The Racialization of the Occult in British Novels, 1850-1900

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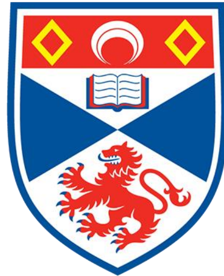

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which the occult and its practitioners are represented in British novels from 1850-1900 and asserts that their representations are racialized in each case. Specifically, this thesis analyzes how the practice of the occult is portrayed in *Cranford* by Elizabeth Gaskell (1854), *A Strange Story* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1861), *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins (1868), *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886), *Trilby* by George Du Maurier (1894), *The Blood of the Vampire* by Florence Marryat (1897), *The Beetle* by Richard Marsh (1897), and *Cleo the Magnificent* by Louis Zangwill (1899). I argue that these novels are emblematic of the ways that British novels participated in, contributed to, and commented on the racialization of the occult that occurred across different genres of fiction published in the second half of the nineteenth century, emphasizing that while individual characters are shaped more specifically by the prevailing discussions of race and the occult that existed during the time of their publication. To demonstrate how pervasive this trend was, this thesis deliberately incorporates a range of canonical and non-canonical texts across several genres that participate in the racialization of the occult, organized by the type of occult practice being racialized. This racialization is accomplished through an emphasis on five key elements regarding occult characters in the novel: physical darkness, a comparison to dangerous animals, a threat posed to the white characters, the framing of the occult character as representative of their entire race, and the eventual removal of the occult character from the story. The novels I examine here contain these elements with minor variations. They are also present in representations of different races, classes, and genders, reinforcing the association of "the Occult" with "the Other."

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Disclaimer: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the final stages of this thesis were completed in the United States. As a result, final checks of primary materials archived in the United Kingdom were not able to be performed. Despite this, I am confident in the accuracy of the information contained in this thesis.

Introduction

The practice, study, and performance of the occult were popular throughout Britain in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Séances were so popular that one woman complained to the *Yorkshire Factory Times* in 1889 that "it seemed almost an impossibility to obtain a hall for a meeting or secure a club-room," and noted that "if the spirit of the departed Brontës are floating unseen around the homes of the people, it would not be unwise of those devotees to the mysteries of séance and raps to implore these guiding stars to infuse a broader spirit of charity into the hearts of some of the local dignitaries."[1] In 1888, *The Radical Leader* reported that the practice of the occult was so profitable that a fortune teller had recently "died worth £24,000."[2] Geoffrey K. Nelson's 1969 study of *Spiritualism and Society* notes that even Queen Victoria hosted a séance at Buckingham Palace in 1846.[3] Other scholars have provided in-depth analysis as to why the occult rose to such cultural prominence during this time: Pamela Thurschwell cites the anxieties of maintaining a worldwide empire and advances in technology that allowed information to spread rapidly; Marlene Tromp adds that popularity of the occult was in response to the increase in scientific discoveries that challenged previously unshakeable dogma on the origins of Earth and mankind, particularly the proposed existence of invisible substances; and Andrew McCann notes that the occult provided a quasi-spiritual framework that offered material answers to questions about the afterlife when Christianity could not.[4]

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[1] "The Difficulty of Securing a Club-Room," *Yorkshire Factory Times,* 11 October 1889, 15.
[2] "The Confidence Trick," *The Radical Leader,* 4 August 1888, 5. This is equivalent to £3,142,896.55 in 2019.
[3] G.K. Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society* (London: Routledge, 2014; originally 1969), 17.
[4] Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Marlene Tromp, *Altered States* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006); Andrew McCann, *Popular Literature, Authorship and the Occult in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

The study of the occult's rise is categorized under what Christopher Partridge has defined as "Occulture": "the social processes by which ideas related to the spiritual, esoteric, paranormal, and conspiratorial become influential in society, central to which is popular culture, which disseminates and remixes occultural ideas."[5] Since popular culture is the widest disseminator of occultural ideas, it becomes the medium through which the public comes to understand and encounter the occult, such as in the reference to the Brontës in the public complaint against séances above. Christine Ferguson has added that the occult was "by no means the exclusive reserve of Romantic all-male secret societies or of the urban bourgeoise who formed the core membership of subsequent occult organizations [but was] available to the wider public" through advertisements, public lectures, word of mouth, "and, perhaps most of all, in the pages of popular novels, which, as the century progressed, became increasingly suffused with occult plots and tropes."[6] One such trope that appears in a wide range of popular novels is the non-white origin of the occult and its practitioners. Turbaned fortune-tellers, dark-eyed mesmerists, and mysterious alchemical masters from distant lands populate the landscape of occult fiction, threatening or assisting the white British heroes as the story demands. These fictional representations inspired real-world counterparts, as occult societies claimed Eastern origins and influences to enhance their mystical credibility, and fin-de-siècle conjurors adopted exotic costumes and stage names to create what Christopher Goto-Jones terms "a magical effect…a sense of altered reality created by the magician's performance that creates the impression that the normal rules of reality do not

[5] Christopher Partridge, "Occulture is Ordinary," *Contemporary Esotericism*, eds. Egil Asprem and Kenneth Granholm (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013), 116.
[6] Christine Ferguson, "Occult Sciences," *The Routledge Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science*, eds. John Holmes and Sharon Ruston (London: Routledge, 2014), 423.

apply to their sphere of influence."[7] These figures in turn inspired the depiction of occult practitioners in fiction.

This thesis examines the ways in which the occult and its practitioners are represented in British novels from 1850-1900 and asserts that their representations are racialized in each case. Specifically, this thesis analyzes how the practice of the occult is portrayed in *Cranford* by Elizabeth Gaskell (1854), *A Strange Story* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1861), *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins (1868), *Trilby* by George Du Maurier (1894), *The Blood of the Vampire* by Florence Marryat (1897), *The Beetle* by Richard Marsh (1897), and *Cleo the Magnificent* by Louis Zangwill (1899). I argue that these novels are emblematic of the ways that British novels participated in, contributed to, and commented on the racialization of the occult that occurred throughout the nineteenth century in Britain. To demonstrate how pervasive this trend was, this thesis deliberately incorporates a range of canonical and non-canonical texts across several genres that participate in the racialization of the occult, organized by the type of occult practice being racialized. This racialization is accomplished through an emphasis on five key elements regarding occult characters in the novel: physical darkness, a comparison to dangerous animals, a threat posed to the white characters, the framing of the occult character as representative of their entire race, and the eventual removal of the occult character from the story. The novels I examine here contain these elements with minor variations. Non-white characters who are secretly white, such as Signor Brunoni (or Samuel Brown) in *Cranford,* and Cleo the Magnificent (or Selina Kettering) in the novel of the same name, are not compared to dangerous animals but their non-white personas still fulfill the other requirements.[8] Margrave's degeneration in *A Strange Story* is

[7] Christopher Goto-Jones, *Conjuring Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 42.
[8] These are discussed in chapter four.

not characterized as representative of all white people but is framed as an inherent aspect of his lower class.[9]

By deliberating selecting novels from multiple authors publishing in different genres throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, I can prove that the shared characteristics I identify in different racialized practitioners of the occult extend beyond conventions of genre or individual style. This allows for greater precision and nuance when discussing the racialization occurring within the novels as the presence of these shared characteristics indicates that a closer examination of the racial, social, gender, and scientific discourse occurring at the time of their publication is necessary. By analyzing the historical contexts from which these novels emerged, I am able to assess to whether the portrayals of the racialized occult reiterated, complicated, or dismissed the prevailing ideas present during their respective dates of publication.

While I have selected a wide variety of texts and authors to examine in this thesis, I have necessarily had to exclude some that might otherwise be placed in conversation with those I include. The focus this thesis places on the period from 1850-1900 reflects the clearest consistent racialization of the occult and its practitioners. Earlier texts also feature racialized portrayals of occult practitioners but are removed from the cultural discourses in which the other novels I have selected participate. For example, *St. Leon* by William Godwin (1799) features Francesco Zampieri, a mysterious alchemist who imparts the secrets of immortality to the novel's protagonist. Zampieri is represented in a manner similar to Haroun of Aleppo in Bulwer-Lytton's *A Strange Story,* but Godwin's novel is more strongly influenced by the politics of the early 1800s, as evidenced by its thematic and narrative similarity to other works published at the time,

[9] This is discussed in chapter three.

such as *Bethlem Gabor* by J.D. Burk (1807) and *St. Irvyne* by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1811).[10] *Zanoni* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1842) is also excluded from this thesis despite its focus on the occult practices of two ritualistic Chaldeans, Zanoni and Mejnour. I chose to exclude this novel because the form of ritual magic represented in the text was not a popular topic of discussion either in literature or in British society at large. Notably, Bulwer-Lytton later rose to prominence in occult literary discourse among Theosophists such as H.P. Blavatsky and ceremonial occultists who came to populate secret societies like the Golden Dawn such as W.B. Yeats, A.E. Waite, and Aleister Crowley.[11] I do not directly engage with these works, nor any others after 1900, because while there is much to be explored in relation to how white occultists continued to grapple with racialized occult practice, the anxieties and cultural discourse in Britain in the lead-up to World War I are distinct from those in the time period on which I have chosen to focus. Other novels within my selected time period have been omitted for a variety of reasons. For example, *Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot (1876) participates in a similar racialization of the occult through the loosely explained powers of Mordecai Ezra Cohen who utilizes what Royce Mahawatte terms "Kabbalistic Jew-dar" to identify the spiritual potential in the titular protagonist and by extension his hidden Jewish ancestry, but these powers cannot be easily defined as a specific practice.[12] Others reiterate and compound the messages contained in

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[10] For further discussion of these ideas, see A.M.D. Hughes, "Shelley's *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyne*," *The Modern Language Review* 7.1 (1912): 54-63; Wallace Austin Flanders, "Godwin and Gothicism," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 8.4 (1967): 533-45; and Ellen Levy, "The Philosophical Gothic of *St. Leon*," *Caliban* 33.1 (1996): 51-62.

[11] For more on Bulwer-Lytton's place within these societies, see Wouter Hanegraaff, "Western Esotericism and the Orient in the First Theosophical Society," *Theosophy Across Boundaries*, eds. Hans Martin Kramer and Julian Strube, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2020), 29-64; Ingvild Gilhus and Lisbeth Mikaelsson, "Theosophy and Popular Fiction," *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, eds. Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein, (Boston: Brill, 2013), 453-73; and James Machin, "Towards a Golden Dawn," *The Victorian* 1.1 (2013): 2-13.

[12] Royce Mahawatte, "Daniel Deronda's Jewish Panic," *Queering the Gothic*, eds. William Hughes and Adam Smith, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 63.

novels that were published earlier or devoted more attention to the occult practitioner being racialized. Many of Arthur Conan Doyle's works were removed from this thesis for this reason, including *The Mystery of Cloomber* (1888) that portrays a threateningly mesmeric trio of Indians seeking revenge against a British aggressor, *The Parasite* (1894) that features a West Indian female mesmerist who drains the vitality of her male English victim, and *The Ring of Thoth* (1890) that depicts an alchemist able to extend his life through alchemical secrets from the East. Other works proved too massive to effectively compare, such as the five-part Dr. Nikola series by Guy Boothby (1895-1901) that illustrates a wide array of occult practitioners that contributed to the "yellow peril" of the fin-de-siecle but ultimately provided too much material for the purposes of this thesis.[13] All of the novels discussed in this section are supplemental to and supportive of my thesis, but I have focused on those texts that have provided the clearest and most foundational material.

In the process of examining these texts, I use several terms in this thesis which benefit from clarification, specifically the occult, racialization, and non-white. As Partridge notes "the occult" is an expansive term that encompasses the "spiritual, esoteric, paranormal, and conspiratorial," categories that are themselves unwieldly and extensive.[14] In the interest of providing a more concrete foundation for my argument, my use of "the occult" throughout this thesis refers to the engagement in a practice that produces or seems to produce a supernatural outcome. While this engagement is often deliberate, it can also be unintentional, such as Harriet Brandt's inherent mesmeric vampirism.[15] Similarly, the supernatural outcome produced may be

[13] For more on Boothby see Ailise Bulfin, "Guy Boothby and the Yellow Peril," *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* 20.1 (2015): 24-40; and Christopher Pittard, *Purity and Contamination in Late Victorian Detective Fiction* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).
[14] Partridge, "Occulture," 116.
[15] See chapter two.

either the intended goal of the practice or it may be an unintended consequence, such as the alchemical degeneration experienced by both Dr. Jekyll and Margrave.[16] Finally, as the chapter on conjurors elaborates, this definition of the occult includes those who claim to be and are perceived as supernatural through their racialized practice, as these characters elicit responses from the white characters in their respective narratives similar to those of the authentically supernatural figures in other novels.[17]

As Karim Murji and John Solomos have indicated, the term "racialization" generally refers to the process of "defining ethnic or group boundaries on the basis of race, understood as colour or biological difference" by ascribing racial identities onto a practice or belief.[18] The novels analyzed in this thesis assign characteristics specifically associated with non-white races to those who practice the occult. Furthermore, they portray the occult as originating from non-white characters and as an inherent quality in non-white races. As Victorian perceptions of and discourse about these racial groups evolved, the portrayal of the racialized occult also changed. For example, in the 1850s and 1860s, when race was thought to be a product of one's physical, cultural, and intellectual environment, the novels I examine implicitly or explicitly warn that practicing the occult can result in a fundamental shift in racial temperament, meaning that white practitioners of the occult could internalize the non-white racial characteristic associated with occult practice.[19] At the end of the century, when race was discussed as a series of inherent

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[16] Both of these outcomes are discussed in chapter three.
[17] This is elaborated in chapter four.
[18] Karim Murji and John Solomos, *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.
[19] See Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science* (New York: Archon, 1982); and Douglas Lorimer, "Reconstructing Victorian Racial Discourse," *Black Victoriana*, ed. Gretchen Gerzina (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 187-207

characteristics, the novels shift their message to warn of the inevitable threat that racialized practitioners of the occult pose to white society, whether the characters intend to or not.[20]

I use the term "non-white" throughout this thesis to refer to the diverse racial groups that were all designated as Other by white Victorians. While acknowledging that different cultures and peoples possess multiple distinctions and that a white/non-white binary categorization inherently prioritizes whiteness, I also must contend with the fact that Victorian concepts of white supremacy benefitted from portraying all other races as monolithic and interchangeable, with only minor differentiation. Some racial scientists did assemble racial hierarchies but, as I discuss in the next chapter, they disagreed on how those hierarchies should be ordered beyond the superiority they assigned to their own whiteness and the inferiority they assigned to everyone else. This homogenization of non-white races was also present among white occultists, exemplified by psychic researcher D.W. Prentiss, who, in his 1882 article on hypnotism, described how:

> the same influences which work the modern phenomena of hypnotism are undoubtedly identified with the manifestations of magic found described in ancient history. The magic of Zoroaster, the wonderful performances of the magi of the East—among the ancient Persians, Hindoos, and Egyptians—the methods of divination, the remarkable feats of the snake charmers of India and Egypt, all belong to the same category.[21]

Despite the vast differences between the civilizations and practices to which Prentiss refers, all are portrayed interchangeably. To many white Victorians, all other races were essentially the same, united by their knowledge and practice of the occult. While the designation of the occult as a non-white practice allowed it to be applied to any racial group, the novels on which I focus in this thesis specifically attribute the occult to characters from India, Arabia, the West Indies, and

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[20] See Douglas Lorimer, "Theoretical Racism in Late-Victorian Anthropology," *Victorian Studies* 31.3 (1988): 405-30; and Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
[21] D.W. Prentiss, "Hypnotism in Animals," *The American Naturalist* 16.9 (1882): 715.

Egypt, as well as to Jews, who Victorians conceived of as a racial rather than cultural group.[22] I also discuss the implicit framing of white members of the lower classes as a racial group distinct from the white upper classes in the fin de siècle.

Historical Context

The racialization of the occult that I identify in these novels is partially the result of a larger cultural movement within Britain to define the professional ideals of empirical science. Debra Schleef demonstrates that the boundaries of professionalization favored the knowledge produced by white middle-class men.[23] Heather Ellis has shown that these ideals of white middle-class masculinity became rhetorically intertwined with those of a scientific education, which Kate Hill argues was solidified in the professional sphere throughout the century.[24] As efforts were being made to produce a close relationship between white middle-class masculinity and science, Wouter Hanegraaff notes that the occult was designated as "the domain of *the Other*…imagined as a strange country, whose inhabitants think differently and live by different laws" than those who accept the type of Britishness extolled by scientifically-educated white men.[25] Some mid-century anthropologists included systems of belief in their categorization of the different races, arguing that superstitions caused verifiable physical variations that could be measured and classified, drawing from discussions of phrenology to justify their claims. As John van Wyhe has shown, early phrenological justifications "allowed Victorians to assert their hierarchical

[22] I explore the racial position of Jews more thoroughly in chapter one.
[23] Debra Schleef, "Identity Transformation, Hegemonic Masculinity and Research on Professionalization," *Sociology Compass* 4.2 (2010): 122–35
[24] Heather Ellis, "Knowledge, Character, and Professionalisation in Nineteenth-Century British Science." *History of Education* 43.6 (2014): 777-92; Kate Hill, *Women and Museums, 1850-1914: Modernity and the Gendering of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).
[25] Wouter Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3.

superiority through the language of scientific naturalism," a superiority that "encompassed…physical, mental and religious qualities."[26] In other words, the ability to effectively practice the occult was considered to be inherent in non-white races, a belief that remained constant in anthropological discussions of race even after phrenology lost popularity. Thus, as I demonstrate later in this thesis, the occult became closely associated with non-white races, positioned as separate from or even in opposition to white British citizens.

As Janet Oppenheim explained in 1985, during the Victorian era, "the lure of the occult…lay precisely in its antipathy to the strictly rational empirical outlook that was increasingly perceived as the hallmark of Victorian thought."[27] As the hegemony of science became linked to Western culture and Christianity became spiritually compromised by concession to science, the East, "ever exotic, mysterious, alien, was an escape from and an alternative to the shallow, externally-oriented culture of the West."[28] The emphasis placed on empirical science created a spiritual vacuum, one that the occult quickly filled, assisted by its purported exotic and romantic origins. Peter Lamont has argued that as public performances and personal accounts of the occult spread, the "failure of skeptical scientists to provide non-supernatural explanations of [occult] abilities revealed the profound limitations of their own putative objectivity and insistence of verifiability" that subsequently provided believers with a defense against empirical material criticism, albeit a fallacious one.[29] The exotic appeal of the mystic East revitalized spirituality, and the potential for scientific discovery drew the attention of well-known scientists and public figures, including John Elliotson, Charles Dickens, Edward

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[26] John van Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 58.
[27] Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 16.
[28] Ibid., 162.
[29] Peter Lamont, "Spiritualism and Mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence," *The Historical Journal* 47.4 (2004): 917-8.

Bulwer-Lytton, and Queen Victoria. This popularity was further enhanced by the attention of high-profile skeptics who sought to dispel the aura of mystery around the occult, including scientists like T.H. Huxley and performers like John Nevil Maskelyne. Rather than existing as an easily dismissed practice of races that were portrayed as inferior, the occult grew to become a popular aspect of Victorian society.

The growing popularity of the occult did not result in a rejection of its racial components. As I demonstrate in this thesis, non-white races were positioned as the originators of the occult, both by believers who extolled the power of these races and by skeptics who derided them as superstitious savages. This positioning of the occult as inherently non-white produced anxieties that non-white races were able to produce more powerful effects through the practice of the occult than white people were through science. As publisher Charles Bray noted in his 1866 study of telepathy:

> important news travels faster in India by Mental Telegraph than by Electric Telegraph. The results of important battles have been known for days before the intelligence could arrive by the ordinary or official means. The source of these tidings cannot be traced; the natives say 'it is in the air.'[30]

In a 1898 presentation before the Society for Psychical Research, physician and researcher J. Shepley Part declared that in West Africa "the transmission of occult intelligence by occult means is treated by the better class of natives as everyday knowledge."[31] In these texts and public addresses, occult powers that outstripped Western technology were portrayed as the norm rather than the exception, and as accounts of occult powers assigned ever-more powerful abilities to non-white races, white British anxieties intensified. While these anxieties took many forms, they can be summarized by Arthur Conan Doyle's warning to his readers at the end of his 1888

[30] Charles Bray, *On Force, its Mental and Moral Correlates* (London: Longmans, 1866), 84.
[31] J. Shepley Part, "A Few Notes on Occultism in West Africa," *Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research* 14.35 (1898): 344.

novel *The Mystery of Cloomber*. Doyle asserts that if the skeptical European "will look to the East, from which all great movements come, he will find there a school of philosophies and savants, who, working on different lines from his own, are many thousand years ahead of him in all the essentials of knowledge."[32] In short, if non-white races possessed inherently occult characteristics and the practice of the occult allowed for greater powers than the study of science, then non-white peoples posed a powerful threat to Britain and white British people. White people who sought to understand and study the occult, whether they were believers like Doyle or skeptics searching for a scientific explanation of occult phenomena, were thousands of years behind the peoples of the East, who were believed to have originated the practice.

I argue that the novels I have selected for analysis in this thesis represent attempts by the authors to grapple with these anxieties, in concurrence with Michael Austin's assertion that literature "allows us to access, store, and process the information provided to us by the world we live in…in order to resolve anxiety through the creation of narrative."[33] The narratives contained in these novels reflect the anxieties that plagued their creators, and their resolutions represent proposed solutions or warnings of consequences. For example, one of the anxieties present in Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* revolves around the appropriate role of mesmerism, weighing the benefits of its psychological insight against the troubling matter of its origin among dangerous dark-skinned peoples. The novel allows Collins to examine the various aspects of the dilemma and propose a solution within a space that Austin designates as "useful without being necessarily true," couching his proposition in the world of fiction while still attempting to impart lessons meant to reflect and shape the world outside of the novel.[34] This process of embodying

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[32] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Mystery of Cloomber* (London: Dover, 2010; originally 1888), 285.
[33] Michael Austin, *Useful Fictions* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), xvii.
[34] Ibid., xvi.

anxiety in narrative has received close critical attention in relation to the portrayal of monsters, such as the analyses of Dracula contained in Franco Moretti's 1983 essay "Dialectic of Fear," or Stephen Arata's 1996 book *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*.[35] However, as Jack Halberstam indicates in his 1995 book, *Skin Shows*, monsters operate as "meaning machines [producing] the technology of monstrosity…allowing audiences to process fears related to gendered, sexual, racial, and social differences onto which may be projected a negative identity."[36] While the novels I have selected do not feature monsters per se, all of them engage in this process of rationalization through the racialization of the occult. Since this racialization occurs as a result of an intersection between scientific discourse, racial discourse, and the portrayal of the occult in popular media, I argue that it is consistent with Christine Ferguson's assertion that studying literature allows "for new mappings of the dynamic relationship between social culture, the popular novel, and science," effectively uniting "high-brow and mass culture."[37] Since the novels draw from so many points of inspiration, they offer unique insight into the ways in which these different fields of thought overlap.

Foundation of Research

My research builds on existing scholarship that examines the relationship between the occult and Victorian society. Analysis of this scholarship revealed a paucity of attention devoted to the role that race plays in this relationship. In this thesis I begin to redress this gap. The research that has

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[35] Franco Moretti, "Dialectic of Fear," *Signs Taken for Wonders*, trans. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs, and David Miller (London: Verso, 1983) 83– 108; Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[36] Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 88; note that this book was published under Halberstam's previous name.
[37] Christine Ferguson, *Language, Science and Popular Fiction in the Victorian Fin-De-Siècle* (London: Routledge, 2006), 52.

most heavily influenced this thesis can be divided into three broad categories: that which explores the impact of the occult on society generally; that which relates Victorian discussions of the occult to social issues existing at the time but did not explicitly address the ways in which race influenced these discussions; and that which directly discusses how race influenced the depiction of the occult. The first category is occupied primarily by histories, either general ones, such as Robert S. Cox's 2003 book on American experience of the occult *Body and Soul* and Ronald Pearsall's 2004 recounting of the occult in Britain *The Table-Rappers*, or those that focus on a specific occult practice, such as Alison Winter's 1998 history *Mesmerized* or Roger Luckhurst's 2002 text *The Invention of Telepathy*.[38] These histories offer insight into how the occult intersected with the material realities of Victorian life, demonstrating the popularity of the occult and indicating the wealth of primary resources available that offer direct commentary on how certain occult practices were performed and how those practices were received by believers and skeptics alike. Due to the broader scope of these histories, they are unable to pursue every facet of their occult subjects and, while they do discuss why the occult became popular or how it related to Victorian social issues, they cannot do so comprehensively. Histories of race and the formations of racial categories, either in seminal texts, such as Christine Bolt's 1971 *Victorian Attitudes to Race* and Douglas Lorimer's 1978 *Colour, Class and the Victorians* or in more contemporary works, such as Catherine Hall's 2002 book *Civilising Subjects*, Edward Beasley's 2010 history *The Victorian Reinvention of Race*, or Satnam Virdee's 2014 text *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider,* are also integral to my understanding of race for this thesis. These

[38] Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003); Ronald Pearsall, *The Table-Rappers* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004); Alison Winter, *Mesmerized* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

texts did not however extend their scope to the ways in which discussions of the occult impacted or were impacted by the formations of racial categories that they discussed.[39]

Thus, those works that focus on the ways in which the occult was associated with other elements of Victorian life provide more nuanced analysis of how the occult shaped social discourse. For example, the collection of essays edited by Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn in 2012, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and the Occult*, offers critical insight into the ways that spiritualism and the occult were "not viewed as having been on the outskirts of society and culture, but rather as culturally central for many Victorians."[40] They, and the scholars with whom they collaborated, successfully argue that narratives surrounding Spiritualism and the occult presented "flexible allegories for many concepts that are distinctly modern" including the transmission of cultural ideals, the rise of rapidly evolving technology, and the permeability between otherwise disparate groups.[41] However, while they are able to effectively articulate how Spiritualism grew as a social movement and united with other social and progressive movements of the era to provide a quasi-secular alternative to both overly materialistic science and demystified Victorian Christianity, they do not directly engage with the occult's association with race. The essays in this collection are primarily concerned with the occult as it was filtered through the specific practices surrounding Spiritualism. As Marina Warner has shown, Spiritualism, with its focus on the séance and the manifestations of spirits within a controlled space, was largely popular among

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[39] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971); Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Satnam Virdee, *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

[40] Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and the Occult* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 1.

[41] Ibid., 2-3.

white middle class "men and women [who] were well-to-do and well connected…philanthropic and liberal," whose interest fostered "a nursery of emancipatory change in education, politics, women's status, and the approach and enterprise of scientific knowledge itself."[42] The specific history and influence of Spiritualism are distinct from more generalized occult practices, and thus lie beyond the scope of this thesis.[43] Essays in the collection that do address the occult separately from Spiritualism are more concerned with the spiritual formation of nominally occult beliefs that arose than with the connections that the expressions of those beliefs shared with contemporary racial rhetoric. For example, J. Jeffrey Franklin's "The Evolution of Occult Spirituality in Victorian England and the Representative Case of Edward Bulwer-Lytton" highlights the breadth of Bulwer-Lytton's study of occultism, but rather than exploring the similarities between his work and those of contemporary occultists or the place that race and class occupy within those works, it "theorizes a broad evolutionary model for the stages of occult spiritual discourse in England over the course of the century." Franklin's essay presents Bulwer-Lytton's works as a syncretic amalgamation of previous ideas that would later influence other hybridized forms of spirituality.[44]

Similarly, Alex Owen has produced in-depth analyses of the ways that Spiritualism and the occult engaged with the social paradigms of the Victorian era. In her 1989 work *The Darkened Room,* she demonstrates how feminized occult spaces like the séance room, the

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[42] Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 239.

[43] The work performed by Bridget Bennett and Molly McGarry in their respective texts is similarly limited. Bridget Bennet, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[44] J. Jeffrey Franklin, "The Evolution of Occult Spirituality in Victorian England and the representative Case of Edward Bulwer-Lytton," *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism and the Occult,* eds. Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 125-6. This essay is also expanded in Franklin's book *Spirit Matters* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

oracle's chamber, and the fortuneteller's parlor provided a social and spiritual structure that allowed for the advancement of women's empowerment and expression that was able to exist separately from masculinized pursuits like material science or business.[45] In her 2004 book *The Place of Enchantment*, she argues that the practice and study of the occult "not only addressed some of the central dilemmas of modernity but was itself constitutive or symptomatic of key elements of modern culture."[46] Just as this thesis concerns itself with the formation of the occult as closely associated with race, Owen's text deals with "the cultural formation of, and advances an argument about, the nature of 'the modern.'"[47] Much of Owen's methodology, grounded in textual reference and comparing the elitist structure of twentieth century "new" occultism to more democratic expressions in the Victorian period, presents a suitable framework for other research on how social issues are recontextualized within the formation of occult societies and writings, as this thesis will do. However, while Owen makes reference to the pseudo-Eastern influences that persisted in twentieth century occult societies like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, she assumes its association is readily apparent and does not delve into how that close association was forged throughout the previous century.

William Hughes' 2015 book on mesmerism, *That Devil's Trick,* provides a detailed pre-history to the work that I present in this thesis. Drawing from a deep catalogue of popular periodicals, Hughes attempts to convey "the widely disseminated cultural archive of images, reputations and fears through which the reading public may have regarded the mesmeric fictions of its day."[48] However, Hughes is primarily focused on the early years of mesmerism in Britain, detailing responses to the practice that range from 1800 until the early 1850s. His analysis is an

[45] Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
[46] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 8.
[47] Ibid.
[48] William Hughes, *That Devil's Trick* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 4.

invaluable resource for gauging the popularity of mesmerism outside of the medical field, particularly in demonstrating the delight that satirical publications took in mocking professionals who were fired for their experimentation with the practice, such as John Elliotson, but it neglects to pursue the relationship that mesmerism had with race. Esdaile's experiments in India are lightly touched upon, but their similarity to indigenous practice and the subsequent unease of the British medical community are unexplored.[49] This tumultuous and at times contradictory relationship between the power and sub-humanity of the occult and its practitioners is more thoroughly explored by Darryl Jones. In his 2009 article "Borderlands" Jones notes that fin-de-siècle gothic narratives imbricated Celtic claims of spiritual or occult power and the "monster-ization" of "the native Irish [into] terrifying beast-men…denizens of another world" that exists just alongside the logical world of Britain.[50] While Jones is focused on the representation of Celticism and its interplay with occultism, his understanding of the ways in which the portrayals of indigenous groups outside of Britain both subscribe to and are repulsed by narrative of the occult is similar to the work I undertake in this thesis.

Accounts of the place of race in the discussion of the occult that offer a more direct parallel to my own research include Patrick Brantlinger's writings on what he terms the Imperial Gothic. Older accounts of the occult's popularity often reflected James Webb's argument in his 1971 book *The Flight from Reason*, that "superstition [arises] in circumstances of anxiety and uncertainty," and that "during the 19th-century crisis of consciousness this sort of situation was the order of the day: and superstition flourished."[51] In other words, the occult's popularity was understandable, as it offered comfort in a time of seemingly chaotic change. However,

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[49] This is addressed in chapter one.
[50] Darryl Jones, "Borderlands," *Irish Studies Review* 17.1 (2009): 40.
[51] James Webb, *The Flight from Reason* (London: Macdonald & Co, 1971), xiii.

Brantlinger's formulation of the Imperial Gothic goes a step further, directly linking the portrayal of the occult in Victorian novels to "the seemingly progressive, often Darwinian ideology of imperialism [and] a seemingly antithetical interest in the occult."[52] Brantlinger argues that depictions of practitioners of the occult took on specific meaning during an era where anxieties about the state of Britain's empire flourished. Thus, fictional accounts of white characters battling against vengeful occult figures from the Orient "offer insistent images of decline and fall, or of 'civilization' turning into its opposite," and the triumph of the white characters over those racialized figures represented "a way of preventing England itself from 'relapsing into barbarism.'"[53] Rather than existing as an inevitable social occurrence, the occult was stylized to represent ongoing anxieties about the fate of the empire that culminated at the fin de siècle. I build on Brantlinger's premise to argue that practitioners of the occult were represented in a specifically racialized manner, associating Britain's imperial anxieties with a particular type of non-white occult figure who in turn could act as a representative of Otherness that plagued Victorian thinkers. I also expand his argument to include the ambiguous position that the occult occupied. The complicated relationship that science and medicine had with mesmerism, for example, reveals a more nuanced position for the occult within Victorian society than one simply emblematic of regression and barbarity.[54] Furthermore, white popular entertainers who disguised themselves as non-white conjurors for profit reveal the widespread popularity of the occult among British audiences, which similarly complicates the categorization of the occult as simply an expression of the inferior Other, even as the fiction I examine in this thesis portrays these disguised conjurors as a threat.[55] While Brantlinger is aware of these nuances and contradictions

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[52] Patrick Brantlinger, "Imperial Gothic," *ELT* 28.3 (1985): 243.
[53] Ibid., 246.
[54] This relationship is explored more fully in chapter one.
[55] This is explored in chapter four.

within imperialist rhetoric, his writing does not engage with them to the degree that I do in this thesis.

H.L. Malchow's 1996 text *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* offers a similar argument about the influence of race on the formation of Gothic imagery in Victorian novels.[56] Malchow demonstrates how popular portrayals of cannibalism, slave revolts, racially-inherent disease, and miscegenation in newspapers and religious periodicals influenced the descriptions of Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, and the Wandering Jew as supernatural representations of Victorian Others, alien and otherworldly outsiders that threaten the stability of white society. These representations were a culmination of the ways in which "the West has constructed non-European peoples as projections of its own anxieties and as rationalizations for and instruments in the extension of its economic and political power."[57] Malchow's limited scope allows for deeper exploration of similar themes. For example, while his brief examination of Harriet Brandt in Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* convincingly argues that her status as a "half-breed" positions her as a threateningly alien presence that looks like the white characters but is racially different from them, he does not connect this status to women of mixed race who I argue represent a magnified threat of femininity and blackness within the colonial imagination.[58] Instead, he connects her to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which he demonstrates was similarly influenced by reports of violent Black slaves in West Indian newspapers. This connection serves his theory but consequently leaves much of Brandt's character unexamined. Similarly, Daniel Pick examines the associations that Du Maurier creates in *Trilby* between Svengali's Jewishness

[56] H.L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
[57] Ibid., 1.
[58] This is explored in chapter two.

and his practice of the occult in his 2000 book *Svengali's Web*.[59] However, an examination of the occult is secondary to Pick's primary thesis, which analyzes film and stage portrayals of Svengali and the lasting impact that the character has had on modern culture. While the sections of Pick's book that summarize the cultural origins of Svengali overlap with my research to some degree, I am primarily concerned with how Svengali's Jewishness and his mesmerism are aligned within the novel and the anxieties that alignment reveals. Building on previous research by scholars such as Malchow and Pick allows this thesis to flesh out the relationship between race and the occult.

Christine Ferguson has also contributed important research to the study of the occult in Victorian culture. Her 2012 book *Determined Spirits* is particularly relevant as it charts the relationship that formed between discussions of race and Spiritualist practice in many of the same ways that I do about other occult practices in this thesis. Ferguson argues that Spiritualism "incorporated traditional and emergent paradigms of biological determinism, hereditary fatalism and racial destiny" and had a heritable racial component that could be identified by external racial factors.[60] Ferguson also argues that Spiritualism operated as a "controversial form of popular utopianism whose followers maintained that natural selection alone was not a sufficient mechanism for bringing the human race to its optimal stage," supporting her argument that while Spiritualists championed social equality, their beliefs mirrored eugenic utopianism and "worked to naturalise rather than dissolve the oppression of minorities."[61] However, Ferguson's focus on Spiritualism produces different conclusions than I reach in this thesis. These differences primarily emerge because Ferguson's research is centered around mediumship, an enterprise that

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[59] Daniel Pick, *Svengali's Web* (London: Yale University Press, 2000).
[60] Christine Ferguson, *Determined Spirits* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 4.
[61] Ibid., 10.

she notes was primarily performed and governed by white people who argued that their powers were not the products of "revelation, piety or rigorous practice, but rather of evolutionary destiny and inherited capacity,"[62] which necessarily relies on concepts of racial essentialism, biological determinism, and biofatalism. For example, she asserts that attacks from the medical community questioning the sanity of Spiritualist leaders resulted in narratives of spiritual authority by virtue of mental inferiority.[63] This narrative was extended as a justification of the supposedly inherent spiritual power wielded by non-white races, as the mental deficiencies that white anthropologists and racial scientists assigned to non-white races were used as evidence that they were more attuned to the spiritual world rather than the physical one. These findings parallel the anxieties I have found in my research regarding the knowledge of the occult supposedly present among non-white races. However, outside of the context of Spiritualism, the framing of this inherent ability differs significantly. As I demonstrate, the occult power wielded by non-white races was primarily feared rather than celebrated, and its potential usefulness was outweighed by the threat it represented. Ferguson's analysis of Spiritualist arguments in favor of interracial mixing also radically differs from the anxieties surrounding miscegenation that I have found to be prevalent in the literature and scientific discourse of the nineteenth century. By closely examining the similarities between Spiritualism and eugenic utopianism, Ferguson's study exposes a gap between the proclaimed social ideal of the Spiritualist movement and reality but does not fully contend with the racial ideas presented outside of Spiritualism.

In this thesis, I address the gap in scholarly research that has been left by the work of these scholars. While some have connected depictions of the occult to race, I am not aware of any other monograph-length exploration of the place that race holds in the construction of the

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[62] Ibid., 14.
[63] Ibid., 48.

occult in Victorian novels or of the role of the occult in the construction of race in Victorian fiction. Similarly, while other scholars may relate how race is incorporated into discussions of a single occult practice, such as mesmerism, I have not encountered any studies examining the relationship between multiple practices as I do here. Most contemporary scholars focus their research within the confines of Spiritualism and only briefly discuss its relationship with race. This gap does not exist without reason. The occult occupied a liminal space within British society, accessible across class lines, and became closely associated with occasionally conflicting social movements that championed changes to perceptions of race, gender, imperialism, and social order. This ambiguous position is exemplified in an 1889 letter from eugenicist Francis Galton to Frederick Myers, the founder of the Society for Psychical Research, in which Galton expressed his frustration at being unable to easily study the amorphous occult. He drew a large X to illustrate his frustration that the knowledge they sought as psychical researchers was in "a position just at the meeting point of three or four different specialties and consequently it is hard to find persons whose previous pursuits would make them justly critical."[64] In 1898, anthropologist Andrew Lang confirmed that the process of deciphering precisely how the occult was viewed in Britain was complicated by the fact that it was "unusual for European travellers and missionaries to give anecdotes which might seem to 'confirm the delusion of benighted savages.'"[65] The occult was associated with "delusion" and "savagery" to such a degree that white British people hesitated to openly endorse it. This hesitation to embrace the label of the occult for fear of being associated with practices considered "savage" both reinforced the association between savagery and the occult and obfuscated how practices that

[64] Francis Galton, Letter to Frederick Myers, 11 February 1889, Myers Papers, Wren Library, Trinity College, 2/63.
[65] Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion* (London: Longmans 1898), 79.

would otherwise be considered occult may have been incorporated into Britain outside of Spiritualism. Thus, the full scope of the occult's relationship with race and British society is not easily defined and extends beyond the confines of this thesis.

Scope of Research

In developing my argument for the racialization of the occult in Victorian Britain, I have drawn evidence from a wide variety of primary sources. To access these sources I have made use of the Gale Collection of Nineteenth Century Newspapers, the Hertfordshire County Record Office, the Dolph Briscoe Center, the British Library, Dr. Williams' Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Special Collections Libraries at the University of St Andrews, University College London, and the University of Edinburgh. The archives at each of these institutions have provided an invaluable resource of newspapers and periodicals from across the political spectrum, ranging from local or privately-owned weekly publications to nationally syndicated periodicals, including those produced in other countries and distributed across the Empire. The findings presented in the official proceedings of scientific societies, primarily distributed to official members, offer insight into the scientific and cultural discussions of the day. These findings were also included in journals and magazines intended for a broader public audience, in satirical articles or cartoons in magazines such as *Punch,* in light-hearted commentaries in entertaining periodicals such as *The Boy's Comic Journal,* or in thoughtful descriptions in leisure magazines intended for the middle class such as *The Edinburgh Gentleman's Journal*. Bernard Lightman has shown that many of the articles concerning scientific discourse in popular periodicals were written by the same people publishing their findings in scientific journals "in an attempt to create a wider base of educated readership whose interest in science was vitally

important to its survival."[66] Professional journals also provided an international perspective, as medical journals in Britain, France, and the United States were often in conversation with one another, debating the same ideas and reprinting whole articles.

While I have narrowed my focus to discuss the perceptions of the occult in Britain specifically, the topics addressed by the novelists I examine in this thesis, such as mesmerism, were being discussed on a global scale. I place publications that dealt with scientific theories in conversation with publications by occult societies that were meant for internal debates or broader distribution. The official proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research resemble the discursive and referential format of publications distributed by other scientific organizations, such as the Ethnological Society, for example, but they addressed the same subject matter as *Light*, the magazine published by the Theosophy movement for disseminating their spiritual ideas. These sources in turn directly or indirectly engage with the ideas being put forward by Christian periodicals, which reported on missionary work abroad, commented on spiritual topics within Britain, or reprinted sermons delivered from the pulpit. Beyond the available periodical sources, I negotiate the space between authoritative and formal sources such as reports to Parliament, published manuscripts, travelogues, official biographies, treatises, and reprinted lectures and more personal, informal accounts such as diary entries, memoirs, and letters in order to develop a multifaceted argument about the different ways that race and the occult were being discussed in public and in private. Despite the variety of sources examined in this thesis, I do not claim that the thesis is exhaustive in its scope. Rather, it indicates that this is a rich field of inquiry inviting further research.

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[66] Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 423.

I have selected texts for this thesis that have garnered a range of critical attention. Some, such as Gaskell's *Cranford* and Collins' *The Moonstone,* have a significant body of scholarship devoted to them, while others, such as Zangwill's *Cleo the Magnificent*, have comparatively little. I have selected these canonical and non-canonical novels in order to investigate a diverse range of writers and ideas to provide a more nuanced and multifaceted picture of the complicated cultural landscape from which they emerged. The novels that I have selected draw clear parallels between racial, scientific, and occult discourse in the Victorian era and the narrative they portray. As I elaborate in the Chapter Outline below, I have addressed texts from the middle of the century along with those from the fin de siècle, examining the changes that occur over time and to expose what remains constant in the racialization of the occult. I was unable to explore this exposition in the second chapter, which engages with portrayals of female mesmerists, because female mesmerists were not portrayed in novels earlier in the century. Instead, this chapter examines the differences between the portrayals of different races and how they were impacted by the scientific and popular discourses at the fin de siècle and how those discourses changed when discussing gender.

I do not directly engage with Spiritualism in this thesis as Spiritualism has a specific history in Britain, and other scholars have produced numerous studies exploring this history and its specific manifestations in Britain.[67] Bridget Bennett explains that Spiritualism was a "complex transatlantic process of diffusion and mutual commerce between its many cultural locations," separate from the portrayals of the occult that I examine in this thesis.[68] Spiritualism's

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[67] See Vieda Skultans, *Intimacy and Ritual* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974); Leigh Wilson, *Modernism and Magic* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013); and Simone Natale, *Supernatural Entertainments* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016)
[68] Bridget Bennett, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 31.

focus on mediumship and manifestation results in differing interpretations of race as demonstrated by Ferguson's 2012 book, which does not directly address the racial anxieties that I cover in this thesis. Instead, I focus on the practice of the occult, a broader term that Hanegraaff has shown was "liberally applied in the Victorian period to a dizzying gamut of old and new magical practices, including divination, mesmerism, geomancy, clairvoyance, palmistry, alchemy, tarot reading, ceremonial magic, astral projection, kabbalah, necromancy, angel invocation, demonology, astrology and many others," the ambiguously categorized practices that existed outside of Spiritualism's codification.[69] By moving away from Spiritualism into this broader space, I am able to not only establish a unique perspective on the relationship between the occult and race in Victorian Britain, I am also able to offer further insight into discussions of that relationship by investigating iterations that fall outside the purview of Spiritualism. I also do not engage with texts that explicitly feature monsters, such as werewolves, the reanimated dead, or ghosts. Monster fiction does provide insights into racial discourse and, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has shown in his 1996 book *Monster Theory*, it often contains similar themes to those explored in this thesis.[70] However, this thesis focuses directly on portrayals of human practitioners of the occult. More than racialized metaphors, the characters that I analyze in this thesis are portrayed as actual members of their race who act as representatives of the rest. Many of them are monstrous or possess powers beyond normal humans, such as the shape-shifting Beetle in Marsh's novel, but they are human. Harriet Brandt, the vampiric woman of mixed race from Marryat's novel, is perhaps a controversial addition in this regard as she is repeatedly referred to as a vampire. However, as Helena Ifill has demonstrated, Brandt is a psychic vampire

[69] Wouter Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 234.
[70] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)

who draws from the energy of those around her, distinguishing her from the typical vampiric trope associated with blood-sucking monsters.[71] By focusing on characters who are aligned with a particular race, I am able to comment directly on the social and scientific discourse surrounding that race during the Victorian era rather than relying exclusively on metaphorical representation.

This thesis is historical and textual in its approach. My conclusions are drawn from evidence presented in the novels, which are placed in historical context provided by primary source documents and supplemented by current arguments in secondary research. My approach to these texts has also been shaped by certain post-colonial theories, particularly the discourse provoked by Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*.[72] Said argues that representations of the East operated as a "Western methodology for domination, restructuring, and maintaining authority over the East."[73] By asserting that the representations of the imagined Orient they presented were legitimate and totalizing, Western intellectuals could position themselves as the rightful authorities of knowledge about the East and its rightful rulers, accomplished by establishing "a system of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')."[74] While Said's seminal text has been criticized for its theoretical shortcomings, and its theoretical implications are not explored in this thesis, the core of his theory is particularly relevant when discussing the racialization of the occult in Victorian fiction.[75] The occult is inherently strange and Other, a

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[71] Helena Ifill, "Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*," *Victorian Popular Fiction* 1.1 (2019): 80-99.
[72] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[73] Ibid., 3.
[74] Ibid., 43.
[75] For a sampling of criticism of Said's limitations, see Robert J.C. Young, *White Mythologies* (London: Routledge, 1990); Patrick Brantlinger, "Nations and Novels," *Victorian Studies* 35.3 (1992): 255-75; Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

distinct entity that is oppositional to the familiar. By closely associating the occult with non-white races, who in turn are portrayed as a danger to white British people by virtue of that association, the novels I address in this thesis define those races as a threatening Other. In addition, Patrick Brantlinger's *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies* has informed my readings of fin-de-siècle novels as navigations of anxieties regarding the potential collapse of the British Empire as well as the sense of imperial guilt and moral crisis that facilitated these anxieties.[76] The work of Robert J.C. Young has also been beneficial to my discussion of the racial ambiguities present in Victorian depictions of miscegenation.[77]

Chapter Outlines

In each chapter of this thesis, I discuss a different form of occult practice and how it is racialized in the selected novels. In the first chapter I focus on mesmerism, specifically the ways in which Wilkie Collins' 1864 novel *The Moonstone* and George Du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby* present opposing arguments regarding the position of mesmerism within Victorian society.[78] Ultimately, Collins' novel argues that despite its non-white origins, mesmerism offers advantages not otherwise available, and its proximity to occult practice is justified or will be justified in the near future if approached in a manner that reflects Britain's scientific values. Du Maurier's novel contends that while some medical benefit is possible through mesmerism, it is outweighed by the threat of mesmerism that is compounded by the untrustworthy non-white practitioners who wield

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[76] Patrick Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009)

[77] Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[78] The term 'mesmerism' refers to a practice that carried several different names during the Victorian period, including Animal Magnetism, Mesmerism, and Hypnotism. For the sake of clarity, I primarily refer to mesmerism, save for direct quotation or when briefly discussing the attempted division of hypnotism as a separate practice.

it. Both of these arguments reflect the debates that circulated in Britain at the time of their writing. I contextualize these novels within a history of mesmerism, explaining what mesmerism is, how it came to Britain, and why it was initially perceived as potentially useful within the British medical community, before exploring the concerns regarding the similarity of medical mesmerism to occult practices that were conceived of as inherently Indian. I argue that *The Moonstone* attempts to justify the medical usefulness of mesmerism while simultaneously dismissing the more occult aspects of its practice as residual elements of a non-white culture by positioning Ezra Jennings, a biracial doctor's assistant with a British education, as the ultimate savior of the novel, albeit one who must die to preserve the social order. I then offer a historical perspective on how the discussion of mesmerism took shape in the 1890s, specifically focusing on the failure to separate a medical practice of mesmerism from a spiritual practice, the anxieties that followed from the revelation that susceptibility to mesmerism was not dictated by internal character, and the persistent belief that Jews were the original disseminators of mesmerism and dangerous to British society. I then argue that the character of Svengali in *Trilby* unites these elements to portray a new form of racialized mesmeric threat present at the fin de siècle.

The second chapter focuses on a subset of racialized mesmerism, specifically how its representation in female characters at the fin de siècle changes depending on their race. The chapter begins with a short discussion of how occultists believed mesmerism operated as an exchange of superfine magnetic fluid between the mesmerist, commonly referred to as the "operator," and the mesmerized, commonly referred to as the "subject." Men, portrayed as having a greater abundance of this fluid, were usually positioned as operators, and women, believed to have less fluid, were usually subjects, establishing a physio-spiritual equilibrium between them wherein men provide energy to otherwise energy-deficient women, and women

provide an outlet to receive the energy that would otherwise overwhelm men. However, Charles Wilkins Webber and Helena Blavatsky both identify the possibility of outliers who disrupt this equilibrium, either filled with an unhealthy abundance of power or acting as psychic vampires who draw the vital fluid from others. Both types of outliers are characterized as aberrant manifestations of femininity, either driven to malevolent outbursts of power over men who would otherwise fulfill a dominant position or so deficient that they passionately consume the life energy of those around them. The connection between this public discourse on mesmerism and fictional representations is made apparent in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire,* which feature these extremes of female-centric mesmerism. The former is embodied in Marsh's shape-shifting Egyptian and the latter in Marryat's sympathetic portrait of the Jamaican Harriet Brandt. While the imbrication of Brandt's gender and her psychic vampirism has already been examined, by scholars such as Ardel Haefele-Thomas in their interrogation of her queer-coding, and by Octavia Davis in her argument that Brandt is a warning against occult miscegenation, my analysis of her as a specifically mesmeric vampire uniquely draws her into conversation with the portrayal of the Beetle's mesmerism.[79] I argue that the manifestations of mesmerism in these characters are directly informed by perceptions of their race, drawing from public and scientific accounts that portray Egyptian women as aggressive and masculine and those that portray Jamaican women as inherently consuming and lethargic. The descriptions of both the Beetle and Brandt incorporate anxieties of the fin de siècle into the racialized characterizations of their mesmerism, resulting in an imbrication of gender, race, and the occult in the novels.

[79] Ardel Haefele-Thomas, *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic: Transgressing Monstrosity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002); Octavia Davis, "Morbid Mothers," *Horrifying Sex*, ed. Ruth Bienstock Anolick (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 40-54.

