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You Might Have Thought I Was Wicked: Evolutionary Psychology and anti-Semitism  
In Late British Victorian Fiction

by  
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To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the dissertation of Heather Summers find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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You Might Have Thought I Was Wicked: Evolutionary Psychology  
and anti-Semitism in Late British Victorian Fiction

Thesis Abstract—Idaho State University (2019)

This thesis examines the role of evolutionary psychology in late nineteenth century British literature to demonstrate how the use of scientific ideas to justify anti-Semitism worked its way into fiction. Considering the works of George Eliot, George du Maurier, and Bram Stoker, I discuss how the manipulation of science to support prejudicial views manifests itself in various works throughout the latter half of the century. Through a presentation of philo- and anti-Semitic messages using an evolutionary lens, these texts demonstrate how cultural use of science to justify racism permeated literature. Each chapter explores a different aspect of evolutionary psychology and how it relates to Judaism in the latter half of the Nineteenth century, while discussing how the manipulation of science was used by those with prejudicial ideas to reinforce their racism.

Key Words: Evolution, Psychology, Anti-Semitism, Literature, Victorian, Sexual Selection, Degeneration, Free Will, Integration, Zionism

## Introduction

The nineteenth century was a period of great cultural and scientific change. As evolutionary theories emerged from Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer, among others, British Victorians began to develop a new understanding of the human as a species. Unfortunately, many of these theories were appropriated as a means to justify racism. The misinterpretation of science in order to provide evidence of the inferiority of groups allowed anti-Semitism, and other forms of prejudice grew. Social changes, specifically Jewish Emancipation, increased fears of Jewish presence in the country despite the progress towards a less exclusive society. As issues that impacted much of nineteenth-century England, the manipulation of science to further prejudicial biases worked its way into literature.

While not the first man to study evolutionary theory, Charles Darwin is remembered much more than his contemporaries. In 1859, he published his first book, *On the Origin of Species*. Because he incorporated evidence into his work when others did not, Darwin produced a theory that was widely accepted. As a result, his work had a major influence on many fields other than science. In the introduction to *Darwin's Plots*, Gillian Beer discusses the publication, saying, "In its imaginative consequences for science, literature, society and feeling, *The Origin of Species* is one of the most extraordinary examples of a work which included more than the maker of it at the time knew, despite all that he *did* know" (2). As Beer states, *Origin* had a greater impact on Victorian society than even Darwin could have expected.

Darwin's publication of *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* in 1871 had further impact on Victorian culture. By expressing ideas that related strongly to human as well as animal evolution, he furthered his previous research and affected cultural ideals even more. It is in this text that Darwin expresses theories that spread through the Victorian imagination. From

sexual selection to degeneration, the text presented a range of ideas that supported existing Victorian prejudice and fear. In “Race, Language, and Mental Evolution in Darwin’s *Descent of Man*,” Stephen G. Alter expresses how Darwin’s writing led to misogyny and racism. He writes:

Darwin apparently anticipated the evolution-based racist thinking that would increasingly take hold in the context of late-19th-century imperialism. He posited a hierarchy of human types in which technologically less sophisticated societies stood closer than did Europeans to the anthropoid beasts. He also suggested that Europeans were destined to dominate other, less favored, national groups (Stocking, 1968, pp. 113–114; Bowler, 1992). Perhaps most notoriously, Darwin drew an analogy between race and gender in which women and “lower” races shared inherent mental limitations (239).

As a result of Darwin’s discussion of the hierarchy of humans and the inferiority of non-white races, many people latched onto his writings in order to affirm their beliefs. It was evident to them that evolutionary theory proved that those who were not of European (and for Victorians, British) descent were inherently lesser.

Darwin’s contribution to anti-Semitism is also reflected in the work of Herbert Spencer. His coinage of the term “survival of the fittest” in *Principles of Biology* led to the creation of Social Darwinism. While he distanced himself from the principles embraced by the movement, he was known to be racist. One example of his racist ideas comes from a letter he sent to Kaneko Kentaro in 1892 regarding miscegenation. He writes, “[intermarriage] should be positively forbidden. It is not at root a question of social philosophy. It is at root a question of biology. There is abundant proof, alike furnished by the inter-marriages of human races and by the inter-breeding of animals, that when the varieties mingled diverge beyond a certain slight degree, the result is invariably a bad one in the long run” (Three Letters LKK.III.7). This comment



demonstrates racism that is evident in his consideration that other races diverge greatly from each other.

Spencer's additional work provides a compounded opportunity for those who were anti-Semitic to feel vindicated in their beliefs. Not only does his conversation with Darwin's work emphasize the hierarchy of humans, but it also indicates that such a hierarchy exists as a result of both genetic and psychological factors. Spencer's logic creates an argument for anti-Semitism by indicating that people are driven entirely by genetic and environmental factors rather than possessing free will. That the Victorian British appeared to be more advanced indicated that their biological and environment natures had evolved more than other races. Additionally, his argument suggests that people of an inferior race are unable to overcome their deficiencies. This concept provided room for anti-Semitism to grow based on the belief that Jews belonged to an inferior race.

Racist beliefs that appeared to be confirmed by Spencer and Darwin's work were already prevalent in the early nineteenth century and continued throughout the century. In "The British Conservative Press and Its Involvement in Antisemitic and Racial Discourse, Circa 1830-1895," James Sack demonstrates one type of attack directed toward Jews. He writes,

The Herald, in 1853, denounced Jews for their wickedness, for their taking the clothes of plague victims and selling them in bazaars, for their speculative hoarding of grain, and for their gouging of the teeth of the dying in order to sell them in the market place.

Unlike the Hindu, the Buddhist, or the Muslim, in the Herald's view the Jew had no redeeming feature. This discourse was accompanied by a widespread call in Conservative press circles for British Jews to be relocated, voluntarily or not, to Palestine (571).

While the Herald does not explicitly refer to evolutionary theories in its expression of prejudicial statements, the sentiment of human hierarchy is present in its views that Jews were inherently greedy.

Such beliefs found further confirmation in the work of Max Nordau, who used the previous work of Bénédict Morel to consider reasons for human deterioration into criminal behavior and mental illness. His belief that environmental and hereditary effects could lead to a degeneration of the species rather than an evolution of the species fed fears that humanity could decline if humans did not properly police its progression. Although he was Jewish, his work presented many opportunities for anti-Semitic belief to flourish, and in some cases, he blatantly linked the Jewish race to degeneration. In *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism*, he stated, “In the narrow Jewish street, our poor limbs forgot how to move joyfully; in the gloom of the sunless houses our eyes became accustomed to nervous blinking, out of fear of constant persecution the timbre of our voices was extinguished to an anxious whisper, which only rose to a strong shout when our martyrs on their stakes cried out their last prayers in the face of their executioners” (92). Although this statement suggests that Jewish degeneration is the result of oppression, it provides confirmation from both a scientist and a Jew that the Jewish were inferior.

Further demonstration of the role of evolution in anti-Semitism surrounds cultural attitudes relating to the election of Benjamin Disraeli to prime minister in 1874. Although he converted to Christianity, Disraeli was not free from judgment of his genetic roots. Sack discusses the presence of anti-Semitism directed at Disraeli, stating, “Although Disraeli, who was after all a Christian, was rarely attacked openly as a Judaizer, often a not very subtle reminder was present in this antisemitic press of his Jewish origins” (571). The focus on his

genetic link to Judaism despite his conversion emphasizes how deeply biases regarding Jewish ethnicity were ingrained by those who expressed anti-Semitic beliefs.

It comes as no surprise, then, that a blend of evolutionary theory and anti-Semitism came to be represented in many literary works created in Victorian England. The portrayal of Jews in many Victorian novels ranges from unflattering to villainizing. Perhaps the most well-known Jew in nineteenth-century literature, Dickens's Fagin, is described stereotypically, from his appearance to his behavior. He is an avaricious thief who is dirty and manipulative. The imagination behind his creation was certainly impacted by social beliefs that Jews are bad by virtue of their origin. Of course, other authors handle Jewish characters as well, both positively and negatively.

The presentation of the Jew in literature is one focus of this thesis, but it also focuses on how evolutionary theory is expressed in literary philo- or anti-Semitism. I argue that the novels demonstrate the role of evolutionary theory in anti-Semitism by engaging with the works of prominent theorists. Using the works of George Eliot, George du Maurier, and Bram Stoker, I explore the progression of this combination through the latter half of the nineteenth century. By moving chronologically through years of publication, I demonstrate how three novels, *Daniel Deronda*, *Trilby*, and *Dracula* engage with issues of science and race as the century advances.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I consider the role Herbert Spencer played in George Eliot's life and how his works influenced *Daniel Deronda*. Additionally, I discuss how her engagement with Spencer's theories impacts the novel's approach to anti-Semitism. Through her exploration of the plights of Jewish characters, Eliot demonstrates a reluctance to accept Spencer's idea that free will does not exist due to human dependence on genetic and biological impulses. In considering the presence of free will in humans, Eliot addresses underlying reasons

for anti-Semitism in the Victorian era, particularly a generalized judgment of an entire group of people based on ideas of race and religion. While problematic, Eliot's work emphasizes a philosemitic viewpoint that was advanced for the period in which she wrote the text.

In the second chapter, I step away from the evolutionary theories of Spencer and instead focus on how Charles Darwin's theory of sexual selection plays into the anti-Semitism represented in George Du Maurier's *Trilby*. In direct contrast to Eliot's philosemitic novel, *Trilby* expresses blatantly anti-Semitic ideas. I explore how Du Maurier's focus on Jewish representation and presentation of the fates of Jewish characters demonstrate his anti-Semitic ideas. By focusing on stereotypical features of the Jew while placing Jewish characters in competition for the love of a woman, Du Maurier reflects societal fears of integration that stemmed from British nationalism while incorporating Darwinian ideas of female choice and species progression. Through his presentation of the most stereotypical Jew in the novel as a man who violates the natural process of sexual selection, Du Maurier emphasizes fears of genetic taint through miscegenation.

In the final chapter, I approach a novel that expresses anti-Semitic beliefs in a more subtle manner than *Trilby*: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In consideration of how Stoker's physical representation of the Count incorporates stereotypical representations of Jewish people while his thirst for blood calls to mind blood libel, I discuss the Victorian beliefs that led to anti-Semitism. Through his portrayal of the vampire as a Jew, without using the direct wording embraced by authors such as George du Maurier and Charles Dickens, Stoker was able to make an anti-Semitic statement without doing so explicitly. Through an examination of textual evidence supporting the Count's Jewish descent as well as the application of Darwin's discussion of

degeneration, I emphasize how the novel represents the fears associated with human regression as well as nationalist belief in the potential of Jewish colonization from within England.

Together, these three novels provide a picture of how those possessing racist sentiments can manipulate scientific theories to justify their beliefs. The presence of evolutionary theories in texts focusing on Jewish characters emphasizes how readily exploitation of the views of Darwin and Spencer can be used to encourage racism while adding legitimacy to their claims. For those who are seeking justification for their prejudicial beliefs, having scientific backup can be powerful and extremely harmful. Considering how literature reflects the appropriation of scientific theories to justify racial oppression can have a beneficial impact on today's struggles by illuminating how such ideas have persisted for centuries.

## Chapter 1: Herbert Spencer, Free Will, and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*

Jewish presence in nineteenth-century British society was a source of conflict. While many supported Jewish emancipation and the Jewish community's impact on the economy, politics, and culture, others felt threatened by their unwillingness to convert to Christianity, New Testament condemnation of their religion, and their "otherness." Still, others developed anti-Semitic beliefs based on a different foundation. Stephanie Winkler discusses one underlying cause of increased anti-Semitism in mid-Victorian times, stating "One has to understand this situation on a larger scale: a speedily growing community of Anglo-Jews made up only a very small percentage of the overall population but had a significant influence on the economy and social life. In the nineteenth century, when the British Empire was beginning to decline, British nationalism began to rise; there was a heightened perception of what was domestic and what was not. At the heart of it was the Anglo-Jewish community, both part of and apart from it" (101). The growth of a race considered inferior to white Victorians within British society rapidly became a perceived threat to nationalism while foreign rebellions began to challenge British imperial rule. For many, the Jewish became a sign of an invasion from within, threatening the Empire at home just as it was being threatened abroad. The resulting anti-Semitism enhanced sentiments that the Jew was dirty, avaricious, criminal, and unstable. Portrayals of stereotypes were common in popular publications, notably the British satire magazine *Punch*, as well as literature such as Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. That these images of Jewish people were so common in Victorian publications demonstrates how pervasive the ideas were among those in Victorian society.

While many British people were engaging in anti-Semitism, they were also being exposed to a wealth of new scientific advancements. Evolutionists brought new theories to light with Jean Baptiste Lamarck's work emerging early in the nineteenth century. As a forerunner to mid-century evolutionists, Lamarck's work began to pave the way toward our understanding of the science. Lamarck believed that organisms would evolve in the course of their lifetime, allowing species advancement within each generation. As an example, his work suggested that a giraffe with a short neck would grow its neck to be able to reach trees then pass that change along to its offspring. His theories have been proven false; however, his ideas allowed later evolutionists to explore and expand on them.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Herbert Spencer delved into Lamarck's work and included the ideas of his predecessor in his own theories. Eventually, Spencer linked his ideas to Darwin's work, granting him more popularity (Cameron 64,65). That Spencer and George Eliot developed a life-long relationship is unsurprising due to their shared intellectual interests. His appreciation of Eliot is evident, extending to his acknowledgment of her influence on *Principles of Psychology* and the value placed on her writing. In "Spencerian Evolutionary Psychology in *Daniel Deronda*," Lauren Cameron discusses this, stating, "Although Spencer was not particularly inclined toward the arts, including literature, he valued her openness to intellectual discussion and came 'to respect her serious view of fiction as an art form'" (68). His growth in understanding of her work demonstrates the interactions and the time passed between the two over the years. It stands to reason, then, that Spencer's ideas would manifest themselves in Eliot's final work, especially in consideration of the novel's production so soon after the publication of the second edition of *Principles of Psychology* in 1870.

The combination of anti-Semitism and science in the novel provides an opportunity to examine how the two work together to make a statement regarding social ideas surrounding the Jewish community. Instead of viewing *Daniel Deronda* as a novel that is philosemitic based on the goodness of its characters alone, I argue that it is such as a result of its examination of Spencer's theories and Eliot's exploration of the role of genetics and environment in human behavior. Ultimately, I argue that through the novel, Eliot expresses a sentiment contrary to that of Spencer's beliefs. This is evident through an examination of specific Spencerian theories that can be applied to the novel, consideration of the stories of essential characters, and examination of what this exploration says about Victorian anti-Semitism.

