Disintegrated Subjects: Gothic Fiction, Mental Science and the fin-de-siècle Discourse of Dissociation

by

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Abstract

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed a rise in popularity of Gothic fiction, which included the publication of works such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), George Du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894), Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894) and *The Three Impostors* (1895), and Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897), featuring menacing foreign mesmerists, hypnotising villains, somnambulistic criminals and spectacular dissociations of personality. Such figures and tropes were not merely the stuff of Gothic fiction, however; from 1875 to the close of the century, cases of dual or multiple personality were reported with increasing frequency, and dissociation – a splitting off of certain mental processes from conscious awareness – was a topic widely discussed in Victorian medical, scientific, social, legal and literary circles. Cases of dissociation and studies of dissociogenic practices like mesmerism and hypnotism compelled attention as they seemed to indicate the fragmented, porous and malleable nature of the human mind and will, challenging longstanding beliefs in a unified soul or mind governing human action. Figured as plebeian, feminine, degenerative and “primitive” in a number of discourses related to mental science, dissociative phenomena offered a number of rich metaphoric possibilities for writers of Gothic fiction. This dissertation connects the rise of interest in dissociation with the rise of Gothic fiction in the *fin-de-siècle*, arguing that late-nineteenth-century Gothic fiction not only incorporated and responded to the theories of Victorian mental scientists on dissociation but also intelligently grappled with and actively challenged the often hegemonic and regulatory nature of such theories by demonstrating the close proximities between normal and so-called deviant psychologies.
*Fin-de-siècle* Gothic fiction posed a fundamental challenge to predominant views on the dissociative subject by demonstrating that Englishmen were not exempt from the experience of multiplicity and psychic fragmentation, hence not as different from women, “degenerates” and “primitives” as they believed. Furthermore, Gothic texts at times even influenced the theories of mental science, providing mental scientists with a language for the expression of the distressing nature of mental disunity, thus demonstrating the circuitous nature of the relationship between mental science and Gothic fiction.
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the influential women in my life, especially my nana, whose kindness, generosity, patience, support and enduring love helped me to believe that all things are possible.
Chapter 1: 
Introduction

It is characteristic of the human condition that each of us thinks of himself as a unity, all the while experiencing the greatest multiplicity.¹

In the fall of 1888 a Parisian lawyer named Emile became the subject of both legal and scientific interest (Hacking, “Automatisme Ambulatoire” 40). This interest began when Emile, acting contrarily to his usual character, destroyed his uncle’s furniture, tore up his uncle’s books and manuscripts, and incurred 500 Fr of gambling "debts," which led to a charge of swindling. Since he could not be located by authorities, he was tried and convicted in absentia. After stealing a small sum of money, he was apprehended and charged with theft. Both charges were later dismissed when evidence was produced that Emile was not fully present during these events, that is to say that Emile had become someone else. In describing his experience, Emile claims, "A new life, a new memory, a new me, begins. He walks, takes the train, makes visits, buys things, gambles, etc." (emphasis added, qtd. in Hacking, Automatisme Ambulatoire 39). Emile was diagnosed with Automatisme Ambulatoire, or as it is understood today, dissociative fugue, a state in which the subject suffers from amnesia, takes on a new personality and travels beyond his or her typical everyday range of movement. This story was presented to the Académie des Sciences Morales on 20 January 1890 as a case of ambulatory automatism in an hysteric by the highly respected professor of medicine and hygiene, Dr. Adrien Prous (Hacking, “Automatisme Ambulatoire 40). Commenting on this case, English psychical researcher Frederick Myers noted that Emile’s condition was a classic case of double or multiple

¹ Adam Crabtree Multiple Man: Explorations in Possession and Multiple Personality. Toronto: Somerville House, 1997.
personality, a state in which a “secondary consciousness” takes over the usual consciousness of the subject (Qtd. in Link-Heer 20). As Adam Crabtree explains it, “In multiple personality disorder the individual spontaneously manifests more than one cohesive personality, and the extra personality (or personalities) makes no claim to an independent existence outside the body of the individual” (From Mesmer to Freud 288). Cases of dissociation, such as Emile’s, indicated that there might be many ‘minds’ operating simultaneously within each human being.

Stories like Emile’s were not uncommon in the nineteenth century. From 1875 to the close of the century, cases of dual or multiple personality were reported with increasing frequency, and dissociation – a splitting off of certain mental processes (thoughts, emotions, memories and sense of identity) from conscious awareness, of which Multiple Personality Disorder is an extreme example – was a topic widely discussed in medical, scientific, social, legal and literary circles, especially in England, France, Germany and the United States. As Elaine Showalter demonstrates in The Female Malady, there was an active exchange of ideas between scholars in these countries during the nineteenth century, especially in fields devoted to the mental sciences as psychiatrists and clinicians regularly visited each other’s asylums and read each other’s publications. However, by the end of the century, “each society [had] established its own moral, medical, and mental boundaries” (Showalter, Female Malady 6). Of particular importance to this study is the British context, which offers an especially rich area for investigation because of the interest in dissociation shared by mental physiologists, neurologists, psychologists, psychical researchers and for my purposes, writers of fiction. Studies of dissociation not only became the cornerstone for
Victorian theories of consciousness, the structure of mind, and the nature of individual personality; they also came to symbolise and even inform a number of nineteenth-century ideas on gender, sexuality and national identity. As such, dissociative states, like alternating consciousness or multiple personality, and dissociogenic practices,\(^2\) like mesmerism and hypnotism, offered a number of rich metaphoric possibilities for writers of fiction. Debates regarding theories of the unconscious and the structure of mind were quickly incorporated into Victorian literature, especially Gothic literature, which has perhaps always shared a close affinity with scientific and philosophical texts. In the late nineteenth century, there was little sense of a divide between literary and scientific explorations of psychology because as Karl Miller observes, “Literature and science collaborated in spreading the gospel which enjoined the plurality of the mind” (329). Sonu Shamdasani, who specialises in the history of psychiatry and psychology, also demonstrates that lines demarcating the “science” of psychology from the “fiction” of literature were not clearly drawn until well into the twentieth century. According to Shamdasani, “writers came into close proximity and collision with the researches of psychologists, who were engaged in similar explorations” (“The Red Book of C G Jung” 194). As artists, writers and psychologists began to explore the same terrain of mental experience, “writers and artists borrowed from psychologists, and vice versa” (Shamdasani, “The Red Book of C G Jung” 194). The profusion of experimentation in psychology in the last half of the nineteenth century was paralleled in literature; on all sides, individuals were searching for forms to depict the complex nature of mental experience. As Shamdasani puts it, “Writers tried to throw off the limitations of

\(^2\) i.e. those practices which induce dissociation
representational conventions to explore and depict the full range of inner experience – dreams, visions, and fantasies. They experimented with new forms and utilized old forms in novel ways” (“The Red Book of C G Jung” 194).

Nowhere were these experiments more discernible than in Gothic literature, which had a longstanding attraction to tropes such as the doppelganger and double, possession, dreams and visions, the unreliability of memory and the instability of identity.³ Tales of menacing foreign mesmerists, hypnotising villains, and dissociations of personality came to dominate fin-de-siècle Gothic texts, which conversely captivated the attention of psychologists and researchers like Sigmund Freud,⁴ Morton Prince and Frederick Myers.⁵ A number of influential studies have highlighted the importance of theories of dissociation in the development of psychology, psychiatry, and more general conceptions of personality and personhood. Henri Ellenberger’s pivotal study The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry (1970) and Adam Crabtree’s From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing (1993) and Multiple Man: Explorations in Possession and Multiple Personality (1997) consider the study of dissociative states paramount in the development of contemporary theories of mental health and mental health therapies. Recently, scholars have become increasingly interested in interdisciplinary studies of Victorian mental science and popular literature. Jill Matus’s

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³ For example, see Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), Matthew Lewis’ The Monk (1796), Ann Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), James Hogg’s The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824), and E.T.A. Hoffman’s “The Sandman” (1816), to name a few.

⁴ See for example “The Uncanny” (1919).

⁵ Both Prince and Myers discuss Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in their works on Multiple Personality Disorder. Prince mentions Stevenson’s work in his Dissociation of a Personality (1905) and Myers’ “Multiplex Personality” (1887) resembles Stevenson’s text in a number of ways (discussed in Chapter 1) and he also wrote Stevenson letters in which he discusses the merits of Jekyll and Hyde for studies of psychology.
Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction (2009) explores the concept of shock in Victorian fiction and psychology, and both Hillary Grimes and Anne Stiles focus on the unique relationship between fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction and the mental sciences. Grimes’ The Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, the Uncanny, and Scenes of Writing (2011) addresses the dialogue between science and the supernatural found in psychical research, psychology and Gothic texts. Similarly, in Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century (2012), Stiles examines the impact of neurological experimentation on late-Victorian Gothic romances, arguing that Gothic texts often criticised the rigid, linear and objective viewpoints of neurology.

These studies have been useful in highlighting the ways in which our understandings of non-unitary mental states like hysteria, possession, somnambulism and multiple personality have been predominantly formed by what Ian Hacking calls “the literary imagination” (Rewriting the Soul 232). In Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory (1995), Hacking asserts that fiction rather than medicine is often responsible for introducing new models of mind and consciousness to the general public. Hacking makes “the strong point” that

The whole language of many selves had been hammered out by generations of romantic poets and novelists, great and small, and also in innumerable broadsheets and feuilletons too ephemeral for general knowledge today.... [T]he literary imagination has formed the language in which we speak of people – be they real, imagined, or, the most common case, of mixed origin. When it comes to the
language that will be used to describe ourselves, each of us is a half-breed of imagination and reality. (232-3)

In particular, Hacking cites the work of Gothic writers, such as Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, Robert Louis Stevenson, and James Hogg, to present his view that works of fiction have “disseminated and entrenched ideas about the non-unitary mind, doubles, trance-states, and possession” (Matus and Goldman 615). However, Hacking’s research does not thoroughly explore the link between fiction, mental science, and its ambient culture in fin-de-siècle studies of dissociation, and it is this link that my study seeks to investigate. In this study, I will connect the rise of interest in dissociation with the rise of Gothic fiction in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, arguing that late-nineteenth-century Gothic fiction not only incorporated and responded to the theories of Victorian mental scientists on dissociation but also intelligently grappled with and actively challenged the often hegemonic and regulatory nature of such theories by demonstrating the close proximities between normal and so-called deviant psychologies; furthermore, Gothic texts at times even influenced these theories, as was the case with Robert Louis Stevenson’s powerful novella, The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886). Thus, Gothic fiction provided mental scientists with a language for the expression of the distressing nature of mental disunity. This study will build upon Terry Castle’s (1995) assertion that the “post-Enlightenment language of mental experience is suffused with a displaced supernaturalism” (84) as well as the work of Kelly Hurley (1996), Andrew Smith

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6See for example Frederic Myers’ “Multiplex Personality” and personal correspondence with Stevenson, Morton Prince’s Dissociation of a Personality, and the work on dual personality done by Scottish psychiatrist Lewis Bruce in the 1890s.
(2004) and Anne Stiles (2007, 2012), which suggests the “Gothic” nature of several discourses of the late-nineteenth century – degeneration, medicine and neurology respectively – in order to establish the “Gothic” character of the discourse of dissociation, a characterisation that has persisted throughout the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. Using the late-nineteenth-century discourse of dissociation as an example, this study will demonstrate the circuitous and reciprocal relationship between Gothic and mental science.

1.1 Terrains of Emergence: the British fin-de-siècle

Roger Luckhurst claims that a history of a concept has to “map the first surfaces of [its] emergence” (emphasis original, The Invention of Telepathy 41). In other words, an analysis of a concept like dissociation needs to “examine the terrains which governed its appearance, shaped its potential utterances, endowed its formulations with possible meanings, and created its believers and sceptics” (Luckhurst, The Invention of Telepathy 10-11). As Bruno Latour argues, this is never an easy task as any scientific concept “is a very tight knot at the centre of a net. It is hard [to understand] because it has to hold so many heterogeneous resources together” (106). The theory of dissociation that emerges at the end of the nineteenth century is no exception.

The fin-de-siècle has been characterised as a time of social anxiety, defined by concerns about a loss of religious faith, the effects of an expanding metropolis, the possibility of degeneration, the implications of the New Woman, the stability of the

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7 A socially-derived counter-narrative to Darwin’s theory of evolution, which suggests the possibility of human regression or de-evolution.

8 A term first coined by Sarah Grand and Ouida in a pair of articles featured in North American Review in 1984 to describe a new generation of women who defied social propriety by living independently and earning their own living. See Sally Ledger “Who was the New Woman?” in The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997. 9-34.
Empire and unease about scientific advances. Kelly Hurley claims that evolutionism, criminal anthropology, degeneration theory, sexology and pre-Freudian psychology all articulated new models of the human as discontinuous in identity (5). In addition to sexology's challenge to the belief in a natural link between sex, gender and sexuality, Charles Darwin's theory of human evolution was perceived as disastrous and traumatic as it revealed human ancestry to be the result of random events rather than a divinely-ordered design. Martin Danahay claims that even though evolution became an established principle of biology in the late nineteenth century, it remained a controversial subject in wider Victorian society due to the challenge it posed to human exceptionalism.

Danahay writes that in suggesting humans and primates shared a common ancestor, “Evolutionary theory was unsettling to the Victorians because it dissolved the boundary between the human and the animal” (Introduction 19). In a letter to Darwin, geologist and clergyman Adam Sedgwick lamented of the “absolute sorrow” with which he read parts of On The Origin of Species (1859), claiming that to deny “There is a moral or metaphysical part of nature as well as a physical” would be to “sink the human race into a lower grade of degradation than any into which it has fallen since its written records tell us of its history” (Letter 2548).

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10 Also known as Anthropocentrism, human exceptionalism is the belief in the human species' preeminence over other animals. This can also be thought of as speciesism, a term coined by Richard Ryder to mean the discrimination against or exploitation of certain animal species by human beings based on an assumption of human superiority. See Richard Ryder “Speciesism” in Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare. Ed. Marc Bekoff. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998. 320.
The nineteenth century saw traditional understandings of human identity undermined and radically transfigured, especially in the last few decades. Tony Davies argues that during the nineteenth century, various and sometimes competing understandings of what it meant to be *human* emerged so that “different and clearly incompatible versions of the ‘human’ ... [were circulating] within the orbit of a single concept” (19). However, what was fairly consistent was the Enlightenment belief that “man” was a rational, agentic being, based on the model articulated by René Descartes in the seventeenth century – a model that is so entrenched in Western culture that Neil Badmington suggests it “continues to enjoy the status of ‘common sense’” (5). Badmington claims that Descartes “arrived at a... remarkably influential account of what it means to be human” when at the beginning of the *Discourse on the Method* he asserts that reason “is the only thing that makes us men [sic] and distinguishes us from the beasts” (qtd. in Badmington 3). According to Badmington, in the Cartesian model, “the critical determinant of being is rational, fully-conscious thought” (5) so that “Rational thought, quite simply, makes humans human” (3). For Descartes, the thinking subject is a unified subject, made cohesive through conscious self awareness (*cogito ergo sum*). According to Stephen Gaukroger, in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* Descartes offered a radically new system of philosophy, one that challenged the long-established Aristotelian model that posited sense perception as the starting point for knowledge. In contrast to Aristotle, Descartes argued that the senses should be subjected to intense skeptical doubt, claiming instead that

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11 This is not to say that such a belief was not challenged. Indeed, studies in subconscious and unconscious mental activity began to reveal that humans might be subject to drives and desires they cannot control, as is the case with much of the work of psychical researchers, like Frederick Myers, and the work of Sigmund Freud.
the intellect is the way to gain true knowledge, forcing one to become “responsible for one’s cognitive life” (Gaukroger 1). The result is a new conception of mind and a new conception of subjectivity that elevates mind as the center of being. The unified, rational and cognitively sound subject became the basis for Enlightenment conceptions of the subject. According to Stuart Hall, the Enlightenment subject:

was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose “centre” consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same — continuous or “identical” with itself — throughout the individual's existence. The essential centre of the self was a person's identity... this was a very “individualist” conception of the subject and “his” (for Enlightenment subjects were usually described as male) identity. (274)

Here, Hall identifies Enlightenment subject as continuous, individuated and masculine in identity, traits that would be strikingly undermined by the dissociated subject of the nineteenth century.

Case studies of dissociation sensationally challenged many of the existing models of subjectivity available in the nineteenth century. Much like Darwin’s theory of natural selection challenged traditional views of intelligent creation and human exceptionalism, case studies of dissociative phenomena involving psychic-splitting, multiple personality and somnambulism, like Emile’s, challenged traditional assumptions about the nature of identity as being unified and integrated as well as the assumption that a person has only one mind.
Amy Louise Miller writes that in Western cultures, “The reality of self is constructed as being local and unified” to such an extent that “unity is the sole allowably ‘normal’ state” (227). Miller calls this the “local view” of self: self is “attached” to and “bounded” by the body in time and space. In this system, “I” am a separate individual “who exists locally within the boundary of my skin. My thoughts take place in my mind, the wiring for which is in my brain, inside my head. There is an assumed one-to-one relationship between my mind and my body” (227). The view of mind held by many Victorians was that it was an entity of spiritual or incorporeal nature. English physiologist and neurologist Henry Charlton Bastian in his text *Brain as an Organ of Mind* (1880) claimed that:

[The] word “Mind” is generally used as a collective designation for the subjective states which reveal themselves to each one of us in consciousness, and which we infer to exist in other beings like ourselves....the word “Mind” comes to be used most frequently, not as a general abstract name answering to no independent reality, but as though it corresponded to a real and positive something, existing of and by itself. (138-9)

This “real and positive something” was most often interpreted as the *Ego* or a non-corporeal embodiment of subjective states: sensation and emotion, intellect and will or volition (Bastian 139); therefore, “mind” came to designate not only consciousness but also subjectivity or personality. Stephen Braude suggests that dissociative states, like Multiple Personality Disorder, “challenge various familiar assumptions about the nature of personhood. Most notably (and quire roughly speaking), we tend to assume that a person has no more than one mind, or that there is a one: one correlation between persons and
bodies” (66). As more and more cases of dual and multiple personality arose, the belief that each individual possessed only one “mind” was called into question, creating anxiety by destabilising the long-held understanding of “man” as a rational and unified being.

These nineteenth-century challenges to self-definition and existing models of identity also created what Elaine Showalter identifies as an intense longing for “strict border controls around the definition of gender, as well as race, class, and nationality” (Sexual Anarchy 4). In her pivotal study of the fin-de-siècle Showalter contends that “if the different races can be kept in their places, if the various classes can be held in their proper districts of the city, and if men and women can be fixed in their separate spheres,” than a comforting sense of identity and permanence can be preserved (Sexual Anarchy 4). Showalter demonstrates that the boundaries between different classes and races were among the most important lines of delineation for English society. Fears of colonial rebellion, miscegenation, crossbreeding, and intermarriage, “fueled scientific and political interest in establishing clear lines of demarcation, between black and white, East and West” (Showalter, Sexual Anarchy 5). The preservation of the English nation was also tied to the theory of urban degeneration and the belief that poverty would lead to a deterioration of the race. As England and Western Europe were hit by an economic depression in the 1870s and the term ‘unemployment’ first comes into use in the next decade (Showalter, Sexual Anarchy 5), the fear of deterioration and decline became more pronounced.

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12 Of interest on this topic is Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok’s theory of the phantom in The Shell and the Kernel (1978), which suggests that the subject is haunted by the psychic conflicts and traumas (the “secrets”) of his/her ancestors.
As many scholarly accounts of the fin-de-siècle have demonstrated, the concept of degeneration was widely influential. William Greenslade, for example, argues that “The late Victorian establishment and the propertied classes generally harboured anxieties about poverty and crime, about public health and national and imperial fitness, about decadent artists, ‘new women’ and homosexuals,” all of which were expressed in a language of “degenerationism” (2). Developed out of fears of national decline, tainted heredity, and the evolutionary model proposed by Darwin and taken up by the Social Darwinists, degeneration is the belief that humans can regress or “de-evolve” under certain conditions. This view was applied to physical, mental and moral conditions alike. In terms of psychology, the capacity for dissociation was seen as pathological by many who studied mental states. French psychologist and philosopher Pierre Janet is credited with developing the theory of dissociation as it is understood today. Dissociation was the conceptual foundation to his understanding of the nature of hysterical functioning and the intrinsic structure of the human psyche more generally. Janet posited two basic laws of dissociation: that ideas can be conscious but not associated with the grouping of sensations and memories that make up the habitual ‘I’; and, that every phenomenon artificially associated with or attached to a secondary or subsequent personality was withdrawn from the awareness of the normal personality (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 313). Although many contemporary understandings of dissociation suggest that the process involves a disassociation of psychic material from conscious awareness, Janet believed that this was really a process of association, one in which ideas and memories are grouped as they occur into one personality or another. As Adam Crabtree explains Janet’s theory, these groups
“will have various degrees of complexity; some of them are sufficiently complex to constitute a personality. The groups begin as and remain isolated units. If the normal consciousness does not have knowledge of an event, it never did have knowledge of it. Forgetting is not involved” (From Mesmer to Freud 313). According to Stephen Braude, Janet saw mental states as having particular patterns of associative links between them and believed that when these links are broken, certain mental states become dissociated from the rest. Janet believed that such pathological dissociations only happened in individuals suffering from particular kinds of mental illness (i.e., hysteria) and that such occurrences were the result of mental or moral weakness. According to Eugene Taylor, Janet subscribed to the view that this weakness was the result of a hereditary depletion of the nerve force, which, coupled with a series of traumatic or exhausting experiences, resulted in a degeneration of the synthesising function of the brain (22).

In Faces of Degeneration Daniel Pick traces the roots of degeneration theory to the 1840s and 1850s in the work of French physician Bénédict Augustin Morel, who attempted to explain psychological abnormalities through a theory of mental decline. In his text Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives (1857), he discusses the nature, causes, and symptoms of degeneration, citing heredity as the leading cause of mental illness. Morel would later claim that alcohol and drug usage could also be important factors in the course of mental decline (Pick, Faces of Degeneration). Although theories of degeneration were drawn from a variety of sources, it was Darwin’s theory of natural selection that came to dominate discussions of “de-evolution” in the latter half of the nineteenth century.
Followers of Darwin, like E. Ray Lankester, maintained that if organisms could evolve as Darwin’s model suggested, they could also “de-evolve” into less complex forms. Pick’s study indicates that ideas about degeneration reached their peak in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, as Italian doctor Cesare Lombroso developed his theories on criminals and writer Max Nordau developed his theories on fin-de-siècle decadence. Lombroso’s pioneering text *Criminal Man* (1876) argued that criminals were atavistic representatives of “an earlier, more violent period in human development” with brains and physiognomies visibly different from other humans (Danahay, Introduction 20). Nordau, a journalist and social critic, maintained that the human species’ capacity for degeneration was evidenced by particular literary and cultural trends, such as the “amoral artistic posturing of a dramatist such as Ibsen and through the quite different writings of Zola and Wilde” as well as in the “‘diseased’ art,” which indicated “the presence of corruption, and was itself potentially corrupting” (Andrew Smith 15). Thus certain types of art, as well as the ways in which they were consumed, could be considered degenerative in the same way particular mental states and biological determinants were in medical and scientific communities.

As the above examples make clear, the language of degeneration filtered into many aspects of Victorian life. It is no surprise, then, that discussions of degeneration found expression in Victorian literature. Linda Dryden claims that the late nineteenth-century novel

[Was] a powerful and influential medium where these issues were laid bare and debated, where the real concerns of the late nineteenth-century could be dramatized through the lives of fictional protagonists and scrutinized through the
acuity of the creative artist. Political, social, moral and scientific debates of the *fin de siècle* provided writers with much of the material out of which to fashion their dynamic narratives, and allowed them to engage creatively with the concerns that were occupying the most influential thinkers of the time and the population at large.

(1)

Similarly, Greenslade’s study demonstrates how theories of degeneration “seemed to provide plausible explanations for disturbing social changes, and new insights into human character and morality” (inside cover). Gothic fiction, already permeated by images of “perversion, atavism and forms of monstrosity” (Andrew Smith 6), seemed especially well suited to explorations of dissociative and degenerative states since, as this study will demonstrate, theories of dissociation and degeneration constitute two traditions of thought that became “Gothicised” during this period (Andrew Smith 34). Kelly Hurley argues that degeneration is a “crucial imaginative and narrative source for the fin-de-siècle Gothic” (45). Theories of atavism and mental decline inform many popular Gothic narratives of the *fin-de-siècle*, such as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). In the novel, Mina Harker remarks to Van Helsing, “The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him” (Stoker 383). According to Pick’s reading of *Dracula*, “the ambiguities of representation in the novel are in part bound up with contradictions of connotation in the wider discourse of degeneration” (*Faces of Degeneration* 167). On the one hand, the novel attributes degeneration to an invasive, alien source in the figure of the Count while, on the other hand, it represents degeneration as a “blood disease, symbolically transmitted through vampirism,” which suggests that “the vampire hunters are themselves pathologised
through contact with the Count” (Andrew Smith 34). Thus, in Stoker’s text all characters, British and foreign, are subject to the potential threat of “morbid accumulation” (Pick, *Faces of Degeneration* 168) represented by degeneration.

One particular employment of degeneration theory was found in discussions of poverty and urban slums. The condition of the urban poor and the slum areas they inhabited were, as Martin Danahay notes, causes of much concern throughout the nineteenth century, but in the 1880s and 1890s, the debate was informed by an ethnocentric and racist vocabulary of degeneration that characterised the slum-dweller as “a throwback to a more ‘primitive’ kind of human being” (Introduction 18). In *The Town Dweller: His Needs and Wants* (1889) J. Milner Fothergill puts forth a similarly racialised thesis that the inhabitants of inner-city London are even a separate *species* from other English citizens. Fothergill takes the “smaller, lighter and darker” appearance of the urban poor to reflect a “deterioration of the race” from the superior Anglo-Dane type found in the countryside (113). Showalter contends that “while for most of the nineteenth century the urban boundaries between the classes were clearly demarcated, with the poor restricted to working-class districts of the East End, urban homelessness and general unemployment made the borderline between the classes startlingly visible” (*Sexual Anarchy* 6). With London rapidly expanding from about two million inhabitants when Victoria came into reign to six and a half million at the time of her death (Christ 1043), crowding and overpopulation, homelessness and poverty became widespread concerns.

In response to B.S. Rowntree’s contention in his book *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (1901) that thirty percent of the population of the city of York lived in a state of poverty,
popular journalist W.T. Stead wrote, “If we are to hold our own among the nations in the severe commercial struggle that lies before us the mass of the people must be physically and mentally efficient. It is the best fed and the best taught nation that will survive in the long run” (Qtd. in Greenslade 182). Likewise, William Greenslade notes that by the end of the nineteenth century “the fate of the nation and the health of the mass of the people had come to seem inseparable. The physical and moral consequences of poverty at home and the threat of imperial weakness abroad were repeatedly spoken of together” (182). Greenslade goes on to quote social imperialist Lord Rosebery as stating “in the rookeries and slums which still survive, an imperial race cannot be reared. You can scarcely produce anything in those foul nests of crime and disease but a progeny doomed from its birth to misery and ignominy” (182-183). Furthermore, as John Tosh contends this “imperial race” had a distinctly masculine character in the late nineteenth century: “The imperial project was presented to the public in unequivocally masculine terms, partly with the intention of encouraging young men to pursue their careers overseas as soldiers, administrators or emigrants at a time when the empire was believed to be under stress” (7). Tosh maintains that the empire “was above all a massive assertion of masculine energies” for the West (6-7) as more than most areas of national life, empire was seen as a projection of masculinity with “manliness and empire confirm[ing] one another, guarantee[ing] one another, [and] enhance[ing] one another” (193). The empire was “a man’s business” in at least two senses. Not only was its acquisition and control dependent upon the energy and ruthlessness of men, but also its place in the popular imagination was mediated through literary and visual images which “consistently emphasized positive male attributes” (193). Empire was, in a
fundamental sense, a test of the nation’s virility. A heightened awareness of threats overseas induced a harsher definition of masculinity at home: “if the empire was in danger, men must be produced who were tough, realistic, unsqueamish and stoical” (Tosh 194). As critics such as Tosh, Josephine Guy and Andrew Smith have demonstrated, however, gender ideologies which sought to define masculinity in the nineteenth century were “neither monolithic nor hegemonic” (Guy 465). There was considerable disagreement over issues such as the relationship between sex and gender, the nature of sexual desire and the acceptable level of “performance” inherent in the social presentation of “manliness.” What was fairly consistent, however, was the belief that courage, independence, honour and stability were the desirable traits for the British masculine subject.13

As Herbert Sussman makes clear in his study *Victorian Masculinities* (1995), conceptualisations of masculine identity were widely debated – at times challenged and at times reinforced – in the pages of Victorian fiction. Sussman argues that through fictional representations of masculinity, Victorian artists were able to emphasise the constructed and multiple nature of the masculine and to call attention to “the historical contingency of... formations of manliness and of male power itself, thus questioning male dominance and supporting the possibility of altering the configuration of what is marked as masculine” (9). As scholars like Andrew Smith and Cyndy Hendershot have demonstrated, Gothic fiction in particular worked to highlight inconsistencies and uncertainties in Victorian conceptions of masculinity or maleness. Hendershot’s text *The Animal Within* (1998) puts forth the argument that one of Gothic’s primary concerns is to reveal the inherent contradictions and

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13 For example, see Michael Roper and John Tosh’s introduction to *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*. London: Routledge, 1991.
idiosyncrasies in existing models of masculinity. According to Hendershot, Gothic undermines “normative, heterosexual masculinity” through its presentation of this supposedly coherent subject position “as one frequently incoherent and plagued by insecurities and varieties beyond the story of heterosexual man” (3). Thus when Dracula’s Jonathan Harker closes his eyes in “languorous ecstasy” and waits “with beating heart” for the “two sharp teeth” of the vampire woman resting on his throat to penetrate his body, Harker’s heterosexual identity is challenged; for, as Christopher Craft writes, “Dracula's daughters offer Harker a feminine form but a masculine penetration” (110) as their vampiric bodies represent “the power to penetrate” (109). Such a scene inverts the typical gender scripts of the nineteenth century by making men passive subjects of a female penetration.