The third chapter pertains to the practice of alchemy and the intersections of race and class in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1862 novel *A Strange Story*. Bulwer-Lytton's villainous Margrave seeks to unlock alchemical secrets in order to achieve immortality, resulting in the alchemist becoming a racialized, more primitive being than his former self. I argue that the racialized depictions of this character's transformation is influenced by discussions of race that occurred around the time of the story's publication. Specifically, by examining the discussions promoting the necessity for an occult elite among Bulwer-Lytton's social network, I contend that his novel draws from anxieties about the uncertainty of the role of race in the changing social, cultural and economic environment of the nineteenth century in order to assert that alchemy, presented as a spiritual rather than a physical process, is a practice reserved for the educated and cultured elite. To elaborate the degree to which these societal factors influenced the portrayal of the racialized alchemist, I draw from the narratives of white supremacy that emerged out of fin-de-siècle theories of inherited racial characteristics to demonstrate how these narratives are altered at near the end of the century by analyzing the differences between Bulwer-Lytton's text and Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. While Stevenson's text is less explicit than Bulwer-Lytton's, alluding to Jekyll's pursuit of spiritual pursuits that are dismissed as "unscientific balderdash" by his colleagues rather than stating that he is practicing alchemy, the mysterious processes he uses in an attempt to separate the good and bad qualities of his soul reflect the same elements of spiritual alchemy elaborated on in *A Strange Story*.[80]

The fourth chapter examines literary representations of conjurors, white performers who participate in what Thomas Recchio defines as "the violation of social decorum through the

[80] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12.

deployment of orientalist imagery," adopting non-white occult personas to profit from that portrayal.[81] I investigate the ways in which these performers perpetuate the racialization of the occult, particularly in Elizabeth Gaskell's 1853 novel *Cranford* and Louis Zangwill's 1899 novel *Cleo the Magnificent.* While the personas of the conjurors are fabrications, they are presented as authentic in the narratives of the novels. I argue that the framing of the conjurors' actions, to not disclose the performativity of their personas, is significant because the perceived threat they pose and the anxieties they provoke extend from others believing that they are authentically non-white. Furthermore, I contend that the two novels direct differing levels of criticism at the performers they portray. *Cranford*'s mild criticism for a performer who fails to disclose the performativity of his persona and its focus on an audience that should know better than to believe in the powers of a racialized occult performer suggest that the threat and associated anxieties surrounding these performers were in their infancy. *Cleo*'s intensified criticism for the non-disclosing performer, emphasizing her predation on someone who is infatuated with the occult through her self-styled racialization, demonstrates a concern that the intended audience for a performance of an occult persona is unable to see the truth. Both novels ultimately suggest a dismissal of the non-white occult in favor of engagement in middle-class domestic work.

The portrayals of the occult and occult practitioners described in each of these chapters illustrate how the occult is racialized in Victorian British novels. The five elements of racialization I identify, which are emphasizing the occult character's physical darkness, comparing the occult character to dangerous animals, portraying the occult character as a threat to the white characters, framing the occult character as representative of their entire race, and eventually removing the occult character from the story, demonstrate the core commonalities in

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[81] Thomas Recchio, *Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford* (London: Routledge, 2016), 57.

these occult constructions, the pervasiveness of which are revealed by the breadth of this racialization across Victorian divisions of race, class, and gender. If previous discussions of the occult have been undermined by what psychical researcher E.R. Dodds termed "its unknowable and destructive nature…[its] defiance of intellectual examination," my thesis provides new opportunities for discussion and contributes new knowledge about the intersection of race and the occult in Victorian Britain.[82]

[82] E.R. Dodds, *Missing Persons* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1977), 96.

Chapter 1: Mesmerism, *The Moonstone*, and *Trilby*

In support of my thesis that the occult was racialized in Victorian British literature, this chapter examines how mesmerism is racialized in Wilkie Collins' 1864 novel *The Moonstone* and George Du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*.[83] These novels portray the racialization of mesmerism by emphasizing the physical darkness, inhuman or animalistic qualities, and threatening behavior of its practitioners that necessitates their elimination from the narrative. Since these characters are the sole representatives of their race in the novels, they become generalized portrayals of the entire group of people or culture the occult mesmerist represents. The anxious reactions of the white characters toward the non-white mesmerist are presented as reasonable fears toward inherently dangerous racial groups.

The portrayals of mesmerism in these novels reflect the debates that circulated in Britain at the time of their writing. This chapter begins with a history of mesmerism that focuses on the responses of the medical community to mesmerism in order to provide evidentiary support for my thesis and context for the novels. The history recounts the initial positioning of mesmerism in Britain as a method used by white physicians which originated from the theories of the German doctor for whom it is named. I then examine how that position was subsequently challenged by both occultists and physicians who asserted that the knowledge and practice of mesmerism are inherent parts of occult spiritual rituals passed down from ancient non-white peoples including Indians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Jews, who preserved that knowledge for centuries. I argue that these tensions and racialized perceptions of the occult are reflected in *The Moonstone*. Collins' novel implicitly accepts that the origins of mesmerism are linked to a non-

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[83] The term 'mesmerism' refers to a practice that carried several different names during the Victorian period, including Animal Magnetism, Mesmerism, and Hypnotism. For the sake of clarity, this chapter will primarily refer to mesmerism, save for direct quotation or when briefly discussing the attempted division of hypnotism as a separate practice.

white engagement with the occult. However, the novel asserts that the medical usefulness of mesmerism transcends the nebulously occult spiritual aspects of the practice associated with non-white practitioners. These spiritual elements are dismissed as superstitious by characters in positions of authority and prove ineffectual in finding the titular gemstone. In the novel, three Brahmins embody mesmerism's occult origins: dark, dangerous, and devoted to an occult spiritual enterprise. Ezra Jennings, the doctor's assistant of biracial parentage, offers an example of the advantages of mesmerism and its possible role in British society if mesmerism could be exercised in a more scientific (and less occult) manner, combining the supposedly inherent ability to perform mesmerism of a non-white existence with white education and respectability. The uncertainty and perhaps infeasibility of this idea are embodied in Jennings' death, illustrating that Victorian Britain was not yet ready to accept mesmerism but might in the future.

While Collins' novel emerges from the cultural discussions of mesmerism in the 1860s, the history of mesmerism shows that these discussions in Victorian society, and the racialization of mesmerism to which they contributed, continued into the 1890s when *Trilby* was written. I argue that as efforts to separate a medical practice of mesmerism from a spiritual practice failed, new anxieties followed from the revelation that susceptibility to mesmerism was dictated by the psychological suggestions of the mesmerist and not by the subject's internal character. The chapter presents evidence that some of these anxieties result from a racialized belief that Jews were among the original disseminators of mesmerism and therefore dangerous to British society. These elements are examined through the character of Svengali in *Trilby*, illustrating the persistence of a racialized vision of mesmerism from the 1860s to the end of the nineteenth century.

History of Mesmerism

Mesmerism is named after the German doctor Franz Anton Mesmer. In 1778, Mesmer traveled from Vienna to Paris to promote his theory of a superfine magnetic fluid:

> A fluid which is universal and so continuous that it cannot suffer void, subtle beyond comparison and susceptible to receive, propagate and communicate every impression of movement…[which] particularly manifests itself in the human body with properties analogous to a magnet; there are poles, diverse and opposed, which can be communicated, changed, destroyed and reinforced…at a distance.[84]

Mesmer claimed that this universal fluid controlled and connected everything from planetary movements to physical health. Thus, he argued that by willfully transferring the flow of this fluid from one person to another, focusing on the "poles" located within the human body, he could cure mental and physical diseases.[85] While both the Faculté de Médicine and the Societé Royale de Médicine rejected Mesmer's findings due to a lack of empirical evidence, mesmerism remained popular into the early nineteenth century, particularly among physicians who gave public demonstrations.[86]

One of these physicians was Jules Denis, Baron Dupotet de Sennevoy, a Parisian physician who operated a free clinic where he regularly practiced mesmerism. His reported success brought him to England, where he quickly revived and popularized mesmerism through further experiments at University College Hospital in London. These experiments instigated numerous discussions on an international scale as to whether mesmerism was a medical miracle, a form of occult spectacle, or some combination of both. Long letters to scientifically-minded

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[84] Franz Anton Mesmer, *Mesmerism: The Discovery of Animal Magnetism (Mémoire Sur La Découverte Du Magnétisme Animal)*, trans. V. R. Myers (Boulder: Soul Care Publishing, 2016), 15.
[85] Ibid., 15
[86] For a more in-depth study of these examinations by French scientific bodies, see Maria M. Tatar, *Spellbound* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); and for more on the spread of mesmerism within France, see Nandor Fodor, *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science* (London: Arthurs Press Limited, 1933); Alison Winter, *Mesmerized* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Antonio Melechi, *Servants of the Supernatural* (London: Arrow Books, 2008).

publications like *The Lancet*, were then republished by newspapers, such as *The Weekly True Sun,* and by professional periodicals, such as *The American Journal of Medical Science*. Editors disagreed as to the status of mesmerism's veracity.[87] *The Weekly True Sun* declared it an "exploded pseudo-science" while *The American Journal of Medical Science* noted "that some very distinguished men of capital have become converts [to mesmerism]" – but mesmerism's popularity as an anesthetic continued to grow.[88] The Académie de Médicine even reversed its position after witnessing the successful removal of a woman's breast by French mesmerist and surgeon Jacques Clocquet, publishing a favorable report that was later translated and published by Scottish mesmerist and barrister John Colquhoun.[89] In October of 1837, *The Times* reported that crowds of nearly forty or fifty people would flock to Dupotet's public demonstrations, wherein he would appear to exercise power over his subjects by performing a series of 'passes' over their bodies.[90] A letter to an editor of *The Lancet* describes these passes when relaying how Dupotet mesmerized an epileptic young woman "with the waving motion of his hands" over her face and arms, adding the he "also – *Honi soit qui mal y pense* – in a later stage of the performance, touched her knee, through the clothes…as if he was intending to keep up an electrical communication."[91] These passes allegedly allowed for the transference of Mesmer's

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[87] Logie Barrow provides a convincing explanation for the acceptance of a supposedly invisible substance that controls the balance of the universe among Victorian scientists in *Independent Spirits* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986). He cites the increased number of accepted and unaccepted discoveries that similarly claimed to operate invisibly and at a distance, such as electricity or helium, which necessitated the personal tests noted by Winter. This explanation is congruent with Robert Darnton's claim in *Mesmerism at the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968) that public demonstrations of mesmerism eroded the division between science and pseudo-science.

[88] "Animal Magnetism," *The Weekly True Sun*, 10 September 1837, 1685; "Animal Magnetism," *The American Journal of Medical Science* 22 (1838): 507.

[89] John Colquhoun, *Report of the Experiments on Animal Magnetism...* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1833). The report notes that the surgery was a success due to the fact that while the patient, Madame Plantin, did die shortly after its completion, she reportedly felt no pain throughout.

[90] "The Animal Magnetism Fraud and Humbug," *The Lancet*, 1 December 1838, 380.

[91] "Animal," *Weekly*, 1685.

proposed fluid from Dupotet to his patient, allowing him to put her into an almost comatose state of total insensibility. The onlookers were invited to test her consciousness and "proceeded to pinch her hands, each harder than his predecessor, and forced snuff up her nostrils at an unmerciful rate, as each surmised his rappee was stronger than his neighbour's…next shaking her and shouting her name in her ear."[92] Alison Winter notes that tests of a mesmeric subject's insensibility were common among these performances:

> The mesmerist and audience members fired pistols near the subject's ears, pricked her skin with needles, and waved smelling salts beneath her nostrils. There were crueler tests, too: acid poured on her skin, knives thrust under her fingernails, electric shocks run through her arms, and noxious substances placed in her mouth – vinegar, soap, or even ammonia.[93]

While mesmerism also produced a variety of other phenomena, including somnambulism and answering questions while in a trance, this supposed insensibility was the element of mesmerism that proved most interesting to British medical professionals who began to experiment privately with mesmerism.

One of these experimenters was George Sigmond, a physician who wrote to *The Lancet* stating that he "commenced [his] series of experiments…imitating the actions of the Baron" and was able to mesmerize his patient, a woman he had "on former occasion attended…aware of the natural strength of her constitution and the absence of nervous temperament." [94] His letter notes that he was able to produce "a most singular appearance of suspended animation…in the presence of many medical men…in which pain is scarcely felt."[95] He describes his initial hesitation "to make my observations at all public, because I thought I might be accused of…investigating a subject which rather belonged to the community than to the

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[92] Ibid., 1685.
[93] Winter, *Mesmerized*, 3.
[94] "Animal," *American*, 507; Ibid., 508.
[95] Ibid., 508; 509.

profession…addressed to the popular feeling so easily excited, rather than to the calm and dispassionate consideration of the followers of science."[96] Sigmond cites the contemporaneous work being done by other illustrious and scientifically-minded men experimenting with mesmerism including John Elliotson, Earl Stanhope, and Herbert Mayo and concludes with a hope that other "members of the profession should try the same process."[97]

Mesmerism in India

While physicians in Britain followed Sigmond's initial hesitation to fully embrace mesmerism, James Esdaile, a Scottish surgeon, began to implement it during surgery in British-controlled India. Esdaile's experiments with mesmerism are significant due to both the scale of his success and the subsequent suspicion mesmerism fell under due to its proximity to a perceived occult practice in India. In a report published by Elliotson's journal *The Zoist*, Esdaile states that over a six-month period, he performed a series of reportedly painless surgeries assisted by mesmerism, ranging from tooth extractions and sore cauterization to arm, leg, and penis amputations, and the removal of scrotal tumors "weighing from 8 lb. to 80 lb."[98] In a letter to a fellow physician four years later, Esdaile claimed to "have performed upwards of 300 capital operations of every description, and many of them of the most terrible nature, without inflicting pain on the patients."[99] These highly publicized and dramatic surgeries helped to spread Esdaile's methods and validate mesmerism more generally throughout the medical community.[100]

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[96] Ibid., 507.
[97] Ibid., 509.
[98] James Esdaile, "Mesmeric Facts," *The Zoist* 3.12 (1845): 502.
[99] Printed in James Braid, *Magic, Witchcraft, Animal Magnetism, Hypnotism, and Electro-Biology*, 3rd ed. (London: John Churchill, 1852), 79.
[100] Elliotson and Esdaile record a particularly striking case that occurred on 11 October 1846. Hurromundoo Laha, age twenty-seven, had a tumor removed that was seven feet in circumference and

The popularity and apparent success of mesmerism prompted the British government to allow Esdaile to maintain a hospital in the Hooghly district of Bengal overseen by official visitors, members of the medical community appointed by the government "to visit the hospital from time to time, inspect Dr. Esdaile's proceedings…and report upon them through the Medical Board for the information of the Government."[101] Among these visitors were Richard O'Shaughnessy and Frederic Mouat, both of whom had previously been stationed in Calcutta Hospital and both of whom gave skeptical reports of Esdaile's claims. While Esdaile maintained a staunch belief in a mesmeric fluid that passed from controller to subject, O'Shaughnessy's report indicates his hesitation "to give any opinion of the usefulness of the 'alleged agent'…[of which] much *apparent* 'mystery and mummery' seem essential to its success."[102] Mouat's report is even more scathing, writing that, in terms of mesmerism's utility in helping patients overcome their illnesses, "charms, amulets, every imaginable superstition…credulity, castration, and the amputation of the big toe, have all been tried in turn, and each can boast of its miraculous cures, with as much reason as Mesmerism."[103] In Mouat's view, mesmerism offered no greater insight into the process of helping patients than the "witchcraft, magic, the power of spirits and demons, and efficacy of charms and incantations" in which "the native of Bengal…completely under the control of superstition in its widest sense and in its more absurd forms…[has] the most implicit faith."[104] To Mouat, mesmerism was simply another superstition, an extension of the occult practices of the region, solidified by his observation that "the common name under which the

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two feet around its neck. After the operation was completed, the tumor weighed 103 pounds; Laha weighed 114. John Elliotson and James Esdaile, *Mesmerism in India* (London: H. Bailliere, 1850), 25.

[101] India. The Mesmeric Committee. *Record of Cases*…. Calcutta: W. Ridsdale, Military Orphan Press, 1847.

[102] Richard O'Shaughnessy in *Record*, 49.

[103] Frederic Mouat in *Report*, 46.

[104] Ibid., 32.

Mesmeric Hospital is known among the lower classes is that of the *house of magic*, or *jadoo hospital.*"[105] Their reports reflect their belief that there was no distinction between the practice of mesmerism and the occult practices of India from which they sought to distance their craft. The concerns of the visitors stem from and contribute to the racialization of the occult, reiterating the belief that knowledge of mesmerism is innate to a non-white identity and that a non-white element is thus inherent in mesmerism.

The association of India, and the mystical East in general, with mesmerism rather than its European namesake was not unique to the official report on Esdaile's experiments. Early observers of Dupotet compared his technique to "the performance of the snake charmers in India, and of the necromancer of Grand Cairo."[106] By mid-century, numerous other theories placed the origin of mesmerism in the recesses of both the ancient past and the magical East: in 1840, Scottish surgeon James Braid contended that the ability to mesmerize "had been practised by the *Magi of Persia*…from the earliest times…was known to Zoroaster…and from this found its way into India, where it has been employed by the Hindoo saints and religious mendicants, Jogees, Fakirs, and others;" in 1848, *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* reported on "Biblical allusions to the influence of one body over another…Egyptian hieroglyphics [that] might be seen with representations of men sitting, while others were making passes over them" and Indian conjurors who lull a man to sleep "by a slow-moving touch;" in 1851, *Pioneer* echoed Colquhoun's claim that "mesmerism is as old as the pyramids."[107] Thus, mesmerism was believed to stem from ancient, occult, and Eastern sources, and Mesmer had merely rekindled interest in it through his discovery of its properties. Even Indian sources related the principles of

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[105] Ibid., 32.
[106] "Animal," *Weekly*, 1685.
[107] Braid, *Magic*, 20; "Mesmerism and the Bible," *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, 13 May 1848, 634; "Mesmeric Psychology," *Pioneer*, 7 June 1851, 120.

mesmerism to native beliefs. In 1845, the *Bombay Times* ran an article on mesmerism that illustrated how the "interchange of energies" between bodies worked by relating it to the belief that energy could be shared between young and old people who shared a bed, an Indian practice intended to infuse the elder with the "stronger and more vitalizing energies at play in the juvenile constitution."[108] Mesmerism, the article argued, worked the same way, acting as yet another influence that passed from one person to another.

Esdaile also acknowledged the similarities between native Indian practice and his own use of mesmerism. He noted that "mesmerism is actually practised in this country, and has probably been so [since] time immemorial, like every other custom in this immutable society."[109] Conceiving of India as a land trapped in the past, Esdaile expresses no surprise at finding a contemporary presence of a supposedly ancient practice. To Esdaile, mesmerism's practice in India by Indians was inevitable, a symptom of India's stagnation, while his own experimentation with it is portrayed as innovative if indistinct in its execution. One instance of his encounters with this native form of mesmerism occurred when he met with a local healer, a man he describes as "one of the most famous magicians in Bengal."[110] Rather than introducing himself as a surgeon who had studied at an elite medical university in Scotland, Esdaile styled himself as a fellow mystical practitioner of the occult. He tells his "brother magician" that he has "studied the art of magic in different parts of the world, particularly in Egypt."[111] Through his study, he claims to have gained access to "the secrets of the great Sooleymann, from the Moollahs and Fuqueers," citing these secrets as the source of his ability to heal the sick and invoke the

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[108] "Mesmerism," *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce,* 4 January 1845, 392.
[109] James Esdaile, *Mesmerism in India, and Its Practical Applications in Surgery and Medicine*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman's, 1846), 40.
[110] Ibid., 41.
[111] Ibid., 42.

mesmeric trance upon his patients.[112] This occult, rather than medical, account of Esdaile's mesmeric background reveals the degree to which he conceived of mesmerism as a supposedly ancient and Eastern phenomenon. Even as Esdaile records his successful attempt to mesmerize the other magician, an event he argued acted as a demonstration of the superiority of his technique, Esdaile is most pleased by the similarity of their practice.[113] Esdaile's methods are so similar to the Indian practice, that another observer "immediately recognized the process…and now knew he had been Mesmerized in a different part of the country."[114] Significantly, Esdaile did not distance himself from the native practice of mesmerism because he conceived of mesmerism as an Indian phenomenon.

This conception is evident in Esdaile's first experiment with mesmerism. Seeing his patient wracked with pain, Esdaile's initial reaction is to "turn to my native sub-assistant surgeon…and ask if he had ever seen Mesmerism."[115] While Esdaile himself had only read about mesmerism, he assumed an Indian native would be more likely to be knowledgeable on the practice. Later, Esdaile reported to the medical board that he rarely mesmerized his patients himself, instead relying on his staff of Indian natives who had been trained at the medical college to perform the practice for him. On an occasion when he did mesmerize a patient, he was able to produce sleep but not anesthesia, stopping the operation when his patient cried out in pain but emphasizing that "the Native Mesmerizer would probably have been more successful" due to a

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[112] Ibid., 42.
[113] This concept of superiority demonstrated through susceptibility to mesmeric influence will be explored later in this chapter, as will Esdaile's first recorded experiment with mesmerism which informs how race became a factor of mesmeric thought.
[114] Ibid., 45.
[115] Ibid., 61.

more intimate knowledge of mesmerism.[116] Through this wide variety of popular, professional, and personal discourse, mesmerism and the East became inexorably associated with one another.

The racialization of mesmerism is evident in this insistence on a close association of mesmerism and the East and the subsequent minimization of Mesmer's involvement. While the Austrian physician's name was attached to the practice, the consensus was that mesmerism had been practiced long before he published his findings. Newspaper articles rarely mentioned Mesmer when discussing mesmerism, and those that did, like *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, clarified that "Mesmer, after much study…threw the first burst of light…on the work of the Egyptians."[117] By framing Mesmer's theories as a rediscovery or new explanation of ancient events, the article emphasizes the non-white origination of mesmerism. A later article on mesmerism in the *Pioneer* excludes Mesmer entirely, only stating that "mesmerism is not new; but a knowledge of it as such is so," before citing mesmerism's history among Indian and Arabian peoples.[118] Skeptics of mesmerism also racialized the practice by criticizing the invocation of Mesmer's name. A review of a book on mesmerism in the *Leader* lamented that those sympathetic towards mesmerism, "the Clairvoyants with their Oriental agents,… scatter the words Newton, Farraday, Mesmer, fluid, agent, imponderables, cause and effect, laws, &c."[119] The reviewer asserts that Mesmer's involvement in mesmerism is misleading because it "[imposes] upon the unscientific public, making them believe there is scientific evidence for what is advanced, and nonplus the scientific sceptic by denying his competence."[120] Thus, the

[116] India, *Report*, 2.
[117] "Mesmerism," *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, 6 May 1848, 602.
[118] "Mesmerism Made Easy," *Pioneer*, 17 May 1851, 71.
[119] "Animal Magnetism." *Leader*, 18 October 1856, 1002.
[120] Ibid., 1002.

history of mesmerism was distanced from white scientists or a European origin and was more closely associated with the mystic East.

British Anxieties

The close association between mesmerism and the East soon fueled public anxieties. John Lang, an Australian lawyer living in Calcutta, expressed his concerns in his newspaper *Mofussilite* that "Native Doctors are permitted to practice Mesmerism…we would suggest an interference on the part of the government – for its suppression."[121] Lang's concern about "Native Doctors" having access to mesmerism stems from the unsavory reputation that had been assigned to mesmerists who were not white doctors. *The Lancet* ran multiple stories of carnal atrocities committed by mesmerists and would make a point of noting when they were non-white, non-British mesmerists. One article relayed the story of "a young French lady, the daughter of a wealthy banker [who] was placed under the care of a Mesmeriser…. an Oriental quack, professing to be a physician."[122] The article emphasizes the dangers of mesmerism to the public, concluding with how "the young lady was thrown into a profound sleep, and the quack stole her honour. On the discovery of his infamy the Mesmeriser fled to *London*" (emphasis in original).[123] The following week, *The Lancet* ran another story stating that another mesmerist, "a dark…man of strong passions, unscrupulous, and without moral principle," had instigated "a series of orgies which only occur amongst licentious enthusiasts."[124] Upon his discovery, he had similarly fled to London, "probably engaged in seeking fresh food for his libidinous propensities."[125] Among

[121] John Lang, "Mesmerism," *Mofussilite,* 9 August 1845, 22.
[122] "The Virtues of Animal Magnetism," *The Lancet*, 8 December 1838, 413-4.
[123] Ibid., 414.
[124] "Animal Magnetism," *The Lancet*, 15 December 1838, 450.
[125] Ibid., 450.

these stories of sexual impropriety, folklorist and translator Walter K. Kelly described mesmerists in an 1841 article as "a vast fiery army, without discipline or leaders; or rather…an ill-assorted pack of hounds without huntsman," neatly summarizing the threat mesmerism supposedly posed to the Victorian public.[126] Thus, the thought of a corps of Indian men being allowed to perfect their mesmeric abilities would be deeply unsettling to white members of the British Empire.

Beyond mesmerism's fearful reputation for facilitating sexual assault, medical pursuits of mesmerism were hindered by the perception of mesmerism as a diabolical endeavor of non-white people. Hugh Boyd M'Neile, a prominent Anglican preacher in Liverpool, gave a sermon in 1842, condemning mesmerism and the peoples believed to be its original practitioners, "the Egyptian nation, the Assyrian nation, and the Babylonian nation…[as] the great agencies of Satan," who sought to bring about the apocalypse.[127] M'Neile's sermon was reported on by *The Liverpool Standard* and picked up by a wide array of other newspapers, as well as *The Penny Pulpit*, a religious anti-mesmerist pamphlet that printed the sermon in full.[128] The wide distribution of *The Penny Pulpit*, and M'Neile's influence as a respected preacher, prompted a defense of mesmerism from George Sandby, an equally prominent vicar in Norfolk who was sympathetic to mesmerism's position. Sandby's publication relates stories of family members who would not occupy the same room as a mesmerist "out of fear" and bemoans critics who

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[126] Walter K. Kelly, "A Few Words on Mesmerism," *The Monthly Magazine,* July 1841, 176.
[127] Hugh M'Neile, "Satanic Agency and Mesmerism," *The Penny Pulpit,* ed. Finney, Charles G., 600, (London: James Paul, 1842), 146.
[128] While the reporter from *The Liverpool Standard* was the only journalist actually in attendance at the original sermon, the story proved popular, as demonstrated by its wide degree of republication in other newspapers, including *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Bury and Norwich Post*, *The Bristol Mercury*, and *The Newcastle Courant*.; "The Rev. Hugh M'Neile on Mesmerism," *The Liverpool Standard*, 12 April 1842; Quotes from M'Neile's sermon are taken from the *Penny Pulpit* transcription, though the exact accuracy of the text is somewhat questionable given the unauthorized nature of the reprinting.

claim that mesmerism "[possesses] no virtue but what it derived from a compact made by the Indians with the Devil."[129] In many ways, Sandby's account is similar to other defenses of mesmerism. It cites the medical benefits of mesmerism and notes that non-white races, in this case "the West Indian" have "been accustomed all his life to…[employ] the aid of an invisible magnetic power…and there was nothing diabolical to him in these ordinary properties of nature."[130] Sandby's defense is significant because it fully endorses mesmerism's ability to invoke "those wonderous feats of *clairvoyance*, which cause the faith of so many to hesitate."[131] Sandby's use of the term clairvoyance refers to the belief among mesmerists that, beyond inducing a state of insensibility or somnambulism, mesmerism was able to produce higher functions, including astral projection, communicating with the dead, and clairvoyance.[132] Mesmerism was seemingly inextricable from a spiritual experience, one that was intimately connected to non-white individuals.

The repeated tethering of mesmerism to the occult, and the association of the occult with non-white races, proved frustrating to white medical professionals who sought to experiment with its anesthetic qualities. As a result, attempts were made to separate the medical and the mystical experiences of mesmerism from one another. In his experiments, James Braid noticed that he was able to produce the trance-like effects of mesmerism by having his patients focus on a fixed point. He determined that the anesthetic condition of mesmerism was thus "a peculiar condition of the nervous system" in which the nerves become paralyzed through continuous fixation.[133] By focusing on the biological and self-contained impetus for a hypnotic trance, Braid

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[129] George Sandby, *Mesmerism and Its Opponents, with a Narrative of Cases* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), 39; Ibid., 45.
[130] Ibid., 32.
[131] Ibid., 118.
[132] "Mesmeric Teachers," *Leader*, 5 July 1851, 636.
[133] James Braid, *Neurypnology* (London: Redway, 1843), 94.

attempted to establish his practice as a scientific and physiological phenomenon, "not the result of any magnetic fluid or force passing from the operator to the patient."[134] He further sought to distinguish his practice by naming it neuro-hypnotism, later shortened to hypnotism, so that his work "might be prosecuted quite independently of any bias or prejudice, either for or against the subject as connected with mesmerism."[135] Braid hoped that by separating hypnotism as a medical enterprise, it could be studied and perfected without the interference of mesmerism's scandalous and racial connotations, arguing that "the vulgar disposition to look upon [mesmerism] as supernatural is one of the causes why sound thinkers and philosophical inquirers are deterred from them."[136] William Hughes has indicated that other fans of hypnotism similarly "deployed rhetoric that subtly evaded any suggestion of a merely supernatural explanation" for its effects in eyewitness accounts published in popular newspapers, though these accounts were kept anonymous, presumably to avoid any personal association with the practice.[137] Unfortunately for Braid, his attempts to separate hypnotism and mesmerism were mostly ignored. His bid to submit his theories to the government's medical board in 1842 were refused, and his request for an investigation into his experiments was declined. However, in the 1860s, a prominent French physician, Ambrose-Auguste Liébeault, reintroduced Braid's theories, emphasizing the focus of the subject on a single object and the rapport between mesmerist and subject.[138]

The writings of prominent medical and ministerial leaders in Victorian England provide evidence of the racialized ideas surrounding mesmerism and show the context within which

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[134] Ibid., 24.
[135] Ibid., 24.
[136] James Braid, *Satantic Agency and Mesmerism Reviewed* (London: Willmer & Smith, 1842), 10.
[137] William Hughes, *That Devil's Trick* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 85.
[138] Hilary Grimes suggests in *The Late Victorian Gothic* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) that the need to reiterate the distinction between mesmerism and hypnotism stems from an anxiety regarding the inability of professional scientists to effectively articulate the differences between their practices and the occult, similar to the anxieties this chapter noted were present in the reviews of Esdaile's work in India.

Wilkie Collins was writing *The Moonstone*. Mesmerism was perceived as an occult spiritual practice that originated from mystical lands populated by dangerous non-white individuals. This perception contributed to skepticism about its effectiveness as a medical treatment and condemnation of its practice as diabolical, even as some practitioners in Britain praised it. Serious questions arose about whether to classify mesmerism as a medical or occult practice, and if it were even proper for white men engaged in serious scientific enterprise to associate with mesmerism. This latter question prompted white physicians to attempt to separate the science of mesmerism from its occult aspects. Whether non-white people, such as those believed to have discovered mesmerism before Mesmer, could be trusted with such a powerful tool was also in doubt.

The Moonstone

The Moonstone's engagement with these mid-century debates exemplifies how the occult was racialized. Without specifically invoking the nominal distinctions of mesmerism and hypnotism, the novel distinguishes between an occult spiritual practice of mesmerism, which I refer to as occult mesmerism, and a scientific medical practice, which I refer to as medical mesmerism. The three Indian Brahmins practice and represent the former type, embodying the non-white occult practice that produced anxiety among Britain's medical professionals when they use mesmerism to produce clairvoyance in a young boy. Ezra Jennings, a West Indian doctor's assistant of both white and non-white parentage, practices and represents the latter, citing prominent British scientists and researchers in his justifications for mesmerizing Franklin Blake, the young aristocratic protagonist. Since both types of mesmerism are assigned to non-white characters, this section will explore the ways in which the differentiation between them defines each type by

characterizing those who practice it. The Brahmins are presented as a dark force that lurks along the borders of British aristocratic society, threatening those who are fooled by their otherwise harmless and entertaining façade of traveling conjurors. Conversely, Ezra Jennings is presented as a well-mannered and well-educated gentleman who has more in common with the white characters than the non-white characters. His racial ancestry allows him to be privy to mesmeric thought that his white companions are not, but he approaches mesmerism as a scientific experiment rather than invoke this ancestry. While Ezra's premature death suggests that he is too destabilizing to society due to his powers, the novel ends with a hope that his ideas may be accepted in the coming generation.

To understand how occult mesmerism is racialized in *The Moonstone*, it is necessary to examine how its practitioners are characterized. From their first appearance in the novel, the three Brahmins are referred to by their skin color and Eastern homeland as "mahogany-coloured Indians."[139] They are a constant source of anxiety for the British characters, blending a thinly disguised threat and a distinctly non-white existence. When they first arrive at Verinder Manor, the novel's primary location, they are greeted by Gabriel Betteredge, the butler and caretaker. Betteredge is instantly suspicious of the white-robed trio, thinking that their "most elegant manners" remind him of the "family plate-basket out on a pantry-table."[140] The presence of civilized discourse among "travelling conjurors," especially those "a few shades darker than myself," is incongruous enough for him to send them away.[141]

[139] Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone,* ed. John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16
[140] Ibid., 16.
[141] Andrea Todd observes in her editorial notes of Collins' novel that Betteredge later refers to the trio of Brahmins as jugglers, making no distinction between two professions. The racialization of these overlapping terms is discussed in chapter four; Collins, *Moonstone*, 16.

Betteredge's daughter Penelope later tails the Brahmins with a friend, convinced that they are mistreating the "little delicate-looking light-haired English boy" who travels with them, "for no reason," Betteredge adds, "except that he was pretty and delicate-looking."[142] The girls come across the trio in a secluded wood and witness as "the Indian took a bottle from his bosom, and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink into the palm of the boy's hand…first touching the boy's head and making signs over it in the air."[143] These signs over the boy's head are the mesmeric passes described in numerous pamphlets, newspaper articles, and histories of mesmerism. The Brahmins use of these passes to induce a trance state in the small boy so that he may gain clairvoyance evokes the occult form of mesmerism that Sandby identifies as a source of hesitation for so many medically-minded mesmerists due to the spiritual explanation assigned to it. As discussed previously, even those who accepted this spiritual approach to mesmerism were wary of its perceived origins among non-white races. Robert Brown, a Scarborough preacher and anti-mesmerist, records an incident in 1840 that he describes as indicative of the work of "magicians practicing in Egypt and in other parts of Africa…as well as the East, the cradle of idolatry… in the present day" which mirrors this ritual of pouring "an inky fluid" into the hands of an entranced young boy and asking about faraway persons.[144] Brown claims the manifested powers "could on no possible ground have been produced, except by the instrumentality of demons…for it is *from the East* that these [practices] are coming in upon us like a mighty flood."[145] Although it is unlikely that all anti-mesmerists were concerned with demonic influence, Brown summarizes the concern that an occult practice of mesmerism is

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[142] Ibid., 16; Ibid, 17.
[143] Ibid., 17-8.
[144] Robert Brown, *Demonology and Witchcraft with Especial Reference to Modern Spiritualism, So-Called, and the Doctrines of Demons* (London: John F. Shaw, 1889), 32.
[145] Ibid., 32.

problematic because of its close association with the East and the racialized characterization of those who lived there. For example, the girls' suspicions of the Indian's mistreatment of the young boy, seemingly unfounded, are confirmed when they witness the leader of the trio demand that the boy hold out his hand in a manner so violent that Penelope relates that "she didn't know what prevented her heart from flying straight out of her."[146] In response, "the boy shrunk back, and shook his head, and said he didn't like it," relenting only when the Indian threatens to return the boy to the forsaken little basket he had been living out of in a London market.[147] The Brahmins, and the form of mesmerism they practice, are presented as frightening and abusive, preying on delicate white children who are too weak to resist. This threat extends beyond their initial use of mesmerism. While the other characters are given a voice to explain their actions and motivations (through dialogue, journal entries, or acting as a narrator speaking directly to the reader), the Brahmins are reduced to an unintelligible presence on the outskirts of the story, "jabbering" in their native language amongst themselves or relying on the single member who can speak English.[148] Both Betteredge and Franklin describe the Brahmins as "lurking" in the darkness, reminiscent of dangerous animals that stalk through the night after their prey, waiting for the opportunity to strike.[149]

This association of the Indian Brahmins with animal characteristics is part of the racialization of the occult and continues throughout the novel. For example, when Mr. Murthwaite, recently returned from an expedition in India, surprises the Brahmins by speaking to them in their native language, Betteredge describes how "if he had pricked them with a bayonet, I doubt if the Indians could have started and turned on him with a more tigerish quickness than

[146] Collins, *Moonstone*, 17.
[147] Ibid., 17.
[148] Ibid., 16.
[149] Ibid., 48.

they did on hearing the first words that passed his lips. The next moment they were bowing and salaaming to him in their most polite and snaky way."[150] The images of the tiger and the snake highlight not only the distinctly Eastern nature of the Brahmins, but also their insidiousness. The Brahmins are quick and dangerous, disguising their ferocity beneath the mask of humility and politeness, a mask that slips long enough to reveal the threat lurking beneath the obsequious surface.

The Brahmins' dangerously feline qualities are reiterated by Mr. Murthwaite, who warns that in their pursuit of the Moonstone "those men will wait their opportunity with the patience of cats, and will use it with the ferocity of tigers."[151] Matthew Bruff, a solicitor, confirms the "noiseless, supple, cat-like way" the English-speaking Indian moves.[152] This quick and graceful movement, combined with the Indian's "swarthy complexion…and grave and graceful politeness of manner were enough to betray his Oriental origin to any intelligent eyes that looked at him."[153] The Brahmins' animal qualities and their Indian qualities seem inseparable and together represent a racialized threat. Mr. Bruff declares "if the Moonstone had been in my possession, this Oriental gentleman would have murdered me, I am well aware, without a moment's hesitation."[154] Mr. Murthwaite extends this certainty a step further, beyond the "admirable assassin" to the whole of India, warning Betteredge that

> In the country those men come from, they care as much about killing a man, as you care about emptying the ashes out of your pipe. If a thousand lives stood between them and the getting back of their Diamond – and if they thought they could destroy those lives without discovery – they would take them all. The sacrifice of caste is a serious thing in India, if you like. The sacrifice of life is nothing at all.[155]

[150] Ibid., 70.
[151] Ibid., 72.
[152] Ibid., 276.
[153] Ibid., 275.
[154] Ibid., 275.
[155] Ibid., 276; Ibid., 73

Murthwaite's condemnation of the entire Indian population highlights the racialized vision of India that the Brahmins embody. In the same manner that the Brahmins do not exist as individual characters, always traveling in a group and being referred to as a collective entity (the Brahmins, the three Indians, the conjurors), all Indians are implicated in their portrayal as inhuman agents of murder and violence.[156] While this characterization may seem out of place given the lack of explicit depictions of violence in the novel, British audiences in the 1860s would be conscious of the fact that the story is set in 1848, nine years before the infamous Indian Rebellion, also called the Sepoy Mutiny, which acted as a cultural reference point of Indian violence. Thus, warnings of the danger that lurk beneath the Brahmin's entertaining disguises would be recognized by the British reader. Furthermore, those warnings are easily extended to any characteristic related to India: if the Brahmins are dangerous, all of India is dangerous, including the coercive and violent form of mesmerism they practice. The occult elements of mesmerism in the novel are inseparable from the Indian characters and thus are implicated in their portrayal as violent threats to white lives.

Ezra Jennings

While the portrayal of occult mesmerism practiced by the three Brahmins is racialized and negative, the portrayal of medical mesmerism is more positive. The novel illustrates Victorian ideas of the benefits of mesmerism when used for medical purposes by having it practiced by Ezra Jennings, a biracial doctor's assistant. Like the mesmerists working in Esdaile's Indian

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[156] Krishna Manavalli notes that Collins' conflation of the Brahmins with India also participates in a Victorian Orientalist vision of India that ignored any religious or ethnic group that was not a part of the Brahminical tradition. Krishna Manavalli, "Collins, Colonial Crime, and the Brahmin Sublime," *Comparative Critical Studies* 4 (2007): 67-86.

clinic, Jennings offers a seemingly innate knowledge of and aptitude for mesmerism that is unavailable to the white characters who surround him but approaches that knowledge from an Anglicized medical perspective. While this mixture of Eastern and Western approaches is evident in Jennings' physical appearance as well as his practice of medical mesmerism, it is fraught with the same anxieties and concerns of scandal that plagued mesmerism in Britain.

Just as the characterization of the Brahmins allows for a deeper understanding of the occult type of mesmerism that they use, Jennings' method of mesmerism can also be examined through description of his character. Upon his first appearance in the novel, Jennings is immediately and visibly differentiated from the white protagonists by his physical features. His dark skin, strange sunken eyes, and his thick curling hair distinguish him from the aristocratic British men and women who populate the novel. Jennings is first described by Blake as "the most remarkable-looking man that [he] had ever seen."[157] Jennings is "of a gipsy darkness," his sharp cheekbones projecting over "fleshless cheeks [that] had fallen into deep hollows" to present an almost skeletal visage.[158] Blake's classification of Jennings' "gipsy darkness" not only carries the connotation that Jennings is not in his homeland, but also that it doesn't matter where he is from. His darkness marks him as different in the same way that the Brahmins are identifiably distinct from the British characters due to their mahogany skin. Blake further classifies Jennings' features by noting that "his nose presented the fine shape and modelling so often found among the ancient people of the East, so seldom visible among the newer races of the West."[159] Like the Brahmins, Jennings is an essentialized representative of the East, his

[157] Ibid., 319.
[158] Ibid., 319.
[159] Ibid., 319.

identity reduced to dark skin and an easily classified nose shape. Both the Brahmins and Jennings are out of place among the white aristocratic cast of the novel.

Jennings' initial position in the novel is a reiteration of the stark contrast between him and those around him. He is a doctor's assistant, but "nobody likes him" and he is relegated to work with the poor, who "must put up with the man with …the gipsy complexion – or they would get no doctoring at all."[160] Jennings is instantly recognized as an outsider and consigned to the lowest tier of his profession. Besides his race, Jennings' social reputation is also hindered by the presence of an unspecified scandal that is somehow connected to an unspeakable accusation that inspires "merciless enmity" from both his family and society at large.[161] This scandalous and apparently true accusation forced him to flee to England where Mr. Candy, the doctor Jennings assists, makes a gracious offer of employment "under circumstances which made [Jennings] his debtor for life."[162] While this scandal is never explained, there are several possibilities as to what it entails, including the possibility that Jennings' experiments with mesmerism resulted in the death of a patient.[163] There were several reported instances of this occurring around the time that Collins was writing *The Moonstone*, including an account of a young boy who was sent into "violent convulsions" during a mesmeric trance, an affliction that persisted until his untimely death despite the assistance of medical men, an incident for which the mesmerist was "prosecuted on the charge of having by his imprudence caused the malady of the boy."[164] Regardless of the exact nature of Jennings' past offense, its presence recalls the looming scandals that plagued mesmerism within the medical community in Britain, preventing it from

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[160] Ibid., 320.
[161] Ibid., 374.
[162] Ibid., 368.
[163] Ardel Haefele-Thomas makes a convincing argument that Ezra may be queer in *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), for example.
[164] "A Dangerous Experiment," *The Cabinet Newspaper*, 10 September 1859, 3.

being more fully accepted. Likewise, Jennings says he is continuously driven out of jobs by slander due to his past scandal.[165] However, his past offense is ultimately dismissed by both Candy and Blake, to whom Jennings reveals the full details of his past.

For Blake, this dismissal of Jennings' past scandal occurs because Jennings has established himself as a benign presence within British society, despite his different outward appearance, due to his Anglicization. Jennings tells Blake that he is biracial, born and partly brought up in one of the colonies. He confides that "my father was an Englishman; but my mother ---."[166] While this thought is never completed, it seems safe to assume that Jennings' mother was a native of those colonies, lending him his strikingly non-white characteristics. Despite his secretive past and visibly foreign aspects, Jennings convinces Blake in very little time that he is "speaking to a gentleman…he had what I may venture to describe as the *unsought self-possession*, which is a sure sign of good breeding, not in England only, but everywhere else in the civilized world."[167] While Jennings' physical characteristics are too distinctly non-white for him to wholly represent the positive traits that Blake associates with being British, his genteel manners and education do represent the positive traits of Britain's effort to "civilize" the colonies. Jennings then represents the ideal outcome of Britain's colonizing mission, physically distinct from his British companions but schooled in British culture. In this way, Jennings is similar to the infamous call from politician Thomas Babington Macaulay for a class of men, "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect," to act as an intermediary class between nineteenth-century British colonizers and their Indian

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[165] Collins, *Moonstone*, 375.
[166] Ibid., 366.
[167] Ibid., 365-6.

subjects.[168] Like Macaulay's proposed intermediary class of British-minded Indians, and Esdaile's mesmeric corps, Jennings is able to translate the occult nature of his colonial heritage into a suitably British practice due to his education and subsequent elevation. As a foreign-born person of color, he embodies the occult without disrupting established hierarchies of intellectual authority, aided by his adoption of British manners and civility. Furthermore, by positioning Jennings as the mesmerist, the novel allows British characters to remain free of the dangerous foreign influence demonstrated by the three Brahmins' use of mesmerism. While the practice of mesmerism and the practice of medicine may have been considered separate entities by some Britons, they are combined within Jennings.

This union of disparate ideologies is also present in Jennings' physicality. Beyond his biracial parentage, he possesses a "puzzling contradiction between his face and figure which made him look old and young both together," recalling the ways in which mesmerism was discussed among the Victorian public.[169] Like mesmerism, Jennings has features that originate within the ancient East, but he is also still a young man, practicing new medical techniques and incorporating innovations into his practice. More strikingly, the union of clashing elements is present in the description of Jennings' hair:

> A quantity of thick closely-curling hair, which, by some freak of Nature, had lost its colour in the most startlingly partial and capricious manner. Over the top of his head it was still of the deep black which was its natural colour. Round the side of his head – without the slightest gradation of grey to break the force of the extraordinary contrast – it had turned completely white. The line between the two colours preserved no sort of regularity. At one place, the white hair ran up into the black; at another, the black hair ran down into the white.[170]

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[168] Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Essays, Critical and Miscellaneous* (London: Carey and Hart, 1846), 23.
[169] Collins, *Moonstone*, 364.
[170] Ibid., 319.

Jennings' hair embodies the struggle of easily defining either him or the place of mesmerism within medicine. On one hand, the black and white are stark opposites, never mixing into "the slightest gradation of grey."[171] Similarly, mesmerism and medicine seem diametrically opposed to one other, one closely associated with violent and occult figures like the Brahmins, the other akin to educated physicians with upper-class civility. Conversely, the line between them has "no sort of regularity," each of the disparate halves intruding into the other's space.[172] Jennings acts as the physical embodiment of medical mesmerism, the "medical and metaphysical theory" he champions, uniting seeming opposites in a somewhat jarring manner made palatable through gentlemanly manners and a British education.[173]

In the same manner that Jennings' civility and background make his physical differences less off-putting to the white characters, his approach to mesmerism is more approachable than the frightening and threat-laden practice of the three Brahmins. While they threaten and cajole their subject into compliance, Jennings begins by carefully outlining the physiological principles of mesmerism to Blake, couching his theories in "admitted principles and recognised authorities," assuring the young man that "Science sanctions my proposal, fanciful as it may seem."[174] Drawing from prominent British physicians who grounded their experiments with mesmerism in physiological phenomenon, including William Carpenter and John Elliotson, who both praised mesmerism as a revolutionary addition to scientific discourse, Jennings proposes using laudanum to access Blake's subconscious mind to prove his innocence in the theft of the diamond.

[171] Ibid., 319.
[172] Ibid., 319.
[173] Ibid., 384.
[174] Ibid., 385.

Jennings' explanation of mesmerism, like the explanations of Elliotson and his colleagues, relies, at least in part, on the physical manifestation of an individual's will, grounding the unfamiliar processes of the mind in tangible effects upon the body. Jennings' scientific approach, which endeavors to recreate the initial conditions of the event as best he can in order to elicit a similar response, stands in sharp contrast to the Brahmins' reliance on mystical clairvoyance or Esdaile's real-life practice of mesmerism in India that was unsettlingly similar to occult practice. Unlike the foreboding specter of mystical occult mesmerism associated with dangerous strangers of color, Jennings' explanation evokes the methodology of white English scientists. His approach is based on experiments performed by Englishmen, grounded in traditional logic, and he describes a similar experiment with empirical results to reproduce. Jennings demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of rational methods associated with white British scientists, while retaining just enough of his non-white native identity to be able to occupy the unique social position necessary to undertake the experiment that ultimately proves that Blake is innocent.

Complications

A series of potential complications arises within the racialization of mesmerism due to the fact that the subject to be mesmerized, Blake, is white and the mesmerist, Jennings, is not. In the original publication of his theory, Mesmer wrote that "although this fluid is universal, all animal bodies are not equally susceptible of it," but he gave no indication as to what governed susceptibility.[175] Since mesmerism was understood to be an expression of the mesmerist's will imposed on the subject, it was generally believed that susceptibility was governed by what

[175] Mesmer, *Mesmerism*, 15.

mesmerist James Coates referred to as a person's "innate disposition."[176] Control could be maintained more easily if the controller does not pressure the subject to do anything "contrary to their will."[177] Willing subjects who possessed a less hardy physical and mental constitution than their controller were thus more easily controlled. Women were routinely selected as ideal candidates, particularly those considered prone to hysteria, as they were thought to lack control over their mental or emotional faculties and were thus easier to control. This is most clearly demonstrated in a letter from Jane Welsh Carlyle to her father. The writer and wife of essayist Thomas Carlyle describes how she visited a friend's house to find that they had invited a mesmerist to perform a demonstration. While another woman was successfully mesmerized, Carlyle resisted, which she writes proved her "moral and intellectual superiority" over her "ill-spoken, bestial, and impudent" rival.[178] Thus, "moral and intellectual superiority" was conceived of as the key element of successfully resisting mesmerism.

This concept was slightly altered by Esdaile's experiments in India. He records that while early Victorian experimentation indicated that he "should probably have selected some highly sensitive female of a nervous temperament, and excitable imagination, who desired to submit to the influence," his first experiment with mesmerism involved a subject who was none of those things. Mádhab Kaurá, "a Hindoo felon of the hangman cast [sic]" was admitted to Esdaile's charity hospital in extreme pain; Esdaile admits that if he had known that the ideal mesmeric subject was an emotional woman, someone who possessed abundant nervous energy, he "should as soon as thought of commencing operations on the first dog or pig I met on the road as of

[176] James Coates, *Human Magnetism or How to Hypnotise* (London: Nichols, 1904), 209.
[177] Ibid., 209.
[178] Jane Welsh Carlyle, Letter to John Welsh, 13 December 1844, *Letters and Memorials*, ed. James Anthony Froude, 2 (London: Forgotten Books, 1883), 23.

selecting this man."[179] In Esdaile's estimation, Kaurá seemed far from the traditional examples of mesmerism involving excitable white English women, and his efforts to mesmerize him should have failed. Despite this apparent lack of nervous energy, Kaurá was soon sent into a trance, and Esdaile was able to operate on him without causing him pain. This success, which defied traditional models of mesmerism, led Esdaile to theorize that race played a key role in determining who could mesmerize whom. Kaurá's low status, history of murder, and identity as one the "ignorant Hindoos…who merely used their eyes and ears without an attempt at reflection" were important factors in his susceptibility to Esdaile's mesmerism.[180] Noting that his Indian patients "seem to be peculiarly sensitive to the mesmeric power," Esdaile sets out to explain his understanding of how the racial differences between Indians and Europeans affect mesmeric influence.[181] He declares that "the population of Bengal generally…are a feeble, ill-nourished race, remarkably deficient in nervous energy" and that their physical and mental constitution "favours us: we have none of the morbid irritability of nerves, and the mental impatience of the uncivilized man, to contend against."[182] Ultimately, however, Esdaile states that the key element of his success is that his patients are "the simple, unsophisticated children of nature; neither thinking, questioning, nor remonstrating, but passively submitting to my pleasure."[183] Esdaile's belief in the inferiority of his Indian subjects, and in the inherent nature of that inferiority, are central to his theory of mesmerism.

