James Aaron Green*

"Old things made new": Transfusive rejuvenescence in M.E. Braddon's "Good Lady Ducayne" and H. G. Wells's "The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham"

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Abstract: In 1897, congratulating Bram Stoker on the release of *Dracula*, the writer M.E. Braddon tries to establish precedence for herself by classifying the novel not, as we might expect, as a story of vampirism, but as one of "transfusion". Taking this designation as its cue, this article recovers examples of what I term "transfusive rejuvenescence fiction", in which a prolongation of life or restoration of youth is achieved via corporeal transferal. It contextualizes this sub-genre by charting how a revival of interest in blood transfusion's rejuvenatory promise occurred alongside shifts in the attitudes to age and aging – to old age especially. Contrary to medical writers, who optimistically envisaged transfusion as an integral part of a "sentimental economy" – in which blood is donated out of "fellow-feeling" – transfusive rejuvenescence fiction raises the prospect of bloodborne youthfulness becoming commodified and circulating according to the tenets of the capitalist marketplace. In these fictions, transfusion serves as an evocative and versatile figure for expressing anxieties around the increasingly urgent question of provision for old age and the issues of intergenerational equity implied therein. To prove the argument, this article performs a comparative reading of Braddon's "Good Lady Ducayne" and H. G. Wells's "The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham", both of 1896. The comparable but distinctive approaches taken by these two short stories means that examining them in tandem provides us with a fuller picture of the contributions that transfusive rejuvenescence fiction made to fin-de-siècle discourses of age and aging.

Keywords: transfusion, rejuvenescence, old age, youth, commodification

Among the literary luminaries who praised Bram Stoker's *Dracula* upon its first publication in 1897 was M.E. Braddon, the veteran author of popular fiction and a personal friend of the Stoker family. Although still best known for her sensation

***Corresponding author: James Aaron Green,** Department of English and American Studies, Spitalgasse 2, Hof 8 (Campus), 1090 Wien, Austria, E-Mail: james.green@univie.ac.at

writing of the 1860s – foremost *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) – she remained just as active in these years and, in complimenting the new novel, she draws a comparison with her own recent work. Specifically, she deprecates her short story "Good Lady Ducayne", published the year before in *Strand Magazine*, as a "humdrum little story of transfusion" that pales against the "bloofer lady" offered up by *Dracula* (qtd. in Belford 1996: 275). The surface impression is of unleavened praise; yet, as Ann Louise Kibbie discerns, Braddon is also attempting via their correspondence to categorize Stoker's novel – to resist, moreover, its most obvious classification as a story of vampirism – and to then claim a sort of precedence (2019: 1). With the "rediscovery" of "Good Lady Ducayne" within twenty-first-century criticism, Braddon's suggestion of a link between the two texts is something that scholars have sought to unpack. Her short story and *Dracula* have been read as tackling the same concerns of modernization, corporeal exploitation, and intergenerational anxiety (Hatter 2015; Mangum 2014: 107; Oakley 2018: 9). If there is no evidence of direct influence, there is assuredly a confluence of interests and of stylistic and thematic choices: the aristocratic antagonist and the prolongation of life via exchanges of blood, to name only the most conspicuous (Tomaiuolo 2010: 69). But if "Good Lady Ducayne" is so clearly an instance of "surgical" or "medical" vampirism (Hartung 2017: 344, 348; Pamboukian 2015: 562, 568; Tomaiuolo 2010: 71) – and, to be sure, such designations were available to Braddon – what are we to make of her decision to swerve this classification and specify an alternative?

This article suggests that the "story of transfusion" label is not applied idly or inadvertently by Braddon. I propose that it indexes a group of fictions published in the fin de siècle and the years just prior in which life extension or rejuvenescence – the restoration of youth – are achieved by means of corporeal transfer. I designate them using the more precise term of "transfusive rejuvenescence fiction" and propose that they negotiated the shifting and fraught statuses of age and aging in the period – especially that of old age. I first examine blood transfusion's rejuvenatory promise and how this, together with its sympathetic associations, connected it to the last stage of the life course. But whereas medical writers optimistically envisaged transfusion as part of a sentimental economy, in which blood is donated out of "fellow-feeling" for others, fiction disclosed the potential for bloodborne youthful vitality to become commodified and to circulate according to the model of the capitalist marketplace. These fictions, appearing noticeably from the 1880s onwards, use transfusion as an evocative and versatile figure for expressing anxieties about the socioeconomic status of old age and its relation to youth. To evidence its argument, this article undertakes a comparative reading of Braddon's "Good Lady Ducayne" and H. G. Wells's "The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham" (hereafter "Ducayne" and "Elvesham"), both first published in 1896. Offering similar but distinctive approaches to their subjects – differently gendered pro- and antagonists, different

forms of transfusion, and so on – a reading of the two short stories in tandem discloses a fuller picture of transfusive rejuvenescence fiction's contributions to fin-de-siècle discourses of age and aging.