While Spencer explored evolutionary theory as it relates to many fields, it is his consideration of evolution in terms of psychology that is important to consider in *Daniel Deronda*. In *Principles of Psychology*, Spencer expresses his theories, stating:

But that every one is at liberty to desire or not to desire, which is the real proposition involved in the dogma of free-will, is negatived as much by the internal perception of every one as by the contents of the preceding chapters. From the universal law that, other things equal, the cohesion of psychical states is proportionate to the frequency with which they have followed one another in experience, it is an inevitable corollary, that all actions whatever must be determined by those psychical connections which experience has generated—either in the life of the individual, or in that general antecedent life whose accumulated results are organized in his constitution (617).

Spencer's rejection of the idea of free will challenges the idea that we can desire and act on those desires separate from our biological workings. Instead, he suggests that our actions are based on both his Lamarckian ideas of genetic transferal and neural development. Lauren Cameron



discusses this, saying, “For Spencer, nervous system firings in response to stimuli form neural pathways, which associate such stimuli with certain circumstances or outcomes; these generate instincts, defined by Spencer as ‘complex reflex action’ that is not substantially differentiated from habits; neural associative pathways also create memories” (69). As a result of the psychological impact of biology, Spencer indicates that decisions are not made freely, but are rather determined by genetics and environment.

Spencer’s theories were problematic as evidenced through their use as the basis of Social Darwinism, which encouraged the idea of white superiority. As a result, people found in Spencer’s work justification for their prejudice, suggesting that those who were not white were inferior because of genetics. Discussing this point, Heinz-Georg Martin, in his article “Racism, Social Darwinism, Anti-Semitism and Aryan Supremacy,” states, “The racist and Social Darwinist patterns of social-biological thought demonstrate that anti-Semitism—in sharp contrast to traditional anti-Judaism—replaced old charges with new accusative ‘findings’, ‘The first basic change originated from the understanding of Jews as a race’” (36). It was this abuse of science that allowed people to step away from the judgment of Judaism as a religion and to focus on the Jews as a race. Martin continues, stating, “This change in perspective was critical, as the question of Jewishness acquired a quasi-scientific dimension due to the spread of Darwinism and Social Darwinism: anti-Semitism was based on biology, and this ‘biologization’ meant a rejection of any emancipation or conversion: the Jew remained, biologically and genetically, a Jew, the ‘eternal’ Jew!” (36). By giving people a new means of justifying their racism, Spencer also provided them with material to use in order to deny Jews rights.

In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot objects to this aspect of Spencer’s theories. This approach to her characters and the use of Judaism in the novel emphasize how anti-Semitism during the

period was based on a fallacious idea that the Jews were inferior and, therefore, a danger to Britain. Eliot's exploration of scientific theory amid anti-Semitic sentiment in her novel takes place through the development of Mirah Lapidoth, Mordechai Cohen, and Daniel Deronda. Through their stories, Eliot expresses the sentiment that human choices are not merely biologically determined, and as a result, the concept of racial inferiority based on science is fallacious.

When introducing several of her characters, Eliot provides a background that is genetically based. By doing so, she provides an important foundation on which to build her argument that individuals are not slaves to their biological inheritance, but rather free to make their own decisions. The details of each character's background create an understanding of where they come from and help demonstrate how their future decisions stray from an expected course based on scientific arguments. By introducing readers to the genetic makeup of each character then exploring the choices, they make Eliot counters those who claim a scientific rationale to their racism.

While she is not the first Jewish character in the novel, Mirah Lapidoth presents a unique look at how Eliot argues for the idea of free will over biological determination. Mirah is presented as an ideal woman in the novel. She is gracious and accepting. From her "most delicate little face" (187) to her "two delicate feet" (209), she is feminine perfection. Other than belonging to the Jewish race, she fits the ideal of the Victorian woman. Eliot's approach to Mirah places her in the role of a caricature. However, the characterization of the Jewess differs from standard stereotypical presentations of Jewish people. The characterization serves a distinct purpose in the novel's response to the period's anti-Semitic message. Lisa Bouma Garvelink explains, saying, "Because Eliot also attempts to subvert contemporary authoritative discourse

that Jews are somehow less worthy than ethnically English people, she creates in Mirah a character who flouts no societal norms. Her ideal woman persona functions as a means for Eliot to break through anti-Semitism” (23). While problematic in its statement that a good Jewess fits the role of the “angel in the house,” this choice of presentation demonstrates the need to overcome the idea of the other in Victorian society by presenting her as a perfect woman.

The struggle with Victorian anti-Semitism in the book is demonstrated in the fact that Mirah knows that she was born Jewish despite being taken away from her family, as opposed to Daniel, who is unaware of his ancestry. Her first representations of herself demonstrate her impressions of her genetic identity, indicating the prevalence of anti-Semitism in British society. Upon first being rescued by Deronda, she says, “I know many Jews are bad.” Deronda responds to this with an argument against it, saying, “So are many Christians. But I should not think it fair for you to despise me because of that” (193). Her understanding of her race continues when she meets the Meyricks, when she says in response to their kindness, “I am a stranger. I am a Jewess. You might have thought I was wicked” (200). Mirah’s acceptance of anti-Semitism is evidenced more as she discusses her life. Her father’s behavior regarding Jews supports anti-Semitic beliefs and helps impress the ideas on her. However, the words of others impress upon her that her fate is sealed as a result of her birth. She says to Mrs. Meyrick, “When I heard this it darted into my mind that the unhappiness in my life came from my being a Jewess, and that always to the end the world would think slightly of me and that I must bear it, for I should be judged by that name; and it comforted me to believe that my suffering was part of the affliction of my people, my part in the long song of mourning that has been going on through the ages” (215). In this statement, Mirah blends the idea of anti-Semitism and in-born traits. She believes that because she is a Jewess, she deserves the suffering of her race.

As Mirah relates her story, it becomes evident that she is not at the mercy of her genetics. Instead, she makes choices that counter Spencer when he states of individuals, “Their cohesions have been wholly determined by experiences—the greater part of them, constituting what we call his natural character, by the experiences of antecedent organisms; and the rest by his own experiences” (619). While her desire to hold on to her ancestry could be said to fit within Spencer’s theory, Eliot counters the ideas with evidence of individual decisions that don’t align with biological determinism. This is especially evident when she says, “Rebellious feelings grew stronger in me, and I wished to get away from this life, but I could not tell where to go, and I dreaded the world” (213). Had Mirah been driven strictly by biological effects, her psychology would require that she stay with her father since both her race and upbringing held her to that conviction. However, she was able to choose to leave, demonstrating an autonomy denied by Spencer.

Beyond leaving her father, Mirah expresses other sentiments that challenge Spencer’s theories. Susan Meyer discusses this, saying, “In the mildest manner—with ‘low-toned’ intensity and with silence—Mirah challenges the Jewish tradition’s interpretation of women, as this novel represents it, and of women’s place in the ethos of ‘transmission.’ She implicitly asserts that her heart is not like the ideal, dead mother’s, that all women do not fit this mold, that she is not simply a vessel for the transmission of her mother’s spirit” (741). Meyer’s analysis demonstrates how far Mirah is from her genetic identity. Not only have her mother’s personal traits not transferred to her, but also she lacks conformity to Jewish expectations.

While Mirah’s struggles stem from a desire to find her family and reunite with her race, her brother Mordecai presents an example of resistance to Spencer’s theories from another point of view. The background Eliot provides for him doesn’t range back as far as Mirah’s, nor is it as

detailed, but it does provide a foundation for understanding the desires which drive the final years of his life. We know that his mother raised him and have Mirah's testament to a memory of him holding her. After that, we depend on information regarding his recent past to understand him.

Eliot's first contradiction to Spencer's theories regarding Mordecai consists of a discussion of Mordecai's apparent premonitions. Eliot writes, "'Second-sight' is a flag over disputed ground. But it is a matter of knowledge that there are persons whose yearnings, conceptions—nay, travelled conclusions—continually take the form of images which have a foreshadowing power: the deed they would do starts up before them in complete shape, making a coercive type; the event they hunger for, or dread rises into vision with a seed-like growth, feeding itself fast on unnumbered impressions" (471). This challenges Spencer's rejection of metaphysical intervention in free will. Not only does Eliot suggest the idea that something outside of the realm of science could be driving Mordecai, but she also pushes the idea that people act on desires rather than biological impulses. Leona Toker emphasizes how Mordecai is presented as being more than physical impulses, stating, "The novel's prophet of this change, Ezra Mordecai Cohen is, however, represented as a version of the Yogi, a mystic whose spirit transcends, and, as it were, consumes, his fragile body, and who therefore stands in need of the 'executive self' in the shape of the healthy, handsome, puritanical Daniel Deronda" (566). Mordecai's mysticism is an important part of his character and, as a result, it makes a strong statement regarding the scientific explanation for human actions.

This is in direct contrast to Spencer, who says:

This subjective illusion, in which the notion of free-will commonly originates, is strengthened by a corresponding objective illusion. The actions of other individuals,

lacking as they do that constancy, that uniformity, habitually seen in phenomena known to obey fixed laws, appear to be lawless—appear to be under no necessity of following any particular order; and are so supposed to be determined by the unknown independent something which we call the Will. But, as I need hardly say, this seeming indeterminateness in the mental succession, is an illusion consequent upon the extreme complication of the forces in action (619).

If Mordecai is acting on desires rather than biology, what Spencer calls the illusion of free will becomes a reality. And it is through the expression of Mordecai's free will that his search for "some young ear into which he could pour his mind as a testament" (472) occurs. Whether or not his foreshadowing is actually the result of second sight, he desires the end result and actively pursues it.

Beyond the implication of his desires fueling Mordecai's search for someone to pass on his knowledge to, Eliot adds another challenge to Spencer's theories by addressing the idea of psychological transfer by genetic means. Mordecai hopes for his ideas to live on, but he expects to transfer them, not through reproduction, as Spencer would see it through his Lamarckian perspective, but spiritually. Meyer addresses this, saying, "The novel expresses this idea of the surrender of self to a greater good also in terms of 'transmission,' as when Mordecai speaks of 'the great Transmitters' who passed down the great ideas of Jewish tradition, and when he wishes his own ideas to be treated by Daniel as if he were just a vessel: Mordecai asks Daniel not to cite his name when translating and passing on his works, but to 'let the thought be born again from our fuller soul which shall be called yours'" (738). While the idea of transmission could fit with Spencer's ideas of genetic and environmental stimuli, Eliot emphasizes the difference through the fact that Mordecai's transmission to Deronda will occur through the works he has

written in Hebrew. Deronda's translation from Hebrew to English will then allow further textual transmission. Instead of neural reactions feeding the transmission, it is instead text that ensures that Mordecai's work continues after his death.

Both Mirah and Mordecai's stories impact the plot for Deronda in a large way. However, it is through Deronda that Eliot most strongly makes her case against Spencer's work and for the idea of free will. Additionally, her response to anti-Semitism is clearly expressed through the title character. Like Mirah, Daniel's background is discussed in depth. Again, this provides a foundation for Eliot's argument. By setting up his history without revealing the facts of his birth, Eliot leaves plenty of room to develop him as a Christian man before exposing his Jewish origins. Not only does doing so create an opportunity for Christian readers to relate to him before his ancestry is revealed, but it also works to demonstrate that those of Jewish ancestry are not inherently different from Christians.

Because of Daniel's unknown ancestry and his participation in the Christian religion, it is easy to relate Daniel's goodness to his religion. Waterman Ward emphasizes his known Christian upbringing, saying, "Young Englishmen educated in the fifties and early sixties of the nineteenth century at either Oxford or Cambridge, as Daniel was, would have found moral earnestness immovably linked with Christianity" (114). Again, Eliot uses this to set up a foundation for a conversation with Spencer. The idea that Christianity develops morality and empathy in its followers would indicate that more men in the novel would express these traits. While many of the men demonstrate morals, Deronda is the only one who presents such an attachment to altruism. This could be explained by linking Deronda's upbringing with his genetic connection to Judaism, presenting a combination that would supposedly enhance his helpfulness and expression of sympathy. Daniel Novak discusses the genetics of Jewish ancestry, saying,

“Selflessness and a self haunted by history form the peculiar inheritance of the Jew. The Jew’s body is an inheritance that is never owned but rather inhabited—an inheritance never possessed, but an inheritance of possession” (78). Here Novak suggests that Jews are dependent on inherited traits and that within those traits lies the legacy of their culture and religion. Therefore, Daniel’s Jewish descent has created the level of altruism he displays. Combining this with his Christianity enhances the effect.

In this way, we see how both inherent and acquired traits can combine to impact a person’s personality. While this acceptance of evolutionary ideas plays an important role in the novel, Eliot also works to define Deronda’s ability to make choices independent of his genetic inheritance. Leona Toker points out a specific moment of free will, saying, “The narrative refers to the imperious ‘chord’ in Mordecai’s voice when he claims Daniel’s allegiance, but Daniel’s ultimate endorsement of Mordecai’s goals is caused not by psychological contagion, not by a resonating chord, not even by a consent to extend a dying man’s life by his own; it is a matter of a rational persuasion on a subject in which – as during his eventide boating trips – his own ‘thinking and desiring melt together’” (568). Toker’s assessment provides another argument against Spencer’s biological determinist assertion. By emphasizing Deronda’s “rational persuasion,” and “thinking and desiring,” she illuminates the expression of his free will.

Daniel’s free will is also reflected in his association with Hans Meyrick at Cambridge. His sacrifice when it comes to helping Hans shows how easily he puts the benefit of others above himself. In doing so, he chooses between meeting the expectations of the man who raised him or allowing himself to sacrifice for the sake of his friend. Eliot writes:

Deronda would not admit that he cared about the risk, and he had really been beguiled into a little indifference by double sympathy; he was very anxious that Hans should not



miss the much-needed scholarship, and he felt a revival of interest in the old studies. Still, when Hans, rather late in the day, got able to use his own eyes, Deronda had tenacity enough to try hard and recover his lost ground. He failed, however; but he had the satisfaction of seeing Meyrick win (182).

Daniel's focus on aiding his friend, realizing that Hans desperately needed the scholarship, portrays his self-sacrifice on a familiar level. The knowledge that he was able to assist in Hans's success leads to his own satisfaction rather than a focus on how it led to his own failure. As he and Hans return from the university, Eliot demonstrates the importance of the choice Daniel made, writing, "[Daniel] relied a little on the baronet's general tolerance for eccentricities, but he expected more opposition than he met with" (183). That Daniel expressly made a decision that could disappoint Sir Hugo to aid Hans emphasizes how altruism often requires a choice between meeting the needs of one person or meeting the needs of another. Deronda exercised his free will to achieve the purpose he would find most satisfying.

