AGE, DEGENERATION, AND REGENERATION

IN *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* BRITISH FICTION

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how various age metaphors from a vampire to mandatory euthanasia function to invalidate linear progressions of both individuals and society in *fin-de-siècle* British literature. It explains how and why many fictional narratives spoke about forceful aspects of not only personal aging but also collective degeneration at the end of the nineteenth century, a time period in which anxieties about the collapse of the old system of belief in modernity and progress mingled with hopes about the arrival of a new way of thinking about man and society. Likening the condition of late Victorian England to old age, this study places the nation's age consciousness in the *fin-de-siècle* context of degeneration. The study analyzes how *fin-de-siècle* age narratives problematize Victorian Britain's attempts to keep secure its national persona as a young self with strong potential for unstoppable progress. In particular, the study theorizes the ways in which *fin-de-siècle* age narratives deconstruct a normal aging process and discover signs of elderliness within modern England in imaginatively testing the possibility of national regeneration. Ultimately, it argues that *fin-de-siècle* age narratives question the ideological boundary separating youth and progress from old age and decline and thus give their readers a chance to contemplate the shared reality, marked by both anxieties of degeneration and hopes of regeneration.

Through the lens of age, this dissertation examines four different subgenres of late nineteenth-century fiction—Gothic, imperial adventure, New Woman, and speculative fiction— and touches on early twentieth-century children's fiction. Reading how these genres explore what it means to be old and/or young for the British Empire itself and for its subjects, the

dissertation brings into focus the ways in which they present a new sense of temporality, which is a nonlinear mixture of the nation's past, present, and future. Specifically, the dissertation discusses literary texts written by Bram Stoker, H. Rider Haggard, Joseph Conrad, Sarah Grand, Eliza Lynn Linton, H. G. Wells, Anthony Trollope, Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett, and Edith Nesbit. Looking at these authors' depictions of the blurred relationship between youth and age, the dissertation suggests that at the turn of the century the heightened anxiety about decline was a driving force behind the production of the nonlinear multilayered temporality.

DEDICATION

To my two little sisters, Young and Pong

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: AGE CONSCIOUSNESS IN *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* BRITISH LITERATURE

How sad it is!" murmured Dorian Gray with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait.

"How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain

always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June. . . . If it were only

the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow

old! For that—for that—I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole

world I would not give! I would give my soul for that! (33)

In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), readers encounter the portrait of a young

man who would give everything, including his soul, for eternal youth. Dorian's love for youth

and strong aversion to age arises from the nineteenth-century idealization of young men with

huge potential for development. As the caricaturist John Leech says in his 1862 work titled

"Preparations for the War," embarking on global expansion, Victorian Britain constantly needed

"fine active young men" who would never stop bringing "GLORIOUS VICTORY" to the

Empire (36). Dorian represents this youth-oriented ideology, but also noticeable is that his

decadent obsession with never-ending youth mirrors the specific context of the end of the

century, in which Victorians became more sharply aware that it might be impossible to maintain

their youthful progress. This realization of the limit to progress led Victorians to reconsider their

national persona. In this respect, Dorian's deviant fixation upon youth corresponds to the late-

Victorian social reality, in which the inevitability of linear progress was generally questioned,

people became self-conscious about social decline, and a stronger aspiration for making

continued progress arose than in any other time. In other words, in Wilde's text, Victorians' self-

consciousness about the possibility of decline is projected onto Dorian's dangerous infatuation

with everlasting youth.

In what context, then, did Victorians feel anxious about aging, and what was the meaning

of aging in Victorian society, where youthful progress was framed as the norm? Since the

Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, life expectancy steadily increased,[1] and

demographic changes began to be officially documented, as indicated by the first census in 1801.

As a result, over the course of the nineteenth century, old age became a distinct stage of life, and

the aged started to become a distinct social group. However, the population structure was still

clearly youthful. According to George R. Boyer and Timothy P. Schmidle, in 1892 in England,

there were "1.4 million persons aged 65 and over" while there were almost 28 million persons

aged under 65 in the same year (250). Even though the percentage of the old among the

population was still much smaller than that of the young,[2] the elderly's lack of autonomy was

constantly problematized in Victorian England, for it was understood as an impediment to the

nation's steady progress. Hence specific social welfare facilities, such as workhouses,

almshouses, and asylums, became the locus of the elderly question. Within this atmosphere, as

Teresa Mangum suggests, the popularity of writings on "longevity," "the human life span," and

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[1] According to Peter Laslett's *Aging in the Past: Demography, Society, and Age* (1995), the average life span in 1801 was thirty-six years, but it rose to approximately fifty years in 1901 (19).

[2] Old people comprised less than five percent of the population in the 1890s. See Boyer and Schmidle's "Poverty among the Elderly in Late Victorian England" (251).

"society's responsibilities to its longest-lived members" reflected the growing concern about how to take care of old people (102). Overall, despite the fact that the number of old people did not grow much, aging became not only an important social issue but also a popular literary topic in late Victorian England.

In modern society—from the seventeenth century onward—one individual subject's aging experience from birth to death came to depend on the health of society as a whole. This close connection between the individual and the collective health is illustrated in Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1984). Foucault points out that modern bio-power takes the forms of disciplining the individual body and regulating the population. In the modern era, power "establishe[d] its dominion" over "life"—rather than death—of individuals who are part of society (139). In other words, the individual life course from birth to death became an inherently social issue in modern society, which saw "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (141). The underlying assumption here is that collective progress can be brought about when society controls the lives of individuals and individuals fit themselves into social standards voluntarily. This paradigm governed not only early modern but also late Victorian Britain.

Interestingly, this developmental belief characterizes the Bildungsroman, a coming-of-age narrative that emerged in tandem with modern bio-politics in the eighteenth century and became a representative literary genre in the nineteenth century. The genre is organized around how the male protagonist's life journey unfolds in such a way that he settles into society as he ages and matures. It thus focuses on the process of successful aging, by which a young individual's non-normative behavior is eventually made normative. As Franco Moretti points

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out, essential to the process is that the protagonist's youthful conflict with society is resolved when he ages and matures; the young man's "mobility and inner restlessness" develop into a socially agreeable form of maturity in ways that are beneficial to society as a whole (6). What is noticeable here is that the protagonist's aging mostly involves childhood, youth, and midlife only. That is, not necessarily bringing the male protagonist's decline after progress—senescence—to visibility, conventional Bildungsromane presented a linear progress model, in which youth is prioritized over other stages of life inasmuch as it serves as a momentum for social advancement. This developmental pattern presents only the bright side of one's linear progression from youth to maturity in ways that justify the inevitability of progress, not paying much attention to later stages of life.

In contrast, what usually happens in narratives of age written in the late nineteenth century—which are the focus of my discussion—does not play into this developmental pattern, in which randomness in the individual life course is reduced, and society makes steady progress. Thus the belief in a smooth integration of individual aging experience into collective progress does not apply to the fixation upon youth described in Wilde's text. Dorian does not seem to differ much from protagonists of conventional Bindungsromane inasmuch as he too glorifies youthfulness, but his youth is pathological and lets us reconsider the meaning of aging, which Dorian himself is too much conscious of, in the *fin-de-siècle* context. In this respect, Wilde's narrative dismantles the successful aging model, in which individual maturation necessarily leads to social advancement. Although Dorian perceives aging as a morbid symptom, it seems to readers that his narcissistic obsession with youth is more problematic than his aging; it is described as a destructive narcissism, which brings neither individual or social progress after all.

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Literary depictions of getting old and decrepit are present across time and cultures, but I claim that they are found particularly often in British narratives on age consciousness, which were produced during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.[3] Throughout my dissertation, I consider *fin-de-siècle* British representations of age as anti-developmental given that they register an impulse to invalidate one's natural progression from youth to maturity and blur the ideological boundary between progress and decline. It is quite difficult for the reader of *fin-de-siècle* age narratives to simplistically identify youth as progress and age as decline inasmuch as the narratives tend to deconstruct the preexisting developmental pattern by speaking about some forceful aspects of age, which are not overshadowed by those of youth. Specifically, those narratives utilize age-mixed metaphors such as premature aging or deviant rejuvenation, thus putting on display the imaginary dissolution of the boundary between youth and age. That is, such metaphors mirror not only fearful but also powerful qualities of age in such a way as to question the appropriateness of the youth-centered ideology of progress.

The goal of my dissertation is therefore to investigate how and why age in *fin-de-siècle* literature came to reflect Victorians' doubt about their continued progress. I survey not only biological or chronological elderliness exhibited by an elderly person but also metaphorical elderliness expressed through non-human entities such as a vampire or a landscape. By reading

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[3] The disintegration of the developmental ideology has been considered as happening in modernist novels published in the twentieth century. For instance, in *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (2012), Jed Esty says that the trope of frozen youth began to be used substantially in early twentieth-century modernist texts as an anti-developmental symbol, which visualizes the young man's unavoidable failure to grow up or to lead social development in modern society. Yet in what follows, I suggest that anti-developmental narratives had already emerged in the last two decades of the nineteenth century in accordance with the rise of degeneration discourses.

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various signs of elderliness, I argue that *fin-de-siècle* British literature of age rewrites the history of human society and culture from an anti-developmental perspective in its effort to reexamine the role of each age category.

Fin-de-siècle anti-developmental literature's treatment of age demonstrates that there could be something uncontrollable about life that cannot be perfectly regulated within the social system. In other words, people's disbelief in the inevitability of beneficial progress on both individual and collective levels was projected onto this genre. This shift in the realm of literature evinces that late Victorian England witnessed unruly aspects of modernization such as capitalist industrialization and imperial expansion. Hence in *fin-de-siècle* narratives of age, the traditional sense of harmonious advancement from youth to maturity is disrupted, and individual progress does not necessarily integrate into collective progress. Accordingly, they tend to convey a sense of exigency in depicting difficulties of making continued progress.

Above all, *fin-de-siècle* England's bio-political concern about aging arose from the fear about the collapse of high civilization. The spread of this anxiety was deeply related to the emergence of evolutionary discourse on the degeneration of the human species in the mid-nineteenth century. The term degeneration itself originated from evolutionary discourse inasmuch as it was first raised as an important topic in the 1860s in *The Lancet*, a medical journal that situated the European debate about evolutionary and racial degeneration in the English context. The debate began with Charles Darwin, who argues that the human species evolved from apes and continued to undergo the process of natural selection, in which some species could not survive. In *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin asserts that natural selection inevitably results from a ceaseless "Struggle for Existence" because "the world would

not hold" weak species (4, 471). Also in *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin repeatedly says that civilized races are unlikely to degenerate into lower ones in the future. Yet his persistent emphasis on the "stamp" of evolution upon the human reminded his Victorian readers of the possibility of their return to their lowly origins (100). Like Darwin's texts, Herbert Spencer's *The Principles of Biology* (1864) articulated the instability of the civilized condition. Based on Darwin's idea of natural selection, Spencer uses the term "survival of the fittest" (444). As a social Darwinist who draws an analogy between his own social theories and Darwin's evolutionary ones, Spencer defends fierce competition among members of society as a means of collective advancement, assuming that the law of natural selection should apply to modern society. In discussing the weak's decline within the history of natural and social evolution, Spencer highlights how difficult it would be to prevent collective degeneration without the strong's continued success to make upward progress.

Building on those mid-nineteenth century foundations, the 1880s and 1890s continued to speak about degeneration, but in this period, the issue of collective degeneration was frequently articulated in close relation to personal aging. In these decades, scientists drew on the interplay between aging of the individual and degeneration of nations and mankind. For instance, in an 1881 essay on *fin-de-siècle* fears of degeneration, Andrew Wilson states that an in-depth study of each individual's biological decay can explain historical matters such as "[b]uried civilizations" and "decline and fall of nations" (492).

That is, toward the end of the century, Victorians came to associate collective degeneration with personal aging, thinking of both as a byproduct of progress. The zoologist Edwin Ray Lankester's 1880 book on degeneration reflects this turn. Seeing the human body's

aging as part of collective evolutionary degeneration, Lankester demonstrates that every individual, subject to the law of evolution, is "as likely to degenerate as progress" (60). Lankester indicates that one's biological aging is perceived as a small-scale symptom of a larger sense of degeneration and that both aging and degeneration are subject to the natural law of evolution, according to which decline is unavoidable when progress stops.

Such a heightened awareness of the inevitability of decline generated ample discussion of exactly when the transition from progress to decline would occur. For example, the biochemist Arthur Gamgee's 1885 article about decay and death argues that "the process of growth depends upon and is certainly influenced by certain circumstances . . . when a certain limit has been attained . . . growth ceases" (686-87). Gamgee here pinpoints the existence of "a certain limit" within one's life course. In other words, the onset of decline shows that one has already reached the limit to growth. Whether individual or collective, decline happens for the same reason, which is exhaustion of one's limited potential for growth.

The spread of anxiety about this limit in the late nineteenth century was closely related to important scientific findings in the fields of thermodynamics and geology. In the 1820s, the French scientist Nicholas Léonard Sadi Carnot asserted that there is a limit to the efficiency of conversion of heat to mechanical work. Carnot's idea was further developed by the German scientist Rudolf Clausius, who introduced the notion of entropy in the 1860s. In mid-century Britain, the physicist William Thomson utilized energy as the key element in understanding the world and formulated the principle of dissipation of energy to show that the total entropy of a

system never decreases over time.[4] As long as thermal energy converts into different forms, the total amount of usable energy will certainly decrease, and only entropy—the degree of disorder—will increase. This observation made Victorians concerned about the early depletion of their limited life force and caused them to see their life course as chaotic. Hence, as Jane Goodall points out, fears of decline prevalent in the late Victorian era can be summarized as an "energy crisis" inasmuch as discourses of age and degeneration began to be amplified through those of entropy (180).

Moreover, there was a change in conceptions of temporality that influenced how Victorians understood the issue of age and degeneration. Though life expectancy steadily rose, evolutionary findings such as Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830–33) and Darwin's works enabled Victorians to perceive their own lives as an insignificant part of a "vast temporal span" (Murphy 12). As Patricia Murphy puts it, "[w]hether advocating or vilifying Darwin's contentions . . . Victorians were perpetually reminded of the workings of time" since mid-century (12). Especially at the close of the century, Victorians' obsession with "an immeasurable past, uncertain future, and incessant change" worsened in ways that emphasized the "uncontrollable" force of time (Murphy 12). This new geological sense of temporality contributed to the spread of anxiety about the early onset of decline.

At the close of the century, age and degeneration were not just scientific issues; they were widely handled in numerous discussions of modern society and culture. This tendency is illustrated well through *Degeneration* (1892), which was written by the Hungarian physician

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[4] See Thomson's essay on the heat death of the universe titled "On the Dynamical Theory of Heat" (1851).

Max Nordau. In asserting that modern Europe is degenerate for many reasons, Nordau offers

various examples that he collects from contemporary European art and literature, including

Wilde's text. Nordau finds the first symptom of collective degeneration in the modern

individual's early onset of senility by saying that "the hair begins to turn gray much sooner than

in former days" (42). Nordau states that it is inevitable for the modern subject to age prematurely

because of the feeling of "fatigue and exhaustion," which he describes as "the effect of

contemporary civilization, of the vertigo and whirl of our frenzied life" (42). Hence central to

Nordau's point about *fin-de-siècle* European mentality are the assumptions that the European

limit to growth has already been reached and that high modernity, an outcome of erstwhile

progress, now accelerates both individual and social decline. Nordau's perception of high

modernity as the reason behind *fin-de-siècle* age and degeneration is the starting point for my

discussion in the chapters to follow.

Nordau's pessimistic outlook was a huge success in late Victorian England,[5] but its

popularity yielded not only dread but also hope. In other words, the fear of degeneration began to

yield a new desire for regeneration in English society. One example is an 1895 text titled

Regeneration: A Reply to Max Nordau. Written by the English social thinker Alfred Egmont

Hake, the text is framed as a response to Nordau's bleak picture of *fin-de-siècle* society and

culture. Hake modifies Nordau's approach by saying that "the alarming symptoms of

degeneration . . . are the first symptoms of regeneration" (306). This suggestion is rooted in his

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[5] After its English version was first introduced in 1895, seven consecutive editions were
produced in six months (Greenslade 120). See William Greenslade's *Degeneration, Culture, and
the Novel, 1880–1940*.

firm belief in England, which he thinks "can render invaluable service to humanity in the present crisis" (305). Moreover, he observes English art and literature in particular and highlights their superiority over other European nations'. Viewing English art and literature as inherently healthy and constructive, he thinks that they "may not attain hectic florescence" even when degeneration affects almost every aspect of society (295). Hake therefore argues that Victorians can be immune to the degeneration that comes from other European nations and pave the way for regeneration. Hake's *Regeneration* reveals that *fin-de-siècle* Victorian understanding of degeneration entailed a sense of ambivalence, for the cult of degeneration not only exacerbated anxiety about high civilization but also gave Victorians a chance to start imagining their own regeneration. This interesting intersection of degeneration and regeneration at the close of the century was further clarified in Holbrook Jackson's book *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (1913). According to Jackson, the end of the nineteenth century was "not entirely decadent and hopeless" because "much of the genius denounced by Max Nordau as degeneration was a sane and healthy expression of a vitality, which, as it is not difficult to show, would have been better named regeneration" (19).

In particular, through Hake's theorization of regeneration, we can see how he highlights England's excellence in regenerating not only themselves but also other nations that are more susceptible to degeneration. This emphasis on England's potential for regeneration characterizes *fin-de-siècle* Victorian discussions of degeneration, which constantly examines the British Empire's ability to achieve continued progress. In fact, during the last two decades of the century, Britain's world supremacy was challenged by other empires, and it lost some of its previous monopoly of political and economic influence. Within this atmosphere, degeneration

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was no longer an evolutionary topic; it was widely translated into the language of imperialism. In a newspaper article titled "The Dethronement of England" (1885), the author says that England's "old position is lost" since its "old exclusive dominion is now shared by rivals" (4, 5). In positioning Britain as an old empire in decline, now facing the rise of other young empires such as Germany and the United States, the author asserts that something needs to be done to give new energy to Britain. Similarly, many late Victorian writers constantly measured the possibility of their nation's further progress in their texts.

In the literary narratives that I will discuss in more detail in subsequent chapters, a number of developmental norms—such as modernity, Englishness, men, and youth—are revisited as a way of diagnosing the condition of late Victorian Britain. These norms have shaped the national image of itself as a young Englishman who never stops making progress toward modernization, but they are generally questioned in the *fin-de-siècle* anti-developmental narratives' use of various symbols of age: a foreign vampire, a colonial space, the New Woman, and old citizens. These symbols conventionally stand for the Other, which has been marginalized in the ideology of progress, but they play a major role in the narratives of age, making it difficult for the reader to reduce the history of man and society into an organic whole built upon the linear temporality.

My reading of *fin-de-siècle* representations of age and degeneration draws on several age theories that redefine the meaning of aging. Critics mostly agree to the idea that aging has long figured in literature in ways that dramatize decline. For one, Margaret Morganroth Gullette, who provides a critique of progress and decline narratives, points out that human beings are aged by culture and that this cultural aging takes the literary form of the decline narrative, in which old

age equals a collapse of developmental energy (*Aged* 9-10). However, in her effort to find any

positive aging, Gullette discusses midlife progress narratives, in which becoming old is not

simply characterized as being decrepit and powerless (*Safe* 41). In pointing to the possibility that

one can still make some progress in later life, Gullette says that we should not put youth ahead of

other age categories, which own less potential for development.

Although Gullette's idea takes old age out of the decline narrative, it still places a

premium on how much progress one can achieve within the life course. That is, though it no

longer places youth at the center, it continues to affirm the desirability of progress in discovering

progress in later stages of life. In effect, in many fictional narratives of age, any age category can

fundamentally be a mixed representation of progress and decline. Age is not a fixed

chronological concept. It is a relational category—a social construct that is produced under the

influence of a dominant ideology of the time. Hence age criticism nowadays suggests that

distinctions between each age category are not clear and that the binary contrast between

progress and decline has not always been valid. This sense of indeterminacy inherent in the

categorization of the life course characterized the Victorian era. Chase discusses "mixed traits"

that are on display through depictions of old characters in Charles Dickens's fiction and asserts

that Dickens does not necessarily link youth to vitality and old age to exhaustion (12-14). This

point is further illuminated by Claudia Nelson's study on age inversion, which examines "the

general instability of age categories" frequently found in Victorian fiction by focusing on the

rhetorical connection between children and adults (4).

Compared to other age categories, old age often shows mixed characteristics. Robert N.

Butler's notion of the life review gives insight into this quality of old age. The life review refers

to the act of remembering the past, which is commonly found in senile subjects who are sharply aware of their linear progression to death. Significantly, Butler perceives the aged subject's return to the past as not only retrogressive but also "progressive" because it involves revisions of the experiences and conflicts that are "surveyed and reintegrated" (66). The life review enables its subject to go beyond restoring past experiences, for it rest on the process of reordering those. In this light, the aged's life review is premised on a new sense of temporality, which is a nonlinear mixture of one's past, present, and future. Expanding upon psychoanalytic analyses of the formation of subjectivity by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan,[6] Kathleen Woodward also elucidates nonlinear aspects of the temporality constructed in old age. It is indeed not uncommon among old subjects to speculate on their remaining days by revisiting the past. That is, the aged have a tendency to "discover where [they] will be as well as to discover where [they] were" in moving "backward and forward between the future and the past" (Woodward 12).

This line of thought generally views temporality in ways other than the linear manner and adds a new dimension to the history of man and society by shedding new light on what happens after the peak of progress, youth. I use a similar approach, but in investigating the new temporality opened up by *fin-de-siècle* age metaphors, I take a step further to liken the condition of late Victorian England particularly to old age and place the age question in the *fin-de-siècle*

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[6] Freud's theories of human development during infancy and childhood offer the starting point for current aging studies, but as Woodward argues, Freud's emphasis on these earlier stages of life leads us to overlook the importance of later stages of life, which seem to be less eligible for progress. Suggesting that "the subject is there to rediscover *where it was*" (45), Lacan also highlights the importance of life events that happened in early life stages, but this act of rediscovering the past can be understood as allowing the subject to produce a nonlinear sense of temporality, for it enables the subject to connect the past, present, and future.

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context of degeneration. Considering that *fin-de-siècle* England had already reached the phase of high civilization but had started to be aware of disorderly aspects of the past evolution of mankind, it can be said that Victorians self-consciously reflected on their modern present and the direction of their future through their reconstruction of the past. Accordingly, as Richard D. Altick says, this period was "the first in English history to be christened while it was still in progress" (8). It is important to note here that *fin-de-siècle* England's collective interest in the past bears a resemblance to qualities of old age. Above all, throughout late Victorian narratives associated with the issue of degeneration, it is made visible that Victorians' experience of modernity in the present was interwoven not only with their memory of progress in the past but also with their imagining of regeneration in the future. In other words, at the end of the century, Victorians became more sharply aware that there had been no linear trajectory of forward progress up and began to measure future possibilities for their nation. Because of this multilayered temporality, I find it pertinent to draw an analogy between *fin-de-siècle* England and the aged subject here and in the dissertation as a whole.

Most of all, it is necessary to form a clearer link between age and degeneration in the late nineteenth century. I aim to broaden the spectrum of age studies through my analysis of the ways in which discourses of degeneration are projected onto various forms of age narratives in the late nineteenth century. As age criticism became prevalent in the twenty-first century, scholars have paid attention to representations of non-youthful stages of life before the twentieth century. For

example, Kay Heath[7] and Karen Chase[8] respectively consider midlife and senescence in the specific context of Victorian culture and literature. In so doing, both of them touch on the issue of degeneration, but given that they deal with the Victorian era as a whole, their research is not focused on the detailed process whereby the analogy between age and degeneration was made particularly in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Hence more specific explanations can be offered as to the correspondence between diversified literary depictions of age and the variegated sociocultural discourses of degeneration and regeneration in this period. With age being understood as a more flexible notion, it is imperative to see how and why multitudinous age metaphors were utilized as a more comprehensive marker for regeneration as well as degeneration within the context of the end of the century, a time period in which anxieties about the collapse of the old system of belief in linear progress mingled with hopes about the arrival of a new way of thinking about man and society.

The dissertation looks into four different late Victorian genres—Gothic, imperial adventure, New Woman, and speculative fiction—to read various ways in which each literary genre conceptualizes aging in response to degeneration. Having become prominent during the last two decades of the century, all these genres are different from conventional realist coming-of-age narratives in terms of their hyperbolic depiction of one's departure from normal aging

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[7] In identifying the implication of cultural aging in Victorian literature, Heath reconstructs midlife as a unique phase of "liminality" (13) and analyzes how midlife functions in Victorian literary plots of romance and marriage.

[8] In her examination of major Victorian literary authors, Chase brings into focus not only the social context in which the elderly became a distinct group in the Victorian era, from the Pensions Act to the life and death of Queen Victoria, but also "the tendency of individuals to look more intimately at their ongoing experience of aging, to mark it and to weigh it, and to make it a theme of self-understanding" (176).

process. Reading the use of age in these *fin-de-siècle* genres comparatively, I investigate how various age metaphors function in the plot to criticize emblems of the British Empire's eternal progress—modern civilization, the British Empire, male-centered society, and efficiency. In identifying symptoms of age and degeneration in England's modern present, male imperial conquest, female life course, and utopian futurity, these genres explore what it means to be old or older for the British Empire itself or for its subjects, faced with the fear of degeneration. After my analysis of *fin-de-siècle* fiction, I end the dissertation with prewar England in the early twentieth century, in which childhood was identified as a venue that symbolized hopes of national regeneration.

Chapter II is focused on Bram Stoker's Gothic fiction *Dracula* (1897). The chapter looks at how late Victorian Gothic vampire literature deals with degeneration and explains the implication of Count Dracula's attempts to extort life force from younger English subjects, who are located at the center of the British Empire, in terms of *fin-de-siècle* discourses of degeneration and regeneration. The immortal vampire is in effect a 460-year-old man who rejuvenates himself at the cost of young Britons' degeneration in his effort to remember and restore the long history of Eastern European imperialism. Dracula's reversal of aging interestingly corresponds to the process by which the British Empire has continuously banished the force of decline in achieving modernity and implementing the ideology of progress. Dracula's regeneration of himself through others' degeneration erases numerous differences, which have been used by England for establishing a fixed identity of a modern English subject. Above all, through the vampire's constant modernization of his old power, this Gothic text

reproduces the ways in which the British Empire has viewed itself as young and developmental and questions the newness of Victorian modernity *per se*.

Chapter III calls attention to the periphery of the British Empire and takes a postcolonial approach to imperial adventure tales. The chapter theorizes how the British Empire's own age consciousness was projected onto its agent's—a male traveler's—perception of colonial spaces and reinterprets the African space specifically as an old yet powerful character, capable of obstructing the male traveler's progress and accelerating his mental and physical decline. Imperial adventure fiction registers a tendency to depict Englishmen's attempts at their own imperial regeneration, which takes the form of conquering Africa. In characterizing Africa as a jungle that is immature, primitive, and therefore ahistoric, the travelers wish to separate the modern present in England from the prehistoric past in Africa. However, it should also be noted that the landscape of Africa in imperial adventure texts is in effect humanized in such a way as to expose childish aspects of the traveling subject's fantasy of imperial conquest. This quality is illuminated in H. Rider Haggard's description of how an immortal African queen and her land evoke a fear in British men in *She: A History of Adventure* (1886). It is more clearly expressed in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which portrays the ways in which the old African landscape acts as an antagonist who puts on display the traveler's vulnerability to degeneration.

The male imperial agent's degeneration forms the background to the New Woman's unique experience of degeneration and regeneration in her domestic life, which is the topic of Chapter IV. This chapter scrutinizes the connection between degeneration and New Woman discourses in the late Victorian era and reads how New Woman narratives of age written by Sarah Grand and Eliza Lynn Linton reinvent the traditional male-oriented coming-of-age plot in

their descriptions of the life course of Victorian women who come into conflict with the male-centered world. Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) is a narrative of female decline, in which young wives age or die prematurely due to their military husbands' moral degeneration. In contrast to *The Heavenly Twins*, Linton's *The Second Youth of Theodora Desanges* (1900) does not seem to bring into focus the New Woman ideal itself, but upon close examination, we can see how Linton projects an Old Woman's rejuvenation onto a New Woman social activist during her senescence as an imaginative solution to the New Woman's premature decline. That is, Linton's novel envisions a female-centered regeneration, which is built around the cross-generational interaction between the New and the Old Woman. Putting together Grand's and Linton's works, this chapter explains how the authors dramatize Victorian women's lifelong struggle to reconcile youth and maturity in the male-centered world of degeneration, in which women neither age naturally nor integrate themselves into society smoothly, unlike men in conventional coming-of-age narratives.

The principal texts discussed in Chapter V are Anthony Trollope's dystopian fiction *The Fixed Period* (1882) and Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett's utopian fiction *New Amazonia: A Foretaste of the Future* (1889). Continuing from the previous chapters, this chapter problematizes the developmental temporality in which the individual's youth is incorporated into a larger context of national advancement. In so doing, the chapter looks at literary representations of the future. It touches on H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and draws a theoretical connection between degeneration and euthanasia debates in late Victorian England, but its focus lies on Trollope's and Corbett's futuristic narratives on state-enforced euthanasia. Despite some differences found in their portrayals of the future, both of them illuminate the

seamy side of utopianism. Whether utopian or dystopian, alternative societies depicted in these authors' texts euthanize elderly people to stay eternally youthful and efficient. Although the authors locate this mandatory euthanasia system in the future, their portrayal of the system as a pivotal means of national regeneration reflects the late Victorian reality, in which people felt a need to increase the size of the young and efficient generation and decrease that of the old and inefficient generation in order to prevent degeneration. However, *fin-de-siècle* speculative texts on euthanasia debunk the myth of national efficiency because the question of efficient population control is not resolved in their future societies, which seem to be perfectly efficient yet turn out to be not as utopian as they seem to be. Hence these texts indicate that the nineteenth-century myth of youth, efficiency, and progress is imaginary and that the reader might want to start finding an alternative.

My conclusion is concerned with early twentieth-century literary representations of national regeneration through a very early stage of life, childhood. For the purpose of scrutinizing how children's literature exchanges degeneration for regeneration in Edwardian England, I discuss the cult of nostalgia and childhood in Edwardian texts and take a closer look at how Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), the first children's text to use time travel, highlights the ways in which children create a nonlinear temporality that connects the past, present, and future. Unlike the late Victorian narratives analyzed in the previous chapters, Nesbit's novel does not talk much about later stages of life. However, the conclusion chapter considers the novel as building on late Victorian narratives of age because Nesbit lets her child time travelers reinvent the history of the British Empire and look in on the future in such a way as to question the ideal of linear development. Thus my dissertation ends with how, as

autonomous subjects of their time travel, the children in Nesbit's text establish their own perspective on the history of the Empire, which clearly differs from the older generation's, for the future that they experience in the course of their journey is not necessarily governed by the ideology of linear progress.

The turn of the century itself was a huge burden to Victorians. No one had any specific idea about what their next phase of life or the new century would be like, although they never stopped reflecting on the past and speculating on the future to better understand their present reality. The *fin de siècle* was thus perceived as the *fin du globe* because the whole social order of the nineteenth century seemed to dissolve. As we shall see, however, the feeling of uncertainty was also a driving force behind the production of a new sense of temporality in *fin-de-siècle* narratives of age and degeneration, which counteract linear progressions of both the individual and society, questioning the boundary separating youth from age—progress from decline. Hence I ultimately argue that *fin-de-siècle* narratives of age offer a critique of the ideology of linear progress and give their readers a chance to contemplate their shared reality, marked by both anxieties of degeneration and hopes of regeneration, in describing forceful aspects of aging in their use of various age metaphors.

CHAPTER II

SINFUL REGENERATION THROUGH DEGENERATION IN *DRACULA*

In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the immortal vampire Count Dracula introduces himself as an embodiment of the medieval past and proudly states that he represents his home country, Transylvania. Yet as he moves to England, his presence there makes visible numerous dichotomies in the late Victorian era. When Dracula aggressively reshapes his own identity and builds his version of a new yet old history through his attack on the young generation of England, it is clearly communicated to the reader that the vampire's deviant power originates from the complicated process of demystifying the relationship between directly opposed ideas: old Europe and young England. Considering that Dracula's identity is constantly reinvented in his bodily contact with others who are young and English, one might contend that his vampirism enables him to transgress twofold boundaries of age and nation—separating youth from age and England from non-England.

The text is inextricably related to the *fin-de-siècle* discourse around national degeneration. Daniel Pick's fine reading of vampirism through the lens of degeneration looks at how *Dracula* addresses issues of corruption and degeneration with "a sense of failure" ("Terrors of the Night" 71). This feeling of failure was present on a national scale. Of course, it cannot be said that the Empire was actually at the brink of substantial political collapse in the late nineteenth century, as it both expected and experienced further territorial and economic growth. Nevertheless, the fear of degeneration was felt nationwide, fed by an economic recession from the 1880s forward as other countries such as the United States and Germany threatened its

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worldwide dominance. In this context, anxiety about the nation's degeneration arose on both political and cultural levels, and *fin-de-siècle* British texts functioned to transform the fears of national degeneration into a cultural imagining about the sense of loss.

In this light, critics have suggested that Dracula's vampirism stands for the decline of civilization. *Dracula* exemplifies what Patrick Brantlinger defines as "the imperial Gothic" inasmuch as it envisages how the anxieties of cultural and political degeneration could be dispelled in the face of the vampire's invasion (227). In Ross G. Forman's terms, *Dracula* presents "the double helix of *fin de siècle* representations of Empire" (91).[9] That is, it engages in the ambivalent feeling that Victorians had toward the British Empire. They still believed in "the promise of continued expansion," but the hope was always intertwined with "the fear of collapse" (Forman 91). Hence, Stoker's imperial Gothic text conjures up the prevailing anxiety of the Empire's loss of dominance over the world through its portrayal of how it can overcome the terror of degeneration, which they connect to reverse colonization starting from other old nations that they label as less civilized. Similarly, in "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" (1990), Stephen Arata notes that Stoker's vampire is an agent of reverse colonization who breaks down "the inevitability of British progress and hegemony," reflecting the widespread feeling of anxiety at the time (622).[10] Nina Auerbach adds that

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[9] H. Rider Haggard's *She: A History of Adventure* (1886) and Matthew Phipps Shiel's *The Yellow Danger* (1898) also fall into the category. In particular, Shiel's lesser known text responds to Europe's *fin-de-siècle* fear that the East Asian race will conquer the European race. Called *the Yellow Peril*, the anxiety was widely handled in late Victorian writings. Shiel's imperial adventure fiction presents the antagonist as an evil Chinese man.

[10] Arata suggests that Stoker singled out Transylvania, not previously a setting for Gothic vampire stories, intentionally to shape Dracula's identity. The reason for Stoker's choice of setting is related to Transylvania's reputation as a venue evoking the long historicity of Eastern

Dracula's version of colonization not only destroys the preexisting order of the British Empire

but also establishes a new order of the world. Arguably, Dracula's "antiquity makes him new"

and produces a powerful opponent for modern England and its "up-to-date young people who

hunt him" (Auerbach 63).

Overall, these critical approaches converge on the point that Dracula's transgressive

power of degeneration is perceived as a great danger to the British Empire's perpetuation of its

modernization. I agree to this idea, but I claim that what is downplayed in this line of thought is

Dracula's unique experience of youth and age. Dracula can modernize his old supernatural

power through his masquerade as a young man who has an old and mature mentality. Even

though the text projects the historicity of other empires onto the degenerate vampire figure and

allows the Britons to destroy him at the end, it emphatically depicts how the dynamism of the

youthful-looking vampire's inner oldness is carried out in *fin-de-siècle* England in ways that

spread degeneracy.

Hence in this chapter, I focus on Dracula's twofold manifestation of youth and age to

better read the ways in which the vampire's invasion of England through his sinful regeneration

sheds light on the darker side of the British Empire's mythmaking of its ongoing development.

As the Irish novelist George Moore says in his 1888 memoir *Confessions of a Young Man*, "the

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European empires. Joseph Bierman's "The Genesis and Dating of Dracula from Bram Stoker's
Working Notes" (1977) notes that Stoker initially considered using Styria, Austria, as a
geographical setting familiar from earlier Gothic tales. Yet Stoker chose Transylvania eventually
to handle the Eastern Question. In the closing decades of the century, Transylvania would have
reminded English readers of ongoing political competitions. For this reason, it is likely that
Stoker took advantage of the region's specificity—the political instability inherent in the long
history of rise and fall of many European empires.

ideal of the nineteenth century is a young man" (176). In other words, in characterizing its constant pursuit of newness and modernization as youthful, Victorian England identified itself with a young man who has a huge potential for progress, not yet experiencing decrepitude.