1 "The wonder-working elixir": Blood transfusion's rejuvenatory promise

In its 11 October 1876 issue, *Judy; or, The London Serio-Comic Journal* published a large, multi-panel comic entitled "Transfusion!" (Figure 1). Its outermost panels highlight the profound changes occurring in recipients of blood from animal "donors" – a type of blood transfusion known as "xenotransfusion". Having imbibed this blood, these persons now exhibit the exaggerated characteristics of the animal: one has reformed his card-playing habits and "gambols" serenely like a lamb; another is astonished at having consumed his dinner with the gluttony of a pig. The scenes are whimsical, yet mentions of the "poor Pig [that] suffered this time" and the "sacrificed" Lamb hint at the surgical realities that enabled these extraordinary changes. Superficially, the central panel offers a scene remote from these images of animal-human hybridity. It shows three persons representing a spectrum of life stages: a panicked-looking young man; a smiling middle-aged man; and a man hunched with old age. The caption explains the uncertain dynamics of this intergenerational meeting through the words of the "Eminent Doctor": "There's only one thing I can think of that'll make a new man of you. Here's your heir: – he's a fine full-blooded young man; we might get a quart or so out of him" (1876: 263). Interpreted laterally with the surrounding images, readers are prompted to imagine the harmful effects this transfusion will have upon the young man (justifying his worried expression), alongside a corresponding renewal of youthful vitality in the older man; just as the recipients of xenotransfusion have incorporated the essence of the animal donors, so the same prospect is promised here along lines of age. Having been occluded by the past-tense narration – through which the operation scene itself is omitted and the "donors" present only as mentions – this central panel restores to readers' notice the disquieting reciprocity of the procedure. The older father might recover his youth, it seems to say, but at what cost to his young son?

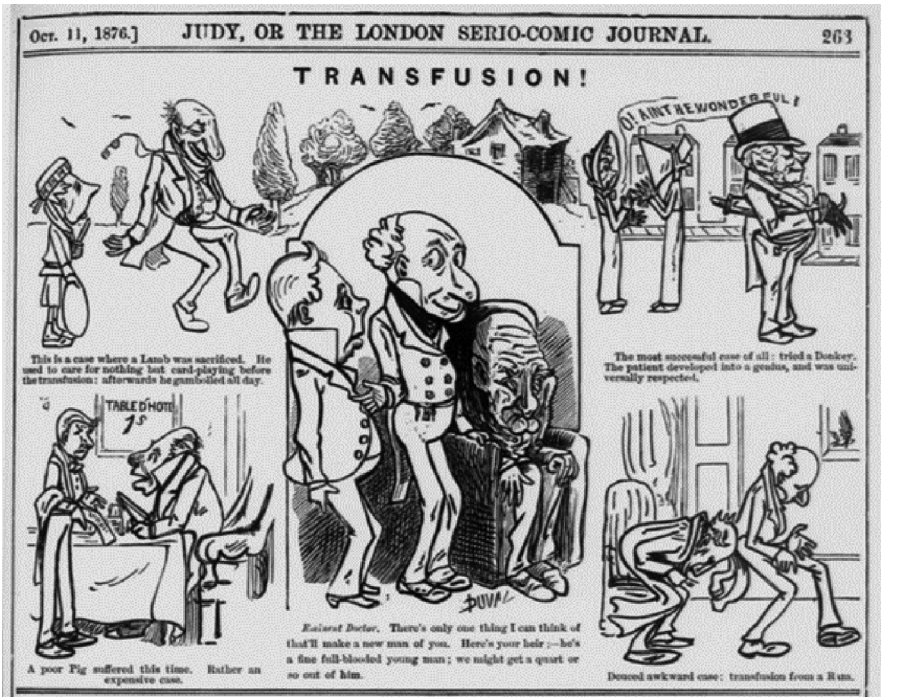

Figure 1: "Transfusion!', *Judy; or, The London Serio-Comic Journal*, 19 (11 October 1876), 263 © ProQuest.

Judy's "Transfusion!" comic is a densely allusive statement of popular attitudes towards blood transfusion in Britain just before the fin de siècle. For the purposes of this discussion, it indexes a number of resonant themes. Foremost is how blood transfusion was associated with the promise to extend life and restore youth. Catherine Oakley reminds us that this connection did not originate in the nineteenth century but was merely "distinctly visible" during it (2018: 6). The rejuvenatory promise of blood had been speculated upon by transfusion's early modern proponents, and this interest re-emerged after the procedure was revived by James Blundell, working at Guy's Hospital, London, in 1818 (Kibbie 2019: 3). Hence, whilst transfusion itself remained a "*novel remedy*" throughout the century, to cite the contemporary surgeon Charles Waller (qtd. in Kibbie 2019: 2; original emphasis), its promise of rejuvenation was soon *passé*; in 1853, nearly a quarter of a century before "Transfusion!" appeared, an article in the *London Journal* entitled "Old Things Made New" wrote derisively of efforts to "revive the doctrine of 'Transfusion'" and the principle therein: that "to bring about perpetual youth, all that is required [...] is to re-furnish our systems every now and then with young blood" (52). The promise proved sufficiently enduring, however, to elicit an unprompted rebuttal from the

physiologist John Edward Morgan over ten years later, as part of the 1866–7 public lecture series "Scientific Lectures for the People". Having emphasized the importance of "good healthy blood" to the body's functioning, he distances the corollary suggestion that injecting young blood into the aged body could eradicate the comorbidities of old age; no benefits are possible, so Morgan reasoned, because of incompatibility between younger and older tissues (1866: 150). Yet the Genevan physician Joseph Roussel, renowned in British transfusion circles of the time, was far more equivocal on blood's rejuvenatory potential. In his 1877 treatise on transfusion, Roussel figures blood as a fluid that can restore activity within the body and, crucially, as capable of doing so even when transferred into another body: "It would seem that health itself can be transfused with the blood of a healthy man" (2). But Roussel evokes more "mystical", as opposed to purely mechanistic (Oakley 2018: 5), understandings of blood in describing the donor's arm as being the "natural and mysteriously inexhaustible source of the wonder-working elixir" (1877: 4). This florid rendering of transfusion's capabilities is significant; by emphasizing occult and miraculous qualities (the "elixir" recalls the *elixir vitae* of eighteenth-century alchemical pursuits after immortality), Roussel lends credibility to the prospect that its rejuvenatory potential might eventually be realized – even if it is beyond the medical expertise of his own day to implement.

