

# Eugenic fictions and radical resistances

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## Abstract

This paper considers the inspiration of Charles Darwin and J. S. Mill for writers and feminists at the end of the nineteenth century, tracing ways in which Darwin's anti-essentialism and his commitment to monogenism—the idea of the unity of races—and Mill's challenge to innatism—the idea that biology is wholly determining—provided a vital framework for early objections to eugenics. This anti-essentialism also helped to expose ways in which capitalism employed biologism, the attribution to nature of that which is social. The paper also explores the opposition to fascism which a socialist internationalism informed by monogenism was able to provide in the early twentieth century, as evidenced in the work of Sylvia Pankhurst and at the Battle of Cable Street. It concludes by considering, through the friendship of Hardy and Sassoon, ways in which poetry protesting the First World War denounced the biologistic thought and division that so often underpinned militarism.

## KEYWORDS

biologism, Charles Darwin, feminism, J. S. Mill, militarism, Mona Caird, monogenism, Siegfried Sassoon, socialism, Sylvia Pankhurst, universalism

What is there to bound / My denizenship? It seems I have found / Its scope to be world-wide.

— Thomas Hardy, 'His Country', 1913

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I believe that the war upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation has now become a war of aggression and conquest.

— Siegfried Sassoon to Parliament, 'Finished with the war: A soldiers declaration', 1917

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In 1887, in *The Woodlanders*, Thomas Hardy took it upon himself to address 'the immortal puzzle—given the man and woman, how to find a basis for their sexual relation' (Hardy, [1887, 1895] 1981, 39 [Preface of 1895]), subjecting to scrutiny a marriage made for social gain, an adulterous liaison, and other, largely unfulfilled, relationships, variously inflected by camaraderie, desire, or ennui, both within or across social boundaries. The following year, in an article called, simply, 'Marriage', Mona Caird, an early feminist novelist and Hardy's friend, brought new public attention to the oppression of women and legal and social inequalities between the sexes. Appearing in the independent section of the left-leaning *Westminster Review*, the article rapidly found an international audience, amplified in *The Telegraph* by the editor Edwin Arnold who had an eye for a debate but could not have foreseen the c.27,000 letters that would descend on his desk when he posed the question 'Is marriage a failure?' (*Daily Telegraph*, 9 August 1888; see Quilter, 1888). Caird, drawing closely on Darwin's language and thought, declared that human nature was not fixed but changing and historically contingent (Richardson, 2011). Paying detailed attention to evolution, she shared with Darwin a radical universalism which took as a biological fact that humanity is of one kind, and not divisible by race or nation. She also refused reified division between the sexes and recognised that class has no biological component, advocating that the moral, political and economic order should be based on that principle. Again following Darwin, she wrote 'Human nature has an apparently limitless adaptability' (Caird, 1888, 186). From this, for Caird, followed a new vision of social organisation, and a new liberty: 'We look forward steadily, hoping and working for the day when men and women shall be comrades and fellow-workers as well as lovers and husbands and wives' (p. 201); a pre-Lutheran freedom would return, whereby a woman 'had more or less liberty to give herself as passion dictated, and society tacitly accorded her a right of choice in matters of love' (p. 191). The eugenic science and fiction writer Grant Allen would decry Caird in the press, mocking her in 1890 as 'lisp[ing] Greek' and daring to enter male territory in his scathing 'The girl of the future' in the *Universal Review*.

Caird's novels, like her periodical writing, are infused with Darwin's ideas of adaptability and the non-fixity of boundaries. She also drew on J. S. Mill on individualism, and on Enlightenment ideas of universal equality and commonality—now systematically applied to species, to races, and to the sexes. These principles informed much late nineteenth-century fiction, which sought to examine the issues they raised at the level of individual experience. In a series of novels, from *Desperate Remedies* in 1871 to *Jude the Obscure* in 1895, Hardy asked what could replace traditional, socially- and state-endorsed relations between men and women, and in particular how far companionship and comradeship offered alternative models, alongside and interwoven with an investigation into the relations between humans and non-human creatures, whether dogs, birds, bees or butterflies.

On declining to become a member of the National Council for Adult Suffrage, which was dedicated to securing votes for women before the end of the war, Hardy told the feminist writer and activist Evelyn Sharp that he had 'never taken any practical part in controversial politics' (7 November 1916; see Hardy, 1978–1988, 5.186). But, in response to Millicent Fawcett's invitation 10 years earlier (indirectly encouraged by Emma Hardy) to contribute to a publication on the female suffrage, alongside other men, Hardy had declared 'I have for a long time been in favour of woman-suffrage' and that he thought that:

it would break up present pernicious conventions in respect of illegitimacy, the stereotyped household (that it must be the unit of society), the father of a woman's child (that it is anybody's business but the woman's own), sport (that so-called educated men should be encouraged to harass & kill for

pleasure feeble creatures by mean stratagems), slaughter-houses (that they should be dark dens of cruelty), & other matters which I got into hot water for touching on many years ago (30 November 1906; see Hardy, 1978–1988, 5.186).

When Jude's old teacher, Phillotson, expresses similar views, remarking, 'I don't see why the woman and the children should not be the unit without the man', his friend Gillingham remarks, aghast, 'Matriarchy' (Hardy, [1895] 1985a, 295), in a novel that aimed to explore new forms of relationships between men and women, including comradeship. Hardy remarked further in his letter to Fawcett:

I do not mean that I think all women, or even a majority, will actively press some or any of the first mentioned of such points, but that their being able to assert themselves will loosen the tongues of men who have not liked to speak out on such subjects while women have been their helpless dependents.

You may disapprove of many of these reasons for woman-suffrage, or think them mistaken, but I am sure you will forgive my stating them.

(30 November 1906; see Hardy, 1978–1988, 3.238–239)

Fawcett replied thanking him for his letter, but remarked that John Bull was 'not ripe for it at present' and that it therefore could not be printed (4 December 1906; Sassoon, 1919b).

Notwithstanding her commitment to the woman's cause, Fawcett was prepared to set aside the majority of working-class women in favour of the middle-class. In 1911, in a letter to her sister Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, she referred to the activities of suffragettes, which she opposed, as 'the revolutionary violence' of 'disgusting masses of people' (Fawcett, 7MGF/A/1/055; see also Pankhurst, 1914). The term 'suffragette' had first been used by the *Daily Mail* in 1906 to describe members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst, who were adopting militant and non-constitutional means, as distinct from the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. Caird's feminism bypassed these class-based affiliations: refusing to allow biology to define sex roles, she also sought to challenge social divisions between women, and to urge their solidarity against patriarchal constraint. She saw as key to this the development of a basis for rights which was not essentialist, and which therefore rejected the claim that behaviours were biologically determined, while also recognising the limits and realities of biology. This formed the focus of her collected essays *Morality of Marriage, and Other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Woman* (1897).

Hardy lent direct practical support to Caird, introducing her to Walter Besant, founder of the Incorporated Society of Authors, and asking if she could join (28 June 1889; see Hardy, 2012, 8.16).<sup>1</sup> Besant shared Caird's and Hardy's sense of the injustices of poverty, speaking out on the subject in *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1884). In 1894 in the *Westminster Review* Caird presented a public challenge to the argument that it was 'folly to protect the weak against the strong' and that doing so would 'enfeeble the race'. Her anti-essentialist critique extended from sex to class and race as she saw through the biologisation of poverty and social inequality. In her best-selling *Daughters of Danaus* (1894), a story of four children who through the course of the novel disrupt and disprove easy hereditarian narratives, Hadria Fullerton, a talented composer, declares that the suffering of women 'is no more "intended" or inherently necessary than that children should be born with curvature of the spine, or rickets' (Caird, 1894, 209). Her older sister, Algitha, works for years among urban poor but refuses a sex-based narrative of self-sacrifice, electing to be 'unwomanly' (p. 31; emphasis in original), a telling term that undoes centuries of biologism. She holds onto the possibility of individual freedom: 'I don't want to pose as a philanthropist', she added, 'though I honestly do desire to be of service. I want to spread my wings. And why should I not?' (pp. 29, 31). A few years later, Leonard Campaigne in Besant's *The Fourth Generation* would remark 'the necessity which forces a man to act is not inherited; that is due

to himself' (Besant, 1900, 325). In a shot across the bow of the hereditarians, Algitha declares: 'I can't believe, for instance, that among all those millions in the East End, not *one* man or woman, for all these ages, was born with great capacities, which better conditions might have allowed to come to fruition' (p. 462).

In a speech of 1913 Caird again exposed the ideological fervour and delusion that shored up biologism, declaring society 'is obsessed by a crude and unproved theory of heredity'. She appealed, instead, to what she presented as its antithesis, a universalism that dismissed social hierarchies and would protect each individual, predicated on a principle of inalienable personal rights and taking sentence as a criterion:

The more one dwells on this principle of ours, the more its essential truth and beauty and sanity is revealed. It is so gloriously universal in its scope! Just in so far as man or animal can enjoy rights or suffer wrongs, just so far we demand for him protection. We deem it absurd and irrelevant to ask questions as to his faith and morals, or his 'importance'; as to the number of his legs, or the nature of his covering. It is obviously enough that he can *feel*.