Esdaile's explicit connection of race and susceptibility to mesmerism was a significant but not radical change. Previous appeals to mental and moral capacity already carried racial

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[179] Esdaile, *Mesmerism*, 59; Ibid., 60.
[180] Ibid., 60.
[181] Ibid., 37.
[182] Ibid., 37; Ibid., 38.
[183] Ibid., 38.

implications, as figures like Macauley had previously described the people of Bengal as being "thoroughly fitted by nature and by habit for a foreign yoke," having had their physical, mental, and moral constitutions "enervated by a soft climate" into a state of languid movement, sedentary pursuits, and unwillingness to engage in any form of conflict.[184] Extending the belief that Indians were naturally submissive in the face of the British Empire to incorporate their apparent submissiveness into his experiments with mesmerism required little further justification from Esdaile. He used this explanation to further justify his use of native surgical assistants, claiming they were elevated above their fellow countrymen by their graduation from the British-run medical college.[185] While this called into question his own occasional failure to mesmerize patients, he explained that it was primarily due "to the great bodily and mental fatigue it caused," thus preserving his theory of race's impact on mesmerism.[186] Thus, the significance of laudanum in Jennings' mesmeric experiment becomes apparent. While the control the three Brahmins' exert over the light-haired boy with whom they travel can be explained as a result of the boy's age and subsequent lack of mental fortitude, Jennings cannot exert direct control over a healthy young white man meant to be the moral center of the story without raising concerns. It is only by weakening Blake's constitution with debilitating drugs that Jennings is able to both perform his experiment and preserve the perceived hierarchy of races.

Why Jennings is Successful

A key distinction between the mesmerism used by Jennings and the Brahmins' mystical practices is how seriously they are considered by the text. Jennings' methods are ultimately successful,

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[184] Macaulay, *Essays*, 325.
[185] Esdaile, *Mesmerism*, 40.
[186] Ibid., 36.

revealing how the Moonstone went missing and proving Franklin's innocence. The Brahmins' efforts are less effective. From their introduction, the Brahmins' beliefs are dismissed as silly and invalid. Betteredge comments that the initial scene with the young boy seems to be little more than "a foolish waste of ink," a statement echoed by Franklin as he derides those "in [England], as well as in the East…who practise this curious hocus-pocus."[187] The ultimate judgement comes from Mr. Murthwaite who declares that while his travels in India allowed him to experiment with mesmerism, he found that the subject is only able to "[reflect] what was already in the mind of the person mesmerizing him," meaning that:

> The clairvoyance in this case is simply a development of the romantic side of the Indian character. It would be a refreshment and an encouragement to those men – quite inconceivable, I grant you, to the English mind – to surround their wearisome and perilous errand in this country with a certain halo of the marvelous and the supernatural.[188]

Mr. Murthwaite's assessment goes unchallenged because, as a wealthy explorer, he has been able to observe mesmerism in India firsthand and has been afforded time to experiment with it so that he may understand it from a British perspective.[189] Significantly, even as the novel preserves the idea that mesmerism originated in India, it minimizes and racializes the occult form of the practice when assigning it to the Brahmins, non-white characters who have not been educated by the British system and are constructed as dangerous and duplicitous. This dismissal is justified by the fact that the Brahmins accomplish very little through their attempts at mesmerism-induced divination.

However, while the Brahmins' practice of the occult is ultimately in vain, Murthwaite's comment that the use of mesmerism would be "inconceivable…to the English mind" exposes a

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[187] Collins, *Moonstone*, 18; Ibid., 48-9.
[188] Ibid., 282.
[189] A more in-depth analysis of the relationship between class and the ability to safely practice and judge the occult occurs in chapter 3.

similar problem for the British characters who rely entirely on logical deduction.[190] Logic does not prove any more effective in exonerating Franklin or in tracking down the Moonstone than the Indian practice of the occult. This is first illustrated when a prominent Scotland Yard detective named Sergeant Cuff undertakes the investigation. Cuff does succeed in predicting that the diamond will be stashed for safekeeping in a deposit box in Lambeth and deduces how the thief plans to retrieve and launder the stone. However, rather than arriving at the correct conclusion, he manages to convince Betteredge that Rachel Verinder, the diamond's rightful owner, has conspired to fake the theft and deceive the various members of the household. It is only through Jennings' position as an intermediary between non-white practice of the occult and British medical techniques that he is allowed to reveal the truth.

Jennings is the ultimate savior of the novel, able to succeed where traditions from both East and West have failed. However, through the successful demonstration of his hypnotic technique, Jennings has shifted what Jeffrey Cass refers to as the "social, economic, and cultural alignment," and becomes a threat to the established society.[191] While Jennings and his experiment are seemingly benign in the novel, mesmerism is regarded as an impetus for social unrest. Logie Barrow writes that it "seems to have offered an enticing terrain of argument for advocates of various class agendas for ordering, shuffling or levelling the social hierarchy."[192] The fact that Jennings is a mesmerist from a class lower than the other white characters is inherently threatening to the social order, in spite of his good intentions.

In Victorian England, Elliotson recognized the power available to the mesmerist, and recommended that its application be kept "in the hands of those whose education, calling, and

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[190] Ibid., 282.
[191] Jeffrey Cass, "The Scraps, Patches, and Rags of Daily Life," *Papers on Language and Literature* 35.4 (1999): 432.
[192] Barrow, *Independent*, 77.

public responsibility evidently points them out as of the party to wield it."[193] Esdaile warned that Indian barbers were especially dangerous since "their occupation brings them into close contact with the surfaces most sensitive to the mesmeric influence" and noted he had met several who had mesmerically kidnapped women and children.[194] The ability to subtly influence the actions of another person without their knowledge was a deeply unsettling idea in Victorian Britain, as was the notion that nearly anyone could do so with little or no medical expertise. James Johnson, a surgeon and founder of the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, revealed in his 1838 dismissal of mesmeric claims that he feared if such a power were proven to exist, anyone able to produce "a single wave of the hand" would be able to not only threaten the virtue of any woman around him, but would render the work of doctors obsolete.[195] A wave of the hand and a commanding voice required no medical degree, and eliminated the need for knowledge regarding the safe administration of other anesthetics. While Jennings does have medical training, and legitimizes his theories by referencing another medical doctor, the successful implementation of his theory does not require any medical knowledge. Outside of Collins' novel, a successful mesmerist was as much of a danger to the medical field as it was a boon. Johnson goes a step further, declaring that if claims of mesmerism's power were true, then accountability would disappear and "the whole foundations of society would be broken up, and every fence of virtue and honour would be levelled in the dust!"[196] Like Johnson, Collins' novel seems to suggest that if mesmerism is allowed to be practiced freely by non-white individuals, it would usher in massive social upheaval.

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[193] John Elliotson, "Lecture Mania," *The Zoist,* 2.10 (1843): 78.
[194] Esdaile, *Mesmerism*, 99.
[195] James Johnson, "Animal Magnetism, " *The Medico-Chirurgical Review,* 33.57 (1838): 635.
[196] Ibid., 635.

The solution to the social crisis that is embodied in Ezra Jennings is simple – he is eliminated. Jennings informs Franklin that he suffers from "an incurable internal complaint" and will soon be dead.[197] He has earned the respect of the younger generation, as evidenced by Franklin and Rachel declaring him to be their "best and dearest friend" for assisting them, but he cannot be allowed to survive in a literary world where his very existence is a threat to the established order.[198] Rather than promoting change and social upheaval, he dies. Within *The Moonstone*, Jennings' presence as a mesmerist who is bi-racial and practices a combination of occult oriental mysticism and logical British medicine provides a serviceable solution to the mystery but then necessitates his prompt death. Neither the bi-racial doctor's assistant nor his mesmeric technique can exist in the neatly delineated world of mid-Victorian Britain, where logical medical practices and white Christians are readily accepted and occult mystical practices and dark-skinned individuals from exotic lands are met with suspicion and disdain. Nonetheless, both Jennings and his mesmerism are allowed to occupy the tenuous middle-ground between these two extremes long enough to solve the novel's central mystery, with the caveat that the troubling combination they represent is removed by Jennings' (un)timely death. Collins seems to offer a vision of the benefits of a society inclusive of an Anglicized occult and its practitioners in the future, but not in the Victorian present.

Thus, Collins' representation of mesmerism in *The Moonstone* operates as a tentative attempt to reconcile its disparate perceptions in Britain. Jennings and the system of mesmerism he practices are both portrayed somewhat positively in the novel, solving problems that defy conventional logic and occult mysticism. Jennings is a character who occupies a space that comingles concepts of race, the occult, and science in Victorian England and thus must be killed

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[197] Collins, *Moonstone*, 375.
[198] Ibid., 428.

off to temporarily preserve the stability of British society. However, the novel seems to offer hope of a different future. Ardel Haefele-Thomas notes that the characters who grow closest to Jennings are Rachael and Franklin. Before they reunite with him on his deathbed, they reflect on their sadness to be parted from "our best and dearest friend."[199] This connection "sets them apart as a different generation, a 'new' generation of British citizen" who are more open-minded, both to racial difference and to the scientific possibilities of mesmerism.[200] Collins had expressed a similar sentiment in a series of six letters, published in the left-wing newspaper the *Leader,* about a decade earlier. While Collins' astonishment at what he described as "something too weird and supernatural…for the sort of discussion which men give to practical every-day-affair" seems to align his view of mesmerism with the Brahmins more than Ezra Jennings, the series concludes with a hope that the future will validate mesmerism's usefulness.[201] Collins states that "as men of intellect and honour in all quarters…continue to study…and to extract more clearly the practical uses to which [mesmerism] may assuredly be directed for the benefit of humanity, so will the circle of believers whose belief is worth gaining inevitably widen, and so will the masses follow them."[202] This dream of future expansion mirrors Elvan Mutlu's argument that for British writers who portrayed the exoticized occult positively, the supernatural reflected a desire for multiculturalism and cultural exchange.[203] This exchange is the hope of the novel – that British society may, in time, put the 'benefit of humanity' first by embracing unconventional ideas and non-white people, albeit those that fit a white Western understanding of 'civilisation.' The Brahmins and their purely occult-focused mesmerism, however, are best left in India, with the

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[199] Ibid., 428.
[200] Haefele-Thomas, *Queer*, 39.
[201] Wilkie Collins, "Magnetic Evenings at Home," *Leader*, 6 March 1852, 257.
[202] Wilkie Collins, "Magnetic Evenings at Home," *Leader*, 13 March 1852, 257.
[203] Elvan Mutlu, "Mobility, Identity and the Supernatural in Late-Victorian Fiction," *International Journal of Research* 5.23 (2018): 612-30

stone returned to its rightful place "in the forehead of the…god of the Moon…dark and awful in the mystic light of heaven" and, more importantly, out of England.[204]

A Lack of Distinction

Despite the efforts of novelists like Collins, and scientists like Braid and Liébeault, medical practices of mesmerism were not easily separated from their occult counterparts. This is in part due to the inherent difficulty of distinguishing between the two. While hypnotism proposed a physiological explanation for its effects, its presentation and results remained similar to mesmerism. A controller still demanded a subject's attention as they appeared to will them into a trance. Soon, 'hypnotism' was treated in the public sphere as another name for mesmerism, rather than a distinct subset. The editor of *Human Nature* complained that yet another name had been associated with the practice, arguing that since "the various phenomena classed by some under the titles of Animal Magnetism, Vital Magnetism, Human Magnetism, and other terms such as Hypnotism, are already known in this country by the simple term Mesmerism, we see no great reason for any change in the nomenclature."[205] *Light*, a spiritualist magazine, was similarly dismissive of the differentiation, printing an article on the anesthetic qualities of "hypnotism (as it is now the fashion to call mesmerism)."[206] Mesmerist James Coates noted in his popular handbook that "practically, hypnotism is mesmerism. The phenomena observed being similar, change of name cannot alter them."[207] Psychic investigator John Barter repeatedly switches between the terms on a sentence-by-sentence basis, despite insisting on an inherent difference.[208]

[204] Collins, *Moonstone*, 466.
[205] "What is Mesmerism?" *Human Nature*, 1.4 (1867): 227-8
[206] "Notes By the Way," *Light*, 30 August 1881, 260.
[207] Coates, *Human*, v.
[208] John Barter, *How to Hypnotise*, (London: Simpkin, 1890), 16-7.

Over time, the attempts to separate hypnotism and mesmerism ceased all together. While this may have been influenced by the complications noted above, it was also facilitated by the spread of other anesthetics, such as chloroform and ether. While Mouat observed that mesmeric attempts to produce a state of insensibility could take upwards of "an hour and a half" and were so potentially exhausting that "a Hospital containing only 300 beds would give a mesmeric staff of seventy-five operators…[at] a rate of Rupees 750 per mensem, or 9,000 per annum," these chemical alternatives could render patients unconscious quickly, cheaply, and without the burden of association with non-white peoples or their occult practices.[209] Since the perceived need to separate hypnotism and mesmerism emerged from mesmerism's medical usefulness, its replacement rendered the need for justification moot.

While the medical community at large shifted its attention to other anesthetics, mesmerism still seemed to offer insights into the unconscious mind, making it appealing to proto-psychologists. However, since the field of psychology was still developing, white scientists still faced the task of distancing themselves from mesmerism's occult roots among non-white practitioners. Attempts at separation were frustrated by the fact that popular demonstrations of mesmerism were often associated with the mystical East and its non-white inhabitants. One example of this occurred at the Universal Exhibition in London in 1867, as recorded by Foveau de Courmelles, a French physician who experimented with mesmerism. According to de Courmelles, the popular exhibition was a group of Indian snake charmers who would perform feats of mesmerism on the animals and themselves. After placing one another into a trance, one of the performers "might be seen eating thorny, leathery leaves of the cactus; another would crack with his teeth, apparently with great gusto, sharp fragments of glass; a head man of the

[209] Mouat in *Report,* xliv

tribe licked a red-hot shovel and forced his eye out of the socket; and all this was repeated over and over again."[210] Such displays were represented as not only powerful effects of mesmerism, but as commonplace occurrences in the mystical East. Medical experiments with mesmerism could not extract it from its supposed racial and occult origins.

As the racial components of mesmerism persisted throughout the century, so too did the concepts of racial influence on susceptibility. Jean-Marie Charcot, a Parisian physician, developed a theory of mesmerism that suggested susceptibility was a function of hereditary degeneration.[211] Thus, as fellow mesmeric researcher Thomas J. Hudson explains, "the whole subject was explicable on the basis of cerebral anatomy or physiology."[212] The relative strength of different races was believed to be both immutable and a key factor in resisting mesmeric influence, so that only those of a weakened constitution or nervous disposition needed to be concerned around dark-skinned mesmerists. However, this changed in 1884 with the publication of a theory proposed by a competing French physician named Hippolyte Bernheim. While Charcot and those who studied under him and came to be known as the Paris or Salpêtrière School maintained that physiology was the determining factor of mesmeric susceptibility, Bernheim and his colleagues, known as the Nancy School, argued that susceptibility to mesmerism relied on psychological suggestion, rather than biological influences. Under Bernheim's theory, while some people were still more resistant to mesmerism than others, an individual's biology or moral character no longer played a determining factor in their

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[210] Foveau de Courmelles, *Hypnotism*, trans. Laura Esnor, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1891) 170.
[211] For more on Charcot's involvement in mesmerism during this time, as well as its connections with hysteria, see Jean-Marie Charcot, *Lectures on the Diseases of the Nervous System*, trans. George Sigerson (London: New Sydenham Society, 1889); Alan Robert George Owen, *Hysteria, Hypnosis, and Healing: The Work of J.-M. Charcot* (New York: Garett, 1971); and Daniel Pick, *Svengali's Web* (London: Yale University Press, 2000).
[212] Thomas Jay Hudson, *The Law of Psychic Phenomena* (London: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1893), 90.

susceptibility. In short, Bernheim theorized that "hypnotism will affect not only nervous individuals, but also sound healthy individuals – or those that are considered such…we all possess a certain nervous impressionability…nobody is absolutely refractory to magnetism."[213] This included those members of white society who had previously felt secure in the belief of their inherent superiority.

Bernheim's proposal had a significant impact on the public perception of mesmerism at the fin de siècle, particularly as it related to the constructed association of non-white races and mesmeric ability. The following section highlights the shift in public discourse about mesmerism following the publication of Bernheim's theory, providing context to Du Maurier's novel *Trilby* and evidentiary support for the continued racialization of the occult. In particular, the section discusses how Jews came to be constructed as mesmeric threats to white British citizens.[214]

Renewed Threat

Soon after Bernheim published his theory, stories detailing the threat of mesmerism resurfaced in Britain. Some recalled the old fears of the life-threatening effects that mesmerism posed to the subject's body and mind, such as *Clarion*'s description of one young man's inability to awake from a trance and "violent nervous crises" following a public performance.[215] Others emphasized the new forms of crime made possible by the threat of mesmerism, a threat made more apparent

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[213] Hippolyte Bernheim, *Hypnotisme, Suggestion, Psychothérapie* (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2010), 124.
[214] During the Victorian period, Jews were viewed as a primarily racial rather than ethnic group, in addition to being followers of Judaism. For a more in depth look at the formation of the perception of Jewishness as a racial category within Victorian Britain, see Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971); Deborah Cohen, "Who Was Who? Race and Jews in Turn-of-the-Century Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 41.4 (2002): 460-83; and Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of the Jew in English Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[215] "The Dangers of Hypnotism," *Clarion*, 23 January 1892, 5.

by the continuing experiments of prominent researchers. Bernheim experimented with implanting a suggestion to steal, reporting that it only takes "forcible and imperative command" to overwhelm any qualms the subject might have about theft. [216] Georges Gilles de la Tourette, a fellow scientist, took the experiment further, writing that he was able to successfully mesmerize a woman into believing a ruler was a revolver and to convince her to 'kill' one of the researchers, resulting in the subject declaring that "he was doomed to die by my hand."[217] Charcot, Tourette's mentor, replicated his student's experiment, his mesmerized subject "remarking casually that [his victim] is an old villain and deserved to die" after 'stabbing' him with a cardboard knife.[218] These findings did not go unnoticed in the public sphere, particularly after one of Tourette's subjects shot him in the head, claiming he had mesmerized her against her will.[219] Tourette survived the attack and denied the allegation, though images of the dramatic encounter were widely published, including on the cover of the popular magazine *Le Pays Illustré* (Figure 1). The scope of these reports indicates the ways in which the dangers of mesmerism became apparent to the public and its benefits continued to be of interest to the medical researchers who valued its psychological insight.

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[216] Hippolyte Bernheim, *Suggestive Therapeutics: A Treatise on the Nature and Uses of Hypnotism*, trans. Christian A. Herter (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), 37.
[217] Georges Gilles de la Tourette, *L'hypnotisme Et Les États Analogues Au Point De Vue Médico-Légal* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1887), 400.
[218] Reprinted in "Hypnotism and Crime," *Famous Crimes* 2.20 (n.d.): 154.
[219] Georges Guinon, "Attentat Contre Le Dr. Gilles De La Tourette." *Le Progres Medical* 21 (1893): 446.

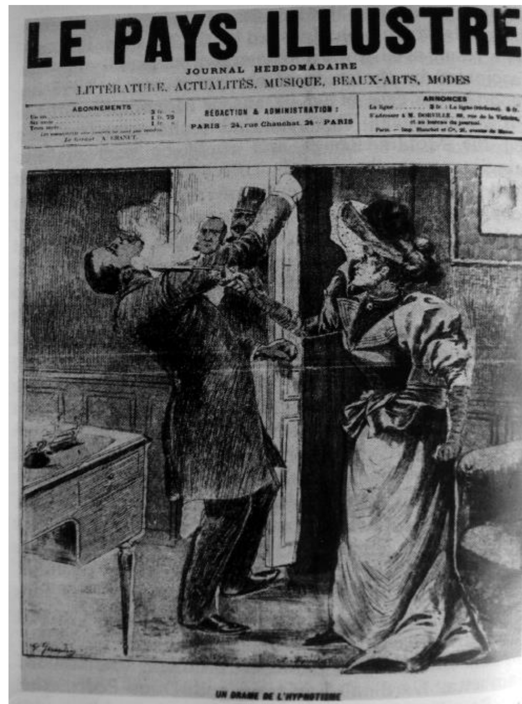

Figure 1[220]

Even though susceptibility to mesmerism was no longer considered a function of race, the ability to perform the occult practice retained its racial elements. Medically-focused texts like Moll's treatise on mesmerism traced mesmerism's roots to "several thousand years ago among the Egyptians, the Persian magi [and] Indian yogi and fakirs," and popular publications like the *Clarion* decried the "modern Mahatmas" who inflict the "darkest abuses" when they could otherwise "provoke amusement."[221] The public reception of mesmerism at the end of the century is summarized by Hudson's statement that "it would be strange indeed if the average man were not pressed with an indefinable dread of the power of the hypnotist," particularly since the typical figure of the mesmerist was constructed as "the Oriental [who] has acquired the knowledge of laws which govern the production of phenomena, and [is] able to apply them."[222]

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[220] "Un Drame de l'Hypnotisme," *Le Pays Illustré* 21 (1983): Cover.
[221] Albert Moll, *Hypnotism* (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1891), 2; "Mesmeric Mountebanks," *Clarion*, 12 December 1891, 5.
[222] Hudson, *Law*, 123; Ibid., 261.

Bernheim's theory of suggestion upended the racial hierarchy of mesmerism and contributed to the construction of a revitalized threat of the non-white mesmerist.

Jews and Mesmerism

Among the various races associated with mesmerism, Jews had occupied a position of secondary importance throughout the Victorian period. While Egypt, India, and Arabia were often considered the originators of the occult practice (with Mesmer reframing it among white thinkers), some writers considered mesmerism and Jews similarly entwined.[223] Mary Anne Atwood, for example, explained that while ancient Egyptians had discovered the principles of mesmerism, their techniques were "preserved and spread by the Hebrews."[224] Douglas Jerrold, as previously mentioned, cited Biblical descriptions of laying on hands as "passages…which would lead to the conclusion that vital magnetism was known in the earlier ages."[225] Later, the physician Joseph Ennemoser published a history of magic that reiterated both of these points, adding that in descriptions of biblical revelation "we see…the same proceedings as in magnetism, -- the same attributes of the hand, the same functions, the same results; but with the difference between the divine power and will and that of man."[226] While these accounts established a connection between Jewishness and mesmerism, most discussions of the occult practice did not focus on the Jews until later in the century.

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[223] Moll also theorized Japan, ancient Persia, Aboriginal Australia, and the forests of Africa as potential points of origin for mesmerism later in the century. Notably, all of these options were considered ancient or savage nations and were populated by non-white races.
[224] Mary Anne Atwood, *Early Magnetism in Its Higher Relations to Humanity as Veiled in the Poets and the Prophets* (London: H. Baillierie, 1846), 27.
[225] "Mesmerism" 26.
[226] Joseph Ennemoser, *The History of Magic*, trans. William Howitt (London: Henry George Bohn, 1854), 253.

In the 1880s and 1890s, the connection between Jews and mesmerism rose to prominence, in part due to their similarly unstable positions within society. Mesmerism's history within the medical community was tolerated despite the reiteration of its non-white origins, and Jews were generally accepted in Europe with the understanding that they were racial and cultural outsiders. Michael Glachinsky argues that "images of decent, hard-working, respectable, and graceful [middle-class] Jews" were popular throughout the 1850s and 1860s, emphasizing that they could exist peacefully alongside British society even if "they never truly assimilated."[227] Deborah Cohen has also noted that the increasing emphasis placed on Jews as a separate race in the late nineteenth century occurred "because they were otherwise difficult to distinguish from their fellow citizens," meaning that while Jewishness was popularly understood to be immutable and recognizable, it was also virtually indistinguishable if not exaggerated.[228] This was particularly evident in representations of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli in popular media. Despite his conversion to Christianity early in life, Disraeli was ethnically Jewish, and many British citizens expressed doubt that Jews could ever be truly converted. *The Young Englishman's Journal*, for example, published what it declared to be a "humorous" account of the frustrations concerning Jews who would recant their conversion to Christianity, concluding with the declaration that drowning a recently converted Jew was the "only manner" to guarantee Jews would not recant.[229] Stories such as these contributed to the idea that Jewishness was indelible and conversion only occurred as a form of subterfuge. Furthermore, Disraeli was seemingly obsessed with the East, believed to be the home of mesmerism. Beyond his own novels, which routinely depicted Jews as privy to an intrinsic spiritual superiority and set

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[227] Michael Galchinsky, "Permanently Blacked," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27.1 (1999): 172-3.
[228] Deborah Cohen, "Who Was Who? Race and Jews in Turn-of-the-Century Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 41.4 (2002): 461.
[229] "Converting a Jew," *The Young Englishman's Journal*, 1.14 (1867): 213.

Jerusalem as the place where Britain might draw spiritual strength, political cartoons satirized his calls for attention to the East by portraying him in Oriental costume (Figure 2) or as a dark-skinned native of the East (Figure 3).

"NEW CROWNS FOR OLD ONES!"
(ALADDIN *adapted.*)

Figure 2[230]

THE ASIATIC MYSTERY.
As Prepared by Sepoy D'Israeli.

Figure 3[231]

The popular press drew repeated attention to Disraeli's Jewish ancestry, its apparent immutability, and the supposedly inherent occult powers associated with it. A pamphlet on the Eastern Crisis in 1878 declared that Disraeli was "a Jew in race, in heart, and in practice," portraying him as a wizard who controlled Britain through "skillfully playing upon … the weaknesses of those around him."[232] This image of Disraeli as a mesmerizing wizard remained popular throughout his time in Parliament. *The Spectator* ran an article theorizing on the powers

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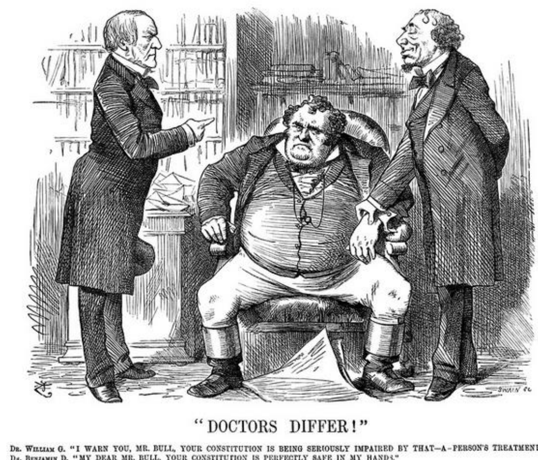
[230] John Tenniel, "New Crowns for Old Ones: Aladdin Adapted," *Punch* 70 (1876): 147.
[231] John Tenniel, "The Asiatic Mystery: As Prepared by Sepoy D'Israeli," *Punch* 33 (1857): 55.
[232] "*The Sympathy and Action of England in the Late Eastern Crisis and What Came of Them*" (London: A. Boyle, 1878), 11.

of the "great Israelite magician" with his "half-belief in the cabalistic sorcery, with all its wild spiritual machinery," able to render "typical Englishmen…the most plastic of all materials" through the power of some "strange talisman."[233] Thomas Carlyle, the social critic, similarly wondered at the "superlative Hebrew conjurer, spellbinding all the great Lords, great parties, great interests of England…leading them by the nose, like helpless mesmerised somnambulant cattle."[234] Drawing on the connections being made between the Jewish Disraeli and mesmeric powers, *Punch*, a satirical magazine, published a cartoon (Figure 4) of the Prime Minister in the familiar pose of the mesmerist, smugly grasping at the wrist of John Bull, the personification of England. This pose mimics popular accounts of the figures carved at the temple of Isis in Egypt, in which "Isis is depicted holding a child by the hand…with the attitude of a magnetizer."[235] Within this public construction of Disraeli, the figures of the Jew and the mesmerist were combined into a single threatening figure that abused his power and harmed those he was supposed to help.



"DOCTORS DIFFER!"

DR. WILLIAM G. "I WARN YOU, MR. BULL, YOUR CONSTITUTION IS BEING SERIOUSLY IMPAIRED BY THAT—A-PERSON'S TREATMENT."
DR. BENJAMIN D. "MY DEAR MR. BULL, YOUR CONSTITUTION IS PERFECTLY SAFE IN MY HANDS."

Figure 4[236]

[233] "Lord Beaconsfield's Magic," *The Spectator*, 2 November 1878, 1357.
[234] Thomas Carlyle, *Shooting Niagara, and After?* (London: Hansebooks, 2016), 10-1.
[235] De Courmelles, *Hypnotism*, 1.
[236] John Tenniel, "Doctors Differ!" *Punch* 74 (1878): 247.

Apart from these depictions of Disraeli, discussions of mesmerism rarely invoked specific Jewish figures as examples. Du Maurier's son-in-law, C.C. Hoyer Millar, even praised Svengali as a wholly original character "unlike anything previously described in fiction."[237] A reviewer at *Punch* magazine, Du Maurier's former employer, expressed equal wonder at the sinister portrayal of "Shylock and Fagin, Mephistophesized," as though the depiction of a Jewish mesmerist had never occurred before.[238] Contrary to the commentary of these critics, the character of Svengali seems to be a product of his time, blending the anti-Semitic and anti-mesmerist portrayals that had existed throughout the Victorian period and that coalesced in the visual culture and narrative surrounding Disraeli. This chapter does not suggest that representations of Disraeli directly affected the portrayal of Svengali in George Du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*, nor that Svengali is meant to act as another representation of Disraeli. However, the depictions of Disraeli are relevant because they provide evidence explicitly connecting mesmerism to stereotypically Jewish features, relating the powers of "that...little god", as an anonymous letter to *Public Opinion* called him, directly to his "yellow [skin]…huge nose and cunning eye…[and] heavy-lipped mouth."[239] Similarly, the depiction of Svengali racializes his practice of mesmerism, connecting his occult abilities with his stereotypically Jewish features through frequent reiteration in the text and in Du Maurier's illustrations. As a result, the anxieties regarding the powers of the mesmerist blend with racial anxieties of miscegenation and racial degeneration. By constructing mesmerism as a feature of a dominating and infiltrating Jewishness that is visibly and characteristically opposed to the construction of white British characters, Du Maurier's novel offers an answer as to how mesmerism should be

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[237] C. C. Hoyer Millar, *George Du Maurier and Others* (London: Cassell and Co, 1937), 145.
[238] "The Marvellous Feat of Tree-Ilby Svengalivanised!" *Punch*, 21 December 1895, 232.
[239] Letter in *Public Opinion*, 6 September 1876, 359-60.

positioned within society given its more dangerous elements and access to the unconscious mind. Furthermore, by portraying both mesmerism and Jewishness as equally dangerous to white members of society, the novel also allows for a reading of mesmerism as both a reflection of and a metaphor for the racial threat of miscegenation. In order to interrogate the ways in which Svengali represents Du Maurier's arguments regarding mesmerism, this section will focus on the ways in which Svengali's Jewishness is highlighted as an integral aspect of his mesmerism as well as how that Jewishness is characterized. To accomplish this, it briefly examines which of Svengali's features are highlighted as Jewish and how those Jewish features are presented as both inherently tied to his practice of mesmerism and as oppositional to the features of white Britishness. The chapter continues by demonstrating how Svengali's practice of mesmerism is depicted as harmful and anxiety-laden. It will then compare these depictions to the benign view of mesmerism wielded by Ezra Jennings in *The Moonstone*.

Trilby

Like Ezra Jennings's distinct West Indian features, Svengali's Jewish characteristics are immediately and visibly obvious. As soon as he appears in the novel, Svengali is identified by the narrator as being "of Jewish aspect, well-featured but sinister."[240] The presence of this sinister Jewish aspect is emphasized in the descriptions of his "bold, brilliant black eyes, with long heavy lids," which alternately "languish" and "flash…with intent to kill."[241] This emphasis on Svengali's eyes is typical of Victorian constructions of Jewishness, which sought to categorically define the various physical aspects of race. John Dunlop, Secretary of the British Society for the Jews, describes in his memoirs of evangelization that "dark eyes…bespeak the

[240] George Du Maurier, *Trilby,* ed. Dennis Denisoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11.
[241] Ibid., 11; Ibid., 16.

Jew," revealing a persistent belief that Jewish people possess "a *sameness*...that they carry with them [marked by] their common origin," and that their sameness could be identified through key features, particularly their dark eyes.[242] Berthold Seemann, an anthropologist, similarly remarks on the "large black eyes peculiar to the Hebrew" present in an indigenous man in the Arctic circle.[243] While Seemann's conclusion that the various tribes present in the Arctic may be descended from a lost tribe of Israel seems far-fetched today, it is predicated on the belief in a universality of racial type.[244] Sander Gilman records the extent of this belief in the Victorian scientific press, noting that Joseph Gobineau, Francis Galton, and Charles Darwin all argued for universally recognizable "Jewish" features, particularly by insisting that all Jewish people could be identified by their dark and bulbous eyes.[245] Other features were also constructed as Jewish, particularly long or hooked noses, bony fingers, or the "thick, heavy, languid, lusterless black hair" that Svengali wears "in that musician-like way that is so offensive to the normal Englishman."[246] However, while these other features were also constructed as Jewish, eyes were considered particularly unique, as evidenced by the early arguments of William Romaine, a prominent reverend, against Jewish naturalization in England. Romaine argued that Jewish eyes

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[242] John Dunlop, *Memories of Gospel Triumphs among the Jews During the Victorian Era* (London: S. W. Partridge and Co., 1894), 344.
[243] Berthold Seemann, "On the Anthropology of Western Eskimo Land, and on the Desirability of Further Arctic Research," *Anthropological Review* 3.10 (1865): ccci.
[244] Seemann was not the only one to speculate on the pervasiveness of certain racial characteristics. Various missionaries and racial theorists including Arthur S. Thomson, *The Story of New Zealand* (London: John Murray, 1859); John Nicholas, *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand* (London: James Black & Son, 1817); Richard Taylor, *New Zealand and Its Inhabitants* (London: Werthiem & Macintosh, 1855); Michael Russell, *Polynesia* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1842); Thomas Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians* (London: A. Heylin, 1860), George Stringer Rowe, *The Life of John Hunt, Missionary to the Cannibals* (London: Hamilton, 1860); Alfred St. Johnston, *Camping among the Cannibals* (London: Macmillan, 1883) and "Cannibalism," *Gentleman's Magazine* 257 (1884) all argued that the black eyes, wide nostrils, and ritualistic practices (that ranged from circumcision to cannibalism) present among Pacific Islanders indicated that they may have also been part of a lost tribe of Israel.
[245] Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London: Routledge, 1991), 44.
[246] Du Maurier, *Trilby*, 11.

carried "a malignant Blackness which gives them such a Cast, as bespeaks Guilt and Murder," a feature he declared made it impossible to "mistake a *Jew* by this Mark."[247] This constructed association between Jews and eyes is of interest because eyes were also routinely believed to be the conduits of mesmeric power.

Eyes and eye contact were an integral part of the practice of mesmerism, particularly in reference to the mesmerist's eyes. While earlier theories had focused on the eyes of the subject, such as Braid's theory of paralyzed nerves from prolonged focus, the late nineteenth-century shifted the focus primarily to the mesmerist. In his experiments with mesmerism, Moll records his ability to mesmerize his subjects by asking them "to look me straight in the eyes," establishing control through verbal commands that can be maintained even when "[the subjects'] eyes are closed during hypnosis."[248] He further demonstrates instances of mesmeric ability emanating from the mesmerist's gaze without a verbal component, citing times when "the operator looks at the subject's leg – it at once becomes powerless to move. The hypnotic is going away – the experimenter looks at a spot on the floor and [the subject] stands chained to the spot."[249] Thus, while either eye contact or systematic 'passes' over the subject could send the subject into a trance state, the mesmerist could control the actions of the mesmerized subject through their gaze alone. Through the construction of the eye of the mesmerist as the instrument of occult power and the focus on dark eyes as the mark of a Jew, the figures of the dark-eyed Jew and the dark-eyed mesmerist became conflated.

Svengali embodies the convergence of these figures, the Jew and the mesmerist, each identifiable by his eyes. When he initially mesmerizes the eponymous Trilby, he bids "her look

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[247] William Romaine, *A Modest Apology for the Citizens and Merchants of London Who Petitioned the House against Naturalizing the Jews* (London: W. Webb, 1753), 8; Ibid., 9.
[248] Moll, *Hypnotism*, 23.
[249] Ibid., 66.

him well in the white of the eyes" as he makes "little passes and counterpasses on her forehead and temples and down her cheek and neck."[250] He then invites another character to test the depth of Trilby's trance in a manner that would have been familiar to attendants of mesmeric stage shows, demonstrating her inability to act without his explicit permission, all the while "leering" over her as he shows "the yellow whites at the top of his big black eyes."[251] Svengali's eyes, already characterized as quintessentially Jewish, are constantly emphasized in Du Maurier's illustrations of mesmeric scenes. For example, the illustration titled "Au clair de la lune" (Figure 5) features a mesmerized Trilby performing at the opera as Svengali conducts her.

Figure 5[252]

Svengali glares up at her from below, this face obscured by a thick beard so that his black-ringed eyes are emphasized. He scowls up at Trilby as she gazes vacantly into the distance, his baton raised almost threateningly as his eyes bore into her throat. Taking Moll's conclusion that the

[250] Du Maurier, *Trilby*, 49.
[251] Ibid., 49.
[252] George Du Maurier, "Au clair de la lune," in *Trilby*, 211.

eyes of the mesmerist directed his power, Svengali's narrow focus on Trilby's exposed neck is practical in addition to threatening, as it is through his mesmerism that she is able to sing so beautifully. The effects of "Au clair" are enhanced in a later illustration (Figure 6) titled "Et maintenant dors, ma mignonne" which portrays Svengali actively mesmerizing the novel's heroine.

Figure 6[253]

In this scene, Svengali is nearly invisible, cloaked in darkness so thick that only the instruments of mesmerism are visible, namely his hands waving in the air before Trilby's vacant face, and his gleaming eyes focused squarely on her throat. He has been reduced to his key elements as they relate to his role in the story: darkness, eyes, Jewishness, and mesmerism. Adding another racialized element to this illustration, Svengali's pupils appear as predatory slits, inviting snake-like or even demonic comparisons.

Svengali's racial and mesmeric association with eyes is significant because Trilby initially falls under Svengali's command due to her own association with eyes. She regularly

[253] George Du Maurier, "Et maintenant dors, ma mignonne," in *Trilby*, 259.

suffers from neuralgia, a persistent pain in her eyes “that was maddening and generally lasted twenty-four hours.”[254] This hereditary condition allows her to fall prey to Svengali’s mesmerism, as he originally uses it to remove her pain in a manner similar to mesmerism’s anesthetic origins in the medical field. In *The Moonstone*, Ezra Jennings’ medical framing of mesmerism illustrates the similarities between white medical practice and non-white occult practice, effectively demonstrating how Jennings is more similar to his white aristocratic companions than previously thought. This scene of Svengali gallantly drawing Trilby’s pain into his own elbows and offering to repeat the process “every time you have pain” has the potential to act similarly, providing Svengali a racial familiarity with mesmerism that allows him to assist Trilby in a way that the white characters cannot.[255] However, while *The Moonstone* was written when the interest of the British medical community granted mesmerism social leeway, Du Maurier’s portrayal of Svengali reveals how mesmerism had lost most of its positive reputation by the end of the century. While Jennings’ white British education and manners offset his racial background, Svengali does not possess the same advantages; his Jewishness is constantly highlighted as being in opposition to the British characters, and thus his practice of mesmerism is represented as dangerous. Svengali is physically distinct from the British characters, “dirty and shabby…[with] a thin, sallow face, and a beard of burnt-up black, which grew almost from under his eyelids, and over it his mustache, a shade lighter, fell in two long spiral twists,” while the white British characters are clean-cut, square-shouldered, and fashionable.[256] Greater differences are evident in his character. While the British characters act as supportive companions, Svengali “seeking whom he might cheat, betray, exploit, borrow money from, make brutal fun of, bully if he dared,

[254] Du Maurier, *Trilby,* 49.
[255] Ibid., 50.
[256] Ibid., 11.

cringe to if he must – man, woman, child, or dog – was about as bad as they make 'em."[257] While Jennings is able to quickly establish himself as a gentleman of the highest caliber, Svengali vacillates between obsequiousness, derisiveness, and viciousness. As a racialized representative of mesmerism, Svengali reveals the extent to which mesmerism has become associated with the construction of the danger inherent in the non-white practitioner rather than the trustworthy scientist.

While Trilby's ocular malady potentially invites comparison to the supposedly inherent eye problems associated with Jews, which would call into question Svengali's position relative to the innocent white woman, Du Maurier's illustrations distinctly separate them. Returning to "Et maintenant," (Figure 6) while Svengali is wrapped in darkness, Trilby radiates light. Similarly, a later illustration (Figure 7) of Trilby's mesmerized rehearsals, titled "We took her voice note by note," shows her face bathed in light while the stern figure of the Jewish mesmerist faces the darkness, his back turned to the light as his eyes gleam from the shadows. Trilby's inherent goodness is illustrated as evocatively as Svengali's menace, the purity of the white woman standing in stark opposition to the threat of the Jewish mesmerist.

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[257] Ibid., 42.

Figure 7[258]

Aliens

The distinction between white British people and Jews was not unique to Du Maurier's novel. Jews had long been regarded as what a writer for the *Foreign Quarterly Review* described as "a curious race, distinct in every respect from the rest of the population," permanent outsiders that were identifiable by their "raven black locks and eyes."[259] Dunlop echoes this distinction in his memoir, stating that Jews "are the most distinct from all around, but they are always like each other," homogenizing the Jews in a more explicit variation of Collins' homogenization of the Brahmins in his novel, positioning them as a generalized collective that exists outside the construction of an implied norm.[260] Jews were viewed akin to a separate species, one that was considered dangerous to white Britons. The *Foreign Quarterly Review* declared Jews to be "the best preserved mummies of the remotest time…a black veil hung all over the country, if we forego the other rather illiberal simile – that of leeches sucking the life blood of the country."[261]

[258] George Du Maurier, "We took her voice note by note," in *Trilby*, 296.
[259] "The State of the Jews in Poland," *The Foreign Quarterly Review* 27 (1841): 139; Ibid., 140.
[260] Dunlop, *Memories,* 344.
[261] "State," 140.

When not viewed as parasites, the stereotypical Jew was considered a carrier of disease, as shown in the *Punch* cartoon titled 'Back!' (Figure 8). The cartoon features an anthropomorphized Britannia commanding the specter of cholera to return to its boat of immigrants, the first of which resembles the stereotypical construction of the Jew. Scientific sources also attributed a racial weakness to Jews, either physical or psychological. Racial scientist and anti-Semite Edouard Drumont wrote a massively popular two-volume diatribe against the Jews, arguing that "these insolent bankers…will plunge into the muddy river for days to cure their hereditary leprosy" among other assertions of physical decay and world-wide conspiracy.[262]

"BACK!"

Figure 8[263]

[262] Edouard Drumont, *La France Juive*, (Paris: C. Marpon & E. Flammarion, 1889), 65.
[263] John Tenniel, "Back!," *Punch* 103 (1892): 115.

Author and artist Joseph Pennell, investigating the abuses of the Jews in Eastern Europe, noted that even when "he is the free man, at liberty to live as he chooses…[the Jew is] a miserable, weak, consumptive-looking specimen of humanity…every year growing, if possible, a degree greasier and more degenerate," further contributing to the idea that Jews were somehow inherently inferior, "sinking deeper…into degradation" while Britain excelled as "a great Christian center."[264]

The extent to which Jews were constructed as separate and distinct from white British people was so great that H. L. Malchow notes, during the Victorian period, the term *alien*, with all its connotations of "invasion, danger, and mystery…came, in the coded discourse of the social problem, to mean specifically the Ashkenazi [Eastern] Jew."[265] Svengali embodies this alien nature in the novel. His dirty viciousness distinguishes him from the British characters and is presented in the novel as being predicated on the same basis as his knowledge of mesmerism, namely his "being an Oriental Israelite Hebrew Jew."[266] His Jewishness amplifies the threat already present in his unpleasant demeanor, as when he learns Trilby has been burning his letters. Rather than accepting her rejection, he launches into a ghoulish description of how he will haughtily appraise her skeleton after her death in a set of "vicious imaginations…which look so tame in English print, sounded much more ghastly in French, pronounced with a Hebrew-German accent, and uttered in his hoarse, rasping, nasal, throaty rook's caw, his big yellow teeth baring themselves in a mongrel canine snarl, his heavy upper eyelids drooping over his insolent black eyes."[267] His reaction is further racialized by its animalistic characterization. In this

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[264] Joseph Pennell, "The Jew at Home," *The Illustrated London News,* 5 December 1891, 5; Ibid., 10; Ibid., 9.
[265] H. L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 159.
[266] Du Maurier, *Trilby*, 244.
[267] Ibid., 92.

context, the novel seeks to justify the decision of other characters as they seek to separate themselves from him.

This characterization of Svengali's Jewishness extends to and is a reflection of his practice of mesmerism as well. This is most apparent when another character recognizes that Svengali mesmerized Trilby, warning her that "they get you into their power, and just do any blessed thing they please – lie, murder, steal – anything! And kill yourself in the bargain when they've done with you!"[268] The speaker does not specify whether 'They' are mesmerists or Jews, but this ambiguity reiterates their interchangeability. In Du Maurier's construction, mesmerism is inherently threatening because it originates from the duplicitous figure of the Jew, and the 'alien' nature of Jews is made dangerous by their practice of mesmerism. Mesmerism allows Svengali to penetrate to the deepest point of Trilby's subconscious mind and infect her with his will.

Miscegenation

An additional layer of danger is presented by Svengali's ability to use mesmerism in order to overcome whatever obstacles would normally prevent him from gaining access to Trilby. Thus, Du Maurier's novel draws on another anxiety present in the Victorian pubic imagination, that of mesmeric miscegenation. Miscegenation, the belief that racial groups are so distinct that interracial coupling results in one group being permanently tainted by the other, was a common element in stories that decried the dangers of mesmerists, particularly as non-white racial groups continued to be associated with the occult practice. The narrative of the lascivious dark-skinned mesmerist preying on white British women, present in the *Lancet* article mentioned earlier as well as other newspaper reports, was easily conjoined with narratives of deceitful and lecherous

[268] Ibid., 52.

Jews being pushed by anti-Semitic campaigners like Joseph Banister and Arnold White, who frequently warned that allowing Jews to live alongside white people would be dangerous.[269] In their respective protestations against an imagined influx of Jews into Britain, Banister claimed that "no Jew is more of a hero among his fellow tribesmen than the one who can boast of having accomplished the ruin of some friendless unprotected Christian girl."[270] White similarly declared that the Jews, with their "tainted constitutions [and] brains charged with subtle mischief… [sought to] transmit a terrible inheritance of evil to the next generation."[271] While mesmerism had produced anxieties concerning the possibility of assault for decades, the imbrication of mesmerism and Jewishness became tied to a specific set of anxieties regarding miscegenation. These anxieties were exacerbated by a series of legal cases involving mesmeric assault on white women by non-white mesmerists, such as the trial of Paul Levy. Levy was a travelling Jewish dentist, accused and convicted of using mesmerism to send his patient into a lucid sleep so that he could assault her.[272] Moll noted that the case was "remarkable because the girl's mother was present and noticed nothing."[273] Such cases were used to highlight the danger perceived to be inherent in the non-white mesmerist, exposing a fundamental anxiety among the British public that such men would be able to overcome the usual boundaries that would theoretically prevent miscegenation from occurring in the same way that Svengali is able to circumvent the protection offered by Trilby's British companions.

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[269] "Virtues," 414; For a greater exploration of the image of the sexually-depraved Jew, see Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1990); Charles Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand* (London: Longman, 1892); and J. Henry Lord, *The Jewish Mission Field in the Bombay Diocese* (Bombay: The Education Society, 1894).
[270] Joseph Banister, *England under the Jews* (London: Joseph Banister, 1901), 39.
[271] Arnold White, *The Modern Jew* (London: W. Heinemann, 1899), 26.
[272] Paul Brouardel, "Accusation De Viol Accompli Pendant Le Sommeil Hypnotique," *Annales D'hygiene Publique Et De Medicine Legale* 1 (1879): 43.
[273] Moll, *Hypnotism*, 336.

Beyond these cases of mesmeric assault, another case touched on deeper anxieties. Moll records an instance in which an unnamed foreign man mesmerized "his victim over many months…to love him, trust him, &c….and assaulted her when she was in an obviously hypnotic state."[274] Thus, the mesmerist not only destroys the woman's honor, but keeps her at his side, disrupting the social boundaries that would otherwise have prevented the marriage. The danger implied in Svengali's marriage to the mesmerized Trilby, is the threat of new offspring, and, to paraphrase White, transmission of Jewishness to the next generation. It is no coincidence that in Du Maurier's illustration of Little Billee, the novel's protagonist, jealously remembering Trilby and Svengali "—hand in hand, master and pupil, husband and wife—" the pair of them enshroud a pair of children (Figure 9). [275] These children are the manifestation of not only Billee's anxieties regarding Trilby, but the anxieties of a British public who imagined an influx of non-white, and thus degenerate, progeny of insidious mesmerists that threatened to disrupt the social order.

Figure 9[276]

[274] Ibid., 335.
[275] Du Maurier, *Trilby,* 223.
[276] George Du Maurier, "And the remembrance of them – hand in hand" in *Trilby*, 224.

Of further concern is the fact that, in Little Billee's mind, Svengali's presence is so corrupting that Trilby even looks more like him, matching his smirk and leering from the picture with her large dark eyes. By mesmerizing Trilby, Svengali has not only fulfilled his promise to make her "see nothing, hear nothing, think of nothing but Svengali, Svengali, Svengali," he has seemingly turned her into another vessel for his own personality, supplanting her identity with something as alien and insidious as himself.[277] Operating similarly to concepts of miscegenation, the novel portrays mesmerism as a threat to identity, corrupting its subject through the presence of a non-white influence. While late Victorian critics do not seem to have offered explicit commentary on this concern, or on the imbrication of Jewishness and mesmerism in general, the function of a specifically Jewish mesmerism in the text becomes difficult to ignore. Trilby, when mesmerized, becomes La Svengali, an extension of the man characterized by his sinister, dirty, and repugnant aspects, which the novel explicitly connects to his Jewishness. Mesmerism creates more Svengalis not only through implied children, but through the act of practicing it. Mesmerism allows Svengali to possess his victim in an extension of the Satanic imagery present in his dark pointed beard and the ways in which he would intrude on her "paradise," presenting "a baleful and most ominous figure that constantly…came between her and the sun."[278] When Trilby encounters Little Billee outside of the opera, for example, she behaves like Svengali, coldly turning away from him with a disdain that "cut him dead."[279] The racialized imagery of the parasite, commonly applied to Jews in the late Victorian period, is also incorporated, as Svengali seems to insert himself into Trilby's mind, sustained by her success in a way that he would be unable to achieve on his own.

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[277] Ibid., 60.
[278] Ibid., 72.
[279] Ibid., 244.

The parasitism of Jewish mesmerism extends through Svengali's death. Having been separated from Trilby at a London opera, confined to a box seat in the shadows and devoid of his power over her, his mesmerism fails. Trilby is unable to sing, snapping out of her reverie, and Svengali is discovered in his seat, frozen in death. Before being separated from Trilby, Svengali appeared invincible, surviving both heart disease and a knife wound to the throat. It is only when he is denied the ability to use mesmerism, to possess Trilby and spread his distinctly Jewish influence, that he finally succumbs.[280] While this scene seems to act as both triumph and moral – demonstrating that a separation from Jews would limit their influence – Svengali's death is more ominous, as he passed away while "smiling a ghastly, sardonic smile, a rictus of hate and triumphant revenge – as if he were saying – 'I've got the laugh of you *all*, this time!'"[281] Shortly after the disastrous night at the opera, Trilby receives a photograph of Svengali in Hungarian finery "and his big black eyes full of stern command."[282] The mysterious portrait has arrived "out of some remote province in eastern Russia – out of the mysterious East! The poisonous East – birthplace and home of an ill wind that blows nobody good."[283] Once again, the East is the origin of the occult and the lethal dangers associated with it. The picture itself seems imbued with the occult nature of its subject and his homeland as even the image of Svengali holds power over her. She is transfixed by his eyes, swaying from side to side before she begins to sing beautifully once more. She then collapses, only uttering the name "Svengali…" before dying.[284] Trilby's

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[280] Ibid., 254; Hilary Grimes, "Power in Flux," *Gothic Studies* 10.2 (2008) and Nina Auerbach, "Magi and Maidens," *Critical Studies* 8.2 (1981) both argue that since removing Trilby from power exchange results in Svengali's death, the novel implies she wields a certain percentage of power in the relationship. However, the anxieties of the novel seem more concerned with Svengali's unfettered power over Trilby rather than any power she may have.
[281] Du Maurier, *Trilby*, 250.
[282] Ibid., 282.
[283] Ibid., 282.
[284] Ibid., 284.

death implies that Svengali's occult influence occupied so much of her mind that without him, she is unable to exist. Svengali's mesmerism erases so much of her identity, replacing it with his own talented but non-white sinister one, that his abrupt removal causes sudden and irreparable damage.