That it was blood's potential to arrest or reverse the debilities of old age that was given such priority in these discussions indexes how a new conception of that life stage had taken hold by the 1870s. In *The Victorians and Old Age* (2009), Karen Chase delineates how old age as an "event" – a phenomenon provoking legislative and cultural responses at scale – was principally a development of the nineteenth century (2). Long-established ideas about life's last stage were destabilized during this period by social and demographic changes that were self-reflexively observed. Chronological definitions of old age, previously ill-defined and sporadic, began to be used with increasing frequency. This more rigid classificatory impetus was prompted by an emphasis upon the "capacity to work" and a sense of the aged worker as obsolete within an economy ever more defined by technological advances and onerous working conditions (Chase 2009: 2; Mangum 2014: 104). The "elderly" became newly visible (Chase 2009: 9), despite the fact that life expectancy rose mostly as a result of a decline in infant mortality rates. Even if, in reality, England's "growing old" was not borne out by the figures, nonetheless a "general but false impression" of an aging society took hold during the second half of the century (Mangum 2014: 101). To no small degree was this impression abetted by the nation's embodiment in the aged Queen Victoria, in her seventies by the last decade of the century, and in seasoned political figures like William Ewart Gladstone.

Broadly, this growth in the visibility and numbers of aged persons was hailed as a sign of societal progression. The professor of physiology George Murray Humphry,

in an oration to the Medical Society of London in 1885, speaks of how "old age acquires a gradually increasing interest as advancing civilization enables a larger number of persons to attain it" (1). Yet studies by the social researcher Charles Booth, notably *A Picture of Pauperism, The Endowment of Old Age* (1892), and *The Aged Poor* (1894), were to evidence a growing suspicion: if more people were attaining old age, commensurate numbers were also proving unable to financially support themselves during it. Such concerns prompted agitation for a national old-age pensions scheme from the late 1870s onwards, which was to culminate in the Pensions Act of 1911. Such a fictional example as Anthony Trollope's *The Fixed Period* (1882), in which enforced euthanasia of those over the age of 67.5 has solved the problem of the "unprofitable old" (qtd. in Charise 2020: 144) indicates how extensively these anxieties over the provision for old age had penetrated into popular culture and were being shaped by it. First as surplus, then as burden, the aged cohort appeared toward the end of the century as a social crisis in waiting (Charise 2020: xxv, 133).

It was not only through the rejuvenatory promise that blood transfusion and old age were associated, but also by a joint connection to sympathy. The various and complex significations of this notion during the Victorian period, and the uses to which it was put in fiction and elsewhere, have been much discussed;[1] I use "sympathy" here in its simplest – which is to say its most capacious – contemporaneous sense in which, as Brigid Lowe explains, it encompassed a "faculty of affective communication" that could be expressed horizontally as well as vertically within the social hierarchy and "bodily manifest[ed]" via such social practices as shared acts of consumption (2007: 9–10). Understood so, as the extension of understanding and care from one person to another (hence it was often termed "fellow-feeling"), sympathy was deemed vital in society's progression to a state that enabled more people to reach old age. Paradoxically, sympathy was therefore both cause and solution to the problem of "burdensome old age". Humphry devotes much of his 1885 oration to this dilemma:

> The prolongation of life into and through the periods of decay, and into and through the processes of disease [...] are the result of human forethought and sympathy. [...] The onward march of civilisation is a necessity, and the onward progress of disease will tend to go with it. But it does remain for forethought and sympathy to narrow the range of evils they have themselves engendered, or which have sprung up with them. (12–13)

1 See, for instance, Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (Cornell University Press, 2000); Rachel Ablow, *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot* (Stanford University Press, 2007); and Rob Boddice, *The Science of Sympathy: Morality, Evolution, and Victorian Civilization* (University of Illinois Press, 2017).

In the absence of sympathy, so Humphry cautioned, civilized society itself ceased to exist: interpersonal relations resembled nothing so much as a Darwinian "struggle for existence" in which the "feeble and the decaying" are trampled by stronger (for which we should read younger) forces (1885: 9). In other words, the state of nature was conflict between the generations – a dire warning to a society that neglected to propagate and maintain fellow-feeling.

But how was sympathy, so crucial to aged persons, to be cultivated? Transfusion offered one possibility. In the form of the "donor", a new category of participant in the medical operation – neither practitioner nor patient – transfusion was seen to either establish new connections between people or reinforce those already existing; the donor's position was one of voluntary self-sacrifice (of their time, vitality, and comfort) to benefit a suffering individual. The "tissue economy" of nineteenth-century blood transfusion was a "*sentimental* one", as Kibbie delineates, wherein "blood, rather than tears [as in the century before], [served] as the ultimate sympathetic bond" (2019: 13; original emphasis); transfusion "could be said to literalize the affective currents of sympathy" (Kibbie 2019: 25) insofar as the apparatus that joined the circulatory systems of donor and patient seemed to physically manifest the imagined "bonds" between people. Equally, the apparent interoperability of transfused blood – its disregard for age, gender, and class distinctions – embodied the "recognition of similarity" (Lowe 2007: 10) that was the starting point of sympathy. (It was not until the delineation of blood types in the early twentieth century that this notion of blood's universality was proven false.) Hence, contemporaneous medical treatises on the procedure almost invariably stray from a discussion of purely practical aspects into the realm of social imaginary: they ask readers to imagine a "fellow-creature" revived by transfused blood (Jennings 1884: 1), an "army of volunteers" ready to revive those wounded in combat (Morgan 1866: 151), or even, most grandiosely, a whole nation on standby to "offer their arm" to those in need (Roussel 1877: 4). More than just a "novel remedy", transfusion's sympathetic associations made it a figure that could express ideal social arrangements – a family, community, or even nation, bound by common feeling.