(Caird, 1913, 10; emphasis in original)

She urged the strengthening of these rights, without discrimination, seeking to extend this beyond the human:

for the protection of the humblest as well as the greatest of our brethren, we render increasingly possible all that makes life interesting, dramatic, and truly worth the living: all adventures of the human spirit. A vista of possibilities is thus opened which promises an enrichment in all the relations of life, an enlargement of the range of consciousness, and therefore of progress, to which we can actually set no limits.

(p. 10)

Caird and Hardy saw in Darwin both the justification and evolutionary imperative for extending rights beyond the human. For Darwin, as a number of writers would show, the golden rule was a vital guide to coexistence and individual moral development. "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise;" and this lies at the foundation of morality' Darwin had written to his daughter Henrietta. 'I fear parts are too like a Sermon: who wd ever have thought that I shd. turn parson?' (8 February 1870; *Darwin Correspondence Project*, letter 7124; Darwin, 1985–2022, Vol. 18). Working within this ethical frame, Darwin and Hardy were keen to resist being mischaracterised as atheists which they saw as another fundamentalism and one at odds with their own positions. In 1910, in one of the few letters he chose to include in his autobiography, completed by Florence Hardy, Hardy, who had declared himself 'among the earliest acclaimers' of the *Origin* (Hardy, [1928; 1930] 1984, 1.158), wrote to the Humanitarian League:

Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species, is ethical; that it logically involved a readjustment of altruistic morals by enlarging as a *necessity of rightness* the application of what has been called 'The Golden Rule' beyond the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom. Possibly Darwin himself did not wholly perceive it, though he alluded to it.

(Vol. 2, p. 377; emphasis in original)

Humanitarians became increasingly wary of, and opposed to, attempts to root racist ideas in biology: the distortion of biology into biologism. Darwin's anti-essentialism was crucial to Caird and Hardy; they also consistently acknowledged the influence of Mill (see Richardson, 2022a, 2022c). Caird's final novel, *The Great Wave* (1931), set in Germany at the time of the First World War, offers a clear condemnation of eugenics and the racism that would underpin Nazi ideology. She underscores the complexity and unpredictability of the laws of inheritance through Dr de Mollyns, the

novel's wise scientist. He is pitted against the other scientists in the novel, who unite around a Malthusian view of existence and misuse science to bolster fictions of inequality and essentialism.

While Galton was measuring and weighing the nation—including Prime Minister Gladstone, who thought his head was bigger than it was (Galton, 1908, 301–302)—in an anthropometric laboratory that in 1885 moved to the Science Museum, Hardy was setting about his challenge to heredity in *The Woodlanders*. His characters are in thrall not to biology but to labour relations and economic structures. Marty South has been born to manual labour, but, as an astute narrator observes:

Nothing but a cast of the die of destiny had decided that the girl should handle the tool; and the fingers which clasped the heavy ash haft might have skilfully guided the pencil or swept the string, had they only been set to do it in good time.

(Hardy, 1981, 48)

The sentence encapsulates the politics that runs through Hardy's work.

In his last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, a graphic indictment of social inequality, Hardy pushed against a privileging of biology over social relations at a time when eugenists were encouraging the nation to see the middle-class family as a repository of eugenic potential or dysgenic problems. When Jude learns he has a young son in Australia, he and Sue adopt him. In Jude's words:

The beggarly question of parentage—what is it, after all? What does it matter, when you come to think of it, whether a child is yours by blood or not? All the little ones of our time are collectively the children of us adults of the time, and entitled to our general care. That excessive regard of parents for their own children, and their dislike of other people's, is, like class-feeling, patriotism, save-your-own-soul-ism and other virtues, a mean exclusiveness at bottom.

(Hardy, 1985a, 274–275)

In 1888, while Hardy had been making notes for *Jude*, Galton was coming up with plans for how the British novel might promote eugenics. Karl Pearson, soon to become Britain's first professor of Eugenics, observed: 'for the least reachable section who read novels and only look at the picture pages of newspapers, Galton wrote what they needed, a tale, his "Kantsaywhere". Galton knew his public better than most men' (Pearson, 1914–1930, 3a.412). Galton's novel is presented as fact—the 'Extracts from the Journal of the late Professor I. Donoghue, revised and edited, in accordance with his request'—with readers given access to the secret musings of a professor of vital statistics who arrives in Kantsaywhere and takes a series of examinations. Donoghue is hoping to qualify for a eugenics degree in order to be eligible to marry the nubile Miss Allfancy, a student at the Eugenics College. He is told a person is 'more important as a probable progenitor of many others than as a mere individual'—the words 'more or less like to him' are inserted in the manuscript after 'others' (Galton, 1908, UCL, Galton Papers, GALTON/2/4/19/6/1, fol. 339) to further flatten individuality. Galton had warned his readers in *Hereditary Genius* not to be 'misled by the word "individuality"'. By contrast, the individual was paramount for Mill, Mona Caird and Hardy and commensurate with socialism. In *Grundrisse*, Marx had emphasised 'rich all-sided individuality', urging the complete development of human beings 'both individual and collective' (Marx, [1857–1858] 1973, 488) and, in recognition of the unalienated body working in close relation to the imaginative mind, praised 'sensuous labour and creation' (*The German Ideology*, 1846; see Marx [1846–1847] 1976, 5.46). In 1868, Hardy listed reading Mill's chapter on Individuality in *On Liberty* as among his 'Cures for despair?' (Hardy, 1984, 59, 274–275).

Kantsaywhere evidences a strong strand of racist hereditarianism. According to Galton: 'All immigrants are more or less suspected' (Galton, c.1911, UCL, Galton Papers, GALTON/2/4/19/6/1, fol. 34); 'Labour Colonies are established where the very weakly are segregated under conditions that are not onerous, except that they must work hard and live in celibacy' (deletions shown; in the published version, in Pearson's biography, the phrase

appears as 'the inferior are segregated', inferior carrying a heightened biologist weight); in the final version, Galton adds 'the propagation of children by the Unfit is looked upon by the inhabitants of Kantsaywhere as a crime to the State'; 'They must renounce in writing all privileges of Kantsaywhere before being allowed the cost of deportation' (Pearson, 1914–1930, 3a.420).

In the same vein, the narrator informs Donoghue that 'those who fail to pass the Poll examination in Eugenics' are 'undesirable as individuals, and dangerous to the community, owing to the practical certainty that they will propagate their kind if unchecked. They are subjected to surveillance <and annoyance if> they refuse to emigrate' (Galton, c.1911, UCL, Galton Papers, GALTON/2/4/19/6/1, fol. 43; insertions shown). There is striking continuity with the resurgence of anti-immigration rhetoric and policy in much of the Western world today. In the words of the British [Home Secretary](#) Theresa May in 2012 'The aim is to create, here in Britain, a really hostile environment for illegal immigrants' (see Richardson, 2022b). In recent years, the *Windrush* generation, who arrived from the late 1940s to help rebuild Britain, have been wrongly detained, denied legal rights, threatened with deportation, and, in more than 60 cases, wrongly deported as a result of the hostile environment policy (Shamsie, 2022).<sup>2</sup>

Passion is edited out of the love-plot in 'Kantsaywhere', just as Malthus had sought to edit it out of the lives of the working class, and as the social purists and the eugenic strand of late Victorian feminism would seek to replace it with what they held to be rational reproduction (see Richardson, 2003). Any elements of romance in the novel were expunged by Galton's niece:

I destroyed all the story, all poor Miss Augusta, the Nonnyson anecdotes, and in fact everything not to the point [...] Mutilated as it is, poor 'Kantsaywhere' can never be published, and it is as safe from that as if it were destroyed altogether, but I think what remains might interest Prof. Pearson, and possibly, though I doubt it, be useful.

(Pearson, 1914–1930, 3a.413)

Donoghue sits an exam in his unnamed host state which determines the number of children a couple are allowed, in a conflating of class, biology and intelligence: 'The restriction placed <by public sentiment &, in extreme cases, by penalty>, on the number of offspring that a couple may propagate in Kantsaywhere, is based on that of their joint marks' (Galton, c.1911, UCL, Galton Papers, GALTON/2/4/19/6/1, fol. 25).

The discourse of restriction and responsibility inculcated by Malthus underpins Galtonian eugenics and lingers on into the twenty-first-century policy of Western governments. In the US, the Clinton administration introduced a welfare cap through the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996), giving states the option of refusing additional support to families on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) (O'Connor, 2003), and in 2017 the UK introduced a two-child benefit cap, reinscribing similar Malthusian-inspired prejudices against class.

The state of Kantsaywhere seeks to bring about eugenics by combining public opinion and state-endorsed penalties. A manuscript insertion in pencil shows the addition of the words 'by public sentiment & in extreme cases by penalty' after 'restriction' and before 'on the number of off-spring' (see Figure 1; Galton, c.1911, UCL, Galton Papers, GALTON/2/4/19/6/1, fol. 48) as Galton attempts to clarify the methods and to hand over to his readers, in the guise of empowering them, a role in population policing. In a move seemingly to appear less prescriptive, he inserts 'about' before 'three children'.