The low level of consequences for his altruism with Hans contrasts with the costs of his altruistic approach to Gwendolen. Toker explains this, saying:

Yet in contrast to carnivalesque affects, though there is an element of interchangeability in this transaction, a traffic across the boundaries of the self, there is no pooling of emotion, no blending: each subject steps in and out of the other's position in a move to imagine what he/she would feel in the other's footgear. This choreographic sympathy is what characterizes Gwendolen's need for Deronda, and it is what has prompted Lisabeth. During, for instance, to point to the major problem with this need: in the process of sympathy, part of the individual emotional life, ambitions, goals, loyalties and beliefs of the sympathetic listener may be erased. When the listener takes over some of the

speaker's burden of pain, part of the listener's own personality shrinks. Such a self-mortification can, in principle, be salutary for the listener, but in *Daniel Deronda* the danger of excessive sympathy to its donor is emphasized at least as strongly as its positive effects on its recipient (569).

The impact of Deronda's sympathy to Gwendolen is subtly implied through the book, but his interactions with her demonstrate how his compassion is harmful to him. Her need for him grows stronger as her story progresses, and he gives his time and energy to aid her, despite the other complications in his life.

Beyond his behavior toward Gwendolen, Daniel's rescue of Mirah indicates how his overwhelming tendency toward sympathy and altruism negatively impacts him. Thomas Albrecht, in his article, "'The Balance of Separateness and Communication': Cosmopolitan Ethics in *Daniel Deronda*," demonstrates the challenges Deronda faces, writing, "Even though Daniel has spontaneous feelings of empathy for the unknown stranger, he deliberately does nothing to help her; he approaches and addresses her only when he later sees her a second time, as she is submersing her cloak in the river. His initial failure to take action illustrates a point made repeatedly by the narrator that Daniel's overly generous power of empathy ultimately only paralyzes him" (397). Not only does Albrecht clarify that Daniel's behavior is based on free will, but he also discusses how difficult the expression of sympathy can be on those who direct it. Daniel's initial paralysis when observing Mirah indicates how he struggles to choose altruism and the impact that struggle has on him. Eliot writes:

He felt an outleap of interest and compassion towards her; but in the next instant she had turned and walked away to a neighbouring bench under a tree. He had no right to linger and watch her; poorly-dressed, melancholy women are common sights; it was only the

delicate beauty, the picturesque lines and colour of the image that were exceptional, and these conditions made it the more markedly impossible that he should obtrude his interest upon her. He began to row away, and was soon far up the river; but no other thoughts were busy enough quite to expel that pale image of unhappy girlhood. (188)

Eliot's portrayal of Daniel's mental struggle emphasizes how altruism is not a natural instinct, but rather something that emerges as a result of a person's rationalization.

Spencer accepts the idea of sympathy and finds it an essential part of the human experience. He writes, "Thus, round the physical feeling forming the nucleus of the whole, there are gathered the feelings produced by personal beauty, that constituting simple attachment, those of reverence, of love of approbation, of self-esteem, of property, of love of freedom, of sympathy. All these, each excited in the highest degree, and severally tending to reflect their excitement on each other, form the composite psychical state which we call love" (602). This aspect of Spencer's theory appears to come into play in the novel's treatment of Deronda. However, Deronda's most altruistic acts occur with strangers. When he returns Gwendolen's necklace to her, she is completely unknown to him. Similarly, his rescue of Mirah occurs not because he knows who she is, but because he chooses to help her.

Daniel's ability to sympathize with others and act to help them catches the attention of those around him. As mentioned previously, Mordecai has a mystical attitude that is noted several times. His ideas for a Jewish future and desire to transfer them to Daniel emphasize Deronda's character. Even before Daniel realizes that he is Jewish, Mordecai takes a deep interest in him. This interest seems to imply that Daniel is a spiritual leader as opposed to a simple product of biology. In her article, "Zion's Mimetic Angel: George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*," Bernadette Waterman Ward provides some insight into Mordecai's views of Deronda,

saying, “Yet Mordecai has visions and enunciates oracles which establish Daniel’s identity as a sort of messiah. Eliot corroborates these with her accounts of Daniel’s power to save those in moral distress, though the reason for that power never becomes clear; the ethical advice that he gives is not only banal but exceptionally non-specific even for platitudes” (Waterman Ward 107). While Waterman considers Deronda’s advice to be non-specific, his advice to others does not need to be specific to be helpful. Waterman quotes a passage in the novel where Deronda says to Gwendolyn, “Look on other lives besides your own. See what their troubles are, and how they are borne. Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires. Try to care for what is best in thought and action—something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot” (446). Here, Daniel might not tell Gwendolyn exactly which lives to look on or what to care about; such advice would be counterproductive. He is aware that she doesn’t need to be told exactly what to do. Instead, she needs guidance, and so he provides it.

With Daniel’s history of self-sacrifice and sympathy, any alteration from his usual course of action would require that he exercise free will to put himself first. It is only when Deronda breaks away from the sympathy directed toward Gwendolen that he is able to assert his final choices. Toker continues, explaining how Deronda overcomes the dangers of excessive sympathy with Gwendolen, saying, “Whereas the final part of the novel tells the story of Daniel’s endorsing his new vocation, it also tells the story of his tactfully and gently resisting the personal demands of Gwendolen and Mordecai alike, since Gwendolen might present an obstacle to his ideological agenda and Mordecai might signify the wrong reason for its pursuit. It is out of conviction born through the questioning of the principles of others while putting his own assumptions at stake, rather than in surrender to an ideologist’s charisma or in a Bouddha-like compassion that Daniel chooses his course of action” (570). That Deronda so readily sacrifices

for others before this moment, then refuses to continue to do so for Gwendolen once he decides on his own purpose indicates a choice that counters his background. The years of focus on others that have defined Daniel are overwhelmed by his decision as he acts counter to his previous behavior.

Daniel's choice to pursue a life devoted to his ancestral people could be considered to confirm Spencer's theories. However, that choice is not one that is easily made. Instead, Daniel spends time processing the information given to him by Mordecai, demonstrating that he was free to decide his own fate rather than being at the mercy of his biology to decide for him. As previously mentioned by Toker, Daniel's ultimate goal is not a result of the type of spontaneity that would be expected if his genetics and history were driving him. Because Daniel is expressing a variety of factors in his choice to pursue a Zionist mission, he actively counters Spencer's negation of free will.

Deronda's decision may be strongly influenced by his ancestry, but he declines to embrace the Jewish people fully. While he is emotionally connected to both Mirah and Mordecai, his experiences with other Jewish people are limited. As a result, he doesn't fully appreciate those who make up the culture to which he now belongs. Leona Toker states, "Even after having moved towards Mordecai's attitude of tolerant sympathy for the stunted Jewish population that he comes to see as waiting for a Zionist redemption, Daniel does not develop the kind of *resonating* sympathy with the Jewish environment" (568). If, as Spencer argues, the identity is dependent on genetics, Deronda's tendency toward sympathy and his realization that he is Jewish would have led to a deeper connection with Jews who fail to fill the roles of upstanding citizens. Instead, Deronda's choices move him to a position where he is leaving

England on a quest to make life better for the “stunted Jewish population” while failing to become acquainted with them before his journey.

This aspect of Deronda’s embrace of his ancestry as well as his immediate acceptance of Zionism has led recent critics to challenge the idea that *Daniel Deronda* is a philosemitic novel. This criticism often includes analysis of statements made by Eliot earlier in her life. In “Writing the Philosemitic Novel: *Daniel Deronda* Revisited,” Alan T. Levenson discusses this, saying:

Those seeking to qualify Eliot’s philosemitism have pointed to private remarks she made at the Jews’ expense, and to her ambivalent representations of the Cohens, the Jewish Everymen of *Daniel Deronda*. The first body of evidence is slim indeed. In an 1848 letter to Rev. John Sibree, prompted by a reading of Disraeli’s historical fiction, Eliot noted that “[e]verything specifically Jewish is of a low grade.” One year earlier, commenting on the presentation of Jesus in Charles Hennell’s *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, Eliot had opined, “[t]o say ‘Jewish philosopher’ seems almost like saying a round square, yet those two words appear to me the truest description of Jesus.” These two privately uttered comments, the only ones which can be construed negatively, may, or may not, represent Eliot’s considered views on Jews and Judaism in the late 1840s (130).

The presence of potential anti-Semitic comments appears problematic when addressing the philosemitism of *Daniel Deronda*. Negative opinions regarding the Jews challenge Eliot’s expression of philosemitism in her final novel and provide room for critics to dissect the Jewish presence in the text.

A potential problem with the novel occurs when examining Eliot’s treatment of Jews. This difficulty is reflected in Eliot’s portrayal of those who are not elevated above the poverty

and struggles they faced in Victorian England. Her depiction of Jews who have become exceptional rather than those who are facing difficulties due to how they were treated in England seems to further ideas of inferiority despite the presence of free will. The extraordinary Jews became such as a result of proper decisions that they made while those she ignores continue to suffer as a result of their own choice. Eliot had to choose the types of characters she would develop in order to reach her readers properly.

It is suggested that by creating a future for Deronda that involves leaving behind the country in which he has lived for his entire life, Eliot demonstrates an anti-Semitic sentiment. A few critics express the idea that, despite the novel's portrayal of good Jews, the fact that it sends the titular character away from England alters that vision. In "George Eliot and Racism," K. M. Newton discusses this, saying, "What would appear to be the substance—the attack on anti-Semitic and racist attitudes—is thus seen as merely a front for Eliot's English nationalism, which is defined as essentially racist" (659). This statement presents the idea that Eliot's demonstration of philosemitism in the novel is not without problems. However, such an argument is flawed. The expression of Zionism in the novel is not focused on English nationalism. Instead, it reflects the sentiment of many Jews that is made evident in Mordecai's work. Removing the Zionist goal from Jews and placing it in the hands of the Victorian British undermines that aspect of Jewish identity.

While the decision to present a Zionist vision in *Daniel Deronda* can be understood as reflective of philosemitism, the criticism regarding Eliot's history remains. Levenson addresses the challenges leveled at Eliot for earlier comments that could be construed as anti-Semitic. He writes:

Eliot presents a veritable compendium of paths by which individuals became philosemitic. Her long-term relationship with another philosemite (Lewes); her intellectual attraction to Jewish historical figures such as Baruch Spinoza and Rahel Varnhagen; her acquaintance with another female author, Fanny Lewald, who also needed to struggle against the constraints of gender and social exclusion; the encounter with contemporary Jews, most notably Emanuel Deutsch (1829–1873); her growing rejection of English antisemitism (including Anthony Trollope’s); the maturation of her own secularized biblicism; her extensive research into Judaism, her status as cognitive insider and social outsider—all these conduced toward a principled philo-semitism (131). Considering early judgmental views of the Jewish people to be reflective of Eliot’s attitude later in life fails to take her lifelong growth into account. Her experiences throughout her life impacted her views and most likely altered how she believed.

In addition to an understanding of how Eliot’s life changed, *Daniel Deronda*’s reception indicates that the novel was perceived as primarily philosemitic. At the time, exposure to obvious anti-Semitism created an understanding that the novel was working to address Victorian behavior toward the Jewish people. Susan Meyer addresses this, writing, “Jews contemporary with George Eliot also seem to have felt that they were represented positively in the novel: in comparison with the blatant anti-semitism of other contemporary novels, Eliot’s treatment of Judaism was described by David Kaufmann in 1888 as a ‘glorious exaltation’” (733). This emphasizes the value of the text as a philosemitic novel.

These arguments express consideration of Jewish treatment in the novel, but they don’t consider how Eliot’s conversation with Spencer impacts the racial statement made in the novel. As previously shown, Eliot’s relationship with Spencer played an important role in the genetic



and biological expression in the novel. Eliot's insistence that free will exists independent of biology provides another Philosemitic argument that is overlooked.

A major criticism of Spencer is the impact that his theories had on racism. The suggestion that biological and social inheritance drives individuals rather than personal choice indicates that those who belong to races considered inferior are less than due to a lack of proper evolution. This concept encouraged Victorian ideas that those who were different from the English were savage, dirty, and sub-human. Without the ability to express free will, these people were, then, incapable of rising above the perceived defects.

By presenting characters through their genetic makeup before continuing her work to demonstrate how they can make personal choices regardless of their situations, as well as through contradiction of Spencer's ideas of genetic transference, Eliot counters this support of racism. If people truly have free will, they become individuals rather than victims of their biological background. As a result, Victorian beliefs regarding the inferiority of races as a whole are challenged.

Despite these problems, through Eliot's application of her argument to anti-Semitism, Eliot counters the Victorian ideas that kept Jewish people oppressed. Rather than portraying them as a race that remains inferior due to genetic disposition, she emphasizes that the Jews are more than a people constrained by race. Instead, they are individuals who are capable of making choices that elevate them above the belief that they are dirty, avaricious, and criminal.

*Daniel Deronda* has faced much scrutiny regarding its treatment of Jews and claims that it is philosemitic. Even though it portrays Jews in a mostly positive light, the novel uses Victorian expectations for Jews to make the story more palatable. Daniel's final decision to leave England reflects Zionist attitudes, but it also works to alleviate fears of Jewish integration. Since

the primary Jewish characters are either dead or leaving the country, British fears of Jewish integration into the Christian population are soothed. Still, *Daniel Deronda* continues to provide a basis for understanding the challenges of anti-Semitism and evolution in a time when scientific theories were used to justify racism. Though the novel is far from perfect in its representations of Jewish characters and their choices, it emerged from a period of blatant anti-Semitism, making an important statement that prejudices against an entire race were unfounded. As a result, its imperfections express cultural issues that Eliot was required to work around in order to achieve her goal.

## Chapter 2: Sexual Selection and Jewish Integration in George Du Maurier's *Trilby*

The role of the Jew in nineteenth-century Britain was subject to much debate. While *Daniel Deronda* presented Jews in a mostly positive light, it reflected the biases and fears of the anti-Semitic by sending Jews out of the country rather than allowing them to integrate with the Christian population. With Benjamin Disraeli serving as Prime Minister, Victorians found themselves grappling with anti-Semitic sentiments and fears of Jewish integration that would be alleviated through Zionism. The conflict between proto-Semitic and anti-Semitic aspects of Eliot's novel reflects the ideological struggle seen in the conversation surrounding Jews. Michael Ragussis writes, "Anti-Semitism became viewed as a challenge to the ground on which English national identity was built; at the same time, Judaization of England was a perennial fear in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and reached a peak during the second ministry of Disraeli" (298). Ragussis's statement emphasizes the societal struggles of those in the nineteenth century when it comes to Judaism and anti-Semitism. While liberalism portrayed the general idea of acceptance of Jews, an underlying fear remained that integration would impact the nation adversely. George du Maurier's *Trilby* is a novel that blatantly displays that underlying anti-Semitism. With stereotypical representations and focus on Jewish villainy and madness, the text incorporates the worst of Victorian attitudes towards Judaism.

