THE TROJAN NEUROBLAST

A Critical Evaluation of Carlo Abbate's
Adult Neurogenesis Theory of Alzheimer's Disease

Architecture, Evidence, Falsifiability, and the Productive Synthesis
with the Convergent Autophagic Collapse and Collapse Trilogy Frameworks

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Fawcett · Carulli · Diamond · Holtzman · Braak

an evaluation of the 2022 Oskar Fischer Prize gold-tier entry (submission Nº 76, IRCCS Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi)

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A Doctoral-Standard Evaluation Paper in the Oskar Fischer Prize Corpus

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Abstract

Dr. Carlo Abbate's Adult Neurogenesis Theory of Alzheimer's Disease, a 2022 Oskar Fischer Prize gold-tier entry from the IRCCS Fondazione Don Carlo Gnocchi, advances a structurally unusual claim about the origin and spatial topography of Alzheimer pathology. The theory holds that the disease does not initiate in mature cortical neurons but in the neural stem cells of the two canonical adult neurogenic niches — the subgranular zone of the hippocampal dentate gyrus and the ventricular-subventricular zone of the lateral ventricles — and that the pathological tau and amyloid signatures of the disease emerge by way of two largely independent processes whose interaction is mediated by chronic microglial activation. In Abbate's model, the natural three-repeat tau isoform expressed by immature neuroblasts during their developmental migration, together with the natural hyperphosphorylation of that tau by glycogen synthase kinase three-beta that is required to maintain cytoskeletal plasticity, supplies the biochemical substrate from which pathological tau aggregation emerges; amyloid-beta-driven chronic microglial activation, by polarizing parenchymal microglia toward an interleukin-ten and prostaglandin-E2-dominated pro-neurogenic secretory profile, forces reactive hyper-proliferation of the niche stem cell pool; the resulting cohort of stressed neuroblasts, deviated from their canonical migratory pathways by chemoattractants released from amyloid-activated cortical microglia, undertakes long-distance and physically demanding migration through the inhibitory adult parenchyma; and the metabolic and mechanical stress of that migration tips the physiological hyperphosphorylation of three-repeat tau past the aggregation threshold, with the migrating neuroblast itself serving as a cellular vector — a Trojan horse, in the metaphor that organizes the model — by which tau seeds are delivered to distant cortical destinations. The model explains the topographic heterogeneity of early-onset Alzheimer's disease as the consequence of different migratory routes from the ventricular-subventricular niche to different cortical regions, links the late-onset form to the short hippocampal migration from the subgranular zone, and extends to primary age-related tauopathy and chronic traumatic encephalopathy as related but distinct configurations of the same migratory mechanism. This paper conducts a sustained critical evaluation of the theory at doctoral standard. We faithfully reconstruct the argument, decompose it into its layered claims, and grade each claim against the available evidence; we identify the load-bearing premises whose failure would dissolve the model and assess each against the primary literature; we situate the model with respect to the Nixon Convergent Autophagic Collapse hypothesis that supplies the cellular-death mechanism Abbate leaves underspecified, with respect to the perineuronal-net and extracellular-matrix biology that determines whether the proposed migrations are physically possible in the adult human brain, and with respect to the Organic Network Synthesis Collapse Trilogy that treats adult hippocampal neurogenesis as a first-principles substrate of hippocampal pathogenesis; we derive falsifiable predictions in the therapeutic, imaging, histological, and comparative-disease registers; and we close with an assessment of the theory's position in the broader theoretical landscape of late-onset Alzheimer's

research. The verdict is that Abbate's theory is among the most conceptually courageous entries in the Fischer prize corpus and possesses two genuinely novel theoretical contributions — the reframing of selective vulnerability as a migratory routing phenomenon and the identification of the migrating neuroblast as a candidate disease vector — but that the load-bearing premise of organized long-distance V-SVZ-to-cortex neuroblast migration in the adult human brain is not supported by current evidence and is in significant tension with the established closure of the human rostral migratory stream after childhood; that the model under-specifies the trans-cellular tau transfer step on which its propagation claim depends; and that the model's most productive contribution is realized only when it is integrated as the macroscopic anatomical layer of a multi-scale account whose microscopic engine is supplied by the Nixon Convergent Autophagic Collapse framework, whose substrate is constrained by the perineuronal-net and adult-extracellular-matrix biology, and whose cellular accounting is carried out under the Collapse Trilogy's treatment of the dentate lineage. The theory survives as a brilliant macro-routing hypothesis; it fails as a self-contained account of pathogenesis; and its most consequential clinical implication is a sharp falsifiable warning against the indiscriminate clinical deployment of pro-neurogenic pharmacological agents in patients with established amyloid pathology.

1. Introduction: Why This Hypothesis Deserves a Proper Hearing

1.1 The Amyloid Impasse and the Demand for Structurally Different Theories

The pursuit of a definitive causal mechanism for Alzheimer's disease has, over the four decades since the cloning of the amyloid precursor protein and the identification of the autosomal-dominant mutations of presenilin one, presenilin two, and APP, been organized around the amyloid cascade hypothesis. The cascade's foundational claim — that the extracellular accumulation of amyloid-beta peptide initiates the pathological sequence, that intracellular tau hyperphosphorylation and neurofibrillary tangle formation are downstream consequences of that initial event, and that the neurodegeneration of the disease is the eventual product of an amyloid-driven cascade traversing multiple cellular and circuit substrates — has organized the field's research agenda, its therapeutic development priorities, and the allocation of approximately twenty billion dollars of public research funding and a substantially larger sum of pharmaceutical industry capital. The cascade's empirical defense rests principally on the genetic argument from the autosomal-dominant forms of the disease and on the temporal precedence of amyloid biomarker abnormality over tau biomarker abnormality in the longitudinal natural-history studies of which the Australian Imaging, Biomarkers, and Lifestyle study and the Dominantly Inherited Alzheimer's Network study are the principal sources.

The cascade's empirical difficulties, accumulated over the same four decades, are at this point not seriously disputed even by its most committed proponents. The clinical-pathological correlation between regional plaque burden and regional cognitive deficit is weak; the substantial fraction of cognitively normal elderly individuals who carry plaque burdens equivalent to those of clinically affected patients undermines the inference from plaque to clinical phenotype; the failure of every major anti-amyloid therapeutic program from the early secretase inhibitors through the recent monoclonal antibody program to produce clinically meaningful disease-modification commensurate with the demonstrated biomarker clearance has by 2026 reached a point at which serious researchers are willing to articulate publicly what was previously articulated only in private correspondence — that the cascade is, at minimum, structurally incomplete, and possibly fundamentally misordered. The lecanemab and donanemab outcomes have not changed this assessment in any material way; they have, in fact, sharpened it, because the demonstration that monoclonal-antibody-driven amyloid clearance produces modest cognitive deceleration at the cost of substantial amyloid-related imaging abnormalities and brain volume loss is most parsimoniously read as evidence that the late removal of extracellular amyloid does not reverse a disease whose causal engine has long since departed the amyloid stage.

The empirical impasse has, since approximately the middle of the previous decade, produced a category of theoretical proposals that the field has come to refer to, with varying degrees of approval, as paradigm-shifting hypotheses — hypotheses that decline to position themselves as refinements of the cascade and instead propose structurally different accounts of the disease's origin, propagation, and cellular substrate. The 2022 Oskar Fischer Prize competition, established

explicitly to solicit such hypotheses from the international research community, awarded its gold-tier prizes to a distinct set of such proposals: Ralph Nixon's Convergent Autophagic Collapse framework, locating the cellular-death mechanism in v-ATPase-mediated lysosomal acidification failure and the PANTHOS morphology; Roger Rosenberg's case for the systematic re-evaluation of the disease's syndromic heterogeneity; Greg Cole and Sally Frautschy's case for the lipidomic and inflammatory substrate of dementia; and, of central concern to the present paper, Carlo Abbate's Adult Neurogenesis Theory.

1.2 The Fischer Prize Mandate and the Status of Abbate in the Corpus

The Fischer Prize was named, deliberately, after the Czech psychiatrist who in 1907 published a description of senile dementia with neuritic plaques in the *Monatsschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie* in the same year that Alois Alzheimer published his account of the same condition in the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie*. Fischer's case series of sixteen patients was, by the assessment of much subsequent historiography, both more clinically detailed and more conceptually ambitious than Alzheimer's; the latter's institutional position at Kraepelin's Munich clinic, however, produced the eponymic outcome with which the field has had to contend. The prize's foundational instruction was that the field had been impoverished, by the early twenty-first century, of the conceptual courage with which Fischer himself had approached the disease, and that the explicit invitation of bold reconceptualizations of existing data was the prize's central purpose.

Within the prize corpus catalogued in the Organic Network Synthesis project under the cellular substrate cluster, Abbate occupies an unusual position. The Nixon entry advances a hypothesis at the intracellular biochemical scale and is constrained by direct ultrastructural and biochemical evidence from a long programmatic line of work culminating in the PANTHOS papers of the early 2020s. The Rosenberg entry advances a syndromic and epidemiological reconceptualization and is constrained by clinical phenomenology rather than by molecular mechanism. The Cole-Frautschy entry advances a lipidomic-inflammatory hypothesis at the systems-biology scale. Abbate's entry is the only one of the gold-tier hypotheses to advance a macroscopic anatomical-routing claim — a claim, that is, about where in the brain the disease originates and by what trajectory it travels — and it is the only one of the gold-tier hypotheses whose load-bearing premise concerns the biology of a cellular process, adult human neurogenesis, whose existence and quantitative parameters were themselves under active scientific dispute at the time of the prize award.

This combination of features — a macroscopic anatomical-routing claim, a load-bearing dependence on a contested cellular phenomenon, and a conceptual courage that the prize was explicitly established to reward — makes Abbate the most theoretically ambitious entry in the corpus and, simultaneously, the most evidentially vulnerable. The combination justifies a depth of critical evaluation greater than has been applied to other corpus entries. The present paper is the first such evaluation to apply doctoral-level critical standards to Abbate's argument in its entirety,

and is intended to serve both as the formal evaluation document for the IRCCS Don Carlo Gnocchi submission within the Organic Network Synthesis catalogue and as a standalone scholarly assessment in its own right.

1.3 The Productive Stakes of the Evaluation

The stakes of the evaluation are not merely academic, and the framing of the present paper as a critical evaluation rather than as a simple defense or rejection follows from this. If Abbate's theory is correct in its load-bearing premise — if migrating neuroblasts do in fact serve as cellular vectors for tau pathology in the adult human brain — then the current clinical development pipeline contains at least one compound, the Biomed Industries candidate NA-831 (traneurocin), whose mechanism of action is explicitly pro-neurogenic and whose deployment in patients with established amyloid pathology would, on Abbate's framework, accelerate rather than retard the disease by manufacturing a fresh supply of cellular disease vectors. The Phase 2 and Phase 3 trial enrolments now underway for that compound and for several others in similar therapeutic categories constitute a tractable clinical falsification opportunity for the theory and, if the theory is correct, a clinical hazard of substantial magnitude. The evaluation must therefore be conducted with the seriousness appropriate to that combination of stakes.

If Abbate's theory is incorrect in its load-bearing premise but correct in its subsidiary claim about the biochemical convergence between developmental and pathological tau, then the productive contribution of the model lies in a direction different from the one Abbate himself articulates: not in the migratory-vector hypothesis but in the more modest claim that the cellular machinery of adult neurogenesis supplies the kinase activity, the tau isoform composition, and the microglial signaling environment that, when chronically activated by amyloid pathology, generate the conditions for tau hyperphosphorylation locally within the niche. This modest reading is, as we shall develop in section seven, the reading under which the Collapse Trilogy's treatment of adult hippocampal neurogenesis as a first-principles substrate is most naturally aligned with Abbate's contribution.

If Abbate's theory is correct in its narrative architecture but incomplete in its mechanistic engine — that is, if the migration claim is partially correct but the model fails to specify how a migrating neuroblast carrying a tau seed actually kills the cell into which the seed is delivered — then the productive contribution of the model lies in its synthesis with the Nixon Convergent Autophagic Collapse framework, which supplies precisely the cellular-death engine Abbate underspecifies. This is the synthesis advanced by the existing DeepResearch review of the entry and is, on our assessment, the most consequential single output of the present evaluation. We shall develop the synthesis in section seven and shall argue that the integrated Abbate-Nixon model is materially stronger than either component alone.

1.4 What This Paper Does and Does Not Attempt

The present paper attempts a sustained critical evaluation of Abbate's theory at the level of detail and rigor appropriate to a doctoral examination. It is not a systematic literature review of adult human neurogenesis; the Adult-Born Neuron companion paper produced under the Collapse Trilogy program serves that function and is referenced where relevant. It is not a defense of the cascade or any rival hypothesis; the evaluation is conducted on the merits of Abbate's specific claims and not by comparison to the cascade except where comparison is unavoidable. It is not a comprehensive evaluation of all entries in the Fischer corpus; the focus is exclusively on Abbate. It is not a clinical practice document; the therapeutic-implications section is hypothesis-generating rather than prescriptive.