### Transcript of Figure 1

Immigrant parents, both of whom received positive marks at the Poll examination, may keep their children with them, but not otherwise. There is a restriction placed «by public sentiment &, in extreme cases, by penalty,» on the number of offspring that a couple may propagate in Kantsaywhere, which is based on that of their joint marks. If these exceed +20 the restriction is nil and large families are encouraged. If between +10 and +20 they are restricted «by public sentiment» to «about»

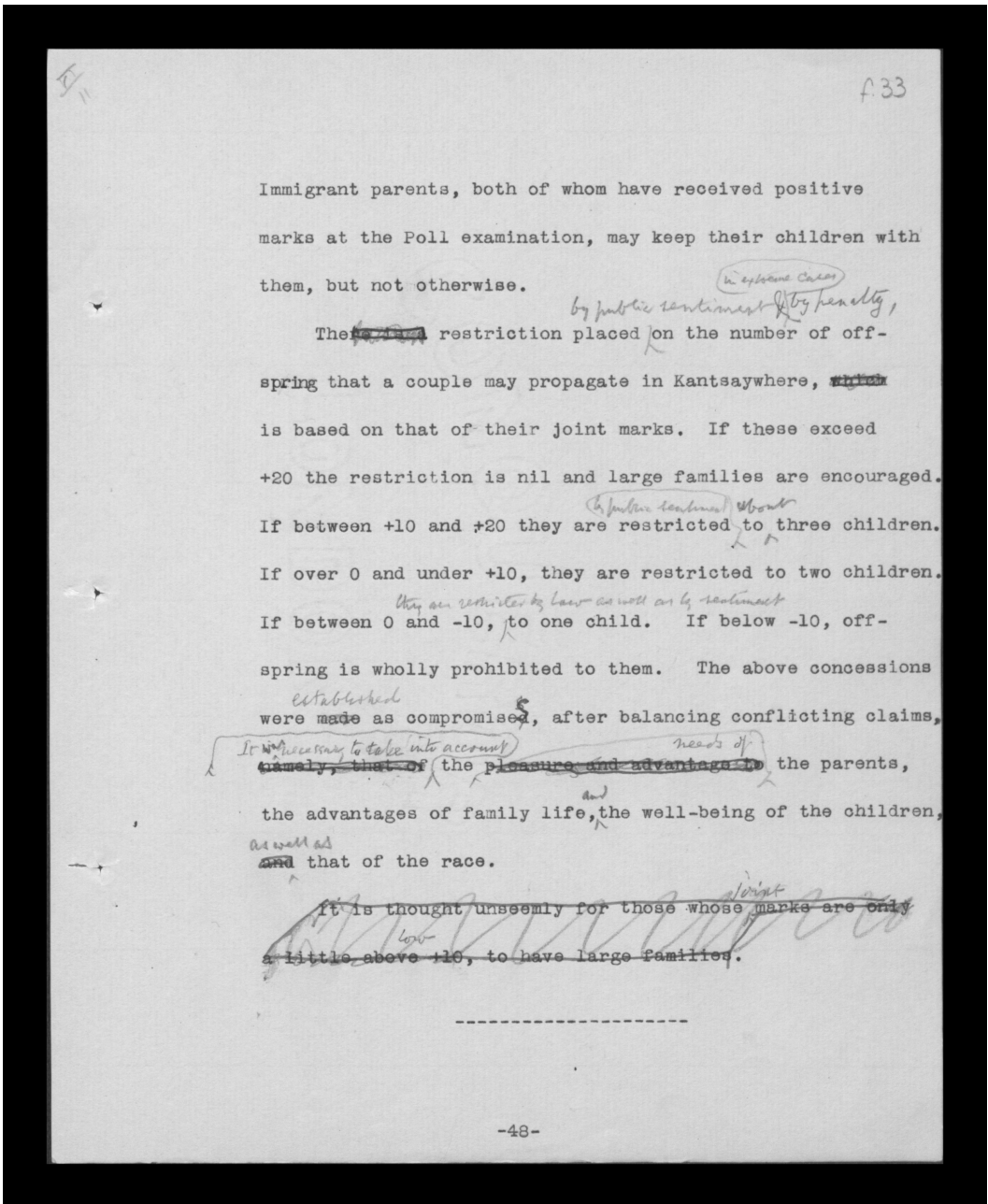


FIGURE 1 Typscript of 'Kantsaywhere'. Source: Galton (c.1911, UCL, Galton Papers, GALTON/2/4/19/6/1, fol. 48). Reproduced courtesy of University College, London

three children. If over 0 and under +10, they are restricted to two children. If between 0 and -10 «they are restricted by law as well as by sentiment» to one child. If below -10 offspring is wholly prohibited to them. The above concessions were «established» made as compromised «s», after balancing conflicting claims, namely, that of «It was necessary to take into account» the pleasure and advantage to the «needs of» the parents, the advantages of family life, «and» the well-being of the children, and «as well as» that of the race.

It is thought unseemly for those whose «joint» marks are only a little «low» above +10, to have large families.

In 1873 the Tory *Fraser's Magazine* had run an article by Galton on 'Hereditary improvement' in which he urged that 'all the most promising individuals would be registered, each in his local centre' (Galton, 1873, 126). Darwin had told Galton directly that he thought his eugenic schemes unworkable: 'the greatest difficulty, I think, would be in deciding who deserved to be on the register' (Darwin to Galton, 4 January 1873; see Darwin, 1985–2022, Vol. 21; *Darwin Correspondence Project*, 2022, letter no. 8724). Some three years later, he would write to Galton on the question of environmental influence, declaring that if Galton rejected the Lamarckian idea of modification by use and disuse during the life of the individual then 'I differ widely from you, as every year I come to attribute more and more to such agency' (7 November 1875; see Darwin, 1985–2022, Vol. 23; *Darwin Correspondence Project*, 2022, letter no. 10245).

But for others, eugenics meshed with separate sphere ideology, the attribution of public roles to men, and domestic roles to women, that followed on from the increasing division of labour in the industrial age. In its late-Victorian expression it gave to women a renewed role and means of citizenship, but it extended the reach of women only as it served an imperial agenda, accentuating the dependence of empire on female reproductivity and domestic labour. Galton's ideas were taken up by Sarah Grand (1854–1943) and Méné Muriel Dowie (1867–1945). Sarah Grand was the pseudonym adopted by Frances Clarke on publication of *The Heavenly Twins*, though it would increasingly suggest a persona that she lived up to. She was styled—reluctantly, by her own admission—a New Woman, a term she took responsibility for coining in 1893 but came to regret (see Forbes, 1900, 883). Dowie was celebrated as a New Woman for publishing *Gallia* in 1895, the same year as Grant Allen's *Woman Who Did*, and her interests in heredity took a practical turn when she became a breeder of cattle, exhibiting pedigrees at shows around England.

The novels of Grand and Dowie were infused with the same biases and hostilities as Galton's 'Kantsaywhere', and informed by the class-driven Malthusian concept of the need to manage passion which had been taken up by social purists in the 1860s. They sought to give women greater autonomy in sexual relations but added a repressive edge that foregrounded duty and saw a converging of notions of social purity and racial regeneration. The biologisation of vice as male and virtue as female mapped onto existing assumptions about the corrupting power of the public world and the redeeming influence of the domestic one which constituted Victorian gender ideology. These assumptions informed the outlook of social purists, and continued to find expression in the reluctance of women from more comfortable social echelons to see political change. This was exemplified by the publication in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1889 of an all-female 'Appeal against female suffrage' with its explicit statement of biologism:

To men belong the struggle of debate and legislation in Parliament; the hard and exhausting labour implied in the administration of the national resources and powers; the conduct of England's relations towards the external world; the working of the army and navy; all the heavy, laborious, fundamental in industries of the state, such as those of mines, metals, railways; the lead and supervision of English commerce, the management of our vast English finance, the service of that merchant fleet on which our food supply depends. In all these spheres women's direct participation is made impossible either by the disabilities of sex, or by strong formations of custom and habit resting ultimately on physical difference, against which it is useless to contend.

(*'An appeal against female suffrage'*, 1889, 781)

A further petition was signed by over 1,500 women, including the philanthropist Julia Stephen, mother of Virginia Woolf (signing herself as Mrs Leslie Stephen).

Sarah Grand, like many of her contemporaries, combined reactionary and repressive elements with genuine resistance to existing forms of patriarchal control, including involuntary motherhood. Sent to the Royal Naval



School in Twickenham in 1868, in 1870, aged 16, she married the widowed Lieutenant-Colonel David Chambers McFall, a retired brigade-surgeon of the Indian Border Regiment, becoming a mother to two stepsons, the older 11 years old—just five years her junior—and subsequently to her own son. Like many other Victorian women, she was radicalised by the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts (1864, 1866 and 1869), which gave a state mandate to the sexual double standard, locating the cause of the spread of sexually transmitted diseases not in men but in women. In 1888 she had a popular and financial success with her self-published novel *Ideala*, the story of a woman who leaves her controlling husband. Taken up by the publisher Richard Bentley and Son, it went through three editions in the first year and with the proceeds Grand was able to leave her husband and move to London as a full-time writer. Interviewed by the journalist and writer Sarah A. Tooley, best known for interviewing celebrity women, Grand was among many women who argued that the grounds for divorce should be equal for men and women. Under the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act adultery was a sufficient ground for a man to divorce his wife, but not for a woman to divorce her husband, an inequality that persisted until 1923 (Tooley, 1896, 167). Grand's was a standard claim among social purity feminists, but for many others too. Even Gladstone, who opposed divorce, thought the law of the land ought not to make a distinction where the law of God did not (see Mallett, 1984).