But *Judy*'s 1876 "Transfusion!" comic registers the presence of two counter-narratives. First, the image of old-age vulnerability – aged persons as inevitably at risk within a Darwinian struggle for existence – was contested by that of the rapacious elder: a figure who clings to or is covetous of power and property. First conspicuous in sensation fiction of the 1860s (Mangum 2014: 101–102), the century's final decades see arguably its most iconic instances in such novels as H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She: A History of Adventure* (1886–87), as well as Stoker's aforementioned *Dracula* (1897). Far from jeopardizing them, fantastical old age enables characters like Gagool, Ayesha, and the Count to accrue formidable resources; their aged status is integral to the threat they pose – a threat often directed at char-

acters who are, if not always young per se, invariably far younger than them. Although seemingly inverse images of old age – one is of dependency, the other of excess – these "burdensome" and "rapacious" archetypes originate, I wish to suggest, in an identical unease about finite resources not being shared equitably amongst the generations; that is to say, whether as a burden that younger generations must pay for, or as a repository for capital that would liberate that same group (to marry, for instance), the aged cohort is seen to thwart the just allocation of resources and opportunity. This is an anxiety characteristic of the fin de siècle and only one facet of a broader concern in the period for the "efficient deployment of human energy"; it was a concern originating in scientific models of energy and work, but from which analogical chains between the biological and the social were crafted, and, as Steffan Blayney elaborates,

> in the fin-de-siècle imagination, the image of a universe slowly, but inexorably, running out of energy both reinforced and further fuelled contemporary notions of decline and cultural pessimism. If the principle of the conservation of energy opened a space for utopian dreams of a society engineered so as to best exploit the infinite productive potentials of nature, the notion of entropy brought shadows of "deterioration, decay, and dissolution". (2020: 165, 157)

The fearful and pessimistic responses that arose from this premise are those most strongly associated with the fin de siècle; yet as Blayney and Oakley separately detail, this perspective also gave scope for the antithesis: it provided "a rationale for new 'interventionist strategies'" through which the body's energy might be restored, enhanced, or raised to its potential (Oakley qtd. in Blayney 2020: 163). It is precisely this promise that, in tandem with anxieties about the "burdensome old age", prompted the late-nineteenth-century revival of fascination for the rejuvenatory potential of blood transfusion.

Transfusive rejuvenescence fiction, of which "Ducayne" and "Elvesham" are later examples, is where the other counter-narrative is met: the "sentimental" economy is replaced in such fictions by the model of the marketplace; or, if sympathy still motivates transfusion, it is shown to be misplaced. In Sabine Baring-Gould's 1884 short story "Margery of Quether", George Rosedhu's sympathetic response to the venerable Margery leads only to her draining him of his youthful vitality so that they swap positions – he becomes a figure of helpless old age, while his erstwhile dependent assumes the role of carer. "The sight [of Margery's rejuvenescence] would have been one of unalloyed delight, had the recovery not been effected at my expense", opines Rosedhu, in one of several moments where his self-effacing altruism reaches comic proportions (Baring-Gould 1884b: 469). Three years later, in Richard Dowling's "Blood is Thicker than Water" and Robert Duncan Milne's "A Man Who Grew Young Again", transfusion's sympathetic potential is negated by the donors' pursuit of financial compensation. In Milne's short story it is in fact the two

youthful donors – prematurely aged by the procedure, like Rosedhu – who are registered as the figures truly deserving of sympathy, not the older recipient; yet this is denied to them by the middle-aged physician who conducts the operation, on account of their financial compensation: "no one pitied them, as they had been paid liberally for their loss of vitality" (1887: 5). In these cases, transfusion indicates a "*breakdown* of sympathetic exchange" (Kibbie 2019: 13; original emphasis) between the generations; sociality between younger and older persons becomes a matter of pure transaction, while middle-aged characters act as the intermediaries to facilitate such exchanges. In Dowling and Milne's stories we see, moreover, the beginnings of an "experimental medical marketplace" (Oakley 2018: 9) in which youthfulness is commodified – able to be bought and sold. Such an arrangement raises issues of coercion, compensation, and privilege, and it threatens to compound inequalities by enabling those with the financial resources to obtain longer and healthier lives; it henceforth becomes possible, as Milne's protagonist does, to earn a "large *capital* of new blood" (Milne 1887: 5; emphasis added) by exchanging its monetary equivalent.