In addition to its stereotypical representation of Jews, however, *Trilby* also includes a wealth of references to evolutionary theory. These references culminate in a digression from the story as Little Billee contemplates Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* and religion while he considers proposing to Alice. Academics often focus on this moment when exploring the impact of evolutionary theory on this novel. Specifically, Laura Vorachek devotes the introduction to her article "Mesmerists and Other Meddlers: Social Darwinism, Degeneration, and Eugenics in *Trilby*" to a discussion of Little Billee's soliloquy before considering the role of evolutionary

theory in the novel. Her in-depth exploration offers a strong understanding of how Darwin's work influences each of the novel's characters. Instead of taking this approach, I will, however, consider Charles Darwin's *Descent of Man and Sexual Selection in Relation to Sex* in combination with the role of anti-Semitism in *Trilby*. I argue that the text demonstrates how Trilby naturally selects against her Jewish suitors, protecting against the degeneration of the species, even as her evolutionary superiority is destroyed by Jewish trickery. This aspect of sexual selection in the novel helps to reinforce anti-Semitic sentiments.

For Trilby, the importance of finding a proper suitor seems to be a low priority. Her happiness is not bound in her search for a husband. Instead, she finds herself drawn to her socialization with a variety of men. However, their attraction to her leads to a variety of approaches to wooing her, demonstrating the role of the theory of sexual selection in *Trilby*. Specifically, Trilby's failure to reproduce with Svengali despite his perceived control over her emphasizes the power of sexual selection over trickery. As a result, she exercises power over unnatural forces that threaten a natural process designed to ensure the enhancement of the species rather than its degeneration. This is evident through an examination of her role as a physical evolutionary ideal, the part Svengali plays in the final years of her life and the role of anti-Semitism in the novel.

Trilby is a perfect evolutionary specimen. Du Maurier makes this evident as he first introduces us to her, or more specifically to her feet. He writes, "And in truth, they were astonishingly beautiful feet, such as one only sees in pictures and statues—a true inspiration of shape and colour, all made up of delicate lengths and subtly-modulated curves and noble straightnesses and happy little dimpled arrangements in innocent young pink and white" (15). Du Maurier expands on just how perfect they are, calling on the evolutionary powers of the limb, as

he continues his praise of them, stating, “Nothing else that Mother Nature has to show, not even the human face divine, has more subtle power to suggest high physical distinction, happy evolution, and supreme development; the lordship of man over beast, the lordship of man over man, the lordship of woman over all!” (16). The focus du Maurier places not just on Trilby’s feet, but on the evolutionary value of Trilby’s feet is an essential part of the novel that explains further aspects of her personality and her actions.

The idea that the foot represented higher evolution had already been ingrained in Victorian culture when du Maurier began writing *Trilby*. In “Footnotes on *Trilby*: The Human Foot as Evolutionary Icon in Late Victorian Culture,” Christine Ferguson states:

Without our feet, writes Darwin, no tools; without tools, no civilization. Subsequent theorists have posited another crucial role for the foot in the “humanizing” of the species; its unique structure not only liberates the arms but also requires the expanded pelvis also necessary for the birth of offspring with the large crania characteristic of our species. Simply put, the things that have most contributed to human evolutionary success—intellectual capacity and tool-making ability—are firmly grounded in the unique shape and function of the foot (130).

It is not surprising, then, that du Maurier would place such deep emphasis on Trilby’s feet as a foundation for her character. By doing so, he creates an expectation that she will be the subject of romantic desire due to her evolutionary perfection.

This perfection is not based on the usual expectations of what makes a woman ideal. Trilby does not fit Victorian expectations of what a perfect woman should be. She is in no way pure; she sits nude for artists, she is not a virgin, she smokes and is not upper class. Her rightness, then, is purely based on what she offers to the evolution of the species rather than what

she offers to Victorian culture. This begins to change as she spends time around Taffy, the Laird, and Little Billee. Du Maurier expresses how Trilby begins to grow to match the perfect evolution of her feet, writing, “She grew more English every day; and that was a good thing” (64).

Although Du Maurier begins to describe her evolution to Victorian Britishness through her cultural adaptations, it is the physical that he focuses on primarily. Her appearance begins to fit with English standards of beauty, although du Maurier states that her appearance would be more appreciated in the time he is writing than it was in the period the novel is set. He writes, “Trilby’s type would be infinitely more admired now than in the fifties. Her photograph would be in the shop-windows. Sir Edward Burne-Jones—if I may make so bold as to say so—would perhaps have marked her for his own, in spite of her almost too exuberant joyousness and irrepressible vitality” (90). By making Trilby’s beauty ahead of its time, du Maurier makes her more advanced than women of the fifties. This emphasizes her evolutionary value.

It is through du Maurier’s physical descriptions of Trilby that we see her specific evolution over the course of the book. Initially he describes her many faults, stating, “This strange medley of garments was surmounted by a small bare head with short, thick, wavy brown hair, and a very healthy young face, which could scarcely be called quite beautiful at first sight, since the eyes were too wide apart, the mouth too large, the chin too massive, the complexion a mass of freckles” (13). Trilby isn’t presented as a gorgeous woman who would draw suitors to her. Instead, she presents a mass of flaws. Later, du Maurier approaches her changes through another physical description, writing:

Also, she grew thinner, especially in the face, where the bones of her cheeks and jaws began to show themselves, and these bones were constructed on such right

principles (as were those of her brow and chin and the bridge of her nose) that the improvement was astonishing, almost inexplicable.

Also, she lost her freckles as the summer waned and she herself went into the open air. And she let her hair grow, and made of it a small knot at the back of her head, and showed her little flat ears, which were charming, and just in the right place, very far back and rather high...Also, her mouth, always too large, took on a firmer and sweeter outline, and her big British teeth were so white and regular that even Frenchmen forgave them their British bigness (90).

Through her evolution, Trilby leaves behind the less attractive traits made evident through her first description, becoming more appealing to those around her. Her natural beauty shows as she loses her weight, freckles, and distinctive mouth shape. She becomes more of an ideal.

Trilby's growth, both physically and culturally, does not fully explain how she manages to attract so many men. She draws the three Englishmen, Gecko, and Svengali to her early in the novel despite the flaws du Maurier lists. The reason for her ability to appeal to so many men can be found in Darwin's *Descent of Man* where he writes, "If all our women were to become as beautiful as the Venus de Medici, we should for a time be charmed; but we should soon wish for variety; and as soon as we had obtained variety, we should wish to see certain characters a little exaggerated beyond the then existing common standard" (581). It is, then, the exaggeration of Trilby's features that initially make her appealing. Had the perfection of her foot been carried throughout her entire figure, she would not have the power of attraction she attains through the presence of her flaws. This aspect of Trilby's worthiness as an evolutionary specimen is further exemplified as du Maurier retains specific flaws even as she advances in beauty. Her teeth remain too big, yet the large British teeth are forgiven.

The emphasis on Trilby's physical traits compared with her initial moral traits offers an intriguing means of consideration of the novel's focus on physical perfection over morality. We learn quickly that Trilby sits for the figure and that she does so in "the altogether" (15). Such behavior undermines her ability to be considered suitable for marriage from a cultural point of view. She is far from being a lady. The fact that she has had sex without being married further undermines her purity. Yet she is considered valuable even though she possesses evidence of moral degeneration. Her value increases once Little Billee sees her posing nude and responds badly to what he sees. At this point, she understands the shame in her actions. Her actions following Little Billee's response change the depiction of her as a degenerate in the novel, raising her moral self to the level of her physical self. Du Maurier writes, "This new-born feeling of shame was unendurable—its birth a travail that racked and rent every fibre of her moral being, and she suffered agonies beyond anything she had ever felt in her life" (82). For Trilby, the degenerative actions of her past were not shameful because she never associated them with disgrace. However, once she became aware of the judgment of those she loved, she felt the horror of humiliation. It was only through Little Billee's eyes, then, that her moral character became an issue for her. At this point, she confesses and repents, evolving into a morally improved specimen as well.

Trilby's advancement makes her even more desirable for the men who surround her. For those in her life, she is much more than just a companion. While several men demonstrate a desire to pair with her, three suitors stand out: Taffy, Svengali, and Little Billee. Through the presentation of a non-Jewish character, juxtaposed with two Jewish characters, du Maurier uses the novel to present an anti-Semitic statement regarding degeneration and sexual selection.



To understand the role of anti-Semitism in *Trilby's* statement, we must consider the role of Taffy in the novel. He is the most ideal suitor for Trilby based on Victorian expectations of manliness. Du Maurier describes him as "a Yorkshireman...called Taffy (and also the Man of Blood, because he was supposed to be distantly related to a baronet)...He was a very big young man, fair, with kind but choleric blue eyes, and the muscles of his brawny arm were strong as iron bands" (4). Taffy is an example of a quality man from an evolutionary perspective. He is strong but kind; his temper is controlled as evidenced in his responses to Svengali's improper behavior. He has served in the military. Ultimately, he is a man who should create offspring, producing more humans who match his quality. And, as Laura Vorachek points out in her article, "Mesmerists and Other Meddlers: Social Darwinism, Degeneration, and Eugenics in *Trilby*," "He is the only character to reproduce, thereby ensuring the race will continue, fathering three boys with Little Billee's sister Blanche. Appropriately, the soldier succeeds in the battle for genetic survival" (199). That the most obvious choice for sexual selection is not Trilby's preference presents a challenge to the theory. For a novel that focuses so much on the physical characteristics of the characters, it would seem that her choice would be the man who fits the Victorian view of the ideal male. Instead, as we learn later in the novel, she turns Taffy down.

Ultimately, Trilby ends up with Svengali, although it is not by choice. Here is where we see the most obvious presentation of the novel's approach to Judaism as degeneration. Du Maurier's description of Svengali paints him as a stereotypical Jew. He writes of Svengali that he was "well-featured but sinister. He was very shabby and dirty...His thick, heavy, languid, lusterless black hair fell down behind his ears to his shoulders...He had bold, brilliant black eyes, with long heavy lids, a thin, sallow face, and a beard of burnt-up black, which grew almost from under his eyelids; and over it his moustache, a shade lighter, fell in two long spiral

twists...and his voice was very thin and mean and harsh, and often broke into a disagreeable falsetto” (11). Du Maurier’s stereotypical representation of Svengali continues throughout the novel, notably recurring during his later fight with Little Billee that culminates in a confrontation with Taffy. Du Maurier writes, “But [Taffy] had, for hours, the feel of that long, thick, shapely Hebrew nose being kneaded between his gloved knuckles, and a pleasing sense of the effectiveness of the tweak he had given it” (240). The focus on Svengali’s Jewishness is more extreme than that of Little Billee. He is a full-blooded Jew, possessing all the characteristic traits of a Jewish man, including certain feminine traits. His filth and hair represent his choice to present himself as a Jew while his nose demonstrates the part of him that can never be hidden.

Sander Gilman discusses the role of the Jewish nose in defining the Jew while considering its unchangeability. He writes, “But how can one alter the ‘nostrility of the Jewish nose, a sign which, unlike the skin color of the Jew, does not seem to vanish when the Jew is acculturated. Indeed, a detailed study of the anthropology of the ‘*Mischlinge* born to Jews and non-Jews’ published in 1928 summarized the given view that there was a ‘Jew nose’ and that this specific form of the nose was dominant in mixed marriages and was recognized to be a fixed, inherited sign of being Jewish” (180). While Little Billee lacks the Jewish nose despite his blood, Svengali’s is prominent. With his increasing wealth, Svengali increases his cleanliness, but his nose remains something that he is unable to hide. He is unable to get rid of the brand of his Jewishness.

That both Little Billee and Svengali possess artistic genius as men of Jewish descent is not surprising based on Victorian ideas of the day. Sander Gilman further discusses the intersection of Jewish creativity and anti-Semitism, stating, “The question of the relationship between the idea of madness and the meaning of creativity was much discussed at the turn of the

century. That Jews were active within the spheres of culture and science could not be contradicted—but was their activity to be understood as ‘creative’? The seemingly central role of Jews in culture was put into question by the argument that this type of art was superficial or even corrupting. Indeed, it was all too often argued, that the ‘creativity’ of the Jew was really a sign of his diseased, ‘mad’ state” (132). This thought process is evidenced in Little Billee’s “fits,” but is more clear in Svengali’s actions regarding Trilby.

We see this evidenced when his attempts to woo Trilby and impress her with his music and reviews fail to have the desired effect on her. He says to her:

There is a little ugly grey building there, and inside are eight slanting slabs of brass, all of a row, like beds in a school dormitory, and one fine day you shall lie asleep on one of those slabs—you, Drilpy, who would not listen to Svengali, and therefore lost him! And over the middle of you will be a little leather apron, and over your head a little brass tap, and all day long and all night the cold water shall trickle, trickle, trickle all the way down your beautiful white body to your beautiful white feet till they turn green, and your poor, damp, draggled, muddy rags will hang above you from the ceiling for your friends to know you by; drip, drip, drip! But you will have no friends... (75).

Such fantasizing about the death of a woman he is attracted to speaks to the man’s madness. His detailed description of the treatment of her corpse following her imagined death is not something a sane man would consider, let alone speak of. He is insane enough to keep the fantasy going, adding himself to the picture as he describes his viewing of her body.

In Victorian times, it was not uncommon to link Jewishness with insanity. Mendelssohn continues her discussion of the idea of Judaism and madness, stating, “With regard to Jews, the consensus was clear: they were, specialists said, more disposed to insanity than other members of

the population at large” (183). So, a Jewish character who exhibits traits that indicate a certain level of insanity is not unexpected. Svengali’s villainy, tied to his madness, emphasizes the fear associated with mental degeneration, which was suggested to be more prevalent in Jews.

That Trilby ends up in the hands of Svengali, then, adds a new layer of dread to the novel. It is more than the presence of mesmerism that makes *Trilby* a gothic text; it is the threat to her evolutionary perfection by the possibility of degeneration. Svengali’s ability to control Trilby isn’t about his desire to make himself famous through her or to merely gain power over a woman who rejected him early in the novel. It is about the possibility that degeneration of the species could occur through challenges to natural selection by trickery. This fear is played out through Svengali’s actions and Trilby’s victimization.

Hints that Svengali has designs on the degeneration of the species as a Jew take place early in the novel, specifically as he takes on the task of training Mademoiselle Honorine Cahen. Du Maurier describes her as “a dirty, drabby little dolly-mop of a Jewess, a model for the figure—a very humble person indeed, socially. She was, however, of a very lively disposition, and had a charming voice, and a natural gift of singing so sweetly that you forgot her accent” (43). Honorine, also known by the derogative name Mimi la Salope, possesses Trilby’s lively disposition but has a much better singing voice. She should be an ideal candidate for Svengali to train to sing for him. However, he abuses her instead, destroying her voice with his demands, extorting her, and threatening her as he throws her into the street.