This version of male passivity was seen by many as indicative of biological and cultural regression. In response to theories of national decline and degeneration, some, like criminologist Max Nordau, argued that through the masculine, and decidedly middle-class, traits of hard-work and level-headedness, society could be revitalised. Although Nordau’s text Degeneration (1892) was published towards the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of an essential link between the vitality of men and the vitality of society had been established much earlier. One example of this link can be found in the work of Samuel Smiles, whose book Self-Help (1859) endorsed an openly-contrived version of ideal masculinity, claiming that the more a man modeled himself after the ideal, the more ideal he would become. According to Smiles, the cultivation of traits such as “Energy and Courage” in men was of “the greatest importance” as “it is the energy of individual men that gives strength to a State, and confers a value even upon the very soil which they
cultivate” (228). For Smiles, traits like energy, power and freedom of will “may be defined to be the very central power of character in a man – in a word, it is the Man himself” (229). However, the act of defining and thus safeguarding masculinity was problematised by a number of profound social shifts at the end of the nineteenth century. It is by now standard to note that the fin-de-siècle is pervaded by anxieties about the stability of traditional constructs of gender and sexuality. Critics such as Pamela Thurschwell and Elaine Showalter demonstrate how deep and far-reaching these anxieties really were. Showalter, borrowing from the novelist George Gissing, classifies the 1880s and 1890s as decades of “sexual anarchy,” as a proliferation of contradictions in gendered identity appeared to break down the laws that governed sexual identity and behaviour; as it was thought “men became women. Women became men. Gender and country were put in doubt” (Sexual Anarchy 3). She goes on to claim that “What was most alarming to the fin de siècle was that sexuality and sex roles might no longer be contained within the neat and permanent borderlines of gender categories. Men and women were not as clearly identified and separated as they had been” (Sexual Anarchy 9). Figures such as the New Woman and the “dandy” emerge alongside the introduction of the terms “feminism” and “homosexuality” and worked to redefine the meanings of both femininity and masculinity (Showalter, Sexual Anarchy 3).

Both Showalter and Judith Walkowitz have persuasively argued that the fin-de-siècle was dominated by a series of debates about gender related to women’s increased desire for autonomy and the pressure for social change. While these social changes had a profound impact on women, in many ways men felt the impact of these shifts as more acutely threatening. Many men found the redefinition of their social role the source of much
anxiety. As Showalter points out, “opportunities to succeed at home and in the Empire were not always abundant; the stresses of maintaining an external mask of confidence and strength led to nervous disorders, such as neurasthenia,” and the required suppression of ‘feminine’ feelings of nurturance and affection created a sense of inner division and turmoil for many men (Sexual Anarchy 9). In his study of late nineteenth-century models of masculinity, Andrew Smith argues that the dominant, largely middle-class masculine scripts at the fin-de-siècle came to be associated with “disease, degeneration and perversity” in scientific, quasi-scientific, as well as literary contexts (1). Smith argues that a “bifurcated model of masculinity” emerges out of a male tradition of writings on degeneracy, sexology and self-help, maintaining that this model was also taken up by Gothic fiction. Smith claims that “Gothic stages a very similar debate about disease and ‘maleness’” as that found in “medical texts and contexts” in the late nineteenth century (5). Just as disciplines like sexology and medicine seemed to be fascinated with “the collapse of dominant gender scripts” and images of division and perversion, the “image of the unstable, divided self...is echoed in the Gothic instabilities of the seemingly bifurcated subject suggested in Jekyll and Hyde” (6). Smith claims that Gothic fiction demonises the normative while it normalises the deviant, marking Gothic as a transgressive force. In the case of both medicine and literature, the idea that “the ideological self-evident signs of masculinity can no longer determine the male subject” comes to influence a variety of writings at the fin-de-siècle (Andrew Smith 34).

In much the same way, mental sciences like neurology, psychology, mental physiology and the burgeoning discipline of psychoanalysis worked to develop a model of
consciousness and identity predicated upon inner division and conflicting states of being so that Gothic and science seem to go hand-in-hand. In the late nineteenth century, both naturally occurring and artificially produced modifications in personality (by suggestion under hypnosis) were popular items in psychological research as well as in Gothic literature. Well known psychologists like Pierre Janet, Alfred Binet and Charles Fere were researching somnambulism and suggestion in France; F.W.H. Myers and William Crookes of the London Society for Psychical Research and psychologist Henry Maudsley were researching divided and multiplex consciousness in England; and Morton Prince and Borris Sidis were exploring the cases of multiple personality in The United States. Maudsely, for example, argued that the mind was divided into antagonistic halves in the very physical make-up of the brain, putting forth a view of the human as inherently divided. Similarly, Charles Darwin presented his hypothesis that humans retained some of the ferocity of the emotions found in their animal progenitors, which suggested a human subject torn between its animal and civilised nature, unpredictable in its variability. The discourse of hypnotic suggestibility, although in no way unified, presented a view of the subject as invadable by outside forces. This anxiety was reflected in much fin-de-siècle Gothic literature, such as George Du Maurier’s Trilby (1894) and Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Parasite” (1894), in which Professor Austin Gilroy is enslaved by the mesmerising powers of Miss Penclosa and forced to perform humiliating and dangerous acts against his will, marking him as feminised and degenerate. The idea that a thought could be planted in a subject’s mind in order to alter the subject’s behaviour was made popular by Scottish surgeon James Braid, whose theory of hypnotism was largely
predicated upon this idea of “suggestion,” or what he called the placement of “dominant ideas.” Braid wrote,

By our various modes of suggestion, through influencing the mind by audible language, spoken within the hearing of the patient, or by definite physical impressions, we fix certain ideas, strongly and involuntarily in the mind of the patient, which thereby act as stimulants, or as sedatives, according to the purport of the expectant ideas, and the direction of the current of thought in the mind of the patient, either drawing it to, or withdrawing it from, particular organs or functions.

*(Neurypnology 8)*

Braid’s theory of “neurohypnology” or “nervous sleep,” which will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, was based on the theory of animal magnetism, developed by Franz Anton Mesmer towards the end of the eighteenth century. While dissimilar in many ways, both theories held that under the right conditions, it was possible for an individual to become entranced and to enter into a state of somnambulism, where the subject was able to speak and act as though they were awake. After briefly tracing the emergence of a divided model of consciousness in the mental sciences, I will demonstrate how a similar model emerges in Gothic fiction.

The somnambulistic states found in both animal magnetism and hypnotism revealed a realm of mental activity not available to the conscious mind and previously unexamined by science. In attempting to use animal magnetism to treat an ill peasant, Victor Race, the marquis de Puységur, one of Mesmer’s most ardent disciples, noticed a remarkable alteration in personality while Victor was in this state: “When he is in a magnetized state, he
is no longer a naive peasant who can barely speak a sentence. He is someone whom I do not know how to name” (qtd. in Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 39). In addition to the appearance of what would be termed a “secondary self” lying dormant in the subject, experiments with animal magnetism (later termed mesmerism in the public vernacular) and hypnotism also revealed that the entranced subject was highly susceptible to outside control, such as the implantation of ideas identified by Braid in his theory of suggestion. Several decades prior to Braid, Puységur had noted that there seems to be a direct connection between the nervous systems of the magnetiser and the magnetised subject, which he labelled ‘rapport.’ Puységur believed this fusion between magnetised and magnetiser to be quite literal, explaining that the magnetiser could cause the magnetised to perform specific actions by a simple act of will, making the magnetised functionally inseparable from the magnetiser (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 41). In his sessions with Victor, Puységur claimed, “I do not need to speak to him. I think in his presence, and he hears me and answers me. When someone comes into the room, he sees them if I want him to; he speaks to them, saying things that I want him to say, not always what I dictate to him, but whatever truth demands. When he wants to say more than I believe prudent for the listener, I stop his ideas, his sentences in the middle of a word and totally change his thought” (Mémoires pour serv 35-36). While Mesmer’s theories were largely dismissed by the medical and scientific communities in Western Europe, Braid’s theories were embraced by many of the leading minds in England and France, such as famed neurologist Jean Martin Charcot, as well as used for therapeutic purposes by psychologists like Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud in the early stages of psychoanalysis.
The view of consciousness as penetrable by the thoughts of another developed in Mesmer’s and Braid’s theories produced an image of the mind as permeable and passive, contradicting the Enlightened view of the subject as unified and subjectivity as fixed and continuous. In contrast to the model proposed by Descartes and developed throughout the eighteenth century, the subject that emerges during the fin-de-siècle was internally divided, animalistic and emotional, permeable and malleable – traits which are most often culturally coded as feminine. The emphasis that Smiles places on the “power of will” (229) and the “freedom of will” (231) as being central to the character of man is matched in discussions on the nature of susceptibility to dissociation. In his first paper on hypnosis, delivered to the Académie des Sciences in February 1882, famed neurologist J.M. Charcot presented his view that hypnotism was an artificially produced form of hysteria, “such as that frequently presented by women” (403). Charcot’s belief that sensitivity to trance was a feminine condition was not one that was new; in the Franklin Commission’s public report on animal magnetism for the king of France (1786), one member – Jean Sylvain Bailly – wrote that men exercise “natural empire” over women, which is demonstrated by the fact that it is “always men who magnetize women,” effectively establishing the gender dynamics of the magnetic relationship (qtd. in Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 92). Therefore, to be a dissociative subject – that is, to be a subject susceptible to hypnotism, hysteria or magnetism – was to be, if only symbolically, a feminine subject. Thus when Robert Holt in Richard Marsh’s Gothic novel, The Beetle (1897), exclaims that to be mesmerised is to be ‘unmanned’ (49) and rendered “impoten[t]” (62), he is pointing to a system of thought, already one hundred years in existence, which characterises susceptibility to trance as a
sign of mental and moral weakness – one characteristic of degenerates, women and “primitives.”

As studies in dissociative phenomena, such as those related to animal magnetism and hypnotism, revealed the mind to be divisible into incongruent parts and susceptible to outside control, many became fearful that the complete extinction of individual will was a distinct possibility. Pamela Thurschwell argues that at the fin-de-siècle there was an anxious sense that “someone or something might get inside one’s mind and control one’s actions” (37). Within medical and scientific circles, dissociation was studied for what the phenomena could reveal about “the vicissitudes of conscious and subconscious thought” (Thurschwell 37). But dissociation was also fascinating to the general public as travelling mesmerists and hypnotists put on spectacular shows, highlighting the entranced subject’s insensitivity to pain and absolute obedience to the will of the mesmerist. Indeed, critics like Thurschwell, Roger Luckhurst and Andrew Smith have demonstrated how narratives of dissociative phenomena come to be figured as Gothic narratives in a number of ways. As mentioned, the hypnotising villain became a staple in fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction. This figure is seen in some of the most popular fiction of the era, including George Du Maurier’s Trilby (1894), Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) and Richard Marsh’s The Beetle (1897), where, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, the hypnotising villain has the power to invade and control the minds and bodies of its entranced victims. An abhorrent, shape-shifting Egyptian14 high-priestess, the Beetle uses her power to overmaster the majority of British citizens with

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14 As Julian Wolrey notes in his edition of Marsh’s text, English involvement in Egypt has a long and complex history. For the Victorians, “Egypt was a source of constant cultural fascination,” representing ancient civilizations (and their decline and ruination), occult scientific knowledge, mythology and mysticism (Wolfreys 340).
whom she comes into contact. This control is figured as a dangerous virility in these texts, dangerous because it is possessed by racialised, non-European and, paradoxically, effeminate ‘Others.’ Similarly, Du Maurier’s *Trilby* tells the tale of an evil mesmerist, a “sinister” Jew (11) named Svengali who comes from “the mysterious East! The poisonous East – birthplace and home of an ill wind that blows nobody good” (282). He possesses a mesmerising power so great that he is able to effectively control the good-hearted Trilby even after his death. It is disturbing enough, as the Laird points out, that Svengali could “get you into [his] power, and just make you do any blessed thing [he pleased] – lie, murder, steal – anything!” (52); what makes Svengali’s power all the more repugnant is that he, a foreign “Jew,” uses this power against Trilby, who, although not wholly of English blood, comes to grow “more English every day” due to the influence of her British counterparts, a transformation Du Maurier’s narrator tells us “was a good thing” (64). The practice of mesmerism encouraged reflections about the basis of race inequalities and the power of one nation to bend another to its will. In the eyes of many Victorians colonial subjects were appropriate subjects for mesmerism as they were perceived as being “naturally subject to the exercise of another’s power” (Winter 211). Some associated the vulnerability of the mesmeric subject with colonial subservience and linked the capacity to fall “under the influence” of mesmerism to social or cultural primitiveness. For example, physician James Esdaile believed there was a link between colonial subservience and susceptibility to trance based on his practice of mesmerism in India. Esdaile argued that a determining factor in a subject’s responsiveness to trance was related to their “closeness to” or “distance from” the natural order so that people who succumb most easily to mesmeric influence are closer
to a “state of nature” and thus less civilised (Winter, Mesmerized 204). Therefore, when an English subject like Trilby fell under the influence of the Jewish Svengali, it suggested that Englishmen and Englishwomen were not so distant from the “primitive” or “savage” as they believed while at the same time reinforcing the “danger” of the foreign Other.

1.2 Gothic and Mental Science: The Moebius Strip

When developments in science throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth century began to reveal – or even discursively produce – the shadowy recesses and potential “dark” sides of the human psyche, explorations of human psychology became popular in Gothic fiction. During the 1790s and early nineteenth century, Gothic novels such as Anne Radcliffe’s The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and Matthew Lewis’s The Monk (1796) became exceptionally popular with the reading public. Characters in these texts constantly attempt to negotiate not only their own impulses and emotions but also the line between fantasy and reality. Radcliffe’s Udolpho, for example, tells the tale of Emily St. Aubert, an orphaned young woman who must go with her guardian, an estranged aunt, to the strange castle of her aunt’s new husband, Signor Montoni. Set in 1584 in southern France and northern Italy, the novel focuses on Emily’s flight from a series of perceived dangers: a forced marriage to an Italian nobleman, imprisonment in Montoni’s castle, the theft of her estates, and various supernatural terrors, which are eventually revealed to be the products of her imagination. As David Punter notes, the plot of Udopho is in many ways simple and straightforward. The strengths of Udopho lie in areas such as “character psychology, symbolic intensification, and an extraordinary use of suspense and doubt which constantly blurs the boundaries of reality and fantasy” (Punter, Literature of Terror 59). It is Punter’s
final point about *Udolpho* that I wish to emphasise in moving towards an understanding of Gothic more generally. The notion of a constant “blur[ring] of boundaries” is perhaps one of Gothic’s most salient features. But there’s more to Gothic than the troubling of categories; Gothic’s power lies in its ability to demonstrate the ways in which such categories are always already flawed or troubled.

According to Chris Baldick the term "Gothic" has become firmly established as the name for “one sinister corner of the modern Western imagination” (xi), denoting at times a style of architecture, a genre of popular fiction, and/or a mode of discourse. Historically, Gothic was a pejorative term meaning barbarous or uncouth as it pointed to the Germanic tribe of the Goths, best known for their part in the decline of the Roman Empire, or, as Markman Ellis puts it, their destruction of classical Roman civilisation, which “plunged the civilised world into centuries of ignorance and darkness” (22). As it came into popular use in the eighteenth-century, “Gothic” stood for the unenlightened and the superstitious, “the old-fashioned as opposed to the modern; the barbaric as opposed to the civilised; crudity as opposed to elegance” (Punter, *Literature of Terror* 5). Thus, the name *Gothic* was taken and used “to prop up one side of that set of cultural oppositions by which the Renaissance and its heirs defined and claimed possession of European civilization: Northern versus Southern, Gothic versus Graeco-Roman, Dark Ages versus the Age of Enlightenment, medieval versus modern, barbarity versus civility, superstition versus Reason” (Baldick xii). In the eighteenth century, a new found interest in medieval architecture and ancient romance resulted in what critics have come to identify as the first Gothic novel – Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Walpole labels his novella a “Gothic Story” and describes it as an "attempt
to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern” (9). In many ways Walpole's novel established the popular formula for the Gothic romance of the period: events take place in a gloomy medieval castle or Abbey, a heroine is trapped or pursued by a mysterious villain, and much of the action occurs at night, involving supernatural events, dreams, prophecies, or psychological disturbances. Located in the remote past, in isolated locations and amidst ancient ruins, the traditional Gothic of writers like Mathew Lewis, Anne Radcliffe, and Clara Reeve focused on “the archaic, the pagan, that which was prior to, or was opposed to, or resisted the establishment of civilised values and a well-regulated society” (Punter, Literature of Terror 5).

But more to the point, Gothic is often closely identified with the ideas of the Enlightenment and thought to be this discourse’s dark “other.” As Michel Foucault explains it in “The Eye of Power,”

A fear haunted the latter half of the eighteenth century: the fear of darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom which prevents full visibility of things, men and truths. It sought to break up the patches of darkness that blocked the light, eliminate the shadowy areas of society, demolish the unlit chambers where arbitrary political acts, monarchical caprice, religious superstitions, tyrannical and priestly plots, epidemics and the illusions of ignorance were fomented ... the landscapes of Ann Radcliffe’s novels are composed of mountains and forests, caves, ruined castles and terrifying dark and silent convents... these imaginary spaces are like the negative of the transparency and visibility which it is aimed to establish. (153-154)
For Foucault, the Gothic novel presented the negation of the Enlightenment ideals of transparency and visibility. This view of Gothic as the dark half of the Enlightenment is one that has been popular with Gothic scholars. Fred Botting, for example, reads Gothic almost in Jungian terms as a “shadow” to “the progress of modernity,” presenting counternarratives that display “the underside of enlightenment and humanist values” (2). For Botting, Gothic condenses the many perceived threats to these values, threats that are associated with supernatural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption. Richard Devetak makes a similar claim when he states: “The Age of Reason sought to banish monsters born of myth, superstition and religion. Rather than disappearing, however, the monsters simply reappeared elsewhere; they fled from the Enlightenment's illuminated spaces into the dark shadows it cast” (623). Gothic has come to be identified with these “dark shadows.”

However, if Gothic is representative of the dark half of the binaries modern Western culture uses to define itself, the “shadow” to Enlightenment values such as reason, it does not positively or obediently stay on its side of the divide. In fact, traits like hybridity, mutability, excess and transgression – those qualities which draw attention to boundaries and limits in order to disrupt demarcations – have come to be identified as Gothic’s persistent features. In her text *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, Anne Williams suggests that Gothic is “crucially concerned with exploring the ‘rules’ of patriarchy” (35) as it “expresses disruptions in the Law of the Father .... expos[ing] its fissures” (175). Here, Williams is evoking Lacan’s understanding of the development of the subject upon its
entrance into the social order, an order predicated upon the acquisition of language and an acceptance of the rules and orders of patriarchy. As Williams understands it, the “Law of the Father” is an elaborate cultural system based on the literal and figurative process by which society organises itself, or “‘draws the line,’ declaring this ‘legitimate,’ that not; this ‘proper,’ that not; this ‘sane,’ that not, rules and divisions that structure all dimensions of human life” (12). Gothic transgresses these boundaries, or as Christine Berthin puts it, Gothic “explode[s]...limits in order to include the hidden and the hinted at” (2). While I would suggest that Gothic often acts in more subtle ways, contaminating categories rather than exploding them, Berthin’s comment indicates the power of Gothic to undermine certainties and destabilise taxonomies.

It must be emphasised that Gothic does not work to unsettle stable categories and a secure reality; rather, it draws attention to ways that categories are always already flawed. The Victorian era has long been noted for the classificatory and taxonomical impulses of its citizens. Kelly Hurley sees the latter half of the nineteenth century as a period of “accelerated taxonomical activity,” characterised by attempts to classify and rank “the races of man, the natural world, the types and variations of human sexuality, the gradations of insanity and other pathologies” (27). Paradoxically, the effect of these increased attempts at classification and order is to produce disorder: “a proliferation of competing paradigms, a multiplication of mental and sexual pathologies behind which the ‘normal subject’ is occluded” (27). In her discussion, Hurley evokes Jacques Derrida’s claim from “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” that any semiotic system, at any historical moment, is an arbitrary one (25). Hurley characterises the fin-de-siècle as a period
of ruptures and classificatory breakdown, and fin-de-siècle Gothic as the “witness” to these ruptures (28). Gothic, however, does more than “witness” moments of rupture and classificatory breakdown; it is an active and rather transgressive force. Indeed, Gothic itself often intermingles with other genres and discourses, turning up in a variety of contexts and settings. As scholars like Fred Botting suggest, Gothic exists primarily in a state of flux. As such, Gothic has been theorised as “an instrumental genre, reemerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises” (Hurley 4-5), for as Terry Eagleton argues, a significant development in literary form may evolve out of “a collective psychological demand” as changes in literature “result from significant changes in ideology. They embody new ways of perceiving social reality” (23). The anxieties presented in the Gothic vary “according to diverse changes: political revolution, industrialism, urbanisation, shifts in sexual and domestic organisation, and scientific discovery” (Botting 3). As Williams suggests, Gothic offers writers a discourse for expressing these anxieties. Uncertainties about the nature of power and law, concerns with “the dynamics of the family, the limits of rationality and passion, the definition of statehood and citizenship, the cultural effects of technology,” and the navigation of sexuality and desires dominate Gothic fiction from Horace Walpole to Stephen King (Bruhm 259).

Based on the above comments, it becomes clear that we are dealing with something more complex than a ‘genre’ when we are dealing with Gothic, although there are problems here with definition. Williams perhaps says it best when she claims that Gothic in literature is “broader than genre, deeper than plot, and wider than a single tradition” (241). Robert
Miles echoes this claim when he states that Gothic is neither a single nor a singular genre; it represents an “area of concern,” which is complex and multifarious in nature (4). Although the term “Gothic” turns up quite frequently in both scholarly and popular discourse, definitions of “Gothic” have become more and more difficult to produce, and what constitutes “Gothic” has become open to much critical debate. Recently, critics have asked if Gothic is a genre or a mode. If it is a genre, how do we interpret the fact that even the group of definitive texts commonly referred to as the “first wave Gothic” of the late eighteenth century only share some common features? How do we account for the many changes “Gothic” has undergone since its inception over two hundred years ago? Or, how do we interpret the fact that certain stock “Gothic” features, such as a fascination with transgression and haunting, appear in a variety of contexts, both literary and scientific? As Williams puts it:

“The literary critic may regard “Gothic” as anything from an agglomeration of cheap tricks to a compelling problem of “literary history,” the “novel,” “romance,” “genre,” “mode,” or “tradition.” Yet even referring to “the” Gothic and choosing – or not – to capitalize the word opens some doors and assures that others will remain not only closed but invisible. A thoughtful analysis of “Gothic” should challenge the kind of literary history that organizes, delineates, and defines: a literary history that also confines us within some inherited literary concepts, particularly ideas about genre, that can be as confusing as Udolpho’s amazing structures. (12-3)"

Accordingly, a “definition” of “Gothic” outlines “a large, irregularly shaped figure” (Williams 23) in line with Mary Shelley’s “monstrous progeny.” It is more than simply a genre, or a mode or a tradition, and it goes beyond a standard set of conventions related to haunted castles, hidden chambers and depraved villains.\(^\text{16}\)

In attempting to define “Gothic,” it becomes clear that the usual terminology for discussions of literature are somewhat inadequate, “for ‘Gothic’ is a ‘something’ that goes beyond the merely literary” (Williams 23). My project relies upon viewing Gothic as both a genre and a mode, as a dynamic, hybrid “something” circulating throughout literature as well as society from the mid-eighteenth century to the present, as a particular means of resisting and/or revealing the ideological uncertainties of patriarchal culture. Whereas genre often specifies the content of a story, a mode is a way or manner of telling a story. Alexandra Warwick in “Feeling Gothicky” suggests that “The worst kind of criticism … has a tendency to treat [Gothic] as though it were a genre, looking for the features that might define it, and producing a rather mechanical conclusion: here is an example of the uncanny, therefore an example of the Gothic” (6). Increasingly, critics have begun to view Gothic in this way. Robert Mighall, for example, agrees that Gothic is a “‘mode’ rather than a genre” (xix), and Julian Wolfreys claims that, “the Gothic is hardly a genre at all” since it is “not containable to one period,” because of its characteristic “internal heterogeneity” and endless mutations (“Victorian Gothic” 66). Similarly, Warwick argues that “Gothic is a mode rather than a genre, that it is a loose tradition and even that its defining characteristics are

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\(^{16}\) In her text *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1986) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick includes such elements as central to Gothic, which she characterizes as a genre. In attempting to outline the features of Gothic fiction, she includes: “The priesthood and monastic institutions; sleeplike and deathlike states; subterranean spaces and live burial . . . unnatural echoes or silences, unintelligible writings, and the unspeakable; garrulous retainers; the poisonous effects of guilt and shame” (9).
its mobility and continued capacity for reinvention” (6). Throughout the nineteenth century, as Julian Wolfreys claims, Gothic is to be found anywhere and everywhere, but never in the same form twice, suggesting that Gothic is recognised through its effects and affects. Gothic “returns” through various manifestations, “in comic discourse, in discourses of history and Christian belief, in the very possibility of the novel in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in countless other discourses and historical, material traces as well” (Victorian Hauntings 11). Thus, we might claim, as Wolfreys does, that nineteenth century culture is permeated by Gothic or is *Gothically inflected.*

Gothic writings of the *fin-de-siècle* focussed on the urban present, the condition of modern life, the other within the self, and the primitive within the civilised. Hurley characterises *fin-de-siècle* Gothic as being centrally concerned with the horrific re-making of the human subject, placing it “within a general anxiety about the nature of human identity permeating late-Victorian and Edwardian culture, an anxiety generated by scientific discourses, biological and sociomedical, which served to dismantle conventionally notions of ‘the human’” (5). Evolutionism, criminal anthropology, degeneration theory, sexology and studies of mind all articulated new models of the human as discontinuous in identity, which made Gothic a likely fit for literary explorations of these new views of the human condition. Hurley claims that while certain broad narrative and thematic continuities link this form to the late eighteenth-century and Romantic Gothic novel,

[The] *fin-de-siècle* Gothic rematerializes as a genre in many ways unrecognizable, transfigured, bespeaking an altered sensibility that resonates more closely with

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17 This term comes from Jodey Castricano’s *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida’s Ghost Writing* (2001).
contemporary horrific representations than those generated at the far edge of the Enlightenment. More graphic than before, soliciting a more visceral readerly response than before, the fin-de-siècle Gothic manifests a new set of generic strategies...which function maximally to enact the defamiliarization and violent reconstitution of the human subject. (4)

Hurley maintains that although fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction may appear as purely reactive, emerging as a response to the general malaise occasioned by the sciences, the relationship between scientific and Gothic discourses is far more complex. As scholars of the fin-de-siècle have increasingly argued, the “making” and “shaping” of examples of deviancy in a number of discursive practices borrow the language of Gothic. For example, Andrew Smith maintains that medical discourse “slips into a more properly Gothic discourse” when it considers “the horrors” of physical deformity, as is the case with discussions of Joseph Merrick, better known as “The Elephant Man” (45). Smith identifies the frequency with which words like “beast” and “thing” appeared in discussions of Merrick, cited by one physician as a “degraded or perverted version of a human being” (qtd. in Andrew Smith 45). For Smith, such descriptions underscore “the limits of medical language” to account for deformity in strictly medical terms (45). Both Hurley and Smith discuss what they view as either a “Gothicisation” (Andrew Smith 7) or inherent “gothicity” (Hurley 5) of a variety of scientific and social discourses at the end of the nineteenth century. For Hurley, degeneration, Pre-Freudian modelings of the unconscious, Darwinism and sexology revealed a human subject “fractured by discontinuity and profoundly alienated from itself,” the implications of which were perceived as disastrous and traumatic – “one might say
'gothic’—by a majority of the population (Hurley 6), as evidenced by Adam Sedgwick’s response to Darwin’s On the Origins of Species.

The social anxiety attached to the remodeling of human identity was perhaps especially pronounced in discussions pertaining to the state of Victorian manhood and its role in the future of the English nation. As Smith’s study makes clear, accounts of degeneracy were largely contingent upon the idea that a link existed between masculinity and nation, and the debate over the precise nature of this link “takes on a strange Gothic colouring” in the late Victorian period (33). It is in Gothic fiction that “this debate about a precarious sense of masculine authority” is taken up, revealing that “norms have become eroded and consequently what is meant by masculinity is open to negotiation” (Andrew Smith 34, 36). In the case of sexology, a discipline which sought to understand the relationship between sex and gender as well as that between biology and society, the nature of male desire became the topic of much scrutiny. Linda Dryden claims that “fear of atavism was closely linked to sexuality: physical appetites, unchecked by moral consciousness, were seen as evidence of a primitive self” (9). The ability to check physical appetites was challenged by the belief that male desire could not be easily contained. One leader in sexology, Havelock Ellis, claimed that one of the central problems in defining male desire is its strange mobility. As Ellis argues in Man and Woman (1894), the locus of female desire was in procreation, but “in men the sexual instinct is a restless source of energy which overflows into all sorts of channels” (Qtd. in Andrew Smith 29). This meant that even adherence to dominant masculine scripts provided no guarantee of heterosexuality. In his pivotal text The History of Sexuality, Michel Foucault writes that “since sexuality was a
medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it—as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behaviour” (44). Here, as well in his other works, Foucault attempts to trace the ways in which “a human being turns him—or herself into a subject,” in this particular instance through asking how and why it is that “men have learned to recognize themselves as subjects of ‘sexuality’” (Qtd. in Townshend 290); Foucault argues that as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed an explosion of discourses on sex, dealing with topics such as “the sensualised body of modesty, manias, reveries, ‘hysteria’” (Miles 7), individual identity became increasingly tied to sexual identity. For middle-class British male subjects in the nineteenth century, this sexual identity was also closely tied to national identity. In the works of Smiles, Nordau, and Edwin Lankester, the discussion of masculinity has clear links to the idea of the nation so that the threat of biological regression suggests the potential for national decline. This “language of pathologisation” also becomes articulated through contemporaneous Gothic literature (Andrew Smith 40). This is an important link “because it reveals how certain scientific discourses became Gothicised” (Andrew Smith 40-41). While it is possible to discern Gothic inflections in a variety of genres and discourses in the late nineteenth century, the focus of this study is on the particular fascination with the hidden capacities of the human psyche shared by studies of mind and Gothic fiction in the fin-de-siècle.

