Reading the Entranced Mind: Late Victorian Popular Fictions of Race



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Abstract

The thesis examines why and how late Victorian popular writers repeatedly evoked the racial 'other' while depicting states of unconsciousness. In novels by Edward Bulwer Lytton, Grant Allen, Marie Corelli, Florence Marryat and Devkinandan Khatri, characters in a state of trance either enter an oriental psycho-geographical space or morph into a 'primitive,' 'savage' alternative version of themselves. The thesis demonstrates that through such moments of entrancement the novels conceptualize distinctive notions of the unconscious and racial 'other'-ness, often imagining a complex relationship between the two. Moving away from the dominant Freudian approach to the unconscious, I trace a fictional history of the psyche through a survey of lesser-known fiction. Influenced by a range of psychological, religious and philosophical discourses, these works treat an altered state of mind as a condition for imaginative creativity. A racial logic underlies the understanding of the creative unconscious: most of these novelists saw an 'oriental' frame of mind as a vital aid to accessing states of trance and imagination. An examination of the significance of the racial 'other' in novelists' artistic credo reveals the heterogeneous ways in which they imagined and identified with the 'other' in their narratives. While they all regarded imagination as a function of the unconscious, most also considered reading as an activity that could induce entrancement. The thesis considers how, by inviting or inducing readerly entrancement, authors attempted to shape the reader's psyche in keeping with their idea of a racially evolved or regressed mind.

In the introduction, I lay out the broad argument and the scope of the thesis. Thereafter, chapter one reads the representation of the quasi-oriental Vril-Ya in Edward Bulwer Lytton's satire *The Coming Race* (1871) against his conception of the creative unconscious. The chapter argues that, unlike Lytton's other romances, this

novel depicts a perverted unconscious incapable of imaginative ideation. Chapter two looks at Grant Allen's *Kalee's Shrine* (1886), an 'imperial Gothic' novel that documents his engagement with the evolutionary anthropological theory of unconscious organic memory. In contrast to other Gothic novels, Allen's novel reveals not so much an anxiety about the 'other' as a desire to establish a connection with the colonized 'other.' Chapter three focuses on Marie Corelli's Gothic romance *Ziska* (1897), in particular, her portrayal of a Christianized state of enchantment. The chapter argues that Corelli's fixation with Christianity produces an orientalist novel that is curiously indifferent to the embodied experience of race. Chapter four examines how Florence Marryat's *Blood of the Vampire* (1897) portrays a racial hybrid equipped with malignant unconscious powers. The chapter contends that Marryat's novel sensationalizes the fear of the psychologically intrusive but unfeeling 'other' with the aim of preserving 'wholesome' British values of sympathy in the reader. Chapter five turns its gaze to the Indian writer Devkinandan Khatri's Hindi romance *Chandrakanta* (1888) which treats trance states as undermining the development of a 'conscious' Hindu nationalist identity. I end the thesis with a Conclusion that briefly discusses the urgency of understanding the complexities of inter-racial mental connection within contemporary debates on cultural appropriation and representation.

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List of Abbreviations

S.P.R.	Society of Psychical Research
CR	*The Coming Race*
KS	*Kalee's Shrine*
CK	*Chandrakanta*
BOV	*The Blood of the Vampire*

List of illustrations: FIG 1. Cat figurine owned by the Khatri family in Banaras, India
FIG 2. Image from 1903 ed. of *Chandrakanta*
FIG 3. Image from 1903 ed. of *Chandrakanta*

Citation Style used in the thesis: MLA 8th edition.

Introduction

The year is 1846. A British surgeon named James Esdaile, serving with the East India Company, is operating on Indian bodies in Hooghly hospital, Calcutta. In what seems to be a strange socio-medical experiment, Esdaile surgically operates on natives' bodies without administering anaesthesia (nitrous oxide or ether) of any kind. His account—*Mesmerism in India, and its Practical Application in Surgery and Medicine* (1846)—clinically lists the body parts removed: 'arm amputated, breast ditto, large tumour in the groin cut off' (22). The names of the patients are conveniently omitted. Each individual is reduced to a severed organ in this catalogue of discarded anatomical offcuts—an effect which seems both uncanny and oddly sensational. Even more sensational, though, is the fact that instead of anaesthetizing his patients, Esdaile mesmerizes them. Citing a high recovery rate for his patients, he attributes the method's success to the native's heightened receptivity to mesmerism:

> Taking the population of Bengal generally, they are a feeble, ill-nourished race, remarkably deficient in nervous energy; and natural debility of constitution being still further lowered by disease, will probably account for their being so readily subdued by the Mesmerist. The success I have met with is mainly to be attributed, I believe, to my patients being the simple unsophisticated children of nature; neither thinking, questioning, nor remonstrating, but passively submitting to my pleasure, without in the smallest degree understanding my object or intentions. How far artificial man may have forfeited his birthright I have not yet had the means of knowing … and if the proud sons of civilization will condescend to return for a moment to the feet of their mother Nature, they also will probably benefit by her bounties. (Esdaile, 37-8)

As can be seen, Esdaile's reasons simultaneously demean and idealize the native. At first, he traces the natives' susceptibility to unconscious suggestion to their 'feeble' nervous constitution (Esdaile 37). Soon after, Esdaile claims that the natives are the romanticized 'unsophisticated children of nature' with an infantile mind not yet corrupted by civilization (Esdaile 37).

In his attempt to legitimize his mesmeric method, Esdaile struggles to uphold the distinction between civilized and 'savage' mental constitutions. If, as he claims, mesmerism was indeed beneficial, then, he had to present the 'primitive' susceptibility to unconsciousness as a desirable state. Later in the passage, Esdaile urges the 'rational' British man to cultivate the very child-like susceptibility of the native. To properly benefit from mesmerism, he argues, the civilized mind must learn to momentarily reconnect with its authentic self by surrendering to 'mother nature' (Esdaile 38). In political terms, submitting to mesmeric influence requires the colonizer to mentally adopt the submissive position of the colonized patient. Becoming unconscious, then carries the promise of mental and physical improvement but also political disempowerment.

The scene where Esdaile operates on native bodies has all the makings of a Gothic sensation novel: while the nineteenth-century reader would, one imagines, be thrilled by the close proximity of racially different bodies, the fact that Esdaile psychically exercises control over the native, heightens the mystery. Esdaile's mental colonization of the natives securely places him, the British person, in the position of power—he interprets the natives' actions, intentions and assumes consent on their behalf. However, the intangible nature of the psychic contact also opens the possibility of the direction of influence being reversed—if their minds could connect, then, the native subject could mentally influence the British psyche. Thirty years after Esdaile's failed experiment (as chloroform gained popularity as a preferred anaesthetic method, mesmerism was no longer considered viable), the unconscious and the 'primitive' mind continued to be regularly associated in popular fiction. Between 1870 and 1900, Gothic romances such as Richard Marsh's *Beetle* (1897) and Rider Haggard's *She* (1888) repeatedly depicted the unconscious psyche in racialized

terms. This thesis looks at multiple configurations of this trope in lesser-known popular fictions of the 1870s to the late 1890s: Edward Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871), Grant Allen's *Kalee's Shrine* (1886), Marie Corelli's *Ziska* (1897), Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) and Devkinandan Khatri's Hindi novel *Chandrakanta* (1888). I ask: what relationship did these Victorian writers conceive between notions of latent unconscious psyche and the racial 'other'? Departing from the dominant critical tendency to develop psychoanalytic readings of the romance and Gothic tradition, the thesis proposes that we retrieve the authors' own conception of unconsciousness in relation to racial alterity. In so doing, the thesis aims to track the multiple, changing, and often conflicting meanings of the notions of unconscious and racial influence that emerged in this period. Through a close reading of novels and extensive archival research, I draw a picture of a range of historicized models of the racialized unconscious present in these texts. The thesis further examines how authors' portrayal of scenes of entrancement is geared towards producing a particular state of reverie for the reader that carries racial connotations.

Entranced Unconscious and Race

Novelistic representations of states of unconsciousness in late Victorian novels often appear in conjunction with the racial 'other.' In these narratives, dreams become the gateway to a fantastical oriental dreamscape or, alternatively, unconsciousness triggers a white British protagonist's turn to a more degenerate 'primitive,' 'savage' self. While the notions of race and unconsciousness had earlier been conjoined in sensation novels like Wilkie Collins' *Moonstone* (1868), the thesis examines a revival of this compound trope later in the century. In this period, trance appears to be the medium, the language through which the Western mind makes sense of the racial 'other.' Not merely coincidental, the yoking of the unconscious with the racial 'other'

in fiction reveals how both provoked the Victorians' curiosity in similar ways. The thesis demonstrates that, in their fiction, authors drew not only on existing understandings of unconscious psychic states and race but also paired them to generate new mythologies/fictions.

Broadly speaking, the trope of 'entrancement with and by the "other"' tends to concentrate in romance and Gothic novels—genres that regained popularity in the latter half of the century, often conflating in a singular form called the Gothic romance. I will begin by outlining how this trope was imagined in romances before moving on to a discussion of the Gothic. In romances (defined as narrative fictions operating outside the constraints of realism), states of unconsciousness often act as passageways into a psycho-geographical space, a land that appears to be a hyper-embellished version of the East. The thesis examines how and why, in these novels, an altered psychic state is seen to be the prerequisite for conjuring a fantastical Orient. In so doing, it aims to nuance our understanding of the relationship between states of consciousness and imagined geographies. If the Orient is the stuff that dreams are made of, then, the thesis examines how the Victorians conceptualized the dream to begin with. In setting up this equivalence between the unconscious and the Orient, did authors see the Orient as an unconscious projection? Or as a figure for the unconscious itself? Was the dream a step toward accessing this exotic space or is the Orient itself the dream? The thesis argues that as much as the representation says something about historical attitudes to race, imagining the Orient was thus also a mode through which the authors were trying to understand the workings of the unconscious.

Edward Said, in his influential book *Orientalism* (1978), claims that the Orient as envisioned by the West was an imaginative construct, more rooted in fantasy than

in reality. Drawing on the Foucauldian understanding of discursive power, Said argues that Western writers abused their imaginative license to produce fictional worlds in which 'the real Orient…has been represented in such a way that it is absented' (Varisco 238). According to Said, by the end of the nineteenth century, a false/fictional representation of the Orient was popularized and normalized as the real essence of a geographical space. For Said, the argument that the East is a fictional construct becomes an end in itself, showcasing the West's attempt to deny it agency and history. Though politically powerful, Said's thesis is overtly suspicious towards any Western attempt at representing the East, to the extent that, for him, 'the very idea of representation…is by nature artificial and invented…' (Varisco 240). Said's blanket suspicion of representation *per se* prevents him from exploring how Victorian authors themselves thought of issues of representation in relation to imagination. The late nineteenth century, as I show, was a period when authors engaged in rich, complex debates on creativity, fictional representation and truth. British authors were aware of the imaginative status of their writings and ascribed varying degrees of truth-value to it: not all thought that their representations were true. Rejecting the equation between realism and truth, authors self-reflexively contested the truth- value and meaning of literary representation, often formulating alternative definitions of truth. As I demonstrate, there was a great degree of diversity in the way authors perceived the validity of the Orient they presented. For instance, Marie Corelli qualified her representation of the Orient as a spiritual but not an empirical truth. At no point does Corelli demand that the reader engage with her vision of the Orient because it is accurate; in fact, for her, the spiritual Orient she presents is 'true' because it is removed from petty concerns of reality.

While the thesis too is concerned with the relationship between the Orient and fictionality, it does not simply argue that representations of the Orient were false because they were fictional. Rather, it aims to expand our understanding of *how* fictions of the Orient took shape as psychological constructs. My study shows that the Orient provides a way of thinking through how authors conceived of the act of fiction-making in relation to the psyche. In the late nineteenth century, many authors used the Orient as a symbol to work through and articulate their philosophy of imagination. This relationship was, in turn, mediated through the notion of the unconscious mind. Influenced by a wide range of psychological, philosophical and religious ideas, fiction writers increasingly regarded the unconscious as the source of creative powers, as the seat of imagination. In *Ardath* (1889), through the figure of the poet Alwyn, Marie Corelli suggested that imagination was best expressed in the state of unconsciousness: 'He had just finished reading from beginning to the end of the poem he had compressed in his trance;—there was not a line in it he could have wished altered' (94). Earlier in the century, Bulwer-Lytton made the oriental mind the authority on creative trance as he wrote in *Zanoni* (1842): '[T]hat third state of being which the Indian sage rightly described as being between sleep and walking' gives birth to 'poetry, music and Art…' (178).

Supposedly susceptible to unconscious suggestion, the oriental mind, though seen as inherently backward, was also framed as possessing a heightened capacity for imaginative reflection. By self-inducing unconsciousness during the process of writing, authors possibly aimed to temporarily inhabit the mental subjectivity of the 'native' subject. Portraying scenes of unconscious thought and action became a mode of experimenting with and further exploring what they perceived as the oriental frame of mind. This correlation between the dream and the East negatively influenced the

portrayal of Oriental characters: mostly seen as dreamy, whimsical and irrational, Eastern characters in orientalist fiction were denied a complex psychological interiority even as they were gifted with special psychic powers. This, however, was not always the case. Often, the authors' deep investment in unconscious processes produced a more ambivalent representation of the Orient that mirrored their own complex, ambiguous, sometimes positive identification with different racial subjects. There is thus no singular, straightforward way in which the relationship between the unconscious and the Orient plays out in the novels I consider—rather, we encounter a contradictory, untidy terrain that needs careful, nuanced decoding. As Srinivas Aravamudan has cogently argued, orientalism is 'a fictional mode for dreaming with the Orient—dreaming with it by constructing and translating fictions about it, pluralizing views of it, inventing it, by reimagining it, unsettling its meaning, brooding over it' (8). To argue that orientalism is not merely a form of dreaming *about* the Orient but *with* it is to suggest that the Orient is integral to the very act of imagining—it is both the means to 'orient' imaginative exploration and the end-product of this exercise. Studying the Orient then tells us about as much about the creative vision of imagination as it does about Victorian models of race.

A better understanding of the author's perception of imagination in this period can also challenge assumptions about the coherence of the concept of the Orient. It is standard critical practice to read the representation of the Orient as an articulation of a racist impulse. This thesis argues that while the Orient, as imagined by nineteenth-century authors, was reduced to an ahistorical signifier; it was also a compound symbol pregnant with a heterogeneity of meaning. A closer attention to the kind of role the Orient plays within the logic of the novels reveals that authors used it to ends that were far more varied than typically presupposed. Often, the very fact that authors

instrumentalized the Orient as a symbol for their specific agendas made it into a placeholder for things other than the East. A caveat: in trying to complicate the interpretation of the Orient, the thesis is not arguing that imagination's scope and sphere of operation transcend race. Rather, I am attempting to fine-tune our understanding of the ways in which race existed in the Victorian imagination— both in its explicitly racist and more ambivalent, exploratory forms. Thus, at times, the thesis is committed to understanding the particular nature of racism better, while, at other times, it reveals that authors mobilized the Orient as an approach to subjects beyond, or aside from, race.

The thesis takes a cue from Lisa Lowe's helpful criticism and adjustment of Said's strong position about the internal heterogeneity of orientalist discourse.[1] Lowe claims 'on the one hand, that orientalism consists of an uneven matrix of orientalist situations across different cultural and historical sites, and on the other, that each of these orientalisms is internally complex and unstable' (5). Like Lowe, I argue that literary authors orientalised the East in ways that do not always fit into the two binary extremes identified by Said—deification and derogation (often seen as two sides of the same coin). I wish to adopt a more open-minded critical mode while reading the presence of race in texts: How did these authors apprehend and, more importantly, imagine racial difference and what place did they attribute to it in the artistic imagination? While there is no doubt that the works of a few of the authors in question are indeed racist, the thesis asks—In what ways can we understand the authors' racial politics as complex effects of their engaged negotiation with contemporary discourses of the mind? Again, this is not a plea to read these authors'

[1] For critics arguing for an assessment of heterogeneity within orientalist discourse, see: Reina Lewis. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*. Routledge, 1996 and Meyda Yegenoglu. *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist reading of Orientalism*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

works as being beyond the charge of racism but to confront the myriad influences that shaped their racial politics.

In fact, the thesis argues that Said's formulation of orientalism suffers from a limiting homogeneity because it undertheorizes the psyche, in particular the unconscious, in relation to the Orient. Said's work has been critiqued before for his distorted use of Foucault's notion of discourse. In Said's theorization of the discursive workings of orientalism, discourse works on two levels—the conscious and the unconscious, the spoken and the unspoken, the manifest and the latent. Said argues that, while at the discursive level, orientalism takes different disciplinary forms, at the root of all the western commentary on the East lies a pre-discursive uniformity, a sameness of thought. Said does not exactly clarify what he means by latent 'pre-discursive' orientalism—it appears to be an unsaid evaluation of the Orient that permeates all Western efforts to interpret the East across time. In his own words:

> The distinction I am making is really between an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity, which I shall call latent Orientalism, and the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth, which I shall call manifest Orientalism. *Whatever change occurs in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism; the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant.* In the nineteenth-century writers I analyz[e] … the differences in their ideas about the Orient can be characterized as exclusively manifest differences, differences in form and personal style, *rarely in basic content*. Every one of them kept intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability its supine malleability; this is why every writer on the Orient, from Renan to Marx (ideologically speaking), or from the most rigorous scholars (Lane and Sacy) to the most powerful imaginations (Flaubert and Nerval), saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption. (emphasis added; 206)

Here, Said uses the unconscious in a specific Foucauldian sense, distinct from a psychoanalytic 'negative' reading of the unconscious that focuses on drawing out repressed meaning. Said, like Foucault, is concerned 'not so much [with] hidden meaning, but [with] what creates the possibility of such hidden meanings in the first

place' (insertion mine; Tatlow 89).[2] For him, Western scholars have shared an unspoken uniform code about the Orient, deeply embedded in the 'unconscious' of a societal mode of thinking that exists implicitly and is articulated differently at different historical stages. In an account that focuses on tracing shifts in a discourse over time, it is strange to see Said confidently generalize the persistent hidden motivations of the Western psyche. To argue that Western individuals across time were all driven by an impulse to dominate and stereotype the East is to unfairly and ahistorically homogenize Western thought and its will to power.

Charges against Said's homogenizing of the operations of orientalism in the Western imagination have been made before by several scholars.[3] Stefan Hoffman, in his interrogation, sees it as a problem in Said's conceptualization of consciousness itself: '[F]or Said, neither the ontological East/West divide nor the Western consciousness are constructed at all but rather, are pre-existing entities' (51). In his reading of Said, Homi Bhabha dwells on Said's notion of the latent unconscious to draw out a more 'ambivalent' psychoanalytical 'unconscious repository of fantasy, imaginative writings' that, he suggests, complicates Said's binary East versus West framework (*The Location of Culture* 102). Against such allegations, including my own, it can be argued that Said is not primarily concerned with the psychological

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[2] Meyda Yegenoglu argues that Said glosses over the psychoanalytic implications of the latent unconscious: 'Although Said refers, in passing, to the concept of latent Orientalism as the realm where unconscious desires, fantasies, and dreams about the Orient reside, he never elaborates its nature nor the processes and mechanisms involved in its working. He does not engage in a discussion of its role in the constitution of the relationship between the Western subject and its Oriental other by subjecting this unconscious site to a more detailed psychoanalytic reading' (23).

[3] For more critiques of Said's essentialization of the West in orientalist discourse, see: Dennis Porter, 'Orientalism and its Problems,' *The Politics of Theory: Proceedings of the Essex Sociology of Literature Conference, Jul7 1982*, edited by Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, and Diane Loxley, University of Essex, 1983, pp. 179-93; Peter van der Veer and Carol Breckenridge argue that 'Said seems at points to refer to a singular, transhistorical orientalist discourse, tracing it back to ancient Greek theatre, that really essentializes "the West" to a considerable extent' (5) in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, edited by Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994; Aijaz Ahmad, 'Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said' in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. Verso, 1998 and Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*. University of Washington, 2007.

question of consciousness because, in Foucauldian style, he aims to excavate a systematic socio-cultural discourse of knowledge as power. Rather than theorizing psychological motivations, Said maps out a generalized discursive attitude of the West towards the East. As James Clifford has stated, the particular language of 'discourse analysis' used by Said 'is … not interested in what they [the authors] have to say or feel as subjects' (32) Yet, as Clifford highlights, Said's theoretical framework is not so free of psychological concerns: switching from a discursive analysis to a 'literary critic;' a 'psycho-historian's' commentary, Said repeatedly assesses the psychic life of the writers (32). In as much as orientalism is about a breakdown of a larger socio-political mode of exerting power, it is thus also seen to be about the mental operations of individuals' psyches.

Surely, the recognition that orientalism is a complex psychological endeavour demands that we pay attention to the mental aspect of the fictive creation of the Orient. This involves closely examining the nature of the unconscious understood to underpin orientalist representation, especially, in light of changes in the conceptualization of the unconscious. In the late nineteenth century, authors were self-reflexively meditating on the role of the unconscious within their diverse notions of imagination. As I show, the notion of the Orient further helped them pitch and anchor claims about the particular psychological nature of the unconscious. By not relying on psychoanalytic a priori assumptions about the mind, the thesis thus treats the unconscious itself as a historically evolving conceptual category. In short, it argues that since the dream, the state of being enchanted, is at the root of the orientalist imagination, the particular historicized development of the unconscious mind ought to be studied.

In addition to examining the orientalist tendencies found in romances, the thesis looks at the framing of the racialized unconscious in late nineteenth-century Gothic fiction. While oriental romances often treated the unconscious as a passport to a spiritually enlightened East, the unconscious in Gothic fiction paves the way for a degenerative 'savage' self. As a genre, the Gothic has been seen to be specially suited to the exploration of unconscious impulses in relation to the racial 'other.' Andrew Smith and William Hughes emphasize how the Gothic aligns with postcolonial conceptions of the psyche: '[T]he Gothic and accounts of postcolonialism indicate the presence of a shared interest in challenging post-enlightenment notions of rationality' (*Empire and Gothic* 1). The Gothic's exploration of the irrational has earned it a reputation for questioning the coherent, rational subject of Enlightenment. This has further led to a widespread critical consensus that the Gothic's interest in 'seemingly idiosyncratic and "excessive" responses' is inherently psychoanalytic in impulse (Masse 308). Not all critics however see the Gothic form and psychoanalysis as seamlessly interchangeable: a few, like Andrew Smith, press for a more complex negotiation between the two, claiming that '[t]he Gothic does not merely anticipate the arrival of Freud, it also … identifies the inconsistencies and incoherences which govern Freud's accounts of the unconscious and the uncanny' (*Gothic Radicalism* 7).

However, despite such attempts, the Freudian unconscious still remains the focal referent in Gothic studies. While psychoanalytic concepts like 'uncanny doubling' and 'repression' assist in analysing the fraught subject in Gothic texts, most readings yield a universalized interpretation of the mind. As Jarlath Killeen claims, a historicized reading of the Gothic, as seen in Robert Mighall's *A Geography of Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (1999), questions a psychoanalytic approach that treats the Gothic unconscious as inherently subversive and universalized (182).

Without ascribing an a priori subversive or conservative edge to the Gothic unconscious, I attempt to historicize the unconscious by contextualizing it within the author's specific understanding of the mind. Readings, so far, have ignored the possibility of authors' developing their own framework of the unconscious that, I argue, can further complicate psychoanalytic assumptions. For instance, Grant Allen's *Kalee's Shrine* (1897) complicates the uncanny doubling we associate with the Gothic mode by drawing on an evolutionary anthropological notion of the unconscious. Conventionally, the doubling in the protagonist Olga's self (she is a British woman in the day and devotee of an Indian Goddess at night) would be seen to mark a radical rupture in the self—a return of an atavistic past that lies dormant in a 'superior' racial mind. A closer inspection of the novel however reveals that the uncanny reversal of the British self to primitivism is not meant to disorient or disturb the reader. Rather, Allen wants the British reader to accept the presence of the racial 'other' as a normalized and ingrained part of the civilized races' unconscious.

The predominant psychoanalytic model has defined the Gothic unconscious as the zone of unrepressed thoughts that permits an unleashing of tabooed fantasies and desires. Readings, so far, have assumed that these texts express general anxieties suggestive of shifts in racial, sexual and imperial power relations in the period. Fred Botting in his compelling account of the Gothic unconscious questions the simplistic application of the repression model to Gothic texts, claiming that '[i]t seems a little glib…to find unconscious depths in Gothic surfaces, a little too easy to discover secret meanings' (19). Rather than necessarily and suspiciously locating a repressed meaning in Gothic texts, I retrieve the authors' own understanding of the purpose of the Gothic unconscious. There has been a tendency to ascribe to the Gothic unconscious a limited affective repertoire, mostly consisting of feelings of anxiety,

fear or trauma, especially in the context of colonizer/colonized relations. The thesis departs from these readings by tracing how other emotions, not conventionally associated with the Gothic, frame and inform interracial encounters. In my analysis, authors, writing within the Gothic mode, often used the mesmerizing encounter with the 'other' to explore the nature and limits of sympathy to be extended to the 'other.' Grant Allen's novel uses the Gothic imaginary to actively establish a sympathetic connection with the racially 'primitive' ancestor, and by extension, the colonized native. By contrast, Florence Marryat's racist novel *The Blood of the Vampire* refuses to see the colonized individual as a subject or object worthy of sympathy. Though Marryat's novel, at first, seems like a typical Gothic tale, it deviates from traditional Gothic by warning the British reader to not feel too much disgust or horror.

Stephen Arata has famously argued that the 'savagery' trope in *Dracula* expresses an 'anxiety' about the colonized 'other' striking back and avenging the wrongs committed by the colonizer nation ('The Occidental Tourist' 623). Drawing on Nicholas Daly's (and Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall's) critique that Gothic criticism has over-used the 'anxiety theory,' the thesis too argues that the trope of psychic colonization is often imbued with meanings other than an anxiety of imperial backlash (34). The registers in which apprehensions about race and empire are expressed in these texts can converge but also diverge: that is, novels could be highly anxious of the racial 'other' yet be remarkably hostile towards the imperial enterprise and vice versa. For instance, while Grant Allen's Gothic novel *Kalee's Shrine* portrays the 'other' as racially inferior, it is highly critical of the increasing British indifference towards the imperial enterprise. Both Marie Corelli's *Ziska* and Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* too question our received understanding of Victorian texts' commentary on empire by not framing imperialism as a binary West versus

East issue. The thesis is thus committed to teasing out the distinct significations of race, Orient and empire that often overlap but also carry a complex meaning independent of the other.

Why popular fiction?

To trace a narrative of the relationship between unconscious experience and race in the late nineteenth century, the thesis turns to lesser-known works of popular fiction in this period. Drawing a picture of the unprecedented boom in the publishing industry, Mary Hammond writes that 'novel production rose from an average of 900 new adult and juvenile novels per year between 1875 and 1886 to 1,618 per year by 1914' (4). With the triple-decker disappearing and large-scale democratization of the literary market, shilling-shockers, penny-dreadfuls, sensation romances and Gothic novellas flooded the market, catering to the middle-class reader (Schneider 127; Daly 118). Within this thriving arena of fiction-production, I choose the following authors to focus on: Edward Bulwer Lytton, Grant Allen, Marie Corelli, Florence Marryat and Devkinandan Khatri.

While these authors have been studied before, I choose lesser-known works that have not received much attention. With the exception of Lytton's *The Coming Race* and Khatri's *Chandrakanta* in the Indian context, the novels I examine did not gain immense popularity in their own time. My rationale for choosing these novels may seem counter-intuitive: though these texts were a middling success, I argue that their status as items of mass-consumption offers insights into routine, everyday forms of popular reading. As novels consumed by Victorians while travelling or to while away time, these texts both reflected and shaped the 'meanings which circulate and become embedded in the lived cultures of people's everyday life' (Storey, *Cultural Studies* 138). The thesis demonstrates that the novels diversify, expand and challenge

our understanding of the popular as a homogeneous terrain that recycled formulaic themes and plots. Not yet a fully ossified separate domain, the domain of the popular was a heterogeneous and unstable field at the fin-de-siècle. Though by the modernist period, lines between high and low became more stringently drawn, Andrew McCann argues that 'the postulation of a high culture/low culture divide has limited traction at the end of the nineteenth century' (87). The fuzzy, permeable boundaries between high/low culture, in Nicholas Daly's opinion, created a fertile ground for generic and artistic experimentation that authors exploited to their advantage (117). It is not surprising then that, in light of this fluidity, authors, like Marie Corelli, who were later regarded as lowbrow, could be considered 'both "trashy" and highbrow' (Federico 9).

To carve a niche within an indeterminate field, authors attempted to redefine the value and meaning of popular by inventing their own distinct aesthetic stamp. To this end, they brought their scientific, spiritual or religious beliefs to bear on their fiction. However, even though authors used their fiction to explicitly air their views, they had to do so without compromising on readers' entertainment. That is, while authors engaged in complex meaning-making, their ideas had to be made accessible for popular consumption. What strategies did authors adopt to not simplify the thrust of their ideas but also cater to demands of popular taste? The thesis engages with the authors' defence of their writings by attending to the ways they aimed to entertain while prioritizing their creative vision. Marie Corelli did not think of her work as light-hearted popular fiction, rather, she re-imagined her romances as a serious vehicle for Christian didactism. In a similar vein, Grant Allen refused to write fiction that would cater to the growing appetite for the supernatural, but, in effect, repackaged supernaturalism as 'scientific' fiction. Labelling his works as 'hill-top'

novels, Allen signalled that the ideas put forth by his fiction qualitatively 'rose' above the rest of popular writing.

The thesis argues that authors' handling of genres was also marked by their efforts to develop a unique authorial style. Critic Ken Gelder argues that popular fiction regularly engages in 'genre bending;' a tweaking of traditional genres that, in turn, produces a complex generic hybrid (2). More than a ploy to grab readers' attention, 'genre bending,' for Gelder, demonstrates artistic competence that is directed towards managing and facilitating the readerly experience (6). Like Gelder, I, too, suggest that authors tailored the form of their works in ways that best reflected their artistic philosophy. In particular, the authors' attempts to hybridize genres or preserve formal purity often followed the racialized logic inherent to their concept of imagination.

As the thesis is concerned with attending to non-British voices, it moves beyond the imperial metropole to consider an example of popular fiction produced in nineteenth-century India. In the last chapter, I look at a popular romance by Devkinandan Khatri titled *Chandrakanta* (1888) in the context of the thriving Hindi publishing industry in Varanasi, India. As readership in Hindi grew by the end of the century, romances and penny-dreadfuls became increasingly popular—a development that, I argue, engendered a new kind of fiction-reader within the Indian populace. I choose to focus on an Indian author because of the kind of literary (and intellectual) traffic that took place between Britain and India in the late nineteenth century. As Priya Joshi has demonstrated in *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English Novel in India* (2002), romances by Lytton and Corelli were hugely popular in 1880s and '90s India. Khatri's work, I show, actively registers the influences of

these Western romances thus enabling us to think of the reception of British popular fiction, and its representations of race and psychology, through a non-western gaze.

The Unconscious in the late Nineteenth Century

As I have stated, this thesis resists working with a pre-defined theoretical notion of the unconscious psyche. Rather, it claims that the authors' exploration of mental exchange between the self and the racial 'other' is informed by their specific understanding of the unconscious. In late nineteenth-century Britain, the idea of the unconscious mind lacked (as it does now) conceptual stability: it was being debated across various kinds of disciplines of psychology, occult theology, anthropology and even evolutionary biology, with definitions and nomenclature differing widely. Amidst these discourses, fiction too played a role in imagining different models of the unconscious. While literary authors used the term 'the unconscious' sparingly, they deployed a range of tropes and metaphors (a flash of hypnotic gaze, a mesmeric encounter or the state of insensibility induced by drugs) to gesture at the presence of a latent hidden mental state or space. The thesis is committed to excavating this fictional imagination of the unconscious that often conflated, challenged and reworked evolving disciplinary understandings. Drawing on Gillian Beer's conception of the 'lateral encounter' between fiction and other discourses, I show that the traffic of ideas between literature and sciences was two-directional in this period (*Open Fields* 5). As Julia Reid notes, '[a]ctive engagement rather than passive digestion, indeed, marked cultural interactions between nineteenth-century scientists and literary figures' (*Robert Louis Stevenson* 3).

Even as I treat fiction and science as equivalent 'cultural documents,' I do not subscribe to George Levine's model of assimilation that suggests that ideas from the scientific domain were gradually absorbed by fiction, regardless of the author's

familiarity with them (Matus 12; Levine 13). While Levine's approach broadens the scope of exchange between literature and science, it necessarily locates traces of dominant scientific discourses in most fictional writings. As a result, we run the risk of losing the authors' distinct voices by treating them as mouthpieces for larger discourses that appear to do the thinking for them. In studies of the psyche in the fin-de-siècle, this, to some extent, explains why critics have almost always turned to Freud to decode representations of the unconscious. In contrast to Levine's approach, I pay close attention to the specific reading done by authors to arrive at their perceptions of unconscious mental operations. This approach of pursuing a direct link between authors' reading and the ideas they encountered allows me to draw on discourses that were not particularly widely circulating, but were still locally significant.

The open-ended multivalency of the unconscious mind, and the plurality of approaches available to it, was one of the many reasons that it made for such a creatively rich trope for literary narratives. That said, authors grappled with the problem of representing a dimension of mind that is, by definition, obscure and inaccessible. In an 1895 survey of contemporary hypnotic fiction in *The Speaker*, largely focused on *Trilby* (1894), the reviewer claims that writers' reliance on hypnotic events to advance the narrative is a sign of lazy writing (A.T.Q.C. 'A Literary Causerie' 290). In the reviewer's words, authors 'invent vagaries for it [hypnosis] as they invent ghosts' (insertion mine; 290). Though the review rejects the use of hypnosis as being creatively uninspiring, authors were evidently drawn to the malleability of the trope. Within the novels I consider, at times, entrancement appears as an unreadable state of insensibility; at other times, it reveals a character's psychological interiority—his or her dreams and visions—to the reader. Across the

chapters, I demonstrate that the unconscious takes forms that gesture at various theoretically nuanced notions: it represents, in different contexts, a spiritual resource, a site of intense emotions, and even evidence of evolutionary inheritance. Not all authors under consideration were equally fascinated by states of unconsciousness: while Lytton and Corelli embraced its supposed powers and creatively channelled it in their fiction, in the context of Indian popular fiction, Devkinandan Khatri exhibits a fear of what the unconscious can unleash.

The study of Victorian models of psychology has been an agile field with strong contributions from within literary studies.[4] In particular, non-Freudian readings of the unconscious have been the focus of studies centring on fiction in two periods: the mid-nineteenth century and early twentieth-century. Sally Shuttleworth and Jenny Bourne Taylor, in an edited collection of nineteenth-century texts titled *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830-90* (1998), map out the rich and dynamic conversation around 'unconscious cerebration' and reflex action within mid-nineteenth century science, pointing to its special articulation in sensation novels. In contrast to this physiological account of the unconscious, Jill Matus, in *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious* (2009) pays close attention to the portrayal of 'mental wound,' the shock/trauma registered on the plane of the unconscious in early-twentieth century fiction (3). While Matus resists reading the unconscious in Freudian terms, she still extracts a 'pathologized' narrative of unconscious, that has dominated studies of Victorian conceptions of the mind. Moving away from these previous

[4] For more on the psyche in nineteenth century, see: Anne Harrington. *Medicine, Mind and the Double Brain: Studies in Nineteenth Century Thought*. Princeton University Press, 1987; Rick Rylance. *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850-1880*. Oxford University Press, 2000; Anne Stiles. *Popular Science and Brain Science in the late Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge University Press, 2012; for more specific studies of mesmerism: *Victorian Literary Mesmerism*, edited by Martin Willis, Catherine Wynne, Rodopi, 2006 and the more recent William Hughes. *That Devil's Trick: Hypnotism and the Victorian Popular Imagination*. Manchester University Press, 2015. Moving away from these approaches, I look at a broader understanding of the unconscious that though inclusive of mesmerism is not limited to it.

readings, I look at the decades between the rise of sensation fiction and the modernist period to extract a dialogue on the unconscious that is neither focused on Freud nor specifically interested in 'abnormal' mental states.

As mentioned earlier, I am not so concerned with tracing a larger, generalized history of scientific models of the unconscious but a fictional history of the psyche as conceived by authors. The thesis is particularly interested in how authors psychologized the unconscious to comprehend the process of literary creation as well as readerly reception. In other words, how did authors conceive of both being entranced while writing and the process of entrancing the receptive reader? Most significantly, what role did race play in this creative and readerly unconscious? Within the romantic and Gothic body of fiction I study, I broadly scrutinize authors' exploration of two kinds of experiences of entrancement.

i) Trance as Transcendence

As Alex Owen has argued, the late nineteenth century witnessed 'a proliferation of spiritual groups and identities that together constituted what contemporaries called the new "spiritual movement of the age"' (*The Place of Enchantment* 4). Far from being a homogenous movement, spiritualism accommodated different belief-systems, including a rich occult revival of sects like the Hermetic order of the Golden Dawn, theosophy, Rosicrucianism and so forth.[5] The spiritualist movement, as Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn describe it, represents a heterogeneous 'history in motion' that cannot be contained in a singular narrative (*Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism* 5). While the primary aim of the spiritualist

[5] Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn argue that though the spiritual and the occult were two distinct domains in this period, studies benefit from considering 'the veil between the two worlds…[as] not a barrier but a conductor, its porosity encouraging transactions and transmissions' (*Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism* 8). In tracing the specific vocabulary used by authors to talk about spiritual matters, the thesis too follows a similar logic.

movement was to confirm the existence of spirits, it did so by exploring the psychic ability of the mind to connect with this other-world. The mind was seen to contain multiple latent selves in addition to acting as a conduit to spirits. Conversation on the powers of mind was not exclusive to spiritualist circles but, as Roger Luckhurst has shown, 'The Society for Psychical Research' set out to 'scientifically' verify spiritualist assumptions though not without its disagreements with spiritualism (*Invention of Telepathy* 52). Though the S.P.R. researched different aspects of the unconscious mind, the experiments on automatic writing, in particular, investigated the mind's ability to generate ideas when unconscious. Under scrutiny was the mysterious process by which latent, nascent thoughts and dreams were translated and realized on paper. Fiction shadowed these debates with some authors claiming that they were channelling 'the work of Shakespeare, Byron, and other improbable persons' (Myers 235). The founder of S.P.R, Frederic Myers's description of 'the patient' who 'write[s] long letters [in a state of unconsciousness] … on the level of his waking productions [which] sometimes…even seem to rise above it' parallels the creative process of fiction writers (insertion mine; 236). Clairvoyance, telepathy and thought-transference supplied a new vocabulary to think of the mind in relation to literary authorship, mediumship and the psychic influence of the novel on the reader.

Literary authors recognized that states of unconsciousness were essential for producing creatively inspired work. The sage Heliobas in Marie Corelli's *Ardath* (1889) (possibly summarizing her philosophy) explains the writing process so: 'Thus your hand mechanically found its way to the pen—thus you wrote, unconscious of what you were writing…' (76). Victor Lytton claimed that his grandfather Edward Bulwer Lytton's 'literary work' used to 'absor[b] him to such an extent that he was oblivious to guests' (Mulvey-Roberts 157). The thesis argues that not only were

fiction writers writing unconsciously but they also consciously theorized the processes of the unconscious mind through their fiction. These ideas gained an audience within occult circles: inspired by Lytton's portrayal of the magnetic fluid, vril, in *The Coming Race* (1871), Madame Blavatsky conceptualized a theosophical 'vibratory force' that, she claimed, had roots in ancient Hindu texts like *Vishnu Purana* (*The Secret Doctrine* 612, 614). Marie Corelli, too, conceived of an electrically-charged mental current that could entrance individuals into believing in Christ. However, more than the occult significance of their ideas, I am concerned with the complex relation between these psychic fluids/forces, the states of trance they induce, and the notion of the creative imagination. While Andrew McCann has argued that artists explored the 'occult dimensions of their own creativity,' much remains to be said about the authors' conceptualization of imagination as an unconscious clairvoyant force, capable of accessing geographical and mental worlds (91).

The authors considered in this thesis projected the artist as a spiritual mediator, who in a state of imaginative trance, automatically conjured the East and deciphered its 'true' spiritual meaning for the reader. In their obsession with the East, authors echoed the theosophists who argued that access to secrets of 'the hierophants of Samthrace, Egypt and the initiated Brahmans of the India of old, down to the later Hebrew rabbis' promised enlightenment (Blavatsky, *Key to Theosophy* 7). Theosophist Annie Besant in the February, 1890 issue of *The Universal Review* suggested that the West should adopt the Eastern 'experimental' approach to hypnosis as illustrated in the Hindu text *Patanjali* (168). One can understand the lure of the East for these movements, for in a way, the occult, with its interest in 'new syncretic or "hybrid" religions,' constituted the domain of the discursive 'other' to Western religions (Franklin, *Spirit Matters* 13). Spiritually inclined literary authors

undoubtedly stereotyped the East, exploiting it as a source of mystique to establish their own spiritual superiority with the readers. The thesis however contests the assumption that these authors' representations of the Orient were inherently toxic and racist. Considering the Orient's crucial significance to their psychic model and their willingness to surrender to it, authors shared a complicated relationship with the East. Often, as the thesis shows, writers consciously used these transcendental occult imaginaries of the Orient to think through contemporary 'real' colonial and racial concerns in unexpected ways.

There has been considerable research on the way Victorians imagined the psyche in spiritualist discourses of the late nineteenth century.[6] Tatiana Kontou, Sarah A. Willburn and Jill Galvan have produced studies of the relationship between femininity and spiritualism, in particular the centrality of emotions to the experience of mediumship. Sarah Willburn in *Possessed Victorians: Extra Spheres in Nineteenth Century Mystical Writings* (2006) argues that the space of the séance enabled women to subversively and radically experiment with their identity. While studies of gender have celebrated the transgressive potential of spiritualism, research on the

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[6] Most of the research in this area can be classified along three trajectories that often overlap—i) history of spiritualism ii) theories of psyche and mediumship iii) gender and spiritualism. Earlier studies such as Janet Oppenheim's *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (2002) and Alex Owen's *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (2004) were the first texts to draw attention to a discourse that had been relegated to the margins within academic scholarship. While both books charted complex histories of the spiritualist movement, Owen's book, in particular, questioned the reductive oppositional binary between the notion of modernity and enchantment. These ground-breaking histories were followed up by Roger Luckhurst's *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870-1901* (2002), Pamela Thurschwell's *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking (1880-1920)* (2004) and Jill Galvan's *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, The Occult, and Communication Technologies* (2010) that probe the relationship between psyche and mediumship, technology and communication. Luckhurst's is one of the few works on telepathy that explores the 'mediation of race and colonial power in mesmeric rapport across the colour-line' at imperial margins (*Invention of Telepathy* 150). The relationship between femininity and spiritualism has been explored in Sarah A. Willburn's *Possessed Victorians: Extra Spheres in Nineteenth Century Mystical Writings* (2006) and Tatiana Kontou's *Spiritualism and Women's Writing: From the Fin-de Siècle to the Neo-Victorian* (2009) and *Women and the Victorian Occult* (2010). Elizabeth McCormic et al. *The Female Fantastic: Gendering the Supernatural in the 1890s and 1920s* (2018) is the latest scholarly work to offer a broad intersectional survey of the role of gender in fantastic narratives in terms of sexuality, race and empire.

significance of race in spiritualist discourse has not yet received the same degree of attention, except in the writings of Anna Neill and Christine Ferguson. Anna Neill's *Primitive Minds: Evolution and Spiritual Experience in the Victorian Novel* (2013) investigates how 'states of reduced consciousness' in realist novels represent 'primitive sites of nervous disarray and often of expanded awareness' from an evolutionary perspective (14). While I also treat the unconscious as the site of both primitivism and spiritual enlightenment, I advance Neill's analysis by drawing out the distinct racial implications of these moments. Shifting the focus to spiritualism, Christine Ferguson's *Determined Spirits: Eugenics, Heredity and Racial Regeneration in Anglo-American Spiritualist Writing, 1848-1930* (2012) is bold in the assertion that spiritualism was not always an empowering discourse; rather, it endorsed a regressive rhetoric on race and the body. Ferguson sees spiritualist writings of the period as necessarily anticipating a conservative eugenic politics—a 'hard hereditarian thought, eugenic doctrines of sexual reproduction, and occult raciology' strangely compatible with the emphasis on the spirit (*Determined Spirits* 2). My thesis draws on Ferguson's work but looks at a range of authors who incorporated race into their creative and spiritual visions in ways that were not merely biologically deterministic.

In the chapter on Edward Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871), I examine his portrayal of a quasi-oriental alien group called the Vril-Ya, a race equipped with powers of inducing unconsciousness. For Lytton, states of trance, in keeping with his Rosicrucian and Romantic leanings, fuelled the creative imagination by activating the soul. In this spiritually enriching state of entrancement, the artist often conjured a psycho-geographical space that resembled the idealized Orient. In *The Coming Race*, however, Lytton drains the Orient of conventional positive

associations as he depicts an oriental race that is neither spiritually nor artistically advanced. Far from being spiritually therapeutic, the Vril-Ya possess a powerful psychic force called Vril that enables them to invade others' minds by inducing unconsciousness. I argue that the Vril-Ya's exploitative, materialized unconscious powers represent the antithesis of the creative unconscious to the extent that even Lytton's creative process, while writing the novel, is hampered. Not merely a creative, spiritual failure, the Vril-Ya are a daunting political threat in neo-colonial terms, standing in not for the Orient, but for a spiritually impoverished nation (in Bulwer Lytton's view)—America. The chapter investigates how Lytton's equation of the depraved Orient with the new imperial power, America, complicates standard representations of racial 'othering' and hybridity.

In the chapter on author and playwright Florence Marryat, I examine her interest in spiritual states of trance to gain insight into her thinking about issues pertaining to race and colonialism. Frustrated by the harsh conditions of her stay in India and the death of her child, Marryat sought emotional comfort in spiritualist séances. For Marryat, the séance, a space where she connected with the spirit of her dead child, became synonymous with wholesome emotions of sympathy and motherhood. In her vampiric novel *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897), she depicts a hypnotic encounter gone wrong between a racial hybrid, Harriet and several British characters. Originally a native of Jamaica, the racial hybrid, Harriet arrives in Heyst, Belgium and entrances British women and men, depleting them of emotional and psychic energy. For Marryat, Harriet's 'bad' spiritual, hypnotic powers represent a psychological abnormality that is directly linked to her racial hybridity. The chapter examines Marryat's anxiety about the hybrid's imminent integration with the British race; an event that, she fears, will contaminate the spiritual core and hereditary

essence of England. The chapter further argues that Marryat's novel arrests the frantic anxiety surrounding miscegenation by injecting a note of nostalgia for a racially and spiritually pure past as represented in her father, Captain Frederick Marryat's sea-faring novels.

The chapter on Marie Corelli's *Ziska* explores her persistent interest in states of trance as being vital to her understanding of the spiritual imagination. In Corelli's novels, a prolonged mesmeric reverie benefits characters, especially artists, curing them of spiritual torpor and physical ailments. Trance proves therapeutic in Corelli's schema because it serves a specific religious purpose, of converting characters to Christianity. The chapter examines how, in *Ziska*, Corelli's illustration of Christian trance is so focused on the spirit that it refuses to legitimize any other identity besides the soul. In the novel, an ancient Egyptian dancer Ziska, and her murderer/lover Araxes, are reborn as the Russian Ziska and the French artist, Armand Gervase, respectively. Treating racial identity as a fickle, changeable thing, Corelli shows that though Ziska and Gervase's exterior changes, their souls remain constant, carrying a record of their past-life crimes. The chapter argues that Corelli's emphasis on the soul marginalizes socio-cultural identity (race, nationality), reducing it to an earthly costume, temporarily worn and discarded by the soul. Corelli's apparent indifference to racial identity in her notion of the Christianized unconscious challenges our reading of orientalist novels as allegorizing racial or imperial relations. The chapter further explores how Corelli's investment in Christian theological notions of repentance and salvation explains the surprising unimportance of race in her novel and forms the basis of a unique spiritual cosmopolitan vision.

ii) Evolutionary Anthropological Unconscious

Within evolutionary debates of the period, the mind of the 'primitive' ancestor was a topic that evoked much curiosity. While foregrounding the possibility of physical difference between races, Darwin's theory relatedly considered how 'savages' were mentally different from 'civilised' races. Rationality was viewed as an attribute of higher races while the mental activity of inferior races was described as more rudimentary and 'unconscious' in nature. Darwin speculated: 'He (the native) must, I think, have reasoned to himself *in a rapid and unconscious manner*, that movement without any apparent cause indicated the presence of some strange living agent' (emphasis added; *The Descent of Man* 65). Darwin's comments on the mental inferiority of the native predict analytical trends in the field of anthropology where the focus shifted to studying the '"condition of knowledge, religion, art, custom and the like among them" (the natives)' (E.B. Tylor qtd in Stocking 161). Anthropological studies such as E.B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871) and J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) attempted to unlock a collective 'primitive' psyche that was considered to be more superstitious and backward in comparison to the 'evolved' Western rational mind. In these studies, the native mind, lacking a grasp over rational causality, is seen to draw superstitious inferences from dreams—especially visions of departed ancestors—to arrive at the idea of God. By tracing the origin of religion to native culture, these anthropologists presented a 'caricature of the primitive mind,' frozen in its irrational investment in the mystical (Pritchard 8). However, while Frazer and Tylor's thesis insisted on the differences between civilized and 'savage' psychic processes, it also brought them closer than ever before. Tylor complicated the progressive trajectory of evolution by arguing that residues of mystical thinking still lurked in the present. In George Stocking's view, Tylor's usage of comparative

philological method in conjunction with the evolutionary paradigm allowed him to argue for the unity of the human mind in psychic terms (Stocking 162).

Within evolutionary anthropology and psychology, connections between the civilized and the past ancestral self were consolidated on the site of the unconscious mind. The notion of an unconscious organic memory, put forth by scientists like Eward Hering and August Weismann, attempted to explain the automatic transmission of behavioural traits across generations (Otis 47). In the sphere of British popular science, Samuel Butler proposed a similar notion of memory that was transmitted unconsciously, from parent to child, by 'special vibrations of the protoplasm' (Hartog 16, Introduction to *Unconscious Memory*). Critic Athena Vrettos records literary authors R.L. Stevenson's and George du Maurier's growing interest in dreams as the pathway to forging 'trans-historical connections with other [ancestral] minds' (insertion mine; '"Little Bags of Remembrance"'). The thesis focuses on another actor who intervened in this debate of inheritance of organic memory: the scientist, anthropologist and reluctant novelist, Grant Allen. Drawing on Herbert Spencer's ideas, Allen developed a theory of use-inheritance of traits that is best illustrated in his Gothic novel *Kalee's Shrine*. Allen's theory does not simply see the individual as a passive carrier of unconscious memories; rather, s/he developed changes in behavioural habits in response to the surrounding environment. More significantly, the stress on environment revealed a lacuna in the theory—how could one reconcile thinking of racial traits as inherited with an understanding of them shaped by the environment? In *Kalee's Shrine*, a British woman, Olga's latent memories from India surge to the surface at night when, in a state of somnambulism, she transforms into a votary of an Indian Goddess, Kalee. While Allen explains Olga's shift in personality as an effect of generational memory coming to the fore, he

uses the emphasis on environment to complicate this assumption. Adopting an anti-imperialist stance, Allen draws our attention to the British Empire as the environmental trigger that has produced racial and psychic degeneration in both the colonizer and colonized subject.

Shifting its gaze to the Indian context, the thesis looks at the relationship between states of unconsciousness and the construction of racialized identity in the popular Indian romance *Chandrakanta*. Turning the question of identity into one of consciousness, Khatri urges the religious Hindu community to develop a hyper-vigilant alertness against a potential onslaught by the British colonizer and the internal Muslim enemy. The chapter argues that the novel's suspicion towards states of unconsciousness reflects the socio-political mood of the period that emphasized the value of a community and nation's coming into consciousness. Constructing a racialized Aryan past for themselves, the Hindu community claimed superior origins in opposition to the Muslims. The chapter demonstrates that Khatri's excessive emphasis on mindful alertness counteracts the racialized romance of the past urging the reader to develop a sceptical outlook on sectarian nationalism.

The Unconscious Dream and Postcolonial Hybridity

Postcolonial studies has relied on a psychoanalytic notion of the unconscious to comprehend the long-drawn out impact of colonialism on the colonizer/colonized subjectivity. Psychoanalyst Ashis Nandy argues that colonialism has shaped the mental habits of both the colonizer and colonized, leaving a mark on the unconscious that lasts far beyond 'the departure of the alien rulers from the colony' (2). Notwithstanding the ameliorative role played by psychoanalysis in addressing colonial trauma, scholars like Celia Brickman and Jean Walton have highlighted the

racist undertones of the universalist assumptions within psychoanalysis.[7] In distancing my approach from psychoanalysis, my contention is not to reject psychoanalysis *in toto*. Psychoanalysis's value cannot be underestimated because it has furnished postcolonial thinking with an interpretive framework that has yielded productive notions including ambivalence and hybridity. However, it must be recognized that psychoanalysis is ultimately a historical and culturally contingent construct, like several others, invented in its own time to address a need specific to the context. The thesis argues that the over-reliance on psychoanalysis has distracted from other Victorian models of the unconscious that also addressed concerns of racial inter-mixing, hybridity and cosmopolitanism on their own terms. To correct this, the thesis traces a historicized narrative of hybridity and ambivalence as emerging from varying portrayals of the unconscious in fiction.

In the tradition of using psychoanalysis for racial analysis, Frantz Fanon's powerful book *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) was one of the first texts to unapologetically lay bare the subjective trauma experienced by the black man—a trauma, at once, personal and belonging to an entire race. Fanon's psychoanalytic model of the unconscious relied on binaries wherein the black individual's psychic make-up is seen as distinctly different from the white mind. Moving away from Fanon's binary understandings of self and 'other,' Homi Bhabha uses a poststructuralist model of 'difference' to re-evaluate the inferences one can draw from

[7] Several commentators have discussed the drawbacks of a psychoanalytic approach. A primary criticism of the model is directed at its narrow universalist theoretical apparatus that does not recognize cultural difference. Within postcolonial studies, there has been an ongoing conversation on the limits of psychoanalysis especially in its treatment of race: Gayatri Spivak, while acknowledging Freud's influence on her thought, critiques the 'casual racism' in his theory of narcissism (21). More voices have highlighted the bias—as Ranjana Khanna and D. Brooks demonstrate, psychoanalysis carries hints of 'a latent colonial discourse' like other discriminatory forms of knowledge that emerged from the same colonial context (6). For Jean Walton in *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference* (2001), the problem of sexual difference always trumps racial difference with the question of race being treated as secondary (5). This is not to argue that, as a theoretical model, psychoanalysis has no validity, and no insights to offer us. It is simply to recognize that psychoanalysis works with universalized assumptions that need qualification in different contexts.

Fanon's work. Like many others such as Alif Dirlik and Benita Parry, I expose the gaps in Bhabha's theorization of hybridity, but I direct the critique at his model of psychoanalytic unconscious. Bhabha treats the encounter between colonizer/colonized as 'a psychic relation' that fundamentally shapes their identities: '[i]t is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated: the phantasmic space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy' (*Location of Culture* 63). For Bhabha, the psychoanalytic dream, defined as the seat of messy, haphazard emotions, is a space of fragmentation that never allows a singular coherent identity to stabilize. Rarely fixed or unified, identities in this space are always in the process of becoming, constantly made and unmade. It is the unstable nature of the phantasm that makes the unconscious so anti-essentialist and radical for Bhabha. However, in arguing that the identities of colonizer/colonized are always framed by contradiction, Bhabha overstates the subversive potential of the unconscious thus paradoxically freezing it as intrinsically and 'essentially' ambivalent.

The chapters on Lytton and Marryat complicate Bhabha's essentialized ambivalent hybridity by concentrating on discourses of racial/biological and spiritual hybridity available within the period. As Satoshi Mizutani argues, Bhabha did not intend the concept of hybridity to be a historical truism for all periods nor did he conceptualize a trope that could assist in 'discover[ing] some objective, sociological realities about miscegenation' across time (4). In other words, hybridity is not a concept that claims to be applicable to all phases of history; rather, it is an abstract theoretical model for thinking about the relation between the colonizer and colonized. However, Bhabha's omission of the biological has not gone unnoticed. Amar Acheraiou in his book *Questioning Hybridity* (2012) writes that Bhabha offers a sanitized version of hybridity that is emptied of its problematic biological history—a

point emphasized by Robert Young, in his statement that 'the racial is always cultural' (5; *Colonial Desire* 26). Recently, Deepika Bahri alerts us to the urgency of historicizing the concept of hybridity: '[t]he confinement of the concerns of the theory of hybridity to semiotic terrain is not without cost to our understanding of the material, historical, and racial coordinates of the colonial experience' (6). To reinstate the biological and the historical in discussions of hybridity is not to refute Bhabha's theory but to nuance our analytical understanding of hybridity.

The chapter on Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* argues that a satirized portrayal of the Orient, to some degree, subverts Bhabha's progressive notion of ambivalent hybridity. Considering the multiple registers on which the hybrid 'other' is present in the text and the differing power relations it stands for, tracing ambivalence proves to be far more complicated than presupposed by Bhabha. In the novel, Lytton consciously mobilizes the oriental 'other' to stand in for America. The chapter examines the implications of Lytton mobilizing the oriental hybrid to signify not a colonized 'other' but an emerging imperial power. What happens when the hybrid does not signify the subaltern colonized but a settler ex-colony that reproduces the logic of colonial power? By linking hybridity with the colonial impulse, the novel perceptively exposes the limitations of the progressive implications of a hybrid unconscious. The chapter further examines Lytton's suggestion that the Vril-Ya represent a perverted hybridity— 'a false homogeneity of heterogeneity'—that signifies racial/philosophical/political essentialism (Bahri 9).

While the hybrid upsets colonial order (as anticipated by Bhabha) in Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*, a deeper exploration of her notion of the spiritual unconscious reveals a far more complicated aversion towards racial miscegenation. Racial and imperial relations, in Marryat's schema, are understood in terms of a

transaction of psychic powers with the colonies communicating spiritually malignant energy back to the imperial centre. The novel traces the racial hybrid Harriet's psychic powers to a contagious emotional dysfunctionality that threatens to contaminate the spiritual and emotional core of British civilization. The chapter examines how Marryat regards the British Empire as the mainstay of a spiritualized unconscious understood as racially pure. Though the novel keeps emphasizing the sympathetic temperament of the British and their spiritual (and racial as well as imperial) superiority, ultimately, this narrative of English superiority does not hold up. Marryat's assertions about British spiritual superiority are caught in a double-bind: if sympathy is an inherently English value, then the novel fails to justify why the British cannot universally extend sympathy to all subjects including the racial 'other.'

The thesis also turns its gaze to the authors' exploration of late Victorian models of cosmopolitan hybridity. The notion of cosmopolitan hybridity, in scholarship on the transnational globalization since the 1990s, has come to epitomize the spirit of progressive multiculturalism.[8] According to Lauren M.E. Goodlad and Julia M. Wright, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Victorians were not so uncritically enthusiastic about a cosmopolitan ideal: 'These pejorative nineteenth-century associations stand in obvious contrast to the new and valorized cosmopolitanisms that scholars across the disciplines have enthusiastically explored

[8] Craig Calhoun, in his critique of contemporary cosmopolitan thinking, argues that cosmopolitanism in its current form is too individual-centric and capitalistic in impulse: 'The current enthusiasm for global citizenship and cosmopolitanism reflects not just a sense of its inherent moral worth but also the challenge of an increasingly global capitalism' ('The Class Consciousness' 886). For more on debates on cosmopolitanism, see: Martha Nussbaum. 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,' in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, edited by Joshua Cohen. Beacon Press, 1996, pp. 1-17; Timothy Brennan. *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*. Harvard University Press, 1997; Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. University of Minnesota, 1998; Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision*. Trans. Polity Press, 2006; Tanya Agathocleous and Jason R. Rudy. 'Victorian Cosmopolitanisms: Introduction.' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2010, pp. 389-97; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. Penguin, 2015.

since…the increasing prominence of globalization' ('Introduction and Keywords'). With the weakening hold of the British Empire at the fin-de-siècle, the Victorians were not as smitten with the utopia of a globalized, connected world as many had been at the height of imperialism. However, this disillusionment did not translate into a complete disavowal of the cosmopolitan ideal altogether. Rather, as I show, it spurred a search for alternative possibilities of cosmopolitanism that often engaged with and critiqued the 'globalising' impulse of imperialism.

Hitherto, research on Victorian literary internationalism such as Amanda Anderson's acclaimed *The Power of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (2001) has primarily focused on canonical realist authors. By contrast, this thesis traces unusual models of a cosmopolitan unconscious found in popular fiction that sophisticatedly yet contradictorily interrogate cultural and racial intermingling. There is an assumption that popular fiction, invested as it is in the sensational, supports a cruder discourse on inter-racial contact. However, pushing against that assumption, I read the novels' illustration of entrancement with the 'other' as a site for exploring inter-racial exchange of psychological and cultural values. Occurring on the level of the unconscious, a hypnotic fascination with the 'other' encompasses diverse responses ranging from repulsion, intrigue, curiosity and attraction—hidden in these affective responses are strong/positive moments of identification and connection with the 'other.' Of course, the power equation in this encounter still favours the Westerner's gaze which determines the tone and outcome of the lopsided exchange. Yet, as Vanessa Smith has deftly illustrated in her book *Intimate Strangers: Friendship, Exchange and Pacific Encounters* (2010), a sense of affinity between colonizer/colonizer can emerge in the unlikeliest of places, even when structurally the colonizer has more power. Making evolutionary racial

development the very basis of a cosmopolitan imaginary, Grant Allen thinks of ways to connect with the primordial ancestor of the past via the colonized native of the present. This, for Allen, does not widen the gap between races but brings the 'primitive' and the civilized subjects closer than before. Allen imagines the encounter between races as a moment of tense, conflict-ridden experience of learning that potentially puts into question racial and cultural assumptions. In so doing, he thus complicates the contemporary congratulatory narrativization of global hybridity by i) inserting racial difference into the picture ii) recognizing that a clash between cultures is inevitable. By contrast with Allen's thinking, Marie Corelli's cosmopolitanism has nothing to do with race. In *Ziska*, Corelli imagines a cosmopolitan model anchored in spiritual affinity—a hybrid global Christian community where individuals irrespective of race and ethnicity are treated equally, so long as they are Christians. Re-inventing Kwame Anthony Appiah's notion of 'rooted cosmopolitanism,' Corelli demands that individuals hold on to their faith as their primary identity while participating in a cosmopolitan community.

The Nineteenth Century Conception of Race

To understand the 'fictions' of race imagined in the late nineteenth century, one must first register significant shifts in the dominant discursive imagination of race. The late nineteenth century has accurately been described as a period of heightened scientific racism. In this period, early nineteenth-century philological thinking about race gave way to a focus on the body as the site of difference between communities. As Christine Bolt writes, 'there was a decline of interest in Oriental studies…and an increase in intolerant chauvinism, as everything was measured in the light of British technology, law and religion and philosophy' (28). The late nineteenth century is usually described as an era of increased racial intolerance and paranoia about the

decline of the British Empire. While, as Peter Kitson has argued, there had been 'a development of a systematized sense of human difference in the natural sciences' at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Darwin's evolutionary theory fed into and aggravated the heightening racism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (3). It is indeed true that, with the rise of evolutionary theory, the myth of race acquired a biological fixity in many quarters and colour became the determining marker for dividing groups. Yet, while the body of the racial 'other' was compulsively codified, there was no unified, singular theory of race that dominated the period. As Nancy Stepan asserts, there was hardly any 'consensus about what evolutionary terms really meant—they meant, in fact, whatever an author chose them to mean' (83). The more Victorian biology and behavioural anthropology tried to pin down the body of the 'other,' the more the notion of race kept 'getting reinvented or rediscovered' (Beasley 13).

In a context where the meaning of race kept fluctuating, it is surprising that histories of race so far have offered a narrative so largely restricted to the opinion of specialists in scientific disciplines. Damon Ieremia Salesa writes that histories of race to date have been built on what can 'informally be called a "canon" of nineteenth-century racial texts' (5). This has led to a narrow view of the heterogeneity of opinions on race in Victorian Britain. Douglas Lorimer asserts that the Victorians have been unfairly maligned: '[b]y constructing the Victorians as archetypical 'racists,' we implicitly celebrate our own freedom from racism' (5). What remains to be explored in greater detail is how ordinary Victorians thought of race in the everyday. Treating the disciplinary narrative as one of the several fictions on race, the thesis excavates other popular 'fictions' about race that unsystematically reinvented the 'other' for everyday popular consumption. Though the texts I treat are marginal,

these fictions gave concrete shape to the racial 'other,' making him/her come alive in the quotidian imagination. Previously, Peter Kitson, Robert J.C. Young, Anne McClintock and Patrick Brantlinger have examined the unstable heterogeneity of racial discourses throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[9] Patrick Brantlinger's *Taming Cannibals* (2011) is the latest addition to a body of research that interrogates the conflicting racial narratives in lesser-researched nineteenth-century accounts of missionaries turned cannibals and Europeans gone native. Building on his work, I look at how popular authors responded to the emergent biological vocabulary of race post the Darwinian turn. The thesis contests the presumption that popular fiction unquestioningly endorsed and accepted an evolutionary understanding of race as a settled norm by the end of the century.

Even as race was increasingly biologized in the late nineteenth century, it was characterized by a peculiar double-ness—a tension between its immaterial, abstract conceptual nature and its material 'reality.' This is particularly marked in the late nineteenth century. As Edward Beasley writes, in this period, '[e]very part of the Old World and some parts of the New had their ancient history retold according to the *fantasy* of race' (emphasis added; 21). Even to this day, race theorists grapple with the 'material immateriality' of race. Highlighting the hollow basis of race, Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that since the biological differences race refers to are not real, it is an illusory fiction, a 'potent idealization' (Nagel 'As If'). Racial sceptics such as Appiah and Naomi Zack use the fictionality of race to argue for its elimination from

[9] For more on this, see: Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Cornell University Press, 1988; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, 1995; Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in theory, culture and race*. Routledge, 2005; Peter J. Kitson, *Romantic Literature, Race and Colonial Encounter*. Palgrave, 2007.

linguistic and discursive use, especially in the sphere of policy-making.[10] In other words, they suggest that since the term race lacks an actual biological truth, it should be banned from public use. By contrast, race constructivists like Paul Taylor argue that in as much as race shapes people's experiences, it determines how individuals negotiate reality and there is therefore a warrant for retaining the term (133). The thesis argues that race is very much a social construct that fundamentally constitutes reality, reproducing structural and experiential forms of discrimination. However, it also attempts to tease out the many 'fictions' of race—the persistent ways in which race is re-imagined that, unlike Appiah's limited understanding, do impinge on reality. To suggest that race is a fiction in this way is to acknowledge its constructed-ness and to be attentive to the kind of contradictory conceptual and experiential forms it takes in the popular imagination, both in the imperial centre and the colonies.