His rejection of Honorine when he could have used his powers of mesmerism to elevate her demonstrates an early instance of Svengali’s sinister nature. In *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity*, Mary J. Russo writes, “The displacement of filth, poverty, and immorality onto Mimi, who is cast out into supposed oblivion...suggests a very fragile line

between the public woman in the limelight and the woman in the shadows” (145). I agree with Russo, so far as the statement that Honorine’s presence suggests the creation of a line in the novel; however, I disagree with her statement of what that boundary is. As demonstrated by the plot, Svengali possesses the ability to turn the poorest of singers into great talents through the art of mesmerism. He does not choose to use his skills on Honorine, indicating that he finds her unworthy of his efforts. That she possesses some traits similar to Trilby with a better voice indicates that it is not her talent, nor her personality, that leads to his rejection of her, but rather her Jewishness. This is evident through the many similarities between Trilby and Honorine and the most notable difference between the two. Despite Honorine’s love of Svengali and her willingness to worship him, he sees her as unfit. It is not enough for him to elevate a Jewish woman to a higher status. Instead, he pursues a woman who is an evolutionary ideal.

Svengali’s mystical pursuit of Trilby begins early as well. His mesmerizing powers are evidenced as he cures her pain through hypnosis. Following his session with her, Trilby shares her relief, saying, “Now I’ll go to Durien’s and sit. How can I thank you, monsieur? You have taken all my pain away” (50). Svengali replies that she should see him every time she has pain and he will cure her. This instance provides a foreshadowing of what is to come.

However, it isn’t until much later in the novel that we learn how he has made use of mesmerism to control her. It begins with the revelation that Trilby is La Svengali. However, we don’t realize the extent of Svengali’s trickery until even later in the text. As La Svengali, Trilby stuns the three Englishmen who were once her closest friends. After all, it is known that Trilby is tone-deaf. She has become something that she is not.

On first glance, Trilby’s progress as a singer could appear to be an evolution. She advances from a woman who is tone-deaf to the most stunning singer in Europe. Du Maurier

writes of her talents, saying, “But her voice was so immense in its softness, richness, freshness, that it seemed to be pouring itself out from all round; its intonation absolutely, mathematically pure; one felt it to be not only faultless, but infallible; and the seduction, the novelty of it, the strangely sympathetic quality! How can one describe the quality of a peach or a nectarine to those who have only known apples?” (210-211). This description of Trilby’s voice in the form of La Svengali is a far cry from what her voice once was. The three Englishmen note the difference, of course, stunned by the change.

It is Gecko who ultimately reveals that Trilby’s sudden ear for music was not the result of Svengali’s skill alone, but rather that of trickery. He confesses his knowledge, saying:

“He had but to say ‘Dors!’ and she suddenly became an unconscious Trilby of marble, who could produce wonderful sounds—just the sounds he wanted, and nothing else—and think his thoughts and wish his wishes—and love him at his bidding with a strange, unreal, factitious love...just his own love for himself turned inside out—à l’enverse—and reflected back on him, as from a mirror...un écho, un simulacre, quoi! Pas autre chose!...It was not worth having! I was not even jealous!” (299).

Gecko’s explanation demonstrates how Trilby’s artistic advances are far from being an evolution. Instead, they are the product of mesmerism. She becomes an instrument, played by Svengali, no longer herself. As Gecko describes her, she becomes merely an unconscious object, something that cannot reproduce.

More than that, she is a mirror to Svengali, a reflection of his love for himself. Gecko’s lack of jealousy over Trilby’s mesmerized love for Svengali emphasizes how completely changed she is and how unreal she becomes as a result of his hypnosis. Ruth Bienstock Anolik discusses this, saying, “The scandal of his personal invasiveness is that he penetrates the body

and soul of the innocent Christian heroine, taking artistic and sexual possession of her and merging his identity with hers so that she no longer exists as a distinct person” (105). Anolik’s observation demonstrates not only Svengali’s role in Trilby’s degeneration to an unthinking automaton but also how the novel plays into Christian fears of Jewish influence on the degeneration of humanity. Here, it is not merely a man destroying a woman for his own purposes; it is a Jew using trickery to corrupt a Christian woman.

Fears invoked by the novel are eventually allayed by the fate of both Svengali and Trilby, which demonstrates the power of sexual selection over trickery. Although Svengali and La Svengali are presented as husband and wife and there are inferences that sexual relations have occurred between them, the Trilby that the three Englishmen knew insists that her love for Svengali was merely innocent. She says, “I used to try and do all I could—be a daughter to him, as I couldn’t be anything else—mend his things, and all that, and cook him little French dishes” (Du Maurier 258). For Trilby, the idea of a sexual relationship is not a possibility. She instead places herself in the position of Svengali’s daughter. The real Trilby, then, certainly refrained from sexual intercourse with Svengali.

Gecko’s confession, however, indicates that La Svengali did not. His statement suggests that, while she was mesmerized, Svengali was able to make her “love him” at will. The unnaturalness of this love failed to result in reproduction, with both members of the couple dying without passing on Svengali’s Jewish madness and evil. The role sexual selection plays in ensuring human progress is further emphasized when we learn that the wife Trilby believes that Svengali abandoned is merely a fiction. Du Maurier makes this clear, writing, “His old mother came over from Germany, and two of his sisters, but no wife. The comic wife and the three children, and the sweet-stuff shop in Elberfeld, had been humorous inventions of his own—a

kind of Mrs. Harris!” (265). Providing information that Svengali’s claims to Trilby that he was married were false allows du Maurier to further relieve societal fears that the novel’s villain managed to procreate. Instead, he died without progeny.

While Trilby does not recover from the damage Svengali does to her, and her role as an ideal evolutionary specimen is destroyed, she does manage to ensure that his trickery does not harm the rest of humanity. Her failure to fully appreciate his skills as a musician and a man provide one area in which she maintains control over him, but it is sexual selection that ultimately ensures that his villainy does not succeed. The natural failure of reproduction between the two prevents the degeneration that would result from their pairing when had she married a different man she would certainly have perpetuated the species. Therefore, her power is engaged as she overcomes the unnatural.

While Svengali represents an obvious example of anti-Semitism in the novel, Little Billee is a character who represents anti-Semitism in a much more subtle way. Even though he is considered one of the novel’s heroes, he is far from physically perfect. He is feminized, as du Maurier describes him, writing, “Little Billee was small and slender, about twenty or twenty-one, and had a straight white forehead veined with blue, large dark blue eyes, delicate, regular features, and coal-black hair. He was also very graceful and well built, with very small hands and feet, and much better dressed than his friends, who went out of their way to outdo the denizens of the Quartier Latin in careless eccentricity of garb, and succeeded” (6). This description paints Little Billee as much less than the manly man that Taffy is. He is shorter than his more masculine friend, educated away from the company of other boys and prone to crying fits. It is observed that “The boy had always been a highly strung, emotional, over-excitable, over-sensitive, and quite uncontrolled mammy’s darling, a cry-baby sort of chap, who had never been



to school” (du Maurier 225). Little Billee is certainly not an ideal man for carrying the genes of the human race into the future, yet his talent draws Trilby to him. However, Little Billee is unsuitable for reproduction for an important reason other than his feminization.

Du Maurier’s tendency toward anti-Semitism is evident not only throughout *Trilby* but also in his drawings for *Punch*, a Victorian humor magazine. While many of his comics focused on non-Jewish related issues, those that took on Judaism reflected his anti-Semitic ideals. For example, his cartoon, “What’s in a Name?” incorporates both stereotypical Jewish features as well as the perception that all Jews speak with a lisp. The illustration contains text that says, “What a prethuth noothenth it ith. Jutht becauth ma thurname happenth to be Abramth, and ma parenth chrithened me Motheth, lotth of people theem to thuthpect I mutht be o’ Hebrew ecthtrachtion! Whereath a thwear a haven’t got a thingle drop of o’ Hebrew blood in all ma veinth, ‘thelpme!’” (Du Maurier). This work by Du Maurier reflects ideas that Jews are attempting to integrate. It comes as no surprise, then, that any person of Jewish descent would demonstrate such ideas in the novel.

The descriptions of Little Billee feed into the presence of anti-Semitism that permeates *Trilby*. Du Maurier’s description of Little Billee includes a long discussion of his Jewish descendance, with du Maurier writing, “And in his winning and handsome face there was just a faint suggestion of some possible very remote Jewish ancestor—just a tinge of that strong, sturdy, irrepressible, indomitable, indelible blood which is of such priceless value in diluted homeopathic doses” (6-7). Two words stand out in this description: irrepressible and indomitable. Du Maurier is making it clear here that the blood Little Billee has received, no matter how diluted, is still Jewish blood, and as a result, it is powerful enough to make him a Jew. So while this statement, on the surface, appears to be philo-Semitic, praising Little Billee’s

ancestry, it has a more sinister connotation. Michèle Mendelssohn challenges the idea that it is a positive statement, arguing, “Du Maurier’s ostensible compliment morphs into something far more sinister, especially when we bear in mind that homeopathy works on the principle that very small doses of substances (some otherwise toxic) stimulate the body to react defensively, thus enabling it to heal itself” (182). Not only does Little Billee’s physical appearance take on stereotypical features of the feminine Jew, but he also has received a tincture of the blood designed to immunize him from the fluid’s more dangerous effects. Despite the perceived homeopathic qualities of the dose of Jewish blood, Little Billee is degenerate through possession of this trait, a man who represents the danger of passing on such genes due to the strong effect that they have on manliness.

That Little Billee possesses Jewish blood but passes as an Englishman reflects Victorian fears of Jewish integration into Victorian society. These fears, while very much steeped in anti-Semitism, stemmed from another issue as well. For the English, a sense of nationalism was extremely important at the time. In his article, “‘She Grew More English Every Day; And That Was a Good Thing’: Gender, Nation, and Posthumanism in Du Maurier’s *Trilby*,” John Wiehl writes, “The British felt the necessity of reviving a specific national identity at this historical juncture partly because of threats to the integrity of the empire” (para 4). Threats to the empire included many things, but among them were religious decline and an identity crisis. The integration of the Jewish population into everyday Victorian culture and politics was perceived to threaten religious stability and undermine British identity. When Jews like Little Billee are able to blend into Victorian society without notice, identity and religion are more deeply undermined.

Du Maurier introduces Little Billee as a character that reflects these concerns and makes him the most appealing of the three Englishmen in Trilby's eyes. By doing so, he creates a deep statement about the integration of Jews into Victorian society. Little Billee is a feminized male. He has fits that his friends write off as due to his youth, his genius, and his attachment to his mother. Additionally, he is artistic. This combination reflects the same convergence of creativity and madness seen in Svengali on a less destructive scale.

As one of Trilby's suitors, Little Billee is portrayed as the most likely to win her. She is clearly full of affection for him, and the other characters speculate that she is in love with him and he with her. However, Trilby does not express the desire to become his wife. Instead, following her confession and repentance, she finds herself longing for less than matrimony. Du Maurier writes, "How could she ever hope to be even the friend of such a man? Might she ever hope to be his servant—his faithful, humble servant?" (88). At her most desperate, she is craving only to be Little Billee's companion. She does not seek to be his wife.

Her lack of desire to marry Little Billee is further emphasized at the point of their engagement. That Little Billee proposes to Trilby for the final time on Christmas night, a Christian holiday, emphasizes how easily he can blend in with the Christians around him. Unlike Jews who maintain their ancestral identity, Little Billee celebrates the holiday with his friends. At this point, when he asks for her hand, Little Billee says to her, "Trilby, I have asked you nineteen times, and you have refused. Trilby, once more on Christmas night, for the twentieth time—*will* you marry me? If not, I leave Paris tomorrow morning, and never come back. I swear it on my word of honor!" (Du Maurier 118). Trilby's response is far from that of a woman happily accepting a marriage proposal. Du Maurier writes, "'God forgive me, *yes!*' said Trilby, and she ran downstairs weeping" (119). As we can see, Trilby has already refused Little Billee

more than a few times. He is asking her for the twentieth time. This time he adds threats that she cannot bear. If she does not accept his proposal, she will never see him again. As a form of manipulation, this demonstrates a bit of villainy in Little Billee that, while not nearly as harsh as that of Svengali, indicates that his Jewish blood allows him to do things that reduce Trilby's autonomy. She must accept his proposal, or she will experience the loss of a friend she can't bear to lose, just as with Svengali, she must accept his mesmerism or experience pain she can't bear to experience.

Billee's mother, rather than Trilby, ends the engagement, but Trilby reasserts her reason for accepting the proposal in her conversation with Mrs. Bagot. While the older woman assumes that she wishes to marry him, Trilby responds, "'On Christmas night he asked me for the twentieth time; he swore he would leave Paris the next day if I refused him. I hadn't the courage. I was weak, you see! It was a dreadful mistake'" (Du Maurier 126). It is clear that Little Billee isn't Trilby's choice of mate. Ultimately, Mrs. Bagot's class worries provide a means for Trilby to escape the mistake she made in her moment of weakness, preserving her value as an evolutionary specimen.

The fact that Little Billee passes away without procreating plays an important role in the novel's statement about the fear of Jewish assimilation in Victorian society. That Little Billee passes as an Englishman despite his Jewish blood makes him a threat to England, and his potential reproduction increases the damage he could do. However, he fails to have children, meaning that the danger stops with him. Discussing this, John Wiehl writes, "Little Billee is a failed Englishman: his failure to procreate and lack of malleable materiality keeps him from evolutionary success; his mixed blood cannot adapt as well as Trilby's, and he is the novel's most thorough-going example of evolutionary determinism" (para 18). Not only is he unable to

procreate as a result of Trilby's refusal to select him as a sexual partner, his failure to fully fit in as an Englishman keeps him from gaining a proper place as a father in Victorian culture.

Little Billee's lack of ability to fit into Victorian culture is emphasized by his *Origin* soliloquy. The speech, related to the dog of the woman Billee is considering proposing to, stems from his conflict between his desire to wed her and his own faith in science rather than religion. He says of his potential bride:

"She believes—she believes—what *doesn't* she believe, Tray?

"The world was made in six days. It is just six thousand years old. Once it lay all smothered in rain water for many weeks, miles deep, because there were so many wicked people about somewhere down in Judee, where they didn't know everything! A costly kind of clearance!" (180).

Little Billee continues across several pages, pointing out several areas where Christianity and science do not mesh. His ruminations take him through the challenges that would arise from marrying a woman who is very religious to those that would occur should he convince her of his beliefs.