As critics like Roger Luckhurst have demonstrated, “the fin-de-siècle Gothic was fascinated by forms of psychic splitting, trance states, and telepathic intimacies” and “adopted the language of the psychical researcher” (The Invention of Telepathy 182).
Images of the hypnotising or mesmerising villain, the hapless automaton thief, and the dissociative killer abound in popular Gothic texts of the late nineteenth century, such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Parasite” (1894). However, these were not only popular tropes for nineteenth-century writers; these were also topics of psychical and medical research. In what can be identified as an active exchange, just as Gothic texts adopted the language of the psychical researcher in order to explore extraordinary psychic states, psychical researchers, psychologists, and neurologists relied upon Gothic language and conventions to characterise the perceived threats associated with dissociative states. Studies of dissociation uncannily mirror Gothic fiction in their presentation of a human subject that is fragmented, alien to itself and possessed by strange forces. In their 1892 book on animal magnetism, renowned psychologists Alfred Binet and Charles Fere characterise the capacity for dissociation as being located in the “shadow” of “the active...forms of the intelligence” (304-5), and describe psychic splitting as the experience of haunting or possession: “[the subject is], so to speak, possessed, both by day in the waking state, and at night during their dreams” (emphasis original, 221). In a similar way Henry Maudsley describes the “dissolution of self” that occurs in double consciousness in terms of “death,” an “indescribable feeling of impending horror” and an “unspeakable anguish” (196). Such descriptions of dissociation and psychic splitting utilise Gothic conventions like haunting, possession, darkness and the unspeakable in order to emphasise the unsettling anxiety related to the breakdown of a unified and singular subject. If to be “many” and “unlimited”
is to be “evil,” as the Pythagorean paradigm of reality suggests, then it is only fitting that the description of this state of being should be coded in Gothic terms. This image of a possessed, fractured and disrupted subject in the discourse of dissociation is analogous to the subject of Gothic fiction, marking the dissociative subject and Gothic subject as highly indistinguishable.

A Gothic subject is frequently a fragmented subject, one that is possessed, dispossessed, shattered, multiple and uncontrollable. According to Fred Botting, Gothic subjects are:

[A]lienate, divided from themselves, no longer in control of those passions, desires, and fantasies, that had been policed and partially expunged in the eighteenth century. Individuals were divided products of both reason and desire, subjects of obsession, narcissism and self-gratification as much as reasonable, responsible codes of behaviour. Nature, wild and untameable, was as much within as without. Excess emanated from within, from hidden, pathological motivations that rationality was powerless to control. (12)

Because the narratives of Gothic fiction can be seen as case studies “which describe deviance, rebellion, and the abnormal,” they bear a resemblance to the psychopathologist’s accounts of dissociated patients, which are also “fragmented, out of chronological sequence, contradictory, and incoherent” (Showalter, Sexual Anarchy 18). As such, Gothic paradoxically becomes a “coherent code” for the representation of fragmented subjectivity,

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18 In Metaphysics Aristotle claims that the Pythagoreans viewed reality as consisting of ten pairs of opposites: male/female, limited/unlimited, odd/even, one/many, right/left, square/oblong, at rest/moving, straight/curved, light/darkness, good/evil. The items on the left of the line are commonly referred to as “The line of evil,” which stands in opposition to the items on the right, or “The line of good.” See Anne Williams’ Art of Darkness (1995) for a more detailed discussion of how this model comes to inform Gothic.
for the representation of the subject “in a state of deracination, of the self finding itself dispossessed in its own house, in a condition of rupture, disjunction, fragmentation” (Miles 3). For Robert Miles, Gothic writing should be regarded as a series of contemporaneously understood forms, devices, codes, and figurations for illuminating the “fragmented subject.” In this way, Gothic can be viewed as a “discursive site, a ‘carnivalesque’ mode for representations of the fragmented subject” (Miles 4). Indeed, Kelly Hurley makes a similar claim when she credits Gothic with the “invention” of a systematic discourse of the irrational (6).

On account of their shared concerns and similar vocabulary, studies of mind have often gone hand-in-hand with discussions of Gothic. In the early stages of critical interest in Gothic, psychoanalysis was used to lend respectability to discussions of a genre largely dismissed as “low culture,” not suitable for serious academic inquiry (Hogle 29). Robert Miles claims that because Gothic writing is seen as “disjunctive,” fragmentary, inchoate, “theory is required to sound the Gothic’s deep structure in order to render the surface froth comprehensible” (1). Psychoanalysis offers an ideal tool for rendering the Gothic comprehensible as the elements, structures and themes that constitute the fantasy of Gothic speak to the desires and fears of both authors and readers. As Michelle Massé relates, the “flat characters” of Gothic fiction can be understood as mythic archetypes, and

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20 See for example Maurice Richardson “The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories” The Twentieth Century 166 (1959): 419-31, or Leslie Fielder’s Love and Death in the American Novel.
the rich symbolic landscapes of the narratives can be understood as parallels to the condensation and displacement found in dreams, day-dreams and neurotic symptoms used by subjects “to construct systems that satisfy basic desires while still letting us function adequately in the ‘real’ world” (229). Maggie Kilgour contends that “With its theory of an underlying reality, psychoanalysis helped give the gothic a new ‘profundity’, by seeing it as the revelation of the private life of either the individual or his culture that had been buried as habit, the conscious will, and forces of individual and social repression” (220). In fact, as Anne Williams claims by the mid-twentieth century, “the idea that the Gothic novelists had ‘discovered the unconscious’ had become nearly a critical commonplace” (241). Williams suggests that it now takes a considerable conscious effort for critics to avoid psychoanalytic insights in reading Gothic fiction, “so seemingly ‘Freudian’ for us are the familial conflicts, the uncanny spaces, the dark, secret dungeons that these novels explore” (242). Thus, psychoanalysis has played an essential role in the development of the field of Gothic Studies and in furthering our understanding of Gothic’s exploration of the unconscious elements of the subject; yet, as will be seen, Gothic has always already haunted psychoanalysis, and by extension, mental science.

Recently, the use of psychoanalysis as a critical tool for ‘making sense’ of the content of Gothic fiction has come to be challenged and questioned by a number of critics. On the one hand, this is the desire to move conversations away from explorations of the psyche to focus on other themes germane to Gothic, themes centered on issues such as history, class and race. For example, Robert Mighall claims that Gothic’s principle defining structure is “its attitude to the past and its unwelcome legacies” (Geography xiv). On the
other hand, this is the increasing realisation, made apparent by the work of scholars like Anne Williams, Jodey Castricano and Dale Townshend, that the relationship between Gothic and psychoanalysis is far more complex and reciprocal than previously acknowledged. Undoubtedly, there are strange affinities between psychoanalysis and Gothic, to such an extent that William’s claim that the “true heir of Walpole and Radcliff, the most profoundly Gothic creator of narrative in our century, is Sigmund Freud” (240) seems provocatively true. Many of Freud’s writings explore subjects that possess a Gothic flair: the cases of the “Wolf Man” and the “Rat Man,” studies on “Dreams and Telepathy” and, of course, the discussion of “The Uncanny,” which features a reading of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s Gothic tale, “The Sandman.” Collectively, Williams suggests, the works of Freud constitute a “Gothic story”: “The Mysteries of Enlightenment” (240). Williams argues that Freud and Gothic are inextricably linked and, furthermore, that “this circularity, this short-circuiting, this teasing, almost uncanny affinity between Freud and Gothic, suggests that perhaps we have it backwards. Instead of using Freud to read Gothic, we should use Gothic to read Freud” (242-3). Williams’ assertion that psychoanalysis is somehow inherently “Gothic” or that Gothic offers us a way into psychoanalysis provides a starting point for an exploration of mental science’s relation to literature, in particular the shared themes, subjects and language of late-nineteenth-century studies of mind and fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction. Yet, this is not a case of simply using psychoanalysis to read Gothic or the inverted model of using Gothic to read psychoanalysis suggested by Williams. If psychoanalysis is indeed ‘Gothic,’ then to use “Gothic to read Freud” may result in what Robert Young names a critical tautology. Thus, the challenge is how to account for the “uncanny affinity” between
Gothic fiction and the scientific study of the psyche without occluding or displacing one genre by or with the other.

William Patrick Day is perhaps one of the first critics to challenge the use of psychoanalysis in readings of Gothic as he argues the two are in fact corresponding discourses. He claims that “the Gothic is not a crude anticipation of Freudianism, nor its unacknowledged father. Rather, the two are cousins. ... The Gothic arises out of the immediate needs of the reading public to ... articulate and define the turbulence of their psychic existence. We may see Freud as the intellectual counterpart of this process” (179). Day’s claim that psychoanalysis and Gothic are “cousins” indicates that their relationship is not one of cause and effect but rather one of mutual descent. In much the same way, Michelle Massé suggests that Gothic and psychoanalysis are “cognate historical strands made up of the same human hopes and anxieties and then woven into particular patterns by the movements of socio-cultural change” (231). While “Gothic” and “psychoanalysis” might be “cousins” or “cognate strands,” these two strands often overlap and intermingle in a number of interesting ways, such as in Freud’s reading of Hoffman in his essay “The Uncanny” (1919) or American psychologist Morton Prince’s reference to Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in his Dissociation of a Personality (1905). Because of “this circularity, this short-circuiting, this teasing” relationship between Gothic and psychoanalysis, or Gothic and mental sciences more generally, the connection between psychoanalysis and Gothic points to Slavoj Žižek’s model of the Moebius band: what is seemingly separate is in fact irrevocably joined. In his discussion of the film Psycho, for example, Žižek writes that the relationship between the two worlds (reality and fantasy or horror) presented in the film
“eludes the simple oppositions of surface and depth, reality and fantasy, and so on—the only topology that suits it is that of the two surfaces of a Moebius band: if we progress far enough on one surface, all of a sudden we find ourselves on its reverse” (72). In the image of the Moebius band, what seemingly has two sides in fact only has one, albeit mysteriously continuous. As Žižek indicates, at one point the two sides of the band can be clearly distinguished, but as we move across the strip as a whole, the two sides are experienced as being continuous. In the experience of this “temporal modality” (72), we enter into “the abyss” (72), or what Žižek identifies as the parallax gap (*The Parallax View* 2006): the space where distinctions collapse and boundaries are revealed to be arbitrary and illusory, only tenuously maintained. I suggest that Žižek’s model of the Moebius band best articulates the relationship between Gothic and mental sciences, like psychology and psychoanalysis, as it points to the vertiginous circularity identified by Gothic scholars like Williams and Jodey Castricano.\(^{21}\) If we begin to explore the tropes of psychic splitting and mental disintegration in Gothic fiction, we will inevitably end up immersed in the contemporaneous theories of mental scientists, for, as Anne Stiles notes, writers were “clearly...paying very close attention” to these ideas (2). In much the same way, any foray into the texts of the mental scientists will illuminate the ways in which Gothic tropes like haunting and transgression come to inform discussions of mental disunity. And just as the precise moment of the transition from realism to horror in *Psycho* is impossible to locate, the moment when psychology becomes a Gothic narrative or Gothic becomes psychology is equally indistinguishable. It is this space that this study proposes to examine, for as William James

expressed in his Lowell Lectures of 1896, it is the study of the marginal that is often the most important. James argued that “the ultra-marginal zone of consciousness” – the space between waking and sleep that dissociative phenomena come to occupy – is of the utmost significance as it allows for the study of “not only...the normal conditions of consciousness] but also of deeper sources of pathology” (Exceptional Mental States 35).

This study will explore the ways in which dissociative phenomena come to be figured as “Gothic” in a number of literary, scientific, and quasi-scientific contexts during the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Just as fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction is suffused with the language of psychology, neurology and psychical research, the discourse surrounding these disciplines is equally suffused with the language, themes and conventions of Gothic. For example, topics such as multiplicity and fragmentation, psychic and moral disintegration, the unspeakable, haunting and possession, excess and transgression circulate throughout various discourses related to both mental science and Gothic fiction suggesting, to borrow a phrase from Castricano’s work in another context, that “each is inhabited, even haunted by the other” (Cryptomimesis 8). This study examines the ways in which Gothic fiction and the discourse of mental science arguably intersect and blend into one another, reflecting their subject matter, which also transgress various boundaries. A field like psychology was not viewed by all as purely scientific. As one observer in 1882 suggests, “psychology, in being that science farthest removed from the reach of experimental means and inductive method, is the science which has longest remained in the trammels of ... metaphysical thought” (Qtd. in Luckhurst, The Invention of Telepathy 49). Luckhurst points out that “The disciplinary formation of psychology fell between medicine,
alienism, neurology, and physiology but also extended into the moral sciences, reflecting an uncertainty as to whether psychology was an objective or subjective science” (*The Invention of Telepathy* 92). One branch of nineteenth-century studies of mind, psychical research, has often been dismissed as a pseudo-science as much of its concerns focused on what might be labelled the supernatural and occult, but topics such as mediumship, table-turning, and telepathy were also of interest to more respectable fields of study, like psychology. Pierre Janet, after all, founded his theory of dissociation on his observations of somnambulists and used automatic writing, a practice also common at the séance, in his treatment of hysterical patients. Representations of dissociation seem to blur the boundary between science and fantasy; hypnotism, for example, is both an occult practice and a scientific practice sanctioned by men like Charcot. Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen has suggested that hypnosis is “an enigma that simultaneously mobilizes and defies the most diverse disciplines” – whether psychology, sociology, theology, or ethnology (Qtd. in Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* 94). Additionally, a practice like hypnotism demonstrates the multitude of ways the borders of the subject can be transgressed, blurring distinctions between self and other, inside and outside. Because of this hybrid nature, the discourse of dissociation is predicated upon the intersections of psychological, scientific, and philosophical issues of the late nineteenth century.

Just as critics like Luckhurst have assumed that an understanding of mental science and psychical research can illuminate the themes and concerns of Gothic fiction, I begin with the assumption, that the works of Gothic fiction “have something to say” (Castricano, *Cryptomimesis* 8) about the works of mental science. In this current project, that
“something” has to do with the ways in which dissociative states – those moments of psychic splitting, suggestibility to trance, and disturbances to integrated identity – come to be figured as plebeian, feminine and, therefore, degenerative and “primitive” in a number of discourses related to mental science. This study focuses on works such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, George Du Maurier’s *Trilby*, Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* and Arthur Machen’s “The Great God Pan” in order to demonstrate that *fin-de-siècle* Gothic fiction posed a fundamental challenge to predominant views on the dissociative subject by implying that Englishmen were not exempt from the experience of multiplicity and psychic fragmentation, thus not as different from women, “degenerates” and “primitives” as they believed. As such, it is my contention that dissociative phenomena in Gothic and in the study of the mind come to represent a particular narrative of masculine anxiety, one that reveals the sovereignty and unity of the Western male subject to be a myth and critiques the enciphering of white masculine (Western) embodiment as a national and natural standard. Theories of Victorian manliness, articulated in the writings of social commentators like Samuel Smiles, Charles Kingsley, and William Landels, managed the distressing implications of dissociative theories by creating models of manliness based on strength of character, the impenetrability of mind and body, the power of will, and the unity of identity. Writers of Gothic fiction challenged this view through the use of dissociative tropes, which draw attention to the gaps or contradictions in models of masculinity. My focus is on the way that dissociative phenomena function in Gothic fiction and on what the representation of dissociation in men reveals about contemporary fears, insecurities and ambiguities concerning the state of Victorian manhood.
Gothic’s relationship to dominant nineteenth-century ideologies of human identity is complex. While Gothic fiction seemed at times to reinforce normative scripts related to gender, class, sexuality and nationality by depicting certain behaviours or characteristics as monstrous and abhorrent, Gothic served to multiply, and thus destabilise, the definitions of personal identity, the normal mind, and the unconscious. So when the illustrious politician Paul Lessingham in Marsh’s *The Beetle* succumbs to mesmerism and hysteria, it is not easy to dismiss him as effeminate and weak-willed without implicating his peers in the process. What science often depicts as pathology, Gothic reveals to be ontology.\(^{22}\) Dissociation as a trope in Gothic fiction calls into question certain nineteenth-century views of the subject as being determined by regulatory fictions in psychology and medicine, and thus works to destabilise the notion that a healthy person has a unified mind or a hermetic consciousness. The destabilising force of Gothic is seen in relation to a number of ideologies. Cyndy Hendershot, for example, argues that a predominant trait of Gothic is that it “fragments stable identity and stable social order,” most frequently gender identity (1). Hendershot argues that through Gothic’s representation of gender, traditional heterosexual masculinity is revealed to be “a veneer that conceals multiplicity and fragmentation. The Gothic exposes the others within and without that give lie to the notion of such a category as stable masculinity” (Hendershot 1). Therefore, for Hendershot, Gothic texts frequently reveal the fragility of traditional manhood. This is certainly the case in *fin-de-siècle* Gothic fiction in which dissociative phenomena come to symbolically stand in for a number of challenges to the authority of the white, middle-class Western European male subject.

\(^{22}\) Thanks to Jodey Castricano for this insight.
1.3 Methodology

A profound fascination with the instability and unknowability of the human psyche and the scope of human consciousness unites the literary and cultural discourses I discuss. The end of the nineteenth century witnessed a Gothic literary revival, which included the publication of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897) and Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894). While my principal focus is on British *fin-de-siècle* Gothic literature, I also discuss what might be called Gothically inflected texts, such as George Du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894) and Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Parasite” (1894), which blend a variety of narrative styles, including Victorian realism and Sensation. I also include scientific and quasi-scientific texts written by French, German and American neurologists, psychologists and psychical researchers, such as Pierre Janet, Alfred Binet, Charles Fere, Morton Prince, William James, Josef Breuer, and, of course, Sigmund Freud, whose psychoanalysis not only changed how Western culture viewed the human mind but also influenced literary studies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In attempting to explore Gothic fiction’s affinity with mental sciences like psychology, this study situates the work of canonical authors, such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, alongside the work of lesser known authors, such as Richard Marsh and Arthur Machen. In focussing exclusively on works by male authors, I do not intend to occlude the very important work by women writers at this time. Indeed, the works of George Eliot and Vernon Lee, for example, often engaged with the theories of mental scientists and psychical researchers and anxieties related to redefinitions of gender and nation. However, as this study aims to explore the particular *masculine* anxieties
expressed in both theories of dissociation and Gothic fiction during the *fin-de-siècle*, it is my contention that the works of male authors, like Stevenson and Marsh, articulate these anxieties most profoundly, demonstrating that concerns over the efficacy of dominant masculine scripts emerged from within masculinist culture. While studies like Elaine Showalter’s *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture and the Fin de Siècle* (1990) and Bram Dijkstra’s *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (1986) examine the presence of a reactionary response in male culture to women’s increased drive for independence, this study takes as a premise, following Andrew Smith’s lead in *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and The Gothic at the Fin-de-Siècle* (2004), that much of the “crisis” in male culture was staged from within that culture rather than as a reaction to pressure from outside it.

Recently, scholars like Pamela Thurschwell, Kelly Hurley, Andrew Smith, and Roger Luckhurst have also focused on late-nineteenth-century Gothic fiction in relation to Victorian science. These studies have been useful in demonstrating how a multidisciplinary approach, examining fiction alongside emerging theories of psychology and psychical research, offers the most valuable means of understanding the *fin-de-siècle* fascination with dissociative states. In much the same way as Sonu Shamdasani, Elaine Showalter contends that because there was “scant scientific documentation for most assumptions,” the language of psychiatric medicine, especially in the nineteenth century, “is as culturally determined and revealing in its *metaphors* as the language of fiction” (emphasis added, *Female Malady* 5). To collapse distinctions between “fiction” and

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23 Jodey Castricano also explores this issue in her text *Gothic Subjects: Literature, Film and Psychoanalysis*, forthcoming 2014.
“nonfiction” in this way must go beyond an exploration of affinities between the subject matter and must also consider the mode of storytelling. We must keep in mind that any writing involves a “making” or “shaping” and that “It is impossible, even in writing nonfiction such as history, not to select, focus, arrange, and judge the material” (Williams 243). As will be discussed in Chapter 2 “Stevenson’s Strange Case and the Discourse of Dissociation,” Morton Prince, for example, is quite frank about the fictional devices he employs in formulating his case study of a dissociated personality such as altering the name of his patient and creating names for the patient’s personalities. He also places himself in the role of “author” when he claims the authority to pick and choose which personality lives on to be the “normal” or dominant self. Prince believed that “each secondary personality is a part only of a normal whole self” (Dissociation of a Personality 3), the “real, original or normal self, the self that was born and which [the patient] was intended by nature to be” (Dissociation of a Personality 1), and that it was his job to discover which personality this was and to extinguish all others. In rather telling “Gothic” terms, he calls this act of extinguishment “psychological murder” (Dissociation of a Personality 248). His self-prescribed task was “to determine which personality was comfortable with abnormality and which with normality, and so find the real self” (Dissociation of a Personality 245). By reading the criteria created by Prince to determine “normalcy” in light of Gothic, we can gain an understanding of the ways in which psychological “deviancy” often parallels other apparent social transgressions (like homosexuality or gender ‘confusion’).

In examining the discourse of dissociation – which is complex and brings together rather diverse resources with a host of experts in different fields – alongside Gothic, I will
use the genealogical model of historical analysis established by Nietzsche and Foucault. As Christopher Hauke puts it, “[g]enealogy is concerned with tracing the origins and developments of a phenomenon that not only asks how it is possible but also why it is necessary” (emphasis original, 160). Nietzsche distinguishes genealogy from history by claiming that there is no linear evolution in our accepted conceptualisations; rather, notions such as “good” and “evil” have been formed in response to changing conflicts and accidental events. Hauke describes genealogy as the image of the family tree: “through the accidents of marriages, births, deaths and divorces – not to mention ‘illegitimate’ births – a line of development proceeds haphazardly and unpredictably... [in this image] the present is still the ‘result’ of the past but not in any evolutionary, linear or rational sense at all but clearly as the ‘result’ or ‘effect’ of the ups and downs of human life” (160). In his essay, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” (1971), Michel Foucault challenges history’s essentialism and its assumption of “origins” because “it is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities; because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession” (353). The genealogist discovers that there is no timeless and essential secret but the secret that things have no essence, “or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms” (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 353). A genealogical examination of a concept, like “Gothic” or “dissociation” permits the discovery of the myriad events “through which – thanks to which, against which – they were formed” (355). According to Foucault,
Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of oblivion; its task is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form on all its vicissitudes. Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals— the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things which continue to exist and have value for us. (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 355)

Thus, a genealogy of the discourse of dissociation moves away from the model established by contemporary studies of dissociation, like Adam Crabtree’s and Milton V. Kline’s, which seek to establish an “evolution” of the idea.

Foucault’s work on madness demonstrates the problem with attempting to discover such an “evolution.” In a number of his earlier works, Foucault claims that history ought to be understood as moments of discontinuity, rupture, thresholds, limits and transformations, which reveal the ways that modes of thinking have undergone significant changes, as opposed to progressing linearly. In The Birth of the Clinic, for example, Foucault argues that systems of thought, such as medical thinking on hysteria, do not simply "progress" in a seamless fashion as though medical knowledge is converging on an objective “truth”; rather, he suggests there is a rift between the truth of medical and scientific statements about the human subject and the discursive framework within which these
statements were conceived. The realisation that past systems of thought were constituted as true within an accepted structure reveals the inherently arbitrary nature of any framework of scientific and medical thought. Such an approach to the history of an idea would uncover what Foucault calls “recurrent distributions”: the multiplicity of frameworks that must be applied to any one area of history (Archaeology 5). These “recurrent distributions” reveal “several pasts, several forms of connexion, several hierarchies of importance, several networks of determination, several teleologies, for one and the same science” (Archaeology 5). By emphasising the notion of rupture, Foucault is able to emphasize the multiple and sometimes contradictory elements that work to formulate specific knowledge regimes, such as the Gothic mode or the discourse of dissociation. Yet, it is important to note, as Best and Kellner do, that although Foucault uses the concept of discontinuity to refer to the fact that in a transition from one historical era to another “things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way,” there is no rupture or break so radical “as to spring forth ex nihilo and negate everything that has preceded it” (45). Foucault claims that rupture is possible “only on the basis of rules that are already in operation” (Qtd. in Best and Kellner 45). Rupture means not some absolute change, but a “redistribution of the [prior] episteme,” a reconfiguration of its elements, where, although there are new rules of a discursive formation redefining the boundaries and nature of knowledge and truth, there are significant continuities as well (Best and Kellner 46), and this redistribution certainly recalls Gothic’s ability to morph according to the historical and social context.
As both Robert Miles and Dale Townshend have demonstrated, Foucault’s genealogical method of viewing history is also an apt model for a history of Gothic. Townshend claims that the rise of Gothic writing toward the end of the eighteenth century marks and signals the onset of modernity and that without the fundamental reconfiguration of the epistemic and discursive scene in the late eighteenth century identified by Foucault, “Gothic writing, the dark product of the shift from classicism to modernity, might not have figured with quite so much horrific insistence as it did” (Townshend 1). As has been demonstrated, Miles comparatively views Gothic as neither a single nor a singular genre but rather as an “area of concern,” which is complex and multifarious in nature (4). Thus, Foucault’s emphasis on the ruptures, contradictions, overlaps and competing hierarchies which structure the unfolding of any idea seems a likely fit for an exploration of Gothic and Gothically inflected texts. Viewing Gothic in this way draws our attention to the intertextual nature of Gothic writing and to the ways that Gothic texts engage in an uncanny dialogue with other texts, especially those of psychopathology.

In Chapter 2, I examine the emergence of the late-nineteenth-century discourse of dissociation and the ways in which this nascent discourse comes to both inform and be informed by Gothic fiction. Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* demonstrates the circuitous relationship between Gothic and mental science and illustrates that fictional representations of dissociation can be highly influential to scientists and the general public alike. Ostensibly inspired by French psychological case studies of dual or alternating personality, Stevenson’s text captivated the attention of some of the leading researchers interested in dissociative phenomena, such as F.W.H. Myers and Morton Prince.
Through a close reading of Stevenson’s text, Myer’s “Multiplex Personality” and Prince’s *The Dissociation of a Personality*, this chapter will explore this relationship in order to suggest that the discourse of dissociation has been formed and maintained by a circular and reciprocal relationship between Gothic fiction and scientific study.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on dissociogenic practices, such as mesmerism and hypnotism, exploring the controversies, mysteries and anxieties fostered by such practices in the public imagination. In Chapter 3, I briefly trace the history of such practices in the nineteenth century, from their emergence in Vienna and France in the late eighteenth century to their appearance in Great Britain in the 1830s, demonstrating the Victorians’ sustained interest in these practices throughout the nineteenth century. dissociogenic practices compelled attention not only because they skirted the boundary between science and mysticism but also because they raised questions regarding the nature of influence, the power of the will, and the nature of intellectual authority. The nature of the relationship between the mesmerist or hypnotist and subject became the particular focus of late-nineteenth-century discussions of dissociogenic practices, and as the operator was typically a middle-class male and the subject was typically a lower-class female, this relationship offered a number of metaphorical possibilities for writers of Gothic fiction. In Chapter 3, I explore Richard Marsh’s portrayal of this relationship in *The Beetle*, where the villainess – a powerful Egyptian shape-shifter – uses her mesmeric power to enslave a number of British citizens, the majority of whom are male. This enslavement is made all the more disturbing by the fact that it occurs in London, the very heart of British civilisation and empire in the late-nineteenth century. Marsh’s novel uses the mesmeric relationship to illuminate a complex
relationship between the permeability of mind, body, and nation that paradoxically serves to both uphold and undermine the supremacy of the British male subject. In Chapter 4, I continue my discussion of dissociogenic practices, examining late Victorian perceptions of the nature and power of influence in relation to George Du Maurier’s best-selling novel, *Trilby*. As dissociogenic practices highlighted the power that one individual could hold over another’s body and mind, the language of dissociation filtered into more general discussions of influence, prompting questions like under what conditions can the individual become susceptible to the influence of others? How might the individual guard him or herself against dangerous or otherwise pernicious influences? What is the place and function of “will-power”? Du Maurier engages with such questions through the figure of the demonic Jewish mesmerist and maestro, Svengali. In his novel, Du Maurier uses dissociogenic practices to explore issues of sexuality, gender identity, cultural identity and the nature of individual will-power in relation to outside influences in order to suggest the dangerous malleability of individual desires to outside forces.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I turn my focus to nineteenth-century neurology, which attempted to locate the capacity for dissociation in the physical structure of the brain. As the science of neurology began to develop, biological explanations of psychological states became increasingly popular. By suggesting certain parts of the brain controlled specific emotions and behaviors, the cerebral localisation theories of nineteenth-century neurologists contradicted a number of long-held Victorian beliefs, such as the idea that a unified soul or mind governed human action. These theories challenged the belief in human agency and presented the possibility that “human beings might be soulless machines
governed solely by physiological impulses” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 4). The dark territories and uncharted regions of the brain are quite disturbingly Gothicised in the work of Welsh author Arthur Machen. Machen’s *The Great God Pan* and “The Inmost Light” present the brain as both a portal to other dimensions and a permeable barrier between the worlds of spirit and matter. Machen’s fiction demonstrates the ways in which the brain comes to be invested with metaphor in the late-nineteenth century, and how this metaphorical space comes to be largely figured as Gothic territory.

From scientific case studies to the pages of popular fiction, discussions of dissociation were at the fore in the late Victorian period. *Disintegrated Subjects* is about the fascination and repulsion attached to dissociative states and dissociogenic practices and the ways in which such states and practices came to stand-in for a number of anxieties related to the rapidly changing British social landscape. An examination of the fiction and mental science that shared this fascination and repulsion reveals that our understanding of non-unitary mental states has been predominantly formed by a circuitous and reciprocal relationship between these seemingly disparate disciplines.
Chapter 2:

From Doubles to Multiples: R.L. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

and The Alternate Consciousness Paradigm in Psychology and Gothic Fiction

But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! .... So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. \(^{24}\)

Thus did my two wills, one new, and the other old, one carnal, the other spiritual, struggle within me; and by their discord, undid my soul. \(^{25}\)

With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. \(^{26}\)

In his “Full Statement of the Case,” R.L. Stevenson’s Dr. Henry Jekyll reflects on the seemingly divided nature of man, coming to the conclusion that “man is not truly one, but truly two” (Stevenson 78-9). Jekyll claims that, “it [is] the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots [are] thus bound together – that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling” (79). For Jekyll, this duality is “thorough” and “primitive,” suggesting that such division is fundamental to human psychology. Robert Louis Stevenson’s “shilling shocker,” \(^{27}\) *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), has become the quintessential modern tale of dualism in man.