In the thesis, I demonstrate that late Victorian authors engaged with the 'immaterial materiality' of race when depicting it in romances—that is, they explored how the 'fiction' of the Orient was imposed on the body of the 'other.' Authors felt entitled to construct their own fictions about the 'other' most in line with their conception of the imaginative psyche. Representing the racial 'other' was a matter of aesthetic concern largely because of the central role it played in the authors' notion of imagination. In the fictions I look at, the extent to which authors regarded the unconscious psyche, the basis of imagination, as a spiritual or a physical faculty impinged on how they represented the racial 'other.'

In literary criticism after Said, orientalist romances have been accused of portraying an unflattering, reductive picture of the racial 'other.' While this view is largely justified, my reading shows that not all orientalist authors were thinking of

[10] For more on racial sceptics vs racial constructivists, read: Ron Mallon. 'Passing, Traveling and Reality: Social Constructionism and the Metaphysics of Race,' *Noûs*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 644–73.

race in a uniform manner, in fact, a few were actively resisting the vocabulary of embodied race, emergent in the late nineteenth century. Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Marie Corelli regarded the genre of romance as an immaterial idealized literary form that transcended the constraints of material and corporeal reality. The Orient they imagined in their romances was an imprecise dreamy space that represented the spirit of an airy, immaterial unconscious. The authors' depiction of the Orient thus contested the biological, evolutionary turn to race which materially defined the 'other.' In Lytton's *The Coming Race*, the Vril-Ya, with their awkward bodily makeup, represent a racialized monstrous perversion of what Lytton would prefer to think of as an idealized Orient. Symbolizing a crude, weighty materialist signifier, race, for Lytton, corrupts the intangible nature of the oriental fantasy. A similar sense of the secondary importance of the body can be found in Marie Corelli's *Ziska*. In the novel, Corelli evacuates Egypt of a material, historical texture turning it into an abstract symbol for the Christian kingdom, elevated above bodily concerns. I show that while Corelli's oriental ideal is narrow-minded and imperialist in some ways (especially in its drive to convert the reader to Christianity), on the question of the biological construction of race, it is surprisingly restrained and ambivalent. The thesis thus complicates the straightforward assumption that orientalist romances 'imagined' race by unquestioningly adopting the Darwinian conception of racial difference. This is not to say that these texts were not racist. Rather, it is to open up another line of inquiry: how can we better understand an oriental imaginary that negates the body yet continues to violently stereotype the 'other'? What did this freedom to 'imagine' the 'other' in idealized rather than in evolutionary terms imply for the artistic credo of these authors?

The thesis also examines two unusual articulations of the racial imaginary in the Gothic (with traces of the sensational) mode—Grant Allen's *Kalee's Shrine* and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*. As a consequence of its interest in and exploitation of the body (bodies in pain, dead bodies, sexually aberrant bodies), the Gothic is, in some ways, an obvious vehicle for the depiction of race.[11] As Howard Malchow argues, the Gothic played a key role in demonizing the racial 'other' as a corporeally deformed figure, inspiring disgust and repulsion in the reader (5). Conventionally, the racial body of the 'other' in Gothic texts is clearly marked as a source of contamination and degeneration. However, while bodies are so labelled and separated, as Kelly Hurley has persuasively argued, the Gothic also consistently represents 'a world in which no fixity remains' (28). Ever present is the lingering possibility that bodies can open up and intermingle, thus further intensifying anxiety about contact, especially between racially different selves. However, in the novels I look at, the threat from the racial 'other' is conveyed primarily in psychic terms. In texts by Allen and Marryat, the biologized tropes of vampirism and cannibalism acquire a psychologized quality. Rather than physically attacking the colonizer, the colonized native is shown to be capable of subtly manipulating and entrancing the 'superior' race's psyche. In these texts, psychic influence can induce biological hereditary changes thus rendering even 'superior' races vulnerable to degeneration. The chapters on Allen and Marryat examine why authors, even while writing in a genre that did not shy away from explicitly representing bodily violence, portray this

[11] For more on race and degeneration in Gothic fiction, see: Kelly Hurley. *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism and Degeneration at the fin-de-siècle*. Cambridge University Press, 1996; David Punter. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*. Longman, 1996; Cannon Schmitt. *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality*. University of Pennsylvania, 1997; Daniel Pick. 'Terrors of the night: *Dracula* and 'degeneration' in the late nineteenth century.' *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1998 pp.71-87; Ruth Bienstock Anolik and Douglas L. Howard. *The Gothic Other: Racial and Social Constructions in the Literary Imagination*. McFarland, 2004; Stephan Karschay. *Degeneration, Normativity and the Gothic at the fin-de-siècle*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; Marie Mulvey-Roberts. *Dangerous Bodies: Historicising the Gothic Corporeal.* Manchester University Press, 2016.

threat primarily in psychic terms? The thesis demonstrates that the texts under consideration address and arrest the anxiety of degeneration in refreshingly novel ways. When confronted by the fragility of the myth of race, the novels do not just exhibit paranoia but work to defuse the anxiety in different ways.

Readerly Entrancement and Racial Identity

Late Victorian authors were often concerned with another kind of unconscious that lay outside the text: that of the reader. The writers I deal with viewed the transaction between the text and the reader as a form of psychic influence that could potentially alter the reader's mental patterns, exercising a lasting impact on the psyche. The experience of reading itself was regarded as a form of entrancement; a psychic connection in which the novel enthrals the reader's mind, holding it hostage. The thesis engages in an examination of the experience of readerly 'entrancement'—a range of spell-binding and distracted states of reverie—that novels produced in the reader. In this period, both romance and Gothic traditions were seen to share a special relationship with the unconscious. Gillian Beer has noted that the form of the romance exercises a peculiar hypnotic influence on the minds of the reader, addicting him/her but also transporting him/her to different worlds: '[t]his relationship (between the reader and romance) liberates us but it also involves unusual dependency' (*Romance* 8). Noting the similarity between a romance and a dream, Robert Louis Stevenson, in 'A Gossip of Romance' (1882) wrote: 'There were day-dreams, it appeared, divine day-dreams, written and printed and bound, and to be bought for money and enjoyed at pleasure' (75). The Gothic form, with its titillating aesthetic, too was presumed to arrest and fixate the reader's attention, often in unhealthy ways: the excess of the bodily transfixing the reader but also voyeuristically inviting him or her to derive pleasure from unseemly images.

While there was a wide recognition of the capacity of popular genres such as romance and Gothic to induce a readerly trance, many authors perceived the effects of these trances as either wholesome or unhealthy. Authors and reviewers alike often anticipated the reader being engrossed in the novel as a moment when s/he risks internalizing the text's energies. This was a state in which, in the novelist Maxwell Gray Tuttiet's words, 'ideas and impressions are unconsciously conveyed to the passive mind, either as poison in the ear of the sleeping king, or as ozone to the lungs…' ('The Advantage of Fiction' 129). In the authors' minds, readerly entrancement carried an overt racial component with the love for reading being described as 'a primal and deep-seated instinct' (Tuttiet, 'The Advantage of Fiction' 124). Most significantly, certain genres were seen to be more suited for reading by a racially evolved mind while others ran the risk of activating latent 'primitive' instincts. Drawing on the evolutionary anthropological notion of a pre-historic psychic connection between civilized and 'primitive' races, critic and anthropologist Andrew Lang wrote that British readers enjoyed romances for they appealed to 'the ancestral barbarism of our natures' (688). Elsewhere, another reviewer compared the taste for romances 'to the credence yielded by savages to their myths' (Maxwell 'The Craving for Fiction' 1050). Marie Corelli criticised Lang's racialized romance theory for wrongly theorizing the genre's purpose by linking it to racial evolution. Rejecting the idea of romance as an atavistic residual racial memory, Corelli insisted that it represented the long-lost spirit of a noble, ideal past. Not only was romance talked of in racial terms, even the influence of Gothic and sensation fiction was scrutinized along similar lines.[12] Critic Arnold Smith, in 1904, described sensational fiction as

[12] For more on the mid-nineteenth century debate on sensation fiction and its pernicious influence on the mind of the Victorians, see: Pamela Gilbert's 'Ingestion, Contagion, Seduction: Victorian metaphors of reading,' *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 1 June 1997, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 83-104 and Laurie Garrison's *Science, Sexuality and Sensation Novels: Pleasures of the Senses.* Palgrave, 2011.

appealing to young boys because 'every boy is a latent savage—the novelist appeals to his savagery; he has a taste for bloodshed derived from countless generations of savage ancestors…' ('The Ethics of Sensational Fiction' 190). The literary authors I consider added to this debate by either treating genres as representative of different stages of racial memory or, like Corelli, asserting that romances had nothing to do with a racial imaginary. These novelists, as I show, believed that by eliciting certain responses from the reader, they could improve or corrupt his/her psyche along the racial behavioural hierarchy.

The thesis argues that the authors considered here regarded the affective dimensions of literary reading (in terms of emotional/visceral responses and attention span) as bearing on the nature of the racialized readerly unconscious they wished to produce. In other words, *how* readers absorbed ideas was as important as the content of what they were reading. To this end, the study draws on the works of Nicholas Dames and Kate Flint to think of identity-production as linked to the experience of reading. While Dames's *Physiology of Reading: Reading, Neural Science and the form of Victorian Fiction* (2007) looks at the shifts in the readers' attentiveness and its physiological demands on his/her nervous system, Flint in *The Woman Reader* (2003) extracts the anxious rhetoric around the Victorian female reader's susceptibility to fiction. Bringing these two approaches together, I add to the discussion by unpacking the way authors manipulated readers' attention with the aim of producing a racialized consciousness. The thesis shows that the question of aesthetic attention—the degree and the nature of awareness extended by the reader—was tied up with contemporary debates about cultural taste and civility.

Susan David Bernstein explores the same theme but from an evolutionary point of view in 'Dirty Reading: Sensation Fiction, Women and Primitivism.' *A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*; Spring 1994, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 213-41.

The thesis thus explores the following question: what racial connotations did being attentive or distracted, or being attentive while simultaneously being idly distracted, carry in this period? In one of the few studies of this kind, Michael Golston's book *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science* (2008) argues that early twentieth-century modernist poetry's rhythmic alterations were adapted to contemporary racialized theories of body movement. A similar case can be made for changes in attentive intensity experienced while reading popular fiction. Shifts in attention are crucial to reading popular fiction that entices the reader with accelerated pace and plot twists—its entertainment value lies in it either being a riveting or a light-hearted, desultory read (Gelder 2). Not mutually exclusive, states of absorption and distraction can co-exist while reading. As Scott McCracken argues: 'The gift of popular fiction is also to allow the reader a space and a time in which he can become accomplished in distraction and achieve new, and perhaps productive, forms of attention' (113-4). The thesis argues that the range of trance-states evoked by popular fiction (fixated entrancement, a distracted reverie, hyper-vigilant trance amongst others) was informed by the authors' perception of these states as being racially charged. Mapping the phenomenological experience of these complex reveries sheds light on how a spectrum of attentive responses, in the authors' eyes, signified racial, mental (or spiritual) evolution or its converse.

It must be noted that the thesis does not trace readers' responses to novels by revisiting actual testimonies of readerly experiences from the period. Instead, it focuses purely on conceptualizing the authors' imagination of what constituted the experience of reading. While retrieving actual experiential accounts of reading can make for intriguing micro-histories, often lending texture to the reader's private relationship with the text, these do not account for the 'vast majority of readers who

left far fewer direct traces' of their reading (Raven, Small and Tadmor 14). Gauging Victorian reading patterns is tricky because in Philip Davis's words, '[n]o one knows how 'a Victorian' read—partly because no such generalized person ever existed; partly because the deep processes of reading…seem so intrinsically private…' ('Deep Reading' 65). While there is no way of certainly knowing how different readers read, what can be gauged is how authors *intended* their works to be read. Rather than turning to the actual reader, the thesis looks at how authors inserted into their narratives detailed instances of characters' reading. In several texts, the act of reading is seen as impinging on a character's consciousness or rather, his/her unconscious, rendering it susceptible to suggestion or even manipulation. By focusing on the textual evocation of implied readers, the thesis argues that the representation of readers in the novels often acts as a cue to the reader guiding him/her on the proper way to read. In short, the thesis follows Rachel Ablow's recommendation of an 'approach to Victorian reading… [that is] attuned to a different model of historical specificity: interested in what nineteenth-century readers and writers *thought* they were doing' (Insertion mine; *The Feeling of Reading* 2).

Unconscious and literary interpretation: A caveat

From Northrop Frye to Fredric Jameson, the notion of the unconscious has puzzled and attracted literary critics. In a way, most literary criticism can be seen as attempting to grasp the unconscious subliminal meaning of a literary work, by decoding what the text is explicitly saying and *unconsciously* omitting. In this thesis, I have attempted to think of the unconscious not as evidenced by omission or repression but in terms of the affective experience of writing and reading *unconsciously*. Even though there are limits to this interpretive exercise, it is still important to return to the question of why texts mesmerize us, not necessarily in a

purely formalist sense, but in terms of their impact on our consciousness and, by extension, on our identity. We unconsciously process information that, in turn, shapes our conscious projection of ourselves to the world. While we cannot ever fully access the contents of the unconscious, how authors consciously thought of these unconscious processes assists us in making sense of their portrayal of such moments.

The relevance of unconscious psychic processes to the creative process is perhaps best demonstrated by the Indian author, Devkinandan Khatri's writing ritual. As Khatri wrote his romances, he stroked a cat figurine, made of stone, to possibly self-induce a state of reverie. Khatri might not have been able to coherently explain why he needed to do this—was it the rhythm of the act that eased him into writing



Fig 1. Cat figurine owned by the Khatri family in Banaras, India

or did it trigger a physiological reflex? Even though the physiology of this act still eludes us, his text *Chandrakanta* faithfully records the product of his reveries. In offering the Indian reader the heightened aesthetic pleasure of being lost in another

world, the novel also manipulated and still manipulates his/her consciousness. Through their narratives, Victorian authors wanted readers to be mesmerized as they themselves were entranced while writing— in so doing, they aimed to influence the readers' identity by introducing them to the pleasures of states of unconsciousness—a mysterious process that the thesis aims to decipher.

Chapter 2. The Oriental Vril-Ya and the Racialized Unconscious in Edward Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race*

At the beginning of *The Coming Race* (1871), Bulwer Lytton's (in its time) popular dystopian fantasy, the narrator falls into a chasm somewhere presumably in the middle of America, and confronts an individual from an alien, winged race called the Vril-Ya.[13] The figure has, he notes, 'sphinx'-like features, 'large, black eyes,' a bejewelled 'tiara' and is holding a wand-like 'polished staff' (Lytton, *CR* 20). With a 'tranquil,' 'beauteous' and mysterious demeanour, this strange individual evokes the fictional oriental imaginaries of early-Romantic writers like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Byron (Lytton, *CR* 20). At first, the reader too expects an intense, vibrant Orient—evocative of the mesmerising dreamscape of Xanadu in Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' (1816). Something however is awry about the space the narrator has accidentally discovered. Soon after his first encounter with the Vril-Ya, a child belonging to the race coercively mesmerises him. Rather than a dreamy Orient, this is, then, an Orient that forcefully induces unconsciousness in the narrator:

> [T]he child taking one of my hands in both his own, approached his lips to my forehead, breathing on it softly. In a few moments my pain ceased; a drowsy, happy calm crept over me; I fell asleep. How long I remained in this state I know not, but when I woke I was perfectly restored. My eyes opened upon a group of silent forms, seated around me in the gravity and quietude of Orientals—*all more or less like the first stranger; the same mantling wings, the same fashion of garment, the same sphinx-like faces*, with the deep dark eyes and red man's colour; above all, the same type of race—race akin to man's, but infinitely stronger of form and grander of aspect, and inspiring the same unutterable feeling of dread. (emphasis added; Lytton, *CR* 24)

The narrator's deep slumber in alien lands proves serene but short-lived. As he wakes up from his hypnotic sleep, he confronts a daunting scene: he is being inspected by a group of 'Orientals' (Lytton, *CR* 24). The Orient fills him with 'dread' (Lytton, *CR*

[13] Edward Bulwer Lytton. *The Coming Race*. Knebworth Edition. London: George Routledge & Sons, 1871. Henceforth *CR*.

24). In a complete inversion of the imperial gaze, the group of oriental 'others' have taken it upon itself to scrutinize the Western invader. Intimidated by their penetrating gaze, the narrator's description of the Orient acquires a strangely flattened tone. Unlike the stereotypical Orient of a Romantic fantasy characterized by a vivid richness and a potentially seductive strangeness, there is a dull uniformity about the Vril-Ya. All members look like replicas of each other. Lytton's prose too is weighed down by this uniformity as the word 'same' is repeated several times.

While both parties are busy 'reading' one another, we only get access into the American narrator's thoughts. Noticeable about his gaze is its attempt to 'other' the Vril-Ya—to establish difference and cast the Vril-Ya into a 'type.' Later in the novel, Lytton offers a sustained critique of this gaze insistent on locating difference on the body. His intention behind doing so, as I show, is not to attack an explicitly racist gaze but to demand a different mode of looking at the racial 'other.'

This chapter explores the complex relationship between the Orient as embodied by the Vril-Ya and the figuring of unconscious psychic processes in *The Coming Race*. As I will demonstrate, despite its grandeur, the Orient in the novel is not the romantic space of fantasy where one can take refuge, but a formidable space capable of inducing 'dread' (Lytton, *CR* 24). The chapter begins with a discussion of the significance of states of unconsciousness to Lytton's notion of the spiritual/imaginative Ideal. It argues that, for Lytton, the imagined Orient exemplifies the purest 'idea' that emerges out of states of unconsciousness. The Orient we encounter in *The Coming Race* is however different from his other romances. In the novel, Lytton consciously uses the degraded Orient to comment on contemporary imperial matters, particularly the rise of the ex-colony, America. Decrepit and corrupt, the Oriental Vril-Ya in the novel illustrates Lytton's view of America as a spiritually

impoverished hub of decadence that is antithetical to the spirit of a romantic Orient. The chapter further argues that Lytton inverts the Romantic Orient to offer a broader commentary on the rise of Darwinistic materialism, especially the biological conception of race. In so doing, he complicates erstwhile readings of the Orient in oriental romances as indistinguishable from a racist outlook centred on the body.

Lytton's notion of the Unconscious

In Lytton's fiction, the state of insensibility frequently leads to philosophical realizations that radically alter a character's perspective on events. A character's 'experience in trance and dream,' in Lytton's works, as critic Joseph Fradin writes, 'may be as revealing of his essential nature and the nature of reality as the daylight experience of his senses' (13). This preoccupation with the unconscious carries through Lytton's non-fiction where he offers a complex theorization of its nature and operations. Lytton regarded the unconscious, especially moments of unawareness and deeper states of unconsciousness (hypnotism, reverie and sleep), as the site for creative thinking. In his essay 'On the Moral Effect of Writers' (1863) published in *Caxtoniana* (a compilation of Lytton's opinions on art, philosophy and politics oriented towards a younger audience), he argues that writers were most inspired when unconscious because a state of trance enables them to access their soul (170). Conscious attention or awareness of the work of art, by contrast, inhibits the artist from drawing on the most spiritualized form of creativity. As Lytton sums up in his essay 'On the Distinction between Active Thought and Reverie' (1863), 'the higher the genius, the less it is conscious of the degrees by which it has ascended' (190). He further writes:

> [N]o doubt, the cradle and nursery of definite thought is in the hazy limbo of reverie. There, ideas float before us, rapid, magical, vague, half-formed; apparitions of the thoughts that are to be born later into the light, and run their course in the world of man. And yet, despite their vagueness and

> incompleteness, how vivid, how lifelike, those apparitions sometimes are! I do not give them the name of thoughts, because they are not singled out of space and subjected to our command. But still they are the souls of thoughts. ('On the Distinction between' 191)

For Lytton, amorphous ideas that spontaneously emerge in a state of reverie signify the imminent reality of thought, prior to expression. To him, these disassociated, incoherent ideas represent the root of thought-formation generally, and artistic creation specifically. Though vague and spectral, these 'apparitions' of thoughts that lack a cohesive form, are 'vivid' and spiritually pure (191). For Lytton, the more nascent an idea, the more it symbolized an expression from the depths of the soul. In fact, as he would suggest elsewhere, the soul too was capable of experiencing varying mental states. Quoting the French philosopher, M. Tissot in a letter to his son in 1861, Lytton wrote that 'the soul has two states, conscious and unconscious' (qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 407).

Clearly, Lytton's views on psychology were predominantly metaphysical. Allen Christensen argues that Lytton's works sustain a dichotomy between the unconscious/conscious, soul/body, immaterial/material with Lytton prioritizing the immaterial principle of the soul (11). Ideation is, for him, a flurry of latent, unborn mental activity occurring initially on the plane of the unconscious and 'born later into light' ('On the Distinction between' 191). In his novels, characters in a state of unconsciousness typically experience intense bursts of creativity or epiphanies. For instance, in *Zanoni* (1842), Lytton describes the Italian singer Viola's creative process: 'She seized on nature and truth intuitively. Her recitations became full of *unconscious power*; her voice moved the heart to tears, or warmed it into generous rage' (emphasis added; Lytton, *Zanoni* 27). Similarly, in *A Strange Story* (1862), during a state of trance induced by a perfumed powder, the materialist doctor,

Fenwick realizes the disturbing truth about the immortal magician, Margrave: that, despite possessing a glowing 'halo,' he lacks a soul (151).

Schiller was clearly the dominant German-Romantic influence on Bulwer-Lytton. In his words, translating the poems of Schiller in 1844 felt like encountering the Ideal: 'Schiller lives in his art; he becomes the Pure Form, the Archetype, the *Gestalt*, that he describes in his poem of the "Ideal and the Actual"' ('On Art in Fiction' 286). The literary movement that best exemplified the philosophical essence of German Idealism, according to Lytton, was British Romanticism. He wrote that Romantic poets such as Walter Scott 'contracted an affection for German Romance' while Coleridge introduced the British reading public to the 'riches of German philosophy and German song' (Lytton, 'Sir Walter Scott' 21, 'Charles Lamb' 149). In Lytton's opinion, the texture of Coleridge, Byron and Scott's poetry evokes inchoate, dream-like ideas. Describing Coleridge's poems as 'outlines and fragments,' Lytton claims that in their unfinished form, his poetry represents the 'soul of thoughts'—that, though incomplete, spawned the works of an entire generation of writers ('Charles Lamb' 146).

Traces of Lytton's interest in idealism can also be found in his engagement with the occult. Marie Mulvey Roberts has influentially argued that Lytton's interest in the occult 'gravitate[s] towards a Rosicrucian idealism which seeks to unite the actual and the ideal' (*Gothic Immortals* 164). Through his study of the occult, Lytton attempted to not only understand the world of the spectral, but to also question some increasingly strong assumptions within contemporary sciences of the mind. Lytton considered the materialist premises of much scientific investigation to be short-sighted and limiting in nature. Rather than dismissing supernatural phenomena as mere delusions of an overactive imagination, science, in his view, needed to treat the

paranormal as the starting point of investigation. In an 1861 letter to John Forster, his publisher, friend and confidante, he wrote: '[C]ommon reasoners reject a good, well-authenticated ghost story altogether. But real philosophers delight in one… Some of the most interesting chapters in the works of physicians are upon spectral illusions founded on these very ghost stories' (qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 48-49). His short story 'Haunted and the Haunters' (1859) too emphasizes this by depicting a protagonist who realizes that science alone cannot explain supernatural phenomena. If science was to advance further, Lytton argued, the nuances of the relationship between the material and immaterial, body and mind had to be fully comprehended. A promising but untapped area of research that could remedy this gap in science was the domain of dreams. As he wrote: 'The mystery of dreaming is the vexed question of this day between materialists and immaterialists. Spectral phenomena are dreams turned inside out (qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 49).'[14]

The discovery of mesmerism was, according to Lytton, a breakthrough in the investigation of the unconscious mind that could potentially advance scientific thinking. Lytton enthusiastically intervened in debates surrounding mesmerism and, in 1838, he co-authored a defense of animal magnetism with Dionysius Lardner in *The Monthly Chronicle*. Critic Gavin Budge argues that Lytton's interest in mesmerism has to be read in conjunction with ongoing scientific research on mesmerism, in particular, materialist 'medical theories of vitality' (41). Budge's approach, however, ignores Lytton's strong anti-materialist bias. For Lytton, the scientific acceptance of mesmerism promised a future where science would be

[14] If Lytton was sceptical of the scientific dismissal of supernatural phenomena, he was equally wary of spiritualist practices or, at least, he publicly adopted this line. His biographer L.G. Mitchell suggests that 'in reporting his experiences [of séances], Lytton prudently hedged his remarks around with words of caution' when 'in private, he was a believer' often hosting séances at his home (insertion mine; 148).

increasingly open to examining seemingly improbable phenomena.[15] He expresses this hope in a semi-congratulatory letter to the leading researcher of mesmeric phenomena, Dr John Elliotson. While praising Elliotson's discoveries, Lytton writes that these discoveries 'teac[h] us both the illimitable resources of nature and the little knowledge we have yet acquired of her secrets' (qtd in Woolf 237). Lytton believed that if scientific research continued its foray into the unknown, it would soon confirm the existence of the immaterial principle of the Ideal and other supernatural phenomena.

While recognizing the physiological workings of mesmerism, Lytton fundamentally regarded any form of unconscious mental influence as originating from the non-physical force of the soul. As he writes in his essay 'On the Distinction between Active Thought and Reverie'—'the hypnotism exhibited by Mr. Braid conveys a striking illustration of the instantaneous and involuntary sympathy between the ideas presented to our inward intelligence, and the slightest threads of that external web-work behind which sits the soul vigilant and unseen' (132). While many of his contemporaries would have distinguished between mesmeric phenomena and clairvoyance (the former being purely physical and the latter bordering on the spiritual), Lytton treats clairvoyance as an advanced form of mesmerism. Defining clairvoyance as 'the sixth and the highest stage' of mesmeric capability, Lytton claims that 'the perception of the patient is extended to persons at any distance, while his power of prevision is spread over an unlimited extent of future time' ('Animal Magnetism' 298).

[15] Betsy Van Schlun explains that Lytton's interest in animal magnetism has to be linked to his occult leanings: '[H]e ties mesmerism back to the same sources from which Mesmer had originally deduced his science. Instead of a progression, he propagates a retrogression of knowledge, returning to the mystic and occult sciences of antiquity to find answers for such phenomena of mesmerism as clairvoyance, thought-transference and trance' (139).

Clairvoyance—the ability of the soul to see things beyond the sensory ambit of the body—becomes the basis of his theory of artistic imagination. For him, the artist's imaginatively prescient vision mimicked and improved upon the clairvoyant mesmerist's gaze. In another essay, Lytton argues that, in contrast to unreliable hypnotic clairvoyance, the artist's imagination can 'faithfully' and consistently conjure scenes he has never witnessed ('On the Normal Clairvoyance' 44):

> It is no rare phenomenon for a poet 'to see through other organs than the eyes; describe with an accuracy that astounds a native of the lands which he has never beheld; and read the most secret thoughts in the hearts of men who lived a thousand years ago. And their clairvoyance immeasurably exceeds, in the marvel of its second-sight, the clairvoyance ascribed to the most eminent somnambule, inasmuch as it is not precarious and fluctuating. ('On the Normal Clairvoyance' 41)

Here, Lytton legitimizes the artist's gaze as steadier, more penetrative and accurate than that of a mesmerist. In his eyes, to portray another era in fiction is an act of advanced clairvoyance that infuses substance, texture and feeling in dry historical fact: it is to make 'the hearts of men,' separated by historical time and distance, come alive ('On the Normal' 41). For Lytton, Shakespeare was one such 'peerless prince of clairvoyants' who, in imaginatively representing contexts removed from him, never failed to convincingly recreate the spirit of a past age ('On the Normal' 42). Lytton aimed to do the same in his writings—to portray historical eras with a clairvoyant gaze that was truthful precisely because it was imaginative.

The Satirized Oriental Ideal in *The Coming Race*

'[W]hat may be revered as truths in Asia are usually despised as dreams in Europe.'—(*A Strange Story* 91)

In the preface to *A Strange Story* (1845), Lytton writes that '[p]eople nowadays do not delight in the Marvellous according to the old childlike spirit. They say in one breath, '"Very extraordinary!" and in the next breath ask, "How do you account for it?"' (7).

For Lytton, the rise of rationalist materialism, with its insistence on demystifying phenomena, threatened to destroy the spirit of imaginative wonder. Rational thinking was the antithesis of the state of dreaming that gave rise to transcendental, intangible fancies. As he wrote in *Zanoni*, trance is the 'airy soil' that 'evoke[s] fruits so rich and flowers so fair' (261). For Lytton, only by entering a state of trance could the romantic imagination be cultivated and the creative/spiritual Ideal be realized. Strikingly, flights of clairvoyant imagination inevitably evoke the Orient in Lytton's writings. That is, the Orient is either the imaginative product of trance or as shown in *A Strange Story*, it can deepen the reverie. In *A Strange Story*, the mystical philosopher, Philip Derval, relies on 'the trance of an Arab child' to gain prescient insight into future events (145). That an Arab mind is a necessary medium for accessing supernatural knowledge proves that Lytton attributed mystical powers to the oriental psyche—clairvoyant powers essential for imagining. After all, 'TRANCE,' in his words, was 'unknown to the children of the Northern world' (Lytton, *Zanoni* 261). For Lytton, the Orient thus represents the medium; the code for accessing a set of values central to his notion of imagination. It emerges as a potent signifier that holistically encompasses the tenets of his idealist philosophy.

Much of Lytton's orientalism can directly be traced to the influence of the Romantic poets, especially the works of Byron. During his school days, Lytton wrote a poem titled 'Ismael: An Oriental Romance' (1820) which he describes as 'Byron-like' in its Eastern imagery, 'thronged with *Bulbuls and palm trees*' (emphasis added; qtd in Robert Lytton *Vol. 1* 134). Such oriental signifiers make an appearance in his earliest works and continue to be reinvented in later writings. While 'Ismael' carried distinctive traces of Byronic orientalism, it was, however, dedicated to another Romantic writer: Walter Scott. Scott was undoubtedly a huge influence on Lytton

who modelled his romances on Scott's imaginative revisioning of history. In a biographical piece, Lytton describes a younger Scott reading 'books of history or poetry, or voyages and travels, not forgetting the usual, or rather ten times the usual quantity of fairy tales, eastern stories, romances, & c.' ('Sir Walter Scott' 16). For Lytton, a fertile imagination could only be nourished by reading 'eastern stories'—reading them (as opposed to actually visiting the orient) could make you imagine the Orient better.

If, for Lytton, the Orient was synonymous with imaginative idealism, it also promised access to deeper spiritual truths. For him, spiritual knowledge was inherited from the East, for as Leslie Mitchell writes, in his view, '[t]he Egyptians and ancient people knew better' (131). Betsy Van Schlun argues that his unique occult philosophy was an eclectic mix of 'the Egyptian Isis cult as well as Indian lore, Brahminical faith, Christian religion, Gnosticism and a belief in Supreme Intelligence' (139). As the supposed Grand patron of the Rosicrucian cult, Lytton insisted that to become an 'authentic' spiritual faith, Rosicrucianism needed to recover its ancient Eastern origins (Mulvey Roberts 158).[16] And, indeed, in Lytton's *A Strange Story*, after the Rosicrucian Philip Derval 'reside[s] some considerable time in the East,' he realizes 'that there does exist an art of magic, distinct from the guile of the conjuror, and applying to certain latent powers and affinities in nature' (185). Introducing Lytton's novel *Zanoni* (1842), a commentator, W.M., writes that the novel was a 'labour of

[16] Christopher McIntosh offers a more sceptical view of Lytton's involvement in Rosicrucianism in *The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology, and Rituals of an Esoteric Order* (1998): 'Lord Lytton's involvement (or rather non-involvement) with the *Soc. Ros.* [Rosicrucian Society] is a curious story. Probably an account if his "Rosicrucian" novel, *Zanoni*, he was proposed and voted in as Honorary Grand Patron of the society in 1871, but without his knowledge. When he found out what had happened, he wrote to John Yarker, another enthusiastic dabbler in fringe Masonry and a member of the *Soc. Ros.*'s Manchester college. Yarker sent an apologetic reply. As far as is known Lytton never even attended a meeting of the *Soc. Ros*' (insertion mine; 99). For a more detailed examination of occult themes in Lytton's fiction, especially the crucial distinction that Lytton draws between Chaldean and Rosicrucian histories, see Robert Lee Wolff. *Strange Stories and Other Explorations in Victorian Fiction*. Garland Publishing, 1971.

love' showcasing Lytton's 'appreciation of oriental thought' (Introduction). In the novel, the clairvoyant imagination and the East are shown to be conjoined in the figure of Zanoni, a mesmeric priest/healer: '[H]e [Zanoni] came, conversed with them [the ailing patients], and they were cured; it usually however happened that a deep sleep preceded the recovery' (insertion mine; Lytton 98).

So far I have argued that for Lytton, the Orient, as an idea, is both a stimulus to and a product of imagination. However, even as he looks to the Orient for inspiration, he is insistent on not precisely defining it in his writings. This is most evident in Lytton's wonderfully vague description of Zanoni's lineage: 'the lustrous darkness of his eyes and hair, and even the peculiarities of his shape, in the delicate smallness of his hands, and the Arab-like turn of the stately head, appeared to fix him as belonging to *one of the Oriental races*' (emphasis added; *Zanoni* 99). It is telling that Lytton never ascribes a definitive racial identity to Zanoni. The Orient, for him, is then more of a shorthand for an imaginary land; an idea that aims to be more evocative than precise—Egypt, Chaldea, Mesopotamia are all fused in Lytton's occult vision. In its vagueness, the Orient evokes a thought, a feeling rather than an exact sense of place. It is this lack of specificity about the Orient that allows Lytton to mix Hellenic mythology with tropes of oriental romance in his works. In *Athens: Its Rise and Fall* (1837), he attributes the cultural greatness of Greece to Egypt's civilizational influence: 'Egyptians [were] more especially assisted to instruct the ancestors of a [Grecian] race that have become teachers and models of the world' (insertion mine; 14). Similarly, in 'The Influence of Love upon Literature and Real Life' (1862), a character, Metellus, claims that ancient Greek poetry is superior because of 'the Asiatic temperament' the Greeks had inherited (*Miscellaneous Prose Works Vol. 4* 211).

Not all his literary portrayals of the Orient are positive, though. In his historical novel, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), Lytton depicts a corrupt Egyptian priest, Arbaces, who wants to conquer the Roman Empire. As the head of Isis, a cult specializing in arcane occult knowledge, Arbaces, entrances others for exploitative, sensual ends. Though villainous, Arbaces's command of theological and occult matters suggests that his portrayal still falls under the conventions of Gothic romance. Egypt is not entirely undermined in the novel as Lytton still attributes occult erudition and a dynamism to the Egyptian priest. By contrast, Lytton's 1871 novel *The Coming Race* offers the most unique representation of the Orient departing from romance conventions altogether. In the novel, Lytton does not simply modify the positive romantic essence of the Orient; he entirely inverts it through the use of satire. Deceptively painted as a utopic race, the Vril-Ya embody a human-like quasi-oriental race who, at first, seem evolutionarily advanced but are gradually revealed to be highly perverted.

Lytton experimented with many genres, but his interest in both romance and satire extended across his career. After the publication of *Devereux* (1829), he wrote the comic satirical poem 'Siamese Twins' (1831), and contemplated writing another satire inspired by *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) that, in his words, would 'satirize and expose the various objects, & methods of rising—which are emphatically called 'worldly'—to make a kind of ludicrous resemblance between great men who are thought honest and Rogues who are hung.'[17] Here and elsewhere, Lytton emphasizes that a successful satire does not necessarily resort to vicious, aggressive attacks. Rather, for him, satire had to exhibit a tonal lightness and a subtlety of wit. Though not obviously humorous, *The Coming Race* too is subtle in its satirical attack on

[17] Edward Bulwer Lytton. Letter to H. Colburn. Undated. Bodleian Library. MS Eng. Lett. D 90. Fol. 29.

American values which explains why Lytton's grandson Victor described it as a 'quiet satire' (*Vol. II* 464). That quietness derives, in large part, from the fact that the satire retains strong components of romantic Idealism. In the case of *The Coming Race*, satire invades the primary frame of romance to produce a generic tonal instability. Critic Dustin H. Griffin describes the jarring effect of satire on other genres: 'When satire takes over another literary structure, it tends not just to borrow it, as when a cuckoo finds another bird's nest for its eggs, but to subvert it…' (3). In *The Coming Race* as well, satire entirely destabilizes the romantic impulse of the novel thus complicating the conventional 'imagination' of the Orient.

In contrast to the romance that Lytton regarded as a product of unconscious states of mind, satire is informed by a hyper-conscious awareness, a heightened critical attention to moral and social failures. Satire works on the reader's mind by disrupting the illusion of romance—it punctures any readerly attempt to invest in a fantasy. However, while satire and romance might seem like two dichotomous genres, they are connected in Lytton's literary universe. Satire emanates from a disillusionment with the world for not having lived up to certain ideals. While it constitutes the other side of romance, its end-justification (in some, if not all cases) is the restoration or safeguarding of the ideals it perceives as having been betrayed. To this end, Christopher Lane reads the misanthropic note in Lytton's works as compatible with his romantic Idealism: 'In Bulwer's lexicon, misanthropy signals humanity's failure to sustain its best ideals, including sympathy and disinterestedness' (600). Similarly, in *The Coming Race*, the satirized Vril-Ya represents Lytton's disillusionment with a particular political scenario that, as I show, failed to live up to his expectations.

In my reading of *The Coming Race*, I demonstrate that Lytton's use of the satire in the novel produces an upside-down romance that alters the conventional representation of the Orient. Within postcolonial studies, satirical representations of the Orient have not received adequate attention. A satirized Orient, as Daniel Martin Varisco writes, is 'totally ignored in Said's narrative' because it does not lend itself to the reading he wants to propose (223). As I show, the representation of the degraded oriental Vril-Ya reveals something crucial about Lytton's notion of the unconscious and its relationship with conscious attitudes to race, in ways that shed light on his changing perception of contemporary imperial politics.

Lytton's Ideal of the imperial colony

Lytton's engagement with British imperialism was more than just literary and imaginative. He had practical experience of imperial political administration in the late 1850s, and ambitiously worked to sustain and extend a robust empire that would support England in the years to come. In 1858, appointed as the Secretary of State of Colonies, he enthusiastically took control of the colonized spaces with a special focus on settlement colonies. For Lytton, the colonial project was a noble 'civilizing mission'; an opinion he made evident in a speech delivered at Lincoln in 1838: 'England is essentially a colonizing country—long may she be so! — to colonize is to civilize' (Mitchell 214; qtd in Mitchell 210-11). The settlement colony signified a hope for the future of British Empire; an opportunity to build a new civilization from scratch. And, indeed, for Lytton, the highlight of his brief tenure, which ended in 1859, was the creation of a new colony—British Columbia.

Lytton called himself an 'Oikist'—the Greek term for 'colony founder'—suggesting that he saw the British Empire as a modern-day equivalent of the empire set up by 'ancient Athens' (Mitchell 213). As he illustrates in his novel *The Caxtons*

(1849), a colony, in this case Australia, was a space where emigrants could leave behind their lives in England and look to morally and economically redeem themselves (Snyder 177). *Caxtons* shows that the colony was, to some extent, a realized version of the literary page—a blank slate onto which a new form of writing, a new imagination could be inscribed. As he describes the process of colonization in another letter to Sir George Bowen: 'It is carving our names on the rind of a young tree, to be found with enlarged letters as the trunk expands.'[18]

Like the literary author, the colonizer country, Britain, was (in the eyes of pro-imperialists) writing these colonies into existence. Rather than conceptualizing the relationship in terms of power, Lytton relies on the trope of heredity to describe the bond between Britain and its colonies. Whenever he talks about colonies, he reverts to a parental model wherein Britain, as the mother-country, rears its colonies to maturity:

> The time will come when these new Colonies will be great states; when they will find it easier to raise fleets and armies than they now find it to raise a police … it may so happen that in that distant day England maybe in danger, that the great despotic and military powers of Europe may then rise up against the vulnerable mother of many free Commonwealths. If that day should ever arrive I believe that her children will not be unmindful of her, and that to her rescue, across the wide ocean, ships will come thick and fast, among which there will be one cry, 'While Australia lasts, England shall not perish.' (qtd in Mitchell 213)

For Lytton, the colony was like a promising child—an attitude that explains his 'benevolent' patronizing tone towards the native peoples in his writings. This attitude allows Lytton to underplay the dictatorial role of the mother country, and paint British rule in a vulnerable light, as an ailing parent of the future. The high emotional tone of the appeal further enables him to demand reciprocity from the colonized populations.

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[18] Edward Bulwer Lytton. Letter to Sir George Bowen. 12 August 1860. Hertfordfshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS). D/EK C 26.

However, even though Lytton continued to idealize the imperial project, he was increasingly critical of the exploitative economic impulses of the empire. That he detested the commercial self-interest of the colonial project is evident in his concerted efforts to oust the commercially motivated Hudson's Bay Company from British Columbia. For him, the colonial project had to be motivated by a higher moral principle: 'I say that our colonies repay England not in hard money alone… but by the rank and dignity, by the moral power' (*Speeches* 317).

By the end of his life, however, Lytton felt increasingly anxious about a rising economic power that had the potential to thwart the hegemony of Britain. The nation that threatened to destroy Britain's future imperial prospects was America. As an erstwhile British settlement colony which had freed itself from British rule, America represented the antithesis of Lytton's rosy vision of colonial unity. Debating the fate of Mosquito Island, Lytton, in a speech delivered in The House of Commons on 9 May, 1856, argues that Americans have culpably forgotten their roots in Britain: '[T]hey can threaten war upon the land that was the cradle of their infant greatness, and is still the sacred burial-ground of their Saxon fathers' (*Speeches* 237).

In his speeches, Lytton, far more conservative than Edmund Burke, constantly tries to remind America of the debt it owes Britain. America's sheer size perturbs Lytton—its sprawling territory, in his eyes, had the potential to make it an invincible force in the future. In a September 1861 speech made during the Civil War, Lytton is hopeful that America will break up because if it were to stay united, it would be a force to reckon with:

> [W]hy then *America would have hung over Europe like a gathering and destructive thunder-cloud*. No single kingdom in Europe could have been strong enough to maintain itself against a nation that had once consolidated the gigantic resources of a quarter of the globe. (emphasis added; qtd in Duyckinck 153)

Lytton's speech is ridden with anxiety: America now hangs over Europe as a 'thunder- cloud' where once it was firmly under Britain's control. Perhaps, the fear of size pushes Lytton to imagine the country as not only spread above ground but expanding its tentacular reach under the earth in *The Coming Race*. But before we move on to that, it is important to register that America's ascendance marks a threat to what Lytton had foreseen for British colonialism. While earlier the colonial settlement was a space where a new moral script could be written, now, with America's independence, those plans were thwarted.

Lytton was troubled by what he saw as a level of American political ambition that went far beyond Independence from Britain: not only had America elected to become self-governing, it was daring to pursue its own colonization agenda. Lytton's attitude towards America thus exposes an unstated relationship between idealism, colonies and power. If the colony signified an idealized space, it had to always stay under the control of the colonizer's imagination. In other words, it had to ultimately serve the vision of the mother country, Britain.

The Orient as America in *The Coming Race*

Lytton made this prophetic speech about America in 1862. By the time, he was writing *The Coming Race* in 1871, many of his fears were coming true. That America was weighing on his mind can be seen in a letter, dated March 16, 1870, to Forster where he abruptly switches from a discussion of *The Coming Race* to his son's appreciation of the Americans:

> Robert seems to have been making an oration at Vienna in praise of the Americans. I don't agree with him in a crow over the gentleman of the south—but that is a matter of opinion and taste. (qtd in *Victor Lytton Vol II* 466)

Lytton cannot fathom Robert's praise for the country. The feelings of betrayal, disappointment and resentment that he felt towards America prevent him from seeing the ex-colony in a positive light. The same affective tone shapes the satire in *The Coming Race*. As I will show, Lytton conjoins two themes in the novel: a deep political mistrust of America is superimposed onto what would otherwise be a straightforward reiteration of Eastern Orientalism. His negative opinion of America modifies the initial romantic promise of the novel into a more cynical satire that still mobilizes the Orient, but in a different form.

Early on in the narrative, the American narrator abandons the 'pursuit of the almighty dollar' to become a 'wanderer' (Lytton, *CR* 8). Though American by birth, the narrator feels strongly drawn to Britain: he has, we are told, spent his adult life in the 'old country' (Britain), studying engineering at Liverpool (Lytton, *CR* 7). Lytton suggests that the narrator's aristocratic status, his 'high social position' does not grant him social privileges; rather, it alienates him from participating in American public life (*CR* 7). Though, to some degree, the narrator is representative of America, his outlook is more British than American. His need to distance himself from America manifests in an impulse to wander. During one such adventure, he, along with his companion, goes mining and falls into a pit. In the pit, he encounters the Vril-Ya—a winged race resembling humans but 'distant from our known extant races' (Lytton, *CR* 20). Though Lytton omits mentioning the exact location of the Vril-Ya land, critic Geoffrey Wagner claims, that the Vril-Ya country seems to be 'within the bowels of America itself' (381). As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the land of the Vril-Ya is indeed the underbelly of America, a 'pseudo America' that conjures the spirit of the country in geographical, political and spiritual terms (Wagner, 'A Forgotten Satire' 383). There is, perhaps, just enough in the distorted image of the

Vril-Ya to deflect straight allegorization with America. Still, the resemblance is too uncanny and substantial to be ignored.

It is the Vril-Ya's hybrid lineage that confirms that they do stand in for Americans. Seeing them for the first time, the narrator is struck by their unique skin colour: in his words, a Vril-Ya looks like 'the red man yet different from it' (Lytton, *CR* 20). Later the narrator discovers that 'the dark red skin showed the most ancient family of the Ana' (Lytton, *CR* 20; 105). The detail is telling: in a letter to the governor of British Columbia, Lytton frequently uses the term 'red man' to refer to the native tribes of North America: 'Law and religion should become naturally introduced amongst the red men, and contribute to their own security against the aggression of immigrants,' he advises (qtd in Harring 197). But if, at times, the Vril-Ya resemble native Americans, at other moments, they seem closer to the early British settlers in America (Lytton, *CR* 150). 'Fairer' than the native Americans and with 'blue eyes', their appearance suggests that, over time, attributes of Americas first peoples and (at least some of) its early European colonizers have amalgamated to produce the Vril-Ya (Lytton, *CR* 105).

Not only do the Vril-Ya carry traces of native American and Anglo-Saxon racial groups; they also look distinctly oriental. When the narrator meets a Vril-Ya member for the first time, he is struck by how different the face of the Ana is from any existing race: it is, he tells us, similar to the face of an Egyptian 'sphinx' (Lytton, *CR* 2). On being scrutinized by a jury of the Vril-Ya members, the narrator claims that their demeanour exemplifies 'the gravity and quietude of Orientals' (Lytton, *CR* 24). Even the Vril-Ya landscape resembles an exotic oriental 'desert' where 'a *simoom*' is blowing—a term typically used for gusts of winds in the Arabian desert (emphasis added; Lytton, *CR* 118). The Vril-Ya saunas with their 'perfumed waters' remind the

narrator of the 'Turkish' culture of bathhouses and the first buildings he sees represent the 'earliest form of Egyptian architecture' (Lytton, *CR*, 102, 19). By ascribing the Vril-Ya an 'oriental' physiognomy and Egyptian architectural signifiers, Lytton might be alluding to the late nineteenth-century migration of Asian and Middle-Eastern populations to America. However, keeping in mind his previous representations of the Orient, this is not simply an allusion to America's rich ethnic diversity. There is more to this oriental reference than meets the eye. A highly valued symbol in Lytton's writings, the Orient was an abstract touchstone of spiritual and cultural excellence. The only difference here is that the orientalized Vril-Ya do not carry such positive connotations; rather, they represent a corruption of the Ideal.

The idealised Orient looms in the background as a parameter against which we can judge the Vril-Ya's slide to degeneracy. The imperfections of the Vril-Ya are conveyed through an unusual strategy: the novel satirically over-accentuates the ideal aspects of the Vril-Ya, their 'most perfect nobility,' to imply their corruption (Lytton, *CR* 161). Perfect though their architecture is, for example, it stretches the boundaries of the notion of the beautiful—not in a good way: 'I should have supposed it at the first glance to have been the earliest form of Egyptian architecture…as I came nearer, I perceived to be more ornamental and more fantastically graceful than architecture allows' (Lytton, *CR* 19). While the building passingly resembles ancient Egyptian buildings, it is an enhanced and, by implication, a distorted version of the same. In a similar vein, the Vril-Ya's negative qualities are never explicitly stated, instead superlatives are used which soon begin to sound inauthentic: 'so splendid was it, yet so somber; so lovely, yet so aweful' (Lytton, *CR* 32). Here, the narrator's repetitive and rhythmic phrasing conveys a tiredness with the Vril-Ya's excellence: their

perfection alienates. The 'so,' at once intensifying and vague, also suggests that the narrator struggles to verbalize exactly how their achievements might be superior.

The Vril-Ya are thus not an ideal reimagining of an oriental type, nor are they a simple inversion. Rather, they *go beyond* the ideal. At first, the Vril-Ya seem awe-inspiring yet soon the awe they induce turns to fear, as noted by the narrator: 'strangely enough, it seemed to me that in this very calm and benignity consisted the secret of the dread which their [Vril-Ya's] countenances inspired' (insertion mine; Lytton, *CR* 24). Having translated Schiller, Lytton appears to draw on his theory of the sublime to conceptualize the Vril-Ya's effect on the narrator. Schiller argued that confronting the sublime was not always a pleasurable experience for the viewer. The initial sense of awe could soon turn into dread, reminding the spectator of his own inadequacy. However, Schiller's theory was also optimistic in its assertion that the human mind was equipped to overcome the sublime. In Schiller's words, as far as 'the emotion involved in the preservation-instinct is concerned, our *intelligible self* must…become aware of its self-sufficiency, of its independence from everything' (34). Only by relying on reason could the individual defeat the feeling of being overwhelmed (Robertson 199). In the novel, however, the American narrator is never able to free himself from the consistent feeling of dread. Incapacitated by the Vril-Ya's perfection, his efforts to overcome his fears rarely prove successful. To some degree, Lytton satirizes the arrogant narrator, who in his desperate attempt to portray the Americans as comparable to the Vril-Ya, clumsily praises American culture. More significantly, Lytton is highlighting the Vril-Ya's perverted sublimity that prevents the narrator from ever relating to them in a human capacity.

To go beyond the spiritual Ideal (in Lytton's own terms) is to enter the domain where it generates its own inverse image. If the Orient, to some degree, epitomised

the imaginative Ideal, then in what way could it turn upon itself? This inversion is best exemplified by the decadent oriental excess that characterizes the Vril-Ya chambers:

> Through one of the doorways I was conducted into a chamber fitted up with an Oriental splendour, the walls were tessellated with spars, and metals, and uncut jewels; cushions and divans abounded; apertures as for windows but unglazed, were made in the chamber opening to the floor; and as I passed along I observed that these openings led into spacious balconies, and commanded views of the illumined landscape without. In cages suspended from the ceiling there were birds of strange form and bright plumage, which at our entrance set up a chorus of song, modulated into tune as is that of our piping bullfinches. A delicious fragrance, from censers of gold elaborately sculptured, filled the air. Several automata, like the one I had seen, stood dumb and motionless by the walls. The stranger placed me beside him on a divan and *again spoke to me, and again I spoke*, but without the least advance towards understanding each other. (emphasis added; Lytton *CR* 23)

The passage evokes a synesthetic effect whereby light, fragrance and music combine to evoke a sense of 'oriental splendour' and luxuriant leisure (Lytton, *CR* 23). As the narrator enters the hallway, he confronts an over-furbished oriental gallery, crowded with objects. The sight of excessive commodities possibly makes him claustrophobic and immediately, his gaze shifts to the windows, as if looking for an escape. A few windows, 'spacious' balconies promise a view of the world outside, but the narrator is not invited to access them (Lytton, *CR* 23). The hallway traps him—his state of entrapment is mirrored by the caged birds 'suspended from the ceiling' (Lytton, *CR* 23). At first, the hall appears to be a well-lit space glimmering with jewels and metals but the passage suggests that the light is coming from outside (Lytton, *CR* 23). Lacking finesse, the 'uncut' jewels and the 'unglazed' apertures do not reflect the light, thus failing to compound the luminous effect (Lytton, *CR* 23). The 'strange' birds sing 'modulated into tune,' as if controlled by an unseen manipulator, and the automatons stand 'dumb' and 'motionless' against the wall (Lytton, *CR* 23). These engineered elements appear to disrupt the flow of the fantasy. In other words, this

seems to be an unfinished or left-over Orient that has been awkwardly curated, 'fitted' together. The invitation into the oriental space further ends on a pessimistic note—as the narrator and the oriental Vril-Ya member exchange a few words, neither can understand the other. Words between the two parties are repeated 'again,' but to no avail (Lytton, *CR* 23).

Only a cloying material surplus can be found in this Orient that, at least in part, represents the venality of American culture's capitalist greed. Lillian Nayder rightly notes that 'Bulwer models the society of the Vril-Ya, *in part*, on American ideals which are taken to a dehumanizing extreme in their classless and unheroic culture' (emphasis added; 215). The oriental aspect of the Vril-Ya (only briefly acknowledged by Nayder) is crucial to conveying the degraded form of their Americanism. In other words, if earlier Lytton thought America had historical potential as a colony, in *The Coming Race*, he represents the aborted romanticized ideal of the ex-colony. Lacking a spiritual ethos, the Vril-Ya 'discourage all speculations on the nature of the Supreme Being' (Lytton, *CR* 90). Their 'usual form of burial' service involves cremating bodies using technological implements—lacking here are any rituals that trigger reflection on the meaning of life and death (Lytton, *CR* 200). On the surface, the Vril-Ya pay lip service to politically and spiritually progressive ideals but their actions belie their beliefs. While the Vril-Ya claim to never 'destroy except where necessary to [their] wellbeing,' they often find unfamiliar species 'menacing' to their 'welfare' (Lytton, *CR* 159). A mere child, Taë feels entitled to killing a reptilian monster, deriving pleasure from committing violence (Lytton, *CR* 157). Lytton suggests that, in their political aggression, the Vril-Ya resemble the impulse of American imperialism which seems benign but is highly virulent.

Lytton's representation of a tired and decayed Orient raises some pressing concerns: considering how his satire is not targeted at the Orient but America, how much of the text is about Oriental lands or people *per se*? To some degree, the Orient, in standing for America, is merely a symbolic vehicle, the aesthetic vocabulary that Lytton mobilizes to articulate his complex love-hate relationship—his initial hopefulness and subsequent crushing disappointment—with America. By displacing his political dissatisfaction with America onto the Oriental template, Lytton complicates the straightforward racist fetishization of the Orient. Yet, the fact that Lytton treats the Orient like a blank slate onto which any association, positive or negative, can be projected proves the extent of the instrumentalization of the ideal of the Orient. In other words, though Lytton's symbolic equation of the Orient with America complicates the political and racial allegory in the novel, he still exploits the Orient as a reductive instrument, a tool, to target a competing super-power. Lytton's satirical treatment of the Orient fits Homi Bhabha's analysis that the Western attitude to the Orient schizophrenically shifts from 'the loved to the hated' ('Other Question' 31). Except, here, the hate is aimed not so much towards Oriental races but America.

Vril-Ya and Racial physicality

If the Vril-Ya land is marked by a material surplus, this excess is also traceable in the configuration of its inhabitants' bodies and psyches. The Vril-Ya are, famously, distinguished by their possession of 'vril' (the imaginative origin of Bovril), an internal fluid that can 'influence variations in temperature' of the environment and fuel mechanical implements (Lytton, *CR* 46). More significantly, vril is capable of quickening the 'faculties of the mind to a degree unknown in the waking state, by trance or vision' (Lytton, *CR* 46). Clearly, 'vril' functions as a means of accessing and to a degree controlling what would conventionally be the unconscious powers of

mind. However, Lytton's materialization of this psychological force implies that this is not the immaterial, creative unconscious but a perversion of the same. And, indeed, vril blocks the positive creative functions associated with the unconscious, including those Lytton considered essential to the production of Ideal art and literature. Though the Vril-Ya employ Vril for multiple purposes—from invading other minds to fuelling technological implements—none of the applications is spiritually enriching. Conceptualizing such an energy in a physical form is antithetical to the creative spiritual principle, as Lytton understood it. As I show, vril is so contrary to the imaginative spirit that Lytton experiences trouble during the creative process of imagining this energy.

The narrative remains ambiguous about the nature of vril—its wide-ranging operations are described as a mix of: 'mesmerism, electro-biology, odic force [that is, the vital force hypothesized by Carl von Reichenbach in 1845] & c., but applied scientifically through vril conductors…[Vril] can exercise influence over minds, and bodies, animal and vegetable, to an extent not surpassed in the romances of our mystics' (Lytton, *CR* 46). Vril, in other words, appears to be an amalgamation of many physicalist and spiritualist theories of mind. It is, at once, unlike any recognizable force yet resembling most of them. In its nature and operations, it resembles mesmeric fluid and, to contemporary readers, the connection would have been obvious. However, in a letter to John Forster, written when Lytton was still in the early stages of planning and writing the novel in March 1870, he dismisses this and other specific associations:

> Now, as some bodies are charged with electricity like the torpedo or electric eel, and never can communicate that power to other bodies, so I suppose the existence of a race charged with that electricity and having acquired the art to concentrate and direct it—in a word, to be conductors of its lightnings. *If you can suggest, any other idea of carrying out that idea of a destroying race, I should be glad*. Probably even the notion of Vril might be cleared from

> mysticism or mesmerism by being simply defined to be electricity and conducted by those staves and rods, omitting all about mesmeric passes, etc. Perhaps, too, it would be safe to omit all reference to the power of communicating with the dead. (emphasis added; qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 467)

Lytton sounds tentative throughout the letter. His frequent use of 'perhaps' and 'probably' express his difficulty in imaginatively portraying this energy (qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 467). Most apparent in the letter is his wish to dispel any potential confusion between vril and mesmeric fluid. Lytton is anxious that the reader must not mistake vril for a physicalized magnetic fluid that possesses healing properties or a beneficial spiritual energy that can connect with spirits. As he struggles to find a real-life parallel to the toxic material energy he envisages, he settles on electricity. To reinforce the awkward material nature of vril, he channels the energy through awkward 'staves and rods' (qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 467). Though electricity does not quite serve his purpose, it is the only force that somewhat approximates his imagination of vril as a tangible force.

As a destructive materialized force of the unconscious, vril signifies the antithesis of the immaterial creative ideal. I argue that Lytton struggles to creatively conceptualize vril because the force does not lend itself to imaginative expression. In other words, this attempt to depict a perverted materialized unconscious, and a type of creature devoid of spirituality, diminishes Lytton's own imaginative ability to conceive such an energy. In his letter dated March 16, 1870, Lytton sounds creatively exhausted as he pleads with his publisher Forster to help him in his creative dilemma: 'But I will attend to any suggestion you may make, or *put aside the MS altogether*' (emphasis added; qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 465).

Lytton intended vril to be not just a form of super power over the unconscious but, it had to be a recognizable 'organic peculiarity' embedded in the Vril-Ya bodies

(qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 465). In other words, it had to manifest as a bodily organ that set the Vril-Ya apart from other races. As the female scientist, Zee, explains to the narrator, vril flows through the Ana bodies and is directed externally via the thumb. The thumb is the conduit through which the Vril-Ya exert power over the outside world. On the surface, Gy's (the female Ana) thumb is a disproportionately magnified version of a human thumb—a bulbous, unwieldy mass, 'much larger, at once longer and more massive, than is found with our species above ground' (Lytton, *CR* 115). Here, size does not indicate improvement: rather, as in Swiftian satire, the bigger the body part, the less refined in build it seems. The skin of the Vril-Ya palm is delicate but the palm itself is 'thicker'—an incongruity that gives their hand a more grotesque appearance (Lytton, *CR* 115). Beneath the palm lies a nerve that exists as a 'visible' channel 'perceptible under the skin' starting 'from the wrist skirting the ball of the thumb' (Lytton, *CR* 115-6). Though the thumb grants the Vril-Ya agential control over unconscious potential, releasing the fluid is a surprisingly arduous task: when deliberately called upon, the unconscious fluid has to pass through a tortuous jumble of nerves. The protuberance of the nerve further signals that nothing is left to the imagination here. Rather, every aspect of the unconscious, a force ideally meant to be immaterial, is explicitly marked on the body.

Zee explains to the narrator that the nerve that transmits vril '[c]an only be acquired by constitutional temperament- i.e. by hereditarily transmitted organization' (Lytton, *CR* 112):

> It [the nerve] has been slowly developed in the course of generations, commencing in the early achievements, and increasing with the continuous exercise, of the vril power; therefore, in the course of one or two thousand years, such a nerve may possibly be engendered in those higher beings of your race, who devote themselves to that paramount science through which is attained command over all the subtler forces of nature permeated by vril.' (insertion mine; Lytton, *CR* 116)

In Zee's Lamarckian account of their evolutionary trajectory, vril has evolved as an ingrained bodily trait through a concerted effort, a 'continuous exercise' over successive generations (Lytton, *CR* 116). She insists that the development of vril is not merely accidental but marks the 'early achievements' of the race (Lytton, *CR* 116). Through a combination of superior racial constitution and practice, the Vril-ya have *consciously* developed powers over the unconscious (Lytton, *CR* 116). The unconscious in their race no longer signifies individual creative genius; rather, it is reduced to a functional organ that is hereditarily passed on (Lytton, *CR* 112). To put it another way, the unconscious has become a sign of 'genus' rather than genius in the Vril-Ya.

Incapable of spontaneous creative expressions, the Vril-Ya are creatures of habit who use vril for unimaginative routine purposes: 'We are all formed by custom,' the Vril-Ya chief Aph-Lin proudly admits to the narrator (Lytton, *CR* 186). As Jennifer Judge argues, such a pessimistic conception of the unconscious resonates with mid-nineteenth-century physiological psychology's 'axiomatic reduction of human beings to their habits' (143). In Judge's words, the behaviour of the Vril-Ya is marked by 'mechanized volition and morality, gutted sympathy, and lobotomized thought' (Judge 151). Relatedly, within the notion of Lamarckian inheritance (and Darwinian, to some degree), the individual becomes a mere carrier of behavioural traits who transmits his/her habits to successive generations. For Lytton, evolutionary (and scientific) thinking's emphasis on habit is incompatible with the impulse toward individual creativity. Though he never clearly defined the quality of genius, within his romantic view, genius signifies highly individualized potential that 'breathed into [art]… a spirit which preserves it from decay' (insertion mine; Lytton, 'Certain Principles of Art' 124). His letters to his fellow author Benjamin Disraeli shed some

light on his conception of genius. Reviewing Disraeli's writings, Lytton urges him to cut down on the 'indulgent flippancies' of style but appreciates the touch of original genius in his work.[19] Genius, as evident from the letter, is not about the formal technicalities of the craft but the unique authorial stamp—the unconscious inventiveness and the emotional vigour associated with an individualized imagination.

In the novel, Lytton's attack is clearly aimed at Darwin's theory of evolution that attempted to classify living beings into types/species defined by the body. As I show, Lytton was critical of Darwin's theory because he feared it would diminish the space for imaginative thinking rooted in the unconscious. The fact that, in the latter part of his novelistic career, Lytton devoted several of his later works (*What Will He do with it* (1858), *A Strange Story* (1862), *Kenelm Chillingly* (1873)) to mocking Darwin's theories shows that he strongly opposed his ideas (Page 127). The Vril-Ya's evolutionary trajectory parodies Darwin's controversial theory: if humans had evolved from apes in Darwin's schema, the Vril-Ya trace their ancestry to frogs. The philosophers base this claim on the shared presence of a 'swimming bladder' between the An and frog; a vestigial organ that is 'no longer of any use to' the An (Lytton, *CR* 121). However, there is a lack of consensus within Vril-Ya culture about whether they have regressed or progressed from frogs: a few philosophers claim that the frog is not the ancestor but 'the improved development of the An' (Lytton, *CR* 124). For Lytton, the Vril-Ya have internalized Darwin's evolutionary theory to such a degree that their imaginative capacities are corrupted beyond repair. The only way they can imagine their past is in dystopic, materialist terms, by tracing their lineage to frogs. Their imagination is, in fact, so comically absurd that that they establish moral and spiritual commonalities with frogs: '[T]he severest critic of the Frog-race could not detect in

[19] Edward Bulwer Lytton. Letter to Benjamin Disraeli. Undated. Bodleian Library. Hughenden MSS 104/1. Fol. 11.

their manners a single aberration from the moral law tacitly recognized by themselves' (Lytton, *CR* 124).

Missing in the evolution-obsessed Vril-Ya society is an impulse to construct a lofty mythic past as illustrated in Lytton's grand historical romances. Lytton's romances did not claim to present an accurate version of history but an inspiringly idealistic one: one where 'the materials of the story' were infused with 'the chronicle of the human heart' (Lytton, Preface to *Rienzi* 11). The ascendance of Darwinism, for Lytton, marked the death of romantic imagination that playfully recreated the past in fanciful terms. Gillian Beer has famously suggested that Darwin's ideas literalized imagination, driven as they were by a 'desire to substantiate metaphor, to convert analogy into real affinity' (*Darwin's Plots* 37). However, while Beer still sees some imaginative scope in Darwin's philosophy describing it as 'romantic materialism,' Lytton is confident that an internalization of Darwin's ideas has crushed any residual sense of wonder in the Vril-Ya (*Darwin's Plots* 37). It is not surprising then that characters modelled on Darwin, in Lytton's novels, pursue unimaginative, materialist work—Zee writes futile tracts on parasites in Asiatic tigers in the novel and in *What Will He Do With It* (1858), Professor Long spends inordinate time researching the evolution of limpets—subjects that, in Lytton's opinion, could hardly yield any philosophical insight into the condition of the human race.[20]

For Lytton, if the oriental 'other' was the impetus to imagination, then evolutionary theory inhibited that imaginary. In his eyes, Darwinian theory of evolution marks a shift from the immaterial, idealised nature of an orientalist imaginary to a very reductive kind of racial/ biological materialism. Darwin's theory produces a more materialist conception of race that, much to his displeasure, imposed

[20] Darwin, after publishing his long tract on barnacles wrote in his diary: 'I do not doubt that Sir E. Lytton Bulwer had me in his mind when he introduces in one of his novels a Professor Long, who had written two huge volumes on Limpets' (*Autobiography* 41).

a distinct outline on the fuzzy, imprecise Orient he imagined in his romances. Lytton objected to this shift possibly because it questioned his power to freely imagine and construct fictions about the 'other.' By this, I am not arguing that the orientalist imaginary is objectively devoid of racial and racist connotations—as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) has convincingly shown, it most definitely shaped the way Victorians thought of race and might have fed into and accelerated the biological turn later in the century. I mean rather to claim that, in Lytton's worldview, there is a distinction: the Orient, in its romanticized form, symbolizes the immaterial power of imagination which when fettered to the body loses its generative creative power. Both understandings of the 'other'—the immaterial and the material—are equally problematic and have contributed to reductively stereotyping the 'other.' However, the precise distinction that Lytton makes between biological race and the oriental imaginary is crucial to understanding the complexity of his artistic vision.