During the soliloquy, Little Billee considers deception reminiscent of Svengali's trickery although on a much smaller scale. Rather than be honest about his beliefs, he explores the idea of keeping them from the parson, saying, "'And if he chooses to be as simple as a little child, why shouldn't I treat him as a little child, for his own good, and fool him to the top of his little bent for his dear daughter's sake, that I may make her happy, and thereby him too?'" (185). This bit of trickery would allow Little Billee to marry Alice, to fit in, and to reproduce, passing on his Jewish blood. However, Little Billee opts against this dishonesty, telling the parson of his beliefs and failing to marry Alice. The lengthy soliloquy in the novel, stemming from *Origin* and

sharing his atheist views while challenging religion, emphasizes his danger to Victorian culture. That he talks himself out of marriage and therefore out of the gene pool provides relief to Victorian fears of integration.

Ultimately, the novel presents comfort in times of anti-Semitic stress due to cultural anxiety by demonstrating clear stereotypical traits in its Jewish characters while preserving English identity by denying the procreation of those who are Jewish. Whether it be the Jew in the obviously villainous form of Svengali who succeeds in corrupting the quality evolutionary specimen that is Trilby, or the hidden Jew that is Little Billee who is unable to woo her, Du Maurier presents a plot that mirrors societal fears surrounding degeneration and integration and resolves them using the theory of sexual selection. In doing so, he combines the role of science and the role of the Jew to develop a blatantly anti-Semitic novel that ties Jews to anti-Semitism while making a statement about the power of sexual selection.

### Chapter 3: Integration, Degeneration, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Several scholars have noted links between vampires and stereotypical Jews, discussing various aspects of anti-Semitism and their link to vampiric folklore. For those who feared Jewish integration and believed that degeneration was evident in the race, the connection between the vampire and the Jew enhanced fears and encouraged anti-Semitism. As a result, past belief in blood libel and accusations of well contamination during the black plague was able to manifest itself in the writing of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Belief in the veracity of claims made about Jewish evil spawned anti-Semitic ideas that led to a marked relationship between vampires and Jews.

In his article, "Circumcising Dracula," Jeffrey Weinstock explores how various historical events such as the development of blood libel attributed to the Jews led to the connection between the Jewish and the Vampire. The idea of blood libel has been around since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, first documented in 1144 in Norwich, England (Weinstock 92). Accusations that Jews murdered a young man in order to stain the observance of the Passion of Christ led to riots and murder. Weinstock discusses how the history of blood libel began to be linked to vampiric lore, stating, "By the fourteenth century, the ritual murder charge had become associated with the Jewish holiday of Passover and had acquired a peculiar vampiric twist. Christians accused Jews of using Christian blood in their unleavened bread" (93). The combination of murder and blood consumption provides an immediately recognizable link between the Jewish community and the vampire.

In addition to blood libel, plague is a second link between the Jew and the vampire. In the fourteenth century, plague panic led to suspicion that Jews poisoned water wells to spread the disease through the population. Weinstock writes, "The association of plague with the Jews is

another manner in which Judaism is linked to the figure of the vampire because what the vampire does is to spread its terrible and unholy disease” (95). The ability of the vampire to secretly and silently infect and kill is readily linked to the idea of Jewish contamination of wells during the bubonic plague’s devastating reign. Just as a vampire spreads his disease without notice, the Jews spread their disease without notice.

Beyond a general link between vampirism and Judaism, scholarship has demonstrated a link between *Dracula* and the Jew with some specific focus on the idea of the Vampiric Jew as a reverse colonizer. Looking at *Dracula* from this standpoint, Stephen Arata states in his book, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, “Vampires are generated by racial enervation and the decline of empire, not vice versa. They are produced, in other words, by the very conditions many perceived as characterizing late-Victorian Britain” (115). For Arata, this allows the Other to work its way back into Britain through the weaknesses that have emerged. While I agree with Arata to an extent, I claim that *Dracula* represents the threat of the integrated Jew, invited in and spreading degeneration in Britain, rather than an external influence that forces its way inside. This is evident through consideration of how the novel portrays *Dracula* as evidence of Jewish degeneration, develops him as a symbol of an integrated Jew rather than a reverse colonizer, and explores the impact of integration on degeneration of the British bloodline. It is through *Dracula*’s ability to blend seamlessly into British society that he can cause degeneration in Lucy, speed Renfield’s degeneration, and begin to impact Mina in the same manner.

The scientific idea of degeneration plays an important role in this text. It refers to the idea of the deterioration of the human species as a result of environmental factors and heredity. The term was first coined by Benedict Morel in his 1857 work, *Traité des Dégénérescences Physiques, Intellectuelles et Morales*. Morel believed that, as Johannes Hendrikus Burgers points



out, “degeneration had both a devolutionary hereditary component, in that degenerates beget degenerates, but also a latent neo-Lamarckian component, in that environmental factors could produce degenerative qualities that would be passed on to the next generation” (Burgers 124). Because this idea offered explanations for human inferiority and criminal behavior, it was used by Cesare de Lombroso used the concept to argue that criminality could be transferred through genetic means. Max Nordau used both men’s research to further his own study into the process. He claimed that both genetic and environmental effects led to degeneration. Although a Jew himself, Nordau wrote of the stereotypical Jew and indicated that they were a degenerate race. Bergers discusses this, saying, “Even though he sought to motivate Jews towards a newer, aggressive Judaism by invoking the image of a frightened, neurotic, ghetto-dweller, he was not only affirming many of the anti-Semitic stereotypes circulating at the time, but also his own preconception of Jews as degenerate bodies” (128). As a result, the work of Morel, Lombroso, and Nordau was used as evidence of Jewish inferiority. By presenting his theory using a description of the stereotypical Jew, he furthered anti-Semitic biases.

Before moving into the statement regarding Dracula as a specimen representative of degeneration, it is beneficial to include a brief discussion of how the Count represents a stereotypical Jew. The initial description of Dracula introduces some stereotypical Jewish traits. Stoker writes, “His face was a strong—a very strong—aquiline, with a high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking with particularly sharp white teeth” (24). Like Svengali, Dracula’s nose is prominent and hooked with large nostrils, his

facial hair thick and unruly. The stereotypical Jewish filth is presented shortly after when Stoker writes, “As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal” (25). Jonathan’s assessment brings to mind the idea of dirtiness Victorians associated with the Jew. This stereotypical filth is evident in other Victorian fictional portrayals of Jews, notably that of Dickens’ Fagin. In her article, “Antisemitism and Social Critique in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*,” Susan Meyer writes, “For instance, Sikes comments that Fagin has been known to swallow coins surreptitiously to keep them away from his associates. Here Dickens commingles the idea of the Jew as obscenely money loving and the idea of the Jew as filthy: presumably Fagin searches through his excrement to retrieve these coins.” (244). Fagin’s natural filth and Dracula’s perceived filth both reflect and reinforce the stereotype associated with Judaism in Victorian times.

Links between Dracula and the Jew continue later in the novel. When Mina is out with Jonathan while he is recovering from his illness, they see the Count. Her account of Jonathan’s reaction reinforces the vampire’s physical description. She writes, “(Jonathan) was very pale, and his eyes seemed bulging out as, half in terror and half in amazement, he gazed at a tall, thin man, with a beaky nose and black moustache and pointed beard, who was also observing the pretty girl” (183). Again, the nose and facial hair become of special importance in the portrayal of Dracula. Through repetition of these traits, Stoker reminds us that the vampire shares similarities with a group of people who are becoming integrated into British society.

It isn’t just Dracula’s physical appearance that links him to Jews, however. During the heroes’ later confrontation with the vampire, Stoker includes a detail that connects the Count to stereotypes of the Jew as miserly. Stoker writes:

Harker evidently meant to try the matter, for he had ready his great Kukri knife, and made a fierce and sudden cut at him. The blow was a powerful one; only the diabolical quickness of the Count's leap back saved him. A second less and the trenchant blade had shorn through his heart. As it was, the point just cut the cloth of his coat, making a wide gap whence a bundle of bank-notes and a stream of gold fell out...The next instant, with a sinuous dive he swept under Harker's arm, ere his blow could fall, and grasping a handful of the money from the floor, dashed across the room, threw himself at the window. Amid the crash and glitter of the falling glass, he tumbled into the flagged area below. Through the sound of the shivering glass I could hear the ting of the gold as some of the sovereigns fell on the flagging (325-326).

Not only does this moment show that Dracula is miserly through his hoarding of gold in his coat, but it also demonstrates that the gold is important enough to him to risk another blow to grab a handful of money before fleeing. This too is reminiscent of Fagin, a man who is obsessed with gold and willing to go to extremes to hold onto it. Dickens presents this view of the Jew as avaricious through Fagin as he pulls out his box of treasures. He writes, "After satisfying himself upon this head, the Jew stepped gently to the door, which he fastened; he then drew forth, as it seemed to Oliver, from some trap in the floor, a small box, which he placed carefully on the table. His eyes glistened as he raised the lid and looked in. Dragging an old chair to the table, he sat down, and took from it a magnificent gold watch, sparkling with diamonds" (67). Through Fagin's collection of items and his secretive nature surrounding them, Dickens presents him as a Jew who possesses the stereotypical trait of avariciousness.

While the presentation of Dracula as a Jew is demonstrated through these stereotypical features, his role as a degenerate is portrayed through Victorian understanding of evolution and

regression. The idea of the Jew as an example of human degeneration is not one that was new to Victorian thought. In fact, it made it into contemporary periodicals with an unknown author writing in "The Saturday Review" on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1857, "In their stiffneckedness and willfulness, (Jews) have banned themselves from humanity; and the dew which has softened Huns and Danes into apostles, has left their hearts as dry and hard as the rocky wilderness of Sinai. Their punishment has been, and is, to grow constantly more Jewish, and less human" (Jewish Emancipation 552). It is not surprising, then, that Dracula's degeneration is portrayed through his interaction with "lower" animals. Most notable is his ability to shift into the forms of wild creatures. However, his choice of animal form remains wild rather than domesticated. Van Helsing discusses this as he explains the vampire's power, saying, "He can transform himself to wolf, as we gather from the ship arrival in Whitby, when he tear open the dog; he can be as bat, as Madam Mina saw him on the window at Whitby, and as friend John saw him fly from this so near house, and as my friend Quincey saw him at the window of Miss Lucy" (255). The wolf and bat transformation allow him the ability to hide his identity. However, they also create a symbol of his degeneration.

There is much to be said about the animals Dracula controls in the novel and what his control says about degeneration. Claire Charlotte McKechnie discusses this in "Man's Best Fiend: Evolution, Rabies, and the Gothic Dog," saying, "Essentially, degeneration theories emerging from Darwin's theory, when connected to the spread of disease, led to a heightened anxiety about the possibilities of regression in terms of humanity's common origin with animals" (115). In other words, any animal that could be associated with the spread of illness produced fear that it could cause the degeneration of the human species. Animal domestication reduced the

threat of disease contagion. However, wild animals retained exposure to and the ability to spread dangerous illnesses such as rabies.

This fear plays an important role in *Dracula*. The Count makes it clear from the beginning that he shares a special connection to undomesticated animals when he is speaking to Jonathan. “Listen to them—the children of the night. What music they make!” (25), he says to his guest. This line in the text demonstrates that Dracula does not see the wolves as a danger. Instead, they are as harmless as children. The reason for his perception of their harmlessness is made clear when he uses them to attack and kill the woman who has come to seek her infant. Dracula clearly has the ability to control these “children” and he uses them to his benefit.

Dracula’s control of animals continues while he is in London. Newspapers report on the disappearance of a wolf, Bersicker, from a local zoo. Dracula uses the same wolf to cause the death of Lucy’s mother and weaken Lucy’s defenses. Stoker writes of the incident, “After a while there was the low howl again out in the shrubbery, and shortly after there was a crash at the window, and a lot of broken glass was hurled on the floor. The window blind blew back with the wind that rushed in, and in the aperture of the broken panes there was the head of a great, gaunt grey wolf” (154). Dracula’s reported visit to the zoo before Bersicker’s escape and the description of the wolf’s condition upon his return to the zoo make it clear that the Count took control of the beast to allow him access to Lucy’s room.

It is notable that Dracula has control over a variety of undomesticated animals but seems to lack the ability to control domesticated creatures. We don’t meet Renfield until after his first encounter with Dracula, a point that is made much later in the book when Renfield refers to how the Count sent him large flies to collect as Seward discusses when the man first grabs his interest. Referring to how Dracula conveys the offers he makes to Renfield, he says, “By making

them happen; just as he used to send in the flies when the sun was shining. Great big fat ones with steel and sapphire on their wings” (297). During Renfield’s gathering of lives to feed to other lives, we are aware of his collection of first flies, followed by spiders, followed by sparrows. These undomesticated creatures seem to come to him with ease. It is only when he finds himself in need of a domesticated animal, a cat, that he needs Seward’s aid. At first glance, this request seems to be the product of Renfield’s confinement. However, Renfield’s access to a window and collection of birds would allow him to lure cats close to catch the sparrows, especially if Dracula were able to help control the felines. His need to procure the animal from a member of British society emphasizes how little control Dracula has over the cultured and domesticated.

The separation of Dracula and his wild things from the domestic is further emphasized when the protagonists enter Carfax and face the rats the Count has set before them. Arthur is prepared with terriers that he brings in to clear the obstacle. Stoker writes of the moment, “With (the rats’) going it seemed as if some evil presence had departed, for the dogs frisked about and barked merrily as they made sudden darts at their prostrate foes, and turned them over and tossed them in the air with vicious shakes” (269). At this moment, the prevalence of the domesticated, and therefore more evolved, over the wild and degenerate is evident. The brief obstacle presented by the degenerate rats is overcome by the evolved terriers. They defeat the evil presence and allow the protagonists to continue with their mission of defeating Dracula.

Despite the Count’s inability to control the domesticated animal, he still manages to use his link to the undomesticated to further his ability to enter Whitby. Dracula’s link to wild animals initially aids him in his integration into British society, simply because his chosen form is mistaken for something domesticated. His arrival is allowed without question since he reaches

London soil disguised as an “immense dog” (89). Van Helsing later identifies this dog as a wolf when discussing the event with the protagonists. This disguise works well enough to shelter him from scrutiny as people focus on the ship rather than the animal that fled it. Ultimately, the “dog” is sought out by those who wish to aid him. Stoker writes, “A good deal of interest was abroad concerning the dog which landed when the ship struck, and more than a few of the members of the SPCA, which is very strong in Whitby, have tried to befriend the animal. To the general disappointment, however, it was not to be found; it seems to have disappeared entirely from the town” (91). For the citizens of Whitby, the animal is one to be found and sheltered because it is deemed to be a domesticated species. From a distance, they misidentify the species and desire to give it a home. This reflects the novel’s expression of fears of integration, demonstrating how the objectionable can be allowed in by those who are unaware of their true nature.