The story follows lawyer John Gabriel Utterson as he attempts to unravel the mystery surrounding his old friend, Dr. Henry Jekyll. The plot is centered on Jekyll’s increasingly odd behaviour and seemingly inexplicable relationship with the amoral and dark stranger, Mr.

\(^{24}\) St. Paul Romans 7:23

\(^{25}\) Saint Augustine *Confessions* (8.10)

\(^{26}\) Robert Louis Stevenson *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2005) at p. 78-79.

\(^{27}\) Shilling shockers, popular in the late-Victorian era, were novels typically depicting violent or otherwise lurid material, costing only one shilling to purchase.
Edward Hyde. Utterson, becoming “Mr. Seek” in his search for Mr. Hyde, speculates that Jekyll is being blackmailed by Hyde, fearing that “the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace” had come back to haunt Jekyll, the punishment coming “pede claudio” (43). It is eventually revealed, however, that the nature of Jekyll’s relationship with Hyde is far more disturbing and complex, for Hyde and Jekyll are in fact one. Although markedly different in appearance, Jekyll and Hyde share the same body, much of the same consciousness and even the same sins. Stevenson’s text has spawned countless adaptations in both theatre and film, has informed a wealth of critical discussions, and the phrase “Jekyll and Hyde” has found its way into contemporary vernacular as a synonym for split or bipolar personalities, most often depicting the contrast between a “good” and “bad” personality. Indeed, in addition to influencing the work of F.W.H. Myers and Morton Prince on the topic of multiple personality at the end of the nineteenth century, Steven’s tale continues to be cited by researchers interested in dissociation, such as John A. Sanford and Robert W. Rieber.28

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde has become an iconic text of fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction, intermittently read as a tale of repressed sexuality,29 nineteenth-century homophobic panic,30 the workings of the criminal mind,31 the fear of degeneration,32 the anxiety related

to shifting class-structures and the nature of human consciousness. With the popularity of psychoanalysis, many critics found resonances of the Freudian concept of repression in the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde. The question of ‘what’ Jekyll represses has been taken up by critics and has resulted in a seemingly endless array of possibilities. Stephan Heath (1986) argues that Jekyll represses his sexuality so that the violence in the text is the eruption of Jekyll’s displaced sexual desires, with “random violence replac[ing] the sexual drive” (93-94). Elaine Showalter in Sexual Anarchy (1990) reads this repressed sexuality as one of same-sex desire and places the text in the context of Victorian anxieties over homosexuality, reading the text as a “fable of fin-de-siècle homosexual panic” in reaction to an increasingly active and vocal homosexual subculture (107). Stephen Arata (1996) reads Hyde as the repressed criminal in the bourgeois subject and as emblematic of the possibility that these two worlds may be colliding as “the atavist learns to pass as a gentleman” (39).

As David Punter argues, “Jekyll’s view seems to be that the split in his being has derived much less from the presence within his psyche of an uncontrollable, passionate self than from the force with which that self has been repressed according to the dictates of social convention” (Literature of Terror, Vol.2, 2-3). He goes on to note that “Hyde is not Jekyll’s opposite, but something within him” as his small physiognomy suggests that he is only one

35 Freud (along with Josef Breuer) introduced the concept of repression in Studies on Hysteria (1895). Here, Freud understood the concept as an act or “effort of will” by which the subject intentionally keeps disagreeable material (thoughts, memories, etc.) from conscious awareness because they clash with or threaten the integrity of the ego, or self. In this sense, “intentionally” does not necessarily mean “consciously”; it simply indicates that there is an identifiable motive, whether it be consciously recognised or not (Strachey Studies on Hysteria 10).
part of the complex whole (Literature of Terror, Vol.2, 4). Martin Danahay also reads the Jekyll/Hyde dyad using the discourse of repression, claiming that in his act of composing an autobiographical narrative, Jekyll, like other Victorian male autobiographers, represses and thus denies his connection to the social world in favour of an idealised individualism. The effect of such a repression is “a deeply divided and conflicted subjectivity” (Danahay, A Community of One 135), which finds expression in the split between Jekyll and Hyde.

As these examples demonstrate, critics have suggested Stevenson’s novella parallels Freudian ideas of repression. However, Nancy Gish makes the provocative claim that “Hyde is neither unconscious nor repressed” (4). While this is a difficult contention to prove, Jekyll’s “Statement” indicates that he knows the elements of personality that come to constitute Hyde, if not fully, “from very early” so that from a young age he becomes “committed to a profound duplicity of life” (Stevenson 78). It is this commitment, along with the desire to “house” these disparate elements in separate identities (Stevenson 79), which drives Jekyll’s experimentation into the modification of personality. Woody and Bowers argue that Jekyll does not so much create Hyde as release him:

The action of the drug in the story is simply to bring to light divisions that were already within: the action tendencies elicited in Hyde, horrific as they are to Jekyll, always lay dormant within Jekyll. The drug, rather than creating a second personality, weakens the integrative mechanisms by which the gaping cracks in a personality are papered over and normally hidden from view. (53)
Such a reading points to the ways that modern or neo-dissociation theory understands the self as already plural and fragmented, needing only an agent of cohesion to appear unified and whole. As the studies of dissociation by Pierre Janet, Elizabeth Howell and Laurence Kirmayer suggest, this cohesive agent is most often narrative in nature. Thus, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde both engages with contemporaneous theories of psychic fragmentation and predicts contemporary understandings of the dissociative mind. By demonstrating the connections between Stevenson’s Strange Case and the work of researchers like Janet, F.W.H. Myers and Morton Prince, it becomes clear that the discourse of dissociation is formed and maintained by a circuitous and reciprocal relationship between creative fiction and scientific study, illustrating Robert Rieber’s claim that tales like Stevenson’s “had a formidable impact on the reading public... [which] manifested itself straight through from the scientific literature to pop culture and back again” (Rieber 43). In positioning Stevenson’s text against the backdrop of contemporaneous and contemporary theories of dissociation, I want to suggest that The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde indeed acts like a case study, illustrating the complex relationship between dissociation and narrative as well as the hybrid character of dissociation discourse. Furthermore, this discourse is Gothically inflected: it is both based on Gothic tropes like doubles and duality and borrows from Gothic tales, like Stevenson’s and the work of E.T.A. Hoffman.

The publication of The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in January 1886 coincided with a number of other important treatises on the topics of dissociated

consciousness and alterations in personality. In *Rewriting the Soul* Ian Hacking claims that
the discourse of multiple personality came into being in July 1885 with the publication of
Louis Vivet’s case in France. In 1886 the case of Vivet, a man said to manifest up to eight
separate personalities, was made known to the broader English audience with a publication
that appeared in the “Psychological Retrospect” section of the *Journal of Mental Science* in
January 1886, written by A. Myers, and then again in the November *Proceedings of the
Society for Psychical Research* by his brother, F.W.H. Myers, in a piece entitled “Multiplex
Personality.” In the following year, Pierre Janet published an article outlining his theory of
dissociation, and Eugène Azam put out his text *Hypnotisme, double conscience et
altérations de la personnalité: le cas Féilda X*, in which he discusses the well known case of
Féilda X, a woman whose secondary personality came to supersede her primary state. Azam
had already published his opinions on the case in a series of articles that appeared in *Revue
Scientifique* in the 1870s. In 1889 Janet published *L’automatisme psychologique* in which he
attempted to outline a new scientific theory of psychological pathology. In this work, Janet
proposed a theory of somnambulism that countered popular conceptions of the
somnambulist as merely an automaton, claiming that somnambulists are able to speak,
resolve problems and sometimes even resist the commands of their hypnotist or
magnetiser. Janet also resisted the notion that there could be only one, unified ‘I’ in any
human being, claiming that the unity of the ‘I’ had to be “established by facts, not assumed
by virtue of some metaphysical theory” (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 315). According
to Crabtree, “Janet claimed that personality involves the grouping of psychological
phenomena in a synthesis that experiences itself as an ‘I.’ Whenever one finds this synthesis
and the corresponding judgment of an ‘I’ within that synthesis, there is a personality” (*From Mesmer to Freud* 315). While the notion of double or divided consciousness and the nature of the secondary self revealed in trance states had been topics of interest for the preceding 100 years, there was a surge of renewed interest in the 1870s and 1880s, largely due to the ‘sanctioned’ scientific interest of researchers like Jean Martin Charcot. As John Herdman explains it,

> In the last quarter of the century the work of the new French psychologists...reinstated the concept of double personality in the world of scientific psychology. The clinical work in mental institutions of the two Janets, of Charcot and Binet, largely endorsed the theories of the Romantic psychologists in revealing, as they believed, a second personality (activated, for instance, in somnambulism) eternally at war with the first, and liable to usurp and take possession of the entire life of the subject. (19)

It is in this milieu of interest in dissociated consciousness that Stevenson wrote and published his text, which Jill Matus describes as “the literary expression of divided being” (emphasis original, 161). Matus positions Stevenson’s text as part of a cluster of ideas about the way the mind responds to “overwhelming or inassimilable experience,” ideas which are dependent on assumptions about a non-unitary self, capable – under pressure – of switching “from one strand of consciousness and memory to another, or indeed, several others” (Matus 160), forming a cluster that combines the literary with the scientific. The interdisciplinary nature of this cluster demonstrates that understandings of psychology and
mental processes are rarely drawn exclusively from official science and that there is a narrative component to such understandings that mirrors that of literature.

The connection between literary and scientific accounts of dissociative phenomena has been well noted by scholars interested in Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), or as it is currently labeled by the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). In his study of multiple personality and literary character, Jeremy Hawthorn claims:

there appear[s] to be analogies and, in some cases connections, between the divisions of personality reported on in [psychiatric] accounts [of multiple personality] and the divisions within literary characters....bringing together literary portrayals of personality disintegration with such clinical accounts might result in mutual illumination, and might also point towards explanations for both the literary and the clinical fragmentation of personality, in larger changes in the social life of the modern period. (ix)

While both Hawthorn and Matus believe that literature and science are both “mutually influential” (Matus 160) in the development of theories about the non-unitary self, scholars who are cynical of the veracity of Multiple Personality Disorder have often negatively viewed the circuitous relationship between fiction and psychology. For example, Aldridge-Morris (1989) and Merskey (1992) claim that MPD is the product of the public fascination with sensational stories like Thigpen and Cleckley’s text *The Three Faces of Eve* (1957) or Schreiber’s *Sybil* (1973), claiming that there was a notable increase of reported cases after the publication of these texts. Aldridge-Morris calls Multiple Personality an “exercise in
deception” and sees it as a cultural phenomenon rather than an independently occurring mental disorder; Mayer-Gross et al (1969) claim that multiple personalities were always artificial productions, due to medical attention and literary interest; and Merskey argues that widespread publicity for the concept makes it uncertain whether any case can now arise without being promoted by the suggestion of popular culture. In the same vein, Robert Rieber writes, “The popular literature of the [nineteenth century] flooded the minds of the public with fascinating macabre psychological novels that dealt with various aspects of mind brain stories about human beings’ moral problems, including sanity and identity” (43), citing the work of Stevenson and Edgar Allan Poe as examples. Ian Hacking admits that Multiple Personality Disorder “has dined all too well on cheap novellas, tabloid newspapers, movies and above all else, television” (“Multiple Personality and its Hosts” 4-5); however, he claims that this is simply the nature of the disorder, and not something that undermines its impact on those who identify with it. Hacking identifies successive waves of interest in multiple or divided personality, from about 1800 onward. Beginning with sporadic reports of double-consciousness in European and American medical literature, interest in dual and multiple personality reached an all-time high in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Most recently, North America has found renewed interest in multiple personality, and the influx of reported cases in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in what Boor labels an “epidemic."

Hacking argues that each wave of popularity of the diagnosis of MPD was made possible by


its linkage with some social issue of great importance, such as spiritualism in the nineteenth century and child abuse in the twentieth. Hacking is able to tie these rather divergent issues together through the concept of “the host.” Hacking describes dissociative phenomena, specifically multiple personality, as a type of parasite, attaching itself to a ready host in order to come into being: “The host provides a way to experience or express mental anguish; the parasite thrives only in a peculiar conjunction of medical and social conditions .... The hosts themselves seem to have nothing in common—they include psychical research cum spiritism, late nineteenth-century positivism and, today, child abuse” (“Multiple Personality and its Hosts” 4). Speaking of the nineteenth century, Hacking claims that the assortment of reports on dual, alternating or double consciousness prior to 1875 were “curiosities” that made no sense until they could be attached to and “absorbed” by a relevant host culture.

Stevenson’s “Gothic gnome”39 has recently been understood by critics as a pivotal piece in the discursive formation of “multiple personality” as an object of knowledge. In “Jekyll and Hyde: The Psychology of Dissociation,” Nancy Gish claims that Janet’s theory of dissociated consciousness, along with the work of F.W.H. Myers and Morton Prince, “provides the most compelling conceptual framework for understanding Stevenson’s representation of duality” and the structure of personality and consciousness in Stevenson’s text (1). However, Gish’s study suggests that Stevenson’s text does more than simply parallel the language of dissociation theory in the nineteenth century; rather, Stevenson’s language, in the voice of Jekyll, “anticipates recent neo-dissociation theory that assumes

originary plurality rather than fragmented unity” (Gish 3). In the same vein, Matus claims that to read Stevenson’s tale in the context of Frederick Myers’s discussion of multiple personality

[Is] to see that both psychological discourse and literary creativity are responding to the idea that the unitary self is illusory; both ponder the consequences of the idea that will and knowledge may be split and undermined as one state of consciousness gives way to another. Both question what implications the notion of a fragmented self may have for ethics, responsibility, self-possession and self-governance. (19)

To what extent Stevenson was aware of and influenced by reports of double, alternating, split and multiple personalities has been debated by scholars. John Herdman claims that Stevenson was a “profound admirer of the new psychology and actively interested in psychic research,” (20) and Elaine Showalter has suggested that Stevenson may have read about the case of Vivet in the Archives de Neurologie (Sexual Anarchy 105). Stevenson’s wife Fanny has also suggested that her husband was influenced by reports of divided consciousness; in a prefatory note to the 1905 Tusitala Edition of Stevenson’s works, Fanny writes that her husband was “deeply impressed by a paper he read in a French scientific journal on sub-consciousness” (qtd in Matus 161). This unnamed article, she adds, "gave the germ of the idea" that Stevenson afterward developed into Deacon Brodie, or, The Double Life (1880), a play about an eighteenth-century Scottish town councillor who led a secret nocturnal life of crime, and then again in his "Markheim" (1885), and, finally, "in a hectic fever following a hemorrhage of the lungs," it "culminated in the dream of Jekyll and Hyde" (Qtd. in Stiles, “‘Jekyll and Hyde’ and the Double Brain” 879). Stevenson, however, denied
that he had ever heard of an actual case of double consciousness before writing his novella. As he told one interviewer in 1893, “After the book was published I heard of the case of ‘Louis V.,’ the man in the hospital at Rochefort. Mr. Myers sent it to me” (qtd. in Matus 162). Anne Stiles suggests that in light of striking correspondences between Stevenson’s work and case studies in French and British popular and medical journals during the 1870s and 1880s, “it seems highly unlikely that Stevenson’s reply to the reporter was entirely honest” (880). Richard Dury suggests that Stevenson resisted revealing his inspirational sources because he did not wish “to provide a single key to a story that is intended to remain enigmatic” (248). As Daniel Pick argues in another context, attempts to settle the limits of ‘what Stevenson knew’ should not be pursued too seriously as “what is in question is not just direct influence, but the wider cultural and social determinants” which produce what could “make sense” in the period (Svengali’s Web 146).

If the sources of inspiration for the story of Jekyll and Hyde are difficult to discern, the same cannot be said for the influence the text has had on theories of dissociation. Robert Mighall has argued that if Stevenson did not take inspiration directly from the case of Louis Vivet, “we can suspect that he might have given something to the writing up of it by Myers (1886)” (qtd. in Matus 162). Certainly, as both Mighall and Matus have highlighted, there are some striking similarities between the work of Stevenson and Myers. Myers took a noted interest in The Strange Case, predicting that Stevenson’s reputation would be made by the text. Myers wrote to Stevenson twice with suggestions for revision that he believed would make the tale adhere more closely to “observed psychological fact” (Qtd. in Matus 168), once shortly after the text’s publication and once again in 1887, urging Stevenson to
perfect his “masterpiece.” Myers felt that Stevenson’s representation of the shared memory and handwriting of Jekyll and Hyde diverged too greatly from reported cases of double and multiple personality, suggesting that at first “the community [of memory] would be very imperfect” between the two personalities, but “gradually the two memories would fuse into one” (emphasis original, qtd. in Matus 169). Similarly, Myers felt that the handwriting of the two personalities should be different as “[h]andwriting in cases of double personality (spontaneous ... or induced, as in hypnotic cases) is not and cannot be the same in the two personalities. Hyde’s writing might look like Jekyll’s done with the left hand, or done when partly drunk, or ill: that is the kind of resemblance there might be” (emphasis original, qtd. in Matus 170). Stevenson’s reply to Myers in March of 1886 was cordial, thanking him for his “just” suggestions. He tells him “I shall keep your paper; and if ever my works come to be collected, I will put my back into these suggestions” (The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, Vol. II [1880-1887] 325). Stevenson, however, never made the revisions suggested by Myers, which for Myers was “a real misfortune to English literature” (qtd. in Matus 169). Nonetheless, in his obituary for Stevenson in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, Myers lauded Stevenson’s work for being “of such special value to the psychologist” for he “offered one of the most striking examples on record of the habitual uprush and incursion into ordinary consciousness of ideas or pictures conceived and matured in some subconscious region, without sense of effort or choice or will” (6-7).

Throughout his career Myers was intrigued by the “uprush” of ideas from the subconscious “into ordinary consciousness,” and he was particularly interested in what he called the “multiplex and mutable character” of “the personality of man” (“Multiplex
Personality” (496). Much of his work focused on the possibility that the human personality could survive after death, the study of which culminated in his posthumously published *Human Personality and its Survival after Bodily Death* (1903). Myers believed that humans possessed psychical capabilities of which they were only dimly aware. As David Lomas understands Myers’ theory, “Just as the visible part of the spectrum includes only a fraction of the radiation emitted by the sun, so too our conscious self is only one small part of an extended psychical entity” (67). Myers believed that we could catch a glimpse of our subliminal self under the right circumstances, claiming that this secondary self could be “vast[ly] superior to our mundane, everyday self” (Lomas 67). Shamdasani claims that for Myers, in contradistinction to his contemporaries such as Freud and Janet, the subconscious or subliminal secondary personalities revealed in trance states, dreaming, crystal gazing, and automatic writing “potentially possessed a higher intelligence than one’s waking or supraliminal personality and often served to convey messages of guidance” (“Encountering Hélène” xv). As Myers explains in a piece for the May 1889 *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, “[e]ach of us, we may say, contains within himself the potentiality of an unknown number of personalities, some at least of which may be educated to become so readily recurrent as his primary personality, although no one of them can – anymore than his primary personality – be made to manifest itself in a really continuous manner” (qtd. in Matus 166). Thematically, then, the works of Stevenson and Myers share many concerns: the mutability of personality, the capacity for spontaneous fluctuations of self, and a view of man as composed of many selves. There are also some striking similarities in the language used by Stevenson and Myers in their explorations of man’s multiple natures. Jekyll’s claim
that “man will ultimately be known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens” (Stevenson 79) is echoed by Myers in “Multiplex Personality” when he speaks of “the dissolution into inco-ordinate elements of the polity of our being” (502). Myers also refers to Vivet’s “monkey-like imprudence,” a term that bears resemblance to the descriptions of Hyde as a “thing like a monkey” (65) full of “ape-like fury” (46), who carries out “apelike tricks” out of “apelike spite” (92). Matus cautions that we should not attribute this shared language exclusively to a ‘borrowing’ from one another: “If Myers seems to echo Jekyll, Jekyll himself echoes phraseology and ideas which are to be found in Myers’s earlier psychological writings” (163). Additionally, the use of the term “ape” and other primitive terminology to emphasise the “animality” of Vivet and Hyde would have been influenced by the work of Darwin and Herbert Spencer, among others. The extent to which these men borrowed ideas and phraseology from one another remains uncertain; however, we can discern from these two examples that towards the end of the nineteenth century a discourse of dissociation was emerging, and an essential component in this matrix of formation is indeed Stevenson’s *Strange Case*.

2.1 “The Second Self” in Psychology and Fiction

The concept of a divided or multiple self was not a new one in the nineteenth century. Indeed, as Masao Miyoshi contends, “questions about [the self’s] makeup and meaning have been among the most insistent concerns of Western thought” (xiii). In *The Republic* Plato suggests that the psyche or soul is comprised of three parts – the appetitive or the irrational, the rational and the spirited – which must remain in the correct balance in the individual (104). Yet, as the quotations from St. Paul and Augustine at the beginning of
this chapter make clear, finding the correct balance was not always an easy task. St. Paul describes the presence of two wills at war within him: the higher will, which seeks to serve the law of God, and the lower will, which desires sinful pleasures. In *The Confessions* Augustine says he came to understand St. Paul’s assertion, claiming that the struggle between his “two wills” was so great that it “undid” his soul. Augustine writes that his “inner self” was “a house divided against itself” in a “fierce struggle, in which [he] was [his] own contestant”, feeling himself “beside myself with madness that would bring me sanity” (Qtd. in Herdman 7). Thus, the notion of a fragmented subjectivity or consciousness has informed much of the Western philosophical and theological traditions. This might be because, as John Herdman argues in his study of the double in literature, “[t]he experience of duality can be described as the foundation stone of human consciousness” (1).

Herdman continues:

This consciousness, in what makes it distinctively human, rests upon our recognition of the distinction between the “I” and the “not-I”....The existence of two, and the recognition of its existence, is necessary to the basic dialectic upon which the possibility of language rests. Consciousness develops in the child through a progressive acknowledgement of the other and its claims. The “not-I”, however, is not always experienced as external to the individual; it can also be experienced as existing within the self. The experience of self-division, or at least the potential for it, is almost an inseparable condition of consciousness. (1)

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40 Herman’s study is focused on the Western tradition, in particular the influences that worked to make the double a popular figure in nineteenth-century fiction.
Because of this, Herdman argues, the double has been one of the most prevalent and enduring themes in myth and literature. As a literary device, the double is used for articulating the experience of self-division and to shed light on the inner workings of the human mind. Ralph Tymms claims that “superficially, doubles are among the facile, and less reputable devices of fiction” (15), and yet the trope has been not only popular but powerful. The roots of the theme are diverse, and accounts of the double have been recorded from the earliest times. Herdman claims that many accounts are firmly embedded in initial speculations on the nature of the soul, especially the belief that the soul existed independently of the body and could depart from it (2). Erwin Rohde, in his study *Psyche* (1890-1894), claimed that the ancient Greeks regarded the soul as an “image” that constitutes a “second self” by reflecting the visible self. In his reading of Homeric poetry, Rohde argues that *man*, as a material reality, is contrasted with *psyche*, presented as separate from yet integral to the living body. Upon the death of the living body, the psyche makes its departure into Hades, and “is invested with the name and value of the complete personality, the ‘self’ of the man” (6). For Rohde, this proves that in the Homeric tradition, both the “visible man (the body and its own faculties) and the indwelling psyche could be described as the man’s ‘self’” (emphasis original, 6). And while “[s]uch an idea – that the psyche should dwell within the living and fully conscious personality, like an alien and a stranger, a feebler double of the man, as his ‘other self’ – may well seem very strange to us,” it is in fact “what so-called ‘savage’ peoples, all over the world, actually believe” (6). However, as Rohde points out, this belief was not limited to “savage” people; it was also

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41 By which Rhode means “human”.
held to be true by Greek poets and philosophers. Through the experience of an apparent “double of the self” in dreams, swoons and ecstasy, the belief that there is “a two-fold principle of life in man” and of “the existence of an independent, separable ‘second self’ dwelling within the visible self of daily life” came to be widespread in the age of Homer (6-7).

The double became an especially popular motif in the late-eighteenth century and early-nineteenth century, developed in somewhat different forms in the early Gothic and Romantic traditions. Miyoshi claims that Gothic and Romanticism are “traditions which together created the prototypes of man divided” that would reappear throughout Victorian literature (xiv). Gothic in particular is “well instrumented to explore the evil and irrationality of man and his sharply personal sense of the war within” (Miyoshi xiv). Matthew Brennan echoes this contention, claiming that “In both literature and art, the Gothic principally represents psychic disintegration, myths about the breakdown of identity and the decentering of the Self” (9). In the works of early Gothic fiction, such as Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764), characters are often presented as mirror opposites, such as Isabella and Matilda, or as suffering from some type of inner conflict or contrast in character, as seen in Manfred’s struggle to negotiate his desire to produce an heir in order to retain the usurped lordship of Otranto. Miyoshi argues that “Manfred is alternately all goodness and reason, and passionate to the point of ferocity. At one moment he is admiring Friar Jerome’s ‘saint-like virtue’ and wishing to emulate it, and at the next trembling with a ‘rage’ strangely compounded with ‘shame’” (6). Similarly, duality is figured as duplicity in Matthew Lewis’s novel The Monk (1796), where Ambrossio lives a double life as both an
esteemed religious leader and a rapist and murderer. Doubleness is also expressed in a number of “Gothic” themes and literary devices, such as the theme of evil and remorse (Herdman 21) and what might be termed “the double plot,” the oscillation of stories or perspectives, such as the switch between Antonia’s and Ambrosio’s perspectives in *The Monk*.

The double ‘proper’ has its origins as a fictional device in Germany, in the “philosophical, literary, and scientific theories of German Romanticism” (Labriola 69) and with the tradition of the *Doppelgänger*. According to Patrick Labriola, in the German Romantic poetic tradition, the double represents the poet’s “constant struggle with himself to reach beyond his own existence” and the poet’s “continuous longing for the infinite, which can never be fulfilled” (69). Since “the Romantic ego” is constantly striving for something higher than itself, “the Romantic poet finds himself divided into two parts: one is rooted in his mortal existence, the other pursues a higher transcendental harmony with the infinite” (69-70). This discrepancy between the “real” and the “ideal” found expression in the figure of the *Doppelgänger*. The *Doppelgänger* is a second self, or alter ego, which appears as a distinct and separate being apprehensible by the physical senses although it exists in a dependent relation to the original. The nature of this dependency varies, but as Herdman points out, often the double comes “to dominate, control, and usurp the functions of the subject” (14). The most characteristic *Doppelgängers* have a supernatural or subjective aspect, which makes their objective reality questionable, yet, as Herdman notes, “the psychological power of the device lies in its ambiguity, in the projection of the
subject’s subjectivity upon a being whose reality the structure of the novel or story obliges the reader to accept” (14).

James Hogg’s *The Private Memoires and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) illustrates the ambiguity Herman identifies as the underlying force of the theme of the double. Set in seventeenth-century Scotland, Hogg’s novel focuses on a “collision of extremes in an individual psyche” (Botting 110). Religious ideas related to Calvinism, Presbyterianism and antinomianism, in conjunction with political and familial conflict, set the stage for Robert Wringhim’s moral and psychological disintegration. Raised by his mother’s Reverend (who is also his namesake) rather than his aristocratic family, the Colwans, Robert is taught to believe that he is one of the Elect, making “his place in Heaven...secure, no matter what he does on earth” (Botting 110). Shortly after his seventeenth birthday, the young Wringhim meets an unusual character who goes by the name Gil-Martin. Gil-Martin possesses the unique ability to transform his physical appearance, changing into the personage of whomever he was focussed on. Robert embarks on a life of indulgence and crime, eventually killing his brother George, his mother and a local girl who accused him of seducing her. Possessing no memory of these crimes, Robert comes to suspect his new friend might be the devil. Wringhim, after unsuccessfully trying to escape from his demonic double, hangs himself.

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42 A term coined by Martin Luther to express the belief that faith alone is necessary for salvation, making Christian ethics that define morality obsolete. For example, see Botting’s discussion of Hogg’s text in *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996) or Herdman’s in *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

43 Although Robert’s patronage is never confirmed, it is strongly suggested that the Reverend is his biological father. In the narrative, George Colwan denies Robert as his son, leaving Mrs. Colwan to raise him with the help of her chaplain and guardian, Robert Wringhim.
The precise relationship between Wringhim and Gil-Martin is never fully explained. The imaginary editor, whose narrative frames Wringhim’s *Confessions*, refers to the story as madness, a dream or “a religious parable” (198), contradicting Wringham’s account in a number of places. And while Gil-Martin’s true identity is left uncertain, Wringham’s narrative of the experience points to concurrent developments in the burgeoning science of psychology and the exploration of disjunctive mental states. Gil-Martin claims to be Wringhim’s “second self” (97), a claim Wringhim corroborates when he says:

I generally conceived myself to be two people. When I lay in bed, I deemed there were two of us in it; when I sat up, I always beheld another person, and always in the same position from the place where I sat or stood...It mattered not how many or how few were present: this my second self was sure to be present in his place. (Hogg 127)

This perception that he is really “two people” is matched by an almost equal force of amnesia, for Wringhim claims to remember nothing of his many crimes. This lack of memory comes to be figured as a subjective disturbance. Wringhim claims,

I seemed hardly to be an accountable creature; being thus in the habit of executing transactions of the utmost moment, without being sensible that I did them. I was a being incomprehensible to myself. Either I had a second self, who transacted business in my likeness, or else my body was at times possessed by a spirit over which it had no controul [sic], and of whose actions my own soul was wholly unconscious....To be in a state of consciousness and unconsciousness, at the same time, in the same body and same spirit, was impossible. (Hogg 150-1)
However, as the work of the marquis de Puységur in the practice of animal magnetism had shown, to be in a state of consciousness and unconsciousness at the same time and in the same body was indeed possible.