But for all her feminism, Grand would align herself more actively with her social class than her sex, urging women of her own status to 'learn to appreciate the value and weight of their own class, the great middle class', adamant that it was in this class that 'the best breeding' and 'the highest culture' were to be found (Grand, 1913, 209). In 1893 Grand published a eugenic tract, 'Eugenia: A modern maiden and a man amazed' in the leading literary paper *Temple Bar—A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*. As the title suggests, the heroine is eugenically fit: 'With such women for the mothers of men, the English-speaking races should rule the world' (Grand, [1893] 1894a, 140). In 1895, Dowie's *Gallia* argued, in an extraordinary rejection of medical ethics, that rather than making people better, society should make better people:

People will see the folly of curing all sorts of ailments that should not have been created, and then they will start at the right end, they will make better people.

[...] if the increase of the lower classes could be taken out of their own hands and supervised on scientific lines, crime as well as a number of diseases would be stamped out.

(Dowie, [1895] 1995, 113, 115)

Dowie was divorced by her husband, the Liberal MP and journalist Henry Norman, for adultery with the mountaineer Edward Fitzgerald and she married Fitzgerald within the year and exchanged writing for travelling. She had one child—a son, like Caird and Grand—from her first marriage. For Grand, the contribution of women (limited to the middle class) would be to the race. Motherhood was a middle-class woman's first act of citizenship. New Women would rewrite the love plot along lines of rational female sexual selection, redirecting the heart towards eugenic devotion (see Richardson, 2003). In 1896, Grand declared 'women are the proper people to decide on matters of population...We could do much if we had the suffrage; the want of electoral power cripples our efforts' (Tooley, 1896, 168), and in 1896 she wrote:

Emancipated, women consider motherhood the most important function of their lives, and the first thing they ask on obtaining their freedom is whether they ought not to require to become mothers except under the conditions that are the most favourable to the health, beauty, intelligence and character of their children....

I think further that it is in the action of woman in this particular matter, i.e. in regard to the improvement of the race—that the one hope lies of saving our present civilization from the extinction which

has overtaken the civilization of all previous peoples; and all I write is for the purpose of spreading this opinion and opening up these subjects to discussion. [...] My views are far from general at present; but the sign to me of their importance is the passionate interest they excite and the opposition as well as the support they meet with.

(Grand to Professor Viëter, 15 December 1896; see Heilmann, 1998, Vol. 5; see also Grand to John Blackwood, 5 December 1892, in Grand, 1889)

In her 1893 best-seller *The Heavenly Twins*, Evadne, like Gallia, rejects novels for works by Galton. The novel reveals the extent to which Grand was invested in dominant power structures, both sexual and racial, even as she sought to bring about change: these dominant structures were upheld in the work of Galton, not Darwin. Grand would, however, also come into conflict with the same power structures, a contradiction that characterised the eugenic feminism that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Co-existing with, and distinct from, the eugenic currents of her novels was her resistance to the sexual double standard and misogyny, and she was an active member of the Women Writers' Suffrage League (1908–1918).

While Grand's fiction promoted independent female characters who defied conventional expectation as to their subservient role in marriage, and denounced brutal and controlling men, in its hostility to men depicted as effeminate it endorsed sex-based stereotypes. Herein lay a paradox that might be explained by Grand's formative military connections—even if she had chafed against some of them—and her own place in structures that ultimately worked against women as a sex class.

Grand argued that the most important work a middle-class woman could do was in the nursery, ensuring a healthy national stock; she would even argue that marriage certificates should be health certificates, writing in 1894 to Frederick Henry Fisher, editor of *The Literary World*, 'The marriage certificate should be a certificate of health. Do you not think we might have the law altered to make it so?' (Grand, 1894b, March 22). Caird, by contrast, drew on a tradition going back at least to Mary Wollstonecraft to argue that promoting motherhood as the centre of existence did not make for good mothers, or indeed good citizens. Such differences were routinely ignored by opponents of the women's movement, and by magazines which preferred to satirise a generic 'New Woman' while ignoring the heterogeneity of the movement and its varied inflections. What was widely recognised, however, was the extent to which literature, and in particular the novel and the short story, was providing an important space for the expression and debate of contentious issues.

## 2 | THE CONFLUENCE OF MODERNISM, SOCIALISM AND EUGENICS

Eugenic feminists were not alone in turning to imaginative literature to explore and disseminate ideas on how sexual relations might regenerate the British race within the context of imperial ambition. They were joined by socialists, including H. G. Wells, and George Bernard Shaw, while anti-eugenicists would see the potential of fiction and poetry to oppose eugenics (see Richardson, 2003, 2015, forthcoming). Feminist eugenics was distinctive, and socially divisive, in its attempt to meld feminism with nationalism; formally, it advocated a citizenship based on contribution rather than entitlement, but it also privileged middle-class women and upheld notions of British superiority.

By the early years of the twentieth century an environment that was actively hostile to migrants was emerging, alongside a more open racism. Arnold White (1848–1925), an employee of the P. & O. shipping company and then a coffee planter in Ceylon in the 1870s before he became a colonial campaigner and journalist, was openly ruthless and anti-Semitic. Attacking what he referred to as 'heedless pity' for individuals, he denounced as 'blind' what he saw as indiscriminate kindness, the result of 'sickly emotion' (White, 1899). In 1892, the writer Israel Zangwill (1864–1926), advocate of Jewish causes, published *Children of the Ghetto*, which documented the

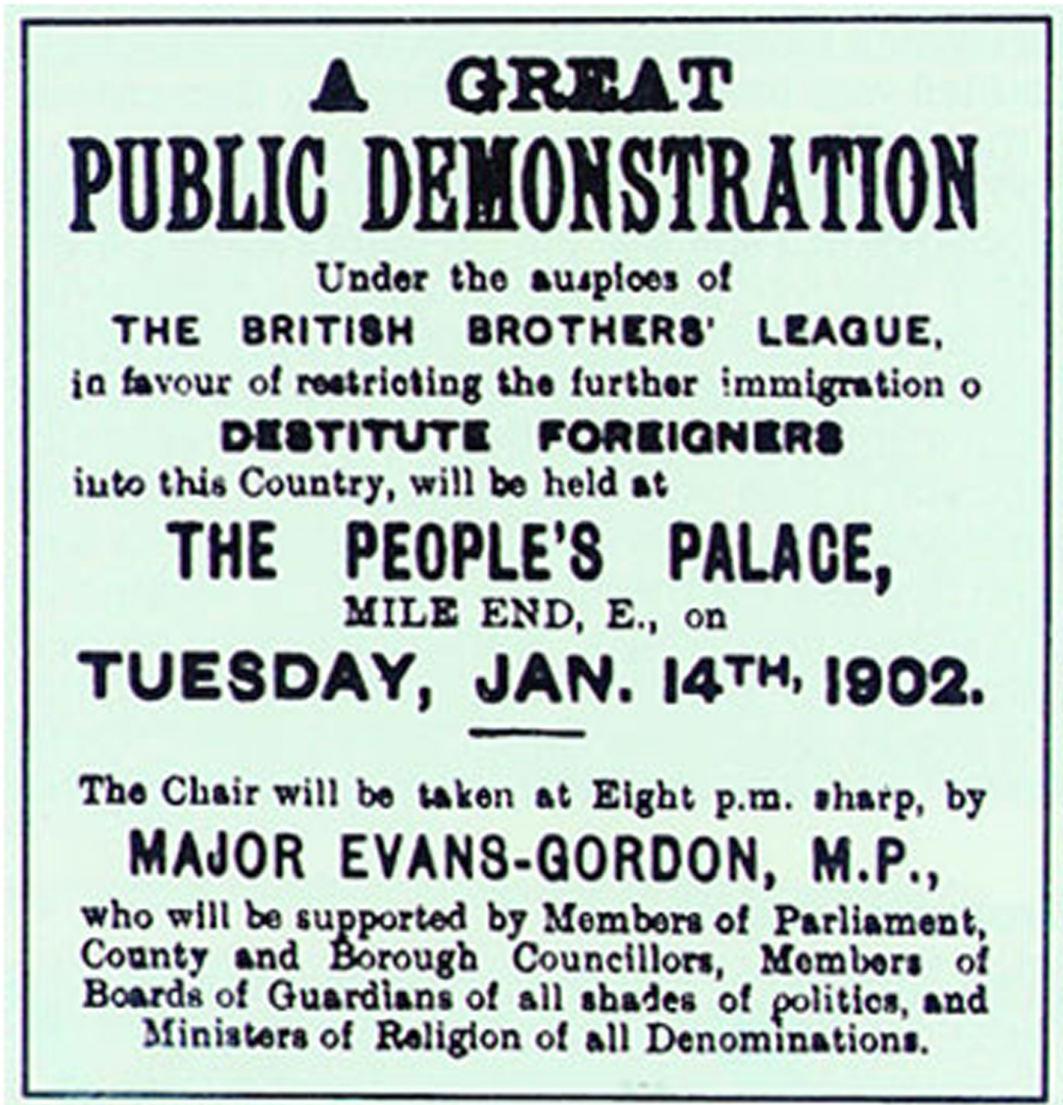


FIGURE 2 Poster for public demonstration from the British Brothers League

lives of a working-class migrant community in what would become a best-selling riposte to the stereotyping of Jews. The novel drew on his experiences living in as a teacher from the 1880s in Spitalfields in east London (see Valman, 2016). At a point in the text where an anti-Semitic novel is discussed, Raphael remarks 'We have always been badly treated in literature' (Zangwill, [1892] 1895, 330); 'it is the popular ignorance of the fact that Jews are as diverse as Protestants that makes such novels as we were discussing at dinner harmful' (p. 350). As Zangwill emphasises, in such diversity common humanity is found.