However, as Edwin Ray Lankester's 1880 study on degeneration notes, the nation's long-standing attempts to establish its national persona as a young self was no longer in full force at the close of the century. That is, the nation was no longer seen as a young man who had not yet reached a point where progress is replaced by decline, and is thus capable of developing further. Lankester says that it would be highly unlikely for Britons to achieve more progress since they had already "arrived at a higher and more elaborated condition than that which [their] ancestors reached" (59). Nevertheless, the deeper the anxiety about collapse was, the stronger the aspiration for continual development and *vice versa*. When the inevitability of straightforward progress did not seem solid, the British Empire had to deny the force of age in order to justify its still youthful potential for progress. Stoker's text was a literary reflection of this trend inasmuch as it imaginatively tests the very possibility of the nation's unstoppable progress through its portrayal of the old vampire's invasion of youthful British subjects and the latter's final victory over the former. Most of all, the text relates degeneration to reverse colonization to see whether the British Empire can maintain its youth and power and defeat the vampire's archaic resistance to the spread of what Britons view as modern and civilized. At the core of the expansion of degeneracy in the late Victorian society lies the vampire's rejuvenation, which happens at the cost of Britons' vitality. I therefore assert that Dracula's reversal of aging corresponds to the process by which the British Empire continuously banishes the force of decline in achieving modernity and implementing the ideology of progress. Dracula breaks down the old foreign

otherness that Britons impose upon him and uses his centuries-old power in rendering back the grotesqueness of degeneration to Britons.

In the following pages, I examine the cultural background in which the questions of age and degeneration were conceptualized and discuss the ways in which the revival of the Gothic—especially narratives of vampire—echoes this cultural climate at the close of the century. I then look into how Stoker's text responds to the age and degeneration questions in depicting Dracula's reversal of the natural progression from youth to age and reinvention of modern selfhood. Throughout my textual analysis, I ultimately suggest that it is Dracula's old age that endows him with the strength to rejuvenate his physical appearance and modernize his existence. It is his long-lasting life that provides him with enough knowledge and experience to access the heart of the British Empire and change the preexisting order of its modern society. Exchanging young Britons' degeneration for his regeneration, Dracula's vampiric life cycle sheds new light on degeneration, which is deeply embedded in the modern civilization of *fin-de-siècle* England.

Cultural Perception of Age and Degeneration

Taking into account that Dracula is presumably 460 years old, it is possible to link him to the presence of elderly people in Victorian England, who, though living in the present, sometimes functioned as strong reminders of past suffering. The population of Victorian England was overwhelmingly young. Medical advances were still too slow to ensure longevity, and many public health issues were not yet resolved. The chances of surviving to old age were therefore not significantly higher than they had been in earlier times. According to Edward Anthony Wrigley and Roger S. Schofield's study on the history of the English population from the

sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the percentage of people aged over 60 in England was roughly seven in the Victorian era, which was even lower than estimates of nine percent in the early eighteenth century (529).

Though the aforementioned statistics indicate that Victorian England in actuality was not full of elderly citizens, it is difficult to avoid noticing that old age loomed increasingly large in the popular Victorian imagination. As Karen Chase suggests, as the century progressed Victorians started to imagine their nation as old, aligning it with the aging Queen Victoria (157), and the elderly were first perceived as a distinct social group in the late nineteenth century. Teresa Mangum notes that there was obviously a growing "need for a specific age at which individuals were eligible for state support," as many old survivors became unable to financially support themselves with their labor alone (98).[11] In other words, old age was not yet a fixed concept in the nineteenth century, but toward the end of the century, Victorian England faced the necessity of a precise understanding of age for the purpose of better categorizing people who were old and weak, with decreased mental and physical strength, as a group that was in need of financial aid. This deepened interest in age was projected onto the formation of *fin-de-siècle* literary discourse of decline as well, which interpreted from multiple angles the meaning of old age in a society that was still under the influence of the ideology of progress.

What is notable about the *fin-de-siècle* cultural perception of old age is that it was not always reduced to powerlessness. Ironically, the fact that there was only a small number of

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[11] Before the Pension Plan, age was determined by clear visual signs of mental or physical decrepitude that one might identify as proof of weakened autonomy. See Mangum's "Growing Old: Age" (1999).

people aged over sixty insinuated that they were the strong ones who successfully had fought their way through life. As I shall argue, the vampire in *fin-de-siècle* literature is a timely response to this image of an old survivor. Since ancient times, the vampire figure has been widely used as a symbol of antiquity, but especially in the nineteenth century, it became a favored literary subject matter. In Victorian vampire literature, the symbolism of the vampire denotes the opposite of the intrinsic values attached to the national selfhood, such as youth and modernity. Most of all, the vampire's oldness itself is suggested as a powerful means of frustrating modern England's longing for straightforward development, for the immortal vampire's forceful transgression of the normative life course disrupts social standards that Victorians use to measure their youthful potential for modernization. Hence through the literary vampire figure, I interpret its agedness as a source not merely of irreparable decrepitude but also of renewable vitality, which makes the reader reexamine how agency in old age is exerted. Regardless of how the vampire's immortality destroys other characters, vampirism *per se* brings into focus the strength—not the weakness—of the aged.

Before delving into the literary vampire's power of aging, I look at the issue from the perspective of age criticism in our own era, which consciously tries not to identify it as inevitable decline. Studies such as Margaret Morganroth Gullette's on cultural aging have made us take aging out of the decline narrative (14–15). Nowadays it is common that gerontology situates old age in a wider context of culture and history to rethink the relationship between age and agency. For example, Ann Bowling enriches preexisting studies on later life by saying that later life can be characterized by "health, autonomy, independence, [and] empowerment" (704). Such positive sides to aging are indeed the primary concern of current age studies. Overall, the focus of age

studies has shifted from weakness to strength, increasingly viewing the elderly as capable of

nourishing agency in their own ways. Yet this question of agency in old age is not limited to the

twentieth and twenty-first centuries, for it was already brought into visibility in the Victorian era

as the question about the elderly's eligibility for progress was raised widely.

As we shall see in Chapter V, Victorian England increasingly regarded aging as a

political and economic issue, and it is in this cultural climate that writings about the impossibility

of eternal growth emerged. William Thoms's assertion that human longevity is just a myth that

needs to be debunked supports this shift. In *Human Longevity: Its Facts and Its Fictions* (1873),

Thoms positions the human life cycle as a course of unavoidable decline, seeing what happens

after the age of twenty as an unavoidable first step toward death. He further suggests that living

past 100 years is a highly difficult task for human beings and that longevity is a fantasy that has

to be demystified, assuming that "the duration of life depend[s] on the duration of growth" (16).

He also asserts that the span of decline is much longer than that of growth. Indeed, much of the

life course of human beings can be a narrative of age and decline.

As human life was related to a narrative of decline, senility started to be perceived as

pathological. Even a century earlier, the term senility had simply indicated "a state of being old

or infirm due to old age" (Katz, *Old Age* 41), but during the Victorian period it gradually came to

signify an illness—a biological phase of decline in life before death. In his study on age and

pathology, Stephen Katz notes that senility was associated loosely with "weakness" by the

middle of the nineteenth century, but as it referred to "a pathological state" in the late nineteenth

century, it was substantially handled in a field of modern medicine (*Old Age* 41). That is, late

Victorian England specifically interpreted aging from the medical perspective to better scrutinize

the ways in which the body exhibits particular symptoms of deterioration, going through a biological transition from progress to decline, which is "a combat between the vitalism of life and the decay of death" (Katz, *Old Age* 43). Mangum also states that this scientific approach to age obviously paved the way for gerontology, which "impos[ed] discipline upon the body" (105).

However, it cannot be said that pathological symptoms of age and decline solely belonged to the old, as age dynamics at the end of the century were complicated by the expansion of the *fin-de-siècle* culture of degeneration. In effect, the decline narrative often challenged the traditional notion that the young hold a better potential for progress than the old. Most of all, the term *fin de siècle* itself juxtaposes youth and age given that it means closure for old values and beginning for new ones. Because the *fin de siècle* was fundamentally a time period of generational shift, which was symbolically represented as a generational conflict, its culture often rhetorically visualized actual difficulties involved in the process by which the progressive potential of the young pushes back against preexisting social norms and grows into their own achievement of modernity. Glen Clifton's recent research on the double-sidedness of the end of the nineteenth century shows that the cultural crossing of old and new values produced "a complex rhetorical tactic" of "[c]ombining youthful potential with quick demise" (288). That is, although the national character of England was in the process of reformulation as young people's desire for newness and modernization grew intense, the change did not always happen to the latter's advantage; sometimes it accelerated their failure. Such failure informs degeneration's attachment to youth in many *fin-de-siècle* texts, in which degeneration becomes a phenomenon that can happen early in the life course.

In *Degeneration* (1892), Max Nordau frequently uses the term *senility* in a negative light by likening it to "the starless winter night," "the grave," and "corruption" (556), but his analysis capitalizes on examples of young people who are prematurely degenerate. In his attempt to position degeneration at the forefront of the modern culture, he suggests that young people have a tendency to age more rapidly than those in earlier times, "showing their white hairs at the beginning of their thirties" (42).[12] Within his diagnosis of Europe's large-scale degeneration, Nordau labels high civilization as a source for the premature aging that the young are faced with because dealing with the rapid social changes in modern society requires so much mental work on the part of individuals. The civilized world is likely to undergo "a twilight mood" in which individual manifestations of early age correspond to a large-scale cultural degeneration (43). Throughout Nordau's text, one might see that the *fin-de-siècle* age question was applicable to those who exhibited signs of "fatigue and exhaustion," which were "the effect of contemporary civilization" no matter how old these individuals were chronologically (42).

Nordau's claim shows that high modernity in the late nineteenth century should be understood as the starting point of decline rather than the prime of progress. It indicates that the developmental belief in the inevitability of society's youthful progress toward modernity was no longer valid at the end of the century. The higher they reach, the more likely they are to be degenerate. In a sense, Nordau's notion of degeneration ironically serves to widen its meaning.

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[12] The connection between individual aging and collective degeneration within high civilization existed in the mid-century as well. For instance, in *A Practical Treatise on the Domestic Management and Most Important Diseases of Advanced Life* (1849), George E. Day analyzes aging from the medical perspective. He briefly adds that "premature decrepitude" is a common cultural phenomenon necessarily undergone by "civilized man" (27). This perspective was further developed by the late nineteenth-century writers who conceptualized degeneration.

He conceptualizes senile degeneration not as an anomalous return to a past condition; it already exists within the highly developed state of modern civilization, which has marked the peak of its youth but still pursues its perpetuation.

Other writers also conceptualized the *fin de siècle* as a time when youth and age came into conflict with each other more than had been the case in earlier times. In *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* (1913), Holbrook Jackson highlights that "the young were so young [and] the old so old" (30). Jackson surmises that the ideological divide between modern and traditional was greater in the final decade of the century than at any other time. There were constant exchanges of old for new values. In her 1896 text on the New Woman, Emily Morgan-Dockerell similarly writes that Victorians constantly witnessed the arrival of a wide variety of new cultural products: "[t]he new art, the new literature, the new fiction, the new journalism, the new humours, the new criticism, the new journalism, the new humour, the new criticism, the new hedonism, the new morality and the new woman" (339). In brief, these authors assert that the *fin-de-siècle* culture's ceaseless interest in the new—"the vertigo and whirl of our frenzied life"—made people feel more exhausted (Nordau 42). In this light, Europe's obsession with the adjective 'new'—longing for constant modernization—did not dispel concerns about degeneration. Constant clashes between old and new norms therefore came to characterize the *fin-de-siècle* culture of decline, in which young people were rapidly worn out, and their aspirations for the new had yet to produce a new order of the world.

The Resurgence of the Gothic and Vampire Texts

The cultural conflict between old and new values affected the *fin-de-siècle* literary narrative of decline as well. A wide variety of fantastic fiction was produced. Much of it adopted a transhistorical mode, in which an old convention was reinvented as one that better reflects the cultural climate of the period. Nicholas Ruddick argues that fantastic fiction encompasses "such past and present genres as folk and fairy tales, beast fables, parables, utopian fantasy, ghost stories, Gothic fiction, weird fiction, horror fiction, dark fantasy, heroic fantasy, scientific romance and science fiction" (190). Ruddick here defines *fin-de-siècle* fantastic fiction as a hybrid genre in which various kinds of nonrealistic literary elements are employed to interconnect past and present—a tendency certainly on display in *Dracula*.

It is evident that there was some necessity for an updated version of the Gothic at the end of the nineteenth century, for the Gothic offered a venue where various writings of *fin-de-siècle* degeneration could be accommodated. Glennis Byron notes that "Gothic monstrosity" became a popular subject matter once again, roughly 100 years after the publication of the original Gothic, as fears of collective decay increased in late Victorian Britain (132). The late Victorian revival of the Gothic arose out of a social climate in which people had started to think that the modern progress model adopted by Victorian England could be disrupted by degenerative forces coming from their long-forgotten past. In this light, the Gothic made allowances for the conflict between old and new, illuminating society's fears about the old Other who is expected to be confined in the past yet who can always return to the present with a monstrous force that can shake the foundation of modernity. In effect, given that the original major Gothic works were produced at a moment of revolutionary turmoil from the end of the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth

century, it becomes understandable that the Gothic became a recognizable genre in which various kinds of strong anxieties about social changes are made visible. Within the context of the late nineteenth century, the prevailing anxiety of degeneration in particular paved the way for much of the fiction that has the Gothic's generic properties. The genre's dramatization of the ways in which long-suppressed otherness haunts the modern reality with a supernatural force attracted late Victorian fiction writers who revisited it to portray the power of violent deviance in old vampirism. Literary vampirism in the late nineteenth-century Gothic therefore served as a medium through which the writer could envisage the ways in which what has been marginalized in the process of achieving the nation's modern prosperity disrupts the present society.

Vampirism as a dreadful act of sucking others' young and fresh blood has its root in the demonic tradition. In western history, vampirism is an evil process of renewing a villain's violent, spiteful, and supernatural power that subverts the natural progression of human life. For example, Adam's first wife in Jewish mythology is named Lilith, a name translatable as "vampire." In 1895, George MacDonald reproduced this mythological figure as an evil vampire in his Gothic fantasy narrative *Lilith*. The protagonist is a young Victorian man who has inherited a house with a library from his father and encounters Lilith in the spiritual world that he enters through the mirror. MacDonald is loyal to the original myth in his presentation of Lilith as a rebellious character obsessed with power who does not obey Adam. Yet placing the text specifically in the *fin-de-siècle* context, one might note that MacDonald strategically brings back to life the supernatural force of the vampire figure within the modern man's inner world. In particular, Lilith's denial of the fact that she has been created by God leads the protagonist and the reader to reexamine their own belief system in the late Victorian present.

Furthermore, vampirism appeared in Victorian discourse of science as well. Writings about social and individual hygiene often mentioned vampires because of vampirism's reliance on exchanges of blood between different subjects. Most of all, with the resumption of blood transfusion practices in the field of medicine in 1818 by the physician James Blundell,[13] vampirism went beyond supernaturalism in the nineteenth century. Once transfusion led people to newly perceive blood as a product that was transferrable between bodies, an exchange of blood—once the stuff of superstition—became part of a medical narrative. The role of exchanged blood in the body was not always seen as positive. According to Travis Lau, blood transfusion could be either "nutritive" or "polluting" to both donors and receivers, for there was a sense of indeterminacy about how the connection between different bodies might work for each (*para*. 3). Regardless of the controversy over the pros and cons, it was apparent that blood transfusion was no longer tied solely to supernaturalism as it was a scientific practice, which situates each body in a complicated web of public health. That is, whether beneficial or harmful, blood transfusion indicates that blood is not just a bodily fluid. As Jules David Law puts it, blood became a crucial social medium that has a "social life" in Victorian England (31). Blood transfusion thus exemplifies the ways in which each individual is provided with a new sense of identity, being systematically "connected to society through his or her bodily fluids" in the Victorian era (Law ix).

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[13] It was in 1665 that the first successful blood transfusion between animals was recorded in England, but the first transfusion of human blood was performed in 1818 by Blundell, an obstetrician.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's "Good Lady Ducayne" (1896) certainly drew inspiration from the practice of blood transfusion in the medical profession. In this text, Ducayne is not an unreal monster but an old human being who benefits from blood transfusion in recovering youth. Stealing blood from her young and powerless companion with the help of chloroform, Ducayne makes the best use of her old age and superior social standing in her attempt at rejuvenation and longevity. For this reason, Ducayne symbolically functions as a vampire in a story that examines the twisted relationship between youth and age—or between the aristocracy and the impoverished genteel. Noticeably, based on the modern medical practice, Ducayne's vampirism evinces that Gothic vampire literature at the end of the century puts together supernaturalism and science in such a way as to illuminate the dissolution of the boundary between different subjects.

As vampirism became a part of modern scientific discourse about the life course, it was natural that writings about British health mentioned vampires as well. For instance, in his 1889 text *Cremation and Urn-Burial, or The Cemeteries of the Future*, the Irish gardener and journalist William Robinson advocates cremation as an efficient way of improving public hygiene. Robinson notes that the preexisting system of burial should be replaced by "an inoffensive and prompt system of reducing bodies to ashes" (5). That is, he asserts that the practice of burials without proper disposals of dead bodies can cause environmental pollution and harm public health, thus degrading the quality of lives led by the living. In so doing, he employs the vampire as a metaphor for contagious diseases arising from dead bodies, which can pose a severe threat to public health throughout his assertion that "we are continually producing vampires . . . and the vampires spread from our burial grounds, attacking the population and producing disease" (184). Robinson depicts the uncanny cycle of the vampire's life and death in

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his rational explanation of the process by which contagious diseases blur the boundary between life and death in moving between living and dead bodies.

The interaction between antique supernaturalism and modern science in vampire texts goes for Stoker's *Dracula* as well. It underlines scientific as well as supernatural elements in describing how the bodily subjectivity of a modern subject is formed. In particular, the application of blood transfusion in Stoker's text lets us pay attention to the leakiness of modern human beings' existential boundaries. When three young men donate their blood to reanimate the deteriorating Lucy Westenra, Stoker brings to light the medical benefits that Victorians could expect from the practice of blood transfusion. By presenting a sequence of scenes in which Lucy receives her three suitors' blood, which is "so young and strong" (158), Stoker implies that blood is not contained as a solid entity within a single body; it can be circulated among Britons' bodies in ways that are beneficial from the perspective of modern science. In this sense, given that numerous Britons' blood is transferrable, one can note that Dracula's old and foreign degeneracy can more rapidly spread due to the social connectedness of the Britons' bodies. In other words, as Heike Bauer notes, the text's representation of its characters' bodily experience of vampirism enables "all kind of violations of the body" and places the permeability of vampiric bodies within the modern network of science in Victorian England (79–80).

Stoker's *Dracula* is a modernized rewriting of the Gothic, for it illuminates the contemporary fear of degeneration spreading in England in renewing the supernatural power of the vampire and relocating the vampire superstition to the center of modern civilization in

England.[14] Stoker delineates his antagonist's transgression of the boundaries between the English self and others. The breakdown of the boundaries here touches on the deepest anxiety that Britons had in establishing their identity by differentiating themselves from others whom they have seen as the opposite of their own culture of progress. Importantly, Stoker's Gothic storytelling introduces a late-century vampirism into the preexisting Gothic mode in ways that bring the old Other back to life. He creates a new hybrid genre that is suitable for delivering cultural and political anxieties about degeneration of the period.

Representation of Age and Degeneration in *Dracula*

In the following pages, I read Stoker's *Dracula* as a narrative of age and degeneration, in which Dracula's power of old age prompts modern England to look back into its own history of civilization and question its young and developmental nationhood. In weakening the power of modernity and accelerating the young's degeneration, the old vampire shows that degeneration has already been inherent in the present in England. Dracula himself is not provided with ample opportunity to speak about his age. Yet his presence figures prominently in the imaginations of other major characters. I divide the characters into three categories to discuss how each of them responds to three issues associated with youth and age in the modern culture at the end of the

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[14] A review of *Dracula* in *The Spectator* (1897) claims that "[t]he up-to-dateness of the book—the phonograph diaries, typewriters, and so on—hardly fits in with the medieval methods" though Stoker "has made [successful use] of all the available traditions of vampirology" (151). This review indicates that the text's depiction of supernatural and monstrous battle does not go well with its presentation of modern technology as a symbol of high civilization of the nineteenth century. The reviewer implies that it is difficult to draw a parallel between the text and earlier Gothic works due to the former's persistent interest in modernity. In effect, it was in the twentieth century rather than in the late nineteenth century that Stoker's text was directly associated with other earlier Gothic texts by Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Mary Shelley.

century: the elderly and the ideology of progress, the young's premature degeneration, and the subversion of the youth-centered national persona. First and foremost, the aged Dutch doctor specializing in vampirism, Abraham Van Helsing, elucidates the social position and role that the aged are expected to take in the Victorian era. The second category includes the young Britons whose lived experiences of vampirism tell the reader how they break away from social norms of aging by encountering their own early onset of age and degeneration. This category is subdivided into men and women, for the novel genders their respective response to the vampirism. Lastly, Dracula represents the last category inasmuch as he is the non-human foreign subject who self-consciously redefines the process whereby one can live, age, and die.

It is notably Van Helsing's mental maturity that leads the Crew of Light—the group that aims at destroying Dracula—to gain insight into Dracula's identity and terminate his life. Van Helsing is a foreigner with solid social standing in England. Attila Viragh's study of the novel points out that Van Helsing's Dutch identity is the reason behind his authority (240). Because his North European culture is "vibrant rather than endangered" (Viragh 240), the Dutch doctor can integrate into the English society better than the Eastern European. Van Helsing smoothly allies with the Britons and helps them reestablish themselves as the true conquering race.

Interestingly, in using his authoritative voice in illuminating the youth-centered ideology of progress, Van Helsing positions himself as an old man with decreased strength. He keeps mentioning his physical ineligibility for blood donation in his attempt to delineate the ideological hierarchy between youth and age. In spite of his ample experience in both modern medicine and ancient superstition, he makes clear that he should play a supporting role in their conquest of Dracula. He says that someone who is "more young and strong" than himself should give blood

to stop Lucy from further deteriorating (158). The remark underscores the power of youth in

national regeneration, which elderly people are not armed with. That is to say, although Van

Helsing gives directions as an experienced advisor to the young generation, he repeatedly defines

himself as an old helper whose social duty is different from his younger counterparts'. Before the

final confrontation with the vampire, Van Helsing states that Jonathan, who is "young and brave

and can fight," should take the lead in their fight against Dracula and that Van Helsing himself

should step aside because, as he says, "I am old. My legs are not so quick to run as once; and I

am not used to ride so long or to pursue as need be, or to fight with lethal weapons. But I can be

of other service; I can fight in other way" (395). Van Helsing's diagnosis of vampirism here

elaborates on the youth- and male-centered ideology of national progress. His perspective

indicates that the role of the elderly can be less crucial to the nation's fight against degeneration

than that of the young. Van Helsing echoes the British Empire's constant marginalization of

children, elderly people, and women, who are labeled as peripheral to its outward expansion of

modern civilization. Van Helsing therefore reiterates the ideology of progress, in which the

elderly's personhood was viewed as not helpful to the nation's unstoppable journey to

modernization.[15]

It therefore comes as no surprise that Van Helsing uses the imagery of the elderly's

powerlessness to imagine the young as strong, brave, and healthy, thus assigning them the

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[15] According to Jenny Hockey and Allison James, it is the rise of modern individualism in the
late nineteenth century that enabled the cultural stereotyping of the elderly as weak, dependent,
and childlike (138). The connection between later life and childhood was possible because of the
similarity between elderly people and children in terms of mental and physical weakness and
dependency.

responsibility for the nation's growth. As Allan Irving's study on the "tight binary of young/old" suggests, the antagonistic relationship between youth and age has been established in ways that clearly explain the order of the world since the Enlightenment (23). In totalizing theories on the world, the Enlightenment brought up issues of universal reason in such a way as to reconcile conflicting values by placing them securely in a rationally binary paradigm that romanticized youth and progress and trivialized age and decline. This system of thinking was compelling throughout the nineteenth century. In particular, as an old man himself who has been influenced by this dichotomy more than the younger generation has, Van Helsing frames the condition of young subjects against that of old ones and prioritizes Jonathan's physical strength over his own intellectual maturity. Van Helsing's stance firmly establishes youth as the linchpin of the nation's resistance to degenerative evils originating in less civilized cultures.

Furthermore, Van Helsing interconnects the politics of youth and of national purity. The connection is firmly established in one scene of blood transfusion where he states that Arthur Holmwood is "so young and strong and of blood so pure that [they] need not defibrinate it" (158). Since defibrination refers to the process of agitating blood to remove fibrin from it, the fact that Holmwood's blood does not even need to go through this procedure points out that Van Helsing greatly values the youthful purity of the British male body, which makes young men less affected by vampirism than Lucy or R. M. Renfield—a woman and a lunatic. He affirms the belief that the pure and fresh blood in an able-bodied British male subject is necessary for protecting the nation as a whole.

Whereas Van Helsing restates the age norms within the robust nation organized under the developmental ideology, the young characters' actual experiences of vampirism unfold in such a

way as to highlight the nation's vulnerability. *Dracula* is a narrative of the young able-bodied British men's decline, in which the confidence in their own continual progress becomes noticeably weak. To understand their premature degeneration issue, it is useful to look first and foremost at Jonathan. Jonathan exemplifies how degeneration can be made visible through a young British male subject.

When Jonathan opens up his narrative and demonstrates how he is attacked by three female vampires as well as by Dracula in Transylvania, it seems clear that old vampires are attracted to Jonathan, for he is "young and strong" (69). However, his youthful strength rapidly deteriorates after his exposure to vampirism. As a young professional solicitor's clerk from London, Jonathan confidently writes in shorthand about his business with Dracula. Before his journey, Jonathan visits the British Museum to "ma[k]e search among the books and maps in the library regarding Transylvania," thinking that "some foreknowledge of the country could hardly fail to have some importance in dealing with a noble of that country" (32). Though he admits that he does not find "any maps of this country as yet to compare with [his own] Ordnance Survey maps" (32), he supposes that the notes from his pre-investigation in the library in the West will prepare him well for the trip to the East (31). Jonathan's self-confidence is rooted in his knowledge attained from his research in the library in his country, which is much more modern than his destination. In this sense, he benefits from the modern achievement of the Empire. His trip is also indebted to the well-developed railroad traffic in Europe, which makes people from various backgrounds conveniently move from place to place in a short time. Also, by saying that "the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains" (33), Jonathan states that the sense of punctuality with which the West is familiar would not work in the East. This account

insinuates that Jonathan conforms to the ideology of progress in his attempt to separate the civilization of Western Europe from the antiquatedness of Eastern Europe and to interpose a barrier between the two.

Nevertheless, once Jonathan arrives in Dracula's land, he experiences an existential crisis, not knowing how to make sense of its antiquity. Standing "in silence" and feeling "doubts and fears crowding upon [him]" (45), he begins to doubt the effectiveness of his professional preparation in London. He says that he cannot understand the nature of Dracula's old and dark place after all his effort and asks himself whether he is experiencing "a customary incident in the life of a solicitor's clerk sent out to explain the purchase of a London estate to a foreigner" (45). On the one hand, Jonathan's anxiety in this scene can be seen as a continuation of his ongoing attempt to distinguish his nation's progress in the present from Transylvania's decline, confining the latter within the realm of the past.[16] On the other hand, though he keeps stating that he is satisfied with his job in London, he is well aware that he is reduced to the status of a terrified and powerless stranger in a strange land, unable to properly exercise his modernity.

Even after the first few pages, Jonathan's journal betrays that it is a narrative of this British man's rapid decline, which starts from his transformation into Dracula's powerless victim. Although the novel's ending provides readers with Jonathan and Mina's victory over Dracula, what they actually encounter throughout Jonathan's journal is his never-ending anxiety. The adjectives often used to depict his condition thus include "mad" (67), "sleepy" (68),

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[16] Jonathan's attempt to differentiate England from Transylvania serves to visualize "the presence of comparative inferiority or degeneration" of the latter, which stands in stark contrast to "the disease-free perfection" of the former (Hughes 32). See William Hughes's "A Singular Invasion: Revisiting the Postcoloniality of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*."

"unconscious" (71), and "exhausted" (140). Most of all, in letting Jonathan recount the tale of his own decrepitude, the novel vividly conveys his anxiety. As Geoffrey Wall observes, the entire novel is "persistently, an anxious text" in various aspects (15). Jonathan's narrative of decline is where the reader encounters the anxiety for the first time. It is his anxiety about decline that exemplifies the aforementioned premature aging question in modern society elucidated by Nordau. As a young modern man who has grown up within the culture of high civilization, Jonathan is subject to the contagiousness of degeneration more than any other previous generations. In addition, Dracula needs this young man for his modern brain as well as his youthful blood because he knows that Jonathan's professional knowledge will help him settle down successfully in modern London. For this reason, it is inevitable for Jonathan to lose his youth and modernity to Dracula.

Not only Jonathan but also another young modern man—Dr. John Seward—betrays signs of anxiety, unable to defend his belief in the advancement that modern science will bring about. In effect, from the early part of the novel, Lucy tells Mina that she finds this man unattractive mainly because he is "nervous," though he looks "very cool outwardly" (89). Yet at least in the first third of the novel, it is evident that Seward is highly assured about what he does in the field of medicine. He enthusiastically makes an objective observation and examination of multiple pathological symptoms of insanity and aberrance from the professional perspective of a doctor. Running an asylum that accommodates, classifies, and denominates a whole variety of marginalized subjects, Seward persistently attempts to turn his patients into the objects of modern science. Seward's professionalism here is similar to Jonathan's given that both of them are firm believers in modern knowledge. Nicholas Daly's consideration of these two young

men's professionalism helps us see how the "experts in their fields" work together as a team and use their "specialized knowledges" in protecting their nation as imperial agents of modernization (38, 44). However, as Kelly Hurley asserts, although Seward pursues extreme rationalism, his overconfidence in modern science lets him overlook "what he cannot explain" (18). Thus unprepared for "the revelation that vampires exist, even in the everyday modern world" (Hurley 18), Seward loses his faith and energy, becoming as "dispirited" as other members of the Crew of Light (391).

The exhaustion of youthful energy happens to another member in the Crew of Light, Quincey P. Morris, who is a young, rich American man. Though his degeneration does not occur in the same way as Jonathan's or Seward's, he dies young at the end, unlike other major young characters. Franco Moretti's analysis of Quincey's death pays attention to his American origin. Moretti argues that Quincey bears a resemblance to Dracula, for no less than the vampire, Quincey is "shrouded in mystery" (75). Described as "so young and so fresh," he is a reliable supporter to his English friends, but Stoker does not give the reader detailed information on why "he has been to so many places and has had such adventures" (90). In keeping with this mysterious aspect, his American background implies that he is keen on "the conquest of the Old World" (Moretti 76). The Old World is ambivalent here. The Britons confine it within the non-Western part of Europe, whereas Dracula's reverse colonization sees modern England as an emblem of the old order that he has to destroy. For Quincey from America, both Eastern and Western Europe can be equally the Old World.

However, despite the difference between Jonathan's and Seward's survival and Morris's death, one can see that these three young men's experiences of vampirism revolve around the

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process by which their youth figures into the narrative of decline. To be sure, throughout the nineteenth century, the image of a young man with a good hope of progress represented the spirit of the age, but this is not to say that youth was always depicted as everlastingly strong. In effect, it could be a phase of vulnerability. As Jed Esty asserts, youth does not provide impetus for social advancement in narratives of decline, which register an anti-developmental impulse; instead, it functions as symbol of "failed progress" (7). The young men in *Dracula* exemplify Esty's notion of "youthful protagonists who conspicuously *do not grow up*" (2), for their stunted youth is indicative of their inability to lead development on a national level.

The double-sidedness of youth is repeatedly mentioned in *Dracula*. In asserting that the members of the Crew of Light should bond together, Van Helsing suggests that they try hard to be "brave of heart and unselfish" (208). His emphasis on bravery and unselfishness implies that young people's capacity for development cannot be fully exercised in the face of the vampire's invasion when they are not armed with these traditional virtues. Van Helsing's thought about those virtues is expressed well when he praises Mina: "So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist – and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so sceptical and selfish" (226). This characterization of Mina calls attention to the younger generation's deviation from the national progress pattern in their modern era, which Van Helsing labels as selfish. In the older generation's view, the younger generation's individual achievement does not always lead to a large-scale advancement though the latter obviously has a greater potential for growth, which can benefit not only themselves but also society as a whole. Specifically, in basing the principle of vampire hunting on old heroic values such as self-sacrifice, Van Helsing claims that the relationship between youth and social progress is not always solid. In Nordau's terms, the

young's inclination toward selfishness in the modern era is an "ego-maniac" degeneracy, which

emerges from the linkage between modernization and individualization (244). That is, high

civilization has created young, self-centered degenerates whose extreme preoccupation with

themselves creates social "disorders" that are prevalent at the *fin de siècle* (244). Overall, in spite

of the promised power of youth in regenerating the nation against the vampire's degeneration, it

is rare that youth becomes powerful enough in the novel to accomplish this goal.[17]

The point about the younger generation's selfishness illustrates that they can be

considered as inherently closer to degeneration than their older counterparts because of their

youthful resistance to the preexisting social convention. According to Stephan Karschay, the

young tend to cross "boundaries of the normative field of socially acceptable behaviours" in

focusing on their individuality in *fin-de-siècle* degeneration discourses (171). The men's

experience does not obviously exemplify this tendency, but manifestations of vampirism on the

part of women such as Lucy show that the young female generation rejects the social virtues

imposed upon them when they degenerate into vampires themselves. On the surface, Lucy's

experience of vampirism merely signals a descent into madness, which fits into Nordau's

degeneration. However, her female degeneracy is also suggestive of the possibility that a woman

could release her suppressed sexuality by devolving into a vampire. When Lucy comes to be

"unclean and full of hell-fire" and advances "with a languorous, voluptuous grace" to seduce her

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[17] Dracula's victims include Mr. Swales, an old man who tells Mina and Lucy about the empty
Whitby churchyard, but the majority of the victims are either children or young people. In case
of Lucy's choice of little children, it can be said that their vulnerability enables her to attack
them more easily, but I leave elderly people and children behind in my reading of *Dracula*,
focusing on the greater number of the targets—young people who are expected to have sufficient
life force, which Dracula aims to obtain.

fiancé Arthur Holmwood (249–50), it seems that Lucy fulfills her "appetites" through her

transformation into a vampire (123).[18] Carol Senf's feminist reading of the text emphasizes that

Lucy's vampirism is a portrayal of how Victorian middle-class women contained "wayward

desire" under patriarchy (115). This argument shows that the degeneration through vampirism

provides Lucy an opportunity to release her self-centered desire. Even though it is difficult to say

that she willfully caused the situation, her unconscious longing for everlasting youth transgresses

the normative female life cycle in Victorian England.

Even though the degeneration of young people is given a gendered aspect in the novel,

male and female manifestations of vampiric degeneration take the same direction, for they

deconstruct the present order of the modern world and leave its future in question. Though the

novel ends with Jonathan's remark that he and Mina now have a son and enjoy a happy life

together, he also mentions that they have made another visit to Dracula's castle, which stands "as

before, reared high above a waste of desolation" (419). This ending thus seems to be self-

contradictory. On the one hand, by presenting Mina as a "brave and gallant" English mother with

her son (419), Jonathan's narration implicitly indicates that the rising generation of England can

be further protected from the foreign force of degeneration. On the other hand, the novel goes on

to imply that degeneration is not fully gone inasmuch as it depicts Jonathan and his wife as

traumatized subjects haunted by "vivid and terrible memories" (419). When it comes to the

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[18] Earlier in the novel, Mina mentions the "New Woman" to highlight that her and Lucy's "appetites" are greater than the New Woman's (123). Even though Mina distances herself and Lucy from the New Woman, the novel's depiction of how these two female characters respond to vampirism is ambivalent. The New Woman's relationship to degeneration will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

ambivalence of the ending, Pick argues that "[t]he reassuring function of the novel – displacing perceived social and political dangers onto the horror story of a foreign Count finally staked through the heart – [is] undermined by the simultaneous suggestion of an invisible and remorseless morbid accumulation" (*Faces of Degeneration* 168). Notably, in spite of a wide variety of documents that the characters and narrators have collected, Jonathan realizes that "there is hardly one authentic document" to elucidate "so wild a story" (419). The inability to correctly deliver their experience here shows that the wildness of the degeneration passed on to the young Britons still outweighs the accurateness of their modern knowledge. This ending implies that their experiences of degeneration make them accept that the future of the nation can be continuously threatened by degeneration. The same perspective exists in H. H. Murdoch's 1898 review of the novel, in which he relates the fictional expansion of vampirism to the real danger of degeneration in *fin-de-siècle* England and expresses concerns about younger generations. By so doing, Murdoch generalizes the existence of vampires, stating that vampires "exist in our midst, and go about from one country to another, from city to city" and that "young children [who] constitute so large a percentage of the vampire's victims" should be better protected from the degenerative force.

The premature decline of youth occurs in conjunction with the deviant regeneration of Dracula himself, who has his own youth "renewed" in ways that break down the youth-oriented power structure built under the ideology of progress (83). Though *Dracula* is a narrative of decline overall, it is imperative to note that the novel's portrayal of decline goes mainly for the young Britons although they seemingly succeed in removing Dracula's threat at the end. It is therefore noteworthy that Dracula makes some progress of his own in his aberrant life cycle by

causing the young Britons' degeneration. Within the *fin-de-siècle* context, the vampire's invasion

of the young in England represents the ideological conflict between youth and age and thus

points to the imperishability of the old monstrous figure's power. As Van Helsing diagnoses in

the text, the vampire extends his own life by "adding new victims and multiplying the evils of

the world" (252). This analysis reveals that he can perpetuate his old deviance into the future in

reproducing other vampires in ways that disrupt young people's advancement in the modern

world.