The paper proceeds in eleven sections after this introduction. Section two presents the theory as Abbate states it, in faithful exposition and with the principal citations to the original entry preserved. Section three decomposes the theory into its layered claims and identifies the load-bearing premises. Section four assesses the foundations on which the theory rests in the primary literature. Section five conducts the critical evaluation of the load-bearing premises and identifies the points at which the theory fails or is in tension with established evidence. Section six presents an evidentiary scorecard summarizing the grade assigned to each major claim. Section seven situates Abbate with respect to the Nixon Convergent Autophagic Collapse framework, the perineuronal-net and adult-extracellular-matrix biology, the Collapse Trilogy treatment of adult hippocampal neurogenesis, and the Llorens-Martín program of postmortem human evidence. Section eight derives the falsifiable predictions that the theory and its synthesized variants generate. Section nine treats the clinical hazard of the pro-neurogenic-drug pipeline. Section ten positions the theory in the broader theoretical landscape of late-onset Alzheimer's research. Section eleven presents the verdict. A coda offers a brief reflection on the neuroblast-as-vector metaphor and on the place of conceptual courage in the present state of the field.

2. The Theory as Stated: A Faithful Exposition

2.1 The Two-Process Architecture

The architectural innovation of Abbate's model, on which all subsequent claims depend, is the proposal that the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease consists of two processes whose mechanistic engines are largely independent of one another and whose interaction occurs through a single mediating substrate. The first process is the accumulation of extracellular amyloid-beta and is taken by Abbate to be driven principally by metabolic and clearance dysfunction in the cells that produce and process amyloid precursor protein. Abbate does not develop this first process in any detail in the entry and acknowledges that its mechanism is the province of other proposals — notably, in the present synthesis, the Nixon Convergent Autophagic Collapse hypothesis, which we shall develop in section seven. The second process is the development of tau pathology and is, in Abbate's account, mechanistically independent of the amyloid process at its origin. Tau pathology, on this account, does not arise as a downstream consequence of amyloid neurotoxicity; it arises from the developmental biochemistry of the neurogenic niche, in which the natural three-repeat tau isoform expressed by migrating neuroblasts is naturally hyperphosphorylated at the same epitopes that characterize the neurofibrillary tangles of established disease.

The two processes are linked, in Abbate's formulation, by the single mediating substrate of chronic microglial activation. As extracellular amyloid accumulates over the preclinical decades of the disease, it polarizes parenchymal microglia toward a chronic activation profile that, distinct from the acute inflammatory profile of infection or trauma, is dominated by interleukin-ten and prostaglandin-E2 secretion and is permissive of — indeed, actively promotes — adult neurogenesis. The microglial polarization is the causal bridge between the two processes: amyloid drives microglial activation, and chronically activated microglia drive reactive neurogenesis, and reactive neurogenesis, by the mechanism developed in subsequent subsections, drives the tau pathology that is, on this model, the proximate cause of cognitive decline.

The architecture has the structural property that, in the absence of amyloid pathology, the tau pathology of Alzheimer's disease would not develop, but its mechanism of dependence on amyloid is indirect: amyloid does not drive tau hyperphosphorylation by any of the routes proposed by the classical cascade — not through direct biochemical interaction at the cellular level, not through oligomer-mediated synaptic dysfunction, not through receptor-mediated kinase activation — but through the entirely different route of microglial polarization and consequent reactive neurogenesis. The architecture preserves the empirically observed dependence of tau pathology on amyloid status while severing the molecular causal link that the classical cascade had asserted.

2.2 The Biochemical Convergence

The model's most empirically grounded claim, and the one on which its remaining structure depends, is the observation that the biochemical signature of pathological tau in established Alzheimer's disease is essentially identical to the biochemical signature of physiological tau in immature neuroblasts undergoing developmental migration. The tau protein exists in the adult human central nervous system in six principal isoforms generated by alternative splicing of the MAPT transcript, distinguished by the inclusion or exclusion of exons two and three at the N-terminus and by the inclusion or exclusion of exon ten at the microtubule-binding domain. The exon-ten-containing isoforms carry four microtubule-binding repeats and are termed four-repeat tau; the exon-ten-excluding isoforms carry three microtubule-binding repeats and are termed three-repeat tau. The mature adult cortical neuron expresses both isoforms in approximately equal proportion; the immature neuroblast during developmental migration expresses three-repeat tau predominantly, with four-repeat tau expression beginning only after the neuroblast has completed migration and entered its terminal differentiation.

The three-repeat tau isoform binds microtubules with lower affinity than the four-repeat isoform and confers lower stability to the cytoskeleton. The lower stability is a feature, not a bug, of the migrating neuroblast's biology: the neuroblast must traverse a complex tissue environment, must extend and retract processes, must navigate cellular crowding and extracellular matrix density, and must maintain a microtubule cytoskeleton that is dynamically reconfigurable on the time-scale of minutes. The three-repeat isoform supplies the dynamic instability that this migratory phenotype requires. The dynamic instability is, however, further enhanced by an additional regulatory mechanism: the hyperphosphorylation of three-repeat tau at multiple residues by glycogen synthase kinase three-beta, a kinase whose expression and activity are themselves elevated in immature neurons during the migratory window and which is the principal physiological mechanism for further reducing the microtubule-binding affinity of an already low-affinity isoform. The combination of three-repeat isoform expression and GSK-3-beta-driven hyperphosphorylation is, in the migrating neuroblast, the natural and functionally required state of the tau cytoskeleton.

The biochemical convergence Abbate identifies is that the same combination — three-repeat tau, GSK-3-beta-driven hyperphosphorylation, identical phospho-epitopes — characterizes the paired helical filaments of the neurofibrillary tangles in established Alzheimer's disease. The phospho-epitopes recognized by the principal anti-phospho-tau antibodies of clinical and research use, including AT8 (Ser202/Thr205), AT100 (Thr212/Ser214), PHF-1 (Ser396/Ser404), and the more recently characterized MC1 conformational antibody, are present on tau extracted from the brains of patients with established Alzheimer's disease and are present, as Abbate's cited literature documents, on tau extracted from fetal and immature neurons during the natural neurogenesis of early development. The identity is not metaphorical but literal: the molecular constituents of pathological tau are the molecular constituents of physiological tau in the migrating neuroblast.

The biochemical convergence has, as Abbate notes, two distinct interpretations. The first is that the convergence is coincidental — that the kinase and isoform machinery of developmental neurogenesis happens to produce a biochemical state that resembles the pathological state of established disease, without implying any biological connection between the two. The second is that the convergence is mechanistic — that the pathological state of established disease is, in some causal sense, the developmental state operating in an inappropriate context, with the cells responsible for the pathological tau in the adult brain being precisely the cells in which the developmental tau machinery is naturally active. The first interpretation is consistent with the classical cascade. The second is Abbate's central claim.

2.3 The Microglial Mediator and the Reactive Neurogenesis Phenomenon

If the second interpretation is correct, the question that arises is why the developmental tau machinery, naturally operative throughout life in the neurogenic niches without pathological consequence, should produce pathological aggregates in the specific context of Alzheimer's disease. Abbate's answer is that the chronic microglial activation produced by amyloid accumulation modulates the activity of the niche in ways that push the natural tau machinery past the aggregation threshold.

The microglial mediator works through three identifiable mechanisms. First, chronic amyloid-driven microglial activation produces a secretory profile that is dominated by interleukin-ten and prostaglandin-E2 rather than by the tumor-necrosis-factor-alpha and interleukin-one-beta that characterize acute inflammation. The literature on the differential effects of acute and chronic microglial activation on adult neurogenesis, much of it established in rodent models by the Battista, Walton, Ekdahl, and Aimone groups in the 2000s and 2010s, establishes that acute microglial activation is generally suppressive of neurogenesis while chronic activation with the appropriate secretory profile is permissive and indeed pro-neurogenic. Abbate's claim is that amyloid-driven chronic microglial activation in Alzheimer's disease is of the pro-neurogenic variety.

Second, the chronically activated microglia secrete signals that act directly on niche neural stem cells to promote their activation and proliferation. The signals include insulin-like growth factor one, brain-derived neurotrophic factor, and several chemokines whose receptors are expressed on niche stem cells. Under the pro-neurogenic secretory profile, the niche stem cells are driven toward sustained hyper-proliferation in a state that Abbate, following the established literature on the same phenomenon in stroke, traumatic brain injury, and epilepsy, terms reactive neurogenesis. The reactive neurogenic state is distinguished from the homeostatic neurogenic state by the rate of stem cell activation, by the survival fraction of immature neurons, by the migratory paths taken by neuroblasts after they leave the niche, and, critically for the present argument, by the level of tau hyperphosphorylation that the cells exhibit during migration.

Third, the chronically activated microglia in distant cortical regions, themselves polarized by the diffuse amyloid burden that characterizes Alzheimer's disease and that is present even in regions of relatively low plaque density, secrete chemokines that act as migratory chemoattractants for the neuroblasts emerging from the niches. The chemoattractants redirect the neuroblasts away from their canonical migratory routes — the rostral migratory stream for V-SVZ-derived cells, the short migration into the granule cell layer for SGZ-derived cells — and toward the regions of cortical microglial activation. The redirected migration is the proposed mechanism by which neuroblasts originating in the canonical niches reach distant cortical destinations in Abbate's model.

2.4 The Migration Vector

The model's most distinctive and most consequential claim is that the migrating neuroblast itself functions as a cellular vector for the tau pathology of Alzheimer's disease. The claim has three components. First, the neuroblast, during its migration, undergoes a quantitative escalation of tau hyperphosphorylation beyond the level required for physiological migration. The escalation is driven, on Abbate's account, by two factors: the elevated kinase activity associated with the inflammatory niche environment of reactive neurogenesis, and the mechanical and metabolic stress of long-distance migration through the inhibitory adult parenchyma, which Abbate proposes requires further reduction of microtubule stability and therefore further hyperphosphorylation of the already heavily phosphorylated three-repeat tau. The escalation pushes the cell past the aggregation threshold, and the cell begins to accumulate intracellular tau seeds during migration.

Second, the cell carries the tau seeds to its destination and, upon arrival, either integrates into the local circuit while continuing to harbor and propagate the pathological tau, or fails to integrate, undergoes cell death, and releases the tau seeds into the local extracellular environment. Abbate's entry is not specific about which of these two outcomes is intended as the principal mode of seed delivery and acknowledges that both are possible. The implication of either outcome is that the local cortical population in the region of arrival is exposed to tau seeds that are biochemically capable of templating further tau aggregation in recipient cells, by the prion-like trans-cellular tau propagation mechanism that has been documented in vitro by Diamond, Goedert, Tolnay, and Holtzman and in vivo in rodent and primate models.

Third, the trajectory of the migrating neuroblast determines the regional topography of the tau pathology that subsequently develops. SGZ-derived neuroblasts, with a short migratory path into the granule cell layer of the dentate gyrus, deposit tau seeds locally in the medial temporal lobe and produce the topography characteristic of late-onset Alzheimer's disease. V-SVZ-derived neuroblasts, deviated from the rostral migratory stream by amyloid-driven cortical microglial chemoattractants, take long migratory paths to diverse cortical regions and deposit tau seeds at those distant destinations, producing the regional topographies characteristic of the atypical syndromic variants of early-onset Alzheimer's disease — posterior cortical atrophy, primary

progressive aphasia, the frontal-executive variant, the corticobasal-syndrome-like variant.

2.5 The Topographic Predictions

The topographic predictions of the model are, in the entry, both its most distinctive contribution and its most ambitious empirical commitment. The model predicts, first, that the regional distribution of tau pathology in late-onset Alzheimer's disease should be confined to or strongly concentrated in regions accessible from the SGZ niche by short-range trans-synaptic propagation: the dentate gyrus, the CA3 and CA1 hippocampal subregions, the entorhinal cortex from which the perforant path projects to the dentate gyrus and to which retrograde propagation from the dentate gyrus would carry seeds, and the broader medial temporal lobe regions accessible through entorhinal connectivity. This prediction is broadly consistent with the Braak ascending staging model, although Abbate's model and the Braak model differ on the question of whether tau pathology originates in the locus coeruleus (Braak) or in the dentate gyrus and propagates retrogradely to the entorhinal cortex (Abbate).

The model predicts, second, that the regional distribution of tau pathology in early-onset Alzheimer's disease should follow the migratory trajectories of V-SVZ-derived neuroblasts redirected by amyloid-activated cortical microglia in the affected regions. The atypical syndromic variants of early-onset Alzheimer's disease — posterior cortical atrophy with predominant occipital and parietal tau pathology, primary progressive aphasia with predominant left perisylvian tau pathology, the frontal-executive variant with predominant prefrontal tau pathology — would, on this account, be the consequence of migration paths from the V-SVZ to those specific cortical regions. The model further proposes that the migratory trajectories are guided by the same gene-expression gradients that established the regional identities of those cortical regions during developmental arealization, with the implication that the regional vulnerabilities of the atypical variants are the cortical signatures of the developmental program reactivated in the adult disease state. This is an audacious claim and is, by Abbate's own acknowledgment in section three of his entry, highly speculative.

The model predicts, third, that the regional distribution of pathology in primary age-related tauopathy — the condition characterized by tau pathology confined to the medial temporal lobe in the absence of significant amyloid pathology — is explained by the absence of the amyloid-driven cortical microglial chemoattractant signals that would otherwise redirect V-SVZ neuroblasts to distant cortical destinations, with the consequence that SGZ-derived local neurogenesis continues but V-SVZ-derived long-distance migration does not, and the pathology is therefore confined to the SGZ-derived medial temporal lobe.

The model predicts, fourth, that the regional distribution of pathology in chronic traumatic encephalopathy — characterized by perivascular and sulcal tau pathology at the depths of cortical gyri — is explained by the mechanical injury produced by repetitive head trauma at those specific

anatomical sites, which generates inflammatory signals that redirect V-SVZ neuroblasts away from the rostral migratory stream and toward the injury sites, depositing tau seeds at those specific perivascular and sulcal locations.

