessarily signal a definitively aesthetic agenda within eugenic writing. But when these texts were written, in the 1860s and 1870s, Ruskin’s status as an aesthetic authority had not fundamentally changed, and I would argue that the principles often identified as eugenic advocacy in his economic writings are actually aesthetic principles adapted for political use. I argued in the first chapter of The Sanitary Arts that Ruskin’s unique participation in mid-Victorian sanitation reform helped to transform cleanliness into an aesthetic value; I am arguing in this last chapter that as the sanitation reform movement gradually evolved into the eugenics movement, aesthetic philosophy remained an endemic and exploited component of the discourse of hygiene. As we know, Saleeby, Rentoul or any other eugenicist could just have easily turned to Ruskin’s aesthetic writings for an impassioned argument about promoting physical health and cleanliness in the working classes; human health and vitality was, for Ruskin, a fundamental prerequisite for the return of beauty and art to England. “The Relation of Art to Use,” was a lecture originally delivered at Oxford University in 1870, well before Galton coined the term “eugenics,” but it certainly provides another kind of example of what passes for Ruskin’s investment in race culture. In this lecture, which I’ve already cited in a much earlier context, Ruskin bemoans his ongoing inability to inspire environmental change in England, or to convince fellow artists and critics that aesthetic reform was vitally linked to personal and national cleanliness:

You cannot have a landscape by Turner, without a country for him to paint; you cannot have a portrait by Titian without a man to be portrayed. I need not prove to you, I suppose, in these short terms; but in the outcome I can get no soul to believe that the beginning of art is getting our country clean and our people beautiful. I have been ten years trying to get this very plain certainty—I do not say believed—but even thought of, as anything but a monstrous proposition. To get your country clean, and your people lovely—I assure you, that is a necessary work of art to being with.¹⁴

To be perfectly clear, I am not arguing that Ruskin’s despair about the environmental state of England in the 1870s constitutes the origins of eugenic
thinking. But just as Ruskin’s focus on clean landscapes and clean people as the necessary path to national aesthetic reform is an important manifestation of the broader Victorian cleanliness campaigns, the wanton appropriation of Ruskin by eugenic writers is also an appropriation of his aesthetic advocacy and reputation, an espousal that makes the curious aesthetic pretensions of Karl Pearson and Havelock Ellis intellectually legible. Indeed, the resuscitation of Ruskin as the unwitting father of eugenics seems inevitable if eugenics is understood as an outgrowth of a much more broadly defined hygiene movement that perpetually articulated itself as an aesthetic philosophy.

II. The Nietzschean Aesthetic

I began this chapter by suggesting that social scientists adopted Ruskin in order to disguise or to disarm the fundamental inhumanity of their eugenic project, but it is also the case that they may have been using Ruskin’s moral authority to revive flagging public interest in hygiene as the path to both national and imperial perfectibility for Great Britain. For writers like George Shee, we will remember, the physical appearance of working-class bodies was a troubling material index of Britain’s waning imperial power, and he also cited Ruskin to plead for more expansive sanitary initiatives like universal military training for boys; after all, Shee argued, in the language of our versatile Victorian reformer, wealth had no more accurate measure than in the “greatest number of happy and healthy men and women.” This kind of eugenic advocacy for physical education, like eugenic support for prenatal care, nutritional programs, and milk purification, was dubbed “positive” eugenics by writers like Caleb Saleeby, an obstetrician fundamentally concerned with the production of healthy British babies and children. Most eugenic writers at the turn of the century agreed that sanitation reforms of the mid-Victorian period had exacerbated the current problem of racial degeneration by interfering with natural selection and preserving a fundamentally unhealthy population of individuals for the breeding of an ever-declining British race. Saleeby’s philosophy of “eugenic reconciliation,” however, insisted that genetic modifications were only ethically possible before the conception of a child actually occurred, and thus any eugenic program must require the humanitarian care and preservation of all living children regardless of race or medical condition. It is true, Saleeby admits, that “indiscriminate humanitarianism” has too long mistaken sentiment for morality, but an ethic of care, of compassion, and of love is perfectly compatible with a eugenic insistence that infirm individuals should not be allowed to propagate their infirmities.
On the other side of the spectrum, according to Saleeby, were a group of racialists who didn’t even deserve eugenic nomenclature; these theorists believed the regeneration of the race necessitated the sacrifice of morality, and, indeed, the sacrifice of degenerate populations to the revitalized work of natural selection.

On the other side of the eugenicists stand those whom we may for short call Nietzscheans. They see one-half of the truth of natural selection; they see that through struggle and internecine war, species have hitherto maintained themselves or ascended. They declare that all improvement of the environment, or at any rate all humanitarian effort, tends to abrogate the struggle for existence, and even, as is only too often true, to select unworthy and let worth go to the wall. This school then declares that infant mortality is a blessing and charity an unmitigated curse. In short, that we must go back as quickly as possible to the order of the beast. (31)

Nietzsche, who declared morality irrelevant, even pernicious, who blamed racial deterioration on democracy, and who theorized that a dominating race of overmen could only arise from “terrible and violent beginnings,” certainly severed what it meant to be human from what it meant to be humane, and put into circulation, at the end of the nineteenth century, a metaphysical justification of birth, blood, and the biological will to power. Nietzsche’s own admonitions and exhortations about breeding are, of course, never vulgarly associated with an outright doctrine of eugenics; Nietzsche despises both science and social science as reductionist schemes that contribute to the smallness of man by insisting on man’s fragmentation rather than fully synthesized wholeness. But “Nietzschean” is still a particularly apt term for the casual regret expressed by Havelock Ellis, for example, when he notes in 1921 that bad environmental conditions are no longer bad enough to kill off the “unfit” in requisite numbers. “Nietzschean” also suits Karl Pearson quite well when the statistician dismisses the humanitarian impulse altogether as, in fact, a pitiful misapprehension of what it means to be human: “It is a false view of human solidarity, a weak humanitarianism, not a true humanism, which regrets that a capable and stalwart race of white men should replace a dark-skinned tribe which can neither utilize its land for the full benefit of mankind, nor contribute its quota to the common stock of human knowledge.”