At the center of this conflict between the old Dracula and the young Britons lies aging,

here portrayed not as powerless but as powerful. Dracula's strength makes us rethink how

agency in old age is enabled. The fact that vampires can survive and extend their degeneracy

metaphorically reveals that he moves beyond the past realm of antiquity and finds his young

victims within modern society. Though the victims are different from Dracula in terms of age,

class, and nationality, over the course of the narrative the strict line between them is blurred as

Dracula moves to the heart of the Empire, rejuvenating himself and erasing the differences. In

letting Mina convey his message, Dracula declares that he is an old survivor who has fought

against other races for "hundreds of years" and is now turning more than one Englishwoman into

his "companion" and "helper" (328). Dracula here asserts that his regeneration through other

races' degeneration has been invincible. Even in the modern world, he will be immortal as long

as he keeps producing multiple degenerate victims who resemble himself.

The vampire's advancement toward the modern world arises from the gap between his

youthful appearance and his old interiority. It is the vampire's physical nature to defy the passing

of time. That is, through the act of sucking blood, the vampire's outer self is rejuvenated in such

a way as to deny aging. Significantly, this physical youth is performative, for it conceals the Count's inner elderliness and makes him look similar to other people who lead normal lives in modern society. This divide is projected onto the two different locations in which Dracula's vampirism is chiefly on display: his castle in Transylvania and London. When Dracula is located in his old home, which is filled with "the broken battlements and casements" in Transylvania (55), he defines himself as a man who is "no longer young" and represents the long history of the region. Jonathan also recognizes Dracula's age, but he tries to classify Dracula's bizarre manifestations of oldness as examples of human degeneration into the animal, taking notice of his "massive" eyebrows, "bushy hair," and "sharp teeth" (48). Although these characteristics do not conspicuously change after Dracula arrives in London, it is apparent to Jonathan that Dracula looks much younger when he "go[es] through the crowded streets of [Jonathan's] mighty London" (51). Thus in a scene where Jonathan lights on Dracula in London, Jonathan clearly admits that Dracula has "grown young" and become part of modern London (209).

However, contrary to the outer self, the inner self of the vampire is old even after Dracula's arrival in London. Most of all, in the opening pages, Dracula tells Jonathan about what he has gone through in "stirring times" and "weary years of mourning over the dead" (52, 54). When Jonathan asks him about Transylvanian history, he says that "the pride of his house and name is his own pride, that their glory is his glory, [and] that their fate is his fate" (59). In so doing, he speaks "almost in the plural, like a king speaking" (59). This scene is indicative of a possibility that the vampire can make the best use of his own cultural historicity in preparing himself for a trip to England. That is, his accumulated experience as the leader of his people is a prerequisite for his move to the modern world. In this sense, Dracula's case fits the Roman

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politician Cicero's analysis of aging in *On Old Age* (44 BC), which was still influential in nineteenth-century Western culture. Cicero seemingly ties elderliness to the narrative of decline, but a closer examination tells us that he also identifies many constructive aspects of old age. For example, in saying that one can grow up by learning "something new and fresh" in later life (16), Cicero reads aging as the never-ending process of achieving mental maturity. In this light, although Stoker's *Dracula* is apparently a narrative of decline that is full of pathological deviations, it is observable that Dracula can exchange the Britons' decline for his own progress in old age because he has never stopped accumulating modern knowledge, taking advantage of his inner maturity.

Dracula's progress in old age reflects that he has educated himself about how the British Empire has produced its own narrative of progress for a long time. While the Crew of Light destroys the force of Dracula's degeneracy, Dracula expels that of youth in the Britons, reversing the direction of the Empire's history-making process in order to achieve his own regeneration. That is, what is new for England can be old for Dracula. Dracula's appropriation of the Britons' youth then makes him put an end to the old Anglocentric order of the world and construct his own order. Dracula's plan to reorganize the world here has something in common with the British Empire's development. For instance, in Troy Boone's words, Jonathan tries to secure "the commercial progress" of his firm and nation upon visiting the Eastern Europe (76). However, Jonathan promptly realizes that Dracula has shaped his own understanding about the British Empire through his own vast collection of out-of-date "English magazines and newspapers," which deal with "history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law" of England (50). In briefly adding that none of those documents is "of very recent date" (50),

Jonathan somewhat underestimates Dracula's information strength, thinking that Dracula cannot catch the wave. Yet this observation also reveals that the vampire in effect has a long experience of the rise and fall of civilization, with which he can enact his own version of progress in the same manner as Jonathan's nation. In terms of the desire for modernization, Dracula gets abreast of the Britons. When Dracula cunningly says to Jonathan that he has thoroughly investigated England's history to "share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is" (51), his claim is not completely false. No less than the Britons, Dracula wishes to implement his own progress narrative, basing it on his mature experience and knowledge. Hence Dracula's reconstruction of the progress model centers on the power of age.

However, the true nature of Dracula's long history is invisible to the Britons, a point that is illustrated well in the scene where Jonathan fails to see the reflection of Dracula in the mirror. Leonard G. Heldreth's study on vampire narratives suggests that the vampire's lack of reflection has long been explained in terms of its "absence of soul": the vampire finds "the void" at the core of its inner self, which serves as a mirror that sheds light back on other people's anxieties (121). The mirror scene in *Dracula* presents the same situation. Narrated in Jonathan's voice, the scene seems to deny Dracula's own interiority *per se*. Yet it problematizes Jonathan's inability to see Dracula in the mirror. Indeed, Jonathan's failure arises from Dracula's ability to make invisible his old self to other people. It is then Dracula who stops Jonathan from integrating his existence into the modern system of knowledge.

Jonathan's failed attempt to discover Dracula's hidden identity can be examined through a Foucauldian lens inasmuch as it throws light on the social construction of the individual life course in modern society. Intriguingly, Michel Foucault's assertion that one's modern

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subjectivity is shaped in accordance with society's effort to manage the life cycle does not fit

Dracula's case. Foucault states that "a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death"

replaced "the ancient right to take life or let live" in modern society (139). In other words, the

temporality of one's life and death became much more complex from the seventeenth century

onward, for modern society started to regulate the life course of its individual members from

birth to death. In this light, the vampiric body, which does not undergo the natural progression

from youth and progress to old age and decline, is an indicator of aberrance. It is difficult for

modern society to understand the nature of the vampiric body that seems to be alive yet indeed

dead; the undead body's inherent transgression of boundaries between life and death complicates

the process by which modern society imposes specific norms upon the life course of its citizens.

Fundamentally already not the same as living bodies, the vampire is not subject to any form of

modern bio-power that aims at "establish[ing] its dominion" over the individual life course

(Foucault 139). This point explains why Jonathan's intellectualization of Dracula's identity or

Seward's observation of lunatics in the asylum fails to control the vampire's subversive body.

Ironically, Van Helsing's pre-modern[19] approaches such as prompt execution of entombed

vampires by cutting off their heads work better; he knows the importance of simply terminating

the lives of "those who represented a kind of biological danger to others" (Foucault 139). Van

Helsing's old-fashioned methods resemble ones that ancient sovereignty employs in deciding

whether or not to take life from an individual who is deemed harmful to society as a whole.

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[19] Van Helsing repeatedly inculcates the Crew of Light with the importance of old conventions. He says that "all we have to go upon are traditions and superstitions," which are "everything" when it comes to their fight against vampirism (278).

Without such archaic methods, Dracula's subversion of the normative human life cycle cannot be successfully restrained in the modern bio-power system. The vampire's recreation of life through death is something that "mere "modernity" cannot kill" (67).

No less than their predecessor, the young Britons still believe in the inevitability of their advancement, but the belief is weakened when the interplay of Dracula's everlasting youth and its grotesque elderliness arouse degeneracy within the young Britons. Dracula's degenerative regeneration thus serves to problematize the ways in which the object of his attack has modernized its self-image by rhetorically utilizing the language of youth and destroying the force of decline. As Ying Jiang and Xiao-hong Zhang indicate, Dracula moves beyond "the primitive frontier of Western culture" in order to disturb "the most progressive, rational and democratic" state of Victorian England (102). His deviant progress as a rejuvenated man with old mentality reverses the process whereby the civilized modern nation has enacted the ideology of youthful progress.

The subversion of the ideological hierarchy governing youth and age in *Dracula* illuminates that the normativity of the young English self and the deviance of the old foreign Other are not clearly distinguishable from each other. Dracula's act of contaminating others' blood suggests that his pathological degeneracy is not just about himself but also about his young victims, who devolve into vampires themselves. Dracula's masquerade thus makes it impossible to draw a clear line between normal human beings and deviant vampires by erasing all kinds of differences, which can be used for building a fixed identity of a modern human being located at the center of civilization. Most of all, the vampire's modernization of his old power mirrors back the ways in which Britons have produced their developmental selfhood by contrasting

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themselves with the other part of Europe that they define as old and degenerate. In so doing, it reproduces the process by which the British Empire has persistently expelled the force of degeneration in putting into practice the ideology of progress. In diluting the power of modernity and accelerating the young's decline, Dracula makes visible that degeneration as a contagious sickness has already become part of the present in England. As such, Stoker's portrayal of vampirism blurs the boundary separating youth from age to question the newness of Victorian modernity and debunk the youth-centered myth of modernization that the British Empire has adhered to in keeping up its development.

CHAPTER III

POWER OF AGE IN COLONIAL SPACE IN ADVENTURE FICTION

As Dracula's attack on young Britons in modern England demonstrates, age is enmeshed

in the relationship between the English self and the foreign other. I continue to examine modern

England's age consciousness in this chapter, but here I focus on how colonial spaces, not

England, function in adventure tales. The traveling subject's centrifugal movement from the

center to the periphery of the British Empire in the *fin-de-siècle* adventure plot is a prerequisite

for progress. Also crucial to this journey is that the traveling subject comes back home safe

eventually, feeling more youthful. In this sense, the function of colonial spaces in *fin-de-siècle*

imperial adventure literature is to revitalize the spirit of imperialism. However, the mechanism of

the Empire's regeneration through colonial travel is self-contradictory. The renewal of the

Empire's developmental potential in fact does not always happen successfully. To look into a

perilous conquest of the Empire's own fear of age and degeneration, this chapter mainly

discusses Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and takes a postcolonial approach to the

text in reading its description of the European travelers' loss of faith in the ideology of progress

within the colonial space of Africa. The chapter also touches on H. Rider Haggard's *She: A*

History of Adventure (1886), a representative adventure narrative that serves as an important

context for Conrad's novella.

Late nineteenth-century British narratives constructed Africa as an abstract image that fits

a stereotype rather than a specific place that exists in reality. As D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke notes,

Victorians desired to mystify Africa and to lay bare its mysterious aspects in their efforts to keep

up "'development' and modernization" (10). Patrick Brantlinger also demonstrates that

Victorians made Africa a mysteriously dark continent for their own convenience, to justify their

mission to flood this savage space with "light" in the name of civilization ("Africans" 166). In

addition, in linking Africa to savagery, Victorian authors view Africa's undeveloped state as

mirroring the early stage of human history. Conrad is no exception. In *Heart of Darkness*,

Conrad has his narrator Charles Marlow call Africa "prehistoric earth," which leads European

explorers to experience "the night of first ages" (107). That is, in terms of modern civilization,

Africa has a long way to go. Because Africa looks primitive to Europeans, closer to the

childhood of their civilization, it functions to evoke their own fear of degeneration, what Max

Nordau calls "retrogression to first beginnings" (82).

Imperial adventure narratives written at this time identified Africa with primitiveness, but

in so doing, the genre reinvented it as a site where Britons attempt the regeneration of the British

Empire in bringing back to life their own childhood imaginings about Africa. In this respect, as

Conrad writes in his essay "Geography and Some Explorers" (1924), Africa, especially Congo,[20]

is "the very spot of [his] boyish boast" (159). It is indeed the British adventurer's own childhood

dream that maps the African space for the purpose of shoring up British imperialism. That is to

say, the ideological connection between Africa and immaturity is not firm inasmuch as it is

rooted in the imaginations of Europeans who are keen on projecting their own lifelong ambition

onto the continent. The actual space of Africa does not always match the British traveler's

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[20] In 1885, the area that we call Congo nowadays became the Congo Free State. Its owner was
Belgium's King Leopold II. Living and working conditions in the Congo were even worse than
in other African regions. The economic exploitation of the region happened at a great rate in the
last two decades of the century.

expectation. In this context, Conrad says that his lived experience in Africa has put "an end to

the idealized realities of a boy's daydreams," for he has been physically and emotionally

defeated by Africa's "enormous wilderness" ("Geography" 159). Conrad does not explain in this

essay what specific aspect of Africa is overwhelming to himself, but this question can be

answered through *Heart of Darkness*, where he offers Africa's preservation of "very old times"

as a subversive force that breaks down the Europeans' boyish impulse to reorganize the space

(70).

Much ado has been made in postcolonial criticism about the importance of Africa to

Europe in Conrad's texts, but I propose that it is necessary to reconsider this relationship in the

frame of age criticism. There have been some critics who discuss how Conrad handles the

themes of youth and age in his Marlow narratives. Douglas Kerr looks at how "the question of

individual youth and age" in Conrad's texts engages in "the question of history and modernity"

(29). Kerr sheds light on Marlow's psychological journey from youth, illusion, and action to old

age, loss, and introspection (29). Similarly, Richard Niland, who limits his focus to the aging

Marlow's interiority, explores the ways in which Marlow constantly revisits his own "past

experience through memory" as his youth ends and aging starts (104). Both Kerr's and Niland's

analyses take note of Marlow's interiority—Marlow's self-awareness of his own life course—but

their findings will have significant applications in the physical setting of the text, for the question

of youth and age figures into Conrad's representation of how the physical landscape of the

colonial space itself affects the European explorer's psychological shift.

What I find interesting about Conrad's portrayal of Africa in *Heart of Darkness* is that he

lets his narrator implicitly discover the power of its oldness. Marlow admittedly owns the

imperialist impulse to problematize the space's inability to civilize itself in ways that fit in the developmental paradigm that sets up the nation's youthful progress as the norm. However, Marlow also implies that Africa is not completely colonized by modern civilization, having preserved forcefully the very young stage of the earth. The fact that Africa has stayed at the early stage of humanity for a long time could also mean that its primitiveness, present especially in the physical environment, has consistently pushed back against the force of European civilization; it has its own history, which is much older yet more powerful than the European civilization. As such, Conrad makes Marlow reconstruct his past adventure in Congo in such a way as to tell his listener and reader about something old yet powerful in the African jungle that defeats the Eurocentric hierarchy between modern Europe and pre-historic Africa. Overall, during the course of the narrative, Marlow comes to question his initial view of himself and belief in the Empire's continued progress up until the point of the narration on a boat anchored in the River Thames.

In order to explore the implications of the colonial space through the lens of youth and age, the first section of this chapter theorizes how Africa was perceived within Victorian discourse on imperialism in terms of Orientalism. The second section explains the ways in which the British Empire's own age consciousness is projected onto its characterization of Africa. The third section frames how *fin-de-siècle* imperial adventure narratives handle the question of national degeneration and regeneration by using Haggard's *She* as an example. The primary text, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, will be the focus of the final section, which investigates how youth-oriented British imperialism is not renewed but emasculated in the old yet powerful African landscape.

Perception of Africa and Orientalism

Since Africa's first contact with Europeans in the late fifteenth century and the initiation of the slave trade in the early sixteenth century, the European colonization of Africa was persistently described in terms of man's ascent to civilization until the Victorian era. For instance, in Aphra Behn's 1688 prose fiction *Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave*, an African prince named Oroonoko is depicted by the narrator as inferior to Europeans. Yet the narrator states that unlike other Africans Oroonoko has some innate goodness, which he has been able to develop due to his exposure to Europeans such as "a Frenchman of wit and learning" and "the English Gentleman" (44). Noticeably, what leads the narrator to speak highly of the African prince's innocence here is the Eurocentric gaze, which imaginatively confines Africa within the early stage of history to justify the necessity of some guidance offered by Europeans. This logic existed in the nineteenth century as well, even after the abolition of slavery in 1833. Not unlike Behn's text, mid-Victorian missionary writings also perceived the continent as a space of savages who have not reached the state of high civilization.

Victorians blamed the presumed inferiority of Africans for their savagery and barbarism as a way of giving grounds for their own superiority. From the mid-nineteenth century forward, this viewpoint continuously governed the British Empire's justification of its colonialism as a benevolent act with the potential to save Africans. It is in this context that missionary writings about the darkness of Africa came into vogue in the 1850s.[21] One such text was David

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[21] Religious missions were instrumental in establishing numerous schools in Africa throughout the nineteenth century. However, in implementing the missions, Britain constantly talk about Africa's inability to achieve progress autonomously.

Livingstone's 1857 work *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, in which

Livingstone often likens not only the continent itself but also its native inhabitants to children.

For instance, Livingstone describes the moment where he finds out that many African "grown

men" adopt manners of "children" to prove their strength when attending some cultural rites

(99). Livingstone's observation overall reveals that he does not "individualize" Africans

although he uses numerous examples to better comprehend the nature of the race (Brantlinger,

"Africans" 176). Throughout his writing, the missionary and explorer himself takes center stage

and marginalizes Africans in positioning himself as a mature emissary of light who never stops

progressing.

This view continued to exert influence upon England in the 1860s and the 1870s as it was

aligned with scientific discourses on evolution and devolution. James Hunt's 1863 text *On the

Negro's Place in Nature* defines Africa as a space "without a progressive history" because "there

has been little or no migration from Africa since the earliest historical records" (30). In *Evidence

as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863), Thomas Henry Huxley examines "the man-like Apes of

either Asia or Africa" in contrasting Africans or Asians with Europeans who have matured into

the advanced state of civilization (22). Similarly, in *The Descent of Man and Selection in

Relation to Sex* (1871), Charles Darwin places human origins in Africa. In discussing racial

differences in terms of evolutionary theory, Darwin positions Africans at the lower phase of

civilization and asserts that "the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and

replace the savage races throughout the world" (193). All these authors legitimize the claim that

African races have stayed at the early phase of evolution, not proceeding to the next stages and

therefore not owning a history of civilization that might correspond to their own.

Conceptual insights from Edward Said's *Orientalism* can be helpful here, for the aforementioned evolutionary texts point to the ways in which the Occident has never stopped performing othering of the non-Western. That is, the association of Africa with the prehistoric stage in the aforementioned evolutionary writings reveals that Victorian writers confirmed Europe's superiority over Africa by constantly marginalizing the presence of Africa in the history of civilization on a discursive level. Building on Michel Foucault's idea of discourse as a social system within which knowledge and power are produced, Said suggests that Orientalism is a Western discourse that generates knowledge about the Orient from a West-centered perspective (3). Hence the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is not equal but hierarchical, "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (Said 5). Embedded in the dichotomous system of representation, Orientalism is premised on the never-ending process of building and preserving a solid boundary between the normative European and the deviant Oriental: "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Said 40). The stereotypes assigned to the Orient are tied to numerous negative values, which overall are framed as the antithesis of the norms represented by the West.

In particular, among all the aforementioned stereotypes, depravity and childlikeness are closely related to each other. In drawing a connection between degeneration and immaturity in the Eurocentric discourse on the Orient, the European sees the Orient as both old and childlike, suggesting that the latter has been in developmental stasis for a long time, due to its inability to move on from the state of primitiveness. This sense of ahistoricity is indeed connected to Africa more than to the spaces comprehended within Said's definition of Oriental spaces. Said's

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classification of the Orient applies broadly to non-Western regions from Asia to North Africa, but in expanding upon Said's idea, Victorian scholars suggest that Victorian Britain's understanding of sub-Saharan Africa differed from its understanding of Asia. For example, Kathryn Castle argues that Africa was perceived as the most powerless continent, the one that has undergone "no historical development at all" since the beginning of the earth (75). Unlike Africa, India was not denied its own history although it was often conceptualized as a degenerate "society indifferent to its own people's suffering" (36) and produced this negative image repetitively to justify their "natural parental role" to India (27). China was viewed as "self-referential" due to its rejection of contact with other countries (141), but this quality did not necessarily mean that China had not seen any progress of its own. That is, in the eyes of Victorians, all non-Western cultures seemed less developmental than their own, but they imagined the history of Africa as the most static one because they believed that it had never experienced any kind of social or political evolution at all. It is this paradigm that was consistently established through depictions of Africa in Victorian discourse as remaining at the stage of evolutionary childhood for too long.

The British Empire's Age Consciousness

However, central to the Orientalist formation of Africa is the Occident's self-consciousness. In *Orientalism*, Said further observes that nineteenth-century Britain commonly required its administrators to retire from the colonies once they reached the age of fifty-five. That is, once it was visible to the colonies that those British administrators had "aged and degenerated" (42), they had to return home. This fact illustrates that Britain preferred that the British colonizer

should always be seen as "vigorous, rational, and ever-alert young" (42). Such self-conscious

attempts to keep reconstructing their heroism as mature yet not old or decrepit ironically imply

that Britain was not unaware of a sense of ambiguity present in the line between the West and the

rest of the world. It is the British Empire's own age consciousness that determines this

dichotomous relationship. The totality of the British Empire, then, is "a very unstable

framework" that can never be firmly established without the presence of colonial others, as

Simon Gikandi points out (33).[22]

In order to understand the reasoning behind the ideological boundary between youth and

age in late Victorian discourse on imperialism, it is pertinent to consider how the question of

human beings' progression from birth to death has been generally theorized within Western

culture. Western discourse on the life course has been formed since Aristotle, who suggests three

distinct life stages—youth, prime, and old age—in Book Two of *Rhetoric* (c. 400 BC). Aristotle

here situates the prime of life between thirty and fifty, youth before thirty, and old age after fifty,

thereby constructing midlife as the ripe age (257). Horace's "The Art of Poetry" (c. 19 BC)

added childhood as a beginning stage to Aristotle's triad, but he did not much change Aristotle's

categorization of the aging process (136–59). As J. A. Burrow notes, Aristotle and Horace's

tendency to see the human life course as "a series of transits from one distinct stage to another"

governed the Western world for a long time (177). This paradigm shaped a common

understanding that an individual is expected to achieve different tasks at each phase to proceed

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[22] *In Maps of Englishness* (1996), Gikandi argues that the notion of Englishness has always been defined by the colonial experience. Otherness—alterity—necessarily plays a significant role in the production of an English selfhood.

well to the next phase. It persisted in and after the Victorian era and continuously framed how people thought of their progression from birth to death.[23] Not unlike in earlier times, England in the Victorian era had a tendency to divide the life course into several stages to better understand how an individual develops mental and physical capability from childhood to youth, successfully enters the midlife stage, and encounters an inevitable decline during senescence.

However, in the Victorian era, youth came to the fore, pushing out middle age. According to Kay Heath, it is obvious that the prime of life in nineteenth-century England was no longer middle age, as the ideology of progress was reinforced in ways that positioned youth as the norm (22). Midlife lost its place and merged with old age, for both phases were deemed non-developmental and therefore less important. The fact that youth still has a potential for growth was important to Victorians. Having developed from the previous condition of childhood, a young man is not immature, but at the same time, he is still expected to make progress. This glorification of youth generated a stricter division between youthful and not youthful. Within the youth-centered frame, all other age categories were relatively marginalized in ways that confirmed the superiority of youth over any other phase, and as a result, Victorians became preoccupied with the idea of perpetuating their own Empire's youthful progress, afraid of what would come next after the height of progress. In this context, much Victorian discourse of imperialism emerged from the necessity of proving the Empire's still youthful potential for

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[23] Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is a continuation of this perspective. In *Childhood and Society* (1950), he claims that personality develops in a fixed order through eight stages of psychological and social development.

progress, which can be met when England keeps functioning as the normative space of eternal youth as opposed to its colonies that are far from youthful.

This background informed the cultural imagining about Africa in the late Victorian era. As I have discussed in my second chapter, the fear of degeneration became a nationwide phenomenon in *fin-de-siècle* Britain. Its worldwide dominance was still firm, but the rise of other nations was perceived as a significant threat. In particular, Britain's self-consciousness about its age was related to the political context surrounding the European colonization of Africa in the 1880s. Britain invaded and occupied Egypt in 1882, and two years later, the Conference of Berlin provided the colonizer with legal grounds for administering the colonization of Africa. At this time period marked by the rise of New Imperialism, Africa was under huge pressure not only from Britain but also from other European countries and the United States. Hence it was inevitable for Britons to be more acutely aware of their Empire's competitiveness in the face of imperial rivalries that were on display in Africa. With this historical background, Britons used the language of decrepitude frequently because the rise of a number of other Western nations made them realize that most areas on the earth were already occupied in spite of the fact that the British Empire also was still growing. The fear about the imperial limit to growth was deepened, and it turned into the national self-perception that "England is too weak or too indifferent," as *The Statist* put it in 1885 (146).[24] John Tosh says that at that time the Empire "occupied a more prominent place in the national psyche than before or since" and that its colonial spaces became a testing ground for British strength, which was articulated in overly masculine terms for the

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[24] As Bernard Porter argues, it was one of the prominent features of the 1880s that "national self-confidence" started to transform into "national self-doubt" (116).

purpose of alleviating the concern about the Empire's collapse (192). As such, seeing itself as already too mature compared to other developing empires, *fin-de-siècle* Britain started to envisage how, against all odds, to make its youthful development eternal in the remote space of Africa. That is, Britain's own anxiety about losing its supremacy and devolving into a prior condition was resolved on an imaginative level when readers saw the male British traveler overcome various symbolic impediments to his progress in Africa and return home, fully prepared for regenerating his nation.

As such, collective consciousness about the Empire's age evolved into a strong encomium of imperialism, prompting Britons to envision a way of breathing new life into the Empire. Alfred Egmont Hake's *Regeneration: A Reply to Max Nordau* (1895) exemplifies this shift. The book stresses the importance of English artistic and literary imagination to prevent the collapse of civilization by idealizing the English subject's potential for advancement. Indeed, Hake's portrayal of Englishmen exemplifies Tosh's point about the connection between masculinity and regeneration in the era of New Imperialism, given that Hake argues that Englishmen are obviously free from the force of decline, which comes from elsewhere, and that they are "practical, energetic, daring pioneers heading the march of progress" (305). Above all, Hake frames Englishness as high "morality" and "patriotism" (255), which has been steadily fostered through Englishmen's "too large experience of books" (252). He emphasizes the role of *fin-de-siècle* English literature in saving the nation from the threat of degeneration and spreading civilization continuously. Since the robust tradition of English literature has consistently enriched English minds, English men are immune to the negative influence of degeneracy, still capable of achieving unstoppable progress as emissaries of high civilization. In justifying the

inevitability of the British Empire's growth, it might seem to today's readers that Hake articulates the degeneration question too simplistically. Yet as we shall see, this oversimplification was commonly found in imperial adventure literature of the day as well, which demonstrates that the British Empire destroys what it perceives to be symptoms of degeneration in remote spaces.

However, Nordau might respond to Hake's reply to himself by claiming that such a strong infatuation with the Empire's youthful progress can itself be a symptom of degeneration, which is often discovered among civilized subjects. In its characterization of *fin-de-siècle* European culture as deviant, Nordau claims that the European mentality of the day is not well-balanced but distorted, for it points people toward the former stages of life in unnatural ways. Their deviant interest in the youthful state directs them even toward childishness, which Nordau calls "the retrogression to first beginnings" (82). In theorizing European degeneracy as far from mature, Nordau says: "It is the contrast between the first babbling of a thriving infant and the stammering of a mentally enfeebled gray-beard; between child-like and childish. But this retrogression to first beginnings, this affectation of simplicity, this child's play in word and gesture, is a frequent phenomenon amongst the weak-minded" (82). In general, Nordau here thinks of *fin-de-siècle* Europe as "childish" because it is already too mature in terms of civilization. Nordau thus likens Europe to an old man who has embarked upon a journey of decline, based on the assumption that it already passed the climax of the life course, youth, and entered the post-youth stage. Identifying Europe's long history of civilization with oldness, Nordau suggests that Europe's excessive interest in youthfulness is then "childish" because it is not something that one is supposed to possess naturally during childhood (82). It is something

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that is made visible by a "mentally feebled" old man who makes an affectation of simplicity artificially (82). Given that it is greatly difficult to achieve fresh progress continually for the already-advanced civilization, the civilized European's "affectation of simplicity" is not natural.

Also, Nordau's concept of childlikeness can be linked to Said's argument about negative stereotypes assigned to the Orient, which I have mentioned earlier. In carrying out othering of the Orient as the antithesis of their normative youth, the Occident has labeled the Orient as both "depraved" and "childlike" (40), but in the context of Nordau's degeneration, the civilized Occident's attempt at its own regeneration in spaces of the Orient can be more problematic than the Orient's developmental stasis inasmuch as the former involves an unnatural act of going back to the past condition in such a way as to imitate childlikeness. Indeed, high civilization is likely to display childish characteristics, for too much civilized subjects' pursuance of childlike simplicity can happen only in unnaturally childish ways. As Claudia Nelson points out in her study about age inversion in Victorian society, childishness is symptomatic of male degeneration, which is often displayed through the "egoistical" child-man who "know[s] no limits" (58). Seen in this light, it is not Africa but Britain that is truly immature, as its attempts to flaunt its own limitless youthful and masculine potential in colonial spaces can be an example of *fin-de-siècle* high civilization's childishness.

Imperial Adventure Fiction and H. Rider Haggard

In many ways, late Victorian adventure fiction is a literary response to the *fin-de-siècle* discourse of imperialism. The genre is therefore characterized by its overly "educational and inspirational" voice, which, Andrea White argues, instills national consciousness about regeneration (40).

Imperialist adventure fiction became an important genre from the 1830s. Because its target

reader was boys, it had a tendency to glorify the bravery of young men who go out to the

colonial setting to try new things, as happens in works such as Robert Ballantyne's *The Coral

Island* (1858) and *The Gorilla Hunters* (1861). Ballantyne's success encouraged late Victorian

authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Haggard to publish similar adventure narratives, and

with these authors, this genre became noticeably more popular at the end of the century, as it

reinvented the colonial space as a particular venue where the hero can expel the fear of

degeneration by reinstating British hegemony.

Fin-de-siècle imperial adventure fiction imaginatively alleviated British people's deep-

seated anxiety about national degeneration by depicting how the Empire's potential for growth is

in fact protected. The basic dynamic of adventure fiction is therefore that the British adventurer

explores exotically primitive spaces, dispels the temptation of their degeneracy, and finally

brings a sense of freshness back home in ways that further reinforce the ideal of progress. The

Scottish writer Andrew Lang's 1891 text *Essays in Little* articulates the logic behind this trope of

colonial travel:

> There has, indeed, arisen a taste for exotic literature: people have become alive to the
>
> strangeness and fascination of the world beyond the bounds of Europe and the United
>
> States. But that is only because men of imagination and literary skill have been the new
>
> conquerors – the Corteses and Balboas of India, Africa, Australia, Japan, and the isles of
>
> the Southern Seas. All such conquerors . . . have, at least, seen new worlds for
>
> themselves; have gone out of the streets of the over-populated lands into the open air. . . .

New strength has come from fresher air into their brains and blood, hence the novelty and

buoyancy of the stories which they tell. (200)

Lang states that the genre successfully appealed to Victorian taste due to its overt appreciation of

how Western people can benefit from colonial travel such as gaining a fresh perspective on the

world. In other words, imperial adventure texts sold well in the late nineteenth century mainly

because their portrayal of colonial adventure was an imaginative solution to the question of

national decline. Given that *fin-de-siècle* adventure fiction's imaginative realization of national

regeneration valorizes "heroic virtues of pluck and forthrightness in the conqueror" (White 39),

the genre can be seen as a continuation of the preexisting national development model of the

nineteenth century. It keeps strengthening the youth-oriented vision.

In some ways, however, *fin-di-siècle* adventure narratives' pursuit of youth is much

stronger than conventional developmental narratives'. The process of colonial travel ends with

the British adventurer's safe return, which enables the Empire to prolong its youth persistently

rather than to allow its youth to mature into age naturally. That is, the transition between each

life stage does not happen naturally in adventure fiction. Somewhere else besides the modernized

space of England—already mature—is needed for Britons to bring fresher air into England,

preventing England from reaching any other stage beyond youth.

One of many late Victorian adventure writers, Haggard wrote *King Solomon's Mines*

(1885) and *She*, influenced by David Livingstone's and Henry Morton Stanley's nonfiction

travel accounts as well as Ballantyne's novels. Most of all, Haggard's own experience of

southern Africa as a colonial official inspired his portrayal of several African tribes in his works,

but overall, his use of the African setting occurs in ways that highlight Britain's supremacy.

Noticeable about Haggard's texts is that the ideal of national regeneration is presented in terms of masculinity. The manly hero is physically and mentally vigorous enough to prove his potential throughout his journey to remote spaces, which are in no way similar to his home. In delving into the intersection of national regeneration and gender in the late Victorian era, Anne McClintock points out that the plot of *Mines* is premised upon the process of suppressing Zulu women's reproductive power as a means of strengthening the male-centered imperialist ideology (3). The male-centeredness here is linked to Tosh's claim that the heightened anxiety about national degeneration yielded a stronger aspiration for national regeneration and that it masculinized much of late Victorian imperialist discourse of how to protect the Empire's youthful energy vigorously from the threat of degeneration (193). This turn was present in Haggard's justification of conquering what Britain defined as the opposite of British masculine vitality in the colonial setting.

In particular, *She* feminizes Africa in employing a female character, Ayesha, a 2000-year-old queen of an old African city, as an antithesis to the British male characters.[25] Ayesha has not aged at all on the surface, still looking very young. The main character, Horace Holly, is a middle-aged man who is always uncomfortable about the fact that he is aging, saying that "[n]o one will deny that a young man is on the average better than an old one" (221). However, Holly gradually restores his diminished self-esteem as an aging man through his exploration of

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[25] In *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (1988), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar place *She* in the context of the rise of the New Woman in the late nineteenth century. According to their feminist reading, the power of both Ayesha and her African land reminds male Britons of the grotesqueness of the growing female power within their own nation.

Ayesha's land, which tells him that "the world is very old" (173). Holly's response to the antiquity of Ayesha's land falls into Said's notion of Orientalism inasmuch as it performs othering of the land by labeling it as old, feminine, and therefore "depraved (fallen)" (40). All these traits of course are charming to Holly, but he overcomes the land's temptation through his symbolic conquest of its oldness and femininity. The completion of the adventure takes place when Ayesha loses her unseasonable youth and degenerates into a very old figure with "a million wrinkles" and the "fearful countenance, no bigger now than that of a two-months' child" right in front of Holly (261, 263). After all, Ayesha's long life against the linearity of time is made meaningless. The British hero reinvents her as a powerless figure who is monstrously aged but has not matured at all. At this point of Ayesha's destruction, the British male adventurer confirms that she is nothing but an old yet immature female figure who needs to be sent back to the past, in contrast to himself who can be youthful and mature, still capable of making progress continuously. Having exchanged her degeneration for his own regeneration, Holly leaves Africa and comes back to his own reality in England.

The collapse of Ayesha's power illuminates how British imperialism's masculine vitality is renewed through its never-ending othering of colonial subjects and spaces—labeling them as far from youthful and developmental. In this sense, the *fin-de-siècle* literary trope of colonial travel sends British characters such as Holly to Africa to let them destroy its degenerative power by containing it forever in the past. In *Imperialism* (1898), Mrs. J. Weston Campbell, whose pen name is C. De Thierry, contrasts heroic and virtuous England with its colonies by indicating that the former has "a great past and a sense of responsibility for the future," unlike the latter, which has not shown any sign of advancement toward a better future since ancient times (18). For this

reason, Andrew M. Stauffer suggests that Africa in adventure fiction is "mysterious" and "dangerous" for English travelers, who feel an urge to constantly imagine and reimagine the exotic past that they believe Africa still stays in (13). Hence colonial travel is necessarily "a journey forward in space but backward in time" (McClintock 106), for it enables the traveling subjects to move forward to remote places and go back across time as a way of finding the prior condition of civilization. By so doing, they freshen their own history of development, feeling encouraged again to keep their advancement continuous. Most of all, they forestall a possibility of their own decline by locating degeneration within the colonial space of Africa.

However, although the colonial adventure restores Holly's masculinity, it is also observable that Holly's own anxiety in effect affects the ways in which he conceptualizes Ayesha's land. As Madhudaya Sinha puts it, Ayesha dismantles Holly's imaginative understanding of her land, which she has dominated for thousands of years, even though Holly attempts to reduce the space of Africa into "a landscape inhabited by 'beastly' natives and wild animals galore" (29), seeing its oldness and femininity as supernaturally horrifying and thereby distancing himself from it. Ayesha's invalidation of Holly's gaze is expressed clearly when she claims that the feeling of terror that the African land evokes in Holly could be just "a fiction of ignorance" (150). To be sure, Ayesha's voice does not come to the fore much from beginning to end, but there are some moments where Ayesha points to the sense of precariousness inherent in the British traveling subject's childish dream about the African land, suggesting that her Africa has its own natural history and therefore is not a fantastical space that is wide open to Europeans.

