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Guest Edited by Janine Hatter and Helena Ifill

“not men’s playthings and slaves”: Popular Fiction, Gender Inequality, and Women’s Education in Alice Mangold Diehl’s *Dr. Paull’s Theory* (1893)

By [Erin Louttit](#), Independent Scholar

<1>Alice Mangold Diehl’s twenty-first-century obscurity masks the life and art of a fascinating novelist, journalist, biographer, musician, teacher and advocate for women’s education. Her support for increased gender equality, most notably in the fields of education and employment, found candid expression in her memoirs. These beliefs were also evident in her popular fiction. Mangold Diehl’s novels confront issues of gender inequality directly, from the sexual double standard as depicted in *Entrapped* (1904) to the eponymous heroine’s lack of training for waged labor in *Eve Lester* (1882), and the disproportionate burden of responsibility for both the family honor and finances borne by the female protagonist of *A Man in Love* (1903). Many of her novels feature irresponsible male characters who create or exacerbate such situations, yet several of her male protagonists strive for, even if they do not always achieve, a redress of social and sexual wrongs and grievances. A number of these recurring themes are evident in her novel *Dr. Paull’s Theory* (1893), a text with which she struggled greatly during the writing process. This work combines the realist theme of courtship with the supernatural plot device of reincarnation and depicts one earthly life of its male protagonist and two physical lives of its female protagonist’s soul. Despite the novel’s use of the paranormal, it treats highly pertinent, realistic issues of equality not only for women, but also for men. Written by an advocate for and practitioner of women’s education, *Dr. Paull’s Theory* provides a passionately argued fictional plea for greater educational, intellectual and economic equality between the sexes in the final years of the nineteenth century.

A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Author

<2>The future popular writer was born Alice Georgina Mangold on 28 February 1844, in Aveley, Essex (General Register Office, Birth).⁽¹⁾ Her cosmopolitan leanings were present from the

beginning of her life: her mother, Eliza Vidal, married the German musician Carl Mangold, whose family had been musicians in Hesse since the seventeenth century (“Mangold”).⁽²⁾ From her father she learned German, and it was through him that her early love of the performing arts began. In her autobiography she discusses her keen interest in a variety of art forms but describes literature as her abiding passion; she claims she thought in verse by the age of four and published her first book, a short collection of poems, at the age of eight (*True Story* 22, 63). Her plans to write were frustrated, however, when the family circumstances altered and the responsibility for providing the primary income devolved to her. She commenced intensive musical training under the tutelage of Henselt, a connection of her father’s, and debuted in Paris in 1861.⁽³⁾ She met Louis Diehl, a fellow musician, and married him in 1863 despite her mother’s opposition.⁽⁴⁾ It was her musical, rather than her literary, abilities that primarily contributed to the family income at this time in her life; she taught music at the North London Collegiate School and wrote only in her spare time. Her writing covered diverse subjects within “the whole spectrum of women’s literary production,” and by the time of her death included biography, autobiography, musical subjects, a popular history of philosophy, novels, and short stories (Thompson 13). Her various interests, talents, and connections put her in contact with many leading artists of the day. She knew Henry Irving and Florence Marryat, and she met many other creative talents including Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Frederic Leighton, and Bret Harte. Well connected as she was in literary, artistic, and musical circles, her networks also included educators and pioneers. She knew and revered Sophie Bryant and Frances Buss, the champions and practitioners of women’s education, and sympathized fully with their goals.

<3>These beliefs in women’s advancement shaped her own life, her expectations for her daughters and, ultimately, her message to her readership. In her autobiography, Mangold Diehl stresses how “deeply interested” she was “in all schemes to render females women, instead of dolls” and hints at the hopes she held for her daughters, explicitly stating her desire that “at least one of my three daughters” would “have laudable ambitions in the direction of some sort of unselfish work” (*True Story* 301). Her interests extended well beyond her own children. She worked as a “pianoforte teacher”, mentioning the fact with particular pride, as she held the post at “the first High School for Girls in England, founded by Miss Frances Mary Buss” (*True Story* 271-172). Buss’s work involved the formalization and professionalization of teacher training and the improved general and practical education of girls and young women. She founded the North London Collegiate School for Ladies and was headmistress for more than forty years, and also involved herself deeply in questions of women’s university education and other reform movements (“Buss”).⁽⁵⁾ Buss’s system benefitted not only her students but also her instructors; as has been noted, “[s]he never forgot the good of the teacher in her anxiety about the pupil” (Holmes 13). Mangold Diehl found that “[m]usical classwork was greatly to my taste,” but, she affirmed, the appointment offered much more than an income:

With all my heart I had admired the school, its object, its head, and the public spirit with which the great woman who was the pioneer of a higher-class moral, mental, and physical education than it had hitherto fallen to the lot of young girls to receive, had sunk personal gains to further her noble scheme. (*True Story* 272)(6)

This deep respect for the advances in women's education extended to the practical when Mangold Diehl accompanied Sophie Bryant and Frances Buss, at Buss's invitation, to visit Newnham and Girton at Cambridge. Her memoirs enthusiastically describe educated women's achievements generally and Bryant's accomplishments specifically, creating a call to arms for other talented women. "All women," Mangold Diehl proclaimed, "should worship the very name of Sophie Bryant, for she has hoisted the flag of equality with envied man, in man's hitherto unchallenged supremacy—that of the mind and brain!" (*True Story* 303) It was Bryant's brain, extolled as "equal to that of any of the greatest of men," that Mangold Diehl praised (302). While she had many kind words for Bryant's personality, and Mangold Diehl, by her own account, admired a strong work ethic in any individual, it was the simultaneous intellectual and gender struggles that she specifically commended.

