'If I Were a Man': Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Sarah Grand and the sexual education of girls

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'I wish and I wish I were a man', Christina Rossetti wrote wistfully in 1854, adding that the most felicitous condition for women was perhaps that which allowed the cessation of existence altogether: 'Or, better than any being, were not:/Were nothing at all in all the world'. To Rossetti, writing at a time of public and private disenfranchisement, woman appeared but a 'doubly blank' slate, at best to be inscribed with the desire for masculine agency, yet doomed to long for self-erasure and death as the only available gateways to freedom.¹ Half a century and a successful women's movement later, woman's accession to masculine power was no longer the stuff of fantasies or delayed until the afterlife. For Charlotte Perkins Gilman, on the other side of the Atlantic, writing the fantasy with homiletic edges, 'If I Were a Man', in 1914, her 'If' rather than 'I wish' illustrates a real development made simply through the expression of the educative mission she would undertake as well as the power she would feel. To gain access to power, to be able to act, to be effective in achieving change rather than awaiting her womanly destiny is Gilman's constantly iterated desire and nowhere is this more evident than in the protestations she makes on behalf of women's rights to full and active humanity:

So in our social world today, men and women who are familiar with liquefied air and Roentgen rays, who have accepted electric transit and look forward with complacency to air ships, people who are as liberal and progressive in mechanical lines as need be hoped, remain sodden and buried in their prehistoric sentiment as to the domestic relations. The world of science and invention may change; industry, commerce and manufacturing may change; but women and the home are supposed to remain as they are, forever.²

Gilman was not working in a vacuum. In 1893 in Great Britain the writer Sarah Grand had argued that human advancement was dependent

upon 'the attributes of both minds, masculine and feminine, perfectly united in one person of either sex.' In evidence everywhere in nature, this 'union . . . of the male and female principles' was, she stressed, the very foundation stone of good government.³ Gilman defined ethical law and civic virtue as gender-neutral human concepts which had become corrupted as a result of the patriarchal imposition of the moral double standard; as she says in her 1911 book *The Man-Made World, or, Our Androcentric Culture*: 'Ethical laws are laws . . . because [they] promot[e] human welfare – not because men happen to prize [them] in women and ignore [them] themselves.'⁴ Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, feminist sexual purity movements on both sides of the Atlantic had invested femininity with an evangelical drive for social reform; from the mid-century onwards, the belief that national and 'racial' regeneration was women's special mission served to bolster the political claim to citizenship and the notion that women should spearhead the moral management of society.⁵ Gilman and Grand positioned themselves within this feminist tradition when they argued, separately, that existing conditions in a male-dominated society sanctioned the sacrifice of women and children to men's pursuit of self-gratification, and that, as a result, women were in duty bound to assert their authority by taking charge of the moral education of the nation.⁵ Both sexes needed, as far as they were concerned, to foster and promote an active sense of responsibility towards the body social. Unlike more radical turn-of-the-century feminists like the British Mona Caird and South African Olive Schreiner, Grand and Gilman were not prepared to advocate the dismantling of marriage altogether, but they certainly felt that the 'true' purpose of the family had been distorted. As Gilman put it in *The Man-Made World*: 'What man has done to the family, speaking broadly, is to change it from an institution for the best service of the child to one modified to his own service, the vehicle of his comfort, power and pride' (*MMW*, p. 27). This is why the role of the mother as educator was all-important: 'The nursery', Grand observed, was 'the proper place to teach the equality of the sexes' and particularly well suited to instil in girls and boys a strong sense of morality and social responsibility.⁶ Since for Gilman and Grand, as for many of their feminist contemporaries, the very survival of humanity was at stake, radical measures could be justified in the effort to regenerate the 'race'.

It is perhaps the prominent role of race in Gilman's work that distinguishes it from the traditions of late eighteenth- and mid-nineteenth-century feminist activism. Her views were very much in tune with the arguments put forward by the physician Prince Morrow, active as a

practitioner and reformer in New York during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His book, *Social Diseases and Marriage* (1904), alerted both medical practitioners and the wider public to the serious dangers to which women and children were exposed as victims of the hidden infections of syphilis and gonorrhoea. Morrow had also become alarmed at the different birth rates between the established American and the immigrant population and saw the effects of venereal disease amongst Americans as one of the contributory factors to the decrease in the birth rate. The rhetoric and tenets of the eugenics movement, held in common by Morrow and Gilman, declared that 'The function of eugenics is to produce a race healthy, well-formed and vigorous by keeping the springs of heredity pure and undefiled, and improving the inborn qualities of the offspring',⁷ and a number of American states put 'eugenic marriage laws' in place, which required a physical examination of the male partner before a marriage could take place.⁸ Morrow established the American Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis in 1905, and at a meeting of the society held in 1910 Charlotte Perkins Gilman told her audience that 'With motherhood we should have maturity and that knowledge which is power and protection',⁹ her advocacy of civic maternalism chiming absolutely with that of Sarah Grand. Both women saw no contradiction in espousing this maternalism alongside a more controversial state-controlled system of eugenic sexual selection, exhaustively promulgated by Gilman in essays and lectures and in Utopian fictions such as the 1913 story 'Bee Wise' and, programmatically, by Grand in short story titles like 'Eugenia' (1894).

Whilst the work of both women was widely circulated in both Europe and America there seems to be no cross-reference between them and they appear never to have met. Although each went on widely publicised lecture tours in the other's country, there is no indication that they even knew of each other's existence. During her extended tour of Britain in 1896 and again in 1899 Gilman met many British feminists, among them the New Woman writer Mona Caird, who knew Grand but disapproved of some aspects of her work.¹⁰ Visiting America in 1901, Grand made friends with Mark Twain among others, but there is no mention of any meeting with Gilman.¹¹ Had the two women met it is not unlikely that their strong personalities would have clashed. In the absence of any real-life interchange, their writings, as well as their lives, present a prime example of the interconnections between turn-of-the-century American and British social purity feminisms. It is this congruity of ideas and visions which we will explore in this essay.