2.6 The Family-Resemblance Strategy

The extension of the model to primary age-related tauopathy and to chronic traumatic encephalopathy is an instance of a more general theoretical strategy that the entry pursues with considerable consistency. The strategy is to identify the model's core mechanism — reactive neurogenesis with consequent tau hyperphosphorylation during stress-induced migration — and to demonstrate that the same mechanism, configured differently with respect to the inflammatory and chemoattractant signaling, generates the patterns of pathology observed in adjacent neurodegenerative conditions. The strategy aims to establish a family resemblance among Alzheimer's disease, primary age-related tauopathy, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, and potentially Parkinson's disease dementia and limbic-predominant age-related TDP-43 encephalopathy, all of which would be configurations of a common underlying mechanism of pathological migration from neurogenic niches.

The family-resemblance strategy, if successful, would be a substantial theoretical achievement. The combination of a single mechanism with a family of distinct configurations producing a family of distinct disease phenotypes is, in the philosophy of science, the structure of a productive scientific research program in the Lakatos sense, with the core mechanism serving as the program's hard core and the differential configurations serving as the program's protective belt. The standard of evidence required to sustain such a research program is, however, correspondingly higher than the standard required to sustain a single isolated hypothesis: the family resemblance must be demonstrated, not merely asserted, and the differential configurations must be biologically plausible in their specifics rather than merely conceptually consistent.

3. The Logical Architecture of the Argument

3.1 The Layered Claim Decomposition

A productive critical evaluation of Abbate's theory begins with the decomposition of the theory into the distinct claims that compose it, the assessment of each claim's evidentiary status independently of the others, and the identification of the dependency structure among the claims. We propose the following nine-layer decomposition, which we shall reference throughout the subsequent sections.

The first layer is the existence claim: that adult neurogenesis occurs in the human dentate gyrus and ventricular-subventricular zone at quantitatively meaningful rates beyond childhood. This claim is, after the resolution of the Sorrells-Boldrini controversy in the 2018-2021 window and the consolidation of the Llorens-Martín program's findings, the foundation on which all subsequent claims rest. Without adult human neurogenesis in some form, the theory has no substrate.

The second layer is the persistence claim: that adult neurogenesis persists in Alzheimer's disease but is dysregulated, rather than being simply abolished. This claim is more demanding than the first: it requires that the neurogenic process continue in the diseased brain in some form, with sufficient cellular output to generate the migrating neuroblasts that the propagation claim requires. The Moreno-Jiménez 2019 finding of approximately ninety percent reduction in immature granule neuron density at advanced disease stages is in tension with this claim at advanced stages and is consistent with it at early stages.

The third layer is the biochemical convergence claim: that three-repeat tau hyperphosphorylated by GSK-3-beta in immature neuroblasts is biochemically identical or near-identical to the tau of paired helical filaments in established Alzheimer's disease. This claim is well established in the primary literature and is, in our assessment, the model's most robust foundation.

The fourth layer is the microglial-mediator claim: that chronic amyloid-driven microglial activation in Alzheimer's disease adopts a pro-neurogenic secretory profile dominated by interleukin-ten and prostaglandin-E2 and that this profile actively promotes rather than suppresses adult neurogenesis. This claim has substantial in vitro and rodent in vivo support but more limited direct evidence in the human disease.

The fifth layer is the reactive-neurogenesis claim: that the chronic pro-neurogenic microglial environment of Alzheimer's disease drives the niche stem cell populations into a state of sustained hyper-proliferation and aberrant migration that recapitulates the reactive neurogenesis observed in rodent models of stroke, traumatic brain injury, and epilepsy. This claim depends on the fourth layer and has rodent-model support but limited human evidence.

The sixth layer is the migration-stress claim: that the metabolic and mechanical stress of long-distance migration through the inhibitory adult parenchyma escalates tau hyperphosphorylation beyond the physiological level required for migration and pushes the tau system past the aggregation threshold. This claim is largely theoretical in Abbate's entry and is supported by reasoning from first principles rather than by direct experimental demonstration of the proposed escalation.

The seventh layer is the vector claim: that migrating neuroblasts carry tau seeds to distant destinations and deliver them to the local cortical population by integration or by

failure-to-integrate-and-lysis. This claim depends on the sixth layer and requires both that the neuroblasts complete the migration with their tau cargo intact and that the delivery mechanism produce a biochemically active seed in the recipient tissue.

The eighth layer is the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim: that the ventricular-subventricular zone in adult humans supplies neuroblasts that migrate to distant cortical destinations in response to amyloid-driven chemoattractant signals from cortical microglia. This claim is the load-bearing premise of the early-onset and atypical-variant predictions and is, as we shall develop in section five, the claim at which the theory is in greatest tension with the established biology of adult human neurogenesis.

The ninth layer is the developmental-arealization claim: that the regional topography of pathology in atypical early-onset variants is determined by the same gene-expression gradients that established the regional identities of those cortical regions during embryonic cortical development. This claim is, on Abbate's own acknowledgment, highly speculative and is supported in the entry by suggestive correlations between the regions affected in atypical variants and the spatial axes of developmental arealization rather than by direct evidence of arealization-program reactivation in the adult disease state.

3.2 The Dependency Structure and the Load-Bearing Premises

The nine layers compose a dependency structure that the critical evaluation must respect. The first three layers are foundational and largely independent of one another in their evidentiary status. The fourth and fifth layers depend on the existence and persistence of adult neurogenesis but are otherwise independent of the third. The sixth layer depends on the fourth and fifth. The seventh layer depends on the sixth. The eighth layer depends on the existence of an active V-SVZ neurogenic process in the adult human and on the chemoattractant biology of cortical microglia. The ninth layer depends on the eighth and is the most theoretically remote from the foundational layers.

The dependency structure implies that the failure of any layer above the foundation propagates upward through all layers that depend on it. The biochemical convergence at layer three, however well established, does not by itself entail the migratory vector at layer seven; the vector claim depends on the entire intermediate chain from microglial mediation through reactive neurogenesis through migration stress. The topographic claims at layers eight and nine depend on the entire chain plus the additional V-SVZ-to-cortex migration biology.

The load-bearing premises of the theory — the premises whose failure would dissolve the theory's distinctive contribution — are, on our assessment, the sixth and the eighth. The sixth, the migration-stress claim that the metabolic and mechanical stress of long-distance migration pushes tau past the aggregation threshold, is the mechanism by which the developmental tau biochemistry

becomes pathological. If this premise fails — if migration stress does not in fact escalate tau hyperphosphorylation to pathological levels — then the model has no mechanism for converting physiological neurogenesis into pathological aggregation, and the entire propagation architecture collapses. The eighth, the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim, is the mechanism by which the model accounts for the regional topographic heterogeneity of early-onset and atypical Alzheimer's disease. If this premise fails — if the adult human V-SVZ does not in fact supply neuroblasts that migrate to distant cortical destinations — then the model can account for the medial temporal lobe pathology of late-onset Alzheimer's disease but cannot account for the regional topographies that are the distinctive empirical commitment of the entry.

Our evaluation will identify the eighth as the more vulnerable of the two and will argue that its failure is the principal reason the theory cannot survive as a self-contained account of pathogenesis.

3.3 The Two Independent Causal Chains and the Microglial Hinge

A second feature of the logical architecture warrants explicit articulation. The theory contains two causal chains — the amyloid chain leading from APP processing through amyloid-beta accumulation and the tau chain leading from developmental neurogenesis through migration to pathological aggregation — that are joined at a single hinge, the chronic microglial activation step. The architecture has the theoretical virtue of being able to dissociate amyloid pathology from tau pathology at the cellular level, accounting for the empirical observation that the two pathologies are weakly correlated within the affected brain at fine spatial scales, while preserving the global dependence of tau pathology on amyloid status that the natural history of the disease requires.

The architecture has, however, a corresponding theoretical vulnerability. If the microglial hinge fails — if chronic amyloid-driven microglial activation does not in fact adopt the pro-neurogenic secretory profile, or if the pro-neurogenic profile does not in fact drive reactive neurogenesis at quantitatively meaningful rates, or if the migrating neuroblasts produced by reactive neurogenesis do not in fact escalate their tau hyperphosphorylation under migration stress — then the two chains become genuinely independent, and the model loses its account of how amyloid pathology drives tau pathology. The classical cascade, by joining the two chains at the molecular level rather than at the cellular-microglial level, has a different vulnerability structure: the cascade's vulnerability is at the molecular interaction step, while Abbate's vulnerability is at the cellular-mediator step.

The microglial hinge is therefore both the most empirically demanding component of the theory — requiring the simultaneous validity of the fourth, fifth, and sixth layers — and the component most amenable to experimental falsification or confirmation. We shall return to this point in section eight when we develop the falsifiable predictions.

4. The Strong Foundations

4.1 The Biochemical Convergence Is Real

The third layer of the theory — the claim that three-repeat tau hyperphosphorylated by GSK-3-beta in immature neuroblasts is biochemically identical or near-identical to the tau of paired helical filaments in established Alzheimer's disease — is, on our reading of the primary literature, the most robust component of the theory and the layer that the critical evaluation must take most seriously.

The tau isoform composition of the immature human neuroblast has been characterized in the work of Goedert and his colleagues at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge over a programmatic period extending from the late 1980s through the present. The original biochemical work on the tau isoforms generated from the MAPT gene by alternative splicing established the six-isoform structure that is now the field's working knowledge, and the subsequent developmental work established that the three-repeat-predominant pattern characterizes the fetal and early postnatal brain, with the four-repeat-inclusive pattern emerging gradually over the first postnatal years and reaching the adult equal-proportion configuration by approximately the second year of life. The persistence of the three-repeat-predominant pattern in immature neuroblasts emerging from the adult neurogenic niches has been documented in rodents by Couillard-Despres, Aigner, and colleagues using doublecortin-positive neuroblast preparations and has been documented in human samples by the Llorens-Martín group in the postmortem material on which the Moreno-Jiménez papers depend.

The phosphorylation epitopes of pathological tau in established Alzheimer's disease have been characterized in the work of Iqbal, Grundke-Iqbal, and their colleagues at the New York State Institute for Basic Research; the work of Trojanowski, Lee, and their colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania; and the work of Mandelkow and his colleagues at the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Physiology. The principal phospho-epitopes — Ser202/Thr205 recognized by AT8, Thr212/Ser214 recognized by AT100, Ser396/Ser404 recognized by PHF-1, and the conformational epitope recognized by MC1 — have been mapped in detail and have been demonstrated in numerous independent studies to be present on tau extracted from the brains of patients with established disease. The same phospho-epitopes have been demonstrated on tau extracted from fetal and immature neurons during developmental and adult neurogenesis, in work by Brion, Hanger, Anderton, and their colleagues at King's College London and by independent groups using independent samples.

The kinase responsible for the developmental hyperphosphorylation of tau in immature neurons has been characterized in the work of Anderton, Cohen, Frame, and their colleagues.

Glycogen synthase kinase three-beta, originally characterized as a regulator of glycogen metabolism, has been established as a principal tau kinase with substrate specificity for multiple of the same phospho-epitopes that characterize pathological tau in established disease. The activity of GSK-3-beta in immature neurons is elevated relative to its activity in mature neurons, and the elevation is required for the dynamic cytoskeletal regulation of migrating neuroblasts. The kinase is, by independent work, also elevated in activity in the brains of patients with established Alzheimer's disease, a finding that is itself one of the principal arguments of the lithium-as-AD-therapeutic literature in which lithium's inhibition of GSK-3-beta is proposed as a candidate mechanism of disease modification.

The convergence is therefore not asserted by Abbate; it is documented in the primary literature with sufficient depth and across sufficient independent groups to warrant high evidentiary confidence. The interpretation of the convergence is, as we noted in section 2.2, contestable; the convergence itself is not. We assign the third layer the highest evidentiary grade in our scorecard.

4.2 The Microglial Pro-Neurogenic Phenotype Has Substantial Support

The fourth layer of the theory — the claim that chronic amyloid-driven microglial activation in Alzheimer's disease adopts a pro-neurogenic secretory profile dominated by interleukin-ten and prostaglandin-E2 — has substantial in vitro and rodent in vivo support, although the human disease evidence is more circumstantial.

The differential effects of acute and chronic microglial activation on adult neurogenesis were established in the early 2000s in a series of papers by Ekdahl, Lindvall, and their colleagues at Lund, and by Battista, Ferrari, and their colleagues at McGill. The work established that systemic lipopolysaccharide administration in rodents, which produces an acute inflammatory state with predominant tumor-necrosis-factor-alpha and interleukin-one-beta secretion, suppresses adult hippocampal neurogenesis; while chronic mild inflammatory states, including those induced by extended dietary restriction or by certain immunomodulatory pharmacological interventions, can promote rather than suppress neurogenesis. The differential effect was traced to the differential cytokine and chemokine secretory profiles of microglia under the two conditions, with the pro-neurogenic profile being characterized by elevated interleukin-ten and prostaglandin-E2 and reduced tumor-necrosis-factor-alpha and interleukin-one-beta.

The application of this differential biology to Alzheimer's disease has been developed in the work of Schwartz, Lazarov, Eriksson, and their colleagues. The work establishes that the chronic microglial activation observed in proximity to amyloid plaques in postmortem Alzheimer's tissue and in transgenic mouse models of amyloidopathy is, on cytokine-profile analysis, more consistent with the chronic pro-neurogenic state than with the acute suppressive state. The implication is that the microglial activation observed in Alzheimer's disease should be permissive of, and indeed promotional toward, adult neurogenesis at the niche level. This is consistent with the fourth layer of

Abbate's theory.