<4>This admiration for intellectual advancement appears in Mangold Diehl's fiction. Although the heroines of her romances do not possess a Doctorate of Science or lead schools for young women as did Bryant and Buss, and are not "Oxbridge trained" like so many of their sisters in New Woman novels, their responses to the difficulties in which they find themselves often show them to be courageous, hardworking, and morally superior to those around them (Cunningham 46). Their education, or, all too frequently, lack thereof, often contributes to the plot as well as to their characterization by highlighting the difficulty of finding suitable employment, despite their willingness to work. In one novel in particular, however, the gulf between impractical upper-class education and restrictive gender roles and an education that would allow greater mental development is fully explored. Mangold Diehl's impassioned advocacy of the "great, I may say, national movement to make of women not men's playthings and slaves, but human beings, possessing, besides a heart, a mind and soul" was subtly and carefully expressed in *Dr. Paull's Theory* (*True Story* 301). It is precisely these qualities—the mind and the soul—that shape the novel and which highlight, through a fictional medium, gender-based hypocrisy and the urgent and necessary act of educational reform.

Dr. Paull's Theory's Troubled Origin

<5>Mangold Diehl's not insignificant number of published works was closely allied to her imaginative talents. Throughout her autobiography she describes herself as a writer above all else, relating the pleasure gained from her literary pursuits, and writing despite, as well as due to, adversity.(7) She stresses her precocity and her lifelong passion for writing in all its forms, and describes in detail the way in which her fictional stories came to her. Most of her stories,

she claimed, “flash into my mind complete, full-born,” leaving only the process of transcribing what already exists in its entirety (*True Story* 344). The “after-writing,” she stated, “is like copying a picture which is visible to oneself alone” (*True Story* 285).

<6>In spite of her considerable artistic gift, what she referred to as the “fiction-faculty” could fail her (*True Story* 345). She asserted that the “partial privation” of her usual ability to see, fully formed, all of her characters’ actions and motivations occurred but once, and that was when writing *Dr. Paull’s Theory* (*True Story* 345). Writing fifteen years later, she still recalled the dismay with which she confronted the story: “I would sit down to my work, each day, expecting my *dramatis personae* as usual. But, what did I see? A blank! It was as if I were seated in the auditorium to witness a play—but the curtain never rose” (*True Story* 345). Her problems with the novel’s composition stand out the more as she mentions the difficulty she faced with *Dr. Paull’s Theory* more than once in an autobiography that omits or elides reference to the greater proportion of her published work. Calling the novel “the most troublesome piece of writing I have ever written ‘Finis’ to,” she records that she “wrote and rewrote” the work four times (*True Story* 335). As emphatically recalled as it is, the novel’s challenging genesis, recounted in such unflattering terms, reveals only part of its history.

<7>Just as its unusual process of writing and rewriting set this novel apart for Mangold Diehl, so too did its dedication. Far from being disregarded as soon as completed, as might be expected from a prolific author finishing a particularly testing piece of writing, the work is dedicated to her close friend Henry Irving. She valued her friendship with Irving immensely, commemorating the “extraordinary man and wonderful actor” who she knew for more than twenty years (*True Story* 341, 295). This personal, as well as professional, appreciation had existed for a decade by the time of the publication of *Dr. Paull’s Theory*, and Mangold Diehl had had quite sufficient time to dedicate any number of her other novels to Irving had she so chosen. Instead, it was this “most troublesome piece of writing” that she elected to dedicate to a fellow craftsman, suggesting a more complex view of the novel than her superficially dismissive comments might seem to suggest (*True Story* 335). The apparent personal significance evident in the dedication, combined with Mangold Diehl’s account of its unique mode of creation, gives this “transmigration story” a certain prominence within her body of work (*True Story* 335). This spiritual and unusual love story carefully challenges many of the social conventions it depicts, creating a fascinating study of relations between the sexes and a plea for improved female education and gender equality.