Both writers were prominent in their respective countries as among the

most vocal and outspoken critics of the moral and medical establishment mores of their time. They employed the medium of popular fiction and the New Journalism in a period which saw the consolidation of mass market culture. Both wrote from experience, having left their husbands for full-time writing and lecturing careers, and both exorcised their clash with marital and medical structures of authority in powerful semi-autobiographical narratives which mobilised mothering and house-keeping metaphors in order to reverse the prevalent gender hierarchies. One crucial key to the work of these writers is the sexual purity didacticism which infuses every aspect of their endeavours: art, for them, served a political purpose, and their writing was designed to make up for the (sex) education that women were denied by society and the state.

Gilman and Grand were, throughout their writing lives, exercised by the social and economic costs of the enforced ignorance of women and girls in matters of sexual hygiene. The association between the ill-health of the individual and the nation were, they contended, intimately connected with the paucity of educational opportunities for girls. Even where formal education did exist, moral and social imperatives impeded the real development of the woman's intellect and her capacity to make informed choices. Grand and Gilman made central to their sociological writings and their fiction the terrible social consequences of the maintenance of girls in a state of ignorance. Throughout their work they invoke what was becoming a staple of feminist social theory, that the health of their respective nations was dependent upon the health of the female body. By extension, the abuse of that body is made symptomatic of the degenerate value systems of their societies. Through reference to questions of women's dress, to male and female bodily hygiene, to the conduct of the medical establishment and the whole culturally invidious effects of the low esteem in which mothering is held, both writers charge their polemic with warnings of the gravest of social sickness, the sexually transmitted disease. The hidden danger of venereal disease – a secret kept from half the population by the other half – is the largest threat to the youthful intellectual and physical promise they can envisage. It is through manifestations of the disease that they locate their most telling criticism of the social and moral order. By drawing on this highly significant *fin-de-siècle* trope, used by many other writers, feminists and social reformers of the time, including Zola and Ibsen, they placed themselves in direct opposition to metaphors of degeneracy, ennui and illness that characterised writers like Wilde, Huysmans, Symons and others.¹² They, therefore, distanced themselves from the label of 'decadence' applied indiscriminately to both groups of

writers by conservative critics.¹³ We will here examine venereal disease as one of the central narrative drivers as well as plot device in works by Grand and Gilman, both of whose chief concern was to achieve social reform rather than high art.

‘The future of the race has come to be a question of morality and a question of health’, Grand proclaimed in *Ideala* (1888),¹⁴ the first part of a trilogy of novels which established her international reputation as the foremost representative, in Britain, of the “‘revolting woman” school of fiction’.¹⁵ *Ideala* leaves her unfaithful, emotionally and physically abusive husband in order to dedicate herself to feminist social work in the form of dress reform and the rehabilitation of prostitutes: an odd set of objectives at first glance. Indeed, Grand’s reviewers invariably took the author to task for the ‘bathos’ of this incongruous conjunction of dressing and slumming matters.¹⁶ However, *Ideala*’s battle against tight-lacing is much more than a trivial fad, for, as the text suggests, the physical confinement of women in unnatural and cramping clothes is only too apt a reflection of their cultural-conceptual immurement in injurious roles where they are forced to represent the extremes of Angel or Whore, thereby keeping in place the oppressive structures of the institutions of marriage and prostitution. *Ideala*’s dual line of attack challenges the very foundations of the body politic by reclaiming the body for the woman herself. Such a reclamation is also Gilman’s purpose in her 1915 Utopian novel, *Herland*, where the hair and clothing of the women is carefully constructed as androgynous, as practical and not sexually provocative.¹⁷ Public and private forms of oppression – and liberation – are closely aligned in *Ideala* and are always enacted on women’s bodies: it is her encounter with a dying prostitute who turns out to be her husband’s discarded mistress that sets into motion the process which sees *Ideala* move from marital separation to feminist separatism. The ‘public’ woman’s diseased body with its unspeakable affliction scarcely concealed behind telling references to ‘scarlet’ fever, mirrors the ‘private’ malady of the wife, whose mind has been indelibly scarred by close contact with a degraded and degrading partner: ‘you make us breathe corruption’, *Ideala* exclaims, ‘and wonder that we lose our health’ (*ID*, 20).

Charlotte Perkins Gilman also portrays women as helpless victims of venereal disease, caught in the fiction maintained by the sexual double standard. The conspiracy of silence that keeps the origin of the disease from those most vulnerable, women and children, is given straightforward expression in her 1916 tale, ‘The Vintage’:

She did not know what was the matter with her, or with her children. She never had known that there was such a danger before 'a decent woman,' though aware of some dark horror connected with 'sin,' impossible even to mention. Her old family physician told her nothing – that was not his place. Her minister told her that her affliction was 'the will of God.' It is astonishing what a low opinion of God some people hold.¹⁸

Similarly, in her short story of 1894, 'Boomellen,' Grand holds the church and 'the unquestioning obedience' of spineless women jointly responsible for lending themselves to the 'manufacture of [ever] more reprobates'.¹⁹ Imprisoned in ignorance by the twin forces of medicine and religion the women in Gilman's and Grand's short stories soon die but, as in Ibsen's *Ghosts*, the founding text of *fin-de-siècle* sexual purity fictions, the infection endures in their children. As the opening lines of Gilman's tale stipulate: 'This is not a short story. It stretches out for generations' (TYW&SS, p. 104). What preoccupies the writer is the generational dimension of the tale: there is no end to this story except in the radical realignment of what constitutes the public good, a move away from the secretive practices of the medical and religious establishment to a new configuration of real public interest.

There is no subsequent life in the public sphere for Leslie Montroy in 'The Vintage' but Gilman does give an active and reforming role to many of her heroines, especially those who are re-inventing themselves in the public, professional domain after years as wife and/or mother. One such woman is Ellen Burrell in the 1914 story 'His Mother', who becomes a 'special agent . . . with a police badge inside her coat' (TYW&SS, p. 77) in order to entrap her own son, a white slaver. In so doing she is said to be, in one of Gilman's most repellently doctrinaire stories, making 'up for her own share in his evil' (TYW&SS, p. 80), an evil unequivocally attributed to the fact of his having 'a Dago' (TYW&SS, p. 73) for a father. Another of her late-start career women, Jane Bellair in the novel *The Crux*, serialised in *The Forerunner* in 1910, becomes a doctor after having been infected with venereal disease by her husband. Her own chance at motherhood thus blighted she makes the enlightenment of girls as to the dangers of infection her special duty.