Reinterpreting colonial travel from this perspective, one might note that the colonial space cannot be easily reducible into an empty space that powerlessly awaits Europeans, contrary

to the latter's "infantile fantasy of omnipotence" (Brantlinger, "Empire" 258). Imperial adventure narratives written at this time hint at childish aspects of modern and civilized Europeans' mentality, for their descriptions of Britons' lived experience of Africa do not always showcase straightforward progress. As the title of Rudyard Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" (1899) indicates, the implementation of imperialism was followed by a significant amount of loss on the part of the colonizer. In the aforementioned essay "Geography and Some Explorers" (1924), Conrad briefly mentions a sense of exhaustion that he detects in Livingstone's writings by saying that he has always thought of Livingstone as "an old man . . . pacing wearily at the head of a few black followers along the reed-fringed lakes towards the dark native hut on the Congo headwaters" (159). To be sure, Livingstone's elderliness and weariness here signify that he is experienced and that his maturity separates him from his immature black followers. At the same time, however, it is necessary to consider that Conrad himself was in his final year of life when he wrote this essay, retrospectively looking back on how he envisaged Africa when he read Livingstone's texts as a little boy. It can therefore be said that the essay conveys Conrad's own feeling of "great melancholy" (159). The sense of loss here implies that the imperialist urge to achieve national regeneration in the colonial space is just an empty childhood dream.

The fictitiousness of the ideal of national regeneration through colonial travel is illustrated more evidently in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* than in Haggard's *She*. Conrad's novella ends with the British traveler's failure to colonize the African land, which confines him within the realm of his own childishness by stopping him from moving on to the next phase of life. In what follows, I take a closer look at the novella to better see how oldness present in the

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African landscape breaks down the British Empire's self-portrait of an eternally youthful and developing man.

Africa's Power of Age in Joseph Conrad's Text

It was in the 1880s that Conrad started English life as a British citizen[26] and began writing for the English-speaking reader. Conrad's fiction, with its nautical settings, was a timely response to New Imperialism. His works were published in popular magazines and newspapers and read and reviewed extensively. Throughout his successful writing career in Britain, however, Conrad never stopped thinking of himself as "the spoiled adopted child of Great Britain" (Author's note 64). He was always sharply aware that he was regarded as an outsider in Britain.

Yet it is this keen sense of the psychological distance between Conrad and British insiders that makes his adventure writing different from other British writers'. At the close of the century, Conrad witnessed how England still glorified youth and speculated about its future with no decline, setting up youthful progress as a national norm. At this time, adventure narratives offered nostalgic retrospection about the past of civilization, through which they aimed to overcome the present fear of degeneration and bring a regenerative force to the Empire for its future development. To be sure, Conrad also used this particular genre, but Conrad's adventure writing differs from other adventure texts, given that it does not merely suggest an interaction between past and present as a shortcut to the Empire's regeneration. For instance, Conrad's narrator and protagonist Marlow—who narrates other well-known works by this author such as *Youth* (1898) and *Lord Jim* (1900)—in *Heart of Darkness* seems to be quite similar to other

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[26] Conrad left his homeland, Poland, at the age of sixteen and embarked on a career at sea.

heroes in adventure fiction inasmuch as he speaks about both his own past overseas experience as a young imperial agent and the past of European civilization. Yet there is something skeptical about Marlow's nostalgia. It becomes difficult for the reader to avoid the awareness that the text reinstates the imperialist ideology because of this sense of skepticism, which arises from the older Marlow's self-consciousness about his past enthusiasm about colonial travel in Africa. In other words, Marlow's approach to the Inner Station in Congo obviously unfolds as a colonial adventure narrative, but in reconstructing his own youth, the older Marlow indicates that he has encountered the heart of darkness in the minds of European men such as Kurtz—who is an ivory trader and chief of the trading post—rather than in the African jungle during his arduous journey. By betraying that the heart of darkness is not necessarily placed in Africa, the novella challenges the developmental ideology of imperialism although it employs the frameworks of adventure fiction.

Nevertheless, as Chinua Achebe's well-known analysis of *Heart of Darkness* asserts, Conrad's readers cannot but notice that Conrad also tends to use Africa as "the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (783). Achebe's thought is telling, considering that Africa in *Heart of Darkness* serves as an abstract and imaginary concept that reflects Europeans' conventional understanding of Africa as a spatial marker for degeneration. In many ways, the novella's treatment of Africa seems to consort well with Stanley's phrase "the Dark Continent," used in his 1878 book *Through the Dark Continent*.

The sharp contrast between European light and African darkness is illustrated in the opening scene of the novella. In comparing and contrasting the River Thames and the Congo

River, Marlow opens his narrative by saying that "I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago. . . . Light came out of this river" (70). Achebe claims that this opening scene highlights how the River Thames is now modernized, free from the dark stage of pre-civilization, whereas the Congo River does not show any sign of modern civilization, being trapped in the past (783). Evidently, Marlow has a tendency to draw a line between modern England and pre-modern Africa. It is made clear that his narration takes place in London, the center of modernity, which is no longer dominated by darkness. In particular, his remark that "darkness was here yesterday" highlights that the British Empire has broken away from the past, whereas the Africa that he will soon talk about has not yet made linear progress toward modern civilization, being still enclosed within the bounds of pre-civilization (70).

Marlow's initial zeal for colonial travel apparently showcases the Orientalist view of history. Russell West-Pavlov's analysis of spatiality in fiction suggests that in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad tends to endorse the ideology of the non-European world as "a place without history" (West-Pavlov 13). Marlow's boyhood "passion for maps" and for the "many blank spaces on the earth" indeed points to the ways in which the target readers of *fin-de-siècle* imperial adventure tales—boys—would shape their understanding of the world with the help of those narratives (73). What is implied in the depiction of Marlow's boyhood is that he has developed his identity as a potential imperial agent, who assigns new meanings to the blank spaces from the Eurocentric perspective. Marlow's childhood enthusiasm for imperial expansion thus indicates that he has started to learn how to impose "a Eurocentric view of space" upon non-European spaces on the map of the world (West-Pavlov 28).

Significantly, this Eurocentric way of spatial thinking defines Africa as a vacant space, problematizing its lack of high civilization. Thinking of Africa as a symbol of primitiveness, the European travelers in adventure fiction focus only on its natural landscape, which they can easily label as dark, vast, and wild, not on the history of its local inhabitants. That is, in placing European civilization at the true center of the world, the height of mankind's progress, the European traveler does not take an interest in Africans' own life and culture. Thus Marlow does not give a full account of the actual reality in Congo. Instead, he abstracts the African continent into a backdrop, which highlights the European character's thoughts and feelings arising from his temporary engagement in this empty continent as a whole. Even though Marlow comments on the abused African slaves of the Belgian colonial enterprise, it still seems that he generally reduces Africa to a jungle without human civilization, marked by overgrown forests. This tendency hints at the belief that the primal darkness has remained intact for a long time, not influenced by civilization.

However, when the older Marlow retrospectively speaks about his strenuous voyage from beginning to end, it is made apparent to the reader that both Marlow and Kurtz encounter their own degeneration, not confirming their mastery over this space eventually. Within the process of their degeneration, the natural landscape of Africa itself serves as a major character. The role of the African landscape in the older Marlow's retrospection is to tell his British listeners how some qualities unique to it elusively escape the European traveler's dominion. As Octavio Paz puts it, a landscape in fiction functions not merely as "the background or the physical setting" but also as "the principal character" (15). It is presented as "something that is alive" and "an idea of man and the cosmos" (Paz 15). Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère also points out that the

African landscape becomes "humanized" toward the end of *Heart of Darkness* in ways that reverse the process that Marlow and Kurtz gradually lose vitality (186). Reflected in Marlow's eyes, the African jungle is reconfigured as a character as important as himself or Kurtz—an antagonist who disrupts the European protagonist's straightforward approach to its inner space. For this reason, even though Conrad does not enter into details of African ways of life, he gives voice to the landscape of Africa, emphatically depicting how its power complicates the European adventurers' pursuance of progress and further brings about their degeneration. Hence in the course of the novella, Conrad leads Marlow to repetitively speak about the hidden force of the physical landscape in Africa, which the latter has not expected to see since his childhood.

The change in Marlow's perception of the African space starts to be on display when he prepares boarding. Looking at another map of Africa here, he fixes his eyes on the image of darkness, located at the center of the continent. As opposed to the maps with many "blank spaces" (73) that caught his eye during his childhood, this "large shining" map shows various colored areas occupied by multiple European empires (76). Yet this sense of colorfulness present in Europe's colonization of the African space soon becomes meaningless when Marlow begins to pay attention to what lies at the core of the colored spaces. Indeed, Marlow looks at the dark image of the Congo River, "fascinating" and yet "deadly" (76), which is far from colorful and above all evokes a sense of death in him. This scene foreshadows Marlow's later discovery of darkness in his encounter with Kurtz at the Inner Station. The younger Marlow has started to be aware of the existence of innate darkness, of which he does not know how to make sense at this stage.

Apart from darkness, Marlow finds an impression of poisonousness as well. In emphasizing that the Congo River is "fascinating" and "deadly" at once, Marlow adds that it looks "like a snake" to him (76). In the eyes of the figure of the European traveler, the River that resembles a snake is ominous for at least two reasons. First of all, the conventional European perception of a snake as moral degeneration might make it difficult for him to see the snake-shaped river in a positive light, making him conscious about his exposure to the continent's degenerative force. Taking into account the Christian reading of the serpent, it comes as no surprise that Marlow mentions the snake in his description of how dangerous Africa is to him despite its charm. Not truly understanding the African symbolism of the snake, he likens the river to the snake as a positive figure, based on the Western way of thinking that the snake possesses a demonically seductive power. Secondly, however, the snake's symbolism in Africa *per se* can be problematic to Europeans. Within the African system of mythological belief, the snake has a boundless ability to generate life ceaselessly. Africans believed that the snake owns regenerative force,[27] for they interpreted its twisted and coiled shape as symbolizing its ability to reproduce life over and over again, not adhering to the law of linear temporal progression. This understanding of the snake's circular shape does not fit the conventional European ideology of progress. In this light, Peter Childs asserts that the snake-shaped river in *Heart of Darkness* functions to anticipate a failure of the traveling subject's linear progress in Africa (108). To be sure, in drawing an analogy between the Congo River and a snake at the early stage of his

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[27] Snakes have been regarded as the object of worship in many regions, especially Africa. See Wilfrid D. Hambly's study on "The Serpent in African Belief and Custom" (1929).

narration, Marlow has started to vaguely sense difficulties involved in placing Africa within the Eurocentric framework of values here.

Upon his arrival in Africa, Marlow continues to perceive the disparity between his romanticized notion of heroic adventure and the physical reality of Africa, which is not in effect a blank space. Admittedly, Marlow's initial confidence is not completely gone, as indicated by his remark that Africa is "before you—smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage, and always mute with an air of whispering, Come and find out" (79). Marlow still thinks of Africa as a mysterious space that awaits the arrival of light from European empires. Yet his expectation collapses once he discovers "[s]ettlements some centuries old" (80). The significance of the settlements here could be interpreted in two ways. First, they tell Marlow that the dark continent is not just "a colossal jungle" without any traces of human civilization (80). The presence of the settlements suggests that the continent cannot be reduced to a jungle without a history of human progress, which has been dominated by tropical forest only, for it has already been exposed to numerous civilizations. It is not an empty space, which is wide open to the implementation of Marlow's boyhood idealism. Secondly, it is also noticeable that these settlements do not integrate well into the African landmass, which is "still no bigger than pinheads on the untouched expanse of their background" (80). The fact that the settlements have not thrived in the continent for centuries emphasizes that the power of the African natural world has resisted the imperialist impulse to go back to the beginning of human civilization and conquer the state of primitiveness. Overall, the failure of the settlements weakens Marlow's boyhood belief in the inevitability of the European adventurer's progress toward the center of the ahistoric jungle. Africa is not historyless, but the history of civilization in the continent has been

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invalidated by its natural landscape, which has its own history that is much longer than any civilization's.

Marlow continues to notice the discordance between European civilization and the African natural environment. For example, when Marlow discovers that there are "paths, everywhere; a stamped-in network of paths spreading over the empty land" (87), Conrad suggests that the paths are now meaningless because human beings have left. Furthermore, the reason that "[t]he population had cleared out a long time ago" is Europeans' ruthless exploitation of African people, which has been performed in the name of civilization (87). Hence Marlow implies that the force of European civilization has caused desolation in this land, which has its own long history of being rich in natural resources.

In so doing, Marlow also depicts "the ruins of grass walls" as "pathetically childish" in discussing the decay of civilization in the African land (88). It might seem ambiguous to the reader whom Marlow specifically has in mind as the subject of "pathetically childish" degeneration. That is, it could be either the grass-covered walls that have been left out there aimlessly or the Europeans whose flaunted ideal of progress has led to the destruction of the physical surrounding. However, the use of the term "childish" here can be aligned with Marlow's later characterization of Kurtz's condition as "contemptibly childish" (147), which indicates that Kurtz undergoes degeneration, losing his intellectual maturity and exhibiting some childish degeneracy. Yoked together, these two uses of "childish" illustrate that Conrad employs the term when he has to say something about European degeneration. In this sense, "the ruins of grass walls" seem "childish" inasmuch as they are the destructive result of the Europeans' childish romanticization of colonial travel, which has led them to arbitrarily conceptualize the African

space as a laboratory for their own limitless growth at the cost of its local inhabitants and natural environment.

As Marlow gets closer to the Inner Station, he delves deeper into the power of the African land and sees more clearly that the history of human civilization is much shorter than that of the African natural landscape. This realization is articulated well in Robert Pogue Harrison's reading of the novella, in which he suggests that Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* when "a new epoch of planetary conquest" opened up in ways that "amassed unprecedented means for a totalized dominion over the earth" (142). Since the Enlightenment, human beings' ascent toward a mature stage of civilization has been premised on their continuous effort to achieve mastery of nature in rational ways.[28] This thought was still influential in nineteenth-century European empires, which tried to reinvent numerous tropical forests on the earth as potential places for civilization, "useful for many human purposes" (Harrison 12). To be sure, Conrad's depiction of Marlow's boyhood expectation of the European conquest of the planet fits this agenda, but as his narrator's journey continues, it becomes axiomatic that the European man cannot establish control over the wildness of the planet; older and more powerful than he, the planet makes him leave the mature stage of civilization and retrogress "back to the earliest beginnings of the world" (105). Marlow thus says that "the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion" (92). Even though the European

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[28] The Enlightenment idea of human beings as master and possessor of nature was developed with René Descartes's argument about scientific thinking, which is illustrated in Part VI in *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth* (1637).

invasion still seems to have some "fantastic" aspects to Marlow, he feels that the "silent wilderness" already waits for the Europeans to reach the limit to growth.

When Marlow finally arrives at the Inner Station and meets Kurtz, he becomes fully aware of Kurtz's mental and physical degeneration. Kurtz is originally called "an emissary of pity, and science, and progress" (94), but by the time Marlow meets with him, the degenerate Kurtz is dying. Kurtz's degeneration results from the fact that he has exposed his own savagery in "raid[ing] the country" that he defines as less civilized (131), reigning over native Africans, and exploiting their natural resources.[29] Most of all, his degeneration culminates in his "contemptibly childish" behavior that he displays right before his death (147). Still expecting "kings [to] meet him at railway-stations on his return from some ghastly Nowhere, where he intended to accomplish great things," Kurtz firmly believes that "there will be no limits to the recognition of your ability" (147). In this sense, Conrad's second use of "childish" here suggests that childishness is a sign of degeneracy specific to Europeans, who are incapable of finding problems in the excessive pursuance of their own progress, dreaming about establishing complete dominion over the colonial land.

Interestingly, in vividly describing Kurtz's degeneration into an immature and vulnerable subject, Marlow juxtaposes the amount of Kurtz's remaining vitality with the speed of water current in the Congo River: "The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress; and Kurtz's life was

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[29] As Brantlinger puts it in *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (2011), Kurtz's degeneration is a negative version of "going native" (68). It indicates that the imperial race experiences "a permanent change of behavior and culture" in the colonial space (67), not performing the self-imposed task of civilization.

running swiftly too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart into the sea of inexorable time" (146).

Considering that the heart of darkness is located not only at the Central Station but also within

Kurtz's mentality, Marlow here draws an analogy between the brown water current and the

European's life force—Kurtz's heartbeat—and emphatically suggests that the Congo River

moves much faster and stronger than either Marlow's "upward progress" or Kurtz's decrepit

heart. Underlining that Kurtz's life force is "swiftly" exhausted by the energy of the river, the

above passage pinpoints the fatal result of Kurtz's failed conquest of nature. It implies that the

failure has been caused by the powerfulness of the African natural environment, which has its

own history that is much older than the European civilization.

Notably, the African space's own historicity reminds the Europeans of the vastness of

geological time, in which their temporary interruption looks insignificant. In fact, as Patricia

Murphy notes, there was noticeably a "profound interest in temporality" among Victorians

sparked by such influential studies on evolution and devolution as Charles Lyell's book

Principles of Geology (1830–33) and Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) (12). In touching

on the vast temporal span on a geological level, compared to which human life span is almost

invisible, both Lyell and Darwin prompted Victorians to open their eyes to their own

vulnerability within the geological history of the earth. Reading the role of African geographies

in *Heart of Darkness* in this light, it can be said that it brings to Victorians' attention that the

history of their own civilization is powerless in the presence of the African landscape. The

novella illustrates that the Congo River's energetic movement is incomparably more forceful

than both Marlow's approach to the center and Kurtz's remaining life. This unsettling aspect of

the African landscape in *Heart of Darkness* evokes a new sense of spatiotemporal thinking,

which does not conform to the conventional way of highlighting the colonial space's inability to achieve evolutionary progress. Sten Pultz Moslund similarly points out that Conrad opens "a space in which the earth comes to speak in language" in such a way as to present how Africa's preservation of mankind's childhood silences the Europeans, who have tried to take advantage of the space as a site for their own regeneration (108). This line of thought emphasizes that the colonizer could be indeed colonized by the essence of what he has planned to marginalize, the prehistoric temporality inherent in the physical environment of Africa.

At the end of the novella, Kurtz's degeneration is passed on to Marlow. Even after his return to Brussels, "the sepulchral city" (150),[30] Marlow also experiences mental and physical decline. When the older Marlow says that it is not his "strength" but "imagination" that needed to be taken care of (150), he makes visible to the reader that his suffering stems from his realization of the disparity between his childhood fantasy and the physical reality of Africa. Marlow's memory of the African space and Kurtz haunts him continuously in this city, making him have "no clear perception of what it was [he] really wanted" (152). Marlow therefore never stops feeling oppressed by the power of African nature, specified as "the gloom of the forests, the glitter of the reach between the murky blends, the beat of the drum, regular and muffled like the beating of a heart—the heart of a conquering darkness" (153). In having the dark primitiveness of the African landscape invade the center of high civilization in Europe, the novella confirms the collapse of the Europeans' boyish imagining of Africa as the opposite of their own civilization. Likewise, when the older Marlow finishes his story in London, Conrad

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[30] The city refers to Brussels, but its namelessness lets the reader think of it as representing any European metropolis.

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again draws a connection between London's "tranquil waterway" and "the uttermost ends of the earth" to highlight that "the heart of an immense darkness" can be present at the very center of European civilization (158).

In conclusion, in slowing down the speed of the Europeans' progress and accelerating their decline on both mental and physical levels, *fin-de-siècle* literary representations of Africa exerts its prehistoric power to invalidate the European traveler's gaze to confine it in the realm of the past. Admittedly, most imperial adventure narratives seem to use the African space as an ideological battleground on which the hierarchy between European maturity and African immaturity is reinstated. However, even in representative adventure narratives such as Haggard's *She*, we can see that the landscape of Africa is humanized in such a way as to emasculate the British traveling subject's childish dream about imperial conquest. This quality is more clearly illuminated in Conrad's fiction. In *Heart of Darkness*, it is European empires that need such earthly primitiveness as a decisive symbol of degeneration, which they wish to overcome for their own imperial regeneration. Onto this space devoid of human civilization, the Europeans project their own anxiety of decline and separate the modern present in Europe from the pre-historic past in Africa. Nevertheless, although the Europeans' gaze arbitrarily restructures the continent's natural environment as one that is still trapped in a pre-civilized planetary condition, it is true that the pre-historicity of the African landscape turns out, subversively, to be more powerful than the history of the European civilization. Overall, during the course of imperial adventure, it becomes clear that the old African landscape is the most vigorous character, invalidating the imperial agent's immature fantasy of eternal progress in ways that shed light on his vulnerability to degeneration.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW/OLD WOMAN'S YOUTH AND AGE

New Woman narratives tend to gender the degeneration question in their exploration of

the life course of the New Woman and/or the Old Woman, whose experiences of youth and age

greatly differ from the male adventurers' in imperial adventure fiction discussed in the previous

chapter. When the New Woman emerged in the 1890s, Victorian critics took an interest in two

aspects of her newness: premature age and youth. That is, although the New Woman's

progressivism made them recognize her youthfully revolutionary spirit, they saw her as not only

young but also prematurely aged. As H. S. Scott and E. B. Hall indicate in "The Character Note"

on the New Woman in *The Cornhill Magazine* (1894), she "looks older than she really is" (365).

Scott and Hall here highlight the New Woman's decline rather than her progress, suggesting that

the New Woman's failure "to prove that woman's mission is something higher than the bearing

of children and the bringing them up" led to early-onset aging (368). Their portrayal of the New

Woman is intriguing because they make an imaginary connection between youth and age to

underscore that the New Woman's incessant conflict with society deprives her of a chance to age

naturally. Their assumption is that the New Woman's attack on patriarchal society made an

appearance too early, and she thus came to exhaust her power too early at a point when her

revolution did not yet flourish. Blanche A. Crackanthorpe's 1894 article "The Revolt of the

Daughters" similarly contends that New Women "long for the 'unexpected,' not always the

'properly introduced'" (24). In these authors' analyses of the New Woman, her new ideal is

associated with unripeness and unpreparedness.

In spite of the unbreakable link between the New Woman and premature age, the origin of her newness is youth. Especially to woman writers, the New Woman's youth is crucial to her claim about women's rebellious power. Because the New Woman is youthfully revolutionary, she does not allow herself to stop at performing the tasks that had been passed down from generation to generation in England. In her 1898 essay "The New Woman and the Old," Grand conceptualizes the New Woman specifically as "a young creature" who is also "a stronger, better, more beautiful creature than the blockhead majority can conceive" (466). Here Grand contrasts the progressive New Woman with the Old Woman who is older and more conservative than her younger counterpart, defining herself only in relation to men and "heap[ing] abuse upon the New Woman" ("New Woman" 466). Grand highlights the New Woman's youthfully revolutionary character by suggesting that she "expos[es] the sores of Society in order to diagnose its diseases, and find a remedy for them," unlike her older sister who "ridicules everything to which she is unaccustomed" ("New Woman" 467). Grand's feminist rhetorical strategy takes advantage of cross-generational tension, for she identifies new womanhood as youthfulness and rebellious spirit.

Literary critics have discussed the ways in which age is enmeshed in the ideological formation of the New Woman figure in the late nineteenth century. Karen Chase explains the relationship between the New Woman and youth in her study of old age in the Victorian era, emphasizing that the New Woman's "adult act of resistance" was reduced to "an adolescent tantrum" (199).[31] Similarly, Sally Ledger's analysis of the mother-daughter relationship in Mona

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[31] Gertrude Hemery's "The Revolt of the Daughters: An Answer by One of Them" and Sarah M. Amos's "The Evolution of the Daughters"—both of which were published in 1894—posed a

Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) reads its main character as a young rebel whose avoidance of feminine duty signals "modernity," which makes her stand against the older generation—especially, her mother who opposes modern women's advancement—that do not seem to give helpful guidance to the younger generation (27).

These discussions of the New Woman's youthful dynamism interpret the New Woman's fights against patriarchal society through the lens of generational tension at the turn of the century. The *fin-de-siècle* cultural landscape raised the question of how one can resolve the tension between youthful progress and old tradition. As Glenn Clifton argues, *fin-de-siècle* literary fiction's deep interest in youth was well illustrated, especially when it "position[ed] itself against the grain through images of generational conflict" (286). For example, in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Dorian's anxiety about physical deterioration and obsession with eternal youth lead to his refusal to join the older generation. Wilde's portrayal of Dorian illuminates the fact that Decadent writers "helped solidify the image of the *avant-garde* as symbolically youthful—an association that is still with us—whatever the age of the actual people who produce innovative works" in their efforts to break free of the previous generation (Clifton 286). It was indeed necessary for both male and female Decadent writers to rhetorically place their literary works in the sociocultural context of the generational change at the turn of the century. Yet the situation that female Decadent writers generally faced was highly complicated because they had to push back against not only the previous generation but also the present patriarchal society. In her analysis of the relationship between the New Woman and the

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question about the difference between the mother and the daughter in terms of their engagement with social evolution toward the future.

Decadent movement, Elaine Showalter stresses that many New Woman writers offered "a feminist point of view on issues of sexuality, aesthetics, 'decadence', and quest" (viii). This is not to say that every piece of New Woman literature represented *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, but it is notable that New Woman texts, like other Decadent texts of the time, take a great interest in the generational conflict and that this conflict symbolizes the New Woman writer's feminist attempts to reinvent women's social position in such a way as to challenge the established patriarchal order of the *fin-de-siècle* society.

However, in focusing on the generational conflict between youth and age, this line of thought does not bring to light a sense of continuity in the New Woman's life course as a whole. Indeed, a close examination of New Woman narratives reveals that they do not frame their female characters as continually young or progressive. For example, New Woman characters' youthful rebellion often ends up in failure, and consequently, they age and die prematurely. It is thus worth looking into how New Woman fiction presents the transition from youth to age in the female life course. Unlike other Victorian conventional coming-of-age narratives, New Woman narratives have a tendency to tap into the female protagonist's seemingly unsuccessful life course, marked by her incapacity to smoothly integrate herself into the old-fashioned patriarchal society. While nineteenth-century Bildungsromane present the male protagonist's straightforward developmental progress as a finished product of the successful reconciliation of youthful resistance and mature acceptance of constrained societal roles,[32] *fin-de-siècle* New

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[32] Franco Moretti's analysis of the Bildungsroman points to the genre's conservatism, in which a reconciliation of youth and maturity becomes a key to modern social progress. Moretti writes: "Only by curbing [youth's] intrinsically boundless dynamism, only by agreeing to betray to a certain extent its very essences, only thus, it seems, can modernity be represented" (6).

Woman narratives depict the female protagonist's inability to make progress or overcome her

conflict with society. According to Christy Rishoi, this inability arises because *fin-de-siècle* New

Woman protagonists voluntarily "choose to remain marginalized at the end of their texts" (64),

not adhering to a male paradigm endorsed by the conventional Bildungsroman in order to make

their own paradigm. Most of all, I consider this female-centered paradigm as anti-developmental,

for it dismantles one's linear progression from youth to maturity, problematizing the ideological

boundary between progress and decline. In other words, New Woman narratives of the female

life course demonstrates how women's anti-developmental life course disapproves the male-

oriented ideology of linear progress.

In this article, I discuss two ways in which anti-developmental New Woman narratives

reinvent the traditional coming-of-age plot by reconfiguring age categories in their descriptions

of the female life course in the late nineteenth century: premature aging and rejuvenation. First of

all, I use Margaret Morganroth Gullette's notion of aging as "change, history—more complex

than a simple minus or a plus" (10). Seeing aging in New Woman texts as a multilayered cultural

reflection of change and history, which cannot be reduced to either progress or decline, within

the context of the late nineteenth-century patriarchal society, I suggest that the unnatural

transformation of youth into age dismantles the ideology of unswerving development present in

conventional Bildungsromane. Thus the New Woman's premature decline plot subverts the male

subject's advancement toward social integration, which is based on his successful reconciliation

of youth and maturity, and diagnoses the problems inherent in the male-centered ideology of

developmental progress from the female perspective. I also revisit Teresa Mangum's "rejuvenescence fiction," which "resist[s] chronologies that pressure conventional plots" in exploring the aged heroine's progress in later life ("Unnatural Youth" 78). I follow these age critics' approaches in reading how New Woman fiction invalidates a natural progression from youth to maturity. Yet I take a step further to address the issue particularly within the *fin-de-siècle* context by considering New Woman narratives as anti-developmental narratives of aging, in which the traditional sense of harmonious advancement from youth to maturity is disrupted by the female protagonist's lived experience of degeneration and regeneration in her married life.

In what follows, I begin by situating the New Woman in the generational conflict to explain the implications of the fictional dissolution of age boundaries in the anti-developmental life course of women in *fin-de-siècle* England. The article particularly concerns itself with two literary texts that address the issue of female aging: Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) and Eliza Lynn Linton's *The Second Youth of Theodora Desanges* (1900). Grand presents the ways in which a by-product of Englishmen's advancement—in this case syphilis—causes young women's premature degeneration. She looks at the downside to the male-oriented agenda of linear progress through her depiction of the young female characters' failure to resolve the conflict with and survive in patriarchal society, faced with lack of a role model that they can rely on. Linton's *Second Youth*, in contrast, dramatizes the regeneration of an Old Woman who is not only biologically but culturally old, but it too reinvents the preexistent form of developmental coming-of-age narratives inasmuch as it lets this rejuvenated Old Woman character blur the distinction between youth as progress and age as decline. In so doing, she bridges the past, present, and future and negotiates generational conflict by guiding the young onto the right path.

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Fin-de-siècle Generational Tension

As Beth Palmer puts it, the emergence of the New Woman itself signaled "a break from the past" because the term *New Woman* reflects the growing interest about women's new status and role within the shifting gender relations in late Victorian England (158). After Sarah Grand popularized the term in her attempts to support women's self-assertion through feminist activities such as dress reform and the suffrage movement, the New Woman was developed into cultural and literary representations, leading the debates about how to modernize the old-fashioned societal order in ways that would mitigate male degeneration in the late Victorian era. Most of all, seeing marriage as "a frame for most women's lives" in late Victorian society (Mangum, *Married* 7), Grand recommended that the New Woman redefine her role within the family and society. In her 1894 essay "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," Grand states that "the mothers of the English race are too strong to allow themselves to be insulted by the reimposition of another most shocking degradation upon their sex" and thus puts on display the New Woman's potential for challenging the established male-centered order of the Victorian world (276).

In general, New Woman writers used the generational tension in their novelistic characterizations of women being in conflict with society. In other words, like conventional male-centered coming-of-age fiction, *fin-de-siècle* New Woman fiction illuminates how the main character's relationship with the older generation or society as a whole changes—or stays the same—as she ages. However, New Woman fiction fundamentally disproves the progressive ideology, for it assigns gender aspects to the heroine's life course within patriarchal society, shedding light on how difficult it is for a married woman to make progress and age gracefully.

It is thus important to note that New Woman narratives handle youth and age differently than traditional Bildungsromane. In effect, the conventional male protagonist's journey of life is predicated upon the ways in which he succeeds in settling into society as he ages. Franco Moretti's analysis of the implications of youth in the nineteenth-century Bildungsroman points out that modern progress is dependent upon how successfully a young individual's conflict with society is resolved in ways that permit his "intrinsically boundless dynamism" to develop into a socially agreeable form of maturity in its representation of the nineteenth-century ideology of progress (6). The developmental coming-of-age plot revolves around the harmonious development of both the individual and society, which happens when the latter successfully assimilates the former's youthful progress into collective progress. That is, the seasonal progress of the young protagonist in society necessarily matures into modernity, which is not dangerously revolutionary and accordingly reinforces the preexisting social ideals of progress, in the conventional developmental narrative. Jill Ehnenn concludes that the genre's interest in the connection of "[p]ersonal progress and social norms" is the reason why it became "the most influential literary form" of Victorian England (154), which had been obsessed with ideas of social advancement since the Enlightenment.

However, what lies behind the development of the youthful energy into socially productive maturity is the unresolved generational conflict between the young individual and the old-fashioned society. In this sense, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Bildungsroman evolved into a literary form that not merely reflects but also revisits the ideology of progress. As Jed Esty observes, this new form is far from developmental inasmuch as it "exposes and disrupts the inherited conventions of the bildungsroman in order to criticize bourgeois values and to

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reinvent the biological novel, but also to explore the contradictions inherent in mainstream developmental discourses of self, nation, and empire" (3).[33] This shift was related to the historical context inasmuch as late Victorians had begun to worry that progress would no longer be feasible. A heightened anxiety that not only modern society but also humans could devolve increased, as evinced by Max Nordau's notion of degeneration as the generational conflict between old and new.[34] Nordau's diagnosis of *fin-de-siècle* degeneracy indicates that Europe at the end of the century overall witnessed "the end of an established order" (5). Most of all, the end of the late nineteenth century seemed to be the end of the developmental ideology. Throughout the nineteenth century, Victorians had a firm belief in the inevitability of unstoppable progress. Yet toward the close of the century, their increased anxiety about degeneration made them question the preexisting order of the world, which had been shaped under the influence of the ideology of progress. Hence within this context, the conventional Bildungsroman was replaced by a rather anti-developmental genre at this time. The *fin-de-siècle* version is anti-developmental inasmuch as the aging protagonist does not necessarily reach a meaningful ending, unable to terminate his conflict with the old-fashioned world.

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[33] Esty's analysis of the anti-developmental impulse in *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (2012) is focused on national/colonial politics in modernist fiction, but I argue that it is already present in gender politics in *fin-de-siècle* New Woman fiction.

[34] As I have discussed in the introductory chapter, Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892) identifies a wide variety of sociocultural symptoms of degeneration as a by-product of modern civilization, industrialization, and urbanization at the end of the nineteenth century.

These twofold anxieties were expressed by many writers of the day. In his 1913 book *The Eighteen Nineties: A Review of Art and Ideas at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, Holbrook Jackson writes:

> It was an era of hope and action. People thought anything might happen; and for the young, any happening sufficiently new was good. . . . It was a time of the experiment. Dissatisfied with the long ages of convention and action which arose out of precedent, many set about testing life for themselves. The new man wished to be himself, the new woman threatened to live her life. The snapping of apron-strings caused consternation in many a decent household, as young men and maidens were suddenly inspired to develop their own souls and personalities. Never, indeed, there was a time when the young were so young or the old so old. (30)

In explaining the dynamic of societal changes at the close of the nineteenth century through the lens of the change of generations, Jackson contends that the ideological conflict between old and new was fierce among late Victorians. In addition, a topical issue of degeneration came to play a significant role in providing the conditions that contributed to the growing tension between progressive and traditional societal forces. This tension animates the cross-generational conflict in *fin-de-siècle* New Woman narratives. In depicting the battle between different generations, New Woman authors focused on the younger female generation's anxious desire to make progress, which they believed could markedly differentiate their path from that of predecessors whom they saw as degenerate.

In my discussion of the generational conflict in New Woman fiction, I focus on how New Women figure themselves as experiencing degenerative symptoms as a by-product of the male-

dictated progressive ideology. This depiction of pathology was related to the social atmosphere in the 1890s, in which confusion over the role of women increased. As the Woman Question was interconnected with biological issues such as Darwinism and eugenics, distinctions between men and women were explained from various perspectives. For male thinkers, women's attempts at social emancipation could be an infraction of their naturally ordained duty—a sign of degeneration of the nation as a whole. However, New Woman writers believed that degeneration started with men who had shown mental and physical symptoms of corruption in implementing the ideology of linear progress in and out of England.[35] Hence they placed women's biological function as motherhood at the center of the nation, presenting it as a counterforce to male degeneration. Ellice Hopkins's 1899 book on womanhood asserts that the British Empire at the *fin de siècle* can be "saved by a solemn league and covenant of her women to bring back simplicity of life" (197). Hopkins's argument reflects the era's concern about "the moral decadence of England" (198). In providing an answer to this, Hopkins likens England to "the mighty mother of nations," feminizes the discourse around degeneration and regeneration, and suggests that the degenerative symptoms present in the entire Empire can be resolved when English women lead "the healing" of the nation (199).

This emphasis on how women's maternal influence can be of benefit to the entire nation pinpoints the female reversal of degeneration narratives in the late nineteenth century. Patricia Murphy notes that while the dominant male-centered discourse of the time period regarded degeneration as a product of "female devolution, contamination, unruliness, sexuality, and other

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[35] My earlier chapter on adventure fiction has explored the male imperial agent's degeneration.

assorted states to convey the sense that women are inherently and intensely dangerous," New

Woman writers reversed this understanding in their argument that "it is male—not female—

presence and intervention that set degeneration in motion" (172–73).[36] I find this point applicable

especially to Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* because she uses her female characters' life course as

a venue in which young wives and potential mothers as the new generation, after their domestic

exposure to the moral degeneration of English military men who have put into practice the

developmental ideology in performing the imperial task of civilization, question the established

order of the male-oriented world.