***Dr. Paull’s Theory* and Gender Inequality across Generations**

<8>*Dr. Paull’s Theory* received mixed reviews upon its publication, but not hostile criticism. Even the reviewers who expressed reservations—most commonly in relation to the theme of reincarnation—acknowledged the “cleverness and originality,” the “freshness,” and the

“success” of Mangold Diehl’s treatment of the occult in a popular romance (*Manchester Courier* 5; *Morning Post* 6; *Western Daily Press* 3). One laudatory reviewer particularly noted that the novel “makes its readers think” and praised Mangold Diehl’s past work for its “insight” (*Graphic* April 384). These generally positive remarks articulate the appeal of a novel that is no longer widely read or studied. Given the relative obscurity of both *Dr. Paull’s Theory* and Mangold Diehl’s own life and body of work, a full plot summary will be useful in understanding precisely how Mangold Diehl combines such seemingly disparate themes within the novel. Hugh Paull, the hero, is training as a doctor in London when he treats Sir Roderick Pym after an accident. Feeling himself drawn to Pym by a strange but indistinct affinity, Paull visits Pym’s country residence after the older man’s recovery, there meeting and falling in love with Pym’s daughter, Lilia, who secretly reciprocates. Although he does not wish to acknowledge the fact, Paull’s unconfessed love distracts him from his work. Paull’s private and professional lives intersect once more when he learns that a dying patient’s condition resulted from her seduction and abandonment by Lilia’s cousin, Captain Roderick Pym, who had recently proposed marriage to Lilia. Paull conceals the scandal but in the process makes an enemy of Captain Pym.

<9>Captain Pym is further enraged when, having been Sir Roderick’s supposed heir, Sir Roderick dies leaving everything to Paull provided that Paull and Lilia marry. The couple wed after Paull successfully completes his medical exams, but their happiness is short-lived. Having underestimated the professional cost of domesticity, Paull grows frustrated, while Lilia becomes physically and emotionally weaker in Paull’s absence. She dies shortly after giving birth to their son Ralph, and Paull, who rashly promised to take his own life after her death so that their disembodied souls could be united, is narrowly prevented from suicide. Nineteen years later, Paull meets Mercedes, a beautiful Spanish noblewoman, who he comes to believe is the reincarnation of Lilia. Their spiritual connection is willfully misunderstood by their enemies, including Captain, now Colonel, Pym, who forces their separation. In the years of trial since Lilia’s death, both Paull and Lilia/Mercedes have matured, and they part content in the anticipation of their reunion in another and better world.

<10>If the plot bespeaks a traditional love story encapsulated in a non-traditional framework, the depiction of the protagonists reveals a great deal about gender issues. Mangold Diehl’s novel provides a balanced portrait. *Dr. Paull’s Theory* emphasizes female intellectual development, connecting it to spiritual and emotional advancement. Just as significantly, the novel also illustrates the emotional and professional cost to men when women’s education is inadequate. The narrative highlights these issues as persistent problems that require redress, as their ill effects mar Paull’s life and, disproportionately affecting the female partner, have a similarly negative effect on both Lilia’s and Mercedes’s lives. The plot, alternating between romance and tragedy, highlights the impossibility of a successful companionate marriage

between two people who love each other when the woman's intellect has been neglected or stunted, and this formative mistreatment has lifelong consequences for others as well.

<11>Lilia's unsuitability for adult life begins long before she meets Paull. Raised by her father, a confirmed misanthrope, her education has been limited in numerous ways. She has, above all, unquestioningly absorbed some of her father's prejudices. These prejudices are most noticeable in regard to women, who, she informs Paull, her father despises so much that "he won't have their portraits about him" in the family home (33). While not fully sharing Pym's active malevolence towards mankind, she has assumed his hatred towards her mother and the belief that "[m]arriage means misery" (37). That Lilia's own convictions should be distorted is, the narrative suggests, but the natural result of her highly unusual upbringing. Pym's attitude towards Lilia evinces such warmth as he is capable of and, at the same time, blameworthy negligence. Her education is unsystematic and fails entirely to prepare her emotionally or mentally for adulthood and, crucially, for an independent, active, and useful life.

<12>The novel emphasizes that Lilia's education has not been wholly neglected. Paull observes and admires her capacity for learning a "great deal" independently, noting in particular her familiarity with Latin, Greek, and Italian, but also notes her complete ignorance of "the ordinary affairs of life" (36). This unworldliness is due in part to the physical as well as intellectual limitations imposed upon Lilia by her father. Pym, Lilia confesses to Paull, "despises the world, and would rather anything should happen than that I should go beyond the Pinewood," the Pym's home, and she accordingly views her secret wish to travel as "treason" (35).⁽⁸⁾ Paull is astonished at her father's control but, significantly, sympathizes with her position in a romantically distorted way, seeing her as similar to "a princess in a fairy-tale immured in a high tower," thereby infantilizing her from the beginning of their acquaintance and hinting at a patronizing and harmful view of their present and future relations (36). The extreme of Paull's idealization has its counterpart in Lilia's equally unrealistic self-abasement: there is no question of equality between the sexes. Lilia is only able to see her desires and ambitions as inferior in relation to others. She believes her father, and later her fiancé, "perfect," and reconciles her emotional crises by ascribing them to her own unworthiness as a daughter and wife (136). Lilia, the novel stresses, has internalized the expectations imposed upon her, as becomes manifest through the contrast between her diary entries and Paull's response upon learning the restrictions placed upon her.