Like Gilman's active heroines, Grand's Ideala transforms her individual tragedy into collective gain by moving into feminist social reform. The closing chapters of the book suggest that the conjunction of personal and political agency sanctifies women; Ideala is, in fact, reconfigured as the female saviour whose coming Florence Nightingale had invoked in the 1850s.²⁰ A Christ-like figure of redemption, Ideala passes through

all the stages which presage sainthood: temptation, renunciation and spiritual purification. Ending with a prophecy of things to come – the close embrace of public and private women – the final vignette of the book offers us a vision of Ideala's feminist manifesto:

What I want to do is to make women discontented . . . Women have never yet united to use their influence steadily and all together against that of which they disapprove. They work too much for themselves, each trying to make their own life happier. They have yet to learn to take a wider view of things, and to be shown that the only way to gain their end is by working for everybody else, with intent to make the whole world better, which means happier . . . It is to help in the direction of that force that I am going to devote my life. (*ID*, p. 188)

Ideala's renunciation of a 'personal' life in favour of her public mission is identified with both political and quasi-religious agency; early on in the text the narrator sets the scene by referring to Ideala's divine calling (*ID*, p. 39), and in the second and most notorious part of the trilogy, *The Heavenly Twins*, Ideala explicitly associates feminist activism with a new and better religion which has emerged to replace the *ancien régime* of the established churches. The 'true spirit of God', she argues, is not to be found in the 'terrible clergy', whose 'dreadful cant of obedience' has harmed women and the 'race', but:

It is in us *women*. We have preserved it, and handed it down from one generation to another of our own sex unsullied; and very soon we shall be called upon to prove the possession of it, for . . . already I – that is to say Woman – am a power in the land, while you – that is to say Priest – retain ever less and less even of the semblance of power.' (*HT*, pp. 266–7, emphasis in original)

That this new religion is equated with social purity feminism is not a new departure; Grand drew on the long-established tradition of the evangelical moral-reform movement, modelling her 'ideal' heroine on her own avowed role model, Josephine Butler, whose courage and supreme determination in waging a twenty-year war against the Contagious Diseases Acts had earned her the reputation of a saint in social-reform circles.²¹ The conjunction of evangelical, medical and eugenic discourses reflects the specific concerns of her time and also anticipates the language of the Edwardian suffragettes. Grand's *fin-de-siècle* brand of sexual purity feminism can be seen to share a rhetoric with Gilman and, indeed, other turn-of-the-century feminists such as Emma Frances Brooke, Frances Swiney and Ellen Key.²²

As Angelique Richardson has noted, Grand's novels were self-consciously "medicinal": antidotes to the traditional male, dysgenic

romance, and guidebooks to responsible sexual selection and marriage, steeped in medical aims and allusions'.²³ Grand herself drew attention to the remedial function of her anarchical twins, whom she said she had conceived as an 'allopathic pill' that her readers would 'mistak[e] for a bonbon and swallo[w] without a suspicion of its medicinal properties. Once swallowed, it would act'.²⁴ And act it certainly did, although its effect, the journalist W.T. Stead wrote, was rather that of a 'bomb of dynamite' than a bonbon.²⁵ *The Heavenly Twins* became the sensation number one on the international book markets of the 1890s,²⁶ opening up the hitherto unmentionable subject of venereal disease to general discussion over tea-tables and bringing the 'delicately nurtured women' who had been carefully kept from all knowledge of it to the 'boiling point of open rebellion'.²⁷ Many years later, Grand recorded with great satisfaction the message she received from a women's committee during World War One: 'Tell Sarah Grand . . . that we, representative women of all classes, have agreed unanimously that she was right in all that she said and wise in all that she advocated'.²⁸ At the time of Grand's death, Rebecca West's sister, Letitia Fairfield, celebrated her as 'the real pioneer of public enlightenment on venereal disease', emphasising that the present generation of women could 'only guess dimly how much courage this took fifty years ago'.²⁹ Ironically, though, Grand's older contemporary, Josephine Butler, whose example had fired her into action in the first place, disapproved of her book, which she thought lacked religious feeling.³⁰

Convinced that venereal disease was the 'cornerstone of the whole foundation of patriarchy',³¹ Grand advocated the implementation of a state-controlled system of hygienic monitoring. In order to safeguard the health of the nation, she advocated compulsory marriage training with licences issued only on production of satisfactory exam results (*ID*, 150). Men who failed to come up to scratch were to be banned from marriage for life, while those who spread the disease would be liable to criminal prosecution. This was what the women's movement should press for, she urged in interviews, arguing that the female vote and the introduction of a 'House of Ladies' were bound to bring about a 'purif[ication of] the political atmosphere'.³²

These ideas are also reflected in Gilman's work, in particular her utopia *Moving the Mountain*, serialised in *The Forerunner* in 1911. Not only is society here organised on uncompromisingly eugenic principles, but men who have venereal disease are forced, by law, 'to die bachelors' whilst the women they would have married 'wise, conscientious, strong women . . . poured all their tremendous force into social service'.³³ A concomitant

effect of the outlawing of the infected male, reversing the gender politics of the Contagious Diseases Acts, is the disappearance of prostitution.³⁴ In envisaging a society in which doctors are required to register syphilitic men (not women) with the Department of Eugenics and where the transmission of venereal disease is a criminal offence, Gilman foregrounds the fact that 'It was on the line of health [women legislators] made their stand, not on "morality" alone' (*MtM*, p. 139). It is education which has effected social change here: 'That new religious movement stirred the socio-ethical sense to sudden power; it coincided with the women's political movement, urging measures for social improvement; its enormous spread, both by preaching and literature, lit up the whole community with new facts, ideas and feelings' (*MtM*, p. 138). Alongside this revision of social attitudes to sexual health Gilman, characteristically, embeds a system of ethnic cleansing in her Utopian vision; not ethnic cleansing as we have, of late, seen used as a euphemism for genocide, but the literal cleansing of the immigrant to America, with Ellis Island replaced by a series of 'Gates', through which, according to nationality, would-be Americans must pass in order to receive a 'welcome in their own language – and instruction in ours . . . physical examination – the most searching and thorough – microscopic – chemical' (*MtM*, p. 80).³⁵