2 Anxious exchanges: "Good Lady Ducayne" and "The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham"

By the time "Ducayne" and "Elvesham" were first published in 1896, the fluid sociopolitical landscape for age and aging in Britain – for old age especially – had seen further change. These years saw the release of publications decisive in developing that influential concept of "burdensome old age"; but Booth's *Pauperism* (1892) and *The Aged Poor* (1894) also led to the creation of – and Booth's large involvement in – the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, which was established in 1893 and reported its findings two years later. The Commission indicated the "gravity of the problem of old age pauperism and the existence of general distress among aged persons of the wage-earning class" according to one contemporary observer; for that same commentator, the extent of the problem was visible in the report's failure to provide the "path to a successful solution" – instead it only warned of what would *not* work to address the dilemma of provision for old age (Holland 1896: 852). The questions that sprang from this vacuum – How was aged pauperism to be mitigated? Who was to pay for it? – are, I suggest, a contributing factor to the more anxious accounts of "Ducayne" and "Elvesham" vis-á-vis those earlier transfusive rejuvenescence fictions by Baring-Gould, Dowling, and Milne. In Braddon and Wells's short stories, old age is posed as antagonistic to youthful wants and desires, and the indeterminate endings of each represent uncertainty about how to address

the incipient social crisis of "burdensome old age" and the questions it raises for intergenerational equity.

"Ducayne" and "Elvesham" each open upon parallel scenes in which their young protagonist is poised to be rescued from financial precarity by the aid of an old benefactor. The eighteen-year-old Bella Rolleston begins "Ducayne" seeking work. She does so not, however, out of self-centred motives, as is presumed by the head of the employment agency, Miss Torpenter, but to alleviate the impoverished condition of herself and her mother: "I want a situation because mother is poor, and I hate being a burden to her. I want a salary that I can share with her" (Braddon 1896: 186). Although Mrs Rolleston's precise age is uncertain, her diminished income cloths her in the guise of the older woman whose "economic viability" within this period, as Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane remind us, "typically declines" if it doesn't disappear entirely (2001: 198). That word "burden", by which Bella describes herself, is liable to have been considered a misapplication by the original readers, since it was redolent not of the young but of "old-age poverty" such as Mrs Rolleston's situation threatens ("Old-Age Pensions" 1898: 593; "Old-Age Pensions" 1892: 477). In fact, in the assistance she renders her mother, Bella conforms to the exhortations made by commentators within the 1890s debates on old-age pensions, who deemed the children of the working class to be the "main insurance" against the potential poverty of their parents. In an 1892 piece for the *Fortnightly Review*, J. Moulton objectifies such youth in describing them as an "outlay of capital" from which the aged parent may eventually "reap their reward" (467–468); that is, the young are analogous to a financial investment that yields greater worth later. If Moulton presents its idealized form from the position of old age, "Ducayne" spotlights how this setup thwarts Bella from readying her own "outlay" as she comes of age; when Miss Torpinter assails her with the prospect of earning money for a "love affair" or a "comfortable home" (Braddon 1896: 186, 187) – the normative hallmarks of young adulthood – Bella responds with incredulity: the money is going to her mother. As Lauren Goodlad astutely discerns, "the main obstacle to Bella's marriage prospects is, ultimately, not her own pennilessness, but her mother's" (2000: 223). Even before Ducayne's introduction, therefore, questions around intergenerational equity and sympathy are already expressed by the fraught emotional and financial ties between Bella and Mrs Rolleston. She may be incognizant of or willingly subject to the strictures involved in supporting her elderly parent, but there is nonetheless a prefiguring of the transfusive motif insofar as the young woman's energies are being utilized to the benefit of someone else.

The arrivals of Ducayne, and in "Elvesham" of the eponymous philosopher, bring to the fore a host of competing attitudes towards old age. If that last life stage is conceived of as the "diminution of material and a diminution of force", as Humphry expresses it in *Old Age and Changes Incidental to It* (1885: 18), then Bella's

benefactor presents as the final form of this process. When Bella first sees Ducayne, the old woman's visage has so lessened that it "seemed only a pair of eyes and a peaked chin", her nose being "hardly visible" between them (Braddon 1896: 187). This diminution is not observed as the natural, morally-neutral outcome of the aging process, however, but is made an object of grotesquerie: Ducayne's fingers are described as "claw-like" and her eyes – magnified by the aid of an eyeglass – as "glaring awfully" (Braddon 1896: 188). This same lexicon of the bestial, even atavistic, is twice applied to the aged philosopher Egbert Elvesham in mentions of the "long bony" and then "shrivelled claw" with which he grasps the young George Edward Eden's "hand" (Wells 1896: 489, 490). (This juxtaposition of the ordinary descriptor for the appendage serves only to emphasize Elvesham's deviance – which is to say the aged body's deviance – from the normative.) Most alarming to notice is how the claw's rudimentary form speaks to an idea of aging as degeneration, inexorably shifting the individual to become "some lower form of life" (Woodward 1983: 52). Significantly, neither of these two aged individuals attempts to mask the physical signs of aging with cosmetics, a response that even in the 1890s remained "on the bounds of gendered and commercial respectability" (Clark 2017: 2); yet the repulsion aroused by their unadulterated aged bodies indicates the bind faced by older persons, and it disputes the more optimistic contemporaneous renderings of old age that strove to equate its naturalness with beauty ("Graceful Old Age" 1901: 1166). Instead, their cases exhibit what Kathleen Woodward (with due acknowledgement of how "shocking" it may seem) describes as an instinctual repulsion toward and disassociation from the decrepit aged body (1983: 44). She locates one appearance of this feeling in Haggard's *She* and the horror experienced by those witness to Ayesha's accelerated aging; but we also see it recognized posteriorly in non-fiction, as when a *Gentleman's Magazine* article of 1906 notes with some regret that "the visible decaying of the body is a haunting horror to us, for we can see in it nothing but unrelieved gloom and tragedy" ("On Growing Old" 343). In Braddon and Wells's stories, the aging process is associated with bodily decline, the terminus of which is tantamount to the grotesque and evolutionarily degenerate.