Clarifications

Notably, while Svengali and his practice of mesmerism are the villains of the novel, mesmerism *per se* is not immediately criticized. In an echo of *Clarion*'s lament that mesmerists abuse a power that could be used to "provoke amusement," Svengali at first appears to be another benign if eccentric mesmerist, willing to help relieve Trilby's pain even to his own detriment, and it is his misuse of that ability that is villainous.[285] In the world outside the novel, mesmerism was also viewed as a viable medical practice that was marred by the potential for abuse. While interest in the use of mesmerism as a medical anesthetic waned due to the relative ease of using chloroform, the newspaper *Police and Public* ran an article in 1889 promoting research being done at the London Hypnotic Institute lauding the efforts of the mesmerists on staff who removed "the difficulty which has hitherto arisen from the absence of qualified and experienced operators to deal with cases" of alcoholism and other addictions.[286] Their efforts yielded quick and "increasingly successful results," and mesmerism appeared to offer a path towards a better future.[287] Similarly, Trilby's success is attributed to her being mesmerized: despite being "quite tone-deaf" when lucid, "she could keep on one note and make it go through all the colours in the rainbow – according to the way Svengali looked at her" when mesmerized.[288] Mesmerism acts as

[285] "Mesmeric," 5.
[286] "Dipsomania and Hypnotism," *Police & Public*, 7 December 1889, 7.
[287] Ibid., 7.
[288] Du Maurier, *Trilby*, 296; Ibid., 297.

the key to unlocking the potential contained within her physiology, evidenced by Svengali's praise of "the roof of [her] mouth…the entrance of [her] throat…[her] little tongue…the bridge of [her] nose."[289] It is at least implied that if mesmerism were applied carefully and by the right person, implanting the same musical lessons into her subconscious mind to circumvent her tone-deafness, she could have enjoyed equal success without the negative repercussions. While the mesmeric transference of ability or knowledge was fiercely debated in Victorian circles, this thesis asserts that the implication of Du Maurier's novel is that mesmerism *could* produce wonderful phenomena *if not wielded by a Jew*. Mesmerism is shown to be a powerful tool that has been corrupted by its use by a Jew, in the same way that French is "a pretty language [made] into an ugly one" by Svengali speaking it.[290] The failure of mesmerism in the novel is more the failure of a specifically Jewish mesmerism, one that seemingly cannot help but infiltrate, dominate, and corrupt. It is not mesmerism that *Trilby* portrays as villainous, but Jewish mesmerism.

Du Maurier's novel resists critiques of generalized anti-Semitism as Du Maurier's biographer, Leonée Ormond, argues that his depiction of Svengali "must not be seen as the expression of an unthinking and general prejudice."[291] Further examination of the text also contests accusation of "general prejudice" through the portrayals of Little Billee and another opera singer named Glorioli. Little Billee's beauty is described as carrying "a faint suggestion of some possible very remote Jewish ancestor," and acts as the novel's noble and introspective protagonist, free of any of the despicable characteristics assigned to Svengali's "Jewish aspect."[292] Similarly, Glorioli is "the biggest, handsomest, and most distinguished-looking Jew

[289] Ibid., 50-1.
[290] Ibid., 23.
[291] Leonée Ormond, *George Du Maurier* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 454.
[292] Du Maurier, *Trilby,* 6; Ibid., 11.

there ever was" and is a respected member of society, renowned for his partnership in a Spanish winery and his remarkable singing voice.[293] Glorioli appears to be the anti-Svengali, causing his audience to be "bewitched" in such a way that "they soon forgot their Highness and their Serenity" but doing so only to entertain, harboring no ill intention nor malice for his audience.[294]

However, these seemingly positive depictions of Jewishness are given caveats within the text. Du Maurier's praise of "that strong, sturdy, irrepressible, indomitable, indelible blood" in Little Billee carries hints of anxieties regarding miscegenation.[295] The very possibility that Little Billee may have had a Jewish ancestor has indelibly marked him generations later in a way that is impossible to repress or conceal. In the same breath, the positive qualities of Little Billee's beauty are extolled at the expense of the Jewish blood that provided them. The entire passage reads:

> And in his winning and handsome face there was just a faint suggestion of some possible very remote Jewish ancestor – just a tinge of that strong, sturdy, irrepressible, indomitable, indelible blood which is of such priceless value in homeopathic doses, like the dry white Spanish wine called montijo, which is not meant to be taken pure; but without a judicious admixture of which no sherry can go round the world and keep its flavour intact; or like the famous bulldog strain, which is not beautiful in itself, and yet just for lacking a little of the same no greyhound can ever hope to be a champion.[296]

In both comparisons, the montijo and the bulldog, the concept of Jewish blood is undesirable, subject to an inherent ugliness and bitterness in its pure state that is tolerable only in combination with a more elegant and favorable counterpart. A Jewish identity can be beneficial to a distant descendant provided it is tempered by an otherwise acceptable bloodline.

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[293] Ibid., 168.
[294] Ibid., 164-5.
[295] Ibid., 6-7.
[296] Ibid., 6-7.

Similarly, Du Maurier specifies that Glorioli is "one of the Sephardim (one of the Seraphim!)" meaning that he is of Levantine or Mediterranean descent, while Svengali is one of the Ashkenazim, "an Oriental Israelite Hebrew Jew."[297] This distinction emerges from and contributes to the late Victorian emphasis on the relative acceptability of Sephardic Jews when compared to the influx of immigrating Ashkenazi Jews fleeing persecution in Eastern Europe. While little distinction had been made between the two earlier in the century, Sephardic Jews had been able to achieve a certain amount of social acceptance. Racialized anti-Semitic sentiments such as those previously outlined persisted throughout the Victorian period, but the status of Sephardic Jews was assisted by legislative protections such as the Emancipation of British Jews in 1858 and by the rise of popular Sephardic figures, including the knighthood of philanthropist Moses Montefiore and the election of Sir David Salomons to Lord Mayor of London.[298] *The Illustrated London News* shows the racialization of the Ashkenazim by describing them as "being usually people of dark complexion…are, it is presumed, thereby more easily distinguished from most people of Christian nations," adding that "this is not so much the case with the Sephardim," allowing the latter to be more readily accepted.[299] Benjamin Disraeli, writing about the triumphs of his ancestors, noted that the conditions in Victorian Britain allowed the Sephardim to "achieve an amount of wealth and consideration that [the first Sephardic immigrants] never could have contemplated."[300] However, Disraeli's descriptions of the hardiness of the Sephardic Jews are presented as existing in contrast to Ashkenazi Jews, "an

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[297] Ibid., 168; Ibid., 244.
[298] For more on the contentious place that Jews occupied in Victorian social politics, see Anne and Roger Cowen's collection of print media relating to British Jews, *Victorian Jews Through British Eyes* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998).
[299] "An Askenazim" *The Illustrated London News*, 26 June 1875, 8.
[300] Benjamin Disraeli, "The Chancellor of the Exchequer's Pedigree," *London News,* 25 September 1858, 3

inferior caste" that sought to "steal into England."[301] This distinction is also present in the work of David Frederick Schloss, a Jewish economist, who sought to analyze how Jews participated in the British workforce at the end of the century. He wrote that while Sephardic Jews possessed "the tidiest of any workman's homes in the metropolis" and were "employed as coal-heavers…soldiers…pugilists of magnificent proportions," Ashkenazi Jews were "often abominably filthy," and "were almost, if not completely, devoid of proficiency in any trade."[302] Thus, Du Maurier's praise of Glorioli does not diminish the image of the invasive, filthy, and dangerous Ashkenazi Jew portrayed by Svengali. Furthermore, the racialized figure of the Ashkenazi Jew is an integral part of the novel's argument about danger inherent in mesmerism that can be used by non-white individuals and affect anyone, as it is Svengali's Jewishness, or more specifically his Ashkenazi-ness, that dictates his separation from and danger to the white British characters.

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[301] Ibid., 3.
[302] David Frederick Schloss, "The Jew as Workman," *The Nineteenth Century* 14 (1891): 99; Ibid., 97; Ibid., 99; Ibid., 97.

Chapter 2: Mesmerism and Women

In support of this thesis' argument that the occult is racialized in Victorian literature, this chapter will present evidence that Richard Marsh's novel *The Beetle* and Florence Marryat's novel *The Blood of the Vampire,* both published in 1897, racialize the mesmeric women that serve as the titular villains. The defining elements by which these characters and the occult are racialized in the other novels analyzed in this thesis are also found in these novels. Their racialization is accomplished by emphasizing the characters' physical darkness, comparing them to dangerous animals, constructing them as a threat to the white British characters, presenting the racialized characters as representative of the larger groups to which they belong, and portraying their death or departure from Britain as the optimal outcome of the story. This chapter argues that the specific ways in which this racialization occurs are drawn from the 1890s understanding of mesmerism as a movement of vital energy from someone who possesses more of that energy, often referred to as an *operator* in Victorian discussions of mesmerism, into someone with less of that energy, often referred to as a *subject*. The characterization of Marsh's shapeshifting Beetle as an extreme example of a powerful operator is influenced by conceptions of Egyptian women as aggressive and vicious, and the characterization of Marryat's psychic vampire Harriet Brandt as an extreme example of a debilitating subject is influenced by conceptions of Jamaican women of mixed race as submissive and weak. In addition, the explanations of how these characters have access to their mesmeric powers are specifically related to their existence as non-white women.

This chapter begins by explaining the conception of mesmerism as a movement of vital energy between persons with different levels of that energy. I argue that the ways in which the Beetle and Brandt are characterized in relation to this theory of mesmerism is influenced by the racialized perceptions of Egyptian and Jamaican women as aggressive and submissive

respectively. The chapter then situates the racialized portrayal of the Beetle within the context of the racial and occult conceptions of Egyptian women that existed in Britain during the 1890s and asserting that the Beetle embodies those conceptions. The Beetle is an example of an operator, which Victorian understandings of mesmerism typically conceived of as male.[303] I argue that the depiction of the Beetle is influenced by the characterization of Egyptian women as overly masculine by Victorian ethnographers such as Richard Burton and Edward Lane.[304] While other Arab women were portrayed in these ethnographies as timid and oppressed, Egyptian women were described as aggressive and vicious, sharing more in common with the construction of violent Arab men that existed in periodicals and popular travelogues. The occult aspects of the Beetle's masculinity are also linked to the zār cult that purportedly existed among Egyptian women. The section concludes by discussing some of the fin-de-siècle threats embodied in the Beetle, including anxieties of miscegenation, reverse colonization, and imperial collapse.

The chapter then discusses how Harriet Brandt in Marryat's novel represents an extreme example of someone who is lacking mesmeric energy, often referred to as a mesmeric "subject." Devoid of vital energy, Brandt is constructed as overly feminine and sensual, and she unwittingly consumes the vitality of those around her. The novel racializes Brandt's effect on others in its explanation that her mother was a "half-caste" priestess of Obeah (a branch of African occultism).[305] This chapter argues that the construction of Brandt as someone who consumes the lifeforce of those who try to help her is influenced by the mesmeric idea of psychic vampirism

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303 In my research, the only female mesmerist I have found is Harper Dexter, an Australian physician about whom little research exists. See Tiffany Donnelly, "Mesmerism, Clairvoyance and Literary Culture in Mid-Century Australia," *Victorian Literary Mesmerism*, eds. Martin Willis and Catherine Wynne (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 105-26.

304 While Burton and Lane wrote their works in the 1860s, they remained popular and seemingly unchallenged in Britain.

305 Florence Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire*, ed. Brenda Hammack (London: Valancourt Books, 2009; originally 1897), 32.

and the racial rhetoric surrounding people of mixed race from Jamaica during the Victorian period, specifically the ways that Jamaican women of mixed were portrayed as indolent and lethargic.[306] Furthermore, the fact that Brandt's psychic vampirism occurs unconsciously constructs mesmerism as a racially inherent quality of non-white peoples. Brandt's racially inherent vampirism is presented as a result of miscegenation, and her pursuit of a husband threatens to continue the cycle of miscegenation and degeneration among the white characters.[307] The descriptions of both the Beetle and Brandt incorporate the anxieties of the fin de siècle into the racialized characterizations of mesmerism, imbricating notions of gender, race, and the occult in the novels.

Mesmerism

In 1893, mesmeric researcher Thomas Jay Hudson identified three general groupings among mesmerists: "The Paris school…the Nancy school…and the occultists."[308] While members of first two groups, primarily members of the Victorian medical community, debated the properties of mesmerism, including how it induced the trance state, what determined susceptibility, or if the anesthetic and psychological benefits outweighed its detrimental association with dark-skinned peoples, the occultists accepted the original theory proposed by Austrian physician Franz Anton

[306] Beverly Dear has laid out the history of the psychological vampire in fin-de-siécle Britain, arguing that its conception was fueled by the anxieties surrounded by mesmerism that I discuss here and in chapter 1. Beverly Dear, "All in the Mind," *Monsters in Society*, ed. Andrea S. Dauber (Boston: Brill, 2019), 97-107.

[307] There are also conceptions of Orientalized sexual desire present in the constructions of both the Beetle and Brandt that are beyond the scope of this chapter. For more on this, see Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985); Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995); and Rhys Garnett, "Imperial and Sexual Guilt and Fear in Late Victorian Fantasy," in *Science Fiction Roots and Branches*, eds. Rhys Garnett and R. J. Ellis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 30-54.

[308] Thomas Jay Hudson, *The Law of Psychic Phenomena* (London: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1893), 90.

Mesmer.[309] The occultists maintained that Mesmer was correct in his assessment that there exists a superfine magnetic fluid that permeates the universe and "particularly manifests itself in the human body with properties analogous to a magnet; there are poles, diverse and opposed, which can be communicated, changed, destroyed and reinforced…at a distance."[310] Charles Wilkins Webber, an American explorer and spiritualist, referred to Mesmer's work in his 1853 explanation of the practice, arguing that the Austrian physician's "nervous fluid is nothing more nor less than that force – whether electrical, magnetic, odic, or otherwise named – which, lubricating the nervous system in man, produces all vital phenomena."[311] Webber argued that "the laws of the distribution of this Odic force seem to bear a somewhat general affinity to those of electricity. The supercharged cloud discharges its superfluous fluid into the cloud more negatively charged. Similarly, the man holding a superfluous amount of vital or Odic force can dismiss a portion of this…[into] a weaker man."[312] Thus, a person's ability to mesmerize another is dictated by the amount of this vital fluid they produce. Those who produce a large amount of vital fluid are operators who are able to impose their will over subjects who produce less fluid. The simplicity of this explanation contributed to its longevity. In 1867, the Spiritualist magazine *Human Nature* echoed these descriptions, defining mesmerism as the manipulation of "a fluid generated by the nerves – an ethereal, vital spirit or essence, which penetrates all bodies… continually passing off from the body, in the same manner as our perspiration."[313] According to this article, "it is by focusing and regulating this emanation, which would otherwise run to waste,

[309] For a larger discussion about this debate, as well as the implications for the racialization of mesmerism in Victorian literature, see the previous chapter of this thesis.
[310] Franz Anton Mesmer, *Mesmerism: The Discovery of Animal Magnetism (Mémoire Sur La Découverte Du Magnétisme Animal)*, trans. V. R. Myers (Boulder: Soul Care Publishing, 2016), 15.
[311] Charles Wilkins Webber, "The Philosophy of Mesmeric Imposition," in *Spiritual Vampirism* by Charles Wilkins Webber (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co: 1853), 6.
[312] Ibid., 8.
[313] "What is Mesmerism?" *Human Nature* 21.1 (1867): 228.

that the effects of Mesmerism are produced," relating the process to the "established medical fact that if a young healthy person sleeps with an old worn-out individual, even though not diseased, the younger will suffer in bodily health, seemingly from an undue absorption on the part of the elder, who acts as a sponge on his young companion."[314] This sponge theory supports the conception of different naturally-occurring levels of vital fluid that dictate who is an operator and who is a subject. Hudson recorded the persistent belief among "the occultists" that "the hypnotic condition is induced through the transference of a magnetic fluid from the operator into the deficient subject…without the knowledge of the subject," which was in contrast to the psychological explanations for mesmerism at the time.[315] Despite competing scientific explanations for the underlying mechanisms of mesmerism's effects, the belief in a superfine magnetic fluid persisted throughout the Victorian period.

Within the system of belief surrounding the perceived existence of a vital nervous fluid, believers constructed a series of explanations for what determined standard levels of the fluid. Webber writes that, in regards to sex, "we most usually find the positive pole in man, who gives out, and the negative in woman, who receives and absorbs from him, the dispenser."[316] Other accounts built on this theory of men as fonts of vitality that could be dispersed at a whim. An article published in the liberal newspaper the *Leader* detailing how this magnetic fluid could be used to turn a table, for example, noted that if the movement of the fluid seemed lacking, the involvement of "one gentleman…could always immediately rouse its dormant energies," an ability credited to his existence as "a man of great strength and size."[317] Thus, outward strength

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[314] Ibid.; I have not been able to determine with whom this "fact" may have been considered "established" beyond the author of this piece.
[315] Hudson, *Law*, 90.
[316] Webber, "Philosophy," 13.
[317] "'Table Moving' in Vienna," *Leader*, 23 April 1853, 394.

and vitality were believed to be an indication of one's mesmeric prowess, which explained why mesmerists tended to be men and subjects tended to be women.[318] According to Webber's proposal, this relationship creates an equilibrium between men and women who have unequal amounts of vitality, wherein men provide energy to otherwise deficient women, and women provide an outlet to receive the energy that would otherwise overwhelm men.

However, Webber identifies two types of outliers that disrupt this equilibrium through an "abnormal condition of the body in which the integrity of the spiritual and organic functions are destroyed."[319] The first is one who has an unhealthy abundance of the Odic force and thus has become "evil-disposed…the mesmeric agitation [requiring] release to steady and give direction to its reckless and deadly aim."[320] He notes that while examples of these over-stuffed fountains of vital fluid "have been known to humanity as prophets, poets, discoverers, &c.," they have also been known to "affect man for evil as well as for good."[321] While Webber does not explicitly connect this malevolence to women, he notes that it arises when "the natural balance of spiritual and organic function is destroyed," and has been linked to "the vicious and emasculating power of the witch or fortune-teller," both of which are typically roles filled by women.[322] By wielding mesmeric power traditionally associated with men, these women are viewed as inherently destructive, "vipers [with] their malignant gaze."[323]

The second type of aberration Webber identifies is the opposite: "human vampires, or sponges…[whose] hungry suckers remorselessly draw away the virility of manhood, or the

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[318] For more on the predominance of male mesmerists during the Victorian period, see Alison Winter, *Mesmerized* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
[319] Webber, "Philosophy," 14.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Ibid., 14; Ibid., 15.
[322] Ibid., 14.
[323] Ibid., 15.

spiritual strength."[324] Where the first type is the result of an overwhelming quantity of Odic fluid, these vampires are "born, seemingly, with but a rudimentary soul [who] must have the Odic fluid restored…sustained by absorption of the life in others."[325] Webber identifies these "Spiritual Vampires" as "the evil type, born in the gross sphere of the passions, with a vigorous organisation…[a] fierce half-monkey being propelled…by the basest of the purely animal instincts, appetites, and lusts."[326] As with the previous aberration, Webber does not explicitly identify women as being more likely to be vampiric sponges than men. However, he does warn that these vampires "live in the integrities of your life, and enjoy, both physically and spiritually, a surreptitious vitality…[while] exhausting and undermining the holy purposes of your life to make up that deficit in their own," a process that allows them to "emasculate" their victims despite their "delicate" appearance, implying a more feminine characterization that directly threatens masculinity.[327] Thus, both disruptions to mesmeric equilibrium identified by Webber are described as being more likely to affect women whose vital fluid level is at one extreme or another; the women are either filled with so much vitality that they are driven to malevolent outbursts of power or so deficient that they passionately consume the life energy of those around them.

Webber offers the clearest explanation of a series of concerns regarding mesmerism that existed among late Victorian thinkers. Various newspapers throughout the Victorian period reported on the danger that lurked within the mesmerist who could dominate those around them at any time; others, such as the article in *Human Nature*, expressed anxiety that those lacking in

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[324] Ibid.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid., 16.
[327] Ibid., 15.

vitality could drain the life force of those around them.[328] These anxieties persisted until the end of the century, as exemplified in the writings of Helena Blavatsky. Blavatsky, a prominent spiritualist and leader of the Theosophy movement, recognized the power made available to women through the practice and study of the occult, which rose in social prominence throughout the century even as it became associated with dangerously racialized practitioners.[329] Cautious of the dangers inherent in a universal practice of mesmerism, Blavatsky reiterates mesmerism as the effect of "the auric fluid…*transmitted* by the operator" and warns against what she terms "*Black* Magic…the application of [mesmerism that] arises when the operator, instilled with an abundance of auric fluid, is actuated by a motive detrimental to any living being or beings."[330] She also defines vampirism as "the involuntary transmission of a portion of one's vitality, or life-essence, by a kind of occult osmosis from one person to another – the latter being endowed, or *afflicted* rather, with such *vampirizing* faculty."[331] Like Webber, Blavatsky accepts that mesmerism is a result of manipulating a superfine vital fluid in a way that is psychically manipulated. Thus, she frames vampirism as a physical process, arguing that it is a corruption of the "*exosmosic…*process of *endosmose,*" in which a sickly subject may be imbued with "part of

[328] "Mesmeric Mountebanks," *Clarion*, 12 December 1891, 5; "The Dangers of Hypnotism," *Clarion*, 23 January 1892, 5; and "Hypnotism and Crime," *Famous Crimes* 2.20 (n.d.): 154. Both of these categories are explored in greater depth later in this chapter.
[329] The power of occultism for Blavatsky and other women is more thoroughly explored in Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Marion Meade, *Madame Blavatsky* (New York: Putnam, 1980); and Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994); Blavatsky's position in relation to the racialized occult is discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.
[330] Helena Blavatsky, *Studies in Occultism* (Boston: New England Theosophical Corporation, 1895), 54; Ibid., 56.
[331] Ibid., 55; Vampirism's place within (pseudo-)medical Victorian discourse has also been addressed in Robert Mighall, "'A Pestilence Which Walketh in Darkness'" *Spectral Readings*, eds. Glennis Byron and David Punter (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 108-24; Maria Parsons, "Vamping the Woman," *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 1 (2006): 66-83; and William Hughes, "Victorian Medicine and the Gothic," *Victorian Gothic*, eds. Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 186-201.

the vital aura…of a healthy operator."[332] In other words, while Blavatsky conceived of the mesmeric fluid as naturally following a course of exosmosis, flowing from an area of high concentration to one of low concentration, psychic vampires function as a vacuum, unconsciously drawing in the vitality of those around them. Blavatsky's definition differs from Webber's construction of a malicious and intentional action on the part of one lacking in vital energy, specifying that such vampirism "is a blind and mechanical process, generally without the knowledge of either the *absorber*, or the vampirized party."[333] Despite this difference, these types of mesmerists are essentially the same as those constructed in the 1860s: the person filled with vital energy made vicious by their power and the person lacking vital energy made dangerous through their vampirism. This chapter argues that these two figures act as the inspiration for the mesmeric women who are the antagonists of Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire,* respectively.

The specific representations of these mesmeric women are informed by late-Victorian understandings of race. As historian Edward Beasley has indicated, the scientific findings of anthropologists and racial scientists, popular understandings of race from newspapers and other periodicals, and imperial doctrines that depended on hierarchical systems of race, were imbricated during the fin de siècle to produce "ideas about separate, stable, physically distinct, and physically inheritable races, with different mental and moral characters."[334] In other words, each race was believed to exist within specific delineations and to necessitate specific interactions from white anthropologists. This belief was particularly evident among the writings of the Royal Anthropological Institute, a scientific society formed by the union of the

[332] Blavatsky, *Studies*, 55.
[333] Ibid., 56.
[334] Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Groupings in the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1.

conservative Anthropology Society and liberal Ethnological Society in 1870. While the Institute often cited physical features as the primary indicators of racial type, such as in T.H. Huxley's 1870 identification of five "primary divisions of the human race" or Augustus Keane's 1880 argument that the different skin colors of indigenous Papuans and Polynesians indicated they were distinct races, these physical characteristics were also extended to serve as indications of mental or moral character.[335] This is particularly apparent in William Henry Flower's 1884 presidential address before the Anthropological Institute. In his speech, Flower urged "the statesman who would govern successfully, not to look upon human nature in the abstract and endeavor to apply universal rules, but to consider the special moral, intellectual, and social capabilities, wants, and aspirations of each particular race with which he has to deal."[336] Thus, this chapter considers each novel as being in agreement with this belief that each race exhibited distinct characterizations to argue that the widespread understanding of the non-white races represented by the women in these novels influenced the portrayal of mesmerism.

The Beetle

The antagonist of Richard Marsh's 1897 novel *The Beetle* is a shapeshifting Arab mesmerist who is alternatingly referred to as Mohamed al Kheir, the Woman of Songs, or simply the Beetle.[337] Like the portrayal of other racialized mesmerists in novels of the 1890s discussed in this thesis,

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[335] T.H. Huxley, "On the Geographical Distribution of the Chief Modifications of Mankind," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 1 (1870): 571; Augustus Keane, "On the Relations of the Indo-Chinese and Inter-Oceanic Races and Languages," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 9 (1880): 254-89; for more on Victorian divisions of race, see Douglas Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge, 1971); and George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

[336] William Henry Flower, "Aims and Prospects of Anthropology," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 13 (1884): 493.

[337] While recognizing that the character is grounded in an intentionally disruptive and amorphous identity, this chapter will refer to her as 'the Beetle,' using feminine pronouns, for the sake of clarity.

such as Svengali in George Du Maurier's *Trilby*, the characterization of the Beetle emphasizes her physical darkness and exotic appearance, her inherent knowledge of and access to mesmerism, and the threat she poses to the white British characters. In addition, Marsh's novel specifically links the Beetle's mesmeric prowess and her status as an Egyptian woman. In order to explain the significance of the Beetle's race to her practice of mesmerism, this section describes the ways that Egypt and Egyptian women were constructed in British newspapers and popular periodicals, as well as travelogues from British explorers, because, as Mark Morrisson has noted, the widespread popularity of the supposedly secretive and esoteric occult during the Victorian period was "the product of a periodical culture…that worked in exactly the opposite and exoteric direction…perpetuating and disseminating not only occult knowledge but also a growing sense of an occult movement" among the British public.[338] Drawing from this evidence, the section illustrates how the Beetle's practice of mesmerism reflects these popular constructions, particularly with regard to the bountiful amount of masculine energy needed for mesmerism.

Egypt

The plot of Marsh's novel revolves around the titular Beetle attempting to exact revenge upon progressive politician Paul Lessingham, who had once fallen under her power and only managed to escape by strangling her. Lessingham's initial encounters with the Beetle occur in "the native quarter" of Cairo, away from his hotel and the British sections of the city.[339] Lessingham's desire

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[338] Mark Morrisson, "The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival," *Journal of Modern Literature* 31.2 (2008): 3-4; For more on the relationship between the popularity of the occult in periodicals and its representation in Britain, see Owen Davies, "Newspapers and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic in the Modern Period," *Journal of British Studies* 37.2 (1998): 139-65; Marcello Truzzi, "The Occult Revival as Popular Culture," *The Sociological Quarterly* 13.1 (1972): 16-36.
[339] Richard Marsh, *The Beetle* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), 183.

to experience "the spice of adventure" that he imagines to be an element of Egyptian life leads him down "a narrow street, and, of course, a dirty one, ill-lit, and apparently…deserted," to a café on the Rue de Regabas, lured by the Beetle's mesmeric song.[340] The fact that the perfumed café in a dilapidated section of Cairo houses a powerful mesmerist would not have been surprising to Marsh's audience because Egypt was often constructed as the epicenter of the mystical Orient, a land from which the occult originated and flourished. As early as 1833, the popular newspaper *The Weekly True Sun* reported on the widespread practice of the occult in Egypt, commenting that "there is hardly a man who does not wear a talisman to which he attaches some particular virtue."[341] In 1853, Richard Burton, a British explorer, published an account of his travels through the East disguised as an Arab, remarking that Egypt was home to "a backwards race…astronomy is still astrology, geography a heap of names, and natural history a mass of fables. Alchemy, geomancy, and summoning of fiends are pet pursuits."[342] He noted that these beliefs are "given such force that even Europeans learn to put faith in them. The traveler who, on the banks of the Seine, scoffs at Sights and Sounds, Table-turning and Spirit-rapping…sees in the wilds of the orient a something supernatural and diabolical."[343] By the 1880s, Egypt had become synonymous with magic, as demonstrated by a cartoon in the satirical magazine *Punch* (Figure 10) that portrayed William Gladstone as an Egyptian magician, wearing Eastern clothes and wielding the power of his majority in Parliament in the same manner that ancient magi were said to be able to call upon the powers of a magic lamp.

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[340] Ibid., 183.
[341] "Superstition," *The Weekly True Sun*, 13 October 1833, 55.
[342] Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Mecca,* 2 vols (London: Tylston and Edwards, 1893; originally 1853), 1:108.
[343] Ibid., 58; Burton is referring to various phenomena that were assigned supernatural explanations by believers and derided by skeptics.

"NEW LIGHTS FOR OLD ONES!"
(THE MAGICIAN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP.)
" A few evenings ago, Mr. GLADSTONE paid a visit to the Crystal Palace, to inspect the Electric Apparatus on exhibition there. – *Daily Paper.*

Figure 10[344]

Scientists and occultists at the end of the century also routinely cited Egypt as being where mesmerism originated. In his 1891 book on mesmerism, psychic researcher Albert Moll draws from evidence throughout the century to argue that "certain hypnotic phenomena are found to have existed several thousand years ago…[likely originating] among the Egyptians."[345] Foveau de Cormelles, another psychic researcher, similarly specifies that "hypnotism is as old as the world…having first been recorded by the Cult of Isis in ancient Egypt."[346] Other histories of

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[344] John Tenniel, "New Lights for Old Ones! (The Magician and the Wonderful Lamp)," *Punch*, 81 (1882): 151.
[345] Albert Moll, *Hypnotism* (London: Walter Scott, 1891), 2.
[346] Foveau de Cormelles, *Hypnotism*, trans. Laura Esnor (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1891), 1; by this point, hypnotism and mesmerism had become synonymous terms, as discussed in chapter 1.

mesmerism similarly traced its origin to Egypt, arguing, as Webber did, that "Mesmer promulgated, under his own name, as a new and astounding discovery in science…no discovery of his, but the exclusive secret of the ancient priesthood practicing in Egypt."[347]

At the end of the century, mesmerism had been connected to a number of scandals resulting in harm or death and was generally considered dangerous.[348] Despite these scandalous accounts, the mere presence of mesmerism was not what made Egypt appear threatening. Mesmerism had previously been used as a medical anesthetic and was still employed by early psychologists who sought to understand the function of the mind. Moll went a step further, arguing that "*a physician can only do good, only attain his aims, when he is a psychologist.*"[349] In the right hands, mesmerism could be a powerful tool for good, but, as Moll writes, "the main point is to choose only an experienced and trustworthy experimenter."[350] While the British assumed the Egyptians to be experienced, believing them to have been practicing mesmerism since ancient times, they did not consider the Egyptians to be trustworthy. Instead, the supposedly original practitioners of mesmerism were routinely constructed as brutal, bestial, and unruly throughout the century. As early as 1846, *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper* recounted the story of the Egyptian ruler ordering a farmer to be beaten to death "without inquiries or investigation, actuated solely by disappointment" that the farmer did not bring in as much profit as his neighbor.[351] Burton confirmed that this rash brutality was magnified when dealing with Europeans, writing "woe to the unhappy Englishman…who may serve an Egyptian,

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[347] Webber, "Philosophy," 6-7.
[348] For a more in depth examination of the perceptions of mesmerism see Moll, *Hypnotism* (1891); Winter, *Mesmerized* (1998); Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and the previous chapter of this thesis.
[349] Moll, *Hypnotism*, 311.
[350] Ibid.
[351] "Egyptian Justice," *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, 3 October 1846, 271.

who, hating all Europeans, adds an especial spite to Oriental coarseness, treachery, and tyranny."[352] He also warns that this attitude is often concealed as "few travelers, save those who have mixed with the Egyptians in Oriental disguise, are aware of the repugnance to, and contempt for, Europeans – so well is the feeling vested under the garb of innate politeness, and so great is their reserve when conversing with those of strange religions."[353] The Urabi Revolt, a nationalist uprising of Egyptians who sought to oust the British that lasted from 1879-1882, was also used as evidence of Egypt's supposedly inherent brutality and hatred for the British. Following the uprising, *Punch* ran a cartoon (Figure 11) that depicted Egypt as a raging crocodile, a dangerous and unthinking animal that must be tamed by the steady hand of Britain, personified by the character of John Bull.

"HOLD ON!"

"AN ALLEGORY ON THE BANKS OF THE NILE"—MRS. MALAPROP.

Figure 11[354]

Other writers also emphasized the unruly elements of the Egyptian national character, warning that the inhabitants could not be trusted. In 1884, socialist activist Charles Fitzgerald

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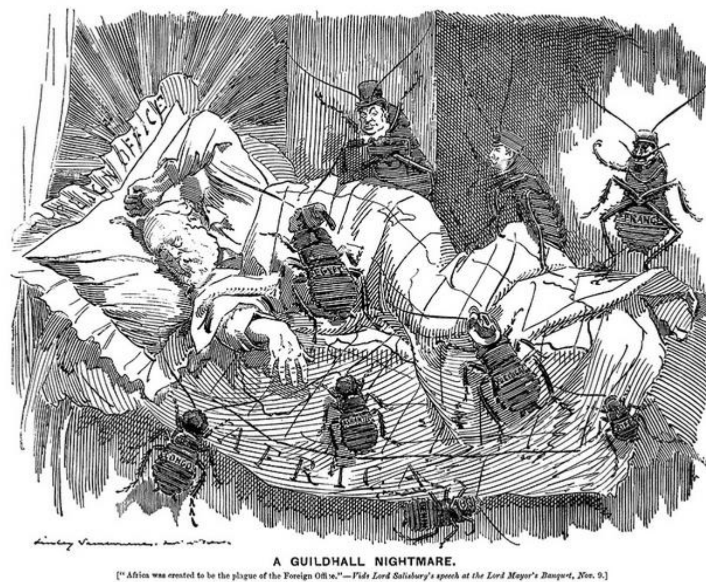
[352] Burton, *Personal*, 1:40.
[353] Ibid., 108.
[354] John Tenniel, "Hold on!," *Punch* 82 (1882): 271.

wrote an article in his newspaper *Justice*, warning that the "steady advance" of Egyptian belief and practices, "though almost unnoticed in England," would soon "cause an outburst of furious fanaticism which would endanger the safety of every European settlement in Africa" if left unchecked.[355] In a travelogue published at the end of the century, British reporter George Warrington Steevens lamented that "after all the aeons of [its] wonderful history" Egypt had become "squalid [and] populated by the debased and parasitic Egyptian."[356] *Punch* also contributed to the image of the parasitic Egyptian in a cartoon (Figure 12) that portrayed Egypt as a bedbug tormenting the Foreign Office. While other nations crowd around the bed, Egypt presents the most direct threat to the British sleeper, embodying the quote from Lord Salisbury at the bottom of the image, "Africa was created to be the plague of the Foreign Office."



A GUILDHALL NIGHTMARE.
["Africa was created to be the plague of the Foreign Office."—*Vide Lord Salisbury's speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, Nov. 9.*]

Figure 12[357]

[355] Charles L. Fitzgerald, "England (with Israel) in Egypt," *Justice*, 26 January 1884, 4.
[356] George Warrington Steevens, *Egypt in 1898* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1899), 126-7; Ailise Bulfin also cites Steevens' criticism of 'modern Egypt' in her article analyzing mummy fiction, "The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia" *English Language Teaching* 54.4 (2011): 411-43; Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, in *The Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) also cite Steevens' account as a pivotal shift in late-Victorian perceptions of Muslims.
[357] Edward Linley Sambourne, "A Guildhall Nightmare," *Punch* 113 (1897): 230.

Egyptians, constructed as brutal, rebellious, animalistic, and debased – threatening the whole of Africa if left unchecked – were not perceived as ideal masters of mesmerism. As the previous chapter discusses, stories of dark-skinned mesmerists abusing their powers filled the popular press, accompanied by histories that linked mesmerism to Egypt and images that reiterated the images of Egyptians as a bloodthirsty and savage group who would abuse their mesmeric powers.[358] The characterization of the Beetle in Marsh's novel reflects these ideas, representing her Egyptian-ness as emblematic of her cruelty and her mesmeric power as inherent in her Egyptian-ness.

The descriptions of the Beetle in the novel regularly emphasize that she is both specifically Egyptian and generally Eastern, allowing her to be representative of a generalized Arab 'type.' The Beetle's specifically Egyptian characteristics are apparent in her membership in the Cult of Isis and her residence in the 'authentic' section of Cairo. The significance of this specificity is explored in greater detail later in this chapter. However, her physical description is more nebulous. Sydney Atherton, a scientist with "a pretty wide personal knowledge of oriental people," admits that he is unable to "make up [his] mind as to the exact part of the east from which [the Beetle] came."[359] She is not entirely "an Arab… a fellah, a Mohammedan…[nor] distinctly Mussulmanic," instead possessing some small hint of each as well as "thick and shapeless lips" that "suggest that in [her] veins there [runs] more than a streak of negro blood."[360] Like Burton's description of Egyptians as "a mixed people…of dark blood gradually whitened by admixture," the Beetle is not specifically representative of any one race, and thus

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[358] For more detailed accounts of the threat believed to be posed by dark-skinned mesmerists, see "Mesmerism," *The Boy's Jubilee Journal*, 2.43 (1888): 270; "Mesmeric Mountebanks," *Clarion*, 12 December 1891, 5; "The Dangers of Hypnotism," *Clarion*, 23 January 1892, 5; and the previous chapter of this thesis.
[359] Marsh, *Beetle*, 94.
[360] Ibid.

her characterizations may be generalized to include any non-white race in the area.[361] The effect of this conglomeration of racial identifiers is magnified by the fact that the Beetle is dressed in a "costume…reminiscent of the 'Algerians' whom one finds all over France, and who are the most persistent, insolent and amusing of pedlars."[362] The merchants are attempting to capitalize on the exoticism of their costume, adopting a pan-Arabian ensemble to profit from the perceived uniformity of the East. Unlike these merchants, however, the Beetle's attire carries a sense of authenticity, "less gaudy, and a good deal dingier, than his Gallic prototypes are apt to be [clothed in] the yellow, grimy-looking article[s] of the Arab of the Soudan, not the spick and span Arab of the boulevard."[363] Thus, the Beetle is dressed in exactly the sort of 'Oriental' outfit that the dark-skinned merchants in France are attempting to mimic, allowing her characterization to be extended to all Arab peoples.

As with other representations of Egypt in 1890, the Beetle's Egyptian-ness is constructed as dangerous and bestial. When the Beetle learns that Lessingham is engaged to another woman, Richard Holt, her first victim in Britain, notes that she is transfigured by "rage as [he] never supposed could possess a human countenance."[364] Her jaw drops open, revealing "yellow fangs [gleaming] through parted lips," and her veins pop out along her face "like seams of blood."[365] The Beetle's inhuman rage is also depicted when Lessingham first escapes her in Cairo, rendering her "drunk with insensate frenzy, delirious with inhuman anger."[366] It becomes clear that the Beetle is driven by bestial passion, acting as cruel and vindictive as British writers constructed the Egyptians to be. The animalistic elements of the Beetle are also emphasized

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[361] Burton, *Personal*, 2:78
[362] Marsh, *Beetle*, 59.
[363] Ibid. 59; The Beetle is often dressed as a man, which is examined later in this chapter.
[364] Ibid., 46.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Ibid., 189.

through descriptions of her physical characteristics. Beyond her ability to "assume the form of a scarabeus," an ability that the novel assigns to all members of the Cult of Isis, the Beetle is frequently associated with dangerous wild animals.[367] Both Atherton and Holt compare the Beetle to "a bird of prey," her "beak-like nose" rendering her unsuitable for "any court of beauty," while another character notes that she looks "more like a baboon than anything else."[368] Lessingham notes that this animalistic aspect of the Beetle is so pervasive, "so unnatural, so inhuman, that [he] believe[s]…[he] could destroy her with as little sense of moral turpitude as if she had been some noxious insect."[369] The Beetle's Egyptian character is portrayed as inherently bestial, noxious, and threatening to the white British characters.

Notably, that same Egyptian character is presented as the explanation for why the Beetle's mesmerism is so powerful. Among the physical features that mark the Beetle as Eastern are her eyes, described by the white British characters as betraying "an especial degree [of] what, for want of a better term, one may call the mesmeric quality," explicitly associating the physicality of Eastern races with mesmeric ability.[370] Furthermore, Atherton notes that, in terms of occult knowledge, "we Westerns are among the rudiments, – we've everything to learn – Orientals leave us at the post."[371] As noted earlier, Egypt was constructed as the place where mesmerism originated, allowing its peoples to have a centuries-long head start in perfecting its practice over Western mesmerists. The novel asserts that "idolatrous sects" like the one to which the Beetle belongs "still practice…in unbroken historical continuity the debased, unclean, mystic, and bloody rites" that imbued them with the powerful energies they used to mesmerize

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[367] Ibid., 67.
[368] Ibid., 14; Ibid., 94; Ibid., 218.
[369] Ibid., 186.
[370] Ibid., 60.
[371] Ibid., 208.

those around them.[372] The knowledge of the "dogmas [or] practices" of the ancient sects or the meaning of "the Papyri, hieroglyphics, and so on" remain a mystery to the British characters, but are constructed as common knowledge to the Beetle and those like her.[373] The same Egyptian character that indicates the Beetle's cruelty and passion also reveals the extent of her mesmeric abilities.

The danger that this potent combination of racial characteristics poses to the white British characters becomes apparent throughout the novel. When the Beetle mesmerizes Holt, she is so powerful that he finds himself "not only incapable of resistance, [but] incapable of distinctly formulating the desire to offer resistance."[374] Having established her control, she has him strip naked, only covering him in a light wrap before ordering him to burgle Lessingham's home. Holt comments "that the consciousness of the incongruity of my attire increased my sense of helplessness, and that, had I been dressed as Englishmen are wont to be [the Beetle] would not have found in me, on that occasion, the facile instrument which, in fact, [she] did."[375] The Beetle's practice of mesmerism is abusive and emasculating, denying Holt his dignity and leaving him feeling as though he "was no longer a man; instead [his] manhood was merged in" the Beetle.[376] In Cairo, the Beetle is even more abusive in her practice of mesmerism. Lessingham, rendered "powerless in her grasp as if she held [him] with bands of steel," becomes her slave "for more than two months – two unspeakable months."[377] He is forced to participate in "orgies of nameless horrors" as "the fibreless, emasculated creature she had made."[378] Atherton

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[372] Ibid., 240.
[373] Ibid., 66.
[374] Ibid., 29.
[375] Ibid., 30.
[376] Ibid., 15.
[377] Ibid., 185; Ibid., 188.
[378] Ibid., 188; Ibid., 190.

notes that this experience is "sufficiently commonplace" in Egypt, musing at the ever-growing number of Englishmen who become entangled with the country's occult population "to their exceedingly bitter cost."[379] The Beetle's mesmeric ability to overcome the resistance of anyone she encounters leads her into the depths of unspeakable depravity, unleashing the cruelty that was believed to be inherent in Egyptians.

Egyptian Women

Many of the traits associated with the Beetle's use of mesmerism can be generalized as constructions representative of Marsh's conceptions of all Arab peoples, in much the same way that her clothing or ambiguous facial features are. However, within the context of understanding mesmerism as an exertion of magnetic fluid from a powerful operator, the Beetle is also portrayed as specifically Egyptian. During the Victorian period, Egyptian women were constructed as overly masculine, bold, and aggressive exceptions to the narrative of oppressed, submissive Arab women.[380] A review of Henry Jessup's book about the missionary attempts to educate the women of Arabia in the *Athenaeum* magazine is symptomatic of the Victorian stereotypes of Arab women. The review decried the "position of women in the East [as] victims of such brutality…that can only be resolved by an elevating of the Oriental character."[381] Thus, the oppression of women in the East was portrayed as the result of inherently submissive women falling victim to what was understood to be the intrinsic flaws of Eastern people, flaws that could

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[379] Ibid., 185.
[380] For more on how Arab women were viewed in British society, see May Witwit "The Image of Arabs in Victorian Works of Religious Nature," *Arab World English Journal* 3 (2015): 5-17; Seraj Assi, "The Original Arabs," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50.2 (2018): 213-32; and Judy Mabro, "Veiled Half-Truths" in *Women and Islam: Images and Realities*, ed. Haideh Moghissi (New York: Routledge, 2005): 111-34.
[381] "The Women of the Arabs," *Athenaeum* 2437 (1874): 42.

supposedly be defeated through "educating the women."[382] The image of the brutal and dangerous figure embodied by Arab men did not apply to Arab women. However, this omission was not the case for women in Egypt.

In Burton's travelogue, republished throughout the Victorian period and gaining popularity after he co-founded the Anthropological Society of London in 1863, he describes the "bold women" of Egypt as aggressive, unruly, and overly masculine.[383] Unlike the other, more submissive, women of the East, Burton writes that Egyptian women "though passing frail, have the worst tempers in the world," their conversations rapidly fluctuating between flirtation and death threats.[384] That flirtation is also "primitive…mainly consisting of direct demand" of sexual favors, with a fierceness that leads Burton to declare it no wonder that "the term Misríyah (an Egyptian woman) means a depraved character."[385] Faced with the fierceness of Egyptian women, Burton declares that while "it is right, in the abstract," that men are no longer permitted to beat their wives, "the fair sex is so unruly in [Egypt] that strong measures are needed to coerce it."[386] In 1860, fellow explorer Edward William Lane reiterated Burton's assessment of Egyptian women, declaring them to be "the most licentious in their feelings of all females who lay any claim to be considered as members of a civilized nation."[387] He reported that even "the most virtuous and respectable women, of the best education…often make use of coarse language, so obscene as only to be fit for a low brothel; and things are named, and subjects talked of, by the most genteel women…that many prostitutes in our country would probably abstain from

[382] Ibid., 43.
[383] Burton, *Personal*, 2: 184.
[384] Ibid., 1:175.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Burton, *Personal*, 1:175.
[387] Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptian* (London: John Murray, 1860), 295.

mentioning."[388] The aggressive and sexual image of Egyptian women is also manifest in a cartoon from *Punch* (Figure 13), which features Egypt personified as Cleopatra appearing before Gladstone/Caesar. While other Arab women were portrayed as demure and hidden behind layers of veils, Egypt is pictured as aggressive and erotic, openly inviting the gaze of her supposed conqueror even as she glares defiantly down at him. Rather than timidly retreating, Egypt is posed like a powerful warrior, her nudity a distraction to the hunched Gladstone, bowed behind his desk. As appealing as Egypt is, the "Difficulty" of the subtitle implies the dangerous process of attempting to rule it, as the typical roles of masculine conqueror and submissive conquered seem to have been reversed.

CLEOPATRA BEFORE CÆSAR;

OR, THE EGYPTIAN DIFFICULTY.

[*Slightly (!) altered from* GÉROME'S *celebrated Picture*.

Figure 13[389]

[388] Ibid.
[389] John Tenniel, "Cleopatra Before Caesar," *Punch* 82 (1882): 163.

In this way, the figure of the Egyptian woman resembled that of the New Woman. A product of 1890s discourse on gender, the New Woman defied or reversed normative gender roles.[390] As sociologist Terry Lovell has observed, the radical assertion of feminine independence embodied in the discursive figure of the New Woman resulted in "a furious debate on what it meant to be a real man, a real woman" during the fin de siècle.[391] Similar to the images of Egyptian women created by British travelers like Burton and Lane, the New Woman was sexually aggressive, prompting H.M. Stutfield to write an article for the conservative *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1895, complaining that the "emancipated woman" of the 1890s "loves to show her independence by dealing freely with the relations of the sexes. Hence all the prating of passion, animalism, 'the natural workings of sex,' and so forth, with which we are nauseated."[392] *Punch* warned that the growth of masculine impulses in women would result in an equal feminization of men, publishing a cartoon in 1895 (Figure 14) that reiterated the message of a similar cartoon from 1874 (Figure 15). The New Women, identified by their masculine neckties, recline in easy chairs as the man, lacking "female society," retreats from the room (Figure 14). While not as feminized as his 1874 counterparts, who coo over an infant (Figure 15), the man in Figure 14 has been removed from the space of political and social discussion, reduced to sipping tea in the servants' quarters.

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[390] For more on the formation of the New Woman in discourse, see Sally Ledger, *The New Woman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct* (New York: Galaxy, 1985).
[391] Terry Lovell, *Consuming Fiction* (New York: Verso, 1987), 119.
[392] H.M. Stutfield, "Tommyrotics," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 157 (1895): 836

Figure 14[393]

Figure 15[394]

[393] George Du Maurier, "The New Woman," *Punch* 108 (1895): 282.
[394] George Du Maurier, "The Coming Race," *Punch* 66 (1874): 23.

Like the imagined Egyptian woman, the masculine tendencies of the New Woman were almost monstrous counterexamples to idealized forms of white, British femininity.[395]

Significantly, the perceptions of Egyptian women as masculine also has connections to occult practice. Carl Benjamin Klunzinger, a German physician who lived in Egypt, is believed to have been the first to describe the zār cult. Published in 1878, Klunzinger's account describes how "women have adopted a practice…of possession…which has spread to such an extent that the government felt itself called upon to forbid it. Nevertheless it is still common among high and low, especially in Upper Egypt."[396] In an 1892 report prepared for the British government, 'Abd Al-Rahman Ismá-'il, a physician monitoring indigenous practices in Egypt, elaborated on this phenomenon, explaining that "there is a company of women called *kūdīyāt*, who practice the *zār*. They are…the most undesirable and most wicked…they do things which souls loathe, and at which bodies shudder."[397] Ismá-'il describes how these wicked deeds are facilitated by "the *kūdīyā* dressing in men's clothing, allowing the *'Afrit* [male demon] to possess the *kūdīyā* and transmit his words to the other cultists."[398] While possessed, the kūdīyā was believed to be empowered by the male spirit, producing more of "the electric magnetism which exists in varying quantities in all things."[399] This power allowed them to "direct…that electricity by way of their senses…making them become artful in subjects of evil report…a practitioner of the lowest crafts."[400] The description of the power provided by zār is nearly identical to conceptions

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395 For more on the perceived unnaturalness of the New Woman, see Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper Feminine'* (London: Routledge, 1992); Patricia Murphy, *The New Woman Gothic* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2016); Linda Dowling, "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33.4 (1979):434-53.
396 Carl Benjamin Klunziner, *Upper Egypt: Its People and Products* (London: AMS Press, 1878), 395.
397 'Abd Al-Rahman Ismá-'il, *Folk Medicine in Modern Egypt*, trans. John Walker (London: Luzac & Co, 1934; originally 1892), 62.
398 Ibid.
399 Ibid., 78.
400 Ibid.

of mesmerism as the control of magnetic fluid, including the abundance of mesmeric power provided by a masculine spirit.