Gilman explored the futuristic dimension of the eugenic moral cleansing that was to follow in the wake of female enfranchisement and the ideological embrace of comprehensive measures to ensure public health, which did, in spite of its drastic inversion of the status quo, attract some support from men. For instance, the Manchester Men's League for Women's Suffrage recommended that Gilman's works were suitable reading for the members of its Girls' Club.³⁶ Grand, in contrast, concentrated on spelling out the horrors concealed beneath the patriarchal myths of romantic love, maidenly innocence and womanly submission. As she protested in her journalistic as well as her narrative work, to deny girls access to vital sexual knowledge amounted to criminal negligence, for, far from protecting girls from corrupting influences, it made them vulnerable to abuse by depriving them of the insight required to make informed decisions. This is illustrated in graphic detail in *The Heavenly Twins*, where Edith Beale, a bishop's daughter who aspires to nothing higher than marriage, motherhood and a life spent in domestic pursuits in the shadow of superior masculinity, goes mad as a result of galloping syphilis contracted from her profligate husband and dies after giving birth to a syphilis-ridden baby. As is suggested in the text, the communication of full knowledge of the facts of life is essential if the health and

happiness of girls is to be safeguarded; such knowledge may even prove to be life-saving. In the event, Edith's carefully nurtured and self-consciously maintained 'innocence' destroys her life and that of her child. For although her parents and particularly her father should have known better than to countenance their daughter's marriage to a man who admits to youthful 'errors' (*HT*, p. 235), Edith herself is not entirely blameless in her positive refusal to contemplate disagreeable truths: 'She did not want to think. When any obtrusive thought presented itself she instantly strove to banish it' (*HT*, p. 168). The beggar woman with the sickly child whom she passes in her coach during the days of her courtship is in fact the abandoned mistress of her prospective husband. Had Edith stopped to think (and talk), she would have discovered the 'truth' about Sir Mosley Menteith in time to be saved from a similar fate. When, a year later, she is prepared to listen to the Other Woman's story, it is too late – the disease knows no class barriers. A similar fate awaits Gilman's heroine in 'The Vintage'. A Southern belle, with an aristocratic string of names, 'Leslie Vauremont Barrington Montroy', she is as ill-educated as the village girls in the 1916 story 'The Unnatural Mother' whose parents actually pride themselves on their daughters' ignorance of 'the Bad Disease'.³⁷

Reclaiming the fallen woman as a victim of society's failure to protect its weakest members, Sarah Grand turned the spotlight firmly on male offenders of the purity code, impressing on her female readers that, once fallen, men were nothing but contagious matter which women did well to leave alone: 'one can't touch pitch without being defiled' (*ID*, 48). 'There is no reclaiming a corrupt *constitution*', she warned prospective brides; 'laxity' and 'levity' in the marriage relation would result in the 'final extinction of our modern civilisation'.³⁸ The threat of 'race' suicide is the central metaphor in 'Boomellen', whose protagonist is the sad end-product of hereditary degeneracy bred on a diet of male debauchery and female self-sacrifice.³⁹ Boomellen drowns in a vain attempt to save a shipwrecked crew, the wreckage forming a grim reminder of society's impending collapse in the wake of women's criminal negligence of their responsibility as 'mother[s] of . . . the dominant race'.⁴⁰ The tragedy of women's lives, Grand deplored, was that they had been so much in the habit of 'always ignorantly idealising when they ought to know': '[d]runkenness, dissipation, extravagance and disease, all the misery-making tendencies they ignored when they chose their husbands'.⁴¹ Not so Eugenia, the eponymous heroine of a companion story to 'Boomellen', who presents an exemplary, eugenic response to the problem of social hygiene.

Repulsed by the idea of attaching herself to an 'amended, patched-up' society man, tellingly named 'Brinkham', she chooses a spotless, morally 'whole' yeoman farmer instead named 'Saxon Wake'.⁴² The result of this choice is that she produces the first male child born to the family for centuries and thus removes the curse that lies over her 'race'. As an allegory on society's destructive impact on 'true' manliness and the possibility of male regeneration with strong female guidance, the baby boy signals the emergence of New Manhood. The story also implies that feminism and especially women's empowerment is a necessary survival strategy for the 'race'. In the absence of male heirs, the women of Eugenia's family attained the position and property rights previously reserved for the men, and this enables Eugenia to marry a man who is her equal in matters of health and 'hygiene'.

Gilman also advocated eugenic sexual selection as the only course of action in the pursuit of 'race regeneration'. Setting many of her Utopian tales in the West, specifically California, she could offer her women, as Judith Allen points out, a place where they could hold 'a better sexual economic bargaining position' (*CPG:OR*, p. 176). The outnumbering of women by men meant that prostitution was a major problem but alongside that, the demographics of the frontier gave women the opportunity to make a fresh start in a manner not practically possible elsewhere in more established communities. Gilman's woman-centred Utopian narratives⁴³ expound principles of community organisation which are not separatist but into which the screening of male applicants for citizenship is built, here in 'Bee Wise', a story of 1913: 'the men were carefully selected. They must prove clean health – for a high grade of motherhood was the continuing ideal of the group'.⁴⁴ In *Women and Economics*, published in 1898, Gilman broadens the argument, however, beyond the sexual health of men – and concomitantly, women – in a discussion of women as overly sexualised, diagnosing economic dependence as the cause of women being 'modified to sex to an excessive degree',⁴⁵ and thus demonstrating the biological implications of social conditions. In Gilman's fable, 'Improving on Nature', published in 1912, both man and woman are hauled before Mother Nature in order to account for their conduct. The woman, she suggests, is guilty because complicit: 'she was a plump, pink little person; hobbled, stilted, and profusely decorated' (*YW&SS*, p. 213), whilst the man is guilty of interfering with the natural order, which, in every species except the human, gives physical equality to the woman: "I love my pet," he said. "I made her like this. By careful selection and education I have made her the kind of woman I like." (*YW&SS*, p. 216). The

man-made woman, Gilman repeats, in essay and in story, is merely a domestic convenience, not a full member of the human race. As the woman explains to Mother Nature: 'He likes us that way. He keeps us shut up in houses and tied up in clothes, and says it isn't proper for us to do anything to develop strength, and he only marries the weak ones.' (YW&SS, p. 214).