These discursive skirmishes over “true” humanism and “indiscriminate” humanitarianism in eugenic thinking are, I would suggest, an important attempt to trademark humanity itself in the service of race culture. Like the appeal to aesthetics, an appeal to humanism works to naturalize eugenic theory, making a preference for healthy bodies and Anglo-Saxon features seem
like a matter of endemic good taste rather than a sign of class revulsion or racial dis-taste. As Bourdieu clarifies, “What is at stake in aesthetic discourse and in an attempted imposition of a definition of the genuinely human, is nothing less than the monopoly of humanity. Art is called upon to make the difference between humans and nonhumans” (491). Indeed, with the help of Bourdieu it becomes clear that the widespread use of John Ruskin within turn-of-the-century eugenic writing humanized the dismal science of race culture by making eugenic advocacy seem like a highly evolved natural preference or “pure taste” for healthy, strong bodies. Furthermore, Bourdieu’s analysis of the political function of taste in the construction of a cultural aristocracy sheds interesting light on the aesthetic case that Saleeby, Pearson and Ellis so fervently pursue for race culture and biologism. When Pearson claims that eugenics is an obvious outgrowth of aesthetic philosophy, when Ellis claims that genetic manipulation is the pursuit of beauty, the poor and working-class subjects of social reform disappear from ethical consideration and even human classification. That “pure gaze” of the connoisseur displaces the scientific gaze of the statistician, and the master race reimposes a cultural aristocracy based on natural taste. “This claim to aristocracy is less likely to be contested than any other,” Bourdieu concludes, “because the relation of the ‘pure’ ‘disinterested’ disposition to the conditions which make it possible, i.e. the material conditions of existence which are rarest because most freed from economic necessity, has every chance of passing unnoticed” (56).

Accordingly, when Nietzsche rhetorically inquires in The Will to Power how a stronger, healthier species could emerge from the current degenerate stage of European democracy, he answers in the familiar discourse of aesthetic philosophy that human regeneration requires, above all, taste: “Classical taste: this means will to simplification, strengthening, to visible happiness, to the terrible, to the courage of psychological nakedness . . . one must be faced with the choice of perishing or prevailing” (465). Only as a matter of taste—the healthy preference for pleasure over pain, for beauty over ugliness, for wholeness over fragmentation—could human evolution be pursued as a biological project, necessitating the judicious breeding of human life not in the service of pitiful, reductionist Science but as the very essence of Art. The aesthetic capacity, as Eagleton reminds us, was a physiological instinct for Nietzsche. Taste is purified to the degree that the race is strengthened; the strongest type of man, the “synthetic” man, would have the power to create a race “with its own sphere of life, with an excess of strength for beauty, bravery, culture, manners, to the highest peak of the spirit . . . beyond good and evil; a hothouse for strange and choice plants” (478). The beautiful is perfect symmetry, power and physical capacity, while the ugly is characterized by bodily
degeneration and imperfection: “the ugly limps, the ugly stumbles: antithesis to the divine frivolity of the dancer” (427).

Eugenic writers, I would argue, install Ruskin as Nietzsche’s opposite, casting two formidable figures in nineteenth-century aesthetic philosophy as the conflicting forces within a single debate about race culture. While Ruskin’s fervent commitment to social perfectibility, moral improvement, and religious faith make his differences from Nietzsche almost too obvious, it is important to realize that both Ruskin and Nietzsche believe beautiful, healthy human bodies in hygienic environments are the very essence of art. Nietzsche’s art and beauty, however, is the domain of the racially elite, the physiologically enlightened, the graceful; his political order consists of a perfected biological aristocracy that rules and controls the degenerate herd. The intellectual legacy revitalized by Nietzsche was not lost on Havelock Ellis, who drew a relatively straight line from the aesthetics of Lord Shaftesbury to modern metaphysics in his 1923 *The Dance of Life*. Shaftesbury believed, of course, that virtue was defined by a love of order and beauty in society; by extension, when we learn to act we are “learning to become artists.” Less interested in virtue as a social characteristic, Nietzsche nevertheless believes, in Ellis’s turn of phrase, that “every man is a work of art he makes himself” (280). Ellis, the former Fabian, here speaks with pity and even derision about “the ambitious moral reformer” who refuses to understand the essential ambiguity, the indefiniteness, of aesthetic morality (282): “To take ‘art’ and ‘morals’ and ‘religion’ and stir them up, however vigorously, into an indigestible plum-pudding, as Ruskin used to do, is no longer possible” (316). Our understanding of true and living art, according to Ellis, could no longer be so narrowed and debased by an image of “Moses with the Ten Commandments”: aesthetic beauty produces physiological pleasure and material comfort, while ugliness, like plum pudding, “interferes with digestion . . . disturbs the nervous system, impairs the forces of life” (328). Simply and succinctly put, good art imparts health, and, in fact, *is* health; bad art, on the other hand, makes you sick and, in fact, *is* sickness. Regardless of one’s taste for realism, for morality, for religion, for plum pudding, the potential physiological power of art expressed by Ellis makes Ruskin seem like the inadvertent father of eugenics after all.

III. Realism, Repose, and the Reclamation of the Picturesque

In hindsight, from the lofty distance of this sixth chapter, Ward’s *The Matting of Lydia* can be revisited as less of a battle between Ruskin and Whistler,
and more as a struggle between Ruskin and Nietzsche, or a clash between the “positive” eugenic programs that will encourage judicious mating, and the “negative” programs that more actively assist nature in her project of natural selection. While Mr. Boden is the explicit representative of Ruskinian values in the text, the Nietzschean is also well-delineated in the vociferously anti-Socialist, anti-democratic, morally indifferent slumlord and aesthete, Edmund Melrose. As the narrator explains, the only public matter that ever concerns Melrose is that “his own class began to show a lamentable want of power” in the putting down and keeping down of the “proletariat” (84). Melrose’s attractiveness, as Faversham explains, is his superb will and brain, an attractiveness that makes his moral abnormalities somehow less alarming. His laissez faire attitude towards Mainstairs, moreover, his hostility to sanitary reform and social perfectibility, as we will remember, are underwritten by a radically individualist, wholly physiological, philosophy of aesthetic pleasure that also cagily identifies the fretful interventions of social reformers as the mere effects of degenerate taste.