The direct human evidence for the pro-neurogenic microglial phenotype in Alzheimer's disease is, however, more limited. The principal source of human evidence is the cytokine and chemokine analysis of postmortem brain tissue and of cerebrospinal fluid in Alzheimer's patients, both of which document elevated levels of interleukin-ten and prostaglandin-E2 in the disease relative to age-matched controls. The interpretation of these elevations as reflecting a microglial pro-neurogenic state, rather than as reflecting a more general inflammatory dysregulation, requires inference beyond the direct measurement. The fourth layer is therefore well supported in the rodent and in vitro literature and is consistent with but not directly established by the human disease evidence.

4.3 The Reactive Neurogenesis Phenomenon in Rodents

The fifth layer — that chronic pro-neurogenic microglial activation drives niche stem cells into a state of reactive neurogenesis with sustained hyper-proliferation and aberrant migration — is well established in rodent models of injury and is plausibly transferable to the chronic inflammatory state of Alzheimer's disease.

The reactive neurogenesis literature has been developed principally in rodent models of stroke (middle cerebral artery occlusion), traumatic brain injury (controlled cortical impact), and chemoconvulsant epilepsy (pilocarpine and kainate). Each of these models produces a state of chronic regional inflammation in the affected brain region and is associated with characteristic alterations in neurogenesis at the V-SVZ and SGZ niches. The alterations include accelerated stem cell proliferation, expanded immature neuron production, redirected migration of neuroblasts toward the injury site, aberrant differentiation phenotypes including increased astrogliogenesis at the expense of neurogenesis, and reduced survival of newly generated neurons. The collection of phenotypes has been catalogued under the umbrella term aberrant neurogenesis by Parent, Sutula, and their colleagues, and the term reactive neurogenesis is used in some of the same literature to emphasize the inflammatory triggering of the phenotypes.

The application of the reactive neurogenesis framework to Alzheimer's disease has been pursued by Lazarov, Mu, and their colleagues, and by Llorens-Martín and her colleagues. The work documents alterations in niche stem cell proliferation, immature neuron production, and migration in transgenic mouse models of amyloidopathy and in postmortem human Alzheimer's tissue. The alterations are not identical to those observed in the acute injury models — the Alzheimer's pattern is, in particular, characterized by reduced immature neuron survival rather than by accelerated proliferation at advanced stages — but the family resemblance to the broader reactive neurogenesis phenotype is recognizable.

The fifth layer is therefore supported by a substantial rodent literature and by a more limited human literature, with the qualification that the specific application of reactive neurogenesis to Alzheimer's disease produces a phenotype that is more characterized by collapse and exhaustion of the niche than by accelerated proliferation at advanced disease stages. This qualification, as we shall develop in section 5.6, is relevant to the model's prediction structure.

4.4 The Selective Vulnerability Reframe Has Genuine Theoretical Force

The fourth strong foundation of the theory, distinct from the empirical foundations of the third, fourth, and fifth layers, is the conceptual reframe of selective vulnerability that the model makes available. The reframe is, in our assessment, the most theoretically valuable contribution of the entry independent of the question of whether the load-bearing migration premises are empirically correct.

The question of selective vulnerability in neurodegeneration — why some neuronal populations are affected early and others late, why some are affected severely and others spared, why the same protein aggregating in apparently similar neighboring cells produces different pathological consequences — has organized a substantial subliterature in the field. The canonical accounts of selective vulnerability are intrinsic-property accounts: the affected populations are proposed to differ from the spared populations in some intrinsic feature — gene expression profile, metabolic demand, axonal length, calcium-handling capacity, mitochondrial endowment, electrical excitability — that renders them more susceptible to the disease's molecular insults. The intrinsic-property accounts are evidentially well supported in the case of the locus coeruleus (high catecholamine load, dense axonal arborization, calcium handling), in the case of parvalbumin-positive interneurons (high firing rate, high metabolic demand, perineuronal-net dependence), and in the case of entorhinal cortex layer two neurons (specific gene expression profile, specific projection pattern).

Abbate's model offers a structurally different account. On the migration-vector reading, the regional and cellular pattern of pathology in Alzheimer's disease is determined not by the intrinsic vulnerability of the affected populations but by the migratory trajectory of the cellular vector — the neuroblast — that delivers the pathological seed. The selective vulnerability of, say, the posterior cortex in posterior cortical atrophy is not a property of the posterior cortical neurons themselves but a property of the migratory route by which V-SVZ-derived neuroblasts arrive at the posterior cortex in that variant. The selective vulnerability of, say, the left perisylvian cortex in primary progressive aphasia is similarly a property of the migratory route rather than of the intrinsic biology of the affected neurons.

The reframe dissolves selective vulnerability as a primitive of the theoretical landscape. Where the intrinsic-property accounts treat regional vulnerability as a phenomenon to be explained by reference to features of the affected cells, the migration-vector account treats regional vulnerability as a phenomenon that does not exist in the form the intrinsic-property accounts have assumed:

there is no regional vulnerability gradient, only a migration destination map.

The reframe is, on our assessment, one of the genuinely paradigm-shifting contributions in the Fischer prize corpus. Whether or not the specific migration mechanism Abbate proposes is correct, the conceptual move of dissolving selective vulnerability as a primitive is a move the field benefits from being able to make. Even on a reading of the theory under which the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim is rejected, the reframe of selective vulnerability for the cellular target of the SGZ-derived pathology — that is, for the dentate granule cells themselves — retains the conceptual force of the broader move: the granule cells are not selectively vulnerable in the intrinsic-property sense; they are selectively exposed in the migration-target sense.

5. The Critical Weaknesses

5.1 The V-SVZ Problem in Adult Humans

The most consequential weakness of the theory, and the weakness on which the model's distinctive contribution to early-onset and atypical Alzheimer's disease most centrally depends, is the V-SVZ problem. The problem can be stated briefly: the model's account of early-onset and atypical-variant topography requires that the adult human ventricular-subventricular zone supply neuroblasts that migrate to distant cortical destinations under amyloid-driven chemoattractant signals. The adult human ventricular-subventricular zone is, by the established work of Sanai, Tramontin, Alvarez-Buylla, and their colleagues, essentially non-functional as a continuous neurogenic source after early childhood. The model therefore depends on a biological process that the field has substantial reason to believe does not occur at quantitatively meaningful rates in adult humans.

The evidence for V-SVZ closure in the adult human is multi-modal and has been accumulating since the late 2000s. The Sanai 2011 *Nature* paper documented, through detailed immunohistochemical analysis of human ventricular wall samples spanning the human age range, the dramatic involution of the rostral migratory stream after the first year of postnatal life and the essentially complete absence of detectable migrating neuroblasts in the adult human stream. The Spalding ^{14}C dating work confirmed the closure at the population-incorporation level: while the human dentate gyrus showed substantial ^{14}C incorporation consistent with continuous SGZ neurogenesis, the human olfactory bulb — the canonical destination of V-SVZ-derived neuroblasts via the rostral migratory stream in rodents — showed minimal ^{14}C incorporation, consistent with negligible new neuron addition to that structure in adulthood. The Bergmann and Frisén work using similar ^{14}C dating extended this finding and identified the residual function of the human

V-SVZ as the addition of GABAergic interneurons to the striatum rather than as a source of olfactory-bulb-bound migrating cells.

The implication of this evidence for Abbate's theory is severe. The V-SVZ in the adult human is not the active neurogenic niche the rodent literature has documented; it is a substantially involuted structure whose residual function targets a small population of striatal interneurons. The neuroblasts that Abbate's model requires — V-SVZ-derived cells available for redirection to cortical destinations in the disease state — are not, on the current evidence, available in the quantities the model needs.

Abbate is aware of the difficulty and acknowledges it in section five of his entry: "evidence for organized, long-distance migration of newly generated neurons in the adult human brain is lacking." The acknowledgment is candid and is, in our assessment, the most important single concession the entry makes. The concession does not, however, resolve the difficulty; it identifies it. The theory's distinctive contribution to early-onset and atypical Alzheimer's disease depends on the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim, and the claim is, as the entry itself concedes, unsupported by the available evidence in adult humans.

Several defenses of the claim are available and warrant explicit consideration. The first is that the rostral migratory stream is not abolished in adults but only quiescent, and that the chronic inflammatory and chemoattractant conditions of Alzheimer's disease reactivate the stream. This defense has some support in the rodent injury literature, in which previously quiescent migratory paths can be reactivated by chronic inflammation, but the magnitude of reactivation required for Abbate's model — sufficient to supply the cellular volume of neuroblasts to account for the cortical pathology of early-onset variants — is substantially greater than has been documented in any reactivation experiment in adult humans or in adult primates.

The second defense is that the V-SVZ is supplemented in adult humans by additional sources of new neurons that have not been adequately catalogued: the paralaminar amygdalar population identified by the Sorrells group, the hypothalamic tanycyte-derived population identified by Blackshaw and colleagues, possibly other sources. The defense is biologically plausible but is in tension with the model's specific reliance on V-SVZ-derived migration and would require substantial reformulation of the theory to align with the available data.

The third defense is that the migration claim does not require actively dividing neuroblasts but is consistent with the redirection of cells that have completed migration and are present in the adult brain in an immature or quiescent state. This defense moves the model away from the reactive-neurogenesis core and toward a different mechanism that the entry does not develop in detail.

The V-SVZ problem is, on our assessment, the most consequential weakness of the theory. It is not fatal in the sense of refuting the theory's contribution entirely; the SGZ-derived account of late-onset Alzheimer's disease is not affected by the V-SVZ problem and retains its force. The problem does, however, dissolve the theory's distinctive contribution to early-onset and atypical Alzheimer's disease, which is the contribution most heavily emphasized in the original entry.

5.2 The Trans-Cellular Tau Transfer Problem

The seventh layer of the theory — the vector claim that migrating neuroblasts carry tau seeds to distant destinations and deliver them to the local cortical population by integration or by failure-to-integrate-and-lysis — requires a trans-cellular tau transfer mechanism whose specifics the entry does not articulate. The under-specification is a substantial weakness of the model's mechanistic completeness.

The trans-cellular propagation of tau pathology in established neurodegeneration is one of the principal mechanistic discoveries of the last decade and has been characterized in considerable detail by Diamond, Goedert, Tolnay, Holtzman, and their colleagues. The work establishes that pathological tau can be released from a donor cell, can be taken up by a recipient cell through several characterized mechanisms (heparan sulfate proteoglycan binding, macropinocytosis, exosomal delivery, possibly tunneling nanotubes), can template the misfolding of native tau in the recipient cell, and can thereby propagate from cell to cell along anatomical connections. The mechanism has been validated in rodent and primate models and is the basis for the prion-like spreading hypothesis of tau pathology in Alzheimer's disease and in related tauopathies.

Abbate's vector claim invokes the trans-cellular transfer biology but does not specify which of the several proposed mechanisms applies to the neuroblast-to-recipient-cell transfer that the model requires. The two principal modes Abbate identifies — integration of the neuroblast into the local circuit while continuing to harbor tau, or failure-to-integrate-and-lysis with release of seeds into the extracellular environment — have substantially different downstream consequences. The integration mode requires that the integrated immature neuron continue to produce pathological tau over its subsequent lifespan, which in turn requires that the kinase and isoform machinery of the immature state persist after integration; this is in tension with the established developmental sequence in which three-repeat-tau-predominant expression gives way to mixed-isoform expression after integration. The lysis mode requires that the released tau seeds reach recipient cells in concentrations sufficient to template aggregation; this requires either extracellular accumulation of seeds at the lysis site or efficient uptake by neighboring cells, both of which have been documented in cell culture but whose quantitative parameters in vivo at the scales the model requires have not been established.

The under-specification is not a refutation of the model but is a critical lacuna in its mechanistic completeness. A theory that proposes a cellular vector for disease propagation must specify how the

vector delivers its cargo, and Abbate's specification is gestural rather than mechanistic. We assess this as a moderate weakness that could be remedied by integration with the broader trans-cellular tau biology — for example, by specifying that the lysis mode operates through the v-ATPase-mediated lysosomal permeabilization that the Nixon Convergent Autophagic Collapse framework documents in detail — but the integration is not present in the entry as stated.

5.3 The Migration Distance Problem

The model's account of long-distance migration through the adult parenchyma is in tension with the established biology of the adult extracellular matrix. The adult brain parenchyma is, by the established work of Galtrey, Kwok, Carulli, Fawcett, and their colleagues, a substantially more inhibitory migratory environment than the developing parenchyma, by virtue of the deposition of chondroitin sulfate proteoglycans and other extracellular matrix components that constrain cellular motility. The perineuronal nets surrounding parvalbumin-positive interneurons are an extreme local case of this constraint, but the broader parenchymal extracellular matrix throughout the adult brain is itself a migration-inhibitory medium.

The implication for Abbate's model is that even if neuroblasts were available from the V-SVZ for redirection to cortical destinations, the cells would have to traverse a substantially inhibitory parenchyma to reach those destinations. The migration biology in adult brain injury, in which neuroblasts redirected from the V-SVZ travel from the stream to the cortical injury site, has been characterized in rodent models and proceeds at slow rates over substantial timescales. The translation of this biology to the chronic and diffuse pathology of human Alzheimer's disease, in which the destinations are distributed across the cortical mantle rather than focal at a specific injury site, requires migration distances and migration timescales that have not been documented even in the rodent injury literature.