In 1902, in a climate of growing enmity, the British Brothers League, a populist anti-immigration group which targeted Jewish migrants, organised a 4,000-strong rally at the People's Palace, Mile End, on the outskirts of the Jewish area. Demonstrators carried placards demanding 'British Homes for British Workers'. Three years later, the Aliens Act of 1905 was passed, aimed at restricting immigration (Figure 2).

Hearing George Bernard Shaw read from his new play *Man and Superman*, Beatrice Webb, co-founder of the Fabians, wrote in her diary on 16 January 1903:

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unemployed, or with any able-bodied men in health (including vagrants). We hold . . . that unemployment can be dealt with effectually only by a national authority. . . . What is needed, however, in our judgement, is the establishment of a Government department charged not merely with organizing a complete system of labour exchanges, but also with making use of the information thereby obtained.

The plan recommended is practically the same as that laid down in the Minority Report for England and Wales.

#### The Care of Children.

The Minority recommend that the whole provision of school age should be entrusted to the Local Education Authority—

*The Establishment of a Common Register for all Forms of Public Assistance and of a Public Registrar.*

#### The Minority state

That this scheme of deliberately breaking up the Poor Law, and of transferring each of its services to a specialized and preventive authority, has the incidental advantage that it brings into prominence the pressing need for a Common Register of all forms of Public Assistance, and makes indispensable the appointment of some such officer as a Registrar of Public Assistance.

They go into detail with regard to the working of this proposed scheme.

The whole of the recommendations of the Minority for breaking up the Poor Law will be found at p. 1418 of the JOURNAL for November 13th.

### EUGENICS AND THE POOR LAW.

A MEETING was held under the auspices of the Eugenics Education Society on December 15th, when Mr. SIDNEY WENN, LL.B., delivered an address on eugenics and the Poor Law, with special reference to the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission.

Mr. WENN said that the present Poor Law, which was costing the United Kingdom nearly twenty millions a year, was almost entirely anti-eugenic in its tendencies. In its provision for feeble-minded maternity, and in the opportunities which the general mixed workhouse afforded for acquaintanceship between the sexes, the Poor Law had undesirable results from the eugenic point of view. Moreover, the principle was involved in the very nature of the Poor Law that there must be destitution before it could operate, and those who were not destitute or would not apply for relief could not be reached. The doles given by boards of guardians in the shape of outdoor relief also served to extend the area, speaking eugenically, of a feeble-minded species. But none of these things were peculiar to the present Poor Law; they were counts in the indictment against any Poor Law, and for that reason he did not suppose that an eugenicist would support the Majority Report, which set Humpty Dumpty on the wall again. A system for the relief of the destitute which could not intervene until there was destitution, and must cease its intervention as soon as destitution ceased, was contrary to sound eugenic principles. Some eugenists, continued Mr. WENN, drew the inference that it would be best to have no intervention at all. But *laissez faire*, from the eugenic point of view, was the worst of all policies, because it surrendered the idea of intelligent, purposeful selection. The first consequence of withdrawing public provision would be an outburst of private charity of the most sentimental order, which would be beyond the power of any Government to suppress. Supposing, however, that it could be suppressed, and that everything could be left to the extreme rigour of the "state of nature" and the struggle for existence, this, eugenically, would be the most unfortunate condition of all. He maintained that the blind struggle for existence did not even improve the average quality of the surviving community. Any improvement that might result from the elimination of the unfit was neutralized by the impairment of the survivors. For example, the effect of the Franco-Prussian war, although it might be true that the war eliminated some of the unfit, was to lower the physique of the French people, shorten the average height, reduce the average weight, impair the general efficiency. It must be remembered, when considering any policy of *laissez faire*, that Nature was not intelligent and purposeful, as the eugenicist understood it.

It knew nothing of the standards of civilized men. If left alone, it neither bred from what were considered to be the best stocks nor eliminated from the struggle those the eugenicist considered should be eliminated. Every biologist knew that the lowest parasite was as much a product of natural selection as the highest man. They were faced by the stern fact that the Caucasian race might go under in the struggle for existence, unless it could manipulate the environment so as to prevent this tendency to elimination, and to make the conditions such that the highest race and the highest types of that race should survive. This manipulation of the environment involved collective regulation, and a very highly-developed social machinery. The eugenicist could not consistently be an individualist; he must interfere, and interfere perpetually. The first duty of eugenists in England, Mr. WENN maintained, was to bring about a drastic revolution in the existing Poor Law. It was a darkening of counsel to suggest, as some were doing, that the Minority Report had anything in common with the Majority on its constructive side. The Minority Report was drawn on strictly eugenic lines, and contained no recommendation contrary to the best eugenic principles. It was based on the policy of

- (a) Deliberately altering the social environment so as to render impossible (or at least more difficult) the present prolific life below the national minimum, or the continuance at large of persons unable or unwilling to come up to that standard of life;
- (b) The "searching" out of every person in default, irrespective of his destitution or his application for relief;
- (c) The medical and other inspection of all infants, school children, sick persons, mentally-defective persons, and all who are "unemployed," or who otherwise need public help so as to discover the unfit, as well as to remedy their defects;
- (d) Segregation, permanent or temporary, of many now at large;
- (e) Enforcement of the responsibilities of parenthood at a high standard, and hence discouragement of marriage among those unable or unwilling to fulfil them; and
- (f) Taking care that no one sincerely desirous of fulfilling his social responsibilities shall by lack of opportunity be prevented from doing so.

At the present time hundreds of thousands of infants were allowed to die through carelessness, apathy, ignorance, or worse, and with a little precaution on the parents' part these cases escaped the coroner. The Poor Law did nothing to search out that neglected childhood. No Poor Law could. He was making no complaint against existing boards of guardians. It was the essence of a Poor Law to do nothing until destitution had occurred. The old Poor Law, in Mr. Balfour's emphatic expression, should be "scrapped," and replaced, not by a new edition of the same thing, but by an intelligently purposeful eugenic policy, which would so alter the social environment as to make those who survived coincide increasingly with those whom we believed to be above the national minimum.

A number of questions were put to Mr. WENN at the close of his lecture, but most of them related to the economic aspect of the problem. Asked what the Minority proposed to do with people who could not support themselves, he replied that to classify such people immediately was out of the question. The Minority proposed that there should be a lengthy process of trial. If the labour exchange could not find a man work he would have to go into training, and if after repeated trials he was still economically unproductive, he would be taken from the labour market and committed to a detention colony. But regard would be had to the nature and cause of his failing, and every circumstance of his case would be patiently considered.

### THE THERMAL BATHS OF THE ISLAND OF NEVIS, B.W.I.

By J. NUMA RAT, M.R.C.S.Eng.,  
District Medical Officer and Health Officer.

I DESIRE to bring to the notice of the profession the existence of the thermal baths of Nevis, B.W.I. These baths were once well known and extensively patronized, while accommodation can be had at the hotel which was built in connexion with them; but, as one of the results of the commercial depression in these parts, the hotel was abandoned and the baths could be no longer utilized.

I am so genuinely delighted at his choice of subject. We cannot touch the subject of human breeding—it is not ripe for the mere industry of induction, and yet I realise that it is the most important of all questions, this breeding of the right sort of man.

(Webb, 1948, 257)

Eugenic discourse and anti-immigration sentiment were now working to reinforce each other. In an article entitled 'Eugenics and the Poor Law', the *British Medical Journal* reported that on speaking at the Eugenics Education Society on 15 December 1909, Sidney Webb had declared 'the Causasian race might go under in the struggle for existence, unless it could manipulate the environment so as to prevent this tendency to elimination' ('Eugenics and the Poor Law', 1909, 1808; see Figure 3 below).<sup>3</sup> In this, he anticipated recent claims of people of white European ancestry being culturally replaced by people of colour, in particular from Muslim countries, as a result of inward migration by the latter and declining birth rates among the former. The theory was promoted by the French white nationalist Renaud Camus in 2011 in *Le grand remplacement* and has been adopted by various white supremacist groups both in the USA and in Europe.