Although Franz Anton Mesmer had many notable students and followers, the marquis de Puységur (Armand Marie Jacques de Chastenet) is perhaps the most important to the history of dissociative phenomena. His discovery of “magnetic somnambulism” or “magnetic sleep” in 1784 during his experiments with animal magnetism “would change the course of the history of psychiatry and psychology” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 39). Mesmer’s theories and practice will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, but a brief introduction is necessary here to appreciate Puységur’s work. Mesmer developed the theory of animal magnetism (originally termed animal gravity) in the late eighteenth century. This theory posited that all human bodies, much like the heavenly bodies, were connected by an unseen physical force. Mesmer believed that the sun, the moon and other heavenly bodies exert a vital influence on earth and its organisms by way of an all-penetrating invisible, vital fluid, which can be manipulated for the service of improving the health and vitality of the subject. Any diminishment of or obstruction to this vital force would produce disease and disorder in the organism. A magnetiser was required to improve health by restoring the natural balance of this fluid in the subject. Within Mesmer’s paradigm, nature had endowed the magnetiser with a surplus of magnetic fluid, which he could use to improve the health of others. This was done by making passes with the hands over the magnetised, with the assistance of an iron wand or by the use of a baquet, an oaken tub specially designed to store and transmit magnetic fluid. The room where Mesmer
held his treatments was kept dark, and except for the carefully-chosen music (typically played on wind instruments, a pianoforte, or the glass ‘harmonica’), there was silence during the treatment. Mesmer, wearing an ornate lilac taffeta robe, would fix the patients with his gaze or touch them with his hand or iron wand. Everything in Mesmer’s clinic was designed to produce a strong physical reaction in the patient referred to as a ‘crisis’, generated in the patient by the establishment of a magnetic current, which Mesmer believed was essential to the healing process. After the agitation of the crisis, the subject would often enter into a state of languor and deep sleep. In contrast to Mesmer, Puységur believed that this state, which he termed “magnetic sleep,” was more beneficial than the violent crisis for the restoration of health. Through this belief, he came to focus much of his attention on this state.

While using animal magnetism to treat Victor Race, a peasant of his estate suffering from congested lungs and a fever, Puységur discovered an unusual state of consciousness, a state in which the subject is seemingly both awake and asleep. In his observations of Victor, Puységur set forth the basic characteristics of this hitherto undefined condition, which he called “magnetic somnambulism” or “magnetic sleep”: “a sleep-walking kind of consciousness, a ‘rapport’ or special connection with the magnetizer, suggestibility, and amnesia in the waking state for events in the magnetized state” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 39). Puységur termed this condition magnetic somnambulism based on the similarities he noticed between Victor’s magnetic state and the naturally occurring state of sleep-walking, or somnambulism. In fact, as Crabtree notes, Puységur came to believe that the induction of magnetic sleep was simply a way of mobilising and controlling natural
somnambulism. In *Recherches, experiences et observations physiologiques sur l’homme dans l’état de somnambulisme naturel et dans le somnambulisme provoqué par l’acte magnétique* (1811), Puységur compared the two somnambulistic states, concluding that they were essentially the same but with subtle differences, such as the manner of production. Puységur understood somnambulism as a state of consciousness in which the subject is neither asleep nor awake but a combination of both. In a somnambulistic state the subject is capable of carrying out ordinary activities while asleep. As though their exterior senses are asleep,

*Somnambulists act intelligently but manifest an apparent disregard of what is going on around them. They may speak, drink, eat, and move around; they may read, write, distinguish colors, and carry out various other mental activities. Indeed, both natural and magnetic somnambulists seem to be capable of performing intellectual tasks beyond the sleeper’s usual abilities. This is apparently due in part to an extraordinary concentration of attention that also makes them largely unresponsive to stimuli from their environment. (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 40-1)*

In his *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire et à l’établissement du magnétisme animal* (1784), Puységur mentions an additional characteristic of magnetic sleep – a notable alteration in personality, remarking that Victor is “no longer a naive peasant who can barely speak a sentence” when he is magnetised; “He is someone whom I do not know how to name” (*Mémoires* 35). Puységur claimed that when Victor was entranced, he knew no one “as profound, prudent, or clear-sighted” (*Mémoires* 33). This is a trait Puységur observed in other magnetised subjects as well. Much like Victor, Puységur’s patient Alexandre Hébert
displayed a drastic change in his personality and behaviour while magnetised. According to Crabtree, “Normally a quiet, uncertain, sometimes petulant, sometimes violent boy, Alexandre would become articulate, self-assured, clearheaded, and calm in the somnambulistic state” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 83). Such radical changes in personality in somnambulists are found throughout the history of animal magnetism and early hypnotism. While in a somnambulistic state, the subject often displayed personality traits which contrasted his or her personality in the waking state and spoke of his/her “waking self” with a sense of detachment, as if speaking of another person. Furthermore, Puységur observed that subjects could typically not recall what had transpired during the magnetic state while in the normal or waking state. He concluded that “the demarcation is so great that one must regard these two states as two different existences” (Mémoires 90). He also noted that there was a continuity of memory within the individual in the state of magnetic sleep: “Whereas the waking person can remember nothing of the magnetic state, the somnambulist remembers both the waking state and all that has occurred in previous magnetic states” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 42). In establishing that the somnambulistic memory thread is separate from the memory thread of the waking person, Puységur helped to usher in a new stage in the history of psychology discovery.

Puységur’s characterisation of “two different existences” in human beings and his discovery of magnetic sleep “introduced a radically new view of the human psyche and opened up a fresh vista of psychological inquiry” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 87-88). Observation of the mind was no longer confined to “the rational, conscious layers of the psyche,” (Herdman 13) and in these depths multiple and incongruous selves might be
discovered. Magnetic sleep revealed that consciousness was divided and that human beings possessed a second consciousness quite distinct from their normal, everyday consciousness. This second consciousness often displays personality characteristics unlike those of the waking self in taste, value judgments and mental acuity and has its own unique memory chain, with continuity of memory and identity from one episode of magnetic sleep to the next, separated from ordinary or waking consciousness by a memory barrier. Puységur’s discovery gave rise to what Crabtree terms “the alternate consciousness paradigm,” which posits that humans are divided beings. We tend to identify our ordinary consciousness as ourselves, and the second, alternate consciousness revealed in trance states, seems like a foreign subject to the ordinary self. According to Crabtree this feeling of alienation is due in part to the memory barrier between the two states and the fact that the secondary consciousness typically has a distinct and separate identity from the waking self: “This alienation is the basis on which the alternate-consciousness paradigm explains mental disorders, for the second consciousness may develop thoughts or emotions very different from and even opposed to those of the ordinary self, causing one to think, feel, and act in uncharacteristic ways” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 88). Such a view became the inspiration for much fiction, as demonstrated by a text like Hogg’s Confessions. Herdman claims that in the theory of magnetic trance, “novelists found an endlessly suggestive source of secondary personalities, and thrilling confirmation of the insight that the human mind could be entered and controlled by an alien will” (153). The marked contrasts in personalities, the seemingly unavoidable amnesia between the two states, and the capacity for the subject to be controlled by the magnetist became the source of inspiration for
writers like Hogg, E.T.A. Hoffman and Stevenson. In the work of such writers, the emergence of the second self is often figured as a dark and disturbing experience, the work of the devil or mad science, effectively establishing the Gothic tone that would come to be attached to both fictional and clinical accounts of alterations in personality.

Since the late eighteenth century, the literary double has fused folkloric fantasy with the scientific observation of the mind. As Ralph Tymms puts it, in the literature of doubles “the magic of the soul (in folk-lore) gives place to the magic of personality with its often dissociated substrata of consciousness (in romantic and modern psychological thought)” (15-16). The German Romantics, and most decisively E.T.A. Hoffmann, were inestimably influenced by the psychological researches of the time. Hoffman’s tales focus on doubles, automata, the supernatural and madness, “depict[ing] minds divided against themselves to the point of pathology and possession, conjuring up the darkness within as palpable phantasms and fantastic realities which irrupt disastrously into the calm, civilized life with which they are satirically contrasted” (Herdman 47). Perhaps Hoffman’s best known tale is “The Sand-man” (1816), which tells the tale of Nathaniel, a young man haunted by the memory of the lawyer and alchemist Coppelius, who Nathaniel believes is the legendary sand-man: a figure who comes to steal the eyes of children to feed his own children on the moon. Nathaniel associates Coppelius with his father’s death, and years later as a student at university, he encounters a barometer seller by the name of Giuseppe Coppola, who he believes is really Coppelius. The tale charts the decline of Nathaniel as he struggles to deal with his fear of the sandman, his belief that Coppelius has returned and his brooding obsession with Olympia, the daughter of the physics professor Spalanzani. It is eventually
revealed that Coppola is indeed Coppelius and that Olympia is an automaton. The tale ends with Nathaniel’s suicide after the attempted murder of his fiancée, Clara. The power of this tale lies in the tension between fantasy and reality, between subjective and objective experience. To say that the horror of Olympia or Coppola/Coppelius exists “only” in the imagination of Nathaniel is to “rob the device of the double of all its potency” (Herdman 50). However, there is a compelling psychological component to Nathaniel’s story, one that was not only influenced by advancements in psychology but was also influential to the mental sciences, particularly the development of psychoanalytical theories of subjectivity.

As the work of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank attests, the figure of the double has been instrumental in the development of psychoanalytic theories, and in turn, these theories have come to influence the study of literature. Freud’s essay “The ‘Uncanny’” (1919) has become a staple text in examinations of the theme of the literary double and studies of Gothic literature more generally. Tzvetan Todorov, for example, defines Gothic as a mode of the fantastic, but specifies Gothic as that which includes the uncanny and the marvellous. According to Todorov, the fantastic is a moment of uncertainty, for both reader and character alike, where an unexplainable event occurs in an otherwise realistic landscape, causing the character and/or reader to decide if such an event is the result of an illusion or fantasy or if it has indeed occurred, revealing that this reality “is controlled by laws unknown to us” (Todorov 25). Todorov claims that if the reader decides that the “laws of reality remain intact” and permit an explanation, then the work belongs to the genre of “the Uncanny,” which he classifies as the “supernatural explained,” as is common in the works of Gothic writers like Ann Radcliffe and Clara Reeves (41). If the reader decides that
new laws of nature must be considered to account for the phenomena, then “we enter the
genre of the marvellous,” in which Todorov places the work of Gothic writers like Horace
Walpole, Matthew Lewis and Charles Maturin (41). While Freud is not the first writer to
explore the concept of the uncanny, the rich and complex understanding of the term he
develops in his essay has provided the current critical vocabulary for discussions of the
uncanny. Freud defines the uncanny as being “undoubtedly related to what is frightening—
to what arouses dread and horror” (“The ‘Uncanny’” 219). The uncanny marks the uncertain
movement between the heimlich and the unheimlich, but the relationship between these
two terms is not strictly oppositional, as what is unfamiliar (unheimlich) was once familiar
(heimlich). Definitions of unheimlich are problematised even further by the varied
understandings of its related term, heimlich. According to Freud, “In general we are
reminded that the word ‘heimlich’ is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas,
which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is
familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight” (“The
‘Uncanny’” 224-5). While it might be tempting to conclude that the word “unheimlich” is
the opposite of “heimlich,” as Freud points out, the relation between these ideas “is not
capable of inversion” (219). Thus, Freud begins the rather tricky endeavour of trying to
define a term which defies definition, for as Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle argue, “To
try to define the uncanny is immediately to encounter one of its decisive paradoxes, namely
that ‘the uncanny’ has to do with a troubling of definitions, with a fundamental disturbance
of what we think and feel” (emphasis original, 36). The uncanny has to do with “a sense of
strangeness, mystery or eeriness,” and more particularly, “it concerns a sense of
unfamiliarity which appears at the very heart of the familiar, or else a sense of familiarity which appears at the very heart of the unfamiliar. The uncanny is not just a matter of the weird or spooky, but has to do more specifically with a disturbance of the familiar” (Bennet and Royle 36).

While Freud identifies several types of feelings of the uncanny, the crux of his argument is perhaps that “the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (“The ‘Uncanny’” 220), or, more precisely (borrowing from Schelling), “everything is unheimlich that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (225). For Freud, feelings of the uncanny are rooted in the revival of infantile complexes repressed in the psychological development of the child or in the resurgence of previously surmounted “primitive” beliefs, such as the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts or “magical thinking,” which he understands as the conviction that thoughts have a direct impact on external reality. Repetition, and especially the feeling of déjà vu, is a key aspect of the uncanny, which also involves “a kind of duplicity (both doubling and deception) within the familiar” (emphasis original, Bennett and Royle 42). The double is also key to Freud’s understanding of the uncanny, for, according to Freud’s essay, “the double is paradoxically both a promise of immortality (look, there’s my double, I can be reproduced, I can live forever) and a harbinger of death (look, there I am, no longer me here, but there: I am about to die, or else I must be dead already). The notion of the double undermines the very logic of identity” (Bennett and Royle 41). The double – defined by Otto Rank as a mirror self who threatens the boundaries of the ego and becomes, in Freud’s words “the uncanny harbinger of death” (“The ‘Uncanny’” 234) – derives its potency from
infantile narcissism. According to Rank in his 1914 study *The Double*, the theme of the double has longstanding connections with mirrors, shadows, guarding spirits, the belief in the soul and the desire for immortality. Rank argues that the double in both literature and anthropology is related to narcissism, self love and the ego’s desire to escape death. As the idea of death is painful to our psyche, the double is a projection of the self in an attempt to ‘cheat’ eternal destruction. Freud claims that:

> [T]he “double” was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an “energetic denial of the power of death”, as Rank says; and probably the “immortal” soul was the first “double” of the body....The same desire led the Ancient Egyptians to develop the art of making images of the dead in lasting materials. Such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded selflove, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the “double” reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death. (“The ‘Uncanny’” 233-4)

Freud, however, claims that such explanations do not adequately account for the extraordinary sense of uncanniness that pervades the concept of the double. He claims that, “our knowledge of pathological mental processes enables us to add that nothing in this more superficial material could account for the urge towards defence which has caused the ego to project that material outward as something foreign to itself” (“The ‘Uncanny’” 235). The double’s “quality of uncanniness” can only come from the fact that the double is a “creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted,” so its return is
also a return of “primitive” beliefs overcome by modern man, feelings that ought to have remained hidden but have come to light (Freud, “The ‘Uncanny’” 235).

Freud attributes the modern sense of the ‘double,’ a type of psychic splitting, to humankind’s advanced capacity for self-observation. He claims that in the later stages of the ego’s growth, a special agency with the capacity to oversee the rest of the ego develops in order to exercise a degree of control over the actions of the subject, in what might be called the ‘conscience.’ In pathological cases, this mental agency becomes isolated, “dissociated from the ego,” which renders it possible “to invest the old idea of a ‘double’ with a new meaning and to ascribe a number of things to it—above all, those things which seem to selfcriticism to belong to the old surmounted narcissism of earliest times” (“The ‘Uncanny’” 234). As Freud would have it, the uncanny is the anxiety associated with the breakdown of borders, which results in the loss of the self as subject. As critics like Julia Kristeva and Nicholas Royle have shown, the uncanny above all has to do with the experience of indistinct borders, particularly the border between ‘self’ and ‘other’. The experience of the uncanny is in many ways related to a border-crossing, a blurring of boundaries (between the familiar and strange, the self and other, reality and fantasy). According to Royle, “the uncanny...has to do with a sense of ourselves as double, split, at odds with ourselves” (The Uncanny 6). Royle claims that the uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, “in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced. Suddenly one’s sense of oneself (of one’s so-called ‘personality’ or ‘sexuality’, for example) seems strangely questionable” (1). As such, the uncanny is “a crisis of the proper: it entails a critical disturbance of what is proper (from the Latin proprius, ‘own’)” (1). The uncanny
experience of the strange within the familiar has the power to contaminate categories and challenge the border between self/other, “I”/“not-I”, proper/improper.

Stevenson makes uncanniness the central force of horror in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. There is said to be something uncanny about Edward Hyde, something “queer” (65) or inexplicably off with him. We are first introduced to Hyde by Utterson’s long-time friend, Richard Enfield, who claims to have “taken a loathing to [the] gentleman at first sight” (Stevenson 33). Of course, this is after Hyde is said to have rather disturbingly trampled calmly over a child’s body in the street, so it is no surprise that Enfield and the other witnesses feel anger and disdain towards him. What is surprising to Enfield, however, is the reaction to Hyde of the doctor attending to the injured child; he is said to “turn sick and white with desire to kill him” every time he looks at Hyde (33). Despite Hyde’s repulsiveness, he is “not easy to describe” (35). Enfield tells Utterson:

> There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No sir; I can make no hand of it; I can’t describe him.

And it’s not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment. (35-6)

This inexplicable sense of deformity associated with Hyde is described by other characters as well. The maid who witnesses the murder of Sir Danvers Carew describes Hyde as “particularly wicked-looking” (47) without specifying why, and Jekyll’s servant Poole states that “there was something queer about that gentleman – something that gave a man a turn
– I don’t know rightly how to say it, sir, beyond this: that you felt it in your marrow kind of cold and thin” (65). These accounts of Hyde remind us that the uncanny is “an experience” or “an effect” and also an affect that is difficult to describe (Bennett and Royle 42, 43). Hyde is “uncanny” because Hyde is “really” Jekyll – or perhaps vice versa – and although the two are noticeably different in appearance (Hyde is small, pale and dwarfish in contrast to tall and stately Jekyll), those who encounter Hyde cannot escape the sensation that there is something familiar in his unfamiliar person.

The desire to behold the unknown face of Hyde comes to consume Utterson, whose imagination becomes “engaged or rather enslaved” by a “singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde” (Stevenson 39). Utterson, as lawyer and interpreter of documents and letters, attempts to read and thus decode the mystery of Edward Hyde. He first encounters Hyde as “but a name of which he could learn no more,” the unknown heir and benefactor named by Jekyll in his holograph will (37). Utterson feels that if “he could but once set eyes on him,” the “mystery would lighten and perhaps roll together all away, as was the habit of mysterious things when well examined” (39). Yet, as Garrett notes, when Utterson at last sees Hyde face-to-face, the effect of indescribability “is not removed by intensified” (65). Utterson struggles to find the words to describe the figure and character of Mr. Hyde, who Utterson describes as “pale and dwarfish” (Stevenson 41), “hardly human” and “troglodytic” (42), but these terms cannot describe “the unknown disgust, loathing and fear” experienced by Utterson in the face of Hyde’s “impression of deformity without any nameable malformation” (41). Utterson can only assert that he has read “Satan’s signature upon a face” (42), a sentiment echoed by
Jekyll in his statement when he says that upon Hyde’s face “evil was written broadly and plainly” (79). In much the same way as his person, Hyde’s signature and handwriting come to perplex and stifle the interpretative acts of readers. In the chapter “Incident of the Letter,” Jekyll gives Utterson a letter “written in an odd, upright hand and signed ‘Edward Hyde,’” charging him with the task of interpretation (51). Castricano points out that this letter “becomes the object of analysis by no less than three readers and each of their interpretive claims reveals a bias” (“Much Ado about Handwriting” par.5). Utterson, believing that he possesses “a murderer’s autograph,” shows the letter to his friend Mr. Guest, “a great student and critic of handwriting,” who “would scarce read so strange a document without dropping a remark” (Stevenson 53). Guest determines that the writer is “not mad” but possesses “an odd hand” (53), to which Utterson adds, “And by all accounts a very odd writer” (53). To these two readers Castricano identifies a third - the narrator - who seems to confirm the view that the letter is indeed “odd.” And yet, as Guest comes to discover, this “odd” writing strangely resembles that of Jekyll, whose writing is almost “identical: only differently sloped” (53). This illustrates Ronald Thomas’ claim that “Hyde is from the outset the product of Jekyll’s pen,” beginning his existence as the chemical formula written by Jekyll in his notebook and existing as sustained by the banknotes and account books Jekyll writes for him (78).
2.2 The Tenuous ‘I’ of Dissociative Narrative

This focus on letters and scenes of reading illustrates the particular “literary” quality of both the uncanny and the discourse of dissociation. According to Bennett and Royle, “the uncanny is especially relevant to the study of literature... [as it] has to do with how the ‘literary’ and the ‘real’ can seem to merge into one another” (37). For Bennett and Royle, this relationship is twofold:

On the one hand, uncanniness could be defined as occurring when “real”, everyday life suddenly takes on a disturbingly “literary” or “fictional” quality. On the other hand, literature itself could be defined as the discourse of the uncanny: literature is the kind of writing which most persistently and most provocatively engages with the uncanny aspects of experience. (37)

This last point is highlighted by Freud in “The ‘Uncanny,’” which is largely focussed on literature, particularly Hoffman’s “The Sand-Man.” Freud claims that Hoffman repeatedly employed the uncanny “with success” in his “fantastic” narratives (“The ‘Uncanny’” 227). Freud asserts that “Hoffmann is the unrivalled master of the uncanny in literature” (233), and his reading of Hoffman is used to illustrate his point that feelings of uncanniness are often rooted in infantile complexes, like the castration complex, or infantile beliefs, such as the desire to see one’s dolls come to life. Although Freud claims that “The uncanny as it is depicted in literature, in stories and imaginative productions, merits in truth a separate discussion” (emphasis original, 249), he continues to interweave literature and case histories throughout his essay. His final pronouncement is that the uncanny in literature offers “a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole
of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life” (249). Freud’s admixture of “fiction” and “real life” reveals his somewhat paradoxical view of the relationship between the two, for, on the one hand, “the realm of phantasy depends for its effect on the fact that its content is not submitted to reality-testing” so that “in the first place a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life”; on the other hand, “there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life” (emphasis original, 249). Thus, Freud feels compelled to consider literature germane to his discussion of the uncanny while, at the same time, admitting “[w]e have drifted into this field of research half involuntarily” (251).

If Freud has only “involuntarily” wandered into the field of aesthetics, we might ask, along the same lines as Royle, what we make of Freud’s use of ‘he’ rather than ‘I’ in the opening lines of his essay. Here, Freud claims that,

It is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling. He works in other strata of mental life and has little to do with the subdued emotional impulses which, inhibited in their aims and dependent on a host of concurrent factors, usually furnish the material for the study of aesthetics. (“The ‘Uncanny’” 219)

Royle highlights that the author seems confident and self-assured: “He appears to know what it is to be a psychoanalyst and what sort of work he does” (The Uncanny 7). But, as Royle asks,
what is happening when someone begins a text by referring to himself in the third person? And what is at stake in this curious reference to being “impelled” to write on a strange subject? The opening of Freud’s essay presents us with someone who has found himself in an unfamiliar place or someone who, apparently without quite knowing why, has chosen to venture into such a place. Do we believe him? “Him”, who? (The Uncanny 7)

Royle reads “Freud” as multiple, split and proliferating, writing a text with an uncertain addressee: “the implied reader, after all, is neither a student of aesthetics nor a student of psychoanalysis” (The Uncanny 26). Thus, in the act of introducing the topic of the uncanny, Freud experiences the uncanny sensation of the ‘strange’ within the ‘familiar,’ the experience of the ‘other’ within the ‘self’ as his strange ‘he’ suggests he is not a subject in control of ‘his’ own thoughts and words. Interestingly, Bennett and Royle claim that this piece illustrates that there were “two Freuds” or “a kind of double-Freud”:

Freud’s “The ‘Uncanny’” provides what is perhaps the most dramatic and stimulating manifestation of these two Freuds. On the one hand there is the Freud who believes (and in some sense needs to believe) that literature and psychoanalysis can be simply and clearly separated off from each other, and that psychoanalysis can significantly contribute towards a scientific and objective understanding of literary texts. On the other hand there is the Freud who shows (often only inadvertently) that the “literary” is stranger and more disturbing than psychoanalysis, science or rationalism in general may be able or willing to acknowledge. (Emphasis original, 41)
That this “double-Freud” should be writing on the uncanny and doubles illustrates the ways in which uncanniness can be manifested as a textual effect in addition to a theme, for Freud is perhaps experiencing the uncanny as he is examining it. What is especially fascinating about Freud’s essay for Bennett and Royle, “is the way in which it prompts us to ask various questions about boundaries and limits: How much of Freud’s essay is psychoanalysis and how much is literature? Where does reason become imagination and imagination reason? Where does science become fiction and fiction science?” (emphasis original, 40). Like Žižek’s Mobius Strip, Freud’s essay indiscernibly slips from psychoanalysis into literature and from aesthetics into science and back again, calling into question the “pure” status of either.

Bennett and Royle claim Freud’s decision to focus on literature is odd since “Freud wrote comparatively little that could be described as literary criticism or literary theory,” and in deciding to do so, Freud “was opening up a very strange can of worms” (40); however, as Michelle Massé asserts, “the connection between literature and psychoanalysis is as old as psychoanalysis itself” (229). For the psychoanalytic critic, the elements, structures and themes that constitute the literary text “speak to the desires and fears of both authors and readers” alike, so “Freud and others in psychoanalysis’s first generation drew upon literature both for examples of psychoanalytic insight and as prior statements of what they themselves were struggling to understand” (Massé 229). In Freud: A Life for Our Time (1988) Peter Gay claims that Freud occasionally read mystery novels, a practice that Anne Williams claims is reflected in his own psychoanalytic writings, and especially in his preferred genre: the case study. Williams writes,
There is a clear affinity between his own case histories and the structure of the classic detective story: the analyst/detective observes the visible phenomena and interprets and reinterprets them in light of a causal pattern as it slowly emerges. Faced with a mass of heterogeneous, often deceptive, and apparently disconnected evidence, the detective eventually constructs a story that accounts for all these facts, by organizing them into a meaningful and coherent whole. (244)

For Williams, the case history “is almost as blatantly fictional...as The Mysteries of Udolpho” (243). In these histories, Freud acts like “a first-person narrator in the character of ‘Doctor Freud,’” a narrator “who constantly has his eye on the audience, who relates his story in as self-conscious a fashion as Trollope or Thackeray” (243). Furthermore, Freud made use of poetry and classical myth to name his theories and develop his metaphors of psychoanalysis. He declared that “the poets” had discovered the unconscious before him, and Oedipus, Narcissus and Eros “received a new incarnation” in “the Freudian oeuvre” (Williams 244). At times Freud was rather transparent about psychoanalysis’s debt to literature: he referred to Totem and Taboo as a “scientific fantasy” and received the Goethe Prize for literature44 in 1930 (Williams 244). Williams labels Freud “a Gothic ‘novelist,’” claiming that he is most “Gothic” at the level of metaphor: “Not only did he write of the Wolf Man and the Rat Man, of hysteria and obsessions, of nightmares and daydreams, of Eros and Thanatos – all part of the paraphernalia of Gothic; his entire theory of mind, developed through the multitudinous pages of his collected works, conceives of the self as a

44 The Goethe Prize is not limited to writers of fiction. It is awarded to individuals "whose creative activity served to honor the memory of Goethe" (Gale Dictionary of Psychoanalysis). The award, however, demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of Freud’s writings as the previous recipients (Stefan George, Albert Schweitzer and Leopold Ziegler) had been a mixture of philosophers, scientists and poets.
structure, a ‘house’ haunted by history, by past deeds—both one’s own and those of one’s ancestors” (244). This sense of “the self as a structure” is reflected in Jekyll’s wish to “house” his divergent personalities in separate bodies, and this terminology comes to inform one of the most sensational accounts of “a house divided against itself” (Prince 187) at the end of the nineteenth century: Morton Prince’s *Dissociation of a Personality*.

The powerful influence of Stevenson’s text on the discourse of dissociation is strikingly apparent in the work of American physician and psychologist Morton Prince. Rieber credits Prince with pioneering “the phenomenon of popularizing MPD as embodied in a spectacular case” (86). Prince’s *Dissociation of a Personality* (1905) tells the story of Miss Christine Beauchamp, a pseudonym for Clara Norton Fowler, who, according to Prince, “is a person in whom several personalities have become developed” (1). The most developed of these personalities is Sally, whose child-like tricks and taunting letters come to convince Miss Beauchamp that she is “possessed by a devil” (129). Prince’s book “enjoyed enormous success” and captured the public imagination, which Rieber claims aroused public interest in psychopathology: “The book was an immediate sensation and it stirred considerable interest in psychology among the general reader, as evidenced by the response in the popular press” (87). In much the same way as Stevenson’s *Strange Case* inspired countless plays, Miss Beauchamp’s odd tale was so compelling that “no less than five hundred plays” based on the case were written by aspiring playwrights (Rieber 88). One effort, entitled “The Case of Becky,” actually made it to the Broadway stage and became a hit (Rieber 88). In March of 1906 the magazine *Academy* called Prince’s book “more interesting than any novel,” and most reviews “couldn’t help remarking on its similarity to
One reviewer for *The New York Times* called it “a chronicle of facts, and in certain features, a realization in actual life of the old fairy tale of the bewitched, long-slumbering maiden who was awakened by a Prince” (qtd. in Rieber 87). *The Boston Herald*, on the other hand, did not consider Prince’s patient so unusual at all: “Miss Beauchamp is simply ourselves ‘writ larger’; ourselves passed on to a stage of chronic mental disease” (qtd. in Marks 121). Rieber claims that the medical establishment of the day did not share the public’s enthusiasm for Miss Beauchamp: “*The Medical Journal* of New York City, for instance, called it ‘a curious borderland study in the shadowy realm of the subconscious [and] hypnotic suggestion” (88).

Prince positions himself in much the same way as Utterson, acting as “Mr. Seek” in his “Hunt for the Real Miss Beauchamp,” the story of whom is revealed through a series of letters written between personalities that Prince must record and decode. He begins his study by stating, “Aside from the psychological interest of the phenomena, the social complications and embarrassments resulting from this inconvenient mode of living would furnish a multitude of plots for the dramatist or sensational novelist,” as “Miss Beauchamp is an example in actual life of the imaginative creation of Stevenson” (Prince 2). Throughout the text Prince makes numerous references to drama and literature, referring to himself as a narrator and “Recording Angel”\(^45\) (117), who “will let [his] notebook tell the story” (199). Much of the text is comprised of letters: letters within letters, letters left from one personality to another, letters from Sally or Miss Beauchamp to Dr. Prince, and letters which demonstrate the switch from one personality to another in the act of the writing. In

\(^{45}\) In Christian doctrine, this is the angel receiving the souls in heaven.
In this way, Prince’s text comes to reflect Stevenson’s, in which, as Jodey Castricano puts it, “readers abound and so do letters” (“Much Ado about Handwriting” par. 5). For Prince, the letters come to reveal the character of the writers; Sally’s letters reveal her immaturity and childish disposition as she teases Miss Beauchamp, telling her that she has hidden her things and squandered her money, and, perhaps worst of all, that Dr. Prince “is utterly disgusted” with her (Prince 128). Sally’s letters are riddled with juvenile mistakes, such as her claim that Miss Beauchamp’s case “was very interesting ‘psychology,’” which Prince tells us is a common mistake: “Sally meant to use the adjective, but always found it too much either to pronounce or write” (106). And while the tone and spelling mistakes reveal this letter to be the work of Sally, “the handwriting alone was [Miss Beauchamp’s]” (106). Despite Myers’s earlier instance that the handwriting of different personalities “is not and cannot be the same,” it would seem the case of Miss Beauchamp reveals otherwise.