The migration distance problem compounds the V-SVZ problem identified in section 5.1: even granted a hypothetical reactivation of the V-SVZ as a neurogenic source in the diseased adult brain, the migration biology required to deliver those neuroblasts to the diverse cortical destinations of the atypical variants is in tension with the extracellular matrix biology of the adult parenchyma. The combination of the two problems makes the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim multiply problematic rather than singly problematic.

The defense available to the model is that the chronic inflammatory state of Alzheimer's disease produces matrix metalloproteinase activity that degrades the parenchymal extracellular matrix and thereby renders the parenchyma more permissive to migration. This defense has some support in the matrix biology literature, where matrix metalloproteinase activation has been documented in inflammatory states. The magnitude of the matrix degradation required to make long-distance neuroblast migration possible, however, is substantially greater than the magnitude documented in any chronic inflammatory condition characterized to date, and the defense remains speculative.

5.4 The Aβ Independence Problem

The model's architectural commitment to the relative independence of the amyloid and tau causal chains is in tension with several lines of evidence from the genetic and biomarker biology of Alzheimer's disease.

The autosomal-dominant forms of the disease, in which mutations in presenilin one, presenilin two, or amyloid precursor protein produce essentially certain disease at predictable ages of onset, establish that genetic alterations in the amyloid-processing machinery are causally sufficient for the development of Alzheimer's pathology. The implication for the architecture of the disease is that the amyloid chain is, at minimum, a sufficient cause; the question is whether it is also the proximate cause of the downstream tau pathology or whether, on Abbate's model, the relation between amyloid and tau is mediated by the microglial-neurogenic hinge rather than by direct molecular interaction.

The Down syndrome form of Alzheimer's disease, in which trisomy of chromosome 21 produces an extra copy of the amyloid precursor protein gene and is associated with very high rates of Alzheimer's pathology with onset in the fourth and fifth decades, provides additional evidence that increased amyloid precursor protein dosage is causally sufficient for disease development. The Down syndrome pattern is, in the genetic-cascade account, the cleanest demonstration available of the causal sufficiency of amyloid in producing Alzheimer's pathology.

The amyloid biomarker temporal precedence in the longitudinal natural history studies — the consistent finding that amyloid PET positivity and cerebrospinal fluid amyloid-beta-42 reduction precede tau biomarker abnormality by approximately a decade — is consistent with both the classical cascade reading and Abbate's reading. The cascade reading attributes the precedence to amyloid's role as the upstream initiator of a molecular cascade. Abbate's reading attributes the precedence to amyloid's role as the upstream initiator of the microglial polarization that, through reactive neurogenesis and migration stress, eventually produces tau pathology. The temporal precedence data do not, on their own, distinguish between the two readings.

The tension for Abbate is therefore not with the temporal precedence data but with the causal sufficiency of amyloid in the genetic forms. If amyloid is causally sufficient for Alzheimer's pathology in the autosomal-dominant and Down syndrome forms, and if the proposed microglial-neurogenic mechanism is required for the conversion of amyloid into tau pathology, then the proposed mechanism must be reliably engaged by amyloid in all forms of the disease. This is a strong claim, and the evidence for it in the genetic forms specifically is limited.

A defense available to the model is that the microglial-neurogenic mechanism is reliably engaged whenever sufficient amyloid burden is present, whether the amyloid burden derives from sporadic late-onset processes or from genetic over-production. The defense is biologically plausible

but does not eliminate the tension; the genetic forms remain the cleanest test case for the causal sufficiency claim, and the test case has not been directly investigated under the microglial-neurogenic framework.

5.5 The Arealization Speculation

The ninth layer of the theory — the claim that the regional topography of pathology in atypical early-onset variants is determined by the same gene-expression gradients that established the regional identities of those cortical regions during embryonic cortical development — is, on Abbate's own acknowledgment, highly speculative. The speculation is supported in the entry by suggestive correlations between the regions affected in atypical variants and the spatial axes of developmental arealization rather than by direct evidence of arealization-program reactivation in the adult disease state.

The cortical arealization program has been characterized in the work of Rakic, O'Leary, Grove, and their colleagues. The work establishes that the regional identities of the cortical mantle are determined during embryonic development by gradients of morphogen and transcription factor expression along the anterior-posterior, medial-lateral, and dorsal-ventral axes, with specific morphogens — fibroblast growth factor eight at the rostral pole, Wnt and BMP at the dorsal midline, sonic hedgehog at the ventral telencephalon — providing the positional information that establishes the regional identities of the prefrontal, motor, somatosensory, auditory, visual, and association areas of the mature cortex. The arealization program is, in the canonical account, complete by the end of embryonic development and is not subsequently active in the mature cortex.

Abbate's claim that the arealization program is reactivated in the adult disease state and that its reactivation supplies the spatial information that guides V-SVZ-derived neuroblasts to specific cortical destinations is biologically extreme. There is, to our knowledge, no direct evidence in the primary literature for reactivation of the developmental arealization program in adult Alzheimer's disease or in any other neurodegenerative condition. The speculation rests on the suggestive geometric correlation between the spatial axes of arealization and the spatial axes along which the atypical Alzheimer's variants appear to organize themselves, but the correlation is qualitative and is potentially explicable by many alternative mechanisms that do not require arealization reactivation.

The ninth layer is, in our assessment, the weakest single component of the theory. It is, however, the layer whose rejection has the least consequence for the rest of the theory. The migration-vector account can survive without the arealization-reactivation supplement; what it loses without the supplement is the ability to predict the specific cortical destinations of the migration in different atypical variants. This is a substantial loss for the model's predictive specificity but does not undermine the architectural commitments of the lower layers.

5.6 The Causal Direction Problem with Moreno-Jiménez

A subtle but important difficulty for the model concerns the interpretation of the Moreno-Jiménez 2019 finding of approximately thirty percent reduction in immature granule neuron density at the prodromal stages of Alzheimer's disease and approximately ninety percent reduction at advanced stages, independent of regional plaque and tangle burden. The finding is, in the Llorens-Martín program's interpretation, evidence that adult hippocampal neurogenesis is impaired in Alzheimer's disease from very early stages, and the magnitude of impairment at the prodromal stage suggests that the impairment may itself be a contributor to early cognitive decline rather than a downstream consequence of late-stage degeneration.

The interpretation is broadly consistent with Abbate's framework at the qualitative level — both interpretations posit that neurogenesis is altered in Alzheimer's disease and that the alteration is biologically meaningful — but it is in tension with Abbate's framework at the quantitative level. The Abbate model requires that neurogenesis be sustained and indeed hyper-active in the niche during the period in which the pathological tau seeds are being generated and the migrating neuroblasts are serving as vectors. The Moreno-Jiménez data document not a hyper-active niche but a depleted niche, with the depletion already substantial at prodromal stages.

The interpretation available to Abbate is that the hyper-active phase precedes the depletion phase temporally, with reactive neurogenesis occurring during the preclinical decades of the disease and exhausting the stem cell pool by the time the disease reaches clinical detection. On this reading, the Moreno-Jiménez data document the post-exhaustion state and are consistent with an earlier hyper-active state that the data do not directly observe. The reading is internally consistent but requires that the bulk of the pathological tau generation occur during the preclinical decades, which is in some tension with the prion-like propagation reading of tau spread in which the propagation continues through the clinical course of the disease.

A more conservative reading is that the Moreno-Jiménez data are consistent with the Abbate framework at the prodromal stage but not at later stages, and that the model's account of tau propagation in later stages must invoke either residual niche activity in a substantially depleted population or alternative propagation mechanisms not involving fresh neuroblast vectors. The conservative reading limits the temporal window of the migration-vector mechanism to the preclinical and early prodromal stages and requires the model to invoke other propagation mechanisms — likely the classical prion-like propagation along synaptic connections — for the later stages.

The causal direction problem is, in our assessment, a moderate weakness of the model. It is not a refutation but it constrains the temporal applicability of the model's central mechanism and requires the model to be supplemented by other mechanisms for the later stages of the disease.

6. The Evidentiary Hierarchy: A Scorecard

The decomposition and assessment developed in sections three through five permit a scorecard that summarizes the grade we assign to each major claim of the theory. The scorecard uses a five-point evidentiary scale, where five denotes claims that are well established in the primary literature with multiple independent lines of confirmation; four denotes claims that are substantially supported with at least one well-developed line of evidence; three denotes claims that have meaningful support but remain contested or under-established; two denotes claims that are speculative with limited direct support; and one denotes claims that are largely conjectural and in tension with established evidence.

Layer	Claim	Evidentiary Grade	Principal Support / Tension
L1	Adult neurogenesis occurs in the human dentate gyrus	5	Spalding ^{14}C; Boldrini; Moreno-Jiménez; Tobin; Terreros-Roncal
L2	Adult neurogenesis persists at quantitatively meaningful rates in AD	3	Moreno-Jiménez shows 30%–90% reduction; tension with sustained-niche reading
L3	3R-tau in neuroblasts is biochemically near-identical to PHF tau	5	Goedert; Iqbal; Mandelkow; Brion; Anderton
L4	Chronic Aβ-driven microglia adopt IL-10/PGE2 pro-neurogenic profile	4	Rodent and in vitro support strong; human disease evidence circumstantial
L5	Pro-neurogenic microglia drive niche hyper-proliferation in AD	3	Rodent reactive-neurogenesis literature; human evidence inconsistent at advanced stages
L6	Migration stress escalates 3R-tau hyperphosphorylation to pathological levels	2	Theoretical; no direct experimental demonstration
L7	Migrating neuroblasts deliver tau seeds to distant cortical destinations	2	Mechanism under-specified; trans-cellular transfer biology not detailed
L8	Adult human V-SVZ supplies neuroblasts for long-distance cortical migration	1	In significant tension with Sanai 2011, Spalding ^{14}C, Bergmann/Frisén
L9	Developmental arealization gradients guide adult migration trajectories	1	Conjectural; no evidence of arealization-program reactivation in adult disease

The scorecard reveals a structure that is consistent with our qualitative assessment: the foundational layers of the theory (L1, L3) are well established; the intermediate layers (L4, L5) are moderately

supported; and the load-bearing premises that supply the theory's distinctive contribution (L6, L7, L8, L9) are progressively more speculative as the theory builds toward its topographic and predictive claims. The cumulative confidence in the theory's distinctive contribution is therefore the product of the individual layer confidences along the dependency chain, and the product is substantially lower than any individual high-grade layer would suggest.

The scorecard also reveals which empirical investigations would most strengthen or weaken the theory's status. Direct evidence for the sixth layer (migration stress as a tau-hyperphosphorylation escalator) would substantially strengthen the model. Direct evidence for the eighth layer (V-SVZ-derived adult migration to specific cortical destinations) would transform the model from a speculative proposal to a serious candidate framework. Conversely, definitive evidence against the eighth layer would dissolve the model's distinctive contribution to atypical and early-onset Alzheimer's disease while leaving the SGZ-derived account of late-onset Alzheimer's disease relatively intact.

7. Synthesis with Adjacent Frameworks

7.1 Nixon's Convergent Autophagic Collapse: The Killing Engine

The most productive synthesis of Abbate's theory available in the current Fischer prize corpus is with the Convergent Autophagic Collapse framework advanced by Ralph Nixon and his colleagues at the Nathan Kline Institute. The synthesis was anticipated, in skeletal form, by the existing DeepResearch review of Abbate's entry and is, in our assessment, the most consequential single integration available between members of the corpus.

The Nixon framework supplies the cellular-death mechanism that Abbate's framework systematically under-specifies. Nixon's central claim is that the proximate cause of neuronal death in Alzheimer's disease is the catastrophic failure of the cell's endolysosomal-autophagic clearance system, with the failure initiated by inhibition of the vacuolar-type H+-ATPase proton pump by amyloid precursor protein metabolites (specifically, APP-β-C-terminal-fragment, which binds the V0a1 subunit of the v-ATPase and competitively inhibits its assembly), followed by lysosomal de-acidification, the failure of autophagic clearance, the accumulation of undigested autophagic vacuoles, the development of the perinuclear "PANTHOS" morphology (a flower-like rosette of autophagic vacuoles around the nucleus), the lysosomal membrane permeabilization and cathepsin release into the cytosol, the inside-out lysis of the cell, and the deposition of the dense-core amyloid plaque from the intracellular contents of the lysed cell. The framework is etiology-agnostic at its

initiation, accommodating any of several upstream triggers (genetic mutations, APOE4 status, viral insults, metabolic stress) that can converge on the v-ATPase inhibition step.

The synthesis with Abbate is structurally clean. Abbate's framework specifies the cells in which the pathology develops (the neural stem cells and their immediate progeny in the neurogenic niches), the biochemistry that makes them vulnerable (the three-repeat-tau and GSK-3-beta machinery of the migrating neuroblast), and the anatomical trajectory by which the pathology reaches its destinations (the migration of neuroblasts through the parenchyma). Nixon's framework specifies what happens to the cells when they arrive: the autophagic clearance system, already stressed by the metabolic demands of migration and now exposed to the amyloid-derived APP-βCTF and the broader inflammatory environment of the diseased brain, undergoes v-ATPase inhibition, lysosomal de-acidification, autophagic vacuole accumulation, PANTHOS morphology, lysosomal membrane permeabilization, and inside-out lysis. The lysis releases the tau seeds that the neuroblast carried into the destination region and simultaneously generates the dense-core amyloid plaque that is observed at the destination. The migrating neuroblast, on the synthesized account, is both the carrier of the tau seeds and the source of the dense-core plaque at the lysis site.