Lytton seems to suggest that a wide-spread societal acceptance of Darwinian evolution will have drastic consequences in the end: it will produce a race that does not possess an imaginative capacity but only destructive embodied power. Summarizing his aim for the novel, Lytton wrote to Forster in 1870 saying that 'the only important point to keep in view is the Darwinian proposition that a coming race is destined to supplant our races' (qtd in Victor Lytton *Vol. II* 465). In his satirical imaginary, these underground creatures are biding their time until they emerge as 'our inevitable destroyers' (Lytton, *CR* 106). It is a warning he would repeat in *Kenelm Chillingly* (1873): '[t]he probability is that, some day or the other, we shall be exterminated by a new development of species' (39). For Lytton, Americans represented this nether-world community whose excessive attachment to materialism would eventually produce an unrecognizably mutated race.

To emphasize the Vril-Ya's dystopian racialized nature, Lytton attributes them an overt technological dimension—not only are the Vril-Ya disturbingly evolved, they resemble cyborgs. Equipped with the 'mechanical contrivance' of detachable wings, their bodies are mechanized to the extent that one cannot distinguish between the organic and the mechanical, the vital and artificial, the soul and Vril (Lytton, *CR* 34). The narrator hints that Vril-Ya individuals are substitutable with machines as he mistakes an automaton for a Vril-Ya—'A figure [the automaton], in a similar garb than that of my guide, but of similar fashion was standing motionless near the threshold' (insertion mine; Lytton, *CR* 22). At another point, Zee claims that the Vril-Ya are capable of technological feats like infusing a heap of metal with life through vril (Lytton, *CR* 117).

Powered by vril, the automaton and the metal are indistinguishable from the living An. While this confusion indicates the extent of the Vril-Ya's dehumanization, Lytton also uses the materiality of technology to say something about the theoretical conception of race.[21] Writing in the contemporary context, theorist Wendy Hui Kyong Chun suggests thinking of 'race and/as technology' as in a relationship of 'simile' (8). Chun argues that race is form of technology, 'an invaluable mapping tool, a means by which origins and boundaries are simultaneously traced and constructed' (10). For Lytton too, race is like technology, in as much as a racial lens mechanistically typifies humans as biological entities. Race, for Lytton, reduces human beings to uniform assemblages, thus not recognizing their unique capacity for spiritual or creative ideation that cannot be codified. This view is echoed by Mr. Caxton, in *The Caxtons* (1849), who sees a clear logical link between the Darwinistic biological interest in

[21] For more recent work on race, technology and cyborgism, see: Donna J. Haraway. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991; Falguni Sheth. 'The Technology of Race.' *Radical Philosophy Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2004, pp.77-98; Beth Coleman. 'Race as Technology.' *Camera Obscura*, vol. 24, no.1, 2009, pp. 176-207.

human bodies and their mechanization: '[M]an is a stomach—ergo, boy a male young stomach. Man is a machine—boy a male young machine. Man is a tail-less monkey—boy a male young tail-less monkey' (4).

And indeed, whenever the Vril-Ya display their racialized traits in the novel, our vision of an oriental fantasy is disrupted. The narrator's first impression is that the Vril-Ya are exotic, immaterial, ethereal figures capable of flying like a 'fabled Peri' or a fairy (Lytton, *CR* 33). This romantic conception is punctured in the novel when the flying beings expose their wings, their 'detachable mechanical prostheses' that 'became dilated as a bladder that fills with air' (Clarke 50; Lytton, *CR* 33). At this moment, the Vril-Ya's spectacular aerial performance transforms into a romance turned inside out—one where the technological, mechanical contrivances that go into making and maintaining the façade of fantasy are exposed. On seeing the transformation, the narrator is unable to cope with the disillusionment and faints. For race to be *like* a technology, then, is to suggest that it is the hidden material underpinning of the oriental vision; the machinery that should remain concealed. Giving a racial contour to the Orient, which is, by definition, a fuzzy, spiritual category for Lytton is to crudely materialize the very essence of a fictional, imaginative marvel. It is to impose biological limits on an airy fantasy.

Vril-Ya as Racial Hybrids

A significant feature of Lytton's historical romances is the racial diversity he ascribes to civilizations of the past. In his romances, he often constructs racially exotic and hybrid histories for Western civilizations—for instance, in *Athens: Its Rise and Fall*, he describes early Grecians as migrating from India, Egypt, and Phoenecia (5). Lytton's representation of ancient historical epochs reveals that he was acutely aware

of inter-racial fusion that accompanied flows of migration. At least, within the imaginary of romances, he accepts and even celebrates the fusion of races. Critic Bruce Knox offers a favourable view of Lytton's conception of hybridity arguing that 'in *The Caxtons*, Lytton had attributed the strength of Europe's civilization to the mixing of races' (869). In the novel, Sisty Caxton, the migrant to Australia, reads an excerpt from the history of civilizations authored by his father, which asserts that 'race in perfection is produced by admixture: how all mixed races have been the most intelligent…' (Lytton, *Caxtons* 162). Sisty, however, goes on to claim that the element of racial inter-mixing reminds him of the plot of historical romances (Lytton, *Caxtons* 162). It is thus possible that, for Lytton, hybridity was a romantic idea, purely entertained at the level of fantasy and removed from the colonial present. In other words, it is uncertain to what degree the romance of oriental hybridity necessarily indicates a comfort with racial miscegenation in the colonial context. To treat the flexibility of Lytton's notion of romantic hybridity as evidence of his 'progressive' views on race or hybridity would be to misread his romantic orientalism as more focused on the biological notion of race than it is.

The Coming Race sharply emphasizes that, for Lytton, there was a key difference between oriental and racial (biological) forms of hybridity. This section examines how Lytton regards the Vril-Ya's racial hybridity as a perversion of imagined oriental hybridity, much esteemed in his romances. In this section, I also illustrate how the Vril-Ya invert the subversive potential of hybridity as imagined by postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha. For Bhabha, hybridity carries transgressive potential—it 'is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of [colonial] domination through disavowal' of purity (insertion mine; *Location of Culture* 159). While Bhabha claimed that the inherent unstable identity of the hybrid countered

essentialist and dominant forms of power, Lytton shows the opposite to be the case with the Vril-Ya. Bhabha conceptualized hybridity as a theoretical tool for understanding the colonial encounter beyond the binary oppositional framework of colonizer versus colonized. His concept, however, does not fully account for the ways in which Victorian writers imagined hybrid subjectivities. Here, I will demonstrate how, by taking into account Lytton's intentions and his political motives, we can arrive at a more layered notion of hybridity than Bhabha supposes.

With their blue eyes and fair skin, the Vril-Ya predominantly look like the Anglo-Saxon British settlers who moved to America to colonize lands. Over time, their racial make-up has absorbed indigenous strains giving them a reddish appearance (though how much of this integration was organic or forced is a history never revealed). In this admixture of racial strains which includes oriental features, the Vril-Ya exhibit a thoroughly hybridised hereditary past. At first glance, their representation appears to subversively question the purity and authenticity of races. Lytton, however, does not present the Vril-Ya as a multiracial/cultural blend that epitomises the spirit of cultural/spiritual excellence in his romances. In fact, he presents them as embodying a highly conservative vision of hybridity:

> It was considered that the dark-red skin showed the most ancient family of Ana; but they attached no sentiment of pride to that antiquity, and, on the contrary believed their present excellence of breed came from frequent crossing with other families differing, yet akin; and they encourage such intermarriages, always provided that it be with the Vril-ya nations. (Lytton, *CR* 105)

For the Vril-Ya, hybridity is not a natural fusion of traits but an engineered cross-pollination between communities. In contrast to theorist Jan Nederveen Pieterse's claim that 'hybridity problematizes boundaries,' the Vril-Ya use hybridity to strictly enforce and define boundaries (220). The Vril-Ya consciously mate across groups to pursue evolutionary advantage and strengthen their power over vril. Resembling an

early form of eugenics, their interbreeding is conditional: they believe in 'fusion between *congenial* races'—that is, mating is only allowed between families who exercise power over vril (emphasis added; Lytton, *CR* 87). Their cross-breeding is thus motivated by an essentialist purpose—to draw on differential vril energies of 'differing yet akin' tribes to produce a potent fluidic concentrate, vril (Lytton, *CR* 105). Vril stands for a toxic distillation of all energies that results in a supra-energy. It signifies a materialization of the principle that underlies Vril-Ya thought in general: '[T]he object of all systems of philosophical thought tends to the attainment of unity, or the ascent through all intervening labyrinths to the simplicity of a single first cause or principle' (Lytton, *CR* 57). In short, vril symbolizes a one-ness of power arising out of hybridity.

In his critique of Bhabha's notion, Robert Young argues that, in attributing a subversive element to hybridity, Bhabha assumes that cultures and races were singular or homogenous at a point in time before mixing (*Colonial Desire* 27). The Vril-Ya, however, do not claim a homogenous past that has, over time, racially intermingled with other cultures. Rather, they maintain that they have been a hybrid race since their inception; a fact confirmed by how all Vril-Ya members look different. Hybridity is the original and the normative state rather than the exception in Vril-Ya culture. However, the fact that Vril-Ya have always been a hybrid race does not make them progressive. As mentioned earlier, their hybridity only misleadingly exists on the surface, geared as it is towards one-ness. Even though their appearance varies, the sole important, and indeed definitive, marker of racial identity is the presence of the fluid, vril. Lytton thus offers a perceptive critique of the notion of hybridity wherein the hybrid itself signifies essentialism. In contrast to the anti-

essentialism of Bhabha's model of hybridity, the Vril-Ya, in upholding the principle of vril, are fixated with purity.

The language of the Vril-Ya also exhibits symptoms of a linguistic synthesis gone wrong. The narrator reports that their dialect 'contains the evidence of fusion between congenial races… [and] the continuous culture of a highly thoughtful people' (insertion mine; Lytton, *CR* 87). Their language is, in his words, 'akin to the Aryan or Indo-Germanic [tongue]' (Lytton, *CR* 86). However, despite traces of Aryan influence, the Vril-Ya only preserve a few Aryan words, one of them being the term for destruction 'nak' (Lytton, *CR* 80). Ignoring their Aryan roots, they borrow significant political terms—like the word, 'Tur' indicating political head—from Turanian, a different linguistic family (Lytton, *CR* 86). In addition to being indifferent to past influences, the Vril-Ya are generally intolerant towards any compound hybrid terms: with zero tolerance for unnecessary phrases, they 'extirpat[e] all such polysynthetical or polysyllabic monsters' (Lytton, *CR* 87).

The Vril-Ya's connection to the Aryans indicates Lytton's familiarity with comparative philologist Max Müller's theory of evolution of languages. The fact that Lytton dedicated the novel to Müller further confirms that Müller's ideas serve as a para-text to the novel.[22] Shadowing *The Coming Race*, Müller's theory offers a critical commentary on the Vril-Ya's devaluation of their Aryan heritage. In his investigation of different mythological systems, Müller traced the historical development of a 'primordial "Aryan" language that predated ancient Greek and Sanskrit' (David and Nicholls 87). The oriental Aryan civilization (of the past) in his

[22] Lytton's interest in orientalist philology, especially the study of religions, intensified in the later years of his life. In 1888, he wrote to Müller about his experience of reading *Mahabharata* asking for suggestions on related mythological texts. In letters written in 1890, Lytton uses an orientalist framework (common amongst colonial officials) to comment on imperial matters such as the legalization of the law against infant marriage in India. Letters from Edward Bulwer Lytton to Max Müller. 1885-90. Bodleian Library. MS. Eng C 2806. fols. 104-12.

schema, signified a highly advanced point of cultural origin for both Eastern and Western civilizations. In his writings, Müller reminded the Western audience that there was much to learn from ancient Eastern texts: 'I wished the Veda and its religion and philosophy should not only seem to you curious and strange, but that you should feel that there was in them something that concerns ourselves, something of our own intellectual growth…[O]r at least of the childhood of our own race' (*India: What can it teach us* 254). Here, Müller urges the Western readers to 'imagine' a connection with these texts: to not just 'other' them but absorb them as one's own linguistic, literary inheritance.

The Vril-Ya contradict Lytton and Müller's insistence on treating the ancient Aryan past as a culturally refined period that could impart valuable lessons to the present. Despite inheriting the cultural make-up from the Aryans, the Vril-Ya prefer to weave evolutionary narratives with frogs as their ancestor. For both Lytton and Müller, past lineages had to be thought of in imaginative, idealist rather than racial, biological terms. Though Müller's work later fed into a discourse of racial differentiation, he mostly 'contradicted the idea of language as racial property, since [for him] all speech sprang from the same universal archetypes of thought' (insertion mine; Abberley 50). For instance, Müller wrote: 'I have declared again and again that if I say Aryas, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hair nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language' (*Biographies of Words and the Home of the Aryas* 120). In 1872, a year after *The Coming Race* was published, Müller publicly articulated his critique of the Darwinian turn to race—at a speech delivered at the Liverpool literary and philosophical society in 1872, he attacked Darwin claiming that '[m]aterialism… is everywhere in the ascendant, while Idealism is almost a term of reproach' (qtd in 'Max Müller on Darwin' 145).

Through his dedication to Müller in the novel, Lytton indirectly endorsed an understanding of linguistic inheritance that resisted a materialist evolutionary logic. Language, for Lytton, was the medium through which the latent idealist power of the unconscious could be articulated: the more semi-formed and hazy the thoughts, the more they represented the immaterial spiritual Ideal. To think in terms of Darwinistic evolutionary paradigm, for Lytton, was to adopt a restrictive materialist paradigm that has too little space for organic creativity. This inability to think in non-racial terms is the problem with the Vril-Ya. Rather than allowing their language to organically evolve through practice over time, they subject it to the logic of racial breeding. For the Vril-Ya, polysyllabic words are not linguistic inheritances to be cherished; instead, they regard them 'as devouring invaders of the aboriginal forms,' as bad hybrids that pollute a strong language, inhibiting efficient communication (Lytton, *CR* 87). The more the language advances, the more the Vril-Ya's vocabulary returns to monosyllabic 'foundations,' trimmed of unwanted 'advance[ments]' acquired during the 'inflectional' stage of linguistic development (Lytton, *CR* 87). Lacking spontaneity, the Vril-Ya culture, like their language, has become 'arrested and fixed'—obsessed with economy and clarity rather than creative possibility (Lytton, *CR* 78).

The Colonial Power of Vril

The Vril-Ya's racial mixed-ness, as imagined by Lytton, is not necessarily politically radical, for it feeds into an imperialist instinct. From the very beginning of the novel, we detect signs of a colonizing instinct in the Vril-Ya mentality. Even as they pretend to be compassionate, they use power over vril as a criterion to discriminate against other non-Vril communities. Their rudimentary view of history supports this view:

‘“The Civilized Nations,” was the common name by which the communities employing the uses of vril distinguished themselves from such of the Ana as were yet in a state of barbarism’ (Lytton, *CR* 57). Like other imperial cultures, the Vril-Ya rationalize their discriminatory attitude by inflating their claims of racial advancement. Here, Lytton’s objection is not directed at the Vril-Ya’s sense of civilizational superiority *per se*. As a keen reader and writer of Anglo-Saxon historical poems/novels such as *King Arthur* (1849) and *Harold, The Last of the Saxons* (1848), he was invested in constructing glorified civilizational narratives for Britain. But, for him, the Vril-Ya’s assertion that Vril made them evolutionary superior hence more suited to colonize was a crude justification for colonialism. In effect, Lytton warns that when a culture internalizes its claim to racial superiority, it leads to a dangerously unrestrained imperialism that discriminates against its own non-vril citizens—similar to the way ‘[t]he citizens of New York regard the Negroes’ (Lytton, *CR* 105).

Identifying that the Vril-Ya signify nascent imperial power complicates Lilian Nayder’s reading of *The Coming Race* as an imperial Gothic text. For Nayder, the novel exposes Lytton’s anxiety about ‘ostensibly civilized’ Britain being ‘threatened with colonization, usually at the hands of a “barbarous” race’ (213-4). In contrast to Nayder, I argue that the Vril-Ya are not the subaltern colonized native lashing out at the colonizer, Britain. Standing in for America, they represent an ex-settler colony that, far from fundamentally contesting the notion of power, reproduces imperialist violence. That is, while the Vril-Ya do upset the power-relation, their ascendance does not question or subvert the logic or project of colonialism.

Lytton’s attack on American colonial designs raises another question: as an active contributor to British imperialism, how did he reconcile his critique of Vril-

Ya's colonial attitude with his position as the secretary of state of colonies? For someone closely involved in imperial affairs, Lytton offers an insightful and reflexive assessment of the colonizer mentality. One way to look at this is to argue that, in the novel, Lytton unwittingly lays bare his discomfort with Britain's colonial agenda. This reading is advanced by Bruce Knox who interprets the unstable tone of the novel—the simultaneous idealization and mockery of the Vril-Ya—as exposing Britain's colonial ambitions (869). However, Lytton is doing something more complex: he is offering the reader a choice between two models of colonialism—a benevolent colonizing Britain and an America, which like the Vril-Ya, believes in ruthless expansionism. The Vril-Ya explicitly state that once they colonize the upper lands, they will kill the human race currently inhabiting the space. Zee rationalizes the impending act of slaughtering as inevitable: The Vril-Ya are '[d]estined to return to the upper world, and supplant all the inferior races now existing therein' (Lytton, *CR* 106). No complex questions are asked; no moral responsibility is taken for the forthcoming genocide—the Vril-Ya treat the possibility of murdering humans in the future as given.

The Vril-Ya's autocratic worldview also subtly comments on the development of American democracy over time. While resembling the independent spirit of America, their political set-up both criticizes and exemplifies American political assumptions about its progressivism and exceptionalism. Through successive experimentation with political systems, the Vril-Ya have arrived at a hybrid system that is neither democratic nor autocratic but something in between. Explicitly rejecting democracy, the child Taë speaks eloquently on the drawbacks of the system. Overstating the merits of democracy or 'Koom-Posh-erie,' the American-born narrator presents it to Taë as the most evolved political system in the world (Lytton,

CR 150). Taë claims that democracy lacks a historical precedent as all such experiments have descended into chaos or 'Glek Nas' (Lytton, *CR* 151). Yet again, in Taë's speech, the Vril-Ya's fear of disorderly confusion comes through with their political system eliminating variation of any kind.

In light of their dismissal of democracy, one would assume that the Vril-Ya follow an autocratic model. Their political system, however, is a perverted form of autocracy that exhibits elements of democracy. The Vril-Ya's socio-political order can be best characterized as 'quasi-democratic authoritarianism'—on the one hand, the narrator claims that '[e]quality here was not a name; it was a reality,' on the other, he describes their society as a 'benevolent autocracy' (Lytton, *CR* 57; 225). Though critical of 'Koom-posh-erie' (democracy), the Vril-Ya continue to value democratic principles by endowing all individuals with the power of vril. However, this easy access to vril makes proto-fascists out of these individuals. Vril thus produces a strangely jumbled political system: it makes power accessible to everyone while justifying its concentration in one individual, the figure of an autocrat. Though everyone is equal in Vril-Ya society and no one 'covet[s] the cares of office' yet the autocrat oddly possesses supreme powers (Lytton, *CR* 58).

For Lytton, the two extremes—democracy and autocracy—are fundamentally interconnected for they both enable abuse of power in radically different ways.[23] In an 1863 essay on the need for pragmatic prudence in American politics, Lytton chides America for hastily adopting democracy. Briefly, in the essay, Lytton recognizes the value of democracy: 'Were I the native of a land that presented to me only the option between these two [autocracy and democracy], I think I should prefer the last'

[23] Lytton's own changing political stance—from Radical to Whig to Tory—over the years possibly fed into this conceptualization of the Vril-Ya as sceptical of democracy but also deeply attached to its principles. For more on this, read Leslie Mitchell's account of Lytton's complex political trajectory in *Bulwer Lytton: The Rise and Fall of a Victorian Man of Letters,* Palgrave, 2003.

(insertion mine; 'The Organ of Weight' 169). But even as he prefers the 'Athenian' model of democracy, Lytton's tone is uncertain. He sees this as a false choice: for him, in the absence of a stable aristocracy, society turns to inferior models of autocracy and democracy ('The Organ of Weight' 169). Too much power invested in the many *or* the one yields uncannily similar results. In a letter to his son in 1866, he reiterates this view, predicting a fate for America: 'democracy is in the future, and will be succeeded by imperial despotisms…' (qtd in Mitchell 225).

Vril-Ya as Incompetent Readers

The Vril-Ya, with their 'god-like serenity' and unruffled demeanour, lack the emotional breadth required for artistic creation (Seed 16). Not only are they incapable of producing art, they are also inept at imaginatively engaging with individuals or books. The Vril-Ya do not write anything, nor can anything be written about them except the narrator's dry, ethnological inquiry into their way of life. Aph-Lin attributes the lack of fiction in their society to their uneventful lives—'what more of us can be said than that 'they were born, they were happy, they died?' (Lytton, *CR* 135). At the cost of emotionally restricting themselves, happiness appears to be the only emotion recognized, or even permitted, in their society. Commenting on their perpetual serenity, an 1871 *Spectator* review described the Vril-Ya as a 'tranquilized' race 'where…all *passions are magnetized to sleep* by the long-inherited experience of the fatality of indulging them' (emphasis added; 'Satiric Utopias' 10).

The Vril-Ya's dulled consciousness suggests insensibility to all stimuli other than those of a crude bodily kind. Their mental state of sedation represents a paradox because, even though unconscious, they cannot access the abstract creative Ideal. The narrator notes that while 'with each generation,' the Vril-Ya faces became 'more serene…the art of the painter became more tame and monotonous' (Lytton, *CR* 119).

For Lytton, far from making an artist passive, accessing the unconscious could unleash emotions, spurring him/her to produce inspiring art. The Vril-Ya represent an antithesis of Lytton's view of the relationship between emotions, unconscious and instinctive creativity. Fiction-writing, for Lytton, was a spontaneous (in the main) unconscious act that could not be forced, as he claimed: '[I]t will be found that the best and subtlest effect of writers are those of which they were themselves unconscious while writing' ('On Moral Effect' 120). In one of his letters, he told his publisher H. Colburn that 'so much [writing] depends upon accident—a flash of thought as it were' (insertion mine).[24] For Lytton, the moment of creation was intensely charged with the power of 'natural feeling' (natural being the operative word here) which infuses the work of art with imaginative vigour. Lytton, in his letters to Colburn, often resists his publisher's pressure to regularly churn out novels to keep up with popular demand.[25] For him, uninspired, mechanical writing, lacking in inventive spontaneity spelt the death-knell of creatively and spiritually charged prose as is the case with the Vril-Ya. Regrettably, as Lytton's letters to Forster show, imagining and portraying the Vril-Ya was an experience plagued by a creative impasse. While writing the novel, Lytton sounds unhappily in danger of becoming like the Vril-Ya: imaginatively disabled in his pursuit of an instrumentalized, uninspiring and perverted oriental Ideal.

In Lytton's view, if creativity stemmed from the unconscious, then even reading a fictional text was an inherently unconscious activity. While reading, readers unconsciously absorbed ideas from books that, in turn, shaped their selves. In *The Caxtons*, the pedant Mr Caxton corroborates this, to his own disadvantage, as he tells his wife: 'My dear Kitty…you found in me all the fine things I have learned from

[24] Edward Bulwer Lytton. Letter to H. Colburn. Undated. Bodleian Library. MS Eng. Lett. D 90. Fol. 212.
[25] Ibid.

books…[b]y-and-by you discovered that I was not worse for all the quartos that have transmigrated into the ideas within me' (25). In Mr Caxton's case, the ideas from books have signally failed to humanize him: the sheer quantity of his reading (the number of 'quartos' imbibed), have turned him into a human encyclopaedia who regurgitates knowledge. Lytton insinuates that books not only become part of the self we project to the world; they also act as filters through which we make sense of our surroundings.

While *The Caxtons* explores the figure of a man who reads too much, to the cost of those around him, *The Coming Race* shows the harmful effects of too little reading. Ironically, Aph-Lin's wife, Bra is the only member interested in reading ancient 'romance and adventure' which Lytton compares to the upper-world's fascination for oriental 'Tales of Genii or Arabian nights' (Lytton, *CR* 173). Her imaginative reading however is seen as a threat, a distraction from her daily duties. In the very next sentence, her deviation stands corrected as we are told that Bra's reading does not interfere in her tending to automatons. For the Vril-Ya, reading fiction is a wasteful activity because it encourages one to indulge in the imaginative world of romance. Most importantly, fiction reminds readers that another clairvoyant force exists beyond the truth of mechanized Vril—that of imagination. [26]

The Vril-Ya are not only bad at reading books, they fail to sensitively read different cultures and races. When they see the narrator for the first time, they don't seem inclined to read him. The narrator mistakes their disinterest as civility when, in reality, their politeness masks a 'tranquil indifference' towards any non-vril individual (Lytton, *CR* 28). By contrast, Lytton suggests that an active, imaginative curiosity

[26] In his earlier essay, 'On Art in Fiction' (1838), Lytton insists on a distinction between emotionally rousing and formally, technically perfect art. Commenting on the appeal of Walter Scott's writings, he claims, 'with all his genius, Scott was rather a great mechanist than a great artist' ('On Art in Fiction' 138).

towards the 'other' would produce a more respectful engagement with racial alterity. For the Vril-Ya, attention to the 'other' starts and ends with the body—they see the narrator as a 'rare wild animal;' his unfamiliar racial origins make them paranoid (Lytton, *CR* 28). Zee informs the narrator that when he was insensible, his 'teeth were examined, and they clearly showed that' he was 'not only graminivorous, but carnivorous' (Lytton, *CR* 177). Even in psychic terms, the Vril-Ya do not emotionally connect with others but invasively read people's minds. While the narrator is asleep, Zee raids his unconscious in order to yield '[a] rude dictionary' of his language and experience (Lytton, *CR* 37). Evading the ethical implications of conducting this experiment, Zee describes the entire process as 'transmission' rather than invasion (Lytton, *CR* 50). Indeed, through repeated vril-induced trances, the narrator does, in turn, absorb the Vril-Ya's language. Still, while the flow of knowledge seems symbiotic, the narrator's consent is never sought.

Reading, for the Vril-Ya, involves reading consciously and materially. It is to grasp the obvious, apparent meaning, 'the polish of words' in poetry (in Aph-Lin's words) and not register the multiple, subtle nuances that, for Lytton, can only be unconsciously absorbed while reading (Lytton, *CR* 136). The Vril-Ya, after all, are a race who read literally, only recognizing signs of the unconscious as long as they are bodily and visible. Lytton's story 'The Haunted and The Haunters' (1859) highlights the limits of a materialist mode of reading: the narrator, faced by the prospect of encountering a ghostly presence in a haunted house, reads Macaulay's Whig-progressivist history to steady his nerves. His faith in materialism is shaken, for the first time, when a spirit-like presence emerges against the page of the book: '[T]he page was overshadowed; I look up, and I saw what I shall find it very difficult to describe' (40). The 'shadowing' of Macaulay's book disturbs the narrator's

progressivist certainty, compelling him to acknowledge the possibility of the existence of the supernatural. At this point, he is forced to trust his unconscious intuitions about the reality of this undefined force that assails him. It is the same imaginative open-ness to the possibility of the unknown that characterizes the nascent romance elements at the start of *The Coming Race*, before the satiric thrust becomes clear. During the course of the narrative, the satiric note, however, transforms that promise of the imaginative unconscious to the narrow fixity of the material.

In the control it asserts over the unconscious, vril signifies a monological, materialist imagination, an inflexible style of reading that only recognizes a single truth—its own. To read imaginatively is to read with openness to unconscious inspiration—with a mind willing to entertain spontaneous, unstructured hermeneutic possibilities. For Lytton, there was no single way of reading texts: he wanted readers to make judgments, to pay attention to the range of possible interpretations without subscribing to a single assigned meaning. As he wrote in *Zanoni*, '[a] writer who conveys typical meaning may express them in myriads' (*Zanoni* 435). That said, Lytton was not pushing for anything like postmodern relativism where all interpretations are valid. It is unlikely that Lytton, considering the satirical thrust of his work, would have endorsed the commercial exploitation of vril for the sale of 'Bovril' or the theosophists' use of his work to elaborate a notion of 'root races.' Lara Karpenko and Shalyn Clagett write that in his preface to *Zanoni*, he endorses a 'suggestive' model of reading wherein he nudges the reader to arrive at inferences similar to his own (229). While the satirical tone of *The Coming Race* is at first veiled, Lytton clearly meant for a competent reader to pick on the suggestions and see the novel for what it is—a satire on materialism.

Lytton's theory of creativity implies an ideal reader who is capable of understanding and appreciating the subtleties of imagination. In this chapter, I have shown how the unconscious emerges as central to Lytton's understanding of the idealist Romantic imagination. Lytton's satiric dystopian fantasy of a 'coming race', bent on the destruction of humanity, starts out as a satiric rewriting of conventional tropes of orientalist romance (aimed politically against American imperialism). The novel thus is as much about Lytton's late-Romantic valuation of the imaginative unconscious as it is about his thinking about the mixed racial and linguistic background of Western culture, or his backward looking regrets about Britain's loss of imperial control over America. More broadly, through the Vril-Ya, Lytton mounts an attack on scientific materialism and the biological mode of establishing racial difference. Considering his investment in British colonialism, Lytton's critique of Darwin is not any more progressive; rather, it stems from a desire to protect an artistic and readerly imagination of the 'other' rooted in idealism. Still, the distinction Lytton sets up between the immateriality of imaginary power and the materiality of embodied power complicates the role of race in more conventional nineteenth-century orientalist representations, gesturing at the prevalence of different, often contesting, imaginaries of race in this period.

Chapter 3. Organic Memory, Comparativism and the Psyche in Grant Allen's *Kalee's Shrine*

Herbert Tompkins, in an obituary for the author, scientist and anthropologist Grant Allen, described him as a 'versatile' writer, remarkable for his 'many sidedness' in both literature and science (134, 135). Canadian by birth, Allen, at the age of 16, moved to Britain in 1864 and resided there for most of his life. Indeed, in the late nineteenth century, the scale of Allen's combined literary and scientific output far exceeded that of other contemporaries. But despite being a prolific fiction writer, Allen repeatedly distanced himself from his novels. As his biographer Edward Clodd noted, Allen prohibited his friends from reading his novels except a few 'hill-top' ones (Melchiori 13). Even his use of pseudonyms (he wrote fiction under the name of J. Arbuthnot Wilson and Cecil Power) reinforced his ambivalence about his literary works. In his own words:

> I wasn't born a novelist, I was only made one. Philosophy and science were the first loves of my youth. I dropped into romance as many men drop into drink, or opium-eating, or other bad practices, not of native perversity, but by pure force of circumstances... I had a ten years' hard struggle for bread, into the details of which I don't care to enter. It left me broken in health and spirit, with all the vitality and vivacity crushed out of me. (Allen, '*Physiological Aesthetics'* and '*Philistia*' in *My First Book* 52)

Appearing in a compilation of authors' recollections about writing their first book, Allen's refusal, here, to romanticize the 'worst paid of professions' stands out ('*Physiological Aesthetics*' and '*Philistia*' in *My First Book* 52). Although Allen uses this essay to alert writers to their meagre financial prospect, it was, in fact, writing about science which proved most unprofitable for him personally—and it was financial hardship which forced him to take up the 'bad practice' of writing romances ('*Physiological Aesthetics*' and '*Philistia*' 52). It was a path that, though lucrative, prevented him from pursuing his passion for science. Yet, a consideration of Allen's

'practice' of fiction writing is crucial for developing an understanding of his place as a nineteenth-century thinker. Allen's imagined worlds reveal his complex interest in ideas of the mind and race, and a study of his fiction in relation to his other writings tells us more about racialized fictions of the mind in the period. Such a study also reveals Allen's investment in shaping the minds of his readers in alignment with his racialized construction of the psyche. It was a construction of the mind that was informed by a scientific rigour, and it is to his conviction in science that I now turn.

Grant Allen and the supernatural

While Allen always insisted on this distinction between his primary 'passion' for science and secondary 'profession' as a writer of popular fiction, a closer scrutiny of his works reveals that his scientific and fictional writings were not so disconnected. Allen often imbued a stylistic literary flair in his scientific works to animate his description of abstract scientific concepts. Peter Morton, in the most comprehensive biography of Grant Allen to date, elaborates upon the distinctive style of Allen's early scientific tract *Physiological Aesthetics* (1877): 'Already very evident are the tools essential to a worker in the craft of high vulgarization: a plain, smooth unassertive style, an effortless command of detail, and a gift of striking metaphor, memorable analogy and concrete illustration' (47). As Morton notes, Allen's prose, whether he liked it or not, was far more literary than he anticipated.

While Allen injected science with literary flair, he also made many of his novels vehicles for scientific ideas. Fiction-writing was not merely a side-line for Allen. It became a way through which he could explore 'questions on which he held decided opinions' (Melchiori 45). Allen's sensational romances often carried a gist of his scientific and anthropological ideas. In the preface of *Strange Stories* (1884), he admitted that though the stories were 'sensational,' he had 'endeavoured to give to

them some slight tinge of psychological import or meaning' (4). Over time, Allen also realized that novels could help him better disseminate his knowledge. In the introduction to *The British Barbarians* (1895), he admitted to strategically using the form of romance to 'broadcast' his ideas to 'the boys and girls of a community'—a demographic, he thought, was most 'in need of suggestion and instruction' (14-15).

Allen's consistent success as a popular fiction writer indicates that he was good at anticipating readerly taste. Even then, the one thing he could not bring himself to cater to was the vast late Victorian appetite for the supernatural. For Allen, there was no supernatural phenomena that was beyond the realm of scientific explanation. In fact, as Anne Stiles observes, Allen's inflexible belief in scientific naturalism made him sound as devout, in a way, as some of his religious contemporaries (89). Even his interventions in anthropology were driven by a 'messianic singlemindedness' to prove the material origins of myths (Parrinder 174). During this period, Victorian anthropologists like E.B. Tylor, J.G. Frazer and Andrew Lang studied mythological systems in primitive societies to better understand the native mind in the colonies. Most anthropologists including Allen approached the mythic as instantiating the inherent superstitious nature of the indigenous mind. Allen's good friend, anthropologist and author, Andrew Lang, however took an entirely different approach. Lang, the father of the school of psycho-folklorism in this period, as Roger Luckhurst points out, 'was synthesizing data from around the world,' including mythic narratives from the margins of the empire (162). In his research, Lang did not treat magic or supernaturalism as irrational and hence, unworthy of inspection. Lang insisted that a deeper knowledge of native mythology and ghost stories could assist in fully comprehending psychical phenomena that was beginning

to be explored by 'experimental psychology' (qtd in Luckhurst 164).[27] Allen too intervened in these debates but he rejected Lang's suggestion about the possible existence of the supernatural. Taking his materialism even further, Allen, in his article 'Who were the fairies?' (1881) argued that elves and fairies in Celtic folktales were not products of the imagination, they represented dead ancestors of a 'real historical race' (335).

A negation of the supernatural at all costs is a marked feature of Allen's lesser-known popular fiction, especially his imperial Gothic novel *Kalee's Shrine* (1886). In the novel, a nefarious Indian thugee (a type of Indian robber infamous for brutally killing their victims) performs a sacrificial ceremony, transforming a British infant, Olga, into a votary of the Goddess Kalee.[28] On her return to England, Olga develops a split personality: part English woman, part Indian thugee—the latter part manifesting itself in moments of unconsciousness. As Patrick Brantlinger argues in *Rule of Darkness* (1988), the trope of the native colonizing the colonizer's psyche by deploying mysterious occult powers is a persistent feature of imperial Gothic fiction from the late nineteenth century (230). In *Kalee's Shrine*, however, Allen does something different. While drawing on the popular theme of the colonized native lashing out against the colonizer, he discards the genre's supernatural overtones and offers a more scientific 'explanation.' This intriguing shift in emphasis—from supernatural to materialist—also marks his remarkable, noxious, but unusual framing of the Indian mind.

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[27] For more on this, see: Andrew Lang. 'Savage Spiritualism.' *AL Longman's Magazine, 1882-1905*, vol. 23, no. 137, March, 1894, pp. 482-95.
[28] Grant Allen and May Cotes. *Kalee's Shrine*. Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1886. Henceforth, *KS*.

Another writer named May Cotes had originally proposed the premise of the plot for *Kalee's Shrine*.[29] Cotes initially approached Allen's friend Andrew Lang with an overtly supernatural idea for the plot. It can be safely presumed that Lang, with his interest in the occult, liked the idea and introduced her to Allen. Not agreeing with Cotes's (and Lang's) taste for the irrational, Allen did his best to negate the occult possibilities of the original plot. As Lang recalled:

> The germ of the tale was sent to me by a lady, and I suggested her collaboration with Mr. Allen. There was something of 'the supernatural' (which he detested) in the romance, so he cut some nerve or other of the heroine's, and rounded the point in that way, though he knew that he was writing false science. (It was the 'inhibitory nerve' of the heroine's eyelid, the cutting of which had impossible consequences). Anything was better than 'the supernatural,' even a consciously false explanation. For such reasons I used to tell Mr. Allen that he was really as obscurantist as any Inquisitor. He thought that the end (science) justified the means. (qtd in Clodd 97-98)

Lang's account reveals that Allen could not tolerate the thought of the supernatural being sold under his name, even for the purpose of entertainment. Any piece of writing that he wrote—be it fictional or non-fictional—had to adhere to his scientific principles. In later editions, Cotes's name was dropped from the title page—an omission that suggests that Allen dominated the writing process, and was almost embarrassed of its fanciful beginnings.

If Allen arrested the plot's supernatural impulse, he also went out of his way to explain potentially occult and 'mesmeric' episodes through scientific models, particularly the incidents of trance, hypnosis and somnambulism. The publication of *Kalee's Shrine* coincided with a re-intensification of interest in all things mesmeric and spiritual in England. As Roger Luckhurst has deftly illustrated, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, The Society of Psychical Research launched 'an organised and systematic attempt to investigate…terms such as mesmeric, psychical and

[29] According to the blog 'Gothic Texts,' 'Cotes, born in Oxfordshire, England, in 1859; married Henry C. Masterman in 1886 and died in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, in 1912' (Hubin 'Crime Fiction IV: A Comprehensive Bibliography').

Spiritualistic' (qtd in Luckhurst *Invention of Telepathy* 54). Allen never intervened in these debates regarding the psychic potential of the mind. His only available 'scientific' commentary on this subject is an unusually positive review of James Sully's book *Illusions: A Psychological Study* (1881), which possibly appealed to him because it offered definitive physiological reasons for the manifestation of dreams. Allen's fictional work, however, makes a clearer case for science. A later novel *Linnet* (1900) introduces a gullible character, Rue, who has 'a sneaking regard in the background of her soul, for mesmerism, spiritualism, psychic force, electro-biology, and the occult and the mysterious in human nature generally' that made her 'a ready prey to plausible imposters' (171). *Kalee's Shrine*, meanwhile, makes an overt attempt to biologize the unconscious mind by offering a pseudo-scientific explanation for Olga's trance-like episodes. But the pseudo-scientific framing does more than deny the supernatural. The novel gestures at Allen's thinking about a larger discussion in science: the debate over the status and meaning of 'organic memory'—a concept that drove his scientific endeavours in the mid-1880s. In the sections that follow, I will demonstrate that the scienticized version of the unconscious mind found in the novel represents an imaginative exploration (a working-through) on Allen's part of Herbert Spencer's theory of organic memory. As I will show, Allen's incorporation of organic memory also alters the dynamics of race in the plot, subverting stereotypical depiction of race relations—a subversion that, in turn, allows him to critique the empire. The chapter further argues that Allen's incorporation of the notion of organic memory in conjunction with his comparativist anthropological gaze also shapes his imagination of the reader's psyche.

Organic Memory and the Unconscious Mind

In his studies of evolutionary psychology, Allen attempted to reconcile Darwin's notion of evolution with Herbert Spencer's theories of psychology. Combining the two approaches, he argued that the development of the psyche followed a trajectory similar to the physical evolution of man. Through this attempt at synthesizing Spencer and Darwin, Allen wished to highlight Spencer's role in the evolutionary debate. While Allen regarded both Darwin and Spencer as the original minds behind evolution, he thought that Spencer had not been credited enough for his contribution (Atchison 55). For him, the significance given to Darwin was unjustified as 'there were many Darwinians (in the popular sense of the term) before Darwin…If anyone's name should be affiliated with the general theory, it should be that of Spencer' (Atchison 56).[30]

Indeed, Allen's ideas were more aligned with Spencer. Spencer's emphasis on the whole, the sum, appealed to him as a more holistic account of evolution in comparison with Darwinian natural selection. In his letters, Allen calls Spencer a 'seer' and 'architect' who, through his synthetic philosophy, had unlocked 'the universal plan.'[31] Out of all of Spencer's ideas, Allen was invested in the notion of hereditary memory: the theory that habits acquired during a lifetime were internalized as instincts and transmitted to an offspring. Summing up Spencer's views in his article 'The Scientific Causerie' (1890), Allen wrote:

> Herbert Spencer always insisted upon the importance of habit in producing modifications of structure, transmitted by heredity to the offspring. He

[30] Allen's reverence for Spencer bordered on hero-worship most evident in the poem he wrote to Spencer from Jamaica in 1874. An excerpt from the same:

> Our age may add to thy [Spencer's] more lasting crown:
> Accept an unknown singer's thanks, for light
> Cast on the dim abyss that bounds on little sight.

(insertion mine; Letter from Grant Allen to Herbert Spencer. 10 Nov, 1874. Senate House Library. MS. 791/102 (i).)

[31] Grant Allen. Letter to Herbert Spencer. 'To Herbert Spencer.' 10 Nov, 1874. Senate House Library. MS. 791/102 (ii).

> believed that function largely preceded and determined structure, and that the young inheriting the structures thus modified by use during the life of the parent, increased and strengthened them by function during their own lives. (537)

Allen shows that, for Spencer, heredity was not an unvarying mechanical process of transmitting the same traits across generations. Instead, the individual could choose to develop habits in response to his/her environment. These acquired habits were then passed on from parent to child with each generation altering the received traits before transmitting them. Further clarifying the relationship between the individual and the environment in his piece 'The Mystery of Birth' (1895), Allen argued that 'assimilation' with the environment was not about a person passively absorbing his/her context but more about him/her actively engaging with environmental triggers (119). Unlike Darwinian natural selection, Spencer's theory offered a modicum of agency to the individual to modify one's inherited biological make-up. This emphasis on 'acquired habit' privileged the role of the individual that, in a theory about generational transmission of traits, risked being marginalized.

This stress on individual agency in Spencer's theory contradicted another theory popular in this period—the theory of germplasm proposed by German evolutionary biologist August Weismann. Weismann argues that the germplasm, composed of a specialized unit of cells called the 'germ cells,' transmitted hereditary knowledge between generations. The germplasm, as Allen wrote, remained 'unchanged during the development of that individual' and was 'continuous from generation to generation' ('Essays upon Heredity' 84). As the germplasm stayed the same in parent and offspring, there was no space for new characteristics to be developed through 'use and disuse' (Allen, 'Essays upon Heredity' 84). In Allen's opinion, by erasing the individual's contribution to inheritance, Weismann's theory pushed back the advances that had been made in discussions of evolution. In his

words, the debate, because of Weismann, had returned to an era of 'pre-Darwinian and pre-Spencerian chaos' (Allen, 'Essays upon Heredity' 84).

However, while Spencer's Lamarckian theory of use-inheritance offered greater agency to the individual, it never completely undermined the significance of the environment. As Spencer wrote in *First Principles* (1867):

> Whoever hesitates to utter that which he thinks the highest truth…Let him duly realize that opinion is the agency through which character adapts external arrangements to itself—that his opinion rightly forms part of this agency—is a unit of force, constituting, with other such units the general power which works out the social changes; and he will perceive that he may properly give full utterance to his innermost conviction, leaving it to produce what effect it may… (123)

Spencer recognizes that the individual's utterance of his opinion constitutes an act of agency. However, paradoxically, he wants the individual to acknowledge that the very assertion of agency sets into motion larger 'social changes' (Spencer, *First Principles* 123). A promise of pure agency is not antithetical to a larger 'cosmic' plan, for Spencer—in fact, it is the necessary prerequisite for a change at the macro-level (Spencer, *First Principles* 123). Though Spencer attempts to delicately balance individual agency with structural forces in his schema, there is always the danger of one overriding the other. The same issue plagues his theory of hereditary memory. With the individual simultaneously operating as 'a descendant of the past and parent of the future' in the theory, the individual's ability to control transmittable traits is always at odds with his inability to escape the effects of his lineage (Spencer, *First Principles* 123).

Spencer's theory of use-inheritance also doubled up as an explanation for the evolutionary development of the psyche. Thinkers from this period such as Ewald Hering and Samuel Butler believed that unlocking the workings of memory at an individual level would shed light on the process of heredity in general. How an

individual acquired and remembered habits could explain the retention and transmission of traits during inter-generational inheritance. The trope of memory thus increasingly became a shorthand for heredity, as Théodule Ribot wrote: 'Heredity, indeed, is a specific memory: it is to the species what memory is to the individual' (*Heredity* 52). Laura Otis, in her expansive book *Organic Memory* (1994), also illustrates that memory in this period was simultaneously viewed as a repository of data and a conduit that facilitated the flow of hereditary information (16).

The question at the heart of this debate was: how did the 'memory' of both the species and the individual work? More specifically, if previously forgotten memories could rise to the surface for an individual, could the same be true of previously buried racial memories? Mid-nineteenth century physiological psychology's research on reflex and instinct proved useful in answering this question. Laura Otis argues that conversations surrounding organic memory often mixed the ideas of memory, instinct and 'unconscious cerebration' (6). As Jane F. Thrailkill observes: 'What Ribot calls "organic memory" William Carpenter termed "unconscious cerebration" and Oliver Wendell Holmes dubbed "reflex action of the brain"' (107). Memory was increasingly seen to operate unconsciously akin to instinct or reflex action. The underlying logic being that once an individual memorized a habit, it would automatically become a part of his unconscious as an ingrained instinct.

Allen accepted this equation between reflex and unconscious memory but not wholeheartedly. In an 1897 short story about generational organic memory, he wrote that lower organisms memorized traits through reflexes but 'whether anything analogous to these animal faculties occurs in ourselves' was still a mystery ('A Freak of Memory' 28). This was a departure from Spencer who claimed that 'intelligent and rational reactions' were still 'more complex reflexes' (Richards 283). Allen was

perhaps echoing Théodule Ribot who argued that memory and habit were not entirely conflatable categories. For Ribot:

> Memory represented a transition state between the conscious and the unconscious, and the unconscious represented a transition state between habit and reflex. (Otis 22-23)

Ribot writes that memory starts out as a conscious impression and is only 'part habit' at an early stage (*Heredity* 51). Initially, when the individual acquires a trait, it represents 'imperfect automatism' (*Heredity* 51). Through practice and 'multiplication of experiences,' an individual's 'conscious memory passes into unconscious or organic memory,' becoming hardwired as a hereditable unconscious reflex (*Heredity* 52). At this point, when memory transitions from the voluntary to the involuntary, from habit to reflex, it becomes a factor in binding generations.

Poised between the conscious and unconscious, memory represented an in-betweenness, a recorded impression that was always in the process of becoming. While Ribot's conceptualization accounted for the transition of memory from the conscious to the unconscious, he admitted that the processes of memory eluded theorization because 'so little is tangible' (*Heredity* 54). Ribot's difficulty in spelling out the relationship between conscious and unconscious memory mirrors the difficulty of biologically mapping out a process that accounts for individual agency as well as generational inheritance. The question that Ribot wanted to solve was: in what way are the traits agentially acquired from an environment stored as unconscious information and passed on to the offspring? During his lifetime, Ribot failed to answer this question to his own satisfaction and it continued to puzzle Allen and other scientists well into the twentieth century.

Allen's scientific writing from this period shows that he was actively following the developments in this area. Through the 1880s and 90s, he wrote several

pieces addressing this debate. One of the most prominent theorists to take on the task of offering a biological explanation to this mystery was Samuel Butler. In his book *Unconscious Memory* (1880), Butler proposed, amongst other implausible theories, that a stream of vibrations could transmit unconscious memory between generations. Allen considered this explanation to be utterly fatuous. In addition to rejecting Butler, Allen also criticized Theodore Eimer's theory of organic memory (that prioritized variation in natural selection) on grounds that it lacked 'a needful sense of allegiance to strict chemical and physical law,' dismissing it as 'medieval' ('Science' 340).

While Allen kept searching for an adequate physiological explanation for the process of use-inheritance, the theory resisted being shaped into a neat form. Dwelling more on this puzzle, in his essay 'The Mystery of Birth' (1895), Allen described the physiological process of use-inheritance as a 'mystery': 'I do not pretend in any way to have solved that mystery; at best, I desire, by more clearly defining it, and fixing attention on the real central problem (as it seems to me) to bring it one step nearer the hope of a solution' (114). In particular, Allen struggled to reconcile the elements of individual agency and environmental determinism within the theory. *Kalee's Shrine*, written years before his scientific writing on this topic, anticipates his future thinking in this area. As I will show, the novel tackles the problem of use-inheritance by providing an unsophisticated but creative solution. It counts as one of the diverse ways in which Allen was thinking of the relationship between the individual and environment in shaping organic memory, and repeatedly touches on his concerns about race and memory.

Organic Memory and Race in *Kalee's Shrine*

At the beginning of *Kalee's Shrine*, an Indian Ayah kidnaps a British infant, Olga. Tracing a path through the jungle, she 'furtively' carries the 'unconscious white child'

to a thugee's shrine (Allen, *KS* 4). There, in the shrine, the 'squalid' thugee lies in a state of trance 'staring vacantly' at the idol of an Indian Goddess, Kalee (Allen, *KS* 4). The thugee thinks the Ayah has brought him a potential sacrificial subject for the Goddess he worships. The Ayah however does not want the child to be harmed. Her request is less gory: she wants the thugee to convert Olga into a believer of Kalee. The thugee duly performs a semi-occult, semi-surgical operation cutting Olga's optical nerves after which he declares that she has been converted. The novel then skips a few years and introduces us to an adult Olga living in England. By day, Olga appears to be a 'normal' British girl but each night, she slips into a trance-like state. In this state, she not only obeys the commands of the Goddess but, occasionally, she personifies Kalee.

Most British acquaintances see Olga's trance-like state at night as a peculiar mental condition. A few, familiar with the operation of the thugees, see it as a supernatural influence cast by the thugs from across the seas. Alan Tennant, the oculist protagonist-hero of the novel, looks to science, not magic. With a name strikingly similar to Grant Allen, Tennant's attitude also mirrors Grant Allen's scientific naturalist gaze. He constantly scans Olga's dazed eyes for signs of damage that can shed light on her peculiar condition (Allen, *KS* 11). After peering closely, he finds two scars on Olga's temples. With a doctor's confidence, he launches into an explanation of the impact of the cut on different nerves and muscles near the eyes:

> I found two tiny scars, one on each temple, most cleverly cut; the operator had severed a particular nerve which governs the opening and closing of the eyelids... However, I found out by asking elsewhere that this was a regular custom of the Thugs…in reality, and that's just the trick of it, he very cleverly cut the nerve that moves the erector muscles of the eyelid; and after that, the child could never close its eyes or open them wide, except with a distinct and unpleasant effort. (Allen, *KS* 20)

The scar adequately explains Olga's difficulty in closing her eyes but Allen makes it accountable for much more. The narrative implies that by cutting the nerves, the thugee has coerced Olga into absorbing memories of the Indian environment.

As the previous section explained, Allen was preoccupied by how an individual could absorb environmental features and adapt them into behavioural traits. 'Is not the real miracle,' he later wrote, 'the miracle of assimilation?' (Allen, 'The Mystery of Birth' 113). Of particular interest to him was the individual's ability to take something inorganic from his surroundings and transform it into the organic—what he calls, the 'making of the not-me into the me' (Allen, 'The Mystery of Birth' 118). At a time when Allen was working through this question, Olga's scar provides a provisional solution to the mystery. As an incision on the skin, it acts as the conduit, the point of contact between the external and internal, the environment and Olga's body.

When the thugee cuts Olga's young nerves, the fiction suggests that he simultaneously opens her up to the world; a drop of blood oozes out indicating that she has released a part of herself. In keeping with Allen's materialism, Tennant only focuses on the biological traces left by organic memory. Allen does not delve deeper into the exact psychological aspects of assimilation, instead, he is fixated with the question: 'what is the chemistry—what the physics of change?' (Allen, 'The Mystery of Birth' 116). However, even as a purely physiological answer to the problem, the scar is not a very sophisticated explanation. Allen seems to be aware that the scar is too reductive and superficial an answer for Olga's adoption of an Indian persona. Tennant also mirrors his incertitude—if earlier, he seemed convinced, at a later point, he gazes at the scars and wonders 'what cause?' led to Olga's state (Allen, *KS* 42). Tennant's faith in his materialist explanation is shaken, albeit momentarily, only to be

more firmly restored by the end of the novel. At the end, he conducts a surgery on Olga's nerves and frees her of Kalee's memory.

The incision on the forehead appears to fundamentally alter Olga's psyche. It creates a scenario where the psyche is fixated with memory of her time in the forest. Simultaneously, the scar prevents her from forming other memories in the future. Anne Stiles notes that Allen regarded eyes to be the camera to the world, a medium through which memories were registered and processed (93). The thugee's cutting of the nerves near Olga's eyes deprives her of the ability to remember and process events in the present as a memory. What Olga carries into the future is a limited archive of memories restricted to her time in India. If understood in terms of Ribot's theorization of memory loss, the severed nerves prevent her from adjusting to a new context and developing instincts after her return to England. Olga's state resembles Ribot's description of amnesia (in an induced form) wherein her memory is stripped down to the most primitive instincts—her core 'stable' memory from her childhood (Otis 23). When unconscious, it is these primitive reflexes that Olga has carried from her childhood in India that are activated.

Though Allen adheres to the materialist logic of organic memory in the novel, his treatment of the notion of time and agency deviates from Spencer's original theory. For instance, in theory, organic memory stretches across generations but in the novel, he fits the longue durée within a span of an individual's life. The scar assists Allen in condensing the generational timespan into a shorter period. Inscribed on Olga's body, the scar persists for years conveying the permanence of the memory from childhood. Even Allen's treatment of agential adaptability of the psyche radically departs from its original conception in his theory of organic memory. Rather than the individual, Olga, wilfully acquiring characteristics from her environment,

predators seem to usurp her agency. The thugee appropriates Olga's agency to *modify* her psyche and mentally colonize her. Olga's semi-conscious 'somnambulist state' sheds more light on her absent agency (Allen, *KS* 43):

> The child made over to the great goddess, can never again close her eyelids in slumber. All night long she lies with her soul spellbound, but her eyes staring wide open and fixed upon Kalee. (Allen, *KS* 6-7)

The blank look in Olga's eyes suggests that despite being awake, she is an automaton following orders from Kalee. Herein lies the paradox of Olga's state—she is awake, even mobile, yet unconscious. Her wide-eyed somnambulism is a negation of the passivity associated with sleep but it does not stand for complete autonomy. Through the figure of Olga, the narrative thus complicates the dichotomy between active and passive, between agency and submission. Sleepwalking at night, Olga's apparent submissive 'acting' out of Kalee's orders does make the reader pause and ask: how conscious is Olga of what she is doing? Retrospectively, Olga does remember fragments of her trance-like episodes, which she compares to a 'ghastly dream' (Allen, *KS* 44). Though the narrative never gives any clear answers, Allen does not foreclose the possibility that she *might* be partly conscious during her experience of trance.

At several points in the novel, different actors use their agency to 'engineer' Olga's biological and psychic constitution. One such figure is Olga's nanny, the Indian Ayah. Drawing on the hackneyed figure of the nanny found in Gothic and sensation fiction, Allen's novel portrays the Ayah as Olga's 'foster-mother.' The role of the mother is taken over by the Ayah to such a degree that the novel omits any mention of Olga's actual biological mother. At first, the thugee refuses to dedicate Olga to Kalee on grounds of her being British. But the Ayah insists that Olga is eligible for the religious ceremony:

> 'Girjee,' she said slowly; it is not true, I know the child can be dedicated to Kalee. Listen to me, and I will tell you why I wish to make her over to the greatest of the goddesses. She shall not serve the gods of the Christians. She is my child. I love her! I love her!' (Allen, *KS* 4-5)

Ayah's decision to use the Goddess Kalee to establish a claim over Olga can be mistaken for superstitious thinking. By the logic of Grant Allen's fictional world, however, the Ayah can be seen as verbalizing the logic of organic memory. The Ayah assumes that in as much as the environment shapes a child's faith and habits, it leaves a biological imprint on the psyche. Following the same logic, she thinks that the emotional nurturing and care she has provided Olga entitles her to make a biological claim over her. By submitting Olga to Kalee, the Ayah wants to ensure that Olga's environmentally inherited Indian-ness is preserved even after she moves to England. A belief in Kalee can thus makes Olga more Indian—a shift in racial identity that can be reversed if the child adopts Christian beliefs.

The Ayah asks the thugee to ensure that Olga can never revert to her English self. Like the thugee, the Ayah plays a significant role in altering and shaping Olga's unconscious memory more so because of the intimate relationship she shares with her ward. She is responsible for lulling a child to sleep—a role that mimics the Victorian mesmerizer's act of inducing trance in a subject. However, while the mesmerizer was imagined to be using magnetic force to exert power, the nanny relies on storytelling to induce unconsciousness in the child. As the first storyteller in a child's life, the nanny shapes his/her ability to retain and process information, thus laying the foundation of the infant's subjectivity. Later in the chapter, I explore how Allen's own storytelling was similarly designed to influence his audience, both educating his audience to understand his materialist vision of the mind, and shaping their sense of the Indian psyche.

If the Ayah is the foster mother, then, in keeping with Allen's anthropological views on religion, Kalee too comes to symbolize a memory of an ancestral mother. In his sole work of anthropology, *The Evolution of the Idea of God* (1897), Allen argues that the notion of God was a kind of organic memory of a dead ancestor that had psychically survived and travelled over generations: 'All gods … were originally ghosts, and ghosts, as the spirits of dead ancestors, supply the "germ-plasm" of religion' (Clodd 142). If Gods were dead ancestors, then Kalee, in *Kalee's Shrine*, symbolically represents the progenitor, the long-lost mother of the race. Kalee however is not the benevolent progenitor of the race but a rather terrifying and awe-inducing ancestor: a Goddess 'dripping with gore, crowned with venomous snakes…with a garland of skulls at her girdle' capable of separating 'the babe from the bosom of her mother' (Allen, *KS* 7). The intensity of his superstitious leanings, and the fact that the native's Gods are so cruel reflects Allen's belief in the innate inferiority of the Indian mind. In the next section, I will illustrate that Allen's Spencerian conception of organic memory both upholds and problematizes his own racist reading of the Indian psyche.

Environment, Empire and the Unconscious

Set in the wilderness of an Indian jungle, the opening scene of Olga's sacrifice evokes conventionally racist tropes about the behaviour of the natives. The reader is bombarded with stereotypical, clichéd images about India: in the forest, there are cobras and tigers and the nanny walks with 'the gliding motion of the Hindu race' (Allen, *KS* 2). Allen shows human body parts lying around which hint at the thugee's cannibalistic instincts. The thugee's emaciated 'fleshless' body symbolically cries out for more flesh (Allen, *KS* 4). Allen did not dramatize the thugee eating human organs possibly with the intention of saving his readers from discomfort. The thugee's

cannibalistic impulse is displaced onto other non-human agents. His dog is found to be 'munching away at an oddly-shaped bone… [with] some fragments of long black hair still cl[inging] to the horrid object' (Allen, *KS* 3). Smearing the inanimate idol's face with blood, the thugee literally feeds Kalee a part of Olga: 'Kalee that day had drunk of her victim' (Allen, *KS* 7). The inanimate idol's consumption of the child's blood symbolizes how Olga's psyche has been devoured by the Indian environment. At the end of the episode, a snake licks blood from Olga's forehead confirming her absorption of stereotypical Indian values. In this sense, *Kalee's Shrine* stirs up considerable paranoia regarding the native thugee's potential to contaminate the psychic life of the colonizer subject.

This aspect of *Kalee's Shrine* is congruent with Allen's fiction as a whole, in which non-Anglo-Saxon characters are stereotypically represented to foreground their racial inferiority. In *The Devil's Die* (1888), for example, Allen's Indian protagonist, Dr Mohammad shares a strange affinity with his pet snake, speaking to it in comforting, soothing tones. Such a moment is not simply a narrative ploy. Allen was convinced about the innate inferiority of these races. Mohammad himself bemoans his racial destiny: 'It's a terrible thing even to feel one belongs to a race in which such devilry' is 'ever possible' (10).

Allen's racist representation of the racial 'other' was not only compatible with, but shaped by, his interest in an evolutionary biology and psychology that insisted on the inferiority of native races. As Peter Morton observes in relation to Allen's scientific writing: 'Just as racism based on cultural/political factors was falling into decline, an even cruder set of prejudices was being reinforced by Darwinian biology' (Morton 'Summary'). However, as this section of the chapter will demonstrate, the racist thrust of *Kalee's Shrine* is not unremitting. The same interest

in evolutionary psychological ideas of organic memory compels Allen to see individual behaviour as simultaneously agential yet determined by the environment (Marshall, 'Biology and Possibility' 166). Allen thus frames characters as capable of independent assertions of will but also as products of larger structural forces. As I demonstrate, Allen uses this conflict in the theory to shift the onus of the thugee's behaviour onto his environment. The notion of environment takes on different meanings in the novel ranging from an individual's immediate cultural context to larger socio-political structures. In *Kalee's Shrine*, the socio-political structure seen to shape individual minds is the British Empire.

Allen's letters, from the time he spent in Jamaica teaching at the Government College, document his ambivalent attitude towards native Jamaicans. Writing to his mother-in-law, Allen complained about the idleness engrained in the black population (qtd in Clodd 39). However, his prejudice is tempered by an understanding of the oppression they experienced: 'I have no exaggerated sympathy with blacks, yet I must say the way they are regarded by the whites is simply shameful' (qtd in Clodd 39). Sympathetic to the slaves' plight, and critical of structures of oppression, Allen demonstrates a critical distance from the empire that translates into his novels.

As the narrative of *Kalee's Shrine* progresses, the novel shifts gears to frame the thugee as a 'creation' of the empire. The idea of creation works on two levels: at one level, Allen suggests that the empire has shaped the rebellious mentality of the thugee. At another, the empire is seen to discursively 'construct' the figure of the thug to justify its own presence in India. At a party hosted by the prim and proper Mrs Tristram, an Anglo-Indian army veteran called Sir Donald Mackinnon celebrates the British Empire's success in eradicating the network of the thugees. Mackinnon praises the efforts of Olga's father, Colonel Trevelyan, a British administrator who led the

operation to wipe out the thugee network in India. Sceptical of the imperial project, Tennant steps in to puncture Mackinnon's colonial arrogance:

> [E]ven the Thugs, blood-curdling as they are, pall at last on the twentieth repetition. And how very characteristic of our British tinkering! We stamp out infanticide—and substitute a famine: we stamp out the Thugs—and get professional poisoners! (Allen, *KS* 76)

Tennant exhibits an impatience, a weariness with the clichéd term thug being bandied around by imperial apologists like Mackinnon. He sees the figure of the thugee as part of the web of lies the empire constructs to sustain itself. The thugee is 'fiction,' a poorly scripted construct whose 'blood curdling' depravity reads like a stale trope from a sensational Gothic potboiler (Allen, *KS* 76). Iterating this equation between the thugee and fiction, Tennant claims that Mackinnon's tale would make a 'capital title for a novel…"The Last of the Thugs"' (Allen, *KS* 19). Tennant's deconstruction of the trope of the thugee raises an important question for the reading of the novel itself. In light of Tennant's critique, how does Allen expect the reader to read the first scene of the novel (where the thugee converts Olga)? Tennant's speech acts as a meta-commentary, a cue to the reader to revisit the first scene with more scepticism. It urges the reader not to internalize the paranoia 'created' around the thugee but investigate the origins of such myths.

Historian Alexander Lyon Macfie argues that, in the 1830s, the thug was an 'orientalist construction,' a colonial invention that allowed the empire to launch a mass-policing drive in the colony (396). If the colonial administration used the thugee to secure control over native populations in the colony, then back home, the circulation of such myths distracted attention from empire's failures. Allen's novel demonstrates that, even fifty years later, imperial apologists recycle the trope of the thug to justify continuing the empire.

Here, Tennant is reproducing Allen's views on the empire. His suggestion that the thugs have been grossly mismanaged by the colonial administration echoes Allen's growing impatience with imperialism. Peter Morton writes that, in 1877, while working as an editor on the encyclopaedic *Imperial Gazetteer of India* under Sir William Hunter, Allen 'found plenty to reinforce his views about British imperialism'—facts that he would later use to strengthen his anti-imperial writings (26). In his article 'Why Keep India?' (1880), Allen contended that India was a political and economic liability exerting financial pressure on British resources. Writing in favour of the right of Indians to determine their own fate, he asserted:

> Empire is one of the empty phrases which are 'beginning to be found out.' Englishmen are beginning to see that it means the denying to others of rights which they themselves claim and exact in their own case. An imperial nation is a nation which stands to its subject races in the position of a master to a slave. And this position is one which necessarily degrades and debases the moral nature of the masters. India has been for a hundred years a millstone hung round the neck of England's conscience, perpetually dragging it downward and preventing it from attaining that full and free development which industrialism fosters. (Allen, 'Why Keep India?' 553)

While the thugee proves to be an 'empty' construct, the empire, for Allen, is an example of an 'empty phrase'—a fantasy lacking both an ethical core and pragmatic value ('Why Keep India?' 553). Allen does not shy away from critiquing the British Empire's unjust subjugation of entire racial populations to the status of slaves. But he pitches this case less in terms of the oppression faced by the colonized subject but more as an ethical inquiry directed at the colonizers. That is, rather than focusing on the dehumanization of the colonized, he highlights the morally flawed behaviour of the British who have self-appointed themselves as masters. Allen's critique is part-sentimental and part-pragmatic. At the heart of it lies a moral appeal: if the British claim to be a morally superior race invested in upholding ethical values, they must act like one by foregoing their imperial aspirations.

Though Allen makes an explicit case against the empire, he is careful to not aggressively attack the British. Allen possibly knew that as a Canadian, his views might not be welcomed by the British populace. Moderating the force of his attack, he frames the moral question of imperialism as impinging on economic development. The tone of his inquiry urges the British to be introspective about the future at stake as he asserts that England cannot economically prosper without regaining ethical integrity.

The empire is consistently critiqued in the novel for producing mentalities (both colonizer/colonized) that are irrational, delusional and lacking in compassion. This is clear in the scene where one character, Mr Keen, mesmerizes Olga (in her state of unconsciousness, she transforms, as usual, into an Indian thugee who supposedly obeys orders from the Indian Goddess, Kalee). Keen suggests that Olga's trance has 'stirred the inmost chords and fibres of her most intimate nature'—the latent unthinking reflexes that she developed during her formative years in India (Allen, *KS* 41). Unlike other subjects mesmerized by Mr Keen, Olga, during her trance does not obey or mirror his orders. Rather, she seems to be under the spell of a distant abstract force. One would presume that, at this point, the Ayah and the thugee are influencing her mind but the plot underplays the possibility. The influence on Olga's psyche instead appears to come from someone closer home—the Anglo-Indian Celt, Sir Mackinnon.