<13>In living a secluded and stultifying existence, Lilia is suffering much the same fate as her mother suffered after marriage. Lilia's mother was, against her inclination, "immured" at Pinewood, Pym's home (87). Her brother-in-law's attempts to reduce her social isolation by befriending her led to her husband suspecting a liaison and planning vengeance for his imagined grievance against his brother and, later, his nephew. The novel depicts not only the

corrosive effects of Pym's misogynist attitude, but also its effects on more than one generation. Lilia's "wretchedly unhappy" mother is "imprisoned" by her husband, and is so miserable precisely because she is aware of greater possibilities and a wider sphere of action (110). Lilia, debarred even this knowledge of a wider world, experiences a growing sense of disquiet but is unable to define, to herself, to Paull, or to her diary, the origin of this unease. Both women were discontent with Pym's constraints, but this feeling originated with different sources. Whereas Lilia's mother had experienced a normal life to compare favorably to her virtual detention, Lilia, lacking even this experience, had only vague impulses and ideas derived from her fragmentary education. That both women suffer under such restraint, however, the novel emphasizes. It will further emphasize, too, how similar controlling behavior will make Mercedes's life an unhappy one, and how her naiveté negatively affects her life. That the story is pieced together slowly through several viewpoints perhaps makes more understated the bleak history it portrays. The cruel actions of a single individual, in this instance Pym's, negatively affect the life of his wife, his daughter, and his daughter reincarnated. First her mother, and then Lilia, become one man's "playthings and slaves," and the novel's subsequent events illustrate the working out of these ill effects during and beyond Lilia's lifetime (*True Story* 301).

Unequal Marriage, Ignorance, and Education

<14>The local clergyman's wife believes Lilia is "really not fit to face the world," and Lilia herself inadvertently confirms this statement (55). Her marriage to Paull is tested, not by lessening love, but by mutually incompatible demands arising from their unequal expectations. Lilia has assumed that they will live at the Pinewood in a sort of perpetual courtship; Paull assumes his career in London will resume and resents the check to his ambitions. Though Paull initially disbelieves reports of Lilia's increasing weakness, Lilia grows startlingly ill during his professional absences and rumors spread that Paull mistreats the woman who becomes a "spectre of a wife, instead of the living, breathing entity I had married" (141). Lilia is unable to move away from the only home she has known, and her health deteriorates. Having passed her life with her father, and marrying six months after being orphaned, she is physically unable to thrive without the physical presence of either her father or her husband. After lacking direction earlier in her life, she cannot plan simple actions, far less her future life. Her father dictated the terms of her marriage, but of anything beyond the plain fact of the marriage, or of the practicalities of her husband's career, she is ignorant. She commences studies that may render her more useful to her husband's career, but, crucially, does not pursue them for the betterment of her own mind or the possible help they might bring to others. Paull notes that she wishes to help him "in minor matters if called upon," and the designation of the "minor" status is not accidental (142). As a child, Mangold Diehl claimed to have studied medical works so that she might "understand my grandfather's work" (*True Story* 34).⁽⁹⁾ She does not indicate

that she foresaw any possibility of a caring profession, but she also does not state that she found these studies onerous, valueless, or inappropriate for her sex. This is not to suggest that Lilia is modelled on Mangold Diehl's own experiences. Rather, it is to highlight the contrast between Mangold Diehl's own recollections, which emphasize the pursuit of knowledge, and the fictional character whose studies in similar branches of learning begin only in relation to her husband's career and which, crucially, are never practically employed.

<15>Lilia's inability to direct her efforts to valuable ends results from her upbringing, it is suggested, but the novel goes further by subtly underlining her continued state of immaturity. Her arrested intellectual growth is referred to in descriptions of her that consistently and repeatedly infantilize her. She is referred to by numerous characters as a child, with only some of these references in connection to her age. During their first meeting alone, Paull notes the physically youthful "child eyes" and "infantine smile" as well as the "childish confidences" he receives (31, 34). While such descriptions might be accurate, or reflect Paull's views on feminine ideals, the quiet but emphatic characterization of Lilia as child-like is repeated so frequently, and by so many characters, that it constitutes one of the primary elements of her character, and discreetly insists upon the adverse effects of such a stunted life.

<16>If Lilia's upbringing has prepared her for nothing, the negative consequences of her (lack of) early training extend beyond her own life. Far from aiding her husband, as she hoped to do, the necessity of his presence for her physical health impedes his professional development and damages their relationship. This injurious effect begins before their marriage, when Paull finds that he cannot "concentrate" upon his patients and his medical training seems "a dream," and becomes exacerbated when, after their marriage, his desire to practice is impeded not by the thought of Lilia, but by Lilia herself (26). The difference is subtle, but suggests a negative shift from the fantasies of idealized love to the realities of marriage—precisely the same difficulty of which he accuses Lilia. Paull's behavior and professed respect for hard work are incompatible with his expectations for his wife and the standard to which he himself inadvertently slips. Paull fails to recognize the inconsistency between his expectations of marriage and the ideal gender roles that he embraces. He does not adopt and perpetuate these roles unthinkingly, as his defense of women against Sir Roderick's misogynistic statements evidences. Nonetheless, Paull replicates, or wishes to replicate, in his own marriage the role he saw his mother perform as his father's "helpmeet" rather than "companion," and he fully expects his sisters to fulfil a similar role in their lives to their "soft, gentle" mother (16).