In my view the object of everybody should be to live, as acutely as possible—to get as many sensations, as many pleasant reactions as possible—out of the day. Some people get their sensations—or say they do—out of fussing about the poor. . . . I make no apology whatever for my existence. (276)

When Melrose is shot in his art gallery, when Boden gives his closural blessing to the newly mated couple in the House Beautiful, what we get, of course, is a triumph of Ruskinian morality over solely sensual, sensational pleasure. Lydia’s “poised mind and mastered senses” (332), like Faversham’s sole ownership and enjoyment of a private art collection, must yield to the sanitary aesthetic, and the moral imperative of public health must displace the seductive power of the pure gaze. But more than social reconciliation, this mating plot reflects Saleeby’s “eugenic reconciliation,” where “we must have the worthy and only the worthy to be the parents of the future.”21

By the twentieth century, as Dan Stone has argued, “biologism” was no longer a progressive ideology, no longer a useful democratic bulwark against social and economic hierarchies.22 Biologism was an ideological tool of the right wing by the time Ruskin was drafted into its service; as Nietzsche had effectively demonstrated, the biological privileging of strength, health and racial purity could be radically individualistic, and could effectively revitalize the latent Victorian doctrines of liberalism and self-determination that fear of dirt and disease had temporarily stifled. The social and sanitary reforms of the mid-nineteenth century had long been seen as a plenary contradic-
tion of the entrenched British habit of ‘doing as one likes.’ Frances Power Cobbe’s 1882 *The Peak in Darien*, for example, had decried the widespread public “Hygeiolatry” that had permitted the passage of Compulsory Vaccination Acts and Contagious Disease Acts as innovations in British legislation that had sacrificed individual rights to a dubious new authority: “Health of the body has been accorded the importance which the—real or supposed—interests of the soul alone commanded two centuries ago,” Cobbe explained, “and the tyranny of the priesthood of Hygeia threatens to be as high-handed as ever was that of the Churches of Rome or Geneva.” This kind of assessment of bureaucratic control of the body, of a state-dictated physiology that could wrest the concept of health away from moral and religious meanings, was a discerning perspective at the end of the nineteenth century, but it was typically answered with dripping sarcasm about sentimental notions of the “liberty of the subject” by sanitarians. Frederick Bagshawe suggested in 1889, “it might be thought that sentiment was not worth much when linked with loathsome disease, or liberty of much value to a dead or disabled subject.” But the bodily health that Nietzsche promised had nothing to do with public sewers or bathhouses, with compulsory vaccination or housing authorities; Nietzsche’s biologism was, of course, the natural aesthetic instinct and privilege of an exalted racial type. Indeed, if the dead and the disabled were never subjects to begin with, were not fully human under the biological laws of harmony and perfection that determined humanity, then their liberty was a democratic fiction, a perverse and profound Socialist lie.

The most radically conservative popularizer of Nietzsche in England was probably Anthony Ludovici, an early-twentieth-century eugenicist who found in the German metaphysician a triumphant argument against the great scourge of racial miscegenation that had degraded the European type. For Ludovici, a former art critic and connoisseur, the most important thing about *The Will to Power* was that it was essentially an aesthetic handbook; at the opening of his 1911 book *Nietzsche and Art*, he insists that the principles found in *The Will to Power* will be the basis of a “new valuation” in art, especially as it pertains to British art and criticism. According to Nietzsche, explains Ludovici, democracy implies a desire to please and a disinclination to assume power that “contradicts the very essence of Art” (17). Under democracy, art becomes realistic and relativistic, illustrative of poverty, lassitude, exhaustion and degeneracy; by definition, democratic art is ugly and can excite no interest or passion in man other than a self-hatred caused by the exhibited decline of his type. Nietzsche’s “Ruler art,” by contrast, acknowledges that true beauty is biological and can exist only within the confines of a specific Ruler race:
The ruler artist is he who, elated by his own health and love of Life, says “Yea” to his own type and proclaims his faith or confidence in it, against all other types; and who, in doing so, determines or accentuates the values of that type. . . . By the beauty which his soul reflects upon the selected men he represents in his works, he establishes an order of rank among his people, and puts each in his place. (137)

In privileging order over chaos, system over anarchy, hierarchy over democracy, the ruler artist harnesses a program of classification to his aesthetic that clearly works, as Mary Douglas has theorized, as a cleansing apparatus. Pollution discourse emerges, we will remember from the first chapter, when form has been attacked, when the facts revealed by realism are “ugly, bare and dissatisfying” (71). What was needed instead, what was provided by the Ruler artist, was “a scheme for life, a picture for life, in which all the naked facts and truths could be given some place and some human significance—in fact, some order and arrangement, whereby they would become the chattels of the human spirit, and no longer subjects of independent existence and awful strangeness” (71).

At a distance, this zeal for organization and classification, order and arrangement, might even resemble Ruskinian methodology, the sanitizing impulse to put matter back in place. But the beauty revealed by Ruskin’s system of arrangement was the highly wrought detail and truthful drama of everyday life, the “unclean story” of harsh social relations. In Nietzsche, in Ludovici, and in a whole tradition of conservative, anti-democratic aesthetic theory, order and arrangement were the mechanisms that repressed detail in favor of what Shaftesbury called social harmony and what modern writers called good health.

We are acquainted with the irascible nerve-patient when he pours his curses on the head of a noisy child; and in his case we are only too ready to suspect a morbid condition for the body. But when we see in ourselves, or our young friends, or our brothers . . . when still in their teens, a sort of gasping enthusiasm before a landscape, a peasant child, or a sunset; when they show an inability to bide their time, and remain inactive in the presence of what they consider beautiful, we immediately conclude from their conduct, not that they have little command of themselves, but that they must of necessity have strong artistic natures. . . . [I]t is only in our age that this neurotic touchiness could possibly be mistaken for strength and vigor; and yet there are hundreds of this kind among the painters and sculptors of the day. (38–39)
Importantly, what separates the ruler artist from this “pathological usurper” appears to be his inaction, and his disinterested, impassive contemplation of the picturesque, his ability to achieve peace and repose from a scene fraught with moral and ethical difficulties. To be moved to realist representation or moral action by a landscape or a peasant child is evidence of physiological degeneracy, whereas true aesthetic power masters and commands the scene, imposes an order and arrangement based on personal feelings of racial vigor and biological privilege.