The depictions of the Beetle in Marsh's novel seem directly influenced by the conception of Egyptian women granted mesmeric empowerment through occult masculine energy. As noted earlier, the Beetle is dressed in clothes typically worn by Arab men and exercises powerful mesmeric ability. She also buries herself in "a heap of clothes piled indiscriminately upon the floor," mirroring the description that Ismá-'il quotes from Zainab Efendī Fawwāz, an Egyptian authoress, who, during her encounter with a zār cult, describes how the possessed woman emerges "out of a bundle of clothes."[401] Furthermore, during the zār ritual, the possessed woman occupies a position of androgynous power, reportedly taking on physically masculine traits to reflect the spirit that inhabits her to the point of obscuring her feminine form, prompting Fawwāz to question "what is this body…that contains the man and the lady?"[402] Similarly, the Beetle is so masculine that most of the characters who encounter her are confused as to what gender she is. While she was beautiful and alluring when Lessingham first encountered her, her continued use of her power has left her nearly unidentifiable, leaving the white characters to conclude that "goodness alone knows what the infernal conjurer's real sex may be."[403] Holt surmises that "it was impossible such a creature could be feminine," before identifying "something which was essentially feminine," in her face, causing him to wonder if she is instead "a ghoulish example of her sex, who had so yielded to her depraved instincts as to have become nothing but a ghastly reminiscence of womanhood."[404] Physically, the Beetle occupies a space between genders, her

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[401] Marsh, *Beetle*, 179; Zainab Efendī Fawwāz, "The women of the Zār," *Jarīdat-al-Nīl* 200 (1891): 73-4, cited in Ismá-'il, *Folk*, 62.
[402] Ibid., 66.
[403] Marsh, *Beetle*, 198.
[404] Ibid., 14; Ibid., 22.

face masculine and harsh and her body feminine and shapely. This further associates the Beetle and the perception of occult Egyptian women with the figure of the New Woman. For example, the anti-feminist critic Eliza Lynn Linton described the New Woman in her 1891 critique as "a woman who has failed in her physical development," a failure that positioned her in the same androgynous space of unidentifiable gender as the Beetle. [405] The Beetle represents a confluence of Victorian anxieties regarding dominant women at the end of the century.

Apart from the occult connections to the zār, the novel also offers a racial explanation for the Beetle's appearance when Atherton observes that "the face is a man's…and the voice is a man's…but the body…is a woman's" and surmises that "among coloured folk one sometimes encounters women whose faces seem to have been lined by the passage of centuries;" Atherton's racialized conclusion is that the Beetle's potential ancestry is the root of her overtly masculine appearance.[406] However, given the similarities between the Beetle and the descriptions of the zār cultists, the racialized occult explanation is more appropriate, especially since the Beetle's combination of masculinity and femininity is perceived as an upset to the natural order rather than a simple effect of biology or cross-dressing. Holt describes how, unable to "at once decide if [the Beetle is] a man or a woman…[he] doubted if it was even human."[407] Similarly, those who experience her mesmeric power are overcome with the sensation of being "in the immediate presence of something awful yet unseen…of a monster, rather than a human being."[408] She exudes a visceral wrongness that is instantly recognizable, resulting in the "unnatural and inhuman" aura she possess.[409] An explanation for this wrongness can be found in the principles

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[405] Eliza Lynn Linton, "The Wild Women as Politicians," *Nineteenth Century* 30 (1891)**:** 80.
[406] Marsh, *Beetle*, 134; Ibid., 94.
[407] Ibid., 14.
[408] Ibid., 160.
[409] Ibid., 186.

of mesmerism. As a woman filled with an excess of vital fluid, the Beetle upsets the balance established between men as operators of mesmerism and women as subjects. Within a typical distribution of vital force, Lessingham would be the more dominant of the two. As a white British man, Lessingham's position as a politician could be seen as an extension of his inherent power, influencing those around him through the unconscious distribution of his own vitality and making him, "well-disposed in worldly affairs."[410] Instead, the Beetle's excessive mesmeric power, a consequence of her Egyptian heritage and the occult knowledge believed to be essential to that heritage, places her in a position of power over him. She emasculates him, reducing him to a hysterical mess at the mention of her name, disrupting the mesmeric power relationship believed to exist between worldly men and subservient women. She and the Egyptian women she represents embody the dangerous realities that critics of the New Woman warned were the inevitable result of unfettered female independence.[411]

Miscegenation and Reverse Colonization

The danger contained within the Beetle's disruption of the relationship between men and women surpasses the physical threat she poses to the white British characters. As an aggressive and domineering mesmerist, the Beetle threatens to steal Lessingham away from his white fiancée in order to create a generation of mesmeric mixed-race children. From her first appearance in the novel, the Beetle vocally admires Lessingham, ruminating on how "he is tall,-- his skin is white;

[410] Ismá-'il, *Folk*, 78.
[411] For a deeper discussion of associations between the Beetle and the New Woman, see Carol Margaret Davison, "The Victorian Gothic and Gender," *Victorian Gothic*, eds. Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 124-41; Victoria Margree, "'Both in Men's Clothing': Gender, Sovereignty and Insecurity in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*." *Critical Survey* 19.2 (2007): 63-81; W.C. Harris and Dawn Vernooy, "'Orgies of Nameless Horrors'" *Papers on Language and Literature* 48.4 (2012): 339-81.

he is strong," and wondering aloud if "for a woman there is…a better thing in life than to be his wife? his well-beloved? the light of his eyes?"[412] Lessingham's whiteness is seemingly essential to her infatuation with him, as she also taunts the mesmerized and visibly disgusted Holt, "you, with your white skin…would you not take me for a wife?"[413] However, she is aware that Lessingham does not share her desires, swinging from "savage, frantic longing" to "the venom of [her] former bitterness" as she thinks about him.[414] Notably, she does not consider his rejection a reaction against her former sexual enslavement of him, but instead as a function of "his scorn for [her] race…despised and rejected."[415] It is Lessingham's rejection of her as an Egyptian that fuels her sense of revenge, revenge that gives way to inhuman rage when she learns he is engaged to "Marjorie Lindon…with the lily face and corn-hued hair!"[416] Were Lessingham unaffected by the Beetle's mesmerism, he would doubtlessly marry Lindon, whom he considers "the best girl in the whole world."[417] The Beetle, with "her skin as yellow as saffron" and her wild oscillations between adoration and contempt, would not normally be considered a romantic rival to the alluring Lindon.[418] However, the Beetle's mesmerism allows her to override the wills of both Lindon and Lessingham in an attempt to recapture Lessingham for herself.

British fears of miscegenation at the fin de siècle were closely related to anxieties regarding the British Empire's position in the world.[419] As Stephen Arata has observed, "the

412 Marsh, *Beetle*, 25.
413 Ibid., 45.
414 Ibid., 25.
415 Ibid.
416 Ibid., 46.
417 Ibid., 127.
418 Ibid., 22.
419 For more, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Victorian Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage, 1989); Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century 1815-1914* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976); and Richard Shannon, *The Crisis of Imperialism* (London: Granada, 1976).

decay of global influence…the increasing unrest in British colonies and possessions, the growing domestic uneasiness over the morality of imperialism – all combined to erode Victorian confidence in the inevitability of British progress and hegemony."[420] With Britain in an already precarious imperial position and non-white races portrayed as degenerated Others, miscegenation was portrayed as a preeminent danger, threatening to transform Britain like British people believed Egypt had been transformed, a once-great empire now ravaged by parasitic modernity. Arata notes that British fin-de-siècle literature incorporates these anxieties through narratives of reverse colonization, in which "the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter becomes exploited, the victimizer victimized," in a vicious cycle of horror and guilt, through which the "the marauding, invasive Other [mirrors Britain's] own imperial practices…back in monstrous form."[421] The Beetle, empowered by the abundance of vital energy that fuels her innate practice of mesmerism, exemplifies this dangerously formidable Other, a resurgence of the power assumed to be wielded by ancient Egypt.

While Arata's argument focuses on ways in which the monstrous Other "designates a kind of colonization of the body," through which "horror arises not because Dracula destroys bodies, but because he appropriates and transforms them," the Beetle's racialized mesmerism allows her to do the same to men's minds.[422] Holt's realization that the Beetle's mesmerism makes him "no longer a man; instead [merging his] manhood" with her mesmeric power illutstrates this fear of mental colonization.[423] He is transformed, no longer an individual being, but a resource for the Beetle to exploit in her quest to recapture Lessingham. Similarly, Lessingham – "THE Paul Lessingham! The GREAT Paul Lessingham!" as the Beetle

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[420] Stephen Arata, "The Occidental Tourist," *Victorian Studies.* 33.4 (1990): 622.
[421] Ibid., 623.
[422] Ibid., 630.
[423] Marsh, *Beetle*, 15.

sarcastically acknowledges – is also transformed.[424] Due to the Beetle's influence, he is reduced from a powerful politician, a well-respected speaker able to sway parliamentary decisions towards progressive reform, to a wailing mess, unable to compose himself "at the mere sight of a pictured scarab."[425] White men, even powerful white men, are rendered powerless in the Beetle's wake, her incursion into London threatening to destroy the Empire they created. As Arata notes, "miscegenation leads, not to the mixing of races, but to the biological and political annihilation of the weaker race by the stronger."[426] The Beetle, imbued with a racialized mesmeric ability, clearly demonstrates that she will be the victor in any racial struggle.

The fear of a racialized mesmerist employing their powers to overcome the social barriers that would otherwise prevent miscegenation and imperial collapse is not unique to Marsh's novel. British newspapers and psychic researchers recorded accounts of mesmerism-assisted assault throughout the century, often emphasizing the danger young white women faced at the hands of lascivious dark-skinned men wielding mesmeric power.[427] Works of fiction, such as George Du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*, featured similar stories of potential miscegenation through mesmerism, focusing on the threat the non-white male mesmerist posed to the next generation. The Beetle employs this same form of mesmeric pursuit, using her mesmerism in a manner that had been previously constructed as exclusively masculine. Similarly, her pursuit of Lessingham has the same implied goal as the dark-skinned mesmerists who preceded her, namely, children to carry on her legacy. Evidence of this goal is present in the novel when Lessingham first becomes aware of his surroundings in Cairo, and the Beetle informs him that he is to be of service to "the great mother goddess – the mother of men," hinting at the procreative

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[424] Ibid., 24.
[425] Ibid., 130.
[426] Arata, "Occidental," 630.
[427] For examples of these accounts, see the previous chapter of this thesis.

elements of the "scandalous…orgies of nameless horrors" he later recounts.[428] The Beetle and the cult to which she belongs seek to create more "children of Isis," threatening to spread not only their beliefs but their mesmerically-empowered offspring across the world.

As with other racialized mesmerists discussed in this thesis, the threat of the Beetle, and indeed of the entire Cult of Isis, is only removed upon its destruction. A train crash disposes of the Beetle, and a giant hole is discovered by expeditionary troops in Dongola as if the result of a great explosion. Dongola, the former capital of Nubia, Egypt, was the site of a key British victory in the British reclamation of territory from the indigenous forces in 1897, the year *The Beetle* was published. By selecting Dongola as the site where the "monstrous creatures…neither men nor women" are destroyed, the novel reinforces the connection between the strength and health of the British Empire and control over the unruly Egyptians through the destruction of the racialized occult.[429] It is only after the Beetle and the cult to which she belongs have been reduced to bloody smears that the British characters are considered safe.

The Blood of the Vampire

The antagonist of Florence Marryat's 1897 novel *The Blood of the Vampire*, Harriet Brandt, is the mesmeric opposite of Marsh's Beetle. Like the Beetle, Brandt is characterized by her physical darkness, her occult heritage, and the danger she poses to the white British characters. However, while the Beetle is overly masculine and dominating in her use of mesmerism, Brandt occupies the other extreme, drawing vitality out of those who become intimately associated with her and reducing them to lifeless husks. Unlike the Beetle, Brandt performs this process without specific intent, marking her as the type of mesmeric vampire identified by Blavatsky, with whom

[428] Ibid., 186; Ibid., 188.
[429] Marsh, *Beetle*, 263.

Marryat had become acquainted in her practice of Spiritualism and who praised Marryat as "a fresh outburst…of mystic and theosophic literature" in her occult periodical *Lucifer* in 1887.[430] The emphasis the novel places on Brandt's powers as hereditarily linked to her mother, a Jamaican Obeah priestess, associates Brandt's practice of mesmerism with British constructions of Jamaican women of mixed race as consuming and sensual in the same manner that the Beetle's practice of mesmerism is associated with constructions of Egyptian women as domineering and aggressive. As will be shown, this association was already present in other accounts of the debilitating powers understood to be present in Jamaican women of mixed race. I argue that this association arose out of a series of negative characteristics believed to be inherent in Black men, such as enervation and sensuality, which were built up over the course of the century. I then show how these traits were portrayed as being magnified in Black women, further exaggerated among men of mixed race, and cultivated to their fullest potential in women of mixed race. Thus, this section uses the same methodology of the previous section, examining the construction of these groups in Britain before using that evidence to argue that those constructions have a direct impact on the depiction of Brandt's mesmerism. It will then demonstrate how these characteristics were closely associated with conceptions of the occult in Jamaica. I argue that Brandt is a conflation of anachronistic descriptions, embodying Britain's shameful past in the West Indies and unknowingly threatening to propagate that past through the extension of the "curse of heredity" that necessitates her destruction.[431]

As noted above, Marryat's novel was not alone in constructing Jamaican women as an example of the mesmeric vampire. In 1845, *The Morning Star*, a missionary periodical, observed

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[430] Helena Blavatsky, "The Signs of the Times," *Lucifer* 1.2 (1887): 83; For more on Marryat's connection to Blavatsky, see Florence Marryat, *The Spirit World* (New York: Charles Reed, 1894); Florence Marryat, *There is No Death* (New York: National Book Company, 1891).
[431] Marryat, *Blood*, 95.

that while "European females and missionaries do not fall sick and die [when they travel to Jamaica]…great mortality is found to exist among the soldiers and sailors, the most debauched classes in the West Indies…who mingle with native women."[432] Although the article only specifically decries "intemperance" on the part of the men, the implication is that the women of Jamaica are a debilitating force, destroying the men with whom they become intimate. Franz Hartmann, a close friend of Blavatsky, wrote an article for the Spiritualist magazine *Borderland* arguing that Jamaican women of mixed race, who "have a voracious appetite, sleep a great deal, but nevertheless do not grow strong and are unfit for continuous labour…, [were] ideal examples of the psychic vampire [who] unconsciously vampirize every sensitive person with whom they come into contact."[433] In her 1889 account of traveling to Jamaica, explorer Hesketh J. Bell details several cases of "spectacular phenomena exhibited by young girls sent to sleep by magnetism," including the apparent "draining of another young boy…leaving him sickly for several days after."[434] Bell also specifically notes that the girls "seemed almost unconscious of the effects of [their] power," reiterating the unconscious aspects of the mesmeric process. She also observes that even if they were conscious of their powers, "the Ethiopian cannot change his hue, wash how he may," constructing this mesmeric vampirism as an inherent aspect of a mixed race Jamaican existence.[435] In order to examine how this close association between Jamaican women of mixed race and debilitating enervation developed, the following section begins by demonstrating the various ways in which Black people in Jamaica were constructed as enervated and overly sensual, seemingly unable to progress without white assistance, as well as the ways in which these characteristics were presented as magnified in Black Jamaican women.

[432] "The Climate of Jamaica," *The Morning Star* 1.8 (1845): 60.
[433] Franz Hartmann, "The Doctrine of the Demon Lover," *Borderland*, 3.3 (1896): 354-5.
[434] Hesketh J. Bell, *Obeah* (London: Sampson Law, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1889), 100-1.
[435] Ibid., 54.

Construction of 'the Negro' in Jamaica

While few scenes in Marryat's novel occur on the island of Jamaica itself, Brandt introduces herself as having spent ten years in a colonial convent since the death of her parents. Brandt's Jamaican heritage is referred to throughout the novel, particularly through the emphasis on her dark hair, dark eyes, and wide lips. Her heritage is significant because it is influenced by the construction of Black people as a whole within Victorian racial science, as well as by the construction of Black people in Jamaica specifically, which remained consistent throughout the century. This is evident in the ethnological writings of British writer Anthony Trollope, who marveled at Jamaica as home to a "strange…race of Creole negroes – of negroes, that is, born out of Africa!"[436] Trollope noted that Black Jamaicans "have no country of their own, yet they have not hitherto any country of their own adoption," indicating his belief that, despite being born in a different country, Black people in Jamaica did not form a Jamaican identity separate from their African heritage, instead retaining their African characteristics and remaining "in each case a servile people in a foreign land."[437] This perceived servility was integral to the construction of Jamaicans since non-white people in the West Indies were often portrayed as inherently complacent and lethargic. In 1828, naturalist James Franklin declared in his report on the West Indies that "the negro, constituted as he is, has such an aversion to labour and so great a propensity for indulgence and vice, that no prospect of advantage can stimulate him…without force he will sink into lethargy, and revert to his primitive savage character," a claim repeated by

[436] Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1860), 55; note that in this case, Trollope is not using the term Creole to refer to people of mixed race. Trollope, like other Victorian writers, categorizes people of mixed race as 'mulatto,' a racial identifier that will be discussed in the next section.
[437] Ibid.

Trollope in 1860.[438] In 1865, James Hunt, then president of the conservative Anthropological Society of London, cited naturalist Charles Hamilton Smith's assessment that "the Negro is habitually dormant…notwithstanding the listless torpidity caused by excessive heat."[439] Hunt situated this theory of apathetic lethargy in evolutionary terms, arguing that "from the remotest antiquity the Negro race seems to have been what it now is," unchanged by the passage of time, and it was only "ceaseless contact with whites" that provided any improvement.[440] Some narratives of Jamaicans as violent savages did arise during times of political unrest in Jamaica, such as just before emancipation and during the rebellions in 1831 and 1859.[441] However, these narratives were secondary to views like the one espoused by Edward Jones, a Black missionary who served as the editor of the *Sierra Leone Weekly Times* in 1862, who argued that Black peoples who had not been granted a white education were "far more innocent and natural creatures…never brought within the range of civilized life."[442]

Alongside calls for the education of the West Indian peoples, there arose a belief that no amount of education could ever yield true improvement. While conservative scholars and groups like the Anthropological Society argued this point throughout the century, even liberal voices that advocated for improvement through education expressed doubt of its efficacy. Franklin's

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[438] James Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti* (London: John Murray, 1828), 364; Trollope, *West*, 63.
[439] James Hunt, "On the Negro's Place in Nature," *Memoirs Read Before the Anthropological Society of London* 1 (1865): 44, citing Charles Hamilton Smith, *Unity of the Human Species*, 190-7, which I was unable to locate.
[440] Hunt, "Negro's," 29; Ibid., 32.
[441] For more on the narrative of violent Jamaicans and the almost immediate pushback against that narrative, see Matthew Lewis, *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor*, ed. Judith Terry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; originally 1824); "Mr. Carlyle's Agency in the Jamaica Slaughters," *The English Leader* 14 April 1866, 185; W.R. Greg, "The Reign of Terror in Jamaica," *The English Leader*, 13 January 1866, 15; "Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica," *The English Leader*, 16 March 1866, 149; "Murder Rewarded," *The Labour League Examiner*, 15 April 1876, 2; Bernard Semmel, *The Governor Eyre Controversy* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1962); and H. L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
[442] Edward Jones, "England's Policy," *Sierra Leone Weekly Times*, 30 July 1862, 237; It should be noted that Burton, *Wanderings,* 221-3 also cites this article in an extended footnote.

account included his fears that "measures to compel [the negro] to labour, inculcate morality,…and promote his civilization…[may not] extirpate those vices which are inherent in the descendants of the African race," citing cases in which Africans educated in England, upon returning to their native soil and seeing "their kindred indulging in all the habits of savage life…have thrown off all traces of civilisation, and embraced with all their primeval ardour the vices of their native country."[443] These writings indicate a fear that if the attitudes imagined to be present in Black people were a product of nature rather than a lack of instruction, that would mean that all of the effort that had been put forward by missionaries and charity groups was a waste of time and resources.

Complaints of the attention being paid to the seemingly unchanging West Indies also framed the colonies as a monetary drain on resources that could otherwise benefit Britain. An 1850 editorial in the *Leader* lamented that "while hundreds and thousands of our fellow-subjects are living in the grossest habits of vice and bestiality [and] diseases, which our care could prevent, decimate the poor… 'ladies and gentlemen' weep over the ignorance of the negroes, and money flows so that the heathen may be Christianized...[despite the fact that] men in the low state of intellectual development of the negroes are not fitted for such education."[444] Even members of the royal family expressed frustration at their perception of the wasted potential of Jamaica. In their 1886 memoir of sailing around the British Empire, Princes Albert and George described Jamaicans as "negroes on an island that is not cultivated to one-fifth of its capabilities…dogs in the manger [who] neither do aught themselves to develop its resources or permit others to come in and do so."[445] For all the money believed to be pouring into Jamaica at

[443] Franklin, *Present*, 364-5.
[444] "Negro Education," *Leader,* 25 May 1850, 204.
[445] Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales, *The Cruise of H.M.S. Bacchante*, ed. John Dalton (London: Macmillan and Co, 1886), 159.

the expense of the British poor, the supposedly unchanging attitudes of the people who lived there added to the frustration of those in Britain. Jamaica was positioned as a drain on British resources, sapping the strength of the nation in order to prolong the lifestyles of natives who were thought to be unwilling or unable to change.

This framing is also present in Hunt's argument that "the Negro race possesses less energy, less courage, and less intellectual capacity than ours," forcing them to rely on outside motivations provided by white people, "whom they imitate in order to improve, replicating but not producing."[446] Hunt also clarifies that while there is "less difference between the Negro and the Negress than between the European male and female…there is no doubt that the Negro brain bears a great resemblance to a European female or child's brain…while the Negress approaches the ape still nearer."[447] Fellow anthropologist Carl Vogt agreed, arguing in 1864 that "the female of the human species is always closer to simian animal type than her male counterpart," and that this was "particularly evident…among the Negro."[448] Thus, for people like Hunt, while animalistic qualities like sensuality and lethargy were inherent in Black men, rendering Jamaica a spoiled paradise in need of white governance, these characteristics were even more pronounced in Black women. Hunt also cites the 1860 memoir of German anthropologist Pruner Bey, who wrote that for "the Negress…sensuality is the lever of all propensities, rendering her sociable…but useless," in order to comment on the persistence of "intense immorality which exists amongst the Negresses…along with their heightened sense of taste and smell, their insatiable appetite and sensual lips…[all of which] present the Negress as a return to the animal

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[446] Hunt, "Negro's," 27; Ibid., 38.
[447] Ibid., 16-7.
[448] Carl Vogt, *Lectures on Man*, ed. James Hunt (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1864), 180.

form."[449] Jamaican women were portrayed as being animalistic by virtue of their sensuality, positioning them as consuming beasts driven purely by carnal desire.[450]

The racialized portrayal of Harriet Brandt, which begins with her first appearance in the novel, typifies this bestial, consuming sensuality. Her racialization is exemplified by descriptions of her physical characteristics and behaviors. She has "long-shaped, dark, and narrow [eyes], with heavy lids and thick black lashes," and her "large…lips of a deep blood colour…quiver" as she sits "rivetted [with] all her attention upon the contents of her plate."[451] When she begins eating, she does so "rapidly and with evident appetite," hunching over her food "as if she feared some one might deprive her of it," transforming the semi-erotic description of her anticipation into animalistic indulgence.[452]

The novel explicitly links this racialized description of Brandt to her mesmeric vampirism when Dr. Phillips, theorizing why Brandt draws "upon the health and strength of all with whom she may be intimately associated…[rendering] her love fatal to such as she may cling to," explains that she is victim to "the curse of heredity."[453] However, Dr. Phillips does not connect her powers to her existence as a Black woman, instead connecting them to her existence as a women of mixed race, like her mother. Recalling "the way she eats her food, and the way she uses her eyes," he declares that Brandt "has inherited her half-caste mother's greedy and sensual disposition."[454] Thus, the animalistic sensuality that Dr. Phillips believes to be essential

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[449] Hunt, "Negro's," 15.
[450] Marryat herself identified similar traits in Indian women in her 1868 travelogue, arguing that heat and a lack of internal drive resulted in a deteriorating ennui, a symptom of weakness and immorality. See Florence Marryat, *Gup* (London: Richard Bentley, 1868); Walter Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); and Éadaoin Agnew, *Imperial Women Writers in Victorian India* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
[451] Marryat, *Blood*, 4.
[452] Ibid., 5.
[453] Ibid., 95; This curse is explored in further detail later in this section.
[454] Ibid., 93.

to Brandt's character and is seemingly connected to her consumption of those with whom she grows intimate, is constructed as inherent in a specifically mixed-race heritage rather than a generally Black one. The following section examines the ways in which people of mixed race were viewed in Victorian Jamaica, providing evidence that Brandt's existence as "a quadroon" affects the portrayal of her mesmerism.[455]

Construction of 'the Mulatto' in Jamaica

Despite the fact that people of mixed race were conceived of as a separate racial category from Black people, and were referred to broadly as 'mulattoes,' white Victorians believed they retained many of the same racial characteristics as Black people.[456] Trollope commented on what he considered the humorous display of "these semi-African people" distancing themselves from other Black people in Jamaica, remarking at how a person of mixed race "will hardly work beside [an African], and regards himself as a creature immeasurably the superior… yet he has made no approach to the civilization of his white fellow-creature, whom he imitates as a monkey does a man."[457] In Trollope's view, "among those [mulattoes] who are nearest to the African streak, no attempt need to be made to preserve an exact line [between] the various gradations of coloured blood" because mulattoes were believed to have a mental and moral character that was functionally identical to the one thought to be inherent in Black people. Hunt similarly claimed that "mulattoes and those of mixed blood…engender the worst of both races," retaining all of the

[455] Ibid.
[456] Within the umbrella term 'Mulatto,' different combinations of races were assigned various names, but there appears to have been little agreement as to specific naming conventions. Even the umbrella term ranges in name from 'mulatto,' to 'brown,' to 'coloured.' For examples, see Lewis, *Journal*, 68; Trollope, *West*, 83; Nugent, *Journal*, 18; and John Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1823), 324.
[457] Trollope, *West*, 56.

negative constructions of Black people without the additional benefits of the physical strength he believed they possessed, rendering them "inferior to the European and African alike," a condition that seemed to worsen with each generation.[458] British explorer Robert Walker testified before the Anthropological Society in 1866 that, "as a rule, these half-breeds, without respect to their paternity, are sickly and weakly, but few of them living to adult age…[and those that do] produce still weaker offspring."[459] Mary Nugent, wife of the governor of Jamaica, had similarly commented on the weakness she believed to be present in people of mixed race in 1802, describing "a little mulatto girl [who] was sent to entertain [her]" as "a sickly delicate girl, like many of her race, with straight-brown hair, and very black eyes."[460] Thus, people of mixed race became associated with physical weakness as well as the lethargy already associated with their Black ancestry, a combination that lends itself to the image of the mesmeric vampire who must feed on the energy of others to counteract their own inherent weakness. In this novel, Brandt's mother, "a fat, flabby half-caste…with her sensual mouth, her greedy eyes, her low forehead and half-formed brain, and her lust for blood," embodies this image of enervated Jamaican women of mixed race.[461] She "hardly ever moved out of her chair but sat eating all day long, until the power to move had almost left her,"[462] representing the indolence and subsequent weakness that is closely associated with her practice of Obeah, lending an occult element to her supposedly inherent weakness.

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[458] Hunt, "Negro's," 34.
[459] Robert Walker, "On the Alleged Sterility of the Union of Women of Savage Races with Native Males, after having had Children by a White Man," *Memoirs Read Before the Anthropological Society of London* 2 (1866): 284.
[460] Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal: Jamaica One Hundred and Thirty Years Ago*, ed. Frank Cundall (London: The West India Committee, 1934; originally 1839), 93.
[461] Marryat, *Blood*, 95.
[462] Ibid.

Despite this notion of inherent weakness, people of mixed race were often viewed as a threatening presence within Jamaican society, due to a persistent and long-held narrative that they had no allegiance to either of their racial forebears. Trollope indicated a long-standing belief that "coloured people are unpatriotic [and] unworthy of the position of an Englishman," even as they were perceived to reject Africans, resulting in "both the white man and the black [disliking] their coloured neighbors."[463] Similarly, Hunt quoted Willem Bosman's seventeenth-century impressions of Guinea that people of mixed race are a "'Bastard Strain…made up of a parcel of profligate Villains, neither true to the *Negroes* nor us,'" claiming that his work reflected the present attitude of "Mulattoes – under which [he included] quadroon and octaroon – as a class all over the world."[464] As with other negative characteristics, these traits were reputedly magnified in women of mixed race. John Stewart, a Scottish explorer who lived in Jamaica, observed in 1823 that "nine-tenths of the females of colour in this island…feel a kind of pride in being removed some degrees from the negro race, and affect as much as possible the manners and customs of the whites," even as their Black heritage causes them to be "shut out from the genteel society of whites."[465] Trollope expressed his amusement at the ways in which "the coloured girls of Jamaica…talk contemptuously of niggers. These people are dirty niggers, and nasty niggers, and mere niggers," explaining how he "had heard this done by one whom [he] had absolutely taken for a negro."[466] Trollope's astonishment at the discussion of Black men as "an inferior class" to the women of mixed race reveals the extent to which he considers them to be equally separated from white people as the Black men they denigrate.

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[463] Trollope, *West*, 83; Ibid., 74.
[464] Hunt, "Negro's," 35, citing Willem Bosman, *Voyage to Guinea* (London: James Knapton, 1705), 141; Hunt, "Negro's," 35.
[465] Stewart, *View*, 325; Ibid., 329.
[466] Trollope, *West*, 88.

In *The Blood of the Vampire*, Brandt has a similar difficulty finding a sense of belonging among either white or Black people. She distinguishes herself from those she calls "regular African fellows" when she happily recalls being allowed to "whip the little niggers for a treat" whom she was assured "deserved it…the little wretches, always thieving or lying or something."[467] However, while white women like Elinor Leyton reject her, citing the fact that "she [has] a mouth from ear to ear and [eats] like a pig," white men are overwhelmingly attracted to her, to their ultimate detriment.[468] This is because, unlike the slaves on her parents' plantation who had dark skin, "woolly heads and blubber lips, and yellow…eyes," Brandt's skin is "colourless but clear…and her nose [is] straight and small."[469] Her status as a woman of mixed race is only visible in her "soft, dull, blue-black hair, which was twisted in careless masses about the nape of her neck, and looked as if it was unaccustomed to comb or hairpin" and her "supple figure and apparently boneless hands and feet."[470] This last detail, emphasizing Brandt's elastic features, recalls accounts of the beauty of women of mixed race recorded by white people in Jamaica early in the century. Cynric Williams, a British author who toured Jamaica in 1824, describes how "Quadroon women….[are] very little darker than the European, in a way much fairer than any of the faces of men long resident in the tropics," and that "strictly European beauty casts but a mean figure in this climate, contrasted with the happy countenances and elastic figures of the Mulatto and Quadroon women."[471] This beauty was seen as threatening to the position of white women, whom Nugent reports saw women of mixed race as "serpents," appealing enough to draw "white men of all descriptions, married or single, [into] a state of

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[467] Marryat, *Blood*, 20.
[468] Ibid., 13.
[469] Ibid., 20; Ibid., 4.
[470] Ibid., 4; Ibid., 94
[471] Cynric Williams, *A Tour Through the Island of Jamaica* (London: Hunter and Clarke, 1824), 54; Ibid., 254.

licentiousness" away from white women, while still retaining and passing on the supposedly inherent negative characteristics they inherited from their Black ancestors.[472] The perceived beauty of women of mixed race to white men posed a unique threat to white women in Jamaica, since women of mixed race were not believed to routinely marry Black men or men of mixed race, as noted above. In addition, white women in Jamaica were routinely outnumbered. Stewart estimates a total population of around 35,000 women of mixed race in 1823, adding that "it is probable that nineteen-twentieths of white males have their brown or black mistresses." The 1871 census recorded around 6,200 white women and 52,000 women of mixed race.[473]

However, Williams remarks that despite their beauty, women of mixed race "retain too often the inclination to the African…something in the contour of [their hair] that reminds me of their African origin; while not wooly it was a mass of untrained curls."[474] Trollope similarly notes a persistence of Black features among "those coloured girls who are tempted, by the closeness of their relationship to Europe, to deny their African parentage."[475] He argues that "many do, if not by lip, at any rate by deed, stoutly make such denial…by every wile by which a quadroon can seek to deny her ancestry! Such denial is never allowed as the hair, the lip, the known family history, a certain languor in the eye…one of these tells the tale."[476] Thus, while light-skinned women of mixed race could be physically perceived as separate from their darker-skinned compatriots, they were still believed to possess the magnified enervation and sensuality

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[472] Nugent, *Journal*, 18; Ibid., 118.
[473] Stewart, *View*, 333; *The New Jamaican Almanac and Register* (Kingston: Stevenson and Aikman, 1872), 19; it should be noted that Stewart's numbers may not be reliable as he admits in a footnote that "this estimate is not taken from any specific data, no regular census having been lately taken of them."
[474] Ibid., 254.
[475] Trollope, *West*, 79.
[476] Ibid.

understood to be inherent aspects of a mixed racial heritage.[477] Notably, Brandt's status as a woman of mixed race is made known by all of these characteristics. Her hair, eyes, lips, and flexible limbs are all commented on throughout the novel as indicators of her racial ancestry, a family history that Dr. Phillips, a physician who knew her parents, imparts to those around her.

By repeatedly emphasizing Brandt's position as a "quadroon" woman, the novel recalls the sensuality and enervation assumed to be inherent in Black people and magnified in people of mixed race, particularly women. Within the racial system present in the Victorian period, every generation after a Black ancestor is presented as a more exaggerated example of the listless and animalistic characteristics supposedly inherent in that ancestor. As the female child of a mixed-race woman, Brandt is the culmination of generations of negative elements, the least energetic, most consuming, most sensual example yet conceived. As such, she embodies many of the features supposedly inherent in both Black people and in psychic vampires. She represents Hunt's claim that "the Negro race possesses less energy, less courage, and less intellectual capacity than ours," forcing them to rely on outside motivations provided by white people, "whom they imitate in order to improve, replicating but not producing" as she spends her days languishing in the company of white British women, hoping to enter society through friendship with them.[478] Brandt parallels Webber's illustration of those who are "born with a rudimentary soul," unable to produce the "vitality" required to survive and must instead "absorb the spiritual life in others through the Odic medium."[479] Both accounts position one group as reliant on another for energy and productivity, unable to generate them on their own. Thus, the enervating

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[477] Indrani Sen makes a similar assessment regarding women of mixed race in India, writing that "the cultural constructions of Eurasian women…were inflected with greater sensuality, weaker will power and, by inference, more proneness to 'immorality' than the 'native' women." Indrani Sen, *Women and Empire* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2008), 48.
[478] Hunt, "Negro's," 27; Ibid., 38.
[479] Webber, "Philosophy," 15.

and consuming features of Brandt's character that serve to magnify her heritage also serve as elements of her consuming mesmerism. Thus, while Malchow claims that the supernatural elements of Marryat's novel are "nearly superfluous," I argue that they are essential in understanding Brandt's racialization.[480]

This is further evidenced by the fact that those to whom she attaches herself become "languid and ill," including Mrs. Pullen, her baby, Bobby Bates, and Anthony Pennell, all of whom die save for Mrs. Pullen, as Brandt unwittingly draws "upon the health and strength of all with whom she may be intimately associated…[rendering] her love fatal to such as she may cling to."[481] Brandt's attempts to grow intimate with others drains them of their energy, an unconscious action that is described using animalistic language that mirrors her wolfish consumption of dinner. This first becomes apparent when Brandt entwines herself "like a coiling snake" around Mrs. Pullen, who becomes "fainter and fainter as the girl [leans] against her with her head upon her breast."[482] As Mrs. Pullen is overcome by a dizzying sensation she has never experienced before, she explicitly states that she feels "as if something or some one were drawing her life away."[483] When Mrs. Pullen attempts to pull away she notes that Brandt "[seems] to hypnotise her as the snake is said to hypnotise the bird," explicitly associating Brandt's consumption of her vitality with mesmerism. The men Brandt becomes intimate with similarly wither after prolonged contact with her, shriveling "like a poisoned plant, the leaves of which lie discoloured and dead upon the garden path."[484] Dr. Phillips reveals that this is because "Miss Brandt possesses something that appeals to the senses of animal creatures like

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[480] Malchow, *Gothic*, 170.
[481] Ibid., 56; Ibid., 95.
[482] Ibid., 21.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Ibid., 250.

ourselves…a far more dangerous quality than that of mere regularity of features. She attracts without knowing it. She is a mass of magnetism."[485] He later clarifies that this magnetism functions in the same manner that occultists like Webber and Blavatsky assign to the mesmeric fluid, occurring in various amounts in different people. Dr. Phillips states that while some are able to give out their power, others "draw from their neighbours, sometimes making large demands upon their vitality—sapping their physical strength, and feeding upon them, as it were, until they are perfectly exhausted and unable to resist disease."[486] While he likens this process to "the vampire bat who is said to suck the breath of its victims," the process he describes is that of the vitality-deficient mesmeric vampire outlined by Blavatsky, sustained by the vitality they unconsciously steal from others.[487] The fact that Brandt's consumption of those around her is unconscious reinforces the idea that such deficiency is inherent in her existence as a Jamaican woman of mixed race.

The Occult in Jamaica

The parallels between psychic vampires and Jamaican women of mixed race are notable because one of the examples frequently cited as evidence of inherent enervation in people of color in Jamaica was the abundant presence of the occult across the island despite the presence of missionaries, constructing a loose association between the supposed inability of the Jamaicans to progress and their practice of the occult. An 1856 article in the *Leader*, a liberal newspaper that regularly advocated for colonial education, suggested that little had changed, noting with

[485] Ibid., 167; An interesting analysis of the ways Mrs. Pullen is also drawn in by this attractiveness is presented in Ardel Haefele-Thomas, *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002).
[486] Marryat, *Blood*, 241.
[487] Ibid.

frustration that, despite the missionary work being done "Britain has paid for…scarcely a [survey that] takes place in Jamaica at which several cases of Obeah are not brought forward," describing the syncretic amalgam of African occultism as "the most degraded form of worship in heathendom."[488] Thomas Hutchinson, British consul and travel writer, similarly noted in an 1861 article for the Ethnological Society that despite "intermingling in social intercourse with European missionaries and traders (mostly Englishmen) [Negroes] cling yet to their gris-gris jujus, fetishism and cannibalism with as much pertinacity as they did many hundred years ago."[489] Hunt argued that this adherence to occultism represented an inherent inability to progress beyond it, reiterating that the deeply rooted belief in "ideas and conceptions of regions of the invisible world…[including] demonology, the attribution of superior powers to objects made by the hands of man, divination by the inspection of entrails, human sacrifices, and anthropophagy…have found their place in the soul of the Negro, as they did amongst us in times past."[490]

At the end of the century, Bell recounts a similar string of "dark superstitions and beliefs in occult power…undoubtedly brought over from Africa [and combined into] what they call 'Obeah.'"[491] Bell's account differs from earlier representations of Jamaica because it draws a direct connection between the lack of Jamaican societal advancement and the practice of Obeah. Bell writes that "nowhere in the West Indies has Obeah a more tenacious hold over high and low than…the interior, where the authority of the Government is even less than nominal [and] dreadful accounts reach us of thousands of negroes having gone back to a perfectly savage

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488 "A Question for Missionaries," *Leader*, 20 December 1856, 1214.
489 Thomas Hutchinson, "On the Social and Domestic Traits of the African Tribes," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society* 1 (1861): 340.
490 Hunt, "Negro's," 38
491 Bell, *Obeah*, 5-6.

life."[492] The "replacement of the Christian religion by Voodooism and fetish worship" is cited as a visible sign of "the negroes' return to savagery," even more indicative than "going about stark naked."[493] Thus, the presence of the occult among Jamaicans became closely associated with the uncivilized, unproductive, and enervated state that was constructed as inherent to their existence.[494]

It is worth noting that, outside of lists written by white people, the traditions attributed to people of color in Jamaica share little in common. Despite this, fetish worship, Obeah, cannibalism, and Voodoo were all treated as equally represented practices among the non-white residents of Jamaica in order to distinguish them as savage Others, separate from the civilized white people.[495] The novel also performs this same designation, specifying that Brandt's mother was an Obeah priestess and a cannibal who "loved the sight and smell of [blood]… would taste it on the tip of her finger when it came in her way…laughing as she watched the dying agonies of those [Brandt's father] slaughtered," connecting African spiritual practice, cannibalism, and bloodthirstiness.[496] Significantly, one of the practices incorporated into the characterization of Brandt's mother is slavery, as she oversees a wide plantation alongside Brandt's mad scientist father. Britain's history of slavery in the West Indies was treated as a source of shame at the end

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[492] Ibid., 58.
[493] Ibid.
[494] For an examination of the place Obeah held in Jamaican society outside of these associations, see Diana Paton and Maarit Forde, *Obeah and Other Powers* (New York: Duke University Press, 2012); Margarite Fernandez-Omos and Elizabeth Parvisini-Gerbert, *Creole Religions in the Caribbean*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003); and Lucille Matharin Mair *A Historical Study of Jamaican Women, 1655-1844* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2006).
[495] For more on how the formation of Otherness in regards to West Indian religious practice, see Melissa Edmundson, *Women's Colonial Gothic Writing, 1850-1930* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Diana Paton, *The Cultural Politics of Obeah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Tabish Khair, *The Gothic, Postcolonialism, and Otherness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and John Bartkowski, "Claims-making and Typifications of Voodoo as a Deviant Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37.4 (1998): 559-79.
[496] Marryat, *Blood*, 83.

of the century. Socialist C.L. Fitzgerald's 1884 article, published in his newspaper *Justice,* is symptomatic of these wider concerns, invoking "the condition of slavery…in the old days, when a slave was 'property,'" in order to protest the labor conditions in Jamaica, echoing the condemnation of "the state of…the negroes' forefathers who were emancipated nearly half a century ago."[497] By including slavery alongside Obeah and cannibalism, the novel signals Britain's anxious need to distance itself from its troubling past. However, Brandt herself seems to embody that past. She talks openly of beating slaves, slaves who Dr. Phillips reveals killed her parents in a vicious revolt that mirrors the scandalous accounts of the 1860s. She occupies the uncertain space between races outlined by Trollope and Hunt, distinguishing herself from the black men on her family's plantation even as she is excluded by other white women. Even descriptions of her beauty echo the language used by those on plantations, especially the detail regarding her "boneless hands and feet," a detail seemingly absent from descriptions of women of mixed race after the 1820s.[498] Brandt's time in a convent removed her from the world at large, and her re-entry into society acts as a reminder of attitudes that pervaded a shameful past.

The Curse of Heredity

The anxieties regarding the past manifested in Brandt also reflect the fin-de-siècle fears of miscegenation and hereditary degeneration. As noted above, Dr. Phillips declares that Brandt is a victim of "the curse of heredity," her existence indelibly marked by her occult biracial mother.[499] He explains that while Brandt was educated in a monastery and never had direct contact with the occult, she is as afflicted as the "madman [whose] progenitors had lunacy in their blood, [or] a

[497] C.L. Fitzgerald, "The Revival of Negro Slavery," *Justice*, 2 February 1884, 2.
[498] Marryat, *Blood*, 94.
[499] Ibid., 95.

consumptive, [whose] were strumous."[500] This quasi-medical diagnosis echoes the prevailing Victorian belief in matrilineally-inherited traits, especially negative ones. Octavia Davis has argued that "'bad mothers' were blamed for the degenerate conditions of the slums and the physical degeneracy of the slum-dwellers," because, unlike their "cerebral white male counterparts," women, and especially women of color, were believed to pass down a "passive dependency and primitive sexuality" that was linked to the "antagonistic gemmules" in their bloodstreams.[501] Brenda Mann Hammack has similarly demonstrated that a range of physical afflictions, like tuberculosis and syphilis, were linked to "bestial women" passing on "bad blood," an argument that Alexandra Warwick also notes was extended to mental and moral failings like alcoholism and licentiousness.[502] In 1899, for example, essayist Isabel Foard wrote in the liberal journal *Westminster Review* warning that "the power of the hereditary strain has been shown to be certain in its results," and as such, "the man who contemplates marriage [should] make his selection from a good stock, if he looks for happiness."[503] However, she also acknowledged that "a pretty girl with charming manners, whose heredity is tabulated by generations of tubercle, insanity, and vice, is far more sought than one who is less gifted."[504] Beyond her vampiric powers, Brandt poses a threat to the British characters because she is an example of "a pretty girl with charming manners," so attractive that her manifestation of the

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[500] Ibid.
[501] Octavia Davis, "Morbid Mothers: Gothic Heredity in Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*," *Horrifying Sex*, ed. Ruth Bienstock Anolick (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 40-1.
[502] Brenda Mann Hammack, "Florence Marryat's Female Vampire and the Scientizing of Hybridity," *Studies in English Literature* 48.4 (2008): 887; and Alexandra Warwick, "Vampires and the Empire," *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, eds. Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 202-20.
[503] Isabel Foard, "The Power of Heredity," *Westminster Review* 151.1 (1899): 114; Ibid., 112.
[504] Ibid.

magnified enervation, sensuality, and consuming occult elements present in her mother can be ignored.

However, the novel stresses that simply ignoring these traits does not mean they aren't there. Dr. Phillips declares that while Brandt may appear to be almost white, seeking company among the British characters and seeking out a domestic life, she is doomed to the existence dictated by heredity because "when the cat is black, the kitten is black too! It's the law of Nature."[505] Some scholars have argued that Dr. Phillips' diagnosis is meant as a parody of occult conclusions drawn without scientific evidence.[506] However, the novel confirms his assessment when Brandt becomes intimate with those around her, such as when "all the Creole [is roused] in Harriet Brandt's blood" at the touch of a man she later unwittingly consumes, or when she becomes "like her mother…dark eyes [rolling] in her passion…her lips [quivering]" before she unconsciously drains another.[507] She embodies the negative traits of her heritage, magnifying them, and threatening to pass them on to the next generation.

As Bram Dijkstra has noted, in the nineteenth century, non-white women were perceived as a threat because their purported "tendency to atavistic reversion," the regressive and degenerative quality identified by racial scientists, "brought out the beast in man," corrupting the white men around them to become more atavistic in turn.[508] As Dijkstra observes, for those who feared the animalistic qualities supposedly present in such women, "the conjoining of bestial woman with the remnant of the beast in man could only spawn human animals, evil creatures

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[505] Marryat, *Blood*, 93.
[506] For examples of these arguments, see Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Haefele-Thomas, *Queer*; and Sian Macfie, "They Suck Us Dry," in *Subjectivity and Literature from the Romantics to the Present Day*, eds. Phillip Shaw and Peter Stockwell (London: Pinter, 1991), 58-67.
[507] Marryat, *Blood*, 72; Ibid., 156.
[508] Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 335.

from the distant past coming back to haunt civilization," in much the same way that the past Brandt represents haunts Britain.[509] This threat, like Brandt's other characteristics, is magnified by her mixed heritage. As H.L. Malchow argues, within the structures of Victorian literature, "both vampire and half-breed pose hidden threats – disguised presences bringing pollution of the blood. Both may be able to 'pass' among the unsuspecting, although both bear hidden signs of their difference which the wary may read."[510] Brandt, with her charms and her not-quite-European features, poses a more pronounced threat to the white characters and their future offspring because while she does bear the marks of her heritage, a heritage that results in her psychic vampirism, they are either invisible to or easily ignored by those who lack the knowledge.

Brandt's covert infiltration of white society has been linked to a variety of fin-de-siècle anxieties about women of color. Helena Ifill has argued that Brandt's white features allow her to occupy a position that is "both foreign and familiar," an uncanny familiarity that makes "the English let down their guard…allowing Harriet to seduce Ralph and drain the life from Margaret's baby."[511] She argues that this uncanny foreignness would be threatening at any point in the century, it was particularly dangerous at the fin de siècle because Brandt's "position as a financially independent, wilful and sometimes shockingly liberated young woman," reflects the dangers surrounding the figure of the New Woman.[512] The power wielded by a mixed-race woman who thrives on the lifeforce of others also invokes Arata's concept of "reverse colonization," the fear that the empire has been weakened "racially, morally, spiritually," to a

[509] Ibid.
[510] Malchow, *Gothic*, 168.
[511] Ifill, "Florence," 91.
[512] Ibid., 95

point where they may be overtaken by "more vigorous, 'primitive' peoples."[513] Sarah Willburn cites this theory to argue that Brandt represents "a wealthy Jamaican colonizing the concept of English womanhood," feeding off of Margaret's energy in a way that presents "a same-sex union as threatening in the same way as a mixed-race union in terms of white nation building."[514] While all of these readings of Brandt reflect the perceived threats of miscegenation, heredity, and dangerous women at the fin de siècle, I maintain that these aspects are reliant on the connection between Brandt's race and her specifically mesmeric form of vampirism.

The degree to which these two aspects are interwoven in the novel is evident in Dr. Phillip's warning to Anthony Pennell that Brandt "inherits terrible proclivities, added to black blood. She is in point of fact a quadroon, and not fit to marry into any English family."[515] Brandt's "black blood" alone is enough to make her unfit "to marry into any English family," threatening to pass on and further magnify the degenerative qualities she inherited from her mother and grandmother. However, she also threatens to magnify the "terrible proclivities" imparted to her mother by the bite of the vampire bat -- the need to consume those around her, manifested as psychic vampirism. Pennell ignores this warning, reasoning that Brandt's devotion to him would override any negative qualities. However, he discovers soon after their marriage "that the savage in her was *not* tamed – [and] that at any moment, like the domesticated lion or tiger, her nature might assert itself and become furious, wild and intractable."[516] Civil ceremony alone is not enough to remove the animalistic qualities supposedly inherent in Brandt, no profession of devotion strong enough to remove the danger carried in her blood and threatening

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[513] Arata, "Occidental," 623.
[514] Sarah Willburn, "The Savage Magnet," *Women's Writing* 15.3 (2008): 450.
[515] Marryat, *Blood*, 142.
[516] Ibid., 218.

to be magnified in the next generation. Pennell is wrong to ignore Dr. Phillips' warnings and is consumed shortly after their marriage.

As with the other dangerous mesmerists covered by this thesis, including Collins' Ezra Jennings, Du Maurier's Svengali, and Marsh's Beetle, the danger inherent in Harriet Brandt is only removed after her death. However, while the Beetle is an aggressive force that must be forcibly destroyed, Brandt is a more sympathetic character. Her mesmeric vampirism exists as a magnification of the characteristics inherent in her Jamaican ancestry and her mother's involvement in Obeah, circumstances that are out of her control. Her contact with the white British characters is due to her desire to see the world, facilitated by the pale skin she inherited from her father and the money her parents left her after their deaths, rather than through any maliciousness on her part. Despite the fact that she was raised in a convent and has no direct contact with the occult elements of her heritage, she cannot help but consume those around her. As a result, Brandt commits suicide, leaving only a note that laments how she lived "in a world where the curse of heredity…made [her] unfit to live."[517]

Both the Beetle and Harriet Brandt ultimately pose too great a threat to white British people in their respective narratives to be allowed to live. The death of each of these mesmeric women is portrayed as necessary in order to ensure the safety of white men and women. The portrayal of the circumstances of their deaths is analogous to the portrayal of their practice of mesmerism. The Beetle dies violently during a high-speed chase and the rest of her cult are killed in an explosion during a military operation to reclaim territory for the British Empire. As with other constructions of Egyptian women, she is violent and aggressive, having used her mesmerism to dominate those around her, and necessitating violent extermination. Harriet

[517] Ibid., 227.

Brandt is more sympathetic, giving into despair that the curse of heredity will cause her to be a permanent threat to those she holds dear. Like her subconscious mesmeric vampirism, Brandt does not have control over her ancestry and must contend with the consequences of her birth as long as she lives. Her suicide is tragic but portrayed as necessary.