The desire to disguise the wild and foreign is Dracula’s goal, as evidenced early in the novel. As a representative of the Jew, then, Dracula becomes a representative of Victorian fears relating to Jewish integration. As the Jews were allowed into British society through emancipation, so too was Dracula invited into the previously safe lives of the novel’s protagonists. In fact, he must be invited in, in order to enter a building, something that counters Arata’s reverse colonization theory. Unlike a colonizer, the vampire is unable to gain control of a country through obvious force. Instead, he must do so by entering without notice. This ability to slip into society and begin to gain power reinforces Victorian fears of perceived Jewish intent to blend into Britain. In “Prejudice and Paranoia: A Comparative Study of Antisemitism and Sinophobia in turn-of-the-century Britain,” Daniel Renshaw says, “The Jewish emigrant, by virtue of skin colour, could potentially ‘pass’ as a Gentile in wider society...a factor that only increased the potency and angst of turn-of-the-century antisemitism, the apparent ‘whiteness’ of

‘the Jew’ acting as a ‘camouflage’” (50). Dracula’s features do not make him stand out in British society and his language has been polished to allow him to “pass.” This ability leaves Britain vulnerable because the vampire, and by extension the Jew, is able to overcome certain restrictions to ensure that he can fulfill his motives. However, the limits he faces do require the help of others for him to achieve his ultimate goals.

The need to enlist the help of the British is demonstrated first through Jonathan and Peter Hawkins’s work to procure him a house in London. The duo had worked together to find a suitable location at Dracula’s request and acquired Carfax for him without him visiting the country. It is only after the estate is legally passed to the Count that he enters London, indicating how the legality of the invitation allows the evil that is the vampire to infiltrate British society.

Dracula’s second invitation occurs when Renfield allows him into Seward’s asylum. This moment provides a demonstration of the Count not just as a degenerate Jew, but also as a sneaky Jew. Renfield shares his experience with Van Helsing, saying, “I wouldn’t ask him to come in at first, though I knew he wanted to—just as he had wanted all along...before I knew what I was doing, I found myself opening the sash and saying to Him: ‘Come in, Lord and Master!’” (297-298). Renfield’s change of heart regarding allowing entrance to Dracula occurs after the Count uses a variety of persuasive tactics on him, each described almost as mesmerizing. The hypnotic representation of Dracula’s persuasive powers is reminiscent of Du Maurier’s Svengali’s trickery, which is portrayed in Trilby’s obsessive memory of Svengali’s name after his hypnosis of her. As The Laird responds to the knowledge of Trilby’s meeting with Svengali, “He mesmerized you; that’s what it is—mesmerism! I’ve often heard of it but never seen it done before. They get you into their power, and just make you do any blessed thing they please—lie, murder, steal—anything! and kill yourself into the bargain when they’ve done with you!” (125).



The Laird's description of mesmerism combined with Renfield's discussion of what happened to him emphasizes the stereotype as well as the danger of the integration of the Jew.

Dracula's desire to fit in completely into the British society that has invited him in, rather than be noticeable, emphasizes the perceived dangers of Jewish emancipation. That Dracula could fit into British society easily is demonstrated in the novel through Stoker's use of language and dialect. Since the novel is written in epistolary style, *Dracula* incorporates a variety of voices through letters, recordings, and journals. Also, it makes use of different dialects that are incorporated into everything from journal entries to newspaper articles. Language, then, plays an essential role in how the novel works. This is evident early in the novel when Jonathan and Dracula discuss the Count's desire to command the English language. Dracula says:

"I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is. But alas! As yet I only know your tongue through books. To you, my friend, I look that I know it to speak...but yet I fear that I am but a little way on the road I would travel. True, I know the grammar and the words, but yet I know not how to speak them" (27).

As he speaks, Jonathan interjects praise at Dracula's ability to speak fluently. His praise indicates that the Count actually does know how to speak English well. Additionally, Stoker's failure to include textual mistakes in his portrayal of Dracula's speech demonstrates this as well. Whereas Stoker includes clear presentations of dialect through the novel, Dracula's speech is virtually clear of errors.

Beyond Stoker's presentation of Dracula's command of English as nearly perfect, other inhabitants of the castle display the same command of the language. At the point where Jonathan

is about to fall prey to the three female vampires in Dracula's castle, he understands everything that they are saying. For Delabastita, this is an important part of the linguistic aspects of the novel. He writes:

All the ingredients of suspense are present here, and the dialogue between the three lady vampires –with its titillating announcement of what is to follow– plays its part in the process. The suspense is so effective that the reader in his / her impatience is unlikely to notice that Stoker is getting away with a most bizarre representational shortcut. Either the lady vampires are conversing in English (or possibly German?), or Jonathan has miraculously acquired a knowledge of Romanian, Romany, Hungarian, Slovak, Serbian, Wallachian, or whichever local language is used in the Dracula household. Neither option looks plausible in terms of the book's fictional set-up (Delabastita 35).

Delabastita resolves the issue by linking it to the importance of creating suspense. He suggests that, had Stoker used broken English or demonstrated a difficulty in understanding the words of the women or of Dracula, the suspense created by the scene would be diminished. While I agree with the importance of ease of reading during the scene in emphasizing the danger in which Jonathan finds himself, I also find the use of proper English here to be a foreshadowing of Dracula's ease of integration into British society. Not only does the Count possess the ability to clearly communicate with a British man, so do others in his household. If this level of preparation to integrate has occurred in Transylvania, the process only requires relocation to be complete.

In contrast to Dracula's nearly perfect English, as well as the use of proper English in the scene with the three female vampires, several characters in the book speak in broken English.

These characters are either heroes or harmless. Among them are those who play only minor roles.

However, the most prominent character who lacks a strong command of English is Van Helsing. Once again, Stoker has other characters transcribe his accent into their writing, rather than incorporating the courtesy of smoothing out his broken English. Our first exposure to his stilted use of the language comes from Seward, who discusses the letter he receives from his friend. He repeats the letter's wording, saying:

When I have received your letter I am already coming to you. By good fortune I can leave just as once, without wrong to any of those who have trusted me. Were fortune other, then it were bad for those who have trusted, for I come to my friend when he call me to aid those he holds dear. Tell your friend that when that time you suck from my wound so swiftly the poison of the gangrene from that knife that our other friend, too nervous, let slip, you did more for him when he wants my aids and you call for them than all his great fortune could do (123).

Seward ensures that Van Helsing's linguistic struggles are incorporated into his documentation, rather than editing his words. Additionally, Van Helsing's struggle with English is evident from the first moment we hear of him. While he speaks in a manner that is more comprehensible than Mr. Swales, his accent is prominent. As a Dutch man, he stands out as much different than his Victorian counterparts and even from Dracula.

That Van Helsing's language struggles so clearly identify him as an Other presents an academic challenge. The idea of the Other as frightening indicates that Van Helsing and other characters who do not speak the language perfectly should be viewed in a dark light. Dirk Delabastita discusses this, saying:

But in line with Victorian fears about degeneration and social chaos, the dialect speakers' blatant and linguistically conveyed lack of cultural sophistication may just as well signal the potential danger of slippage into vulgarity, greed, heavy drinking, and possibly worse vices. The apparent lack of education in dialect speakers surely reveals their true native qualities as Britons (the man from Doolittle Wharf is a "good fellow all the same", p. 294), but in a modern metropolitan context it also causes some unease. We can always trust true Britons, so the novel tells us, but not without voicing anxieties about whether we can always trust the working classes" (Delabastita 29).

While I agree that the linguistic varieties portrayed in *Dracula* provide unease and distinguish the speakers and their flaws from members of proper society, I disagree with Delabastita's assertions regarding the purpose of dialect presentation in the novel. While he suggests that good or neutral characters' struggles with "proper" English demonstrate Victorian fears, I suggest instead that they provide comfort through easy identification of those who do not readily belong in English middle- and upper-class society. Delabastita touches on this later in his article, writing:

Conformity to moral norms is here at odds with conformity to linguistic norms. The paradox is easy to resolve though. Dracula has honed his linguistic skills as a speaker of English as a strategy of camouflage and infiltration. Linguistic assimilation enables him to get behind the frontline and blend in. This makes him doubly dangerous. (30)

Therefore, the presence of textual representations of accents and grammatically incorrect English works not to make the characters frightening, but rather to mark them clearly as outsiders. Since they can be clearly identified as belonging to specific social groups or foreign countries, there is comfort in their othering. They cannot be mistaken as part of proper British society, so the

country remains safe from miscegenation and its threat to the British bloodline. This is notable with Van Helsing. His documented speech makes him a foreigner who is not a threat because he is easily identified as an Other. Through his speech, it is determined that he belongs to another country and not to England, reducing fears that he will integrate, bringing foreignness to Victorian culture.

While Van Helsing presents a bit of comfort through the identification of his foreignness in an obvious way, Seward's pet patient, Renfield, inserts another level of discomfort into the novel. As a character who is deemed insane, he is an Other who represents one of the most frightening forms of degeneration. We don't meet Renfield until after his first encounter with Dracula, a point that is made much later in the book when Renfield refers to how the Count sent him large flies to collect as Seward discusses when the man first grabs his interest. Referring to how Dracula conveys the offers he makes to Renfield, he says, "By making them happen; just as he used to send in the flies when the sun was shining. Great big fat ones with steel and sapphire on their wings" (297). The fact that Dracula aided Renfield's fly gathering provides an understanding of Renfield's degeneration. While he was obviously mentally ill before being placed in Seward's asylum, the doctor's increased focus on his behaviors indicates an intensified decline in his mental state throughout the novel. The presence of the Count in the inmate's life explains this increased degeneration.

Renfield's role as a product of degeneration is portrayed through Seward's description of him as "a zoophagous (life-eating) maniac" (80), a term Seward has coined in response to the man's desire to feed life to life in order to prolong his own. In her book, *Most Dreadful Visitation: Male Madness in Victorian Fiction*, Valerie Pedlar discusses this, saying, "This term was not part of nineteenth-century nosology, but is borrowed from natural science, and the

transference underlines the degree to which Renfield is seen as an animal, a specimen for the scientist to observe and catalogue, a not unusual attitude in Victorian medicine” (138). The view of Renfield as an animal feeds the idea of insanity as a form of degeneration. It is important to remember, though, that Seward’s description of Renfield does not come until after Dracula’s first visits to Renfield, in which the Count supplies the initial flies. The timing of such terminology adds to the presentation of Dracula as the cause of degeneration.

Renfield provides an example of how those who are at risk can ease the spread of degeneration through British society. Not only does his behavior reflect the degenerative behavior of the Count, but it also leaves him open to manipulation by Dracula. As Renfield recounts the events that occurred before he invited Dracula into the asylum, it becomes clear that Dracula knew how to manipulate his illness. Renfield says:

He held up his hand, and they all stopped; and I thought He seemed to be saying; ‘All these lives will I give you, ay, and many more and greater, through countless ages, if you will fall down and worship me! And then a red cloud, like the colour of blood, seemed to close over my eyes; and before I knew what I was doing, I found myself opening the sash and saying to Him: ‘Come in, Lord and Master!’ The rats were all gone, but He slid into the room through the slash, though it was only open an inch wide. (298)

Dracula is aware of Renfield’s weakness, his desire for lives to feed to other lives, and he uses that knowledge to trick Renfield into inviting him in. The description also indicates a sense of hypnosis which altered the man’s resistance to allow the vampire inside. Even with a weakened mind, Renfield is aware that he should not let Dracula enter. It takes trickery on the Count’s part to gain access. This sense of trickery in order to integrate demonstrates a fear of Jewish trickery and its impact on Jewish emancipation. If Jews are welcomed into British society, their

reputation for sneaky behavior could allow them to easily marry non-Jews, damaging the British bloodline. In this way, the integrated Jew could bring degeneration to England.

The impact of miscegenation brought on by Dracula's seamless integration begins shortly after his arrival. It is first demonstrated through Lucy, who begins her degeneration helplessly, sleepwalking to the pier where she succumbs to Dracula's will. This first interaction is witnessed by Mina who sees Dracula only as a dark figure leaning over Lucy. By the time Mina reaches Lucy, he is gone, only a specter in the night. She has a brief and distant view of a being that could be bringing Lucy harm, but her concern focuses on protecting Lucy's reputation from the judging eyes of anyone who may have seen her nocturnal adventure. Dracula's distance and quickness keep his identity from being revealed. This is the moment where Lucy's degeneration begins. She has been seduced and penetrated by the vampire, a shameful act that she is determined to hide, even in a semi-conscious state, by covering her throat.

Dracula's further visits to Lucy retain the same level of invisibility while creating a stronger impact on her degeneration. In her journal, Mina writes, "Last night I found (Lucy) leaning out (the window) when I woke up, and when I tried to wake her I could not; she was in a faint. When I managed to restore her she was as weak as water, and cried silently between long, painful struggles for breath. When I asked her how she came to be at the window, she shook her head and turned away" (106). Lucy's weakness emphasizes the decline in her strong British blood. Additionally, even as Dracula feeds from Lucy in the night, he is able to do so invisibly, not drawing attention to his true identity while bringing destruction to a beautiful specimen of British society. His integration through a variety of sneaky methods allows him to continue to cause the degeneration of an English woman while escaping blame for Lucy's decline.

Lucy's station in life makes her a woman who brings about desperate attempts to save her. She is desired by those who see her as Victorian beauty, clearly fit for furthering the species. Her three suitors offer her the opportunity to engage in the process of sexual selection and she does so, preferring Arthur to the other men. Dracula's interference, however, ensures that her selection does not matter. Stoker demonstrates her loss of choice later in the novel when Van Helsing says, "Will it be no joy to think of hereafter in the silence of the night when sleep is not: 'It was my hand that sent her to the stars; it was the hand of him that loved her best; the hand that of all she would herself have chosen, had it been to her to choose?'" (229). Van Helsing's reference to Arthur demonstrates the knowledge of her selection. However, before she can marry Arthur, before she receives blood transfusions from him and her other suitors, she has given her blood to Dracula, symbolically becoming his wife and succumbing to the degeneration that occurs as a result of intermarriage with a Jew. After she becomes Dracula's wife through the contribution of her blood, she receives the same fluid from each of her suitors and Van Helsing, nullifying the choice that she made. The symbolic sharing of the liquid connects each man to her in a very intimate way, including another foreigner. Demonstrating this point, Stoker shares a conversation between Van Helsing and Seward, writing:

"Just so. Said he not that the transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride?"

"Yes, and it was a sweet and comforting idea for him."

"Quite so. But there was a difficulty, friend John. If so that, then what about the others? Ho, ho! Then this so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor wife dead to me, but alive by Church's law, though no wits, all gone—even I, who am faithful husband to this now-no-wife, am bigamist" (187).