Intriguingly, the story of Miss Beauchamp’s interactions with Sally seems in many ways to parallel those of Jekyll and Hyde. Miss Beauchamp is tormented by Sally’s tricks and deceits, which at times seem to border on the monstrous. In addition to making Miss Beauchamp tear up her money and say and do things against her will, Sally once left her a box of spiders wrapped up like a gift, knowing that Miss Beauchamp has “a nervous antipathy to spiders” and “abhors them to a degree that contact with them throws her into a condition of terror” (Prince 161). These acts lead Miss Beauchamp to write “I am afraid ... of everything now – of myself most of all” (134). Sally for her becomes “Satan himself” (134), a “demon” inside (147), and a “demon of mischief” that she tries to “cast out” with “fasting and vigil” so that it will cease to “rul[e her] as it will” (107). Sally writes letters in the
guise of Miss B., leaving a trail of confusion and torment in her wake. In one rather disturbing scene, we see Sally take over Miss Beauchamp while engaged in the act of writing. Prince claims: “Her tone was pleading and her manner nervous and agitated. She gave the impression of struggling against some controlling force, — something that was taking possession of her brain and muscles against her will. The expression of her face was worried and depressed; her movements halting and jerky” (122). Prince interprets her repeated plea of “don’t let me go” to mean “out of the room” (122), but it seems equally likely that this plea refers to her consciousness as well. As Sally takes over Miss Beauchamp’s body, her nervous manner disappears, her face, voice and movements all become those of someone else (122). Such a scene recalls the transformation of Hyde into Jekyll witnessed by Lanyon, where Hyde is said to cry, reel and stagger as “a change” comes over his face and body (76).

Much like the story of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, which is revealed by multiple narrators, the ‘case’ composed not of chapters “but of ten disparate documents identified only as letters, incidents, cases, and statements” (Thomas 75), the story of Miss Beauchamp, Sally and the eventual additional personalities is also presented as a “drama of letters” (Castricano, “Much Ado about Handwriting” par. 9). In these letters, the personalities struggle with pronominal markers. Neither Sally nor Miss Beauchamp will use the first person pronoun to discuss the other, so that “she” and “her” come to denominate these various aspects of the same writing body. Such an unpredictable and shifting narrative is characteristic of dissociative narrative in general, as dissociative patients can be said to suffer from a lack of self-cohesion. Elizabeth Howell writes that “The ‘self’ is plural,
variegated, polyphonic, and multivoiced. We experience an illusion of unity as a result of the mind’s capacity to fill in the blanks and to forge links” (38). This process of linking and connecting mental states to each other is achieved by forging “links to other people, often by narration” (47). Lawrence Kirmayer suggests that as our memory is full of gaps and holes, so “we must work ... to close the gaps and mend the ruptures in experience” (104). We do this in part through the process of narration. The fragmentary meanings of isolated events are “woven into narratives that describe our motives, aims, and relationships both in accounts of immediate circumstances and in the longer stories that span a lifetime” (104). Kirmayer claims that these narratives are then told to others in a process of exchange that solidifies social reality. We weave together our experiences in order to discover meaning and “[t]hese meanings, in turn, are based on the narratives by which we identify our selves and our place in the world. These narratives have their origin in the need to give an account of our actions to others and so they depend on socially sanctioned forms of explanation and self-depiction” (Kirmayer 104). For Kirmayer, self-consciousness functions by its use of narrative to bridge dissociative gaps and to weld together a sense of self-continuity in order to construct “a socially credible personhood” (104).

The importance of narrative in fostering these links in dissociative patients was recognised by Prince, as well as Janet, Breuer and Freud. In order to treat Miss Beauchamp and integrate Sally into a more unified subject, Prince asked Sally to compose an “autobiography,” the value of which for Prince “lies in the description of a dissociated mind, and of the alleged cleavage of consciousness dating back to early childhood” (393). By locating the origin of this “cleavage” in consciousness, Prince could learn of the events
which led to the creation of Sally as a separate personality for Christine. A decade earlier, Freud and Breuer had employed a similar strategy in their treatment of hysterical patients. In the course of their investigation into the aetiology of hysterical symptoms, Freud and Breuer found that hysterical symptoms would disappear when the accompanying memory was brought into consciousness and “the patient had described that event in the greatest possible detail and had put the affect into words” (emphasis original, Studies on Hysteria 6). During the course of their treatment of Anna O, they found that she got better when she ‘talked herself out,’ and they thus developed what Anna would aptly name the “talking cure.” Pierre Janet may have been the earliest psychotherapist to use narrative in order to treat dissociative patients. In attempting to bridge the cleavage in consciousness he thought to be characteristic of hysteria, Janet used the practice of automatic writing to help hysterical patients “perceive and express ideas they could not account for previously” (The Major Symptoms of Hysteria 282). Janet believed that the process of distracted or automatic writing tapped into the subconscious aspects of personality, and through the act of writing, a bridge between selves could be made, helping personality to become harmonised and integrated. Janet posited a unique connection between memory, dissociation and narration. He stated that memory “is an action: essentially, it is the action of telling a story” (emphasis original, qtd in Howell 57). Janet believed that individuals gain their sense of self by telling a coherent story of their life. He saw memory as a creative act in which a person categorises events and assimilates them into a cognitive scheme. In a

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46 Breuer and Freud shared Janet’s belief that hysteria was the result of a traumatic or overwhelming experience left unassimilated from the memories of the habitual self. Whereas Breuer and Freud thought of this lack of assimilation in terms of repression or an active “forgetting,” Janet thought of it in terms of dissociation or the development of a separate and unique memory cluster, which resulted in the creation of separate personalities.
healthy subject the memory system works harmoniously so that emotions, thoughts and actions are assessed and integrated into a unitary consciousness that is under voluntary control. However, the overwhelming emotions brought on by a traumatic event prevent normal assimilation, so traumatised persons are unable to associate the memory of the event with the rest of their memoires, resulting in dissociation (Howell 56). Janet recognised that traumatised people are unable to tell their stories in words, so by using automatic writing, the patient was able to join the dissociated memory with her other memories and heal the “cleavage” in consciousness.

As critics like Ronald Thomas and Peter Garrett have noted, the absence of a coherent self in Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is reflected in the text’s narrative structure so that “on the level of narration, we find neither unity nor purified duality but a complex weave of voices” (Garrett 67). Although Garrett and Thomas are referring to the overall structure of the text, the same can be said of Henry Jekyll’s autobiographical “Full Statement of the Case.” The account of Jekyll contains many of the elements that are common to the accounts of dissociative patients: an inability to view the self holistically, a refusal to accept alter personalities as part of the ‘I,’ and an unpredictable and unstable use of pronouns. Yet, Jekyll’s writing yields none of the salutary effects endorsed by Janet and Prince; rather, the ‘I’ of Jekyll’s autobiography begins to disintegrate and splinter into pieces that are unrecognisable as either Henry Jekyll or Edward Hyde. Jekyll’s account begins as a typical autobiography might, with the date of his birth and a linear presentation of the events that mark the appearance of his second self and his decline into misery. But unlike a typical autobiography, which seeks to “construct a unitary and autonomous subjectivity” (Danahay,
A Community of One 10), Jekyll’s autobiography stresses the divisions within his self. It is interesting to note that Jekyll speaks of a “trench” that severs the elements which make up the complex subjective whole. Although he ascribes a moral dimension to these elements – “those provinces of good and ill” (78) – his use of the word “trench” points to Janet’s theories of dissociation and hysteria as a “cleavage” in the self, the result of which is the formation of different personality clusters/personalities. Unlike most dissociative patients, Jekyll is aware, to borrow a phrase from Prince, that his is “a house divided against itself” (187) and seeks to make the divide permanent by “hous[ing]” each personality “in [a] separate identity[y],” to “dissociat[e]” the “continuously struggling” “polar twins” that were “bound together – in the agonised womb of consciousness” (Stevenson 79). This act of self-division by chemical means results in the projection of Hyde from psychic elements into bodily form, albeit this is a body he still shares with Jekyll, despite its modifications in stature. As Gish highlights, “although it may seem that Hyde’s embodiment in a smaller, younger, paler, and frightening self places it in a separate category as demonic or simply hallucinatory, many multiples experience their bodies in very different ways—in size, age, gender and physical ability” (5). Sally, for example, presents herself as younger than Miss Beauchamp, and B IV (or “the Idiot,” as Prince calls her) experiences herself as healthier than Miss Beauchamp and in many ways more mature. And Prince notes throughout the text that the various personalities demonstrate different mannerisms, postures, facial expressions and tones of voice to such an extent that he can determine who he is dealing with based on appearance alone.
As a tradition, autobiography rests on an assumption that the speaking and writing subject is a “sovereign subject,” an individual subject that is self-governed and self-controlled (Danahay, A Community of One 12). Sidonie Smith claims that Western autobiography flourished because of the notion that there is a unified and unique ‘self’ to represent and rests upon the “conviction that ‘I,’ the speaking subject, has a single, stable referent” (18). Yet, as Thomas notes, “[t]he act of self narration is revealed in Jekyll and Hyde to be a ritual act of self-estrangement rather than the act of self-discovery that it purports to be in the case of a traditional autobiographical novel” (73). Thomas reads the end of The Strange Case as the “fragmenting of the self into distinct pieces with distinct voices” rather than “the bringing together of those pieces into some unified character who speaks with a single voice” (73). But what makes Jekyll’s narrative so intriguing in the context of dissociation studies is that we are not dealing with “distinct pieces with distinct voices”; rather, the voices tend to bleed into one another so that it becomes difficult to attribute any particular narrative to any particular speaker. Jekyll begins his “Statement” grounded in the seeming stability of the first person pronoun, viewing Hyde as an element of himself: “There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new ... I felt younger, lighter, happier in body” (Stevenson 80). Jekyll’s claims that “I knew myself” (80) and “This, too, was myself” (81) shortly give way to the use of “it” rather than “he” or “I,” the use of third-person distance in references to “Henry Jekyll” and “Edward Hyde,” and claims such as “He, I say – I cannot say, I” (90) in the descriptions of Hyde’s actions. Yet, when one might expect Jekyll to distance himself the most from Hyde – that is in his description of the murder of Carew – Jekyll narrates the event from the first-person
perspective: “Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow” (Stevenson 87). These permutations of ‘I,’ ‘he,’ ‘it,’ ‘Henry Jekyll’ and ‘Edward Hyde’ are unpredictable, even for a subject prone to dissociations of personality. Even when Sally is asked to write an autobiography of her experience as a secondary self, she restricts her pronouns to ‘she’ and ‘I.’

It is perhaps telling that Lanyon’s command to the hysterical Hyde is “compose yourself”47 (Stevenson 75). Such a command indicates the importance of coherence in self-representation and points to the treatment used by Janet in his work with hysterical patients. Janet maintained that hysteria is “a malady of the personal synthesis,” an inability of the subject to “compose” herself and tell a coherent story of her identity (emphasis original, Major Symptoms of Hysteria 332). Thus, the cure for this malady is to integrate the multiple sensations, perceptions, and memories which comprise one’s own experience and personality into a unified ‘I’. Kirmayer argues that “cultures differ in their tolerance for gaps in narratives, unmotivated events, happenings attributed to extrinsic agencies, and the radical shifts in perspective that accompany shifts in states of mind” (106-107). In the Western world, in order to achieve a “socially credible personhood,” dissociative gaps and contradictory states of self must be joined together by a narrative of self-continuity (Kirmayer 104). It would seem that Jekyll’s “Statement” is an attempt to “compose” himself and to construct the type of narrative demanded of him, not only as confession for his crimes but as explanation for his state of being. The pronominal shifting and uncertainty is

47 See Castricano “Much Ado about Handwriting” (2006) for more on the significance of this phrase.
perhaps to be expected, given the extent to which his two personalities take on lives of their own. What is perplexing about Jekyll’s “statement” is the strange ‘other’ who emerges at the end of his narrative. As he prepares to lay down his pen and seal up his confessions, Jekyll remarks “this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself” (Stevenson 93). If this is, as Jekyll claims, the moment where “the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll” is brought to “an end,” is this other Hyde, who Jekyll claims not to care about any longer? If it is Hyde, how is it that Jekyll comes to dissociate himself entirely from the figure who he once identified as “myself” (81)? Could it be that we are dealing with the development of a third personality, “an indeterminate figure who is neither” Jekyll nor Hyde (Garrett 63), a character who claims to reside “Between these two” (Stevenson 85)? It is this ambiguity that leads to Garrett to ask: “Who writes ‘Henry Jekyll’s Statement’?” (63).

On the one hand, it seems that we are dealing with the strange self that emerges in the act of narrating or writing one’s story. Garret claims that the process of self-narration enacted in autobiography creates a split, rather than unified subject, a “doubling of the subject that is always produced by telling one’s story” (Garrett 63). In the same vein, Georges Gusdorf has said that “the image [produced in writing] is another ‘myself,’ a double of my being but more fragile and vulnerable, invested with a sacred character that makes it at once fascinating and frightening” (qtd. in Danahay, A Community of One 10). Yet, we are already dealing with a double in Jekyll’s narrative, the sometimes ‘I’ and sometimes ‘he’ of Edward Hyde. Prince notes that in response to the pressure of dealing with two disparate and seemingly incongruous personalities, Miss Beauchamp develops a third state, B III,
which was eventually followed by B IV. Until the emergence of B IV, Prince claims that the case of “who is the Real Miss Beauchamp” had been quite unproblematic: “the psychological problem had been comparatively simply. Two persons had been contending for the mastery of life ... but there had been no doubt about which was the Real Miss Beauchamp” (171). However, this “third person [who] came upon the scene; one whom we had never met before,” brought with her “new problems to be solved, and raised doubts about the identity and origin of our old friend,” Miss Beauchamp (Prince 171). We as readers are left feeling perplexed, much like Dr. Prince, about with whom we are engaging when this seemingly new persona emerges in Jekyll’s narrative.

2.3 Multiplicity and Masculinity

The multiple selves that emerge in Jekyll’s narrative can perhaps be attributed to the “unmanning” quality of his experiences. Through its focus on aging professionals and lonely bachelors, the story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde “is a story about communities of men” (Showalter, Sexual Anarchy 69), bourgeois men, who, according to Andrew Smith, are represented “in a state of terminal decline” (37). This decline is represented, in part, in the failed attempt of Henry Jekyll to craft an autobiography. In his study of male autobiography in the nineteenth century, Martin Danahay illustrates how patriarchy, in its denial or repression of the feminine, demands that the male autobiographer create “a self-sufficient and autonomous self” in the act of writing or narration (A Community of One 15). For Danahay, Jekyll’s inability to say ‘I’ is a case of self-denial and a refusal to acknowledge, rather than an inability to explain, his connection with the self-centered Hyde (A Community of One 138). However, this inability to say ‘I’ also indicates that Jekyll’s position as
patriarchal subject has been compromised, for as Sidonie Smith and Luce Irigaray argue, the first-person pronoun is *masculine*. Smith, for example, argues that the autobiographical ‘I’ of a text traditionally marks it as a masculine creation (1). Similarly, in her work on psycho-linguistics, Luce Irigaray posits that identity is enacted at least partly in self-positioning in language. In examining the difference between the “normal” (i.e. non-pathological) speech of men and that of women, Irigaray determined that, as Whitford puts it, “it is not a question of biology determining speech, but of identity assumed in language within a particular symbolic system known as patriarchy, and described by Lacan, in which the only possible subject position is masculine” (3). Irigaray argues that men are more likely to take up a subject position in language and to designate themselves as subjects of discourse and action, and thus, the use first person pronoun ‘I’ can be read as “masculine” (Whitford 4). The female subject, due to its multiple and fluid nature, cannot be represented by the masculine ‘I’; thus, the inference might then be drawn that to not be an ‘I’ is to not be a ‘man’ or a ‘subject’ proper. To be a ‘not I’, that is to be multiple and fragmentary as in the case of dissociative conditions, is to be abjectly aligned with the feminine. This is made apparent by not only Jekyll’s claim that his experiences are “unmanning” (Stevenson 56) but also in the way that Hyde is characterised as hysterical and overly emotional, traits primarily associated with females. Poole tells Utterson that he once “heard it weeping...like a woman or a lost soul” (66), and Lanyon describes Hyde as “wrestling against the approaches of hysteria” (75) when he encounters Hyde in his home. These descriptions mark Hyde as somewhat of a ‘feminine’ force, if only because he poses a direct challenge to the autonomous and unified self demanded of masculine representation. It is perhaps
significant that Freud notes castration anxiety, which he relates to the fear of losing one’s eyes as presented in E.T.A. Hoffman’s “The Sand-Man,” is one of the most profoundly uncanny experiences a subject can undergo. He claims that “A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one’s eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated” (“The ‘Uncanny’” 230). For the male subject, the fear of losing one’s manhood, and thus symbolically one’s masculinity, is the ultimate uncanny experience. The loss of the ‘eye’ accordingly parallels the loss of the ‘I’ as both terms convey the inherent power of the masculine subject position.

Feminist critics, most notably Julia Kristeva, have interpreted the ‘not-I’ as the experience of the infant prior to its development as a unique and agentic subject. In Revolution in Poetic Language Kristeva develops her idea of the semiotic, which she believes is closely tied to the infantile pre-Oedipal stage referred to in psychoanalysis or the Lacanian pre-mirror stage in which the child does not distinguish itself as a being separate from its mother. For Kristeva, the semiotic is a state tied to the emotions and instincts, based in the prosodic experience of language before an understanding of the denotative meaning of words develops. Kristeva characterises this as a ‘feminine’ state that opposes the symbolic order (based on the work of Lacan), which is predicated upon the subject’s entrance into the world of linguistic communication, knowledge of ideological conventions and acceptance of the law (acceptance of the social order). In Does The Woman Exist?: From Freud’s Hysteric to Lacan’s Feminine Paul Verhaeghe argues that according to Lacan, subjectivity requires language, and language is masculine as it is grounded in the universal signifier of the Phallus. As Stacey Keltner puts it, the symbolic order “refers primarily to the
social and linguistic realm of law that legislates the subject’s relations to itself, others, and the socio-historical world” (24). This is the world of the male subject, who gains entrance via the Name-of-the-Father and the acceptance of the laws and restrictions that regulate desire and the rules of communication (denotative language, rules of grammar, etc). In *Powers of Horror* (1982) Kristeva discusses the ways in which the symbolic order creates a system of exclusion; these prohibitions act “as a means of separating out the human from the non-human and the fully constituted subject from the partially formed subject” (Creed 8). In this paradigm, the fully constituted subject must be unified and hermetic. Thus, the dissociative subject, the ‘not-I’, is the Other to the patriarchal subject, symbolically rendered feminine and non-human.

Although Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is most often read as a tale of duality and duplicity in man, it is a text in which images of multiplicity abound. Peter Garrett claims that “Good and evil, higher and lower, spirit and matter, body and soul: such are the opposites from which Jekyll’s philosophical discourse is constructed, and which for many readers have determined the meaning of the whole tale” (60). These dualities, however, are destabilised by the presence of multiplicity in the text. We have multiple narrators, multiple perspectives and multiple letters; for example, Utterson is given an envelope in which three smaller envelopes are found, each one explaining another aspect of the case of Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde. There is the image of the fractured key, broken into pieces “much as if a man had stamped on it” (Stevenson 68). Jill Matus writes, “the image of the fractured key gives way to further images of breakdown and refraction” (175), for as Utterson and Poole force their way into Jekyll’s cabinet, they find a cheval glass, “into whose depths they
looked with an involuntary horror...the fire sparkling in a hundred repetitions along the glazed front of the presses, and their own pale and fearful countenances stooping to look in” (Stevenson 68). The mirror is said “to show them nothing” but their own reflections, significantly reflected alongside the image of the “fire sparkling in a hundred repetitions” (68). Matus claims, “The glass, which shows nothing but reflection, a multiplication of images, seems to presage the fracturing and multiplication of self that they not yet understand as the key to Jekyll’s case” (175). Matus reads the mirror as a symbol for Jekyll himself. Poole’s statement that “This glass has seen some strange things” is qualified by Utterson’s odd comment: “surely none stranger than itself” (Stevenson 68). For Matus, “the glass turns out to stand for Jekyll himself, who, like the mirror, has not only seen strange things, but is himself the strangest of them” (176). Interestingly, as Matus notes, the cheval glass was also referred to as “the Psyche”: “According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it was so called because of Raphael’s full-length painting of the fabled Psyche” (176). Psyche, of course, is a term often used interchangeably with words like “mind,” “soul” and “spirit,” an association not entirely lost by the late nineteenth century. The word psychology is derived from the Greek word “soul discourse,” and many early psychologists believed that they were studying the movements and nature of the soul when they were studying the mind. Throughout the nineteenth century there is often a metaphysical or supernatural component to some theories of mind and studies of psychology, such as Frederick Myers’s quest to prove the survival of the human personality after death. The term “psyche,” however, also reflects the myth of Psyche, in which “duality or multiplicity replaces ‘unity’
or ‘oneness’ as the assumed (and privileged)” state of being (emphasis original, Williams 149).

The myth of Psyche is a tale “of duality and transformation” (Williams 149). As Williams relates it, the story tells the tale of the beautiful Psyche, a girl so lovely that men began to worship her as the “new Aphrodite,” making the goddess jealous and vengeful. Aphrodite demands that Psyche be married to a hideous monster, but her son Eros takes pity on the girl and instead transports her to a mysterious castle to become his wife. Here, she lives a life of luxury, with only one rule to follow: she must never look on Eros, who comes to her at night and makes love to her in the darkness. After her jealous sisters convince her that she is really married to a monster, Psyche breaks this rule and gazes on Eros one night after he has fallen asleep. Eros flees, and Aphrodite once again projects her jealousy onto Psyche, assigning her four impossible tasks to complete or forever be separated from Eros. Psyche must sort a roomful of seeds into their various types in one day, gather golden wool from the fierce rams of the sun, collect water from a high waterfall, and lastly, descend into Hades and return with a box of Persphone’s beauty ointment. Faced with the impossibility of these tasks, Psyche continuously loses hope only to discover the help of others: in the first instance, the ants offer to help her sort the seeds; in the second, a reed whispers to her to collect the wool caught on the thorn-bushes after the rams have gone to river to drink; thirdly, an eagle carries her flask for her to the waterfall; and lastly, a tower tells Psyche how to carry out her task in Hades. In the end, she is reunited with Eros and made immortal by Zeus. Throughout her tasks, Psyche receives the help of others, countering the male myth of independent heroism and instead
demonstrating cooperation with others. For Williams, this is a feminine myth, one of the few in the Western tradition. The myth of Psyche represents multiplicity and cooperation in opposition to unity and “oneness,” an interpretation strengthened by the fact that throughout it all Psyche is pregnant with Eros’s child, making her not “truly one, but truly two.” Thus, “psyche,” which represents the prised (and typically ‘masculine’) qualities of “mind” and “soul” associated with reason, also represents femininity and multiplicity when the term is placed in its original mythological context.

In the nineteenth century the possibility that the human psyche is fragmented and the self is unknowable undermines previous conceptions of the subject as the basis for knowing, understanding and the construction of knowledge. Psychopathology, psychical research, and Darwinian theory all present new models of the self as multiple and unpredictable, one that exceeds the typical Western (and largely Christian) binary oppositions that seek to place their meaning under a unified masculine deity. Whereas duality offered stability in a fixed system of binaries and oppositions (good/evil, dark/light, male/female, etc.), multiplicity presented a view of nature as erratic, disarrayed, unknowable and unfixable. Duplicity fits into previous dualistic models of organising reality brought about by Christianity and patriarchy, which sought to place all things on one side or the other of a binary. Reports of “second selves” and divided states of consciousness often confirmed rather than undermined the system of binaries inherent in these paradigms. As Tymms points out, the secondary personality that appeared in abnormal states of consciousness was usually found to be morally different from the ordinary personality of the waking state of consciousness, for it represented the suppressed impulses of the mind:
“It often happened that the secondary personality was consequently an almost entirely wicked counterpart of the normal self, and seemed to be identical with the bad self which traditionally lurks within, a hostile principle; or, if the bad traits had consciously triumphed in the man’s normal character, the suppressed unconscious self would probably be predominantly good in consequence” (42). In the same vein, John Herdman claims that the ideas which are articulated by means of the literary double are essentially moral and religious, and the psychological perspective cannot properly be separated from this content (x). This merging of an old dualistic ethical system with the phenomena reported by psychologists is brought out in nineteenth-century texts that explore double consciousness, where there is a motif of the hostile second self lurking in the unconscious mind — a threat from within to the guideline of reason and decency in the mind was also a threat to society.

As reports of double consciousness gave way to reports of cases like Vivet’s, multiplicity and multiple personality became topics widely discussed. The possibility of multiple selves had far-reaching consequences for Victorian society, especially for religious questions. As Jill Matus claims, “Duality was less threatening than multiplicity because it could be understood in terms of the animal or corporeal being, on the one hand, and the spiritual being or soul, on the other” (172). Victorians were more comfortable admitting the possibility of duplex personality because it was at least consonant with religious ideology and accepted understandings of man’s duality. As Matus notes, “This discourse of duality is a discourse of superior and inferior parts of the self” (173): oppositions between good and evil, higher and lower, spirit and matter, soul and body, masculine and feminine form the basis of both Christian doctrine and patriarchal society. Multiplicity destabilises these easy
dualisms and opens up a number of uncharted, and possibly uncontrollable, areas of psychic and social life to speculation. In a letter to the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, Thomas Barkworth argued that duplex personality was an allowable concept because the duality was to be understood in terms of animal or corporeal being, and spirit, but the concept of multiple personality was inadmissible because it appeared to assume that “the soul is a mere congeries of different conscious entities” without an “irreducible Ego” (60). Barkworth goes on to complain that the concept of multiple personality “assails the existence of a soul; for it splits up our psychical being into a number of co-ordinate personalities, each of them closely dependent on a special state of the nervous system” (61). This assailment against the existence of a soul was compounded by Darwin’s evolutionary model, which undermined the belief in human exceptionalism. William Paley’s famous “watchmaker analogy” suggested that design implies a designer. In considering the complexity of human beings and the structure of the universe, Paley argued that there simply must be an intelligent designer. As Michael Ruse puts it,

The eye is like a telescope. Telescopes have telescope makers. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that eyes must have eye makers. God! The wonderful thing about [Paley’s] argument is that it does not simply prove God’s existence but points to his having some of the attributes that we traditionally associate with the Christian God. As hands and eyes and teeth and so forth are miracles of engineering, and clearly intended for our use and happiness, the Designer must himself be very clever and concerned about human welfare (not to mention the welfare of the other living
Darwin’s theory of natural selection put forth in *On the Origin of Species* offered another possible explanation for the complexity of human design. Darwin posited that through the process of natural selection, the key mechanism of evolution, genetic traits become more or less pronounced from one generation to the next. As Ruse notes, Darwin did indeed believe that nature had a “designer,” but it was one “who worked at a distance through unbroken law.... The Darwin God can only do the best job possible given unbroken law — that is, given the making of organisms through evolution” (254). Darwin’s model suggested that although nature had a designer, it was a largely absent designer, one that created life and then left it to evolve as it would. Thus, ‘man’ was the product of natural selection, a descendent from a common ancestor shared by other primates, and not a figure created in God’s own image, as the Christian bible had suggested in the account of the Earth’s creation given in Genesis.

Kelly Hurley claims that “Darwinism opened up a space wherein hitherto unthinkable morphic structures could emerge” (7). If nature was no longer the product and ward of the Divine Designer, God, what was there to regulate it? Additionally, Darwinian theory posed a direct threat to the fantasy of the stable Western European male subject by replacing a divinely-structured, male-controlled nature with an erratic and random feminine nature. While nature had long been personified as feminine in the discourse of science, by removing an over-seeing masculine deity from the equation, Darwin’s theory effected “no less than a decentering of the human subject, and the impact of this was much more significant for the male subject, who in nineteenth-century society culturally should embody
dominance, rationality, and power” (Hendershot 97). For the Baconian scientist of previous eras, a personified feminine nature could be controlled by the masculine scientist because of divine intervention. The scientist received his ability to “penetrate” nature from God (Bacon 36). Darwinism, however, placed the male scientist in the position of being created and controlled by a nature still personified as feminine, but one that the rational scientist could no longer control. As Hendershot explains it, in mid-nineteenth-century Britain the Baconian scientist revealing nature’s law is replaced by the Darwinian scientist “perplexed in the face of a nature beyond his understanding: nature is now a force that neither human rationality nor divine inspiration can explain” (97).

According to Alvar Ellegard, the primary objection to Darwinian theory in nineteenth-century British popular and academic presses was related to Darwin’s removal of the supernatural from this theory of descent so that “what critics chiefly objected to was the randomness element in Darwin’s theory” (268). Darwin emphasises the false sense of wholeness that underlies the belief in divine creation: “it is only our natural prejudice, and that arrogance which made our forefathers declare that they were descended from demi-gods, which leads us to demur to this conclusion” (Descent 33). Unlike the Baconian Scientist, the Darwinian scientist does not claim to be able to “penetrate” nature and reveal “her” secrets, yet he is haunted by what Cyndy Hendershot terms a metaphorical association of nature with the feminine. In On the Origin of Species Darwin attempts to move away from the persistent personification of nature in scientific models, stating, “it is difficult to avoid personifying the word Nature; but I mean by Nature, only the aggregate
action and product of many natural laws, and by laws the sequence of events ascertained by us” (109). Nevertheless, Darwin does personify nature as feminine when he claims:

Nature, if I may be allowed to personify the natural preservation or survival of the fittest, cares nothing for appearances, except in so far as they are useful to any being. She can act on every internal organ, on every shade of constitutional difference, on the whole machinery of life. Man selects only for his good: Nature only for that of the being which she tends. Each selected character is fully exercised by her, as is implied by the fact of their selection. (Emphasis added, Origin 111-12)

Darwin presents a nature that, while personified as ‘feminine,’ cannot be mastered by man in the same way that Bacon suggests it can be by the divinely inspired scientist; rather, “he is created by and mastered by her. His attempts at selection are pale imitations of her successes” (Hendershot 99). Within the context of Darwinian science the male attempting to master nature finds himself increasingly controlled by a powerful, random and multiple feminine nature. According to Hendershot, “this rhetorical conception of nature affected male subjects and their perceptions of themselves as masterful and flawless” (99). In moving from a concept of a feminine nature penetrable and controllable by the male scientist to a concept of nature as beyond human understanding and control, Darwin’s theories contributed to the nineteenth-century fear that the sovereignty of the masculine subject was being compromised.