<17>Lilia embodies these values at their most extreme. She is no "companion" to her husband, and her failure to sustain him originates in her failure to sustain herself as an independent entity. Paull had said of his parents' relationship that his father's was "not a mind to require a second self" (16). Lilia's behavior subverts both the expectations her father had for women and

the feminine ideal in which her husband believes. Her husband unwittingly identifies part of the problem when he writes that “she is not in love with *me*, but with her love for me” (139). Lilia’s failure to prepare for her position as Paull’s wife, due entirely to her unfocused upbringing, leads her to perform a highly exaggerated role of a clinging, dependent wife.

<18>The likelihood of an unequal relationship was evident before their marriage. Immediately after her father’s death, Lilia expressed her loss of identity explicitly, describing it as a form of absorption. Thinking of her prospective marriage to Paull, Lilia reflects on the potential for change, not in her own life, but in relation to others. Her notebook expresses her concerns that, in her transition from her father’s daughter to her new relation to Paull, “I shall not be your Lilia anymore, but a little piece of another identity” (124). Tellingly, she writes of the prospective marriage, forced upon her on her father’s deathbed, as “chains” and describes herself as “a chained beast” (123). Her own identity, when written of at all, is negatively portrayed, displaying an exaggerated form of what the Victorian critic, John Ruskin, called marital “self-renunciation” (100). She thus conceptualizes the transition of marriage wholly as one from daughter to wife, not as one that affects an independent sense of self.

<19>The lack of independence and resource retards Lilia’s development and her desire for development. Through having seen herself exclusively as a daughter, and having been taught to abhor marriage, Lilia cannot comprehend the transition to adulthood, work, and marriage. Mangold Diehl is careful to portray a sympathetic female protagonist, but one who cannot help but display unsympathetic traits in her words and actions. As the doctor who visits her says, “I think her one of the sweetest women alive, but a perfect baby” (144). She is indeed perfectly sweet and womanly, but represents a near caricature of a feminine ideal that Paull unquestioningly cherishes.

<20>Lilia herself is aware of these tendencies and of her own potential shortcomings. She is not depicted as falsely modest, but as genuinely overwhelmed by the demands, first upon a daughter, then upon a wife. Lilia realizes that her prospective marriage with Paull will prove incompatible, and as she and Paull come to an understanding, she begs him to “save yourself from me!” warning him of what awaits him if they marry: “I cannot love you unselfishly. I should be a burden to you; you would get to hate me” (137). At the same time that Lilia proves incapable of fulfilling her husband’s unrealistic expectations, she demonstrates a degree of awareness of both her own shortcomings and her husband’s idealized image of her, the latter of which she strongly refutes. In this, she evinces greater knowledge than her husband, who unthinkingly, and ominously, assumes that they “shall be happy in life and death” (137). It is only after their marriage that Paull begins to study Lilia’s character. His experiences compel him to reconsider his former easy assumptions about marriage, although he persists in seeing his relationship as an adjunct to his profession, not as a defining part of his identity.

<21>While the text indicates Lilia's overreliance on, and unhealthy attitudes toward, constant blissful companionship, there are also careful suggestions that Paull's attitude to work, generally commendable though it may be, is not blameless for the state of the difficult relationship. His decision to leave Lilia, whether during their engagement to complete his training or during their marriage to resume his practice, is pragmatic, but his attitude and behavior are harsh.

<22>He states that "[l]ife is not a poem in so many cantos. It is work; hard, dry, but honest work," a sentiment that strongly resembles his creator's view that "[t]here is only one panacea for all the miseries of life—WORK" (*Dr. Paull's*, 140; *True Story* 3). He seems, nonetheless, incapable of tempering his speech to his wife who grows "deadly pale, and looked at me as if at the very least I had threatened to kill her" (140). While these scenes reflect Lilia's unsuitability for marriage, they also indicate Paull's similarly, but more subtly conveyed position as a man who is unready for marriage and its attendant responsibilities. To put it another way, if Lilia has constructed fantasies of what marriage is, so too has her husband. Both come to the marriage unprepared, but in different ways that would have been forestalled had their respective education and upbringing been more equal.

<23>Paull ignores Lilia's advice that she would become "a burden" to him, and in doing so acts less sensibly than his future wife. Paull's decision to disregard Lilia's forewarning subtly aligns his views with Sir Roderick's idea of women as silly; Paull's actions highlight, not the courtship of a rational intellectual man, but the emotional response of a man so gripped by love that he cannot accurately assess the compatibility of the two lovers (137).⁽¹⁰⁾ Although Lilia's educational deficiencies harm the couple's chances of happiness before they even meet, the novel represents plainly the obstacles to contentment that arise from their own fixed notions of gender roles and conservative ideas of marriage. Paull himself confirms his rashness in marrying without considering Lilia's caution. After their marriage, Lilia observes ivy living on oak when they are out walking and likens the closeness of the plants to their marriage. It is Paull who connects the ivy "choking the life out of the oak" to the damage he believes Lilia is doing, not only to his professional life, but also to him (145). At the time of their courtship, Paull was quite willing to risk such possible smothering, yet his attitude alters significantly after a few months of marriage. The differences in how each views the scene, and how Paull reflects upon it later, develop the detrimental effect of Lilia's overpowering emotions but, more subtly, demonstrate Paull's shifting expectations and experience of an unequal marriage.