Less exorcised than Ludovici about the racial problem of miscegenation, and speaking in defense of modern Post-Impressionist painting rather than in objection to its decadence, Bloomsbury art critic Roger Fry still expressed a similar aesthetic concern about the potentially destabilizing emotional experience of material life.

The more poignant emotions of actual life have, I think, a kind of numbing effect analogous to the paralyzing influence of fear in some animals; but even if this experience is generally not admitted, all will admit that the need for responsive action in us hurries us along and prevents us from ever realizing fully what the emotion is we feel, from coordinating it perfectly with our other states.26

Again, the need for action in response to a scene, a situation, or a landscape prevents true emotional understanding, actually anaesthetizing our highest, most potentially harmonious aesthetic pleasures. The true artist, for Fry, translates pure sensation into an emotion that can be given back to us in forms and colors, and we are thus spared any need for action or response. This ability to blend the sensational and the emotional, the scientific and the intellectual, is only possible for the truly “generalizing intellect”; when generalization is the goal, “the mind is held in delighted equilibrium by the contemplation of the inevitable relation of all the parts to the whole, so that no need exists to make reference to what is outside the unity, and this becomes for the time being the universe.”27 Inevitably, this best, most synthesizing, most revitalizing Modern art would not appeal to “ordinary man,” Fry admitted: “In proportion as art becomes purer the number of people to whom it appeals gets less.”28

In other words, the transvaluation of pollution discourse over the long nineteenth century continues, in a wide variety of anti-democratic aesthetic writing, to be a reclassification of those controversial sensations provided by the picturesque. In the Romantic aesthetic philosophy of Hazlitt, Burke, and Shaftesbury, haziness, blurriness, and generalization were the revered
agents of personal, imaginative sublimity, the warm brown tones and dark backgrounds of Renaissance painting providing a free space of intellectual exploration and experience that moved aristocratic morals in the service of enhanced and elegant social relations. By the end of the nineteenth century, after laboratory science had appropriated the ideological space of fragmentation, pessimism, and materialism, detail was demonized once again as a fretful shattering of the harmonizing aesthetic instinct into anatomy, pathology, and the profound ugliness of social and economic reality. In the assessment of James Hinton, a surgeon, homeopath, and mystic who deeply influenced Havelock Ellis and the Fellowship of New Life, realist detail even defeated and degraded the cherished Victorian belief that the beautiful was always morally useful, because detail was a slavish abasement before things rather than ideas: “While the painter is endeavoring to accurately represent certain things which come before him, he is serving those things. When he is sacrificing those things to fulfill the claims of other things, he is not serving them, but using them.” The imagination, Hinton explained, must sacrifice detail for the sake of higher beauty, and for this reason, he argued, as Nietzsche might, that such synthetic thinking itself should be understood as an Art.

Another philosopher who significantly shaped the aesthetic ideas of Havelock Ellis as well as Nietzsche was the Neo-Kantian Frederick Albert Lange, whose book *The History of Materialism* first appeared in the middle of the materialist 1860s, when science was just beginning to measure the limits of human knowledge by the scope and capacity of the senses. Here, Lange argues that the highest and noblest functions of the human mind work constantly to supplement the low realities of physical life with an ideal world of its own creation, an optimistic image of life that is harmonious in form and free from deformity and perversion. The problem with realism and scientific detail is that it is depressing, degrading to the human spirit and ruinous to art, and Lange illustrates the problem by walking his reader up a hillside to contemplate a view.

When from some elevated point we regard a landscape our whole nature is attuned to ascribe to it beauty and perfection. We must first destroy the powerful unity of the picture by analysis, in order to remember that in those huts, peacefully resting on the mountain slope, there dwell careworn men; that behind that little sheltered window perhaps some sufferer is enduring the most terrible torments; that beneath the murmuring summits of the distant forest, birds of prey are rending their quivering prey; that in the silvery waves of the river a thousand tiny creatures, scarcely born to life, are finding a cruel death. To our sweeping glance the withered branches
of the trees, the blighted cornfields, the sun-scorched meadows, are only shadows in a picture which delights our eye and cheers our heart. . . . Thus the world appears to the optimistic philosopher. He praises the harmony which he himself has introduced into it.” (338)

Under the sweeping glance of the optimistic philosopher, the aesthetic power of the picturesque is reclaimed; as Nietzsche’s Ruler artist will eventually discover, the superior and healthful individual has the power to impose harmony on the most abject images of poverty and suffering, repressing the dirt and detritus of social existence for the happiness and cheerful well-being of fully realized, fully synthesized individual life. The picturesque persists, well into the twentieth century, because it remains the battleground of the sanitary aesthetic; the place where anaesthesia still challenges aethesia, the place where the power of the pure gaze still confronts the panic and anxiety, the guilt, the pity and the nose of the social reformer. In contemplating the power of the picturesque, nothing less than the political definition of humanity is perpetually at stake.

IV. Intensive Culture: Sarah Grand’s Eugenic Reconciliation

Sarah Grand’s planned “trio” of eugenic novels written in the beginning of the twentieth century clearly exploits the ideological overlapping of mid-century environmental reform and late-century human engineering, and the way that both movements identified themselves by, through and as aesthetic discourse. I say “trio” of novels even though “duo” is more apt: Grand originally imagined a trilogy that, as Teresa Mangum explains, would have culminated in the healthy eugenic marriage of Adnam Pratt, the 1912 hero of Adnam’s Orchard, and Ella Banks, the 1916 heroine of Winged Victory. Speculation on why the trilogy wasn’t completed ranges from the cultural horrors and disillusionments of World War I to Grand’s personal disillusionment with eugenics itself. Impossible to ignore in the two novels Grand did write, however, is an emergent feminist investment in eugenic philosophy as a morally irreproachable strategy for seizing sexual and reproductive autonomy for women at a time of perceived declining national health. Contemporary scholars like Mangum and Beth Sutton-Ramspeck have productively struggled to address the seemingly unholy or at least unsavory alliance between feminist and eugenic purposes, and Sutton-Ramspeck does turn to the historical continuity between sanitary reform and racial hygiene in order to read
Grand’s foregrounding of “cleanliness” as an essentially domestic concern. But after recasting the ongoing work of nineteenth-century sanitation reform as an evolving aesthetic philosophy, it becomes plain that the shift in scene from *Adnam’s Orchard* to *Winged Victory*, the shift between the protagonists, the landscape, and the reformist objectives of “intensive culture” that each novel pursues, also dramatizes the subtle shift in Socialist priorities from mid-Victorian environmental reforms to late-century genetic improvement.