Concerned by 'differential' fertility rates between the classes, H. G. Wells, novelist, science writer and social commentator, advocated the public endowment of motherhood in *Socialism and the Family* in 1906. This comprised two papers, one presented at the Fabian Society in October, and another that had appeared in the *Independent Review*, a journal that would become part of Edwardian Bloomsbury. The following year, Sidney Webb began campaigning for the endowment of motherhood, by which he meant middle-class motherhood, remarking that the alternative was 'this country falling to the Irish and the Jews' (Webb, 1907, 17). In establishing workhouses, the Malthus-inspired Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), with its state-stigmatisation of poverty, continued its effects into the twentieth century, with workhouses not abolished until the Local Government Act of 1929. But for the Webbs and many of their contemporaries, the workhouse was not punitive enough. As the *British Medical Journal* reported 'Mr. Webb said that the present Poor Law, which was costing the United Kingdom nearly twenty millions a year, was almost entirely anti-eugenic in its tendencies'; 'provision for feeble-minded maternity' was 'contrary to sound eugenic principles'. Sidney Webb was clear: 'the eugenicist could not consistently be an individualist; he must interfere, and interfere perpetually'. He observed that the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission, to which the Webbs were leading contributors, was based on 'the best eugenic principles' (see 'Eugenics and the Poor Law', 1909, 1808; see Figure 3 above). Laissez-faire in its refusal to intervene and regulate was actively dysgenic.

Eugenicists intensified their efforts against those they considered unproductive and therefore expendable, and wanted the Poor Law to be replaced by employment bureaus so that labour resources, that is, humans, might be used efficiently. For Fabian socialists, a degenerate and highly fertile poor were breeding too much, and the middle class not enough: they sought the empowerment not of workers but of middle-class professionals, imagining a scientifically planned society run by people like themselves. While they opposed the unregulated excesses of capitalism, it was more significant that it was inefficient than that it was unjust (see Richardson, 2014, 18). In this, they drew impetus from a new hardening of hereditarian theory, which in turn saw the development of a new language around employment. 'Unemployed' had first become a noun in 1882 in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and, five years later, *St. James's Gazette* (22 December, 1887, 4/1) referred to 'Persons who are unemployed because they are unemployable', ushering in a new adjective. In 1910, in their co-authored *English Poor Law Policy*, the Webbs went further, despairing that 'Unlike the Local Education Authorities, the Destitution Authorities cannot reach out to prevent the neglect of children which will, in time, produce "unemployables"' (Webb & Webb, 1910, 300). From a different political grouping, Winston Churchill, newly appointed first lord of the Admiralty—head of the Royal Navy—and at this point a member of the Liberal Party (he defected from the Tories in 1924, returning in 1924) wrote to Liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith in December 1910:

The unnatural and increasingly rapid growth of the Feeble-Minded and Insane classes, coupled as it is with a steady restriction among all the thrifty, energetic and superior stocks, constitutes a national and race danger which it is impossible to exaggerate.

(Churchill, 1910, Bodleian Library, MS Asquith 12)

Churchill was a vice-president of the first international Eugenics Congress, held in London in 1912, and Arthur Balfour, former Conservative prime minister (1902–1905) and, as foreign secretary (1916–1919), architect, five years later, of the Balfour Declaration (1917), addressed its banquet.

In *A Modern Utopia* (1905), H. G. Wells argued that the state should prevent the procreation of those considered below a national minimum physical and mental efficiency, but pay mothers whose children were above minimum standards of health. In 1922 he provided strong support to Margaret Sangers *Pivot of Civilization* in his introduction, although his fiction would more often resist hereditarian narratives around poverty and in 1940, as he campaigned for the establishment of human rights such as the rights to life, education and labour, in international law, he unequivocally rejected eugenics (Wells, 1940, 64, 83). The popular magazine *John Bull* published the following remarks by Marie Stopes (1880–1958) in 1924:

From the point of view of the economics of the nation, it is racial madness to rifle the pockets of the thrifty and intelligent who are struggling to do their best for their own families of one and two and squander the money on low grade mental deficient, the spawn of drunkards, the puny families of women so feckless and deadened that they apathetically breed like rabbits.

(Stopes, 1924, 13)

Stopes would describe the southern Italians as 'a low-grade race' and when the French tightened their laws against contraception in the early 1920s, she said that if they really wanted to repopulate their nation, they should 'eliminate the taint of their large numbers of perverted or homosexual people'. She came up with her own 'Prorace' brand of cervical cap; the trademarked 'Prorace' provided a eugenic stamp of approval.<sup>4</sup> For Stopes, reproductive health was a matter of class investment, with class conceived along racial, biologicistic lines. In *Wise Parenthood: A Practical Handbook on Birth Control* she referred to 'the unfit weaklings and diseased individuals' (Stopes, 1918, 55) who threatened the race—and her 1919 *Letter to Working Mothers* constituted her attempt to reverse this. She declared:

Control should not *merely* be repressive, and it is just as much the aim of Constructive Birth Control to secure conception to those married people who are healthy, childless, and desire children as it is to furnish security from conception to those who are racially diseased, already overburdened with children or in any specific way unfitted for parenthood.

The 'racially diseased' included those with tuberculosis (and other infectious conditions) thought at the time to be caused by a person's defective heredity. In 1917 the Scottish medical doctor Halliday Sutherland provided clear evidence that tuberculosis was caused by infection, not heredity, increasing understanding of environmental causes of disease. Remarking 'there is not even, in my judgment, an inherited predisposition, although in the past medicine has made more of predisposition than theology of predestination' (Sutherland, 1917, 6), and that 'a great deal of nonsense is talked about the poor' (p. 10), he asked 'is it any marvel' that 'the indigent product of city life, should fall the first and easiest victims' to tuberculosis (p. 11)?

Regard their environment: when a population is overcrowded and underfed living in dark tenements, or in back-to-back houses, breathing foul or twice-breathed air in ill-ventilated rooms

seldom lit by the sun, working long hours in gas-lit workshops for a sweated wage, striving without an end for strife, buying the cheapest food in the dearest market, and drugged by bad liquor.

(Sutherland, 1917, 10-11; see Sutherland, 2020).

But mainstream eugenists ignored these findings. Fourteen years later, Mona Caird would have the anti-eugenist de Mollins in *The Great Wave* declare 'people talk a lot of nonsense about heredity' (Caird, 1931).

### 3 | VOICES OF RESISTANCE

Militarism serves as a powerful impetus for nationalism and patriotism, reifying divisions of class, sex and race. In the late nineteenth century it melded with, and buttressed, eugenics finding expression in a language of efficiency from Arnold White's autocratic *Empire and Efficiency* (1901) to the writing of Sarah Grand. In the words of Grand (1898b):

there are to-day two very marked types in what is known as society—the military and the university, or the kempt and the unkempt [...] A young man who enters his university a boor with leave it a boor—a thing which is well-nigh impossible after the training for military life. [...] The young university man is undisciplined, he is apt to leave his room late in the morning and leave it all in disorder. He never seems to know when his hair should be cut, and his clothes are often but imperfectly brushed.

Grand left her army surgeon husband, but her married life had given her an insight into the patriarchal structure of the military and the challenge it represented to the advancement of women. Partly shaped by her class and race biases, the feminism that resulted was complex and often paradoxical, embracing militarism but recoiling from the licence it gave to misogyny. In *The Heavenly Twins*, Edith is courted by Sir Mosley Monteith, a naval officer with syphilis, contracted on the HMS *Abomination*, while Beth's husband is the keeper of a lock hospital. While the word 'lock' had been used since the fourteenth century to describe hospitals where lepers were kept, segregated from society, it was the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s that shifted the focus to the forcible incarceration and medical examination of women, a development promoted by William Acton's *Prostitution Considered in Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects* (1857).<sup>5</sup> In Grand's fiction, the patriarchal bearing of individual doctors and military men is interrogated and found rebarbative. Eugenic feminists were conflicted in relation to the power structures that upheld eugenics, and many eugenists came to see war as dysgenic, coinciding here with the tenets of peace biology. In 1915 the leading peace biologist Peter Chalmers Mitchell published *Evolution and the War*, the first work to address German military ideology and to differentiate it from fundamental principles of Darwinian thought. Chalmers Mitchell, a distinguished zoologist who attended the universities of Aberdeen, Oxford, Berlin and Leipzig, underlined that Darwin had meant by the 'preservation of favoured nations in the struggle for life' those that were best suited for 'general adaptation to their place in the composite web of life' (Chalmers Mitchell, 1915, 21). Peace biologists pointed out Darwin's emphasis on struggle as metaphor and distanced themselves from the position on war that some eugenists were now adopting, one that opposed war less on humanitarian grounds than, somewhat paradoxically, for reasons of its negative impact on racial strength, a question of growing interest as international conflict intensified. In the first edition of the *Descent*, Darwin had observed:

The bravest men, who were always willing to come to the front in war, and who freely risked their lives for others, would on an average perish in larger number than other men. Therefore it seems scarcely possible (bearing in mind that we are not here speaking of one tribe being victorious over another) that the number of men gifted with such virtues, or that the standard of their excellence, could be increased through natural selection, that is, by the survival of the fittest.

(Darwin, 1871, 163)

Chalmers Mitchell argued that it was only after 'poets and popular writers got to work, that the struggle for existence acquired the special significance of fierceness and cruelty, became an expression of nature, "red in tooth and claw"', pointing to questions of responsibility and the potential of literature to play a significant part in constructing the meaning of scientific works for a wider public, for good or ill.