The logical corollary of these associations between extreme old age, decrepitude, and atavism would be to make youth the more valued state. In "Ducayne" and "Elvesham" there is more than this, however: Bella and Eden's youthful vitality is commodified. When Ducayne first meets Bella, it takes only the young woman's appearance as "fresh, blooming, a living image of youth and hope" (Braddon 1896: 187) to indicate her suitability for employment as her companion; "Bella's youth is her essential quality and characteristic, which qualifies her" for the role, as Heike Hartung discerns (2017: 345). Easily overlooked, however, is how Ducayne's approval proceeds from an outlook that idly equates youth with corporeal vitality; Bella's youthful appearance serves as irrefutable proof of her capacity to provide

the healthy blood that her employer needs to sustain her longevity. For Elvesham this is not a given; he examines Eden himself with "a curious touch of greed" and then a "touch of envy" (Wells 1896: 488, 489) – looks rife with sexual and economic import – but he only proceeds with the arrangement after the young man has been examined by a physician. Whilst Sylvia A. Pamboukian deems Ducayne's scrutinizing gaze redolent of the elderly procuress (2015: 566–567), comparison with other examples of transfusive rejuvenescence fiction indicates it to be a motif of the subgenre; such examinations, also present in Dowling and Milne's short stories, assess the corporeal suitability of the prospective donor and originate in the real-life incentive for donors to be fit and healthy. In Dowling's "Blood is Thicker than Water", for instance, Dr Bromhead's transfusion of blood into the aged, dying Bishop of Barminster is preceded by a comically elaborate blazon of the ideal donor:

> He must be young and vigorous. He must be in the prime of manhood, no sickly ascetic, no cultivator of mortifying groans, but a man full of vitality, bounding with health, healthfully attached to life, resolved to live for life's sake, no waster of the midnight oil, a man whose blood is dense with red corpuscles. (1887: 10)

The ironic conclusion to Bromhead's search is his co-opting of the robust, yet far from model specimen (an "ill-looking young man" [Dowling 1887: 12]) of Dan Lowrey, a professional boxer; with such a conclusion, Dowling satirizes how the reification of youth exists in a singular disconnect from the reality. In Milne's "A Man Who Grew Young Again", an equivalent search for donors who can save a life is described in more predatory terms: "with feelings akin to the hunter", the narrator-physician surveys those around them in search of the "youngest and richest human blood", settling eventually upon two youths who he deems to "possess [] a practically unlimited store [...] of the pure life fluid" (1887: 4). With such language, Milne suggests how the prospect of transfused vitality tends toward a dehumanization of the young person, who is henceforth conceived of as an exploitable resource.

By contrast with Dowling and Milne's stories, in which the narrative perspective follows the middle-aged intermediary, in "Ducayne" and "Elvesham" such a role is minimized and omitted, respectively. The consequence of this is to isolate, and hence to render starker, the antagonistic, transactional nature of relations between the old and young; the aged in both these stories are more straightforwardly purchasing youthfulness, and the young are more clearly (albeit unknowingly) depleting their store of vitality to gain its money equivalent. This dynamic produces an emphatic denial of transfusion's sympathetic potential; instead, a literal price is put upon youth, as it becomes a commodity contained within blood and exchangeable via its transfusion. These exchanges may equalize the relative advantages of old age and youth – balancing a surfeit of vigour against an abundance of capital, respectively – but, as Oakley reminds us, such a system of exchange nevertheless com-

pounds unequal power dynamics: a "socially dominant group [obtains] at the expense of a less socially powerful one" (2018: 9). In Braddon and Wells's short stories, the Darwinian "struggle for existence" that Humphry had cautioned would occur in a society absent of sympathy is brought into existence, except it is younger and not older persons who are vulnerable within it.

Whilst "Ducayne" and "Elvesham" are both structured by exchanges of youthful vitality for capital, those exchanges run according to distinct "tempos" that befit the specific type of financial arrangement being conducted. Bella's ongoing employment with Ducayne translates into a gradual enfeeblement as, unbeknownst to her, she receives nocturnal transfusions whilst under the effects of chloroform. The symptoms include a "lassitude" and diminishment of her strength such that she experiences difficulty and disinterest in her usual athletic pursuits (Braddon 1896: 190, 193). Interspersed within this narrative of bodily decline are precise mentions of salary ("five and twenty pounds" [Braddon 1896: 193]) and its transferal to Mrs Rollerston, so that the transactional nature of her situation is consistently underscored. Bella's decline from a robust young woman at the story's start to a visible "wreck" (Braddon 1896: 194) before its end is significant within the matrix of fin-de-siècle anxieties about "energy" and its rightful allocation. In contrast to Roussel's optimistic prognostications, Bella's inability to resist the literally draining influence of Ducayne indicates how the energies of the human body – even those of a healthy and young one – are finite; her stock of rejuvenating blood, that "wonder-working elixir", is manifestly not "inexhaustible". The interconnected bodily economy presented in Braddon's short story is a limited one, where Bella's constant fatigue signifies unmistakably an excessive depletion of energies such as risks permanent debility. This dangerous outcome is conspicuous through the fact that it is the presumed fate of Ducayne's two previous attendants; their decline and death in her service puts a human face to what Blayney describes as the "dark entropic spectre of 'total collapse' or 'irrecoverable degeneration'" (2020: 159) that loomed over the period. In a cultural landscape alert to re- and degenerative possibilities for the body and society, the *allocation* of limited energies becomes the decisive issue.