Mid-way through the mesmeric spell, Sir Mackinnon takes control of Olga's trance by egging her to talk in Hindustani. As readers, we witness this scene through Mackinnon's gaze, which dominates the scene. Mackinnon takes it upon himself to interpret Olga's switch from English to Hindustani—'Sir Donald could hardly catch the sound, but he fancied to himself from the shape of the mouth that the word was

'Kalee'' (Allen, *KS* 100-1). Though he cannot clearly hear what Olga is saying, he 'imagines' her speaking on behalf of the thugee. The scene thus recreates the paranoid imperial gaze that constructs the criminalized thugee everywhere, even in an English drawing room. However, even as Olga behaves like the thugee—to the extent of preparing to strangle her friend, Norah, in the room—she questions Mackinnon's overdetermined reading of the scene. Rejecting Mackinnon's assumption that the scarf she was using was a 'roomal' (the cloth used by thugees as a noose), Olga, on behalf of the thugee, speaks back to the imperial agent: 'This isn't a roomal… it's only a neckerchief—a common neckerchief' (Allen, *KS* 104).

Within this hypnotic power play, the supposed mesmerizer and mesmerized take on different roles: Mackinnon, out of habit, becomes the imperial policing agent and Olga is forced to play the part of the thugee. The sequence too symbolically stages the cycle of hide and seek between the empire and the lawless Indian subject. If Mackinnon had previously claimed 'to have stamped the very last [of the thugee] out of' India, here, he is unable to control Olga acting as the thugee (insertion mine; Allen, *KS* 10). Failing to bring Olga out of her mesmeric state, Mr Keen gives up: 'I worked so hard at putting her into the comatose condition that I can't for the life of me now get her out of it again. I'm faint, faint: I have lost power. I went too far!' (Allen, *KS* 105). Mr Keen's declaration about having gone 'too far' can be read, perhaps, as an indictment of the empire that has gone 'too far' and crossed all moral limits (Allen, *KS* 105). Alternatively, Mr Keen's tone carries a hint of defeat: it reads like a tacit acceptance of the crimes committed by the empire. The 'far' also signals the geographical and mental distance that separates the colonizer and the colonized—a gap that, as I will show, is at heart of the novel's moral inquiry on the empire.

Near the novel's conclusion, Alan Tennant squarely blames Mackinnon for

Olga's transformation into Kalee:

> Believing in the real existence of Kalee, it seems, quite as genuinely as the wretched Thugs themselves who worship her, you (Mackinnon) accepted Kalee's orders as the moving power of what was really brought about in the sleeping girl's mind by *your own terrible and unearthly suggestion*. Miss Trevelyan went to her room only half aroused, under the influence of the ghastly delusion your hints had created in her…You were satisfied to leave it all to Kalee—that is to say, to the unconscious working out of your own wild hints and hideous imaginings. But for it [Olga's delusion] and *for everything you, you are to blame*. I say it once more, soberly and seriously, Sir Donald Mackinnon, YOU ARE THE MURDERER! (insertion and emphasis added; Allen, *KS* 178)

Reconstructing the mesmeric episode, Tennant asserts that it is not the thugee who remotely controls Olga's mind but, through the power of suggestion, Mackinnon manipulates her unconscious. Here, the ever-rational Alan Tennant insinuates that a colonial administrator and the thugee—with their shared delusional beliefs—are two sides of the same coin. Parama Roy, in her article 'Discovering India, Imagining Thugee' (1996), similarly argues that 'colonial accounts of the thugee' reveal that the Englishman and the native thugee were mirror-images, to the extent that they could be conflated 'into a single figure, so that where there is an Englishman there is a thug' (142). Tennant's point however is also about the epistemological distinction—the rational/irrational dichotomy—that supposedly differentiates the British colonizer from the colonized. For Tennant, Kalee is as much a product of Mackinnon's 'wild hints and hideous imaginings' as she is part of the thugee's mythology (Allen, *KS* 178). He rounds off his speech by blaming Mackinnon 'for everything' (Allen, *KS* 178). The 'everything,' at once vague and damning, makes Mackinnon culpable for events far beyond the mishap with Norah at Thorborough, possibly even the systemic violence carried out by the empire (Allen, *KS* 178).

If the novel complicates its initial assertion about Olga carrying a supernatural influence from India, then in what way does it qualify as an imperial Gothic text?

Stephen Arata, in his seminal essay 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization' (1990) argues that late Victorian imperial Gothic novels register a popular anxiety felt by the British about being colonized by the racial 'other.' Missing in Allen's novel however is this '*language* of panic, of unreasoning anxiety, blind revulsion' that, according to H.L. Malchow, characterized the Gothic writing of the period (3-4). By portraying the 'other' in overt supernatural terms, Gothic writers symbolically articulated an anxiety about not understanding the racial 'other.' In contrast, Allen's rational explanation of the thugee's mode of operation renders the workings of the native psyche decipherable thus, to some degree, containing the moral panic. Arata links the fear of the native lashing back to a mass 'cultural guilt' felt by the British in this period (4). He writes that '[i]n the marauding invasive Other, British culture sees its own imperial practices mirrored back in monstrous forms' (4). Allen's novel too articulates a fear of reverse colonization by the colonized native but it treats the native's desire to seek revenge from the colonizer as morally justified. In the looming threat of the native, Allen locates the wrongdoings of the empire that were bound to plague the British at some point. As a Gothic text, Allen's novel is less informed by a collective guilt; rather, it urges the British reader to introspect his/her complicity in the imperial project.

Allen's complex reworking of the imperial Gothic genre is most demonstrable in a chapter mid-way through the novel, titled 'Kalee in Suffolk.' Here, a storm approaches the Suffolk seaside and threatens to capsize the fishermen's boats. Symbolically, the storm at sea signifies an influence being communicated from across the waters—from the colonies. While the storm rages outside, diners at 'Mrs Hilary Tristram's house on the North Parade' remain unconcerned about fishermen's fate:

> [I]nside … nobody noticed the storm or its fury. Now and again, to be sure, the groaning of the wind, as it tore round the gables and shook the beams to

> their very foundations, disturbed a little the tone of the grand piano. But who thinks of wind or sea in a well-lighted room, full of guests and music, at ten in the evening? (Allen, *KS* 25)

Here, we witness an England so cocooned in domesticity that it is oblivious to the suffering of the world. Even as the 'foundations' of the house (and presumably the empire) are being shaken, the party carries on unaffected (Allen, *KS* 25). The tumultuous wind groans 'now and again' urgently trying to catch the attention of the partygoers to no avail (Allen, *KS* 25). A window separates the scene of enjoyment from the fishermen's misery yet the party actively choose not to look outside. The scene illustrates Barbara Melchiori's observation about Allen's portrayal of the English: 'The English, as so often in Grant Allen's works, are observed as if the author were looking in at them from the outside' (31).

To not have to look beyond one's immediate surroundings is a luxury that the empire has afforded the British. The party's indifference echoes Britain's disconnectedness from pockets of empire geographically removed from it. 'We English are dreadfully ignorant of Indian affairs…,' as one of Allen's characters remarks elsewhere (*The Devil's Die* 9). In the absence of available information about the colony, the colony was a blank canvas onto which the empire imposed a fabricated narrative. This lack of reliable information, Allen suggests, not only shaped an overactive delusional imagination, it simultaneously produced an emotionally detached psyche in Britain.

Critic Andrew Rudd has noted that, in the nineteenth century, 'the problem of physical distance' led to a 'difficulty of emotional transfer between Britain and in India in both the political and cultural sphere' (15). The empire did not bring places or races closer (as part of the united commonwealth), rather, the physical, geographical distance severed any possibility of an 'emotional' connection between the metropole

and colonies. As Carlo Ginzburg argues in his article 'Killing a Chinese Mandarin: The Moral Implications of Distance' (1994), distance turns the suffering of another into an unreal idea, in Allen's words, a 'mere abstraction' (*KS* 31). This inability to imagine, in turn, protects individuals from confronting difficult moral questions about their own culpability in these distant scenarios. Ginzburg quotes a scene from Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* (1835) that reads like the party episode from *Kalee's Shrine*: 'In India the English are killing thousands of men as good as we are; and at this moment, as I speak, the most charming woman is there being burnt— but you have had coffee for breakfast all the same?' (Ginzburg 23). When juxtaposed, the ordinariness of the coffee-drinking amplifies the horror of the catastrophic scene in the colony. The two scenes—of a colonized woman being burnt while someone drinks coffee unaware of another's misfortune—read like disparate realities but as Balzac and Allen hint, they share a connection. Ironically, the two dissonant but simultaneous realities are produced by the same imperial structure. If, in the colony, empire unleashes violence on people, in the metropole, it allows people to be emotionally aloof.

Echoing Hume's philosophical musings on a 'ship at a distance, tost (sic) by a tempest,' as an analogy for imperial indifference, Allen's storm scene goes a step further in thinking about the relationship between distance and the failures of affective connection (Sayre-McCord 594). Distance might hinder sympathy except, in the novel, the suffering fishermen are not far away from the party. Allen's point then is not merely about geographical distance being an obstacle in relating to the 'other.' Instead, he is hinting at another kind of distance: a mental gap that the colonizer inserts between himself and the colonized 'other.' Confident of their racial and cultural superiority, the British do not see the colonized 'other' as equally human.

Mohammad Ali's poignant appeal to his British companion, Harry Chichele in *The Devil's Die* best captures this as he asks: 'Am I not a man and a brother?' (7). The earnestness of Mohammad's semi-serious appeal is defused by Chichele's laughter. Chichele's attempt at evading the question affirms that, in his eyes, Mohammad can never be an equal.

Kalee's Shrine further provides a complex commentary on this ethical dilemma of sympathizing with the distant 'other.' Even Tennant, who is otherwise morally conscientious, fails to 'feel' with and for the fishermen. Olga is the sole character who recognizes that their celebrations might be perceived as insensitive. It is only when Tennant sees Olga express shame about her lack of sympathy that his attention turns to the fishermen's plight. As Tennant ponders:

> Human nature is very complex. Alan Tennant reflected somewhat remorsefully to himself that his main interest in the fishermen's fate was not for the sake of their wives and children (whom he did not know), but for the sake of Olga Trevelyan's tender conscience. 'What would you have?' he thought to himself, puffing away reflectively at his big cigar. He had never seen the worthy fisher-folk. He had seen Olga Trevelyan. The smallest headache or heartache of those whom you know—and love—he thought it deliberately—is ten thousand times worse to you, rightly or wrongly, than the bitterest griefs of the vast unknown and unnumbered multitude. (Allen, *KS* 30)

Consumed by his passion for Olga, Tennant cannot think about any individual beyond her. Tennant is aware that he is acting selfishly; he thus rationalizes this inability to sympathize as a larger failing of human nature. He realizes that he too is guilty, like the rest, of not empathizing with 'the vast unknown and unnumbered multitude' beyond his circle of intimacy (Allen, *KS* 30). Tennant's moral dilemma opens up larger questions about whether sympathy towards the distant 'other' can ever be earnest. In other words, can the gap between the civilized/primitive, colonizer/colonized ever be adequately bridged? This is further complicated when Tennant admits that individuals 'perform' sympathy to avoid judgment from others.

As he confesses, the sole reason he cares about the fishermen is so that Olga does not consider him heartless. His show of sympathy proves farcical because it is driven by a selfish purpose—to project a better image in Olga's eyes. Ginzburg argues along similar lines that people feel remorse because they fear censure: 'Remorse springs perhaps less from horror of oneself than from fear of others; less from shame at what one has done than from the blame and punishment it would bring if it were found out' (110).

Intriguingly, at this point, the novel does not offer sympathy as the answer to its moral dilemma of relating to the 'other.' Allen is not so much concerned with the ethical nature of sympathy as a value *per se*, rather, he wants to critique the disconnect between the colonizer/colonized that has led to apathy. The distance created by the empire cannot be remedied through individual attempts at cultivating sympathy. For individuals to become more humane, the structure of empire needs to be dismantled and herein lies the subversive potential of Allen's critique. In the next section, I demonstrate that the novel offers an unusual solution to this problem of sympathetic identification: it suggests that an awareness of the evolutionary trajectory can possibly reduce the mental distance between colonizer/colonized.

Shared Origins, Organic memory and The Unconscious 'Savage' Within

As the novel laments the disconnectedness perpetuated by the empire, it also imagines an alternative model of connectedness rooted in the Spencerian notion of psychic unity. In Spencer's (and Allen's) developmental conception of evolutionary teleology, hereditary mental traits were transmitted from 'savage' ancestors to advanced beings. Spencer's model of mental evolution was undoubtedly developmental in orientation. However, even as it affirmed the forward movement, it stressed that humans had

reached an advanced stage because ‘our ancestors had done most of our preliminary development for us’ (Rylance 220). In so doing, Spencerian evolutionary psychology simultaneously upheld and questioned the confident progressive telos of evolution. This return to the ancestor, at once the primitive and the original ‘mind,’ undercut the assumption that seemingly advanced beings had a trajectory, different from lower beings. Allen’s article ‘Who was Primitive Man?’ (1882) also re-assesses the psyche of the primitive man to infer that ‘this pre-glacial and interglacial man was really quite as human and quite as capable of civilisation as any race now living…’ (308).

Anthropologists from the period drew on the psycho-evolutionary model to explain and compare the present-day differences in races. When mapped onto the present, this meant that existing races shared the same origin but signified varying stages along the evolutionary trajectory. Within Victorian anthropology, E.B. Tylor and James Frazer drew on this linear evolutionary trajectory—in particular, the link between the primitive and evolved man—to track the differences across races. To what extent were advanced races biologically and culturally ‘associated’ with inferior races? What traces of vestigial ‘survival’ tendencies did advanced cultures still carry? The assumption that cultures shared a common psychic past legitimized a comparative method of study where they were placed next to each other. As Ida Magli in her book *Cultural Anthropology* (2001) has argued, a comparativist outlook presupposed that an ‘integrated humanity’ underlay the hierarchy of races (67).

William Greenslade and Terence Rodgers argue that Allen too ‘applied this relativist method’ to look horizontally across cultures, locating latent primitive elements in seemingly advanced cultures (15). In fact, one can argue that Allen’s comparativism often overextended connections by seeing links where none existed. In his scientific writings, Allen drew unorthodox connections not only linking different

races but even species. One such example of Allen probing cross-species behaviour is his scientific work *The Colour Sense* (1879) that argues for a colour sense common to insects and humans. Allen's thesis, in the book, is provocative and absurd as he 'trace(s) back the pleasure which man experiences from…painting or decorative art, to a long line of ante human ancestry' (2). While researching for the same book, Allen wrote to Rev. Archibald Sayce, a missionary at Oxford well-known for his anthropological work on Egypt, inquiring about the reception of colour in pre-historic cultures:

> Any information which either of you could give me as to native colour or applied pigments or ornaments, pottery, necklets, &c., Assyrian or pre-historic, would be thankfully received. I am anxious, if I undertake the work at all, to settle the question once for all *whether the various races of men have or have not an essentially identical sense of colour*. (emphasis added)[32]

In attempting to establish a common colour sense across races, Allen seems to be stating the obvious. His theory carries levelling potential in its implication that races share an 'identical' aesthetic sense. Though Allen is primarily concerned with basic sensory perception, the theory presents the possibility of 'degraded' races being capable of aesthetic discrimination. If the 'savage' can aesthetically discern, he might also be capable of complex psychological and moral thinking—a conclusion that threatens to bring the 'savage' and civilized closer than before.

In the pan-race theory of colour sense that Allen develops, two temporalities—the ancestral past and the colonial present—are treated as equivalent. In the letter above, he enquires about evidence that could prove shared uniformity of sense between generations of humans. Simultaneously, Allen included evidence about the colonized native from a network of missionaries stationed in the colonies.[33] For

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[32] Grant Allen. Letter to Rev Archibald Sayce. 1878. Bodleian Library. Ms. Eng. Lett. D 70, fols. 2-3.
[33] After the book was finished, Allen wrote to Herbert Spencer asking for more contacts in the colonies: 'I wish to send it (for answers) to a few Indian civilians who are working among hill-tribes, some

Allen, the 'savage' of the past and the present are substitutable mirror-images, with knowledge about one yielding insights about the other. In this regard, George Stocking explains how Victorian anthropology superimposed the figure of the ancestral primitive onto the colonized native: 'Contemporaneity in space was therefore converted into succession in time by rearranging the cultural forms coexisting in the Victorian present along an axis of assumed structural or ideational archaism—from the simple to the complex…' (173).

This comparative glance across cultures continues in *Kalee's Shrine*. The novel does not exceptionalize the thugee's superstitious ritualism. Rather, Allen juxtaposes it with Sir Donald Mackinnon's Celtic investment in the mythic. Regarding Indian and Celtic temperaments as less advanced, Allen paints them as coeval in their primitivism. However, Allen shows that even advanced races carry the potential to experience a resurgence of latent memories from a primitive past. This element of atavistic 'savagery' carried by superior races could find expression, especially when situated in the appropriate environment. As Christine Ferguson has argued: 'While languages and races may exist for Allen in a distinct evolutionary hierarchy, the connection between advanced and primordial forms is never entirely severed, and return is always a possibility' (79). In the novel, Olga's transformation into Kalee is, for the most part, imputed to external influence (the Indian thugee and later Mackinnon). However, another possibility hinted at by the novel is that this might be Olga's latent racial memory coming to the fore. When read in conjunction with Allen's anthropological views, Olga's transformation into Kalee signifies the return of a primitive ancestor.

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missionaries, American ethnologists &c..' (Letter from Grant Allen to Herbert Spencer. Undated. Senate House Library. MS. 791. F.126.).

Crucially, in the moment of reversion, the European individual begins to resemble the colonized native. This is in keeping with Allen's anthropological vision that treated the colonized native of the present as 'approximately' resembling the primitive ancestor. Olga's physical appearance, her 'most divinely dark' skin and 'a lavish wealth of silky-black hair' signify the resurfacing of her latent primordialism (Allen, *KS* 14). Intriguingly, Olga's regression in time is also mapped onto space. The more Olga transforms into Kalee, the more the British landscape begins to resemble India. This is not a mere case of pathetic fallacy where an individual's surroundings mirror his/her mental state. Nor does Suffolk suddenly morph into a different geographical terrain. But Allen shows that the 'marshy' landscape with its 'devouring slush' and 'deep ooze' is distinctly Suffolkian yet uncannily foreign (Allen, *KS* 49, 135, 131). Though Allen had never visited India, he was familiar with the geography of another colonized nation, Jamaica. Morton observes that, in his letters, Allen disdainfully described Jamaica as a 'low, sweltering, swampy plain' (28). Indeed, Allen's unflattering depiction of Thorborough marsh is inspired by Jamaica but he gives it an Indian touch. Flowers such as the 'Artemesia' or 'Indian wormwood,' usually found in India, grow in the midst of the swamp (Allen, *KS* 130, 137).

That this primitive memory is inherent to England (and not merely an influence from the colony) is confirmed by its emergence from the depths of the British soil—the terrain of Thorborough-on-Sea. Allen's point is that evolutionary history stretches so far back that the only surviving record of the primordial past is geographical in nature. Allen regarded geological rock formations as the most reliable record of the evolutionary transition from less-advanced species to vertebrate forms. In his 1880 article 'Evolution and Geological Time,' he stated: 'The geological record bears out in minute detail the very smallest particulars of Darwinian theory' (564). In

Kalee's Shrine, therefore, Allen reminds the reader that memories of distant epochs are buried in the land. Tennant comments that the mud is deep enough to swallow 'a Siberian mammoth,' hinting at the scale of extinction witnessed by the land (Allen, *KS* 130). Meandering through Thorborough, the 'sluggish' river mimics the gradualist pace of organic memory, carrying residual strata from across centuries (Allen, *KS* 68). The river branches into tributaries paralleling the differentiation of ancestral memory into varied races. As the water washes over the riverbed, the soil keeps 'oozing' a memory (in the first scene, 'the blood oozed slowly from the tiny severed vessel on either side' from Olga's forehead—the oozing paradoxically indicating the absorption of organic memory) (Allen, *KS* 10). The layers in the soil, signifying residues of diverse eras, are not neatly differentiated but have dissolved into a slushy marsh. The melding of different layers indicates that the distinctions between different epochs have become 'muddy' (Allen, *KS* 142). When Tennant and his friend embark on a boating adventure, the swampy marsh threatens to swallow them. As Tennant goes 'sinking, sinking, sinking,' he is relieved to find 'segregation!'—a spot with firm mud that symbolically provides him with a secure place in the evolutionary history of the human race (Allen, *KS* 130,137). If, so far, the memory had been gently oozing, in the last few chapters, it demands to be heard by the residents of Thorborough-On-Sea. By the close of the novel, the sluggish river suddenly acquires a ferocity, threatening to flood everyone in a 'malodorous mass of deep black ooze' (Allen, *KS* 135). Allen implies that the British residents must confront their relationship with the evolutionary past lest they too become extinct.

Literary Genres and Comparativism

As the tempest gathers force in the novel, not only Olga but the rational Tennant also

begins to display latent signs of savagery. Tennant discovers this side of him through an unusual route. In Allen's short story 'A Freak of Memory' (1897), the protagonist states that a trigger is necessary for activating and recovering traces of ancestral memory: 'A great gulf seemed fixed between myself and them; a veil interposed itself between descendant and ancestors. I felt the task was hopeless…till one morning accidentally a *clew* [sic] came of itself to me' (emphasis added, 'A Freak' 27). In the story, the 'clew' or clue is a material object—the pattern of a curtain, the texture of a dress transport the person to the past (Allen, 'A Freak' 27). In *Kalee's Shrine*, this crucial 'clew' is a sensation novel.

In this section, I examine Allen's representation of reading as an activity that can potentially mesmerize the reader into confronting latent memories. Allen implies that fiction, because of its access to the unconscious, is capable of triggering the activation of certain suppressed memories. At the peak of the storm, Tennant retreats into his room to read a sensation novel by the famous French sensation and crime novelist, Emile Gaboriau. Engrossed in the novel, he slips into a trance-like state until he is interrupted ('rouse[d] … dreamily from the terrors of Gaboriau') (Allen, *KS* 14). In his essay on readerly attention in Stendhal's fiction, critic Nicholas Dames describes the state of 'reverie' experienced by a reader absorbed in a novel as defined by a feeling of amnesia. Dames writes that, central to this readerly reverie, is 'process of absorption and concentration… [through which the reader] condenses, or 'forgets' most actual experience' (insertion mine; 49). Tennant too is hypnotized by the sensation novel which he finds 'wickedly enticing' and 'thrilling' (Allen, *KS* 31). Though the novel makes him forget his present surroundings (Tennant's attention is broken when he hears a sound outside), as I show, the amnesia of the present has far-reaching effects: it rekindles his latent ancestral memory.

Gaboriau's influence on Tennant's mind parallels mesmerism's effect on Olga's psyche and her eventual regression into savagery. After reading the novel, Alan Tennant steps out and witnesses a ghastly death of a woman at sea. With nerves already overwrought from reading, he is shocked to see Olga walk on the terrace in a state of open-eyed unconsciousness. Even more shocking is the state he finds her in: Olga is hysterically laughing at the scene of the woman dying. While Olga's ill-timed laughter signals her transformation into the insensitive Kalee, Tennant's response does not establish him as the morally superior compassionate British man. At first, he is momentarily repulsed by Olga's laughter but soon the 'revulsion' paves way for affinity:

> The very force and intensity of his momentary revulsion, when for one brief space of time he imagined the laughter was really wrung from her by that awful sight, in itself revealed to him the depth and reality of his new-born passion. (Allen, *KS* 37)

Years of conditioning as a 'civilized' white man shape Tennant's initial response of disgust to Olga. His feeling of disgust however soon morphs into a 'new-born' sense of desire (Allen, *KS* 37). At this moment, Tennant does not desire the British Olga, but her Indian version, Kalee. A chain of hypnotic association runs here: Tennant is mesmerized by the sensation novel and then proceeds to be fixated with Olga (who is focused on Kalee). Deciphering Olga's behavioural cues from a distance, Tennant is captivated by the spectre of this radically altered Olga. His complex reaction to Olga mimics the shifts in a reader's physiological response to the sensation novel. Like the sensational Gabriou novel that disturbs yet delights Tennant, the sight of Olga initially shocks him but soon the shock triggers a raw, visceral passion in him.

The sensation novel, in a way, psychologically prepares him to accept a more racially and morally 'degenerate' Olga. At this moment, Tennant embraces Olga's

behaviour possibly because, through his reading, he realizes that he too, despite his rationalist pretensions, is more 'savage' than expected. The surge of love he feels for Olga is an implicit acceptance of his own racial history. Seeing Olga as Kalee further activates his unconscious ancestral memory, the residual traces of the primitive past that linger in his mind. At this point, Tennant feels a renewed connection with Olga because he sees a part of himself mirrored in her.

Tennant's response to Gaboriau's novel offers a meta-commentary on the sensation novel's ability to awaken latent primitivism in the reader. Allen suggests that the mystery novel, as a genre, can connect readers with their baser 'animal' instincts. It symbolizes a literary form capable of scraping off layers of civilization to reveal one's inherited barbarism. In a way, the genre of sensation novel offers an unusual answer to the quandary of the unbridgeable gap between the self and the 'other,' the elite and the fishermen, the colonizer and the colonized. It indirectly answers Allen's concern about the limits of sympathizing with the distant 'other.' The subtext being that the impossibility of genuinely sympathizing with the 'other' can be somewhat remedied by locating traces of the 'other' within oneself.

The sensation novel momentarily allows the reader to inhabit an ancestral subjectivity—a primitive self, removed in space and time. As a genre that could traverse vast time-periods, it echoes how contemporary authors thought of romance as evoking the past. Aaron Rosenberg in his recent reading of H.G. Wells's *Time Machine* (1895), a novel in part inspired by Allen's short story 'Pallinghurst Barrow' (1892) argues that romance gives the reader imaginative access into 'deep time,' of epochs far removed from the present (79).[34] In contrast, realism's obsessive focus on the minutiae of the present is not suited to a representation that 'jumps across

[34] For more on H.G. Wells's debt to Grant Allen's short story 'Pallinghurst Barrow' (1892) in *The Time Machine* (1895), see: David Y. Hughes. 'A Queer Notion of Grant Allen's.' *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1998, pp. 271–84.

thousand –and then –million year gaps' (Rosenberg 80). Rosenberg reads Wells' move to adopt romance, in place of realism, for his novel as a strategic decision that assisted in narrativizing 'on such enormous scales' (80). I argue that Allen does something similar in *Kalee's Shrine* with the form of the sensation novel. For the materialist Allen, the sensation novel, more than the romance, was perhaps better suited to act as a cultural link to the past because he thought that the genre spoke to the body at the level of basic physiological reflexes.

Allen appears to regard literary genres, the frames the narratives are embedded in, as analogous to organic memory. In his schema, genres metaphorically function like a literary germplasm—they act as the basic template of organic memory amassing cultural and historical imprints through the ages. Allen's representation of sensation fiction as a form that could activate a reader's ancestral organic memory echoes the way authors thought of romance in this period. Robert Louis Stevenson, as Julia Reid has demonstrated, argued that romance appealed to a 'reader's "inherited experience,"' triggering 'a resurgence of unconscious, ancestral memories' ('Stevenson, Romance' 215). Andrew Lang also echoes Stevenson in his article 'Realism and Romance' (1887) claiming that romances were 'savage survivals' appealing to 'the old barbarian under our clothes' (690). In romance, Lang and Stevenson saw a masculine, adventure-oriented genre that could rescue late nineteenth-century fiction from a state of imaginative stagnation. Lang and Stevenson's imagination fetishized the past as the pinnacle of literary production and both authors bemoaned the current state of fiction-writing. In particular, they regarded the proliferation of genres such as decadence and realism 'as a mark not of intellectual progress but of morbid overcivilization' in the age (Reid 217).

Like Stevenson and Lang, Allen too uses an evolutionary lens to evaluate

literary genres.[35] He views romance as an elementary, psychologically atavistic form that has survived the ages. But unlike the other two authors, Allen regards sensation novels and romances as inferior forms best shunned in favour of better, more evolved genres like realism.[36] In an 1890 essay on the rise of the novel of character, Allen traces an evolutionary trajectory of genres progressing from the lesser evolved romance to more advanced realism of the present. Paralleling this temporally arranged hierarchy of genres, Allen elsewhere conceptualizes a hierarchy along spatial lines—sensation novels, romances were located in the swamps while his preferred fiction was positioned at the elevated 'hill-top.'

Yet, Allen's evolutionary (and geographical) ladder of genres does not statically hierarchize literary forms seeing them as 'fossils' frozen in time. For Allen, the psychologically realist novel, with its emphasis on exploring mental interiority in relation to heredity, was the most evolutionary advanced genre. Romance, in contrast, was an atavistic 'recrudescent' genre characterized by 'abrupt changes, sensational episodes, improbable coincidences' (Allen, 'The Novel of Character' 226). Early romances such as *Aladdin* and *The Arabian Nights* were characterized by illogical plotlines, fantastical occurrences—generic features that Allen considered redundant. Newer romances too exhibit these tendencies, for Allen, but with a difference, as he writes:

I don't doubt, at the same time, that the old romance of pure adventure will

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[35] In his article 'Evolution and Geological time' (1880), Allen criticizes the scientists who deny evolutionary progressivism in favour of an alternative model of simultaneous existence between advanced and inferior evolutionary forms. Using a literary analogy, Allen debunks the anti-progressivist assumptions of a few scientists: to think that the species has not progressed biologically is 'to argue that English literature can never have undergone any progressive development, because in the primitive or very earliest of these three epochs it had already produced Chaucer, Shakespeare, Bacon and Spencer' (564). While not talking about literature *per se*, Allen was clearly thinking of the movement of literary history in progressive teleological terms.

[36] This literary Darwinistic approach was not unusual for the period. Ferdinand Brunetiere explicitly theorized it in his book *Évolution des Genres dans l'Histoire de la Littérature* (1892-94), which argued that literary forms, like species, evolved through a logic of differentiation. For Brunetiere, as time progresses, a few genres survive due to better adaptation while others slip into oblivion (Juvan 306).

> live on more or less bravely side by side with the new romance of pure portraiture; just as melodrama still lives on by the side of the modern drawing-room comedy…But even so, the new school will almost unconsciously affect the old; as anyone can see for himself who chooses to compare Mr. Stevenson's 'New Arabian Nights' with the old 'Arabian Nights' of Cairene Mediaevalism. Mr. Stevenson is a writer who, it has been well said, in the midst of an over-civilized age (strange epithet indeed for our recrudescent nineteenth century!) retains something of the barbaric faculty of imagination… And even the wildest romances of the recrudescence have to this extent at least been influenced by the new models—that their human characters, as opposed to their semi-supernatural creations, try to act, speak, feel and think with something like a due regard to the average psychology of the European nature. ('The Novel of Character' 225-6)

Even though Allen disapproved of romance, he was keen to explore the shifts in the genre over time. This proves that he did not regard genres as unchanging, static inheritances but as adaptable forms open to influences. In particular, Allen is interested in the interaction between romance and the new wave of realism. Can romance, an atavistic genre, that retained 'barbaric' elements, absorb the new aesthetic turn towards psychological interiority? ('The Novel of Character' 225). Allen thinks this is possible. He sees romances as shaped by its ancient formal legacy but also being reinvented in the process through contact with other genres. According to Allen, inferior genres were not reformed through a contrived process, rather they 'unconsciously' and organically absorb the formal energies of an era. In his opinion, Stevenson's romance represented this newer, improved form of romance that registered an older 'barbaric' note as well as a more contemporary restrained realist sensibility.

Allen's model of generic classification is unique because the old and the new genres simultaneously co-exist in a process of constant negotiation. This is where Allen's application of the theory of organic memory to romance differs from his contemporaries. In line with the Spencerian notion of organic memory, Allen devises genres as memory-carriers and triggers that can be repackaged in the present. Thus, as

much as Allen's evolutionary model established a hierarchy of genres, here too, his reliance on organic memory relativizes the distance between seemingly 'civilized,' refined genres and 'primitive,' less-evolved ones.

Allen's classification of genres follows a taxonomic logic characteristic of his scientific comparativist approach. Such an approach, as Robert Allen has argued, conventionally followed the logic of grouping fields in science, with the literary scholar dividing genres 'much as the botanist divides the realm of flora into varieties of plants' ('Bursting Bubbles' 44). But as I have shown, Allen's taxonomic approach did not aim to conservatively draw neat boundaries between races/disciplines/genres. Rather than using the act of comparing things/fields to neatly compartmentalize, Allen uses the classificatory technique to subversively question the logic of categorization. Allen's comparativist approach, in his scientific and anthropological studies, too consistently prevents the stabilization of categories and hierarchies, often disregarding disciplinary boundaries between biology, anthropology and literature.

In *Kalee's Shrine*, Allen draws on his comparativist outlook and brings together diverse genres to produce a heteroglossic generic hybrid. Strong resonances of high generic styles such as psychological realism and a scientific rationalism permeate the text. In this generic alchemy, high generic notes wrestle with popular generic conventions such as Gothic, shilling-shocker, sensation novel and romance for domination. Tennant's internal monologue while reading a sensation novel is a fine example of Allen's intermingling of vocabularies of sensation and realism. While Tennant's weighty self-reflection reads like a realist scene, it is ironic that a sensation novel elicits this monologue.

Lyssa Randolph claims that Allen introduced higher generic notes in his popular novels to arrest the tendencies of lower, inferior genres (72). She reads this as

Allen attempting to 'purify' his fiction (Randolph 72). Indeed, Allen was attached to the notion of purity but Randolph sees his treatment of genres as articulating a fear of 'proximity of kinship,' an anxiety about contamination (72). By contrast, I argue that Allen's notion of (racial and generic) purity is not phobic or anxious about the possibility of adulteration via contact. Allen consistently opens up high genres to potentially 'corrupt' influences and even his 'hill-top' novels, that he regarded as better-quality, carried traces of sentimentalism and melodrama. Allen hoped that the mere co-existence of different genres would 'elevate' these inferior forms transforming them into shadows of better genres. Thus, while he was still aspiring towards generic purity, it was a purity necessarily achieved by risking contamination.

Not only on a generic level, Allen's comparativism also shapes the intertextual tone of *Kalee's Shrine*. The most prominent literary allusion that Allen weaves into the novel is a reference to Shakespeare. This unexpected note, which would count as a high stylistic register, is crucial to conveying the novel's racial stance.[37] The storm, which Allen repeatedly calls the 'tempest,' is a clear nod at Shakespeare's play by the same name. Deeper affinities exist between the texts especially in their treatment of race. If Shakespeare's play depicted an encounter between the civilized/savage on a remote island off the coast of Africa, in *Kalee's Shrine*, Allen (in the way of most sensation fiction) shifts the scene to the familiar landscape of England - Thorborough seaside. *The Tempest* (1610-11) offers a racially relativist account of Caliban's origins, even suggesting that the brute Caliban is Prospero's progeny. In a similar

[37] In this period, *The Tempest* was beginning to be read as an imperial and racial allegory—Critic Trevor Griffiths writes that Allen's friend, Andrew Lang, was the first scholar to compare Caliban to colonized populations. In his article for the April, 1892 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Lang wrote: 'He [Caliban] was like the red men in America, the blacks in Australia, the tribes of Hispaniola. Then he committed an offence, an unpardonable offence, but one that Caliban was fated to commit. Then he was punished. Do we not punish the natives all over the world, all we civilized powers? ... My own sympathies have always been with "the natives," with Caliban' (qtd in Griffiths 166).

vein, *Kalee's Shrine* provocatively asks: whose progeny is Olga? Is she civilized or 'savage'? Is 'savagery' an inherent part of her? Both narratives thus complicate the question of racial identity through the figure of Caliban and Olga—at once, representative of the privileged colonizer and the subaltern 'other.' Allen does refer to the Shakespearean age elsewhere in his works but unusually in the context of cosmopolitanism. In the next section, I pursue this further to examine how the comparativism evident in this novel informs an unconventional model of cosmopolitanism.

Allen's Cosmopolitan Impulse

'For our own age too, is a second Elizabethan' (Allen, 'Romance of Clash' 77). Comparing the Shakespearean age to the Victorian era in his essay 'The Romance of the Clash of Races' (1894), Allen contends that both periods witnessed a national 'expansion.' Allen here refers to the growth of the empire that, in his opinion, has led to 'an outburst of thought and invention' ('Romance of the Clash' 70). 'Our ideas have widened,' he writes (Romance of the Clash' 70). Many thinkers of the nineteenth century imagined the empire as a world system of economic (and cultural) connectivity (Mukherjee, 'Introduction: Victorian World Literature' 3). Allen is no exception to this trend. He sees expansion as fostering a cosmopolitan sensibility where cultures are fusing, a world in which even the Queen of England is found to be learning Hindustani ('Romance of the Clash' 76). However, as I show, Allen's cosmopolitanism is not invested in a naïve 'feel-good,' idyllic co-existence between cultures (Ganguly 177). The model he imagines is far more complex in its treatment of the thorny problems that accompany cultural exchange.

For Allen, geographical expansionism ushered in changes in the domain of literature with readers' palates drastically craving the novelty of the racial 'other,' in

his words, 'for something hot, with a touch of spice in it…' ('Romance of the Clash' 73). To cater to this growing appetite, the literary imagination, 'consciously or unconsciously,' capitalized on a portrayal of the encounter between cultures (Allen, 'Romance of the Clash' 73). Allen is surprised that this trend, best captured in the novels of Stevenson and Haggard, had not been noticed by other critics. As he notes: 'In one word, the point of which I speak is the comparative cosmopolitanisation of letters, and especially the introduction into literary art of the phenomena due to the Clash of Races' (Allen, 'Romance of Clash' 71). Allen labels this new literary genre 'The Race-Clash Romance'—a literary portrayal of the difficult yet entertaining interactions between different races.

Allen's theorization of the genre can be seen as a composite, compact version of a nineteenth-century vision of world literature. In contrast to Goethe's universalized model, Allen's race-clash genre model functions as a literary extension of his comparativist anthropology. Allen's complex model, a model which ghosts its way through *Kalee's Shrine,* complicates the incipient understanding of world literature prevalent in this period. Allen's cosmopolitanism has similarities with Goethe's.[38] His model of organic memory presupposes a shared psychic unity across cultures—a form of shared universalized psyche—but with a key difference. In Allen's comparative framing, specific, local differences are not obliterated to fit the larger whole. Allen was always preoccupied by ideas of the local. In the few travel guides to European cities he wrote, he emphasizes the need to 'devote most attention

[38] Theo D'Haen in *The Routledge Concise History of World Literature* (2011) offers a comprehensive account of the emergence of comparative literature in the nineteenth century. Allen's *Kalee's Shrine* was released in the same year as H.M. Posnett's foundational work *Comparative Literature* (1886)—a work that, according to Leerssen, was informed by '[an] imperial-global view of the countries of the world; a Eurocentric notion of stadialism…' came to be seen as the foundation of 'Comparative' literature (206). For a contemporary discussion on the method and history of comparatism in literary studies, see: Devin Griffiths. 'The Comparative Method and the History of the Modern Humanities.' *History of Humanities*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2017, pp. 473-505.

in every case to what is locally illustrative, and less to what is merely adventitious and foreign' (Allen, *Paris* 6). Similarly, Allen's inter-cultural romance signifies a generic model in which cultures, even when placed in a generalized framework, can be accorded their specificity. As Joep Leerssen writes: '"Comparative" allowed intellectuals to thematize the specifics of variation and diversity in human culture without altogether abandoning a generic framework or the ambitions to formulate generalized insights' (200).

In a critical climate in which scholars of world literature continue to struggle to reconcile the local with the global, Allen's cosmopolitanism offers an intriguing prefatory chapter. Allen resists the urge to 'globalize' all cultures as being part of the same rubric, speaking the same language. If Allen rejects a universal sameness, he does not endorse a radical difference either. His primary concern is: to what extent can cultures, with all their differences, comprehend each other? Recognizing that cultures are not equivalent, he reads the moment of encounter between them as being charged with conflict and tension:

> The old battles are now well-nigh fought out; but new ones are looming ahead for us. The cosmopolitanisation of the world is introducing into our midst strange elements of discord. A conglomerate of *unwelded ethnical elements* usurps the stage of history. America and South Africa have already their negro question; California and Australia have already their Chinese question; Russia is fast getting her Asiatic, her Mahommedan question…And as for England, she staggers on still under the increasing load of India, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, the West Indiea, Fiji, New Guinea, North Borneo—all of them rife with endless race questions… (Allen, emphasis added; 'Romance of the Clash,' 73-4)

As Allen notes, at this historical juncture, cultures with contrarian values are being pitted against each other. Such situations are ripe with the potential for miscommunication as 'unwelded' ethnic elements attempt to make sense of each other (Allen, 'Romance of the Clash' 73). Despite cultures being mismatched, Allen thinks there is value in this encounter—a confrontation with alterity can urge imperial

cultures to ask difficult questions of themselves and to even question the ethics of empire.

Allen's thoughts anticipate the more recent critique of translation proposed by contemporary comparative literary theorists such as Natalie Melas and Emily Apter. Apter, in her book *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013), argues that comparative literature operates with a presumption that cultures *can* be translated (3). This, for her, is a misplaced notion that presumes commensurability between cultures when, for various reasons, 'translation failure' marks these encounters (Apter 9). As an alternative, she suggests that we begin by comparing cultures from the point of non-equivalence. Far from impeding translation, according to Apter, this reflexive approach can produce better translations than before. Lucia Boldrini summarizes Apter's approach as balancing 'at one end, the radical incommensurability of different languages and of cultural, political, aesthetic systems; at the other, the human(ist) will to…search for codes that can translate one language into another' (182). To some degree, Allen prefigures Apter in his thinking. While accepting that cultures are not always legible, he recognizes that confronting un-translatability can be illuminating for the cultures involved. Allen sounds optimistic about the kind of introspection this confrontation can generate, especially in the colonizer's mind. In his article 'About Abroad' (1894), Allen urges the ignorant Englishmen to see the world in its un-translatable specificity, as defined by difference: 'Abroad is not all alike. There are differences between Poland, Peru and Palestine' (170).

So far, Allen's theorization seems promisingly nuanced in its understanding of difference. However, he defines the specificity of cultures in terms of race and this is where his model falters. Even while acknowledging difference, Allen fails to see

cultures in their fullness because he defines them biologically. In the piece itself, Allen foregrounds the Anglo-Saxon racial origins of novelists such as Marion Crawford and R.L. Stevenson ('Romance of Clash' 72, 75). The author's racial (rather than national or cultural) identity, according to Allen, is integral to the act of portraying and translating the psychology of other groups into fiction. The literary encounter then is about translating 'races'—the definitive indicator of cultural and biological identity for Allen.

Thus, while there are progressive elements in Allen's model of cosmopolitanism, it never abandons its conviction in the reality of race as a biological truth. It is no wonder then that Allen is closed off to a cosmopolitanism that leads to biological racial intermixing. It is, therefore, a central irony in Allen's thinking, and his fiction, that though he celebrates hybridity, his vision cannot sustain itself. While the imagined world of the novel can be seen to coherently bring together different genres, or different stages of organic memory in one narrative, the action of Allen's novel repeatedly arrests the possibility of physical contact between races. The biggest indicator of Allen thwarting hybridity from being realized in the novel is the way in which his heroine, Olga, finds her match. Even though the precondition of Tennant's attraction to Olga is her Indian appearance, the novel does not allow them to pursue their love without containing Olga's overt Indian-ness. She is, by the novel's end, forced, by Tennant, to revert to her English self. One question left, at the end of the novel, is whether Tennant will fall under Olga's spell again or will Allen's hero always remain as English as he began?

As Joep Leerssen argues, nineteenth-century cosmopolitan imaginaries were frequently founded on divisive categories such as race, nationality and ethnicity (202). Yet, on the surface, they paid lip service to the notion of universalism. Allen's model

however not only nods at the racial discourse of the period, it makes entrenched racial difference the starting point of his cosmopolitanism. For Allen, races were defined by intrinsic essentialized qualities. Races were innately 'civilized' and 'savage' with the European being the most advanced and others lagging behind. As a corollary of this reliance on race, he consistently frames the meeting between races as a 'picturesque juxtaposition and contrast of civilisation and savagery' (Allen, 'Romance of the Clash' 74). Yet, as we see in his fiction, races can often articulate psychological tendencies unlike their own. This is then the central paradox of his thinking—race is very much a biological essence but it can culturally adapt (though within limits) in a new environment. In *Devil's Die*, the Indian doctor Mohammad Ali, speaks eloquent English, often sounding more English than the English themselves. He reveres the culture of England: 'Heaven forbid so great a degradation! But for all that, I'm glad I came to England. To stop in India is to starve one's own moral and mental nature. To come here is growth, development, emancipation, freedom!' (19). The irony of Mohammad Ali's statement is not lost—even as he overcomes the inherent proclivities of his racial background, he sees the 'moral and mental nature' of the two spaces (England and India) as fixed (Allen, *Devil's Die* 19). This conflict between what the race *is* and what it *can become* is never fully resolved in Allen's writings. Can a race ever fully escape its racial destiny through contact with another race or a new environment? To what degree can a race be *translated* into another? These were questions that Allen was possibly exploring through his fiction and his meditations on cosmopolitanism.

Allen's cosmopolitan model situates races in diverse contexts to track their responses in a new environment. The most promising aspect of his cosmopolitanism is that while simultaneously affirming the superiority of the European race, it also

undercuts it. Without denying the racist impulse of his cosmopolitanism, Allen imagines an inter-racial encounter that forces the European man to confront the limits of his advancement. This discomfort is a fundamental tenet of Allen's cosmopolitanism—as races meet, they do not instantly assimilate but they struggle to make sense of the alien character of the 'other.' In this interaction with the colonized 'other,' psychological and ontological limits of the European self are tested. One of the most disturbing realizations for the European mind in *Kalee's Shrine* is that the 'savage' latently exists within him/her. A crisis of self-identity ensues as the British recognize a part of their ancestral past in the colonized native for the native turns out to be none other than his own prehistoric ancestor.

Allen's cosmopolitanism sees the encounter between races as compressing the spatial and temporal distance separating races in the history of evolution. In other words, the colonizer/colonized do not constitute one cohesive global world without differences but an evolutionary unit with a psychic unity. For him, a cosmopolitan sensibility does not transcend or deny race or creed, rather, it bridges the gap between races through an awareness of the evolutionary telos. *Kalee's Shrine* is an example of an inter-cultural romance, a fast-paced shilling-shocker, designed for travel or recreational reading, that offers a delineation of the evolutionary timeline (from 'savage' to civilized) in a condensed form. Within a span of less than a hundred pages, the novel offers the reader a compressed preview of the longue-durée of evolutionary timeline. Through the novel, Allen aims to educate the reader to not merely see the racial 'other' as an alien to be feared.

The project of cultivating a cosmopolitan imagination through popular fiction thus extends to the reader's mind. Like Tennant, the ideal reader for Allen, would be open to experiencing psychological shifts where he might realize that he too is not

very different from the Indian Olga. The distance between the colonizer/colonized is reduced not by shaping a sympathetic readerly imagination but by making him/her connect with the 'other' in terms of evolutionary distance. At the end of the novel (and presumably—in some cases—by the end of the train journey undertaken by the typical reader), the reader has consumed the evolutionary timeline in print form.

It is, then, not coincidental that the Arrowsmith edition of the novel, anticipating the reader's state of mind, placed an advertisement for John Beddoe's *Races of Britain* (1885) at the end. Allen's publishers possibly imagined a reader who ends the novel feeling simultaneously curious about racial origins but also open to interacting with the 'other.' The reader's participation in this fantasy of cosmopolitan evolutionary unity, however, proves short-lived. As Olga is released from the mesmeric spell of Kalee, the reader must be released from the absorbing world of 'imagined' proximity with the 'savage.' As the train journey ends, the reader reaches his destination, the novel's spell is broken and the cosmopolitan fantasy of psychologically merging with the primitive 'other' becomes just another ephemeral fiction.

Chapter 4. Christian Enchantment and the Unimportance of Embodied Race in Marie Corelli's *Ziska*

> There is a dead face and a living one on this canvas, he said, and the dead face seems to enthral me as much as the living. Both have the same cruel smile,—both the same compelling magnetism of eye. Only it is a singular thing that I should know the dead face even more intimately than the living—that the tortured look upon it should be a kind of haunting memory—horrible—ghastly. (Corelli, *Ziska* 254)

In Marie Corelli's 1897 novel *Ziska*, a French artist, Armand Gervase, paints a portrait of an Egyptian princess, Ziska, a woman he passionately desires.[39] On completing the portrait, Gervase realizes that he has 'unconsciously' sketched a 'repellent' distortion of Ziska's face (Corelli, *Ziska* 177). More shocking is the realization that he has painted her face as it would look on the brink of death. Ziska's dead face, in the portrait, does not appear blank and expressionless. Rather, as Gervase notes, it exudes, even in the act of dying, a range of emotions: it wears a 'cruel smile,' carries a 'magnetic' gleam in the eyes and expresses a 'sentient solemnity' (Corelli, *Ziska* 254, 177).

Gervase is most agitated to discover that he knows this dead face 'intimately' (Corelli, *Ziska* 254). Admitting that Ziska's 'tortured' face 'enthrals' him, he confesses a perverse necrophiliac fascination for the image (Corelli, *Ziska* 254). There is a peculiar quality to his captivation with the portrait. The longer he looks at the image, the more he is gripped by an intense sense of *déjà vu*—the feeling of having seen Ziska's 'tortured' visage before (Corelli, *Ziska* 254). Gervase later finds out that this *déjà vu* indeed involves a 'haunting' incident from his past: his cold-blooded murder of Ziska in a previous life.

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[39] Marie Corelli. *Ziska: The Problem of a Wicked Soul*. Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1897.

The novel begins with a scene immediately following the crime. With the pyramids in the background, the spirit of Ziska-Charmazel, an Egyptian concubine vows to avenge her murder by her lover, Araxes, an Egyptian warrior. Ziska's spirit emerges from the pyramids as a 'thin vapour' and assumes a 'woman's form' to warn Araxes that his crime will not go unpunished (Corelli, *Ziska* 8). The novel then shifts to nineteenth-century Cairo where the reincarnated selves of Ziska-Charmazel and Araxes meet in Gezireh Palace Hotel. Charmazel, now the Princess Ziska, still seeks revenge on Araxes, now a French artist, Armand Gervase. Mesmerized by Ziska's beauty, Gervase falls in love with her and wonders why the mere sight of her both thrills and intimidates him. At the close of the novel, in a dramatic climax set in the pyramids, he realizes the truth of their intertwined past lives and seeks Ziska's forgiveness. Gervase's plea falls on deaf ears: Ziska kills him. The novel, however, does not end on an entirely grim note: with Gervase's death, the divine order of justice is restored. Both souls, we are told, attain salvation and are liberated from their bodies.

Interspersed through this revenge narrative are commentaries on tourism, ancient and modern Egypt and Christianity that offer a holistic insight into Corelli's thinking about these subjects. A celebrity writer at the end of the century, Marie Corelli was the most controversial and 'the most flamboyant of the 1890s top-sellers' (Sutherland 84). While some of her novels, notably *Ardath* (1889) and *Sorrows of Satan* (1895), have been the subject of critical commentaries, *Ziska* is yet to receive adequate attention. The relative critical neglect of *Ziska* can be attributed to the fact that it was published as part of the Arrowsmith Railway Series targeted at a travelling readership. *Bookman* reports from the year, however, show that the novel was one of the top sellers in York, Manchester, Aberdeen and Dublin ('Sales of Books' 23).

Though *Ziska* catered to a demand for light reading, Corelli weaves into its plot some serious thinking about the long history of Christianity. Hitherto, critics have categorized *Ziska* as either an imperial allegory, or a typical example of the mummy-revenge genre as popularised by Richard Marsh's *Beetle* (1897) and H. Rider Haggard's *Cleopatra* (1889) to name a few. This chapter adopts a different route: it traces Corelli's interest in subconscious states of mind and memory in the context of her Christian leanings. It further examines how Corelli represents a state of enchantment that is Christian in essence.

The chapter looks at how a Christian model of trance in *Ziska* activates memories in characters by triggering moral introspection. In particular, the chapter argues that Corelli's conception of the Christianized trance prioritizes the soul to such a degree that it rejects all other earthly identities. It is a direct consequence of this prioritisation of religion that Corelli shows remarkably little interest in the biology and psychology of race. For her, race is an insignificant aspect of material life, one that has no importance in her Christian idealist vision. In the model of the Christianized psyche found in *Ziska*, race, nationality and other identity markers are reduced to a mere costume, pieces of clothing that can be put on and discarded. This devaluation of bodily race simultaneously makes Corelli's racial vision remarkably flexible (and in that sense, to some degree, 'liberal') and problematically, often very conventionally orientalist. The chapter further explores how her model of the Christianized deracinated psyche shapes her unique notion of cosmopolitanism that appealed to readers in the colonies.

Studies of Corelli by Andrew McCann and Alisha Siebers have examined the state of trance she proposes in relation to her conception of authorship but none to date has considered the imagined involvement of the reader in the trance state.

Enchanted trance, for Corelli, was not just a precondition for the creation of art: she wanted and expected her readers to be entranced by her work. To be more precise, she imagined the relationship between author and reader as simulating the dynamic between a sermonizing priest and an enchanted convert. The chapter ends with an investigation of the specific nature of this Christianized trance that Corelli expects to induce in the reader.

Enchantment and the Creative Imagination

For Corelli, a state of susceptibility to unconsciousness was a prerequisite for the creation of superior art. Dreaming was the basis of creativity in her metaphysical schema: 'the Universe' before it was created 'was once a dream in the mind of God' ('Vanishing Gift' 307). So, in *Ardath* (1889), the spiritual healer Heliobas hypnotizes the artist, Alwyn to energize his weakened creative spirit.[40] Far from being a mentally passive state, trance renews the artist's jaded spirit stimulating his inner genius in *Ardath* as Alwyn 'in his hypnotized condition, write[s] a poem' titled '"Nourhalma"' (Corelli, vol. 3 274). In *Ziska* too, Gervase creates a strangely mesmerizing portrait of Ziska whilst his 'senses' are 'dazzled' (Corelli, *Ziska* 144). Unaware of the workings of his hand on canvas, Gervase's painting of the crime resonates with the practice of 'automatic writing' that many writers experimented with at the fin-de-siècle. Psychic researchers, especially those associated with the Society of Psychical Research, claimed that hypnosis draws out one's deepest, unrepressed thoughts—a 'secondary' self, unmediated by conscious reason (Grimes 16). Corelli too suggests that the

[40] For more on trance in Corelli's novels, see: Robyn Hallim, 'Marie Corelli's Best-Selling Electric Creed.' *Women's Writing*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2006, pp. 267-83; Julia Kuehn. 'The Strategies of the Popular Novel: Marie Corelli's Feminine Sublime and the Aesthetic of the Dream.' *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 41, no. 6, 2008, pp. 975-93.

artist's imagination articulates on canvas, or in textual form, repressed thoughts and truths s/he is yet to discover about him/herself. However, her particular understanding of automatic writing differs from psychical research's explorations of similar phenomena in its emphasis on Christianity. For Corelli, Christianity was 'supernatural' in essence and a study of the religion could yield spiritual insights without turning to 'table-turning, magnetic slate-writing, and other illusive phenomena' (*Romance of Two Worlds* 14).

While encouraging flights of artistic imagination, there was one condition Corelli imposes on artistic creation: good art, for her, could only be produced if the artist channels the spirit of Christ. An imaginative endeavour, for Corelli, had to be directed towards upholding the glory of God and of the Christian faith. Distancing herself from spiritualist séances and experiments conducted by the Society of Psychical Research, Corelli emphasized, in the preface of *Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), that her 'creed has foundations in Christ alone' (5). Though Corelli drew on S.P.R.'s ongoing research to develop her ideas of the creative imagination, she did not share their general interest in the paranormal. In her model, an experience of trance counts as authentic only if it resembles a state of Christianized ecstasy. For her, artists ought to use trance to 'imagine' a communication with Christ through the act of creation. As the devout Cardinal Bonpre states in *The Master Christian* (1900), 'Christ's teachings' are 'going on even now, in everything we can do, think or plan…' (50). Creating art is thus synonymous with a kind of imaginative worshipping of Christ in Corelli's schema. Thus, for Corelli, if imagination was motivated by a Christian impulse, then, being a Christian was equally an imaginative enterprise.[41]

[41] While Corelli was explicitly critical of the excesses of Catholic Church, she did not spare the Protestant church either. Her Christian beliefs can be categorized as heterodox, largely indebted to New Testament teachings, which she imaginatively re-interpreted in her fiction.

In Corelli's schema, a state of entrancement unblocks the imagination by revitalizing its point of origin: the soul. Describing imagination as the 'sun dial of the soul,' Corelli insisted that creation was a deeply spiritual act ('Vanishing Gift' 289). Her philosophy of electric creed as illustrated in *Romance of Two Worlds*, imagines an energetic electric connection between the author and the divine spirit that 'can see and converse with angels—can heal the sick and console the afflicted—can preserve health in the body and beauty' (19). When the artist slips into a semi-conscious state, s/he experiences an 'out-of-body' feeling that culminates in union with the divine (Siebers 187). It is therefore not surprising that Corelli imagines the artist as a more spiritually evolved being than others—a mediator of divine and (in some cases) prophetic truths. Iterating this, Andrew McCann argues that Corelli self-consciously projected herself as a 'healthy, uncorrupted author who writes in thrall of higher [presumably spiritual] truth' (insertion mine; 108).

Christianized Unconscious Memory

I offer this wider context to Corelli's interest in unconscious states of spiritual communion with the divine to emphasize that, in *Ziska*, an episode of enchanted trance or hypnotism leads to spiritual discoveries. In a state resembling hypnosis, characters repeatedly stumble across a revelatory memory, not from this life, but from a past life. Awareness of past life memory pushes the character to confront pressing questions about the ethical integrity of their personal conduct in the present life—and in the memories of previous incarnations glimpsed by them in states of suspended consciousness. As characters access their earlier selves, these encounters with their past lives open up larger theological and existential questions about the validity of their spiritual beliefs.

A unique aspect of Corelli's conception of psychic memory is its capacity to reincarnate across lives (literally, to sustain itself across new bodily forms). Stretching across time, the memory embedded in Gervase's psyche encompasses a record of critical events, especially major sins from his previous life. As can be seen from her letters, Corelli was fascinated by the idea of a durable trans-personal memory. Writing to her publisher, George Bentley, she presented the case of her father Dr Mackay who, after an epileptic attack, remembered things from the distant past: 'in a hyperphysical dream,' she wrote, 'the memory going back some thousands of years is…possible.'[42] Noteworthy is that notions of durable memory and reincarnative soul, so central to Corelli's writings, were not endorsed by Christian doctrines. To plug this gap in Christian teachings, Corelli turned to Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism for inspiration. As J. Jeffrey Franklin notes, such theological 'hybridization' was common in this period, especially with the influx of religious ideas from Eastern colonies to Britain (19). Elaine M. Hartnell explains Corelli's derivative debt to Hinduism:

> In Hindu thought, the soul is separated from its incarnated personality when it migrates to its next life and thus memory, a temporal faculty is lost. However, in Corelli's writings it is always possible for the soul to remember everything from its previous existences. (289)

Moving between lives, individuals retain a memory of their past, albeit, in an unconscious form. Attached to the soul, this unconscious spiritual memory is activated at crucial moments in their lives. The aim of an individual's soul is to gain consciousness of this unconscious memory while 'progress[ing] through various forms' (Corelli, *Ziska* 140). With each life, the individual must develop a 'new "experience" of thought…wider intelligence, and intensified consciousness' of their

[42] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. 7 March, 1889. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332. Box 1, Folder 11.

past (‘Question of Faith’ 51). Once conscious of his or her actions, the person can evaluate past actions and set him/herself on the path to salvation.

Though Corelli derived the idea of reincarnation from foreign theological traditions, she adapted it to suit her Christian agenda. Unconscious memory, in *Ziska*, follows a strict Christian logic insofar as it compels characters to introspect their actions. Rather than existing as a mere archival record, it acts, ultimately, as an agent of justice; an ethico-juridical force ensuring characters are held accountable to themselves, and to Christ, for their sins. But while pressuring people to confess their crimes to themselves, unconscious memory also plays an ameliorative role allowing individuals the chance to rectify their behaviour.

Corelli’s reincarnative model thus allows the individual agent to break out of the cycle of re-birth in which s/he is entrapped until their spiritual journey is complete. As she pronounces in *Romance*, by directing his/her ‘spiritual WILL,’ a person can cultivate the ‘germ of a soul’ and become ‘a spiritual creature’ (115). While the individual can control his/her spiritual destiny, often, an external trigger in the form of a chance meeting with a previous soulmate, catalyses this awareness. The meeting with Ziska is one such encounter which pushes Gervase to become aware of his sins. Flashing her eyes, Ziska’s gaze induces a ‘strange dizzying shock’ that in Gervase’s words, ‘drag[s] my very soul out of me’ (Corelli, *Ziska* 60, 258). The magnetic influence she casts on Gervase is not merely an indicator of her attractiveness; it performs a specific spiritual purpose.

Entranced by Ziska’s gaze, Gervase unconsciously draws the image of his past crime that appears on the canvas. Dr Dean, an orientalist scholar with a keen interest in ‘“occult” peculiarities of temperament, “coincidences,” strange occurrences generally’ confirms that Gervase has recorded past life reminisces on the canvas

(Corelli, *Ziska* 35). He further adds that an aggrieved soul from Gervase's past life might be interfering with his imagination:

> [W]hy then the Soul of the other woman you once wronged might come between you and the face of the new attraction and cause you to unconsciously paint the tortured look of the injured and unforgiving Spirit on the countenance of the lovely fascinator whose charms are just beginning to ensnare you… (Corelli, *Ziska* 182-3)

Dr Dean explains that, on the canvas, the image of Ziska-Charmazel is superimposed onto her present incarnation thus producing an eerie, double vision. The double-image symbolizes how Gervase's past life histories will always haunt his present. Dr Dean imagines Ziska's 'unforgiving' spirit acting like a screen between Gervase and his work, guiding his hand on the canvas (Corelli, *Ziska* 183). Contrary to a typical instance of déjà vu, Gervase is not struck by an unprompted flash of recognition; rather, as Dr Dean suggests, this is a case of orchestrated déjà vu. Ziska's hypnotic gaze appears to spiritually colonize Gervase, tacitly drawing out his confession of his crime. While Gervase's artistic confession is partly attributed to Ziska mentally manipulating him, Corelli suggests that the portrait is a product of his own troubled, guilty conscience.

By mediating between Gervase's conscience and the canvas, Ziska warns him of the pending spiritual punishment. An agent of divine justice, Ziska intends to spiritually reform Gervase but her mode of awakening his memory is often unnerving. She is portrayed as a bewitching femme fatale who, though spiritually 'evolved,' possesses shades of monstrosity. Dr Dean insists that Ziska is different from the ghoulish ghosts of many Gothic novels: she is a spirit capable of taking material form and 'imitat[ing] our customs and ways' (Corelli, *Ziska* 98). Her semi-ghostly, semi-human character makes her more eerie, inspiring a sense of foreboding in Gervase. At one point, he compares Ziska's presence, the love she inspires in him, to being

strangulated: he feels his 'soul strangled by the coils of a woman's hair—black hair, black as night…I have never felt the insidious horror of a love like strong drink mounting through the blood to the brain…' (Corelli, *Ziska* 99).

Though sinister at times, Ziska's desire to take revenge is endorsed by Corelli. The novel legitimizes Ziska's revenge by setting her up as a figure who, on behalf of all wronged women, is teaching men a lesson. On just one occasion, Dr Dean chides Ziska for harbouring an unforgiving sentiment against Gervase for so long. But, for the most part, he rationalizes revenge as the universe's way of re-establishing karmic balance—of counterbalancing the bad with the good. He dubs this principle the 'psychic law of equity' which ordains that unethical actions will be followed by punitive consequences:

> I mean that the murderer who has secretly torn the life out of his shrieking victim in some unfrequented spot, and has succeeded in hiding his crime from what we call 'justice,' cannot escape the Spiritual law of vengeance. (Corelli, *Ziska* 117)

Dr Dean thus justifies Ziska's desire to settle scores with Gervase. However, even as Corelli's spiritual model accommodates revenge, forgiveness is integral to the plan. At the end of the novel, Gervase is given a chance to repent and seek forgiveness. An ethereal voice, presumably the voice of God, ends the novel by declaring the outcome of this karmic plot: 'The woman's soul forgives; the man's repents,—wherefore they are both released from bondage and the memory of sin' (Corelli, *Ziska* 347).

Though revenge is justified, ultimately, Corelli's reincarnative model offers each character the chance to seek forgiveness. Her benevolent model of Christianity allows even the most sinful individual to opt for redemption. Redeeming one's self however involves reforming one's views on the question of existence—to accept the revelation that the spirit is primary and body is redundant. When Ziska finally stabs Gervase in the climactic scene, the dying man is hit by a similar realization:

> He recognized himself as Araxes—always the same Soul passing through a myriad changes,—and all the links of past and present were suddenly welded together in one unbroken chain, stretching over thousands of years, every link of which he was able to count, mark and recognize. By the dreadful light of that dumb comprehension which flashes on all parting souls at the moment of dissolution, he perceived at last that not the body but the Spirit is the central secret of life,—not deeds, but thoughts evolve creation. (Corelli, *Ziska* 345)

As Gervase nears his end, the essential truth of existence dawns on him: the knowledge that the soul is everlasting. The revelation is 'dreadful' (Corelli, *Ziska* 345). Faced by the imminent 'dissolution' of his body, Gervase at last comprehends its transient nature (Corelli, *Ziska* 345). This awareness leads to an existential question: if he is going to die, then what will become of him? Who is he, if not, Gervase? Searching for something to hold on to, for some assurance of identity, Gervase is struck by a vision of his past incarnations. In this vision, Gervase sees each reincarnation as distinct yet somehow seamlessly linked with the next 'in one unbroken chain' (Corelli, *Ziska* 345). He registers that while his physical self has undergone a 'myriad changes,' his soul is the only constant (Corelli, *Ziska* 345). His final realization as he departs his body is that the body and its needs are temporary, whereas his soul has endured across centuries and will endure for all time.

A common theme across Corelli's novels is the preoccupation with the existence of an afterlife and *Ziska* offers an in-depth exploration of the same. Writing about the representation of death in Corelli's novel, Nickianne Moody observes: 'The possibility of liberation from the flesh is a frequent motif in Corelli's fiction, fulfilling the fantasy of absolute freedom from the body and deliverance from want, illness, and material responsibility' (191). Echoing Corelli's theological beliefs, Dr Dean vociferously argues in favour of the 'immortality of the soul;' a theory rejected by Gervase as 'a most foolish and barbaric superstition' (Corelli, *Ziska* 46). Gervase's denial of the concept of afterlife symptomizes his failure to ascend to the spiritual

state. Across his lives, Gervase has obsessively sought carnal, material gratification, thus inhibiting his spiritual growth. As a result, Ziska states that he is still trapped in his flesh: 'They (the discoverers) have not even found his tomb; but he was buried in the Pyramids with all the honours of a king' (Corelli, *Ziska* 73). Corelli evokes the popular Gothic trope of the missing mummy to create suspense about Gervase's fate—except here the focus is not on his body but on his lost soul.