Like Gilman, Grand promoted the interrogation of the terms on which marriages and sexual relations were conducted to the extent of endorsing marriage rejection and sexual withdrawal. If a woman found herself unwittingly trapped in an unsuitable marriage with an improper man, she was perfectly justified, in the interest of her health and that of future generations, to seek a separation. Although Grand was strongly opposed to divorce,⁴⁶ she vigorously defended women's right to leave husbands who fell short of the required standard, or to refuse to have sex with them. Thus in *The Heavenly Twins* the New Woman Evadne decamps on the day of her wedding after realising that she has married a man with an unwholesome past. Grand leaves the exact nature of Colquhoun's misdemeanours open to speculation, but the hints in the narrative which point at Josephine Butler as Evadne's source of information suggest a past involvement with prostitutes, and possibly venereal disease. Undeterred by her father's fury, Evadne asserts her right to refuse sex to her husband since her marriage vows were 'taken under a grave misapprehension': 'having been kept in ignorance, I consider . . . that every law of morality absolves me from fulfilling my share of the contract' (HT, 89).

Grand and Gilman were of course not the only feminists to take pains to impress on women the risks that marriage and motherhood entailed. In 1870, Josephine Butler had stated that among men venereal disease was 'almost universal at one time or another',⁴⁷ and some forty years later Christabel Pankhurst came up with a figure of 80 per cent.⁴⁸ According to a Royal Commission report of 1916, 10 per cent of men had contracted syphilis; the figure for gonorrhoea was estimated to be considerably higher.⁴⁹ Amongst the American troops stationed on the border between Texas and Mexico to repel the incursions of Pancho Villa in 1916, it was estimated that 30 per cent of the men in an army of 10,000 had some form of venereal infection.⁵⁰ Even if only one man in ten was, in actual fact, afflicted with some form of venereal disease, this was hardly a promising state of affairs for women contemplating marriage – especially if they had friends and relatives who were directly affected by the disease. This is the situation portrayed in Gilman's novel *The Crux*, and Grand knew '8 of those dreadful Edith cases' personally and had, she said, been urged to

write *The Heavenly Twins* 'by other women, who send me accounts of cases so horrifying and so heartrending' that 'to pretend to ignore [the subject] any longer would be criminal'.⁵¹ The spectre of syphilis in Grand and Gilman, and in feminist fiction of the time more generally, has to be placed in the context of mainstream discourses of Victorian medicine and fiction in both countries. By making men, especially of the upper classes, into sites of contagion, feminists sought to turn the tables on the medical establishment which, in order to legitimise the implementation of legal sanctions against prostitutes, had demonised working-class women.⁵² As American social reformer Maude Glasgow wrote in 1910: 'the man who has voluntarily exposed himself to the contagion of a loathsome disease continued even after his infection by the prostitute to have business and social relations as before, with the result that innocent members of society are exposed to a dangerous and contagious disorder to which they have not exposed themselves and from which no effort is made to protect them.'⁵³ Until the discovery of antibiotics, syphilis was incurable and treatment was at best traumatic.⁵⁴ If manifested in its congenital form, the disease was already in its secondary stage and would have started to affect the nervous system: the repercussions on children were therefore particularly grave. Gilman's Leslie Montroy gives birth to one crippled son and then to a series of 'little blasted buds [which] came and went, without even breathing' (*YW&SS*, p. 106), whilst in *The Heavenly Twins* Edith Beale's disabled baby – 'a little old man baby . . . with a cold in his head . . . exhausted with suffering' (*HT*, pp. 288–9) could have sprung straight from medical reports of the time, in which syphilitic children figure as 'small, wizened, atrophied, weakly, sickly', monkey-like, quasi-racialised and atavistic creatures.⁵⁵

Like other *fin-de-siècle* feminists Grand and Gilman were outraged at the institutionalised double standard which treated women's health and welfare with cynical indifference whilst male access to prostitutes was effectively safeguarded. Grand's villains are drawn from three bastions of patriarchy in Britain – the House of Lords, the army and the medical profession – groups which could be said to have a vested interest in upholding the sexual *status quo* and in keeping the existing system of prostitution in place. Gilman's American villains are also often professional men: her doctors are complicit or even negligent, her white slavers and carriers of venereal disease are educated, well travelled and charming like the prodigal male in the parable 'Wild Oats and Tame Wheat', published in *The Forerunner* in 1913. Amongst the gifts he brings back to his sweet and virginal bride from his adventures in foreign lands are 'one or two diseases

not easily dismissed' which he then, naturally, 'shared with her' (YW&SS, pp. 218–19). It is in their attack on the medical establishment that both authors are most hard-hitting, perhaps because both had bitter home truths to impart. Each had experienced medical misogyny at first hand, Gilman in the various treatments for her severe and debilitating post-natal depression, culminating in the 'rest-cure' she took with Silas Weir Mitchell, which produced, as she says in her autobiography, 'the inevitable result, progressive insanity'.⁵⁶ Weir Mitchell seems to have had more success with Grand, who took the cure in 1903.⁵⁷ Grand was also the wife of an army surgeon involved in the implementation of the Contagious Diseases Acts; his responsibilities included the monitoring of prostitutes and their referral to Lock Hospitals.⁵⁸ The collision between medical and feminist world views and responses to matters of health, hygiene, and hysteria is a defining feature of the work of both women in fiction and non-fiction.