Thus, as this discussion of Darwin’s view of nature suggests, the erratic and the multiple is perceived as threatening in the nineteenth century in part because it is coded as feminine. Multiplicity, as the Pythagorean paradigm of reality suggests, has long been
aligned with “evil” and “femininity” in the Western philosophical tradition. In This Sex Which is Not One Luce Irigaray argues that woman is multiple in nature because her sexuality is manifold; her genitals, unlike the unitary genitals of man, are formed of two lips: “Thus, within herself, she is already two” (24). But she is more than merely two as her erogenous zones are many, located everywhere and anywhere on her body. For Irigaray, woman, who does not have one sex, “cannot subsume it/herself under one term, generic or specific. Body, breasts, pubis, clitoris, labia, vulva, vagina, neck of the uterus, womb ... thwarts...reduction to any proper name, any specific meaning, any concept. According to Irigaray, woman “is not infinite, but nor is she one unit” (emphasis original, “Volume” 55). The result is that woman represents a mystery to a culture “claiming to count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities. She is neither one nor two. Rigorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two. She resists all adequate definition” (This Sex 26). As woman is dispersed into so many places, the pieces do not gather together in anything which she can recognise as her ‘self’ (“Volume” 53). The fragmented and fractured nature of Woman as defined by Irigaray is not recognisable as a subject, either by man or by woman. The Cartesian subject, still upheld as the ideal by most medical and scientific discourse in the nineteenth century, is unified through the act of thinking and a conscious awareness of self (cogito ergo sum). To be a fragmented and fractured subject, is to be aligned with the feminine.

Thus, both Jekyll and Hyde bear traits of the feminine. Jekyll, through his fluid and multiple identity, can no longer identify himself as a comprehensive subject. His inability to say ‘I’ when speaking of himself suggests that more is at stake than his pronominal
confidence; this inability points to a radical collapse of his masculine identity, one that is exacerbated by Hyde’s association with hysteria. According to William Veeder, “despite all his ‘masculine’ traits of preternatural strength and animal agility, Hyde is prey to what the nineteenth century associated primarily with women” (qtd in Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 114). A wide range of criticism has shown that hysteria, given its etymological connotations, is a *female* disorder.48 Within the nineteenth-century imagination, hysteria was one main part of the larger category of dissociative phenomena. Pierre Janet related hysteric symptoms to the automatic activities of the mind, which were demonstrably shown in somnambulism. According to this model, dissociation of psychological functions was fundamental to the mechanism of hysteria; a loss of integration was thought to engender fixed ideas (*idée fixes*) and to lead to the development of a system totally isolated from the whole personality system (Nakatani 1). Janet believed that hysteria was a condition caused by a splitting (*dédoublement*) of the personality that in extreme cases could lead to the subject’s consciousness alternating between two (or more) selves, each of which is unaware of the other. Around the same time that Janet was developing his theory of dissociation, the case of Louis Vivet was drawing attention from the medical community in France. Vivet was a fascinating study as he displayed all of the extreme symptoms of hysteria that were commonplace among the females in Charcot’s ward at the *Salpêtrière*. According to Hacking, “Aside from conditions that explicitly require female reproductive organs, Vivet displayed virtually every type of bodily distress known to the language of hysteria”

(Rewriting the Soul 174). Even though the alleged first case of ‘multiple personality’ involves a male subject, through symptomatic and symbolic alignment, Vivet is a female subject. Thus, in defining hysteria as a dissociative phenomenon, Janet’s theory draws a parallel between femininity, dissociation and multiplicity. Elaine Showalter makes the provocative claim that madness, even when experienced by men, “is metaphorically and symbolically represented as feminine: a female malady” (Female Malady 4). For Showalter women, within Western society’s “dualistic systems of language and representation, are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind” (Female Malady 3-4). The result of this dichotomistic thinking, according to Shoshana Felman, is that men “appear not only as the possessors, but also as the dispensers, of reason, which they can at will mete out to – or take away from – others” (7). In aligning Jekyll/Hyde with multiplicity, irrationality, failed discourse and a gross corporeality, Stevenson’s novella suggests that the horror of Jekyll’s disintegration is rooted in the feminine.

Stevenson’s Strange Case has remained popular with readers and critics alike since its first appearance in the late nineteenth century. This sustained popularity reveals the power of narratives of dissociation. Fin-de-siècle cases of psychic fracturing were intriguing not only to psychologists and clinicians interested in exploring the depths of human consciousness; these cases also provided writers of literature with potent symbols for the representation of identities in flux. As the late-Victorian era saw an ever-changing social landscape, the typical markers of identity – gender, sexuality, class, race, nationality – seemed to be unstable. Discussions of mental, physical and social degeneration presented
the possibility that seemingly “normal” individuals could be concealing madness, perversion
and criminality, a possibility that Stevenson’s text makes explicit in the figure of Henry
Jekyll. In creating the character of Jekyll/Hyde, Stevenson created an icon for the experience
of self-division. It is perhaps no wonder, then, that this poignant representation of inner
turmoil and identity confusion has had such a significant impact on clinical accounts of
dissociative experience.
Chapter 3:

Manliness, Mesmerism and Empire in Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle*

I do not know if one can will evil as powerfully as good. If this were so, should not one fear the effects of animal magnetism in the hands of dishonest men?\(^{49}\)

All subjugate themselves to the magnetizer. They may seem satisfied to be in an apparent state of drowsiness, but his voice or a look or sign from him will draw them out. One cannot help but note in these consistent effects a great power that moves the patients and masters them. The result is that the magnetizer seems to be their absolute ruler.\(^{50}\)

“When my brain says ‘Come!’ to you, you shall cross land or sea to do my bidding.”\(^{51}\)

Scientists and writers in the nineteenth century who were interested in dissociative phenomena like double consciousness and multiple personality were also intrigued by practices such as mesmerism and hypnotism as they too revealed “the porousness of the mental apparatus” (Thurschwell 37) and the instability of personal identity. While spontaneously occurring disturbances in personality such as those of Louis Vivet were disturbing to many Victorians, mesmerism and its associated practices were perceived as downright dreadful for they demonstrated the power that one individual could hold over another’s body and mind. In the dissociative state of mesmeric or hypnotic trance, the subject appeared to be bereft of volition and autonomy, unable to act independently from the will of the mesmerist. Perhaps most unsettling was the accompanying amnesia; upon awakening from the trance, the subject was almost never able to recall the events that had transpired during the trance state. Thus, to many it seemed as though the mesmerist held


absolute power over the mesmerised subject, turning the sovereign individual into a living marionette that acts out the will of the mesmerist.

Mesmerism, originally named animal magnetism, involved placing patients into a trance by making “passes” — motions of the hands — over their face and body. Its creator, Franz Anton Mesmer, maintained that the passes were “a therapeutic application of Newtonian philosophy, using the body’s own magnetic forces,” which he conceived of as an invisible magnetic fluid (Thurschwell 40). Critics who denied the existence of any physical agency renamed the practice *mesmerism*, a pejorative term that called attention to the central and “dangerously intimate” relation between the initiator of the trance and the entranced subject (Thurschwell 40). The practice of inducing trance would be renamed “hypnotism” by Manchester surgeon James Braid in the 1840s. Although Braid was influenced by the work of the magnetists, he believed trance to be a psychological rather than physiological state, and in contradistinction to most magnetists, Braid argued that a subject could not be placed into a trance against his or her will. Braid's *hypnotism* made three important changes to the practice of animal magnetism: it denied the existence of magnetic fluid, removed the “passes” and the erotic undertones of their application to the patient, and undermined the “personal relationship between mesmerist and subject explicit in the claim that one person’s body, mind or will impinged on another’s” (Thurschwell 41). Braid was ultimately successful in his attempts to distinguish hypnotism from mesmerism, demonstrated by its use as an investigative tool and therapeutic aid by some of the leading
physicians and psychologists of the nineteenth century\textsuperscript{52} as well as the term’s continued popularity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Mesmerism and its associated practices like hypnotism were often viewed with fear or disgust because of the perceived challenges they posed to the maintenance of individual and professional boundaries. The loss of individual identity is a recurring theme in countless discussions of mesmerism and hypnotism. As Sarah Gracombe notes, for many Victorians mesmerism’s most disturbing quality was the way that it troubled the notion of a stable, unified identity by suggesting that there were hidden, unconscious mental regions “that might contradict one’s own sense of self, a Mr. Hyde inside every sober, respectable Dr. Jekyll” (100). Even more disturbing, however, was the possibility that the mind might respond “to someone else’s will” (emphasis original, Gracombe 100). Elizabeth Barrett, for example, claimed that she shrank from “the idea of subjecting [her] will as an individual to the will of another” because this meant, as she states, “merging my identity (in some strange way which makes my blood creep to think of)” into that of someone else’s (Qtd. in Winter, \textit{Mesmerized} 238). On one level, it is this erasure of individual boundaries that makes the practice of mesmerism unsettling for, as Julian Wolfreyes notes, mesmerism transgresses boundaries between inner and outer, self and other, proper and improper; this is a practice that “devastate[s]...through the psychic erasure of the boundaries which one imposes on oneself as the necessary limits of self-definition,” whether one is speaking of

\textsuperscript{52} In France, neurologist Jean Martin Charcot, physiologist Charles Richet and psychologists Pierre Janet, Charles Fere, and Alfred Binet are examples of some of the many who used hypnotism in their practices. In England, psychical researchers like Sir William Barrett and Frederick Myers studied hypnotism and trance states. Perhaps most famously, Sigmund Freud used hypnotism early in his career (as outlined in \textit{Studies on Hysteria}), but he later abandoned the practice as he developed the technique of free association and what would be termed “the talking cure.”
class-position, gender-scripts or national identity (Introduction 13). Similarly, David Zimmerman argues that practices like mesmerism and hypnotism “demonstrated that the hegemony of consciousness was tenuous, that under certain conditions other selves and other energies could usurp control of the mind, that there was a mechanism churning just below consciousness that might sometimes be given over to its own uncanny automatism” (62). On another level, mesmerism and hypnotism were perceived as unsettling because of the way these practices transgressed the boundaries between science, philosophy and fiction. Mesmerism’s scientific and medical legitimacy and efficacy was a topic of much debate, and as Wolfreys points out, “the mainstream medical profession sought on occasions to distance itself from a practice which, to some, had the patina of a sideshow entertainment, or otherwise suggested non-rational, non-European mysticism” (Introduction 12). However, in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, hypnotism became a source of heated debate among medical men in Great Britain and Europe as the serious investigations by respected medical professionals like J.M. Charcot, Pierre Janet and others at the Salpêtrière finally sanctioned the study of hypnotic phenomena as a legitimate area of scientific research.

For some, like Charcot, hypnosis offered an investigative tool, one that could be used to designate degeneration and neurosis in the subject. Charcot explicitly related hypnosis to hysteria as he believed that the two states followed the same three stages: catalepsy, lethargy and somnambulism.53 Furthermore, Charcot discovered that hysterics

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53 As Crabtree notes, Charcot described these states in common medical terms, speaking of “reflex movements,” “muscular states” and “sensory alterations” (From Mesmer to Freud 166). Roughly speaking, in
were readily susceptible to hypnotic trance; thus, he concluded that hypnosis was an artificially produced state of hysteria. For others, like Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud in his early work, hypnotism could be used as a therapeutic agent, one that could help the subject uncover traumatic memories and bridge pathological gaps in consciousness. Whether it was in the pages of British medical journals such as the *Lancet* or the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* or popular fiction like Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897) and George Du Maruier’s enormously successful *Trilby* (1894), hypnotism and mesmerism, often interchangeable in the public imagination, “compelled attention” (Thurschwell 37). The medical and scientific legitimacy of such practices was widely debated, and some like Ernest Hart, medical journalist for the *Lancet* and long-time editor of the *BMJ*, warned of the possible social mischief of hypnosis and cautioned against its practice by lay individuals. This chapter and the next will explore concerns like Hart’s, which were not uncommon in the late-nineteenth century. In addition to questions of qualification and legitimacy, hypnotism and mesmerism prompted questions concerning the power of individual will, the nature of influence and control over others, as well as the seat of intellectual authority. These questions were taken up by writers like Marsh and Du Maurier in their fiction in order to explore the changing social fabric of England, particularly contemporary fears and insecurities concerning the state of English culture and the role of Victorian manhood in its maintenance. In these texts the tropes of mesmerism/hypnotism illuminate a complex relationship between the permeability of mind, body, and nation that paradoxically serves to both uphold and undermine the supremacy of the British male subject. This chapter will

the cataleptic state the subject would respond to physical suggestions, in the lethargic state, she would respond to none, and in the somnambulistic state, the subject was highly suggestive.
briefly outline the history of such practices and their reception in England before turning to a discussion of Marsh’s Gothic tale of mesmerism – *The Beetle*.

### 3.1 Mesmerism, Hypnotism and the Question of Self-Control

Developed by Franz Anton Mesmer in the late eighteenth century, the theory and practice of animal magnetism grew out of Mesmer’s earlier work with mineral magnetism and animal gravity, which he understood as the generalised influence of celestial bodies on the human organism. In his dissertation, titled *Physical-Medical Treatise on the Influence of the Planets* (1766), Mesmer sought to prove that the stars have an influence on human bodies and disease as well as contribute to the harmonisation between the astral and the human planes. The degree of this influence varied depending on the subject’s “sex, age, temperament, and various other characteristics, etc.” (Mesmer, *On the Influence of the Planets* 20). In proving the existence of this invisible influence, Mesmer hoped to furnish medical science with “either a cause or a remedy to many a sickness” (*On the Influence of the Planets* 20). Later, in 1774 when Mesmer began to experiment with magnets in his medical practice, he would rename “animal gravity” “animal magnetism” and would label this invisible influence “magnetic fluid”: an all-penetrating imperceptible fluid thought to be the foundation of life itself as well as the agent by which organic bodies carry out their “vital functions” (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 4). Mesmer quickly abandoned the use of

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magnets\textsuperscript{55} and insisted that the most important magnet was in fact the human body, making the practitioner the central force in the magnetic experiment.

In 1778 Mesmer established his practice in Paris,\textsuperscript{56} which became well known to members of both the upper and lower classes. His salon was “flooded by the ill and the curious” (Crabtree, \textit{From Mesmer to Freud} 12). Mesmer’s clinic stood out in part because it “bore little resemblance to the normally austere décor of eighteenth-century clinics” (Tatar 14). In fact, his clinic was steeped in mystery and enchantment. Mesmer, with his iron wand and lilac taffeta robe, acted like a wizard, moving amongst the patients and fixing them with his magnetic stare. The room where Mesmer held his treatments was kept dark and silent, except for the specially-chosen soft music. According to Robert Darnton, “Heavy carpets, weird, astrological wall-decorations, and drawn curtains shut [Mesmer’s clinic] off from the outside world and muffled the occasional words, screams, and bursts of hysterical laughter that broke the habitual heavy silence” (8). The nature of the treatment was extremely intimate, and the relationship between magnetiser and patient was considered central to affecting a cure; physical contact and physical manipulation were part of a personal interaction thought to be essential to magnetic healing. According to Crabtree,

\textsuperscript{55} Mesmer did this in part because he was resentful that Jesuit priest Maximillian Hell was receiving more fame for the experiments than he was. Mesmer had based his experiments with magnets on the work of Hell, who had also made the magnets Mesmer used.

\textsuperscript{56} Mesmer was forced to leave his native Austria after a commission appointed to investigate his procedures reached the conclusion that animal magnetism “constituted a public menace and demanded that the doctor put an end to his fraudulent practice” (Tatar 11). This decision was based on both the Austrian medical community’s reluctance to accept the tenets of animal magnetism as scientific truth and public controversy surrounding the alleged inordinately strong attachment to Mesmer by one of his students, an eighteen-year-old blind musical prodigy, Maria Theresa Paradis.
Such attention involved an intricate system of magnetic “passes,” measured movements of the hands of the magnetizer over the body of the patient. Typically ... Mesmer would sit facing the patient, knee against knee and foot against foot, to establish “harmony.” While fixing the patient with his eyes, Mesmer would place the fingers of one hand on the stomach and make parabolic movements over that area with the fingers of the other hand. While this was happening, the patient would often experience feelings of cold, heat, or pleasure from the passes. (From Mesmer to Freud 14)

Mesmer’s treatments were immensely popular with the public in France, but the orthodox medical community remained sceptical. Just as in Vienna, Mesmer sought after the recognition of the medical and scientific communities in Paris; he approached both the Academy of Sciences and The Society of Medicine, but neither group was wholly convinced of the veracity of animal magnetism and the existence of magnetic fluid.

The popularity of Mesmer’s treatments, the lack of official approval of his treatments, and the publication of Mesmer’s Mémoire sur le découverte du magnétisme animal (1779) and Charles D’Eslon’s Observations sur le magnétisme animal (1780), which strongly supported Mesmer, worked together to cause “a storm of controversy in the public press” (Crabtree From Mesmer to Freud 20). D’Eslon was physician to the comte d’Artois and a respected member of the Faculty of Medicine who became interested in animal magnetism because of the speedy and powerful results of the treatment. As D’Elsone became independently established as a practitioner of animal magnetism, he increased his efforts to gain official governmental recognition for animal magnetism. He wrote to the
government in early 1784 calling for the formation of an official commission to investigate animal magnetism. D’Eslon’s request was favourably received, and as Crabtree notes, “no doubt his personal connection with the aristocracy partly accounted for this response” (From Mesmer to Freud 23). There was also, however, a growing need identified in governmental circles that the controversial matter of animal magnetism should be settled once and for all. The king thus appointed a commission to determine the scientific status of animal magnetism, which consisted of Benjamin Franklin (chair), J.B. Le Roy, A.L. Lavoisier, J.S. Bailly (secretary), and four members from the Faculty of Medicine. The committee members were to investigate and the faculty members were to comment on the results. Less than a month later, the king appointed a second commission, comprised of members of the Royal Society of Medicine, in order to determine the usefulness of animal magnetism in the treatment of illness. All investigation relied on D’Eslon as Mesmer refused to participate. Later, Mesmer would declare that the findings were invalid as D’Eslon had neither the true doctrine nor the correct technique of animal magnetism. The Franklin Commission (commonly thought to be the more prestigious of the two) concluded that the apparent effects of animal magnetism were due to “imagination and imitation” (From Mesmer to Freud 24), consequently denying the existence of the magnetic fluid.

Thus, when animal magnetism came to England in the 1830s, it had already been established as a controversial and enigmatic practice. According to Winter, “Although mesmerism had made sporadic visits to Britain before the 1830s, it was in that decade that mesmerism’s British career began in earnest, with a series of experiments that consumed

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57 For more on the famous rift between D’Eslon and Mesmer, see Crabtree From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993).
the attention of London in the spring of 1838” (Mesmerized 5). Due in part to the notoriety of its creator and in part to the dismissal of the existence of magnetic fluid, animal magnetism came to be pejoratively dubbed *mesmerism*. As the practice spread rapidly through Europe, both “animal magnetism” and “mesmerism” came to refer to a wide range of different techniques, “each claiming to give one person the power to affect another mind or body” (Winter, Mesmerized 2). Its arrival in England was marked by anxiety, debate and scepticism. In the fall of 1837 a journalist for the monthly *Mirror* reported a bizarre experiment in which the subject, a British gentleman, suffered a distressing loss of individual will. The reporter witnessed a foreign man “of very prepossessing appearance, with fine, dark, intelligent eyes” entrance the British gentleman by making gentle passes with his hands. When the experimenter ordered the subject to follow him, the man “yielded to the influence” and cried to be held back “or he must follow, as if he were dragged by a strong chain!” The struggle appeared to make the subject “considerably excited” at his helpless situation, requiring the experiment to end (qtd. in Winter, Mesmerized 44). The experimenter was the ‘Baron’ Charles Dupotet de Sennevoy, a figure of some prestige in France who had travelled to London to demonstrate the power of animal magnetism just as London doctors were debating the nature of the practice. Dupotet claimed to possess an unusual power to influence people and to control their actions against their will, stating that he was able to “penetrate” others with his “vital principle” (Winter, Mesmerized 44). Dupotet was the first – and perhaps most influential – of a series of traveling mesmerists demonstrating their strange powers. In the 1830s and 1840s a number of “exotic and, some
claimed, dangerous” lecturers on the topic of mesmerism began to appear in London. As Winter tells it,

One of them – a small, spare man inexplicably missing his right thumb – was said to draw mysterious powers from this distinguishing physical feature. Another with his “piercing eyes,” flowing mustaches, and long beard, caused women on Regent Street to “cover their faces and cry out” when they saw him. Their physical appearance drew comment not merely because they stood out in a crowd, but also because of the power they claimed for themselves: their bodies demonstrated how one person could “penetrate” another with his “vital principle.” *(Mesmerized 21)*

Even before they arrived, mesmerists were portrayed as seductive “foreign scoundrels,” and novels like Isabella Frances Romer’s *Sturmer: a Tale of Mesmerism* (1841) described dark and sometimes evil magnetisers using their supernatural powers to prey on vulnerable girls or even to kill. Romer’s sketch of mesmerism was all the more powerful because she claimed that the stories were based on “only what she has witnessed” (6). Winter claims that there was talk of magnetic “orgies” in the Paris hospitals and of “predatory magnetizers deflowering virginal patients” *(Mesmerized 21)*. One commentator even went so far as to claim that “voracious Continental mesmerists were driven across the Channel in the search of ‘fresh food’ to feed their ‘libidinous propensities’” *(Winter, Mesmerized 21)*.

The first mesmerists and the powers they claimed to possess became powerful stimuli to the British public imagination and, as this chapter and the next will demonstrate, mesmeric practice came to symbolically stand-in for a number of social issues ranging from the nature of gender roles to questions of national identity to the strength of individual character.
By the late-nineteenth century, mesmerism had been largely stigmatised as an indecent, if not a criminal, practice. From the first accounts of Mesmer’s treatments it was the risk to women at the hands of male charlatans that was the key anxiety. The first official report on Mesmerism in 1784 had a private addendum in which the commissioners describe the intimacy involved in the magnetic procedure and express their concern about “possible abuses” that may occur when women are magnetised by men in private (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 28). Crabtree claims that the members of the Franklin Commission were astonished by the spectacle of the ‘crises’ undergone by patients. One member wrote: “All subjugate themselves to the magnetizer...one cannot help but note in these consistent effects a great power that moves the patients and masters them. The result is that the magnetizer seems to be their absolute ruler” (qtd. in Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 25). If such views gave mesmerism the stigma of impropriety, its associations with crime and the criminal “made it not only improper but also significantly nefarious” (Willis and Wynne 9). Stories of mesmerism prompted much social anxiety as some warned that such practice might produce a wave of criminal activity. According to Roger Luckhurst, many believed that “women might be the passive and amnesic victims of hypnotic seducers; others might find themselves acting in trance or post-hypnotic suggestion to rob, murder or rape” (*The Invention of Telepathy* 152). After all, as Willis and Wynne point out, “if mesmerizers could suggest a variety of activities to their powerless subjects who could deny the possibility that some of these suggestions might involve illegal action” (9). Indeed,

[T]he legal symbolism of mesmerism had always suggested a phenomenon on trial, always already criminalized. Mesmeric exhibitions were often attended by a select
group of observers acting as judges and jury for the events laid out before them. Mesmerism’s defenders – perhaps defendants – often used personal testimony as evidence of the truth of mesmerism. The language and practice of the courtroom, then, thoroughly pervades the discourse and performance of mesmerism, combining with its “politically transgressive” nature\textsuperscript{58} to suggest a tacit connection with crime and the criminal. (Willis and Wynne 9)

Mesmerism and hypnotism retained their “criminal” character into the fin-de-siècle. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, British medical minds remained divided over the question of hypnotism’s medical efficacy as a practice. What most did agree upon, however, was that hypnotism should remain the unique purview of medical men. According to Mary Elizabeth Leighton, Ernest Hart maintained that the hypnotic state was potentially dangerous because of the subject’s vulnerability to suggestion, which was particularly concerning when hypnosis was conducted by unqualified or criminally minded practitioners (115).

The potentially dangerous nature of hypnotic suggestibility and the vulnerability of the hypnotised subject were to become the central focus of many late-nineteenth-century discussions of the practice. As Willis and Wynne point out, although mesmeric practices had long been “tarnished by accusations of fakery, villainy and corruption,” the second half of the nineteenth century “was to bring these various charges to a focus around the power relationship between mesmerizer and subject” (9). The intense connection between magnetiser and magnetised was one of the most striking features of animal magnetism. The

\textsuperscript{58} Robert Darnton’s study of mesmerism, Mesmerism and the End of Enlightenment in France (1970), suggests that mesmerism had an important impact on social and political thinkers during the two decades preceding the French Revolution. He argues that because Mesmer’s salon mixed social classes and genders, often placing the diverse subjects on equal footing, it was perceived as radical, anti-elite and even dangerous by some in late-eighteenth-century France.
marquis de Puységur noted that there seems to be a direct connection between the nervous systems of the magnetiser and the magnetised subject, which he labelled “rapport.” Puységur believed that the magnetiser could cause the magnetised to perform specific actions by a simple act of will: “Just as our body executes our will (as when I will my hand to pick up a book), when the magnetizer wills something, the magnetized person executes that command” (qtd. in Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 41). In Puységur’s view, “rapport causes the somnambulist to respond to and obey only the magnetizer” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 41). The fear of abuse of the rapport was present from the beginning. Puységur himself worried that the dependency of the subject might become a burden to the magnetiser or that the magnetiser might abuse his power.

One of the more remarkable features of the rapport was what James Braid would come to term suggestibility. As Braid began to develop his theory of hypnotism, he was especially interested in discovering how physiological functioning could be altered by voluntary and involuntary mental efforts, and he eventually moved on to consider the crucial role of suggestion and imagination in control of the body (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 160). In 1851 Braid claimed that the state of hypnosis “is essentially one of mental abstraction or concentration of attention, in which the powers of the mind are engrossed, if not entirely absorbed, with a single idea or train of thought, and concurrently rendered unconscious of, or indifferently conscious to, all other ideas or impressions” (Electro-Biological Phenomena 6). According to Crabtree, “Recognizing the power of mind over body and ideas over physiological functioning, Braid drew attention to the presence of ‘dominant ideas’ in the mind which, whether one is aware of them or not, powerfully affect one’s
psychological and physiological state” (*From Mesmer to Freud* 161). Using this notion of dominant or fixed ideas, Braid developed his theory of suggestion: a method by which ideas could be implanted in the subject’s mind. These ideas could draw attention to or away from certain behaviours and conditions of the subject, or, as Braid puts it, certain ideas could be fixed “strongly and involuntarily in the mind of the patient, which thereby act as stimulants, or as sedatives, according to the purport of the expectant ideas, and the direction of the current of thought in the mind of the patient, either drawing it to, or withdrawing it from, particular organs or functions” (*Hypnotic Therapeutics* 8). These ideas could be implanted by speaking to the subject and influencing his or her thoughts or by creating physical impressions, such as applying pressure, contact or friction over an organ or area of the body that is affected by illness or disorder. Braid based this theory on the premise that when attention is directed in a certain way, bodily changes occur, “such as milk flowing in a mother at the sight of her child, saliva produced on viewing or smelling tasty food, tears coming from grief, blushing from shame, or palpitations from fear” (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 161). Thus, since hypnotism focuses attention to an extraordinary degree, and physical changes can occur from mental concentration, hypnotism could be used to improve the physical and psychological health of the subject. In *Hypnotic Therapeutics* (1853), Braid wrote:

> Since it cannot be doubted that the soul and the body can mutually act and react upon each other, it should follow, as a natural consequence, that if we can attain to any mode of intensifying the mental power, we should thus realise, in a corresponding degree, greater control over physical action. Now this is precisely
what my processes do – they create no new faculties; but they give us greater control over the natural functions than we possess during the ordinary waking condition and particularly in intensifying mental influence, or the power of the mind of the patient over his own physical functions; and of a fixed dominant idea and physical state of the organs over the other faculties of the mind during the dominance of such fixed ideas. (Emphasis original, 12)

Braid’s notion of fixed dominant ideas that control the body “led directly to a method of applying hypnotism in the amelioration or even cure of physical and mental illnesses. It involved using suggestion to create new fixed ideas of a curative nature” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 162). However, it also presented the converse possibility that harmful ideas could be implanted, reflected in the fear that subjects could be made to commit crimes or forget assaults made against them by their magnetist or hypnotist. The notion of suggestion also raised questions regarding the nature of the relationship between magnetiser and magnetised and the level of power that the mesmerist held over the entranced subject.