Moreover, the New Woman's problematization of male degeneration goes on to

dismantle the male subject's rather conservatively safe transition from youth to maturity in the

Bildungsroman. New Woman narratives bring into focus the female subject's conflict with *fin-

de-siècle* patriarchal society, showing that a stable progress on both individual and collective

levels is not easily achievable and that the individual's growth necessarily involves its incessant

resistance to rather than smooth integration into the old-fashioned order of the world. Hence,

contrary to the concept of modernity represented by the conventional protagonist of the

Bildungsroman, which emerges from the completion of the journey from rebellious youth to

governable maturity, the New Woman's modernity is built around an open-ended process of her

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[36] To name one instance of the dominance (and effects) of such thinking: Introduced in the 1860s, the Contagious Diseases Acts reflected an attempt to control venereal disease in the British military. They enacted compulsory examination of women suspected of being prostitutes, based on the assumption that women's diseased sexuality leads to collective degeneration on a national scale. Infuriated social reformers such as Josephine Butler launched a campaign against them, and in this climate, New Woman thinkers came to raise their voice against the male-oriented discourse of national degeneration and asserted that men's sexual licentiousness had diminished the possibility of regeneration.

lifelong resistance to the old-fashioned gender norms. Accordingly, the focus of New Woman narratives lies on the protagonists' lives after youth—specifically, after marriage. In their investigation of the New Woman protagonist's ongoing conflict and frustration, they do not present marriage as the peak of her life. Instead, marriage signals their incessant conflict with patriarchal society.

Literary representations of New Women in the generational conflict take various forms, but one of the most common forms is the characters' enervation in and beyond their married lives. Thomas Hardy's New Woman character Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) offers a good example of this premature female degeneration. At the end of the novel, this once modern woman is depicted as "staid and worn" (487), having used all her energy because of what she has gone through in her resistance to the oppression of conventional marriage. Interestingly, it is not unusual for New Woman narratives to describe their young heroines as exhausted after their ceaseless battle with society, which centers on their married lives. As Stephanie Forward points out, "the words 'weary' and 'weariness' appear repeatedly" in the feminist literature of the *fin-de-siècle* period in ways that highlight women characters' inevitable exhaustion in their married lives (5). Significantly, it is the conflict between the New Woman and society that causes the degeneration of the former, whose resistance becomes contained by the male-centered world.

The New Woman's Premature Aging

Most pertinent to this discussion is Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, as it offers a detailed analysis of married women's degeneration, which does not fit into the male-oriented linear development model. The novel interconnects the lives of three seemingly different young women—radical

Evadne Frayling, conservative Edith Beale, and mischievous Angelica Hamilton-Wells—to explore issues such as women's dress reform and financial and mental independence, asking whether women's personal fulfillment is possible in marriage and motherhood. Thus all three main characters' lived experiences of patriarchal norms as degeneration serve to undermine male authority. Especially through Evadne and Edith's confinement in their oppressive marriages to morally and sexually degenerate English military men, it becomes explicit that the former's premature degeneration are accelerated by the latter. Even Angelica, who adapts to her marriage in the end, does not straightforwardly comply with patriarchy inasmuch as her cross-dressing as a boy enables her to expose "the defects of patriarchal religion" (Heilmann, *New Woman* 59). In so doing, the novel provides the reader with a chance to examine the downside to the social agenda of advancement through these young Englishwomen's deterioration stories.

To begin with, the plots of Evadne and Edith, who lose their youthful spirit in their early twenties after encountering mental and physical deterioration in marriage, are focused on their unnatural decline, which happens within a specific cultural context. Hence their stories of aging after marriage are what the age critic Gullette would see as cultural "[a]ging through a particular century" (9). The logic behind the characters' early decline in marriage is closely tied to the late Victorian patriarchal culture. That is to say, Grand's portrayal of how marital oppression by representatives of the *fin-de-siècle* patriarchal culture accelerates her young female characters' aging subverts the chronologies of natural aging. The novel is anti-developmental inasmuch as it revolves around how its protagonists deteriorate in "the battle which women are waging against iniquity of every kind" (645). Though the novel starts with the main characters' childhood just as many other Victorian novels do, it does not present their marriage as a desirable destination that

young women should run toward. Instead, it devotes most of the chapters to describing how difficult it is for these young women to reconcile youth and maturity in their married lives as their male counterparts do in the conventional Bildungsroman.

Grand's 1897 interview with journalist Sarah Tooley on the significance of love in woman's life indicates that discourse around the New Woman necessarily touches on her entire life course, throughout which the New Woman is conceptualized in association with her age rather than youth. In the interview, Grand emphasizes that the suffering of married women will worsen as they get old when she states that "[t]he position of women in middle life and old age would be very sad and desolate" (168). I read Grand's emphasis as her attempt to broaden the temporal spectrum of the New Woman's resistance to society. By bringing into focus women's lifelong suffering in marriage and defining it as "retrogression," Grand asserts that women— whether young or old—are constantly in need of more "progress" toward their independence (Tooley 168). In other words, the New Woman ideals are not a finished product, which is premised on youthful progress that only the younger generation achieves. Rather, the New Woman's life course as a whole becomes a process of premature aging, which unfolds in tandem with her resistance to male degeneration.

What should also be noted about young women characters in Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* is that they mentally and physically deteriorate in unnatural ways—early and rapidly in their twenties. Throughout her description of this process, Grand lets her reader speculate on the ways in which the female subject ages in a specific cultural context. In particular, by having the female subject, incapable of steadily moving forward from youth to maturity, exhibit mental and physical signs of premature aging in her twenties, Grand deconstructs the developmental plot

applicable to the male subject. Her prematurely aged characters in *The Heavenly Twins* problematize the process by which a linear advancement from youth to maturity is completed.

Evadne and Edith's aging into wives and mothers points the reader toward the educational functionality of premature decline in New Woman fiction. Learning from one another's failed marriages, the young women in *The Heavenly Twins* become critics of the Victorian patriarchal norms that are imposed upon their lives after marriage. They educate themselves by closely reading women's common inevitable degeneration under patriarchy. For this reason, Grand's accounts of their lives are not simply organized around her heroines' adaptation to their problematic marriages. Their failure and frustration showcase *fin-de-siècle* women's attempts at reinvention of their roles in the male-oriented world.[37]

Hence it is important to look into Evadne's degeneration because it is the major plot through which readers as well as characters encounter the conflict between the New Woman and patriarchal society for the first time in the novel. Placed at the center of the three narratives, the Evadne plot revolves around the process whereby her mind deteriorates (4). Though the novel starts with Evadne's childhood and how it is shaped by her intelligence, it soon shifts its focus to her self-education, which happens "in such a silent way" (5). As Evadne's aging from a curious girl to a silent woman who keeps her thoughts to herself proceeds, she becomes a frustrated wife who is confined in a sexless marriage, eventually turning into a wearied mother who looks "ten years older" than her actual age (677). Evadne's narrative seems to follow the pattern of a

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[37] As Kate Flint proposes, in this respect New Woman fiction serves as a socially meaningful means of encouraging women readers not only to read each others' lives but also "to speak, to write, to define, to manage, and to change . . . society itself" (25).

conventional Bildungsroman inasmuch as it presents her journey from childhood to adulthood chronologically. Yet as her life unfolds, it becomes clear that this journey is not characterized by any noticeable development of the kind that a protagonist of the conventional coming-of-age narrative is usually expected to achieve. Evadne's longing for more knowledge and adventure is fulfilled only partially through her ceaseless reading of novels. The real life that she leads in her married life clearly has a patriarchal character. Accordingly, her rebellion against the old-fashioned world results in her painful decision at the end of the novel to "live on the surface of life" and "read nothing" (672). Thus Evadne's narrative can be seen as an anti-developmental narrative of a New Woman who struggles hard to integrate well into society by taking the prescribed role as a devoted wife and mother at the expense of her self-education.

Evadne's degeneration stems from the discrepancy between her ideals and reality, for her imaginary understanding of her future life does not go hand in hand with her actual experience of marriage. Evadne's childhood shows that her unusual intellectual curiosity does not allow her to adjust to the preexisting order; this order is supported by her father, who is "quite ignorant of the moral progress of the world at the present time, and ready to resent even the upward tendency of evolution when it presented itself to him in the form of any change, including, of course, changes for the better" (6). Evadne's potential as a progressive New Woman who pursues autonomy rather than selflessness manifests itself through a scene in which she decides to cancel her marriage to Colonel Colquhoun, who, along with other English military men such as Edith's husband Sir Mosley Menteith, has a history of sexually transmitted disease—syphilis—which embodies the moral and sexual corruption lurking behind the Empire's male-oriented advancement. Here nineteen-year-old Evadne is brave enough to figure out a way to protect

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herself and even her offspring from any risk of sexual disease, but as her parents reduce her

resistance to the marriage into a futile adolescent rebellion, thinking of her as "a most unnatural

child" (114), her rebellion is contained.[38] In fact, Evadne's unnatural marriage allows the reader

to think critically about the distinction between natural and unnatural. After she moves to Malta

with Colquhoun, the couple's mutual agreement to stay sexless comes to be ridiculed for its

unnaturalness. Even Evadne's desire to interact with many people at Malta is seen as unnatural

for a married woman in Victorian society. As opposed to other Victorian women who are defined

as "womanly" in conventional ways, she is viewed as "irresponsible," thus becoming "the

subject of common gossip" (218).

By describing in detail how Evadne's sexless marriage can be perceived as unnatural, the

novel emphasizes that Evadne's unnaturalness stems from her inability to reproduce. As

Angelique Richardson puts it, Evadne's unnaturalness reflects the late Victorian patriarchal

culture, in which women who were "cut off from their ordained social and sexual duties" were

"pathologized" and labeled "unnatural" (36). That is to say, within the patriarchal discourse that

defines women's reproduction of the future generation as naturally useful to the progress of

humanity and civilization, Evadne's inability to mature into a mother in her marriage to

Colquhoun is obviously far from normal. In addition, even from the feminist perspective of the

time, Evadne's sexual immaturity can be viewed as problematic in the *fin-de-siècle* world,

preoccupied with anxieties about degeneration and hopes for regeneration. Late Victorian

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[38] In his 1896 lecture on infantile syphilis, the physician J. A. Coutts suggests that a vast majority of syphilitic mothers had syphilitic husbands and discusses "the long persistence of the father's influence" upon children, saying that the infantile mortality rate was 56.6 percent in cases in which syphilis had come from the father (1026).

feminist critics such as Frances Swiney, in their scientific discourse of how women had contributed to the evolution of mankind, interpreted the natural reproduction that women can enact as mothers as the best way to alleviate the moral degeneration of the male-oriented civilization and to achieve "the regeneration of mankind" (56). In this respect, Evadne is not given an opportunity to perform her "holy and sublime" mission to lead "men to a purer and nobler morality" through her sexual union with her husband and the production of the future generation (Swiney 56).

As such, Evadne's unnatural immaturity in her married life highlights the New Woman's dilemma. That is, the New Woman's progressive belief in self-assertion along with her fresh energy cannot be fostered naturally when she is seen as incapable of enriching her potential as a progressive woman because she is confined within domestic roles. While Evadne as a child feels a strong dissatisfaction with women's living conditions under patriarchy after reading a plethora of books on romance and marriage, her further intellectual advancement is obstructed as she ages. She remains "an incomplete creature" in her marriage, unable to close the gap between her knowledge and her experience (Grand, *Heavenly Twins* 218). The New Woman's failure to complete her growth here indicates that she is likely to degenerate prematurely into a pathological state in a world where there is no room for newness. It is inevitable for Evadne to encounter aging unnaturally early because she "stop[s] progress" at the point of her early marriage, which makes her incapable of completing her own transition from youth to maturity (218).

Evadne's arrested development is followed by various pathological symptoms of degeneracy. Faced with the absence of "an outlet for her superfluous vitality as a girl," she

becomes "morbid and hysterical," trapped "in the unnatural state of celibacy" (350), which indicates that it is not Evadne but her sexless marriage that is so unnatural that it thwarts her natural aging into a mother. Her hysteria fits into Nordau's diagnosis of the social climate at the end of the century, in which frequent occurrence of hysteria is connected to a broader degeneration on a collective scale. Both hysteria and degeneration are definable as "states of fatigues and exhaustion" that anyone can experience when he or she struggles incessantly to adapt to the highly advanced civilization of the modern era (Nordau 42). Evadne's hysteria specifically embodies the social degeneration of women, whose self-realization is continuously inhibited within the patriarchal frame of marriage. The mentally diseased Evadne is "reduced to an existence of objectless contemplation," stuck in the gap between her ideals and reality, repeating "enervating" activities only, when she barely lives in the present but does not move toward the future (Grand, *Heavenly Twins* 350).

Evadne's mental deterioration never stops even when she opens up the second chapter of her life by marrying Galbraith, who tries to make her integrate well into the established order of Victorian marriage. In her twenties, she becomes a mother herself, but she rapidly turns into an invalid, deeply concerned about her child's future. Evadne's unstoppable deterioration mirrors her failure to put into practice the ideas about love and marriage that she has built. Though Evadne finally seems to be able to lead a productive life with her doctor-husband and child, Grand does not make her heroine neatly resolve the conflict. The pregnant Evadne writes to Galbraith: "I am haunted by a terrible fear. . . . You would not see that it is prophetic, as I do—in case of our death—nothing to save my daughter from Edith's fate [premature death from syphilis]—better both die at once" (665). Evadne's feeling of frustration comes from her

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prediction that the battle between the New Woman and male degeneration in the old-fashioned world will continue to happen. Overall, her transformation into a wife and mother involves the process of this New Woman character's degeneration—rather than development—into a semi-invalid who awaits nothing but her own death.

Moreover, Evadne's grave concern about her child, who she thinks might follow in Edith's or her baby's footsteps, shows that she epistemologically forms a connection among herself, her late friend Edith, and her unborn daughter in terms of their unfinished struggle within a world hostile to women's progress.[39] Evadne's understanding of her friend's marital tragedies brings into focus the New Woman's anxiety about the perpetuation of male degeneration into the future as well as the present. The novel makes this point clear with the example of Edith and her baby's unnaturally rapid degeneration, which originates from her syphilitic military husband Menteith. Grand points out that Menteith is not "the kind of repentant erring sinner" who might be saved, but "a miserable example of the result of uniting the spiritual or better part of human nature with the essentially animal or most degraded side of it" (277), thereby holding him accountable for the ongoing degeneration of his wife and child. While the baby "rapidly degenerate[s], and Edith herself [i]s a wreck" (277), Menteith does not manifest any pathological symptoms even though it is he who has contaminated his entire family. The degeneration of

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[39] The trope of wearied mothers as a predictor of how much suffering their children will encounter appears in other New Woman texts as well. George Egerton, in "The Spell of the White Elf," depicts a baby who is far from pretty with its already "wistful" eyes (97). George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893) portrays Monica Madden's untimely death after she gives birth to her "[p]oor, little child," whose vulnerability makes another woman character emotionally skeptical about its future in a world that is hostile toward what is new (325). Like that of Grand's female characters, Monica's deterioration stimulates the reader to think critically about the degeneration that is currently under way and to prepare for a better future.

Edith and her child is suggestive of "the *fin-de-siècle* predicate typifying the discourse of species deterioration," for Edith's "gray, ghastly, and old" maternal body will "never function as a viable reproductive vessel" (Murphy 191). The scene of Edith's death thereby gives the reader a chance to ruminate on the New Woman's inability to successfully function as a mother to next generations in the patriarchal world. Grand goes so far as to let the once docile Edith associate her own premature deterioration with the evils of patriarchy by telling her father that he represents "the arrangement of society which has made it possible for [her] and [her] child to be sacrificed in this way" and dismissing Menteith from the scene (300).

Edith's "horrible look of age," characterized by the "deep lines of suffering" marked upon her face in her death scene, comes as a shock to other young woman characters (300), for it reminds them of their own vulnerability in the present social climate. Edith's inability to recover her health here is depicted as more tragic than any other female character's enervation, considering that she, unlike rebellious Evadne, has easily accepted her role as a devoted wife and mother. Admittedly, Edith can be labeled as the Old Woman and Evadne as the New Woman. Yet as Ann Heilmann notes, they bear a resemblance to each other inasmuch as both of them "change dramatically as a result of their marital tragedies" and display pathological symptoms in the process of their decline under patriarchy ("Hysteric" 124). The similarity between old-fashioned Edith and progressive Evadne also lies in the fact that both of them not only experience but also detect the problem of the patriarchal character of life. Most of all, the early death of Edith's newborn, who is "old, old already, and exhausted with suffering" (289), haunts Evadne for the rest of her life because it constantly reminds her of how early both their own and succeeding generations can confront the end of the world unless moral degeneration is fixed. In

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highlighting the ways in which the two characters' lives of degeneration overlap each other, Grand lays the foundation for a bond between young women of the new generation, which enables them to diagnose each other's suffering and learn from each other.

The trope of premature aging reminds the reader as well as the characters that young women should prepare themselves for their lives after marriage because the onset of their aging is determined in the specific cultural context of patriarchal oppressions. In her 1898 article "At What Age Should Girls Marry?", Grand asserts that "[e]arly marriage mean[s] early ageing for women" (163). Grand emphasizes that girls should marry when they arrive at "years of discretion" ("What Age" 163), suggesting that they should have better knowledge about their married lives in patriarchy before rushing into marriage. Similarly, Ruth Lamb's 1898 text "In the Twilight" states that women can age gracefully when they "learn to grow old in such wise that each year's passage means . . . progress" (219), but it was obviously not easy for many Victorian women to educate themselves on the subject of aging. In this sense, Grand recognizes the absence of gracefully aging women in Victorian society and speaks about "[a] very old lady" who "abdicate[s] all claim to youth" and "g[ives] up any pursuit which might bring upon her the reproach of youngness" by "cut[ting] off her own hair and wear[ing] a cap and front" at the age of thirty ("What Age" 163). The "old lady" who wallows in self-pity here is used as a counterexample to "a well-educated self-reliant modern maid" that Grand advocates for ("What Age" 163). Grand's sarcastic depiction of the performatively old woman indicates that she, incapable of stopping the New Woman's early degeneration, interrupts their progress toward the reconciliation of youth and maturity. It is because the old woman's version of maturity is built around her performance of agedness in such a way as to reinforce patriarchal norms imposed

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upon the female life course. For her younger sisters, however, this performance is another form

of mindlessly accepting the established order of the patriarchal world where there is no place for

the New Woman and succeeding generations' advancement.

New Woman writers often problematize the lack of a good role model in the older

generation, on whom the younger generation can rely. Indeed, the absence is of key importance

to the ideological construction of the New Woman figure. The values represented by the New

Woman were perceived as being in marked contrast to those protected by the relatively older

woman. That is, in order to justify their attempts to achieve autonomy and sexual liberation, the

New Woman had to define her feminist ideals as new by revisiting the ideological boundary

separating new from old in the late Victorian era. In this sense, Jeannette King says that it was

inevitable for New Women, unable to seek helpful advice from their female predecessors, to

"distance themselves discursively from the old through a new usage of the terms 'Old Woman'"

(33). As the aforementioned example of the "old lady" indicates, Grand also criticizes the Old

Woman's conservatism, based on the assumption that the Old Woman performs the role of an

oppressor. Grand thinks of the Old Woman as an opponent of the New Woman because the

former hampers the latter's progress toward autonomy in "only recogniz[ing] other women in

their relation to men, and that only in the one sense, the sexual" ("New Woman" 469). In her

1898 article "The New Woman and the Old: A Reply to Sarah Grand," the essayist Lady Mary

Jeune expands on Grand's idea of the Old Woman by defining her as "an institution which, like

many others, has had its day and done its work, but done it in such a manner as to deprive her of

the smallest claim to any consideration at the hands of the reformers," though she softens

Grand's attack on the Old Woman by adding that it is English men—rather than women in the

older generation—who caused the moral devolution of society (600). Overall, these authors'
claims about a sense of rigidity of women in the older generation disclose that those in the
younger generation had to reinvent their role on their own at the end of the century when a
generational change was widely perceived to be timely and necessary.

Old Woman characters such as the mothers of the female protagonists in *The Heavenly
Twins* help to maintain patriarchal control. For instance, Edith's mother Mrs. Beale, armed with
"the womanly restraining influence," fits into the aforementioned definition of the Old Woman,
for she is unaware of Menteith's immorality (165). When she encourages Edith to marry
Menteith, she overlooks his "burying of the past" and unintentionally becomes an accomplice to
him (Crackanthorpe 29). This error shows that Mrs. Beale is not a desirable mentor for Edith
inasmuch as she is incapable of forming a right judgment about her daughter's future, so tied is
she to the preexisting law of the patriarchal world. In this light, not unlike the typical Victorian
mothers whom Grand attacks, Mrs. Beale is supposedly complicit with patriarchal values, acting
as the cornerstone of the patriarchal family. Unable to notice her son-in-law's flaws, she helps to
solidify the patriarchal oppression in which uncured male degeneration is passed on to future
generations. As this mother-daughter relationship indicates, it is difficult for the daughter to seek
productive advice from her female predecessor in her attempts to overcome the generational
divide. Grand's portrayal of an older woman as unhelpful to the younger generation offers
insight into the complex situation in which the New Woman is placed in *fin-de-siècle* society.
That is, the New Woman has to differentiate her mission from the older generation's to diagnose
the nature of the degeneracy on her own to prevent its recurrence.

Within the old-fashioned patriarchal world dramatized through *The Heavenly Twins*, Angelica is the only young woman character who saves herself from the repetitive pattern of premature degeneration by negotiating for her own graceful aging in marriage—somehow settling well into her married life as Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe. Even though Angelica's settlement seems to be yet another way of accepting the old-fashioned order, it is imperative to look at the process whereby she protects herself from the force of degeneration and transforms her youthful rebellion into her own version of maturity within the frame of her marriage. Having been a mischievous girl, Angelica voluntarily marries her husband (who is old enough to be called *Daddy*), but as "a child in mind and experience" at the point of the marriage, her assumption that "the mere making of a wife of her must make her a mature and sensible woman" is rooted in her unripeness (550). She starts to seek pleasure from her cross-dressing adventure to befriend a Tenor who thinks of Angelica as her twin brother Diavolo, and only after this relationship ends tragically can Angelica turn herself into a devoted wife with a mature voice. The role of this cross-dressing adventure in Angelica's married life has been discussed widely. Though many critics, such as Carol Senf, see Angelica's adaptation to life as Mrs. Kilroy (who is "grateful for the blessing of a good man's love") as a "docile return" to the patriarchal frame (x), recent approaches reinterpret it as a manifestation of Angelica's survival skills. For example, Audrey Fessler shows that Angelica's life in later years can be "a strategic resistance to patriarchal domination" (49). Building on this idea, I contend that Angelica comes into maturity and prevents her premature aging when she learns how to use her wifehood as a self-conscious performance.

Hence Angelica's return to her husband itself can be a masquerade, not unlike her cross-dressing experience. As Mary Ann Doane puts it, the masquerade of femininity "involves a realignment of femininity (82). Because Angelica wears any costume offered to her in such a manner as to make the costume readable to herself, her triumphant passing as a good wife can be read as an example of the masquerade of femininity, which leads her to reestablish her own understanding of femininity in her marriage. Moreover, her self-conscious performance of wifehood is not just another conservative acceptance of the old-fashioned order, for she comes to exert her influence upon her husband by having him give "some of her speeches in parliament" (567). That is to say, it is necessary to differentiate Angelica's ending from either a male protagonist's integration into or Edith and Evadne's disconnection from the preexisting order of the world. Angelica's masquerade is the outcome of her self-education, throughout which she autonomously protects herself from the premature degeneration that has affected other young women characters of the new generation.

Overall, Grand does not merely portray how the ruinous effects of the male-oriented order manifest themselves through the premature aging of the young women characters but also points to the ways in which these characters strive to build their sense of self in their efforts to resolve the generational conflict that they are situated in. In illustrating how the New Woman's youth meets degeneration unnaturally early, Grand subverts the male-centered linear progress of aging from youth to maturity. In the novel, the New Woman's life after marriage, characterized by ongoing conflicts that she comes into with the old-fashioned society, accordingly provides an avenue for rethinking about the male-oriented ideology of progress. I now proceed to Linton's *Second Youth*, which deals with the opposite of premature aging—an old woman's

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rejuvenation—to see how the aged female's youthful masquerade functions as another way of criticizing the linear advancement model and opening up the generational interaction.

The Old Woman's Rejuvenation

Linton's last novel, *Second Youth*, takes the form of an old woman's first-person memoir about aging experiences. Whereas many of her other novels center on a young girl's failed romance, *Second Youth* presents an elderly first-person narrator's life after her mysterious rejuvenation. This narrator is not a New Woman but an Old Woman, for she is not only biologically but also culturally old, proud of her motherly influence upon her friends and acquaintances. Once she starts living backward, however, she tries hard to redefine her social position, which is no longer characterized by her motherly service.[40]

Neither male nor young, Theodora's second youth is what Barbara Frey Waxman would view as the Reifungsroman, or the novel of ripening, which dramatizes old women "who journey on the high road of life's adventures after a major 'liberating' transition in their lives" (95). In describing Theodora's efforts to find her new place as a conservative activist in Victorian society, the novel brings into focus how the Old Woman character releases herself from her former motherly role and gains a fuller perspective on both younger and older generations. The novel has not occupied a central position in Linton criticism, but its attempt to make an ironic

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[40] The novel ends with Theodora's tragic suicide. Until the moment of death, her body does not age at all, while her old friends and acquaintances who have shunned her since rejuvenation are no longer alive. I think of this device not as her inevitable acceptance of the tragedy but as her voluntary choice to free herself from a linear temporality that dominates everyone else but her. Hence her decision to commit suicide is in keeping with her transformation into a conservative woman activist within the male-centered world because both actions are rooted in her anti-developmental impulse to write her own version of progress.

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connection between old and new through the Old Woman's social involvement in the generational interaction is observable especially when its treatment of the intergenerational contact is placed in the context of *fin-de-siècle* New Woman narratives.

Within New Woman criticism, Grand and Linton have long been positioned as ideological opponents, and their literary similarities have not been fully discussed. As Andrea L. Broomfield notes, critics overall assume that Grand and Linton "fought each other in the press to win points for their sides" (254). Broomfield adds that these writers used each other's rhetoric in ways that enabled them to better "promote themselves" though they seemed to understand differently women's nature and rights (254). Indeed, their critical essays on the Woman Question point to not only their distinct worldviews but also their mutual dependency. Grand's rhetorical attack on the Old Woman in "The New Woman and the Old," seeing her as an obstacle to her younger counterpart's progress, could have reminded Grand's audience of Linton, who was in her seventies in the 1890s. Widely known for her anti-feminist perspective on the "Wild" young women who "have lost all respect for the old ideal of womanhood" (Linton, "Partisans" 463), Linton seemed to be the embodiment of the Old Woman harshly criticized by Grand. Yet Grand better elaborated on the New Woman when she explained her feminist ideals by comparing and contrasting her new thoughts with Linton's. Hence one might speculate that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two writers' responses to the Woman Question. The same goes for their *fin-de-siècle* literary texts, in which they take advantage of the interplay of youth and age in modifying conventional coming-of-age narratives.

Moreover, a closer look at Linton's conservatism is provided by Nancy Fix Anderson's useful biography. Admittedly, Linton railed against rebellious feminists after her politically

radical novel *Realities: A Tale* (1851) was severely attacked by many critics, but when her

literary career began in the 1840s, her determination "to leave the stifling domestic world" in her

effort to be a professional writer in London made her more rebellious than other woman writers

who wrote within their assigned domestic sphere (Anderson 33). Throughout her literary career,

Linton differentiated herself successfully from both domestic and feminist woman writers by

employing a flexible persona and making herself more marketable. Anderson contends that even

her transformation into a reactionary writer in the 1850s was her professionally strategic choice

"to make her own way in the man's world" safely as "a true woman of the world" (72).

Linton's acceptance of malleable identities is projected onto her literary works in which

she tries out gender-bending without constraints. As Clare Walker Gore says, many of Linton's

characters do not conform to the mold that she herself creates in her antifeminist essays, for

much of her fiction "continue[s] to celebrate independent women and to experiment with gender-

bending" (329). For instance, in *The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland* (1885), Linton

blurs the gender boundary by having a male narrator retell her life story. In *Second Youth*, she

goes so far as to obfuscate not only gender but also age boundaries by turning her outwardly

conservative Old Woman narrator's rejuvenated life into a site where she dismantles the

boundary that separates youth from age and questions patriarchal constraints in late Victorian

England.

In this sense, Linton's *Second Youth* can be read in alignment with Grand's *The Heavenly*

Twins because in both texts the heroines' aging experience in patriarchal society disrupts the

harmonious process of development in the conventional Bildungsroman, by which the young

protagonist's chronological aging turns into maturity and lays the foundation for a broader sense

of social advancement. *The Heavenly Twins* emphasizes decline to explain the other side of the ideology of male-oriented progress. For instance, through her claim that English military men's moral degeneration destroys young English women and children, Grand looks at the downside to the male-centered progress of the British Empire. Grand thus makes her novel a female narrative of age, which focuses on how the young heroine's transition from youth to maturity is frustrated within her marriage to a man who has contributed to the expansion of the Empire. Linton's novel also dismantles male-centered progress, but it employs a different methodology by having its heroine, Theodora Desanges, more actively push back against her chronological decline. Theodora's twofold involvement in youth and age continues to develop her selfhood through her sudden rejuvenation, which happens in her seventies. Notably, Theodora's backward progress takes the opposite direction to a young man's straightforward progress, which is predicated upon his smooth transition from childhood or youth to maturity in the Bildungsroman. Theodora's resistance to decline does not lead her to move forward from one phase to another. Instead, it grants her life a sense of nonlinearity, with which she creates a link among the past, present, and future, being both young and old—or neither young nor old. Problematizing the chronological boundary between age and youth, her unique experience of aging in Victorian society can be seen as a female version of progress, which functions to feminize the linearity present in male-centered coming-of-age stories.

From articles to novels, female aging was a recurrent theme for Linton. In her 1868 essay "La Femme Passée," Linton asserts that a woman should accept that she would age naturally into "[w]ife and mother," supporting the next generations (313). Also, in her 1892 essay "The Partisans of the Wild Women," she problematizes "the emancipation of youth and ignorance

from the control of age and knowledge" (463). In this respect, her conceptualization of female

aging is consistently premised on what Kay Heath calls "her conviction that the most essential

female quality is maternity manifested in acts of sacrificial nature" (74). To Linton, an old

woman "[d]ressed in the extreme of youthful fashion" with "her thinning hair dyed and crimped"

is neither ready to become a tender mother nor "consent[ing] to grow old" ("Femme" 313).

Admittedly, Linton's depiction of the old woman in general indicates that Victorian women's

graceful aging happens within the frame of marriage, where they should embrace their domestic

role of assisting the younger generation as wives and mothers.

Though it seems that Linton associates positive female aging with old-fashioned

womanly values such as selfless service, it is also significant that her fictional creation of a

rejuvenated woman in *Second Youth* goes well beyond this point by expressing ambivalence

toward the main character's life course. Despite Theodora's professed admiration for "traditions

handed down by the elders" (15), the driving force behind the plot cannot be explained solely by

this conservatism, for her backward journey into youth is not suggested as a mere repetition of

her first youth in patriarchal marriage. Instead, it emancipates her from both marriageability and

reproductivity. The novel implies that Theodora in her later life is freed from her loveless

marriage, which is likened to "an atrocious act of legal prostitution" (257). Moreover, it

describes the rejuvenation as "the zenith of [her] social success" inasmuch as it offers her an

opportunity to become a social activist (16-17). The rejuvenated Theodora transgresses age and

gender boundaries, provided with a new sense of freedom that even a young New Woman cannot

achieve.

As such, Theodora's later life is far from a decline that leads toward the point of death. The rejuvenation that occurs during her senescence opens up a new stage of life, not subject to the linear temporality. Compared to the young New Women in decline in Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, Theodora is given a chance to reverse the pattern of decline. By returning to the previous phase of her life during her senescence, she creates a new pattern in the life course of Victorian women. Indeed, in the late nineteenth century, medical discourse around female aging, such as the physician E. J. Tilt's 1882 findings about the implications of menopause, hinted at the idea that the progression of the female life span is marked by the continuous emergences of several transitional periods, which makes the stream of female life "metamorphic" rather than stagnant (*Change* 3).[41] Tilt asserts that menopause is not a cessation but a beginning of a new sense of femininity. That is, compared to the aging male, the aging female can keep healthy and make progress in her own way at midlife and beyond. Though it is not common for Victorian novels to directly mention menopause, Theodora's second phase of life, which liberates her from the conventional female decline plot focused on marriage, may be a symbolic example of what Tilt would define as metamorphic female aging beyond menopause. Theodora's regeneration into a healthier woman in her later life can be read as a postmenopausal woman's ability to enjoy "a length of life and a strength of constitution superior in general to that of the opposite sex similarly advanced in years" (Tilt, *Diseases* 106). The overlapping of her second youth and senescence allows her to pursue self-assertion rather than the selfless service that younger

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[41] Tilt's works on female health were the first and only Victorian texts that delved deeply into the signification of menopause in the female life course. The first edition appeared in 1857, and the following editions continuously came out until 1882.

Victorian women are expected to offer as wives or mothers in support of the continuation of patriarchal family and society. Specifically, her second youth after menopause stands in sharp contrast to Evadne's youth characterized by celibacy and hysteria in *The Heavenly Twins*. Considering that Evadne's hysteria illustrates how young fertile women are susceptible to disease when they do not reproduce, Theodora's rejuvenation in later life implies that menopause can release women from such duty.

In depicting such liberating aspects, the novel does not oversimplify the relationship between youth and age by thinking of age through youth and youth through age. Herbert van Thal observes that "Eliza wistfully reminisces, seeing herself when she was young in the role of the heroine – a womanly woman" (207). Yet I add that Linton's fictional narrative on the interaction between youth and age cannot be read as a mere reflection of aspects of her past that she considers womanly.

Linton's heroine goes well beyond passively looking at her seemingly womanly past. Theodora reinvents her past self from the perspective of a rejuvenated woman who is "too old in mind and experience for the young" and "too young in bodily strength and vigour for the old" through the act of reminiscing (62). She defines her past self as "a fervent believer in social progress and moral perfectibility" (79), indicating that her womanliness has needed a social outlet because it has not been fully enriched as she has grown old. Before marriage, she "go[es] about among the rural poor of [her] father's parish," and after marriage, she "content[s] [her]self with subscriptions to philanthropic societies, leaving the practical administration to others younger and stronger than [her]" (79). That is to say, Theodora realizes that her desire for social activities has not been fulfilled within her life course as a womanly woman, and it is through her

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rejuvenation that she is provided with a second chance to reexamine how to age well as a woman activist in late Victorian England.

The rejuvenated Theodora's social engagement offers an insight into the aged Victorian woman's dilemma in the generational tension. Having been a positive influence on her younger friends as "Mother of the World" during her senescence, this Old Woman's sudden rejuvenation is not easily accepted by the younger generation (35). Her adopted daughter and granddaughter express a sense of disgust when they see "the Granny, the septuagenarian, dressed like a girl, and looking as if [she] were enjoying [her] dance like a girl" (32). They are shocked because Theodora does not fit in their cultural stereotype of old women as "unproductive, dependent, rigid, weak, defenceless, morally old-fashioned, timid, ugly, senile and lonely" (Rosenthal 6). Not understanding that an aged woman needs her own busy social life—not always domestic— these young characters impose conventional womanly norms upon the elderly female and draw a strict line between youth and age. For feminist age critics such as Evelyn Rosenthal, this rigidity can be understood as an example of how various representations of female aging are somehow affected by ageism, which divides aged women into either supportively productive motherly figures or unproductive non-motherly figures, and even the former casts women as only "perfect mothers . . . denied challenge and growth" (6). Following this line of thought, I interpret the two young daughterly characters' response here as signifying that they have categorized female agedness as either productive or nonproductive.

The aged woman's social standing is highly unstable in the late nineteenth-century patriarchal society. First of all, when she loses her former position as a motherly caregiver, becoming nonproductive and pursuing her own progress in her later life, her self-expression is

inevitably harshly criticized by her younger counterparts. The feeling of revulsion that

Theodora's daughter and granddaughter have toward her youthful appearance makes Theodora

keenly realize that she can safely locate herself within the patriarchal structure of society only

when she functions as a caregiver. However, by reversing Theodora's physical aging, Linton

leads Theodora, neither productive nor unproductive, to rewrite her second youth in ways that

challenge the patriarchal frame of women's life.

Moreover, given that the younger generation cannot break the preexisting stereotypes of

youth and age, Linton implies that the older generation can help the unripe younger generation's

further progress in the future. In fact, the novel's description of the young female generation's

narrow-mindedness and fear about aging points to the older female generation's dilemma, in

which even their acceptance of the positive stereotype is likely to confine them in traditional

gender roles that New Woman activists fight against. The dilemma evokes New Woman writers'

common view on the relationship between the New and the Old Woman. For example, Lady

Jeune thinks of the Old Woman as an old-fashioned institution that embodies "the restraints and

conventionalities of the past" (600). Yet Lady Jeune also contends that "[s]ociety and life cannot

be revolutionized in a day, and in an essentially conservative country like ours, where the so-

called hardships and inequalities of women are borne cheerfully, and . . . no one is prepared to

accept the new gospel at the hands of a few loud-voiced, discontented viragos" (602). Here she

thinks beyond the younger generation's radicalism by considering the Old Woman's stake in the

nation's progress. Overall, like Linton, Lady Jeune claims that a "union between the Old and

New Woman" is necessary in their "protests against the inferiority, the immorality of men"

(602), saying that a vast majority of English wives and mothers who still belong to the old-fashioned order have made the nation "great and glorious" in their own ways (604).