Like *Middlemarch*, like *The Mating of Lydia*, *Adnam’s Orchard* is set during a British agricultural depression blamed, in part, on aristocratic preferences for picturesque decay. Small tenant farmer Ellery Banks raises a family of ten children in the dilapidated Red Rose Farm, where it is damp in winter and stifling in summer, and he constantly petitions his landlord, Squire Pointz, for improvements. But

> it was such a picturesque little place that no one of any taste could have the heart to alter it—so said the Duchess, and the neighboring gentry cordially agreed; and all the more cordially because Red Rose Farm was a pretty object for a drive for London guests, who loved to sketch it, and photograph it, and sentimentalize about it and the Simple Life, when the Simple Life became the last luxury of fashionable talk.

While the cottages on Squire Pointz’s picturesque property contain weak children with decayed teeth and undersize adults who demonstrate “that general want of stamina which is a sure indication of degeneracy in the race” (38), the generalizing impulse of aristocratic taste represses all evidence of suffering and decay, and works to preserve the material space of its imaginative pleasure and power. The natural taste of the gentry, moreover, is aided and abetted by what Grand characterizes as a kind of bureaucratic optimism which meets the symptoms of racial decline and biological degeneracy by cheerfully “lowering the standard of height for men in the army,” and troubling itself no further with what is clearly, in *Adnam’s Orchard*, a physiological crisis (38). While Grand explicitly connects the worship of picturesque decay with the physical decay of the British laboring classes, she also suggests that the upper classes are going through a similar biological decline: not only is the wealthy Pointz family vulgar and animalistic, they are described as luxuriously “living in a vitiated atmosphere” where there is “no health” (429). The weakly, degenerate Pointz children suggest a tentative reproductive future for the upper classes which is matched at the other end of the social spectrum by the Malthusian implications of Squire Pointz’s outright refusal to build additional housing for his own agricultural workers. At the start of the story,
all the still-healthy sons of the soil have left Pointz for the eugenically dangerous London because there is no land for them to farm and no houses for them to take wives and begin families of their own. This plot point is the one that inspires our hero Adnam to build his orchard: he wants to import new agricultural techniques to England to allow a revitalized farming class “house room to bring up a healthy family,” and thus turn the tide of degeneracy and decline that has infected the British population (57).

Given that Adnam’s program of intensive culture resembles, so strongly, the ideological labor of mid-Victorian sanitary fiction, it is not surprising to find him surfacing within our now-ubiquitous sanitary mise-en-scène. Wandering the Pointz property at sunset, Adnam helps the reader evaluate the view:

To the eye of the artist the sun, low down in the west, gave the last touch of beauty to the quiet land; but, as to the eye of the physician who knows that some much admired beauty is not the beauty of health but the symptom of a deadly disease, so to the eye of the modern agriculturalist, those peaceful pastures on either hand, sparsely sprinkled with cattle, were symptomatic of a threatened decay of a great nation, a danger signal not to be ignored for a moment if the situation were to be saved. . . . The fields looked lovely by the waning light in their vivid green, but it was not their loveliness that appealed to Adnam’s intelligence. What he noticed was the neglect that had fallen upon them and the barrenness which was the result of neglect. The loneliness also struck him. Not a human being was there anywhere in sight except himself. (155)

Passing from the aesthetic gaze to the medical gaze, and finally resting with the eye of our modern agriculturist, Adnam, what we experience in this shrewdly overfamiliar passage is actually a reinvented sanitary narrative, where the shifting cultural meaning of the picturesque landscape is made to accommodate a new story of hygiene and social improvement. Adnam Pratt’s reaction to the picturesque environment is certainly marked by an appropriate anxiety about its endemic pollution, but for Adnam, the lack of human presence in the landscape is what degrades the picture. Reversing the aesthetic instinct that would need to empty picturesque environments of vulgar people in order to preserve the beauty of the landscape, Adnam seeks to introduce a healthy set of human subjects into the barren landscape, to repopulate the brown emptiness with a selection of robust and vigorous British bodies. In this way, Adnam’s goal is both aesthetically driven and biblically inspired: by repurposing a segment of his Yeoman father’s wasteland for his agricultural
experiment, the French system of “intensive culture” becomes a British pro-
gram for racial improvement.

“Intensive culture” is a robustly ambiguous term in the novel, figuring
literally as a system of greenhouse cultivation that requires a great deal of
glass and a large number of strong workers; despite these difficulties, Adnam
effortlessly amasses the money and the thirty men required for his proj-
et. Reading in the newspaper that anxieties about military efficiency have
prompted the British army to purchase new tents, Adnam promptly pur-
chases the old tents for his laborers, clearly underscoring the idea that his
own application of intensive culture participates in the domestic program
of national defense. In a chapter called “A Labour Camp Idyll,” we learn that
Adnam’s men live in these tents, eating fish they catch and cook themselves,
and that the healthy sport and food improves them both mentally and phys-
ically (247). They eventually found their own library, and begin to create
together an intellectual and artistic community of healthy laboring men. The
aristocrats in the neighborhood complain about Adnam’s labor camp, how-
ever, misinterpreting the agricultural project of intensive culture as a form
of dirt rather than cleanliness: the Duchess of nearby Castlefield Saye, for
example, complains to Adnam’s mother Ursula Pratt that his working field
“looks like the abomination of desolation and mud pies” (109). The Duchess
tries to sympathize with Ursula, exclaiming that it was such a pity “to spoil
your picturesque old Orchard and that dear old field,” even adding that the
“dear weeds” which choked the Orchard in times past were so pretty (109).
Mrs. Pratt, however, replies that they weren’t “wholesome,” and calmly offers
her support for her son’s agricultural endeavors by observing, somewhat
chillingly, “I want to see the weeds killed everywhere” (109).