<24>Their relationship is not a clear case of female victimization, nor is it a question of male aggression or misunderstanding, though elements of both are evident. Rather, the novel is careful to demonstrate how, despite loving each other, Lilia and Paull are unable to live together happily due to the unrealistic gender roles in which both have been raised and that

they bring to their marriage. If Lilia's educational, and therefore intellectual and professional, inferiority damages her life and her marriage, then Paull's expectations of a dutiful spouse and joyful mother likewise injure his personal and professional lives. The parties do not suffer equally, but that they do both suffer from their respective restricted gendered expectations is clear.

Gendered Domestic Tragedy as Grand Tragedy

<25>That their love would prove destructive had been suggested before they met. Both Lilia's eventual death and Paull's melancholy afterlife—as well as the complexity of their emotional natures—are hinted at in the epithet which Sir Roderick bestows upon Paull when the latter is treating him. Sir Roderick calls the younger man Hamlet for his studious air and black clothes, worn in mourning for his mother. The reference is not accidental, and, echoed throughout the novel, reimagines some of the betrayal and cruelty of the play. Pym takes Paull for “a vision of Hamlet,” but the likeness between Hamlet's character and Paull's is suggested before Pym makes the connection explicit (10). Paull's character is reflective to the point of gloominess. He possesses “the habit of self-interrogation” and is “desperately in earnest,” so much so that he adopts Hamlet's “To thine own self be true [...] Thou canst not then be false to any man” as a guiding ideal (Shakespeare *Ham.* 1.3.78-80). While this melancholy nature is not his most prominent character trait early in the novel, it is evident to others, including his late mother, whom it concerns. This subdued seriousness also leads Paull, like his namesake, to irresolution at various times in the plot. That the two characters share numerous similarities is, therefore, subtly and frequently conveyed. The likeness is not one of Sir Roderick's fancies, a passing resemblance or a hallucination after the shock of an accident. Paull's resemblance to Hamlet is as mental as it is physical.

<26>Paull's pessimism in the earlier stages of the novel, and his connection to Hamlet, are most suggestively made in relation to his near-suicide. The scene recalls Hamlet's famous speech, but not insistently or obtrusively. Hamlet's musings undergo a change in the later scene. Paull's dismay at Lilia's approaching death and her blasphemous desire that Paull commit suicide give Paull some cause for reflection. His reflections, however, fail to stop his intended purpose. He feels “absolutely apathetic ... as a body ... without its soul” (153). His temperament proves stronger than his religious belief, and highlights his attachment to his wife even as it portrays unambiguously the dangers, both physical and spiritual, that such unthinking passion represents.

<27>Although Paull's mirroring of Hamlet recurs in the novel, his is not the only character to echo Shakespeare's creations. Sir Roderick's meddling in the lives of the young couple also echoes Polonius's ill-fated attempts to involve himself in Hamlet's affairs and displays as little regard for his daughter as does Shakespeare's character. Paull is not so perceptive as his

namesake, for, while aware that Sir Roderick persistently and “purposely threw us together,” Paull “can not imagine” the older man’s “motive” for doing so (34). Sir Roderick explains to Paull on his deathbed that “I wanted you for Lilia” and demands an immediate marriage between his daughter and his doctor (96). Again, as in Shakespeare, these actions, motivated by an all-consuming desire for revenge—in this instance on Sir Roderick’s brother and nephew—have far greater repercussions than their instigator conceives. Pym’s outrageous attempts to control his power and money incense his brother (whose malicious actions later cause Lilia’s premature labor), disappoint and enrage his nephew and assumed heir, embarrass Paull, and humiliate Lilia. Sir Roderick’s death constitutes a miniature tragedy, but, in a grander, more theatrical sense, it also sets in motion the events, desires for revenge, and destruction of family bonds that form the other tragedies of the novel.

<28>If Paull and Sir Roderick find their counterparts in *Hamlet*, so too does Lilia. Her connection to Ophelia reinforces the nature of her tragedy and the greater structures of power and control that cause her unhappiness and, ultimately, her early death. Her link to Ophelia is made explicit, and is introduced in relation to Paull’s similar link to Hamlet. This connection is further made by Sir Roderick at a time when he intends, unknown to both Lilia and Paull, to manipulate the lives of the two younger people. Lilia’s introduction to Paull is as Hamlet; her knowledge of the husband her father intends for her is preconditioned through the nickname that had already been bestowed on the doctor. Lilia, like those around her, does not understand the tragedy; for all of the resonances between themselves and the characters they resemble, and whose names and mottos they share, the characters of *Dr. Paull’s Theory* do not recognize their own roles in their misfortunes.