The writers, journalists, activists and scientists who were debating these issues moved in the same environments as Hardy. He took a cutting from the *Graphic* on Chalmers Mitchell's lectures at University College, London, in 1904 on the 'Evolution of man'.<sup>6</sup> Chalmers Mitchell also emphasised evolutionary adaptation to environment to strengthen his argument, writing in *Evolution and the War*: 'Natural suitability to the organic and inorganic environment and capacity to adapt behaviour to circumstances are the dominant factors in successful struggle, and there is no trace of the remotest resemblance with human warfare. This is the struggle for existence as Darwin thought of it' (Chalmers Mitchell, 1915, 35). He pointed out that there were no grounds for interpreting Darwin's 'metaphorical phrase'—the struggle for existence—in any sense that would make it a justification for war between nations, pointing out that it was abundantly clear both from Darwin's own writings and those of later naturalists that success had come about in 'a thousand instances taken from the animal kingdom', not from conflict but by means analogous with the cultivation of all the peaceful arts, the raising of the intelligence, and the heightening of the emotions of love and pity (p. 41). This insistence on the value of co-operation was crucial to the development of an anti-war biology, and the invoking of Darwin served both to heighten the credentials of peace biology and to strike a further blow against determinism. Nurture, Chalmers Mitchell declared, 'is inconceivably more important than nature' (p. 82). He continued:

The environment of the body and the environment of the mind determine national differences. These variable factors, and notably the environment of the mind, differ from the factors that rule in the animal and vegetable kingdoms inasmuch as they involve conscious human intelligence and choice, conscious imposition on the part of the rulers and conscious acquiescence on the part of the governed.

(p. 82)

Chalmers Mitchell concluded his treatise emphasising firstly that he had sought to demonstrate 'That even if the struggle for existence were a scientific law'—and he was far from convinced that it was—'it does not necessarily apply to human affairs'; secondly, 'That modern nations were distinct from units of the animal and vegetable kingdom from which the law of struggle for existence is a supposed inference'; and thirdly, that this struggle 'has no resemblance with human warfare'. As his fourth and final point he underlined that 'man was not subject to the laws of the unconscious' (p. 108); the aim was harmony with an ideal of culture that had been built up through the ages: the outcome of social evolution. Environment in this sense represented culture at its most ethical and humane.

While Grand was conflicted, anti-essentialists such as Caird and Hardy provided a more unequivocal criticism of militarism. Hardy's poems repeatedly unsettle patriotism and jingoism. The speaker in 'The Man He Killed', published six months after the Second South African War, wonders at the comradeship that might have developed with the man against whom he is ranged as infantry, 'He thought he'd 'list, perhaps, / Off-hand-like, just as I— / Was out of work—had sold his traps—No other reason why' (on Hardy and war, see also Richardson, 2023).<sup>5</sup> Hardy would subsequently write to the Royal Academy of Literature in support of an international League of Peace and against the idea of foreignness and any narrow definition of patriotism, redefining it against its nationalist meaning. His anti-war poetry gives poignant expression to this perspective. When British troops departed for South Africa, Hardy would write, of his 'effusions' on this war, 'I am happy to say that not a single one is Jingo or Imperial'. In 'The Pity of It', in his 'Poems of War and Patriotism', a section of 17 poems in *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses* (Hardy, 1917b), the Germans and British are described as 'kin folk kin tongued even as we are', as Hardy walks in 'loamy Wessex lanes' and hears the Teutonic residue of ancient Dorset dialect 'in field and farmstead'.



'His Country', in the same group of poems, gives us Hardy's citizen of the world. Dated 1913, it appeared first in 'Poems of War and Patriotism'. The speaker finds kinship and connection as he journeys southward from his native spot; the poem's note in the margin observes that he 'cannot discover the boundary of his native country; / or where his duties to his fellow-creatures end; nor who are his enemies'. In the speaker's own words: 'It did not seem to me / That my dear country with its hearts, / Mind yearnings, worse and better parts / Had ended with the sea'; as he traces 'the whole terrestrial round' he asks 'What is there to bound / My denizenship? It seems I have found / Its scope to be world-wide' (Hardy, 1917a, 225). The image contrasts starkly with Prime Minister Theresa May's remark at the Tory Party Conference, 2016: 'If you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere' (see Wan, 2019). The charge of rootlessness or cosmopolitanism has traditionally formed part of anti-Semitic discourse.

Hardy's radical universalism punctuates his work. Writing to the secretary of the Royal Academy of Literature on 8 February 1917, days after Germany resumed unrestricted U-boat warfare and the US severed diplomatic ties with Germany, he declared his belief

[t]hat nothing effectual will be accomplished in the cause of Peace till the sentiment of Patriotism be freed from the narrow meaning attaching to it in the past (still upheld by Junkers and Jingoists) and be extended to the whole globe.

On the other hand, that the sentiment of *Foreignness*— if the sense of a contrast be really rhetorically necessary—attach only to other planets and their inhabitants, if any.

I may add that I have been writing in advocacy of those views for the last twenty years.

(Hardy, 1984, 405; 1978–1988, 5.202; emphasis in original)

It was a letter he would publish in his autobiography. He would also include in this work, from notes he made before writing *The Dynasts*, 'Patriotism, if aggressive and at the expense of other countries, is a vice; if in sympathy with them, a virtue' (Hardy, 1984, 450), and, in a letter to the novelist and playwright John Galsworthy in 1923, he drew attention to the value and benefit of the 'exchange of international thought', alluding to 'Departure', the poem he had written at the beginning of the second South African War (1899–1902), in which he asked when 'the saner softer polities / Whereof we dream' would 'have play in each proud land' and patriotism 'scorn to stand / Bondslave to realms, but circle earth and seas'.

The struggle against biologist divisions continued. In the tradition of Cobbett, Mill and the anti-essentialist novelists, the Liberal and then Labour MP Josiah Wedgwood stayed up long into the night in the Commons, arguing for the removal of the eugenic clause from the Mental Deficiency Act. This would have prohibited marriage and criminalised procreation among those considered feeble-minded. Wedgwood declared:

You can almost hear them saying, 'I know it is hard, but you are inconvenient to society and must go to prison for life.' That is the Home Office attitude. Their view is the convenience of society; the comfort of society. Our views as Members of Parliament are something far different from that. The convenience of society comes second; the liberty of British citizens first.

(Mental Deficiency Bill, *Hansard*, 19 July 1912)

The directly eugenic clause was dropped before the bill passed into law but it remained eugenic in inspiration and in implementation, in the sense that the 'feeble-minded' remained institutionalised and separated in order to stop them reproducing. Churchill (and many other eugenicists), preferred sterilisation because it was cheaper, but were content with segregation.

## 4 | INTERNATIONALISM

In August 1918 Hardy admitted to Galsworthy 'The fact is that I cannot do patriotic poems very well—seeing the other side too much.' A century later, the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah made the same point in his Reith lectures: 'Real cosmopolitanism is not a privilege; it is an obligation [...] We can be tempted to imagine—like children who think they can hide by closing their eyes—that our human concerns can stop neatly at the border, with a wider world kept forever at bay' (Appiah, 2016).

There is continuity in Appiah's internationalism both with early feminist opposition to war, and aspects of early socialism and the Labour movement. A number of women-led organisations developed, from the Women's Freedom League (1907–1961), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (1915–) to the International Alliance of Women (1904–), and international socialism also gathered pace with the Labour and Socialist International founded in 1923, though it was conflicted over colonialism. The more progressive League against Imperial and Colonial Oppression ran from 1927 to 1935 when it merged with the Comité mondial des femmes contre la guerre et le fascisme, whose sponsors in Britain included Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960) and Charlotte Despard (1844–1939). These internationalist movements were emerging partly in opposition to growing fascism in the UK and elsewhere. In 1930 Oswald Mosley formed the New Party, by 1932 known as the British Union of Fascists, and Women Against War and Fascism was established in 1934 as the British branch of the Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism. The *Daily Worker* reported 'No less than 23 prominent personalities have given their names in support of the appeal made by John Strachey for organising all the anti-Fascist forces in London against Mosley's poisonous propaganda' (see Gottlieb, 2000, 83, 89). These included Pankhurst, who in 1916 had been publicly disowned by her mother, Emmeline, for her involvement in an anti-conscription rally at Trafalgar Square (Holmes, 2020, 101). In 1936, Cable Street saw the largest anti-fascist demonstration to take place in Britain, with some 100,000 people blocking a march from Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists (a march that had tacit support from the police).

The anti-colonialist feminist and socialist Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960) was active in a range of political movements, including opposing fascism and imperialism, writing presciently on race and anti-colonialism. She was friends with the socialists Eleanor Marx and Israel Zangwill, and with Olive Schreiner, the South African feminist and campaigner against racism. Her father, Richard Pankhurst, a socialist barrister who had written the bill that became the 1882 Married Women's Property Act, had given her an abridged copy of Darwin's *Origin*. On 21 June 1908, Hardy accompanied Florence Hardy to a 'Suffrage Sunday', co-organised by Pankhurst, which saw 30 special trains from 70 towns bringing women to London (Holmes, 2020, 214).