By throwing into relief the pervasive nature of medical and marital violence against women and the way in which familial and religious authorities turned a blind eye to these crimes, Grand and Gilman dramatised the collapse of paternalism, thereby justifying feminist resistance to the law of the father as a matter of the most basic self-defence: 'There is no law ... either to protect us or avenge us', Angelica tells her sympathetic brother in *The Heavenly Twins*: 'That is because men made the law for themselves, and that is why women are fighting for the right to make laws too' (HT, p. 307). The syphilis and medical abuse plots constituted Gilman's and Grand's most powerful weapons in the war against male sexual, marital, religious, legal and medical mistreatment of women.

If in her fiction Grand illustrated the havoc wrought by the failure of patriarchy, in her journalistic writings she discussed and outlined the concrete steps and courses of action that needed to be taken in order to redress the situation. The remedy she offered her readers was eugenic maternalism: women had to take charge of politics as nature had, after all, designed them for leadership by making them mothers. She paints a sad picture of race regression, 'the man of the moment' needing nothing so much as the helping hand of the mothers of the nation: 'It is the woman's place and pride and pleasure to teach the child, and man morally is in his infancy ... woman holds out a strong hand to the child-man, and insists, but with infinite tenderness and pity, upon helping him up'.⁵⁹ Gilman's polemic is uniform between fiction and non-fiction; her language, her rhetorical strategies, her plots are all identical in promotion of her ideas of social and race progress. Like Grand, her narrative imperative or informing

argument is invariably caught up in a nexus of maternal, political and socio-biological necessity; only where women are free to be other than wife and mother can they fully be wife and mother; as she says in *Women and Economics*: 'It is not motherhood that keeps the housewife on her feet from dawn till dark; it is house-service, not child-service' (*W&E*, p. 20).

Both women followed in the footsteps of Josephine Butler, who had mobilised the metaphor of the conscientious housewife in the 1860s in order to justify interference with the Contagious Diseases Acts. Grand suggested that all the New Woman wanted to do was 'set the human household in order':

the first principle of good housekeeping is to have no dark corners, and . . . we go to work with a will to sweep them out. It is for us to set the human household in order, to see to it that all is clean and sweet and comfortable for the men who are fit to help us to make home in it. We are bound to raise the dust while we are at work, but only those who are in it will suffer any inconvenience from it . . . For the rest it will be all benefits.⁶⁰

Whereas, at least on the face of it, Grand went out of her way to uphold domestic values, Gilman, by contrast, used the metaphor of the home as the expression of all that is sick and repressive in society. In her detective novel, *Unpunished*, written in 1929 but which remained unpublished at her death, the domestic tyrant, Wade Vaughn, holds his extended family in thrall both emotionally and financially and keeps them in check with any dirty and devious means he can contrive. He is the literal representation in fiction of Gilman's frequently repeated assertion that the structure of the family has become outdated, that women function within it as 'private servants' and that 'change . . . for the advantage of individual and race' (*W&E*, pp. 210–11) is vital if the 'race' is to progress.

With the demand for full human rights for women and children also comes, however, the promise of a balanced and healthy role for the man in the culture. Both writers stress that women's primary aim was to ensure the upward movement of the 'race'.⁶¹ Far from wishing to bring destructive forces into play in society, the woman's movement reflected, for Grand, 'an evolutionary effort [of the human race] to raise itself a step higher in the scale of development'.⁶² The feminist call for equality would be pointless if it were to 'lower the woman'; what was required instead was to 'raise the man'.⁶³ Girls and women had every right to demand access to an academic training and adequate sexual knowledge, whereas boys and men were in need of a different kind of 'higher education', one that would instill in them a sense of morality and social responsibility.⁶⁴

As Claudia Nelson has noted, sex education was promoted by two distinctly separate camps at the turn of the century, with 'maternalists' differing considerably from 'professionalists' on the issue of exactly what girls and boys should be taught, and by whom. Professionalists emphasised the need for public male instructors, thereby revalidating the idea of separate spheres, which feminists considered the root cause of all evil, by insisting that, while girls should be trained for motherhood, boys needed to channel their sexual energies into the 'proper' expression of masculinity. Maternalists were primarily concerned with policing unchaste men so that their dangerous and abusive sexual practices would cease to afflict the 'body' of the 'race', that is, the women and children. Professionalists were also anxious to repress any desire and above all masturbation and homosexual experimentation, which were likely to impair the development of an 'appropriate' and 'virile' male body politic.⁶⁵ Maternalists like Grand and Gilman drew on women's mothering capacities in order to demand that women be given an appropriate education so as to demonstrate that there was nobody better suited to guide children of both sexes towards a moral understanding of their reproductive duties. Voicing sentiments indistinguishable from those expressed by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *Women and Economics*, Grand wrote in 1900:

We insist that the highest, holiest, and noblest position on earth is the position of wife and mother, and we demand that the fact shall be recognised practically as well as theoretically; we demand that the wife and mother shall receive due . . . reverence for her pains, and that those who may hope to become wives and mothers shall have every advantage of education and training . . . to fit them for their sacred duties. This is the primary outcome of the woman movement.⁶⁶

Since the state continued to ignore women's demands, Grand believed that it was up to feminist writers like herself to take charge of the neglected sex education of their readers. It is no accident that she contributed a never-ending series of articles to journals like *Young Woman* and *Woman at Home*, and while the conservative and even reactionary tone of many of her essays is at odds with her more radical fictional work, there was a method to her journalistic mildness. In her letters she frequently refers to her maxim 'reculer pour mieux sauter', a strategy evident in her periodical writings for the 'homely' market, particularly since she usually managed to bury some sort of feminist message between the lines. Despairing of the editorial practices of the mainstream journal editors,

Charlotte Perkins Gilman concentrated her efforts on writing both social theory and fiction for her own journal, *The Forerunner*, published between 1909 and 1916. As has already been emphasised she made no distinction between the rhetoric and topics of her fiction and non-fiction, the same blend of radicalism and reaction is evident in everything she wrote, and during *The Forerunner* years she had no editor to please but herself. The imperative for Gilman was to enlighten her readers; as she says in her 1923 treatise, *His Religion and Hers: A Study of the Faith of Our Fathers and the Work of Our Mothers*: 'For women already educated enough to grasp the facts and their relations, and able to make a conviction work, it should require no more than a book or two, a lecture or two, to start swifter social evolution.'⁶⁷ Both women conceived of themselves as great 'teachers and preachers' of their time;⁶⁸ both were unequivocal in their determination to impart a feminist sex education to the *fin-de-siècle* reading public of Great Britain and America.