Gendered History Repeating Itself

<29>The conception of these characters as foredoomed is heightened by the return of Lilia’s soul in the body of Mercedes. The way that Mangold Diehl portrays the soul’s return continues some of the themes, most notably female education, which dominate the earlier part of the narrative. The life Mercedes lives demonstrates amply the continuation of the same restrictions that caused so much unhappiness to Lilia during her life, and that ultimately proved responsible for her death. The only consolation that Mercedes possesses is faith, and, in this, Mangold Diehl allows her heroine a spiritual victory while not negating the unsatisfactory social, gender, and moral ramifications of the plot. Mangold Diehl here demonstrates a complicated attitude towards religion in her fiction, though in her private life she was wholly clear about her own convictions, as well as the spiritual lives of her family members.

<30>The echoes of *Hamlet*, and specifically and subtly Ophelia’s tragic death, support but do not overwhelm the overall plot. They hint at events to come, but the novel’s focus remains, throughout the double lives of its female protagonist, on the personal tragedy that results from

her individual situation. That reincarnation features so strongly highlights, rather than diminishes, the unique quality of Lilia's and Mercedes's sorrows. Lilia's many misfortunes might conceivably be said to arise from her upbringing and her father's broadly misanthropic and particularly misogynistic views. By having Lilia's soul return, however, to a life as restricted, if not more so, than its previous incarnation, Mangold Diehl emphasizes the generalized gender inequality that permeates multiple levels of society rather than the unequal personal relationships of a single family in a domestic novel. Lilia's stunted intellectual and emotional upbringing was not solely the unique and misguided result of her father's peculiar prejudices, but rather symptomatic of a wider, cultural trend that denies women a suitable education, sufficient occupation, including mental occupation, and the opportunity to choose their future husband in such a way as to ensure the happiness of both partners. While the circumstances differ, Lilia and Mercedes experience remarkably similar—unfavorable—life events.

<31>If Mangold Diehl paints a picture that is dark and seemingly unforgiving, there is a key shift between Lilia's short life and Mercedes's chance to atone for her soul's earlier transgressions. The primary difference between the two women is that Mercedes takes solace for her griefs in her religion. Lilia had earlier attended church in spite of her father's opposition to organized religion, but when bereaved had renounced God. Paull's faith had not wavered and he experienced misgivings regarding his wife's irreligious attitude, but he did not press her, only subsequently noting "often I reproached myself, that I had not taken her atheism more seriously" (245). At the time of her death, Lilia is entirely without conviction. Her request (for Paull's suicide) makes her state quite clear, but Mangold Diehl goes further. When Paull acquiesces, Lilia admits "[n]ow I don't hate this God of yours so much" (153). The Lilia who invited Paull to church before they were engaged, becomes the Lilia who refers to "this God of yours" (153). Bereft of her father, and without a spiritual or intellectual bedrock, Lilia becomes entirely incapable of sustaining herself. What is more, she causes actual harm to her husband, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Lilia's rebirth gives her some opportunity to atone for the errors of her life. Mercedes's faith is such that her endurance of suffering, while necessary for a life with her husband, means that she rises above his petty, earthly level.

<32>In Mangold Diehl's personal life, she became a staunch Catholic, and she gives her heroine in *Dr. Paull's Theory* the same faith as she professed. This unshakeable religious belief permits Mercedes to experience support that she did not fully have as Lilia. Although suggestive, the theological nuances of Mangold Diehl's heroines, worthy of study in themselves, serve as a background for the broader framework depicted in the novel. Here, Mangold Diehl can be said to present her own personal convictions on two counts. The novel illustrates the benefits of a broader education and the intellectual resources that such an education can bestow upon its recipient, as Mercedes's convent education is superior to Lilia's insufficient education. In addition to their educational backgrounds, however, the primary difficulty that both women

confront is their gender and the personal and social positions in which their gender places them. Lilia proved unequal to the challenge. Mercedes, with stronger religious faith, is capable of sustaining herself and suffering. Neither, however, is able to transcend the limits imposed upon them through their birth and their upbringing.

<33>Mercedes's convictions enable her to redeem both her own soul and Paull's. What her faith conspicuously fails to do, however, is shelter her from the social evils to which she is subjected. Her convent education, while ministering faithfully to her spiritual wellbeing, leaves her as naïve and unprotected as she was during her life as Lilia. Both women, not fully educated and not familiar with the ways of the world, are shown to be unable to cope with the positions into which they are thrust by misogynistic, neglectful, or vengeful men. Mercedes fares better than Lilia, as her faith saves her soul, but it manifestly fails to save her happiness, her social and financial position, or her reputation. In both lives, Lilia and Mercedes are not allowed to choose their marriage partner. In fact, Mangold Diehl subtly suggests that, in this regard, life becomes worse for the chastened soul of Lilia when she is reborn as Mercedes.