Chapter 3: Strange Alchemy

This chapter asserts that Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1862 novel *A Strange Story* participates in the racialization of the occult in Victorian novels. The practice of alchemy is central to the plot, as Bulwer-Lytton's villainous Margrave seeks to unlock alchemical secrets in order to achieve immortality. This attempt results in the alchemist becoming a racialized, more primitive being than his former self as Margrave takes on the personality and mental characteristics of the dark-skinned, bestial attendants with which he surrounds himself. As a racialized product of alchemy, both Margrave is portrayed as a threat to the white people around him, necessitating his destruction. Furthermore, he acts as a generalized portrayal of the lower class, sharing more in common with the nameless groups of non-white and poor people in his novel than the white wealthy individuals he threatens.

This chapter provides evidence that the racialized depictions of these characters' transformations are influenced by discussions of race that occurred around the time of their publication. Specifically, I argue that Bulwer-Lytton's novel draws from anxieties about the uncertainty of the role of race in the changing social, cultural, and economic environment of the nineteenth century and the contention that alchemy is a practice only for an occult elite. I begin by examining Bulwer-Lytton's position within the occult community in mid nineteenth-century Britain and the emphasis that community placed on the importance of practitioners of the occult possessing qualities generally associated with the predominantly white upper class. I then show that this emphasis stems from arguments put forward by white anthropologists in the 1840s and 1850s that race and the characteristics associated with it were heavily influenced by physical, cultural, social class, and environmental factors, including education. Bulwer-Lytton's portrayal of alchemy in his novel reinforces this argument. The aristocratic character Sir Philip Derval,

who draws on his education, access to other white scholars, and genteel temperament when studying alchemy, is able to successfully avoid the degeneration suffered by Margrave. Margrave, a member of the lower class, who immerses himself in Eastern culture when practicing alchemy, surrounding himself with dark-skinned and seemingly inhuman attendants, ultimately succumbs to their influence as he also becomes bestial and dangerous. In order to demonstrate the impact that the conception of race as a mutable concept had on Bulwer-Lytton's portrayal of Margrave, I offer a brief coda in which I assert that Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* features a similar alchemical degeneration that reflects and resists narratives of white superiority by virtue of inherited racial characteristics that occurred at the fin de siècle. I begin by demonstrating how discussions of race among rich white scientists shifted during the 1870s and 1880s to define race as a series of distinct and inherited characteristics, codifying many of the earlier environmental arguments. I then provide points of comparison between an analysis of the inherent qualities present in Jekyll that resulted in Hyde's manifestation and the environmental factors that caused Margrave's degeneration.

A Strange Story

In Bulwer-Lytton's 1861 novel *A Strange Story*, Dr. Allen Fenwick attempts to contend with the villainous Margrave with the help of the respected Sir Philip, learning that the training of the two alchemists shared a similar origin. After being "long resident in another part of the East," both traveled to study alchemy under "Haroun of Aleppo…a magician [who] appears to have resembled those Arabian sages of the Gothic Age to whom modern science is largely indebted, -- a mystic enthusiast, but an earnest scholar."[518] Haroun is described as having "mastered every

[518] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *A Strange Story* (New York: Starling and Black, 2014; originally 1861), 39.

secret in nature which the nobler, or theurgic, magic seeks to fathom" and is equipped with "the true art of healing…employed [in] the re-invigourating and recruiting of the principle of life."[519] It is revealed that this knowledge comes from "more than a hundred years" of study and experience, as the ancient scholar has used his alchemical skill to repeatedly renew his youth.[520] However, while Sir Philip is able to successfully take what he has learned from Haroun and maintain his position within British society, Margrave degenerates, taking on the characteristics of the racialized non-white people with whom he surrounds himself. I show that the distinction between the two is influenced by discussions within Bulwer-Lytton's occult network about the need for an educated moral elite to practice the occult, a perspective that was in turn influenced by conceptions of race in the 1840s and 1850s. The following section provides examples of Bulwer-Lytton's connections to prominent occult figures, the philosophy of those figures as presented in their personal writings, and accounts of racial characteristics dependent on environment. I then draw from the work of racial scholars to demonstrate how race became relevant to discussions of alchemy in the 1850s and how white upper-class theorists drew a close association between the environment of the supposedly uncivilized non-white races and the white lower class. I then propose that this association was used to argue that both latter groups were less likely to practice alchemy in a manner that contributed positively to civilized society.

Bulwer-Lytton's Occult Network

Bulwer-Lytton's relationship to the occult is best summarized by the writer Arthur Conan Doyle, who, in his history of spiritualism, described how "Lord Lytton, the famous novelist… never publicly avowed his belief in [the occult], though his private letters, and indeed his published

[519] Ibid., 82.
[520] Ibid.

novels, are evidence of his true feelings."[521] Bulwer-Lytton's novels often focused on occult themes and characters, such as the immortal Chaldean alchemists in *Zanoni* (1842) or the subterranean wielders of occult power in *Vril, The Coming Race* (1871), and his writings generated speculations about his direct involvement in various occult societies. Where Bulwer-Lytton's interest in the occult is more readily evident is in the wide network of occult contacts he built over the course of his life.[522] In 1840, mesmeric researcher Chauncy Hare Townshend sent Bulwer-Lytton a copy of his upcoming book, *Facts in Mesmerism or Animal Magnetism* (1841), writing that Bulwer-Lytton was known for possessing "a German *depth*…peculiarly calculated to invest the mysteries of mesmerism with solemnity and grandeur."[523] In 1850, John Elliotson, one of the leading proponents of mesmerism in Britain, published a letter in his journal *The Zoist* from Bulwer-Lytton praising "that proper mixture of faith and diffidence" employed by mesmeric researchers "which teaches us both the illimitable resources of nature and the little knowledge we have yet acquired of her secrets."[524] In 1854, occult practitioner Eliphas Levi recounted how "a friend of [fellow adept] Sir B---L---" brought him to where "a complete magical cabinet" had been set up by Bulwer-Lytton for Levi to use in his attempt to summon the spirit of Apollonius.[525] In 1855, Bulwer-Lytton hosted acclaimed spirit medium D.D. Home at his estate, where Home's wife reported "several seances took place…no record of which is

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[521] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, 2 vols (Amsterdam: Fredonia, 2003; originally 1926) 1:194.
[522] For Bulwer-Lytton's alleged enrollment in secret societies, see R.A. Gilbert, "The Supposed Rosy Crucian Society, Bulwer-Lytton and the S.R.I.A," *Ésotérisme, Gnoses & Imaginaire Symbolique*, eds. Richard Caron, Joscelyn Godwin, Wouter Hanegraaff, Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 389-402.
[523] Chauncy Hare Townshend, Letter to Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 29 February 1840, Lytton MS, Hertfordshire County Record Office D/EK 6:11
[524] John Elliotson, "On Medical Anti-Mesmerists," *The Zoist* 7.28 (1850): 383.
[525] Eliphas Levi, *Dogme et Ritual Haute Magie*, trans. A.E. Waite, 2 vols (London: Rider and Company, 1896), 1:75.

available," a visit corroborated by Bulwer-Lytton's undated letter to his son, wherein he speculated the effects of Home's séance may have been produced "[not] by spirits at all, [but] rather [by] brownies or fairies," providing at least one piece of evidence of his belief in some form of the supernatural.[526] In 1867, psychical researcher John Ashburner recorded that "Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton was with [him]" when he both performed and underwent phrenological experiments, acting as a witness to Ashburner's claims that "a magnetic accession of mental forces" increased the size of his head.[527]

Within this extensive occult network, many expressed concerns that the occult should only be pursued by the right kind of people. In the book he sent Bulwer-Lytton, Townshend described the study of the occult as "a subject which is calculated to work an entire revolution in the very regulator of our being… disturbing the emotions, and through them the exercise of the intellectual powers," and thus requiring the careful attention of "a man [who] has the strength of mind sufficient…to discipline his fancy to the proper standard of belief, stating only that which he has ascertained by the most rigid observation."[528] For Townshend, this strength of mind was achieved by a scientific education that allowed one to "adventure his bark of discovery into the great deep…Columbus-like, [steering] ever towards one anticipated point, deterred neither by portents nor by passions in mutiny," unlike the "ignorant man...left prey to the invasion of every fancy…[who enters] upon a course resembling rather the fabled voyage of Ulysses, haunted by

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[526] Julie Home, *D.D. Home, His Life and Mission* (London: Trübner, 1888), 50; Undated letter quoted in Neville Lytton, *The Life of Edward Bulwer, First Lord Lytton by his Grandson*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1913), 2:44.
[527] John Ashburner, *Notes and Studies in the Philosophy of Animal Magnetism and Spiritualism* (London: H. Bailliere, 1867), 64.
[528] Chauncy Hare Townshend, *Facts in Mesmerism or Animal Magnetism* (Boston: Charles Little, 1841), 40.

prodigies and embarrassed by delays."[529] For Townshend, this education was important because the study of the occult was focused on

> the nature of those subtile [sic] influences which require a certain attention, and indeed education of sensibility, in order to perceive. The savage has been known to track his prey like a dog, by the scent alone; and, in doing so, he must, of necessity, fix all his attention upon the fine exhalations, by which he is guided. But how plainly absurd it would be to affirm on that account the sensations of the savage![530]

The occult required not only refined senses but a refined education in how to use them. Without that education, it was "absurd" to think that "the savage" could obtain the same achievements as the civilized man even if his senses appeared stronger.[531] Elliotson echoed this sentiment in 1843, recommending that knowledge of the occult remain "in the hands of those whose education, calling, and public responsibility evidently points them out as of the party to wield it."[532] In 1867, Ashburner also cautioned against the damage that could be done by an empowered soul which, "when not properly educated, or habituated to self-control, runs riot, and soon becomes the victim of evil influences."[533] Charles Dickens, Bulwer-Lytton's publisher, invoked the notion of an occult elite in an 1861 letter assuring the author that he was skilled enough to endear the public to the supernatural elements of his novel, writing that "the Magician's servant does not know what to do with potent spirits and has consequently no business with them; but you are the Magician…and the Magician does know what to do with them, and has all the business with them that he can transact."[534] In Bulwer-Lytton's circle, the occult was a perilously complex subject that could only be engaged with by the most dedicated

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[529] Ibid., 39.
[530] Ibid., 412.
[531] Ibid.
[532] John Elliotson, "Lecture Mania," *The Zoist,* 2.10 (1843): 78.
[533] Ashburner, *Notes*, 296.
[534] Charles Dickens, Letter to Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 12 May 1861, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Graham Storey, 10 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 9:414.

thinkers equipped with the education and temperament that exceeded casual analysis. This notion supports Christine Ferguson's argument that, while scientific naturalism and the occult are often presented as opposite pursuits, they "are perhaps better imagined as uneasy analogues, rehearsing a shared desire to expand understanding of the natural world while simultaneously controlling the potential applications of such knowledge and policing access to their own disciplinary authority."[535]

This emphasis on a proper education and the need to regulate character was especially prevalent in Victorian discussions of alchemy, which Lawrence Principe and William Newman explained regained prominence as a spiritual movement in the 1850s when accounts of transmuting lead into gold were reframed as elaborate metaphors.[536] These ideas are particularly evident in Mary Anne Atwood's 1850 treatise, *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery,* which argues that the ancient alchemists "reduced their medicine to a dust, and this dust is the Arabian Elixir. This Elixir the philosophers could carry about them; but the medicine not so, for it is such a subtle moist fire that nothing will hold it."[537] In other words, the insights offered by practicing alchemy were so revelatory and spiritually abstract that they could not be effectively translated into mundane descriptions. Instead, they were reduced to the format of the surviving alchemical texts that could be used as a starting point towards achieving civilized enlightenment. Atwood, the only daughter of wealthy alchemical scholar Thomas South, maintained a similar occult network to Bulwer-Lytton, writing a letter to her friend Isabelle de Steiger about her

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[535] Christine Ferguson, "Occult Sciences," *The Routledge Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science*, eds. John Holmes and Sharon Ruston, (London: Routledge, 2017), 434.
[536] Lawrence Principe and William Newman, "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy," *Secrets of Nature*, eds. Anthony Grafton and William Newman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 385-431.
[537] Mary Anne Atwood, *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* (London: Trelawney Saunders, 1850), 489.

involvement "with Dr. Elliotson, Engledue, Ashburner and the rest who were then active in their advocacy through *The Zoist*," and shared similar concerns regarding the unregulated practice of alchemy.[538] Atwood argued that alchemy should only be practiced by a select group because alchemy, which originated in Egypt, was "that mighty Art with which [Egypt] rose, governed, and dazzled the whole contemporary world."[539] In Atwood's view, the alchemical practice of spiritual self-perfection was an essential element of national power, not just in Egypt, but in "India, Arabia, China, and Persia," all of whom gained "magian skill and prowess," from learning the "Art and Wisdom [through] initiation into the Mysteries of Isis."[540] In Atwood's view, the power and scope of the Eastern empires could be directly correlated to their understanding of the "strange arts [and] kindred light" of which alchemy is comprised.[541] Alchemical knowledge was power and needed to be protected.

Given the importance of alchemy and the complexity of its ciphers, Atwood warned that those who lacked the proper education, cultural environment, and character "may pursue [alchemy] wrong, and be lost in this labyrinth," and only those best equipped to pursue alchemy would succeed.[542] Like others who emphasized the importance of being in an intellectual environment to successfully practice alchemy, Atwood declared that "the imperfect and impure metals (let not the allusion here be misapprehended) must be purified if one will draw any profit from them" and that this process of purification required "that they should first be fermented with very good and most pure gold; for otherwise the imperfect metal would not be able to support its too great and supreme subtlety."[543] In other words, before being inducted into the

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[538] Quoted in Isabelle de Steiger, *Memorabilia* (London: Rider, 1927), 234.
[539] Atwood, *Suggestive*, 8.
[540] Ibid., 11.
[541] Ibid., 24.
[542] Ibid., 474.
[543] Ibid., 490.

ways of alchemy, one must be exposed to the teachings and understanding of an established alchemist who has already achieved a state of perfection. While her chapter on "the mental requisites" of this pursuit did not illustrate an explicit portrait of the ideal alchemist, Atwood did suggest that "sons of science" would be best equipped to be alchemists, those involved in scientific inquiry who approach their work with "caution, [and] the Power [of alchemy] might only be discovered through the long labour of an experienced and upright mind."[544] The careful and studious mind shaped by a scientific education and upstanding character was the only one prepared to engage with alchemy.

In opposition to the ideal alchemist, Atwood described those who should not attempt to pursue alchemy as "fools, ignorant and vicious, who are without self-control and beneficence, [and seek] to perpetuate sinful things."[545] According to Atwood, "because their brains are replete with *fumosities*, they cannot receive the true *intention*" of alchemy's teachings.[546] Instead, they are "no more than beasts…who cannot *discern any truth at all in* natural things."[547] Atwood argued that this deficiency meant that even when bad alchemists "succeeded in inducing an exulted energy," producing an effect that would be positive, they "willfully denied…its true fulfillment, substituting their own hasty purposes which defile the Divine."[548] In other words, Atwood argued that those who lacked the proper education and character were beast-like and impatient and thus abused alchemy for their own purposes, corrupting what would otherwise be beneficial. Atwood believed that allowing such people access to alchemical knowledge would lead to disaster, a belief her father apparently took to heart. According to Freemason Walter

[544] Ibid., 400.
[545] Ibid.
[546] Ibid., 394; emphasis in original.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Ibid., 396.

Leslie Wilmhurst's introduction to the 1918 edition of Atwood's treatise, shortly after it was distributed, South recalled the remainder of the print run "under considerable protest from the publisher and at a cost of £250 to Mr. South."[549] After this abrupt recall, South and Atwood stacked the copies of her book on the lawn "and a bonfire was made of them."[550] In an 1853 letter to fellow occultist Christopher Walton, South confirmed that he "had reasons to fear the consequences of indiscriminate publication" and had withdrawn a few copies "into [his] *own hands* for private circulation only."[551] While South never elaborated on his nebulous fears, Wilmhurst theorized that, in South's understanding, the Hermetic subject was viewed as "a practical and vital Art, experimentation in which was desirable only by the gravest and most morally qualified persons," and that by allowing the public to access the secrets contained in the text, Atwood had inadvertently exposed them to dangerous ideas.[552] Given the similarities of their social circles and the reiterations of many of Atwood's ideas in his novel, it seems likely that Bulwer-Lytton could have been one of those morally qualified persons, trusted due to his education and genteel character.

Atwood was not the only one to put forward this interpretation of alchemy. In 1857, American occult scholar Thomas Jay Hudson echoed many of Atwood's insights in his *Remarks Upon Alchemy and the Alchemists.* Like Atwood, Hudson claimed that "*Man* was the *subject* of

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[549] Roughly equivalent to £33,000 in 2018; Walter Leslie Wilmhurst, "Introduction," *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* by Mary Anne Atwood (Belfast: William Tait, 1918), 6.
[550] Ibid., 6.
[551] Thomas South, Letter to Christopher Walton, 25 May 1853. Dr. Williams' Library, 189.3 (182).
[552] Wilmhurst, "Introduction," 7; Alternatively, religious scholar Jeffrey D. Lavoie has suggested that South's decision was influenced by his involvement in the Evangelical Revival in England, a movement marked by intense fundamentalism and a belief in purging sin from the world through activism, and that he may have doubted the compatibility of alchemy and Christianity. Jeffrey D. Lavoie, *A Search for Meaning in Victorian Religion* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2015). Literary scholar Jayne Elisabeth Archer has also argued that South may have been jealous of his daughter's success. Jayne Elisabeth Archer, "The Philosopher's Stone and Key to all Mythologies" in *Literary Bric-a-Brac and the Victorians*, ed. Jen Harrison (London: Routledge 2016), 163-178.

Alchemy; and the *object* of the Art was the perfection, or at least the improvement, of Man."[553] Arguing that "this noble Art requires a sound man, of learned mind and stout heart," Hudson declared that those who would inevitably fail in their attempts at alchemy have "a sickness which has darkened their senses…seeking only what may gratify some selfish passion."[554] Like Atwood, Hudson envisions an ideal alchemist as one who has proper education and character, and one who is "petulant, irritable, and morose," as the worst candidate for alchemy, questioning "how is such a man to be improved?"[555] Hudson apparently did not share South's misgivings, distributing rather than burning his book, and in 1858 the liberal newspaper the *Leader* noted that his theories, while "cabalistical," were "deserving of further examination," particularly the notion of society being shaped by "the highest class of philosophers."[556]

The emphasis placed on the necessity of a 'proper' education in order to practice, be trusted with, or even critique others in their pursuit of the occult stemmed from two main factors. The first factor was that those in Britain who advocated for an elite caste of occultists armed with a rigorous scientific education used themselves as a standard: Elliotson and Ashburner were physicians, Townshend was a Cambridge-educated minister, and Atwood was an educated member of the gentry; all were wealthy. The second factor was the framing of race in the 1840s and 1850s by aristocratic white men, as previously explored by Edward Beasley.[557] Beasley argues that during this time, race was a worrisome fluid product of physical and intellectual environment rather than a set of unique and inheritable characteristics, meaning that cultural elements like education and class were important factors that could potentially influence one's

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[553] Thomas Jay Hudson, *Remarks Upon Alchemy and the Alchemists* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols & Co, 1857), iv.
[554] Ibid., 101.
[555] Ibid., 45.
[556] "The Alchemists," *Leader*, 9 January 1858, 42.
[557] Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race* (New York: Routledge, 2010)

race. As Scottish publisher and evolutionary thinker Robert Chambers wrote in his best-selling book *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* in 1844, while "the human race sprung from one stock, which was at first in a state of simplicity, if not barbarism…as they parted off and took up separate ground [mankind] became marked by external features so peculiar."[558] For some theorists, this notion of "separate ground" referred entirely to physical environment, which was believed to have a direct impact on the moral and intellectual properties of those who lived there.[559] Others, like Chambers, included cultural influence as an environmental factor, due to the belief that "the style of living is ascertained to have a powerful effect in modifying one's race."[560] While the exact definition of "cultural influence" varied, Mark Francis has argued that it can generally be defined as having access to the "interconnected web of the arts, sciences, politics, religion, social relations, and material goods" that constituted an immersion in British culture.[561] Access to this web was apparently so powerful that ethnologist Daniel Wilson asserted in 1862 that attempts to form arguments about individual races outside of their "native condition," how they existed without the influence of other races, was useless because

> the capacity for civilization of the Magyar or Turk when transferred to new physical conditions and subjected to higher moral and intellectual influences, or the wondrous intellectual vigour of the Arab of Baghdad in Cordova, affords no scale by which to gauge the immobility of the Tartar on his native steppe, or the Arab in his desert wilderness.[562]

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[558] Robert Chambers, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (London: John Churchill, 1844), 305; For more on the reception and spread of Chambers' book see James A. Second, *Victorian Sensation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
[559] For examples, see Robert FitzRoy *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of HMS* Adventure *and* Beagle (London: Henry Colburn, 1839); "Why Are There Black Men in the World and What is the Meaning of Africa?" *The Family Herald*, 7 January 1843, 160; "World Climate," *Lloyd's Weekly Miscellany* 2 (1850), 1087.
[560] Chambers, *Vestiges*, 280.
[561] Mark Francis, "The 'Civilizing' of Indigenous People in Nineteenth-Century Canada," *Journal of World History* 9.1 (1998): 52.
[562] Daniel Wilson, *Prehistoric Man* (London: Macmillan, 1862), 10.

Racial characteristics were thus believed to be rapidly altered by exposure to different cultural conditions and practices, complicating attempts to form classifiable groups of people.

This view was supported in other popular and religious periodicals. In 1836, British philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill argued in the *London and Westminster Review* that civilization referred to "the direct converse or contrary of…the characteristics of what we call savage life," specifically access to a material culture which provided "the arrangements of society for protecting the persons and property of its members."[563] Mill declared that since "these elements [existed] in modern Europe, and especially in Great Britain, in a more eminent degree, and in a state of more rapid progression, than at any other place or time," Britain had become a dominant world power.[564] Other nations, like India, Turkey, and other Eastern countries, lacked the access to culture which had enabled Britain's success, altering the individual character of their peoples until they "[approached] the condition of savages…incapable of acting in concert" and unable "to sacrifice, for any purpose, the satisfaction of individual will."[565] The cultural conditions in which one existed supposedly had a direct effect on one's character and theoretically were a key element in determining one's ability to successfully practice alchemy.

David de Giastino has shown how this principle was also adopted by phrenologists to argue that physical aspects reflected mental or moral capacities.[566] In 1849, *Baptist Magazine* observed that as black slaves were freed in Jamaica, "the low forehead, the flat nose, the thick lip and the animal features which characterized the race in the days of bondage" soon faded.[567] In 1850, the weekly magazine *Working Man's Friend* similarly observed that Africans who

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[563] John Stuart Mill, "Civilization," *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill,* ed. J.M. Robson, 33 vols (Toronto: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 18:120.
[564] Ibid., 120-1.
[565] Ibid., 122.
[566] David de Giastino, *Conquest of Mind* (London: Croom Helm, 1975).
[567] "The End of Slavery in Jamaica," *Baptist Magazine* 1 (1849), 1.

converted to Islam also demonstrated a notable change, "their skulls converting from prognathous to pyramidal," a physical indication of their supposedly advanced mental state.[568] Thus, access to more intellectual and more civilized cultural elements like education was presented as a primary factor in shaping all racial characteristics, both mental and physical. This fits Christine Bolt's argument that "a theory of progressive change [among] British thinkers, its apparent absence in other cultures [and] Victorians' ethno-centrism allowed them to think in terms of a cultural hierarchy in which white civilizations occupied first place."[569] People who looked similar to whites and accepted white British standards of culture were thus deemed more civilized, while those who did not were deemed less civilized. Since race was so fluid, one's position was not guaranteed either. Citing explorer James Buckingham's account of "perfectly black children being born to an Arab couple in whose ancestry no such blood intermingled" when they moved from the Middle East to Northern Africa in his 1824 travelogue, *Travels Among the Arabs*, Chambers warns that since "subjection to external conditions" such as nutrition, hardship, and cultural influence, have the strongest impact on race, they must be carefully maintained to avoid slipping down the hierarchical structure of race.[570] Thus, racial characteristics were in constant danger of radically changing; to avoid degeneration, one would have to interact within the right environment in the right way. Accepting the existence of this hierarchy, the emphasis placed on the need for an elite group of occult practitioners who would be able to minimize the degree to which they were changed by the occult is logical. Occultists advocated for the most qualified members of society – those immersed in the best cultural environment – to practice the occult. Furthermore, an elite group that practices the occult would

[568] "Religion in Africa," *The Working Man's Friend*, 5 January 1850, 10.
[569] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge, 1971), 27.
[570] Chambers, *Vestiges*, 279; Ibid., 309.

avoid intellectual and racial degeneration, as attempts at self-improvement using spiritual alchemy could be dangerous if undertaken by those who were unqualified and from the wrong environment.

Notably, even as British histories of alchemy acknowledged alchemy's origin among non-white races, the qualities that the white upper class attributed to the ideal alchemist aligned with qualities they attributed to themselves, and those attributed to flawed alchemists aligned with those attributed to the lower class. Hillary Ellis has examined how scientific societies populated by rich white men engaged in an explicit attempt to align "scientific" thought with Victorian ideals of British whiteness and masculinity.[571] Building on Ellis' assertions, this chapter of my thesis is concerned with representations of the lower class and the ways in which they were presented as existing in similar conditions to non-white races, rendering them less civilized and thus less capable of practicing alchemy 'correctly' than the white British elite.[572] In 1851, journalist Henry Mayhew published a four-part book series, *London Labour and the London Poor,* in the radical newspaper *The Morning Chronicle*. In the final part of this series, published in 1862, Mayhew attempted to catalogue "the truthful revelation and descriptions of the London street folk, workers and non-workers, and the means by which they exist" in order to "enlighten the educated classes."[573] For Mayhew "the members of any community [could] be divided into the *energetic* and the *an-ergetic*…the distinguishing characteristic of the *anergetic* being the extreme irksomenesss of all labour to them, and their consequent indisposition to work

[571] Hillary Ellis, "Knowledge, Character, and Professionalisation in Nineteenth-Century British Science," *History of Education* 43.6 (2014): 777-92

[572] I have not encountered any sources that declare a total incapability of performing alchemy outside of the elite, but the emphasis on education favors the upper class.

[573] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 4 vols (New York: Dover, 1968; originally 1862), 4:v.

for their subsistence."[574] Drawing from the model of environmental influences outlined above, Mayhew defined these 'anergetic' members of the lower class as "the Dangerous Classes of the Metropolis," a "distinct body of people [separated from] the pauper class and the wealthy class [by] specific differences in the constitution of different beings" brought on by different physical and cultural climates.[575] In Mayhew's assessment, the lower classes existed in a toxic and debilitating environment, populated by people who "[contaminated] the very air, like a deadly upas tree, and [poisoned] the blood of the nation with the most audacious recklessness…the noisiest, the most pugnacious, unprincipled, and reckless part of the population… of London."[576] Mayhew explicitly cited these negative characteristics as products of environment, noting that they were "inculcated at first by the force of evil example and bad bringing up, and invigorated every day by the liberty allowed them."[577] This meant that the lower classes, "surrounded by the most baneful and degrading influences…trained from their infancy in the bosom of crime…born in the homes of habitual thieves and other persons of bad character," were doomed to possess a "lazy disposition and lack of energy both of body and mind."[578] While this moral and intellectual deficiency matched the characterization of the faulty alchemist put forward by Atwood, it also matched constructions of non-white races as inferior due to their environment. Mayhew explicitly invokes this parallel when he compared "the Hindoo beggar and the Negro" to "a cockney of the lowest order," writing that "they so nearly resemble each other that what I have said of one, I could almost identically say of the others," and, describing the lower class white people who "steal forth from their homes at night with rogueish eyes and low cunning" as the

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[574] Ibid., 4:3.
[575] Ibid., 4:v; Ibid., 4:31.
[576] Ibid., 4:234.
[577] Ibid.
[578] Ibid., 4:273-4.

"young Arabs of the city."[579] The white lower classes and non-white races were united by their lack of access to the proper education and civilized culture available to the British upper classes.

Mayhew's work reiterated the argument that a more civilized environment produced more civilized citizens, such as when he recounted the story of a young girl who improved her life upon returning to her family home and only "returned to her old haunts, renewed her acquaintance with her vicious companions, and resumed her old course of life" after the death of her father, or when he observed that even the criminals in richer neighborhoods were "engaging in appearance and very tasteful in their dress, very unlike the rough burglars in Whitechapel, the Borough, and Lambeth."[580] However, he also expressed concern about "how systemically the seeds of mendicancy and crime are implanted in the heart of the young Arab tribes of London," especially since "a characteristic of civilized races is the separation of the vicious from the moral classes," necessitating the isolation of the upper class from the lower class who "should be understood to represent, for the most part, the very dregs, the lowest, most unthinking, and vilest of the race."[581] Mayhew argued that the lower classes were understood to be so warped by their environment, so similar to "savage" non-white races, that they could not hope to be like the white upper class and would maintain an arrested state of development without strict guidance, even as he warned that that guidance may be misdirected. This concept of the lower class as trapped in a perpetual state of inferiority was an implicit aspect of the need for elite practitioners of the occult, similar to Atwood's insistence on the purification of base materials. Since the lower classes were seen as unable to better themselves, due to the environment of moral and

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[579] Ibid., 4:424; Ibid., 4:277.
[580] Ibid., 4:241; Ibid., 4:295.
[581] Ibid., 4:431; Mayhew is referring to white lower-class people as Arabs; Ibid., 4:57; Ibid., 4:263.

mental deficiency in which they supposedly existed, the educated upper classes more precisely fit the description of successful alchemists.

As presented by Mayhew, class was considered a more permanent feature than race, which Douglas Lorimer has argued was in a state of flux until the early 1870s.[582] Mayhew's concerns that members of the lower class were shaped by their environment to such a degree that it permanently altered them in a way that no amount of money or access to more civilized environments could undo presaged the debates of the 1860s regarding the rise of the professional class and the differentiation made between the aristocrats and everyone else, as discussed by Janice Carlisle.[583] Building on Carlisle's argument, as well as that of Patrick Joyce who asserts that economic categorizations of class in the Victorian period were less important than political ones, the racialization of Margrave reflects the debates concerning the permanency of race or class, since the inherency of his lower-class qualities renders his racial characteristics uncertain.[584]

Alchemists in Bulwer-Lytton's Novel

In Bulwer-Lytton's *A Strange Story*, Sir Philip Derval and Margrave fulfill the roles of the successful and the unsuccessful alchemist respectively. While both men receive their initial training in the East, the following section examines how they differ in their continued pursuit of alchemy. It begins by showing that Sir Philip shares the characteristics for which the occult elite advocated; he is a member of the educated upper class, grounds his theories in the works of other white alchemists, and is concerned for the safety of the public in regards to alchemy, ordering his

[582] Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978).
[583] Janice Carlisle, "The Smell of Class," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29.1 (2001): 1-19.
[584] Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

research to be destroyed after his death in a manner reminiscent of Atwood. The section then demonstrates that Margrave is racialized as Sir Philip's opposite. As a member of the lower class, Margrave is unable to assimilate with the upper class or in their civilized environment. Instead, he surrounds himself with non-white attendants, who are characterized by an emphasis on their physical darkness, their animalistic qualities, the threat they pose to white characters, and their portrayal as a generalized representation of all non-white peoples. The two named figures, Ayesha and Juma, are evidence of how different the environment in which Margrave exists is from that of Sir Philip. As a result of immersing himself in this environment, Margrave becomes more animalistic and dangerous, reflecting the threatening figures with whom he associates in his selfish desire for immortality. Due to the influence of their different environments, Sir Philip is able to retain his exemplary qualities while practicing alchemy, but Margrave becomes more animal than man and fails in his attempts to achieve immortality through alchemy.

Sir Philip Derval, the Successful Alchemist

As noted above, Sir Philip "resided some considerable time in the East," and was trained by Haroun of Aleppo, whom Sir Philip describes as a "man from whom [he] acquired a knowledge immeasurably more profound and occult than that which may be tested by experiments."[585] However, it is this emphasis on experimentation which allows Sir Philip to study and practice alchemy in a manner that does not jeopardize his character. The novel states that while much of alchemy is cloaked in esoteric language and carefully guarded secrets, "one thing we do know…is that amongst the ancients, and especially in the East, [alchemy] was no commonplace

[585] Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 82.

mechanical craft, but a special and secret art appropriated to men who cultivated with assiduity all that was then known of natural science in order to extract from it agencies that might appear supernatural."[586] This passage emphasizes that knowledge of alchemy exists to a special degree in the East and highlights the belief that a safe pursuit of alchemy is reserved for aristocrats who are studious and careful, approaching alchemy with a scientific mindset. Sir Philip is portrayed as being well-equipped to engage with alchemy, due to his being "very fond of chemical science; a clever, odd, philanthropical man [who] had studied medicine…[and] was said to have made many marvellous cures."[587] He resembles the "born gentleman" described by David Cannadine, the educated aristocrat who was "morally, culturally, and financially superior" by default and thus appealed to those who dreamed of an elite ruling class.[588] Sir Philip's gentlemanly and studious behavior predisposes him towards a methodical and reverent approach, while his medical education allows him to exercise a knowledge of natural science that the novel explicitly states is a prerequisite to safely practice alchemy. He is one of the few men who may practice the "special and secret art" with the knowledge that he may succeed in his experimentation with it.[589] This praise of Sir Philip's extensive medical education and genteel character parallels Atwood's argument that "the long labour of an experienced and upright mind" is critical for the successful alchemist, revealing that Sir Philip has been shaped by his environment to be well-suited for alchemical practice.[590]

The length of Sir Philip's experience with the occult is further hinted at when Fenwick uncovers a hidden library and occult workshop in Sir Philip's estate. The workshop apparently

[586] Ibid., 152.
[587] Ibid., 38.
[588] David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Penguin, 2000), 75.
[589] Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 152.
[590] Atwood, *Suggestive*, 400.

belonged to Simon Forman, "the most notorious of those astrologers or soothsayers whom the superstition of an earlier age alternately persecuted or honoured," who stayed there when Sir Philip was a child.[591] Fenwick contemplates whether it was a childhood exposure to the ideas of this earlier master "that had originally biased Sir Philip Derval's taste towards the mystic…in the chain of association which so subtly links our pursuits in manhood to our impressions in childhood."[592] Sir Philip's aristocratic culture has provided him with access to the works of an expert alchemist and the education and qualities that allow him to devote a great deal of time and careful thought to his study of alchemy. His success in alchemy is credited to his extensive experimentation, experimentation that he conducts using "the works of those writers whom we may class together under the title of mystics, -- Iamblichus and Plotinus; Swedenborg and Behmen; Sandivogius, Van Helmont, Paracelsus, [and] Cardan," all of whom are white Europeans.[593] This lifelong devotion to alchemy, within the context of a white upper-class environment, does not harm Sir Philip in any way. He retains "the quiet courtesy with which a well-bred man goes through a ceremony," and displays a "noble countenance…not intimidating, not aggressive [but] mild…benignant."[594] He is an educated gentlemanly product of his environment, equipped with the qualities necessary for the successful practice of alchemy.

The presence of these qualities is reinforced when Sir Philip is given a silver "casket of ancient Byzantine workmanship" by Haroun, who tells him that he has demonstrated that he is "too versed in the mysteries of Nature not to discriminate between the powers that may serve the good to good ends, and the powers that may tempt the good…to the ends that are evil."[595]

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[591] Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 56.
[592] Ibid., 57.
[593] Ibid., 56.
[594] Ibid., 60-1.
[595] Ibid., 72; Ibid., 85.

Because he has shown that he has the characteristics of a careful and studious alchemist, Haroun bestows the base materials that Sir Philip needs to perfect himself. However, Haroun makes it clear that "this casket contains not a drop…of that essence, undiluted and pure, which grants undue prolongation of soul in the flesh."[596] Instead, it holds "the essences which quicken the life of those duplicate senses that lie dormant and coiled in their chrysalis web, awaiting the wings of a future development – the senses by which we can see, though not with the eye, and hear, but not with the ear."[597] Though not explicitly named as such, this description matches Atwood's portrayal of the Arabian Elixir, a condensed form of alchemy available in the East that contains something useful at its core, able to be made exceptional by someone with the proper education and character.[598] Thus, Sir Philip is portrayed as the best-suited student of alchemy, an educated, upstanding aristocrat diligently studying the works of other educated men, able to retain the "civilized" qualities which signified his initial worthiness. Sir Philip also recognizes that those around him do not share these qualities and attempts to have as much of his research destroyed after his death as he can. His will asks the executor of his estate to "demolish the [alchemical study], and to destroy by fire, without perusal, all the books and manuscripts found in the safes."[599] Sir Philip, like other Victorian occultists, recognizes the inherent dangers of pursuing alchemy without the proper education, qualities, and environment and urges that his work be destroyed so that no one suffer the consequences of doing so.

[596] Ibid.
[597] Ibid.
[598] Atwood, *Suggestive*, 489.
[599] Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 73.

Margrave, the Unsuccessful Alchemist

Unlike Sir Philip, Margrave is a member of the lower class, and while his father, "a usurer, infamous for the rapacity with which he acquired enormous wealth," is able to send him to Eton and Cambridge, he is unable to assimilate with his classmates in a manner similar to Mayhew's concern that the lower class had become too warped to progress.[600] He is described as "fierce…haughty, quarrelsome, reckless…[prone to fighting] till he was half killed," all of which place him in stark contrast to the studious, careful, polite, and gentlemanly Sir Philip.[601] The novel explicitly states that Margrave's wealth is the wrong kind of wealth, and while "it is good to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth…it is when one has one's own family crest on it."[602] As "a horrid usurer's son," Margrave's entrance into "the Polite World" is perceived by his classmates as a member of the lower class presuming entitlement to the same benefits allowed to the upper class, and where he "claimed the right to be courted,—he was shunned; to be admired,—he was loathed."[603] Those who knew Margrave at school theorize that "perhaps he could have lived through all this had he sought to glide quietly into position; but he wanted the tact of the well-bred, and strove to storm his way" into upper class society, more focused on doing things quickly than on performing the careful study that facilitates Sir Philip's success.[604] Lacking the positive influence of an aristocratic culture and environment, Margrave retains the combative viciousness portrayed as rampant among the lower class, only able to achieve access to the upper class through notorious usury rather than education and refinement. While his expulsion from high society is prompted by the murder of "a real fine gentleman," his flight "to

[600] Ibid., 40.
[601] Ibid.
[602] Ibid.
[603] Ibid.
[604] Ibid.

some distant uncivilized lands" feels inevitable, as he shares little in common with the members of the British elite, which puts him at a disadvantage for the successful practice of alchemy.[605]

In his attempt to gain alchemical power, Margrave establishes a "barbaric court…in a very remote part of the East, little known to Europeans…as a kind of savage royalty…[filled] with charmers and sorcerers."[606] Rather than eschewing physical aspects of the material world to focus on spiritual growth, what Atwood terms the "separation of the black, foul, and stinking fume of the Blackest Black [to form] our white and resplendent Stone [which reflects] a Light acquired by the natural force of reasoning," Margrave fully embraces the material components of the East, wearing "the Eastern dress, and always [carrying] jewels about him."[607] While Sir Philip consults with the works of a variety of learned alchemical philosophers across centuries, Margrave "researches into ancient sepulchres or temples…[studying] deeply that knowledge which the philosophers of old called 'occult'."[608] In his desperation to attain immortality, Margrave does not move beyond the East to improve upon the ancient experiences of alchemy but instead devotes all of his time to recreating them, becoming what Sir Philip describes as "an orientalized Englishman."[609] However, the novel establishes how this attempt at recreation is ultimately pointless. In a conversation between Sir Philip and Fenwick, Sir Philip asks

> When the chemist has found that the diamond affords no other substance from its combustion than pure carbonic-acid gas, and the only chemical difference between the costliest diamond and a lump of pure charcoal is a proportion of hydrogen less than 1/100000 part of the weight of the substance, can the chemist make you a diamond?[610]

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605 Ibid., 41.
606 Ibid., 39.
607 Atwood, *Suggestive*, 475; Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 39.
608 Ibid.
609 Ibid., 83.
610 Ibid., 69.

Sir Philip's point is that studying the physical qualities of base elements offers little insight into how to recreate the final product. Margrave is the misguided chemist, studying the forgotten past and dressing like the "superstitious" magicians who in turn mimic a royal court around him.[611] In this regard, Margrave's "court" is almost comedic, a series of non-white men pretending to be like the white man pretending to be like them. Lacking an aristocratic education and culture, Margrave creates the feedback loop that Mayhew predicted, trapping himself in a cyclical environment that prevents him or those around him from progressing. Any of the insights that Haroun's incomplete teachings may offer are lost in a series of false recreations and over-reliance on the aesthetics and culture of the "savage" and "superstitious" East.[612]

Margrave's Environment

The extent of Margrave's reliance on the East is demonstrated by the degree to which he continues to act as "an orientalized Englishman" after returning to Britain.[613] While no longer dressing in elaborate robes or carrying precious jewels, he does surround himself with a "train of outlandish attendants," who are characterized by an emphasis on their physical darkness, their untrustworthiness, and their general lack of individual identity.[614] None of the seven "swarthy attendants" ever speak or are given names, instead milling around Margrave's encampment threateningly, "as bloodhounds to the hunter who has only to show them their prey."[615] They meld into the shadows, "human forms dimly seen by the glinting moonlight through the gaps in the foliage."[616] Even Ayesha, one of the two members of Margrave's retinue given a name, is

[611] Ibid., 39.
[612] Ibid.
[613] Ibid., 83.
[614] Ibid., 165-6.
[615] Ibid., 184; Ibid., 182.
[616] Ibid.

barely characterized, her appearance lost "in the loose folds of a black mantle, [with] the features of her face…hidden by a black veil" so that she appears less like a woman and more like a "long dark shadow…cast upon the turf in the vague figure of a woman."[617] When Fenwick questions why Margrave pursues him to assist in the alchemical ritual he hopes will grant him immortality, rather than simply relying on those "who doubtless are slaves to [his] orders," Margrave laughs.[618] He explains that "the task enjoined to them would be to prevent such unscrupulous knaves from stealing the gold," having lived among the dark-skinned Arabians and learned first-hand that they are equally likely to rob and abandon their master in the desert "as the living leave the dead whom the Plague has claimed for its own."[619] Despite Margrave's distrust and open disdain for them, the Eastern attendants are drawn to Margrave's power. He explains that it is only because "the boldest son of the East is more craven, perhaps, than the daintiest Sybarite of Europe" that he is able to command them.[620] The seemingly identical group of dark-skinned, duplicitous, cowardly attendants offers no evidence to the contrary. Instead, they exist as a silent confirmation of the depths of Margrave's degeneration, allowing the novel to project them as representative of the whole of the East, "the wild dwellers on the verge which Humanity guards from the Brute," whose culture Margrave seeks to replicate.[621] Margrave is thus characterized by those with whom he surrounds himself, immersed in an 'uncivilized' environment that causes him to become as racialized as they are.

The extent of the distinction between Margrave's environment and the upper-class environment that produced Sir Philip is best evidenced in the characterization of the other named

[617] Ibid., 182.
[618] Ibid., 184.
[619] Ibid.; Ibid., 168.
[620] Ibid., 184.
[621] Ibid., 191.

attendant, Juma the Strangler. Like the others in Margrave's retinue, Juma is identified by his physical darkness, with a "visage even darker than those of the Syrians or Arabs behind him."[622] He dresses in an "Oriental" style that is "a uniform ghastly white, as are the cerements of the grave," and his "long and fleshless" arms give him a "skeleton form" that allows his "footsteps [to fall] without a sound."[623] He is further associated with brutality and death through his animalistic features, such as his dark and hollow face that reminds Fenwick of "a bird of prey, -- the beak of the eagle, but the eye of the vulture."[624] Even among the other dangerous figures of Margrave's retinue, he is viewed "with detestation and terror" by the other "wild retainers."[625] This is because Juma is a member of "that murderous sect of fanatics whose existence as a community has only recently been made known to Europe."[626] While Bulwer-Lytton is not specific about the name of the sect, he does describe how they "strangle their unsuspecting victim in the firm belief that they thereby propitiate the favour of the goddess they serve," suggesting that Juma is a Thug, or a follower of Thuggee.[627] In the mid-Victorian period, Thuggee was believed to be a pan-Indian death cult whose followers would join a caravan of travelers, win their trust, and then strangle them in their sleep.

British officers in India described these murders as an ordinary part of Indian life, indicating why India and its inhabitants required the civilizing influence of Britain. In 1839, William Henry Sleeman, an officer in the employ of the British East India Company, published an account of his attempts at eradicating Thuggee from India, describing the tactics and

[622] Ibid., 182.
[623] Ibid.
[624] Ibid.
[625] Ibid., 86.
[626] Ibid.
[627] Ibid.

motivations of the cult based on the testimonies of those he captured.[628] Many of them described their actions as a form of worship to "the goddess Bhowannee [Kali]" who would "supply [them] with many victims and abundant spoil, and protect [them]."[629] Later that year, Phillip Meadows Taylor, a British administrator governing in India, published a best-selling historical novel based on Sleeman's account, emphasizing both the brutality of the murders and their supposedly occult motives. Sections of Taylor's novel regularly appeared in the popular conservative newspaper *The Weekly True Sun,* often preceded by commentary that "the *origins* of [the Thugs'] horrid rites is clearly Hindoo," framing murder as integral to the non-Christian faith.[630] This cyclical and symbiotic relationship between novels and newspapers in symptomatic of how the literary sphere, drawing from the imperial context in which existed, perpetuated ideas of race that would influence future perceptions and reports that would in turn influence future novels (and so on and so on).

Following these accounts, others published their own accounts of India as an inherently violent and occult place. In 1837, Charles Edward Trevelyan, another British officer serving in India, wrote in the *Edinburgh Review* that "the Thugs have nothing to fear from public opinion" because the Hindu majority worshipped a "long catalogue of gods and goddesses and the vices which are under the special patronage of each."[631] For Trevelyan, the whole of India was

[628] Given the questionably reliable aspect of these accounts, as well as the fact that Sleeman had a vested interest in proving the threat of the cult he was being paid to exterminate, some historians have speculated that Thuggee may not have existed at all. See Ricardo Roque and Kim Wagner, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2012); Alexander MacFie, "Thuggee: an Orientalist Construction?" *Rethinking History* 12.3 (2008): 383-397; and Kim Wagner, *Thuggee* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
[629] William Henry Sleeman, *Report on the Depredations Committed by the Thug Gangs of Upper and Central India* (Calcutta: Orphan Press, 1840), 155.
[630] Phillip Meadows Taylor, "Confessions of a Thug," *The Weekly True Sun* 8 September 1839, 6; Phillip Meadows Taylor, "Confessions of a Thug," *The Weekly True Sun* 1 September 1839, 6.
[631] Charles Edward Trevelyan, "The Thugs," *Edinburgh Review* 64 (1837), 392; Ibid., 394; Despite the Victorian insistence on Thugee's Hindu origins, some historians have argued that if Thugs did exist, they would likely have included both Muslim and Hindu members. For examples, see Radhika Singha,

complicit in upholding a system that legitimized these murders, and "if [one] were to form a graduated scale of religions, that of Christ and that of Kalee would be the opposite extremes."[632] In 1848, *The Missionary Repository for Youth*, a missionary magazine aimed at children, took the ubiquity of Thuggee even further, stating that while "men in England go to their shops, or their counting houses, or to their fields, the Thugs in India go out, day by day to rob and to murder."[633] Thus Thugs and the Eastern countries that tolerated their existence acted as the cultural opposites of Britain, as conniving and murderous thieves, where British people were upright and industrious. The inclusion of Juma, a member of this group, within Margrave's entourage reveals how far the alchemist has strayed from the civilized environment of Britain.

As demonstrated above, and summarized by Nancy Stepan, mid-Victorian conceptions of race maintained that Margrave's immersion in this environment would inevitably alter his mental and moral character, the internal characteristics used to categorize one's position along the racial hierarchy.[634] In the novel, this process is exacerbated by Margrave's misuse of alchemy. Rather than becoming more like Sir Philip or other members of the British upper class, Margrave loses his soul in practicing alchemy due to his selfishness and recklessness that were intensified by the environment he created. This is demonstrated to Fenwick by Sir Philip, who shows him "three separate emanations of light, -- the one of a pale red hue, the second of a pale azure, the third a silvery spark" within the lower-class alchemist.[635] These three lights are explained as representations of mankind's three states of existence. The red, which "undulated from the brain

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"'Providential' Circumstances," *Modern Asian Studies* 12.1 (1993), 83-146; Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Writing India 1757-1990: The Literature of British India* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); and Mike Dash, *Thug* (London: Granta Books, 2005).
632 Trevelyan, "Thugs," 394.
633 "The Thugs," *The Missionary Repository for Youth* 12.98 (1848), 99.
634 Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science* (New York: Archon, 1982)
635 Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 65.

along the arteries, the veins, the nerves," represents animal life and physical wellbeing; the blue, "crossing and uniting with the red, but in a separate and distinct ray," embodies the intellect, guiding and directing the physical being while remaining distinct from it; and the silver, "undisturbed and undarkened by the sins which have left such trace and such ravage in the world of the mind," represents the presence of the soul, omnipresent yet removed from the physical impact of the world.[636] Sir Philip explains that alchemy ideally allows the practitioner to ascend through these forms, surpassing the carnal and the mental for the spiritual as "the water that flows before your gaze may stop consolidated into ice or ascend into air as a vapour."[637]

Sir Philip's explanation echoes the assertion put forward by Atwood that within each individual there is an essence "which appears under the form of Water, [embodying] three different substances, three different principles of bodies…the spirit, the soul and the body; and though they appear…perfectly united together," as the three lights in Bulwer-Lytton's novel are, "there still wants much of their being so."[638] According to the teachings of spiritual alchemy, the different principles must be separated from one another to perfect the soul. However, Margrave has not developed the proper approach to alchemy, and so his practice of alchemy goes awry. Fenwick watches as "all of thought, of passion, of desire, through which the azure light poured its restless flow, [surge] up round the starry spark, as in siege," only to have the silver light suddenly rise into space and vanish in order to escape the onslaught, creating a void "where my soul had recognized the presence of soul."[639] As a result, the other lights grow "even more vivid in certain organs useful to the conservation of existence, as in those organs [Fenwick] had

[636] Ibid., 66.
[637] Ibid., 63.
[638] Atwood, *Suggestive*, 477.
[639] Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 66.

observed it more vivid among some of the inferior animals than it is in man."[640] Margrave's immersion in the environment of non-white and lower-class cultures has caused him to fail in his attempt at alchemy. He had "not properly learned the art" and so was subject to "its dangers."[641] Within the novel, these dangers are realized as degenerative, reducing him to a state of inferiority that takes on the racialized characteristics examined in the next section.

Margrave's Racialization

Margrave's degeneration through alchemy does not involve a physical change of race, either through a darkening of his skin or a change to his skull shape. Rather than physically altering him, Margrave's practice of alchemy causes him to adopt traits associated with beasts and the non-white races who were portrayed as bestial "-- secretiveness, destructiveness, and the ready perception of things immediate to the wants of the day."[642] By making racialized comparisons between Margrave's degenerative state and the animalistic "savages" he now resembles, the novel reiterates the similarity between the white members of the lower class and non-white races, highlighting their failure to behave like Atwood's ideal alchemists, the white "sons of science."[643]

The most visible characteristics of Margrave's alchemical transformation is the enhancement of what Fenwick deems his "animal organization," an increased vitality that is a product of his alchemical misfire and the subsequent strengthening of the red light that is present in lower lifeforms "from the elephant to the moth, from the bird in which brain was the largest to

[640] Ibid., 67.
[641] Ibid., 134.
[642] Ibid., 67.
[643] Atwood, *Suggestive*, 400.

the hybrid in which life seemed to live as in plants."[644] The only comparison Fenwick can think of is "the Indian savages [who] must have a health as perfect as [Margrave's]; a nervous system as fine,—witness their marvellous accuracy of ear, of eye, of scent, probably also of touch."[645] Both Margrave and the "savages" share the enhanced senses present in animals, all of them united by an abundance of vital energy.