Indeed, Adnam’s instinct for a highly controlled, carefully regulated
environment for the superior growth of both crops and men seems to be
part of his maternal inheritance. As we learn, Ursula Pratt has long experi-
enced with a more biological form of intensive culture herself: years ago,
Ursula left her own highly bred German Catholic family to deliberately mix
her bloodstream with the healthy bedrock of British Protestantism, the Yeoman
class. Adnam’s regular features, well-proportioned frame, endemic health and
enlightened self-interest all become genetically legible when his mother is
revealed to be a hidden Countess and actually the second wife of Adnam’s
father, Yeoman Pratt. By contrast, Pratt’s elder son, Seraph, is the result of the
Yeoman’s less careful mating of earlier days:

His mother had been an anemic girl of town stock, the child of tradespeo-
ple, with impoverished blood, bred in the days when municipal ignorance,
mismanagement, and neglect of interest in the health of the community generally was enough to make microbes in the milk carts stand on their tails and cheer. . . . She lived long enough to infect him, her only child with her innate defects of character and manner. (21)

Just as in Ward's The Mating of Lydia, in Adnam's Orchard we encounter some mixed messages about germ theory, contagion, and the effects of heredity on offspring. Seraph's mother is the product of an insanitary period in British municipal history, and microbe-infected milk seems to have degraded a character that was already prone to degradation; her ill-favored physiology, moreover, lingers in the body of her dark, poorly proportioned, bad-tempered son. Grand insists that the differences between these two wives of Yeoman Pratt, and thus the differences between their respective offspring, prove that "qualities good or bad are inherent in the blood, things neither to be acquired nor eradicated" (22). Indeed, Grand writes under a set of assumptions about race culture that depends upon the superior maternal blood of her eugenic hero: Adnam's aristocratic blood has been improved by being grafted upon a pure, healthy British stock, and suggests that his inheritance will be more than a talent for farming or a knack for agriculture.

This inheritance becomes most apparent when one of Adnam's workmen in his labor camp reveals himself, suddenly, to be a masterful orator and musician, seizing a violin to accompany Mrs. Pratt during a piano performance, and astounding everyone, except Ursula, with his virtuosity. Through a bewildering series of unmaskings that occur toward the end of the novel, the soulful and literate laborer Mickleham is revealed to be: a) a well-known philanthropist who specializes in agricultural reforms; b) a famous art collector and connoisseur; c) a wealthy German prince named Strelletzen; and d) Ursula Pratt's brother and, therefore, Adnam's uncle. This enigmatic man with the hands of an artisan and the voice of a gentleman, a man who knows French and German and music, made a mysterious fortune "in the colonies" after being disinherited by his Catholic family and now devotes his time to his hobbies: agriculture and philanthropy (553). The incognito Prince Strelletzen further reveals that he came to his sister's neighborhood out of interest in his nephew and the orchard he was creating, and a desire to further Adnam's agricultural program if intensive culture suited his own reformist objectives. But when the degenerate, inebriate landowner Colonel Kedlock disparagingly dubs Strelletzen the "artist-man," the Prince's most important function in the novel is ironically confirmed: as the Ruler artist and consummate overman, Strelletzen clarifies that Adnam's Orchard actually represents and reflects his nephew's aesthetic inheritance, a natural aristocratic power to compose and
harmonize his own environment, to establish order out of chaos and to assign value and meaning to the various ranks of people in his newly constructed social ecology. In essence, Adnam recomposes his picturesque landscape as a painter would introduce people to an empty canvas, using his labor camp as a material hothouse for a healthy race with its own sphere of existence.

Prince Strelletzen’s Nietzschean title also suits him particularly well after the artist-man manages to solve the central sanitary crisis in Adnam’s Orchard. While still disguised as Mickleham, Strelletzen visits Squire Pointz to discuss the potential use of intensive culture in and around Red Rose Farm. On the wall of the Squire’s luxuriously appointed private library, Mickleham notices a Goya painting, and surprises Pointz by mentioning that he knows a collector who would give a great deal to possess it. At this point in the novel, Pointz has been so harassed by the Sanitary Authorities and so exposed by local newspapers that he is willing to rethink his preference for the picturesque; he ruefully agrees to Mickleham’s brokered sale of the Goya and to the investment of the money from the sale in the purification and agricultural improvement of his property. It is ideologically important that the Squire’s aesthetic paradise is sacrificed for environmental cleanliness; throughout the novel, the library is the morally weak, physically diminished Squire’s retreat from the “harassing recollections” of his failures as a paternalist and as a father (429). In Adnam’s Orchard, as in so many late-Victorian novels, art and aesthetic philosophy are the spoils of a corrupt economic system that must be returned to the earth as manure for new forms of beauty and fertility.

On the other hand, Pointz’s hoarded, overvalued painting is not a muddy landscape by Cuyp or a hideously embrowned Rembrandt portrait, not a typical object of mid-Victorian realist revulsion that can be symbolically exchanged for what I earlier identified as the sanitary aesthetic. The sudden surfacing of a Goya in Adnam’s Orchard is, I would suggest instead, a telling index of the evolving aesthetic anxieties I’ve been discussing throughout The Sanitary Arts: the last of the Old Masters, Goya was also discovered around the time Adnam’s Orchard was published to be the first of the Moderns. D. S. MacColl, a British art critic who was an early supporter of the Impressionist movement, claimed that the “devil” entered nineteenth-century art with the appearance of Goya, and that he manifested through his painting the bloodlust, cruelty, and terror of his home country: “What is the pride of Velasquez besides this fierce decorum and mad disdain; the pitiful night of Rembrandt changes to a horror of darkness, ambiguous with all that is furtive and unclean, featureless things that mop and mow, the bald harpy, the incubus and the bat.” Grand is maddeningly vague about what Squire
Pointz’s Goya looks like; it could, after all, be a conventional, highly finished portrait of Spanish aristocracy or a canvas from the altar of a Church. But the significance of Goya at the beginning of the twentieth century was usually extracted, as MacColl’s words imply, from his later Black Paintings: images of insanity, death, depravity, torture and illness that were thematically and visually at home during the post-impressionist and expressionist movements in Modern art. It would make a certain amount of ideological sense if Pointz’s Goya was from this “unclean” period of the painter’s career, the banishment of a Black Painting from the landowner’s library would imply that degenerate, bloody, disturbing art must be bartered, at the end of this particular sanitary fiction, for public health and physiological revival. But the only clue to the subject of Pointz’s Goya painting is the fact that at the moment of the Squire’s strangely orchestrated bargain with Mickleham/Strelletzan, he is confronted by his angry wife who tries to prevent the sale. Pointz looks at her,

The skin roughened by gluttony, and brick-red now with rage; the ugly pepper and salt of her coarse, ill-dressed hair; the gaunt form bared of all grace of womanly softness by the attrition of mean thought and strife; every repulsive detail of her personality he took in at a glance, and his distaste for her showed as never before in the expression of his face. With a contemptuous smile, the Squire glanced from her to the Goya. (445)

As the Squire’s gaze shifts from his hideous wife to the mysterious Goya, visual metonymy provides one possible and possibly significant answer to the question of genre. Rejecting degenerate art and his ill-bred wife simultaneously, the Squire purifies his own aesthetic standards and prepares the way for his return to social responsibility through sanitary work.