This moment of revelation emphasizes how Lucy's choice was taken from her as efforts to save her were underway. Symbolically, she became the wife of each of her suitors, as well as another who never proposed, without consent. Similarly, the Count's withdrawal of her blood and absorption of the fluid into his body allowed him to become her husband without her consent. She has become sexually connected to five men through the transfer of blood, nullifying any impression that she represents the pure Victorian ideal. The use of blood as a symbol for marriage at this moment demonstrates just how much Lucy has degenerated. Her decline is evident in her physical deterioration. Stoker emphasizes this as Seward writes, "Lucy was breathing somewhat stertorously, and her face was at its worst, for the open mouth showed the pale gums" (170). Her beauty has become lost in her decline. She has drifted so far from the Victorian ideal of the perfect woman that her death is the only opportunity to save her and avoid degeneration of future generations she may spawn.

That Lucy's death, which should have spared her the tragedy of her degeneration, leads to her rising as a vampire further develops the novel's statement about the integrated Jew's ability to spread degeneration through England. The strength of her Jewish marriage overpowers every attempt to stave off the potential spread of what overcame her. Even Van Helsing's precautions after her death are not enough to control the degeneration caused by Dracula's integration into Jewish society. Lucy can rise from the death that should have saved her due to greed, a trait associated with Jewishness.

Hints about her new state of degeneration occur when children begin talking about the "bloofer lady." Stoker writes of one event:

We have just received intelligence that another child, missed last night, was only discovered late in the morning under a furze bush at the Shooter's Hill side of Hampstead

Heath, which is, perhaps, less frequented than the other parts. It has the same tiny wound in the throat as has been noticed in other cases. It was terribly weak, and looked quite emaciated. It too, when partially restored, had the common story to tell of being lured away by the 'bloofer lady' (189-190).

Lucy's choice of victim in local children speaks both to the Jewish spreading of disease as mentioned previously during accusations of poisoning wells during the middle ages, as well as a statement regarding the interruption of her role in sexual selection. Not only is her choice altered through the transfusions she receives, but it is also changed through Dracula's seduction. Ultimately, the Count gains her, penetrating her and luring her into his degenerate identity without her full awareness of what he is. She then becomes one of the integrated Jews through miscegenation, and that marriage leads to the illness of the children with whom she comes into contact. Rather than producing healthy English children, Lucy is creating weakened children. As she succumbs more to her role as a Jew's wife, she is more harmful to children, her role in hurting the British youth emphasized when she is confronted by the men who seek to release her from her undesirable state. Stoker writes, "With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. The child gave a sharp cry, and lay there moaning. There was a cold-bloodedness in the act which wrung a groan from Arthur; when she advanced to him with outstretched arms and a wanton smile, he fell back and hid his face in his hands" (226). At this point, she has become a representation of the fear of miscegenation, a woman who carelessly hurts the children she should be protecting. Her activities speak to the idea that a Jewish bloodline will weaken the strength of the British bloodline, harming the country's children and ultimately the country.

In order for Lucy to cast off the degeneration caused by her improper marriage, she must succumb to the will of her Christian suitors, specifically the penetration of her body by Arthur's stake. Van Helsing inspires Arthur's ability to defile her, despite the distasteful nature of the task, saying, "But of the most blessed of all, when this now Un-Dead be made to rest as true dead, then the soul of the poor lady whom we love shall again be free" (229). The conclusion of the staking reveals the truth of his words. Through the symbolic rape, represented by the plunging of the stake into her body, Arthur, with his strong, pure, noble blood brings her back into the British bloodline, freeing her from the degeneration of her marriage to Dracula. Jennifer A. Swartz-Levine states of her death, "She becomes the perfect example of sacrifice, thereby achieving both domestic harmony and a renewed status as a domestic angel" (349). It is not just the penetration that saves her, however. Her salvation requires awareness of Dracula's identity, the cause of her degeneration, and understanding of how to rescue her, despite her regression. Without the knowledge and persistence of good British men, she would have continued her degenerative actions indefinitely.

Dracula's ability to slip into British society unnoticed played an essential role in Lucy's vampirism and ultimate death. When it comes to Mina, however, his cover has been blown, and he is at greater risk. This does not stop him from his quest to convert her, however. Like the gold he reclaims from the floor beneath Jonathan's blade, Mina is determined to be worth the risk. Something in her makes her valuable enough for the Count to place himself at risk to reap great rewards.

The rewards that Dracula seeks are evident as we consider how Mina interacts with those around her. She is a maternal woman who takes care of others. This is evident quickly when she discovers that Lucy has left the house and immediately rushes out to find her. Additionally, she

cares for Jonathan as he recovers from his illness. Still, it is more than her maternal nature that makes her a prime specimen for Dracula's corruption. Van Helsing states:

“Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has man's brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted—and woman's heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when He made that so good combination. Friend John, up to now fortune has made that woman of help to us; after tonight she must not have to do with this so terrible affair. It is not good that she run a risk so great. We men are determined—nay, are we not pledged?—to destroy this monster; but it is no part for a woman. Even if she be not harmed, her heart may fail her in so much and so many horrors; and hereafter she may suffer—both in waking, from her nerves, and in sleep, from her dreams. And, besides, she is young woman and not so long married; there may be other things to think of some time, if not now. You tell me she has wrote all, then she must consult with us; but tomorrow she say goodbye to this work and we go alone” (250).

Through Van Helsing, Stoker expresses the idea that Mina is an intelligent person who has helped the men in their work in many ways. However, Van Helsing feels that her primary purpose requires that she be protected from both physical and emotional danger. That purpose, while not spelled out, is hinted at when he discusses her newly married state and the “other things” that may need to be considered in time, if not immediately. Mina's potential motherhood is of great concern to Van Helsing when it comes to interaction with Dracula.

Her potential for procreation is of great concern to Dracula as well. As a maternal British woman, Mina presents a clear representation of the importance of sexual selection. Her marriage to Jonathan has created a comfortable setup for furthering of the pure British bloodline. Interfering with this arrangement and drawing Mina into his clutches allows Dracula to make a

greater impact on the British bloodline than he could with Lucy by disturbing what was meant to be guaranteed.

The fact that the attack on Mina is presented as such, rather than as a lover visiting in the night and fleeing before detection reflects the change in Dracula's need to possess Mina as well as the struggles he faces since his identity is now known. Stoker writes,

With his left hand he held both Mrs Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink (301).

Scholarship has been quick to identify this scene as a demonstration of rape. Kathleen L. Spencer has a different take on this scene, stating, "However, Dracula has drained not only her blood, but also her will to resist. He is, in sexual terms, more seducer than rapist. For a modern reader, this might lessen the crime, but for Victorians seduction would have been infinitely worse. In Victorian theory, it is sexual desire rather than sexual activity that is the true source of danger; and as Mina herself makes clear, she experiences desire under Dracula's attentions" (217). In this case, Mina demonstrates that even the married, maternal woman can be seduced by the integrated outsider, allowing outside bloodlines to interfere with British pureness.

That the protagonists learned of Dracula's identity allowed them to prevent Mina's full degeneration. This is evidenced by their immediate understanding of the cause of her paleness and easy preparation to save her. Stoker writes,

“We know the worst now,” he said. “He is here, and we know his purpose. It may not be too late. Let us be armed—the same as we were the other night, but lose no time; there is not an instant to spare.” There was no need to put our fear, nay our conviction, into words—we shared them in common. We all hurried and took from our rooms the same things that we had when we entered the Count’s house (299).

Here we see how Dracula is suddenly weakened in his quest due to his inability to hide his identity. He is clearly known for what he is, and that allows the protagonists to fight back using tools that are known to harm him. An attempt at known force, such as what would be required for reverse colonization, leads to intense vulnerability for the vampire.

This is further evidenced as the men enter Mina’s room to find him in the process of draining her of blood as her husband sleeps next to her. Stoker writes,

With a wrench, which threw his victim back upon the bed as though hurled from a height, he turned and sprang at us. But by this time, the Professor had gained his feet, and was holding towards him the envelope which contained the Sacred Wafer. The Count suddenly stopped, just as poor Lucy had done outside the tomb and cowered back.

Further and further back he cowered, as we, lifting our crucifixes, advanced (301).

Knowledge of who Dracula is as well as his weaknesses allows Van Helsing and the others to stop his attack on Mina and to drive him back. This ability would not have been present had the men remained unaware of what caused Lucy’s decline and ultimate turn to vampirism. Dracula clearly has more success integrating than he does as a being who attempts to lure women to join him when his identity and purpose is known.

Dracula’s ability to integrate into British society through the use of language adoption and trickery allows him to easily lure Lucy into a symbolic intermarriage that spreads

degeneration not only to her, but also to the children that she comes into contact with. His representation as a Jew demonstrates Victorian fears that Jewish emancipation will increase the ability of the Jew to weaken British bloodlines. It is only when the vampire, and by extension, the Jew, is known for what he is, that the women and Victorian society can be protected from the threat that is levied against them.

## Conclusion

Consideration of the use of evolutionary theory in the justification of racism presents a unique view of fiction written in the nineteenth century. The novels examined in this thesis present three examples of how Victorian understandings of evolution and anti-Semitism work together to guide character development and plot. Although each text differs considerably from the others, contemplation of each in light of the others develops an understanding of how nineteenth-century writers engaged with the role Darwin and Spencer's theories played in furthering anti-Semitic biases. The progression from a benevolent Jewish character in *Daniel Deronda* to the ruthlessly evil Jew presented in *Dracula* reveals how science was manipulated more and more as the century progressed.

While the reasons for engagement with scientific theories vary by author, it is undeniable that the work of Darwin and Spencer played an important role in the creation of many nineteenth-century works. This impact occurred due to the commonality of expression in both the science and literature fields. Beer discusses this, saying:

The common language of scientific prose and literary prose at this period allowed rapid movement of ideas and metaphors to take place. It is clear that in *The Origin* Darwin was writing not only to the confraternity of scientists but with the assumption that his work would be readable by any educated reader. And 'educated reader' here must imply not simply a level of literacy but a level of shared cultural assumption and shared cultural controversy (41).

It makes sense, then, that authors who wrote works addressing anti-Semitism incorporated ideas gleaned from evolutionary theory into their texts. With the presence of scientific thinking



prominent in Victorian society, the combination of issues comprising English thought readily found its way into fiction.

Eliot presents a unique case since she engaged with science throughout her life. Her relationship with Spencer increased her awareness of his theories, while her previous research made her knowledgeable about other emerging scientific discoveries. When writing her final novel, shortly after the republication of *Principles of Psychology*, she would have developed a lifetime of understanding of scientific advances. That *Daniel Deronda* engages so completely with both evolution and philosemitism is evidence of her intellectual pursuits. By using fiction to express her response to Spencer's theories as they applied to Jewish characters, she created a work that, while problematic, demonstrated her opposition to anti-Semitism.

In many ways, evolution supported the stereotypical representation of Jews by linking them directly to their ancestry and genetics. As Renshaw explains, "Colonialism, combined with social Darwinism, had by the last quarter of the nineteenth century led to the construction of a complex racial hierarchy, with the 'Anglo-Saxon' 'races' at the apex. 'Race' and definitions of racial difference and superiority came to form a widely held and popular belief system, with old prejudices seemingly backed up by the promises of modern science" (39). As a result of the maintenance of old prejudices, George du Maurier's formulaic drawings of Jews for *Punch* and the novel found welcome in Victorian society. Additionally, his character presentation addressed a prevalent fear in England that the Jews would integrate into society and unknowingly spread degeneration through the human species.

Presenting a character as an evil Jew in his novel allows du Maurier to engage with social impressions of Jews as tricky while he explores the impact of sexual selection on his other characters. Interestingly, his approach to the character of Trilby challenges ideas of Lamarckian

evolution while he explores the possibility of degeneration and eugenics through the plot.

Vorachek's commentary on Trilby's evolutionary fitness explains the challenge she presents in the novel. She says:

Trilby would seem to be a prime candidate for urban degeneration, as she is subject to both environmental and hereditary risk factors. She has lived all her life in the poorer quarters of Paris; and her parents die of alcoholism and her brother of scarlet fever, both diseases associated with the urban poor. However, Trilby is decidedly fit, described as "young," "healthy," "very tall and fully developed," and with her "nerves and muscles are well in tune" (12, 13; pt. 1)" (200).

That du Maurier created a character who falls short in terms of evolution, but who is eventually able to overcome what are major deficiencies in her genetics and environment, expresses how Darwin's work could be applied to further his anti-Semitic beliefs while avoiding a statement regarding degeneration in Victorian people. Had du Maurier truly been engaging Darwin in his novel, a greater statement discussing the environmental and genetic influence on Victorian society would have been made more evident in the title character. Instead, the novel shifts focus from the Christian-born woman to the substandard Jewish men. Du Maurier's decision to apply evolutionary theory to some characters as opposed to others helps the novel express its blatantly anti-Semitic themes.

In contrast to the evolutionary familiarity of Eliot and du Maurier, Bram Stoker's scientific knowledge was largely medical. Still, he interacted with Darwinian ideas when writing *Dracula*. The exploration of sexual selection and degeneration in the novel portrays a clear engagement with evolution. Darwin's dissolution of the boundaries between human and animal play an essential role in how the novel plays out. According to Kathleen Spencer, "Darwinian

evolutionary theory blurred the boundaries between human and animal in not one but two ways: by the famous argument that humans and apes had a common ancestor, but also by the implied hierarchy at the end of *The Descent of Man* which leads from the ape-like ancestor through primitive peoples to civilized Europeans” (204). It is evident through the roles played by animals and humans in *Dracula* that Stoker understood these implications and incorporated them into the novel. Through this knowledge, Stoker was able to address concerns surrounding degeneration and sexual selection through plot and characterization.

By considering these three novels in relation to each other, we can see how science and culture played an essential role in creating works that addressed anti-Semitism in the late nineteenth century. Each text explores this combination in strikingly different ways while coming together to demonstrate how attitudes toward Jews were challenged or supported by the works of Darwin and Spencer. Ultimately, they expose the role of science in confirming anti-Semitic beliefs throughout the latter half of the Victorian era.

The presence of evolution and anti-Semitism in these novels can enlighten us about current issues. In a period when racism has become more and more prominent, pseudoscience based on evolutionary theories is still used to condemn people of color. This use of scientific advancements in the nineteenth century to oppress minorities is a continual challenge that needs to be addressed due to its social dangers. In his article, “Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race,” Rutledge M. Dennis expresses the trouble with such beliefs, stating:

Although the average White American will not or cannot read studies such as Jensen's or *The Bell Curve*, after the politicians, policy makers, talk-show hosts, and others have provided their soundbites and synopses of these works, the complex problems and issues

they raise will have been unduly simplified and made that much more dangerous. The picture they paint, of Blacks and other people of color as collective biological illiterates—as not only intellectually unfit but evil and criminal as well—will provide the logic and justification for those who would further disenfranchise and exclude racial and ethnic minorities (250).

That this problem continues to exist today demonstrates how readily some will make use of theories to justify racist behavior just as du Maurier and Stoker did. However, an examination of how these issues have carried from the nineteenth century to the present can provide an important opportunity for us to consider how and why such opinions continue today.

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