The comparison of an alchemically-altered Margrave to an animal is extended to his lack of empathy for those around him, making him "as callous to the sufferings of another as a deer who deserts and butts from him a wounded comrade."[646] At first, Fenwick believes this callousness to be the result of "a nature as gentle as it is simple," as evidenced by the time Margrave allows a handicapped boy to topple from his shoulders after a high jump, leaving the howling child where he has fallen without "even stopping to lift up the boy, or examine what the hurt was" before running off to play with the other children.[647] The act of abandoning an injured and wailing child barely registers as offensive to Margrave, as he is too caught up in the pursuit of immediate pleasure. Fenwick is scandalized, but Margrave is so sweet, "so winning, that disgust insensibly melted into that sort of forgiveness one accords (let me repeat the illustration) to the deer that forsakes its comrade. The poor thing knows no better."[648] He lacks the emotional capacity to care for those around him, making him uncaring when presented with the pain of others. However, Margrave's association with Juma the Strangler later in the novel reveals his more dangerous aspects, demonstrating that Margrave is not as simple-minded as a deer, but "is more hostile to mankind than the wolf is to the sheepfold."[649] By becoming more like the non-

[644] Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 46; Ibid., 66.
[645] Ibid., 46.
[646] Ibid., 49.
[647] Ibid.
[648] Ibid.
[649] Ibid., 64.

white races with whom he associates through alchemy, Margrave becomes increasingly animalistic and threatening, escalating callousness to cold-blooded murderousness.

This cold-bloodedness is most apparent when the novel associates Margrave with snakes, an animal invoked by Atwood when she states that those less likely to perform alchemy correctly are akin to "the Serpent, born of the Slime of the earth."[650] In Atwood's text, the snake represents the negative aspects of oneself that must be destroyed to properly practice alchemy, so Margrave's association with snakes is another indication of his alchemical degeneration, demonstrating how he and the non-white figures who surround him are inferior. This association is repeated throughout the novel as Margrave murmurs a series of "barbaric chants," which he explains are the songs "by which the serpent-charmer charms the serpent," which he learned while studying alchemy in the East.[651] These songs are accompanied by a particular look in his eyes, a "sinister, wrathful, [and] menacing" look that gives him the appearance of having "serpent eyes."[652] This hint at Margrave's dangerously corrupted state is more heavily foreshadowed just before he murders Sir Philip in the wing of a museum populated by displays of exotic Eastern animals. Upon entering, Margrave throws "himself on a seat just under the great anaconda" before being overpowered by the more talented alchemist's power.[653] As British herpetologist Frank Wall notes, early descriptions of anacondas in Ceylon, which influenced Victorian scientific classification and populated adventure fiction, bear little resemblance to the South American snake. Wall suggests that perhaps the original descriptions were instead of a python, and that the name anaconda stems from the Sinhalese or Tamil word *anai-kondra* or

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[650] Atwood, *Suggestive*, 479.
[651] Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 48; Ibid., 59.
[652] Ibid., 59; Ibid., 159.
[653] Ibid., 64.

'elephant killer.'[654] This suggestion not only explains why the anaconda would be housed with the other animals of the East but also foreshadows the murder of Sir Philip, who emerges from behind "the huge bulk of the dead elephant."[655] Margrave is also compared to a snake when he later attempts to kill Fenwick, who confesses that were it not for his own rage and resolution to survive, he "could no more have coped with [Margrave] than the bison can cope with the boa."[656] Thus, the association of Margrave with snakes accentuates the murderous state to which he is reduced by his practice of Eastern alchemy, a state that is common among the non-white people with whom he associates and within the alchemy they practice.

The comparisons between the degenerated Margrave, non-white races, and animals are most apparent in his debate with Fenwick regarding the division of 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' races. During this debate, the animalistic aspects of Margrave's character that have been created by his pursuit of alchemy serve to undercut any of the intellectual elements of his argument. For example, his voice is described as being "as musical and fresh as a sky lark's warble," but his sentences are fragmentary and "very slightly linked together."[657] This rushed and sporadic style of speech accentuates the frantic and bestial manner in which he paces across the room, moving "with the undulating restlessness of some wild animal in the confines of its den."[658] The result is that Margrave comes across as less of a cultured scholar imparting philosophical knowledge and more of a dangerous animal that threatens to harm anyone who comes too close. Moving the conversation outside, Margrave challenges Fenwick to consider "what is civilization? Those words were uttered by men who founded empires when Europe was not civilized," perhaps

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[654] Frank Wall, *Ophidia Taprobanica* (Colombo, Ceylon: Government Press, 1921), 48.
[655] Bulwer-Lytton, *Strange*, 65.
[656] Ibid., 125.
[657] Ibid., 44.
[658] Ibid.

alluding to a larger argument about the benefits of the Eastern and supposedly less-civilized culture from which he learned alchemy, a pursuit that is both helpful to and absent from Britain.[659] Before he can formulate his argument, or even wait for Fenwick to respond, he gets distracted and springs up a tree with "a panther-like bound" after a squirrel, his primal instincts overriding his attempts at intellectual discourse. Margrave is unable to carry on a debate about civilization as Fenwick's equal, instead adopting the demeanor "of a savage" as he scampers up a tree, embodying the animalistic qualities that were believed to be characteristic of the lower class and of non-white races. [660] The danger of this state is emphasized as Margrave, bitten by the squirrel he has just seized, wrings its neck, dashes it to the ground, and with "every feature quivering with rage, [stamps] his foot on his victim again and again!"[661]

Lacking an aristocratic culture, education and environment, Margrave's attempts at alchemy create a bestial villain who reflects the dangerous characteristics of the non-white people with whom he surrounds himself. The novel portrays these negative characteristics as the consequence of allowing those outside the occult elite access to alchemy. The novel implies that, like Margrave, non-elite alchemists would be seduced by the promise of riches and immortality, murdering those who would oppose them and degenerating further down the racial hierarchy rather than preserving and promoting a civilized society. Ultimately, the result of these attempts at alchemy from those other than the occult elite are demonstrated to be a failure. Margrave is crushed by a stampede of wild beasts startled by his alchemical experiments in the Australian outback, his death signaled by a cry "more wild than their own savage blare, [that pierces] the

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[659] Ibid., 45.
[660] Ibid.
[661] Ibid.

reek through which the Brute Hurricane [sweeps]," a final warning to any who would seek to follow in his footsteps unprepared.[662]

Race

One of the most prominent changes in scientific discussions of race toward the end of the nineteenth century was the hardening of racial rhetoric due to belief in heritable characteristics unique to each race. Douglas Lorimer has produced a wide body of research that shows a change from an emphasis in the 1840s and 1850s on the dangerous plasticity of race where physical and cultural characteristics of an environment were presented by scientific societies as primary factors in determining racial features to later theories that emphasized the presence of inherent qualities which allowed for the classification of races.[663] Lorimer, like Michael Biddiss, indicates that the origin of this concept of inherent racial qualities was within theories of polygenesis, the belief that the different races of the world had different ancestors and thus had developed separately.[664] As early as 1850, racial scientist Robert Knox argued in favor of polygenesis, writing "that human character, individual and national, is traceable solely to the nature of that race to which the individual or nation belongs."[665] For Knox, race was "everything," dictating "the physical character and constitution of man, his mental and corporeal attributes," and thus governing the development of history, morality, and individual character.[666] Within Knox's system, races that enjoyed economic and imperial success were able to do so on the basis of

[662] Ibid., 190.
[663] See Douglas Lorimer, "Reconstructing Victorian Racial Discourse," *Black Victoriana*, ed. Gretchen Gerzina (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 187-207; *Colour, Class and the Victorians* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978); and "Theoretical Racism in Late-Victorian Anthropology," *Victorian Studies* 31.3 (1988): 405-30.
[664] Michael Biddiss, "The Politics of Anatomy," *The History of Medicine* 69.1 (1976): 245-50.
[665] Robert Knox, *The Races of Men* (London: Henry Renshaw, 1850), v.
[666] Ibid., 1-2.

inherent biological superiority. These views were later supported by his student James Hunt, founder of the Anthropological Society, who continued to espouse Knox's views of race throughout the 1860s. Polygenesis proved unpopular among Victorian scientific thinkers, particularly due to its reliance on demonstrably false propositions, including Knox's declaration that "experimental science [among Oriental civilizations] did not exist," and while "their energy is considerable…the Arab race [has] made no progress, never in reality improved," despite the numerous scientific texts that could trace a clear path back to ancient Arabia.[667] Another example is Hunt's assertion that "nowhere does there exist a permanent hybrid Euro African race," which was later cited by Paul Broca, another member of the Anthropological Society who classified people of mixed race as "infertile mongrels…produced by interbreeding," when in fact people of mixed race continued to exist and have children.[668] Despite these examples, the belief in heritable characteristics unique to each race that could determine a person's mental, physical, and moral outlook remained popular, as evidenced by the writings of men who directly engaged with scientific discussions in the 1870s and 1880s.

In 1870, ethnographer John Lubbock testified that while travelers were able to accurately describe the physical conditions that existed outside of Britain, they would be unable to accurately comment on how the indigenous peoples that lived there thought because "the whole mental condition of a savage is so different from ours that it is often very difficult to understand

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[667] Ibid., 518.

[668] James Hunt, "Introductory Address on the Study of Anthropology," *The Anthropological Review* 1.1 (1863): 3; Paul Broca, *On the Phenomena of Hybridity in the Genus Homo* (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1864), x; For a greater discussion on the place of Knox, Hunt, and polygenesis in Victorian conceptions of race, see Douglas Lorimer, "Science and Secularization of Victorian Images of Race," *Victorian Science in Context*, ed. Bernard Lightman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997): 212-30.

the motives by which he is influenced."[669] In 1871, Professor William H. Flower urged the British Association not to fall victim to "a favorite English theory…that all men are morally and intellectually alike."[670] Flower would reiterate this idea in 1884 in his capacity as the president of the Anthropological Institute, a union of the Anthropological and Ethnological Societies, urging "the statesman who would govern successfully not to look upon human nature in the abstract and endeavor to apply universal rules, but to consider the special moral, intellectual, and social capabilities, wants, and aspirations of each particular race with which he has to deal."[671] He stressed that such a consideration was necessary because "it is not only that their education, training, and circumstances are dissimilar, but that their very mental constitution is totally distinct."[672] This distinction between races allowed for a system of categorization to arise.

Physical features were no longer believed to rapidly respond to environmental changes and were instead used to classify the different races of mankind. While skin color served as the primary factor of determining racial groups, George Stocking has explained how racial theorists in the latter half of the century argued that other physical features were deterministic of inherent racial characteristics, including head size and facial shape.[673] This element of determinism is most evident in Flower's 1884 presidential address to the Anthropological Institute, where he describes how anthropology's primary aim is "the discrimination and description of race

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[669] John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man* (London: Longman, Greens and Co., 1870), 3.
[670] William H. Flower, "Address to the Department of Anthropology of the British Association," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 2 (1881): 185.
[671] William H. Flower, "President's Address on the Aims and Prospects of Anthropology," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 13 (1884): 493.
[672] Ibid.
[673] George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology,* (New York: Macmillan, 1987); For more on the emergence of skin color as racial identifier, see Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

characteristics."[674] These characteristics include physical features, including "stature, proportions of different parts of the body, constitution, complexion, features, colour and character of the hair, form of the skull and other bones," as well as "mental and moral characters…language…and social customs."[675] While Flower clarifies that these more vaguely defined characteristics are "unquestionably below physical characteristics," in terms of importance, their inclusion is significant, demonstrating that such features were believed to be inherent in race and implying the "mental and moral characters" could be determined by examining external features and vice versa. Flower makes this explicit when he writes that "the physical characteristics of race, so strongly worked in many cases, are probably always associated with equally or more diverse characteristics of temper and intellect."[676] The physical distinctions of race were thus inexorably linked with racial typology.

Beyond the Anthropological Institute, others similarly argued that racial heritage determined internal characteristics. In 1878, author Samuel Butler criticized Charles Darwin's accounts of evolutionary theory because he felt they placed too much emphasis on environmental factors to explain "the main cause of the development of the various phases either of structure or instinct which we see…in the human race."[677] Citing Darwin's own argument that "the kind of variation [within a species] which ensues [depends] in most cases in a far higher degree on the nature or constitution of the being, than on the nature of the changed condition," Butler maintained that "the history of a man prior to his birth is more important as far as his success or failure goes than his surroundings after birth, important though they may be."[678] For Butler, the

[674] Flower, "President's," 491.
[675] Ibid., 491-2.
[676] Ibid., 492.
[677] Samuel Butler, *Life and Habit* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1911; originally 1878), 248.
[678] Ibid., 249.

inheritance of race, transmitted by one's ancestors, formed "an elaborate but unconscious performance [of] actions, thoughts, and needs…that carry with them a presumption of infinite practice [and] form the whole history and development of the embryo."[679] In 1884, Francis Galton, Darwin's half-cousin and founder of the eugenics movement, also argued that "no man stands on an isolated basis, but is a prolongation of his ancestry in metaphorical sense."[680] By arguing that race is a determinant of internal character and subsequent success, racial hierarchies could be constructed.

Beasley has shown how theories of racial hierarchies in Britain were primarily published by well-educated white men who inevitably placed themselves at the top, arguing for an internal superiority that allowed for their domination.[681] For example, in 1872, essayist Walter Bagehot argued that "a village of English colonists is indisputably superior to a tribe of Australian natives who roam about them…in war…means of happiness…morals and religion…and command over the powers of nature."[682] For Bagehot, this superiority that existed "not only externally, but also internally…the civilised man is better and more equipped to rule than the barbarian."[683] Citing the evolutionary theories of biologist and naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, Bagehot claimed that the mental capabilities of non-white races represented "living records of a time when the intellect of man was not as able to adapt to the world around him," rendering them less capable of "commanding the powers of nature" than white people.[684] Racial hierarchies had already existed within scientific discourse, as evidenced by the work of eighteenth-century naturalist William Smellie, reprinted in 1885, who argued that "independently of all political institutions, nature

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[679] Ibid., 59.
[680] Francis Galton, *Records of Family Faculties* (London: Macmillan, 1884), 13.
[681] Beasley, *Victorian*
[682] Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* (Ontario: Batoche, 2011; originally 1872), 118.
[683] Ibid.
[684] Ibid., 63; Ibid., 118.

herself has formed the human species into castes and ranks. How many gradations may be traced between a stupid Huron, or a darkened Hottentot, and a profound philosopher! Here the distance is immense, but nature has occupied the whole by almost infinite shades of discrimination."[685] However, the advent of evolutionary theories provided a system of classification that represented superiority as inherent and biological. Through the end of the century, other scientific thinkers including T.H. Huxley, James Dallas, and Augustus Keane presented different classifications of race, each similarly asserting the inherent superiority of white British people as a result of evolutionary growth of races.[686] In 1877, anthropologist Augustus Lane-Fox lamented that Europeans were *so* superior that "once [non-white] race are brought into contact with European civilisation, their habits change so rapidly that the opportunity is so lost of observing them in their pristine condition," adding that since "the English race" was the most superior of all; it "has done more than any other to destroy all these races and obliterate their culture."[687] Such destruction was thus conceived of as a biological inevitability rather than a historical process. White people were thus positioned as the pinnacle of evolution, and while those from other races were seen as capable of improving should they adopt white British culture, the reverse was constructed as detrimental, resulting in the fin-de-siècle anxieties surrounding racial degeneration explored by Patrick Brantlinger.[688]

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[685] William Smellie, *The Philosophy of Natural History* (Boston: Brown, Taggard & Chase, 1885; originally 1790), 308-9.
[686] See T. H. Huxley, "On the Geographical Distribution of the Chief Modifications of Mankind," *Journal of the Ethnological Society* 2.4 (1870): 404-12; James Dallas, "On the Primary Divisions and Geographical Distribution of Mankind," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 15 (1886): 304-330; Augustus Keane, *Ethnology* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1896).
[687] Augustus Lane-Fox, "Discussion of On the Anthropology of Africa," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 6 (1877): 178.
[688] Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

These classifications were complicated by the rhetoric surrounding the British lower classes. Kenan Malik has shown that while white British people categorized themselves as superior to other races, this superiority was not extended to the lower class.[689] This distinction is also evident in an 1864 article in the conservative newspaper *The Saturday Review* that describes "the Benthal Green poor, as compared to the comfortable inhabitants in Western London, [as] a caste apart, a race of whom we know nothing, whose lives are of quite a different complexion from ours, persons with whom we have no point of contact," mirroring the language of anthropologists who struggled to articulate the ways of "the savage."[690] The article further established their similarities by noting that while the British public decry the policies in the slave-holding American states, "if five farm labourers took five seats in a railway carriage, and English gentleman filling the sixth would find it hard to stand the smell, however benevolent and pious he might be," adding that "if the poor really came in the 'thronging numbers' [to] the service of the English Church, which are invited, the building would reek with a stifling vapour."[691] Thus, the poor are constructed as possessing the same negative characteristics that Black slaves were believed to possess, an argument that subtly attempts to both excuse the conditions of slavery and designate the poor as equally deserving of those conditions. Like other arguments which highlight the inherent "incapability of the African to govern," the article notes that "distinctions and separations, like those of the English classes, which always endure, which last from the cradle to the grave…offer a very firm parallel to the separation of the slaves from the whites," representing the isolation of the poor as a logical conclusion due to an inherent lack of some undefined quality.[692] "The English poor man or child," the article concludes, "is

[689] Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race* (New York: NYU Press, 1996).
[690] "Slaves and Labourers," *The Saturday Review*, 16 January 1864, 71.
[691] Ibid.
[692] Ibid.

expected always to remember that condition in which God has placed him, exactly as a negro is expected to remember the skin that God has given him. The relation in both instances is that of perpetual superior to perpetual inferior, of chief to dependant, and no amount of kindness is suffered to alter this relation."[693]

While few commenters explicitly stated that the lower classes were a distinct race from the upper classes, many used language similar to *The Saturday Review*'s equivalence between the poor and non-white races, portraying their social position as an inherent characteristic. In an 1865 article for *Macmillan's Magazine*, Galton remarks that other than "steady labour, tameness of disposition, and prolonged development, I know of no point of difference that very markedly distinguishes the nature of the lower classes of civilized man from that of barbarians."[694] He then notes that under close examination, all three distinguishing features are generally lacking among the lower classes in Britain, seeming "to have been a mere gloss thrown by education over a barbarous nature," which stands in sharp contrast to "the intellectual and moral grandeur of nature that [is found] in aristocratical families."[695] Following the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica in 1865, an article in *The Saturday Review* arguing against the image of inherently violent (as opposed to inherently lazy) Black people, maintained that "the negro…is neither ferociously cruel nor habitually malignant. He often does cruel and barbarous things; but then so do our draymen and hackney-coachmen and grooms and farm-servants through want of either thought or power of thought."[696] Notably, the equivalence between the actions of Black people

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[693] Ibid.
[694] Francis Galton, "Hereditary Talent and Character," *Macmillan's Magazine* 12 (1865): 326.
[695] Ibid.
[696] "The Negro Controversy," *The Saturday Review*, 13 October 1866, 447.

and white people only extends to the professions of the lower class, who possess the same "want of either thought or power of thought" that the writer assigns to the rebels in the West Indies.[697]

By the end of the century, the rhetoric was even more explicit as poor neighborhoods were considered analogous to the mysterious jungles of Africa. In 1883, journalist George Sims published a collection of his articles documenting the conditions of the British poor, describing them as "the wild races which inhabit…a dark continent that is within easy walking distance of the General Post Office," whom he hoped would elicit the sympathy of the reading public "as easily as other savage tribes."[698] In 1890, Salvation Army founder William Booth similarly referred to the poor neighborhoods throughout England as comprising "darkest England," a parallel to "darkest Africa."[699] Declaring that darkest England contained "similar horrors…to those in the Equatorial Forest," and that "the more the mind dwells upon the subject, the closer the analogy appears," Booth identified the "two tribes of savages," that comprised the lower classes, "the human baboon and the handsome dwarf who will not speak lest it impede him in his task…the vicious, lazy lout and the toiling slave," and questioned if "the lot of the negress in the Equatorial Forest, is not…so very much worse than that of many a pretty orphan girl in our Christian capitol?"[700] The lower classes were conceived of as being so distinct from the upper classes, that they were practically another race, sharing more in common with the supposed savages of Africa than the affluent whites of Britain. This idea is best summarized by French psychologist Gustav LeBon's 1894 argument that "the lowest strata of the European societies is homologous with the primitive man," and that given enough time "the superior grades of a

[697] Ibid.
[698] George Sims, *How the Poor Live* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1889; originally 1883), 1.
[699] William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1890), 11.
[700] Ibid. 12-13.

population will be separated from the inferior grades by a distance as great as that which separates the white man from the negro."[701]

Coda: Racialization of Alchemy in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Just as the racialization of the alchemist Margrave in Bulwer-Lytton's *A Strange Story* was influenced by the notions of race and class being discussed within Bulwer-Lytton's occult circle, I argue that the racialized descriptions of Hyde in Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* reflect the hardening of racial rhetoric that occurred alongside evolutionary theories of race and class within the scientific circles with which Stevenson was closely associated. I assert that, given Hyde's portrayal as a representation of the negative aspects within Jekyll, Hyde is not a degenerative transformation of Jekyll in the way that Margrave's bestial personality is, but is an alchemical revelation of Jekyll's similarity to non-white races from whom white men of science sought to distance themselves. In other words, civilized white men like Jekyll do not degenerate to become primitive like Hyde; they are equally primitive from the start, and the failure to recognize and accept this idea can only result in disaster.

This section begins by exploring how Jekyll's transformation into Hyde is similar to Margrave's alchemical degeneration. As other scholars have already established, notably Robert Mighall and Kelly Hurley, Hyde acts as racialized product of Dr. Jekyll's use of alchemical science, evidenced by the focus on his physical and moral darkness, his being compared to animals, the danger he poses to the white British characters, and his eventual destruction.[702] I

[701] Gustav LeBon, *The Psychology of Peoples* (New York: G. E. Stechart, 1912; originally 1894), 29; Ibid. 43.
[702] Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

extend their arguments to show how this racialization is further developed by Hyde's residence among the poor members of the racialized lower class, who are portrayed as more similar to non-white races than the white wealthy scientists and lawyers who otherwise populate the novella. Then go on to demonstrate that Hyde's characteristics are defined as inherent, reflecting the ways in which the construction of race changed in the 1870s and 1880s to focus on the construction of heritable external and internal characteristics. I contend that Jekyll's attempt to use alchemy to separate himself from Hyde reflects the attempts of the wealthy upper class in Victorian England to use scientific classifications to separate themselves from the non-white and poor, believing they were inherently superior. Consequently, Jekyll's suicide is a result of his failure to purge himself of the racialized Hyde through his use of alchemy as well as his inability to accept that Hyde is a part of himself.

It should be noted throughout this final section of the chapter that while Bulwer-Lytton's text is explicit and deliberate in its sustained examination of the effects of practicing alchemy, Stevenson's novella is much more implicit and allusive. The imbuing of a mysterious power into an elixir to enhance the soul through a process dismissed by material scientists is too similar to ignore, but Stevenson does not directly engage with the occult significance of this "mystical and transcendental" process the way that Bulwer-Lytton does.[703]

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[703] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 52; This hesitancy to explicitly name alchemy may be a result of Stevenson's engagement in scientific societies like the Savile Club, which were dismissive of "unscientific" occult ideas. For more on Stevenson's scientific connections, see James Sully, *My Life and Friends* (London: T. Fischer Unwin, 1897); and Robert Louis Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895)

Similarities to *A Strange Story*

Dr. Jekyll's degeneration into the primitive Mr. Hyde has been well analyzed by numerous scholars, including Stephen Arata who has argued that Hyde represents the "decline of authorship" into professionalism, and Christine Ferguson, who similarly characterizes the novella as one in which "a seemingly respectable chemist degenerates into an inhuman troglodyte through the air of an unstable, pseudo-alchemical formula," imparting to Stevenson's readers that "occult science could be a distinctly hazardous enterprise, one best left to non-practising armchair eccentrics or indeed avoided entirely if the reputability and safety of the new scientific disciplines were to be maintained."[704] This reading is precisely the message I argue is at the core of Bulwer-Lytton's novel, cautioning against pursuing alchemy for fear of becoming too similar to non-white races. Lanyon, the other scientist in the novella, specifically derides Jekyll for becoming "too fanciful" in his pursuit of "such unscientific balderdash" as alchemy rather than material science.[705] As Lanyon states, it is only when Jekyll began to pursue alchemy that "he began to go wrong, wrong in mind," which presumably would not have happened if he restricted himself to the typical work of a white wealthy scientist. Instead, Jekyll immerses himself in his occult studies, brews the mysterious potion that transforms him into the villainous Hyde, and loses control of himself. This loss of control similarly results in the alchemist's degeneration into a dark, animalistic figure who is a threat to the white citizens of Britain. As Ilaria Sborgi has demonstrated, Hyde's physical appearance has been the focus of intense scholarship, particularly the novella's consistent emphasis on his physical darkness, a darkness

[704] Stephen Arata, "The Sedulous Ape," *Criticism* 37.2 (1995): 233; Christine Ferguson, "Occult Sciences," *The Routledge Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science*, ed. John Holmes and Sharon Ruston (London: Routledge, 2017), 425.
[705] Ibid., 12.

that becomes linked with his primitive appearance.[706] Jekyll's account of waking up as Hyde describes his horror upon looking at his hand to find it "lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor, and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair," a stark contrast to its usual "large, firm, white and comely" appearance.[707] Without Utterson's clarification that Hyde is "pale and dwarfish," a reader might assume that the "dusky" Hyde is a creature of an entirely separate race from the orderly, white Jekyll.[708]

Like Margrave, Hyde is unwelcome among the wealthy elites, instead taking up residence among the lower classes in "the dismal quarter of Soho" populated by "ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities" that resembles "a district of some city in a nightmare."[709] While predating the rhetoric of 'darkest England,' Hyde's house in Soho is situated in exactly the type of poor neighborhood that would come to be cited as evidence that the lower class existed as a distinct group from the upper class, and the poor who litter the dingy streets of Soho are positioned as the people among whom Hyde belongs, united through a common moral or mental deficiency, just as Margrave is positioned as belonging among and representative of the dark-skinned occult practitioners with whom he holds court. To observe Hyde is to observe the other members of the lower class and vice versa.

Differentiation

Despite these similarities, there are a few key differences between the two texts that indicate how narratives of race shifted between their dates of publication. Notably, "Henry Jekyll, M.D.,

[706] Ilaria Sborgi, "Stevenson's Unfinished Autopsy of the Other," in *Robert Louis Stevenson*, eds. Richard Ambrosini and Richard Dury (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 145-57
[707] Ibid., 58.
[708] Ibid., 15.
[709] Ibid., 22.

D.C.L., L.L.D. F.R.S., &c." is a clear representation of the rich white Victorian scientist who would have made the ideal candidate to study and practice Bulwer-Lytton's alchemy.[710] So his degeneration from a "large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty," regarded by his friends as possessing "every mark of capacity and kindness," into a "particularly small and particularly wicked-looking" man who fills others with a sense of "something displeasing, something downright detestable" prompts further investigation.[711]

Apart from his darkened complexion, Hyde's most notable characteristic is an intangible wrongness, made evident by the inability of onlookers to describe exactly what is so unsettling about Hyde. Utterson's friend describes how Hyde "must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong sense of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way."[712] Utterson echoes this sentiment when he encounters Hyde himself, remarking on how Hyde "gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation."[713] This sense of deformity is closely linked with Hyde's internal character, marked by "a change in the temper of [his] thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation," and an "ape-like fury."[714] This animalistic character, notable in his "ape-like tricks" and "his ape-like spite," is the most explicit connection to evolutionary theories of race within the novel, drawing a close association between Hyde's viciousness, his disregard for the trappings of civilization, and his internal character in a way that "seems hardly human!"[715] This unsettlingly animalistic self is the clearest delineation between Hyde and the affluent white characters because, as Flower argues, "even when the physical

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[710] Ibid., 11.
[711] Ibid., 18; Ibid., 9.
[712] Stevenson, *Strange*, 9.
[713] Ibid., 15.
[714] Stevenson, *Strange*, 62; Ibid., 15.
[715] Ibid., 16.

divergence [between races] are weakly shown…the mental and moral characteristics are still most strongly marked."[716] Furthermore, as Jekyll observes, this "malign and villainous" character exists "inherently" within Hyde, rendering him "bestial" in a way that frightens Jekyll and poses a distinct threat to other wealthy white men like Carew, necessitating Hyde's destruction just as it necessitated Margrave's.[717]

Because these characteristics are inherent in Hyde, they are also inherent in Jekyll. When he first recognizes "the primitive duality of man," the unjust pleasure-seeker conjoined with his virtuous twin, Jekyll realizes that "of the two natures that contended in the fields of [his] consciousness, even if [he] could rightly be said to be either, it was only because [he] was radically both."[718] Hyde is just as much a part of the wealthy and sophisticated Jekyll as he is a member of the racialized lower class. Jekyll acknowledges this explicitly when he first transforms, looking in a mirror and becoming "conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was [Jekyll]. It seemed natural and human."[719]

While Margrave's greatest mistake is undertaking alchemy without the proper training, Jekyll is doomed from the start. When Hyde begins to manifest without Jekyll's intention, Jekyll seeks out purified quantities of the salt that comprises the key ingredient of his potion, repeatedly writing to his suppliers that their samples are "impure and useless," as they no longer allow him to transform back into Jekyll.[720] Jekyll mistakenly believes the form of the rich white scientist to be the purified one, divested of the influences of Hyde in the same way that rich white men were presented in Victorian science as being free from the negative characteristics they argued were

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[716] Flower, "Aims," 492.
[717] Ibid., 57.
[718] Ibid., 53.
[719] Ibid., 55.
[720] Ibid., 37.

inherent in non-white races. He realizes too late that his "first supply [of the salt] was impure, and that it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught."[721] Jekyll is unable to separate himself from the animalistic impulses that Hyde embodies, and even his initial conception of a dichotomy of savagery and civilization is ultimately proven incorrect. Without committing to a specific number, Jekyll concludes that "man [is] a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens," each of which influences his ultimate form.[722] It is not that alchemy causes Jekyll to transform or degenerate due to the racializing influence of the occult; it is that those racialized elements were always within him, and alchemy simply revealed them. It is only the racialized quest for purity and separation that produces the inescapable viciousness of Hyde to consume Jekyll.

In contrast to the sophisticated Jekyll, Hyde exhibits common traits of the racialized practitioner of the occult, including his physical darkness, his animalistic qualities, and the threat he poses to the white British people around him. *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* does not position alchemy as a dangerous force that results in the degeneration of white men who become more like non-white races in the way that *A Strange Story* by Bulwer-Lytton does. Instead, alchemy is used in an attempt to separate the racialized qualities present in all men in the belief that wealthy white people are supposed to be superior to and separate from those qualities, which is consistent with the ideas about race at the time the book was written. Jekyll's failure demonstrates the failure of these ideas, as Hyde is not a degenerate form of Jekyll but a reminder

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[721] Ibid., 66.
[722] Ibid., 53; Stevenson presents a similar argument in his essays "The Manse" and "Pastoral," as well as in his memoirs written in the South Seas; For more on Stevenson's views of racial equivalence in the South Pacific, see Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Charles Baxter, 9 May 1889, in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, eds. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mahew, 8 vols (New York: Yale University Press, 1995), 6:295; Fanny Stevenson, Letter to Sidney Colvin, 7 December 1888, in *Letters*, 6:229; John Marc Harris, "Folklore and Imperialism," *ELT* 46.4 (2003): 382-99; Roslyn Jolly, *Robert Louis Stevenson in the Pacific* (London: Routledge, 2009).

that, while they may pretend otherwise, rich white scientific men are neither superior to nor separate from those they denigrate.

Ultimately, Jekyll is unable to accept that Hyde is a part of himself, referring to the manifestation of his inner primitive self in the third person and admitting that "I cannot say I."[723] He cannot live with the knowledge that he shares so much in common with the racialized poor with whom Hyde associates, with the responsibility for the crimes he committed under the "thick cloak…of Edward Hyde," or with the rejection from his wealthy friends who similarly refuse to acknowledge any recognition of the ape-like creature as present within themselves.[724] Utterson discovers his friend in Hyde's form, a "crushed phial in the hand and the strong smell of kernels that hung upon the air" indicating his suicide.[725] Like other racialized practitioners of the occult, Hyde is eliminated so that he can pose no greater threat to the white citizens of London than he already has. Jekyll's suicide upon failing to achieve separation from the racialized Hyde emphasizes the inability of the members of that class to accept that they also possess the characteristics constructed as inherent in those they found strange.

[723] Stevenson, *Strange*, 63.
[724] Ibid., 55.
[725] Ibid., 41.

Chapter 4: Conjuring Race

This chapter examines literary representations of conjurors: specifically, white performers who adopted non-white occult personas to profit from that portrayal. I investigate the ways in which these performers perpetuate the racialization of the occult, particularly in Elizabeth Gaskell's 1853 novel *Cranford* and Louis Zangwill's 1899 novel *Cleo the Magnificent.* By portraying occult personas that are explicitly fabricated by the conjurors, these novels demonstrate that occult practitioners are racialized using similar methods described in the previous chapters of this thesis that emphasize their dark features; depict them as representative of the exotic East; and portray them as a threat provoking anxiety in the other white characters which must be removed. The fact that these personas are fabrications is not made explicit to their respective audiences, thus they perform the same function for both the readers and the white characters in the novels as occult characters examined in previous chapters. I argue that the framing of each conjuror's choice to not disclose the performativity of their personas is significant because the perceived threat they pose and the anxieties they provoke extend from others believing that they are authentically non-white. Furthermore, I contend that the differing levels of criticism directed at the performers by the novels is reflective of the social context in which they were published. *Cranford*'s mild criticism for a performer who fails to disclose the performativity of his persona and its focus on an audience that should know better than to believe in the powers of a racialized occult performer suggest that the threat and associated anxieties surrounding these performers were in their infancy. They would become more predominant later in the century. *Cleo the Magnificent*'s intensified criticism for the non-disclosing performer, emphasizing her predation on someone who is infatuated with the occult through her self-styled racialization, demonstrates a concern that the intended audience for a performance of an occult persona is not able to see the

truth. I argue that the escalated intensity of these criticisms is influenced by different anxieties present at the time of each text's publication. For example, the anxieties about Brunoni's potential criminality or murderousness, which spark the panic in Cranford, reflect the generalized anxieties that were associated with all non-white practitioners of the occult in the 1850s, and those anxieties vanish once Brown's whiteness is revealed. The fin-de-siècle anxieties regarding the threat of imperial collapse, the possibility of racial degeneration, and the increased number of white performers adopting seemingly authentic non-white personas intensify and complicate the criticism of Cleo in Zangwill's novel. Cleo presents two different threats to the narrator: first as a beguiling non-white practitioner of the occult and then as a white woman purposefully exploiting the perceptions of the racialized occult for her own gain. Despite the differences in their criticism, both novels ultimately suggest a dismissal of the non-white occult in favor of engagement with middle-class values of community and commerce.

The examination of these elements in the novels requires a clarification regarding certain terms that will or will not be used in this chapter. First, since the anxieties that arise in the novels stem from the perceptions of the conjurors as authentically non-white, it is tempting to categorize these characters as engaging in racial passing, which Randall Kennedy defines as "a self-conscious engagement in the concealment of one's race."[726] As Marcia Dawkins has demonstrated, narratives of racial passing "offer insight into the limitations and processes of constructing identities in a variety of cultural, legal, and political contexts."[727] However, this chapter does not refer to the adoption of a non-white persona as racial passing because, as Kennedy notes, passing is typically performed by a member of a minority group "to adopt certain roles or identities among the majority from which he would be barred by prevailing social

[726] Randall Kennedy, "Racial Passing," *Ohio State Law Journal* 62.3 (2001): 1145.
[727] Marcia Dawkins, *Clearly Invisible* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 3.

standards in the absence of his misleading conduct," such as light-skinned Black people passing as white in the United States.[728] Passing, in this context, is the adoption of behaviors and signifiers constructed by the majority group about themselves, which may be consciously or unconsciously mimicked. The characters I examine are members of the white majority adopting signifiers that have been imposed on other races by white people. Designating this performance as passing implies that these signifiers are accurate characteristics present in these ethnic groups, rather than the products of racial Othering. Thus, this chapter will not use this term. Second, this chapter uses the term conjuror in two different ways. The primary sources I draw from use conjuror to refer to an occult practitioner or stage magician, with varying amounts of overlap between the two professions. However, I also use the term to refer to an occult version of what Thomas Recchio defines as "the violation of social decorum through the deployment of orientalist imagery."[729] Recchio, in his analysis of *Cranford*, uses the phrase to refer to how Signor Brunoni and Peter, the errant young man who returns from India and is "perceived as 'the Aga himself,' based on his exotic clothing and the color of his tan skin," disrupt the tranquility of Cranford when perceived as non-white.[730] While Peter engages in this racial deception unintentionally and superficially, "wearing race in the way he had worn his sister Deborah's clothes: a racial cross-dresser," Brunoni and Cleo do so deliberately, constructing non-white identities in the same manner that stage magicians create stage personas to enhance the occult elements of their performance. Thus, I use conjuror to refer both to stage magicians and those that 'conjure' non-white occult personas.

[728] Kennedy, "Racial," 1146.
[729] Thomas Recchio, *Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford* (London: Routledge, 2016), 57.
[730] Ibid., 58.

According to historians of stage magic, there were relatively few performers who adopted non-white occult personas in the 1850s, when *Cranford* was published, and many of those who did so implicitly or explicitly emphasized the inauthenticity of their performance, indicating the association they wished to invoke without attempting to embody it.[731] In this capacity, they acted similarly to blackface minstrels, commenting on and shaping discussions of non-white people while retaining their whiteness.[732] The criticism for Signor Brunoni/Samuel Brown in *Cranford* stems from his failure to participate in this aspect of performance. This is indicative of early apprehensions about non-white personas in Britain even as the novel is primarily concerned with criticizing those driven to a state of hysteria by the idea of the occult. However, the perceived threat of these performers became more pronounced as the connection between non-white races and the occult increased. This strengthening connection was evident in the increase of performers adopting non-white personas, the degree to which these personas were presented as authentic, and an invigorated belief in the spiritual power of non-white peoples and spaces, all of which raised pronounced anxieties about white imperial superiority. Alison Winter and Judith Wilt have shown how accounts of non-white people superstitiously believing science to be magic were used to justify narratives of this superiority in the 1850s and 1860s.[733] I argue that the criticism for Cleo/Selina Kettering within Zangwill's novel tacitly acknowledges that white British people possess the same superstitions, even outside of the presentation of stage magic portrayed in *Cranford*, reflecting an anxiety that the narratives of white superiority which had supported the Empire would soon collapse. Ultimately, both novels recommend that white

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[731] See Christopher Goto-Jones, *Conjuring Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Peter Lamont and Crispin Bates, "Conjuring Images of India in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Social History* 32.3 (2007): 308-26; and Jim Steinmeyer, *The Glorious Deception* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2005)
[732] A more in-depth discussion of blackface minstrels occurs later in this chapter.
[733] Alison Winter, *Mesmerized* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Judith Wilt, "The Imperial Mouth," *Journal of Popular Culture* 14.4 (1981): 618-29.

audiences not become invested in the racialized occult and instead focus on building systems of support within white communities.

This chapter begins by analyzing how Signor Brunoni, the non-white occult persona of Samuel Brown, is racialized in *Cranford*, highlighting the emphasis on his physical darkness and his allegedly Eastern origins. It then demonstrates how these elements were also employed by stage magicians in the real world, including Charles Dickens, the novel's publisher, as well as by other racialized performers, such as blackface minstrels. I argue that the performative qualities exhibited by these other performers were not threatening and did not provoke the same anxieties as Brunoni/Brown because they highlighted their inauthenticity, while Brunoni/Brown presents as an authentic example of the racialized occult and thus inspires authentic racial fears. Thus, while *Cranford* is primarily critical of the rampant delusions of the ladies of Cranford, it also reveals the perceived dangers of the racialized occult and the anxieties that would grow over the course of the century. In the novel, these anxieties are only removed once Brown's true identity is revealed and the Brunoni persona is removed from Cranford. The chapter then illustrates the growing number of people who attempted to construct "authentic" non-white personas in order to benefit from connections to the occult, such as the personae of William Robinson, who notably adopted a number of different personas before settling on that of Chinese magician Chung Ling Soo, and Helena Blavatsky, who claimed to be visited by spiritual Mahatmas and Tibetan spirit guides in her leadership of the Theosophy movement. The chapter then reflects on the intensified criticism of such persona-creators in *Cleo the Magnificent*'s framing of the titular Cleo (the persona of Selina Kettering) who is racialized in similar ways to Signor Brunoni. Unlike *Cranford*'s passing criticism of Brunoni/Brown, *Cleo the Magnificent* condemns Cleo/Selina as a predator taking advantage of the occult-loving Englishman who is driven into

debt by her frivolousness. It is only after she divorces him and removes herself from the story that he is able to find peace. I argue that Zangwill's novel tacitly admits that the superstitions once used to categorize non-white races as inferior are prominent among the white British population at the fin de siècle, framing such beliefs as disastrous and criticizing those who perpetuate ideas of a racialized occult. Like *Cranford*, this later novel also emphasizes a return to pastoral community engagement as the solution to the anxieties provoked by the threat of the racialized occult.

Cranford

Elizabeth Gaskell's 1853 novel *Cranford* focuses on the titular small British town and the various women who populate it. One day, Cranford is visited by a traveling conjuror, "the Grand Turk…Signor Brunoni," who amazes his audience with a series of astonishing tricks.[734] Shortly after his performance, however, Brunoni's presence inspires a town-wide panic, as rumors of burglaries, home invasions, and the potential of murder by a deadly occult force circulate. It is only when Brunoni is revealed to be Samuel Brown, a retired soldier pretending to be an Eastern occult practitioner, that the panic subsides. While the novel focuses criticism primarily on the ladies of Cranford for overreacting, it does lightly chastise Brown for failing to indicate the performativity of his non-white persona. While scholars like Jeffrey Cass, Patricia Wolfe, and Alyson Kiesel have already demonstrated how Brunoni's male-ness acts as a panic-inducing foreign intrusion into the female-centric space of Cranford, I focus on his adopted racial attributes.[735] I argue that his racialization is reminiscent of other racial performers, including

[734] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford,* ed. Elizabeth Porges Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86.
[735] Jeffrey Cass, "Gaskell's Oriental Other and the Conservation of Cranford," *Papers on Language and Literature* 35.4 (1999): 417-33; Patricia Wolfe, "Structure and Movement in Cranford," *Nineteenth-*

blackface minstrels and stage magicians who adopted a non-white persona, but he does not explicitly or implicitly indicate the inauthenticity of his adopted identity as they do, sparking the panic that erupts in Cranford.

Signor Brunoni's Racialization

The construction of the Signor Brunoni persona relies on preconceived notions held by the ladies of Cranford regarding how the non-white occult practitioner is characterized, namely through his physical darkness, the emphasis placed on his allegedly Eastern origins and how he was considered to represent all Eastern people, and the potential danger posed by his practice of the occult. These notions are revealed when Miss Pole first divulges that she has encountered Brunoni in town and the others immediately ask about his physicality, wondering if he is "dark" or "has…a beard," signifying that these elements are integral to their image of the exotic performer.[736] Before he ever appears on stage, the Cranford women have a culturally-transmitted image of the Grand Turk as being like their perception of "all foreigners," a dark-skinned intruder into their white town.[737] The narrator reveals the strange position occupied by the conjuror by beginning to ask "did he look—" before abandoning her question, "unable to shape [it] prudently."[738] The narrator has an image of a non-white occult practitioner as strange looking, physically marked by their difference in a way that would be "imprudent" to address in polite company, such as the sense of racialized savagery that defines Mr. Hyde in Robert Louis Stevenson's novella.[739] Recchio has suggested that the narrator's hesitation stems from "an

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Century Fiction 23.2 (1968): 161-76; Alyson Kiesel "Meaning and Misinterpretation in *Cranford,*" *ELH* 71.4 (2004): 1001-17

[736] Gaskell, *Cranford*, 83.

[737] Ibid.

[738] Ibid.

[739] Ibid.; for more on the sense of Hyde's physical savagery, see the previous chapter of this thesis.

uneasiness with an apparent common-sense racial differentiation," but the ease with which the other ladies assign racial signifiers to the conjuror imply something more lurid or grotesque, a physical manifestation of the fearful power that stems from the racialized occult.[740]

While he is not physically marked by his practice of the occult, Brunoni does fulfill the other expectations of a non-white occult practitioner. He dresses "in the Turkish costume," and wears his beard as a "muffy sort of thing about his chin" that is entirely at odds with the image of "a close-shaved Christian gentleman."[741] He speaks "in very broken English – so broken that there [is] no cohesion between the parts of his sentences" and aims "unchristian looks" at Miss Pole, and the narrator acknowledges that not much more could be expected "from a Mussulman."[742] Most significantly, he performs a series of astonishing tricks that cause the superstitious Mrs. Forrester to question if "it was quite right to have come to see" the show, "fearing [the townsfolk] were lending encouragement to something that was not quite –."[743] As with the narrator's question about Brunoni's physicality, this sentiment remains unarticulated. However, Forrester's request to discreetly check if the rector is at the show so that she may know if Brunoni "is sanctioned by the Church" indicates her suspicion that Brunoni is not only unchristian but antichristian, an unholy "being of another sphere" whose powers could prove dangerous to the souls of the assembled audience.[744] Her implied escalation of Brunoni's supposed powers from occult to demonic indicates the degree to which non-white occult practitioners were a source of anxiety since they were positioned as antithetical to white Christian Britain. The fact that Forrester's concerns can remain implied and unspoken indicates

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[740] Recchio, *Elizabeth*, 114.
[741] Gaskell, *Cranford*, 86.
[742] Ibid., 87.
[743] Ibid.
[744] Ibid., 88; Ibid., 86.

that they were self-evident, understood and acknowledged without needing to be explained. The ladies of Cranford agree that the figure of the non-white magician is dark, exotic, and potentially threatening, without needing to say so. Notably, the novel indicates that the racialized magician represented by the Brunoni persona is featured most prominently in fiction. When describing her encounter with him, Miss Pole says that "he spoke such pretty broken English [she] could not help thinking of Thaddeus of Warsaw and the Hungarian Brothers and Santo Sebastini," all of whom Dinah Birch reveals are romantic figures in historical novels, who are similarly characterized as dark and exotic.[745] While these characters are fictional, their descriptions are taken by the women of Cranford as accurate portrayals of non-white races. Despite the fact that he is also a fictional portrayal, Brunoni serves to authenticate the stories the women have heard about people from the East, such as their broken English, their clothing, and their ability to perform magic. Fictional representations of non-white races by white conjurors compound upon one another, confirming their internal fictions while influencing future interpretations of those fictions.

Conjurors in Britain

By confirming and shaping his audience's conceptions of non-white peoples through the performance of the Brunoni persona, Brown performs a similar function to blackface minstrels. While minstrel shows originated as American efforts to justify slavery, as Mel Watkins has argued, Michael Pickering has demonstrated that British minstrel shows sought to "facilitate the

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[745] Ibid., 82; Dinah Birch, "Explanatory Notes," Ibid., 210; Birch identifies the romantic figures as characters from Jane Porter's *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803), Anna Maria Porter's *The Hungarian Brothers* (1807), and Catherine Cuthbertson's *Santo Sebastiano, The Young Protector* (1806).

playing out of tensions and conflicts in a social and institutional order based on inequality."[746] In other words, white performers shaped discussions and understandings of non-white races, often disseminating racist, sexist, or imperialist messages through their portrayal of stereotyped figures who both molded and solidified the opinions of the shows' white audiences. For example, in 1839, the popular newspaper *The Weekly True Sun* published an article praising "our Minstrel Boys" for their concert at the Fairbridge Cricket Club, congratulating the performers for their "accurate and entertaining performance" that "breathed new life into the well-known absurdities of the negro," indicating that the blackface minstrels were accepted and celebrated as authorities on the race they presented.[747] While Tracy Davis has shown that minstrelsy was not always well received, Cranford represents the environment she argues would have most readily accepted Brown's performance as fact, as the residents would have had little opportunity to directly encounter residents of the East outside of fiction or secondhand accounts.[748] Just as white audiences in the Northern United States and Britain were separated from the conditions of slavery and relied on blackface performers for information about black people, the ladies of Cranford are separated from the peoples of the East, understanding them entirely through characterizations like Brunoni. This separation allows them to confirm their beliefs about the mystical Orient while simultaneously promoting new ideas about Eastern occult skills.

While similar to blackface minstrels, Brown is differentiated from them because participating in this racial discourse is not his primary objective. Like other stage conjurors, Brown creates the Brunoni persona to lend occult credibility to his show. As Christopher Goto-

[746] Mel Watkins, *On the Real Side* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); Michael Pickering, "Mock Blacks and Racial Mockery," *Acts of Supremacy* by J.S. Bratton, Richard Allen Cave, Breandan Gregory, Heidi J. Holder, and Michael Pickering (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 180.
[747] "Outpourings of the Press," *The Weekly True Sun*, 20 January 1839, 2254.
[748] Tracy Davis, "Christy's Minstrels in Mid-19th-Century Britain," *TDR* 57.2 (2013): 38-65.

Jones has illustrated, by "locating magic in distant and apparently mystical or spiritual territories, which most audiences had never encountered directly, [conjurors] facilitated the development of esoteric characters on the stage…drawing on an origination in 'pre-modern' peripheries as a means to claim authentic magical potency."[749] In other words, by propagating belief in the mystical East, conjurors gave their performances credibility in the eyes of a credulous audience. The non-white stage personas were used to invoke the connections to the mystic East in the same way that Scottish journalist Charles Mackay argued in his 1852 memoirs that "minstrels blackened their faces in order to give proper effect to the verses."[750] Just as songs about black experiences were authenticated by performatively black performers, claims to the occult power used in the East were justified by racialized personas. However, rather than uncritically endorsing and legitimizing the Eastern occult, most white performers in the 1850s implicitly or explicitly indicated the theatricality of their performance to their audience. Thus, white stage conjurors benefitted from the same privileges that Susan Gubar identifies as inherent in minstrelsy, namely that the performer is "viewed as an authentic representation of their assumed race, even as they retain the authority of their whiteness," an authority "recognized and quietly acknowledged" by the audience.[751] The trappings of the racialized occult were accepted as authentic recreations, but the conjurors themselves were not presented as authentically non-white practitioners of the occult. This complicated sequence of endorsements and disavowals is exemplified by Charles Dickens, *Cranford*'s publisher and the man identified in histories of

[749] Christopher Goto-Jones, "Magic, Modernity, and Orientalism," *Modern Asian Studies* 48.6 (2014): 1459.
[750] Charles Mackay, *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (London: Richard Bentley, 1852), 630.
[751] Susan Gubar, *Racechanges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 24.

stage magic by Goto-Jones, Simon During, and Peter Lamont and Crispin Bates as the first British conjuror known to have adopted a non-white persona.[752]

In 1849, Dickens performed a conjuring act in the small village of Bonchurch, advertising himself as "The Unparalleled Necromancer Rhia Rhama Rhoos, educated cabalistically in the Orange Groves of Salamanca and the Ocean Caves of Alum Bay."[753] Like Brunoni, Rhoos acted as a confirmation of Eastern stereotypes. As Lamont and Bates have shown, Dickens "blacked up his face and hands [and] dressed himself in exotic robes," presenting a similar Eastern appearance as the turbaned, dark-skinned Brunoni.[754] The flyer that Dickens distributed to advertise his show also assigned exotic and Oriental stories to each of the tricks he performed, declaring them to be "the results of nine years' seclusion in the mines of Russia;" learned from "a Chinese Mandarin, who died of grief immediately after parting with the secret;" or studied for "ten years in the Plains of Tartary."[755] Rhoos appealed to ideas of Eastern places that would have existed in the minds of an audience who could not visit them directly. They would already have been familiar with best-selling travelogues from travel writers like François Bernier, who described India in 1826 as home to conjurors able to "tell any person his thoughts, cause the branch of a tree to blossom and to bear fruit within the hour, hatch an egg in their bosom in less than five minutes, produce whatever bird may be demanded, fly around the room, and execute many other prodigies that need not be enumerated."[756] Dickens' performance as Rhoos reinforced this association between the East and occult knowledge to frame his

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[752] Ibid.; Simon During, *Modern Enchantments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Peter Lamont and Crispin Bates, "Conjuring Images of India," *Social History* 32.3 (2007): 308-24.
[753] Quoted in John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens,* 3 vols (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co, 1874), 3.111.
[754] Lamont and Bates, "Conjuring," 320
[755] Forster, *Life*, 3.111.
[756] François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, trans. Irving Block, 2 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1826), 2.28

performance as being more exotic than it otherwise would have been. However, Dickens made no attempt to disguise his true identity. As his biographer John Forster notes, he had been at Bonchurch for over a month before putting on his show, was "well received by its residents, eager to host someone as famous as he," and personally wrote up and distributed the fliers for his show.[757] Rhoos was not presented as a legitimately Eastern person, but as another of Dickens' characters, an exotic set-dressing to enhance the illusion of the stage show. Dickens further signaled the theatricality of his performance by selecting a stage name that was an obvious corruption of Khia Khan Khruse, an Indian juggler who had become famous enough to perform during the interval of the stage adaption of *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1837.[758] The modern equivalent would be a magician named Barry Boudini, a none-too-subtle wink to the audience that the on-stage persona existed as a playful reference to larger history of magic rather than as an authentically threatening occult practitioner.