For Corelli, individuals in the contemporary age were too consumed by sensual needs—a materialist outlook that had arrested their moral and spiritual growth. In the most coherent statement she made of her beliefs in the essay 'A Question of Faith' (1905), written later in her career, Corelli argued that a materialist lifestyle resulted in a religious and moral 'inconsistency' where '[t]hings are jumbled up in a heterogeneous mass' (39). The modern individual is bombarded with a plethora of options that distract him from an unwavering commitment to religion. In *Ziska*, she laments the onset of technological modernity: 'we have made a mistake—we, in our progressive generation,—we have banished the old sweetnesses, triumphs and delights of life, and we have got in exchange steam and electricity' (Corelli, *Ziska* 215). Here, Corelli romanticizes the 'sweetnesses' and 'delights of life' in the past, presumably imagining a simpler, more spiritually grounded culture. Christine Ferguson rightly observes that this romanticization of the past can be understood as an 'Edenic antidote to the semantic instability of modern life' (Ferguson, *Language, Science and Popular Fiction* 57). But if spiritual clarity characterised the ancient past, one could still access it by imaginatively engaging with and learning from history. The importance of ancient Egypt, particularly, for Corelli was that contemplating a part of the world crucial to the historic development of early Christianity could impart lessons that would counter the current wave of materialism in the West.

The Romance of Egypt

In *Ziska*, Egypt, with its ancient civilizational inheritances, offers a sharp contrast to the materialistic character of modern European life. The climactic scene of Gervase's epiphany takes place in a pyramid. The setting is crucial as pyramids carry a symbolic import in the novel: like the soul, they possess a timeless resilience. Dr Dean views the pyramids as vestiges of the past signifying a history 'in which no link [between the past and the present] is ever really broken' (insertion mine; Corelli, *Ziska* 218). Carrying the past into the present, Egypt represents an access point into a more spiritually evolved way of life.

Not only the figure of Ziska but the Egyptian scenery triggers Gervase's latent spiritual memories. An encounter with Egypt exercises an enthralling effect on Gervase's psyche: 'What tricks my imagination plays me in this city of the Orient,' he remarks at one point—'I might as well be hypnotised!' (Corelli, *Ziska* 194). It is a loaded term. In a letter to Bentley, Corelli wrote that 'this hypnotism that is being now so constantly practised with astonishing and perplexing results, was well known in Egypt….'[43] To be hypnotised is to experience the resurgence of long-forgotten and threatening secrets more so when visiting an ancient civilizational space. In *Ziska*, Corelli describes Egypt as the land of mystique:

> [T]he mystic land of the old gods,—the terrible land filled with dark secrets as yet unexplored,—the land 'shadowing with wings,' as the Bible hath it,—the land in which are buried tremendous histories as yet unguessed. (Corelli, *Ziska* 18)

Corelli's suggestion is that exposure to these mysteries can hypnotize people into discovering their own 'buried' spiritual pasts –sometimes even 'dark secrets,' as is the case with Gervase (*Ziska* 18).

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[43] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. 20 April, 1889. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332 Box 1, Folder 14.

For Corelli, ancient Egypt was not the cradle of paganism, rather, Christianity in its nascent stage flourished there. In the passage above, she describes Egypt as the space 'shadowing with wings'—an apparent reference to the ten plagues that afflict Egypt in the book of Exodus (Corelli, *Ziska* 18). In a scene preceding the climax, Ziska tutors Gervase on the biblical origins of the pyramids, claiming that they were 'built as towers of defence against the Deluge' (Corelli, *Ziska* 269). Historian David Gange argues that Corelli's representation of Egypt in *Ziska* exemplifies a shift in fin-de-siècle perception of Egypt as 'defined by vivacity and intense spirituality rather than the barbarity and fatalism' (154). The emergent discipline of Egyptology saw in Egypt's supposed Christian past 'evidence and elaboration of the biblical text' (3). Gange contends that Egyptological research was in the main conservative, aiming to confirm, rather than challenge, pre-conceived notions about Egypt's Christian past. More specifically, S. Magus notes that, in the fin-de-siècle, there 'arose a discourse of Christian Egyptosophy, whereby Egyptosophical speculations were directed towards a revitalisation of the scriptural aspect of Anglicanism' (484).

While Corelli's claims about Egypt's Christian past were, in part, influenced by Egyptosophy, they were equally shaped by her eccentric reading. Ziska informs Gervase that, contrary to other myths, the pyramids were built by a King called Saurid, the son of Sabaloc (Corelli, *Ziska* 271).[44] Her story alludes to a lesser-known Arabic myth that Corelli claimed to have encountered in an Arabic book written in 1672, presumably Murtada ibn al-Afif's ancient text titled *The Egyptian History:*

[44] David Gange argues that '[t]he 1880s are in fact the high tide of the British public's relationship with biblical Egypt and the moment when Egyptologists in Britain were most intensely engrossed in the pages of the Pentateuch. Egyptology's publicizers badgered away at the biblical text, shifting emphases from oppression to freedom, from barbarity to spirituality' (153). While still using 'the Old Testament [as] an "enframing" device,' Corelli mixes it with obscure Arabic myths to make an original contribution to the discussion (Gange 164).

Treating if the Pyramids, the inundation of the Nile and other Prodigies (1672).[45] But despite her attempts at broadening her reading, Corelli selectively uses this knowledge to portray a purely fantastical Egypt in *Ziska*—a blend of myths that suits her Christian narrative. Egypt is recognizable insofar as the pyramids and Sphinx give it a distinctive flavour, but lacking any historical or contemporary precision.

Corelli side-lines Egypt's own history, treating the space like an empty placeholder for her Christian agenda. Lacking specificity, Egypt is an easily replaceable, and generalizable, token for an ancient past onto which a script, in this case Christian mythology, is transposed (ancient Greece or Rome could do as well). The subordination of geographical realism to her Christian agenda comes through strongly in Corelli's description of the pre-modern character of Ziska's lodgings: as Gervase enters her room, he sees '[q]uaint musical instruments of the fashion of thousands of years ago,' 'ancient papyri' and flowers 'which a connoisseur would have declared to be unknown in Egypt…' (Corelli, *Ziska* 142). Rather than a textured, detailed description, the reader receives vague, nondescript images of 'ancient papyri' and 'instruments' from 'thousands of years ago' (Corelli, *Ziska* 142). There is not much about this space that stands out as distinctly Egyptian. In its generic-ness, the scene differs from other romantic representations of Egypt at the fin-de-siècle, especially Haggard's *Cleopatra* (1889), a text saturated with intricate details about the 'ceremonies, or customs' of ancient Egypt (8).[46] It is not that Haggard's novel provided a more accurate representation of Egypt than Corelli's but his work is marked by the turn towards minutely detailed, though exhibitionistic, portrayals of the

[45] In a letter dated 27 March, 1889, Corelli talks of translating Arabic with the help of Armenian friends. Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library. GEN MSS 332. Box 1, Folder 14.

[46] On Haggard's *Cleopatra*, Corelli wrote: 'I had a glimpse of Rider Haggard's new story *Cleopatra*…I cannot conceive how he can mangle such a noble subject in such slovenly language;—but I suppose nobody cares!' Letter to George Bentley. Late Feb or early March, 1889. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332 Box 1, Folder 11.

Orient as was dominant in this period (Mitchell 10). Corelli's approach is a refreshing contrast to Haggard's in that she does not attempt to mask the concocted nature of her orientalist portrayal.

Even by the fin-de-siècle's standards of orientalising the East, Corelli's woolly representation of Egypt was deemed unconvincing. Though there is no record of her specifically defending *Ziska* on this score, Corelli often addressed and justified her ahistorical representation of the East in other texts. Admitting she had never travelled to these places, she owned that they were a product of her imagination: 'For accuracy of detail, we can consult a guide book—but for a complete picture…we must go to the inspired author whose prescience or second sight enables him to be something more…' ('Power of Pen' 301). Insisting that her representation of the Orient was a product of this 'second sight,' a deeper spiritual knowledge, she claimed to have portrayed its truest essence. Her claim rested on the idea that the artist's job was to romanticize a space by conjuring a panoramic, all-encompassing dream vision rather than provide narratives with 'overattention to minutiae of life, to empirical detail' (Galvan, 'Corelli's Caliban' 338).

Romance and the Ideal

Corelli's orientalization of Egypt in *Ziska* thus differs from her contemporaries in its acute self-consciousness about the lack of realism and its claim to depth of 'spiritual' insight. In terms of genre, she specifically associated Egypt with the imaginative spirit of romance. George Bentley, her publisher, reading drafts for *Ardath* criticized her 'unreal' portrayal of Al-Kryis, the imaginary oriental space, even advising her to remove the section. In response, Corelli defended her portrayal as compelling the

reader to 'decide which is dream, which is reality.'[47] Corelli disputed any narrow definition of the real: for her, a dream did not just closely mimic the real, '[f]or the things we call "imaginative" are often far more real than what we call "realism"' ('Vanishing Gift' 278). Expanding on her notion of romance to George Bentley, she writes:

> I have tried to raise the great art of romance, i.e., the art of idealizing a given subject like a sculptor or painter, by means of words—to something higher than a mere story of love-making, murder, and money trouble. I have been able to persuade people to pause awhile and think ... (qtd in Federico 50)

Through the 'art of romance,' Corelli aimed to paint a dreamscape that transcended the prosaic materialism and pettiness of everyday life. Hers was however not simply an escapist conception of romance. As Jill Galvan argues, '[c]ounterintuitive as it may seem, Corelli offers romance as a way to grasp Reality' ('Corelli's Caliban' 346). Her idealized depictions, while offering a respite from the pressures of reality, did not abandon reality as a referent. Instead, her poetic fancies aimed to present the real in its most perfect form—the Ideal as the spiritual and moral touchstone that humans ought to aspire towards.

Corelli's emphasis on elevating the art of fiction, lifting literary representation to a higher plane, parallels the upward movement of the soul from earthly bonds in her theological vision. It is not surprising then that her initial title for her first book *Romance of the Two Worlds* was 'Lifted Up.'[48] In a letter to Bentley dated March, 1889, Corelli describes her artistic vision for *Ardath*: 'The vision at Dariel is a most exquisite allegory of the lifting of a soul out of darkness into light….'[49] And, indeed, Corelli claimed that romance could induce an out-of-body experience elevating the

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[47] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. March 15, 1889. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332. Box 1 Folder 13.
[48] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. Easter Eve, 1889. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332. Box 1, Folder 1.
[49] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. 13 March, 1889. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332. Box 1, Folder 13.

soul. Her theorization of romance directly challenged Andrew Lang's theory of romance as a mode rooted in biological evolution. Lang claimed that romance, as a form, appealed to instincts biologically inherited from primitive ancestors.[50] To connect romance to 'apes' was, for Corelli, to mock the higher purpose of the mode. Romance was not a biological inheritance, an atavistic 'savage' sensibility; rather, it was, in her words, 'an immortal sense of memory which is always striving to recall the beautiful things the Soul has lost' (Corelli, 'Vanishing Gift' 321).

Corellian romance epitomized, in the words of one of her readers, the purest spiritual impulse, 'the conception of lofty unseen things' while 'materialism leads us back to barbarism….'[51] For Corelli, this spiritual character made romance superior to many popular genres—sensation fiction, and those forms of Gothic and decadence that valued a sensual, materialist aesthetic and rejected spiritually prescriptive art. Yet, despite her aversion to these genres, her writing often closely replicates the aesthetic she detests. Jessica DeCoux reads *Wormwood* (1890), her most anti-decadent novel warning against the consumption of absinthe, as 'a full-fledged work of decadence in its own right' (90). How does one reconcile Corelli's severe critique of the decadent aesthetic with her incorporation of many of its generic features? In contrast to previous critics, I do not see her contradictory stance as indicating a hidden desire to participate in the decadent movement. While Corelli clearly felt excluded from the male-dominated club of decadent writers, she did not want to be seen as one of the decadents. Her handling of the romance mode counters the decadents by an

[50] 'The world is indebted to Mr. Andrew Lang', she writes in *Ardath*, 'for the newest "logical" explanation of the Religious Instinct in Man:—namely, that the very idea of God first arose from the terror and amazement of an ape at the sound of the thunder! So choice and soul-moving a definition of Deity needs no comment!' (vol. 3 220).

[51] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. 29 June, 1889. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332. Box 1, Folder 16.

unusual strategy: it both alludes to their symbolism and freely re-interprets it in keeping with her own beliefs.

Building on Jill Galvan's reading of Corelli's negotiation of aestheticism in *Sorrows of Satan*, I want to argue that Corelli incorporates decadent tropes in *Ziska* to spiritualize and redeem them ('Corelli's Caliban' 338).[52] Her re-gearing of decadence can indeed be understood as a kind of aesthetic 'reincarnation.' Across her works, she re-cycles, re-packages familiar decadent images and metaphors in didactic stories, giving them a new literary life. For instance, Gervase's painting clearly alludes to the portrait in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), yet unlike Wilde's novel, which never explicitly chastises Dorian's hedonism, the portrait in *Ziska* sets Gervase on the path of spiritual reformation.

For Corelli, material metaphors could be incorporated, even flaunted, as long as they carried a stamp of spirituality. In other words, an over-embellished portrayal of material reality was acceptable if it assisted in representing the spiritual 'Ideal'. In *Ziska*, the bright sheen of the jewels and treasures in the pyramids conveys the mystical aura of the place— 'the vast learning of Egypt, its sciences, discoveries and strange discoveries…' (Corelli, *Ziska* 271). Even when Gervase dies, which is a spiritually significant moment in the novel, Corelli turns our attention to the jewels surrounding him: 'the wavering ghostly light gave luminance…and showed where, fallen sideways among the golden treasures and mementoes of the past, lay the dead body…' (Corelli, *Ziska* 302). Here, the golden light from the jewels produces not a superficial gleam but a 'spectral radiance' marking the moment of Gervase's passing

[52] Galvan, however, reads Corelli's didactic framing of decadent tropes as mediated through her understanding of realism. That is, in Galvan's opinion, Corelli's aesthetic can be described as 'true, transcendental realism' that captures the details of material surfaces with the aim of drawing out their spiritual depths ('Corelli's Caliban' 346). Though Corelli qualifies her writing as reworking the 'real,' to label it as 'realistic' is to disregard her insistent claim that she was writing romance. Moreover, as I have shown, Corelli's writing does represent the material but in fuzzy, generalized terms.

into a spiritual state (Corelli, *Ziska* 303). However, it must be noted that though Corelli aimed to mobilize the material in service of the spiritual, the end result was not always perfect. Often, the opulent glamour of material signifiers overshadowed the spiritual message. Yet, as I show, the material surplus, the decadent brightness reveals an unexpected relationship between the spiritual and the material and the role of the body in it.

Tourism and Christian Cosmopolitanism in *Ziska*

Though Corelli uses the material to undergird the significance of the spiritual, materialism is consistently critiqued in many forms throughout the novel. One of the ways in which *Ziska* critiques the materialist condition of modern life is through a satire on the cosmopolitan tourist. When Gervase wonders where he has met Ziska, she responds: 'The world is so small that we must have crossed paths on the grand tour' (Corelli, *Ziska* 256). Ziska scoffs at people who embark on grand tours—journeys taken by the aristocratic classes to Europe 'for education, personal development, and culture' (Colletta 10). While grand tours were largely an eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century phenomenon, by the fin-de-siècle, Thomas Cook's Nile tours dominated the commercial tourism market. Initially, tours on the Nile were conducted on the traditional 'Dahabeah,' a large boat carrying passengers but later, they were replaced by commercial steam boats (Fritze 194). Cook's Nile tour packages opened up travel to Egypt to members of all classes. This democratization of travel met with a degree of backlash from the elites but Cook 'defended the capacity of his middle-class clients' to relish exotic spaces (Fletcher 142). His Nile itinerary was in fact so popular that, in F. Robert Hunter's opinion, 'there were two empires on the Nile—Britain's military occupation, and Cook's Egyptian travel' (44).

In *Ziska*, Corelli parodies the new cosmopolitan travellers who 'journey from hotel to hotel' in search of sensual pleasures such as 'good bedding and food' (Corelli, *Ziska* 19). The representative tourist's 'voracious appetite' for food metaphorically characterizes his tendency to compulsively, and mindlessly, consume other cultures (Corelli, *Ziska* 13). Taking a stroll through Al-Kahira in Cairo, he treats scenes of quotidian life as a spectacle, propped up for his entertainment. The tourist is blissfully unaware of his 'invader' status, often 'thrust[ing] his warm red face' at shopkeepers and walking around with a self-assured 'swagger' (Corelli, *Ziska* 17, 13). Though an outsider, he treats the native as 'a good servant' who is there to cater to his/her needs (Corelli, *Ziska* 23).

James Buzard has noted that late nineteenth-century novels often mockingly portrayed uncouth Western tourists who moved around in packs (2). The tourist, as Buzard argues, was the subject of elite classist anxieties about the lower-class 'mob' invading popular travel destinations (45). While Corelli's depiction of the boorish tourist is no exception to this trend, her critique is not solely directed at the uncultured, middle-class tourist. Corelli is equally harsh towards the wealthy elites who she finds wanting in spiritual knowledge. Unsparing to all, her critique of travellers is not aimed at their supposed absence of cultural knowledge but their lack of awareness of the spiritual history of the place. In *Ziska*, the British tourists only socialize with others of their kind and create an exclusionary 'London society,' wherever they go. This self-imposed insulation from native society reflects their lack of curiosity not only about Egypt's present condition but about its past. Treating Egypt as 'tableaux vivants' or a series of static images, the tourists are indifferent to the deeper nuances of the country's 'scenery and associations' (Corelli, *Ziska* 16, 19). Spending their time idling in the hotel, they refuse to venture out to the pyramids on

account of the harsh sun. The magazine tycoon Chetwynd Lyle and the insipid aristocrat Lord Fulkeward idly gossip about Ziska's marital status (Corelli, *Ziska* 29). The tourists continue to behave inappropriately at the ball with the elderly widower Lady Fulkeward acting like a 'hoyden of seventeen just let loose from school for the holidays' flirting with men like she was 'twenty at the age of sixty' (Corelli, *Ziska* 71, 81). Without checking their own behaviour, the tourists pass judgment on the natives' way of life: Ziska's traditional Egyptian dance performance is appreciated by all except the prudish British Lady Lyle who calls it 'improper' (Corelli, *Ziska* 237).

The trope of the misguided tourist in *Ziska* is not simply a predictable critical touch. It is central to the text's didactic purpose. Ancient historical sites, according to Corelli, offered convincing proof of the endurance of the soul. Representing the highest achievements of the human spirit, for Corelli, the 'temples of ancient Egypt—and that marvellous imaginative creation, the Sphinx…are all visible evidences of spiritual aspiration and endeavour' ('Vanishing Gift' 308). The purpose of travel, for Corelli, was to imaginatively engage with these architectural wonders and spiritually educate oneself. All the tourists in the novel, except Dr Dean, ignore the spiritual lessons embedded in ancient historical sites. The stereotypical tourist, in Dr Dean's words, is spiritually regressed—a 'mere protoplasm,' he is the basic unit of material life, lacking a complex 'individual consciousness' (Corelli, *Ziska* 280). Gervase is one such soul who, though initially resistant, gradually opens up to spiritual experience. The pyramids play a crucial role in his awakening for it is only after learning their history that he comprehends the truth.

In addition to the tourist, Corelli satirizes the ailing Westerners who treat Egypt as a short-term retreat always available for recuperation:

> [T]hey hastily depart to the Land of the Sun, carrying with them their nameless languors, discontents and incurable illnesses, for which Heaven

> itself, much less Egypt, could provide no remedy. It is not at all to be wondered at that these physically and morally sick tribes of human kind have ceased to give any serious attention as *to what may possibly become of them after death, or whether there is any 'after,'* for they are in the mentally comatose condition which precedes wreckage of brain-force; existence itself has become a 'bore;' one place is like another, and they repeat the same monotonous round of living in every spot where they congregate, whether it be east, west, north, or south. (emphasis added; *Ziska* 15-16)

In a later novel *The Life Everlasting* (1911), Corelli regards Catherine, the traveling hypochondriac 'so accustomed to have every little ailment exaggerated' as suffering from mental degeneration (57). Neurotically obsessed with health issues, the tourist cannot see beyond his/her bodily concerns. His/her physical sickness symptomizes a 'mentally-comatose' state of perpetual boredom (Corelli, *Ziska* 15). Each time s/he moves to an exotic locale, the stimulus of the new quickly gives way to ennui. Corelli suggests that the malaise has spread so far and wide that the tourist 'tribe' sticks together and distractedly moves between places. In so doing, the tourist chooses denial over self-awareness, sensual gratification over spiritual open-mindedness.

At the heart of the tourist's existential crisis is a lack of spiritual direction, expressed in this geographic floundering. But more than the directionless wandering, Corelli is troubled by the frenzied pace of the movement (*Ziska* 16). For Corelli, this feverish pace of modern life, which she elsewhere describes as a 'chronic state of hurry,' leaves no room to pause and contemplate the meaning of life ('Vanishing Gift' 304). She describes the whirlpool of modern life in similar terms: 'We are always going *to and fro* in these days. We are forever wandering up and down…' (emphasis added; 'Vanishing Gift' 274). Like the tourist wandering hither and thither, Gervase shows signs of spiritual rootlessness. Though the reader is not given insight into the entire span of his multiple lives, it is evident (from the two lives we glimpse) that his identity has radically altered over time—from that of an Egyptian warrior to a French painter. Gervase's radically different embodiments indicate the moral instability of his

soul; his inability to stay committed in romance, spirituality and life. The soul that moves haphazardly in physical life is doomed to be lost in his/her afterlife, unless he chooses to follow Christ.

In Corelli's works, France was a nation in peril, doomed to being spiritually lost, because of its excessive attachment to materialism. It is, then, no coincidence, that in *Ziska*, Gervase's soul is 'tossed around' till he is re-born as a French citizen (Corelli, *Ziska* 156). This Gallic embodiment does not signify progress. In *The Master Christian* (1900), Corelli describes the downward turn Paris has taken: 'Her men are dissolute, her women shameless—her youth of both sexes depraved,—her laws are corrupt—her arts decadent—her religion dead. What next can be expected of her?' (90). Gervase embodies all these immoral tendencies, plus an unapologetic misogynistic streak: 'I am a pure savage; I consider the love of woman as my right' (Corelli, *Ziska* 101). His egregious flaw is that he is an atheist possessing 'neither religion nor morality' (Corelli, *Ziska* 312). An arrogant humanist, Gervase declares that France is at the 'triumphal apex' of civilization where 'man now knows himself to be the only God' (Corelli, *Ziska* 154).

Gervase's spiritual degeneracy influences other aspects of his persona, especially his artistic philosophy. Elsewhere, in *Wormwood* (1890), Corelli sees French fiction as an extension of the '"absinthe-trail" that makes French art "obscene" and "repulsive"' (MacLeod, 'Marie Corelli and fin-de-siecle Francophobia' 74). In *Ziska*, in place of God, Gervase audaciously declares that he worships the naturalist philosopher, Emile Zola (Corelli, *Ziska* 47). A perverted amalgamation of Zola's naturalism with decadent materialism, Gervase's philosophy of art asserts that art ought to be devoted to 'the idealization and transfiguration of Nature' (Corelli, *Ziska* 51). Art, for him, does not merely represent the external reality; it was the very

essence of the real. Echoing the decadents, Gervase claims that art need not fulfil a larger moral purpose; rather, it can purely exist for aesthetic pleasure. Corelli's satirical commentary on Gervase foreshadows her later attack on Oscar Wilde (notwithstanding his early support for her) in the collection of essays *The Silver Domino* (1892): 'He considers Nature *au naturel* a mistake. Nature must be refined by Art. Ergo, a grand waterfall would not appeal to him, unless properly illumined by electricity…' ('Of the Social Elephant' 171). Considering how Corelli freely altered reality in her works, her objection to Wilde's modification of nature seems out of place. The difference is that, for Corelli, her idealization of nature was motivated by a higher moral purpose. Through her idealized art, she claimed to extract the spiritual lessons embedded within nature. In conveying the spiritual truth of nature, art, in her eyes, acted as the mere medium that, in no way, substituted the divinity of God's natural creation. The decadents, on the other hand, were so focused on form and beautiful 'effects' that, in her way of thinking, they neglected the spiritual essence of the object they intended to represent.

As the country where aestheticism and decadence flourished, France was a hub of literary cosmopolitanism. Matthew Potolsky is one of many critics to have observed that the decadent movement attracted a diverse mix of artists and cultural sensibilities from across the world (2). This fertile cosmopolitan climate paved the way for a 'literary and artistic border crossing' that shaped the generically 'syncretic' character of decadent writing (Potolsky 2). Michèle Mendelssohn too argues that the decadents' commitment to aestheticism made for an inclusive atmosphere: 'Rooted in art rather than in the nation,' these artists were committed to transcending cultural affiliations to experience the world in its sensual richness (491). Corelli regarded the free-floating geographical movement of the decadents, their claim that art recognizes

no barriers in cultural difference, as a sign of artistic and moral inconsistency. It is not that she wanted art to be geographically rooted; rather, she opposed the decadents' treatment of art as an end in itself. The creation of art for the sake of art could not be the driving spirit of imagination; rather, the end point had to be Christian faith.

Corelli's aversion to cosmopolitan materialism does not imply that she was opposed to travel *per se*. Instead, she endorsed a spiritually 'rooted' form of cosmopolitanism (to invoke Anthony Appiah with a difference) that would foster an openness towards other cultures/races (*Ethics of Identity* 214). Corelli's version of cosmopolitanism proposes a unique mode of engaging with cultures: to 'spiritually' imagine oneself as belonging to another space. When visiting a foreign place, the tourist might end up discovering that, in another life, he was a native of that place. When Ziska and Gervase meet, Ziska hints that they have crossed paths before, in a previous life: 'At last we meet, Monsieur Armand Gervase…I cannot look upon you as a stranger, for I have known you so long—in spirit!' (Corelli, *Ziska* 61). To remain spiritually rooted while travelling is to stay open to the possibility of inhabiting a racially and culturally different identity in one's past life. It involves accepting that a single unitary soul can encompass a wide range of racially diverse histories. Though Gervase is French in his present life, his spirit possesses latent memories from an Egyptian past. The flexibility of Corelli's way of thinking is not without appeal: if the same individual could be both Egyptian and French at different points in his spiritual growth, then racial difference was not as rigid as commonly considered.

But, as ever, Corelli's Christian didacticism makes conservatism the dominant note. Focusing on the Christian end of salvation enables the tourist to keep his eye on the larger purpose of his spiritual trajectory. The enlightened tourist ought to treat his touristic journey on earth as an analogy for the larger voyage of the soul. Like the

tourist who hops between multiple stop-overs, the spiritually reincarnated individual moves through different physical locations on his spiritual trajectory. A holistic bird's-eye view of his existence can help the tourist detach from the superficial, sensual pleasures a place has to offer. Rising above the materialist trappings of any one place, the tourist can begin to engage with the world in a deeper, spiritually absorbed manner. A Christian outlook on the spiritual significance of journeys, a cultivation of a spiritual rather than a sensual attachment, can thus shape a deeper spiritually cosmopolitan sensibility.

If being a Christian ideally makes one more culturally open, then, it is hardly surprising that the most cosmopolitan figure is the strident Christian proselytiser, Ziska. Adopting different identities with ease, Ziska shows off her multilingual skills switching between French and English. Her movement across identities in the novel is acceptable precisely because she believes in the supremacy of Christ. Characters wonder whether she is Russian or Egyptian eventually failing to reach a consensus about her nationality. When Dr Dean ascribes an Egyptian identity to Ziska, she assertively clarifies that she is 'originally' from Egypt (Corelli, *Ziska* 76). Ziska's need to correct Dr Dean's presupposition reveals that she no longer identifies with Ziska-Charmazel who was her previous, perhaps first, material incarnation. In this moment, Ziska identifies as a Christian spirit with Ziska-Charmazel being a mere costume she re-inhabits to seek revenge.

Corelli's attempt to make Christianity the basis of her cosmopolitan ideal may well seem counter-intuitive. As Maria Rovisco and Sebastian Kim contend, combining religion and cosmopolitanism disturbs a conventional secular conception of cosmopolitanism: '[P]articularistic attachments to a community of faith sit uneasily with the ethical universalism and secular ideals of justice and equality that underpin

some cosmopolitan discourses and perspectives' (*Cosmopolitanism* 2). However, the ethical vocabularies of Christianity and cosmopolitanism are not only compatible but strikingly similar: both emphasise values of empathy, peace and harmony (Kollontai 50). Scott Appleby writes that religion has often been associated with irrational 'intolerance, human rights violations and extremist violence' when it is also a prompt to 'non-violent conflict transformation, the defence of human rights…' (qtd in Kollontai 50). Cosmopolitanism and most religious doctrines, at least in abstract terms, endorse cultural tolerance as a virtue. Corelli too draws on a distinctly Christian ethical vocabulary to critique the British tourists' moral failure to treat the Egyptian 'desert born' as 'a man and a brother' (*Ziska* 23). As I will show, Corelli imagines a world where shared worship of Christ would enable sublimation of cultural and racial differences thus bringing people together. Her religious cosmopolitanism however is so focused on Christ that its potentially radical stance on race tips over into a peculiar blindness to race, entirely devaluing it as a relevant signifier of identity. In the next section, I examine how race and the body are devalued in *Ziska* and what that omission reveals about her Christian vision.

Race, Unconscious memory and the Costume

In this section, I trace the role of the body in Corelli's model of spiritually inherited memory to draw out the larger significance of race in her Christian worldview. Corelli, in *Ziska*, imagines a unique mode through which unconscious memory sustains and reproduces itself across time. In effect, her spiritual model destabilizes the notion dominant within evolutionary anthropology and biology that unconscious memory is biologically inherited. While the leading evolutionary theorists of unconscious memory (Edward von Hartmann, Ewald Hering on the Continent and Samuel Butler in Britain) proposed that the body could act as a conduit for an organic

form of memory, Corelli makes latent memories attributes of the soul.[53] Tied to the soul, spiritual memory is not determined by biological lineage but reincarnates across space, time and even race. The Egyptian Araxes reincarnates as the French Gervase a thousand years later, inheriting the same soul but sporting an entirely different racial and cultural makeup.

As a result, in *Ziska*, race does not get flagged in the conventional biological sense, as commonly found in the popular fiction of this period. There is little attention to physical appearance; no references to skin tone, hair colour, cast of eyes, or other conventional markers of racial types—and what we do get is predominantly (if not entirely) resistant to assumptions of the higher racial status of white Westerners. The British tourist's sense of evolutionary superiority is undercut as Corelli compares his demeanour to a monkey—the 'simian ancestor' of humans (*Ziska* 14). Here, Corelli not only rejects the conventional association between native bodies and apes but in effect shuns evolutionary notions of race. Indeed, from the beginning, Corelli severs the connection between race and biology by signposting racial identity in non-biological terms. Her rejection of the body as a racial signifier comes through most strongly in her parody of smug British tourists:

> We are glad we are not as the Arab, as the African, as the Hindoo; we are proud of our elephant-legs and our dividing coat-line; these things show we are civilized, and that God approves of us more than any other type of creature ever created. (Corelli, *Ziska* 21-22)

Though she discredits the tourist's conceit by mocking his appearance, she does not once mention his racial/bodily traits. Instead, she focuses on his costume—his 'dividing coat line' and his 'elephant legs' (referring to his inflated trousers)—that strike a comic contrast to the dignified Egyptian (Corelli, *Ziska* 21-22). A typical

[53] Countering an evolutionary notion of race that viewed humans as descendants of apes, Corelli legitimized imagining a romantic history of one's past: 'In the days of classic Greece and Rome, men and women 'imagined' themselves to be descended from the gods…' ('Vanishing Gift' 288).

Western costume, normally seen as a marker of civilization, is presented as a ludicrous adornment of an animal and graceless (elephantine) body. Here, Corelli shifts the register of understanding race by displacing it onto the tourist's clothes. At another point, she re-directs our attention towards the tourist's clothes when, lounging in the hotel's gallery, Sir Chetwynd Lyle, passes a discriminatory comment on the Egyptians' lack of an 'intelligent expression' (Corelli, *Ziska* 26). Lampooning Lyle for his racist comments, Corelli describes him as a 'waistcoated airballoon,' oblivious to his own wind-baggery (*Ziska* 26).

Bodies, in *Ziska*, often emerge as oddly irrelevant or unrevealing signifiers. The narrative portrays Dr Dean's knowledge of 'the differing shade of colour' in the natives' 'skins' as an interest in 'surface things' that are less important than the deep spiritual questions (Corelli, *Ziska* 35). Skin is presented as an elusive and malleable surface that resists neat racial classifications. While painting Ziska's portrait, Gervase struggles to pin down the colour of Ziska's skin, claiming: 'I shall have to mix strange tints in your portrait… [i]t is difficult to find the exact hue of your skin…' (Corelli, *Ziska* 151). Such a sense of the elusiveness of physical selfhood emerges strongly in the narrative. Even Ziska's Nubian servant, the most racially clichéd figure in the book, possesses a physically malleable appearance. The Nubian's complexion is described as 'parchment-like,' marking not only its sallow quality but also its capacity to take on whatever significations are imposed on it (Corelli, *Ziska* 139). Skin in *Ziska* then is not an unvarying exterior of the body but an adaptable surface, a veneer.

Or, to draw on one of Corelli's signature preoccupations, *Ziska* treats the body, for all intents and purposes, as a costume. This view of the body is at the heart of an idealism that clearly draws on Thomas Carlyle's Teufelsdröckhian philosophy. In a letter to Bentley, Corelli acknowledged the influence of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*

(1836)—an influence captured in these lines from *Ardath*: 'We sit as in a boundless Phantasmagoria and Dream-grotto…[I]n that strange dream, how we clutch at shadows as if they were substances…'[54] Here, as for Carlyle (also working in a long biblical tradition), all our earthly experiences and appearances are but 'shadows'—most of them misleading shadows—of a higher reality. In *Ziska*, Corelli applies Carlyle's metaphor of clothes to explain the workings of the physical world. The significant scene of the costume ball is prefaced by a quotation from Carlyle: 'Society is founded upon Cloth'—i.e. that man does adapt his manners very much to suit his clothes…' (Corelli, *Ziska* 70). For Carlyle, clothing represents the worldly identity of an individual, the historically specific exterior that temporarily conceals the soul. In his broader view of history, 'the solid seeming world' is 'all hooked and buttoned together, and held up, by clothes' and with each new era, the physical world adopts a new set of clothes (Carlyle 41, 44). Corelli's understanding of the movement of history is similar but invested in the idea of individual physical reincarnation that Carlyle would presumably have found heretical ('rebirth' is a strictly spiritual concept in his writing). For Corelli, with each new epoch, the human soul gives way to a different material incarnation, a new set of clothes, in the next life. At the end of the trajectory, the soul sheds its bodily baggage to emerge as pure spirit. The spiritually enlightened character Santoris in *A Life Everlasting* gives this way of thinking its most explicit articulation, as summarized by Harland: '[E]ach individual's life is a perpetual succession of progressive changes… till the person concerned has prepared the next 'costume' or mortal presentment of immortal being…' (138).

It is a philosophy, to a degree, traceable in Corelli's own self-fashioning. Annette Federico, Corelli's biographer, notes that Corelli and her life-long companion

[54] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. 2 Jan, 1889. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332. Box 1, Folder 11.

Bertha Vyer would often try on fancy dresses in their Stratford home (45). In photographs of these costume trials, Corelli stylishly poses in a pastoral gown holding a basket of flowers possibly aiming for a pastoral belle look (Federico 45). The surplus of floral accessories in the photograph implies a love of theatrical excess but this was not all. Federico mentions that Corelli had the photography 'retouched' to present a more youthful and angelic version of her face (45). Corelli's efforts to modify her skin in photographs reveal that, for her, there was no merit to portraying the body in its natural state. As per her philosophy of romance, editing reality was legitimate as long as it presented a more improved, ideal image.

While the photographs reveal Corelli's whimsical interest in performing imaginary identities for her own amusement, she also undertook a more serious identity alteration in her life. Biographical records show that, despite her Scottish origins, Corelli claimed that she was of Italian descent (Federico 6). Corelli was so committed to playing this part that she rode a 'venetian gondola with all the trimmings' on the river Avon in Stratford (Ransom 145). In her letters to Bentley, Corelli often referred to Italy as her homeland and the gondola was the finishing touch on her claim of being Italian.[55] For Corelli, identity was circumstantial: to mould it into new forms was not in any serious moral sense to be untruthful. At the heart of her self-fashioning, in life as in her fiction, was a view of the body, and the material circumstances of the individual's life, as little more than a robe.

As evident from her life, Corelli believed that there was scope for an individual to agentially alter his/her identity. In *Ziska* as well, a change is costume is all it takes for characters to switch selves. Standing for different incarnations,

[55] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. November, 1885. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332 Box 1, folder 1.

costumes become the gateways to selves of the past. Indeed, wearing a costume in the novel radically changes one's appearance including altering skin colour. Prior to the pivotal fancy dress scene, Corelli defends the costume's potential to draw out a radically new self in individuals:

> It may be a very trivial matter, yet it is certain that fancy dress gives a peculiar charm, freedom, and brightness to festivities of the kind; and men…when they find themselves in the brilliant and becoming attire of some picturesque period when dress was an art as well as a fashion; and not only do they look their best, but they somehow manage to put on 'manner' with costume and become courteous, witty, and graceful… (*Ziska* 69)

Corelli starts off by lightly praising the glamour fancy dress brings to parties. Far more important for her, though, is the 'freedom' costume lends to individuals to act out a different self. Corelli's assertion is that, in taking on a period costume, you do not just don an accessory, you internalize the spirit or the 'manner' of another era (Corelli, *Ziska* 69). Dr Dean is fully aware of the transformative potential of costumes: without the historically precise accessories being in place, he refuses to dress as an Egyptian priest (Corelli, *Ziska* 36). This is not just a passion for historical accuracy: the 'ancient designs', he explains, were 'symbolic', charged with 'very curious meanings' (Corelli, *Ziska* 36). Here, 'curious' connotes both a sense of fascination and its old etymological meaning of meticulous care.

Trivially, costumes can free an individual from the monotony of living under one identity, allowing him/ her to 'imagine' another self. But the performance can also take on a note of reality and reveal a substantive truth about a person's spiritual condition. Indeed, costumes repeatedly assist a slippage in *Ziska*, whereby an individual's soul reverts to a previous material incarnation in which s/he committed 'good' or 'wicked' actions. This complicates the notion of agency available in the novel conditionally geared as it is towards a final spiritual judgement. In the

masquerade, dressed as ancient Egyptians, Ziska and Gervase do not merely mimic characters from the past, they *become* their past selves. The masquerade thus represents a double-bind in the novel—it is both an assertion of individual agency and a revelation of spiritual determinism at work.

In *Ziska*, accessories facilitate this return to the past self. Dressed as a 'Bedouin chief,' with a turban on his head and a dagger tucked in his waist, Gervase enters the costume ball (Corelli, *Ziska* 45). Despite his French identity, Gervase inhabits his Egyptian costume with ease and so convincingly looks the part of Araxes that the onlookers are intrigued by his 'half savage type of beauty' (Corelli, *Ziska* 45). However, even as Gervase's Egyptian look is felt to be eerily authentic, the novel does not mask the fact that he has procured his 'charming articles' from, as he puts it, 'a dirty bazaar' (Corelli, *Ziska* 47). Cheap, commodified facsimiles of ancient Egyptian accessories are treated as having the power to restore Gervase's Egyptian identity. It is, as if, they were genuine relics surviving from ancient Egypt.

In the end, it is a costume that reawakens Gervase's spiritual memory forcing him to confront his past (Corelli, *Ziska* 47). However, more than his change in dress, it is Ziska's costume that kindles his repressed unconscious memory. After his dramatic entry as the Arab chief, Ziska enters dressed in full oriental splendour:

> [A] group of people in fancy dress…were all eagerly pressing round one central figure—the figure of a woman clad in gleaming golden tissues and veiled in the old Egyptian fashion up to the eyes, with jewels flashing about her waist, bosom and hair,—a woman who moved glidingly as if she floated rather than walked and whose beauty, half hidden as it was by the exigencies of the costume she had chosen, was so unusual and brilliant that it seemed to create an atmosphere of bewilderment and rapture around her as she came. She was preceded by a small Nubian boy in a costume of vivid scarlet, who, walking backwards humbly, fanned her slowly with a tall fan of peacock's plumes made after the quaint designs of ancient Egypt. The lustre radiating from the peacock's feather, the light of her golden garments, her jewels and the marvellous black splendour of her eyes, all flashed for a moment like

> sudden lightning on Gervase; something—he knew not what—turned him giddy and blind… (Corelli, *Ziska* 55-56)

At the very outset of this passage, Corelli labels Ziska's procession a 'fancy dress' underscoring the artificial, exhibitionistic format of the pageant (Corelli, *Ziska* 55). The description of Ziska's entrance plays around with contrasts: her insubstantial (spiritual) form seems to float while her oriental finery gives her elusive beauty material substance. While the veil covers Ziska's face and hides it from the onlookers, the rest of her body is cloaked with jewellery. A recurrent trope of the princess's physical depiction, even her laughter has a 'silvery' note (Corelli, *Ziska* 54). Here, Ziska's body is entirely sheathed by the garments, veil and jewels; only her eyes are briefly glimpsed. In this moment, Ziska's identity is not to be found in her body or her face, only in the power of her costume that 'create[s] an atmosphere of bewilderment and rapture' (Corelli, *Ziska* 55).

The description is punctuated with metaphors of light, with the word 'flashing' repeated several times. It is curious that, in this passage, 'light,' 'lustre,' 'flash,' and 'vivid[ness]' do not refer to natural light but to artificially reflected light from jewels (Corelli, *Ziska* 55). The artificiality of this light along with the 'faint odours' that emanate from her clothes suggest a mummy emanating from a musty dark pyramid (Corelli, *Ziska* 60). In the interplay between her veil and the jewels—between shadow and light, concealment and display, the onlookers are enthralled by Ziska's mysterious aura. Her entrance has the makings of a voyeuristic scene —a returning mummy, suspense-inducing lighting, and the lure of jewels — except that her body is absent. If Gervase and the reader are titillated, it is not by hints of her hidden body, but by a potent pageantry of costume and jewels.

The more intensely the 'light' reflects off Ziska's accessories, the more familiar Ziska seems to Gervase. The 'flash' of the gold and the jewels, which would

otherwise be ostentatious, becomes a meaningful, spiritual spark that 'enlightens' Gervase about his past (Corelli, *Ziska* 55). In this moment, the force of the guilt that comes with memory is so overwhelming that Gervase is blinded. He staggers and struggles to find his bearings, unable to make sense of the déjà vu. Later, this artificial light will return to haunt Gervase and he will wonder why 'every circlet of gold…on her [Ziska's] fair body pushes him to think harder about his past (Corelli, *Ziska* 251).

Seeing gaudy, flashy accessories on a soulmate prompts an intense spiritual exercise for Gervase. He is hypnotically dazzled by the brilliant 'golden' shade of Ziska's sandals; later, 'the gleam of the jewel-winged scarabei' similarly prods his memory (Corelli, *Ziska* 104, 133). Dr Dean describes the scarabei: 'it's blue—very blue—almost like a rare turquoise, and it appears it is the sign-manual of the warrior Araxes…' (Corelli, *Ziska* 133). Material objects and their sensory effect—in this case, the intense blue-ness of the brooch—act as spiritual catalysts in the novel. The status of the material object in this scenario corresponds with the place of the body in the larger spiritual trajectory. Moving across lives, the soul depends on the body as a medium to be carried forward. The body's use as a carrier however does not redeem it; Corelli still suspiciously regards it as the earthly form that ought to be shunned. If anything, material objects are more highly valued in that, unlike the body, they can serve as relics—repositories of memory and thus of spiritual value even as they do not possess any value in their own right.

In this journey of the soul across epochs, race and nationality constitute an important part of the baggage attached to the body—as fickle and almost as transitory as the body itself, in Corelli's way of thinking. Ziska's dress and accessories underscore the superficial and tenuous nature of the body. Later in the novel, when

the ball is in full swing, she starts dancing with Gervase. In motion, she becomes the very incarnation of an Egyptian:

> [S]he had kept to the details of ancient Egyptian costume so exactly that she even wore sandals, and that her feet, perfectly shaped and lovely as perfectly shaped and lovely hands, were bare save for the sandal ribbons which crossed them, and which were fastened with jewels…' (Corelli, *Ziska* 104)

As the 'golden bells' of her sandals flash and jingle, Ziska's mutation into Ziska-Charmazel is completed (Corelli, *Ziska* 104). Even now, Corelli resists describing Ziska's body—her feet and hands are said to be 'perfectly shaped and lovely' and nothing more (*Ziska* 104). Her costume is sparingly accounted for: we are told that it 'exactly' mimics the fashion of ancient Egypt, but only the jewelled sandals and a veil are specified (Corelli, *Ziska* 104). Corelli clearly wants the reader's response to mirror the collective gasp of admiration from the masquerade audience and to accept the performance as a reincarnation of the spirit. That said, the confirmation of Ziska-Charmazel's identity is precariously predicated on the illusion created by her accessories. It hinges on a costume that, though spectacular, is superficial and can be discarded at will. The costume thus both firmly establishes her Egyptian-ness while simultaneously signifying the flimsiness of this material covering—underneath this lurks her spirit. Giving up one's body is, accordingly, metaphorically akin to discarding a costume for which one no longer has any use. In his moment of death, Gervase's physical form is likened to 'a disguising cloak [that] may fall from the figure of a friend in a masquerade, so his present-seeming personality dropped from him and no longer had any substance' (Corelli, *Ziska* 345).

Historicist readings of this novel that see Ziska as representative of Egyptian history typically fail to do justice to the extent of Corelli's anti-materialism. Sharla Hutchison argues that *Ziska* deviates from other mummy narratives in its depiction of

an agential Egyptian Cleopatra-esque woman who, in donning accessories from ancient Egypt, flaunts her sexual desire, confidently owning her identity (36). For Hutchison, *Ziska* offers a unique voyeuristic experience because, for a change, the mummy is in control of her 'striptease': where, conventionally, in Rider Haggard, Conan Doyle and Guy Boothby's mummy romances, a male explorer unwraps the mummy; here, Ziska unwraps herself (36). By contrast, I argue that Ziska's body is almost entirely absent. Indeed, the erotic charge of the scene is heightened precisely because her body is hidden. Hutchison correctly notes that Corelli draws on the fin-de-siècle fascination with all things Egyptian, but, as I show, she directs it towards a different purpose: Ziska is not representative of Egypt. While Corelli grants her feminist agency to take revenge on Gervase, there are limits to the subversive potential of this agency. The agency that matters to Corelli is, once all the parading of costumes is done with, spiritual in nature—and it is disputable, given the extent of commitment to final judgement here, how far this even qualifies as 'agency.'

This odd combination of radicalism and conservatism is equally evident in *Ziska's* handling of race. In the increasingly positivist climate of post-Darwinian evolutionary thinking about race, Corelli did not contest or even complicate evolutionary views of race; rather, she denied that race was a significant feature of human existence altogether. Grouping all historical and cultural data as transient, immaterial, and morally imperfect factors in our earthly existence, she saw the spiritual trajectory of humankind as transcending them all.

To claim that this emphasis on idealism made Corelli positively colour-blind—an early exponent of trans-racial humanist thinking—would be unduly politically generous. As Alana Lentin writes, claims of rejecting race under the garb of post-racialism, in contemporary times, constitute 'racism under another disguise'

(1404). This holds true for Corelli to a degree. Devaluing race might seem a potentially progressive move on her part but the context within which that devaluation occurs negates any positive radicalism. Corelli is not arguing that race is a social construct. For her, race is not a fiction imposed on the body; instead, the body itself is a fiction. Invalidating all experience of physical life, Corelli, in effect, tells us that the embodied experience of race has no importance, and while she is capable of pungent satire on Western assumptions of superiority, she is not concerned with redressing the injustices attached to race. The ease with which characters wear costumes and adopt a different identity proves that, for Corelli, race is too provisional an identity to be taken seriously. As a consequence of her denial of race as a fact of lived reality, the novel shows no commitment to portraying identity in complex terms. This explains why though Corelli, in *Ziska*, rejects the existence of race in Darwinist bodily terms, it still reads like a deeply orientalist text.

Given everything that has been said thus far about Corelli's commitment to an idealism that threatens to treat all historical, social and biological experience as mere worldly superficialities, to what extent does it remain possible to read this novel as an imperial allegory? Bradley Deane argues that the relationship between Ziska and Gervase allegorizes the particular nature of imperial relations between Egypt and Britain in the late nineteenth century (392). Adding to that argument, Catherine Delyfer claims that the vengeful Ziska not only represents the anger of the 'new woman' in Britain but also the resistance of the colonized native (150). Both these readings presume that racial identity is a significant category in the novel and that Corelli intended Ziska to be a description of a native Egyptian woman. Reading it in these terms requires turning a blind eye to its main structuring topos—reincarnation of the soul across different centuries and cultures. Taken seriously, reincarnation

makes it impossible to invest in the idea of racial identity—in the absence of which Delyfer's and Deane's reading, to an extent, does not seem tenable.

Rather than allegorizing topical imperial relations, Corelli's aim with *Ziska* is to make *all* individuals shed their material forms (such as race and nationality) and ascend to the spiritual, Christian Ideal (66).[56] In lieu of endorsing the British Empire, Corelli, as Neil Hultgren notes, imagines a 'heavenly empire,' an alternative global community of Christians (66). As I explore in the next section, this aspiration takes the shape of a desire to convert the world to Christianity. At the heart of the novel is a mission to colonize the minds of readers with the message of Christ.

A Christianized Cosmopolitan Empire in the Colonies

This section examines how Corelli's unusual understanding of race contributed to her popularity in the colonies. I argue that it was precisely Corelli's flattening of race that surprisingly gained her followers in India, Ghana and Australia. The question of race cannot be disconnected from the unorthodox vision of Christianity in Corelli's oeuvre. In her writings, she transposes the racial dichotomy of 'civilized' versus 'savage' commonly found in fiction from the period onto a different but equally problematic and divisive binary: Christian vs. non-Christian. There is plenty of standard and uncomfortable racism in Corelli's writing. As Simon Goldhill has noted, she made the corruption of the Jewish priest Caiephas in *Barabbas* (1893) 'paradigmatic of the Jewish people' (535). But even her problematic racism follows a religious logic in identifying the 'other.' In general, as Jill Galvan notes, she ascribes 'superior' racial features to Christian characters while non-Christians are portrayed as racially inferior ('Christians, Infidels' 88). In both *A Romance of Two Worlds* and

[56] 'I don't think politics affect literature very much,' Corelli wrote to Bentley in a letter dated July 13, 1892. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332. Box 2, Folder 30.

Soul of Lilith (1892), the more religious a character, the more white they seem (Galvan, 'Christians, infidels' 88).

Yet, this raises a surprisingly difficult question: who qualifies as Christian in Corelli's fiction? Corelli's definition of Christian is remarkably inclusive of all those who perform 'good' deeds, even if they do not identify as Christian. In *Ziska*, the white British and French characters are Christian only in name for, as Corelli insists, their depraved actions prove otherwise. Often, in her non-fiction, she berates the ways of the degenerate West by comparing it with morally superior 'pagans':

> [T]hank God, there exist thousands of very real 'Christians'—('by their fruits ye shall know them'), doing unostentatious good everywhere, rescuing the lost, aiding the poor, comforting the sick, and helping the world to grow happier and better. They may be called Jews, or Baptists, Papists, or Buddhists,—but I hold them all as 'Christians' if they perform those good deeds and live those good lives which are acceptable to Christ,—while many church-going hypocrites called 'Christians' whose social existence is a scandal, whose dissipations, gross immoralities and pernicious example of living are open dangers to the whole community, do not deserve even such a complimentary term as 'pagan' applied to them. For the pagans—aye, the earliest savages, believed in Something higher than themselves,—but these sort of people believe in nothing but the necessity of getting what they want at all costs, and are mere human cancers of evil, breeding infection and pestilence. (Corelli, 'Question of Faith' 66)

The above passage gives insight into Corelli's complex views on race and Christianity. To begin with, she criticizes the hypocritical Christian who limits his religious duties to a visit to church. Most striking is Corelli's refusal to racially typify the figure of a good Christian. In her eyes, 'Jews…Papists or Buddhists,' irrespective of their diverse ethnicities, possess the virtues that define the true Christian (Corelli, 'Question of Faith' 66). Their actions make them more worthy of the label than the so-called Christians in the West. Criticizing falling Western moral standards, Corelli further alleges that the term 'pagan' is too good an insult for the insincere Western Christian ('Question of Faith' 66). Elsewhere, she compares the moral corruption of

the Roman Catholic Church clergy to the pagan priests who mislead their people into believing falsities. For Corelli, the pagans were not at fault for (in the Papal system's critic, Aubrey's words in *The Master Christian*), at least, 'THEY had an ideal…;' all they needed was the guiding light of Christianity (314).

Corelli's Christian vision thus carries a seemingly inclusive cosmopolitan impulse that sees all individuals as equal under the eye of God. All individuals, irrespective of their ethnicities, can be part of her Christian fold. The progressive inclusive implications of her pluralistic Christian vision however are not played out in her narratives. While she de-emphasizes race, her insistence on categorizing everyone as potential Christians reads oddly. In emphasizing religion, Corelli does not conceptualize an 'actually existing cosmopolitanism' that is sensitive to the situated-ness of diverse religious experiences (Robbins 1). Rather she sees all individuals, regardless of their religious backgrounds, as possible members of her own Christian faith. In her schema, the Christian identity is not one amongst many; it is the singular correct identity that everyone should aspire to around the globe. She thus imagines a world where 'all creeds [are] amalgamated into one great loving family under the name of Christ' (Corelli, 'Question of Faith' 65). Here, a tyrannical fantasy of homogenization, of converting everyone into Christians, is offered as a vision of an inclusive 'great loving family' (Corelli, 'Question of Faith' 65). There is thus an unresolved tension in her Christian worldview—while her religion leads her to claim that all individuals are equal, the equality she promises denies the reality and validity of cultural/historical differences in faiths and creeds.

Hegemonic though her Christian outlook was, it proved immensely popular in the colonies. Why did her didactic writing appeal so broadly? One reason may be that the sheer zeal with which she pursued her ideas attracted readers who extracted the

idealism and, perhaps, overlooked the doctrinal narrowness. Adopting a sermonizing tone in her fiction, Corelli invested in a textual fantasy of producing a Christianised reader. Commenting on the evangelistic tone of her writings, Bertha Vyer claimed that Corelli 'wrote with fervour, even with fury; she became declamatory even to vehemence; she had the zeal of a missionary, the enthusiasm of the crusader' (266). Corelli distanced her writing from institutionalized religion and promised the reader a personalized connection with Christ—a one-on-one relation that she mediated through her writing. In a letter to Rev Arbuthnot, she clarified the principles behind her unorthodox Christian vision: 'We simply, as far as it is humanly possible to do, obey the *words of Christ* as spoken by himself—even at all risk of inconvenience to ourselves and misjudgement by our friends' (qtd in Ransom 102). Corelli explicitly states that her faith allows individuals to freely and directly interpret Christ's words (though ironically she found her own interpretations to be the most accurate). The collective 'we' in the letter implies that she was heading a real cult, a Christian order. In reality, as Martin Hipsky notes, this was an 'imaginary' community, invented to give weight to her claims (*Modernism* 74).

Predictably, the established church was not pleased with her customized unorthodox readings of biblical history, nor with her global and mass popularity. Authorities, especially missionaries and 'educationists,' both in India and Ghana, regarded her work as licentious and unsuited for moral reading (Newell 104). Corelli used such criticisms to her advantage. To her readers, she painted herself as a misunderstood, yet genuine, thinker, forced to contain her 'desire to make disciplines, converts or confidants' (*Life Everlasting* 37). 'The Symbolism of the Christian Faith has been…lost sight of,' she complains in 'A Question of Faith', 'owing to the manner in which the unimaginative and unthinking majority of people…' regard

religion (47). Her fiction repeatedly recreates the figure of the spiritually enlightened female priestess, intimate with the meaning and purpose of symbols, but shunned by society. Ziska epitomizes Corelli's perception of herself as such a priestess. Ziska is a 'wonderful Egyptologist' who knows more about the spiritual essence of the pyramids than the archaeologist Dr Dean (Corelli, *Ziska* 133). Yet, she refuses to share her wisdom because, too often, her 'knowledge of history' has been dismissed as 'deficient' (Corelli, *Ziska* 264, 265). Clearly, Corelli here is referring to the censuring of her works for historical inaccuracy and imaginative excess. Ziska converts Gervase not by teaching him tenets of the Christian doctrine but by testing his views on romantic fidelity. Transposing Christian piety into romantic devotion, Corelli expands the definition of being a Christian. Like Ziska becomes Gervase's personal route to salvation, Corelli too promises to save the reader's soul through reading.

Corelli's offer to mediate between her readers and God found a mass appeal in a global community of readers, for whom the work of conversion had been done by others (primarily, the missionary societies active all over the empire).[57] Translations of her novels were and are, till this day, immensely popular. This is not to claim that her novels actively converted people but they enthused and provided a cultural prop for many new Christians abroad attempting to negotiate their Christian-ness socially. Simon Gikandi iterates that, in 'colonial Africa,' Corelli's novels influenced a generation of 'novelists coming out of the Christian mission' (19). As Father Ignatius,

[57] Priya Joshi's book *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English novel in India* (2004) is an in-depth study of the reading habits of nineteenth-century readers in the colonies. While it is impossible to locate first-hand readerly accounts of colonial readers, Joshi's statistical data of sales reveals that Corelli and Bulwer Lytton were favoured by colonial readers. The popularity of *Barabbas* (1893) and *Sorrows of Satan* (1895) indicates that Corelli's Christian texts were very much in demand in the colonies. Prodosh Bhattacharya notes that *Ziska* continued to be reprinted by Wilco Press in post-independence India in 1961 ('Reception of Marie Corelli' 241). An *Athaeneum* advertisement from 1895 reports that translations of *Sorrows of Satan* in Hindi and Gujarati were being sold in India (Ransom 438).

a monk who recognized the proselytizing potential of Corelli's novels, commented: 'Marie Corelli is doing more for the faith than Archbishops and Bishops and convocations put together; there are thousands upon thousands throughout English speaking Christendom who will bless the pages that Marie Corelli has penned' (qtd in Ransom 85).

The fact that Corelli's works were censured by missionaries proves that she was widely-read and influential enough to cause concern among more conventional members of the church. Though not translated as much as Corelli's other works, *Ziska* was distributed across the colonies as part of Hutchinson's colonial library in 1897, the same year as *Dracula* (Berni 27). In 1907, it received a critical mention in an index of censored summaries published by Examiner Press, a weekly Catholic magazine in Bombay. In this volume titled *The Writings of Marie Corelli* (1907), the editor, Reverend Father Ernest J. Hull, Archbishop of Bombay, harshly denounced *Ziska* as 'execrable reading for any sincere Christian' (Boswin 64). Amongst other heterodox ideas, he particularly attacked the emphasis on 'the manifold reincarnation' and the 'few insignificant references to Christ, or rather Christianity' as blasphemous (Boswin 64).

Most responses to Corelli, so far, have attributed her popularity in the colonies to her melodramatic aesthetic or, as critic Prodosh Bhattacharya notes, to the wide appeal of the ideal of womanhood she offers ('Reception of Marie Corelli' 226). I argue that Corelli's treatment of racial identity also contributed to her popularity—especially amongst colonial readers. It is important to note that any attempt at examining a community's inclination for an author involves 'mind-reading' that 'is at best hypothetical' (Fraser 177). But Corelli's carelessness towards racial difference, so unusual among romance writers interested in the East, surely goes to some degree

to explain her appeal. And, importantly, Corelli's fiction does not assume that religious knowledge can only be passed on from a white person to the racial 'other.' In *Romance*, Heliobas, 'a Chaldean descended directly from one of the wise men of the East,' cures the creative lethargy and atheism afflicting Western artists (88-89). Similarly, in *Ziska*, a French man receives Christian lessons from a spirit with an expertise in Egyptian history. Corelli's insistence that the West was itself in need of conversion comes through in her essay 'The Soul of the Nation' (1905) where she exhorts Britain to clear its conscience before converting 'India, China or Japan' to Christianity (341). This inversion of national and racial hierarchy possibly appealed to Christian and non-Christian readers alike in the colony. It certainly catered to the self-respect of colonial subjects for it proved that the colonizers had to be taught the true meaning of their own religion.

Ziska however does not simply offer a fantasy of reverse spiritual colonization; rather, Corelli's reincarnative framework assumes that all races are morally fallible. Though Corelli is not progressive in her racial politics, she, at least, equalizes all races. While some characters are nominally better than others, in *Ziska*, all nationalities (Egyptians, British and French) are branded as sinners in need of spiritual and moral elevation. If races across the spectrum are degraded, then, there is no innate difference between an Indian and a British person. For the reader in the colony, this would be a liberating thought. But, more importantly, Corelli's reincarnative model renders identity malleable, both capable of being moulded and subject to divine judgement. To the reader, this offered the consolatory possibility of 'imagining' him/herself as belonging to a different race in the past or a future life. Since race was a changeable quality, the reader could fantasize about inhabiting

another identity in a different time and space.[58] Rita Felski argues that Corelli's romances allowed women to nurture 'quasi-transcendental aspirations' to escape the mundane every day; in the same vein, *Ziska* and other reincarnative novels too permitted the reader in the colony to transcend the constraints of his/her racial identity (*Reading the Popular Sublime* 117).[59] Thus, while Corelli evacuates race and the body of meaning to emphasize the soul, her devaluation of race makes it a fluid, adaptable category for the reader.

In the next section, I explore how Corelli's Christian didactism, with its (in its time) widely attractive flexibility of outlook on race, leads her to invest heavily in the concept of the trance state as a model of the ideal reading experience.

Reading, trance and converts

As the self-appointed priestess for her readers, Corelli imagined that, like Heliobas in *Romance of Two Worlds*, her writing would enchant her readers into converting to Christianity. Andrew McCann argues that Corelli in her fiction carefully distinguishes between spiritual states of trance and degenerative, hysterical addictive states (89). Corelli's illustration of hypnotic states in *Ziska* suggests that she wants her reader to experience an unusual psychic openness: a hyper-focused spiritual reverie geared towards conversion. To this end, she provides images of streamlined, structured trances in *Ziska* with implicit encouragements to the reader to emulate them in the act of reading. Onlookers are spellbound by Ziska. Gervase cannot take his eyes off her

[58] Having said this, the fact that Ziska and Gervase's gender remains unchanged across multiple lives suggests that Corelli attached some value to gender identity.

[59] The debates surrounding the missionaries' politics of conversions are complex and layered. As several scholars have argued, conversions were violent, coercive but, often, they proved emancipatory for communities suffering oppression in their homelands. Jean and John L. Comaroff in *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (1991) debate the perception of conversions as a one-way imposition of Christian beliefs onto another culture. In several contexts, conversions allowed natives to agentially 'reconstruct […] their own image,' granting them the freedom to refashion and adopt a new self (Comaroff 12).

and is ‘dazzled’ by her gaze (Corelli, *Ziska* 57). Dr Dean, when talking about marriage as a spiritual contract, has a ‘rapt’ and noble expression (Corelli, *Ziska* 288). For Corelli, only through unwavering fixation can an individual begin to see the spiritual, Christian meaning hidden in everyday life. She expects the same from the reader. From a dreamy, inattentive reverie, the reader gradually transitions to a deep, intense state of absorption. With prolonged fixation, a pattern emerges from the dreamy haze and the spiritual truth becomes evident. Corelli’s trance thus allows the mind to wander but it also places limits: while it permits an imaginative play with ideas, it is circumscribed by a Christian end. The reader’s imaginative flight has to obey the terms set by the author, as Corelli advises him/her: ‘[T]o get all the enjoyment out of an author’s imagination, we, who read his books, must ourselves ‘imagine’ with him. We must let him take us where he will; we must not draw back and refuse to go with him’ (‘Power of Pen’ 303).

Corelli developed this model of trance to counter the widespread malaise of distraction that, she thought, was afflicting individuals at the fin de siècle. She regarded distraction and boredom as interchangeable states that masked an existential confusion about the fate of the body and the soul. The ‘wearied,’ languid Scottish Highlander, Denzil Murray, in the novel is too focused on his bodily needs to be enchanted by the thought of spiritual eternity (Corelli, *Ziska* 40). By contrast, a spiritually rooted individual, like Dr Dean, is ‘never dull; he had plenty to do…’ (Corelli, *Ziska* 35). Spiritual awareness also makes a person a good reader: Ziska ‘can read Egyptian papyri’ and decipher hieroglyphics (Corelli, *Ziska* 134). In *Sorrows of Satan*, Corelli shows Sibyl Elton reading decadent poetry by A.C. Swinburne (which in Corelli’s opinion lacked spiritual purpose) ‘without paying much attention to the subject-matter of the verse’ (406). Corelli suggests that the print culture of the

period—the boom in bestsellers, journalism and ephemeral fiction—aggravated the state of distraction. She was far from unusual in taking this view: Nicholas Dames notes that, in the nineteenth century, the rise of popular fiction was widely seen to shape 'the fragmentation and temporal shortening of attention' (*Physiology of the Novel* 81). While Corelli was one of the bestselling writers, she remained critical of popular fiction that, to her mind, temporarily and superficially absorbed the reader only to leave him/her more dissatisfied. Criticizing the habits of the distracted reader to Bentley, she writes: 'For those, who only languidly read the first few pages of a book and decline to go further, heaven grant that they do not read me at all….'[60] Morally depraved characters are portrayed as poor readers, as Talia Schaffer notes, 'Gaston [in *Wormwood* (1890)] is a casual skimmer who misses key points' ('Modernist Mental States'). Like the tourist in *Ziska*, the modern reader moves from one bestseller to another without understanding the deeper spiritual insights serious literature might offer into his own condition.

Corelli distinguished herself from other popular works claiming that, in her writings, she had 'not pandered to any passing popular taste for "sensationals"- and "adventures."'[61] In *Ziska*, she makes her bias against popular sensation novels, and the unsatisfactory trance states they induce, more apparent. Many characters are seen to read distractedly in the novel: Lady Lyle's daughters, Muriel and Dolly, are busy 'reading the Daily Dial'—a parody of the sensationalist magazines in circulation (Corelli, *Ziska* 124). At another point, Helen Murray, the woman Gervase jilts for Ziska, reads a book but cannot concentrate on its contents (Corelli, *Ziska* 198).