Throughout *Second Youth*, we can see that Linton's emphasis on the older generation's maturity is her careful choice to conceptualize a female progress, which centers on Theodora's mature attempts as the Old Woman—who represents oldness not only biologically but also culturally—to resolve the unfinished conflict between the young and the old. Linton stresses that there is a sense of conservatism embedded in Theodora's long life in Victorian England, showing that Theodora has been seemingly content with her domestic role. However, both her senescence and her rejuvenation serve as sites where she can concentrate solely on fulfilling her longing for self-achievement. Believing that her "intellect stimulated to the highest point of which it was capable," "memory clear as a crystal," and "self-possession unruffled" can lead her to influence the younger generation, Theodora strives to widen her sociopolitical engagement and alleviate the intergenerational tension (16). In one episode about her philanthropic activities in the East End, she realizes how different her take on social degeneration is from her younger counterparts'. While Theodora understands that love will not root out this urban degeneration, thus struggling to find a practical method, other idealistic young woman philanthropists approach the problem merely with "warm sympathies" (102). Theodora argues that urban poverty needs to be handled with the help of "some more compact, some more interdependent, system of social organisation" (92-93). The argument shows that this Old Woman character who has ended her own degeneration and begun her regeneration extends her influence beyond her personal life by using her mature intelligence in her efforts to turn herself into a social activist fighting against social

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degeneration. Understanding both youth and age better than the radical younger generation, Theodora imagines how she can bring social regeneration to the East End in feasible ways.

The urban poverty that Theodora witnesses in the East End was a grave concern for the nation as a whole in the closing decade of the nineteenth century. Symbolizing all kinds of social problems that had arisen as part of the male-centered imperial advancement, the East End started to be associated with the idea of collective degeneration by the 1880s. In particular, as London—the center of the British Empire—kept growing and its population density increased, the poor in the East End were considered a pathological symptom lurking in the high civilization that the Empire had promoted. In *How the Poor Live* (1883), George Robert Sims writes that the poor in London have become "a race so oppressed, so hampered, and so utterly neglected, that its condition has become a national scandal" in the public imagination (63). Sims's statement reflects late Victorian social reformers' perception that "[t]he social, moral, and physical improvement" of the degenerate class within London became an urgent task that new generations had to undertake (63). Feminist thinkers such as Grand contended that this regeneration was dependent specifically upon the New Woman's maternal responsibility to reproduce and educate new generations, based upon the belief that "what [women as mothers] teach their children in the nursery today will become the public opinion of tomorrow" ("Young Man" 884). While Grand here highlights the role of the young female generation in her conceptualization of social regeneration, Linton's approach to the same topic in *Second Youth* runs beyond the territory of the young. It is maturity, not youth, that enables Linton's heroine to use good judgment about the urban degeneration that is no longer resolvable by young women's maternal affection. Though Theodora is no longer definable by her productive maternal service, she can make a socially

meaningful contribution to the alleviation of degeneration, for she knows how to deal practically with social symptoms of decline, having observed the ways in which progress and decline have occurred in English society throughout her life.

Linton's age-mixing strategy is employed in ways that regenerate her old heroine into a social activist who modifies the male-centered social advancement, standing in the middle of youth and age. In comparison with Grand, who diagnoses the degeneration of the older generation through her age-mixing strategy, Linton goes so far as to find a solution to the same issue through the scrutiny of the process whereby her aged heroine's rejuvenation prepares the way for a broader regeneration of English society. Thus Linton's portrayal of her old woman character's attempts at collective regeneration interestingly points the reader in the same direction as Grand's critique of her young woman characters' vulnerability to degeneration. For conservative Theodora, the social progress that she can make to stop degeneration starts from her "wider experience and consequently better knowledge" (208). She believes that the younger generation needs proper guidance because her previous experience of youth tells her that it is "the season of exaggeration and the evils which come from impracticable theories" (240). She helps her young female friends and takes part in national politics herself by making her house "the centre for young politicians, young journalists, young men of every profession whose ideas would soon be predominant and whose hands would soon take the reins—the young men of the advancing generation" (241).

As a consequence, Theodora is able to join the political circle of England, for she makes the best out of her mysterious situation in which the coexistence of her physical youthfulness and mental intelligence and maturity leads her to have a perspective, which is different from that of

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the young, on how to stop degeneration and achieve steady progress. Her success illustrates that

she can "modify or turn aside" the national advancement through her attempts to raise the

younger generation's political awareness about the history of England that she herself has

experienced firsthand (242). In a scene where she discusses the British Empire's task of

spreading civilization, she adamantly asserts that the present generation "cannot neglect the

teachings of history, or the lessons of experience" (208), saying that her agedness enables her to

understand the nation's entire history, which involves not only glory but also "illusions" of the

youthful progress.

Notably, Linton does not stop at simply depicting Theodora's political participation as

"the happiest period of [her] new existence"; rather, she vividly describes a never-ending conflict

between her and patriarchal society (242). This conflict is made manifest through the patriarchal

gaze that constantly oppresses her. Despite her great insight into the history of the nation, she is

forced to fight against the patriarchal society in which the discrepancy between a woman's

physical youthfulness and mental ripeness is not fully appreciated. Most of all, despite her

ongoing attempts to differentiate her rejuvenated self from "the kind of person to marry for

safety or refuge," she is persistently reduced to the object of young men's romantic conquest

(251). Their patriarchal misinterpretation sheds light on women's unfinished struggle to find

their place in Victorian society. Considering that the novel explains how patriarchal society

disrupts Theodora's intergenerational interaction as a rejuvenated old woman who embodies

historicity, her second youth does not play into the linear progress ideology, which is endorsed in

traditional Bildungsromane that dramatize a successful reconciliation of youth and maturity as

the ultimate goal of a hero. Even though her mysterious rejuvenation grants her both youth and

maturity, it is presented not as her destination but as a beginning, which signals ongoing conflicts that she is likely to go through over the course of the narrative.

Moreover, the rejuvenated Theodora does not repeat activities that she has already carried out. Importantly, the revival of her youth is not just a repetition of her past. It enables her to live against the linearity of time in such a way as to set out on her own nonlinear journey, which constantly interconnects her past and present, blurring the boundary between the two. Theodora's creation of this new temporality lets her envision a better future for not only herself but also society as a whole. She makes nonlinear progress on her own.

In this light, Theodora's second youth falls into the category of what many age critics would see as positive aging. According to Robert N. Butler, the aged show an increased tendency for remembering their past, which he calls "the life review" (66). The life review refers to "a naturally occurring, universal mental process characterized by the progressive return to consciousness of past experiences, and particularly, the resurgence of unresolved conflicts," which involves revisions of the experiences and conflicts that are "surveyed and reintegrated" (Butler 66). Butler emphasizes that there can be constructiveness in the aged subject's return to their past experiences. Even though the review involves painful experiences filled with still unresolvable issues, it can be helpful to the elderly to the extent that they can reorder their life events inwardly and reshape their subjectivity, not overwhelmed by the fear of death. Applying this approach to her literary analysis, King suggests that life review novels deconstruct the linear temporal progress to give "the reader direct access to the experience of ageing" (130). Especially, in narratives of female aging, the life review empowers the aging female protagonist to rewrite from her own perspective about the ways in which she has come into conflict with

patriarchal society. In her conversation about how to "keep the balance even" between different sexes and generations with her first love's grandson—whose "cynicism" particularly represents the younger generation's hostility toward the older generation—and a young woman who has a secret crush on him, Theodora reminds herself of her own unhappy marriage and tries to share with the young her chilling insights into a dangerous marriage to a misogynist (137).

In other words, Theodora's rejuvenation serves as a venue where her act of looking back is not a passive acceptance of the end of her life course, for she is keen to use her findings about the family and society in her interaction with new generations to envision a better future for every generation. Theodora's life review diversifies the role of the conservative aged female in patriarchal society in ways that enable her to offer a remedy to female degeneration, building a bridge between past, present, and future. The inscrutable rejuvenation that the main character goes through leads her to transgress age boundaries, push back against the linearity of the progress ideology, and reinvent the female role in social discourses of regeneration.

The female-centered regeneration imagined through Theodora's rejuvenation and transformation into a social activist is premised on her unique traits as the Old Woman who masquerades as a young New Woman. Theodora's masquerade as a young woman here evokes Angelica's masquerade as a devoted wife in Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*. It is because both Theodora and Angelica protect themselves from the risk of degeneration caused by the English male that they succeed in raising their voice in the English society through their performances of certain roles that they self-consciously opt for. Yet unlike Angelica's, which can save herself only, Theodora's masquerade makes her use her maturity gained through her life of more than seventy years and offer proper guidance for others. According to Kathleen Woodward,

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masquerade in old age necessarily brings back to life what has been lost, thus "serving as a bridge which re-creates, momentarily, the past in the present" (129). In this light, Theodora as the Old Woman who has developed her own understanding of patriarchal society throughout her long life re-creates her own past in the present, trying to point the younger female generation in the right direction. Theodora's take on the present society is helpful for the New Woman generation in widening their horizons to understand how and why the Old Woman has functioned as the old-fashioned institution that contains the New Woman's radicalism in the male-oriented English society. Through the Old Woman's backward journey into youth, in which she reconstructs her life progressively in later life, not only is the linearity of the conventional male-centered development challenged, but the radicalism of the New Woman's fresh advancement is reinvented as well. For Hulda Friederichs, who suggests that "the New Woman is only the Old Woman made perfect" in her 1895 essay, Theodora's experience of rejuvenation would exemplify how the Old Woman's traditional sense of gentleness has evolved into tenacity with which she makes an effort to strengthen the New Woman ideals in realizable ways (276). Linton's *Second Youth* therefore shows how the New Woman and the Old Woman join forces to envisage social regeneration that will benefit all generations.

In sum, New Woman texts by Grand and Linton explain the implications of the fictional dissolution of age boundaries in the female life course in *fin-de-siècle* England. Putting together the two writers' novelistic representations of the conflicts that the New Woman undergoes in her struggle to reconcile youth and maturity in a world that is hostile to the New Woman generation's progress, I contend that her premature aging and rejuvenation in and out of her married life reveal an anti-developmental impulse to complicate the male subject's

developmental version of the progress from youth to maturity. Within the *fin-de-siècle* context,

the heroines' lived experience of aging and rejuvenation signifies their attempts to look behind

the nation's anxiety about the degeneration of its high civilization and figuring out a way to

regenerate the degenerate society. Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* presents young New Women's

premature degeneration after marriage to shed light on ongoing conflicts that they come into with

the preexisting order of the old-fashioned male-centered world. Linton's *Second Youth* goes one

step further by amplifying the role of women in realizing social regeneration on a national scale

through its portrayal of the ways in which the rejuvenated Old Woman strives to resolve the

generational conflict. Whereas conventional male-centered coming-of-age narratives present a

linear progress model, the two New Woman texts illuminate the sense of nonlinearity embedded

in the female life course in Victorian society by having the heroines either age prematurely or

live backward during senescence. In other words, the female life course dramatized in New

Woman narratives demonstrates how women's anti-developmental experience of age offers a

female version of regeneration, built around cross-generational interaction.

CHAPTER V

EUTHANASIA AND NATIONAL EFFICIENCY IN ANTI-UTOPIAN FICTION

In this chapter, I survey speculative fiction on state-enforced euthanasia of old and inefficient individuals and examine its depiction of the future without decline. In describing how seemingly perfect societies euthanize old and inefficient citizens to achieve national regeneration, speculative fiction emphasizes the interconnection between utopian regeneration and dystopian degeneration. The genre problematizes the ideology of progress in its effort to show what would happen when the systematic thinking about collective regeneration is given priority over the individual's aging.

It is commonly said that speculative fiction emerged with Thomas More's 1516 social satire *Utopia,* which envisions an ideal state in which everyone engages in productive activities, but the genre only became widely recognizable in the late nineteenth century. The dominant pattern of utopian ideas in the late nineteenth century is closely related to socialist reformism, as Matthew Beaumont notes (*Utopia* 43). The logic behind this proliferation of utopianism echoes the social background of the time period, in which significant and rapid social changes heightened people's expectations about the future as offering solutions to the conflicts that they were exposed to in the present. In this context, the genre plays with the gap between the future and the present reality.

The chief function of *fin-de-siècle* speculative fiction is to comment on the contemporary fear of degeneration, understood generally as decline of civilization in modern England. The future depicted in this genre is a field of battle, in which various contemporary philosophical

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ideas on civilization compete with each other. Nancee Reeves is one of many critics to argue that the genre often offers "rambling narratives with little or no action" because its central focus on philosophical ideas on progress of individuals and society overwhelms its artistic impulse to embellish those ideas with strong plots (95). Yet I assert that the protagonist still takes action to affect the future within the plot even though there is neither obvious climax nor the achievement of specific goals. The protagonist's action does occur, but it no longer falls into the developmental pattern of conventional narratives of progress. In other words, the protagonist's personal philosophical belief in evolution and progress cannot easily evolve into a socially effective action that will prevent degeneration and bring out collective regeneration in developmental ways, no matter how he aggressively sets out on his journey toward regeneration in the future setting. Relating this failure to bring eternal progress to society to the *fin-de-siècle* context, we can see how it indeed reflects the present social reality, in which Victorians wished to change their future but had no idea what kind of actions would eventually turn out to be beneficial to society in the future.

One of the most common ways in which speculative fiction discusses the social conflict of the present through the medium of the future is to establish a new definition of national efficiency as a countermeasure against national degeneration. The modern culture of efficiency was explained chiefly in association with early twentieth-century modernism. Yet the term already played an important role in speculative texts on utopian nations written during the Victorian era. For example, in H. G. Wells' novella *The Time Machine* (1895), a text that I will examine in more detail below, the Time Traveller speaks about an "efficient" future society where population is perfectly controlled (*Time Machine* 25). That is, efficiency is of key

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importance to the construction of a utopian community here.

I suggest that this understanding of efficiency in *fin-de-siècle* futuristic fiction cannot be seen merely as a continuation of the developmental paradigm stemming from the Enlightenment. It is true that *fin-de-siècle* futuristic writing is keenly interested in the possibility of further advancement, but the emphasis on efficiency also functions to cast doubt on the construction of a perfectly advanced nation in which every member contributes to the efficient management of the nation. Scientific devices are often employed to portray the ways in which degeneration is exchanged for regeneration on a national scale. The advanced technology in the future setting empowers society to strengthen its control of the citizens' productivity. That is, in late Victorian speculative fiction, efficiency is ambivalently used. While it can prevent early degeneration, it can also dehumanize the individual citizen's natural progression in his or her own life.

Efficiency is the goal of alternative societies described in representative speculative texts such as Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888), William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1889), and Wells's *The Time Machine*. In all these texts, utopia bears a striking resemblance to dystopia because of its extreme pursuit of national efficiency. Traditionally, utopia refers to a society of perfection, and dystopia stands for a society of degradation. However, in *fin-de-siècle* representations, the clear distinction between the two types of alternative communities is challenged. For this reason, late nineteenth-century imaginary societies in futuristic fiction fit into Lyman Tower Sargent's broadened definition of utopia, which includes both positive and negative versions of alternative societies (9). Toward the end of the century, futuristic narratives became conspicuously ambivalent, for they view collective preoccupation with the efficiency issue as highly dystopian. The blurred relationship between

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utopia and dystopia shows that *fin-de-siècle* writers were clearly aware that the open-endedness of the world applied to their own lives and tried to deal with it in their literary creation of efficiently operated alternative communities. The *fin-de-siècle* turn to the ambivalence present in seemingly well-developed societies was a seasonable literary response to the growing concern that the natural balance between individual and social progress had been upset and that the world was faced with the challenge of looking for a different kind of efficiency to find the right balance between individuals and society in the fight against degeneration.

Intriguingly, in addressing the efficiency question in the future setting, speculative fiction tends to examine how to enact population planning efficiently in ways that increase the size of the young and efficient generation and decrease that of the old and inefficient generation. For instance, writers such as W. H. Hudson and Walter Besant depict future societies in which the population is tightly controlled to interpret what Wells calls "fitful and uncertain" aspects of evolution in their own literary imaginations ("Zoological Retrogression" 135). By so doing, they specifically take advantage of euthanasia as the only personal option given to the citizens of alternative societies, who decide to end their no longer productive lives.[42] The use of euthanasia here lets the reader question consistently the relationship between individuals and society. Euthanasia is instrumental in these writers' dramatization of the ongoing conflict between individual and social advancement. That is, a seemingly flawless alternative society that one might see as utopian is indeed built upon the operation of euthanasia—a convenient tool that both individuals and society can employ when their lives lose vital productivity. In late Victorian

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[42] Hudson's *A Crystal Age* was published in 1887, a year before Besant's *The Inner House* (1888) came out.

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speculative fiction, euthanasia serves as a significant literary trope, which makes the reader pose the question of humanity: will it be possible for a nation to achieve unfailingly efficient progress when it thoroughly regulates the individual's life course for the sake of maximizing social productivity?

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical background for the rise of speculative fiction on the efficient population control question (such as Wells's novella) and explain the reasons behind the production of anti-utopian literature on euthanasia; I then proceed to two lesser known texts in which euthanasia is used as an expedient means of implementing utopian values in alternative societies. The two texts I closely examine are Anthony Trollope's *The Fixed Period* (1882) and Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett's *New Amazonia: A Foretaste of the Future* (1889). In these texts, the protagonists are faced with a dilemma, placed in a position where they have to think critically about the effectiveness of state-enforced euthanasia of old and decrepit individuals and find a way to induce or at least participate in collective regeneration themselves. The alternative societies in the novels plan to reach and maintain the youthful state by eliminating various symptoms of personal degeneration, which is necessarily involved in the natural process of aging. For Trollope and Corbett, euthanasia of the elderly is a significant literary trope that allows the protagonists to rethink the utopian logic behind the permanently youthful and efficient structure of society, in which the regulation of the citizen's life and death is taken for granted. In these narratives, euthanasia serves as the vital momentum for the protagonists to rewrite the story of national regeneration from their own individual perspectives.

The eternal youth attained through state-enforced euthanasia of aged citizens signifies the ideological link between the concern about the growing population of the elderly and the issue of

national efficiency in late Victorian England. In 1892, England had "1.4 million persons aged 65 and over, or 4.7 percent of the population" (Boyer and Schmidle 250). Though the percentage of the old among the population was not pronounced compared to that of the young,[43] questions about aged citizens' "constant control over [their] body and physical energies" were widely raised on a social level (Chase 215). Aging was problematic to the Victorian society because old citizens' incapacity for labor and difficulty with staying self-reliant were perceived as early signs of the nation's large-scale degeneration. One might thus note that Trollope's and Corbett's future societies are based on the authors' own reality, marked by the collective fear of the increase of degenerate—less productive—populations in England. That is, their use of the euthanasia policy highlights that the degenerate citizen's inability to develop his or her potential to be productive within society was a big social conundrum in the late nineteenth century.

Situating Trollope's and Corbett's treatment of euthanasia in the broader historical context of the *fin de siècle*, I claim that their interpretation of the outwardly perfect state is satiric, for it takes an interest in not the unknown future but the present society, still built upon the ideology of progress. Whereas earlier nineteenth-century narratives of progress portray the ways in which a young protagonist matures and succeeds in naturally reconciling the virtue of self-help with social determination, *fin-de-siècle* speculative narratives present the unnatural ways in which society makes a decision on the direction of each citizen's progress in order to prevent degeneration and maximize efficiency on a national scale. In their attempts to break with tradition and revisit the ideology of progress through their depiction of anti-utopian aspects of

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[43] In the same year, there were 27,629,924 persons aged under 65. See Boyer and Schmidle's "Poverty among the Elderly in Late Victorian England" (251).

utopian society without decline, *fin-de-siècle* speculative texts prompt Victorian readers to rebuild their understanding of progress.

Degeneration and National Efficiency

The term degeneration originated from evolutionary discourse, but it was situated in a broader social context of the nation's efficient population management at the end of the century. In the 1860s, degeneration was associated with class conflicts and public health problems in urban areas as a response to the growing number of urban poor and their perceived disruptive effect upon society. Utilitarian social reformers such as Edwin Chadwick made an effort to solve the urban degeneration problem by presenting ways in which the nation's wealth and health issues could be resolved efficiently.[44] It is noteworthy that the utilitarian understanding of the degeneration issue showed that the latter question had started to be more deeply anchored in the national vision as a whole. As Daniel Pick says, the discourse of degeneration served as "a counter-theory to mass-democracy and socialism" in and beyond the 1880s (218), and thus a firm connection was made between class conflicts in the domestic arena and racial conflicts in the international arena. In particular, the advent of eugenics in the 1880s yielded more specific solutions to the national degeneration. The eugenic belief that society could engage in the process of efficiently enhancing the biological quality of the English population against degenerative forces embodied in the lower class or less civilized races was given scientific

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[44] Chadwick was highly influenced by Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism that stresses the greatest happiness of the greatest number principle. Chadwick paved the way for the passage of the New Poor Law in 1834 and consistently pointed to the necessity of producing a new group of healthy and stronger workers in order to prop up the nation's efficient operation in his 1862 address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

authority in the closing decades of the century. A similar understanding of increasing efficiency

nationwide is illustrated well through *Efficiency and Empire* (1901), written by the eugenist and

imperialist thinker Arnold White. White offers various examples of the British Empire's loss of

stamina and argues that a more efficient policy is needed against "the increase of a decayed

population" (117). Hence in the last two decades of the century, the fear of degeneration was

translated into the language of efficiency and began to provoke the Empire's interest in the issue

of efficient population control.

The historical background that I have just discussed informs Wells's *The Time Machine*,

which is one of the most influential futuristic works on degeneration and efficiency. Wells's

protagonist, the Time Traveller, invents a time machine and leaves the present for the future to

find solid answers to the question of what kind of character the English race will eventually

exhibit. The Time Traveller's curiosity about the future is grounded in the aforementioned social

discourse around degeneration. He discovers that AD 802,701 is marked by the destructive

polarization of two degenerate races. Despite his hopes for witnessing "strange developments of

humanity" and "wonderful advances upon our rudimentary civilization" in the very remote future

(*Time Machine* 18), he finds out that the future world is inhabited by effeminate Elois and bestial

Morlocks, who together represent an exaggeration of the present reality of late Victorian England

with its strict class divisions.[45]

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[45] As Bernard Bergonzi puts it, the Time Traveller walks the reader through the future version of
the class and race conflict, positioned as "an amiable and gregarious bourgeois" who represents
Wells's own interest in many intellectual movements of the late Victorian era—from Marxism to
Darwinism (192). The relationship between the Eloi and the Morlocks is grounded in the
Victorian conflict between the rich and the working class.

Fascinated by the Eloi's seemingly utopian life without hard labor on the surface of the earth and shocked at the Morlocks' apparently dystopian life in destitution underground, the Time Traveller starts to ruminate on the question of efficiently controlled population. In his early account of the Eloi community, the Time Traveller describes a society "[w]here population is balanced and abundant" and "there is less necessity—indeed there is no necessity—of an efficient family" (*Time Machine* 25). The Eloi's peaceful utopian society, in which population does not increase exponentially because it is controlled all too well, stimulates the Time Traveller's demographic imagination and leads him to consider it an example of an already efficient utopia. Yet as he delves deeper, he concludes that the Eloi's labor-free world is far from being a developmental model due to its stasis and lack of productivity. The Eloi's leisurely life does not fit into his understanding of a world that keeps developing its civilization through social activities of production. In other words, the Eloi's utopia is not as perfect as it seems to be at first; it is in fact an anti-utopia. The Time Traveller's observation about the anti-utopian aspects of the static world without ceaseless transformations implies that any vibrant society will be continuously in the process of creating the most efficiently controlled population structure. Wells's later nonfiction text *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life* (1901) provides the reader with a similar yet intensified version of the same theme. In this work, Wells more explicitly suggests that readers will live in the age of "the new needs of efficiency," which will push society never to cease renewing its character and reshaping its population control policy in accordance with scientific advancement (*Anticipations* 342).

Wells's discussion of the efficient future did not come out of nowhere; the topic was popular among many influential social thinkers from the beginning of the nineteenth century

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forward. Indeed, the foundational work on the efficiency question is Thomas Robert Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society* (1798). In this study, Malthus addresses a dystopian vision of overpopulated human societies in decline, in which there is "[a]n increase of population without a proportional increase of food" (82). His point about the imbalance—which accelerates degeneration—is grounded in his awareness of the limits to growth. That is, faced with the environmental limits to growth, human beings will encounter the social limits to growth as well, because of which societies might even be in constant need of devastations such as war, famine, and disease in tackling the overpopulation problem and building a more efficient population structure.

The Malthusian limit continued to be discussed by social thinkers in the mid-nineteenth century. Herbert Spencer, in his use of the term "survival of the fittest" in his 1864 text *The Principles of Biology* (444), revisits not only Darwin's natural selection but also Malthus's argument about the inefficient population problem inasmuch as he advocates for a more "efficient maintenance" of nature and society as a social Darwinist (118). Crucial to my reading of Spencer is that he is mindful of the limit to growth, not unlike Malthus. Spencer's biological perspective on the world is expressed in his book *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy* (1862), where he writes that "the power or force manifested to us in all phenomena, continues unaltered in quantity" (497). By hinting at the finiteness of energy, Spencer here debunks the long-held belief in boundless potentials of human societies. Indeed, Europe as a whole shared this awareness of the limits to growth. Karl Marx's socialist idea on conscious economic planning is an example of how the Malthusian limit was reinterpreted in nineteenth-century Europe. Marx does not agree to the Malthusian population doctrine of population. In *Capital*

(1867), he thus says that "[a]n abstract law of population exists for plants and animals only, and only in so far as man has not interfered with them" in order to problematize capitalist economy rather than population growth (Marx 693). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the starting point for Marx's argument regarding the distribution of wealth is his recognition of the "limit" (688). Overall, these nineteenth-century thinkers' concerns about the limits to progress help to inform the Time Traveller's intellectual curiosity about the future of mankind in Wells's novella. Contrary to his initial expectations, the Time Traveller only notices "the physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins" (*Time Machine* 28), all of which remind him that the limits have been reached and that there is a serious loss of momentum for efficient advancement of mankind within this future society in entropic stasis.

The worldview provided particularly by Malthusianism and social Darwinism had laid the foundation for eugenics, which went so far as to suggest the ways in which human societies can be more efficiently reorganized in collective efforts to overcome the limits to progress. Darwin's cousin Francis Galton—who coined the term eugenics in 1883—defines eugenics as "the science of improving stock" (*Inquiries* 25). By so doing, Galton revisits Darwin's theory of descent through modification and claims that society should strategically empower healthier and stronger subjects to produce more children so as to produce a more efficient population structure and stop weak and degraded ones from multiplying. As such, Galton offers sensible control of reproduction as a specific protective mechanism against degeneration. Galton's argument is that it is possible to prevent the cessation of growth if humans can systematically make a difference to the biological quality of the race and increase the population of a better race.

Eugenics and the efficiency question were taken up by *fin-de-siècle* fiction writers who

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expressed a great interest in the direction of evolution. It is indeed noticeable that speculative

works on the national efficiency issue were particularly popular at the end of the century, though

social theories around utopia existed long before this period. Influenced by the Industrial

Revolution, the class conflict, new technologies, and new ideologies from socialism to

anarchism, *fin-de-siècle* speculative writing explored different modes of national efficiency and

came to establish their own literary genre (*Utopian Reader* 209).

Taking a closer look at the genre, we can see that it can be subdivided into science fiction

and anti-utopian social satire, which examine eugenic ideas of national efficiency in differing

ways. The representative text of speculative fiction as a whole, *The Time Machine*, fits better into

the first category given that it mainly delivers the protagonist's scientific explorations of a

possibility that further social advancement is attainable so that a better race can exist in the

future. Wells's protagonist presents objective observations about the entropic state in the future,

not making an effort to change the future himself. In this sense, the text relies on scientific

elements not to prevent degeneration but to make sense of the time travel to the reader. However,

Trollope's and Corbett's speculative texts—both of them specifically focused on euthanasia—are

closer to anti-utopian social satire. These texts use the mandatory euthanasia system in particular

as an effective medium of eugenic social reform that the main characters should engage in for

better or worse. Thus the main conflict of the novels centers on whether the characters can fully

justify the need for euthanizing old and unproductive citizens. In so doing, not only do they

depict how society tries to justify euthanasia of the elderly as a progressive methodology, but

they also reveal the seamy side of progressivism.

The Rise of Euthanasia Debates

Before we look closely into Trollope's and Corbett's literary approach to the question, it will be helpful to briefly examine the history of euthanasia debates. Euthanasia has existed since ancient Greece and Rome, but as I have mentioned earlier, it was discussed for the first time in English literature by Thomas More in the early sixteenth century. In *Utopia*, More states that the sick in utopia are allowed to "choose rather to die" when they clearly see that life "become[s] a burden to themselves and to all about them" (58). He emphasizes that utopia is a nation where the sick have a right to terminate their painful lives in a peaceful manner. The same question was addressed in the seventeenth century by Francis Bacon, who used the word euthanasia in the medical context to refer to "a fair and easy passage" for the sick (233). Bacon is still known as the first scholar who employed the term after Roman historian Suetonius (A.D. 69-130), but it is hard to say that Bacon actually favored euthanasia, for his "low opinion of doctors" did not let him consider medical euthanasia as a viable social practice to be implemented widely in real cases (Dowbiggin 23).

It was during the nineteenth century that debates over euthanasia became heated as morphine and chloroform started in the first half of the nineteenth century to be used as a means of "mitigating the agonies of death" (Warren 70).[46] With these medical solutions at hand, Victorians began to think that the pains of disease and death are somewhat controllable. However, as Ian Dowbiggin notes, as devout Christians, numerous physicians were still incapable of justifying euthanasia (43). Though they were aware of the amount of pain that the

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[46] In 1848, the American physician John Warren suggested in *Etherization: With Surgical Remarks* that morphine should be used to put a painless end to the suffering patient's life.

patient experiences at the final stage of some illnesses, they were reluctant to perform euthanasia. Thus the idea of medical euthanasia was not carried out in real cases. This ethical dilemma becomes a backdrop for Samuel D. Williams's 1870 speech on euthanasia.[47] A nonphysician, he approaches the issue as a eugenist and lays out the reasons why he believes that chloroform should be used not only to alleviate pain but also to put an end to the patient's no longer socially productive life. Starting from the Darwinian idea of natural selection, Williams develops his eugenic thought that there is no place in society for diseased human subjects who fall behind in their competition with others,

> For man's existence here forms no exception to that of other organized beings. That he, too, has to maintain a ceaseless struggle, now with his fellow man, and now with the general condition of life, is clear as noon-day. With him, as with his fellow denizens of this strange world, the natural provision is, for the weak to go to the wall, and for the "vigour of the race" to be maintained. (Williams 229)

In the above passage, Williams views the human subject as part of nature, stating that the inevitable failure of the weak to survive is necessary in order for human society to develop steadily. What is noteworthy is that Williams here lays the foundation for his justification of medical euthanasia. On the one hand, he argues that weak individuals have a right to die gracefully if it is unavoidable that they fail to age gracefully, living in pain. On the other hand, he asserts that euthanasia can be efficient for society as a whole because it is a time-efficient and

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[47] Williams's suggestion was initially made through a speech at the Birmingham Speculative Club, an amateur philosophical society. As it became famous, it was published as a book two years later, in 1872.

cost-effective way of "the preservation of the hardest races" (228). As such, basing his argument

on eugenics, Williams emphasizes the efficient aspect of medical euthanasia, taking for granted

that the weak should be replaced by the strong for national regeneration.

Though Williams's suggestion was not officially accepted by the medical profession, it

was broadly reviewed by social reformists in the late nineteenth century, who were eager to work

out a way to stop degeneration. The euthanasia debate was particularly intense among social

scientists rather than physicians. Nevertheless, even social theorists were not always favorable

toward euthanasia. For instance, an editorial in the *Spectator* published in 1871 does not approve

Williams's claim. It shows that "to prolong life" can be a safer option in controversial cases and

points out that the enforcement of euthanasia is far from productive inasmuch as it will be

hedged with numerous practical difficulties in taking care of the euthanized subject's property

(315). However, there were also writers such as the rationalist philosopher Lionel Tollemache

and the birth-control advocate Annie Besant who embraced Williams's view. They contended

that euthanasia can benefit society and agreed that either society or the patient has a public duty

to end a life that has become a "burden" to others (Tollemache 16).

The late Victorian eugenic interest in social advantages of euthanasia indicates that

personal symptoms of decrepitude were understood as initial signs of the dying subject's

ineligibility to be a self-reliant economic agent in society. This interpretation applied to not only

diseased but also biologically aging members of Victorian society whose autonomy was lost as

the bodily function deteriorated. Hence an individual citizen's "decaying body in old age" was a

huge social concern because it served as "a constant reminder of the limits of self-control" and a

symbol of "dependence, disease, failure, and sin" (Chase 6). In other words, in late Victorian

England, aging stood for the opposite of Victorian bourgeois virtues such as self-help, strength, success, and morality. In her interpretation of this tendency, Anne-Julia Zwierlein says that the preexisting Romantic discourse's emphasis on "individual achievement and entitlement" evolved into the late nineteenth-century preoccupation with the extent to which the individual can be self-reliant to function efficiently in society (39). Importantly, in the *fin-de-siècle* context, aged citizens' decreased capacity for work, which led to the loss of their self-reliance in society, became a contentious issue as "conceptions of the aging process and the "invention of retirement" were closely linked with questions of individual achievement" (Zwierlein 38).

It is within this social atmosphere that Trollope and Corbett similarly responded to the national question of efficient population management in their literary imaginations about societies that enforce mandatory euthanasia of old and degenerate citizens. At first glimpse, the two writers' alternative societies seem to take on socialist traits inasmuch as they plan and manage the life course of each citizen. However, their depictions of state intervention in those societies go on to illuminate their ongoing obsession with Victorian virtues of progress, which leads them to exchange individual degeneration for national regeneration. Reading state-enforced euthanasia in this light, one might see that it serves as a social medium through which capitalist values are maximized ironically. Given that this tightened form of state control aims to create and maintain the continually youthful population structure in the novels, the two writers respond to Victorians' growing interest in "conscious evolution through population control" (Claeys, *Dystopia* 295).

Although Trollope and Corbett published their futuristic works—both of which build youthful and efficient utopian nations upon the legalization of mandatory euthanasia of the old

and the weak—in the same period, their texts contrast with each other in terms of the narrative

structure. Trollope's *Period* is obviously set up as a narrative of failure, in which the social

reform through euthanasia accomplishes nothing. It is clear to the reader that the utopian claim

made by Trollope's protagonist as the leader of the community can never be carried out, and

accordingly, the driving force behind the novel is the unfinished process of failure, in which his

reformist ideas on the perfectly efficient nation are subverted. Intriguingly, Corbett's *Amazonia*

seems to be a narrative of success, which portrays a utopian nation led by women settlers as an

already finished product from the beginning. Corbett's protagonist, not yet positioned as a true

insider, expresses a sense of wonder when she is enlightened about the history behind this perfect

product of the female version of the progressive ideology; even so, this initial admiration is to

some extent replaced by shock and horror at compulsory euthanasia of the weak. As such, the

two novels' difference lies in the ways in which the alternative society—seemingly different

from yet indeed similar to the present society—is presented and conceptualized to the reader.

Nevertheless, what I focus on in the following pages is the two authors' similarity as

shown through their portrayals of euthanasia (the forced deaths of old and inefficient citizens),

which prompt the reader to rethink the boundary between utopia and dystopia. In their texts,

euthanasia is obviously depicted as a pathway to utopia inasmuch as it serves to create a

perfectly youthful and efficient society. However, as we shall see, this utopian mechanism itself

is actually dystopian, for it is based upon the process of eliminating citizens whose lives are

categorized as useless. At first glimpse, Trollope and Corbett's narratives on youth and

efficiency do not seem to apparently express the "sense of abiding loss" that critics such as

Stephen Arata associate with *fin-de-siècle* texts on dark fantasies that break with the tradition of

"[h]eroic narratives of foundation" (1). Yet a close reading of their texts indicates that these two

writers build their future societies in ways that intentionally highlight the moment at which their

protagonists feel that sense of loss, becoming aware that what has looked like a utopia is in fact a

dystopia. The essence of their view is that any utopian and dystopian—anti-utopian—societies

are inextricably related to each other. Thus in the remainder of the chapter, I read euthanasia as a

crucial literary device that demystifies the developmental idea of youth and efficiency that the

futuristic narratives endorse on the surface.