Notes

- 1 Christina Rossetti, 'From the Antique' (1854), in *Poems and Prose*, ed. Jan Marsh, London, Everyman, 1994, p. 37, ll. 2–5.
- 2 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 'Economic Basis of the Woman Question', 1898, collected in Aileen S. Kraditor (ed.), *Up from the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism*, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1968, pp. 175–6.
- 3 Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, London, Heinemann, [1893] 1908, pp. 403, xi. Hereafter *HT*.
- 4 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Man-Made World or, Our Androcentric Culture*, New York, Johnson Reprint Corporation, [1911] 1971, p. 134. Hereafter *MMW*.
- 5 For the evangelical roots of much of nineteenth-century feminism see Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780–1860*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1985, pp. 73–107. For details of social/sexual purity feminism in Britain and the United States see Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885–1914*, London, Penguin, 1995, and Beryl Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom: American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement, 1875–1920*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999.
- 6 Sarah A. Tooley, 'The Woman's Question: An Interview with Madame Sarah Grand', *Humanitarian*, 8 (1896), 166, repr. in Ann Heilmann (ed.), *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts*, Vol. 5, London, Routledge Thoemmes Press, 1998.
- 7 Prince A. Morrow, cited in Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History*

of *Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 19.

- 8 See Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, pp. 14–31 for a discussion of Morrow's work.
- 9 Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, p. 29.
- 10 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight, Vol. 2, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1994, pp. 668, 774, 783, 786. For Caird's criticism of Grand's position and her novel *Ideala*, see her article, 'Ideal Marriage', *Westminster Review*, Vol. 130 (1888), p. 620.
- 11 Gillian Kersley, *Darling Madame: Sarah Grand & Devoted Friend*, London, Virago, 1983, p. x.
- 12 For a discussion of degeneration and decadence see Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummel to Beerbohm*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1978; William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880–1940*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994. For Wilde and other 'degenerate'/'effeminate' writers of the *fin de siècle* see Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Movement*, London, Cassell, 1994; Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1995; Sally Ledger, 'The New Woman and the Crisis of Victorianism', in Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (eds), *Cultural Politics of the Fin de Siècle*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 22–44; and Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, pp. 94–121.
- 13 See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, London, Bloomsbury, 1991, pp. 169–87; Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*, London, Edward Arnold, 1995, pp. 14–53; Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', in Lyn Pykett (ed.), *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, London, Longman, 1996, pp. 47–63; and Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism*, Basingstoke, Macmillan/Palgrave, 2000, pp. 46–53. For contemporary criticism's conflation of aesthetes and feminists see Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, [1895] 1968; Janet E. Hogarth, 'Literary Degenerates', *Fortnightly Review*, 57 ns (1895), pp. 586–92, repr. in Heilmann (ed.), *Late-Victorian Marriage Question*, Vol. 5, and Hugh E. Stutfield, 'Tommyrotics', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. 157 (1895), pp. 833–45, repr. in Heilmann (ed.), *Late-Victorian Marriage Question*, Vol. 5.
- 14 Sarah Grand, *Ideala: A Study from Life*, London, Richard Bentley, 1889, p. 185. First published privately in 1888. Hereafter *ID*.
- 15 'Sarah Grand: Novelist of the Nineties' [unsigned obituary], *The Times*, 13 May 1943, repr. in Ann Heilmann and Stephanie Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 559.

- 16 See contemporary reviews of *Ideala* in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, pp. 377–94.
- 17 See Bridget Bennett's essay on 'Pockets of Resistance: Some Notes Towards an Exploration of Gender and Genre Boundaries in *Herland*', in Val Gough and Jill Rudd (eds), *A Very Different Story: Studies on the Fiction of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1998, pp. 38–53.
- 18 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, '*The Yellow Wallpaper*' and *Selected Stories of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise D. Knight, London, Associated University Presses, 1994, p. 107. Hereafter TYW&SS.
- 19 Sarah Grand, 'Boommellen', *Our Manifold Nature*, London, Heinemann, 1894, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 4, p. 160.
- 20 Florence Nightingale, 'Cassandra', in Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, London, Virago, 1988, p. 416.
- 21 Passed in the 1860s, these Acts introduced the forcible gynaecological examination of any woman believed to be a prostitute to ensure her freedom from venereal disease. It took two decades for the repeal movement, in which Josephine Butler was a leading figure, to achieve its aim; in 1886 the acts were abolished. See Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980. For the evangelical roots of social purity feminism see Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, pp. 13–27, 63–102, and Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism & Sexual Morality 1885–1914*, London, Penguin, 1995, pp. 95–123, 143–50. For Butler's influence on Grand see "'The Heavenly Twins': Bath Mayoress Tells Their Story – Josephine Butler Centenary', *Bath and Wilts Chronicle and Herald*, 19 June 1928, p. 7, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds) *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, pp. 317–20.
- 22 As William Greenslade notes, eugenicist ideas held considerable attraction for Edwardian feminists not least because they enabled a shift from personal to public discourses of injustice, substantiating demands for political redress. See *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880–1940*, pp. 207–9.
- 23 Angelique Richardson, 'The Eugenization of Love: Darwin, Galton, and New Woman Fictions of Heredity and Eugenics', doctoral thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 1999, p. 215.
- 24 Sarah Grand, 'Foreword' to *The Heavenly Twins*, London, Heinemann, 1923, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 404.
- 25 W.T. Stead, 'The Novel of the Modern Woman', *Review of Reviews*, 10 (1894), p. 68, repr. in Heilmann (ed.), *The Late-Victorian Marriage Question: A Collection of Key New Woman Texts*, Vol. 5.
- 26 For details see Gillian Kersley, *Darling Madame*, pp. 72–3.