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[60] Marie Corelli. Letter to George Bentley. 14 March, 1889. Marie Corelli Collection. Beinecke Library, Yale. GEN MSS 332. Box 1, Folder 13.
[61] Ibid.

Gervase himself turns to reading a trivial popular French novel to divert his mind from ponderous questions:

> [T]o distract himself from dwelling any longer on the haunting ideas that perplexed him, he took up one of the latest and frothiest of French novels & began to read. Someone in a room not far off was singing a French song…and unconsciously to himself Gervase caught the words as they rang out full and clearly on the quiet, heated air—
>
> O toi que j'ai tant aimee,
>
> Songes-tu que je t'aime encor? [*sic*] (Corelli, *Ziska* 254-55)

Not used to slowly 'dwelling' on spiritual matters, Gervase picks up a racy adventure-packed French novella that promises him immediate gratification (Corelli, *Ziska* 254). While reading, he experiences a shift in attention: the more absorbed he becomes in the French novel, the more he slips into a state of unconsciousness. However, the trance induced by the French novel is so 'mechanical' and muddled that he is easily distracted by the floating notes of the French song (Corelli, *Ziska* 255). Carrying a pertinent message about Gervase's deep relationship with Ziska, the song promises an alternative experience of Christian trance that 'rang out full and clearly' (Corelli, *Ziska* 255). Hooked to the 'bad' fiction he is reading; Gervase does not surrender to this alternative offer.

Corelli wants to lift Gervase above the crude temptations of the sensation novel, with the basic pleasure it offers in sensual stimulus, to make him answer the call of Christ. In a way, the scene above summarizes Corelli's struggle to persuade the (presumptively) distracted reader of popular fiction to attend closely to her Christian message. Corelli often portrays the consumption of popular sensational fiction as carrying fatal consequences. Her characters rarely read fiction for leisure but when they do, they suffer for it. Sibyl Elton's death in *Sorrows of Satan* is directly linked to 'poisoning as the natural, literalizing effect of her reading history' (Galvan, 'Corelli's

Caliban' 339). In *Ziska*, she is a little more forgiving towards the distracted reader. While Corelli chastises bad reading, she implicitly outlines what better, more attentive reading would look and feel like.

Published by Arrowsmith as part of the railway series, *Ziska* was one of the few shilling-shockers Corelli wrote in her career.[62] The intended readership of *Ziska* thus consisted largely of the leisurely readers that Corelli detested. Aware that her audience was mostly composed of rail travellers, Corelli was careful to not outrightly risk alienating them. This however does not mean that she compromised on her principles. In the last scene of the novel, Gervase's conversion to Christianity simultaneously illustrates his reformation as a reader. Corelli imbues a critique of the Gothic genre into this scene, alluding to other Gothic novels being published by Arrowsmith. Confronted by Ziska's terrifying apparition, Gervase is 'stricken dumb with a ghastly supernatural terror which far exceeded any ordinary sense of fear' (Corelli, *Ziska* 337). His terror is characterized by 'a creeping sense of coldness and horror' that 'stole into his veins' (Corelli, *Ziska* 340). His body 'spellbound, his blood freezing, his very limbs stiffening,' Gervase is paralyzed by the sight of Ziska (Corelli, *Ziska* 337). Intriguingly, at this late point, Ziska's racial characteristics become distinct—her 'dark hair' and 'black eyes' add to her terrorizing visage (Corelli, *Ziska* 336). It is as if, for Corelli, the mere mention of body is enough to evoke horror.

Corelli links Gervase's experience of Gothic terror to his lack of spiritual clarity, his confused, bewildered state of mind. However, mid-way through the revenge scene, 'something sweet and subtle stirs in' Gervase and he gains clarity: he

[62] Thomas F.G. Coates writes that Corelli was planning to publish *Romance* with Arrowsmith before George Bentley intervened and accepted the manuscript (37-38).

realizes that his soul is his essence and only Christ can save him from purgatory (Corelli, *Ziska* 346). Recognizing the existence of his soul alters his perception of Ziska: she no longer seems a monstrous figure but a shadowy, 'spectral form' (Corelli, *Ziska* 347). Most striking is the 'sense of power' Corelli gives to Gervase to 'choose' how he wants to perceive Ziska (*Ziska* 346). Ziska does not change form of her own accord but Gervase's 'reading' of Ziska, the interpretive filter he provides, alters her appearance to the reader. Corelli extends this choice to the reader: does the reader want to relish the horrors of the body or does s/he want to experience a spiritualized Christian state of entrancement?

To read for spiritual gain without mobilizing the body is the experience Corelli seeks to impart to the reader. The reader she wants to cultivate might belong to any caste or creed but will be receptive to the message of Christ, and in taking the name of Christ, s/he will become blind to the mere 'costume' of the body. This distancing from the body simultaneously makes it oblivious to the embodied experience of racial identity. For Corelli, race and the body are horrifying only as long as they are over-valued; once recognised as the passing things they are, they will be felt as trivial, not worth our conventional attachment to them. This comes through strongly at the end of the novel when Corelli asks: 'what can be said of the dead mouldering corpse [of Gervase] [n]othing…' (insertion mine; Corelli, *Ziska* 364). The 'nothing,' at once urgent and too abrupt, is followed by a hurried gesture to veil the body. Turning our attention away from the putrefying body in the pyramid, Corelli quickly ends the novel with Christian platitudes confident, perhaps too confident, that the enchantment of Christianity will be enough to gloss over the haunting corpse.

Chapter 5. Sympathetic Magnetism and Racial Preservation in Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*

In the year 1897, Bram Stoker's publication of his bestseller *Dracula* overshadowed another vampire narrative—Florence Marryat's lesser-known novel *The Blood of the Vampire*.[63] Popularly known as a writer of sensation novels, Marryat was moving into new territory with this Gothic work. Reviewers noted, but did not always appreciate, Marryat's experimentation with the genre. A particularly derisive account, in *The Speaker*, saw it as an 'ill-conceived' novel that fails to evoke horror ('Fiction' 29). The review reads the figure of Harriet, the psychic vampire who sucks on energy rather than blood, as laughable, pathetic, reminiscent of 'the turnip-bogey of our childhood' ('Fiction' 29). A more favourable account in the November issue of *Liverpool Mercury* felt rather that the subdued nature of the vampire action amplified the element of horror ('Books of the Day'). Both critics, though divided in their judgment of the novel, registered that Marryat's novel was attempting to explore a different shade of terror: subtler than the fears provoked by many earlier fictions on the theme, including (and perhaps especially) Sheridan LeFanu's Sapphic thriller *Carmilla* (1871-2).

The muted quality of the action is evident from this scene, early in the novel:

> She [Margaret Pullen] had become fainter and fainter, as the girl [Harriet] leaned against her with her head upon her breast. Some sensation which she could not define, nor account for—some feeling which she had never experienced before—had come over her and made her head reel. She felt as if something or some one (*sic*) were drawing all her life away. She tried to disengage herself from the girl's clasp but Harriet Brandt seemed to come after her, like a coiling snake, till she could stand it no longer, and faintly exclaiming: 'Miss Brandt! Let go of me, please! I feel ill!' she rose, and tried

[63] Florence Marryat. *The Blood of the Vampire*. Edited by Brenda Hammack, Valancourt Books, 2009. Originally published Hutchinson, 1897. Henceforth *BOV*.

> to make her way between the crowded tables, towards the open air. (Marryat, *Blood of the Vampire* 21)

In this scene that takes place in a hotel salon in Heyst, a mixed-race woman, Harriet affectionately rests her head on the breast of Margaret Pullen, an English woman whose acquaintance she has only recently made, but from whom she immediately demands the love she claims has been missing from her life thus far. The act of intimacy soon turns macabre as Margaret feels as if Harriet is choking her. While there are no physical signs of violence, the sense of horror slowly escalates. The victim, Margaret, struggles to put into words what has happened to her. Experiencing no recognizable physical pain, she is unable to 'define' the sensation (Marryat, *BOV* 21). The fact that this feeling does not resemble anything Margaret has experienced before suggests to the reader that it is unnatural, even paranormal (Marryat, *BOV* 21). Margaret is puzzled about the source of the assault—'something' or 'some one' (sic) has taken hold of her but she is unsure of the nature of the force (Marryat, *BOV* 21). The reader's difficulty in comprehension mirrors Margaret's at this point. Our sense of horror intensifies because the exact workings of the assault are hidden from us. The elusive and imperceptible nature of the 'coiling' attack suggests it may be occurring on a psychic, rather than a physical, plane (Marryat, *BOV* 21). Later in the novel, we find out that this is indeed the case. Harriet possesses 'magnetic powers' that enable her to involuntarily invade people's unconscious (Marryat, *BOV* 195). A 'mass of magnetism,' she hypnotizes people and drains them of mental energy (Marryat, *BOV* 167).

A native of post-abolition Jamaica, Harriet arrives in Heyst, Belgium at the novel's start and attracts attention by her unconventional looks and behaviour. In Heyst, she tries to befriend a few English characters on vacation—Margaret Pullen (married, with a new baby) and her friend Elinor Leyton—embarrassing them with

her explicit (and physically) 'familiar' demands for affection. Soon enough, Harriet's naïve charm reveals a more sinister side as her mere presence starts to oppress the characters. While the women quickly grow wary of Harriet, the men find her hypnotically enthralling. Elinor's fiancé Ralph Pullen is captivated by Harriet's beauty and is the first in a series of British men to fall in love with her. Crucial information from a British doctor, Dr Phillips, on Harriet's mixed-race background, combined with the death of Margaret's baby, prevents the affair from progressing any further. Determined to pursue Ralph, Harriet moves to London. Dr Phillips, fearing that Harriet will break Ralph's engagement with Elinor, sends Ralph's cousin, Anthony Pennell to talk to Harriet. Even though Pennell is forewarned of her evil influence, he is besotted with Harriet at first sight. Disregarding Dr Phillips's warnings against interracial relationships, the politically progressive Pennell marries Harriet. The novel suggests that Harriet's malign psychic influence proves so potent that she ends up unintentionally killing Pennell, sapping him of all his vitality. In the end, unable to live with the guilt of killing her husband, Harriet commits suicide.

Readings of the novel to date, including Howard Malchow's astute account in *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (1996), have tended to argue that Marryat's novel is a straightforward demonization of Harriet's racial hybridity. Recently, Susan Zieger, in her book *Inventing the Addict* (2008), has complicated the charge of racism by highlighting an ambivalence in Marryat's treatment of race. Tracing the relationship between addictive drinking and eugenics in the nineteenth century, Zieger reads the figure of the racially mixed Harriet as a degenerate addict who simultaneously stands for violent white imperial power and represents a more standardly stereotypical infectious blackness. While Zieger's reading is attractively complex, it overstates the critique of white violence that Marryat offers in the novel. I

add to these previous readings by tracing a relationship between the notion of psychic influence and racial contamination in *Blood of the Vampire*. By drawing on Marryat's spiritualist writings, (*There is no Death* (1891), *The Spirit World* (1894)) I show that sympathy (unusually) forms the basis of her notion of unconscious psychic/spiritual powers, underwriting the theorisation of the hypnotic encounter in her novel. In *Blood of the Vampire*, any psychic/hypnotic exchange involves a transaction of emotions, and explains the curiously mute character of the novel's vampirism: instead of drawing blood, Harriet draws on her victims' feelings, thus, making a less violent yet intrusive claim on the 'life' of others. This psychic model of affective connection between individuals is both gendered and racialized in the novel—only English women are shown to possess positive reserves of sympathy that, in turn, endow them with wholesome magnetic powers. As opposed to British women, the racial hybrid, Harriet is seen to possess corrupted magnetic powers. She is the inversion of the spiritually and affectively enabling medium because rather than sympathetically attuning herself with others, she parasitically draws on their energy. By aligning ameliorative sympathy with whiteness, Marryat represents the British as being born with a more evolved psychic unconscious than their non-white counterparts. In the novel, she cautions against any contact with other races lest the purity and strength of the white British sympathetic unconscious become contaminated. Clearly, it is a corollary of the racist vision at work here that white sympathy *for* other races must be limited; a limitation that I show complicates the ideal of sympathy proposed by the novel.

There is however a puzzling ambivalence in the text: while the racial hybrid is cruel-hearted, and a danger to good British women, Marryat also depicts several British characters as unsympathetic. I argue that this anomalous depiction of British

characters in no way lessens the racist thrust of the novel. Rather than locating an innate deficiency in British culture, Marryat presents these figures as reminders to British people to safeguard the moral values associated with their race. Focusing on British characters allows her to trace an affective note in the novel—a conservative longing for an ideal of sympathy that, according to Marryat, is the endangered foundation of British cultural superiority and the empire. The last section of the chapter focuses on the novel's imperial politics and argues that Marryat sees the sympathetic unconscious as a force that can revive a waning British Empire.

The chapter argues that the novel's atypical relation to its genre—the muted nature of vampire Gothic here—is informed by Marryat's racialized conception of sympathy. Assuming that only a racially inferior mind can derive pleasure from Gothic imagery in a sustained way, Marryat dilutes and omits explicit violence from the novel. She does so with the purpose of preserving sympathy in the British reader. There is another hereditary note that frames the novel—the influence of Marryat's father, Captain Frederick Marryat, author of hugely popular and wholesome seafaring novels in the early nineteenth century, lingers at the back of the text. I argue that Marryat's tweaking of the Gothic form in *The Blood of the Vampire* can be understood as an attempt to write wholesome moral fictions based in sympathy like her father. At the heart of the novel is a nostalgic yearning for a socially and rationally hierarchical ideal of sympathy that she equates with her father's 'hearty,' pro-imperial writings.

A racialized psychic unconscious

Though Harriet does not feed on her victims' blood, her psychic influence negatively affects their bodies. In Harriet's presence, Margaret feels as if a 'coiling snake' is

choking her and her 'life was being taken away' (Marryat, *BOV* 21). Dr Phillips, the authoritative medical voice in the novel, compares Harriet to a vampire bat 'who is said to suck the breath of its victims' (Marryat, *BOV* 195). This metaphor of sucking the breath—breath being at once intangible but also essential to physical life—sums up Harriet's influence. The different terms Marryat uses to describe that influence, ranging from 'illness,' 'disease' to 'neuralgia,' all locate her impact on the somatic level. Harriet's own physiognomy carries overt signs of vampiric tendencies: her lips are described as a 'deep blood colour' suggesting they crave blood, and her eyes possess a lacklustre quality that disturbs the viewer (Marryat, *BOV* 4, 34). Harriet's lovingly desirous gaze when she looks at men is compared to that of 'a panther awaiting the advent of its prey' (Marryat, *BOV* 45). Her ability to consume others' energy is seen as an extension of her enormous appetite for sweets: '[h]er mouth, too, was stained with the delicate sweetmeat—she was always eating, either fruit or bon-bons' (Marryat, *BOV* 40). Though her tastes are delicate and sweet, these food items mask her actual craving for blood. Most significantly, the novel connects her psychic temperament to her racial inheritance: Harriet's hypnotic capacity is traced to hereditary influence—her hybrid racial composition—the fact that she is the illegitimate child of a Jamaican slave woman and a British father.

Marryat's involvement in the spiritualist movement sheds light on the curious overlap between the psychological and the physical in the novel. In her books *There is No Death* (1891), *The Spirit World* (1894) and the novel *The Dead Man's Message* (1894), Marryat put forth a strong defence of spiritualism. As the editor of *London Society* between 1872 and 1874, a magazine for women readers, she published numerous articles on spiritualism, including a serialisation of her spiritualist novel *Open Sesame* (1874). Georgina O'Brien Hill notes that, as an important figure in

spiritualist circles, Marryat was '[o]ften…one of the privileged few who were invited into the intimate and private space of the medium's cabinet' (334).[64] Marryat's accounts of séances primarily focus on materialization of spirits (Kontou, 'The Case of Florence' 227). She was interested in the way spirits could physically appear or interact with everyday objects. For Marryat, living bodies could access their own living spirits while alive but also host spirits that had transitioned to their afterlife. She insisted that after death, spirits continued to grow as they did when they were alive. In one instance, she describes meeting the materialized spirit of her deceased friend John Powles: 'I felt a hand laid on my head and the fingers began to gently stroke and pull the short curls upon my forehead' (Marryat, *There is No Death* 69). A psychic encounter takes on a tactile note as Powles's hand strokes Marryat's hair. In this lengthy description of the two-way touching between her living and his dead body, she lingers on the hirsute quality of his hands, the odd shape of his wrist, and the contours of his face. The pretext of establishing Powles's identity permits Marryat to relay the scene with a level of detail that would otherwise be read as overtly sensual. As Alex Owen has argued, the space of the séance was not only a materialist one but charged with sensual energy (222).

Marryat often presented the materialization of spirits as conclusive evidence of their existence. For her, the spiritual world could be explained through

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[64] In the year 1874, *London Society* published several articles on the subject of spiritualism. Henry Dunphy, in the February and July issues, wrote a famously controversial series titled 'Modern Mysteries'—an investigation of séances conducted by the famous medium, Florence Cook. Tatiana Kontou notes that: 'Dunphy was not only one of Cook's "wealthier patrons," but he also provided Marryat with her first introduction to the young fashionable medium' (63). Though Dunphy's article concluded that spiritualism was not a charlatan practice, Marryat added a disclaimer to the article stating that the editor was not 'bound to the views' of the author (166). Repeating this trend of distancing herself from spiritualism, Marryat in the June, 1874 issue, posing as 'Free Lance,' dismisses the existence of spirits ('Social Subjects' 574). It seems likely that Marryat was adopting an anti-spiritualist stance to deflect attention from having authored the piece. At the end of the piece, she adds a note suggesting that it might be fitting for 'Free Lance' to attend a few séances ('Social Subjects' 549).

natural/biological laws. She vehemently stated that 'there is no such thing as super nature' (Marryat, *The Spirit World* 31). Richard Noakes argues that it was common for '"naturalistic" spiritualists' to 'turn séances into scientific sites for probing connections between the known physical and unknown "spiritual sources" …' (31). For Marryat as well, biological connections could be sustained on the psychic plane. It was on these insistently physicalist terms that Marryat claimed to be in contact with the spirit of her deceased daughter, Florence—her grief at the loss of the child playing a major role in her interpretation of spiritualist theory and practice. Marryat maintained that the facial appearance of her child's spirit uncannily resembled her earthly form: marks of a bodily disability—a cleft lip—were visible on her spiritual countenance. In contrast to the notion that bodily defects and illness would be repaired in the afterlife, spirits 'inherit' scars from their earthly existence in Marryat's séance. This unconventional understanding of hereditary traits impinging on the psychic or the spiritual plane is present in her fiction; the racial imaginary of *Blood of the Vampire*, as I show, being among its most interesting expressions.

Central to Marryat's writings is the figure of the spiritual medium who is adept at channelling psychic energy. Marryat not only befriended several famous mediums (including Mrs. Oliver, Florence Cook and Miss Showers), she claimed to be a medium herself, asserting that she could 'summon the spirits' of the dead and 'the living' (*There is No Death* 40). Widespread amongst psychics of the period was the belief that the medium and the spirit were psychically connected through an electromagnetic chain of energy. But whether the energy during a spiritual encounter was supplied by the medium or the spirit was still under dispute. Scientifically inclined spiritualists relied on physicist, Sir William Crookes's conception of psychic force to argue that the medium was the source of energy in a séance. Crookes

proposed that human beings carried an inherent mental energy called a 'psychic force'—a form of invisible mental force that acts on objects from a distance.[65] In the June 1874 issue of *London Society*, Marryat, writing under the pseudonym of 'Free Lance,' aligned with Crookes and asserted that 'when the spiritualist contends that the phenomena he witnesses are caused by the spirits of the dead, we cannot resist the conviction that the process of reasoning … is wholly arbitrary' ('Social Subjects' 550). For Marryat, the medium's energy is the only 'intelligent cause of [occult] phenomena' (insertion added; 'Social Subjects' 549). A similar understanding can be found in *There Is No Death* where the spirit, Peter extracts energy from her to become visible: 'Peter said we had exhausted all the phosphorus in our bodies by the long evening we had spent, and left him nothing to light himself up with' (68). Lacking energy reserves of its own, the spirit-world is dependent on the living medium 'whose body… become[s] the locus of spiritual interaction' (Willburn, *Possessed Victorians* 86).

This was a contrast to an earlier line of thinking put forth by Marryat. In the March 1873 issue of *London Society*, posing as 'Free Lance,' Marryat adopts a counterintuitive position on the controversy surrounding the term 'psychic force' ('Talk of the Town' 279). Surprisingly, Marryat does not sound very enthusiastic about the notion, though she does not entirely reject it. This posturing could very well be an attempt on her part to hide her identity, to come across as a neutral observer in the spiritualist debate. As Tatiana Kontou notes, Marryat was taking on

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[65] Crookes's psychic force radically differed from the idea of unconscious reflex action that scientist James Braid, in the 1860s, proposed to be the basis of hypnosis. In his article titled 'A Reply to the Quarterly Review' (1871), Crookes responded to a reviewer who severely criticized his attempts at conceptualizing a new force. The reviewer maintained that Crookes was simply repackaging the physical concept of reflex action and presenting it as a psychic force. For more on this, see Crookes's book: *Researches into the Phenomena of Modern Spiritualism: Reprinted from the Quarterly Journal of Science*. London: J. Burns, Southampton Row, 1874.

'interchangeable roles' in the 1870s and 80s 'as an astute observer of spirit phenomena and Marryat the convinced spiritualist' ('The Case of Florence' 222). It is not that Marryat doubted the existence of magnetic force but, as she clarifies in *There Is No Death*, she was hesitant to label it— '[i]t is magnetic force or psychic force, it is unconscious cerebration or brain-reading' (25). This statement affirms that while Marryat was aware of the differing perspectives on the raging debate, she wasn't keen on taking sides. She does however give an insight into her distinct understanding of how magnetic force operates:

> If our bodies contain magnetic forces sufficient to raise substantial and apparently living forms from the bare earth, which our eyes are clairvoyant enough to see, and which can articulate words which our ears are clairaudient enough to hear - if, in addition to this, our minds can *read each other's inmost thoughts*…and foretell what will happen in the future, then our human powers are greater than we have ever imagined, and we ought to do a great deal more with them than we do. (emphasis added; *There Is No Death* 15)

Marryat tentatively presents to the reader the possibility of a magnetic power that could hold ground-breaking implications for scientific advancement. In several ways, Marryat's approach draws on ongoing psychical research which, as Roger Luckhurst has argued, formed the basis of mainstream British psychology.[66] Like other conceptions of psychic force, this magnetic force could facilitate levitation, telepathic clairvoyant communication and hypnosis. There is however another feature

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[66] Luckhurst observes that, at the end of the century, British psychology was dominated by psychical research with Edmund Gurney and Frederic Myers being deemed 'renowned experts' in the field (94). Luckhurst further writes: 'In England, the few advances made by dynamic psychology before 1900 against physiological determinism were inextricably linked to psychical research' (102). While British psychical researchers were interested in the phenomenon, most of the psychological investigations of hypnosis were carried out in the continent. This revival of interest in hypnosis was spearheaded by two schools in France: 1) The Salpêtrière School and 2) The School of Nancy. The Salpêtrière School of Psychology led by Charcot proposed a physiological and pathological explanation of hypnosis, treating it as a 'symptom of hysteria' (Luckhurst 101). On the other hand, the School of Nancy did not associate hypnotism with a disorder; in fact, it argued that hypnosis could be induced by the simple act of suggestion. The Nancy School saw in hypnosis an opportunity for developing a new model of psychotherapy. British psychologists like Milne Bramwell and Charles Lloyd Tuckey in their articles in the *New Review* and *Contemporary Review* expressed enthusiasm about the Nancy School's approach. However, as Roger Luckhurst claims, this open mindedness towards hypnotism was accompanied by a growing paranoia about its usage for malicious purposes (*The Invention of Telepathy* 102).

that stands out in Marryat's description: the distinctly psychological character of the magnetic force's penetration of 'inmost thoughts' (15). While mesmerism was seen to connect 'people's minds and souls… in mysterious ways,' Marryat adds to the existing conversation by attributing to psychic force the peculiar ability to tap into and cathartically release deep-seated emotions in others (Winter 119). This particular psychological conceptualization allows her to imagine unconventional potential uses for the power including providing emotional comfort from a distance.

For Marryat, the magnetic force wielded in mediumship carried a charge of feeling: a range of emotions encompassing love but potentially also grief, anger, and vengefulness. In a series of séances conducted by the spiritualist medium William Eglinton, Marryat describes the wave of emotion experienced by a woman in the audience who reunites with the spirit of her deceased brother (*There Is No Death* 125). Intense feelings released during a séance can trigger a visitation by a spirit. Elsewhere, Marryat writes that after hearing of her sister Emily's death, she went into mourning—an affective state that, in turn, prompted a visit from Emily's spirit (*There Is No Death* 88).

In Marryat's schema, not only does a hypnotic encounter involve an exchange of emotions, but sympathy is the very basis of magnetic abilities. In other words, an ideal spiritual mediation is rooted in the capacity to sympathize. Sympathy, as Marryat understands it, is an intersubjective process that involves feeling and thinking with other people. This capacity to be sympathetically oriented towards others is a marker of heightened sensitivity; a sensitivity not only to the distress of the living, but also towards the emotional needs of spirits after death. Marryat's understanding of any psychic mediation including mesmerism is unusual for its concentration on affect. Scientist James Braid, in a mid-nineteenth century discussion of mesmerism,

explained the process as mobilizing 'the powers of sympathy, imitation and suggestion' (Braid 158). While the term 'sympathy' was often used within physiological psychology, it typically did little more than gesture at physical attunement between two individuals. As physician Charles Caldwell wrote, '[b]y the phrase sympathy of brains, I mean the brain of one person being in the same condition with the brain of another…' (45). Similarly, Alexander Bain 'likened forms of imitative sympathy to mesmeric sleep' (Lanzoni 276). In this regard, Lara Karpenko too argues that, in the mid-nineteenth century, mesmeric sympathy mostly referred to the physiological response of unconscious reflex action that was thought to facilitate the hypnotic encounter (147). In contrast to these early theorizations of mesmerism, Marryat makes a more psychological notion of sympathy the basis of mesmeric connection. As I demonstrate, as opposed to other sensation writers, Marryat's portrayal of hypnotism is informed by an affective sensibility that is not just focused on bodily responses.

While the mesmeric encounter in *Blood of the Vampire* carries psychological overtones, it is far from therapeutic. Harriet's hypnotic exchanges with others in the novel explicitly involve a communication of emotional energy. However, her ability to gauge a person's deep feelings empowers her to unconsciously scoop them hollow of emotion. Such an understanding of human individuals as carriers of emotional energy is voiced by a surprising figure in the novel, the British doctor, Dr Phillips. After killing another victim, Bobby Bates, with her hypnotic powers, Harriet realizes the fatal effect she has on people and approaches Dr Phillips for an explanation. Phillips prefaces his theory of magnetic constitutions by saying that it was 'little thought of or discussed amongst medical men' (Marryat, *BOV* 195). However, such a disclaimer is not intended to highlight the unscientific basis of the theory of

magnetism but to frame it as a gap within science. Dr Phillips categorizes individuals into two types and claims that the first type of individual 'give(s) out their magnetic power' to people s/he is intimate with, having a salubrious effect on their mental health (Marryat, *BOV* 195). This type closely resembles Marryat's ideal medium, endowed with a sympathetic capacity that casts a beneficial magnetic effect on others. In contrast to this good medium, there are individuals 'who *draw* from their neighbours, sometimes making large demands upon their vitality' (Marryat, *BOV* 195). As Phillips goes on to claim, Harriet Brandt fits the profile of the latter type. Hers is an inverted form of psychic sympathy that reaches out only to draw emotional energy and never to give anything in return.

Harriet thus possesses the power of a spiritual medium in a negative form. She lacks the sympathetic capacity that gives out healthy magnetic power—instead she exudes a toxic psychic force. The novel traces her lack of sympathy to her mixed-race heritage: the fact that she is the daughter of a mixed-race Jamaican woman and a British doctor. After Bobby's death, his mother Madame Gobelli, blames Harriet for carrying 'the curse of black blood and vampire's blood which kills everything it caresses' (Marryat, *BOV* 188). But most significantly, it is Harriet's inheritance of 'the deadly aspect of her blood thirsty parents'—their brutally insensitive nature—that accounts for her temperament (Marryat, *BOV* 96). Harriet's inherent cruel heartedness disables her from sympathetically reading other minds. However, this does not imply that Harriet is shut out of people's moods and emotions; in fact, it grants her a different kind of mental power—to unconsciously enter minds and parasitically 'cling to' them (Marryat, *BOV* 95).

It is possible that Marryat's representation of psychic powers in fiction was influenced in part by George Eliot's model of sympathetic 'fellow feeling', in which

sympathy is the basis of morality. There is no categorical evidence that Marryat read Eliot's works but her brief communication with Eliot suggests that she was familiar with her writings. In February, 1879, Marryat wrote a letter to Eliot extending her heartfelt sympathy on the demise of her partner, physiologist G.H. Lewes. Though the letter was a gesture of condolence, it offers us a glimpse into Marryat's own unique understanding of sympathy. Marryat's tone vacillates between awe for Eliot's stature and excessive familiarity. Having experienced the death of her stillborn child, Marryat felt that she deeply connected with people who were trying to cope with the loss of a near and dear one. Throughout the letter, Marryat tries to urgently communicate to Eliot that she entirely understands her pain:

> I have felt so very deeply for you in your late bereavement that I cannot resist asking you to accept my sincere sympathy on behalf of it. I have pictured to myself what it must be to lose the companion of one's life and my heart has bled for your loneliness.[67]

Though well intentioned, Marryat's condolences sound cloying and risk being intrusive. Her emphasis on feeling 'so very deeply,' and the claim to 'ble(e)d for' Eliot's 'loneliness', sound both sentimental and self-serving.[68] Marryat is possibly aware that she is presuming too much about the nature of Eliot's bereavement, that she can never *exactly* know what Eliot is going through. Anticipating this, she ends her letter with a poignant appeal for the sincerity of her sympathy: 'Will you only believe that any stranger can feel with you more truly than yours? (word illegible) faithfully, Florence Marryat.'[69] For Marryat, sympathy between strangers was thus a possibility, especially in moments of loss. In a final attempt to convey the earnestness of her sympathy, Marryat writes that surely Eliot's 'womanly part' will understand

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[67] Florence Marryat Lean. Letter to George Eliot. 8 February 1879. George Eliot and George Henry Lewes collection, Beinecke Library, Yale GEN MSS 963. http://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3443503 Accessed 5 June 2017.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

her intentions.[70] Sympathy, it seems, was very much a feminine sentiment for Marryat and she regarded it to be a woman's duty to act as emotional pillars to others.

If sympathy, according to Marryat, is about feeling with strangers, the novel illustrates the opposite scenario—the dangers of sympathy offered by a stranger who is a racial hybrid. Like George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* (1859), a novella that pathologizes sympathy, *The Blood of the Vampire* showcases a sympathy that has gone too far. Harriet is not consciously interested in the mental life of others; she is simply biologically/racially predisposed to feed off their energy. As Dr Phillips claims: 'I do not say she does harm intentionally or even consciously…' (96). On the face of it, Harriet appears genuinely interested in others—only, the more interested she seems, the more she depresses others. Her excessive sympathy, no matter how well-intentioned, cannot counteract the hard-heartedness she has inherited. Margaret complains that Harriet's presence leaves her 'in low spirits and more disposed to cry than laugh' (Marryat, *BOV* 47). While Harriet has a dulling effect on others, she is shown to be emotionally lively herself. At times, she expresses a wide-eyed wonder, an exaggerated fascination towards people and her surroundings (Marryat, *BOV* 15). This excessive sense of wonder would otherwise indicate an innocent, child-like sympathy, but in Harriet's case, it stands for a prurient, albeit unconscious, interest in the psychic interiority of others. Margaret Pullen often doubts the authenticity of Harriet's sympathetic façade only to later chide herself for being suspicious. Her intuition however proves right.

The novel shows that despite her best intentions, Harriet can only truly sympathize with herself. The only time she breaks down into a 'violent fit of sobbing,

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[70] Ibid.

hot, angry tears' is when Ralph Pullen deserts her in Brussels (Marryat, *BOV* 108). In this instance, the reader is likely not to sympathize with Harriet but is taken aback by the sheer intensity of her self-pity. Her excessive show of interest in and generosity towards Margaret's baby is also portrayed as an inverted form of egoism. While initially comforting Madam Gobelli's ill-treated son, Bobby, Harriet uses the access into Bobby's vulnerabilities to get over Ralph Pullen. All her overeager attempts to cultivate deep friendships are driven by emotional narcissism: 'It is what I have longed for—to come out into the world and find someone to be a friend, and to love me, only me, and all for myself!' (Marryat, *BOV* 42). Unlike in a stereotypical hypnotic encounter, Harriet does not make her victim act in accordance with her will. Harriet's sympathetic advances are, more accurately, a form of emotional extraction: they eat into others' feelings.

It is not uncommon in this period to come across depictions of excesses of sympathy in terms of eating or being eaten. Published a few years after Marryat's novel, Henry James's *The Sacred Fount* (1901) depicts a narrator whose keenness to know more about the mental life of others turns him vampiric and parasitical. Like all forms of human vampirism, Harriet's ingestion of others' thoughts and feelings carries connotations of cannibalism. To psychologically consume another is to take over some vital part of that person's self, absorbing him/her into one's own being. It involves getting access into the individual's vulnerabilities as well as his/her strengths. For instance, after being jilted by Ralph Pullen, Harriet exploits Bobby's vulnerability about being unloved to strengthen herself emotionally. Harriet does not simply ingest other's thoughts, she contaminates the moral and racial being of her victims. Marryat suggests that Harriet's hypnotic takeover is a form of psychological cannibalism that threatens to consume another race and the cultural values associated

with it. This is evident in the shift in Ralph Pullen's behaviour after he falls prey to Harriet's vampiric influence: he stops acting like a sensitive, conscientious British man who is duty-bound to his fiancée, Elinor.

The only acceptable model for compassion in the novel is English civility. Growing up away from 'society' on the island of Jamaica, Harriet is unfamiliar with the cultural codes of her country of adoption, Britain (Marryat, *BOV* 20). Rather than introducing her to the ways of the 'civilized' world, Marryat suggests that Harriet's convent education has isolated her even more from accepted modes of behaviour within civilized societies. Though she speaks fluent English and French, Harriet is a cultural outsider, unschooled in common codes of politeness and awkward in her social interactions. In Heyst, she accompanies Margaret Pullen and Eliza Leyton on a stroll even though they do not invite her (Marryat, *BOV* 13). After one meeting, she acts overtly familiar with Margaret Pullen and affectionately places her arms around her waist—a gesture that alarms Margaret for it suggests 'inappropriate' homoerotic interest (Marryat, *BOV* 19). Instead of accepting the girl's behaviour as a result of cultural difference, Eliza Leyton condescendingly remarks: 'Miss Brandt has a great deal to learn … before she can enter English Society!' (Marryat, *BOV* 70). To be civilized thus takes on a narrowly culture-specific meaning as it is equated with British politeness. And indeed, for Marryat, a healthy sympathetic psyche was the core quality that defined British culture, distinguishing it from the rest of the world.

It could seem as if Marryat is taking a cue from George Eliot's novella *The Lifted Veil* (1859) and using the mesmeric unconscious to critique the inherent limits of sympathy as a source of morality. But Marryat's aim, in contrast to Eliot's novella, was not to suggest that sympathy might be 'an inadequate basis for a moral code' (Small 20). Rather, she is concerned with placing limits on sympathy—what kind of

person is capable of extending it; what sort of person deserves it, and to what extent. Brigid Lowe has argued that sympathy needs to be wrestled from a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' that often pervades our reading of Victorian texts. By this, she means that Charles Dickens's omission of non-British characters from his works, was not necessarily a racist gesture, rather, this was his way of 'acknowledg[ing] the limits of his knowing' (Lowe 58). Lowe argues that Victorian authors were often conscious of historical shifts in time—that the present would be held accountable in the future—which urged them to ethically, and sympathetically, engage with present-day injustices (60). However, Lowe does not so much consider the possibility of sympathy itself being a racist gesture in Victorian novels. My reading of Marryat finds in it an aggressively racialized notion of sympathy that categorizes individuals from different racial groups on the basis of their sympathetic capacity. The next section of this chapter explores the ramifications of this racial discrimination: what happens when sympathy, which by definition is other-oriented, is overdetermined by a racist author's imagination? How does Marryat preach the lesson of sympathy in a novel that is so very *unsympathetic* to the racial 'other'?

Sympathy, Disgust, and Racialized Literary Form

A concern with sympathy shapes the form of Marryat's novels generally, and *The Blood of the Vampire* in particular. In a rare interview, with Helen C. Black for *The Lady's Pictorial*, Marryat describes her fictional characters as 'sentient beings' (100). In the interview, she states that, while writing, she does not consciously think about the content; rather, the characters often automatically appear to her (100). The ease with which she slips into their minds resembles the sympathetic attunement to others she depicts (more or less pathologically) in her characters. In a telling letter from her publisher Richard Bentley to Marryat, written a year after the publication of her novel

Nelly Brooke (1868), he rejects her translation of a French novel titled *Madeleine's Lover*, declaring it too melancholic to be published.[71] Though one cannot exactly ascertain which French novel Marryat had translated, this goes to show that she was writing fiction that did not fit the stereotypical definition of sensational pot-boilers. As noted by several reviewers, Marryat's writings were indeed characterized not just by a melodramatic outpouring of emotions but by a heightened sense of 'pathos.' The demands of the market and dropping sales of her works seem to have prevented Marryat from writing and publishing the more affectively charged works that she preferred. Claiming that her work was sensational in as much as it appealed to feelings, Marryat rejected the pejorative associations of 'sensation fiction.' In the preface to her novel *Veronique* (1869), Marryat explicitly took issue with the term 'sensational':

> The word 'sensational' has been so twisted from its original meaning by the cant of what, in this age, we term criticism, that it has become difficult to know in what sense it should be applied. To affirm that the story I submit to your approval is not sensational, i.e., that its incidents are not intended to appeal to your feelings, would be erroneous, since it boasts no higher claim; but on the other hand, should I be accused of distorting nature in order *to give birth to a "monstrosity of fiction,"* my answer is, that the most unlikely scenes depicted here, the adventures on the Neilgherry Hills, and the wreck in the Chinese seas, have happened, and are drawn from life… (emphasis added, 5-7)

This preface is a rare instance of Marryat addressing the charge of sensationalism directed at her. Refusing to accept that her work distorts reality, she insists that it was based on real-life events. As Beth Palmer notes, Marryat's 'authorial identity was interwoven with the contested nature of sensation' in this period (*Women's Authorship* 124). In Marryat's eyes, critics had misunderstood the meaning of sensational, when, for her, it was defined by a heightened emotional

[71] Richard Bentley. Letter to Mrs Ross Church. 27 May 1869. Bentley Archives. British Library. MS 156.201.203 Reel 41. Vol. 84-5.

appeal. Marryat's affect-driven understanding of sensational, her emphasis on making a reader 'feel' is closer to a realist model of sympathy. Though she does not explicitly spell it out, Marryat possibly thought that along the lines of Eliot's fiction, her novels could teach readers to develop a moral sense of sympathy. In privileging an emotional readerly response, Marryat's sensationalism ceases to be about superficial melodrama but crosses generic boundaries to incorporate realistic elements.

Loyal readers found reasons to applaud the power of Marryat's handling of emotion in her novels. The feminist Ninon Kingsford, in a note of praise for Marryat's novel *Fighting the Air* (1875), wrote: 'If you can write with the deep pathos that has moved me as few romances have ever moved me before, you must also feel profoundly in distress, and value love and sympathy highly.'[72] Kingsford's gesture of extending sympathy sounds uncannily like the letter Marryat wrote to George Eliot except that, in this case, sensation fiction evokes a deep sentimental response. But this attempt at crossing sensationalism's affective power with the truth claims of realism did not persuade everyone: a critic of Marryat's first novel *Love's Conflict* (1865) denounced it as exemplifying a debased or 'coarse' realism (Lennox 2).

Marryat looked to Charlotte Brontë 's *Shirley* (1849) to strengthen her case for the realism of her texts. Intriguingly, she articulated her claim in terms of the standard sensational preoccupation—the bounds of legitimacy. Marryat refers to her novels as her legitimate children, as the 'honest bantling' even equating them at one point with her 'stillborn child' (*Veronique* 7). The implication is that her fiction is her offspring, and to call her work illegitimate is to cast doubt on the propriety of her writing and

[72] Ninon Kingsford. Letter to Florence Marryat. 13 October, 1875. Florence Marryat Collection. Beinecke Library. GEN MSS 994 BOX 1, Folder 7 Series 1. Correspondence.

her name. Marryat thus gives the trope of legitimacy, a typically sensational thematic concern, a sentimental connotation where to question her novel's veracity is to disrespect her feelings as a mother.

The language Marryat deploys to talk about the form of her novels is imbued with concerns about heredity. Fiction that distorts reality, she claims, is illegitimate fiction: a grotesque, monstrous and counterfeit perversion of 'wholesome' fiction. If Marryat was thinking of her novels as her offspring, then what kind of novelistic progeny did she want to produce? What did she imagine as an aesthetically non-grotesque and pure literary form? In *Blood of the Vampire*, the thematic obsession with racial purity translates into a drive to cleanse the novel of formal elements that Marryat considered impure: in particular, Gothic (and sensational) generic conventions centred on the body. Her decision to purge her vampire novel of blood and gore puts considerable pressure on the concept of a 'vampire novel', but it reflects her understanding of sympathy. Sympathy, for Marryat, was ideally a non-invasive emotion that would respect bodily boundaries. In another novel *A Daughter of the Tropics* (1888), a West Indian woman who practices voodoo laments that 'one is not permitted to shed blood (in Britain), however great the purpose' (insertion added; 80). If the act of reading amounts to a call for feeling toward fictional characters, readers were clearly meant to sympathize in a non-invasive way, only with an individual's feelings. To read and relish blood and gore is to not respect the sanctity of bodily boundaries while reading. It represents a sympathetic encounter gone awry. It is to be unhealthily interested in the innards of the body and the mind, very much like the 'savage' Harriet. For several commentators, this was the danger associated with reading sensation fiction in this period. As Alison Winter has argued, '[t]he link of sensation fiction…between reader and character recalled the mesmeric "community

of a similar vein" that removed boundaries between people' (326). While preaching the lesson of sympathy, Marryat thus makes her novel urge readers to cultivate wholesome, non-invasive English values of sympathy that respected bodily limits.

One way in which the novel critiques 'unhealthy' readerly responses to Gothic grisliness can be seen in the meta-commentary on Harriet's visit to the Wiertz Museum in Brussels. Harriet derives gustatory pleasure from seeing gruesome art by Wiertz depicting 'blood and bones' (Marryat, *BOV* 102).[73] The scene is a rare instance of Harriet being hypnotized by something, rather than actively mesmerizing others. She is 'entranced,' 'enraptured' by the portrayal of 'the mother in a time of famine devouring her child' (Marryat, *BOV* 102). The painting presents a morally complex dilemma: conditions of extreme scarcity drive a mother to cannibalistically feed on her child. Marryat however flattens the moral ambiguity of the painting, treating it as a straightforward instance of cannibalism. At this moment, Harriet behaves like a seasoned reader of sensation novels, addicted to sensual stimuli. Hypnotized by the scene which 'absorb[s] all her senses,' she is unable to maintain a healthy distance from the painting she admires (Marryat, *BOV* 102). The more Harriet is hypnotised by the painting, the more she identifies with it, becoming indistinguishable from the cannibalistic mother.

Marryat suggests that Harriet's attraction to the painting confirms her inherent depravity that is a function of her racial hybridity. The admission that the painting is 'life-like' reveals that, for her, the painting did not represent an unusual moment of guilty pleasure: this was her customary reality (Marryat, *BOV* 102). The racial hybrid

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[73] Intriguingly, the July 1872 issue of *London Society*, edited by Marryat, published a piece authored by Ouida on the artist Antoine Wiertz praising his genius but criticizing him on grounds of his fascination with 'absolute deformity' (30).

is thus not a reader momentarily intrigued by Gothic grisliness but she embodies the worst impulses triggered by a sensationalist/Gothic text. Here, the subtext is that Harriet's cannibalistic unconscious is at the root of her aesthetic 'taste.' Connecting aesthetic perception with sensual taste, Marryat highlights that Harriet is incapable of refined affective responses. Taste, as Carolyn Korsmeyer argues, is a particularly limiting sense because it 'does not furnish significant information about the external world; it delivers only bodily pleasure' ('Tastes and Pleasures'). An individual who savours things via oral consumption is solely capable of self-referential pleasure that is not 'other' directed, concerned as it is only with the immediate source of its experience. And this is precisely the problem with Harriet's sympathetic overtures—she never reciprocates the emotional labour others perform for her. In contrast, the sympathy Marryat looks to endorse is primarily about reciprocity and feeling for/with others.

However, while Marryat wants the reader to imbibe the lesson of sympathy, she wants him/her to draw certain limits. A sympathetic viewer, for Marryat, would ideally be repulsed by the scene in the painting and feel instinctive pity towards the child being eaten. But too much sympathy could also turn voyeuristic as it does with Harriet who cannot distinguish between healthy affection and consumption. In stressing sympathy, the novel is clear that it should be conditionally offered: it should be extended in moderation. Moreover, it should not be extended to all, irrespective of race or ethnicity. These conditions deeply problematize Marryat's sympathetic ideal. As a cultural value dear to British culture (though never without its critics), the novel goes out of its way to stress that sympathy across racial boundaries must be treated with extreme caution. To extend sympathy to the racial 'other' is to risk contamination by their emotions; it is also to risk draining one's psychological

resources. Marryat thus emphasizes the need to maintain distance between racially different bodies.[74] The novel is so committed to keeping white and non-white races apart that, after the initial scene between Margaret Pullen and Harriet in the hotel lobby, it rarely depicts direct physical contact between Harriet and others. Rather, Marryat leaves it to the readers to imagine what it must feel like for Harriet to sap their bodies and 'brains' (*BOV* 220).

Intriguingly, then, imposing racial limits on sympathy demands that sympathy and disgust have to be evoked together.[75] Disgust, as Sara Ahmed argues, allows one to repel the revolting subject's body, thus forming the basis of racist sentiment (88). Portraying the native as disgusting, along such self-protective lines, however, proves tricky in *Blood of the Vampire* because too much disgust can 'blunt' the general capacity for sympathy in the viewer (Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust* 96). In other words, sympathy and disgust are incompatible affective states. Carolyn Korsmeyer argues along similar lines that, when aesthetically combined, sympathy and disgust tend to cancel each other out. Alternatively, they may evoke a more principled pity for the disgusting subject in question—something Marryat clearly wants to avoid with Harriet (Korsmeyer, *Savoring Disgust* 96).[76] Too much disgust moreover runs the risk of appealing to the reader's perverser tastes by supplying sensationalized images. It

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[74] Martha Nussbaum in her influential book *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (2004) argues that in contemporary times, disgust and anxiety of contamination are at the root of the fear of mixing with other races. She suggests that this fear can be arrested by replacing it with a sympathetic imagination. Nussbaum, like many other theorists, sees sympathy and disgust as opposing emotions – with one having the power to thwart the other. As I have shown, this presumes that sympathy is fundamentally incompatible with disgust whereas there are ways in which disgust can be the precondition for sympathy.

[75] Anna Lindhe in her essay 'The Paradox of Narrative Empathy and the Form of the Novel, or What George Eliot Knew' (2016) calls this 'the paradox of empathy': 'if literature trains readers to be empathetic, it also creates an "Other" towards whom the reader is expected to be non-empathetic' (20-21).

[76] Some of the key works on disgust are: William Ian Miller's classic work *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Harvard University Press, 1997; Aurel Kolnai's *On Disgust*, edited with an introduction by Barry Smith and Carolyn Korsmeyer, Open Court, 2004; Martha Nussbaum's *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and Law*. Princeton University Press, 2004; Sianne Ngai's *Ugly Feelings*. Harvard University Press, 2005 and Colin McGinn's *The Meaning of Disgust*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

can make the reader lose his sympathetic instinct, encouraging him to derive pleasure from an unseemly aesthetic. The novel thus runs into trouble here: how to evoke a feeling of disgust without repelling the reader's sympathy? How to ensure that the reader is adequately disgusted with the 'other' without being morally corrupted?

Marryat primarily works around this problem by subtly evoking disgust in metaphorical terms: Harriet is not shown to drink blood but keeps eating bon-bons, sweetmeats, at times even fine cuisine, though in excess. The disgust is left to the level of imagination as rather than focusing on what is being eaten, Marryat presents the act of unrestrained consumption as disgusting. Omitting imagery of overt violence from her text, she develops a muted or censored Gothic horror that encodes a warning against the racial 'other,' without losing sight of ideals of civility and sympathy.[77]

This is not all. Marryat articulates a more particular form of discomfort around the potential for sympathy with the racial 'other' focused on the act of creating art. One scene from the novel may serve as a meta-commentary on its racial aesthetics. The novelist, Anthony Pennell, falls in love with Harriet and wants to draw inspiration from her for his next novel. This is shown to be a grave error—one which culminates in the death of his art and himself. Pennell asks Harriet to act as his muse: 'I shall get you to sing to me when I am in the vein for composing! You would bring me all sorts of beautiful ideas and phantasies!' (Marryat, *BOV* 220). He wants Harriet's voice to induce a state of hypnosis in him, a kind of trance state in which he

[77] Readers too registered that Marryat's fiction was attempting to balance the grisly sensational with a more refined sensibility. In the October 6, 1866 issue of *Pall Mall Gazette*, a reader, by the name of 'Bewildered' wrote to the editor that he was confused by a particular review of Marryat's novel *For Ever and for Ever*—The review claimed that the novel was '[a] remarkably bright and well-written tale…almost verging on the sensational, yet free from everything objectionable.' To this, the reader responded: 'This only made "confusion worse confounded"… Can a book be good and bad, positively—better and worse, comparatively, at the same time?' 'Periodical Criticism' in *Pall Mall Gazette*. Florence Marryat Scrapbook. Florence Marryat Collection. Beinecke Library. GEN MSS 994. Box 3. Folder 41. Series IV. Personal papers.

hopes to revive his dormant creativity. He also wants to 'draw' on Harriet for the character of his 'next heroine' (Marryat, *BOV* 220-21). This is crucial because he does not want to include Harriet as a marginal character: he wants to base a fully-fledged character on her. However, the more Pennell feels inspired by Harriet, the more his vital energy ends up being drawn. Soon after expressing a desire to flesh out a Harriet-like character in his novel, Pennell dies and the novel remains unwritten. This dramatization of the danger of giving the racial hybrid imaginative centrality echoes with Marryat's *Daughter of the Tropics* (1887), in which Kerrison, a playwright (theatre was also a literary form that Marryat was interested in) becomes dependent on a racial hybrid, the West Indian Mrs Arlington to compile his manuscript. As in the case with Pennell, the problem arises with Mr Kerrison being too sympathetic to the racial 'other.' In both cases, the British artists fail to anticipate that by involving the racial 'other' at the level of conception of art, they risk vitiating the formal composition of art. In formal terms, Marryat meant to convey that the sympathetic realism would be disrupted by sensational or melodramatic excess—an aesthetic she associates with the racial hybrid.

The Maternal Unconscious and Sympathy

Marryat regarded women as, broadly speaking, more emotionally evolved than men, and hence better suited for the role of a medium. Commenting on this common connection between feminine sympathy and mediumship in the late Victorian period, Tatiana Kontou states that '[s]ensitive nerves—the privilege of women and effeminate men—were not a sign of fragility but psychical tools with which to access the minds of the living and the dead' (*Women and Victorian Occult* 276-77). In Marryat's non-fiction, most of the effective practising mediums are women, including the famous medium from Hackney, Florence Cook and the American medium, Mrs

Oliver. In her own life, spiritualism met the emotional needs that arose from her experience of losing a child. The spiritualist dictum that death was not the final end but an entry point to an afterlife evidently consoled her in her distress. Writing fiction became another means through which she coped with bereavement: in her short story 'The Box with Iron Clamps' (1868), Blanche, the protagonist, struggles to come to terms with the death of her illegitimate child. The story takes a macabre turn when unable to part with the child, she carries its skeleton everywhere. Blanche's obsessive relationship with her deceased infant mirrors Marryat's own experience of grieving, but only to an extent. Unlike Blanche, Marryat sought closure through spiritualism, turning her grief into something more optimistic (Kontou, 'The Case of Florence' 224). Spiritualism allowed Marryat to contact her deceased daughter (so she believed) and continue the bond with her on an other-worldly plane. In a scene that could very well epitomize her conception of motherhood, she describes how she recurrently cradles the materialized spirit of her deceased child— 'I have known her come in the dark and sit on my lap and kiss my face and hands, and let me feel the defect in her mouth with my own' (Marryat, *There is no Death* 78).

These visions enabled Marryat to fulfil an emotional ideal of motherhood—especially, in relation to her child Florence who died in 1861. This, for Marryat, was the major component/reward of mediumship. In her séances, she portrays her meetings with her daughter as joyful reunions, but there is, to modern eyes especially, and even to many Victorian ones perhaps, an unhappy morbidity to this contact over many years with the dead child. Marryat justifies these repeated meetings with her daughter by deflecting attention from her own emotional needs. She constantly reminds the reader that she does not actively seek the spirit child; rather, the child returns to her of her own volition, asking for her mother's love.

Harriet and Marryat uncomfortably resemble one another in their need for validation: both want a child who depends on them. Even the rhyming of their names suggests that Harriet may be Marryat's alter ego. But Harriet's status as a racial hybrid means that, in the toxic racial imaginary of *The Blood of the Vampire*, she cannot be a maternal caregiver. Her reasons for wanting a child are shockingly selfish: 'What would I not give to have a baby of my very own to do what I liked with? I would never part with it, night nor day, I would teach it to love me so much, that it should never be happy out of my sight!' (Marryat, *BOV* 35). Harriet's ideas about parenting are consistently disturbing: she wants not to nurture but to deprive the child of a life independent of its mother. Initially showering Margaret's baby with affection, she soon becomes indifferent to her. This pattern of exploiting another's affection and then abandoning them continues through the novel: once Harriet becomes infatuated with Ralph Pullen, the baby ceases to matter—to the extent that she never enquires about its failing health (Marryat, *BOV* 64). Harriet's affection towards Bobby, the young son of Madame Gobelli, has an equally disturbing quality, oscillating between maternal care and romantic love. In an alarming scene where Harriet becomes physically intimate with Bobby, at first, she treats him like a lover but soon the affection turns motherly: 'She kissed and fondled him…caressing him as if he had been what the Baroness chose to consider him—a child of ten years old' (Marryat, *BOV* 107).

Harriet's portrayal as a bad mother has to be read in relation to the figures of the ayahs or the wet-nurses who acted as proxy mothers to so many British infants in colonies. In *Gup* (1868), her travelogue from the time she spent as a young married woman in India between 1854 and 1860, Marryat provides an unflattering character sketch of Indians in general. Painting native women as mostly crooked in nature, she

fleetingly, and grudgingly, acknowledges that they possess one good quality: motherly instinct. However, she is quick to limit the virtue of the maternal love they possess:

> Their characters may be summed up in a word: the men are cruel, crafty, and indolent; the women notoriously vicious; and the consequence is that such a thing as natural affection is little known amongst them. The greatest instinct they possess, *perhaps, is that of maternal love*; but as I have seen a woman sell her child to a man who had none of his own, for a coin worth seven shillings and a piece of cloth, without evincing the slightest emotion at parting with it…I cannot say that I have much faith in their possession of much of even this feeling, which we share in common with the brutes of the field. (emphasis added, *Gup* 35-36)[78]

In this prejudiced portrayal of the native, Marryat focuses all her attention on the native's supposed inability to feel sympathy or express affection. As always, her primary criterion for judging individuals is their ability to sympathize. It is worth noting that Marryat's opinions on the natives might have been shaped by her stay in the colony, India, at a particularly troubling time: the aftermath of the bloody Sepoy rebellion of 1857. The Rebellion or the 'war of no pity,' as Christopher Herbert calls it, traumatized the British to the extent that writers found the events 'too horrible and obscene, too "unspeakable," to be decently depicted' (20). The events also cemented the perception of the natives as untrustworthy and capable of brutal 'savagery.' While Marryat might not have witnessed the violence of the revolt first hand, as the spouse of an army officer, she possibly absorbed the British Empire's paranoia around what the angry natives could unleash.

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[78] As *The Homeward Mail* review pointed out, even by Victorian standards, this was a particularly prejudiced account of Indians: 'Our own belief is that "Florence Marryatt's" (*sic*) sweeping condemnation of the natives of India is essentially untrue. Upon this particular point that they are wanting in natural affection, we conceive that she is as wrong as it is possible to be. The natives of India have a much stronger sense of the claims of consanguinity than the natives of England.' 'Blackening the Blacks.' *The Homeward Mail*. Dec. 13, 1866. Florence Marryat Scrapbook. Florence Marryat Collection. Beinecke Library. GEN MSS 994. Box 3. Folder 41. Series IV. Personal papers.

Discussing native women in the passage, Marryat attributes to them a basic capacity to feel compassion only to radically diminish it a moment later. That maternal love is a sentiment possessed even by animals is highlighted to emphasize the moral depravity of the native. Marryat's fraught attitude towards native women exposes a hint of threat she feels from them. This is surprising considering she employed ayahs for her own children—one such ayah was 'Anemah' who Marryat portrays as an unreliable worker with an insubordinate attitude (*Gup* 32). Since Marryat primarily identified as a mother, over and above being a writer, one can speculate that she felt threatened by the native ayah who provided not only physical care for British children but their early emotional care. Denying these women a normal maternal instinct thus allows Marryat to emphasize that while they might act as temporary maternal influences, they can never match up to sympathetic British mothers.

In much the same way, even though Harriet is not Indian but Jamaican (and it is worth recalling that Jamaica was a slave society until 1833), Marryat casts aspersions on her capacity to be a caring mother. Noticing the time Harriet spends with the child, Madame Gobelli states that Harriet is acting like a 'nursemaid' to the baby (Marryat, *BOV* 40). And indeed Harriet is the only woman able to quieten the child and make her sleep. But rather than getting the child to sleep comfortably as a good nursemaid would, Harriet exercises a hypnotic influence, like 'opium,' or 'soothing syrup' which induces a comatose sleep—that leads to the baby's death (Marryat, *BOV* 78). Her toxic motherly instinct also contaminates any healthy maternal presence in her vicinity, including the black wet-nurse who nursed her in infancy (Marryat, *BOV* 199).

Harriet inherits this hypnotic ability to destroy from her mixed-race mother who, we are told, killed her own mother during her delivery (Marryat, *BOV* 83). Dr Phillips portrays a strikingly graphic image of the mother, Mrs Carey:

> At thirty, when I saw her she was a revolting spectacle. Gluttonous and obese—her large eyes rolling and sensual lips protruding as if she were always licking them in anticipation of her prey. She was said to be 'Obeah' too by the natives and they ascribed all the deaths and diseases that took place on the plantation, to her malign influence… she possesses the fatal attributes of the Vampire that affected her mother's birth—that endued (*sic*) her with the thirst for blood, which characterised her life… (Marryat, *BOV* 92-95)

The 'half caste' slave mother's body with its 'rolling' eyes, 'protruding' lips and constantly 'licking' tongue moves threateningly in all directions (Marryat, *BOV* 83, 92). Harriet's nameless mother's 'flabby' body is a source of threat but strangely enough, her obesity nullifies the danger, making her more like a grotesque image or idol than a living character (Marryat, *BOV* 83). Dr Phillips tells Margaret Pullen that Harriet's mother ate so much that he feared she would stop moving (Marryat, *BOV* 83). The mother's lethargic fatness quarantines her infectious influence, preventing her from being mobile. Harriet, in contrast, is a greater threat because she is eager to move beyond the island to the imperial metropole. Dr Phillips claims that Harriet's agility is a function of her young age and as she grows older, she will transform into a version of her obese mother. For Phillips, it is only a matter of time before Harriet's predatory interest in food and her demand for love will morph into an explicit cannibalism.

While Harriet's voracious behaviour promises to turn her into her mother, the differences between the mother and the daughter are telling. Harriet's mother is shown to consciously enjoy, in Dr Phillips's words, 'the sight and smell of' blood as 'she would taste it on the tip of her finger' (Marryat, *BOV* 83). For an image meant to represent cannibalism, it remains an oddly delicate image—clearly attempting to

control the level of disgust in the reader. Again, Marryat spares the reader a description of cannibalism that would threaten the reader's preservation of a healthy sympathy. But another unexpected actor enjoys the 'nauseating' sight. Dr Phillips seems to relish describing the mother's gluttonous consumption, thus deriving pleasure from what should disgust him. His prurient description of the 'spectacle' of the mother's body, though presented as a diagnostic exercise, reeks of voyeurism (Marryat, *BOV* 92). If Mrs Carey is indeed so revolting, then, why does he insist on looking at her and describing her body parts in detail? Marryat however allows Dr Phillips to delve into details because his description serves to warn against mixing with the hybrid.

The novel even attributes the deaths of the slaves on the plantation to the mother's magnetic powers. While Harriet's British father carries out the act of murdering the slaves, the novel suggests that her mother exercises a toxic influence over him. As I will show in the next section, the novel does not entirely exonerate the husband for the atrocities he commits. Marryat shows that the slaves too view Harriet's mother's 'influence' as the cause of the carnage (83). They regard her as a master practitioner of 'Obeah', a hybrid religious tradition from the Caribbean that Dr Phillips describes as 'diabolical witchcraft' (Marryat, *BOV* 92). Obeah '[r]itual specialists were *bricoleurs*, drawing from belief systems and cultural traditions indigenized in the Caribbean over the course of centuries of coexistence and synthesis between Judeo-Christian and West African religiosity' (Paton and Forde 23).[79] Crucially, obeah (not always given the capital O Marryat affords it) was characterized

[79] Colonial administrator Hesketh J. Bell traced the genealogy of obeah in his book *Obeah: Witchcraft in the West Indies* (1893): 'All these dark superstitions and beliefs in the occult power were undoubtedly brought over from Africa by the cargoes of slaves formerly imported into the West Indies, and it is astonishing to see how firm a hold these same superstitions have over the minds of these people… [t]he etymology of Obi has been traced to a very antique source, stretching far back into Egyptian mythology. A serpent in the Egyptian language was called "*Ob*" or "*Aub*"' (5-6).

by a cultural in-between-ness that assisted its reach across different Caribbean communities. Harriet's slave mother is, moreover, not just said to be practising obeah but '*to be* obeah,' implying that she embodies and personifies this 'malign' psychic hybridity.

Obeah's hybrid composition, in particular its varied influences, possibly made it more incomprehensible to British colonists. Certainly it was a source of great anxiety. After the Tacky rebellion of 1760, the colonial government 'exaggerated the antisocial dimensions of obeah,' viewing it as not only a religious but a political tool for consolidating communal ties (Bilby and Handler 153). Marryat's rejection of obeah differs from the colonial government's paranoid ban on such practices in Jamaica. Considering her own spiritualist leanings, Marryat could not simply reject obeah on grounds of superstition. Obeah, for her, represented a psychic/religious extension of racial hybridity that made it inferior to the racially pure practices of spiritualism. As opposed to the blood-thirsty, violence-inducing rituals of obeah, her séances epitomised 'superior' cultural values of sympathetic magnetism.

In the novel, Marryat turns obeah into something feared and 'othered' not only by the colonizers but also by the slaves. While, historically, native populations in Jamaica did internalize a fear towards obeah, their attitude was a result of a more complex negotiation with the religion than the novel presupposes. The natives grew fearful of obeah partly due to the colonial state's criminalization of such practices.[80] Marryat attaches a different meaning to the slaves' rejection of obeah in keeping with her racial logic. The slaves reject obeah and, by extension, Mrs Carey because they too detest hybridity of any kind—psychic or racial. Marryat thus makes it amply clear

[80] Diana Paton suggests that '[t]he much deeper prohibition on obeah [amongst native communities] emerges because obeah itself is a construct produced through colonial (and postcolonial) law making and law enforcement over more than two centuries' ('Obeah Acts: Producing and Policing' 3).

that to be a hybrid is worse than being a pure-blooded black person. Even in her novel *The Daughter of the Tropics* (1887), the racially mixed Lola Arlington wishes she was 'born a veritable negress' rather than with a 'taint' on her blood (78). Marryat sets up another analogy to underscore the abnormality of racial hybridity. Harriet's mother is not only a racial hybrid, she also possesses an odd animalistic strain of vampire blood—her own mother 'was bitten by a vampire bat' (Marryat, *BOV* 83). Howard Malchow argues that the vampire bat is a 'nearly superfluous' distraction in a narrative primarily about racial anxiety (170). On the contrary, I read Marryat's incorporation of the animalistic element as accentuating the fear of racial hybridity. Racial and inter-species hybridity is commensurable in Marryat's eyes with both transgressions crossing boundaries that ought to be respected. That is, interbreeding between two races is on a par with, or worryingly close to, breeding with another species, the most taboo of all transgressions.

Though a mixed-race 'quadroon' herself, the irony is that Harriet is shown to despise Africans. Cooing over Margaret Pullen's baby, Harriet declares that she prefers white babies over 'little niggers who smell so nasty' (Marryat, *BOV* 14). Harriet even hates her mother, Mrs Carey, talking about her with 'sullen contempt' (Marryat, *BOV* 35). It is ironic that Harriet's insensitivity is established through her hatred and maltreatment of Africans. Blaming her black blood as the root-cause of her cruelty, the novel traces her unsympathetic temperament to her heredity. Harriet thus appears to be a self-hating hybrid for whom blackness is both the condition and target of her insensitivity:

> We had plenty of niggers on the coffee plantation, regular African fellows, with woolly heads and blubber lips, and yellow whites to their eyes. When I was a little thing of four years old, Pete used to let me whip the little niggers for a treat, when they had done anything wrong. It used to make me laugh to see them wriggle their legs under the whip and cry! (Marryat, *BOV* 20)

A paradox frames this scene: while the novel presents Harriet's prejudice towards the slaves as an instance of her meanness, it, in effect, overlooks the violence inherent in the British imperial enterprise. Marryat's partiality comes through in an instance she recounts in *Gup*: 'I always felt the *keenest sympathy* with the action of one officer who… gave the domestic (a young Mussulman) such an energetic kick that he sent him flying' (emphasis added; 35). Here, Marryat commends an unprovoked act of violence by a British officer, yet when Harriet is the aggressor, the novel portrays it negatively. For Marryat, racial hybrids posed a real threat to empire, threatening to take over its operations. As Daniel Livesay argues, in the early nineteenth century, the status of mixed-race individuals was tenuous with the colonial state denying the population rights to inheritance (115). Though repellent, Harriet's bias against native Africans reflects the changed reality of post-Abolition Jamaica. Harriet's elevated class position as a coffee plantation owner's daughter and the fact that she is partially white entitle her to be the next owner of the landholding. The novel presents her dehumanizing description of Africans and her use of the word 'nigger' as proof of her insensitivity, insisting that, though she might have drops of white blood, she is not fit to rule or colonize. While British colonial policies were undeniably racist, by 1860s, racist jargon was commonly censored in public discourse. This was not because British imperialism was more 'sensitive' but there was a concerted attempt to present the imperial project as a civilized enterprise.[81] By highlighting Harriet's cruel

[81] Marryat herself engaged in this act of painting pro-empire voices, including her anti-abolitionist grandfather, Joseph Marryat, as 'liberal' (Joseph 192). Terra Walston Joseph notes that Florence's portrayal of Joseph Marryat's passionate abolitionism is 'selectively rosy' when, in reality, he was arguing for the opposite (192). Catherine Hall, in her history of the Marryat family in the West Indies, writes: 'The Marryats were another slave-owning family who saw opportunities across new sites of empire in the wake of emancipation. Captain Frederick Marryat's father was Joseph Marryat, a merchant and ship-owner with interests across the Caribbean and North America. He was in the House of Commons for two periods and spoke in defence of the slave trade and slavery. He published pamphlets on the subject, most notably his *Thoughts on the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Civilization of Africa* in 1816, which was part of a long-running debate with leading abolitionists James Stephen and Zachary Macaulay. Marryat Senior died shortly before abolition, but his oldest son

treatment of the workers, Marryat suggests that the racial hybrid is too insensitive and 'uncivilized' to be in a position of power (Marryat, *BOV* 20). For Marryat, black people were certainly 'incapable of modern forms of governance,' but the racial hybrid was even more unqualified for the job (Walston 205).