Dickens' performance as Rhoos was followed in 1854, a year after *Cranford*'s publication, by Isaiah Hughes, a professional conjuror who performed as "the Fakir of Ava, Chief of Staff of Conjurors to His Sublime Greatness the Nanka of Aristaphae!" (Figure 16).

[757] Forster, *Life*, 2.426.
[758] John Zubrzycki has claimed that Khruse was similarly the conjuring persona of a Portuguese man named Juan Antonia, but I have not located sources corroborating this claim and Zubrzycki has not returned my emails.

Figure 16[759]

While other conjurors may have also followed Dickens' example, the Fakir of Ava is noteworthy due to his popularity and his similarly playful invocation of the Eastern occult. For example, Hughes often advertised that the Fakir would "appear in his native costume and will perform the most Astonishing Miracles of the East!!" implying that his performance as the Fakir was an authentic recreation of Eastern culture and power. However, as Peter Lamont has noted, beyond "wearing dark make-up and claiming an exotic costume was the native dress of a land he had never visited," Hughes did very little to "authenticate his Avan credentials."[760] He populated his stage show with tricks that were "standard European illusions with exotic titles," made no

[759] *The Fakir of Ava*, Dolph Briscoe Center, Broadsides Collection, BC OD 1700s-1859/OD1299
[760] Peter Lamont, *The Rise of the Indian Rope Trick* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005), 31.

attempt to continue the Fakir persona offstage, and eventually abandoned the premise entirely, performing "in formal European evening dress" that had become the standard of white stage magic.[761] Like Rhoos, the Fakir of Ava was an obvious invention for the stage, a costume adopted by a conjuror who was known to be white. His claims of authentic costume and Eastern feats of magic may have been accepted by uninformed members of his audience, confirming a pre-existing vision of the East and its inhabitants, but the conjuror himself was safely and quietly acknowledged as white.

The implicit whiteness of stage performers like Dickens and Hughes helped to alleviate many of the anxieties associated with non-white conjurors that were beginning to emerge. Some accounts used language similar to an 1840 article in the liberal newspaper *The Odd Fellow* that praised "the dexterity and agility" of the "Hindoo jugglers" that could be found around Britain, performing their "tricks without any fuss, and with so little apparatus, as would make the most scientific conjuror in Europe stare."[762] John Platts, a Unitarian minister, similarly argued in his 1854 collection of natural phenomena that "such proficiency must be so common in India, that it excites no extraordinary interest there," and that the prevalence of these performances by non-white performers in Britain, "being the sole fruit of effort, activity, quickness of eye, and rapidity of action, [is what] gives rise to the notion among any who has witnessed them that the East may contain some grand spiritual power."[763] However, stories that explicitly acknowledged the dexterity of the performers were overshadowed by those that emphasized the mystical and dangerous qualities of the East. In 1834, Reverend Hobart Caunter published *The Oriental Annual*, a memoir recounting his time in India, describing his experience witnessing a trick in

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[761] Ibid., 32.
[762] "Hindoo Diversions," *The Odd Fellow,* 18 July 1840, 115.
[763] John Platts, *The Book of Curiosities* (Philadelphia: Leary & Getz, 1854), 897-8.

which a child is seemingly stabbed in a basket before emerging unharmed. Caunter recounted how "the whole scene was perfectly dismaying…terrible to see and hear," as the swordsman stabbed at the basket

> with all the blind ferocity of an excited demon. My first impulse was to rush upon the monster and fell him to the earth, but he was armed and I defenseless. I looked at my companions – they appeared to be pale and paralyzed with terror, and yet these feelings were somewhat neutralized by the consciousness that the man could not dare to commit a deliberate murder in the broad eye of day, and before so many witnesses; still the whole thing was appalling.[764]

Even when Caunter and his friends knew it to be a trick, their belief in the ferocity and viciousness of the Indian population caused them to become "paralyzed with terror" before the armed performer.[765] In 1839, the popular *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* described a similar event where, before beginning, "the leader of the jugglers, who were all, of course, natives of Hindustan, requested the commanding officer to place a guard of men around the scene of display."[766] As with Caunter's account, the swordsman was illustrated as a demonic figure, "[lashing] himself up into such an apparent fury that the foam actually stood upon his lips and…he looked, to the white spectators at least, as like an enraged demon might be."[767] The soldiers, "who believed this to be not trick, but a piece of diabolical butchery," were prevented by the pre-set guard "from leaping into the arena, and tearing the man to pieces" before he could reveal the unharmed child.[768] While the explicit theatricality of white conjurors established a degree of entertaining distance between their performance and reality, the authenticity of Eastern conjurors removed that distance, so that "even the officers, whose better education and

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[764] Hobart Caunter, *The Oriental Annual* (London: Edward Bull, 1834), 26.
[765] Ibid.
[766] "Jugglers of India," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, 16 March 1839, 69.
[767] Ibid.
[768] Ibid.

experience made them less open to vindictive rage, grew pale with uneasiness."[769] When directly engaging what they believe to be an authentic experience with Eastern peoples, white audiences reacted with fear instead of delight, positioning the conjurors similarly to the way Miss Forrester does in Gaskell's novel.

This fear is manifest when Brown, still believed to be the Eastern Brunoni, inspires a town-wide panic in the novel. The women of Cranford become convinced that he is responsible for a string of mysterious incidents. First, a string of robberies – "real *bonâ fide* robberies," are believed to have been carried out by mysterious "strangers – if strangers, why not foreigners?"[770] To the ladies of Cranford, all foreigners are equivalently threatening, whether they are "the Red Indians or the French," and thus Signor Brunoni, who "spoke broken English" and "wore a turban" is surmised to be a burglar and possibly a spy for the French.[771] This conclusion is reinforced by accounts of locked homes being entered through "holes made in walls, the bricks being silently carried away in the dead of the night," which "Signor Brunoni must be at the bottom of" since to do this "so quietly that no sound was heard either in or out of the house," is a "trick fit for a conjuror."[772] Brunoni is even suspected of the death of a neighbor's dog because "he had apparently killed a canary with only a word of command; his will seemed of deadly force; who knew but what he might yet be lingering in the neighbourhood willing all sorts of awful things!"[773] As discussed in the first chapter, the potentially deadly implementation of one's will was closely associated with non-white peoples, proving Brunoni's guilt in the minds of Cranford's residents. By confirming the exoticized visions of Eastern peoples through his

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[769] Ibid.
[770] Gaskell, *Cranford*, 89.
[771] Ibid.
[772] Ibid., 90.
[773] Ibid., 94.

performance, Brunoni also intensifies their anxieties about the unknowable powers they were thought to possess, and they eventually band together to storm the inn where he is staying. Rather than acting as a reliable representation by a trusted authority, Brunoni is presented as an authentic Eastern conjuror, implying that his powers are similarly authentic and producing the same fear of the Other that non-white conjurors did. At the inn, Brown's true identity as a white soldier trying to support his family is revealed, ending the panic and eliminating the threat his non-white persona poses. The novel draws explicit attention to how "the great Cranford panic, which had been occasioned by his first coming in his Turkish dress, melted away in the air on his second coming" as a white man.[774] The perception of Brown as an authentically non-white conjuror and his failure to indicate the theatricality of his performance as such cause the uproar, and it is only when his whiteness is confirmed that calm is restored.

As Louise Henson has indicated, Gaskell often wrote about how the implied authenticity of magical powers inevitably results in panic and persecution.[775] As in her other texts, until the residents of Cranford are offered resolution to the Eastern illusion, what should be a playful acknowledgement between audience and performer becomes a source of anxiety. This shift from playfulness to fear is exemplified by Miss Matty, during the height of the panic, buying "a penny ball, such as children play with [to roll] under the bed every night" to make sure Brunoni is not lingering there, waiting to attack.[776] The ball is transformed from plaything to defensive tool, the ever-present fear of the Eastern conjuror's powers warping the perceptions of his audience. It is only when Brown's true identity is revealed that the panic subsides and the ball is able to return to its status as a plaything, as the narrator finds "Miss Matty covering her penny ball – the ball

[774] Gaskell, *Cranford*, 103.
[775] Louise Henson, "Half-Believing, Half-Incredulous," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 24.3 (2002): 251-69.
[776] Gaskell, *Cranford*, 98.

she used to roll under her bed – with gay-coloured worsted in rainbow stripes," for Brown's "little care-worn child [who,] although her father is a conjuror, looks as if she never had a good game of play in her life."[777] Thus the novel indicates that conjuring should be a state of play shared between the performer and the audience. Brown's attempts to thoroughly disguise his race are presented as the inciting incident of the panic, rendering him responsible even as the novel frames the comedic superstitions of the Cranford women – which include "everything from ghosts to death-watches," – as the frenzied source of escalation from dark-skinned conjuror to French spy and psychically murderous leader of a gang of thieves.[778] In this escalation, Gaskell identifies the threat and potential anxieties that would inevitably arise from Brown's devotion to and continued pursuit of authenticity in the creation of Brunoni, a pursuit the novel clarifies is not only harmful to the audience's psyche but also unnecessary. While Brown built his act around "some tricks he learnt from an Indian juggler," and modeled his appearance after Indian conjurors, his wife reveals that her brother has been appearing as Brunoni while Brown recovers from an injury, and has been making a profit despite the fact that he is less skilled than Brown and "has never been to India, and knows nothing of the proper sit of a turban."[779] Brown's brother-in-law, with his clumsy attempt at the Brunoni persona, does not inspire the same anxieties that Brown does, presumably because he is not dangerously authentic. Audiences are willing to accept inauthentic representations as entertainment because they do not endanger their perceived safety in the way that Brown's Brunoni does.

Despite his brief appearance in the novel, Signor Brunoni embodies many of the anxieties that would come to be closely associated with conjurors adopting non-white personas. He is

[777] Ibid., 104.
[778] Ibid., 96.
[779] Ibid., 107.

physically dark, visibly Eastern, and able to convince his audience of the occult powers of the East through his continuous presentation as an authentic conjuror. The novel predicts that these personas will inevitably confuse those who harbor superstitious beliefs regarding the occult powers of the East and therefore it recommends that conjuring remain as a shared playfulness between performer and audience so that more attention may be paid to domestic concerns. Once Brown's identity is revealed, the formerly panicking ladies band together to assist him and his family, discovering that "he, who had first excited our love of the marvellous by his unprecedented arts, had not sufficient every-day gifts to manage a shying horse," and that assisting him "made us feel like ourselves again."[780] The familiar rhythm of the domestic sphere – cooking for the Brown family, watching their daughter, helping with daily chores – is emphasized as a cure for the dangerous implications of the non-white occult. The elimination of Brunoni, in favor of Brown, allows the ladies of Cranford to focus their attention on simple and familiar tasks around the house, preventing them from spiraling into anxiety attempting to guess what dangers lurk in the unknowable sphere of the occult.

A Growing Trend

While there were not many documented instances of white conjurors adopting non-white personas in the 1850s, the practice grew over the course of the century as accounts of Eastern conjuring shifted from praising dexterity to affirming the existence of occult powers. In 1861, F. Swanwick wrote an article for the popular magazine *Once a Week* describing the performances of native conjurors in Calcutta. His account attested that a Hindu conjuror placed a brass coin into Swanwick's closed fist before transforming it into a live snake, demonstrating "one of the

[780] Ibid., 104.

feats [from] the time of Moses…handed down from the most distant ages, from father to son, by generations of Hindu magicians."[781] In 1865, the occult periodical *The Spiritual Magazine* went a step further when describing a conjuror's performance, writing that "assuming the account relayed to me to be true, and I have not the least doubt of its literal accuracy, it is probably that the performer is possessed of the occult powers of his native India, and we may at least obtain through him an insight into the mysterious character and capabilities of the magicians of old, the so-called Indian Jugglers."[782] These accounts demonstrate how the powers of the non-white conjuror were associated with ancient mystical powers that originated in the East, assigning credibility to the occult beyond manual dexterity. By the end of the century, this mystical power was synonymous with the peoples of the East. In 1883, American travel writer Harry French remarked that conjurors were "one of the greatest sights of India…almost a trademark of Hindustan," emblematic of the "marvels and mysteries that permeate the air of the East."[783] Professional conjuror Charles Bertram noted a similar position in his 1899 article for the popular *Strand Magazine,* writing that "the average man," when asked for what India is most celebrated would "ignore the glories of the Taj Mahal, the beneficence of British rule, even Mr. Kipling, and will unhesistantly reply in one word, 'jugglers.'"[784] These conjurors were reportedly "so versed in their magical skill that travelers proclaim they possess preternatural powers from time immemorable," powers that became inextricably associated with the East.[785]

In 1892, stage magician John Nevil Maskelyne published a collection of essays on the spread of the supernatural in Britain, noting that "so much high-falutin has been written

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[781] F. Swanwick, "Indian Juggling," *Once a Week* 4.80 (1861): 40.
[782] "Wonderful Manifestations in London," *The Spiritual Magazine* 6.3 (1865): 120.
[783] Harry French, *Our Boys in India* (New York: Lee and Shepard, 1883), 222-3.
[784] Charles Bertram, "Are Indian Jugglers Humbug?" *The Strand Magazine* 18.108 (1899): 657.
[785] Ibid.

concerning [Oriental conjuring], and so deeply have travellers drunk of the Asian Soma provided for them by their predecessors [that] the very mention of anything in connection with it calls up a thousand thoughts and fancies associated with all that is weird and mysterious. For Asia was the birthplace of Magic."[786] The association between the occult and the East was so powerful that Maskelyne noted that "Europe is a market for such wares in which the dusky Necromancer could obtain in a single hour more money than the amount of his receipts in a whole year in his native land."[787] In his 1934 memoir, fellow magician Robert Henry Elliot reiterated Maskelyne's sentiments, adding that unless a white conjuror at the fin de siècle performed perfectly, "he would be laughed off the stage *unless he dressed up in Eastern robes*."[788] In Elliot's view, audiences were willing to accept even "simple acts of legerdemain" from such costumed conjurors because the occult and the East had become so connected.[789]

As the East and its inhabitants became more closely associated with the occult, more white conjurors adopted non-white personas. Some, as Goto-Jones has argued, were attracted by the practical elements of an Eastern costume, as wide sleeves and long loose robes provided numerous hiding places for props or simple machinery.[790] Tobias Bamberg, a Dutch conjuror, wrote in his memoir that he chose a stage persona who "was a foreigner and couldn't speak the language – such as a Japanese or a Chinese," because he had gone deaf.[791] Like earlier conjurors, these performers did little to hide their white identities even as they adopted Eastern costumes and face paint. However, others sought to continue masquerading as their persona off-stage in

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[786] John Nevil Maskelyne, "Oriental Jugglery," *The Supernatural?* by Lionel Weatherly and John Nevil Maskelyne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011; originally 1892), 155-6.
[787] Ibid., 157.
[788] Robert Henry Elliot, *The Myth of the Mystic East* (London: Blackwood, 1934), 37.
[789] Ibid.
[790] Chris Goto-Jones, *Conjuring Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 224.
[791] Tobias Bamberg, *Okito on Magic* (Chicago: Edward O. Drane, 1921), 31.

order to be considered authentically Eastern in the same way that Brown/Brunoni did in Gaskell's novel. The practice became so widespread that Thomas Frost, a radical journalist, commented in his 1871 book on conjurors that there were so many "operatic *artistes* of British birth who exoticize their names, or prefix foreign forms of address to them among jugglers and conjurors [that] I am doubtful…whether any conjuror of the present day, who appears with a brown face and an Oriental garb, is an Asiatic."[792] Conjurors knew that simply presenting as Eastern was enough to invoke magical associations among British audiences.

One such conjuror was William Robinson, better known as Chung Ling Soo. Biographer Jim Steinmeyer has recorded Robinson's history of non-white stage personas, including the Egyptian Achmed Ben Ali, the Indian Nana Sahib, and the Turkish Abdul Khan. Steinmeyer argues that these changes in persona were influenced by the magicians surrounding Robinson at the time, each of whom promoted a different race as superior in their practice of the occult. Ben Ali was a direct imitation of Max Auzinger's success as Ben Ali Bey in 1887; Sahib was the suggestion of Robinson's employer Henry Kellar in 1888; and Khan a result of Robinson's hiring by Kellar's rival Alexander Hermann in 1889.[793] Each identity was presented as an authentic conjuror rather than an adopted identity, supposedly presenting authentic representations of magical ability. *The New York Clipper*, an entertainment newspaper, praised the "new and amazing feats" of the "Oriental necromancer" in 1887. Kellar printed posters featuring a racialized Sahib surrounded by exotic animals in 1888 (Figure 17), and Hermann's playbill prominently advertised Khan's "supernatural feats from the Orient!"[794]

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[792] Thomas Frost, *The Lives of the Conjurors* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1876), 221.
[793] Jim Steinmeyer, *The Glorious Deception* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2005), 94-5.
[794] "Achmed Ben Ali," *New York Clipper* 27 August 1887; qtd in Steinmeyer, *Glorious*, 117.

Figure 17[795]

Following these examples, when Robinson set off on his solo career, he presented yet another non-white persona, Chung Ling Soo. Like his other personas, Robinson made no attempt to disclose his true identity, appearing in embroidered silk robes, pointed slippers, and a long boxy braid. He performed entirely silently and would only communicate with the press through his translator and assistant, Fee Lung. As Steinmeyer notes, Lung was actually a Japanese-American man named Frank Kametaro, who would relay reporters' questions in Chinese to Soo, who would "consider the question with a pensive expression, then let loose a long string of mock-Chinese gibberish," for Lung to 'translate' back into English.[796] This deception was apparently successful, as popular newspapers promoted his image as an authentically Eastern conjuror. The *Evening Standard* advertised him as "the Great Chinese magician [performing] a group of new feats never before seen in this country" in 1900, and the *Weekly Reporter* described how "his skin is yellow, his eyes are black and oblique, and his teeth are absolutely inky as those

[795] "Nana Sahib," *Kellar's Wonders*, Mike Caveney and Bill Miesel (Pasadena: Magic Words, 2003), 233.
[796] Steinmeyer, *Glorious*, 220.

of all true celestials of rank should be."[797] When the *Weekly Dispatch* interviewed Ching Ling Foo, an actual Chinese conjuror from whom Robinson likely got his stage name, Foo attempted to expose the inauthentic aspects of Soo's performance, only to have a competing newspaper, the *Express*, come to Soo's defense as the more authentic of the two. The *Express* echoed the *Reporter*'s emphasis on Soo's "very Chinese" appearance by noting that "his skin is yellow, his eyes are black and oblique, and his teeth are inky as though he has devoted a long life to chewing opium" as well as insisting that "he spoke no English," though his history was doubtlessly "brilliant as a spring morning, when the zephyr's idle play and fleecy flecks float o'er the azure sky."[798] Robinson's presentation as Soo confirmed the existing stereotypes of the East, and so he was used as an example of the typical non-white conjuror, an authentic representation of a mystical East that was far removed from British experience. Even the *Reporter*'s initial article could not resist emphasizing Eastern otherness, transcribing Foo's broken English when he revealed "him have head chop if he go to China. He wears woman's dress. Him one big fool."[799] The reinforcement of the East as a distant and potentially magical location was more important than anything else, and while Robinson represented a particularly spectacular example, he was not alone. As biographer William Dexter has indicated, over a dozen other white conjurors performed under various iterations of Ching Ling Foo's name at the fin de siècle.[800]

The associations between occult power and a non-white identity drawn by these conjurors was seized upon even by those not performing on stage, notably by Russian occultist Helena Blavatasky. In her 1875 book outlining the worldview of the newly founded Theosophical

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[797] "Alhambra," *Evening Standard*, 16 April 1900, 1285; "Chung Ling Soo," *Weekly Reporter*, 9 April 1900, 6.
[798] "Ching Responds," *Express*, 2 January 1905, 64.
[799] "Chung vs Ching" *The Weekly Dispatch,* 1 January 1905, 59.
[800] William Dexter, *The Riddle of Chung Ling Soo* (London: Arco, 1955), 56.

Society, Blavatsky argued that the spiritual superiority of the East could be easily recognized by the fact that while Western performers usually required that they be mesmerized to access latent spiritual powers, "in the East, whether the performer be a holy lama or a mercenary sorcerer (the latter class being generally termed 'jugglers' or 'conjurors') he needs no preparation or abnormal state."[801] While Janet Oppenheim has shown that Blavatsky's use of the term theosophy "conjured up a rich variety of associations with the cabalist, neo-Platonic, and Hermetic strands in Western philosophy and religious beliefs [which] had haunted the fringes of European thought for centuries," Blavatsky grounded her personal beliefs in Eastern philosophy, claiming that her own spiritual insights were guided by Tibetan "Masters [who] do not communicate with men except by entirely subjective means and spiritual manifestations."[802] In an 1887 interview with fellow Theosophist Charles Johnston, Blavatsky revealed that one of these Masters, or Mahatmas as they were later called, was named Morya, "a Rajput by birth…one of the old warrior race of the Indian desert."[803] She emphasized Morya's physical darkness, his "forceful, even fierce face; his dark, glowing eyes, which stare you out of countenance; and his clear-cut features of bronze, the raven hair and beard of a true Master," producing a portrait she had commissioned from her friend, Hermann Schmeichen, who had never seen the Masters but was "guided" by Blavatsky, featuring the dark-skinned Mahatma with a long beard and turban (Figure 18).[804]

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[801] Helena Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 2 vols (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1875), 1.446.
[802] Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 163; Helena Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (London: Theosophy Publishing, 1889), 18.
[803] Helena Blavatsky, "Interview with Charles Johnston," *Collected Writings* (Madras: Theosophical Publishing, 1960), 399.
[804] Ibid., 400.

Figure 18[805]

To Blavatsky, Morya and his fellow Master, Koot Hoomi, represented the spiritual superiority of the peoples "in the East, each of whom is furnished with a page of the Divine Wisdom," while she complained that "all Western, and especially English, education is instinct with the principles of emulation and strife."[806] Historian Ronald Hutton has credited this aggressive insistence on Eastern spiritual authority, combined with Blavatsky's charisma, with the spread of Eastern philosophy and occult thought in Britain during the 1880s, demonstrating "the influence she possessed over all members of the populace."[807] The leaders of the Theosophical Society also took this message to heart, relocating their headquarters to India in 1884 because, as Blavatsky wrote, "Theosophy is so closely allied with Eastern, and particularly Indian, thought, it cannot be

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805 Hermann Schmeichen, "Morya," *Collected Writings* by Helena Blavatsky (Madras: Theosophical Publishing, 1960), 401.
806 Blavatsky, *Key*, 21.
807 Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18.

meaningfully separated."[808] Later that year, Reverend George Patterson wrote in an article for his religious periodical, *The Madras Christian College Magazine*, that after the move the Theosophical Society manifested even more occult "*phenomena*…exhibitions of a knowledge of nature more profound than modern man has attained," such as spiritual apparitions, letters manifesting from the ceiling, and broken trays being instantly repaired upon being placed in a cupboard, all of which Blavatsky credited to "the existence, power, and authority of the Mahatmas."[809] However, Patterson revealed that he had been approached by his friends, Emma and Alex Coulomb, who had recently left the Theosophical Society and presented him with "documents in Mme. Blavatsky's hand-writing, left with strange recklessness in the possession of the Coulombs," which proved that the various phenomena were illusions and that Morya, Koot Hoomi, and the other Tibetan Masters were invented by Blavatsky.[810] Parapsychologist Richard Hodgson followed up on the accusations on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research in 1885, publishing a report that declared Blavatsky to be "one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history."[811] Like a stage conjuror, Blavatsky had invented the mysterious personas of Morya and Koot Hoomi to lend authenticity to her performance of the occult, invoking the mystical associations of the East to spread the influence of her Society, which continued to promote the existence of the Masters despite the protestations of outside investigators.

[808] Blavatsky, *Key*, 104.
[809] George Patterson, "The Collapse of Koot Hoomi," *The Madras Christian College Magazine* 1.15 (1884): 199.
[810] Ibid., 202.
[811] Richard Hodgson, "Report of the Committee…," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 3 (1885): 207.

Backlash

As the act of adopting a non-white persona and reiterating the popular association of occult powers and the East grew more popular, it drew more substantial criticism from those who opposed it. Alison Butler has recorded the numerous stage magicians and scientific thinkers who sought to expose Spiritualists, Theosophists, and others who attempted to promote the existence of the occult, many of whom attempted to pass themselves off as authentically Eastern.[812] These cases became so prevalent that solicitor Joseph Dodson formed the Occultists' Defense League (ODL) in 1890 to offer legal consul to those brought to court for adopting a non-white occult persona, advertising in the Theosophical periodical *Light* that "the League's success [checks] the prosecution of the police, which imperils the profession of many true believers."[813] Dodson later published a *Directory of Occult Practitioners* with occultist Ida Ellis, a reference book for anyone "seeking to probe the mysteries of the universe." The book is filled with many of the exoticized names and foreign prefixes that Frost noted in 1871, some of which inexplicably had the same contact information as less exotic names, such as "Zanoni," "Madamoiselle Cinderella," and "Satanella," who could be contacted via "Mr. H.R. Partridge," "Mrs. Clarke," and "Mrs. E.V. Keighley," respectively.[814] Beyond these legal cases, other critics spoke out against the concepts of mysticism more generally. Kellar, recording his tour through the East in search of new tricks, wrote that "most of the wonders attributed to Oriental jugglers have never existed anywhere outside of the imaginations of those who tell them," and that anyone who claimed otherwise "must have had their brains steeped in hasheesh."[815] Conjuror Samri Baldwin

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[812] Alison Butler, *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[813] Joseph Dodson, "Occultists' Defense League," *Light* 20.8 (1900): 396.
[814] Ida Ellis and Joseph Dodson, *Directory of Occult Practitioners* (Blackpool: Promenade, 1901), 41; Ibid., 38; Ibid., 40.
[815] Harry Kellar, *A Magician's Tour* (Chicago: Donohue, 1890), 115-6.

attempted to decry the existence of "miraculous, occult, superhuman, or supernatural powers" in his 1895 book *The Secrets of Mahatma Land Explained*, even as he capitalized on the East's association with the occult by performing as "the White Mahatma," and appearing in Indian costume, complete with turban and a "mystic sigil" painted on his forehead (Figure 19).[816]

Figure 19[817]

The majority of criticism directed at these conjurors can be summarized by Maskelyne's 1892 essay, which described Eastern conjuring as "a subject which, in so far as actual results are concerned, would be so very deficient in anything that may claim to be worthy of serious consideration, were it not for the alarming amount of misconception and falsehood to which it has given rise."[818] Like Kellar, Maskelyne was dismissive of claims of "Oriental mysticism," reasoning that "the theme and text of a large portion of Eastern travellers' recollections and recorded experiences…polluted the minds of future travellers" to such a degree that

> those who pride themselves upon their advancement of knowledge, and their freedom from all that may savour of superstition, are yet led, by an innate love of

[816] Samri Baldwin, *The Secrets of Mahatma Land Explained* (Liverpool: Dyson & Son, 1895), 11.
[817] Ibid., 10.
[818] Maskelyne, "Oriental," 153.

> the marvelous, into the belief that some remnant of the power which built Aladdin's Palace still lingers in lands of the rising sun.[819]

To Maskelyne and other critics, conjurors who promoted the occult image of the East were dangerous because they preyed upon their audiences' collective desire to believe in the fantastical, taking advantage of their sense of wonder to profit from the construction of the powerful Eastern conjuror, despite the fact that "Oriental jugglers are, for the most part…of the very lowest castes, scorned even by those who hold them in superstitious dread. They are to the Orientals just what the gipsies are to us, and no more."[820] For Maskelyne, the British perception of Eastern conjurors as powerful wielders of unknowable magic exposed how the illusion of the racialized occult could be used to elevate the "very lowest castes" in the minds of white audiences, allowing those who could otherwise be ignored as undesirable elements of society to be transformed into powerful practitioners of the occult.[821] This radical shift in perception could pose a serious threat to the social structure of fin-de-siècle Britain that benefitted from a rigid racial and class system. The promotion of the racialized occult, especially by white people, posed a serious threat to that system.

Cleo the Magnificent

I argue that criticism like Maskelyne's informs the presentation of conjurors who adopt non-white personas in Louis Zangwill's 1899 novel, *Cleo the Magnificent*. While *Cranford* portrays Brown sympathetically, emphasizing his care for his family even as it criticizes his attempt to dupe his audience, *Cleo the Magnificent* portrays Selina Kettering as predatory, taking advantage of the fascination with the occult present in those around her in order to live off their money and

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[819] Ibid., 155.
[820] Ibid., 179-80.
[821] Ibid, 180.

avoid the realities of her lower-class life. To accomplish this, she cultivates an Orientalized persona, the titular Cleo, emphasizing her physical darkness, wearing exotic clothes, surrounding herself with mystical goods, and presenting herself as an embodiment of Eastern occultism. While not a stage magician, like Brown or Robinson, Kettering employs the same methods to conjure an occult persona. As in the Signor Brunoni section of *Cranford*, the ultimate message of *Cleo the Magnificent* is to disregard the racialized occult and return to idyllic domesticity, illustrated by Morgan Druce, the protagonist, resolving to work on Selina's family's farm to repay her debts after he learns the truth. I argue that the reiteration of this message in Zangwill's novel reflects the threat and ongoing anxiety regarding the power of the non-white occult due to how widespread it had become as well as the susceptibility of white audiences to a belief in that power.

Cleo's Racialization

As with other conjurors, Cleo's racialization emphasizes her physical darkness and exotic costume. Morgan remarks that she is "of a gipsy-like brown" with "full lips of startling scarlet, as though they bled," a description similar to the seductive, dangerous women of mixed race in fiction, like Harriet Brandt in Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897).[822] Cleo dresses exclusively in long robes and thin sandals, creating an image that is so evocative of the East that Morgan is surprised when she greets him in English, as "he had almost expected some strange, rich, musical language to fall from her lips."[823] Cleo's exotic appearance is enhanced by her surroundings, as seen when Morgan is introduced to her in a room that she has transformed

[822] Louis Zangwill, *Cleo the Magnificent* (London: William Heinemann, 1899), 42; Brandt is discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.
[823] Ibid.

into a "strange Egyptian chamber," lining the walls "with a repeating mystical pattern that defied description" and hanging a large tapestry from the ceiling so that it became "an immense tangle of gold, green, red and blue thread work, each line of which could be followed until the eye lost it in the maze."[824] In the center of the room, she "lounge[s] on a gilded settee, upholstered in silk…bathed in a vague, mystic light that compelled an almost religious emotion as it came through the tiny window panes."[825] Because she surrounds herself with Eastern goods and dresses in exotic clothes, Morgan's first impression of Cleo is "a dreamy one of fusing colour," so that she appears "as a mystical figure floating out of a sort of Oriental nebula."[826] The effect of this impression is that Cleo becomes less of an individual person to Morgan and more of a nebulously Oriental force representative of the entire East. Later, when he is selecting plays to produce and for her to star in, he selects "the Oriental, which he thought would at any rate give Cleo an opportunity to display her dresses," demonstrating that he is more influenced by the Eastern-ness of her wardrobe than any quality she or the play might possess.

Cleo reinforces the connection between the East and the occult, often carrying a book "the cover of which was illumined with seven mystic stars and a veiled floating figure."[827] While she does not use this connection to enhance a stage performance, like Brunoni, she does seek to convince Morgan that she is able to wield occult power. She tells Morgan that she is "what the vulgar call superstitious," having received "a presentiment" that he would call on her.[828] She declares that ever since she was young she has "ever felt [herself] a chosen spirit," explicitly linking this feeling to her exotic dark-skinned identity as she tells Morgan that "in me is

[824] Ibid.
[825] Ibid., 45.
[826] Ibid., 47.
[827] Ibid., 45.
[828] Ibid.

reincarnated the spirit of the mystic East, and it is my mission to interpret that spirit to the modern world."[829] Thus, the supposed authenticity of Cleo's non-white identity is used to validate her occult powers and vice versa; she is the spirit of the East and thus she has occult power, and she has occult power which validates her status as a spirit of the East. The novel further reflects the extent to which the occult is included in Cleo's performance when her actions are described in the language of the occult, such as when Morgan watches her navigate the "heterogenous, noisy mass" of the theatrical world "with interested expectancy for a light-giving result, as a child might watch the preparations for an elaborate conjuring trick."[830] Her mystique and her strong will "hypnotize him, strong enough to draw him away from the rest of the world and absorb his life in hers."[831] Whenever he begins to doubt her actions, such as when the play she performs using his money fails, she reiterates the language of the occult, assuring him that "her faith that the powers that worked the universe could not possibly allow her the great humiliation of being a defaulter was unshaken."[832] Cleo's insistence on the existence and power of the occult as well as its inherency in her being are used to placate Morgan, distracting him from the worries of financial ruin so that he continues to trust in the occult powers of the racialized Cleo.

Susceptibility and Machination

Like the ladies in *Cranford*, Morgan is portrayed as more likely to accept Cleo's implied authenticity because he already accepts the reality of the occult and the association of the occult with the East. He is obsessed with "metaphysical moods and unseizable mystic fantasies," but is

[829] Ibid.
[830] Ibid., 52.
[831] Ibid.
[832] Ibid., 70.

only able to access them "dimly through the medium of books."[833] Morgan's superstitions, like those of the Cranford ladies, are formed by fiction, but while they are illustrated as laughable and comedic, his devotion to the occult is all-consuming. He forms a racialized vision of the occult that reality cannot fulfill until he meets Cleo. Like Brunoni, Cleo is a confirmation of all of Morgan's beliefs regarding the racialized occult. She is "his dream-woman, who had haunted his imagination," who so thoroughly validates his conception of the occult that "it seemed to him that he had discerned Cleo's every feature from the beginning."[834] Thus, his inability to perceive Cleo as an individual outside of her racialized presentation is a result of his own bias as well as her performance. This is made apparent when he declares his love for her:

> He did not conceive of it as a real statement made to a real human being. Cleo was his wonderful dream-woman, and he had no notion at all of getting any insight into her as real woman playing an actual role in actual life. He did not think of her as an element of real life at all; she was simply the heroine of the fantasy he was busy weaving – a position which he had mentally isolated from the rest of reality, and in which for the time being he had lost himself.[835]

Morgan constructs a fantasy and Cleo fulfills it because he is willing to ignore the intrusion of any reality which might contradict his beliefs. While Morgan's position is similar to that of the superstitious Cranford women who escalate Brown's innocent mistake into full-blown panic, Zangwill's novel explicitly addresses Kettering's culpability in her performance as Cleo. She is "Machiavellian," having "obviously arranged" the Eastern trappings of her room every time he visits her.[836] When they are forced to move in with her family in Dover to escape her many debts, Morgan discovers "a copy of a work by a lurid lady novelist" that contains the lines she used to convince him that she was a "reincarnated spirit of the ancient East…doubly underlined

[833] Ibid., 10.
[834] Ibid., 42-3.
[835] Ibid., 45-6.
[836] Ibid., 53.

in red ink, as well as thickly marked down the margin."[837] Even her "gipsy-like brown" skin is a result of her upbringing in a working-class family, as the fine clothes her parents and her brother wear on their first meeting with Morgan are "but a thin disguise for the week they had worked," their hands "coarse-grained and of a tint that no longer yields to ablutions."[838] Just as Peter is mistaken for an Indian Aga because "his face was deep brown as if tanned and re-tanned by the sun" in Gaskell's novel, Morgan perceives Kettering to be an exotic and therefore occult woman because he associates dark skin with the East.[839] While Recchio notes that the mistaken perception of Peter is a result of the "orientalist associations in the visual field of the Cranford ladies," the perception of Cleo is notably deliberate, as Kettering spends most of her time "lounging in the sun" when at home in Dover.[840] Cleo fits Morgan's vision of the occult East because Kettering created her by drawing from racialized depictions in fiction, just as he has, and she has since calculated every detail of her performance to match this vision.

Like other fin-de-siècle conjurors, Kettering makes no attempt to indicate the theatricality of her Cleo persona, choosing to live as an Eastern practitioner of the occult and benefitting from the perceived authenticity of that performance by duping those interested in the racialized occult into funding her lavish lifestyle. Simon During has suggested that for white British conjurors, taking on non-white personas was a deliberate act of definition enacted in order to "establish for European audiences the supremacy of western over Oriental magic," undermining the mystique of the racialized occult by recreating it through stage trickery.[841] However, this theory does not

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[837] Ibid., 80.
[838] Ibid., 195.
[839] Gaskell, *Cranford*, 280.
[840] Recchio, *Elizabeth*, 114; Zangwill, *Cleo*, 196; The fact that the Ketterings' tan skin, which facilitates the Cleo persona, is a result of outdoor labor also recalls the connections between non-white races and lower class white people explored in chapter three.
[841] During, *Modern*, 88.

account for the persistence of white conjurors who did not reveal the inauthenticity of their non-white personas after their performance had ended. The actions of conjurors like Robinson or Blavatsky more closely align with historian Alex Owen's argument that the Eastern occult became popular among middle-class British audiences because they perceived it "as attractive because it offered a spiritual alternative to weakened Anglican orthodoxy and the empty godlessness of scientific discovery, one that ostensibly operated without the requirement of faith [since] the spiritual could now be made material."[842] In other words, white audiences were more likely to perceive the Eastern occult as being more powerful than Western magic, not less. Conjurors who adopted non-white occult personas at the fin de siècle sought to profit from that perception, reinforcing it through advertising and the production of seemingly impossible performances.

I argue that it is this implicit endorsement of the power of the Eastern occult that drew such intense criticism from white conjurors who did not adopt a non-white persona, like Maskelyne. Belief in the occult was condemned as the result of drug abuse and blind fanaticism because the alternative was that the East offered a more fulfilling spiritual experience than Britain, a conclusion that was contradictory to the imperialist notion that Britain was superior in every way. Furthermore, the widespread belief in this power, as evidenced by the popularity of non-white personas in conjuring, undermined claims of white mental superiority on the basis that they were less superstitious. Winter notes that "Victorian stories of the East scripted dramas whose Oriental players performed the superstition and subordination assigned to them, confirming the power and rationality of their British masters," particularly in instances where scientific phenomena were presented as displays of occult power.[843] The willingness to accept

[842] Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 53.
[843] Winter, *Mesmerized,* 188.

what they were shown as authentically occult was used as justification for colonial expansion. This reasoning is exemplified in Baldwin's attempt to justify his usage of the title Mahatma in his conjuring act, where he claims that while he does personally believe in the occult, his "entertainment was so marvelous in its weird fascination that Fakeers and Phongyii, Brahmins and Ascetics, Laamas and Gooroos, in their amazement christened him 'the mighty monarch of the Mahatmas.'"[844] Baldwin's account simultaneously cites the authority of Eastern spiritual figures and attempts to assert the dominance of British intellect by dismissing them as superstitious. However, the former point invalidates the latter, and Baldwin's continued usage of the Mahatma title to cultivate occult authority demonstrates his own implicit endorsement of the racialized occult. Thus, the narrative of white mental superiority is undermined by the belief of whites in the non-white occult.

This undermining of white superiority did not go unnoticed. In 1971, Christine Bolt analyzed the connections drawn between "savage belief and modern spiritualism" by Victorian anthropologists, including E.B. Tylor, T.H. Huxley, and Andrew Lang, which collectively "constituted a clear attack upon the latter and an assumption of inferiority in the former."[845] The spread of belief in the occult, enforced and reiterated by conjurors performing non-white personas, became a source of anxiety for those invested in narratives of British superiority, like anthropologist Edward Clodd, who wrote in 1885 that while "both barbarous and civilized religions are a mass of curious notions and contradictions…superstition is to be expected of the lower races, not of the enlightened."[846] Significantly, presence of authentic belief in audiences is irrelevant; whether or not white British audiences actually believed conjurors possessed magical

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[844] Baldwin, *Secrets*, 6.
[845] Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) 119-20.
[846] Edward Clodd, *The Story of 'Primitive' Man* (London: Appleton, 1885), 119.

abilities, the frequent repetition that they did produced an outpouring of anxieties from both professional conjurors and social critics who feared what Stephen Arata has shown was considered an ongoing "biological, cultural, and aesthetic degeneration" which would inevitably culminate in total imperial collapse.[847] I propose that these anxieties were fostered by similar conditions to those that Patrick Brantlinger has identified in the formations of the "Imperial Gothic," a genre of fiction in which "the destructive magic of the Orient takes its revenge and Western rationality is subverted by the very superstitions it rejects."[848] Both are founded on a suspicion that the rational underpinnings of British society were not as unassailable as previous narratives of supremacy suggested. Both the Imperial Gothic and the popularity of non-white conjurors suggested that Britain was on an "atavistic decline into the primordial," regressing into uncivilized barbarism as "expressions of concern about national regression start to multiply and the British found it increasingly difficult to think of themselves as automatically progressive."[849] While Imperial Gothic novels dramatize this through protagonists undergoing allegorical descents into barbarism by "going native," the adoption of non-white personas embraced and promoted the Eastern occult as a more powerful alternative to Western performances, provoking the anxieties surrounding Britain's position in the world.

I contend that the endings of both the Signor Brunoni segment of *Cranford* and *Cleo the Magnificent* dramatize the chaos of these anxieties and propose a similar solution by removing the non-white persona and the threat they present from the story then recommending the other white characters focus on domestic enterprise. However, just as the focus on the conjuror's culpability is escalated in the later novel, so is the impact of their deception. Upon realizing he

[847] Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin De Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); for more on the fin-de-siecle anxieties surrounding degeneration, see chapter 3.
[848] Patrick Brantlinger, "Imperial Gothic," *ELT* 28.3 (1985): 243.
[849] Ibid., 247.

has squandered most of his fortune and alienated those close to him for a poor girl from Dover rather than a mystical dream-woman from the East, Morgan attempts to drown himself by wading into the sea. He only comes to his senses after hearing "the throb of a mighty ship's engines from afar, considering what mastery over the deeps they represented, and realizing that he, too, was master of the boundless waters, buoyant at his will."[850] After swimming to shore, he resolves to follow the advice of Kettering's father, "to labour, and by the work of his own hands to pay those whom Cleo had wronged!"[851] Kettering, who is "not the kind of woman to stay…with a penniless man, who was nothing to her but her husband – she with her gorgeous demands upon life," flees into the night to find a new life, and Morgan becomes her father's apprentice.[852] Morgan's shift in focus demonstrates the novel's message that engagement in practical commercial work is a solution to chaos produced by chasing the dream-like occult. Just as the ladies of Cranford avert the panic by disregarding the Eastern occult in favor of community unity, Morgan averts his despair by allowing his nebulously occult ideals to fall away as he becomes an industrious worker. Furthermore, the emphasis on the ship's engines during Morgan's revelation reasserts the strength of familiar science and technology. While fantasizing about the occult leaves Morgan helpless, "timidly peeping from behind [Cleo's] skirts" as she shaped his life with reassurances of her occult power, the mechanical engines remind him that he possesses "mastery" over his situation.[853] Thus, the novel reasserts the narrative of colonial power identified by Winter, in which the claims of non-white practitioners of the occult to command nature pale in comparison to "British science that alone could discern

[850] Zangwill, *Cleo*, 90.
[851] Ibid., 91.
[852] Ibid., 94.
[853] Ibid., 52; Ibid., 90.

and control the causes of natural phenomena."[854] Morgan becomes a representative of middle-class masculinity, led astray by the siren call of the racialized occult and restored by industry, averting the decline that would otherwise bring about his demise.[855] Ultimately, both novels eliminate the threatening non-white persona; Brunoni is revealed to be a false persona in *Cranford* and Cleo runs away from her husband and Dover in *Cleo the Magnificent*. For the other characters, the novels suggest a life of middle-class domestic engagement in order to rectify the chaos wrought by the introduction of the non-white occult. In *Cranford*, the ladies devote themselves to cooking meals and playing with Brown's child while he recovers, and in *Cleo the Magnificent*, Morgan lets Kettering leave as he devotes himself to the commercial sphere. These idyllic scenes portray white middle class endeavors as stable and restorative by positioning them in opposition to the occult, which is portrayed as chaotically nebulous and racialized.

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[854] Winter, *Mesmerized*, 188.
[855] This escalation in criticism when the perpetrator is a woman also parallels the escalation of anxiety surrounding mesmeric women examined in chapter two.

Conclusion

This thesis offers a unique argument for the racialization of the occult in Victorian novels. It closely analyzes a wide variety of canonical and non-canonical British novels published from 1850 to 1900 and places the representations of the occult characters they feature in conversation with the discourse surrounding race and the occult during this time. My arguments are grounded in evidence provided by historical documents including periodicals, travelogues, letters, diary entries, and official Parliamentary reports.

This thesis demonstrates how the different occult practices that shape each chapter's focus were closely associated with non-white characters in the novels that featured them and with the scientific thinking and historical context when those novels were published. I have identified a consistent emphasis on five key characteristics that racialize the portrayal of occult practitioners in the novels: physical darkness, a comparison to dangerous animals, a threat posed to the white characters, the framing of the occult character as representative of their entire race, and the eventual removal of the occult character from the story. These elements appear in all of the novels used in this thesis with only minor variation. I have shown how these characteristics are present across different genres of fiction published in the second half of the nineteenth century, emphasizing that while individual characters are shaped more specifically by the prevailing discussions of race and the occult that existed during the time of their publication, these core characteristics remain throughout the Victorian period. They are also present in representations of different races, classes, and genders, reinforcing the association of "the Occult" with "the Other." My argument has been substantiated by an analysis of the popular and scientific conceptions of non-white races, specifically the belief in characteristics inherent in one's race. I have demonstrated how racial characteristics were further conceived of as being

inherent in the occult practices that were believed to have originated within these racial groups. This is most apparent in novels that feature white characters who engage in the occult. These white characters are either described as possessing the same qualities of non-white races or they take on the racial characteristics of non-white groups after they engage with the occult and are similarly removed from the narrative, a racial change believed to be so powerful that it spurred Thomas South to gather up and burn his daughter's treatise on alchemy, lest it corrupt those unequipped to engage with it. Given the close association between race and the occult in literature, I have concluded that the novels I have selected for this thesis are representative of the ways that British novels participated in, contributed to, and commented on the racialization of the occult that occurred throughout the nineteenth century in Britain. As the novels I have selected have shown, readers of realist, gothic, detective, and sensation novels were all exposed to similar depictions of race and the occult, illustrating the importance of literary culture in reflecting and shaping public discourse. Whether readers are transported to quaint rural townships grappling with encroaching modernity, seaside estates full of secrets and half-truths, or locales that resemble London's darkened underbelly, they encounter familiarly racialized practitioners of the occult who threaten the white protagonists and the society they inhabit.

This thesis is not an end point; rather, it presents opportunities for future research and the potential to build on and extend the conclusions it reaches. In particular, an investigation of the racialization of occult practices beyond mesmerism, alchemy, and conjuring that I have included as well as in Spiritualism could connect to the existing scholarship produced by Christine Ferguson, Alex Owen, Sarah Willburn, or other prominent scholars.[856] Alternatively, one could

[856] Christine Ferguson, *Determined Spirits (*Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Sarah Willburn, "The Savage Magnet," *Women's Writing* 15.3 (2008): 436-53.

investigate or expand upon the texts and broader topics that I noted in the Introduction which were excluded from this thesis for one reason or another. Another area for research is an expansion of the ways in which science was depicted as an inherently white enterprise in Victorian literature in opposition to the racialized occult, which I have analyzed only briefly. This approach would build on the research that Heather Ellis has done to show how the discourse on scientific empiricism mirrored the discourse on Victorian conceptions of middle-class white masculinity.[857] Similarly, a more-depth analysis of Egypt's place in the Victorian imagination could be expanded, particularly in connection with the work being done by Eleanor Dobson.[858] This line of research could also extend beyond the nineteenth century. An examination of the racializing elements of modern horror or gothic narratives could follow the work recently established by Darryl Jones, who has also explored the interplay between society and the messages contained in both canonical and non-canonical representations of dangerous figures within it. In his book *Sleeping with the Lights On*, Jones examines the relationship between modern horror and the Victorian occult, particularly the "re-emphasis…on hidden meanings, concealed or rejected knowledge, and other worlds."[859] This connection between contemporary and Victorian anxieties offers an opportunity to synthesize our respective areas of research and another potential direction for my research. Finally, this thesis provides a basis for a further investigation into how Victorian conjurations of race influenced the continuation of the practice in the twentieth century, such as that conducted by Meilin Chinn in her article "Race Magic and

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[857] Heather Ellis, "Knowledge, Character, and Professionalisation in Nineteenth-Century British Science," *History of Education* 43.6 (2014): 777-92.

[858] Eleanor Dobson, *Writing the Sphinx* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Critical Studies in Victorian Culture, 2020).

[859] Darryl Jones, *Sleeping with the Lights On* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 61.

the Yellow Peril."[860] Finally, while the postcolonial scholars I have mentioned were acknowledged primarily as scholars whose work guided the theoretical framework I constructed when selecting the novels I analyzed in this thesis, their work could underpin a thoroughly postcolonial reading of these texts in a similar theoretical vein as opposed to the evidentiary approach I have taken.

The racialization of the occult is a relevant and vibrant topic deserving of further research. In Victorian literary and cultural analyses, the relationship between race and the occult is an underexplored but impactful element, intersecting with scholarly discussions of race, class, and gender across the British Empire. Outside of this field, the racialization of the occult offers insight into many of the same discussions that are occurring today regarding narratives of immigration, racial tension, accepted forms of knowledge, hierarchical power structures, and the ways in which dominant groups attempt to reinforce definitions of "the Other" through representations of minority groups.

[860] Meilin Chinn, "Race Magic and the Yellow Peril," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 77.4 (2019): 423-33.

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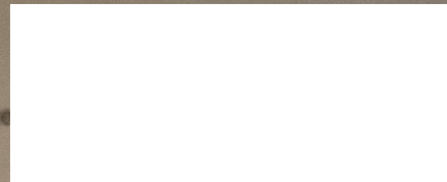

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