<34>This pessimistic view of women's position, ultimately, seems to be the most striking message in this love story by a popular novelist: these forms of social oppression do not change. If the theory of reincarnation is, for the purposes of the novel, accepted as fact, then the stark reality is that Lilia and Mercedes live the span of two lives on earth, during which time their lot does not improve. As daughters, as wives, and certainly as independent adults, their actions and even their emotions are constricted by the expectations of others. Even faith, though it ultimately redeems Mercedes's and Paull's souls, is powerless against the very social ills it confronts. In this world, the larger social and cultural forces at work hold sway. The temporal world is highly flawed. What is more, it was, and remains flawed. For all of Lilia's financial and social advantages, she cannot surmount the difficulties in which her sex and lack of education place her. What is more shocking, however, is the narrative's subtle but insistent point that her situation has not altered after another lifetime, as her rebirth is into a society that has not advanced in its treatment of wives and daughters. The supernatural element of the story allows Mangold Diehl to make a distinctly social point. *Dr. Paull's Theory*, written and rewritten as it was, offers readers a startling view of the costs of gender inequality for both sexes and subtly pleads for improved educational opportunities for women—all in the unassuming guise of a popular novel.

Endnotes

(1)Her memoirs record her date of birth as 25 February. The birth was registered by Mangold Diehl's mother, and the date of the birth certificate has been adopted here.(△)

(2) While Mangold Diehl's life and works demand reassessment from scholars of literature and music, her family's history, though outside the scope of this article, also includes many points of interest to class historians and students of transnationalism. As she related it, her family background was remarkably global, reaching across Europe to the Caribbean, and her ancestors, though not rich, were prosperous. By her lifetime, however, the family fortunes had altered. In Mangold Diehl's autobiography she is quick to mention that her father gave lessons to Queen Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent, as well as the Duchess of Cambridge and Princess Mary of Cambridge. At the same time that Diehl drops the names of particular royal patrons, she relentlessly records the general falling off of private pupils and what would now be called her parents' downward mobility (*True Story* 17-21, 184).^(^)

(3) A carte-de-visite photograph of her from about this time may be viewed at the website of the National Portrait Gallery, London:

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp86751/alice-mangold-diehl>.^(^)

(4) They married on 7 December 1863 (General Register Office, Marriage). He predeceased her by two years, passing away in 1910. She died at the age of 68, on 13 June 1912, with heart and liver disease as the recorded cause of death (General Register Office, Death, Louis Diehl; General Register Office, Death, Alice Mangold Diehl).^(^)

(5) One of Buss's biographers particularly stressed the high-minded vision Buss had for her profession; she wished "that teaching should cease to be a mere trade" to those who practised it, with "excellence of work, and not work's reward ... the object of ambition." As well as Buss's ennobling and professional approach, she was humane, giving her students "not merely the means of living, but also a life worth living" and guiding them towards "work worth the doing; work that enriched the world as well as the worker" (Ridley 91). Buss's inclusive vision should also be noted: the school "was intended to cater for girls from every level of the broad Victorian middle class" (Watson 14). For the happy and appreciative memories of former pupils, see Cross.^(^)

(6) Mangold Diehl's critical assessment of the state of female education has been supported by others. One scholar has noted that educators observed that "pupils came to school very badly prepared" for the new, more rigorous and expansive education (Roach 299). Buss's work was truly innovative. Although it would become influential, Buss's school in North London "created a prototype rather than even the beginning of a system" (Fletcher 13).^(^)

(7) Her passion for art in its many forms was combined with a strong work ethic and a sound business sense. Writing of *Elsie's Art Life*, Mangold Diehl's subsequent novel, one reviewer commended the work while nonetheless observing: "[t]he appearance of another new novel from the pen of Mrs. A. M. Diehl so soon after 'Dr. Paull's Theory' is rather rapid, even for these

times" (*Graphic* 632). The rate of writing, as well as the rate of selling completed manuscripts and the speed of publication, is discussed frankly by Mangold Diehl in her memoirs.(^)

(8)In portraying Lilia's extreme restrictions, Mangold Diehl offers a depiction seemingly at odds with the bicycling heroines of that other popular genre, the New Woman novel. Nonetheless, Lilia's confinement to the home and her explicit yearning for a form of "freedom, physical independence and sense of personal control" suggest a wish for the liberation others also desired (Wintle 66). Similarly, Lilia's constitutional and emotional weaknesses, in marked contrast to the "New Woman of popular fiction" who "was physically and mentally healthy," depict a very different kind of popular heroine but engage with many of the same themes that other writers explored at the same time (Willis 55).(^)

(9)This was her maternal grandfather, whose Jamaican birth, brief military career, and life in medicine she outlines in her autobiography. Her paternal grandfather died in an asylum before her parents' marriage; she speaks of him in relation to the family's history of mental illness but does not draw further on family recollections of his history (*True Story* 19).(^)

(10)In this, Paull resembles a more benign version of Andrew Quarles, the central villain of *Entrapped*, who disregards both logic and numerous warnings in pursuit of the woman he desires, with disastrous consequences for her. The later novel highlights different gender dynamics to those of *Dr. Paull's Theory*, but Mangold Diehl is careful in both novels to depict the emotional, irrational, selfish behavior of the male protagonists when wooing, and the personal tragedies that result from their actions.(^)

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