The English New Woman and Unconscious Failures of Sympathy

The novel does not present Harriet as an isolated case of extreme emotional dysfunction. While Harriet is portrayed as a product of her racial background, and to some extent a victim of circumstances, many English women are shown to be similarly degraded. Marryat suggests that an infection is internally at work within England, symbolized by the heartless, unsympathetic attitudes of women. As I show, Marryat treats the presence of anomalous traits in English culture as a form of cultural/psychic hybridity that does not bode well for the future. Casting an introspective glance at English culture, Marryat imagines that vampiric women are on the rise in Britain. Whenever the novel describes Harriet's vampiric tendencies, soon after, the focus shifts onto Madame Gobelli (an English-born woman, allegedly of servant origins, who has married a wealthy German baron) to show that English women are equally emotionally stunted and withholding affection. Madame Gobelli, whose name possibly plays on the word 'gobble,' is a ruthless British businesswoman with a hyper-consumerist attitude to life and relationships. Like Margaret Pullen, she visits Heyst on a holiday with her family but is avoided by others due to her boorish attitude. A member of the *nouveau riche* gentry, she lacks any sense of decorum, as is evident in her treatment of servants. The novel begins with her yelling at a waiter. Horrified by her behaviour, Elinor Leyton recounts a rumoured incident about Madam

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Joseph, born in Grenada, carried on the family traditions…Captain Frederick Marryat inherited from his father and drew income from the West Indian estates. He claimed in later years, "We are all ruined by West India property being so bad"' (37).

Gobelli 'advanc[ing] upon her coachman' with 'a kitchen cleaver' after an altercation (Marryat, *BOV* 24). A similar incident is recounted by Marryat in *Gup* in which a colonial officer's wife physically abused her servants in India. Marryat presents this episode as an example of how a prolonged stay in the colony can corrupt civilized English women (it is worth noting here that she does not censure a male colonial officer for misbehaving with native servants). The tone suggests that English women who live in the colony for too long not only become insensitive but start to imitate the 'savage' mannerisms of the natives. Indeed, the pleasure Harriet derives from whipping African workers finds a parallel in Madame Gobelli hitting her son Bobby with a stick (Marryat, *BOV* 23). Madame Gobelli, however, has never lived in the colony; her temperament is very much a product of a bad English upbringing.

Sympathetic capability is treated as an extension of aesthetic taste in the novel. Like Harriet, Madame Gobelli devours food with a voracious appetite, but her taste is shown to be inferior to that of the racial hybrid. Her vulgarity not only reflects her class origins, but marks a failure of refined feeling that, for Marryat, defined femininity. Her home too is indicative of the problem: the 'Red house'—the colour red carrying overtones of blood and violence—lacks signs of comfort or care. Characterized by an 'incongruous' aesthetic hybridity, it stylistically yokes together the exotic with the mundane, the expensive with the tawdry (Marryat, *BOV* 112). Outlandish pieces of luxury seem to be strewn amidst the décor to conceal the moral and spiritual poverty at the heart of the house. As Harriet notes, the plush 'two dozen Moroccan chairs' do not pair well with the ordinary fare of bread, butter, and cheese that is served at dinner (Marryat, *BOV* 118). In all, Madame Gobelli's house is the antithesis of well-ordered domesticity. Her failed domestic affairs strike a jarring contrast to Marryat's house, described by Helen Black as a home that 'has a look of

thorough snugness and comfort' (Black 82). At her home, Marryat is the hostess par excellence serving tea to the interviewer on a table covered with a 'prettily embroidered cloth' (Black 92). Though a far cry from the author's elegant domesticity, Gobelli's house too shows subtle signs of civility—Anthony Pennell notes that Gobelli's taste in porcelain tea cups is the best in London (Marryat, *BOV* 160). When Gobelli introduces her china collection, her house momentarily resembles Marryat's study which 'displayed a variety of china plates…' (Black 82). At such moments, not only is Gobelli's taste redeemed but she becomes 'almost womanly as her eyes rested lovingly on her art treasures' (Marryat, *BOV* 160). Marryat's point is that only through cultivating refinement (both in taste and feelings) can English women re-connect with their civilizing mission.

Everything about Madam Gobelli is shown to be out of kilter. Critiquing the figure of the 'new woman,' Marryat suggests that this woman's involvement in the male domain of business has made her forget the feminine value of kindness. Her greed for wealth is shown to taint the way she manages her relationships:

> Having plenty of money at her command, she [Madame Gobelli] was used to take (*sic*) violent fancies to people—taking them up suddenly, loading them with presents and favours for as long as it pleased her, and then dropping them as suddenly, without why or wherefore—even insulting them if she could not shake them off without doing so. The Baron was completely under her thumb; more than that, he was servile in her presence, which astonished those people, who did not know that amongst her other arrogant insistences, the Baroness laid claim to holding intercourse with certain supernatural and invisible beings who had the power to wreak vengeance on all those who offended her. (Marryat, *BOV* 6)

An emotionally erratic person, Gobelli treats people like a buyable commodity. Sensing that Harriet has inherited vast sums of money, Gobelli showers attention on her, even taking her to the Red House, only to soon grow weary of her. This quick changeability of emotions is incompatible with sympathy: Gobelli's incessant 'taking

up' people, and 'dropping them as suddenly' suggests an inability to extend care in a sustained way (Marryat, *BOV* 6). Lacking even in instinctive maternal sympathy, her occult powers are feared by all, including Bobby who calls his mother a 'witch' capable of 'rais[ing] up the dead' (Marryat, *BOV* 101). Marlene Tromp argues that, conventionally, mediums conducted séances in their homes and often household objects/ activities, especially the preparation of food, became part of the rituals of séance ('Eating, Feeding' 291). Spiritual mediation, for Marryat, was about a sympathetic connection that she strongly associated with the spirit of domesticity. Madame Gobelli perverts the filial energy of the séance. Turning spiritual mediation into 'business,' she conducts meetings in a room that nobody is allowed to enter. According to her son, 'horrible things happen' there, along the lines of voodoo (Marryat, *BOV* 101). Her power to inspire fear notwithstanding, she is a fraud, most of her prophecies about Harriet falling in love turn out to be false (Marryat, *BOV* 104). Affective disability and psychic mediumship are linked in the novel—the more unsympathetic a character, the more flawed their psychic powers. Gobelli's exploitative use of spiritualism is thus no better than the dark magic of Harriet's 'Obeah' mother.

While Marryat attacks the erratic emotionalism of the *nouveau riche*, she does not spare women of finer breeding either. The aristocratic Elinor Leyton epitomizes the dangers of extreme propriety and is shown to be too reserved around her fiancé, Ralph Pullen: 'She consented to sit in the balcony with him for a few minutes, but she would not permit his chair to be placed too close to hers' (Marryat, *BOV* 60). Marryat even blames Elinor's reserve for Ralph being tempted to have an affair with Harriet. Setting up an unflattering correlation between men and infants, Marryat suggests that men require to be coddled as infants, and it is the woman's duty to provide the

coddling. Marryat's point is that the prudish attitude of women like Elinor who repress their sexual/romantic desire will ultimately stall the reproduction of the race. The novel even hints that Elinor's inhibition has led to a deviant sexual orientation as 'all her friends were of her own sex' (Marryat, *BOV* 29). Both excess of propriety and the lack thereof are thus treated as pathological disorders in the novel.

However, the novel does offer English women the opportunity to reform themselves—an opportunity not available to the racial 'other.' Margaret Pullen serves as a model to other English women teaching them the value of sympathy and maternal love. She is, as Dr Phillips calls her in the novel, the 'true woman' (Marryat, *BOV* 98). To say this is to contest the view taken by Octavia Davis, who argues that, like Harriet and Madame Gobelli, Margaret Pullen embodies energy that is 'anabolic' or parasitic in nature (47). It is a reading that overlooks the extensive emotional labour Margaret performs in the novel: after Bobby's death, she visits the paralyzed Madame Gobelli to comfort her with the notion of an afterlife—a gesture that might remind us of Marryat's offer to console George Eliot (Marryat, *BOV* 210). Mourning becomes a rite of passage through which Gobelli acknowledges the presence of God and learns to repent of her sins.

Marryat shows that English women's affective disability negatively affects men rendering them effete. In a reversal of roles, Madame Gobelli takes on the role of the patriarch in her marriage, controlling her husband. Her supposed ability to contact the other world of spirits to terrorize others is offered as reason for her husband's timidity. The men associated with Madam Gobelli evince signs of a diminished masculinity: her husband, Baron Gobelli, is described as 'one of those mild German faces, with pale watery blue eyes' while, her son, Bobby, has a 'sickly and uninteresting', 'worn out', 'pale,' and 'anaemic' demeanour (Marryat, *BOV* 8, 118,

100). Ironically enough, Madam Gobelli undermines Bobby's masculinity through her attempts to make him more manly, repeatedly chiding him for 'fainting like hysterical gals' (Marryat, *BOV* 126). Though Harriet's arrival in the Gobelli house triggers Bobby's untimely death, the novel suggests that the boy's death can be traced to a deeper cause: a long-drawn-out period of neglect by Madame Gobelli. Andrew Mangham, in his study of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's fiction, observes that 'faulty maternal management' is a trope commonly found in sensation novels: left to their own moral devices, 'a race of men […] have succumbed to "a lingering decline, [a] wasting away"' (108, quoting Mary Braddon's *Lady Lisle* (1860)). Marryat's depiction stands out in that context for the polemical urgency with which she links 'bad' mothering to the perceived threat of racial degeneration and the deterioration of the British Empire.

The novel thus reads like an advice manual to English women to cultivate a balanced sense of civility to combat the threat of 'savagery.' Marryat implies that English women, except the sympathetic Margaret Pullen, are plagued by an affective dysfunctionality. The novel suggests that if English women do not mend their moral and emotional outlook, the damage they do to their children could be passed down through generations. At some level, Marryat sees psychological degeneracy as a form of racial hybridity. Contact with non-white women can affect the hereditary future as women might imbibe the mental characteristics of another race. Metaphors of hybridity, Hammack and others have noted, are repeatedly used for characters who, though racially pure, display signs of being morally and culturally corrupted: Madam Gobelli is described as a 'strange mixture'—her Anglo-Saxon racial identity being incompatible with her unsympathetic temperament (Marryat, *BOV* 144). Mixing of

any kind is seen as worrying: Ralph Pullen's willingness to 'mix himself up with the Gobelli's' is a source of acute concern to Margaret (Marryat, *BOV* 65).

Harriet holds up a worrying mirror to English women. She represents the culmination of the emotional dysfunctionality that afflicts English women in the novel. On several occasions in the novel, Madam Gobelli introduces Harriet to others as her 'daughter' (Marryat, *BOV* 102). Though not biologically related, Marryat's insinuation is that this is not a far-fetched possibility. Even as a racial hybrid, Harriet is physically almost indistinguishable from a English woman. Octavia Davis describes her appearance as fitting into 'conventional white middle class feminine delicacy' (44). As I will discuss in the next section, the novel is as much about preserving Englishness as it is about the fear of the racial hybrid—the significance of Harriet's English inheritance, the role of her white father, Henry Brandt, thus cannot be underplayed in the narrative.

Paternal impressions and Sympathy

While the novel does undoubtedly evince extreme paranoia about the mixing of races, a closer reading reveals a more complex picture in which the father's role cannot be discounted. In this section, I examine the novel's portrayal of the father figure in relation to Marryat's conception of heredity, and link it to her own obsession with paternal lineage. Tracing the logic of heredity in Marryat's novel *The Strange Transfiguration of Hannah Stubbs* (1896), Christine Ferguson rightly claims that 'the sins of the father routinely outweigh the role of women in bearing and shaping their offspring' (*Determined Spirits* 106). The same can be said of *Blood of the Vampire*.

Harriet's father, Dr Brandt, is described as a British doctor-cum-vivisectionist who conducted ruthless experiments on animals that led to his banishment from

Switzerland. Exiled for his acts, Brandt retreats to the colony, Jamaica. Away from the scrutinizing gaze of the Swiss government, Jamaica serves as a space where Dr Brandt can carry out vivisection with impunity. In the colony, 'diseased' and old native bodies become interchangeable with animal bodies and Brandt's plantation soon turns into a graveyard of human bones (Marryat, *BOV* 93). A carryover trope from sensation fiction as well as degeneration fiction (there is a clear debt to earlier novels such as Wilkie Collins's *Heart and Science* (1883) as well as H. G. Wells's nearly contemporary *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896)), vivisection stands in the novel for the abject loss of the ability to sympathize, a degeneration of Brandt's moral conscience that is reflected in the callousness with which he kills not only animals but humans.

Dr Phillips highlights the extent of Dr Brandt's atrocities in the colony and the ensuing consequences of his actions:

> I was stationed in Jamaica with my regiment, some fifteen years ago, when this girl was a child of six years, running half naked about her father's plantation, uncared for by either parent, and associating solely with the negro servants. Brandt was a brute—the perpetrator of such atrocities in vivisection and other scientific experiments, that he was finally slaughtered on his own plantation by his servants, and everyone said it served him right. (Marryat, *BOV* 92)

In a vicious cycle of degeneration, bad parenting creates an insensitive offspring. Most importantly, in the case of Brandt, rather than the racially 'superior' plantation owner being disgusted with degenerate slaves, the sentiment is reversed. Brandt's actions are so heinous that even the slaves, whom Marryat considers innately morally inferior, are offended by him. The intolerance of the slaves to Brandt's brutality shows that he has crossed all limits of decency. The slaves's moral revolt translates into a political revolt as they murder him on his own plantation to general approval. Intriguingly, a justified revolt against the plantation owner is motivated not by a

demand for freedom or liberty but by moral disgust. A white plantation owner has to lead by example: he must 'act' with sympathy towards others (animals and slaves) or he forfeits his right to rule the property.

In her non-fiction, Marryat implies that the tropical environment of the colonies could corrode an individual's mind. However, at no point does the novel insinuate that the backdrop of the colony alone brings out this heinous side to Dr Brandt. In fact, it clearly establishes that he was morally depraved prior to his move to the colony. Rather than the colony bringing out the worst in him, Brandt misuses his power as a plantation owner, transforming his estate into a 'laboratory' where he treats native bodies as expendable objects of study.

In short, the novel does not turn a blind eye to Brandt's misdeeds. While Harriet's mother is indeed portrayed as the primary culprit for her unsympathetic nature, it is important to pause and ask—why does Marryat portray Harriet's father in extremely negative terms? Unlike a classic portrayal of hybridity where the source of contamination is the outsider or the foreigner, here, Dr Brandt is shown to be equally at fault. The novel urges us to read Harriet's brutishness as a direct corollary of British imperial insensitivity; an insensitivity that finds its symbolic equivalence in his interbreeding with the 'Obeah' half-caste woman. The mother is described as 'a fiend,' a 'fitting match' for Henry Brandt (Marryat, *BOV* 83). Dr Phillips's concluding statements on Harriet's hereditary composition hold both parents culpable—'[a] woman born in such circumstances—bred of sensuality, cruelty, and heartlessness—cannot in the order of things, be modest, kind or sympathetic' (Marryat, *BOV* 85). This emphasis on the psychological depravity of both parents momentarily draws attention away from the fact that they are racially different. Even though Brandt does not possess hypnotic influence, his lack of sympathy shapes his

daughter's magnetic capacities. Here, Marryat is, perhaps, surprisingly, suggesting that a gross failure of sympathy can develop in superior races without the blood being polluted. At this point, one can retrieve a minimal degree of progressivism from the novel, as it gainsays its own reliance on race as the major determinant in moral behaviour.

The racial logic underlying Marryat's depiction of psychology is neither consistent nor predictable. Susan Zieger traces an ambivalence in the novel claiming it is at once racist but also somewhat critical of imperial violence (223). While I agree that there are unresolved contradictions in the text, I go on to demonstrate that this critical depiction of British characters does not translate into an introspective critique of the imperial enterprise. By portraying such unflattering British characters, Marryat's aim is not to undercut claims of English superiority. In other words, this is not an instance of a classic Gothic reversal wherein the most evolved of races is shown to carry a latent strain of savagery. Instead, it signifies a conservative nostalgia for sympathetic values that Marryat believes formerly defined English culture. It acts as a warning against forces of impurity threatening the psychological degradation of the British race. That is, once the English lose the cultural values of sympathy that supposedly distinguish them from other races, they will freely breed with 'savages' and might as well *be* 'savages.' Insensitivity not only begets insensitivity; it is also attracted to insensitivity. The only way to prevent such contamination is for the English to maintain their psychological (and psychic) superiority by preserving the moral and cultural refinement that supports it—and for that, in Marryat's view, the nation must primarily look to its women.

Brenda Hammack has suggested, persuasively, that the novel illustrates the theory of imaginationism, popular at this time, which argued that pregnant mothers

passed on their psychological impressions to the child (888). My argument focuses on the impressions from Harriet's father that equally shape the development of her mind. The English father figure cannot be treated as marginal because, of the two parents, Harriet identifies more with him. Focusing on the father also helps us trace another affective note in the novel that differs from the disgust for the mother—a longing for a sympathetic white paternal figure.

Paternal haunting is a persistent feature of Marryat's oeuvre: her father, the celebrated novelist Captain Frederick Marryat, casts a long shadow on her works. Black's 1906 interview with Florence was, indeed, largely devoted to a discussion of Captain Marryat's works. At the risk of subsuming Marryat's identity into her father's, Black saw as a direct transference of skill from father to daughter: 'Born of such a gifted father, it is small wonder that the child should have inherited brilliant talents' (98). In the interview, Marryat proudly flaunts her paternal inheritance, pointing the interviewer to Captain Marryat's maritime relics including paintings of sea wrecks and diamonds from Burma (Black 97). Marryat wholeheartedly embraced her identity as Captain Marryat's daughter—and for good reason. Her father's name allowed her to tap into a network of well-established literary connections. It garnered her credibility at the start of her career, and undoubtedly assisted her path to publication. Reviews of her first novel *Love's Conflict* (1865) repeatedly alluded to her 'hereditary talent'—and, to an extent, she tried to keep her father's nautical flame alive. While not well known, some of the fictions she wrote, including *The Little Marine and the Japanese Lily* (1891), were tales for young boys—hearty stories of adventure at sea that attempted to carry on her father's legacy.

Under Florence's editorial guidance, in the January 1873 issue of *London Society*, T. H. S. Escott published an article titled 'Land and Sea', extolling the fiction

written by Frederick Marryat and his contemporary Charles Lever as representative of English values:

> The existence (at sea) depicted both by Lever and by Marryat was the very embodiment of every idea of liberty, of fun, of rollicking dash, and of prosperous pluck which a youngster could conceive. *No base desires, no ignoble appetites* were ever excited or encouraged by a single line which either of these writers ever penned. The chord of sympathy which they struck, if now and then somewhat extravagant in its note, had, at least, a ring always manly, always healthful, invigorating, English, and pure. (emphasis added; 34)

Lever is treated as a contrast to Frederick Marryat in the piece—as an author who could not match his greatness. Escott writes that Marryat's clean hearty images of heroism at sea shaped an entire generation's idea of fun; a fun that was infused with moral values of courage and valour. The 'rollicking dash,' the alliterative 'prosperous pluck' recall the thrilling excitement of Marryat's fictional adventures. In the very next line though, the author clarifies—in a reference obviously aimed at sensation fiction—that Marryat's content did not vitiate the morality of the previous generation. It never whetted any appetite for unwholesome subjects. Rather, according to Escott, it brought the reader closer to the refreshing air of the sea, imaginatively invigorating him (the reader is presumably male). Reading this fiction inculcated virtues such as 'constancy to purpose, loyalty to duty, loyalty to friends' in a majority of British men (Escott 44). The 'chord of sympathy' his fiction evoked, produced physically and emotionally healthy readers—men with a strong sense of English-ness who often set out to serve the empire (Escott 34).

But even as modelling herself on her father proved to be a smart business move, it led to unflattering comparisons between their works. Marryat never managed to scale the heights of literary success achieved by her father—in part, perhaps, because she never garnered such unqualified praise for the morality of her writing. Critics mostly disapproved of her overwrought fictions contrasting them with the

'wholesome' adventure tales her father wrote. In Marryat's defence, she was dealing with the conventions of a different genre—the sensation novel. Even so, critics took conflicting views of whether her writing was healthy or diseased. As Andrew Maunder notes in his appraisal of the reviews of her first novel *Love's Conflict* (1865), a few critics praised the gentility of her fiction but others were put off by her '"vulgarity" and "want of cultivation"' (11). Later in her career, the contradiction would be sharper and more triangulated: between high morality, interest in spiritualism and '"hard, coarse realism" [that] "offend[s] cultivated taste"' (qtd in Maunder 20). This contradiction, I argue, was not just a problem of perception on the critics' part. Marryat was consciously trying to tailor the sensational genre into something more morally and spiritually salubrious. And *The Blood of the Vampire* reveals the strains involved in that endeavour as it works with and against her paternal literary inheritance.

Marryat's decision to introduce a seaside setting, the town of Heyst, at the very beginning of *Blood of Vampire* is undoubtedly a nod to her father's work. The sea possesses a restless optimistic energy in Captain Marryat's novels of imperial expansion. Those novels inspired a generation of men to participate in the imperial project and move beyond the islands of Britain. In Marryat's most autobiographical novel *Midshipman Easy* (1836), the sea is the only space that according to Jack, the philosopher-sailor, belongs to everyone. Jack comically harps on the value of equal rights for all and befriends a former black slave called Mesty while traveling at sea. Through the course of the novel, Mesty and Jack share a genuine affective bond, rescuing each other from danger. However, this racial interaction has its limits. Patrick Brantlinger persuasively writes that the sea in Marryat's work presents a place where hierarchies are preserved and rigidly reinforced (*Rule of Darkness* 58). This is

most evident by the close of the novel: Mesty, the black slave, though depicted sympathetically, is not allowed to scale the ranks and the status quo is preserved.

In *Blood of the Vampire*, Marryat intensifies the imperialist complacencies of her father's novels. The sea takes on darker Gothic connotations in her novel: it hovers in the backdrop not as a source of self-realization or comfort but as the carrier of racial infection from the colonies. The earlier novel, *Daughter of the Tropics*, had already moved in this direction, portraying the seaside harbour as a site of strange occult influence from the colonies. The racial hybrid, Mrs Arlington's Jamaican grandmother 'maman' practices voodoo and lives on the East India docks (Marryat, *Daughter* 71). The docks are more generally the point at which infection enters the country, with their 'unwholesome' food shops and 'seamen, navvies, Chinamen, and West Indian negroes' milling around (Marryat, *Daughter* 72). Even in *Blood of the Vampire*, the dunes of Heyst, next to the sea, emanate a strange and oppressive odour—an odour presumably wafting from the colonies (Marryat, *BOV* 22).

Like her father, Marryat emphasises the value of sympathy, but her novel forbids interracial contact at sea. The journey from Jamaica to Heyst proves traumatic for Harriet's European friend, Olga Brimont. Afflicted with bouts of seasickness, Olga complains of a 'feeling of emptiness' as if 'someone was sitting on her chest' throughout the journey (Marryat, *BOV* 27). Harriet sympathizes with her friend, yet this moment of tenderness further exacerbates her seasickness. The novel ultimately shows that Olga's seasickness is not a reaction to the ocean but a result of the interracial proximity between her and Harriet enabled by the sea voyage.

If the sea in Captain Marryat's novels is represented with imperial optimism, in *Blood of the Vampire*, it is an entry point for discussion of the contemporary

condition of British Empire—no longer (post 1857 rebellion in India) able to be so complacent about its future. The reference to nautical elements strongly reminiscent of her father's moral romance mode in *The Blood of the Vampire* indicates Marryat's longing for the period of past imperial glory and racial purity in the novel. Margaret, for example, praises the swimming abilities of Englishmen in contrast to the clumsy swimming efforts of the Belgians and Germans in Heyst: 'All the Pullens are wonderful swimmers'—as if all that is needed to rescue the empire from the threat of racial contamination is a course in swimming lessons at the public schools (Marryat, *BOV* 32). More broadly, where the sea in Captain Marryat's novels signified a value system that was distinctly English, Florence uses the sea to express a longing for an imperilled ideal.

Marryat mobilizes the distance the oceans impose between the home country and the colonizer country as an affective trope, to discuss the failing emotional health of officers stationed in the colonies, and the emotional health of the imperial nation. The beginning of the novel is notable for the absence of men as the readers meet a group of women holidaying in Heyst. Both Margaret Pullen and Eliza Leyton's husband and fiancé, stationed in the corners of the empire, are expected to return home for the holidays. In one scene, the women longingly gaze at the sea thinking about the arrival of their partners:

> Margaret Pullen sat where they had left her, moving about the perambulator whilst her eyes, like Elinor's, were fixed upon the tranquil water … She was thinking of her husband, Colonel Arthur Pullen the elder brother of Miss Leyton's fiancé, who was toiling out in India for baby and herself. It had been a terrible blow to Margaret to let him go out alone after only one year of happy wedded life, but the expected advent of her little daughter at the time had prohibited her undertaking so long a journey and she had been compelled to remain behind. (Marryat, *BOV* 8)

Looking at the sea, Margaret is reminded of the voyage taken by her husband to India and the distance that separates them. The languor and the stillness of the sea foreground her sombre mood as she longs to be united with her husband. A few pages later, Margaret's anxiety amplifies as she fears that she and her husband might not be able to meet again (Marryat, *BOV* 9). The child looms in the background as a reminder of a family that is incomplete. Here, we confront an image of a woman looking seawards whose family has been put under unnatural strain by empire.

In her own life, Marryat may have blamed the breakdown of her first marriage on the distance between India and England. For a span of six years between 1854 and 1860, Marryat (sixteen at the outset) lived with her husband in India as a colonial officer's wife. Her husband, Thomas Ross Church, was a career officer with the twelfth Madras Staff Corps of the British army posted in Penang, Malaya (and later India) from 1854 to 1860 (Edmundson 74). During this time, she travelled widely around India, staying in Bangalore for 'twelve months' (Marryat, *Gup* 53). After 1857, the British Empire was still grappling with the effects of the traumatic Sepoy Rebellion in the subcontinent. With the South of India being relatively unaffected by the rebellion, it is likely that Thomas Ross Church was not involved in quelling the revolt. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the revolt, army regiments in India were more suspicious of the natives. This mistrust of colonized populations permeated the domestic interior of British officials, where most servants were natives. Marryat, in *Gup*, sounds dissatisfied with her stay in the imperial colony that demanded regular interaction with natives. In 1860, she suffered a breakdown and returned to England while pregnant with her fourth child (the baby Florence died ten days after she was born). Historian Mary A. Procida argues that that officers' families in the colony were 'focused not on the private domestic pleasures of hearth and home but on the very

public business of ruling imperial India' (29). I trace in Marryat's writing a desire to reconcile life at the imperial frontier with the Victorian ideal of wholesome domesticity. As Éadaoin Agnew demonstrates, Marryat never fully adapted to colonial bungalows and possibly longed to re-connect with a comfortable way of life that she felt was missing in the colony (31).

The hostile conditions in the colony did not leave Marryat feeling disenchanted with empire *per se*. Rather, her writing indicates a desire to educate the British public about the difficulties of life in the colonies. In *Blood of the Vampire*, Anthony Pennell relays to Harriet in great detail the trials and tribulations faced by British officer wives during their stay in the colony. At this point, bizarrely enough, Harriet is clearly expected to feel guilty about her financially secure future and sympathize with the plight of the British colonial officers. Marryat is actively trying to engage the reader, here, with the question of how to improve the emotional health of British men in the colony who, in her opinion, are the real sufferers. Anthony Pennell describes to Harriet the conditions of Captain Pullen's stay:

> [W]hilst Colonel Pullen is on active service, […] he has nothing but his pay to depend upon, and whilst he can work, he must. Which means, a residence in India, and perhaps separation from his wife and children—if he should lose his health, a compulsory retirement; and if he keeps it, toiling out there till old age, and then coming home to spin out the remainder of his life on an inadequate pension. A man who accepts service in India should make up *his mind to live and die in the country*, but so many accidents may prevent it. And at the best, it means banishment from England and all one's friends and relations. (emphasis added; Marryat, *BOV* 220)

Pennell paints a grim picture of the soldier's life in the colony—a life of penury and sacrifices unacknowledged by the British Government. Marryat was, of course, writing from personal experience as an army officer's wife who faced the effects of not receiving adequate remuneration from the colonial government (the February 1863 'To be Captains' list in *London Gazette* shows that Thomas Ross Church was

not promoted to captaincy until 1862 (945)). To add to the officer's troubles, an emotionally taxing life of social isolation awaits him in the colony. An anonymous article titled 'Simla Society,' published in the December 1886 issue of *London Society*, raises the same issue of officers' financial insecurity damaging their marriage prospects (373). The concerns of the article and the manner in which they are expressed unmistakably bear Marryat's authorial stamp. In several of her articles and novels, she touched upon the same theme, detailing the difficulties faced by officers wanting to marry but held back by a poor stipend or the lack of eligible British women in the colony.

Not least, Marryat depicts the men tasked with protecting and extending the empire as vulnerable beings with emotional needs that need addressing—a problem that could be, if not solved at least ameliorated, by more British women treating them with emotional generosity. The condition of the modern marriage was definitely on her mind as a possible social solution to the problem of alienation in the colonies. As much as the novel is about women's psychological and reproductive health, it is also about the British Empire failing its men: men in her novel are not the robust boys of Captain Marryat's fiction, but grown men broken by their prolonged stay in colony.

A mere mention of the colony in *Blood of the Vampire* has a deteriorating effect on the characters. When Harriet speaks of Jamaica, Margaret Pullen starts feeling dizzy (Marryat, *BOV* 21). But Marryat does not demand that the colonial officers return to England and cut off ties from the colony. Instead, she urgently poses the following questions: how can Britain mediate with this other world and rescue the men trapped there? How can the morale of these envoys of empire be boosted? The burden of reaching out to these men is placed on English women who can act as sympathetic mediums between Britain and the colony. Marryat urges English women

to emotionally communicate across the seas, not least (contrary to her own trajectory) by relocating to the colonies. Margaret Pullen fulfils her duty as an officer's wife in the novel by moving to India (Marryat, *BOV* 98). Marryat's novel *Veronique* (1869) begins with a lament that there are not enough English women in the Indian colony. This lament is at the root of a racial anxiety that English men are veering towards native women in the absence of English women. It also conveys a cultural anxiety about Britons staying on in the colony and culturally integrating with the 'other.' In *Gup*, Marryat disdainfully refers to British men who have lost touch with their country and adopted Indian manners: the 'minds and energies [of the Anglo-Indians] may rust and dull from the effects of the climate, or the tone of their morals become lowered from the want of spiritual instruction' (insertion mine; 39). A review of *Gup*, presumably written by an anonymous Anglo-Indian critic in the *Calcutta Review* praised Marryat's account of the country but unsurprisingly criticised her for accenting 'the foibles and eccentricities' of the Anglo-Indian character (197).

In the novel, the racially hybrid woman not only presents a threat to the British race, her invasive in-between-ness implies that the British Empire risks losing its former 'purity.' In the end, Harriet commits suicide from a sincere belief that she must not stand in the way of the pure-blooded, psychologically superior British race that deserves to rule. This is a powerful moment in the novel: the racial hybrid is forced to acknowledge that her birth was a mistake. By the close of the novel, Marryat has transformed Harriet into a martyr willing to die for a noble cause. The message is clear: the only way this woman can garner sympathy is by killing herself and erasing her biological presence. Harriet's suicide signifies a coming into moral consciousness: 'There was no awakening on this earth for Harriet Pennell' (Marryat, *BOV* 226). Only in the moment of death does Marryat recognize Harriet's married name. Only, that is,

when she takes the form of a spirit does Harriet transform into the devoted English wife who travels to another world, beyond empire, to be with her husband. Harriet's sacrifice bodes well for the empire: she bequeaths her money to Margaret Pullen, the true sympathetic British woman whose affective labour is, in this way, rewarded. Order is restored as the British father's inheritance returns to the culture of origin and is rechannelled into the work of empire building.

As I have shown, Marryat's 'muted' Gothic novel yearns to restore sympathetic magnetic powers in British women, which, for her, were the basis of British culture and Empire. This yearning for a lost ideal drives her formal and stylistic choices, as she seeks to make an 'unwholesome' genre do 'healthy work' in defence of English moral, political and cultural values. Frederick Marryat's romances are only one influence here, among the many generic strands playing in to *The Blood of the Vampire*, but the contrast between his heroic clarity and her more troubled imagining of the imperial project is there to be seen. A witness and survivor of the Sepoy rebellion years in India, who had lived to see the global rise of resistance to British imperialism, Florence delivers a more troubled and troubling vision of intercultural and interracial contact—one in which generic instability looks strongly symptomatic of a moral and emotional uncertainty, largely unconscious perhaps, about the sustainability of English imperialism and the strength of the domestic, as much as military, virtues supporting it.

Chapter 6. Vigilant Enchantment and Racial Identity in Devkinandan Khatri's *Chandrakanta*

In Devkinandan Khatri's 1888 novel *Chandrakanta*, Chapla, a spy, finds herself trapped in the courtyard of an enchanted ruin where several mysterious objects are kept (*Chandrakanta* 101).[82] Walking around the ruin, she encounters a reclining statue, made out of marble. Lying on a platform, reading a book in a relaxed posture, the statue appears to mirror the reader of *Chandrakanta* who too, we may presume, is languidly reading for pleasure. When Chapla hits the statue with a pebble, the statue, evidently perturbed while reading, moves its hand to remove the stone (Khatri, *CK* 101). With this act of animation, the statue symbolizes the contemporary readers' consciousness that, Khatri hoped, would simultaneously experience an awakening of sorts. The book held by the statue is no ordinary tome. Rather, it contains secrets that can aid Chapla in escaping the ruin. Khatri, I argue here, wanted his novel *Chandrakanta*, like this book of secrets, to awaken the Indian reader's imagination to a new socio-political future. While being immersed in a world of pleasure, the reader, for Khatri, would show signs of being imaginatively and politically 'moved' by his prose. In this chapter, I explore how, through *Chandrakanta*, Khatri sought to introduce the North Indian populace to a new mode of reading romances—a practice that, he hoped, would pave the way for building a 'modern' Hindu identity in late nineteenth-century India.

[82] Devkinandan Khatri. *Chandrakanta* (Originally published Banaras: Lahiri Press, 1888). Diamond Pocket Books, 2014. Henceforth, *CK*.



FIG. 2 Chandrakanta trapped in the ruin illustrated in the 1903 Lahiri Press edition of *Chandrakanta*—here, the statue is not shown to be reading

With a plot line that stretches across multiple sequels, *Chandrakanta* is a highly complex tale. In the first part of the series (the focus of this chapter), Vijaygarh's princess Chandrakanta falls in love with Naugarh's prince Virendra Singh. Chandrakanta's father, Jai Singh does not approve of their match because he wants Chandrakanta to marry his courtier's son, Kroor Singh. Kroor Singh's intentions however are not to be trusted. Aided by his team of 'cunning' Muslim spies, Kroor Singh plans to marry Chandrakanta to usurp King Jai Singh's throne. To this end, he ropes in an ally, King Shivdutt to kidnap Chandrakanta and her aid Chapla. Though Shivdutt successfully traps the two in his fortress, Chapla, being a highly resourceful spy, plots their escape. However, soon after fleeing the fortress, Chandrakanta and Chapla end up trapped in a dilapidated bungalow in the middle of a forest. The readers are told that this ruin is an enchanted maze that contains many curiosities—one such oddity being a statue of a mechanically powered heron that traps Chandrakata. The rest of the plot focuses on Chandrakanta's lover, Virendra Singh and his spies' efforts to rescue Chandrakanta from the ruin. In the end, order is

restored as Chandrakanta is rescued by another spy, Jeet Singh and marries her lover, Virendra Singh.

When *Chandrakanta* was published in 1888, it marked a turning point that changed the course of fiction-writing in the North Indian context.[83] After the success of *Chandrakanta*, Devkinandan Khatri set up Lahiri press in Banaras, which became one of the leading publication houses of popular fiction in North India. Alongside a popular fiction monthly titled *Upanyas Lahiri*, Lahiri Press published *Chandrakanta*'s sequels 'whose twenty-fourth and final part he [Khatri] completed in 1905' (Orsini, *Print and Pleasure* 201). The decades after *Chandrakanta*'s release were flooded with novels that can loosely be described as spin offs. Often, these derivative novels used names inspired by *Chandrakanta*—for instance, Nandlal Sharma's *Swarn Kanta* (1915), Ganga Prasad Gupta's *Krishna Kanta Santiti* (1920), Shambhu Prasad Upadhyay's *Premkanta* (1923, 2nd ed.), Ramchandra Singh's *Virendra Kumar* (1935) (same name as the hero of *Chandrakanta*) and Ramnarayan Dikshit's *Chandraprabha* (n.d.). The famous novelist Kishorilal Goswami's *Chapla* (n.d.) (referencing *Chandrakanta*'s female *aiyaar*) also exploited the *Chandrakanta* craze. Bordering on fan- fiction, these books paid homage to *Chandrakanta*, and all were published in Banaras.[84] The novels highlight *Chandrakanta's* impact on Hindi popular fiction in the decades following its publication.

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[83] Gopal Ray notes that *Chandrakanta* did not gain immediate popularity when it was published in 1888. After a gap of three years, the magazine *Hindi Pradeep* published a part of the novel in 1891 that made people take notice (68).

[84] Banaras and Allahabad were the hub of Hindi literary publication in North India. For more on this, see: Francesca Orsini. 'Pandits, Printers and Others: Publishing in Nineteenth-Century Benaras.' *Print Areas: Book History in India*, edited by Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty, Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 103-39; Nita Kumar. 'Religion and Rituals in Indian Schools: Banaras from the 1880s to the 1940s.' *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, edited by Nigel Crook, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 135-54. On Urdu publishing in North India, see: Ulrike Stark. *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India*. Permanent Black, 2008.

Critics often treat *Chandrakanta* and other romances as representative of the underdeveloped initial phase of Hindi writing that paved the way for 'superior' realist fiction in early twentieth century. Due to this bias against romances, a body of popular ephemeral literature written in the 1880s, 90s and early twentieth century has largely been ignored by Indian critics. Housed in the Nagari Pracharini Sabha Library in Banaras, this overlooked wealth of material is crucial to understanding the way Hindi-reading/speaking Indians read for pleasure in the late nineteenth century.

In contrast to previous readings of *Chandrakanta*, I will, in this chapter, pay attention to Khatri's treatment of consciousness and unconsciousness in relation to the political context of the period. Previously, Francesca Orsini, in her ground-breaking book on Hindi popular fiction *Print and Pleasure* (2009), has traced *Chandrakanta*'s debt to the Persian/Urdu '*dastan*' tradition—a style of storytelling popular in eighteenth-century North India (*Print and Pleasure* 200). Orsini argues, in *Chandrakanta*, that Khatri appropriates elements from this tradition and casts them in a new religious Hindu mould (*Print and Pleasure* 214). Arthur Dudney, in his close reading of the text, treats *Chandrakanta*'s 'ambiguous genre' as a sign of the novel's complex engagement with colonial modernity (4). I draw on both these readings to argue that Khatri reworks the romance genre in *Chandrakanta* to invent a 'modern' Hindu romance. Khatri's scientization of the Persian romance, his addition of modern rational elements, should be read in conjunction with the ideal Hindu self he imagines.

Through a close reading of his fiction and an analysis of his short-lived but eventful membership of a relevant socio-linguistic organization in the late nineteenth century, I demonstrate that Khatri adopts a complex stance on the relationship between psyche and identity. Critical readings have assumed that Khatri's novel

aimed to crudely entertain the reader. However, a close reading of the novel shows it to be far more subtle. Khatri altered the way the North Indian audience read and enjoyed popular fiction. His prefaces and afterword demonstrate that he wanted the reader to internalize a specific message from the novel: the importance of being vigilant against mental manipulation. The novel consistently warns the reader to be suspicious of fantasies that arise out of states of unconsciousness. This vigilant state of mind is central to the act of reading as Khatri trains the reader to read fantastical fiction in a particular way—to learn to enjoy the fantasy while being vigilant of the illusions it offers. In so doing, I argue that he presents and packages vigilance itself as an alluring, and alterative, state of enchantment.

This chapter contends that Khatri's warning to be conscious/ vigilant carries a political significance, directed as it is towards Hindu reader. By training the Hindu reader to be vigilant, Khatri wants him/her to develop a guarded attitude towards the figure of the 'treacherous' Muslim. For Khatri, the Hindu community could not afford to be 'unconscious' lest the Muslim rival take advantage of its vulnerability. In *Chandrakanta*, Khatri however is not merely advocating vigilance as a defensive stance against the enemy, he also wants the Hindu community to develop a consciousness of its own religious and caste identity. As I show, the vigilance Khatri proposes, complicates the fantasy of the Hindu ideal predominant within the community in this period.

Unconsciousness, '*Lakhlakha*' and the Reader's psyche

> *Tejsingh itr ki shishiyan liye saamne pahunche aur salaam kar baith gaye, tab kaha, 'Lucknow ka rehne waala Gandhi hoon, aapka naam sun kar aap hi ke laayak acche acche itr laaya hoon! Yeh keh shishi khol faha bana dene lage… Thodi der mein Hardayaal Singh aur unke sab dost behosh hokar zameen par let gaye.* (Khatri, *CK* 39)

> Tej Singh approached the guard, Hardayaal Singh with perfume bottles and introduced himself: 'I am a perfumer from Lucknow, I have brought perfumes that would be suitable for you!' As Tej Singh opened the bottle, the fragrance caused Hardayal Singh and his friends to become unconscious and fall to the ground. (my trans.)

Throughout *Chandrakanta*, characters keep slipping into a state of unconsciousness. But, rather than experiencing an involuntary blackout or swoon, they are coerced into a state of insensibility by others. In the passage above, Tej Singh, a spy wishes to gain entry into the enemy, King Shivdutt's fort. Dressed as a perfumer, Singh approaches the guards of the rival army with bottles of perfumes (intoxicating drugs in disguise). Disarmed by Tej Singh's sweet talk, the guard Hardayal Singh and his friends inhale the fragrance only to fall insensible a moment later. As the guard lies helpless on the ground, Tej Singh undresses him, assumes his identity and sneaks into the enemy's fort. Khatri inserts this ruse of drugging characters so often that it risks becoming tedious. Yet, each time, he makes Tej Singh use a new method (flowers, tobacco, and food) to sedate characters thus preventing the trick from becoming too clichéd.

Tej Singh, whose name means clever and agile, belongs to a group of spies called the *aiyaars*. The *aiyaars* practice the art of *aiyaari*: a form of espionage that involves inventing strategies to outwit the enemy. Exhibiting an impressive list of skills ranging from taking on disguises, singing, dancing, and conducting detective work, the *aiyaars* possess many talents. Their deftness is judged by the ease with which they administer the drug of unconsciousness or *lakhlakha*. Though *aiyaars* can perform martial feats, their skills are primarily mental—they are trained to manipulate others' minds and solve challenging puzzles, called '*tilisms*.'

In *Chandrakanta*, the *aiyaars*' stunts of drugging characters appear to re-work the trope of mental colonization found in British 'trance fiction' at the fin de siècle (Luckhurst, *Invention of Telepathy* 204). In other Hindi romance novels from the

period as well, hypnosis is represented as an effective tool for mental subjugation. In his 1874 novel, *Yogini Ya Jadugarni* (*Priestess or Magician*), Calcutta-based author Ramlal Verma, uses the English word 'mesmerism,' asserting that '[m]esmerism only works on the weak…the individual whose brain is weak, heart is weak…' (3). The repetition of 'weak' in the statement implies that, for the author, only the vulnerable can be mentally colonized. Khatri too treats the act of inducing unconsciousness in another as an assertion of power. However, he drains the psychic transaction of any occult or spiritualist connotations turning it into a straightforward instance of sedation by drugs. Khatri's obsessive representation of the manipulation of the psyche in *Chandrakanta* articulates a political fantasy of claiming control over consciousness. It is possible that for a population already suffering under colonial rule, the psyche was the last terrain over which it felt it could assert autonomy. As I show, the power-politics coded in the psychic encounter signals the emergence of a 'conscious' Hindu psyche that was beginning to assert its voice in this period.

Even as *Chandrakanta* is full of instances of characters being rendered insensible, the novel is curiously silent on the psychological workings of the unconscious. The *aiyaars*' ability to induce unconsciousness does not allow them (or the reader) to access a character's psychic interiority. Not in the least intrigued by the state of trance, Khatri sees unconsciousness as a debilitating state of mind that marks an erasure of the self. The novel too supports this for when characters fall unconscious, they are omitted from the narrative till their senses are fully restored. For Khatri, characters are only worthy of narrativization as long as they are conscious and capable of rational judgment.

The novel's resistance to exploring states of unconsciousness is ironic considering that it is classified as one of the earliest fantasy novels written in India.

Traditionally, a European or Persian romantic fantasy would be more hospitable to elements related to the unconscious, however, Khatri not only subdues those elements; he even makes the reader suspicious of them. This is best illustrated in the description of the cave that the spy, Tej Singh selects to imprison the enemy spies he renders unconscious. Contrary to the frequent portrayal of caves as divine, mythical spaces in Hindu mythological texts, in *Chandrakanta*, they signify a deceptive dream (Khatri, *CK* 25). When the enemy spies recover from their comatose state inside the cave, they encounter a dream-like scene: a gentle breeze blows against the trees, a waterfall gushes in the background and peacocks can be seen prancing around (Khatri, *CK* 25). The cave and its surroundings however do not offer a comforting refuge, rather, Tej Singh uses it to imprison his opponents. Khatri suggests that like the cave's delightful ('*suhavna*'), dream-like pastoral fantasy, articulations of the unconscious psyche deceive and trap the mind (*CK* 25). At another point in the novel, Prince Virendra Singh wakes up from a deep sleep (that lasted for two days) and finds himself in a beautiful room decorated with mirrors and lamps (Khatri, *CK* 161). Pictures of beautiful women adorn the room and one wall is plastered with Chandrakanta's portrait (Khatri, *CK* 161). Though suspicious about how he ended up in this place, Virendra Singh cannot resist surrendering to the luxurious atmosphere of the space—the expensive clothes and the delicious food thoroughly entrance him (Khatri, *CK* 161). Everything about this place that pampers him however turns out to be deceptive. The next time Virendra wakes up from a deep slumber, he does not find himself on a soft bed with cushions but stranded on a rock. It is as if a hallucinatory dream has been broken, forcing him to confront reality. What remains uncertain throughout this episode is whether Virendra was kidnapped by a group of women or the fantasies of his own unconscious mind had trapped him.

In *Chandrakanta*, Khatri does not entirely avoid the fantastical but, as Orsini notes, he constantly deconstructs fantasies by providing pseudo-scientific explanations (*Print and Pleasure* 210). Drawing on the fantastical trope of the '*tilism*' (literally translates to talisman), commonly depicted in Persian tales such as *Fasana-e-Azad* and *Dastan Amir Hamza*, Khatri modifies it in keeping with his emphasis on scientific rationalism (Orsini, *Print and Pleasure* 210). Conventionally, a *tilism* is a spatial puzzle composed of a series of convoluted magical challenges (Pritchett, 'A Magic Combat' 379). In Persian *dastans* (stories) and their Urdu translations, the *tilisms* are 'magic-bound lands created by an ancient pantheon of gods such as Samri and Jamshed, and in some cases, by sages' (Husain Jah 14).[85] The hero's purpose, in the *tilism*, is to overcome a sequence of hurdles and find the talisman to emerge victorious. In *Chandrakanta*, as Orsini notes, Khatri turns the *tilism* into a space riddled with mental challenges that can only be solved by an intellectually alert mind. Magic and occult practices like astrology and fortune-telling fail to predict anything inside the *tilism*: the '*jyotishi*' (astrologer) Pandit Jaggannath complains that even throwing a '*ramal*' (an astrological tool for predicting the fortune) does not yield any results about Chandrakanta's whereabouts (Khatri, *CK* 48). At every step, the hero is expected to use his hyper-rational gaze to penetrate through the fantastical façade of things.

Khatri's injection of pseudo-science in form of the *tilism* does not render the riddle tedious; if anything, it enhances the element of suspense and surprise. The mouth of Tej Singh's cave, shaped like a lion's face, can only be opened through a complex logical procedure. Tej Singh pulls the lion's tongue like a lever which, in turn, opens out to a space where a serpent sits ready to strike. At this point, the

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[85] For more on the *dastan* tradition, see: Frances Pritchett. *The Romance Tradition in Urdu: Adventures from the Dastan of Amir Hamzah*. Columbia University Press, 1991.

narrative takes on an appearance of the fantastical: the snake, baring its fangs, seems to belong in an adventurous romance. Any such readerly expectations are however punctured as Khatri reveals that the snake is a mere mechanical contraption (Khatri, *CK* 25). Tej Singh explains to his fellow *aiyaar* that the screw in the snake's neck has to be twisted twice to shut the door of the cave (Khatri, *CK* 112). Here, the harmonious syncing between different technological levers—the coordination between the bolt in the snake's neck and the door— is presented as a scientific feat more marvellous than magic. Tej Singh's breakdown of the steps required, his careful delineation of the mechanical process, further intensifies the reader's delight. It is as if the source of enchantment in Khatri's novel is the smooth operation of machines.

In line with the scientific framing of the novel, unconsciousness can only be induced through a material substance rather than supernatural powers. In his other works, Khatri, often elaborated upon the material nature of the drug used to induce insensibility. In a novella titled *Naulakha Haar* (n.d.) that he translated from Bengali as part of a 'Railway series,' the detective named Bhopu is skilled at the art of perfumery. On a train journey, Bhopu makes the thief Jordan smell one of his fragrant concoctions, a '*behoshi ki dawa*' or a sedative, to make him confess his crime. Anticipating the North Indian reader's sceptical astonishment regarding the powers of the drug, Khatri writes: 'The reader must be amazed to hear about this insensibility inducing drug but I am certain that if you asked a doctor about it, he would immediately assure you about its existence' (my trans., *Naulakha Haar* 32). In *Chandrakanta* as well, literary critic Pradip Saxena notes that the *aiyaars* don't possess spiritual/divine powers to induce unconsciousness, instead, their wallet contains '*lakhlakha*,' a sleep-inducing drug used to disarm enemies (29). Saxena suggests that '*lakhlakha*' refers to a mixture used during holy rituals in Banaras.

There is, however, another possible reading. Khatri, being a member of the mercantile class, must have been familiar with the various fragrant commodities being circulated in everyday Banaras. Given his mistrust of the supernatural, it is more consistent to view his fictional *lakhlakha* as not a holy substance—but derived from everyday objects like flowers and perfumes that he saw in the marketplace. Such a reading complicates the theorization of popular consumption *Chandrakanta* has to offer: if everyday objects can become intoxicating substances, the pleasure one derives from commodities might be seen as akin to inhaling a drug. As I demonstrate further in the chapter, Khatri extends this understanding to the commodity he sold—the popular novel that, for him, is capable of inducing alterations in consciousness.

In *Chandrakanta*, *lakhlakha* does not simply induce insensibility, rather, it can influence consciousness in a variety of ways. Critic Girish Chandra Tripathi insists that *lakhlakha* in Khatri's work is not a '*maadak*' or alcoholic substance, in fact it has the opposite effect—'"*laklake" ko sungh kar manushhya ki chetna fir lautti hai/ behosh hone ka prashn hi kahan uthta hai*' (after inhaling *lakhlakha*, an individual becomes conscious/aware, there is no loss of consciousness here) (my trans., 7). *Lakhlakha* can thus serve a dual purpose of both lulling consciousness and making a person more attentive than usual. In its capacity to activate rational thinking, the *lakhlakha* inhibits emotional outbursts. Seeing Chandrakanta after a prolonged period of separation, Prince Virendra Singh loses control over his senses and starts shivering out of excitement (Khatri, *CK* 29). Noticing Virendra's state, Tej Singh, Virendra's *aiyaar*, quickly feeds him *lakhlakha* to help him gain composure (Khatri, *CK* 29). *Lakhlakha* thus operates as a regulator of consciousness that, depending on the dose, can make a person lose control over rational processes of the mind or conversely make him/her hyper-rational. It is, however, not merely the *lakhlakha* that enables the

aiyaars to control other's minds; their own state of eternal watchfulness also aids them in catching others unaware. Rarely shown to be asleep, Chapla, the female *aiyaar* is awake all night because her mind is preoccupied with deciphering the seemingly supernatural mystery of the *tilism* (Khatri, *CK* 118). Perpetually alert, the *aiyaars* have internalized the hyper-alertness induced by the external *lakhlakha*—theirs is an altered state of mind that Khatri wants to normalize.[86]

In *Chandrakanta*, it is not simply characters who switch between states or levels of consciousness. Even the reader experiences such shifts while immersed in the text. Incorporating pseudo-scientific explanations in his romance, Khatri's generic model resembles the 'new' British romances (by Rider Haggard, R.L. Stevenson and others) of the late nineteenth century which, according to Michael Saler, 'were usually receptive to the rational, scientific and consumerist trends of modernity' (66). Like 'new romances,' Khatri's romances never allow the reader to 'simply "escap[e]" by turning to these worlds,' rather, they present a world that constantly tries to convince the reader of its plausibility (Saler 66). However, Khatri does not merely aim to persuade the reader of the credibility of his fantastical universe; he wants to shape a critically vigilant reader. A receptive reader, for Khatri, is one who, like the *aiyaar*, can critically see through the mechanism that produces fantasies. In other words, it is a reader who is alert and capable of resisting the illusory deception of fantasies. What is unique about Khatri's readerly model is that the hyper-vigilance or alertness he endorses is an equally mesmerizing and enchanting state.

Khatri's *tilismic* puzzle is simultaneously a fantastical and a cerebrally challenging test that modulates attention in a peculiar way. Through the novel, Khatri trains the reader to shift between non-attentive and attentive modes of reading. Early

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[86] In Hindi/Urdu, the word '*hoshiyaar*' carries connotations of being awake and clever which explains the novel's conflation of meanings.

on, he invites the reader to be alert: in the preface, he urges the audience to detect errors in his work—'*badi meherbaani hogi agar aap log meri bhool ko patra dwaara mujh par zaahir karenge*' (I will be very grateful if you write notes to me about the mistakes in my narrative' (Khatri, *CK* 9). At other times in the narrative, he is more lenient, allowing the reader to enter into a state of fantastical reverie. Yet, this reverie only lasts temporarily because Khatri does not want his reader to grow complacent. Like the '*lakhlakha*' that both lulls and jolts the reader, the novel simultaneously draws the reader into a dreamy space and nudges him/her to be hyper-alert to multiple clues. The reader derives a thrill not just from the constant action in the novel but from oscillating between interconnected states of mind—between unconsciousness and consciousness, distraction and vigilance.

Nicholas Dames observes that Victorian British authors often constructed their narratives with the aim of regulating readers' attention, producing a 'periodic or punctuated attentiveness' (*Physiology of the Novel* 78). Citing William Makepeace Thackeray as an example, Dames argues that while his novels demand a 'constant, strained attentiveness,' they also provide momentary distractions to relieve the reader (*Physiology of the Novel* 80). Khatri's attempt to train the reader in switching between states is different because, for him, more than distraction, it is vigilance that sets the reader free. Only when the reader is aware of the mechanism undergirding a seemingly fantastical event can he truly enjoy the narrative. The vigilance Khatri expects from the reader is thus not merely a rational, matter-of-fact reception of facts but a highly pleasurable and enchanted state of hyper-attention, imbued with a sense of wonder or '*taajub*,' as he calls it (Khatri, *CK* 247). In an afterword to the 1903 edition of *Chandrakanta*, Khatri attempts to persuade the reader to buy the sequel to *Chandrakanta* claiming that the work of romance was written with more

attentiveness. Confessing that he wrote the first novel without paying much attention to detail in haste (‘*acchi tarah dhyan diye bina hi sarsari taur mein’*), he pitches the sequel as a more carefully crafted fantasy (*CK* 1903 ed.). Unlike Victorian British writers who insisted that fantasies were creations of the unconscious, Khatri explicitly declares that his romance is enchanting because it was a consciously created work of art.

Khatri played a significant role in shaping another kind of vigilant linguistic consciousness in this period: that of the Hindi speaking reader. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Hindu community was rallying for a change in script (from Persian to Devnagari) in North India.[87] In light of *Chandrakanta*’s popularity, more people felt drawn to learning the new lettering (Dudney 21). Khatri was not just introducing readers to a new genre but to a new mode of consuming stories through the Nagari script. To be able to read a novel in a new script required an attentiveness, a vigilance like the kind Khatri wants the reader to cultivate. Yet, if the reader were too busy decoding the language, s/he would not be able to enjoy the text. Khatri works around this by incorporating words from Urdu and other dialects that were already familiar to the North Indian reader. In the preface to the novel, he writes that the strength of his work is that ‘one does not need to reach for the dictionary in order to read it’ (qtd in Orsini 224). Again, in his handling of language, Khatri ensures that the reader reads without breaking his/her flow while still being conscious of absorbing a new script. This is another instance of Khatri manipulating the reader into

[87] Though Hindi (or Hindustani) was widely spoken in North India, prior to the 1880s, mostly Persian script was used while writing. In this regard, Francesca Orsini writes: ‘A fully fledged Hindi print culture developed in Benaras [also spelt as Banaras] only in the 1870s, mainly through the initiative, talent and indefatigable activity of “Bhartendu” Harishchandra (1850-85)… It is well known that Harishchandra encouraged many contemporaries to write and publish, wherever they were: the ‘Bhartendu circle’ had its centre in Benaras but extended over several cities in the United Provinces and Bihar’ (insertion mine; ‘Pandit, Printers and Others’ 117). Later in this chapter, I revisit the Hindi-Urdu language debate in greater detail.

staying vigilant while being enchanted.[88] In the next sections, I illustrate how Khatri's model of a vigilant readerly psyche forms the basis of his construction of a new 'modern' Hindu identity.

Rational vigilance and the body

Emphasizing intellectual and rational processes of the mind, *Chandrakanta* underplays the significance of the body. Intriguingly, on the few occasions, Khatri mobilizes the body in the novel, it is to reinforce the need to be aware and vigilant against malign influences. The *aiyaars*' rules of conduct dictate that they should never use physical tactics against enemies but win their battles 'by means of cunning and disguise' (Gaeffke 26). Shivdutt, the rival king of Chunar prefers to first send his intellectual army of *aiyaars* to the battlefield: '*humko ladne ki abhi koi zaroorat nahin, pehle hum apne aiyaaron ke saath Pandit Jagannath jyotishi ko tumhare saath kar dete hain*' (we don't need to fight right now, we can send the astrologer along with the *aiyaars*) (my trans., *CK* 36). Insisting that this was not the '*kayda*' (custom), Tej Singh is furious to see the *aiyaars* Pannalal and Ramnarayan thrashed by King Jai Singh's guards (Khatri, *CK* 60). Any reliance on the body by the *aiyaars* is seen to undermine the intellectual basis and worth of the practice of *aiyaari*.

Modelling his work on mid-Victorian sensation fiction, especially Urdu translations of the writer George W.M. Reynolds's fiction (of *Mysteries of London* [1844] fame), Khatri's work routinely portrays melodramatic moments that induce 'extraordinary shock or thrill to the reader's nervous system' (Brantlinger, *Reading Lesson* 143). Khatri deliberately wants to disconcert the reader to a point where s/he becomes immune to the shock and instead responds with slow, cautionary

[88] Critic Madhuresh claims that in *Chandrakanta*, the reader does not notice the changes in the language. It is only when s/he reaches the end of the novel that s/he realizes the growth in his vocabulary (*Hindi Upanyas Saarthak* 42-3).

mindfulness.[89] His novel *Katora Bhar Khoon* (1895) (*Bowl full of Blood*) begins on a rather sensational note: walking through the fields to meet his beloved, the hero Bir Singh panics when he encounters a '*laash*' (corpse) without a '*sar*' (head) (13). At first, Bir Singh is shocked but soon sense prevails and he starts planning the body's burial (*Katora Bhar Khoon* 13). In *Chandrakanta*, part one of the novel ends with readers being shocked by Chandrakanta and Chapla's decapitated heads—*Chandrakanta and Chapla ka sir kaatkar koi le gaya…Maharaj to ekaek hay keh ke gir hi pade, Kumar ki bhi ajab haalat ho gayee, chehre par murdani chaa gayi* (someone has beheaded Chandrakanta and Chapla… the King suddenly fell down from the shock, Kumar too could not cope with the news, his face took on the colour of death) (my trans., Khatri, *CK* 71). In part two, it is revealed that the bodies were wax dummies (Khatri, *CK* 73). Here, Khatri cautions against the ease with which the illusion of reality can be created. Not only are Chandrakanta's parents, the king and the queen fooled, but Khatri effectively practices *aiyaari* on the reader. At first, the reader is shocked, and cannot control an instantaneous reflexive response. Khatri then disabuses the reader of the deception, revealing that the bodies were merely dummies. The reader is reminded that s/he too, like the characters in the novel, has been tricked into not paying attention to the signs. The novel is replete with such moments: the female *aiyaar*, Champa catches Shivdutt's *aiyaars* by tricking them with a facsimile

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[89] As Priya Joshi has noted, G.W.M. Reynolds's popularity in India surpassed his sales in Britain (*In Another Country* 29). Attempting to explain Reynolds's popularity, Joshi claims that 'the social radicalism that so excited Reynolds' English readers against the ruling classes equally aroused "strong feelings of hatred against vice and social inequality" among his Indian readers' (*In Another Country* 81). Khatri was clearly attracted to Reynolds because in the early twentieth century, Lahiri Press published a series of his translations titled 'Reynolds Granthmala'. Writing about Reynolds's role in framing *dastans*, noted Urdu scholar, C.M. Naim claims that Reynolds's *Leila, Star of Mingrelia* (1856) was one of the first Western oriental romances to be published in Urdu in mid-nineteenth century India ('The "Magic-making" Mr. Reynolds'). It is very likely that Khatri, being fluent in Persian, read Reynolds's *Leila* in the 1850s. There are striking similarities between *Leila* and *Chandrakanta*—both novels are eponymously named after the heroine and have a mysterious cave that traps characters. In 1899, a few years after *Chandrakanta* was published, Khatri's brother, Deviprasad Khazanchi, translated the book for Lahiri Press under the title, *Praveenpathik*.

of Chandrakanta's body (Khatri, *CK* 59). The body, or a facsimile of the body, is thus deployed to emphasize the need for vigilant presence of mind. In other words, Khatri urges the reader not to give into a sudden reflexive shock but to mindfully determine whether a situation merits the knee-jerk response.

Earlier, I argued that *Chandrakanta* is a fantasy that constantly warns the reader against believing the illusory, the fantastical. Adding to that, I suggest that Khatri expects the reader to extend the same vigilant scepticism to moments of sensationalized excess. In addition to the fantastical, the body too, for Khatri, is a source of deception whose responses need to be policed by the rational mind. The next sections demonstrate that Khatri urges the reader to extend this vigilant suspicion to another incipient fantasy popular in this period—a utopic imagination centred on a high valuation of the Hindu body. At a time when the Hindu body was being celebrated as racially superior, Khatri subtly advises the reader to approach this bodily ideal with caution.

Vigilance against the Muslim

Khatri's attempt to create a new kind of vigilant reader is connected to his vision of a new political subjectivity. *Chandrakanta*'s insistence on attentive reading arguably operated as a code that was meant to be internally circulated within the Hindu community. First published in the Devanagari script, *Chandrakanta*'s readership in the initial years (before it was translated in other languages) was primarily a North Indian Hindi-speaking populace. In late nineteenth-century North India, Hindi, written in the Devnagari script, was used within the Hindu community as opposed to the Persian script which was familiar to both Hindus and Muslims (Brass, 129). In the preface to the first edition, Khatri explains why he wrote *Chandrakanta*. Though he limits his literary ambitions to merely providing entertainment, he does clearly define

an agenda: to teach the Hindi speaking reader not to be deceived (9). He thus invites the Hindi reader to internalize the watchfulness of the *aiyaars*. Critic Rajendra Yadav interprets Khatri's stress on vigilance as an attempt to restore self-confidence in the idea of 'Indianness' in a populace oppressed by British colonialism (188). In his words, *aiyaari* represented the anxieties of the defeated Indian who hoped that though the British 'have defeated us… we have greatness on our side which they don't' (187). Though Yadav's reading is perceptive, it over-reads the significance of the British in Khatri's imaginary and underplays the divisions within the Indian populace. By contrast, I argue that when Khatri warns the Hindu populace to be cautious and alert to defend itself, he locates the primary threat *internally* in the figure of the Muslim.

Chandrakanta aggressively vilifies the figure of the Muslim. In the novel, the Hindu *aiyaar* and spy, Tej Singh insists that Hardayal Singh, the advisor to King Jay Singh, should exclude Muslims from his army (Khatri, *CK* 44). Barring Muslims, in Tej Singh's opinion, would be the first step towards building a loyal army that can unify and fight against the rival, King Shivdutt. While Tej Singh warns against trusting Muslims, the Princely Hindu hero, Virendra Singh, openly expresses disgust at the presence of Muslims in the army (Khatri, *CK* 69). His solution to the problem of increasing numbers of Muslims is nothing short of horrifying. Singh suggests purging the army (and presumably the nation-state) of Muslims by sending them first to the battlefield as guinea pigs. He claims that the plan will serve a dual purpose: it will expose the cowardliness of the Muslims while ensuring their eradication. Singh's proposition is greeted with laughter from his aid. The fact that this crass joke is shared between two Hindus in the novel reflects the larger audience it was intended for—an audience assumed not to include Muslims.

In light of the negative portrayal of Muslims, it might be thought surprising that they are capable of mastering the art of '*aiyaari*' (the art of espionage). Though Muslims are competent *aiyaars* in the novel, their intent is always painted as suspect. Within the *aiyaari* community, religious affiliations prove far stronger than the shared code of *aiyaari*. The Hindu *aiyaars* rejoice when they learn that Muslim spies have quit their camp: '*Naazim aur Ahmed, ye hi donon humaare raja par kroor grah the, so nikal gaye*' (Naazim and Ahmed were bringing bad luck to our king, now they have been thrown out) (Khatri, *CK* 179). The message is that the Muslim exploits his intelligence for treacherous ends: he is the '*chalaak*' or cunning traitor who opportunistically changes loyalties.