In this context, Ducayne's wrongdoing is not simply her exploitation of Bella: it is that her continuing existence marks the improper distribution of those finite energies. When the young physician Herbert Stafford confronts Ducayne and her medical attendant Dr Parravicini in the story's climax, her face impresses him with an "indescribable horror of death outlived, a face that should have been hidden under a coffin-lid years and years ago" (Braddon 1896: 196). The scene has received deserved and insightful scrutiny (Hartung 2017: 369; Pamboukian 2015: 568), but understated by prior assessments is the fact that Ducayne, at 103 years old, is not preternaturally aged; Humphry's 1889 study *Old Age* had recognized 74 centenarians living in Britain alone (qtd. in Mangum 2014: 105), and Braddon's story ranges across

a wider geography – Italy as well as Britain. Stafford's revilement is not, in other words, prompted by Ducayne's trespass beyond the natural lifespan, but, I argue, by her stranglehold upon energies that would be better utilized by others. "You have had your share" (Braddon 1896: 198) is how he articulates her wrongdoing, framing her villainy as a profligacy for which transfusion is merely the most egregious symptom. Such characterization makes 'Ducayne' an anxious, pessimistic account of old age, because it renders it as a social problem even when it is financially self-supporting. Endowed with ample funds, Ducayne is not a burden to anyone, yet the excess and immobility of her finances signals a failure to apportion finite resources in the common interest. Significantly, when she gives a thousand-pound gift to Bella at the story's conclusion, the money is "invested" in "debenture stock" (Braddon 1896: 199); as it begins to accrue interest in its support of the economy, this once-dead capital is itself figuratively rejuvenated. What the old woman's gift solves, in fact, is the "problem" thrown up by another member of her aged cohort: it relieves Bella (and Stafford, her soon-to-be husband) of maintaining Mrs Rolleston, enabling Braddon's protagonist to finally pursue the hallmarks of young adulthood she risked missing out on. The harmonious end to the short story therefore coincides with a resolution to the problem of burdensome old age. Yet, although solved in the case of Bella, the extraordinary means by which it is resolved – through the *deus ex machina* of Ducayne's bequeathal – is to ironically spotlight how the provision for old age remains a more intractable concern for fin-de-siècle Britain.

The dynamics of exchange are altogether different in "Elvesham". Whereas Bella may be seen to undergo a gradual equalization with Ducayne – her lassitude manifesting the symptoms of premature senility – Eden is brought with shocking suddenness to experience the decrepit old age embodied by the aged philosopher. By contrast with "Ducayne"'s strong investment in medical verisimilitude (Pamboukian 2015: 559), the precise means by which the transfusion is effected in Wells's story are more opaque. This uncertainty about whether, and by what means, Eden finds himself in the body of Egbert Elvesham is a purposive one, however, eliciting as it does a tension between supernatural and natural explanations and a broader reflection on how old age presents; this hesitation has been productively read via the Todorovian fantastic (Santos and Soares 2016: 61). The intra- and inter-textual evidence suggests that a more figurative and less material form of transfusion occurs, involving not an exchange of tissue but of consciousness. It instances what Kibbie terms the "model of sympathetic occupancy or projection"; of the model's origins, she writes that

> eighteenth-century authors, working in a variety of genres, use the term transfusion to imagine a transpersonal access of emotions or energies, moments in which the self feels itself invaded by another, or imagines transferring its own powers into another body. (2019: 24)

The form saw updates in the nineteenth century in William Godwin Jr.'s gothic novel of family relations, *Transfusion; or, The Orphans of Unwalden* (1835), and George Eliot's short story of clairvoyance, "The Lifted Veil" (1859). Chronologically and thematically closest to "Elvesham" is William Delisle Hay's *Blood: A Tragic Tale* (1886), in which consciousness itself is bloodborne; after a transfusion, Hay's donor protagonist finds themselves experiencing the world in the body of the recipient. Such precursors mean that Wells's story was liable to have been recognized as a variation upon the figurative type of transfusion, one specifically involving differences of age.

In lieu of an operation scene, therefore, the bodies of Eden and Elvesham are symbolically brought close by their shared consumption of food and drink, central to which is the liqueur with which they toast the contract permitting Eden to inherit the aged philosopher's fortune. In such telling details as the champagne's warming effect upon the "blood", the "pinkish powder" used to flavour the liqueur, and the "flourescent amber colour" (Wells 1896: 489, 492) of the resulting drink, the language circles the sanguineous; it creates a sense that the fluid is, as Will Trinkwon rightly claims, "blood-like" (2020: 561) – a substitute transfusion occurs through its ingestion. After consuming it, Eden begins to lose the characteristic vigour of his youth and confront a host of age-inappropriate symptoms: co-morbidities of old age that defy sense when presenting in a young body. In the mould of Charles Dickens's "old men", who as they navigate metropolitan spaces become a sign of a forgotten past (Chase 2009: 37), the reeling Eden imaginatively conjures "vanished shops", "vivid phantasmal memories" (Wells 1896: 491), and obsolete tasks as he travels home. He experiences, too, a manifold forgetfulness, forgetting first his house number, and then remembering it as being told to him by some forgotten person (Wells 1896: 491). Incognizant as he is to their meaning – wondering if they result from intoxication or clairvoyance – such behaviours would have been recognizable to many original readers as the potential symptoms of an incipient "senile dementia" (Humphry 1885: 30). But by nullifying the duration of aging – by bringing a young man into sudden, premature possession of an aged body and the cognitive decline that can accompany it – transfusive rejuvenescence estranges the phenomenological experience of old age; only because that life stage is encountered after the extended timespan of the aging process do the emphatic differences between it and youth seem unremarkable, so Wells seems to say. "The unreality of aging's mundane process", to use Jacob Jewusiak's phrasing (2020: 114–115), is therefore illuminated through the fantastical device of rejuvenescence.