- 27 Sarah Grand to William Blackwood, 23 September 1891, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2, p. 24.
- 28 Grand, 'Foreword' to *The Heavenly Twins*, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 400.
- 29 Letitia Fairfield, 'Mme Sarah Grand' [letter to the] *Manchester Guardian*, 19 May 1943, p. 4, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 568.
- 30 "'The Heavenly Twins': Bath's Mayoress Tells Their Story – Josephine Butler Centenary', repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 319.
- 31 Grand, 'Foreword' to *The Heavenly Twins*, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 404.
- 32 Sarah A. Tooley, 'The Woman's Question: An Interview with Madame Sarah Grand', repr. in Heilmann (ed.), *Late-Victorian Marriage Question*, Vol. 5.
- 33 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Moving the Mountain, The Forerunner*, 1911, p. 138.
- 34 See Judith A. Allen's essay, 'Reconfiguring Vice: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Prostitution, and Frontier Sexual Contracts', in Jill Rudd and Val Gough (eds), *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Optimist Reformer*, Iowa, University of Iowa Press, pp. 173–99. Allen compares Gilman's work on prostitution with Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Christabel Pankhurst in Britain and Rose Scott and Vida Goldstein in Australia.
- 35 For a detailed discussion of Gilman's vision of ethnic assimilation and re-education see Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams, 'Charlotte Perkins Gilman and *The Forerunner*: A New Woman's Changing Perspective on American Immigration', in Ann Heilmann (ed.), *Feminist Forerunners: New Womanism and Feminism in the Early Twentieth Century*, London, Pandora, 2002.
- 36 Fiona Montgomery, 'Women Who Did, and all that kind of thing . . . Male Perceptions of "Wholesome" Literature', in Christopher Parker (ed.), *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1995, pp. 174–5.
- 37 Ann J. Lane (ed.), *The Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader*, London, The Women's Press, 1981, p. 62.
- 38 Sarah Grand, 'At What Age Should Girls Marry?', *Young Woman*, 7 (1898), repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, pp. 114–15 (emphasis in original).
- 39 Sarah Grand, 'Boomellen', *Our Manifold Nature*, London, Heinemann, 1894, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 4, pp. 159–60.
- 40 Sarah Grand, 'The Modern Girl', *Temple Magazine*, 2 (1898), repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 45.
- 41 Sarah Grand, 'Eugenia', *Our Manifold Nature*, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 4, p. 146.

- 42 Grand, 'Eugenia', p. 144.
- 43 See the discussion of these stories in Janet Beer, 'Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Analogues: Reiterating the Social Health', in *Kate Chopin, Edith Wharton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Studies in Short Fiction*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997, pp. 174–96.
- 44 Carol Farley Kessler (ed.), *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Her Progress Toward Utopia*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1995, p. 217.
- 45 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, [1898] 1966, p. 39.
- 46 Tooley, 'The Woman's Question', p. 167.
- 47 Cited in Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 130.
- 48 Christabel Pankhurst, 'The Great Scourge and How to End It' (1913), in Sheila Jeffreys (ed.), *The Sexuality Debates*, New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, p. 325. For statistics on VD see pp. 315, 317.
- 49 Steve Humphries, *A Secret World of Sex*, London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1988, p. 19.
- 50 Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, pp. 52–8.
- 51 Sarah Grand to William Blackwood, 23 September 1891, repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2, p. 24. See also Grand's 'Foreword' to the 1923 edition of *The Heavenly Twins*, Vol. 1, pp. 403–4.
- 52 For details see Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997.
- 53 Cited in Rosalind Rosenberg's *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century*, London, Penguin, 1993, p. 51.
- 54 Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, London, Penguin, 1991, p. 96.
- 55 Elaine Showalter, 'Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Fiction of the *Fin de Siècle*', in Lyn Pykett (ed.), *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, London, Longman, 1996, pp. 170, 172.
- 56 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, [1935] 1990, p. 119.
- 57 Stephanie Forward, 'Introduction' to *Selected Letters*, Vol. 2 of Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, p. 7.
- 58 Kersley, *Darling Madame*, p. 47.
- 59 Sarah Grand, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', *North American Review*, 158 (1894), p. 273, in Heilmann (ed.), *Late-Victorian Marriage Question*, Vol. 2.
- 60 Grand, 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', p. 276. Compare with Josephine Butler's 'Introduction' to *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture: A Series of Essays*, London, Macmillan, 1869, p. xvii: 'any theory of life . . . which

... deals with [prostitution] as a fact ... which must be as much as possible pushed into a corner ... resembles ... an indolent housewife who is aware of a certain chamber in her house which is full of the accumulated dirt of years, but which she fears to look into, hopeless of any possible cleansing, and the door of which she keeps carefully closed, content so long as the rest of the dwelling is not fatally infected by the presence of the evil'.

- 61 Sarah Grand, 'Marriage Questions in Fiction: The Standpoint of the Typical Modern Woman', *Fortnightly Review*, 375 (March 1898), repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, pp. 77, 91.
- 62 Sarah Grand to Professor Viëtor, 15 December 1896, repr. in Heilmann (eds), *Late-Victorian Marriage Question*, Vol. 5.
- 63 Jane T. Stoddart, 'Illustrated Interview: Sarah Grand', *Woman at Home*, 3 (1895), repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 214.
- 64 *ID*, 186–7. See also Sarah Grand, 'On the Choice of a Husband', *Young Woman*, 7 (1898), repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 108.
- 65 Claudia Nelson, "'Under the Guidance of a Wise Mother": British Sex Education at the Fin de Siècle', in Claudia Nelson and Ann Sumner Holmes (eds), *Maternal Instincts: Visions of Motherhood and Sexuality in Britain, 1875–1925*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997, pp. 98–121.
- 66 Sarah Grand, 'On Clubs and the Question of Intelligence', *Woman at Home*, 9 (September 1900), repr. in Heilmann and Forward (eds), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1, p. 97.
- 67 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *His Religion and Hers: A Study of the Faith of Our Fathers and the Work of Our Mothers*, New York, Hyperion, [1923] 1976, p. 91.
- 68 Grand to Viëtor, 15 December 1896.

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