Khatri insinuates that to protect oneself from the scheming Muslim, the Hindu must develop his skills of '*aiyaari*.' *Aiyaari* is thus both the threat and the coping mechanism through which the Hindu mind addresses the perceived threat of the Muslim. The abstract, imagined threat from the Muslim takes on a psychic-spatialized form in the enchanted bungalow that traps the Hindu Chandrakanta and her Hindu *aiyaar* aid, Chapla (Khatri, *CK* 99). The bungalow is the central *tilism*/puzzle in the novel—a summation of all possible imaginary mental threats contained under one roof. After Chandrakanta and Chapla escape King Shivdutt's palace, they enter a 'terrifying forest' where 'blood thirsty animals' prowl looking for prey (Khatri, *CK* 152). Chandrakanta and Chapla's freedom in this forest proves short-lived. Walking around the forest, they are intrigued by the dilapidated ruins of a house. The interiors of the *tilismic* bungalow represent a decrepit Gothic nightmare: in place of the '*bagh*' (garden) (Orsini claims that the garden occupied a central place in Persian fantasies), there is an orchard overgrown with '*jungli ped*' (wild bushes) and wilted '*kyaaris*' (rows of flowers) (Khatri, *CK* 99). The mounds of debris ('*patthar ke dher*') and the

broken statues with frightening faces in the courtyard of the bungalow indicate a breakdown of logic and functionality that are otherwise so central to Khatri's novelistic universe (Khatri, *CK* 99). The more Chapla investigates the house, the more it seems like a disjointed dream: on the first level of the house, there is a curious looking fountain and a garden, and on another, a small room with a well. When Chapla peers inside the well, she is astonished to find a man sitting. Yet, amidst all this incoherence, there is a key hidden which can decode the *tilism* and restore logicality.

Inside the *tilism*, the *aiyaar*'s intellectual endurance is tested to the extreme. S/he has to stay hyper-vigilant and display an excruciating degree of mental attentiveness against potential snares. Walking through the *tilismic* orchard, the seasoned Hindu *aiyaar* Chapla experiences first-hand the dangers lurking at each step. As she strolls in search of food, she is drawn to a harmless looking stone. On touching it, Chapla falls unconscious. The stone, as Khatri explains later, is an energetically charged node of receptors that induces insensibility. Khatri is again reminding the *aiyaars* and the readers never to trust anything, without a proper investigation, no matter how innocuous it seems. The hyper-awareness exhibited by the *aiyaars* borders on a paranoid vigilance that 'imagines' spaces imbued with 'an uneasy quietude, a desolate devastation… riddled with terrible deception and conspiracy' (Yadav 185). If, as Francesca Orsini claims, Khatri 'hinduizes' the *tilism*, I argue that the atmosphere inside the *tilism* also reflects the mood of the Hindu community (*Print and Pleasure* 212). The suspicious environment of Khatri's *tilism* mirrors the

collective anxieties experienced by the North-Indian Hindu psyche in the socio-political context of the period.[90]

One sinister feature, amongst many, of the *tilism* is that it traps people indefinitely. The *aiyaars*' job involves both decoding and setting up complex, knotty, inescapable '*tilisms*.' While giving a tour of his *tilismic* cave, Tej Singh explains his fool-proof mechanism for kidnapping his opponents:

> *Iske andar kaid karne se kaidiyon ke haath-pair baandhne ki zaroorat nahin rahegi, sirf hifaazat ke liye ek khulaasi bedi unke pair pe daal deni padegi jisse veh dheere- dheere chal fir sake. Kaidiyon ke khaane-peene ki bhi fikr tumko nahin karni padegi kyunki iske andar ek choti-si kudrati nahar hai kismein barabar paani rehta hai, yahaan mevon ke darakht bhi bahut hain*. (Khatri, *CK* 25)
>
> Inside the cave, the prisoner does not need to be tied with heavy chains, though for the sake of security, he is made to wear a light chain that slows his gait. One need not worry about feeding the prisoners because the cave has a stream that never dries up. There are also trees that bear dry fruits. (my trans.).

More than physically imprisoning the inmates, the *tilismic* cave psychologically oppresses the captives. The interiors of the *tilism* are deceptively lush: fruit-bearing trees and fresh water from a river cater to the prisoners' needs. While the inside of the cave expands into an open space, the limitlessness of the landscape, especially the terrifying sublimity of the mountains, intimidates the prisoner (Khatri, *CK* 25). The surplus of food and amenities ensures that characters can be indefinitely imprisoned. In promising to cater to the prisoners' needs, the cave represents a self-sufficient though suffocating world in itself; a dream from which there is no escape. All *tilismic* dreamscapes prove to be equally oppressive in the novel. Like a pastiche of nightmares, *tilismic* spaces flow into each other; their interconnectedness signifying a

[90] *Tilismi* authors were writing fiction targeting the Hindu community's paranoia about the Muslim 'other' well into the early twentieth century. Written after *Chandrakanta*, Lakshminarayan Sikandarara's 1906 *tilismi* novel titled *Dhoorta Aiyaar* (*Cunning Aiyaar*) alerts the reader to the potential misuses of the art of *aiyaari*. The author's panic-stricken plea to his readers about counterfeit accounts of *aiyaari* circulating in the market sounds odd in the light of *aiyaari* being a fictional art. But more significantly, this reveals that *aiyaari* addressed a 'real' anxiety experienced by the Hindu reader.

larger mental discontent afflicting the community at large. For example, the particular *tilismic* cave set up by Tej Singh connects with the bungalow that imprisons Chandrakanta (Khatri, *CK* 172). One *tilismic* space morphing into another reveals how all *tilismic* spaces can be traced to a single origin: an anxious psyche self-constructing complicated riddles and solving them to stay mentally agile. If *aiyaari* is the skill that must be practiced, then the *tilism* emerges as a form of mental exercise that the Hindu mind engages in, in anticipation of a possible onslaught from the enemy.

The Hindu community's insecurities about being under siege are expressed through the metaphor of the *tilism*. Virendra Singh's army keeps exploring the *tilism* and finds multiple '*sandooks*' (boxes) and doors, each leading to a new compartment. The convoluted structure of the *tilism*, the multiple boxes within a box, signifies the collective sense of persecution felt by the community. The narrative about entrapment however is simultaneously one about conquering the space of the *tilism*. Typical of romance narratives, the hero's foray into unknown, often perilous, spaces symbolizes an invasion of an alien terrain. In *Chandrakanta* as well, Virendra Singh and his army wish to escape the *tilism* but their attempt to find their way out turns into a colonizing mission. As the reader finds out in the end, Virendra Singh unearths a hidden treasure in the *tilism* which signifies his conquest of the space.

Despite its complicated structure, the *tilism* proves to be decipherable, at least temporarily. By sublimating the Muslim 'problem' into a puzzle, Khatri attempts to solve it at a psychic level. The Muslim enemy however is never truly eliminated in the novel. By the close of the novel, the characters confront him in another guise: Zalim Khan and Aafat Khan, *aiyaars* who prove to be tougher enemies than Najim Ali and Ahmed Khan. Like the *tilism* that keeps reproducing itself across a series of

puzzles in *Chandrakanta*'s many sequels, the Muslim enemy takes different forms in the collective Hindu mind.

Race and the Hindu Ideal

Alongside the novel's call for vigilance against the Muslim, Khatri presents a nascent fantasy of the ideal Hindu man. The novel offsets the threat from the Muslim by insistently claiming the superiority of the Hindu self. Before I elaborate on Khatri's complex portrayal of an idealized Hindu subject, it is important to note that, in the late nineteenth century, there was an emergence of a politically self-conscious Hindu community. As that community's demand to make Hindi the dominant language of the public sphere became more strident, so did assertions about the racial and religious superiority of the Hindu self. Claims about Hindu advancement, as Vasudha Dalmia observes, were geared towards imagining '*Bharatvarsha*' or the ideal Hindu nation of the future (*The Nationalization of Hindu* 21). In this section, I will demonstrate that Khatri's novel engages with this emergent linguistic and racial discourse centred on the Hindu self to offer its own unusual and 'modern' take on the fantasy.

Race is conventionally regarded as a discourse of 'othering' born out of a colonial encounter that the British used to legitimize the imperial project. While this was indeed the case, communities in late nineteenth-century South Asia often used a racialized vocabulary to assert internal differences between groups. By contrast to Britain, race, in South Asia, was not a distinctively coherent or cogent category; rather, the language of race informed and framed the conversation around other identities specific to the region. As Javeed Majeed argues, while race is a 'far from monolithic' concept, '[n]owhere was this inchoate nature of the European notion of 'race' more evident than in British India, where the term was used to describe a

variety of caste, sectarian, tribal and ethnic identities' ('Race and Pan-Islam' 304). And indeed, in this period, race cannot be seen as separate from other identities in South Asia. As evident from the writings of the period, the discourse on diverse identities often overlaps with a single term '*jaati*' being used to indicate race, caste, nationhood interchangeably or all at once.

In *Chandrakanta*, we see how a religious community constructs a mythic past to assert its claims of racial superiority in order to establish political dominance. The novel registers latent echoes of a discourse that, as Christophe Jaffrelot has shown, was 'reactivated and reinterpreted' by Hindu revivalists in the early twentieth century (334). Khatri, to a degree, draws on a Western orientalist discourse, specifically, notions of Aryan race to build a case for the Hindu body being racially more advanced than its Muslim counterpart. Yet, as I show, he also warns the reader against naively investing in a fantasy of a golden Hindu past. Khatri's prejudiced depiction of Muslims and the idealization of the Hindu can be traced to his association with the 'Nagari Pracharini Sabha' in Banaras, an organization committed to promoting Hindi. The Sabha pressurised the colonial government to consider replacing Persian with the Devnagari script as the official language of the courts.[91] By the late nineteenth century, a language war was being waged between the Hindu and Muslim community. The perception that the government was appeasing Muslims by treating Persian as the official court language led to resentment amongst the Hindu majority.

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[91] C.R. King's expansive book *One Language, Two Scripts*, Oxford University Press, 1994 provides the most detailed account of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha's origins and activities in this period. Other books on this subject include: C.R. King. 'The Pracharini Sabha of Benaras, 1893-1914: A Study of the Social and Political History of the Hindi Language.' Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1974; Francesca Orsini. *Hindi Public Sphere 1920-40: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism.* Oxford University Press, 2002; Alok Rai. *Hindi Nationalism (Tracts for the Times)*. Orient Longman, 2002; Gyanendra Pandey. *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

The irony in this situation was that Hindi and Urdu were essentially the same language with differing scripts. Yet the divide over the script signified a greater divide between communities. To give an example of the kind of rhetoric being circulated in this period, a leading Hindi magazine *Hindi Pradeep* in 1888 published an editorial titled '*Hindi ka Apmaan*' (Hindi's insult) calling Hindi an '*anaath*' (orphan) language neglected by the colonial authorities (12). Another article in the same magazine claimed that even when Muslims misbehaved with British officials, the government appeased their interests, promoting their language and festivals ('*Musalmaanon ki Khaatirdaari*' 8). The question of language was inevitably a question about identity—as the rift grew wider, both communities, Hindus and Muslims, made sustained efforts to construct distinctive historical and linguistic pasts that were often highly romanticised.

This drive to present a more idealized past also shaped the way the communities curated their language. Hindi speaking groups sanskritized Hindi while the Muslim community persianized Urdu. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Nagari Pracharini Sabha systematically devoted itself to promoting Hindi—its efforts culminating in the publication of the Hindi literary journal, *Saraswati* that became the dominant literary voice for years to come. Not very supportive of colloquial forms of Hindi (Brajbhasha, Bhojpuri and other dialects), the Sabha endorsed a more idealized version of Hindi imbued with a heavy Sanskrit influence. The Sabha's version of Hindi was an artificially put together, mythic version of a language, purged of any trans-local influences it considered foreign. As Christopher King notes, 'one of the ironies of the Hindi movement is' that it did not 'promot[e] popular culture in the form of the regional and local dialects that surrounded them, though... [it] spoke for the welfare of the Hindu majority of the

population in the "Hindi-speaking areas of north India"' ('Forging a New Linguistic' 183-84).

One of the primary claims made by the Sabha was that Hindi was the direct descendent of Sanskrit. Drawing on early nineteenth-century orientalist scholarship conducted by Max Müller and William Jones, the Sabha regarded Sanskrit as the mother language of the Indo-European family of languages. For the Sabha, Hindi had to be restored to its original Sanskritic glory, to a state when it had not been adulterated by Persian influence. In *Chandrakanta Santiti*, the sequel to *Chandrakanta*, Khatri echoes the Sabha's views on Sanskrit, going so far as to make Sanskrit the basis for the foundation of an Indian nation in the future:

> *Chahe koi Hindu ho, chahe jain ho ya baudh ho aur chaahe Arya Samaaji ya Dharmsamaaji hi kyun na hi; parantu jin sajjanon ke maanviya avataaron aur purvjanon ne is punya bhumi ki apne aavibharv se gaurav badhaya hai, unmein se kaun abhaaga hoga jo punyata aur madhurtayukt Sanskrit bhasha ke shabdon ka prachur prachar na chaahega.* (qtd in Saxena 85)
>
> A person could be Hindu, Jain or Buddhist, Arya Samaji or Dharm Samaji but amongst these communities (whose ancestors have contributed to the pride of this sacred land), is there anyone who would not endorse the propagation of the sweet and pure Sanskrit language. (my trans.)

Here, Khatri evokes an idea of a nation wherein even diverse communities (most communities he names, barring a few, are Hindu sects) recognize the greatness of Sanskrit as a valuable cultural-linguistic inheritance. The India Khatri imagines is tolerant of different religious sects as long as they acknowledge Sanskrit's superiority. Muslims however are excluded from this vision for they are seen to be outsiders/foreigners who can destroy the 'pure' cultural/religious fabric of the Hindu nation. Contrary to critic Pradip Saxena's argument that Khatri possibly included this conservative message to appease the Sabha, I argue that Khatri's vision carries an inherently exclusionary impulse that is hostile to Muslims.

While the Nagari Pracharini Sabha (the organization promoting Hindi) never explicitly published anything on race, its rhetoric about language indirectly fed into a racial discourse. To this day, the Sabha's library is called the 'Aryabhasha' library which translates to 'the language of the Aryans.' Historian Romila Thapar writes that, by the close of the nineteenth century, the British orientalists' inferences about a shared Indo-European language family prepared the ground for a racial identity called the 'Arya' (5).[92] While initially the colonial government relied on the myth of Aryanism to better understand the social fabric and history of India, in the latter half of the century Hindu organizations appropriated this theory for their agenda. The romance of the past took a racial form as 'Sankritists and race science…collaborated, without really meaning to, in the creation of an enduring…racial theory of Indian civilization' (Trautmann 193). Within Hindu supremacist accounts, the 'Arya' was mobilized as a symbol of racial and linguistic excellence that established the superior origins of upper-caste Hindus. Such a claim enabled the Hindu community to insinuate a shared racial ancestry between Europeans and Hindus while simultaneously anchoring their identity in an era prior to British or Muslim rule.

In *Chandrakanta*, Khatri reproduces some of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha's ideological views, as reflected in his valorisation of Hindu characters. To an extent, Prince Virendra Singh embodies the qualities of an ideal Hindu man in *Chandrakanta*. The novel presents him as the only individual fated to crack the challenging *tilism* (puzzle) that traps Chandrakanta. Though most *tilisms* require intellectual acuity to be broken, this particular *tilism* declares that the person who

[92] For extensive discussion of the Hindu appropriation of Aryan identity in the nineteenth century, see: Joan Leopold. 'British Applications of the Aryan Theory of Race to India, 1850-1870.' *The English Historical Review*, vol. 89, No. 352, July 1974, pp. 578-603; Thomas R. Trautmann. *Aryans and British India*. University of California Press, 1997; Christophe Jaffrelot. 'The ideas of the Hindu race in the writings of Hindu nationalist ideologues in the 1920s and 1930s: A concept between two cultures.' *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, edited by Peter Robb. Oxford University Press, 1997; Tony Ballantyne. *Orientalism and Race*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

breaks it will need to wield physical strength (Khatri, *CK* 117). Surprisingly, the non-*aiyaar*, Virendra Singh, is the chosen one destined to break the *tilism*. It is however not his intelligence but an arbitrary physical criterion—his hand measurement—that qualifies him for the task (Khatri, *CK* 124). While Virendra does succeed in breaking the *tilism*, his victory is purely a function of his identity as a Hindu prince. In privileging Virendra's identity, the novel contradicts the value it places on merit. The novel's deviation from its normative emphasis on intellect does not last long. In the end, Virendra Singh only manages to decode a part of the *tilismic* puzzle. Rational order within the *tilism* is restored when the puzzle in its entirety is broken by the *aiyaar*, Jeet Singh, Tej Singh's father.

The body, especially skin colour, features prominently across Khatri's works as an indicator of 'superior' birth and moral values. While colour consciousness predates colonialism in India, rooted as it is in the caste system, anthropological studies conducted by the colonial state sharpened the association between skin colour and behavioural superiority. The British relied on racial Aryan theory to explain the difference between upper-caste Hindus and indigenous natives. George Grierson, member of the Sabha and compiler of *Linguistic Survey of India*, theorized that, in the Vedic period, fair-skinned central Asian Aryans migrated to India and married darker-skinned indigenous natives. For Grierson, as a result of this intermarrying, both linguistically and racially, Hindus had lost touch with their Sanskritic past (*Linguistic Survey* 134). The myth of the Aryan invader proved that the fair-skinned race was more suited to rule and colonize other populations. This theory was used by both the British colonizer and Hindu nationalists to justify their right to rule. In his works, Khatri too regularly attaches valuations to skin colour. In his novel *Katora Khoon Bhar* (1895), the hero Bir Singh, marvels at the lack of markers on the face of a

robber who is described as 'fair skinned, with big eyes, thin brows and even teeth'—in Bir Singh's words, '*koi nishan nahin milti*' (no marker [of depravity] can be found on his face) (27). In another novel titled *Kajar ki Kothri* (1902), a character, who later turns out to be the thief, is presented as dark-skinned with thick lips and uneven teeth (Khatri 6-7). All the queens, Kings and *aiyaars* are described as fair-skinned in *Chandrakanta*. Though Khatri never explicitly expressed his views on physiognomy and race, his son, Durgaprasad Khatri, wrote a book titled *Aakriti Vigyan* (n.d.) (*The Science of Physiognomy*) cataloguing the physical attributes of different races. Durgaprasad's gaze in the book is ethnologically informed by a keen desire to classify and essentialize individual characteristics as representative of the collective psychology of races (*Aakriti Vigyan* 4). In the preface of the book, Durgaprasad, possibly referring to his father's fiction, insists that an experienced ('*anubhavi*') novelist always signposts an individual's behavioural characteristics through his physical features (*Aakriti Vigyan* 5).

With his fair complexion, big eyes and muscular built, Virendra Singh in *Chandrakanta* embodies racial features that appear distinctively Aryan. In the scene before the Prince goes to war, Khatri minutely describes Virendra's bodily features and the various accessories he has donned. Riding a horse with an army of soldiers behind him, Virendra is eagerly cheered on by the crowds. Here, not only is the Hindu male body projected as superior to the Muslim but there is another comparison at work: Virendra's physical features (his fair skin) mirror the British colonizer. However, rather than signifying a moment of affinity between the colonizer and the colonized, this image presents the native as an equal, and a competent adversary. Khatri thus uses Singh's body as a site to respond to imperial claims of native bodies being inferior:

> *Sir par faulaadi top jismein ek huma ke par ki manbi kalangi lagi thi, badan mein beshkimat libaas ke upar fauladi zera pehne hue the. Gora rang, badi-badi aankein, gaalon par surkhi chaa rahi thi. Kamar mein jadau peti jismein beshkimat heera jada hua tha, aur pindli tak ka joota jis par kaudiye moti ka kaam tha, chamra nazar nahin aata tha, pehene hue the… Taakat, javaanmardi, dileri aur roab unke chehre se hi jhalakta tha, doston ke dilon mein muhabbat aur dushmanon ke dil mein khauf paida hota tha.* (*CK* 67)
>
> With a phoenix feather in his helmet, Virendra Singh was marching, wearing an expensive attire with a martial gear on top. His fair skin, big eyes and red cheeks were exuding health. On his waist hung a priceless diamond and the shoes that reached his calves were entirely covered with pearls … His face was radiating power, a young masculinity, courage and authority – the kind that would evoke affection in the heart of friends and fear in enemies. (my trans.)

Virendra Singh's fair skin, his robust body and his regal facial expressions epitomise a racially evolved exterior that mark his noble birth. Representing 'javaanmardi' (a youthful masculinity) that is yet to fully mature—much like the nascent consciousness of the Hindu community—Virendra Singh is a stock image of masculine Aryan martial strength. However, for an image meant to convince us of his bravery, the focus is on the embellishments of his costume: the phoenix feather on his cap and the diamonds that entirely cover his shoe, dominate the scene. Though Virendra appears impressive in his getup, the image is surprisingly inert for an action hero. The novel rarely portrays Virendra fighting, rather, he is always overshadowed by the *aiyaar*'s mental stunts. Virendra mostly appears to be a static spectacle frozen in time. Decked in finery from head to toe, he is the poster boy, the prototype of the ideal Hindu man

whom the community looks to for inspiration.

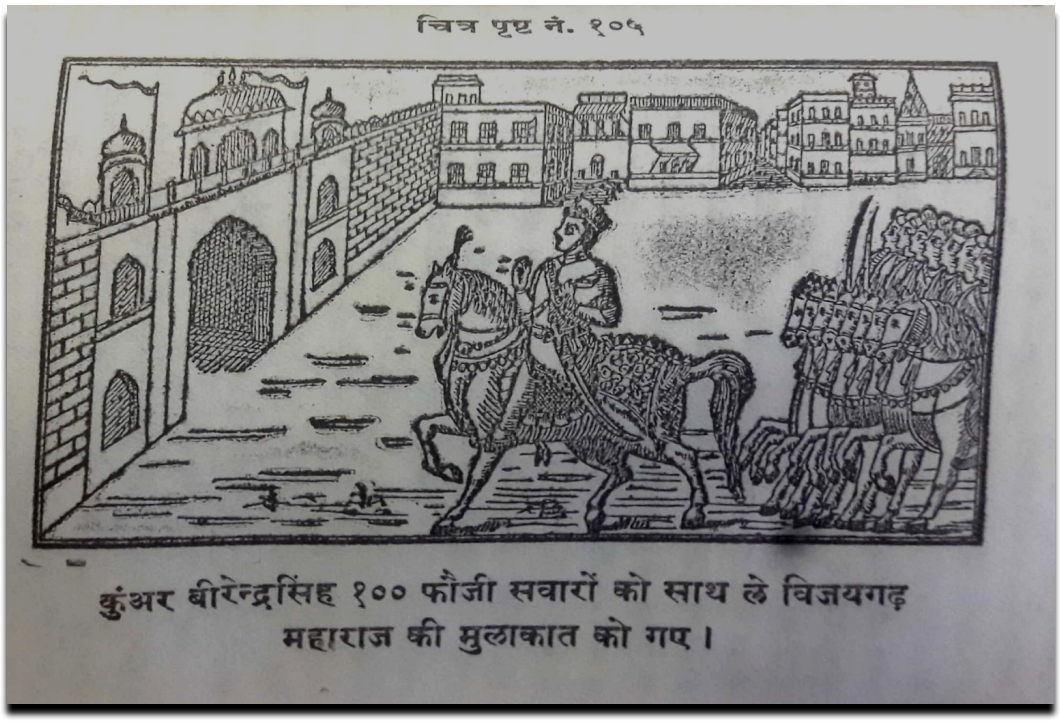

FIG 3. Virendra Singh parading the grounds on his way to Vijaygarh; image from 1903 Lahiri Press edition of *Chandrakanta*

Just as Hindi was being cast in a new robe, sanskritized and made into an ideal symbol of a community, here, the ideal Hindu man is aestheticised. At a time when the Hindu nationalist movement was incipient, Khatri reproduces the community's aspirational fantasy for a martial Hindu hero. But in a novel that values vigilance, Virendra Singh's glossy exterior also represents an elusive fantasy; a romance that needs puncturing. Even as Khatri hints at the fantasy of the idealized Hindu self, he proceeds to undercut it. The narrative repeatedly emphasizes Virendra Singh's '*veerta*' (bravery) to a point where the claim begins to sound suspect. Virendra Singh is unimpressive at several points in the narrative: A sentimental lover, the mere thought of Chandrakanta makes him cry. During his moments of emotional collapse, the novel unsympathetically describes his mental state as '*bigda hua dimaag*' which translates to 'an unbalanced brain' (Khatri, *CK* 191). Many a time, Virendra fails to

deflect an attack from the rival *aiyaars* despite Tej Singh's repeated warnings to stay vigilant (Khatri, *CK 49*). When Virendra Singh goes hunting, he is met by a rival *aiyaar* disguised as Tej Singh who tricks him into revealing the location of the *tilismic* cave (Khatri, *CK* 69). Reaching the mouth of the cave, the *aiyaar* questions Virendra's competence in opening the complicated lock. Eager to prove that he too is intellectually capable, Virendra ends up revealing the secret of the complicated lock to the disguised *aiyaar* (Khatri, *CK* 69). The novel is replete with other instances where Virendra is not very alert: seeing Chandrakanta with King Shivdutt, he does not pause to investigate the illusion of reality created by Shivdutt's *aiyaars*. Instead, he murders Chandrakanta in a fit of rage (it is later revealed that he decapitates a dummy body). As a lover, he is disloyal to Chandrakanta, falling for the charms of a mysterious forest woman, Vankanya (Khatri, *CK* 140). His incompetence is plainly exposed when he loses the precious book of *aiyaari* that guarantees Chandrakanta's freedom from the ruin (Khatri, *CK* 129). Containing the secrets of *aiyaari*, the book promised to not only rescue Chandrakanta but also symbolically save the languishing Hindu community from the threat of the Muslim. By making Virendra lose the book, Khatri conveys that he is incapable of being the flagbearer of the Hindu community in the future.

Virendra Singh's behaviour is a stark contrast to the *aiyaars*' rational, agile approach to problem solving. Rarely vigilant, he is the romantic lover whose sentimentalism clouds rational judgment making him prone to day-dreaming. While he embodies a heroic soldierly flamboyance, he lacks the intelligence to singlehandedly survive any adventure. His semi-heroic, semi-pathetic portrayal raises the question: if Khatri aimed to glorify a Hindu hero, then why did he not make Virendra both martially and intellectually capable? Why is the reader provided with

two models of Hindu heroism—the martial Virendra Singh and the intellectual *aiyaar*? This splitting suggests that the two tendencies—the romantic and the intellectual—cannot co-exist in one individual. The novel leaves no doubt that it prefers the *aiyaars*' intellectual heroism. In the end, it is the *aiyaars*' intellectual prowess that ensures a victory for Virendra Singh's army. Fighting in the dark, the soldiers from Virendra's army mistake their own people for the enemy. While Virendra Singh is the swashbuckling hero ready to take action in this scenario, it is the mental agility of the *aiyaars* that saves the day: they quickly make torches to illuminate the battlefield, thus saving the lives of their soldiers (Khatri, *CK* 82).

If Virendra Singh exemplifies the racial/communal ideal, then this is a model which, though martially adept, is deeply flawed. Through this subtle parody of Virendra Singh, the novel iterates its warning against naively believing in the romance of chivalry. While Khatri believed that Hindus were, in some degree, biologically superior to Muslims, rather than investing in a fantasy of the golden Hindu past, he wants Hindus to cultivate their intellectual skills to imagine a different fantasy. The true ideal for Khatri is the vigilant *aiyaar* who represents the antithesis of the spirit of the romantic ideal. Like an *aiyaar* whose razor-sharp mind never accepts any illusions at face value, the reader is meant to question the flimsy nature of the romance of the racially superior Hindu man. To be vigilant then is to not only be suspicious of the Muslim but to also be wary of buying into the available model of the Hinduised fantasy.

While Khatri trains the reader to be suspicious of the romantic fantasy of physical superiority, he replaces it with a fantasy tailored to modern times. For Khatri, the intellectually capable Hindu man or woman embodied by the *aiyaar* is an equally, if not more, enchanting ideal. The *aiyaar* is the 'modern' Hindu man/woman who,

while retaining his/her religious identity, works though problems with scientific rigour.[93] More than casting a glance at the static past, Khatri's romance is invested in imagining a fresh configuration of an intellectually conscious Hindu individual oriented towards the future. The end of the novel gestures at this future of a modern Hindu nation. When Prince Virendra Singh and Princess Chandrakanta finally get married in the end, the focus remains mainly on the *aiyaars*' activities. Traditional romances would treat the wedding ceremony as a significant, spectacular event that marks the continuation of the royal dynastic line (Khatri, *CK* 247). Khatri however refuses to delve into the details of the ceremony, openly declaring that he finds rituals tedious (Khatri, *CK* 247). Instead, the novel closes with the *aiyaar*, Tej Singh's last trick: Tej Singh impersonates King Shivdutt at the wedding effectively preventing the King from participating in the ceremony (Khatri, *CK* 247). Though Tej Singh is not the real King, the *aiyaar*'s convincing disguise perhaps articulates Khatri's fantasy of envisioning a different intellectual King/leader of the state in the future.

Khatri's questioning of the romantic Aryan ideal constitutes a radical note that undermines the Sabha's utopia of a Sanskritized Hindu nation. His undercutting of the communal/racial ideal needs to be linked to his treatment of language in *Chandrakanta*. If a linguistic and racial ideal were two sides of the same coin, then Khatri's use of language questions that ideal. Khatri's approach to language differed from the Nagari Pracharini's over-idealization of Hindi which might have led to a disagreement. He treated the Sabha's glorification of a purified, sanskritised Hindi as

[93] Historian Shruti Kapila's observation in her essay 'The Enchantment of Science in India' (2010) is highly relevant here. Kapila writes that scientific discoveries in nineteenth-century India did not disrupt the discourse of religion, in the way they questioned Christianity in the West: '[T]he assumption of modern science in Indian public and domestic life was seamless and indeed Event-less compared with the raging controversies seen in nineteenth century Europe and Americas…[T]he rational temperament of science became the cornerstone for the reform of religious practices' (129).

being out of touch with the demands of modern reality.[94] Early on, Khatri realized that writing fiction in pure Hindi would strike a false note, defeating the purpose of making it popular with the masses. Staying true to his mercantile entrepreneurial vision, Khatri thus treats the reader as a consumer who has to be sold a palatable and realistic version of Hindi. One of the reasons Lahiri press performed well was because it used an accessible 'Khari Boli' (colloquial) style of Hindi. The reviewers were not always generous towards Khatri's writing style. The magazine *Samaalochak* carried a derogatory review of his novel *Kaajar ki Kothri* calling it a '*chause ka murabba*' (mango pickle), literally a 'pickle' of many linguistic influences (60). Khatri however never turned to writing Hindi in a Sanskritized fashion, like his peers Bhartendu Harishchandra and Kishorilal Goswami. Elsewhere, Khatri laments the state of writing in Hindi by the end of the century: '*Us samay Hindi ke lekhak the, par grahak na the, is samay grahak hain, par lekhak nahin*' (At that time, there were Hindi writers but no consumers, now, there are consumers but no writers, my trans.) (qtd in Saxena 82). Here, Khatri mocks other contemporary Hindi writers who produce fiction in inaccessible Hindi that finds no buyers. In his preface to *Chandrakanta Santiti*, he writes: '[w]hat I say is that if Babu Harishchandra had made his language a little simpler, our friends would have no cause for putting such blame on their own society, and by mixing natural words [*svabhavik shabd*] Hindi's passenger train would have become an express mail' (qtd in Orsini 224). Rather than blaming the disinterested reader/consumer, Khatri blames these writers for alienating readers by force-feeding them a purified version of Hindi. Khatri's syncretic use of language

[94] The annual records of the Sabha can be found in Carmichael Library, one of the oldest libraries in Banaras. In a few records of Nagari Pracharini's annual reports, the Sabha credits the authors who helped propagate Hindi. Though Khatri played a massive role in popularizing Hindi, his name is omitted from these reports. It is likely that the Sabha did not want to associate with Khatri's brand of Hindi and he too did not appreciate their linguistic vision.

does not necessarily prove that his fantasy is tolerant or secular. As mentioned earlier, he does not leave any doubts in the reader's mind that his vision of Hindu nation is inhospitable to Muslims. Yet in the way it negotiates Hindu identity, especially his distancing from the dominant Sanskritic ideal opens up a more flexible model of the Hindu self that privileges intellectual acumen.

Caste and the Mind

To fully understand the workings of identity in *Chandrakanta*, it is important to acknowledge how caste, a discriminatory system peculiar to India, informs the narrative. In this section, I give a brief overview of the caste system as it was codified under the British regime and Khatri's response to the same in *Chandrakanta*. The role of caste in a novel set in South Asia cannot be ignored given the fundamental role it plays in shaping identity in the region. Caste is a complex system of societal stratification that, in Balmurli Natrajan's words, ensures that certain groups stay in their assigned place (80). It is fundamentally a hierarchical regime that essentializes individuals as belonging to different lines of descent. These lineages are seen to be inherently suited to certain occupations that are then taken up by generations to come. The four main categories of division are: Brahmins (education), Kshatriyas (warrior), Vaishya (merchants) and the Sudras (menial labour). These categories constitute the broad '*varnas*' and contain many sub-categories called castes, also known as '*jaati*.' It must be noted that *varna* is the generalized, abstract language of caste while *jaati* defines the everyday practice of caste in South Asia (Bayly 9). In other words, *varna* is the broad order, the 'idealized moral archetype' while in reality, there exist hundreds of castes and sub-castes (Bayly 25). Within this order, the upper castes exercise a monopoly over certain professions prohibiting lower castes from ascending

the caste hierarchy. This prohibition also extends to social and physical contact between castes with individuals conventionally marrying within their own castes.

There are parallels between race and caste as categories in so far as both have historically marked certain groups as inferior.[95] Yet their mode of operation is different. Unlike race, a person's caste is not 'determined by what is phenotypically on the surface' of the body (Gupta 87). That is, a person's caste is not explicitly flagged on his/her physique. Rather, the body makes an appearance in caste discourse in the way contact between upper and lower-caste bodies is prohibited on grounds of contamination. Colonial officials and British ethnographers like H.H. Risley, in their attempt to decode caste, viewed caste as a form of race. Risley claimed that, caste was 'a sort of *unconscious fiction*' that is 'equivalent to the difference of race, which is the true basis of the system' (emphasis added; qtd in Trautmann 199). Deploying the lens of Aryan racial theory, the upper castes were seen to be pure Aryan descendants while lower castes were categorized as Dravidian or indigeneous. A racialized perspective on caste however did not fully account for the complex and invisible nature of caste. As Romila Thapar asserts, in the British schema, 'complexities of caste were simplified in it being explained as racial segregation, demarcating the Aryans from others' (7). Though overstating the comparison between race and caste, H.H. Risley correctly observes that caste is ultimately 'an unconscious fiction' in as much as it pervades Indian society in invisible, insidious ways.

The consolidation of caste as a category in late nineteenth-century India has been the subject of a rich scholarly debate. [96] While nineteenth-century colonial

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[95] For more on race and caste, see: Ania Loomba. 'Race and the Possibilities of Comparative Critique.' *New Literary History*, vol. 40 no. 3, 2009, pp. 501-22; Gyanendra Pandey. *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste and Difference in India and the United States*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

[96] For a comprehensive overview of this debate, see Susan Bayly's 'Western Orientalists and the Colonial Perception of Caste' in *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 97-143; Nicholas Dirks. *Castes of Mind:*

officials and British ethnographers found caste puzzling, they also regarded it as the key to maintaining social order in India. Nicholas Dirks argues that after the Indian rebellion of 1857, the British, anxious about the possibility of another revolt, launched a surveillance drive to map out the network of caste relations, in particular the relationship between different castes (*jaati*) and the larger ideal category (*varna*) (14). This ethnographic shift in colonial governance was geared towards better understanding the complexities of Indian society to strengthen control. This is not to argue that caste as a factor was absent in pre-nineteenth century India but, as Susan Bayly argues, it acquired a more calcified character during the last decades of the century (104). Caste as we understand it today is thus a product of practices inherited over centuries and the system as formally codified by the British.

The advent of colonial modernity in India did not render caste a pre-modern vestige from the past, rather, it reinforced and even re-imagined its significance in social life. As the colonial state set out to define castes, linking sub-castes (*jatis*) with particular (*varnas*), groups attempted to craft their own identity within this grid. The census conducted by the British opened a space for social clusters to bargain for a status that benefitted them in the long run. Communities strategically and agentially negotiated with the colonial state often demanding a higher caste status within the census. *Chandrakanta* offers a complex account of caste dynamics that reveal a category in flux. At a time when communities were scrambling to define themselves within official data, Khatri's text engages in constructing a history for the caste group called the '*Kshatriyas*.' As I will show, the flexibility afforded by the system and Khatri's own uncertain caste identity play a role in his 'modern' re-imagination of Kshatriyahood.

Colonialism and the Making of Modern India. Princeton University Press, 2001; Sumit Guha. *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and Present*. Brill, 2012.

A characteristic feature of the caste system is that it unfairly attributes varying levels of mental capacity to people, thereby treating intellect as the privilege of a select few groups. Historically, the Brahmins, the uppermost caste have appointed themselves as the group most suited to engaging in mental, intellectual labour thus relegating other communities to 'inferior' roles. *Chandrakanta* challenges this equation between Brahmins and intellectual merit: the upper-caste Brahmin priest Pandit Badrinath, depicted as the stereotypical Brahmin priest, is an outsider in a group of *aiyaars*. Though the *aiyaars* accommodate Badrinath in their group, time and again, his amateurish skills are highlighted. The fierce Muslim opponent Zaalim Khan describes Badrinath's skills at *aiyaari* as laughable (Khatri, *CK* 208). While the novel does not openly discredit Brahmins, it suggests that the Brahmin, and his textual knowledge, belong to an older, outdated order that cannot keep up with a newly emergent social configuration.

Aiyaari's privileging of intellect, at first, makes it seem like a meritocratic profession that is open to all. However, while women, Muslims, lower-castes can become *aiyaars*, they carry their ascribed socio-political and religious identities inside the *tilism*. The *tilism*'s pretence of being a modern, rational space that has transcended constraints of caste identity proves illusory. Not only does the *tilism* obey caste rules but it actively reconfigures and reproduces them. Despite their intellectual talents being the primary marker of their self, Chapla and Tej Singh's caste identity is highlighted in the narrative. Though Tej Singh resists finding out about his beloved, Chapla's caste identity, Virendra Singh informs him that their union is acceptable because they belong to the same Kshatriya caste (Khatri, *CK* 202).

Contact within the *tilism* between different castes is permitted within caste boundaries. While it is true that the word '*jati*' (caste) is used in the novel only once,

the novel is highly conscious of everyday practices associated with caste. Kroor Singh's *aiyaars* discuss plans to kidnap King Jai Singh by infiltrating his kitchen and mixing *lakhlakha* in his food. Following caste rules, the *aiyaars* unanimously agree that the king's food should be adulterated by an upper-caste person (Khatri, *CK* 179). Even when rendering an individual unconscious, the *aiyaars* are careful not to violate caste hierarchies. Enchanting another individual within the space of the *tilism* is not always a levelling process especially when it involves contact between castes. This proves that Khatri's *tilism* does not always question social order instead it can reinforce regressive notions of caste pollution. Most striking about Khatri's formulation is that the modern *tilism* rationalizes caste. Within the rational paradigm of the *tilism*, caste is given a new lease of life, with Khatri making it compatible with a modern, scientific mode of thinking.

As mentioned earlier, communities took advantage of the opportunity to re-imagine and re-fashion their identities within a new order. The romance novel too emerges as a medium through which communities constructed imaginary historical pasts to legitimize their sense of identity. In particular, the *aiyaari* literature written in the last two decades of the century engaged in myth-making about a 'warrior' caste called the *Kshatriyas*. Portrayed as valiant soldiers that followed a strict code of honour, the *Kshatriyas* were the equivalents of the knights in British romances.[97] The British officials, drawing on racial theories of Aryanism, type-casted *Kshatriyas*, in particular the sub-caste Rajputs, as a martially superior chivalrous tribe that had

[97] David Omissi notes that, for the British officials, '[i]f fighting ability was hereditary, then racial mixing would produce only degeneracy and military weakness. British recruiting strategy therefore favoured groups who followed restrictive marriage practices and who thus promised to be racially pure' (33). For more on Rajputs and their racial stereotyping by the British, see: Heather Streets. *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture*, *1857-1914*. Manchester University Press, 2004.

inherited Aryan blood (Omissi 32). Most sub-castes of the *Kshatriya* community too endorsed this narrative as it synced with its self-perception of being a brave clan.

Echoes of this narrative can be found in *Chandrakanta*. Before marching to war, King Surendra Singh spells out a code of *Kshatriya* honour to Virendra Singh:

> *Tum abhi Vijaygarh jaao, kshatriyon ko ladayi se zyaada pyaara baap, beta, bhai-bhatija koi nahin hota. Isiliye tumhari muhabbat chorkar hukm deta hoon ki apni kul fauj lekar maharaj jaysingh ko madad pahunchao aur naam paida karo*. (*CK* 66)
>
> You should go to Vijaygarh now, nothing is more important to Kshatriyas than war, not even father, son, brother-nephew. This is why, I put aside my love for you and order you to aid King Jaisingh and bring honour to our kin. (my trans.)

In Surendra Singh's grandiose narrativization of *Kshatriya* identity, the code of honour operates as the binding law of conduct that transcends all affiliations. This is ironic because the code's abstract, transcendental idealism distracts from its actual commitment to hereditary caste lineage. In other words, the honour Virendra Singh is meant to uphold is tied to his caste kinship. More than regulating behaviour, the code stands for a timeless, imagined history within which the community situates itself.

In Khatri's eyes, instead of Virendra, it is the *aiyaar* who represents a more pragmatic vision of Kshatriyahood. Unable to locate Chandrakanta in the *tilism*, Virendra Singh slips into a state of despondency and declares that he does not want to live any longer (Khatri, *CK* 191). As Virendra is about to melodramatically kill himself, a booming voice prohibits him from taking such a drastic step (Khatri, *CK* 191). The voice belongs to Jeet Singh, the master of all *aiyaars*, disguised as a '*sadhu*' (monk) (Khatri, *CK* 191). Jeet Singh reminds Virendra of his duties: 'Are you a Kshatriya? Is this the conduct of the Kshatriyas? Have you not pledged to marry someone?' ('*kya tu kshatri hai? Kshatriyon ke yehi dharm hota hai? Kya tune kisi se vivaah ki pratigya nahin ki?*') (my trans., Khatri, *CK* 191). In a reversal of the power

equation, the *aiyaar* emerges as the spokesperson of the caste ideal, training the prince to follow his '*dharma*' (duty) as a *Kshatriya*. The *aiyaar*'s rational counsel urges Virendra to consider Chandrakanta's fate after his death. Though the *aiyaar*'s advice is concerned with practical matters, he still frames it as a question of fulfilling caste duty.

Chandrakanta rethinks what it means to be a Kshatriya by complicating the dominant romantic construction of martial Kshatriyahood. Khatri's own ambiguous caste status in this period might explain his questioning of the narrative on *Kshatriyas*.[98] Khatris were a mercantile sub-caste (*jaati*) that wielded considerable socio-economic and cultural power in North India. The question of which larger caste category (*varna*) the Khatris belonged to remained unresolved through this period. A few commentators from within the community claimed that Khatris were the original Kshatriyas. Khatri's friend Bhartendu Harischandra, (from the same caste as Khatri) in his essay, '*Khatriyom ki utpatti*' (The Origins of the Khatris) (1873), insisted that 'Khatris were the param aryas, the highest kind of aryas' (qtd in Dalmia *Hindu Pasts* 132). Others like Kashi Nath asserted that Khatris were 'descendents of a war-like race,' an independent caste in their own right separate from the Kshatriyas (qtd in Oommen 96). The common thread across these approaches reveals that the Khatri community was invested in actively constructing a warrior past. Yet, as the missionary Indologist MA Sherring notes about Khatris in 1872 Banaras, the claim was not corroborated by actual ethnographic evidence:

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[98] For more on origin myths about Khatris in early twentieth-century India, see: Todar Mal Bhandari. *Thoughts on the Origin of Present Day Khatris and its Morals*. Amritsar: (publisher unknown), 1908; H.D. Varma. *An Account of Khatris, As a Race of Ancient Kshatriyas, Fully Proving the High Origins of Khatris*. Lahore: (publisher unknown), 1901; K.C.S. Varma. *Kshatriyas and Would be Kshatriyas: A Consideration of the Claim of Certain Hindu Castes to Rank with Rajputs, The Descendants of the Ancient Kshatriyas*, Pioneer Press, 1904.

> The Hindu tribe is an ethnological puzzle. In some respects, they resemble the great Kshatriya or Rajpoot race; in others, they differ from it. Instead of being addicted to government, and delighting in war, they are exclusively devoted to trade; and consequently, are naturally placed among the commercial classes. (277)

Sherring observes that despite similarities with Kshatriyas, Khatris were more entrepreneurial than martial. In light of their mercantile streak, the British too were never entirely convinced by Khatri claims to warriorhood. [99] In a period when Khatris were predominantly claiming warrior status, Devkinandan tries to modify the ideal by constructing a heroic non-martial Kshatriya identity. Through the figure of the *aiyaar*, Devkinandan still manages to claim Kshatriyahood while reconciling it with the more cerebral, entrepreneurial aspects of Khatri life. In short, Khatri posits a Kshatriya identity that does not turn back to the ancient past but is rooted in the present.

Romance and the nationalist consciousness

So far, I have argued that Khatri injects his novel with a cautionary note against romance that, in turn, undercuts an immanent Hindu fantasy. In place of this fantasy, he gives us a more modern, commercially viable yet enchanting vision of a Hindu nation. In this section, I analyse *Chandrakanta*'s critical reception in the early twentieth century and the generic shift from romance to realism thereafter. As a romance, *Chandrakanta*'s insistence that fantasies have to be rationally explainable complicates the conventional readings of romance as an escapist genre. Compared to other romances, *Chandrakanta*'s escapism is more complex because it always directs the reader back to reality. Though set in an undated ancient age, *Chandrakanta*'s emphasis on plausibility gestures at the present and the future. As Khatri wrote in *Chandrakanta Santiti*: 'Now remains the question of plausibility…[W]hat was

[99] Different British ethnographers recorded the status of the Khatris differently (John McLane 131). In the Punjab census of 1870 compiled by Sir Denzil Ibbetson, Khatris are unusually categorized as a mercantile caste. Jürgen Schaflechner notes that Khatris wrote to H.H. Risley, 'the commissioner in charge of the 1901 census' and 'sought to improve their *varna* status' (59).

impossible a hundred years ago is now becoming possible through science. In an earlier age who could have believed in the power of electricity, trains and wireless?' (qtd in Mukherjee, 66). In this statement, Khatri rationalizes the fantastical element of his work as that which is in the process of 'becoming possible,' of translating into reality. In light of this forward-looking gaze of Khatri's romance, the reader does not merely escape the everyday but encounters the present (and the future) via the fantastical.

Twenty years after *Chandrakanta* was written, in 1903, a critical debate refused to acknowledge Khatri's complex negotiation of the genre of romance. A heated conversation across literary journals in the early twentieth century questioned the novel's status in the nationalist literary canon, choosing to read it as unwholesome titillating sensation fiction.[100] This debate printed across three magazines— *Sudarshan*, *Venkateswar Samachar* and *Samaalochak*— articulated the elite critics' explicit rejection of the romance tradition (Madhuresh *Devkinandan* 14). *Venkateshwar Samachar*, a Bombay newspaper that mostly published religious tracts harshly criticized *Chandrakanta* while *Sudarshan*, a periodical owned by Khatri, published under the mentorship of Madhav Prasad Mishra, defended the novel ('*Devkinandan Khatri*' 14). The debate in these two journals, absent as it is from the prominent archives, cannot be traced but another journal *Samaalochak* intervened in the debate and adopted a strong anti-*Chandrakanta* stance. Edited by Chandradhar Sharma Guleri, *Samaalochak*, a Jaipur based magazine claimed that 'racy novels

[100] An obituary for Khatri published in the 1913 edition of the literary magazine *Saraswati* (an initiative started by members of the Sabha), while paying homage to his success describes *Chandrakanta* as an *upanyas* (novel) lacking seriousness ('Babu Devkinandan' 434).

cannot possibly aid the growth of a language' ('*koi bhasha upanyason ke bharose nahin ji saki*') (my trans., '*Tipanniyan*' 4).[101]

For these critics, literary tradition in India could only progress by departing from *Chandrakanta'*s excessively sensational melodramatic aesthetic. As Orsini claims, the trend until recently has been to see *Chandrakanta* as an 'unfortunate stage in the progress towards the realistic novel represented by the work of Premchand' (*Print and Pleasure* 198). For the *Samaalochak* reviewer, Khatri's modern packaging of the romance tradition—his attempt to give the implausible a veneer of the real—did not hide the absurd, fantastical and sensational premise of the novel ('Tippaniyan'). Describing *Chandrakanta* as '*bilalla*' (foolish), the reviewer asserts that characters in *tilismi* fiction lack a lively, complex emotional interiority: '*Aise upanyason ke naayak aur naayika khaali badmaashon ke haatth ki gudia hain, na unmein jaan hai, na Shakti*' (In these novels, the hero and heroines, lacking life or power, are pawns in the hands of the villains) ('my trans., '*Tipanniyan*' 6). The critical commentary also took issue with *aiyaari* literature's idealization of the Kshatriya caste calling its portrayal '*bhadda*' (vulgar) ('*Tipanniyan*' 6). Locating a phony note in *aiyaari* fiction's representation of the Kshatriya warrior, the commentator writes that this portrayal was harming the perception of the community. The debate demonstrates that romances were indeed seen to influence and frame the dominant narrative of Kshatriya-hood. The article urges Kshatriyas to turn away from unreliable romances and consult 'archives' to write their own realistic history devoid of imaginative exaggerations ('*Tippaniyan*' 7). The debate further shows the

[101] According to Avinash Kumar in his PhD thesis 'Making of the Hindi Literary Field: Journals, Institutions, Personalities 1900-40,' Khatri in response accused Guleri of being resentful of the success of the Banaras popular fiction industry (162).

emergence of realism as the new acceptable language for making identity claims within South Asia.

Most significantly, the *Samaalochak* critic labels the genre of romance a foreign import, alien to South Asian sensibility ('*Tipanniyan*' 6). He blames the works of Walter Scott and G.W.M Reynolds for popularizing the genre of sensational romance that had disconnected Indian readers from reality. Comparing the genre to a disease that has mentally afflicted Europe, he claims: '*Ye Europe is bimari ka granth hai aur humein bhi bimaar karne mein kasar na karenge*' 'romance is a disease that has stricken Europe and is now afflicting India' (my trans., 'Tippaniyan' 6). The assumption here is that, having for decades consumed an unhealthy diet of romances, Europe has become culturally/morally degraded— a fate that, in his opinion, also awaits India.

Though the reviewers do not represent the masses, they reflect the thinking of an emergent elite Hindi public sphere that was committed to building a nationalist consciousness. Several commentaries in the early twentieth century asserted that novels should represent a truthful image of the nation and society ('*Upanyas mein desh, kaal, samaaj ki tasveer honi chahiye*') (my trans., Satyadev, '*Hindi Sahitya aur humara Kaam*' 463). Novelists viewed the novel as a medium for imparting social awareness to individuals which, in turn, would lead to heightened nationalist consciousness. A realist mode would prevent the reader from escaping to non-viable, alternative worlds, assisting him/her in responsibly committing to and confronting reality. Iconic realist writer Premchand railed against romances of the yesteryears: 'The century that we have crossed had no relationship whatsoever to reality. Our writers would create idiosyncratic *tilisms* by letting their imagination loose' (qtd in Anjali Gera 49).

For realist writers, to read without consciousness of one's reality for the sake of pleasure was to read without an explicit purpose. It is not surprising then that as the nationalist movement intensified in the early twentieth century, these novelists increasingly veered towards experimenting with realism. In this regard, Simon Gikandi argues that realism and nationalism went hand in hand because realism 'promise[d] narratives that would produce the objective world of the colonized and represent their spaces as autonomous and self-engendered' ('Realism, Romance' 317). Gikandi claims that writing realistically was a mimetic attempt on the part of the colonized to speak back in the language of the colonizer ('Realism, Romance' 317). In the context of India, writers felt that only a portrayal of real conditions could articulate the oppression faced by the colonized subject.

Not only were writers expected to produce a socially responsible vision but one's reading habits also had to be directed towards this purpose. The shift from romance to realism marks a transition in the nature of the attention expected from the reader—for realist novelists, a reader has to be always conscious; at no point, should he/she forget the world that s/he inhabits. In Khatri's romances, however, a conscious reader is expected to constantly measure the fantastical against the real but not at the cost of abandoning the power of fantasy. In a period when attentive reading had to be oriented towards a purpose, reading for pleasure or entertainment was too offer a selfish pursuit—an activity that led to wastage of time '*samay nasht karne ke liye upanyas*' (my trans., Satyadev, '*Hindi Sahitya aur humara Kaam*' 463). To underscore the reckless nature of the act of reading romances, Premchand compared reading to a form of self-serving addictive eating. The author of the *Samaalochak* editorial also uses the metaphor of food and consumption to describe the effect of reading romances. He compares *Chandrakanta*, and the form of romance in general,

to a 'chutney,' the condiment used to flavour food that excites the taste buds without providing substantial food for thought ('*Tippaniyan*' 5). The 'chutney' metaphor is strikingly similar to the description of sensation fiction as '"sugary" romances and "highly spiced fictions"' that the British reader was supposed to avoid in order to develop a more 'discriminating palate' (Gilbert 84). As when the sensation novel that had supposedly caused 'moral panic' in the nineteenth century British readers, the fear among the elites was that the North Indian public's addiction to serial reading would delay a nationalist awakening.

Intriguingly, Khatri, anticipates these critics as he encodes a warning against consuming 'masala' (spice) in *Chandrakanta*. The enemy *aiyaars* trick Tej Singh into revealing the location of the cave by feeding him a piece of meat coated with spice (Khatri, *CK* 49). The lesson that Tej Singh and the readers are meant to absorb is never to trust the senses over the intellect. Aware of the limits of romance, Khatri appears to anticipate later realists in suggesting that the reader needs to be wary of a fantasy not constrained by realism. However, for Khatri, this is not reason enough to entirely omit the genre of romance. By dressing up romance as the real, Khatri tried to generate a different mode of reading that permitted readers to revel in the pleasure of the fantastical while being periodically reminded that fantasies had to be held accountable.

This is however not to argue that Khatri redeemed 'bad' readers of popular fiction by inculcating a sense of responsibility in them. Rather, he trained readers to develop a new attentive mode of engaging with and 'enjoying' romances. *Chandrakanta*'s role in navigating the generic language of romance and realism is thus far more complex than previously considered. In his insistence on grounding the imaginary in the real, Khatri was perhaps aware that the realist aesthetic too contained

an imaginative component. At the heart of *Chandrakanta* is an awareness that the fantastical and the real are not dichotomous categories but share a complex interdependent relationship. As I have shown, this extends to Khatri's understanding of identity as well—for a Hindu ideal to be realized in the future, the reader had to be made 'conscious' of the ideal through the romance of imagination before the vision could be translated into reality. Rather than drilling political consciousness into the reader, Khatri trains him/her to be mesmerized by the state of vigilance which, if cultivated, will assist the Hindu reader in politically defending his community.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

In the 2017 horror film *Get Out*, a white American hypnotherapist, Missy, hypnotises her daughter's black boyfriend, Chris, against his will. Missy claims that hypnosis can cure Chris's smoking addiction. As the scene unfolds, we realize that Missy's intentions are more macabre. Gently stirring her tea-cup, with one decisive clink of the tea-spoon, she mesmerizes and emotionally manipulates him into talking about his mother's untimely death. As Chris breaks down and starts crying, he re-lives the traumatic moment when he first heard about his mother's death in an accident. Though not overtly gruesome, the scene is horrifying in its psychic invasiveness. As viewers, we find ourselves visiting the terrifying 'sunken space,' presumably the recesses of Chris's mind, where he feels indefinitely trapped, unable to escape the guilt of his mother's death. Chris feels burdened not only by his past but also by the white hypnotist peering into his mind.

This thesis began with a discussion of the British doctor in Calcutta who mesmerized unsuspecting Indian patients and surgically operated on them. Approximately one hundred and seventy years later, we see a physically quieter reconfiguration of the trope in a film, except this time the hypnotized racial 'other's' complex interiority is not hidden from the viewers. It takes centre stage.

The film, directed by African American director Jordan Peele, exposes how the wounds left by White American society's oppression of the Black community are not merely physical in nature but signify a deeper history of mental colonization. Described by some reviewers as a ground-breaking reworking of the racialized conventions of the genre of horror, the film pushes back against the tradition of portraying the racial 'other' as the hypnotizing agent, the psychic aggressor equipped with special access to the mind. This pivotal scene and several others in the film

reveal how the unconscious dynamics of mental influence continue to be a relevant trope in the representation of inter-racial contact. Where British Victorian writers primarily deployed the psychic shade of Gothic to convey the threat from the racial 'other,' the new generation of writers/film-makers of colour is offering an inversion, and a deeper internalisation, of Gothic tropes—exploring the unconscious workings of inter-subjectivity to expose the subtle workings of racist violence. These newer fictions, art and films—pregnant as they are with the horror of racial subjugation and discrimination—offer a novel, often more subversive, articulation of tropes of unconsciousness. Such works illustrate how the racism works at a deep, subliminal level, inflicting psychic rather than physical wounds.

The treatment of the unconscious by contemporary writers of colour radically alters the standard representation of genres like romance, fantasy, Gothic and science fiction. For instance, African American writer Octavia Butler's science fiction novel *Parable of the Sower* (1993) portrays a character with special unconscious powers who taps into others' thoughts. In Butler's novel, the hyper-empathetic black protagonist Lauren, like Latimer from George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* (1859), can read other minds—a capacity that enables her to write fiction. In Caribbean writer Nalo Hopkinson's novels *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998) and *Midnight Robber* (2000), we encounter a reclaiming of spiritualist traditions similar to the 'Obeah' demonised in colonial Victorian writings. More recently, the travel adventure narrative, traditionally an imperialist genre, has been re-imagined in Esi Edugyan's *Washington Black* (2018). Edugyan's novel depicts a scientifically inclined black slave who dreams of escaping his oppressive plantation life in Barbados in the 1820s. An air balloon that he builds with his white mentor Christopher 'Tich' becomes his passport to an exploratory adventure in London, Amsterdam and Morocco. Though the thesis has

not looked at these newer configurations in detail, it provides a model for conceptualizing the significance of the unconscious in thinking about racial identity.

One need not look to the contemporary moment to extract an alternative dialogue on the unconscious by writers of colour. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Khatri was not the only author writing Gothic and romance novels that departed from the traditional Eurocentric representation of the genre. What drew readers and writers in the colonies to these genres is a question that merits further consideration. Another potential area of inquiry that the thesis gestures at, but does not fully explore, is how authors in the colonies were influenced by reading popular British writers. Across the Atlantic, Pauline Hopkins, the African American writer and editor of *The Colored American Magazine*, alluded to Bulwer-Lytton's romances in several of her novels. According to critic Daniel Hack, Hopkins's novel *Of One Blood* (1902-03) offers a 'revisionist' reading of Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) by modelling its protagonist, Ruel Briggs, in the mould of Arbaces, the Egyptian priest from Lytton's novel (166). Traces of *The Coming Race* (1871) are also visible in the novel as Ruel discovers he is a descendent of a lost Ethiopian civilization that possesses mesmeric powers. If, in the American context, Lytton's romances inspired a racialized re-imagining of a fantasy of origins, Indian writers like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Mulk Raj Anand, Begum Rokeya and many others working in the vast North-Indian popular fiction industry in Banaras and Allahabad were drawn to popular British authors like H. Rider Haggard, Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Marie Corelli.

Priya Joshi and Shawfqat Towheed's work on readership in colonial India examines the popularity of these authors in late nineteenth-century India but a systematic study of the way such works shaped fiction in the colony is pending.

Societies that struggled with self-definition under colonial rule ironically used the format of British romances to construct pasts for themselves. The thesis thus paves the way for future readings of the ways writers in the colonies appropriated the romance form to suit their contexts and needs. This is not to suggest that colonies like India merely borrowed generic models from the West. Rather, my thesis opens up a deeper examination of the varied purposes towards which native writers employed these generic tropes.

One of the key conclusions of the thesis is that, in this period, the biological conception of race was being contested and re-imagined within popular fiction. In particular, the thesis's treatment of the relationship between race and the artistic imagination offers an entry point into navigating the controversial contemporary debate on cultural appropriation, representation and artistic imagination. In our postcolonial times, race and imagination share a troubled and unsettled relationship, especially with an increasing number of writers from marginalized groups objecting to stereotypical representation of their communities. Authors claim that an imaginative endeavour, especially by white authors, which represents minority cultures has to exhibit a sensitive awareness of lived experiences. Recently, writer Lionel Shriver lashed out against this 'calling out' culture, labelling it as a form of policing that curtails creativity ('Writers Blocked'). While Shriver raises concerns about who has the right to imagine (concerns also raised by Victorian authors), she is more interested in settling the debate than initiating an open-ended conversation. In their exploration of the relationship between race and imagination, some Victorian writers too asserted their right to 'imagine' the 'other' in more complex ways. Both Lytton and Corelli stand out in that regard. The fact that they did not make claims to be offering an authoritative, 'authentic,' and realistic representation of the 'other'

(unlike Shriver), assists my claim that—racist though some aspects of their imaginings are—they are not to be dismissed as simply 'appropriating' the experience of other races. Moreover, the fact that these authors (to an extent) used their representations to criticize Western imperialist ambitions puts pressure on the intent behind their appropriation.

Intervening in the contemporary debate, Hari Kunzru urges us to do more nuanced thinking about this process of imagining/writing about the 'other': '[s]ince trespassing into otherness is a foundation of the novelist's work, should we restrict ourselves in some way, so as to avoid doing violence to those who identify with our characters?' ('Whose life is it anyway?'). Like Bulwer-Lytton, Kunzru sounds confident about the author's ability to use imagination to tap into another's mind, in a way that borders on imaginative clairvoyance. While Kunzru recognizes that it is in the very nature of creative writing to mentally violate, inhabit other identities and speak on behalf of other individuals, he is keen to refute the violence sometimes associated with such imagining. By contrast, Shriver aggressively asserts that the writer 'can step into other people's shoes' and need not seek 'permission' to do so ('Lionel Shriver's full speech'). For her, fictional characters can 'be manipulated at his [the author's] whim, to fulfil whatever purpose he cares to put them to' (insertion mine; 'Lionel Shriver's full speech'). Shriver's message is unequivocal: the novelistic world is the author's domain and s/he decides the rules.

At the heart of Shriver's understanding is a simplistic, non-reflexive model of authorial empathy. More than genuine empathy, it is a hardened belief that the author possesses the capacity to holistically imagine and represent another's experience. Before I further problematize Shriver's notion of empathy, I wish to highlight the popular conception of the authorial mind for which she speaks, as being capable of

empathetically reading and connecting with other minds. For contemporary commentators, being a writer is too often synonymous with being able to sensitively establish a connection with fictional and real characters. They argue that, when properly extended, empathy can act as the antidote to the exploitative mentality behind cultural appropriation. For Jia Tolentino in the *New Yorker*, '[r]eal empathy is obvious in a text, and I wouldn't expect to find it in the work of authors who request "a few points for trying"' ('Lionel Shriver puts on a Sombrero'). The debate however is not merely about the capacity to empathize but *how* and *to what ends* such empathy is extended. In a context where many people of colour experience a lack of public platforms and a lack of willing audiences for their expression of their own experience, a white authorial 'claim' to be empathetic can easily seem to transgress upon and make capital of that experience. The current debate urges authors to re-think their claim to empathy: How far can anyone see into another's mind? At what point does the external gaze, no matter how well-intentioned, become presumptive or intrusive? It is thus not enough to claim to imagine another's experience: a proper modesty is required about one's capacity to fully inhabit a different selfhood. Far from limiting the scope of fiction, acknowledging that another's experience can only be partially and approximately apprehended, holds the potential to enrich imaginative fiction and its criticism.

Victorian British authors' representations of being mesmerically entranced with the 'other' add a layer of complexity to understanding inter-racial empathy in the period and subsequently. Authors such as Grant Allen used the trope of entrancement to express a longing for the fantasy of empathetic bonding between races. Conversely, Florence Marryat portrays entrancement more negatively to expose the dangers of inter-racial psychic proximity. Marryat's conservative novel presents an ideal of

empathy that is inherently racist in impulse. Her notion of empathy supports the British colonial project and actively prevents races from mentally connecting. By contrast, Allen gestures at an alternative psychic mode to sustain a dialogue between races. For him, being entranced by the 'primitive' racial ancestor offers a corrective to the breakdown of empathy caused by imperial power. Though his approach relies on a racial framework, Allen accepts that fully grasping the 'other' is an impossibility. These problematic models illustrate how authors re-imagined not just the possibility of empathy between races, but mental connection itself. Though the works I consider are mostly conservative, a few (like Allen and Corelli's fiction) also show how mental influence opens up the possibility of a shared intercultural, potentially cosmopolitan experience. Their understanding of psychic exchange complicates our current models that treat racist appropriation of minority cultures and empathy as opposing notions. These works illustrate how empathy too can be a problematic impulse and thereby push us to devise a more complex notion of imaginative and affective interaction for theorizing inter-racial relations.

Re-imagining empathy demands recognizing how power determines the exchange of empathy. It also involves paying attention, as Mica Nava observes in his notion of 'visceral cosmopolitanism,' to 'the unconscious, non-intellectual, emotional, inclusive features' of empathetically feeling in sync with another (8). Perhaps, then, it is important to pause and inquire what we mean *now* by *unconsciously* feeling with another. This unconscious identification with others, for Martha Nussbaum, lies at the heart of the 'moral imagination' cultivated through reading novels (*Love's Knowledge* 251-2). If our ethical selves are shaped by reading, what happens to this moral imagination when authors elicit varied psychic readerly responses to the fictionalized racial 'other'? The thesis complicates not only the claim Nussbaum and many others

have wanted to make, of late, for authorial empathy but the kind of unconscious connection a reader could possibly feel with racially different characters. One clear conclusion it reaches is that any adequate response needs to be historical: that is, needs to understand that what has been comprehended by the claim to empathetic 'moral imagination' has changed substantially over the years, and was never at any point simple or uncontested. Thus, as demonstrated above, this thesis paves the way for further examination of the relationship between conceptions of mind and race, ethics of representation, cosmopolitanism, the affective politics of reading and readership within the popular fiction of late Victorian Britain and its colonies.

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