The synthesis is structurally productive in several distinct ways. First, it supplies the cellular-death mechanism that Abbate leaves underspecified, addressing the seventh-layer weakness identified in our scorecard. Second, it explains the observed co-localization of tau and amyloid pathology in specific anatomical regions: the regions where neuroblasts arrive and lyse are the regions where both the tau seeds (delivered by the neuroblast cargo) and the amyloid plaques (generated by the lysis itself) are deposited. Third, it explains the otherwise puzzling clinical observation that anti-amyloid monoclonal antibody therapeutics fail to halt cognitive decline despite successful clearance of extracellular amyloid: under the synthesized account, the extracellular amyloid is the post-mortem residue of the cellular catastrophe, not the cause of it, and its removal does not address the upstream lysosomal failure that is the proximate driver of cell death.

The synthesized model has, in our assessment, materially greater explanatory power than either component alone. It is, however, also more empirically demanding: it requires that both the migration biology of Abbate and the lysosomal biology of Nixon be substantially correct in their load-bearing premises. The V-SVZ problem identified in section 5.1 propagates through the synthesis to constrain its applicability to the SGZ-derived medial temporal lobe pathology of late-onset Alzheimer's disease. The synthesized model is therefore most defensible as an account of late-onset Alzheimer's disease specifically, with the early-onset and atypical-variant extensions remaining speculative.

7.2 The Perineuronal Net and Adult Extracellular Matrix Substrate

A second synthesis available to the model, less prominently developed in the existing review literature, is with the perineuronal-net and adult-extracellular-matrix biology that determines the substrate through which neuroblast migration must occur. The synthesis is most directly relevant to the migration-distance problem identified in section 5.3 but has broader implications for the model's biological plausibility.

The perineuronal-net literature has been developed in the work of Fawcett, Carulli, Kwok, Galtrey, and their colleagues at Cambridge and at the Karolinska. The work establishes that the perineuronal net, a specialized condensation of chondroitin sulfate proteoglycans, hyaluronan, link proteins, and tenascin around the cell bodies and proximal dendrites of certain neuronal populations — paradigmatically the parvalbumin-positive fast-spiking interneurons of the cortex and hippocampus — constitutes a particularly inhibitory extracellular environment that constrains both the migration of cells into the protected region and the synaptic plasticity of the protected cell. The broader adult parenchymal extracellular matrix, of which the perineuronal net is a specialized local case, is similarly characterized by chondroitin sulfate proteoglycan deposition that renders the parenchyma a substantially more inhibitory migratory environment than the developing parenchyma.

The implication for Abbate's model is that the long-distance neuroblast migration the theory requires must occur through this inhibitory environment, and the biological plausibility of the migration depends on the matrix's permissiveness. The Carulli and Sorg work on matrix metalloproteinase activation in inflammatory states has documented that the matrix can be locally degraded under certain pathological conditions, with consequent loss of perineuronal net integrity and increased permissiveness to migration. The synthesis with Abbate is that the chronic amyloid-driven microglial activation of Alzheimer's disease produces sufficient matrix metalloproteinase activity to render the parenchyma permissive to the migration the model requires. Whether the actual matrix metalloproteinase activity in Alzheimer's disease is sufficient to produce the required permissiveness is an empirical question that has not been directly investigated under this framework but is amenable to experimental test.

The synthesis is theoretically attractive because it embeds Abbate's model in the broader extracellular-matrix biology of late-onset Alzheimer's disease, which is itself a developing area of investigation. The Crapser and Green work on microglial CR3-mediated phagocytosis of perineuronal nets in Alzheimer's models, the Vegh work on perineuronal net loss in entorhinal cortex layer two of AD patients, and the broader Fawcett-Sorg literature on matrix dynamics in neurodegeneration together establish a context in which the matrix substrate of Abbate's migration is not the static obstacle the canonical adult-matrix biology might suggest but a dynamically remodeled substrate under the inflammatory conditions of the disease. The synthesis does not resolve the migration-distance problem, but it provides a framework within which the problem can

be productively investigated.

7.3 The Collapse Trilogy and the AHN-as-Substrate Reading

A third synthesis, internal to the Organic Network Synthesis methodology, is with the Collapse Trilogy's treatment of adult hippocampal neurogenesis as a first-principles substrate of hippocampal pathogenesis. The synthesis has been developed in the companion paper "The Adult-Born Neuron," which treats adult hippocampal neurogenesis as the missing variable in the trilogy's account of the Phase I to Phase II transition and as the cellular substrate at which the Phase II hippocampal bridgehead consolidates.

The Trilogy synthesis differs from the Abbate synthesis in a critical respect. Abbate's framework treats the neurogenic niches as the site of pathological tau generation and the migrating neuroblast as the vector by which pathology is delivered to the rest of the brain. The Trilogy framework treats the neurogenic niche as the site at which the propagated tau seed arrives from the brainstem (via the Locus Coeruleus Bridge mechanism developed in the Bioenergetic Collapse thesis) and at which the seed is amplified by the niche's natural tau machinery and converted into the local hippocampal pathology that is the Phase II bridgehead.

The two readings are not mutually exclusive. The Trilogy reading proposes that the niche receives tau seeds from outside (from the brainstem) and amplifies them locally. Abbate's reading proposes that the niche generates tau seeds internally (from the developmental tau machinery driven by reactive neurogenesis) and exports them to the rest of the brain. The two readings can be combined under a bidirectional model: the niche receives seeds from the brainstem, amplifies them through its natural tau machinery, exports the amplified seeds via migrating neuroblasts to additional cortical destinations, and thereby serves as both an amplifier and a propagator of the pathology.

The bidirectional reading is theoretically attractive because it accommodates the established temporal sequence of Braak staging (locus coeruleus transentorhinal cortex entorhinal cortex hippocampus) under the Trilogy reading and the regional heterogeneity of atypical variants under the Abbate reading, with the niche serving as the conversion point at which the linear Braak progression branches into the regional heterogeneity that the atypical variants display. The bidirectional reading is, however, also more empirically demanding than either component reading alone and requires substantial further investigation to be defensible.

The bidirectional reading also exposes the V-SVZ problem in a new light. The Trilogy reading does not depend on V-SVZ-derived migration to atypical cortical destinations; it depends only on the SGZ niche of the hippocampus and on the established trans-synaptic propagation of tau along the perforant path and the broader hippocampal-cortical connectivity. The Trilogy reading is therefore robust to the failure of Abbate's eighth layer, while Abbate's reading is not. The combined

reading inherits this robustness for the late-onset disease while losing the early-onset and atypical-variant predictions to the V-SVZ problem.

7.4 The Llorens-Martín Program as Empirical Anchor

The fourth synthesis is with the empirical program of Maria Llorens-Martín and her colleagues at the Cajal Institute, whose work on postmortem human adult hippocampal neurogenesis in non-demented and Alzheimer's disease samples provides the principal direct human evidence for the model's foundational and persistence layers.

The Llorens-Martín program has, over the past decade, established the methodology by which adult human hippocampal neurogenesis can be reliably detected in postmortem tissue (rapid postmortem fixation under conditions preserving DCX immunoreactivity, specific antigen-retrieval and staining protocols, quantitative stereology rather than descriptive enumeration), the trajectory of neurogenesis across the human age range in non-demented controls (substantial immature neuron presence into the ninth decade with gradual age-related decline), and the dramatic and disease-stage-dependent reduction of neurogenesis in Alzheimer's disease (approximately thirty percent at the prodromal stage, approximately ninety percent at advanced stages, independent of regional plaque and tangle burden). The program has extended the findings to multiple tauopathies (Terreros-Roncal 2021) and has documented related findings in other neurodegenerative conditions.

The Llorens-Martín program is, in our assessment, the principal empirical anchor for any theoretical account that posits adult neurogenesis as a substrate of Alzheimer's pathology. Abbate's theoretical framework and the Trilogy's first-principles framework both depend on the program's empirical foundation. The program's findings are broadly compatible with Abbate's qualitative claims (neurogenesis is dysregulated in AD; the dysregulation is early; the dysregulation is independent of focal plaque and tangle burden) but are in quantitative tension with the model's requirement for sustained hyper-activity of the niche during the period of vector generation. The program's data are consistent with a model in which the niche is hyper-active during the long preclinical phase and exhausted by the prodromal phase, but the program itself does not directly observe the hyper-active preclinical phase and the inference of that phase from the post-exhaustion data is indirect.

The Llorens-Martín program is also the empirical anchor for the most clinically resonant implication of the integrated framework: the early-stage AHN deficit observed at the prodromal stage corresponds to the clinical phenotype of impaired pattern separation that the Stark Mnemonic Similarity Task documents at the same prodromal stage. The correspondence between the cellular finding and the clinical phenotype suggests that AHN collapse is, at minimum, a substantial contributor to early cognitive decline in Alzheimer's disease, whether or not the migration-vector mechanism Abbate proposes for the niche's role in disease propagation is correct.

8. Falsifiable Predictions

A theory's scientific status depends in substantial part on the falsifiable predictions it generates and on the empirical investigations those predictions invite. Abbate's theory, particularly when synthesized with the Nixon framework, generates a set of predictions whose investigation would substantially advance the field's understanding of late-onset Alzheimer's disease independently of the specific question of whether Abbate's model is correct in its load-bearing premises.

8.1 Therapeutic Predictions

The most clinically consequential prediction the theory generates is that pro-neurogenic pharmacological agents administered to patients with established amyloid pathology will accelerate rather than retard the disease. The prediction follows directly from the migration-vector mechanism: if migrating neuroblasts under the chronic inflammatory conditions of Alzheimer's disease serve as vectors for tau pathology, then pharmacological stimulation of niche stem cell proliferation in the presence of established amyloid pathology will manufacture additional vectors and accelerate the propagation of the disease. The prediction is sharp, falsifiable, and currently testable in the ongoing clinical development of pro-neurogenic compounds, of which the Biomed Industries candidate NA-831 (traneurocin) is the most advanced.

The prediction has two empirical signatures that should be distinguishable in clinical trial data. First, in patients with positive amyloid biomarker status at the time of treatment initiation, pro-neurogenic treatment should produce either no benefit or a net acceleration of cognitive decline relative to placebo. Second, in patients with negative amyloid biomarker status at the time of treatment initiation, pro-neurogenic treatment may produce the cognitive enhancement that its proposed mechanism predicts, because the migration-vector pathway is not engaged in the absence of established amyloid pathology. The differential outcome by baseline amyloid status would be a strong signature of the migration-vector mechanism and would be observable in well-stratified clinical trial data.

A second therapeutic prediction concerns the sequencing of anti-amyloid and pro-neurogenic interventions. The synthesized Abbate-Nixon framework predicts that anti-amyloid therapeutics, by reducing the chronic microglial activation that drives reactive neurogenesis, should reduce the rate of vector generation and slow the progression of tau pathology, even though they do not address the lysosomal-acidification engine that produces cellular death. The prediction is consistent with the modest cognitive deceleration observed in lecanemab and donanemab trials and predicts that

pre-treatment with anti-amyloid therapeutics before initiation of any pro-neurogenic intervention would reduce the hazard of accelerated decline. The prediction is testable in clinical trial designs that compare sequenced treatment to combined treatment.

A third therapeutic prediction concerns the targeting of microglial polarization rather than of niche stem cells directly. The framework predicts that pharmacological modulation of the microglial secretory profile toward the homeostatic configuration documented by Butovsky (Tgfbr1-Smad-dependent maintenance of P2RY12, TMEM119, SALL1, and the broader homeostatic transcriptional signature) and away from the chronic pro-neurogenic profile would reduce vector generation more selectively than direct anti-neurogenic interventions, because it would address the upstream driver of reactive neurogenesis without abolishing the homeostatic neurogenic function that the niche serves in healthy individuals. The prediction is testable through colony-stimulating-factor-1-receptor (CSF1R) modulators and through more selective microglial modulators currently in early clinical development.

8.2 Imaging Predictions

The theory generates several imaging predictions that are testable with current and near-term technology.

First, tau-PET imaging should reveal, in patients with atypical early-onset Alzheimer's variants, anatomically continuous tracts of tau pathology connecting the V-SVZ region to the affected cortical destinations, if the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration mechanism is operative. The current generation of tau-PET tracers (^{18}F-flortaucipir, ^{18}F-MK-6240, ^{18}F-PI-2620) has sufficient spatial resolution to detect such tracts if they exist at the population scale the model requires. The absence of such tracts in published tau-PET datasets across the atypical variants is a substantial empirical constraint on the model and could be interpreted as evidence against the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim. The prediction is testable through retrospective analysis of existing tau-PET datasets stratified by clinical phenotype.

Second, diffusion tensor imaging and high-resolution structural MRI should reveal, in early-stage atypical-variant patients, alterations in the white matter and parenchymal microstructure along the proposed migration paths from the V-SVZ to the affected regions. The alterations could include increased mean diffusivity reflecting matrix degradation, reduced fractional anisotropy reflecting cellular infiltration, or other signatures of altered parenchymal microstructure. The prediction is testable through retrospective analysis of existing diffusion MRI datasets and through prospective imaging protocols.

Third, novel PET tracers specific to neuroblast markers (doublecortin, PSA-NCAM) or to neural stem cell markers (nestin, SOX2) would, if available, permit direct in vivo imaging of niche activity and migration. Such tracers are not currently in clinical use, but their development is

feasible and would constitute a direct empirical test of the model's central biological claim. The prediction is testable contingent on tracer development.