Unlike, say, Max Nordau, who believed all Modern art was degenerate and fundamentally dangerous to the preservation of racial types, Nietzsche believed that the Ruler artist was so strong and so racially healthy that he could actually derive sustenance from ugly, horrible, sensational art; by definition, the Ruler artist must “have all the morbid traits of the century, but to balance them through a superabundant, recuperative strength”:

Health and sickness: one should be careful! The standard remains the efflorescence of the body, the agility, courage, and cheerfulness of the spirit—but also, of course, how much of the sickly it can take and overcome—how much it can make healthy. That of which the delicate man would perish belongs to the stimulants of great health.
Weak men, as Nietzsche indicates, become overexcited when they listen to Wagner; they are too physiologically compromised, too much at the mercy of our “anarchy of the atoms” to resist the further fragmentation and terror that Modern music, like Modern painting, inflicts on the human nervous system. One reason that Grand denies us the opportunity to “see” the Goya painting that Strelletzen removes from Pointz’s library might be that we, like the Squire himself, are part of the degenerate herd that cannot survive an encounter with such terrifyingly abject art. The Goya painting that is whisked away by Strelletzen will no doubt be placed in healthier hands, with a curator who can withstand physiological shocks and injuries much more successfully than the “small, sallow, hopeless, ill-nourished” Squire Pointz (429).

The other significant landowner in Adnam’s Orchard is an aristocrat who continues to be important in Grand’s sequel, The Winged Victory, primarily because he takes an unusual interest in Adnam’s would-be eugenic bride, Ella Banks. Stronger, richer, and more intelligent than Squire Pointz, the Duke of Castlefield Saye must similarly purge himself of perverse aesthetic instincts before he can move on to the next novel, and he accomplishes this through a much more traditional story of sanitary conversion. Although the Duke dearly loves the artistic proportions of his Village, and “at the back of his mind was a feeling that [his tenants] should have found comfort enough in the picturesque” (211), he voluntarily institutes necessary reforms on his properties, and even builds a new fever hospital like the one imagined in the 1830s by poor Lydgate. Interestingly, the Duke’s hospital is called “Her Repose,” and it opens just in time to admit victims of not only typhoid, but also diphtheria and tuberculosis from Squire Pointz’s fetid cottages. The fever hospital itself is a great triumph of intensive culture, not because it makes use of Adnam’s system of greenhouses, but because it forces health and prosperity from a repressive and exploitive class system. “Everything there bespoke wealth well spent, and if the money did come from the slums, like manure which deserves to be called dirty, it became transformed in the application also like manure, and lost its bad character when it was considered the source of so much deservedly admired fertility” (499). The sanitary plot of Adnam’s Orchard is finally shaped by this kind of ideological transformation of dirt: through both agricultural reform and eugenic reform, “intensive culture” forces the bloom of health and the promise of fertility from the degraded soil, transforming dirt into art for the benefit of the British race.

Any social reconciliation provided by the sanitary aesthetic in Adnam’s Orchard is premature, of course; Grand’s subtitle for this novel is “A Prologue,” implying that environmental sanitation is simply the first and most traditional form of cleansing that her eugenic trilogy will accomplish. Indeed,
the hygienic work of agricultural reform in this first novel is obstructed by the entrenched degeneracy of Adnam’s physiological foil, his elder brother Seraph. In a fit of rage, jealousy, and inebriation, the underbred Seraph sets fire to his brother’s progressive greenhouses, burning Adnam’s edenic labor camp to the ground. Emery Pratt dies, Seraph inherits the farm, and the solitary Adnam bravely sets off for London. Undaunted by his agricultural failure and by the temporary triumph of the degenerate herd, Adnam’s program of intensive culture suggestively dilates at the end of the novel: according to Grand’s closing sentence, “Henceforth, Adnam’s Orchard was the World” (623).

I’ve suggested that mid-Victorian sanitary fiction is less revolutionary than evolutionary, that Socialist narratives of sanitation reform rarely demand that the aristocratic landowners be eliminated, only that their aesthetic perversities be cleansed. But the most conservative turn-of-the-century sanitary stories treat democracy itself as a filthy perversion, and can only negotiate cleanliness as a kind of physiological reinvention and reinscription of aristocratic power. Eugenic cleansing must originate from within the aristocracy, even if it superficially seems like the heroic sanitarian emerges de novo from the unwashed herd. Accordingly, Adnam’s eugenic counterpart, Ella Banks, who grows up in the dilapidated Red Rose Farm, and who is the apparent daughter of a tenant farmer, passes from Adnam’s Orchard to Winged Victory without suspecting that she is actually the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Castlefield Saye. Ella’s instinctive grace, surpassing beauty, and innate aesthetic taste are genetically unmoored and therefore controversial for most of the two-part trilogy. Ella is “pure aesthetic emotion made visible” according to Col Drindon, the London writer who also gives Ella the nickname of “Winged Victory” because she is a perfect unity of form and function. Her vocation also transfers Adnam’s metaphoric program of intensive culture from the agricultural to the industrial: Ella’s plan is to revive “the intensive craft of lace” in Great Britain and thus revitalize a degraded and degrading industry that is also a lost aesthetic resource for England. A broad goal, perhaps, but Ella has a strategy with two separate tactics. The first is to eliminate the middlemen who sweat the labor of poor workers, and to open a shop where she can sell lace directly to a wealthy aristocratic clientele. The second is to revive the practice of aristocratic lace making itself, which she can accomplish by admitting the daughters of the wealthy to a school attached to her shop. The Duke of Castlefield Saye, knowing Ella to be his daughter, engages to be her benefactor and installs her in the family’s dowager house in London: a worthy structure for both of Ella’s purposes. “The rich and the great are the natural Guardians of Art,” the lawyer for the Brabant family, Mr. Bosc, explains to her when he informs Ella of the Duke’s generous intentions,
and Ella accepts his gift accordingly as a rightful extension of aristocratic power. The house is decorated in eighteenth-century style, but refit for Ella with contemporary sanitary objectives that make cleanliness attainable even during the long season of London smuts. “My rooms must look healthy and fresh,” Ella insists to Bosc. “Everything in it must be cleanable. It must be clean before everything. And not to be made stuffy and enervating with a surplus of cushions and easy chairs” (15). Throughout the novel, Ella’s domestic sanitation is linked not only to her pursuit of exercise, and to the way that she comes to secretly imagine a marriage to the Duke’s eldest son Melton as a way to get “good new blood” into a degenerating aristocratic tree (542), but to the scientist, Gregor Strangworth’s, identification of “the intensive craft of lace” itself as what he calls a “hygienic” ritual:

The attitude of the whole body which sewing necessitated and the steady rise and fall of the arm, have a healthy effect on the—er—centre, in fact, of a woman’s being, the condition of which determines her conduct. (89)

Strangworth is a mysterious and powerful character in Winged Victory, a member of an “elect who are shaping life to its finest issues, a Spiritual Aristocracy” according to the decadent Lord Terry, a man who even organizes his dinner parties homogenously rather than episodically because “Dining is a great art” that maintains physiological health and digestive integrity of the body (165). Lace making, according to Strangworth, will strengthen the individual female body at the same time it strengthens the social body, uniting rich and poor women as fellow artisans, and reviving a “link in the chain of descent” that connects the current and currently degraded aristocratic family of women with their purer and more worthy ancestors. The Princess Anna, who graciously opens Ella’s lace shop, and brings a whole train of wealthy customers in her wake, reveals herself to be a lace maker, and the two women momentarily forget ostensible class differences and as equals “enjoy the freemasonry of their craft” (77). “Lace can be patriotic,” Ella insists to the agreeable Princess, and for most of the rest of the novel Ella’s healthy and particularly female art is created and sold in the service of an imagined aesthetic nationalism, an harmonious union of classes of strong women for the greater glory of England (81).

This would seem somewhat more subversive if we didn’t suspect throughout Winged Victory that Ella’s true biological status would eventually minimize the class difference between our heroine and Princess Anna, and make the democratic discourse of freemasonry seem less free after all. The only real clue to her identity, however, is a Gainsborough portrait of the Duke’s grand-
mother, a portrait that hangs in the Duke's private library and that remains covered until its revelation can harmonize the biological family in *Winged Victory* the way the Goya painting harmonized the social family in *Adnam's Orchard*. The Duke is personally *cleaning* the painting when his eldest legitimate son enters the library one afternoon late in the latter novel, and its details and colors stand out “as purely as if the picture were fresh from the studio” (629). Unfortunately the Duke's recognition and reclamation of Ella as the pure and fresh daughter he always wanted, the child produced by a liaison with a woman of healthier, cleaner blood than that of his own lawful wife, is forestalled by the fact that she has secretly become his son Melton's wife, and is therefore doubly and more dangerously a daughter. When Melton sees Ella herself in eighteenth-century lace and satin stepping forward from the gleaming canvas, his incestuous crime is immediately legible. Devastated, he orchestrates his own accidental death to spare everyone else the aftereffects, and while this ending strikes Teresa Mangum as apocalyptic and as a radical repudiation of eugenic philosophy, it strikes me as the exemplification of intensive culture's inevitable purpose: enhanced natural selection.

Throughout *Winged Victory*, the Duke interests himself in the study of heredity, realizing gradually that his own choice in marriage was an unfortunate violation of his biological responsibilities, his aristocratic privilege and burden to reproduce a strong and vibrant race.

He had observed that bad traits came out worse in the next generation. His wife was foolish; his daughter was a fool. He hesitated in his speech, Eustace stuttered; he had direct intentions, but procrastinated; Melton, the hope of his house was a drifter. . . . He needed another kind of child, one to be proud of; but another kind of child would require another kind of mother, and his initial mistake must stand. He had not chosen the right woman to produce the child he would have gloriid to have. (232–33)

Both Ella and the Duke have separately registered Melton's passivity, his weakness, his insufficiently evolved racial features; both also feel that a regenerative marriage with a woman of healthy stock will right what is wrong with Melton in his offspring. But by eliminating himself from the reproductive cycle altogether, Melton repairs the biological family in keeping with the best eugenic policies: Ella is now a legitimate daughter of the Duke of Castlefield Saye and can legally possess her racial and aristocratic destiny, granting the Duke, belatedly, the child he “would have gloriid to have.” Given that the Duke's stuttering son, Eustace, marries the barren daughter of an alcoholic, and that his foolish daughter Anne marries Squire Pointz's degenerate and
possibly syphilitic son Algernon, illegitimate Ella, otherwise the “Winged Victory” of the title, is the perfect unity of form and function, the healthy biological resource for aristocratic continuity, and the art that has sprung from the dirt after all.

Of course, we are finally denied the eugenic reconciliation prepared for us by the isolation of Adnam and Ella from the herd into which they were born, and by the revelation that their innate aesthetic powers are the rightful inheritance of a natural aristocracy. For whatever reason, Sarah Grand’s eugenic story ends abruptly in 1916, and leaves hanging a whole host of possible outcomes for the physiological overmen she so carefully prepares for reproductive dominance. A eugenic program that relies on fortuitously discovered aristocratic bloodlines rather than rigorous breeding systems seems like a singularly ineffective method of racial improvement, one that resurrects the sentimental Dickensian story of the foundling child in order to invent a new Nietzschean parable of the exceptionally well-born. But if we remember the intellectual history of the aesthetic; if we remember, with Eagleton and Bourdieu, that conservative strain of aesthetic philosophy that is central to the work of political hegemony, the class system and the economic hierarchy, the “natural” taste for clean environments and beautiful people can be seen as a claim to aristocracy after all.