The transfusion between Eden and Elvesham may be in the "model of sympathetic occupation", but, as in "Ducayne", sympathy itself is conspicuously absent from the exchange. Having previously maintained a categorical distinction from the older man on the basis of physical difference, Eden, now in possession of the decrepit body he was repulsed by, finds himself radically alienated from "his" physical

form; self-investigation discovers the prosaic markers of old age – "loose folds of skin", gums where teeth once were – but can process them only via the gothic mode as a source of horror: "I was sick with dismay and disgust" (Wells 1896: 493). Tactile exploration moves to visual confirmation when he sees himself in a mirror, staging a scene of "critical age awareness" that recurs repeatedly in literary representations of aged bodies (Jewusiak 2020: 115; Woodward 1983: 55). This moment is worth reproducing at length:

> I tottered to the glass and saw – *Elvesham's face!* It was none the less horrible because I had already dimly feared as much. He had already seemed physically weak and pitiful to me, but seen now [...] I cannot describe its desolate decrepitude. [...] You who are mind and body together, at your natural years, cannot imagine what this fiendish imprisonment meant to me. To be young and full of the desire and energy of youth, and to be caught, and presently to be crushed in this tottering ruin of a body. (Wells 1896: 494; original emphasis)

Here the indeterminacy around whether Eden has swapped bodies with Elvesham, or this is Elvesham struggling with the cognitive infirmities that can accompany old age, comes into focus. For if the events leading up to it are disregarded, Eden's non-recognition of his aged body represents only a dramatic arrival upon a feeling known to arise with old age. The aged body is not taken to reflect the real self but to disguise and hide it – the real self is contained within (trapped or incarcerated, to use Wells's spatial metaphors) decrepitude. The aged body becomes "foreign" and rendered as the Other; it is invested with a volition separate from, and often contrary to, the self (Woodward 1983: 55). If prolonged reflection – literal and figurative – may eventually resolve such feelings into recognition of the unitary self, the tragedy of Eden's case is that this never materializes. Instead, he purposes the clinical gaze and language of late-century "senescence" to understand himself; each unanticipated movement and action in his aged body is registered as "senile" (a "senile repetition" or "senile rage" [Wells 1896: 493, 495]), thereby reproducing a rhetoric of age determinism that denies him psychological independence. Eden seems to be overawed by hegemonic cultural constructions of old age; he willingly self-identifies with what Andrea Charise claims was the new form that "senility" took in fin-de-siècle Britain: "a complex insignia in which medicalized and aesthetic values are yoked to visions of decline" (2020: 103). "Ruin" is therefore an operative word for him to use – a visual signifier of a fall from normative function, with no prospect of futurity; old age, for Eden, is purely a past-oriented state. Hence, even before it is revealed that "Eden" (Elvesham in that young man's erstwhile body) has died in a traffic accident, a foreclosure of regenerative possibilities has already occurred. The prospect of restoring or enhancing bodily energies has been monopolized by Elvesham via transfusion, leaving Eden with only the more pessimistic potentials that populated the fin-de-siècle imaginary: degeneration, entropy, and loss.

3 Conclusion

"Elvesham" ends with its prematurely aged protagonist penning a powerful statement about fatalism and depleted energies: "I tire of writing" (Wells 1896: 496). It marks a personal loss of youth through an exploitative exchange, but it also gestures to an anxiety about a more generalized loss of youthful opportunities and energies to the rapacious demands of an aged cohort. This same concern for intergenerational equity proliferates Braddon's "Ducayne". Both short stories utilize blood transfusion – in more and less figurative forms – to pose questions of sympathy, obligation, finance, and power as they appear in and structure relations between the young and old. Neither fields a single, homogeneous picture of old age and its relationship to youth; instead, each draws upon and complicates the repertoire of culturally-resonant ideas about that life stage that were circulating in fin-de-siècle Britain. That repertoire had already been shaped by those other, earlier examples of transfusive rejuvenescence fiction treated here: Baring-Gould's "Margery of Quether", Dowling's "Blood is Thicker than Water", and Milne's "The Man Who Grew Young Again". When Braddon labels "Ducayne" a "story of transfusion" in her discussion of *Dracula*, she could hardly have been incognizant of these and other precursors.

The indeterminate ending of "Ducayne" and the pessimistic finality of "Elvesham" each, in their own way, respond to the fact that by the 1890s, in Britain and elsewhere – and the inconclusive report of the Royal Commission exemplified this – the problem of provision for old age seemed intractable. How were "the aged poor" to be provided for? By whom? Would doing so denude future generations of the opportunities experienced by their forebears, or was an equitable solution possible? Similar questions confront the present-day with renewed force, gripped as it is by "apocalyptic demography" (Cruikshank qtd. in Charise 2020: 144) around a global aging population – worrying presentiments about the socioeconomic effects of extended lifespans; the fin-de-siècle concern for "burdensome old age" in new guises. Such anxieties, as Stephen Katz observes, are part "bio-demographic reality", part "social construction" (2014: 18). To better understand them, it requires us to further examine the conditions in which they originated; the genres and modes in which they found expression; and the rhetorical strategies deployed to contest and confirm them. Transfusive rejuvenescence fiction must be recognized as a crucial, but as-yet underexamined, place from which insights into the history of this most-pressing of contemporary issues can begin to be uncovered.

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