Pankhurst continued to campaign on behalf of women, but also turned her attention to Ireland, and further afield to Soviet Russia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, in each case arguing for a more international politics (see Pankhurst, 1919, 1922, 1930; Pankhurst & Pankhurst, 1953). Like many feminists, she understood the material causes of poverty and the links between class, race and sex, and the urgent need for a socialism that transcended divisions of nation. In 1927, she had declared in *Delphos: The Future of International Language* 'language-barriers deprive the far-sent word of the universal comprehension given to music', observing:

Of the influences urging towards Inter-language, stronger than all is the desire for world-friendship long maintained amongst the kindlier and wiser people of all nations, and now quickened to an ardent flame by agonies of the World-war. With all its faults, the so-called League of Nations is the response of governments to this deep and ever-growing sentiment.

(Pankhurst, 1927, 6–7)

While she had on occasion had recourse to a language of eugenics, this was in protest against involuntary motherhood, and in *Save the Mothers* (1930) she urged the need for state maternity support for all women, pointing to the economic causes of inequality. Working closely with anti-colonialist African scholars and activists, Pankhurst

spent the last years of her life in Ethiopia, having been centrally involved in the Ethiopian independence movement. Her internationalism also informed her response to Zionism, where she agreed the need for a Jewish homeland but thought that this might be outside the biblical Holy Land, and that it should be democratic (and inclusive) rather than theocratic (and exclusive) (see Holmes, 2020): in the 1930s her hopes proved illusory, though she continued to urge against division, writing on 11 March 1939 in the paper she edited, *New Times and Ethiopia News*, 'The conflict between the Arabs and the Jews is tragically sad and unnecessary. These two races must agree to live together' (Holmes, 2020, 647). Pankhurst's feminism and socialism were underpinned by universalist commitment, and her understanding that the enmities of the First World War were unnecessary would find strident expression in the work of the anti-war poets.

Siegfried Sassoon, his father Jewish and of Iraqi Indian descent and his mother an Anglo-Catholic Germanophile who gave him his German name, had good reason to reject the idea that racial conflict was inevitable or desirable. He began writing to Hardy in January 1916, a few months before the Battle of the Somme. Wounded in 1917, he sent his famous statement of protest first to Hardy. Published by Sylvia Pankhurst in her newspaper, *The Workers' Dreadnought*, on 28 July, it was read out in the House of Commons by a Labour MP two days later

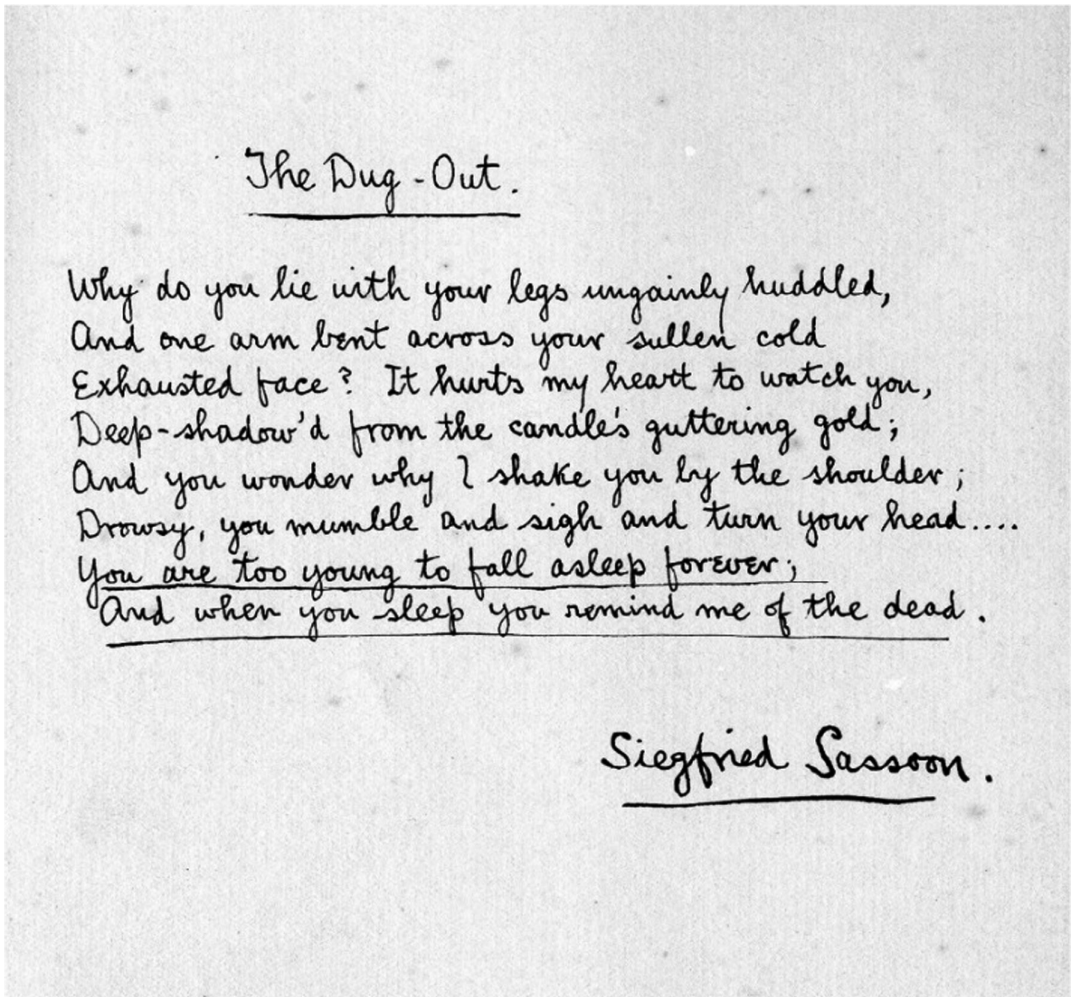


FIGURE 4 A tribute to Thomas Hardy O.M. (1919). Source: Sassoon (1919b). Reproduced by courtesy of Dorset History Centre

and printed in *The Times* the next day. Sassoon began 'I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that the war upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation has now become a war of aggression and conquest'. He was sent to Craiglockhart, a military psychiatric hospital in Edinburgh, in lieu of being court-martialled. Here, he would meet Wilfred Owen, before returning to active service and continuing to protest against the war in his poetry. After the war, Sassoon joined the Labour Party and lectured on pacifism, becoming literary editor of the *Daily Herald*, 'the new labour paper', as he referred to it in a letter to Hardy (Sassoon, 1919b).

Sassoon selected 'The Dug-Out' for the tribute book from the younger generation of poets that he presented Hardy with in October 1919 (see Figure 4; Sassoon, 1919b). In February 1922 Florence Hardy told Sassoon that she had heard Hardy say, 'in a loud & clear voice', 'I wrote my poems for men like Siegfried Sassoon' (Millgate, 1996, 180).

The divisions of race and class that find their most extreme expression in war were challenged by a search for that which is and can be held in common. The writers and activists who despaired of the atrocities to which nationalism was shown to lead turned increasingly to a radical universalism. Rooted in internationalism, it did not seek to impose the representation of the many by a select few, or to present the culturally specific as universal. Instead, it sought dialogue amid the recognition of a common humanity. It was not blind to differences between groups as between individuals but it refused to see them in biologicistic terms as fixed or determined, or to make difference a basis for discrimination.

The poem that Sassoon wrote to mark the end of the First World War is a hymn to a radical universalism and testimony to the resistance, hope and vision it was able to marshal against militarism:

#### Everyone Sang

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;  
 And I was filled with such delight  
 As prisoned birds must find in freedom,  
 Winging wildly across the white  
 Orchards and dark-green fields; on-on—and out of sight.  
 Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;  
 And beauty came like the setting sun:  
 My heart was shaken with tears; and horror  
 Drifted away ... O, but Everyone  
 Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.  
 Siegfried Sassoon 1919

(see Sassoon, 1919a)

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See also, on Hardy's friendship with Caird, letter to Samuel Squire Sprigge, secretary of the Incorporated Society of Authors, 19 June 1889 (Hardy, 1978–1988, 1.193) and letter to Percy Bunting, editor of the *Contemporary Review*, 13 January 1890 (see Hardy, 1978–1988, 1.207–208).
- <sup>2</sup> See [https://rmcentre.org.uk/casestudies\\_\\_trashed/case-study-windrush/](https://rmcentre.org.uk/casestudies__trashed/case-study-windrush/); <https://www.migrantsorganise.org/from-go-home-vans-to-rwanda-asylum-deal-a-decade-of-the-hostile-environment-a-lecture-by-author-kamila-shamsie/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Sidney Webb had delivered a lecture at the Eugenics Society at Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW, on 15 December 1909. This was later published in *The Eugenics Review*, November 1910, 2(3), 233–241.
- <sup>4</sup> See <http://collection.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects/co96336/prorace-cervical-cap-england-1915-1925-cervical-cap> Science Museum Group Collection.
- <sup>5</sup> The London Lock Hospital, for the treatment of venereal disease, had been founded in 1746 and the term 'lock hospital' appears in John Entick's four-volume *New and Accurate History and Survey of London* (1766, 4.444).
- <sup>6</sup> 'The grand passion', *Daily Graphic*. 13 October 1904, pp. 1, 3 (see Hardy, 1985b, 2.381, entry 2540).
- <sup>7</sup> *Variorum* p. 287, lines 13–16. The poem appeared in *Harper's Weekly* and *The Sphere* in November 1902, just a few months after the end of the Second South African War, before it was collected in *Times Laughingstocks* (1909, 186).

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