8.3 Histological Predictions

The theory generates several histological predictions that are testable in postmortem human tissue.

First, immunohistochemical analysis of brain regions affected by atypical early-onset Alzheimer's variants should reveal, in the affected regions, cellular signatures of neuroblast arrival: doublecortin-positive cells, PSA-NCAM-positive cells, cells expressing the immature neuronal markers calretinin and beta-III-tubulin, and possibly cells expressing markers of the three-repeat-tau-predominant developmental state. The presence of such cells in the affected regions of atypical-variant patients, particularly in cells co-localized with hyperphosphorylated tau deposits, would be strong evidence for the migration-vector mechanism. The absence of such cells, particularly under conditions of optimized antigen retrieval and tissue preservation, would be substantial evidence against. The prediction is testable through systematic histological analysis of postmortem material from well-characterized atypical-variant patients.

Second, single-cell RNA sequencing of postmortem material from affected regions of atypical-variant patients should reveal, if the migration-vector mechanism is operative, a subpopulation of cells with transcriptional signatures consistent with the immature neuroblast or recently-integrated immature neuron state. The transcriptional signature is well characterized in rodent neurogenesis and has been increasingly characterized in human niche material. The detection of such a subpopulation in cortical regions affected by atypical variants would be strong evidence for the model. The prediction is testable through application of single-cell sequencing technology to postmortem material from carefully selected cases.

Third, ultrastructural analysis of the boundaries of affected cortical regions in atypical-variant patients should reveal, if the migration-vector mechanism is operative, evidence of recent cellular arrival: matrix metalloproteinase activity, locally degraded extracellular matrix, neuroblast-like cellular morphology in the boundary zones. The prediction is testable through electron microscopy of carefully selected postmortem material.

8.4 Comparative Disease Predictions

The theory generates several comparative disease predictions that are testable across the neurodegenerative landscape.

First, primary age-related tauopathy, on Abbate's account, should show tau pathology confined to the regions accessible by SGZ-derived short-range migration and trans-synaptic propagation: the medial temporal lobe and its directly connected regions. The prediction is broadly consistent with the established topography of primary age-related tauopathy and is therefore not a novel test but is a

consistency check. Deviations from the predicted topography in well-characterized primary age-related tauopathy cases would be evidence against the model.

Second, chronic traumatic encephalopathy, on Abbate's account, should show tau pathology at perivascular and sulcal locations corresponding to the mechanical injury sites that generate the chemoattractant signals redirecting V-SVZ neuroblasts. The prediction is broadly consistent with the established topography of chronic traumatic encephalopathy. The model further predicts that chronic traumatic encephalopathy in adult-onset cases should show evidence of V-SVZ neuroblast involvement at the affected sites, and that the absence of such evidence would be against the model. The prediction is testable through histological analysis of chronic traumatic encephalopathy material.

Third, Parkinson's disease dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies, on Abbate's account, should show evidence of neuroblast involvement in their characteristic regional pathologies. The prediction is more speculative but would, if substantiated, extend the model to the alpha-synucleinopathies and provide a unifying account of the proteinopathic dementias as configurations of a common migration-vector mechanism.

Fourth, limbic-predominant age-related TDP-43 encephalopathy (LATE), on Abbate's account, should show its medial-temporal-lobe-predominant pathology in correspondence with SGZ-derived neuroblast activity in the affected regions. The prediction is consistent with the established topography of LATE but adds the specific prediction of cellular signatures of niche activity in the affected regions, which is testable through histological analysis.

9. The Clinical Hazard: The Neurogenic Paradox

9.1 The NA-831 Concern

The clinical-hazard implication of Abbate's theory, identified in section 1.3 and developed in section 8.1, warrants extended explicit discussion. The Biomed Industries clinical candidate NA-831 (traneurocin) is an orally bioavailable small molecule that activates synaptic AMPA receptors, increases brain-derived neurotrophic factor expression, and explicitly stimulates adult hippocampal neurogenesis. The compound has progressed through Phase 1 safety trials and into Phase 2 efficacy trials for mild cognitive impairment and early Alzheimer's disease, with reported Phase 2a results showing modest improvements in cognitive composite scores. The compound is one of several pro-neurogenic candidates in active clinical development, and its rationale — that adult hippocampal neurogenesis is impaired in Alzheimer's disease and that pharmacological restoration of neurogenesis should produce cognitive benefit — is intuitively appealing and is supported by the well-documented AHN deficit in the disease.

The Abbate framework, however, predicts that the compound's mechanism of action is the opposite of therapeutic under the conditions of established amyloid pathology. The framework holds that pharmacological stimulation of niche stem cell proliferation in the presence of chronic amyloid-driven microglial activation will manufacture additional neuroblast vectors, will accelerate the migration-vector mechanism by which tau pathology spreads, and will therefore accelerate rather than retard the disease. The prediction is sharp, falsifiable, and directly testable in the ongoing Phase 2 and Phase 3 trials.

The clinical-hazard implication is that the trials should be conducted under stratification by baseline amyloid biomarker status, with particular attention to whether amyloid-positive patients experience differential outcomes from amyloid-negative patients. If the Abbate framework is correct, amyloid-positive patients should experience accelerated decline relative to placebo; amyloid-negative patients may experience the cognitive enhancement the compound's mechanism predicts; and the failure to detect this differential outcome by stratified analysis would be a missed opportunity for both the clinical trial and the theoretical evaluation of the framework.

The implication is not that the trials should be halted. It is that the trials should be designed and analyzed with explicit attention to the differential prediction the Abbate framework generates, and that the patient population should be informed of the theoretical concern as part of the informed consent process. The clinical-research ethics of proceeding with a Phase 3 trial of a pro-neurogenic compound in a population with a substantial fraction of amyloid-positive individuals, in light of the published Abbate framework and its theoretical prediction of accelerated decline in that subgroup, are a matter that the trial sponsors and the relevant regulatory authorities should address explicitly.

9.2 The Sequencing Imperative

A second clinical implication of the framework concerns the sequencing of anti-amyloid and pro-neurogenic interventions. The framework predicts that anti-amyloid therapeutics, by reducing chronic microglial activation and consequent reactive neurogenesis, should reduce the hazard of vector generation that pro-neurogenic interventions would otherwise create. The prediction implies that pre-treatment with an anti-amyloid antibody to substantially reduce amyloid burden, followed by initiation of pro-neurogenic therapy in a now amyloid-reduced state, may be a safer sequencing than concurrent or pro-neurogenic-first protocols.

The sequencing imperative is testable in clinical trial designs that compare sequenced to concurrent administration. It is also consistent, on the framework's account, with the broader Nixon-framework implication that anti-amyloid therapeutics are best understood not as disease-modifying interventions in themselves but as adjuncts that reduce the inflammatory and microglial burden under which other disease-modifying interventions must operate.

The sequencing imperative further implies that the targeting of microglial polarization, as discussed in section 8.1, may be a more selective intervention than either anti-amyloid antibody therapy or pro-neurogenic small-molecule therapy. The Butovsky-signature-restoring approach, by addressing the upstream driver of reactive neurogenesis without abolishing homeostatic niche function, would on the framework's prediction reduce vector generation while preserving the cognitive benefit that residual healthy neurogenesis supplies.

9.3 What the Theory Says About Anti-Amyloid Monoclonal Antibodies

A third clinical implication concerns the interpretation of the anti-amyloid monoclonal antibody trial outcomes. The Abbate framework, in synthesis with the Nixon framework, predicts that anti-amyloid antibodies should produce modest cognitive deceleration by two distinct mechanisms: first, by reducing the chronic microglial activation that drives reactive neurogenesis and consequent vector generation, and second, by reducing the inflammatory environment that exacerbates the lysosomal-acidification engine of cellular death. The framework predicts, however, that anti-amyloid antibodies cannot produce cognitive reversal or substantial deceleration in late-stage disease because the upstream vector-generation and lysosomal-acidification mechanisms are by that stage substantially advanced and are not directly addressed by amyloid clearance.

The prediction is broadly consistent with the lecanemab and donanemab trial outcomes, in which modest decelerations (27% reduction in CDR-SB decline for lecanemab at 18 months, similar magnitudes for donanemab) have been observed in early-stage patients without substantial benefit in more advanced patients. The framework's interpretation of these outcomes — as evidence that anti-amyloid antibodies address the upstream inflammatory driver but not the cellular-death engine — is consistent with the Nixon framework's interpretation but differs from the classical

cascade's interpretation, which would predict either larger benefits if amyloid is the proximate driver or no benefits if amyloid is unrelated to clinical decline.

The Abbate-Nixon framework therefore provides a coherent account of the modest-but-real benefits of anti-amyloid therapy and predicts that combined or sequenced approaches addressing both the inflammatory driver (anti-amyloid antibodies) and the cellular-death engine (v-ATPase-restoring or lysosomal-reacidifying agents) should produce substantially greater clinical benefit than anti-amyloid therapy alone. The prediction is testable in clinical trials of combination regimens.

10. Position in the Theoretical Landscape

10.1 Relation to the Amyloid Cascade

Abbate's theory occupies an unusual position relative to the amyloid cascade hypothesis. The theory does not deny the empirical observations on which the cascade is based — that amyloid pathology temporally precedes tau pathology in longitudinal natural-history studies, that genetic alterations in the amyloid-processing machinery are causally sufficient for disease in the autosomal-dominant forms, that amyloid clearance produces modest cognitive deceleration in clinical trials. The theory accepts these observations and proposes a different mechanism for the relationship they document.

The cascade holds that amyloid is the proximate molecular cause of tau pathology, with the causal route running through direct or oligomer-mediated activation of GSK-3-beta and other kinases that hyperphosphorylate tau in mature neurons. Abbate holds that amyloid is the upstream initiator of a different causal route: amyloid drives chronic microglial activation, which drives reactive neurogenesis at the niches, which produces migrating neuroblasts whose stress-induced tau hyperphosphorylation generates the pathological tau seeds. The two theories differ on the molecular and cellular substrate of the amyloid-to-tau conversion but agree on the global causal structure.

The theoretical move Abbate makes is therefore less radical than the entry's rhetorical framing might suggest. It is not a rejection of the cascade but a relocation of the cascade's causal route from the molecular interaction at mature neurons to the cellular-microglial-neurogenic interaction at the niches. The relocation has substantial implications — for selective vulnerability, for therapeutic targeting, for the interpretation of the temporal precedence — but it is a relocation rather than a replacement.

The implication for the theory's position in the field is that it is, in a sense the cascade's defenders should find more rather than less acceptable, a friendly amendment to the cascade rather than a hostile alternative. The cascade's empirical observations are preserved; what changes is the mechanism by which the cascade's claims are realized. The position is, theoretically, the most productive position a paradigm-shifting hypothesis can occupy: substantially novel in mechanism while consistent with the empirical observations the prior paradigm has accumulated.

10.2 Relation to Prion-Like Tau Spread

The theory's relation to the prion-like tau spread hypothesis, advanced by Diamond, Goedert, Tolnay, Holtzman, and their colleagues, is similarly subtle. The prion-like spread hypothesis holds that pathological tau, once present in a small focal location in the brain, spreads from cell to cell along anatomical connections through a templating mechanism in which donor-cell tau seeds enter recipient cells and template the misfolding of native tau. The hypothesis is well established in cell culture, in transgenic mouse models, and in primate experimental systems, and is the current field consensus on the cellular biology of tau propagation.

Abbate's theory is consistent with prion-like spread but is not reducible to it. The theory accepts that pathological tau, once present in a brain region, can propagate from cell to cell by the prion-like mechanism. The theory's distinctive contribution is in the upstream question of how the pathological tau gets to its initial cellular locations in the brain: not by templating from a single focal origin but by the migration of cellular vectors from the neurogenic niches to multiple distinct cortical destinations. The Abbate mechanism and the prion-like mechanism are therefore complementary rather than competitive: Abbate supplies the upstream cellular vector that delivers the seed; the prion-like mechanism supplies the downstream cellular-to-cellular propagation of the seed once delivered.

The complementary positioning has the implication that the empirical observations supporting prion-like spread do not, in themselves, distinguish between Abbate's account of pathology origin and the alternative accounts (cascade-driven origin, locus-coeruleus-bridge origin) that have been proposed. The distinction must be made on the basis of evidence specific to the upstream origin question — direct evidence of niche-derived vectors, evidence of migration trajectories, evidence of differential cellular biology in atypical variants — rather than on the basis of evidence about the downstream propagation biology that all the upstream accounts share.

10.3 Relation to Selective Vulnerability Frameworks

The theory's most distinctive contribution to the field is, as developed in section 4.4, the reframe of selective vulnerability. The reframe places Abbate in tension with the dominant intrinsic-property accounts of selective vulnerability (those of Mattson, Trojanowski, Spires-Jones, Polymenidou, and others) but in alignment with a small minority of accounts that have proposed exogenous mechanisms of selective vulnerability — most prominently the trans-synaptic propagation accounts (Goedert, Holtzman) and the seed-delivery accounts that emphasize anatomical accessibility over intrinsic cellular susceptibility.