Age and Inefficiency in Dystopia

Trollope's interest in various topical issues exemplifies his strategic oscillation between

conservativism and liberalism. As is widely known, he thought of himself as "an advanced, but a

still conservative Liberal" (*Autobiography* 255). As Lynette Felber writes, throughout his literary

works, Trollope's ambiguous self-fashioning is employed as an effective strategy by which he

was able to "occupy the political middle ground" (421). *Period* can also be read in this light,

though Trollope scholars such as A. O. J. Cockshut often regard it as an exception or "a failure"

(91). Although unlike his well-known realist works it handles futuristic elements, it is

noteworthy that its anti-utopian aspects reflect Trollope's consistent attempts to cross the

boundary between conservatism and liberalism. In spite of the protagonist's repetitive suggestion

that the social ideals of the new and efficient future are better than the old and conservative

present of England, the author is interested in how those hopes for fresh and revolutionary

beginnings are illusory; they can be indeed an extension of the late Victorian developmental

ideology. For this reason, I argue that Trollope's careful self-positioning is projected onto this

text, as is also the case in his other works. *Period* looks at the never-ending process by which the relationship between old and new is constantly challenged within the anti-utopian future society.

When it comes to the plot of the novel, scholars by and large have analyzed the functionality of either British imperialism or euthanasia, not bringing into focus the ways in which the text's anti-developmental pattern can be understood in relation to the late Victorian interest in national efficiency. Dominic Alessio reads it as "a New Zealand utopia novel" (74), and Karen Chase focuses on the ways in which "an energetic fantasy of age play[s] out within the space of empire" (100). Recently, Reeves has discussed this novel's engagement with the debate over euthanasia, suggesting that it aims to show the reader how social Darwinism and eugenics would unfold in real cases (110). Trollope's treatment of euthanasia reflects those social agendas, as Reeves contends. In my analysis of the novel through the lens of efficiency, I would add that Trollope's satirical dramatization of social regeneration as a product of mandatory euthanasia sheds light on the dystopian side to the attempt to create a perfectly youthful, efficient, and forward-looking society.

Period, set in 1980 in the fictitious nation of Britannula, a former colony of the British Empire, presents a society whose president plans to enforce the Fixed Period law, under which citizens aged over sixty-seven and a half retire to a College for a year to await their compulsory euthanasia. The novel is narrated in the first person by Britannula's first President, John Neverbend. Though Britannula is a very small nation located on a very small island, Neverbend proudly states that the nation's growth has been led by white New Zealanders since its independence from Britain in the 1950s. In stressing the freshness of the start in this new land, Neverbend strives to carry out the mandatory euthanasia law governing elderly individuals in

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their late sixties. However, when confronting the eldest citizen in the community, who refuses to abide by the law, Neverbend is constantly placed in a difficult situation where he has to nervously defend his utopian claim that the sacrifice on the part of the elderly will enable the nation to invest more in the young generation's growth. Yet utopian overreach fails: he is eventually deported to England, with Britannula becoming part of the British Empire again.

In addressing the issue of euthanasia, the novel views individual aging as the first sign of social degeneracy, discussing the aged's lessened strength and productivity as a primary obstacle to the eternal progress of this small island. In order to understand why the elimination of the elderly is important for the construction of Britannula as a stronger nation, it is helpful to locate the text within its larger historical context. Trollope himself was sixty-seven when he completed this novel in 1881, when the chances for longevity were greater than previous centuries. In Trollope's time, England admittedly had a youthful structure, for only five percent of the total population was over sixty-five. However, this is not to say that Victorians could not survive into old age. There were obviously more aged citizens in Victorian England than ever before, due to the fact that the total population[48] was greater and the average life expectancy[49] longer than in earlier times.

Period mirrors this historical background and offers a unique insight into the ways in which Victorians in the late nineteenth century made an ideological connection between youth

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[48] In 1801, the population was estimated to be eleven million, but by the end of the century, the population skyrocketed to thirty-seven million (Soloway 617). See Richard A. Soloway's "Population and Demographics."

[49] The average life expectancy was thirty-six years in 1801, but it rose to forty-eight years for men and fifty-two years for women in 1901. See Peter Laslett's "Necessary Knowledge: Age and Aging in the Societies of the Past."

and national power; its imagined community bears a striking resemblance to Victorian England despite Britannula's ceaseless attempts not to follow in the latter's footsteps. Keen on glorifying the nation's continually youthful progress, Neverbend keeps defining Britannula as a young nation that has gained complete independence from its mother country. As the first president, Neverbend emphasizes that he has done his best to establish this small community with a population of two hundred and fifty thousand as an independent nation better than the elderly England. When Neverbend associates England with "the old" and Britannula with "the young" (10), his fascination with his country's youth reminds the reader of the relationship between Victorian England and its young colonies. Britannula is in fact positioned specifically as a younger sister to Australia or New Zealand. For this reason, this novel can be aligned with Trollope's nonfiction work *Australia and New Zealand* (1873), in which he delivers his observations about how these young colonies are different from or similar to England.[50] It was indeed not uncommon within late Victorian culture to associate British colonies with youth and England with age. As Simon Sleight notes in his study of how the youth population actively used and reinvented the space of Melbourne in the late nineteenth century, the public space of the British Empire's colonies often embodied the culture of youthful flexibility due to their youthful population and short history (4). Neverbend similarly characterizes young Britannula as the opposite of England in "effete old age" (10).

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[50] *Australia and New Zealand* (1873) is a travel narrative in which Trollope discusses the indigenous culture and the conditions of settlers' lives. It deals with political issues of the British Empire, looking into the relationship between England and its colonies through its account of the conflict between settlers and indigenous people.

In highlighting his young and small nation's potential to keep making progress, Neverbend claims that the history of England has been established around the dominant group of elders in their sixties or seventies, who would never allow any audacious reform such as the state-enforced euthanasia law. He remarks,

> The Prime Minister in Downing Street was seventy-two when we were debarred from carrying out our project, and the Secretary for the Colonies was sixty-nine. Had they been among us, and had we been allowed to use our wisdom without interference from effete old age, where would they have been? . . . It is sad to think that the strength and intellect and spirit of manhood should thus be conquered by that very imbecility which it is their desire to banish from the world. (10–11)

Trollope here has Neverbend criticize England's lack of "true reformer[s]," suggesting that it stems from the demographic fact that "the old men are still alive" (10). This argument shows that England is far from progressive, for its elderliness symbolizes its ineligibility for flexible self-transformations. For Neverbend, the driving force behind national development lies in the youthfully forward-looking spirit, which he thinks can save the world from "affliction" and "poverty" (10). In this light, he proclaims that he prioritizes youthful revolution over old conservatism.

By repeatedly depicting Britannula as a young community, Neverbend highlights the necessity of social investment in youth, translating youth and age into the language of efficiency. The central focus of this youthful and efficient society lies on the systemized process of forcing the elderly to accept their retirement and euthanasia. In his justification of the Fixed Period law, he stresses the need for a national "hero" who proves his worthiness through the voluntary

acceptance of euthanasia, thereby paving the way for more effective social advancement led by the younger generation of this still developing country (83). Based upon the belief that "a worn-out old man" must eventually wear out society as a whole, he finds it justifiable to eliminate aged citizens as the most efficient way to increase the wealth of the nation (12).

Neverbend's perspective on the aged individual's inefficiency illustrates how the question of aging can be related to the bourgeois virtue of self-reliance when explained in economic language. According to Hans-Joachim von Kondratowitz's study of the medicalization of aging, in late nineteenth-century Europe there was a growing awareness of the limited nature of the life force, analogous to "the economic calculability of bourgeois living conditions" (144). This insight applies to how Victorian bourgeois society saw individual citizens' deterioration. Because individuals' biological aging meant that they were in the process of losing the life force, never to replenish it again, each of them had to use the force economically to stay self-reliant for a long time; otherwise, society had to compensate for the loss of the elderly's lessened productivity. Thus aged individuals' decreased life force was not just a personal matter, for it was perceived to lower the level of social efficiency generally. This view is expressed clearly through the logic through which Neverbend justifies the compulsory euthanasia of Britannula citizens who are no longer economically active. He asserts that their "unpardonable weakness" will bear a high cost to society (7). Providing his reader with statistics that prove that "the sufficient sustenance of an old man is more costly than the feeding of a young one" (7), Neverbend points out that the key to Britannula's independence from England lies in its efficient maintenance of the euthanasia system.

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Trollope's account of Neverbend's obsession with youth and disregard for the elderly's needs is indeed relevant to Victorian England, which "afforded little in the way of a safety net for the elderly members of poor families" (Nelson 129). As Claudia Nelson suggests, especially under the New Poor Law,[51] many elderly people in poverty—ineligible for outdoor relief in the form of money, food, and clothing—had to enter the workhouse, and by the end of the century, about a third of the workhouse residents were elderly citizens (130). The operation of the New Poor Law and the workhouse system reflects Victorian England's continuous definitions of its deserving citizens by their ability to be industrious throughout their life. Trollope acknowledges this attitude when he has his protagonist insist that the Britannula citizen should retire from society to be euthanized when "his limbs will have lost all that robust agility which is needed for the adequate performance of the work of the world" (13). In classifying elderly citizens as useless for the Britannula community, Neverbend adamantly argues that his system will serve as "the creator of a new idea of wealth and comfort," which can bring eternal progress to his nation (13).

For Neverbend, all citizens, including himself, should accept their fate to be euthanized to fulfill their "duty as a citizen" (92). A matter of life and death is inherently a national concern. Henry Wright's speculative fiction *Travel in Imagined Lands* (1878), which was published four years before *Period*, also testifies to the ideological connection between citizenship and "productiveness" (181). In Wright's imagination as well as Trollope's, all citizens have a responsibility to prove their worthiness because their civic rights "cannot be held through mere

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[51] The 1834 New Poor Law was fundamentally associated with the cultural debate over "deserving" and "undeserving" poor.

right of birth alone" (181). This systematic thinking points to the ways in which citizenship is understood in economic terms in close relation to the question of how diligently one can work to raise his social productivity. In other words, a responsible citizen in the developmental social network is always in the self-regulatory process of proving his worthiness, irrespective of how old he or she is. Neverbend's definition of citizenship as efficiency echoes Victorian bourgeois society's "obsession with efficiency and productivity" in ways that led all deserving citizens to continually compete with each other in order to keep participating in the growth of the national economy (Claeys, *Dystopia* 298).

Neverbend's claim for efficiency originates in the utilitarian debate of early Victorian England along with the New Poor Law. Though Trollope worked on this fiction in the early 1880s when he was in his late sixties, his ideas of social reform expressed in the novel are rooted in utilitarian notions of social reform prevalent in the middle of the century. In effect, as utilitarianism became more widely accepted, it turned by the end of the century into an ethical philosophy emphasizing the significance of self-discipline in bourgeois society (Brown 830). This tendency is projected onto Trollope's *Period* inasmuch as Neverbend's social reform demands that each citizen should be in the process of improving self-regulation and increasing productivity. The same paradigm is specified in the utilitarian social reformer Edwin Chadwick's earlier discussion. In his famous 1862 address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Chadwick points out that citizens and nations should be constantly "instructed by economical science on the waste of capital" to make the most of their "available days of working ability" (511). Starting from Malthusian speculations about the problem of overpopulation, Chadwick presents specific efficient methods to prevent the exhaustion of productive force. His

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point about the regulatory mechanism is that collective degeneration can be prevented when each

English citizen's bodily and mental "energy" is objectively measured and managed for better

programming the nation's further progress (514).[52] This thought is echoed in Neverbend's notion

of the efficient preservation of national youth. Hence Neverbend's justification of his argument

is a *fin-de-siècle* futuristic embodiment of Chadwick's earlier idea of "the economy of

prevention" (507).

Also important is that Neverbend's philosophy of efficiency is grounded in the late

Victorian discourse of science. His reliance on science is not directly stated within the text, but it

is significant that he has a tendency to see the Britannula citizen's productivity as quantifiable.

His reading of the social question of development within the scientific framework here reflects

the late nineteenth-century tendency to map the social discourse around aging onto the scientific

discourse around entropy. Allen MacDuffie's recent study on the implication of energy in

Victorian narratives indicates that late Victorian systems of science, economy, and literature

were closely tied to each other in terms of their heightened interest in the process of energy

collapse. All the fields saw each individual body as a microcosm of the universe—a limited stock

of energy—and illuminated how human activities of production can accelerate consumptions of

energy, which "gradually stops circulating" and dissipates in a form that is no longer productive

(MacDuffie 122). Neverbend's compulsive attempts to predict how long one can remain

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[52] In keeping with Chadwick's view, John Edward Morgan, in his 1865 address to the
Association for the Promotion of Social Science, also interpreted the issue of individual labor
energy in national terms, posing this question: what should the nation do to maintain its
"permanent greatness" while its "national life-blood" is "prematurely consum[ed]" through
individuals' exhaustions of their energy (427)?

"energetic" in ways that are helpful to the nation reveals that he likens each Britannula citizen's body to a small-scale storage of energy (6), which will not be replenished once exhausted.

Although Neverbend explains the impact of aging objectively in terms of science, he comes to contradict himself when he witnesses differing ways in which aging proceeds in practice. Neverbend's first target is Gabriel Cransweller, who is the oldest citizen of the nation in chronological terms. Given that he is about to turn sixty-seven, it looks natural for him to have little remaining energy, but ironically, Cransweller shows no signs of aging at all. He is still "remarkably handsome," has "fewer of symptoms of age than any old man," and speaks "always clearly and audibly" (20). Cransweller's exceptionally good health makes Neverbend hesitate to enforce the law, for Neverbend knows well that Cransweller's lived experience of aging does not neatly fit into his own definition of it as "a burden" to society (31). Cransweller thus resists the euthanasia law, saying that he has "never [been] better able to manage [his] business than [he is] at present" (31). In contrast to Cransweller, however, Mr Graybody, the curator of the College, has become "unnaturally old" in his late fifties, having failed at every attempt that he has made (84). Mr Graybody, not only "slow" and "decrepit" but also "melancholy, disheartened, and impoverished," exhibits various signs of what not only Neverbend but also most Victorians would see as ungraceful aging (84–85). Neverbend is not unaware that his understanding of aging as loss of productivity cannot be entirely chronologically explainable, but he still concludes that the most objective way for his nation to plan further youthful progress is to apply the fixed period—the age of sixty-seven and a half—without exception. In other words, refusing to admit that it is impossible to calculate how much energy is stored in one's body, Neverbend decides to stick to his chronological criterion, with which he can more efficiently enact the law

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without variation, because he thinks of it as the only efficient method to gauge the extent to which one is old enough to be eliminated from society.

The major difference between these two elderly men sheds light on how the individual aging issue is framed by the developmental ideology of self-help. Neverbend's portrayal of Cransweller centers on the latter's financial success in Britannula. Cransweller is a wool trader who has operated a large firm. His competence as an experienced businessman comes from his ability to work in harmony with his partners, who are at least ten years younger than he. Notably, this oldest citizen symbolizes Britannula's ceaseless progress as Neverbend acknowledges that "[e]verything ha[s] thriven with Cransweller" since the foundation of the nation (18). In this light, it can be said that Cransweller's successful management of his own productivity has enabled him to contribute greatly to Britannula's development into an independent nation. Cransweller's personal history therefore leads the reader to think of his senescence as an example of healthy longevity, which testifies to the bourgeois citizen's capability of staying industrious and accordingly enhancing the productivity of the nation. In contrast to Cransweller, Mr Graybody falls into the category of aging ungracefully. From the developmental perspective, Mr Gradybody's premature aging is a product of his own failure to prove his civic usefulness as a self-reliant citizen. Hence Trollope's presentations of these two different cases of aging allow his readers to ask themselves whether there can be objective standards by which progress on both personal and collective levels can be exactly measured.

Neverbend's efforts to quantify the amount of energy applies to the nation itself as well as to its elderly citizens. In order to carry out his plan to raise national efficiency, he has to reduce the complicated network of Britannula to a closed economic system so that he can easily

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predict the result of his population planning and put into practice the economy of prevention

within a system not influenced by external factors. In this sense, every time Neverbend mentions

Britannula's high efficiency, he expresses the desire to create a perfect system of economy

independent of older and stronger nations. His inflated sense of Britannula's excellence gives the

reader an opportunity to rethink the meaning of its independence, inasmuch as Neverbend's

excessive preoccupation with the nation's independence is premised on Britannula's isolation

from all other nations. In Neverbend's storytelling, he makes the system of Britannula far from

open-ended to ensure that this young self-contained community never stops making progress

toward the state of (solitary) perfection.

However, the protagonist's fantasy of national self-sufficiency is carefully problematized

by the author. For instance, during the cricket match between Britannula and England, the

narrator tells the reader that Britannulists are still "not foreigners" but "Englishmen" to England

(66). No matter how enthusiastically Neverbend suggests that Britannulists have "owed no more

of submission to Great Britain than [they] do to the Salomon Islands or to Otaheite," his version

of independence seems questionable because it is based on the illogical assumption that the

country is entirely self-sufficient, not relating to any other countries (11). In a conversation

between Neverbend and Lord Marylebone from England before the match, Trollope sarcastically

states that Britannula is still culturally and economically connected to England inasmuch as it

speaks English and uses English coins. Moreover, despite Neverbend's assertion that

Britannula's euthanization of old citizens and disposal of their corpses will protect it from

degenerative forces coming from the mother country, it turns out that the operation of the

crematorium called Necropolis—where Britannulists can incinerate dead bodies more efficiently

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than any other country[53]—is indebted to other developed countries. Indeed, "all the best

machinery" necessary for the furnace can be obtained only in "Europe and the States" (86). In

this regard, the efficient population control in Britannula makes it harder for the nation to

decrease its economic dependence on other countries. This irony shows that Trollope lets

Neverbend contradict himself in such a manner as to debunk the myth that the nation's economy

is perfectly self-contained, not connecting to other economies at all.

Most of all, given that Neverbend's extreme prioritization of social efficiency over

humanity leads to his deportation from Britannula to England and England's victory over

Britannula, this futurist fiction sends Victorian readers back to their own time, and the question

remains: what does Trollope aim to illuminate through Neverbend's failure to find a "hero" who

would willingly embrace his own fixed period for national glory and Britannula's return to the

British Empire (83)? Though Neverbend strives in the twentieth century to differentiate young

progressive Britannula from old conservative England, his glorification of the straightforward

progress of his nation is suggestive of the British Empire at the end of the nineteenth century.

Neverbend's failed attempts to find a hero who can willingly sacrifice himself and incorporate

his achievement into the narrative of the nation's development thus serves as Trollope's sarcastic

critique of the late Victorian developmental ideology's regression into frozen youth. Throughout

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[53] Britannula's state-of-the-art facility for cremating dead bodies reflects late Victorian
England's heightened interest in the habit of cremation. Sir Henry Thomson's 1874 article on
cremation illustrates this issue, starting from the concern about the overcrowding of urban
cemeteries and the decay of the buried body in England. Thomson proposed the substitution of
less expensive and hygienic furnace in disposing of the dead more efficiently. In 1875, Thomson
formed the Cremation Society, of which Trollope was a member. However, cremation was
adopted very slowly. In 1885, the Society enacted its first cremation at Woking, and only three
people were cremated during that year. See *The Victorians* by A. N. Wilson.

the plot that revolves around Neverbend's failure, Trollope weakens the entanglement between personal progress and national regeneration. Moreover, Neverbend's utopia reminds us of Wells's future, which seems to be perfectly efficient at first glimpse but turns out to be greatly problematic. That is, like the Eloi community, Neverbend's utopia can be constructed only when there are not any developmental changes at all. Thus Neverbend's utopian ideal cannot be implemented in a vibrant community.

Most of all, on Neverbend's return, Trollope's readers come back to their own reality and potentially start looking beneath the surface of the perfect society in which every citizen's self-reliance is translated into the language of efficiency. Indeed, a palpable sense of loss lies in this social satire of efficiency, for Neverbend's inhumane idea of mandatory euthanasia shows that the state of efficient progress cannot be maintained without any sacrifice on the part of inefficient individuals. The rhetoric that Neverbend believes to be utopian becomes anti-utopian over the course of a plot within which social progress is put ahead of that of the individual. As such, in framing the text as an anti-dystopian narrative, Trollope redefines the interrelation between progress and decline. He questions Victorian optimism about steady progress of reason by converting it to his protagonist's irrational obsession with the arrested youth of his nation. Though Trollope does not provide a unilineal view of the nation's progress, he underscores the amplified confusion about the future of humanity. Hence the readers can conceptualize a viable alternative themselves.

Youth and Efficiency in Utopia

While Trollope's dystopian fiction centers on the process of failure, by which its protagonist fails to establish a continually youthful society, the New Woman writer Corbett's utopian fiction presents the community as a successfully finished product and depicts the ways in which it solidifies its success. That is, in contrast to Trollope's narrative of failure, this novel from the beginning seems to position itself as a narrative of success, giving the reader ample evidence of how and why this perfect product of the progressive ideology has been established. As the title indicates, the novel offers a foretaste of woman-centered society in the remote future, which is markedly different from the patriarchal culture within late Victorian England inasmuch as the already efficient future community represents various kinds of national regeneration, which have been planned and enacted by women activists.[54]

The novel opens with the protagonist's brief analysis of the late Victorian social reality, in which advocates of female suffrage, though still a minority, include men as well as upper- and middle-class women. As a New Woman writer, the protagonist's frustration is strong enough to fuel her secret desire to subvert the old-fashioned order.[55] This character then falls into a slumber from which she wakes to find herself in the year 2472. The slumber is a literary device that Corbett adopts to let her heroine experience this new world of feminine regeneration, standing in

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[54] A woman-centered future was also envisioned by Hudson in *A Crystal Age*.

[55] My fourth chapter centers on the New Woman in the generational conflict. Like New Woman characters in Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*, Corbett's heroine obviously struggles in the male-centered Victorian world. However, Corbett's novel does not stop at depicting the heroine's current conflict with Victorian society and sends her directly to the future where her adventurous journey unfolds. For this reason, I handle *New Amazonia* in this chapter, regarding it as an example of futuristic fiction that talks about utopian/dystopian politics.

the middle of her own reality and fantasy. With the help of this time-travel device, the unnamed

narrator and protagonist obtains a chance to see various ways in which autonomous women

prevent *fin-de-siècle* degenerative symptoms. In this imagined future, the protagonist is initially

positioned as an outsider from Victorian England who is keen on learning more about this future

society. However, as the narrative unfolds, the protagonist comes to redefine her position as a

productive member of the community, placed in a situation where she has to find a specific way

to engage in the collective regeneration of this flawless community. She realizes that this utopia

has been built upon sacrifices of less efficient citizens, in part through the enforcement of the

state's euthanasia policy. In this respect, the novel sheds light on negative aspects of the utopian

society inasmuch as it focuses on the process by which the character's early admiration for the

already complete utopia gradually turns into her shocking discovery about the dark side of the

utopian regeneration.

The regeneration of New Amazonia has been discussed mainly through the lens of

feminism, based on the fact that Corbett was a prolific New Woman writer whose ideals of social

reform are projected onto her heroine.[56] It is therefore important to note that *Amazonia* was

framed basically as Corbett's literary response to the "Appeal against Female Suffrage"

published in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1889.[57] For example, Matthew Beaumont contends that

this novel discusses how "writing utopia" empowers the New Woman to regenerate herself by

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[56] Corbett was a journalist and novelist, best known for this novel. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, she published several pieces of fiction dealing with gender issues as a strong advocate of women's rights. Her representative works include *Mrs. Grundy's Victims* (1893) and *Little Miss Robinson Crusoe* (1898). She is also known as Mrs. George Corbett.

[57] "Appeal" invokes prominent women who were against women's suffrage and asserts that women should stay in the domestic sphere.

conceptualizing a new form of utopian female fellowship, which can be forged between the

writer and broader audiences ("New Woman" 229–30). Anita Rose also takes a feminist

approach, but she touches on ambivalent aspects of the female-centered regeneration. She

contends that this New Woman text's rhetoric cannot be fully understood without examining in

detail the ambivalent meaning of what is truly new in the *fin-de-siècle* social context. New

Amazonia's newness, she argues, is inherently "both regenerative and degenerative" (Rose 18).

Following this lead, it is important to look at Corbett's use of the interplay of old and new, in

which the woman-centered community's newness stems from the old degenerative forces of the

patriarchal culture in Victorian England. I take this point about regeneration further, scrutinizing

the ambivalence about the national regeneration of New Amazonia in terms of age and

inefficiency as well as feminism.

Obviously, Corbett's utopia keeps making progress toward regeneration in overtly

feminine ways. In situating New Amazonia in Ireland, not England, Corbett establishes a

feminized subject nation, in which England's traditional views toward both Ireland and women

as inferior to men—less disciplined and productive than men—are subverted. The protagonist of

the novel thinks of the present British civilization as an embodiment of degeneration. Corbett lets

the protagonist characterize the British culture in the late nineteenth century as "Corrupt,

Degraded, Rotten to the core" (30). Corbett's understanding of degeneration is that the

preexisting hierarchy between men and women is so solid that not only men but also many

upper- and middle-class women do not take the risk of advocating for the extension of the

franchise to themselves. In this sense, the protagonist represents Corbett inasmuch as her

fantastic exploration of this permanently youthful world with universal suffrage serves to

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problematize her own reality in late Victorian England. Intriguingly, the protagonist is not alone in traveling this nation. Along with the New Woman protagonist, Corbett provides the reader with a Victorian male character who finds it difficult to give up on his male privilege in order to be attuned to this woman-centered environment. Presenting these two characters side by side allows Corbett to rethink the gender politics of her day. That is, in depicting a utopian community where the gender norms are reversed in ways that prioritize women's progress over men's, Corbett suggests that there is no room for female progress in a Victorian world dominated by the male-oriented ideology of progress.

For all the importance of gender here, however, this utopian novel also deals with age-related issues in its dramatization of national regeneration. Of course, New Amazonians are still bound by the natural law of aging. They get old and lose their productivity, but they have taken steps to effectively control the individual's life course, thereby preventing the decline of the nation itself. In the earlier part of the novel, Principal Grey, who conducts the protagonist to the community, summarizes the long history of the nation over the past 500 years and asserts that the issue of a nation's rise and fall has always been associated with the question of how "life's burden" can be supported (82). Not unlike many other nations that have lost their battle against famine and disease, New Amazonians have long been afraid of "[t]he advance of age," for it can bring "an appalling train of evils" to their nation (82). Yet it is evident that the nation has succeeded in stopping the citizen's early aging and death, as Principal Grey makes clear that its successful survival has been premised on its continuous attempts to lengthen the average span of its citizens' lives.

Given that New Amazonia is an idealistic society that consists of youthfully energetic

citizens whose bodies are rejuvenated to stay productive, Corbett's portrayal of this alternative

society indicates that the wasteful aspect of human activities can be resolved and that ceaseless

self-transformation is a key condition of prolonging youth. Hence it is helpful to look at whether

or not late Victorian England believed degeneration to be stoppable before proceeding to the

issues of age and degeneration in Corbett's literary representation. According to Anson

Rabinbach's study on how human activities in the nineteenth century were performed in such a

way as to strengthen machine-like productivity beneficial to society as a whole, late nineteenth-

century thinkers generally admitted that even "the most efficient of movements" would still be

subject to the law of entropy (118).[58] However, this is not to say that the long-held belief in

progress was completely replaced by the acceptance of hopeless future marked by entropy. In

effect, the more widely degeneration was discussed, the stronger the desire for regeneration

became. Holbrook Jackson demonstrates that in this sense, *fin-de-siècle* discourse around

degeneration was "a sane and healthy expression of a vitality, which, as it is not difficult to

show, would have been better named regeneration" (19). In his essay on health and efficiency

published in *The Book of Health* (1883), the surgeon William Scovell Savory implies that

regeneration is possible to some extent because each organism can undergo the never-ending

process of self-transformation, fighting against degeneration. He asserts that "the repair or

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[58] In his 1992 study *The Human Motor*, Rabinbach points out that productivism, along with the laws of thermodynamics, began to become a dominant paradigm in the West in the mid-nineteenth century. He defines productivism as "the belief that human society and nature are linked by the primacy and identity of all productive activity, whether of laborers, of machines, or of natural forces" (3). This concept of productivism runs through Corbett's imagination about the optimization of the human body in the utopian nation.

reproduction necessary to maintenance" can exert "the power of compensating [destruction]" (41). This line of argument indicates that Corbett's utopia—where every citizen permanently develops her or his potential and engages in the process of maintaining the nation's youthful energy—is an imaginary space where collective attempts for repair have been successfully performed to reverse the order of devolution.

The history of New Amazonia is ostensibly oriented toward the reparability of life rather than the inevitability of death. The protagonist herself raises a question about the secret of this eternal life:

> I still did not know how it was that no one seemed to bear any of the usual marks of age. I could hardly believe that the approach of a wrinkle, or a slight failing in any given direction, would be considered a sufficient warning to put an end to earthly troubles, and yet I met not a single individual who looked as if she or he was even nearing old age.
>
> (109)

Here the protagonist wonders why New Amazonians do not seem to experience retrogression. Principal Grey explains that there are three major ways of transformation, which together make this young nation "so perfect and efficient" (120): tightly controlled reproduction, rejuvenation, and voluntary euthanasia. In other words, here euthanasia is only one among several key strategies for building utopia.

First, it is eugenic paradigms of healthier reproduction and nurturing that lay the foundation for this society of life. In fact, Corbett makes explicit that the historical background of New Amazonia's development is related to the decline of male-centered nations—especially England. In the year 2472, England no longer exists as a political entity. It has been replaced by

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New Amazonia, which has evolved from Ireland. This decolonization affects not merely Ireland but also women as a whole, for "so many male lives are lost" as a result of "war, seafaring, and a thousand accidents to which men are more exposed than women" (20). England's decline is identified here as "masculine extinction" (121). Corbett indicates that the male-oriented ideology of progress has brought about the degeneration of the entire nation, thus bestowing masculine shape upon the fall of the British Empire. The narrator is also told that women survivors have been able to make a difference to the degenerate world through selective reproduction. In New Amazonia, a "good many Irish women" survivors have gone through various medical examinations in order to prove their fitness for socially advantageous reproduction (70). The success of New Amazonia is assigned a gendered aspect here because it has resulted from women's collective efforts to reproduce strong children. In this utopia, it is autonomous women's intelligent parenting that provides them with the political right to participate in the nation's efficient advancement. New Amazonia's female-centered utopianism exemplifies late nineteenth-century suffragists' idea of feminine regeneration. For example, in *The Awakening of Women: Or, Woman's Part in Revolution* (1899), the social activist Frances Swiney says that "the divine mission" of "motherhood" is a remedy for social degeneration caused by male corruption in late Victorian England (197).

Hence New Amazonian women's privilege lies in their reproduction and nurturing of "healthy children" who will become citizens providing beneficial service to the community (69). This efficient parenting led by women reflects the Victorian conceptualization of eugenics as civic motherhood, which was proposed as a regenerative solution to "the question of poverty and the health of the nation" in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, as Angelique

Richardson says (77). What is notable here is that the notion of efficiency forms a connection between motherhood and nationhood; women demonstrate their social productivity through their reproduction of stronger and healthier citizens. This kind of eugenic future prepared by women is in line with Galton's 1891 emphasis on the necessity of producing "serviceable citizens" (13–14).[59] Similarly, in another 1891 work titled "A New View of the Surplus of Women," the physician and eugenist Arabella Kenealy contends that "women generally are better judges than are men of a suitable life-partner" even though many of them are unaware of their full potential (471). Natural selection in this light is in the hands of women insofar as women autonomously opt for the right reproductive partner, who they believe will be helpful to their own reproduction of better offspring. All these approaches point out that women can serve as the chief agent of regeneration because they can create lives efficiently and rescue the nation from the degenerative forces of death.

In showing that the success of New Amazonia is associated with its strict enforcement of eugenic reproduction, Corbett turns Malthusian approaches to the overpopulation issue into a female-oriented paradigm in which the limits to growth are intelligently handled by women. For instance, the protagonist proclaims that New Amazonia effectively has protected itself from degeneration, which has been caused by overpopulation, because "Malthusian doctrines" have been "stringently enforced" in terms of its population control (75). Through its implementation of eugenic reproduction, the nation not only enlarges the number of healthy and strong citizens but also controls the increase of the entire population. By so doing, it prevents the devolution of

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[59] Galton's point about serviceable citizens was made in his unpublished work Galton Papers, now held in the UCL Special Collections.

society as a whole. In this sense, Corbett's text exemplifies how Malthus's concern about the

impossibility of advancement without extreme devastation can be reinterpreted within the *fin-de-siècle* frame of utopian fiction. According to Catherine Gallagher, the overpopulation question

started to be raised in the first half of the century, but specific solutions were envisaged by

literary authors from the middle of the century (157). Gallagher's analysis is focused on mid-century realist texts by Charles Dickens and George Eliot, but her approach is useful for my

consideration of Corbett's futuristic work on social reform published at the end of the century as

well. Corbett offers her reader the vision of a very desirable future in which the Malthusian

dilemma—how to bring about "progressively higher forms of human civilization" without

experiencing negative cycles of devastation—has been resolved within her literary

reinterpretation of degeneration and regeneration (Gallagher 157).[60] Corbett therefore rewrites

the male-centered developmental ideology in her dramatization of a female-oriented utopia in

which women's eugenic reproduction can resolve the Malthusian conundrum.

Alongside reproduction, medical rejuvenation is portrayed as another way of maintaining

New Amazonia's youth. About halfway through the narrative, the protagonist asks Principal

Grey why "everyone here seems gifted with perpetual youth" (109). When Principal Grey

explains the mystery by walking the protagonist through "the Physiological Hall for recuperation

and rejuvenation" where decrepit individuals can recover health, taking energy from the nerves

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[60] In *The Body Economic* (2006), Gallagher looks at how Malthus's thoughts became "culture-friendly" as they were revisited in various developmental narrative narratives in the latter half of the century (157).

of animals, to live for several hundred years, she explains why this procedure is efficient on a national scale (110):

> [I]t is to the benefit we derive here that much of our national prosperity is due. The breeding and rearing of the animals required is an expensive branch of State economy, but all expenses are more than counterbalanced by the fee which we willingly pay for each operation. Even apart from the fact that we are individually and collectively enormously benefitted by our rejuvenating system, it gives employment to a large number of people, and adds considerably to the revenues of the State. (111)

Principal Grey's perception of energy transfers between animals and human beings here is counter-entropic, given that it is presented as a way of reversing the process of energy consumption. If New Amazonia's repair is viewed in terms of energy exchange, one might see Corbett as reinventing the late Victorian thermodynamic perspective on energy and entropy. In other words, in New Amazonia the process of energy's natural devolution into a useless form within the human body can be repaired. This idealistic mechanism illuminates the utopian assumption that the natural process of energy devolution can move backward. Likewise, the human body's capability of living youthfully can be recharged in a utopian nation. It is noticeable that this counter-entropic process of repair is depicted as beneficial to the economy of the nation, for it opens up many career opportunities to New Amazonians. Hence when New Amazonians receive energy from other organisms through inoculation, they raise both their own life force and the entire nation's productivity. As such, this counter-entropic system of repair functions to bring about large-scale regeneration.

New Amazonia's practices regarding reproduction and rejuvenation certainly aim to invigorate its citizens' lives, but it is imperative to note that those are not the only measures that lead to the nation's regeneration. In addition to reproduction and rejuvenation, this society of perfection practices euthanasia of the elderly. The utopian claim running through the novel has something in common with Neverbend's thinking, which Trollope sarcastically critiques in *Period*. The similarity between Britannula and New Amazonia becomes explicit in the second half of the text when the protagonist delves deeply into the absence of aging in the community. In response to her questions, Principal Grey offers detailed explanations about how New Amazonians perceive aging, indicating that there comes a moment where "the misfortune of physical wreck" hampers the body's "further advancement" (104). When aged citizens of New Amazonia are no longer able to lead "an honourable and useful life," they undergo careful medical examinations designed to help them decide whether or not to terminate their lives (102). New Amazonia is certainly a community of longevity, which seeks "to prolong the healthy life of the body" as long as possible before invoking euthanasia, but noticeably, the logic behind the policy of voluntary euthanasia overlaps Neverbend's problematic justification of the fixed period (104). Despite the nonviolent side to medical euthanasia in this nation, Principal Grey hints that old individuals should accept euthanasia "without any wasteful delay" once the mental deterioration that follows physical aging has lowered their self-reliance to the point at which any material compensation for their labor, including pension payouts, is economically inappropriate (104).

New Amazonia's tightened management of the individual's life course from birth to death shocks the protagonist, even though she never stops taking pleasure in the nation's female-

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oriented version of progress. Since the aim of the nation's development is "to guard against the evils of over-population in the future" (75), it is inevitable for newborn and elderly citizens to be medically examined to verify their eligibility for citizenship. In effect, "crippled or malformed infants," no less than the demented elderly, are categorized as unfit to live when society labels them as incapable of efficiently using their "[h]ealth of the body, the highest technical and intellectual knowledge, and purity of morals," thereby rendering them unable to contribute to "the most perfect, the most prosperous, and the most moral community in existence" (74–75). As such, each citizen's worthiness to live is measured by the amount of usable energy—civic usefulness—stored in her or his body in New Amazonia.