The reframe is, in our assessment, the contribution most likely to survive the empirical difficulties of the load-bearing migration premises. Even on a reading of the theory under which the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim is rejected and the theory is restricted to the SGZ-derived account of late-onset Alzheimer's disease, the reframe of regional vulnerability as migration-target-determined rather than intrinsic-property-determined remains a productive theoretical move. The dentate granule cells affected by AD-related AHN collapse are, on the reframe, not selectively vulnerable in the intrinsic-property sense; they are the cells most directly exposed to the niche-delivered tau pathology by virtue of their anatomical position at the receiving end of the niche.

The reframe also has implications beyond Alzheimer's disease. The pattern of regional selectivity in other neurodegenerative conditions — the substantia nigra in Parkinson's disease, the upper motor neurons in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, the cortical-spinal tracts in primary lateral sclerosis — may be productively re-examined under a vector-and-destination framework rather than an intrinsic-property framework. The re-examination is independent of whether Abbate's specific migration mechanism is correct and represents a portable theoretical contribution to the broader neurodegeneration field.

10.4 Why the Field Has Not Adopted the Theory

A final question of theoretical positioning concerns why the field has not, as of 2026, adopted Abbate's framework despite its conceptual ambition and its inclusion in the gold tier of the Fischer Prize. The answer, on our assessment, has three components.

First, the V-SVZ problem identified in section 5.1 is widely recognized in the adult neurogenesis community, and the field's awareness that the human V-SVZ is substantially involuted after childhood is a substantial obstacle to acceptance of any framework that depends on adult V-SVZ-derived migration. The framework's distinctive contribution to early-onset and atypical Alzheimer's variants is therefore widely understood to be in tension with the established cellular biology, and the framework's defenders within the adult neurogenesis community have not articulated a defense that adequately addresses this tension.

Second, the framework is conceptually demanding in ways that the cascade and the prion-like spread hypothesis are not. The cascade requires only the acceptance of an upstream molecular cause and a downstream molecular consequence; it is mechanistically tractable in the way that molecular cell biology generally is. The prion-like spread hypothesis requires only the acceptance of a templating mechanism analogous to the well-characterized prion biology; it is conceptually anchored in a familiar biological framework. Abbate's framework requires the acceptance of a macroscopic anatomical-routing mechanism that has no direct precedent in the adult human brain and that depends on the integration of developmental biology, glial immunology, extracellular matrix dynamics, and tau biochemistry across multiple cellular and anatomical scales. The conceptual demand is greater, and the field's adoption is correspondingly slower.

Third, the framework's clinical implications, particularly the warning against pro-neurogenic therapeutics, are commercially inconvenient for the substantial fraction of the field that has invested in pro-neurogenic and neurotrophic-factor-based therapeutic development. The institutional incentives within the drug-development ecosystem of academic-industry collaboration on therapeutic candidates run against the adoption of a framework whose principal clinical implication is a warning about an active commercial program. The institutional resistance is not unique to Abbate's framework — it has been observed in the histories of many paradigm-shifting hypotheses — but it is operative in this case and contributes to the framework's slow adoption.

The combination of the three factors — empirical tension, conceptual demand, and institutional resistance — explains the framework's slow adoption without requiring the conclusion that the framework is intellectually unworthy of more adoption than it has received. The framework's intellectual worth, as we have developed throughout this paper, is substantial; the obstacles to its adoption are largely orthogonal to its intellectual worth.

11. The Verdict

11.1 Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses

The verdict on Abbate's Adult Neurogenesis Theory of Alzheimer's Disease, on the basis of the evaluation developed in the preceding ten sections, has the following structure.

The theory's foundational layers (L1 — adult human neurogenesis; L3 — biochemical convergence; L4 — microglial pro-neurogenic phenotype) are well established or substantially supported in the primary literature and constitute a credible foundation. The theory's intermediate

layers (L5 — reactive neurogenesis in AD; L6 — migration-stress tau escalation) are supported by rodent and in vitro literature but lack direct human evidence and remain partially speculative. The theory's load-bearing premises (L7 — neuroblast-as-vector; L8 — V-SVZ-to-cortex migration; L9 — arealization-program reactivation) are progressively more speculative, with the eighth layer in significant tension with the established biology of adult human V-SVZ neurogenesis and the ninth layer essentially conjectural.

The theory's principal contributions, independent of the empirical status of the load-bearing premises, are three. The reframe of selective vulnerability as migration-target-determined rather than intrinsic-property-determined is a portable theoretical contribution that survives even on a restricted reading of the theory. The integration of the biochemical convergence between developmental and pathological tau into a unified account of niche-derived pathology is a productive theoretical move that supplies a missing piece in the cellular biology of tau pathogenesis. The family-resemblance strategy extending the framework to primary age-related tauopathy and chronic traumatic encephalopathy is an ambitious theoretical synthesis that has the structure of a productive scientific research program even if its specific commitments require further investigation.

The theory's principal weaknesses are the V-SVZ problem, the trans-cellular tau transfer under-specification, and the migration-distance problem in the adult parenchyma. The V-SVZ problem is the most consequential and dissolves the theory's distinctive contribution to early-onset and atypical Alzheimer's variants while leaving the SGZ-derived account of late-onset Alzheimer's disease relatively intact. The trans-cellular tau transfer under-specification is a moderate weakness that is most productively addressed by integration with the Nixon Convergent Autophagic Collapse framework. The migration-distance problem is a moderate weakness that is most productively addressed by integration with the perineuronal-net and extracellular-matrix biology of the adult brain.

11.2 The Productive Reading

The productive reading of the theory — the reading that retains its theoretical contributions while addressing its empirical weaknesses — has the following structure.

The theory is most defensible as an account of late-onset Alzheimer's disease specifically. The SGZ niche is well established as an active site of adult human neurogenesis; the biochemical convergence is well established; the microglial pro-neurogenic phenotype is well supported in rodents and circumstantially in humans; the short-range migration of SGZ-derived neuroblasts into the granule cell layer is well established; the reactive neurogenesis phenomenon is supported in rodent models of injury and is plausibly transferable to the chronic inflammation of AD; and the trans-synaptic propagation of tau along the perforant path and the broader hippocampal connectivity provides a established route by which niche-derived pathology can reach the entorhinal cortex and the broader medial temporal lobe.

The theory is productively supplemented by the Nixon Convergent Autophagic Collapse framework, which supplies the cellular-death mechanism the original theory underspecifies. The synthesized Abbate-Nixon account supplies both the cellular origin of the pathology (the SGZ niche, with its developmental tau biochemistry) and the cellular-death engine (v-ATPase-mediated lysosomal acidification failure, PANTHOS morphology, lysosomal membrane permeabilization, inside-out lysis). The synthesized account is materially more complete than either component alone.

The theory is further productively supplemented by the Collapse Trilogy's treatment of adult hippocampal neurogenesis as a first-principles substrate of hippocampal pathogenesis. The Trilogy's bidirectional reading — in which the niche both receives tau seeds from the brainstem locus coeruleus and exports amplified seeds to the rest of the hippocampus and entorhinal cortex — preserves the Abbate contribution while integrating it with the broader Braak-staging-consistent account of brainstem-origin pathology.

The theory is further productively supplemented by the perineuronal-net and extracellular-matrix biology that determines the parenchymal substrate through which short-range SGZ-derived migration occurs. The perineuronal-net loss documented in entorhinal cortex layer two of AD patients is consistent with the local matrix remodeling required for SGZ-derived neuroblast migration into the granule cell layer to proceed in the disease state.

The integrated productive reading retains Abbate's contributions on biochemical convergence, microglial mediation, niche-origin pathology, and reframed selective vulnerability while dropping the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim, the developmental arealization speculation, and the long-distance migration framework for atypical variants. The integrated reading is, in our assessment, the strongest defensible position the framework can occupy.

11.3 Recommended Empirical Program

The empirical program that the framework most productively invites consists of the following investigations, ordered by tractability and consequence.

First, the differential outcome by baseline amyloid status in ongoing and forthcoming pro-neurogenic clinical trials should be systematically analyzed. The Biomed Industries NA-831 Phase 3 trials, in particular, should be stratified and analyzed under the explicit hypothesis that amyloid-positive patients will experience accelerated decline while amyloid-negative patients may experience cognitive enhancement. The analysis is directly testable, is in the field's current capability, and would either substantially support or substantially undermine the framework's central clinical prediction.

Second, retrospective analysis of existing tau-PET datasets in atypical early-onset Alzheimer's variants should be conducted to test for anatomically continuous tracts of tau pathology connecting the V-SVZ region to the affected cortical destinations. The absence of such tracts in the existing

datasets would be substantial evidence against the V-SVZ-to-cortex migration claim. The analysis is directly testable in publicly available imaging databases.

Third, postmortem histological analysis of brain regions affected by atypical early-onset variants should be conducted to test for cellular signatures of neuroblast arrival in those regions. The presence or absence of doublecortin-positive, PSA-NCAM-positive, or three-repeat-tau-predominant cells in the affected regions would directly test the migration-vector mechanism. The analysis requires access to well-characterized postmortem material and to optimized antigen-retrieval protocols but is technically tractable.

Fourth, single-cell RNA sequencing of postmortem material from carefully selected atypical-variant patients should be conducted to test for subpopulations with transcriptional signatures consistent with the immature neuroblast or recently-integrated immature neuron state. The technology is available, the postmortem material exists in established brain banks, and the analysis is directly tractable.

Fifth, the temporal sequencing of the niche-activity phases proposed by the framework — preclinical hyper-activity followed by prodromal exhaustion — should be investigated in longitudinal animal models of amyloidopathy with serial niche sampling. The investigation is laborious but technically tractable and would directly test the framework's most demanding claim about the temporal structure of the niche pathology.

The empirical program is sufficient to substantially constrain the framework's load-bearing premises within five to ten years of focused investigation. The program is also sufficiently independent of the framework's specific theoretical commitments that its results will be informative even if the framework itself is ultimately superseded by a different account. The program represents, in our assessment, the most productive single direction for empirical investigation in the niche-and-neurodegeneration intersection that the framework has opened.

12. Coda: The Neuroblast as Vector

The metaphor that organizes Abbate's theory — the migrating neuroblast as a Trojan horse carrying tau pathology into the unsuspecting recipient cortex — is, in the assessment we have developed, the most evocative single image to emerge from the 2022 Fischer Prize corpus. The metaphor's force is independent of the question of whether the specific cellular biology it imagines is correct in adult humans. The metaphor draws together the developmental biology of the neuroblast, the inflammatory immunology of the chronic disease state, the migration mechanics of

the adult parenchyma, the prion-like propagation of tau seeds, and the regional heterogeneity of clinical Alzheimer's variants into a single coherent image, and the image is one that the field can productively work with regardless of whether its specific biological commitments survive empirical scrutiny.

The metaphor's deeper resonance lies in what it implies about the nature of the disease. On the classical cascade view, Alzheimer's disease is a failure of cellular maintenance: amyloid accumulates because clearance fails, tau aggregates because the cytoskeletal maintenance machinery fails, neurons die because the integrated cellular machinery fails. The image of the disease is the image of a system running down, with the failure originating in the loss of homeostatic capacity. On the Abbate view, by contrast, the disease is a failure of developmental constraint: amyloid drives the reactivation of a developmental program that should be quiescent in the adult brain, the reactivation produces migrating cells with developmental tau biochemistry that should not be present in the mature brain, and the cells deliver pathological seeds to regions that should not contain them. The image of the disease is the image of a system whose developmental program has been inappropriately reactivated, with the failure originating in the loss of developmental constraint.

The two images have substantially different implications for how the field should think about the disease and about therapeutic intervention. The classical cascade view implies that the disease should be treated by restoring homeostatic capacity — by clearing the amyloid that the failing system cannot clear, by stabilizing the cytoskeleton that the failing system cannot stabilize, by supporting the cellular maintenance machinery that the failing system has lost. The Abbate view implies that the disease should be treated by restoring developmental constraint — by suppressing the reactive neurogenesis that should not be occurring, by re-polarizing the microglia that have adopted an inappropriate secretory profile, by reconstituting the parenchymal matrix that should be inhibiting the migration the disease has rendered possible.

The differential implications are, in the present state of the field, hypothesis-generating rather than prescriptive. Whether the cascade view or the Abbate view is closer to the truth is a question that the empirical program outlined in section 11.3 is best positioned to address. What is not in question is that the Abbate view supplies a frame of reference for understanding the disease that the cascade view does not supply, and that the field is enriched by having both frames available even if it should turn out that only one of them is ultimately correct.

The Oskar Fischer Prize was established to solicit such alternative frames. Carlo Abbate's contribution to the 2022 corpus is, on our final assessment, one of the most successful realizations of the prize's mandate that the corpus contains. The contribution is not without weaknesses, and the present paper has not been reluctant to identify them. The contribution is also not without strengths, and the present paper has been at pains to articulate those strengths with the seriousness they deserve. The synthesis of the strengths into the integrated framework we have developed in

section seven represents, in our assessment, the most productive theoretical position the framework can currently occupy and the position from which the most productive empirical investigations can be launched.

The neuroblast may or may not be a Trojan horse for tau. The metaphor is, regardless, a gift to the field. The image it provides — of cellular biology operating across developmental and pathological time, of microglial signaling polarizing entire cellular trajectories, of matrix biology determining what migrations are possible, of selective vulnerability dissolving into migration-target geography — is an image the field can productively inhabit while the empirical work of determining whether the specific biology is correct proceeds. The contribution of a paradigm-shifting hypothesis is not always the specific claims it advances; sometimes the contribution is the conceptual space it opens. By that measure, Carlo Abbate's Adult Neurogenesis Theory of Alzheimer's Disease has made a contribution to the Fischer corpus that the field will be working with for years to come.

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