Interconnected with the citizen's productivity in this woman-centered progressive nation is the virtue of self-reliance. Toward the end of the novel, it becomes clear that there is no room in New Amazonia for inefficient citizens who do not professionally engage in financial activities. Hence what happens right before the protagonist's return to her own reality in late Victorian England is that she realizes that she now has to find a job in order to make her own living. In this society where every self-reliant citizen makes a contribution to its permanent progress, the protagonist feels pressured to "prove [her] capability of assuming an active part in the battle of life" (174). Principal Grey agrees to the protagonist's idea of finding a solid job in New Amazonia, saying that "it is expedient that some plans should be laid for [the protagonist's] future" so that the protagonist may lead "as commonplace a life as any of [New Amazonians]" (175). Principal Grey's deep interest in how the protagonist can earn her living indicates that citizenship in New Amazonia is deeply related to the efficiency question. The protagonist therefore decides to be a professional writer who can offer a constructive critique of the history

of England's decline. She believes that her own experience in Victorian England can be constructively used in warning New Amazonian audiences not to follow the footsteps of England.

Nevertheless, no matter how idealistic this nation's efficient progress is, Corbett also makes explicit that "progression" necessarily calls for "retrogression" (181). For instance, the Victorian male character who finds himself located in New Amazonia all of a sudden is positioned as an outcast in the woman-centered community. He represents the problematic aspects of Victorian aristocratic masculinity, which makes him unable to accept the newly established gender hierarchy in New Amazonia. He adamantly tells everyone that he has never even dressed himself "without assistance" in England because his family belongs to the English aristocracy (182). He refuses to earn his living, based on the belief that doing so will require him to "degrade himself" (180). This male character's incapability of adjusting to New Amazonia leads Principal Grey to decide, with no evident difficulty, that he might better die if he cannot turn himself into a productive citizen. Based on the fact that this man has already "lost so much time," Principal Grey labels him an unworthy subject who has led a wasteful life and should be euthanized soon, although the protagonist's journey ends before this event happens (181). Shocked by Principal Grey's remark, the protagonist anxiously strives to prove her own potential as soon as practicable. This episode throws light on the eugenic thought that the renewal of national character is impossible without the elimination of individuals with less productivity. Consequently, it becomes difficult to see New Amazonia's success as an entirely positive outcome of the progressive ideology. The youthful regeneration that the nation has achieved is not genuinely utopian inasmuch as it has taken for granted forceful retrogressions of citizens who

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are ineligible for the New Amazonian citizenship of efficiency. The unbreakable link between progression and retrogression here indicates that perhaps the most efficient utopian nation is predicated on destructive as well as constructive mechanisms. Not unlike Wells's Eloi community and Trollope's Britannula, New Amazonia turns out to be not as perfect as it seems to be at first despite its efficient population control.

Corbett has her heroine choose to come back to her own life in Victorian England voluntarily, leaving behind the fantasy of unfailing youth and life at the end of the novel. To be sure, compared to Trollope's depiction of the failure to establish an efficient society without old age, Corbett's is undeniably drawn toward New Amazonia's successful female-centered implementation of the fantasy of eternal youth. Yet also notable is that the protagonist's experience of the never-ending life of progression in the utopian society is transformed into a piece of unverified fiction and that her personal choice outweighs the New Amazonian community's once she awakes from her deep slumber. Hence Corbett's narrative turns out to be anti-utopian, for it does not stop at pointing to a possibility that the fear of degeneration can be overcome by empowered women. Alexis Lothian, in this sense, says that this seemingly utopian novel indeed underscores "the dark side of a utopia" (13). By sending the heroine back to the present reality of the late Victorian era, Corbett implies that the heroine's temporal relocation places her in a more difficult situation than ever. Having gained new insight into the problematic aspects of not only the male-centered social structure of the present but also the female-centered utopian structure of the future, this New Woman character has to reestablish her understanding of an ideal nation upon her return to the present.

Despite the differences between Trollope's dystopian and Corbett's utopian plots, it is evident that both writers rearticulate late Victorian anxieties of degeneration within the particular genre of anti-utopian writing through their representations of euthanasia. In their texts, the mandatory euthanasia system serves as a pivotal means of strengthening social control over inefficient individuals, which enables national regeneration. In emphasizing the indestructible connection between utopian regeneration and dystopian degeneration, *fin-de-siècle* speculative texts take on anti-utopian traits and modify the nineteenth-century developmental pattern to depict the process by which the balance of power between individuals and society is ceaselessly upset. This imbalance is caused by the moment where the systematic thinking about social regeneration is prioritized over the individual's natural progression from youth to age—life to death—in the remote future setting, which is in effect greatly similar to the late Victorian reality. Consequently, the anti-utopian plot in speculative texts on euthanasia is a *fin-de-siècle* rewriting of the conventional narrative of progress. Even though the national question of efficient population control is completely resolved in neither of these texts, they inform the reader that the myth of eternal youth, efficiency, and progress is imaginary and that it is the reader's task now to find a practicable alternative.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: IMAGINATIVE REGENERATION THROUGH CHILDHOOD

IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLAND

Throughout the previous chapters, I have looked into the question of age in the *fin-de-siècle* context of degeneration. I have read how different subgenres of *fin-de-siècle* narratives interpret youth and age in different ways to respond to the perceived devolution of high civilization in modern England. The prominence of Gothic, imperial adventure, New Woman, and speculative fiction in the late nineteenth century shows that national self-confidence transformed into national self-doubt. The nineteenth-century British ideal was a young man with strong potential for progress, but toward the close of the century, it became more difficult for the nation to keep securing its national persona as a young self because the anxiety about national and cultural decline increased. Within this background, diverse literary subgenres imaginatively tested the possibility of the nation's straightforward progress by using the trope of age as a mirror in which one can speculate on the condition of degenerate individuals and society within modern England. *Fin-de-siècle* narratives of age and degeneration thus tend to criticize modern civilization, the British Empire, male-centered society, and efficiency, all of which have contributed to the establishment of eternal progress as the national ideal throughout the nineteenth century.

Specifically, I have argued that in Bram Stoker's Gothic text, the immortal vampire's modernization of his old power replicates the ways in which the British Empire has defined itself as young and developmental and accordingly questions the newness of its modern civilization.

The vampire's attack upon Britons happens at the center of the Empire, London, in ways that shed light on the powerlessness of the young. Yet the focus of imperial adventure fiction written by H. Rider Haggard and Joseph Conrad in the same period lies on the periphery of the Empire. Although the British Empire constantly projects its own age consciousness onto its colonial spaces to expel the fear of degeneration, its male agents' progress is obstructed by the colonial space, which functions as an old yet powerful character who accelerates Britons' degeneration. While imperial adventure fiction centers on male degeneration, *fin-de-siècle* New Woman fiction deals with female degeneration, which happens to young women who are married to degenerate men. Sarah Grand's text depicts young New Woman characters' failure to overcome their conflict with male-centered society, which leads to their own premature aging, but in Eliza Lynn Linton's novel, the New Woman generation's vulnerability is offset by the symbolic regeneration of an Old Woman character, who is no longer bound by wifely or motherly duties, into a conservative activist who helps the New Woman generation in her later life. Regeneration is handled in Anthony Trollope and Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett's speculative fiction on state-enforced euthanasia of old citizens as well. Whether utopian or dystopian, alternative societies in the future are obsessed with the idea of national efficiency. They use mandatory euthanasia as a means of increasing the size of the young and efficient generation and decreasing that of the old and inefficient generation, but this seemingly utopian claim turns out to be dystopian, for national regeneration is not really achieved in any alternative society. Accordingly, in emphasizing such forceful aspects of aging in their use of diverse age metaphors, these *fin-de-siècle* genres are keen on deconstructing the nineteenth-century idealization of youth and progress. Though these genres do not give explicit directions on how to overcome the fear of

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degeneration, they problematize the ideology of linear progress and prompt the reader to contemplate the issue on their own in their use of age metaphors.

Late Victorian British fiction's description of what it means to be old influenced Edwardian fiction's portrayal of what it means to be very young. This conclusion, then, focuses primarily on the functionality of the very early stage of life—childhood—in literature written just after the end of the nineteenth century. I do not aim to offer a comprehensive reading of early twentieth-century narratives of childhood or children here, but I seek to highlight the ways in which Edwardian narratives present children as agent of regeneration, whose strong potential for growth may serve to reduce anxiety over degeneration at the opening of the new century. In the first half of what follows, I examine the cult of nostalgia and childhood in Edwardian England, touching on several Edwardian texts that use childhood as a vehicle for exploring the history of not only the British Empire but also other ancient empires and imagining the future led by the next generation. In the latter half, I analyze Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), for it presents child time travelers who observe the past, present, and future of the British Empire. I argue that not only late Victorian but also Edwardian texts, especially those for children, revisit the preexisting ideology of linear progress by envisioning national regeneration through childhood. Edwardian children's literature therefore gives a useful direction for age criticism of our own era.

During the Edwardian era,[61] the ideology of progress continued to be questioned although the British Empire did not actually lose its worldwide dominion until after the Second World

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[61] Though King Edward VII's reign ended in 1910, the Edwardian period is commonly understood as continuing until 1914 right before the First World War.

War. Taking into account how much the World Wars affected Europe, it seems important that Britain had not yet witnessed dramatic changes in this period. Nevertheless, in serving as a transition between Victorian and modern, Edwardian Britain was faced with the interchange of old and new values. In this sense, Samuel Hynes says that the nation was "in an odd pivotal position between the nineteenth century and the twentieth: it was not quite Victorian, though conservatives tried to make it so, nor was it altogether modern, though it contained the beginnings of many ideas that we recognize as our own" (vii). That is to say, modernization rapidly took place while the preexisting order was not completely gone, and accordingly, the conflict between old and new steadily intensified.

As Edwardians accepted more social changes, they felt more wistful toward the past, and this tendency became useful subject matter for literary authors of the period. That is, Edwardian authors often portray their characters as being nostalgic for their nation's or their own past. For example, in *Conrad in Quest of His Youth, an Extravagance of Temperament* (1903), the English novelist Leonard Merrick—who is not much discussed nowadays but was widely known for his fine works in his own time—presents a middle-aged protagonist, Conrad, who wants to be "nineteen again" and nostalgically recalls the memory of youth (2). Having spent eighteen years in one of the British colonial regions, the protagonist comes back to London, but he constantly misses some dynamic aspects of being young, not adapting himself to the new London:

> We do not immediately recognize that our youth is going from us; it recedes stealthily, like our hair. For a long time he had missed the zest, the sparkle, the buoyancy from life, but for the flatness that distressed him he blamed the Colony instead of his age. He confused the emotions of his youth with the scenes where he had felt them, and yearned

to make sentimental journeys, fancying that to revisit the scenes would be to recover the

emotions. (2–3)

The above passage hints at Conrad's fixation on youth. In effect, the older Conrad has not

encountered senescence. He is a middle-aged man who does not show any particular sign of

elderliness yet, but over the course of his narrative, he sees himself as already decrepit. He sets

up his boyhood as his prime of life (7), the time in which he experienced "the zest, the sparkle,

the buoyancy from life."

This retrospective mode running through the novel mirrors the social atmosphere of the

period. Not unlike the end of the nineteenth century, the early twentieth century also had a

tendency to recall the good old days, consistently restoring the glory of the past. Significantly,

the longing for bygones here does not mean that the preexisting order has completely crumbled.

The power of the British Empire remained undiminished, but it constantly felt a need to flaunt its

strength. In addition, the Second Boer War of 1899–1902 made Britons clearly see their

weakness. Britons had thought that they could win the war easily, but it turned out that the war

was not an easy one despite their final triumph. The Boer War obviously triggered Britons to

abandon their illusions about imperial progress, just as H. G. Wells says in his novel *The Wife of

Sir Isaac Harman* (1914): "The first decade of the twentieth century was for the English a decade

of badly sprained optimism. Our Empire was nearly beaten by a handful of farmers amidst the

jeering contempt of the whole world" (259). Nevertheless, their "badly sprained optimism" was

not completely gone inasmuch as it generated a strong sense of yearning for the glorious past of

pre-twentieth-century Empire.

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The proliferation of concern about the British Empire's decline led Britons to turn their eyes to other empires in the past. In particular, the history of the Roman Empire, which once colonized Britain, grabbed their attention. This turn to the Roman Empire is exemplified by Elliott Evans Mills's pamphlet titled *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1905). In identifying the symptoms of imperial decline, Mills writes: "Any Empire, which wishes to play a notable part in the history of the World, must realize that other Empires as proudly exultant as herself have passed away. If she wishes to avoid a similar fate, her inhabitants must from childhood be acquainted with the errors of their predecessors" (iii). Among all empires that have disappeared in the past, Mills keeps the Roman Empire uppermost in mind.

The analogy between the British and the Roman Empires was often made in Edwardian discourse on imperial decline. Influenced by Mills's pamphlet, Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement, discussed in his 1908 book *Scouting for Boys* the ways in which Britain could avoid the fate of Rome. Throwing light on "the decline of good citizenship" in the Roman Empire (Ch. X), Baden-Powell highlights the necessity of properly educating the next generation in such a way as to make them patriotic soldiers armed with good citizenship.

Baden-Powell's book clearly leans toward the decline of the Roman Empire, but many Edwardian texts look back at different periods of England's own history in having the next generation learn about old values and prepare for a better future. This quality is expressed well in children's fiction, turning children into learners of the past. For example, taking the form of historical fantasy, Rudyard Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) presents two children who become friends with a fairy, Puck, and encounter the past of England. Puck introduces himself as "the oldest Old Thing in England" (15), thereby serving as the bridge between past and present.

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Puck's role in the text is to teach the children about the history of England by letting them listen to stories of people from the past. The characters from the past include the Norman knight Sir Richard Dalyngridge, who participated in the Norman Conquest, the Roman Centurion Parnesius, who was charged with the defense of Hadrian's Wall, and the Jewish moneylender Kadmiel, who contributed to the signing of Magna Carta in 1215. Puck thus offers the children a chance to better understand their Englishness and says: "Now are you two lawfully seized and possessed of all Old England. . . . Hold fast all I give you" (19). In utilizing the fairy who has a magical power to bring the past to life, Kipling positions the two children as learners who "create a connection . . . between themselves in the present and the people of the past" (29), as Gabriel Moshenka puts it. By getting lessons from the past, the children are able to see themselves as part of the British Empire and further develop their understanding of Englishness.

Lying behind the Edwardian authors' logic in such texts is certainly an optimistic belief that the rising generation can lead developments for the future of the nation by revisiting its history, but this way of rhetorically connecting the past, present, and future arises from their disbelief in the linear progress model. Like late Victorian authors of narratives of age and degeneration, these Edwardian authors were cognizant of the limit to linear progress. Obviously, the anxiety about the devolution of the established order, which is illustrated in *fin-de-siècle* New Woman fiction in particular, was not gone at the beginning of the new century. The cultural dynamic in the early twentieth century—before the First World War—was similar to that in the Victorian era in many ways, but what is striking in the Edwardian discussion of national decline is that it calls attention to childhood, as indicated by Baden-Powell's emphasis on the early education of boys as the first step toward national regeneration. As Jonathan Rose states, the

"fascination with childhood" corresponded to "a new concern for child welfare" at this time, because "[f]or the first time it was widely recognized that children are different from adults" (178). This shift was specified through the 1908 Children's Act, which was designed to protect children from abuse and exploitation. This social reform was carried out partly as a response to the anxiety over the decrease in the birth rate,[62] which posed a national efficiency question to English society.

The increased attention to children and childhood was projected onto literature. A wide variety of now-canonical children's texts were published in Edwardian England. Aside from *Puck of Pook's Hill*, Kipling published *Kim* (1901). Also, J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan texts such as *The Little White Bird* (1902) and *Peter and Wendy* (1904), Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1905), and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) appeared in this period. Among many authors of children's literature, Nesbit wrote children's tales such as *The Railway Children* (1906), *Amulet*, *The House of Arden* (1908), and *Harding's Luck* (1909), in which children are presented as autonomous beings. In particular, I suggest that *Amulet* conceptualizes autonomous children's imaginative engagement in national regeneration.

Notably, Edwardian authors did not originate this way of regarding children as autonomous; they were influenced heavily by Victorians. Charles Dickens's texts such as *Oliver Twist; or, the Parish Boy's Progress* (1837) illustrate how children develop their agency, not necessarily constrained by their social status. Charlotte Brontë's female Bildungsroman *Jane*

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[62] The average number of children that English women who married in the 1860s gave birth to was more than six, but 50 years later, it dropped to fewer than three. See Michael Anderson's "The Social Implications of Demographic Change" (1990).

Eyre (1847) delves deeply into the young Jane's psychological struggle to gain autonomy. Also, Mary Louisa Molesworth's fiction for children, *"Carrots": Just a Little Boy* (1876), depicts the adventurous journey of a young boy and his siblings, bringing into focus the mindset of the very young character. A close examination of such authors' treatment of childhood complicates our perception of Victorian children and childhood. As is widely accepted, Romanticism's idealization of childhood influenced Victorians' moral and religious approach to children's innocence, but at the same time, many Victorians saw children as inherently sinful. This paradigm is basically dichotomous inasmuch as it views children as either good or bad. However, recent critics claim that we should not oversimplify Victorians' understanding of children and childhood. For instance, Amberyl Malkovich points out, Victorian children are neither innocent nor sinful; they are "imperfect" beings who have their own needs, being in the process of forming their identity in their own ways by "undergo[ing] social norming" throughout their developmental journey (6). Marah Gubar similarly contends that Victorian books present "child characters and child readers as socially saturated beings, profoundly shaped by the culture, manners, and morals of their time, precisely in order to explore the vexed issue of the child's agency" (4).

In this respect, Nesbit's interpretation of children as autonomous beings can be seen as having its root in these Victorian authors', but it is also significant that her texts—especially *Amulet*—are different from her literary predecessors'. *Amulet* is generally regarded as the first children's text that uses time travel for child characters' adventure. *Amulet* highlights its four child characters' belief in magic, which empowers them to travel beyond space and time. Victorian fiction for adult readers uses time travel as a device that enables the protagonist to

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discover alternative societies located in different spatiotemporal backgrounds. It therefore added

a new dimension to the social conflict of the present. For example, in Wells's *The Time Machine*

(1895), the adult protagonist's time travel is intended to build a new definition of national

efficiency in the future as a countermeasure against national degeneration in the present. Indeed,

many writers published time travel narratives in the late Victorian era. Representative works

include Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1887), William Morris's *A Dream of

John Ball* (1888), and Corbett's *New Amazonia: A Foretaste of Future* (1889), which I have

investigated in the fifth chapter. However, unlike the adult protagonists in such texts, Nesbit's

young characters are depicted as neither judging what they witness in the past or the future nor

speculating about the nature of a utopian nation without degeneration even though they acquire

some experience of the world on their own, based on their engagement in different

spatiotemporal settings.

Moreover, Nesbit's text differs from Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill*, which was published

in the same year. Kipling does not send his child characters to the past, instead positioning them

as passive listeners to the stories told by the figures from the history of England, who remind

Edwardians of their glorious past. In contrast, in *Amulet*, Nesbit employs characters from other

civilizations as well and let them speak about their own experiences. Moreover, she makes her

child protagonists visit not only the past but also the utopian future, thereby prompting the next

generation to see what will happen as well as what has happened from its own fresh perspective.

Overall, Nesbit's child characters do not stop at being inculcated with the preexisting

social norms endorsed by the older generation, especially parents. In *Amulet*, the child characters

are presented as living with an old nurse who runs a boardinghouse near the British Museum in

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Edwardian London. The parental absence emotionally affects the children. Yet as Margaret

Rustin and Michael Rustin say, the absence here "creates the space which then has to be filled

somehow, by the children in their relationships with each other" (60). In helping one another

overcome the absence in their own ways, the children free themselves from the normative

influence of the older generation and autonomously set out on a magical journey not only to the

past but also to the future, which enables them to witness firsthand how the British Empire has

made history and will continue to do so. These children do not need cutting-edge technology for

their adventure. Not even understanding the meaning of degeneration and regeneration, the

children's goal is not to rethink the degeneration question in alternative societies but to find the

other half of an ancient amulet, which they purchase under the guidance of their old friend with

magical powers, the Psammead.

However, as we shall see, their curious encounter not only with ancient civilizations but

also with a utopian future is suggested as a meaningful attempt to find a sustainable alternative

for the Empire on the part of the next generation. The children's time travel seems to be less

realistic than adults', for they accidentally intervene in the history of the Empire. In this light,

Amulet adds comical and fantastic elements to the Empire's linear progress. In introducing

themselves as coming "from the world where the sun never sets" to people who have not heard

of the British Empire (88), the children seemingly echo the older generation's opinions, but they

reconstruct the imperial history from different angles.

In other words, the reader can explore the ways in which the national regeneration

question, which influenced both late Victorian and Edwardian literature, is handled through

Nesbit's portrayal of children and childhood in *Amulet*. Nesbit's dramatization of the very young

time travelers looking back at the past of the Empire is her literary response to the present reality of modern Britain.[63] Susan Anderson asserts that Nesbit's engagement in "pleasures of nostalgia" does not signify that her child characters do not embrace "cultural change" happening in the early twentieth century (308), dwelling on the past. The child characters' fantastic experience of other civilizations in *Amulet* does not happen in ways that deny modern changes happening in the present. Thus not unlike modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf, Nesbit accepts newness and "negotiates issues of time and modernity" through her description of imaginative regeneration through childhood (Anderson 308). Noticeably, Britain's age consciousness lies behind Nesbit's symbolic treatment of children not only as agents of modernity but also as nostalgic time travelers who offer a new vision of national regeneration.

I too argue that the children's acceptance of newness in their exploration not only of the past and but also of the present and future is of key importance to our fuller understanding of the narrative. From Victorian authors, Nesbit inherits the interest in children's strong potential for growth, which can be fully enriched throughout their explorations of various spaces that they find to be very different from their own. Yet she takes this stance further by positioning children as time travelers who act as young agents of the Empire. That is, in contrast to late Victorian narratives of age discussed in the previous chapters, Nesbit's *Amulet* employs child adventurers and encourages them to modify the predominant understanding of the imperial progress achieved

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[63] At first glimpse, Nesbit's fantasy can be seen as not deeply related to the present reality of Edwardian England. In this sense, Humphrey Carpenter suggests that many Edwardian fantasy texts for children, including Nesbit's, are fundamentally "introspective" (16), for they focus on a utopian space that does not exist in the real world. However, I agree to recent critics' idea that Nesbit's fantasy for children reflects the present social reality in modern England.

by the older generations from their fresh perspective. Nesbit's time-slip narrative for children serves to replace the preexisting anxiety about social decline, which was handled in late Victorian narratives of age and degeneration, with fascination with a very early stage of life. Her literary representation of childhood in *Amulet* reflects England's aspiration to achieve regeneration at the beginning of the new century.

The novel's treatment of childhood does more than just visualize children's own adventurous spirit because it demonstrates how an adult might reconstruct his own childhood psychologically. Nesbit's use of childhood in *Amulet* is a timely response to the early twentieth-century "reversion to a childlike turn of mind" (Rose 178).[64] Specifically, *Amulet* illustrates adults' return to childhood by presenting an adult character, a poor neighbor on the top floor of the house in which the children are boarding. This adult character, a scholar known to the children as "Jimmy," bears a resemblance to Conrad, the titular adult protagonist of Merrick's novel, who psychologically idealizes childhood as an escape from his present reality. Jimmy too seems to be dissatisfied with his life as a poor adult in Edwardian Britain, but unlike Conrad's, Jimmy's yearning for childhood allows him to take action by engaging in the children's time travel. Although Jimmy is not capable of communicating with people from other cultures—aside from his fluency in Latin—he helps the children and benefits from their adventure. As a consequence, he feels regenerated as "a new man" (373).

Above all, Jimmy's regeneration occurs after his magical union with one of the ancient figures that the children encounter, Rekh-mara, a priest that the children meet in ancient Egypt.

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[64] One representative example is Barrie's Peter Pan, who expresses "an outright refusal to grow up" (Rose 178).

Having possessed the half of the amulet in the past, Rekh-mara appears in London at the end of

the novel and helps the children obtain the whole amulet. Rekh-mara knows the importance of

his knowledge inasmuch as he says to the children: "If I go back to my own land and my own

age, who will believe my tales of what I have seen in the future? Let me stay here, be the great

knower of all that has been, in that our time, so living to me, so old to you, about which your

learned men speculate unceasingly" (367). The logic behind Rekh-mara's remark here is that his

symbolic oldness, which arises from his ancient origin, will be a valuable asset to modern

England. Hence Rekh-mara enables Jimmy to regenerate into "a new man" by disappearing into

Jimmy's body (373). In this sense, the novel indicates that the Edwardian adult's magical

regeneration results from his deep appreciation of the value of the children's adventure beyond

space and time. Also, considering that Edwardian England's acceptance of ancient knowledge

takes the form of Jimmy's regeneration, there is a sense that the novel portrays the ways in which

Edwardian adults rebuild childhood imaginatively as a site for strengthening the British Empire.

However, it is the children's own ability to integrate themselves into any culture in any

time that is of key importance to their time travel, although Jimmy too gets rewarded for his

engagement in the children's journey. Thus the narrator of the novel says that "the children had

found out the universal language which everyone can understand, and wise men so far have not

found" (82). In other words, it seems that the children's innocence matters more than the older

generation's wisdom in the course of their time travel. The narrator's valorization of childlike

innocence here invokes Max Nordau's characterization of degeneracy at the end of the

nineteenth century as both senile and childish. As I have mentioned earlier in my reading of

imperial adventure fiction, Nordau states that degeneracy manifests itself in the form of

"senility" and that the worn-out modern subject often imitates childlike "simplicity" in such a way as to replicate the child's potential for innovation (2, 82). This *fin-de-siècle* senility, then, is exchanged for childlikeness through Nesbit's early twentieth-century depiction of child travelers who visit their Empire's past and future rather than the colonial spaces in the present. In contrast to the traveling adults in *fin-de-siècle* narratives, the children in *Amulet* do not seem to know the meaning of their time travel. Yet unlike the older generation, the children do not find it difficult to communicate with people from different spatiotemporal backgrounds. They have not acquired sophisticated mentality yet, but their childlike imagination enables them to create an alternative vision of the Empire, within which the past, present, and future coexist and intermingle.

In this sense, it can also be said that Nesbit's interpretation of childhood in *Amulet* differs from other Edwardian authors' such as Merrick's. In contrast to Merrick's adult protagonist in *Conrad*, who only passively recalls his bygone childhood, Nesbit's protagonists in *Amulet* are children who are now undergoing childhood. Hence Nesbit has her child characters actively take advantage of their own childlike simplicity in their exploration of the Empire's past, present, and future. For the older generation, childhood is therefore just an abstract concept that exists only in the past. However, throughout *Amulet*, we can see how the Edwardian children themselves experience childhood as their present reality and make the best use of their own childlikeness for their time travel.

As I have mentioned, the children mostly go to the past, but they also bring characters from the past to the present and look in on the future. There are three representative moments where they explore their nation's past, present, and future respectively. First of all, the children's conversation with Julius Caesar—who is considering whether or not to invade Britain, "gazing

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over the sea towards Britain" outside his tent—allows them to rethink their understanding of Britain at the time of the Roman invasion (248). The children here position themselves as the colonized in the presence of Caesar, for Caesar seems to think of these children as exotic barbarians, inferior to the Roman citizens. The children say that they come from a civilized world, twentieth-century Britain, but when they realize that they are provoking Caesar's curiosity about Britain and making him firmly decide to attack the land, they start to assert that Britain is "just a savage sort of island" that is not worth colonizing (253). The implication of this comic scene is that the time travel to the ancient past gives these children from twentieth-century London a chance to look at their Empire from another point of view, redefining themselves as the conquered—not the conquering—race.

The children's engagement in the past involves ancient Babylon as well, but this time, their adventure is not limited to the realm of the past, for the queen whom they meet in ancient Babylon comes to modern London with them. The presence of this ancient figure in the modern present becomes problematic especially at the British Museum, an emblem of Britain's progress, which has happened at the expense of other civilizations. The Queen makes a scene inside the Museum upon encountering "lots of things from [her] country" (185). Saying that "[t]hose necklaces and earrings and things in the glass cases were all hers" (188), she attempts to break the glass and then uses magic to cause the ancient objects to leave the museum, causing consternation among the witnesses. Even after this incident, the Queen asks the children to show her London, wishing to see "the wonders of London" (195).

However, the Queen is not greatly impressed by the modern metropolitan landscape and thinks of "working-people" as "slaves" who are "wretched and poor and neglected" (195). The

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Queen's response to modernity in London is interesting given that the author herself was a socialist who was one of the founders of the Fabian Society in 1884.[65] That is, Nesbit employs this character from another empire in the past in order to offer social criticism. Through the eyes of the Babylonian Queen, who has not been exposed to modern civilization, Nesbit satirizes the social structure of modern England and suggests that little has been improved in terms of social welfare within this civilized world. Furthermore, Nesbit lets the Queen further say that the laborers' right to vote seems to be "a sort of plaything" and offer them food and drink, which make "an enormous change in the look of the Mile End Road" (196). This scene indicates that modern England's social system is not indeed more advanced than ancient Babylon's. Hence the role of the Babylonian Queen in the present is to subvert the hierarchy between ancient and modern. Overall, the Babylonian Queen episode can be understood as an example of reverse colonization, which was addressed in late Victorian narratives of decline such as Stoker's *Dracula*. Yet as Eitan Bar-Yosef observes, reverse colonization is more "liberating" in Nesbit's text than it is in late Victorian ones (6). Published a decade later than Stoker's, Nesbit's text is not simply a repetition of the preexisting genre, for it reinvents the concept of reverse colonization by having the English children playfully become part of the ancient Queen's invasion of the metropolitan center. The children's simplicity here allows them to join her because they are less prejudiced against her behavior than adults.

Having failed to find the missing half of the amulet in the past, the children go to the future—"a time *after* [they]'ve found it" (293)—which turns out to be utopian. The future

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[65] The Fabian Society was founded for the purpose of establishing democratic socialism—evolutionary rather than revolutionary—in Britain.

symbolizes Nesbit's socialist ideals inasmuch as it emphasizes the importance of proper

education. Her utopian vision offers a child-friendly house that has children's rooms in the

middle. The rooms are filled with padded furniture and walls in order to prevent children from

injuring themselves. Nesbit's portrayal of childproofing here indicates that investing in children

is critical to building a utopian community. The children then meet with a woman who explains

what it means to be a child citizen in this community. She tells them that it is necessary for

children to learn about "the Duties of Citizenship" in order "to do [their] full share of the work of

making [their] town a beautiful and happy place for people to live in" (305, 306). The children

find the utopian nation to be not only very different from but also much better than their own.

The lady also thinks that the children are "old-fashioned" and that twentieth-century Britain is

"[a]ncient" and "dark" compared to her own nation (306). Accordingly, again through her

portrayal of the future, Nesbit lets her children hilariously criticize Edwardian modernity and

progress.

However, the children's magical involvement in the imperial history itself would not be

possible without modernity and progress achieved by the British Empire. Admittedly, living in

modern London—the metropolitan center—Nesbit's protagonists are already part of the British

Empire inasmuch as they take pleasure in browsing in shops that sell exotic items such as a

Japanese toy and visiting the British Museum. The shops and the Museum are two important

places in the novel. At the shops, the children come across the Psammead and purchase the

amulet, which signals the beginning of their journey to the ancient past. At the Museum, not only

do they let the Babylonian Queen criticize the British Empire's exploitation of other

civilizations, but they also gain access to the utopian future. In this sense, Nesbit establishes the children as emerging agents of the Empire, who imagine a new vision of modernity and progress.

Nevertheless, being characterized as "refreshingly ignorant" (305), the young imperial agents do not fully comprehend the nature of their experience. Nesbit overall playfully takes advantage of the children's simplicity in her attempt to reexamine—not to accept—the inevitability of Britain's progress. In the three episodes, the children's simplicity makes them freely interact with people from different civilizations. Nesbit satirically rebuilds the imperial history by including some comic elements arising from the children's childlikeness. In this respect, her child protagonists do not just glorify the past of the British Empire; their adventure beyond time and space is not suggested as the surest way to restoring the linear developmental paradigm.

Most of all, Nesbit's children do not achieve linear progress after their time travel. The children do not aim to become saviors of the Empire. Above all, they do not proceed to a next phase of life, remaining as children after they finally find the other half of the amulet, which has led them to set out on the long journey. In other words, Nesbit tends to prioritize childhood over other phases of life, not transforming the children into grownups over the course of the narrative.

Amulet presents childhood as a passage for the world of fantasy. As Adrienne E. Gavin and Andrew F. Humphries put it, childhood was remarkably reinvented by adults in the early twentieth century as "a world (or worlds) apart from that of adults, both in time and imaginative possibility" (4). *Amulet* exemplifies this tendency, for its "refreshingly ignorant" children can overcome spatiotemporal restraints and rewrite the imperial history from their own fresh perspective. The fluid sense of spatiotemporality found in their truly childlike adventure goes

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beyond the conventional dichotomous paradigm, which strictly divides the history of civilization into progress and decline. Hence this binary structure is dismantled in Nesbit's attempt to make the most of childhood in *Amulet*. In other words, instead of just replicating the older generation's progress in the past, the children in *Amulet* hilariously create an open-ended process of history-making, which is built upon a nonlinear connection between past, present, and future, and witness how modernity and progress are relatively determined.

Nesbit's fiction analyzed here suggests some of the implications of my larger discussion of age and degeneration in literary narratives of age that I see as revisiting the ideology of progress. Throughout the previous chapters, I have defined four late Victorian genres—Gothic, imperial adventure, New Woman, and speculative fiction—as anti-developmental narratives of age, which conceptualize various age metaphors in response to the degeneration question. These genres differ from conventional coming-of-age narratives inasmuch as they register an impulse to deconstruct a normal aging process and discover signs of elderliness within the British Empire. By using various age metaphors from the vampire to mandatory euthanasia, they express disbelief in the inevitability of the British Empire's youthful progress while trying to find a practicable alternative. Their ceaseless interest in not only degeneration but also regeneration continues to be found in Nesbit's early twentieth-century time-slip fiction for children, which positions child time travelers as young agents of modernity and progress. It cannot be said that Nesbit's child characters aim to complete a vision of regeneration, but as autonomous subjects of their time travel, the children have their own perspective on the history of the Empire, which clearly differs from the older generation's. Significantly, the future experienced by the children is not necessarily governed by the ideology of linear progress.

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Not unlike other Edwardian authors, Nesbit basically offers childhood as a metaphorical counterweight to the degenerate modern society, but in so doing, she does not simply use childhood as a venue where adults' nostalgic aspiration for linear progress is realized. She offers children whose temporal transgression mischievously intervenes in the history of the British Empire and debunks the myth of linear progress established by the older generation. Most of all, through her portrayal of her child time travelers' fantastic adventure, she affords a glimpse into the future, in which modernity and progress in Edwardian Britain are reduced to antiquity. For these reasons, I argue that Edwardian children's literature has late Victorian literature of age and degeneration as its literary predecessor inasmuch as it expands upon the former's consciousness of the life cycle and delves into what it means to be young or old in the nation, which knows that it is impossible to make everlasting progress but still wishes to do so. Considering that literary narratives on age and degeneration in the late nineteenth century evolved into those on idealized childhood and regeneration in the early twentieth century, I propose that it is worth further exploring the interchange of youth and age during these times.

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Mills, Elliott Evans. *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire: A Brief Account of Those Causes Which Resulted in the Destruction of Our L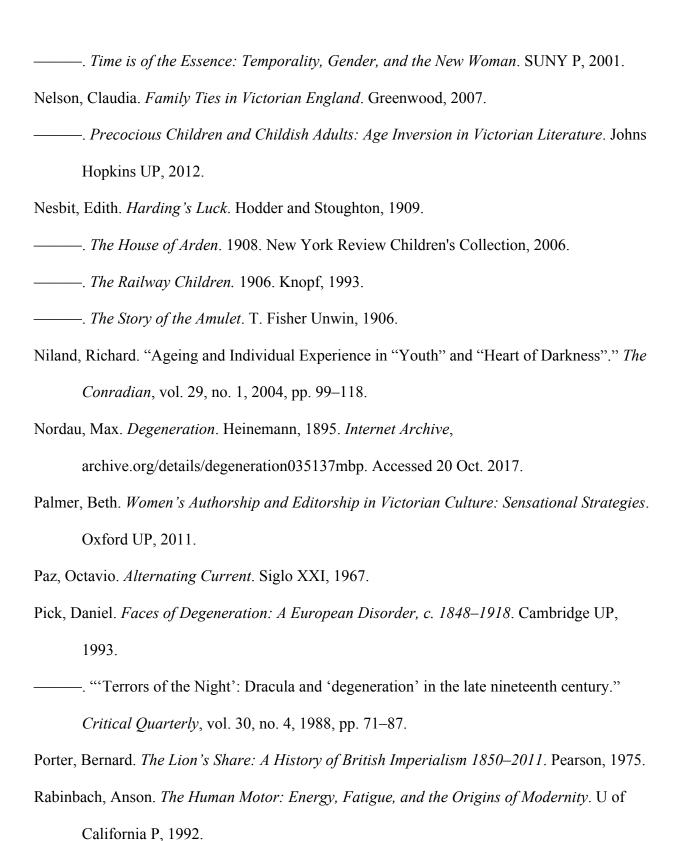ate Ally, Together with a Comparison between the British and Roman Empires*. Alden, 1905. *Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/declinefallofbri00millrich/page/n3. Accessed 10 Dec. 2018.

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