The precise nature of the relationship between mesmerist and mesmerised was extensively debated. Since the subject seemed to be completely under the control of the mesmerist, experiments with mesmerism became sites for competing assertions on the nature of power and authority over others. There were often pronounced class and gender differences between mesmerist and subject, and Winter claims that the ideal mesmeric subject was both lower-class and female because the “best kind of experimental subject ...would be the most animal- or machine-like” (Mesmerized 62). The poor and
disenfranchised were model subjects as middle-class patients brought with them “an undesirable obtrusion of their own sense of identity, freedom of action, and speech into the experimental setting... [and] their own expectations [would lead] them to censor what they reported” (Mesmerized 62). As the magnetiser was most often male and the magnetised subject most often female, the roles of the mesmerist and somnambulist had certain gender associations that seemed to confirm traditional stereotypes of men and women. The notion of the mesmerist’s dominating mind and powers of psychic penetration corresponds to conventional images of masculinity, illustrated by Dupotet’s claim he could “penetrate” another with his mind or spirit. By contrast, the person being magnetised assumes a role often considered passive and submissive, therefore feminine. In his Manuel pratique de magnétisme animal (1843), Alphonse Teste suggested that women are more likely to be mesmerised due to their dependent nature,59 and in 1784 Jean Sylvain Bailly claimed that men exercise “natural empire” over women, which is demonstrated by the fact that it is “always men who magnetize women,” effectively establishing the gender dynamics of the magnetic relationship (Qtd. in Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 92). Thus, a female mesmerist, such as the Woman of Songs in Marsh’s The Beetle or Miss Penclosa in Conan Doyle’s “The Parasite,” inverts societal norms of women’s weaker and dependent nature. According to Allison Winter, the few women mesmerists there were in the nineteenth century refrained from giving public demonstrations as “the role of mesmerist (as opposed to that of subject) was too overt a display of power” (Mesmerized 138). They did, however, work privately. Harriet Martineau had two female mesmerists, one of whom was her

servant. In *Letters on Mesmerism* (1845) she recounts how she instructed her maid to mesmerise her: “my maid did for me whatever, under my own instruction, good-will and affection could do” (11). However, Martineau desired “an educated person, so familiar with the practice of Mesmerism as to be able to keep a steady eye on the end” (11). She eventually found this in the widow of a clergyman. Although the case of Martineau demonstrates that mesmerism had the potential to destabilise existing power relations, the reverse was more often true. Adam Crabtree cites one nineteenth-century reviewer of mesmerism, A. Lombard, as claiming that women should not magnetise people as “they have a constitution more frail than [men’s], and magnetism, in lavishing nervous fluid, very much exhausts them and leaves them no energy for fulfilling their sacred duties,” such as pregnancy and nursing, which “require all the strength nature gives them” (*From Mesmer to Freud* 97). Misogynistic ideas, like those of Teste and Lombard, permeate much of the literature on mesmerism.

Much like women and members of the lower-class, colonial subjects, in the eyes of many Victorians, were also appropriate subjects for mesmerism as they were perceived as being “naturally subject to the exercise of another’s power” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 211). Winter claims that some associated the vulnerability of the mesmeric subject with colonial subservience and linked the capacity to fall “under the influence” of mesmerism to social or cultural primitiveness. For example, physician James Esdaile believed there was a link between colonial subservience and susceptibility to trance based on his practice of mesmerism in India. On the one hand, Esdaile used mesmerism as an anesthetic to alleviate pain during surgery. On the other hand, Esdaile used mesmerism as means of reinforcing
the status quo and demonstrating the superiority of the English over Indians. Esdaile argued that a determining factor in a subject’s responsiveness to trance was related to their “closeness to” or “distance from” the natural order so that people who succumb most easily to mesmeric influence are closer to a “state of nature” and thus less civilised. In The Introduction of Mesmerism (With the Sanction of the Government) into The Public Hospitals of India (1856), Esdaile compares Eastern subjects to “monkeys” and claims that Indian and African constitutions are more susceptible to the influence of mesmerism. He continues, “if Europeans cannot be so readily subdued, it is only a question of degree..., and the depressing influence of disease will be found to reduce them very often to the impressionable condition of the nervous system so common among the Eastern nations” (7). In his first text on mesmerism, Mesmerism in India and Its Practical Application in Surgery and Medicine (1846), Esdaile argues that the sick are the “proper subjects” for mesmerism, and as a group, “the people of [India] seem to be peculiarly sensitive to mesmeric power,” a trait he attributes to the “depressed state” of their nervous systems:

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. Their mental constitution also favours us; we have none of the morbid irritability of nerves, and the mental impatience of the civilized man, to contend against; both of which resist and neutralise the efforts of nature. The

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60 Esdaile also claims that the human constitution is “radically the same all over the world” (7); however, he emphasises that Europeans in a state of health are less susceptible to mesmeric influence than other ethnic groups.
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. (27)

Winter claims that Esdaile’s model “implied a cultural scale,” in which one’s place was assigned based on his or her “degree of knowledge, and of control over [his or her] own intellect” (Mesmerized 204). “Savages,” according to Esdaile, lacked intellectual sophistication and the capacity for self-control, making them ideal subjects for dissociogenic practices.

Self-control, will-power, and individual volition are repeated themes in discussions of dissociogenic procedures, such as mesmerism. As Winter’s study makes clear, “the power of self-control...was the decisive phenomenon in the mesmeric experiment” as the power of self-control was a sign of “moral and intellectual authority,” or perhaps even superiority (Mesmerized 1). Puységur, for example, believed that thought controls all the actions of the human and can traverse space so that thought and the power of will (understood as desire) determines where animal magnetism should operate in the body. Actions of the will, for Puységur, had the capacity to produce phenomena which “have the air of the miraculous” (Suite des mémoires 13). One such phenomenon is the ability of the magnetiser to convey his will to the subject. Puységur writes,

The ill person in this state [of magnetic somnambulism] enters into a very intimate rapport with his magnetizer, so that one could say he becomes a part of him. So when [the magnetiser] wants to move a magnetic being [a somnambulist] by a
simple act of the will, nothing more astonishing takes place than what happens in our ordinary actions. I will to pick up a piece of paper on the table; I order my arm and my hand to take hold of it. Since the rapport between my principal driving force – my will – and my hand is very intimate, the effect of my will is manifested so quickly that I have no need to reflect on the operation. (*Suite des mémoires* 17)

In the same way that the magnetist can “will” his hand to pick up a piece of paper, he can “will” the magnetised to perform the action since the rapport of animal magnetism “establishes a connection so close and so immediate that the will of the magnetizer is instantly carried out by the magnetized” (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 50). In Puységur’s view, the magnetic rapport makes the somnambulist a functional part of the magnetiser, “much as his hand is a part of him,” so “by a mere act of will the magnetizer can direct the actions of the somnambulist as he chooses” (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 50). The view that the magnetist exerts his will over the subject was widely held to be true. Alison Chapman cites one anonymous British pamphleteer as stating,

> It is a fact perfectly notorious to every experienced Magnetist, that, in certain stages of Somnambulism, the patient is entirely directed by the will of the Magnetiser. In him (the Magnetiser,) for the time, it may be said, without intending any irreverent allusion, that the former “lives, and moves, and has his being”. In these states, the Somnambulist sees and hears his Magnetiser only... Nay, so intimate is this particular rapport, that he (the Somnambulist) penetrates into the most secret thoughts of his Magnetiser, and is, in all things, submissively obedient to the unuttered dictates of his will. (Emphasis original, qtd. in Chapman 334)
Puységur took a positive view of the absolute submission of the somnambulist to the will of the magnetiser. In his treatise *Du magnétisme animal considéré dans ses rapports avec diverses branches de la physique générale* (1820) he claims, “If one touches an ill person without intention or attention, one effects neither good nor bad.... There is only one way always to magnetize usefully: that is strongly and constantly to will the good and the benefit of the ill person, and never to change or vary the will” (153). A few pages later, he asserts: “The compassion which an ill person inspires in me produces a desire or thought to be useful to him. And from the moment I make up my mind to try to help him, his vital principle receives the impression of the action of my will” (159). However, Puységur also expressed his anxiety that some magnetisers might abuse their power over their subjects. In his first text on animal magnetism, *Mémoires pour server à l’histoire et à l’établissement du magnétisme animal* (1784), he wrote, “I do not know if one can will evil as powerfully as good. If this were so, should not one fear the effects of animal magnetism in the hands of dishonest men?” (39).

The fear that animal magnetism could become a powerful force for propagating evil, made clear by Puységur’s comment, comes to inform many of the discussions regarding the state of the subject in the mesmeric relationship. In particular, the possibility that one could be entranced against his or her will and forced to commit criminal or otherwise unscrupulous acts caused much anxiety. In their study *Animal Magnetism* (1892), well known French psychologists Alfred Binet and Charles Fere claim that “many persons are agitated by the idea that a stranger may influence and dispose of them as if they were mere automata” (101). They warn that practices like mesmerism and hypnotism are “certainly
dangerous to human liberty,” claiming that the danger “increases with the repetition of experiments” as “a subject [who] has been frequently hypnotized... may be unconsciously hypnotized in several ways” (Binet and Fere 101). In addition to those who have been frequently hypnotised, those subjects suffering from nervous conditions like hysteria “are distinctly predisposed to the hypnotic sleep” (Binet and Fere 100). They warn, however, that even persons who have never been hypnotized cannot always resist coming under the spell of a hypnotist. They claim that the “naïveté” of the belief that one can resist hypnosis

[R]eminds us of those philosophers who say, “I am free to do this or that, if I wish it.”

Everything depends on whether the subject can exercise resistance and use his will.

It must not be supposed that because moral resistance is a psychical function, it is found to an equal degree in all men. On the contrary, it varies with the individual, just as muscular force varies. (Emphasis original, 102-3)

Binet and Fere claim that as some people are excessively susceptible to trance and can be taken by surprise by a hypnotist, “the seriousness of the danger cannot be denied” (103). While some like Puységur argued that magnetic sleep could only be induced under the right conditions, such as when the subject is in a state of ill-health, others like Dupotet argued that magnetic phenomena could be produced regardless of the state of the subject. Dupotet rejected the notion that will or belief was primary in the production of magnetic phenomena, and claimed “I see that to produce sleep there is no need to desire it or will it; [the magnetic] agent produces this state like opium.... A lack of belief on the part of the

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61 Those who dismissed animal magnetism and the denied the existence of magnetic fluid, such as the Franklin Commission, believed that the effects of animal magnetism were merely the effects of the imagination: one had to believe in animal magnetism in order for it to yield results.
magnetic subject is no hindrance – merely a mark of stupidity” (qtd. in Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 194). In contrast to Dupotet’s view, which was not uncommon among magnetists, James Braid maintained that hypnotism could not affect anyone without the full participation – that is, the free will – of the subject. Braid argued that, “the state cannot be induced, in any stage, unless with the knowledge and consent of the party operated on” (*Braid on Hypnotosim*, 92). Furthermore, Braid claimed that while in a state of hypnosis, subjects retained a measure of their intellect and moral compass. Braid writes, “I am aware great prejudice has been raised against mesmerism, from the idea that it might be turned to immoral purposes.... I have proved by experiments...that during the state of excitement, the judgment is sufficiently active to make the patients, if possible, even *more* fastidious as regards propriety of conduct, than in the waking condition” (emphasis original, *Braid on Hypnotism*, 91). He assures his readers that subjects can be easily and readily roused from the somnambulistic state, sometimes even on their own, and always by someone other than the hypnotist.

The debate over who was susceptible to trance and under what conditions was perhaps most fierce in France, demonstrated by the divide between the Nancy School and the doctors at the Salpêtrière. Thurschwell contends,

The arguments which arose from the Nancy-Salpétrière debate stemmed from two divergent conceptions of the human will, as infinitely pliable or stable set. Questions about the nature of human agency also appeared in writings about crowds, multiple personalities and trance mediums. Was excessive suggestibility a staple of human existence or a pathological state? Did people in crowds act as if they were
hypnotized? Was the “herd mentality” which appeared to develop in rioting mobs caused by a kind of mass hypnotic effect? (42) On the one side of this debate was the Nancy School; predominantly comprised of a group of physicians, the Nancy School held true to the premise that all individuals—regardless of age, gender, class, or race—could be hypnotised under the right conditions. Hippolyte Bernheim, who practiced medicine at Nancy, France, became introduced to the practice of hypnotism through the work of Ambroise Liébeault. Liébeault, based on the work of Braid, used hypnotism at his country practice with such great success that he came to be known as a medical healer, curing many patients who had been unable to find help elsewhere (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 164). Liébeault believed that hypnotic sleep and natural sleep were the same except that a hypnotised patient was in a state of rapport with the hypnotiser, and by the suggestion of tiredness and sleep, the hypnotist “induced hypnotism and then made simple curative suggestions appropriate to the disease. These suggestions would negate the symptoms of the disease and inculcate good habits of health maintenance” (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 163). Bernheim differed slightly from Liébeault in that he saw hypnotism as a psychological state in its own right, one intimately connected with suggestion. He “proposed a new definition of hypnotism: the induction of a peculiar psychical condition that increases susceptibility to suggestion” (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 164). According to Crabtree, “Bernheim claimed that suggestion is involved in practically all human interaction and stated that paralysis, contracture, anesthesias, sensorial illusions, and hallucinations could be obtained through suggestion without hypnotism” (emphasis original, Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 164). Thus, for
Bernheim, hypnosis is the result of suggestion, and as suggestion underlies almost all human interactions, anyone could be susceptible to hypnosis under the right conditions. Bernheim’s theories of hypnotism were appealing to many clinicians and theorists. Most notable perhaps is Jules Liégeois, a professor of law at Nancy. Liégeois’ *De la suggestion et du somnambulisme dans leurs rapports avec la jurisprudence et la médecine légale* (1889) discusses the relevance of hypnotic suggestion to civil and criminal law and investigates the legal implications of suggested hallucination, hypnotically induced amnesia, suggestions in the waking state, and other phenomena (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 165). Thurschwell claims that Liégeois “instigated what was to become a forensic debate, enacted in the court-rooms of Paris” when he put forth his view that people could be coerced into crimes through suggestion (42). In response to Liégeois’ study, Binet and Fere write, “it remains to be seen what is the penal and moral responsibility of the individual who has acted under the influence of an hypnotic suggestion” (375). Nevertheless, “hypnotic criminals ought to be treated like insane criminals” as “it cannot be denied that society is justified in defending itself against such a dangerous subject” (Binet and Fere 376).

While some like Liébeault and Bernheim argued that suggestibility to trance was a natural and universally occurring phenomenon, the view that the susceptible subject was degenerative and effeminate was widely held to be true. One of the most influential thinkers on the topic of hypnosis was J.M. Charcot, famous for his neurological research. At the Salpêtrière Charcot and his co-worker Paul Richer closely observed patients labelled as hysterics and recorded their symptoms, discovering that hysterical symptoms, such as paralysis, could be produced and relieved by hypnotic suggestion (Showalter, *Female
Malady 147). In his first paper on hypnosis, delivered to the Académie des Sciences on February 13, 1882, Charcot presented his view of the nature of hypnotism: “Hypnotism, considered in its perfectly developed form – such as that frequently presented by women suffering from hysteron-epilepsy with mixed crises – includes many nervous states, each distinguished by a particular symptomology. According to my observations, these nervous states are three in number, namely: (1) the cataleptic state, (2) the lethargic state, (3) the somnambulistic state” (403). In contrast to the views of the Nancy school, Charcot held that the three “stages” of hypnotism were organically determined and not the result of suggestions; therefore, hypnotism was an artificially created neurosis. As the symptoms of hypnotism and those of hysteria were considered to be very similar, “Charcot thought of hypnotism and hysteria as essentially identical” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 167). According to Crabtree, “this way of describing hypnotism was highly palatable to medical orthodoxy, and this one short speech paved the way for the broad acceptance of hypnotism among physicians” (From Mesmer to Freud 166). Charcot concluded that susceptibility to trance was restricted to the already “weak-willed” such as women and degenerates, and, according to Luckhurst, Charcot’s belief that mesmerism or hypnotism could only affect those with “abnormal organisms” contained the loss of will involved in trance to a relatively safe minority (Invention of Telepathy 157). This view was also prevalent in Victorian scientific circles; as one early report of The Society for Psychical Research reassured readers, “persons in a normal state seem to be little if at all liable to have their will dominated, or their actions dominated against their will, by the silent determination of
another” (qtd. in Luckhurst, *Invention of Telepathy* 153). Thus, susceptibility to mesmerism or hypnotism was for many a sign of mental and physical inferiority.

Despite assurances that “normal” individuals were unlikely to fall prey to malevolent hypnotisers, much popular interest in mesmerism and hypnotism focused on its criminal or amoral nature. Thurschwell contends that public interest in hypnosis “often centred around its relation to criminal activities – the complicated questions of legal and moral responsibility which emerged from a hypnotized mind and subject literally not present to his or her self” (Thurschwell 42). Around the same time that the physicians at Nancy and the Salpêtrière were debating the mysteries of suggestion, French society became absorbed by what Paul Lerner terms “a series of scandals” involving hypnosis and “lurid tales” of criminal activity: “The fear spread that suggestion was a powerful tool that enabled criminal masterminds to manipulate unsuspecting victims into carrying out their will, and suggestion and hypnosis became popular literary and cultural themes” (82). Texts like Marsh’s *The Beetle* and Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Parasite” feature men who are hypnotically compelled to commit crimes, ranging from acts of burglary to physical violence. Additionally, as Willis and Wynne point out, literary representations of mesmerism often focused on the “quasi-sexual ritualism” of the practice, and “much of the literary interpretation of nineteenth-century mesmerism envisaged a male mesmerizer, invariably insidious and foreign, making passes over the body and manipulating the mind of a young and passive female” (8). Stories of men like Dupotet and the strange powers they claimed to possess became the inspiration for much late-Victorian Gothic literature. Notably, Bram Stoker’s fiction, as well as non-fiction, contains multiple references to Mesmer and
mesmerism. In *Famous Imposters* (1910), a collection of essays on historical characters associated with imposture and deceit, Stoker claims that “Although Frederic-Antoine Mesmer made an astonishing discovery which...is accepted as a contribution to science, he is included in the list of impostors because, however sound his theory was, he used it in the manner or surrounded with the atmosphere of imposture” (456). In this text Stoker endorses mesmerism “but attributes its creator with imposture for imbuing the science he created with bizarre and unnecessary ritualism and ‘parting the ways between earnest science and charlatanism’” (Willis and Wynne 3-4). Stoker also explores the ambiguity of mesmerism in his final novel, *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911). The plot of this text focuses on Edgar Caswall, whose ancestor inherited Mesmer’s trunk. According to an old retainer of his family’s, the trunk “probably contains secrets which Dr Mesmer told my master. Told them to his ruin!” (Chapter XI). Edgar’s eyes are said to display a “remarkable will power” and one that “seems to take away from eyes that meet them all power of resistance” (Chapter II). Caswell uses this power to prey on a young local girl, Lilla Watford. We are told that Caswell “kept his eyes fixed on Lilla” like a “hound” or a “bird of prey” (Chapter VI). Stoker’s most famous use of mesmerism, however, is in *Dracula* (1897), in which the Count’s mesmeric and telepathic powers connect him to Mina Harker after she has been infected with his blood. Dracula tells Mina, “When my brain says ‘Come!’ to you, you shall cross land or sea to do my bidding” (328). According to Willis and Wynne, “The Count deploys mesmeric powers to satisfy his lust for blood but the occultist predisposition is scientifically reclaimed by a Dutch doctor, Van Helsing, and mesmerism becomes central in the struggle to defeat the vampire” (4). Under the hypnotic guidance of Van Helsing,
“Mina is simultaneously able to read the Count’s mind as he flees England for Transylvania and this allows the vampire hunters to track his movements, trap him at his Castle and destroy him” (Willis and Wynne 4). Thus, mesmerism represents a complex trope in Stoker’s fiction, one that combines the occult with the scientific and marks the practice as simultaneously threatening and valuable.

3.2 Richard Marsh’s The Beetle

Initially more popular than Stoker’s Dracula (1897), Richard Marsh’s The Beetle (1897) tells the story of an ambiguous and multifarious creature “born of neither god nor man,” (Marsh 322), a “liminal man-woman-goddess-beetle-thing” (Luckhurst, “Trance Gothic” 106) endowed with supernatural and mesmeric powers. Known alternately as “the Beetle,” “The Woman of Songs” and “The Oriental,” s/he is a priest/ess from the cult of Isis who comes to fin-de-siècle London from Egypt in search of her/his/its former lover, the great statesman Paul Lessingham. As Kelly Hurley highlights, the Beetle is ambiguous in bodily identity as both human and animal, in sexual identity as both male and female, and in sexual orientation: “as a woman, she seduces Paul Lessingham; as a man, he assaults Robert Holt; as a woman, she assaults Marjorie Lindon” (24). Furthermore, while it is clear that the Beetle is “oriental to the fingertips” (Marsh 140), its racial identity is otherwise left uncertain. Drawing from a wide range of racial stereotypes, the characters can only discern that the figure is from the East, a possible “Arab” with “more than a streak of negro [sic] blood” (Marsh 140). Through its use of mesmerism, the Beetle comes to overpower the majority of British subjects with whom it comes into contact, reflecting some of the most prevalent fears of the fin-de-siècle connecting cultural decline, the vulnerability of
masculinity and the dominance of empire. While critics have read Marsh’s novel as a tale of masculine anxiety and have considered the creature’s practice of mesmerism integral to its dreadful power, the ways in which these two areas overlap have been largely overlooked. An examination of these intersections reveals that the possession of mesmeric power is akin to the possession of a dangerous virile energy in the text, a “vital principle” which can be used to “penetrate” and dominate others: as a foreign female, the Beetle’s use of mesmerism marks her as inappropriately masculine and aggressive; as a British subject, Atherton’s possession of a keen mesmeric gaze coupled with his scientific quest to perfect “the art of murder” (Marsh 109) characterises him as acutely threatening. This symbolic linking of mesmerism, virility and monstrosity is conversely expressed by the equation of suggestibility, effeminacy and degeneration, so when Paul Lessingham, Robert Holt and Marjorie Lindon succumb to the mesmerising power of the foreign Beetle, the supremacy of the British subject is inverted, the virility of the male subject is called into question, and the underlying passivity of the female subject is safely confirmed. Thus, mesmerism is used to reveal contemporary fears and insecurities concerning the state of Victorian manhood, illuminating a complex relationship between the permeability of mind, body, and nation that paradoxically serves to both uphold and undermine the supremacy of the British male subject.

The Beetle is what might be called the ultimate Other; its identity is presented as compounded, uncertain and unfixed. As both male and female, human and insect, mortal and immortal, homosexual and heterosexual, the Beetle’s slippery identity is rendered further unstable by the creature’s uncertain age and nationality. When the first protagonist,
Robert Holt, initially encounters the creature, he is unsure of not only its age, gender, and nationality but also its species:

I could not at once decide if it was a man or a woman. Indeed at first I doubted if it was anything human. But, afterwards, I knew it to be a man, -for this reason, if for no other, that it was impossible such a creature could be feminine... his age I could not guess; such a look of age I had never imagined.... It might have been that he had been afflicted by some terrible disease, and it was that which had made him so supernaturally ugly. (Marsh 53)

Despite such ambiguity and confusion, Holt is able to determine that the individual is “foreign.” Indeed, the text emphasises the “man’s” foreign qualities as markers of his repulsiveness. Holt tells us “there was not a hair upon his face or head, but, to make up for it, the skin, which was a saffron yellow, was an amazing mass of wrinkles. The cranium, and, indeed, the whole skull, was so small as to be disagreeably suggestive of something animal” (53). Furthermore, the nose was “abnormally large,” so extravagantly so that “it resembled the beak of some bird of prey” (53). The “blubber lips” and “absence of chin” gave “the face the appearance of something not human” (53). The inhumaness of the “man in the bed” is further stressed by the appearance of his eyes, which are so pronounced that it seems “he was nothing but eyes” (53). They “were long... [and] seemed to be lighted by some internal radiance, for they shone out like lamps in a lighthouse tower” (53). Throughout the text there is an insistence on the unspeakability of the Beetle. Those who encounter the figure are left baffled by its hybridity and complexity. As a signifier, he/she violates multiple categories. Kelly Hurley claims that the Beetle’s unspeakability results “as much from her
racial difference and her species fluctuability as her metamorphic sexual identity (particularly as this identity violates norms of femininity)” (125). The horror of the Beetle is augmented by the creature’s practice of mesmerism, which highlights the permeability and uncertainty of all subject positions within the text. As Holt looks into the creature’s eyes, he claims that “I immediately became conscious... that something was going from me, - the capacity, as it were to be myself” (Marsh 53). What is truly unsettling in the text, in Julian Wolfreys’ opinion, is that mesmerism is appropriated by a non-European and monstrous other for clearly criminal and sexual purposes and “provides the opportunity for the unscrupulous predatory alien to control and devastate not merely through physical attack and corporeal destruction, but also through the psychic erasure of the boundaries which one imposes on oneself as the necessary limits of self-definition” (Introduction 13). The novel suggests that this self-definition is most vital in the case of the three male protagonists, each of whom has his masculinity questioned through his contact with the Beetle.

Marsh’s text is not the first to suggest the emasculating nature of a female mesmerist’s power over a male subject. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tells a comparable tale of a powerful female mesmerist preying on British gentlemen. His novelette “The Parasite” (1894) recounts the mesmeric misadventures of a young physiologist and academic, Austin Gilroy. A self-proclaimed “materialist” who is “devoted to exact science,” Gilroy is introduced to the practice of mesmerism by his colleague, Wilson, a professor of psychology interested in “subjects...tainted with charlatanerie and hysteria” (Doyle 11). Nonetheless,
Gilroy is persuaded to attend a party at Wilson’s where he is introduced to Miss Penclosa, a powerful mesmerist from the West Indies. Upon meeting her, Gilroy remarks:

Any one less like my idea of a West Indian could not be imagined. She was a small, frail creature, well over forty, I should say, with a pale, peaky face, and hair of a very light shade of chestnut. Her presence was insignificant and her manner retiring. In any group of ten women she would have been the last whom one would have picked out. Her eyes were perhaps her most remarkable, and also, I am compelled to say, her least pleasant, feature. They were gray in color,—gray with a shade of green,—and their expression struck me as being decidedly furtive. I wonder if furtive is the word, or should I have said fierce? On second thoughts, feline would have expressed it better. A crutch leaning against the wall told me what was painfully evident when she rose: that one of her legs was crippled. (13-14)

Much like the description of the Beetle, Miss Penclosa is identified as animalistic and only partially human; her “fierce,” “feline” eyes mark her as predatory and emphasise the mesmeric power that she holds. This emphasis on the eyes of the mesmerist is also expressed in Marsh’s text. Of the Beetle, Atherton claims “more uncanny-looking eyes I had never encountered” as they “glowed not only with the force and fire, but, also with the frenzy of youth,” a stark contrast from the old and wrinkled countenance (Marsh 141). Holt also claims that the Beetle’s eyes “seemed literally to flame with fire,” which in the act of mesmerism grew “larger and larger, till they seemed to fill all space” (Marsh 61, 56). Significantly, the mesmeric power turns Penclosa from a frail, insignificant woman into “a Roman empress” (Doyle 16), her whole figured expanded with the mastery of her craft.
Miss Penclosa's eyes hold a dark power, one that transforms Gilroy from a man of “pure reason” to a lovelorn fool, the laughing stock of his university, a thief and would-be murderer and mutilator of his fiancée, Agatha. At first, Penclosa’s mesmeric experiments on Gilroy are meant to turn him from sceptic to believer. Despite Gilroy’s initial claim that mesmeric subjects are “mentally unsound” and possess “abnormal organisms” (Doyle 14), he soon discovers that he is an especially sensitive and suggestible subject. He embarks on a series of experiments with Penclosa in which he is the subject. The experiments thrill him. Gilroy claims, “My horizon of scientific possibilities has suddenly been enormously extended.... How petty do [my physiological] researches seem when compared with this one which strikes at the very roots of life and the nature of the soul!” (21-22). After weeks of experimentation, Gilroy comes to realise that this is “a terrible power,” one that allows “an operator to gain complete command over his subject” in order to “make him do whatever he likes” (23, 24). Gilroy becomes addicted to the trance and obsessed with uncovering the secret knowledge of mesmerism. Playing on the fear of the dependency of the subject on the mesmerist, Doyle has Gilroy fall in love with Miss Penclosa, who takes a “singular interest” in her subject. He comes to realise that he has lost possession of his self: “I am for the moment at the beck and call of this creature with the crutch. I must come when she wills it. I must do as she wills. Worst of all, I must feel as she wills. I loathe her and fear her, yet, while I am under the spell, she can doubtless make me love her” (33). More disturbing still, he believes that she can “dominate [his] nervous organism” and “project herself into [his] body and take command of it. She has a parasite soul; yes, she is a parasite, a monstrous parasite” (33-34). Once he realises that she seeks to possess him and
make him her lover, he becomes sickened and enraged, calling her repulsive and disgusting. Penclosa tells him that if he will not become her lover, he will become her slave. His decline begins with making the “most preposterous statements” during his lectures, of which he has no recollection (49). After he is stripped of his lectureship by the university administration, he is magnetically compelled to attempt a break-in at the local branch of the Bank of England and to mercilessly physically assault his colleague, Charles Sadler. Penclosa’s final horror is to make Gilroy throw sulphuric acid into his fiancée Agatha’s face, a horror Gilroy is spared due to the sudden death of his mesmeric master. The tale reveals that the magnetic bond between Gilroy and Penclosa is severed only in death, suggesting that the mesmerist holds absolute power over the subject. This suggestion is further enforced by Doyle’s choice of subject: a male professor and conservative scientist. That a subject such as Gilroy could be wholly dominated by a frail, foreign woman indicates the fallacy of Esdaile’s claims for the superiority of European organisms. By making his mesmerist a feeble, West Indian female and his subject a keen and intelligent British scientist, Doyle inverts the stereotypical mesmeric relationship, posing a fundamental challenge to the authority and superiority of the British male subject by implying that Englishmen are not so different from “savages” as they believed.

Marsh enacts a similar narrative by making his villain a powerful female mesmerist who subjugates the men with whom she comes into contact. The Beetle’s object of desire in both the present and the past is Paul Lessingham, who, as a representative of masculine empire, has his manliness challenged and undermined by his experiences in Egypt. As a youth in Cairo, Lessingham is seduced and imprisoned by the Beetle, or as he knows her
then, the Woman of Songs. His story is revealed by the final narrator, Augustus Champnell, a member of the aristocracy turned “confidential agent.” Lessingham tells Champnell that “her touch had on me what I can only describe as a magnetic influence...I felt as powerless in her grasp as if she held me with bands of steel...those eyes of hers! They were a devil’s. ... They robbed me of my consciousness, of my power of volition, of my capacity to think” (Marsh 240). The Beetle takes from Lessingham those qualities which are traditionally the privilege of the self-possessed masculine subject by her use of mesmerism, and reduced to a state of passivity, Lessingham is further emasculated by the Woman of Songs’ sexual aggressiveness. For Lessingham “the most dreadful part” of his experience is that he is wholly incapable of offering even the faintest resistance to her caresses: “I lay there like a log. She did with me as she would, and in dumb agony I endured” (243). It is implied that he is forced to have intercourse with the Woman of Songs on several occasions, an experience Lessingham describes as “emasculat[ing]” (245). Judith Halberstam argues that Lessingham is “totally feminised” and “castrated” by his sexual encounters with the masculine Woman of Songs (“Gothic Nation” 108), echoing Hurley’s claim that Lessingham “behaves as a female subject – passive, resistless, voiceless, and inert – when under the control of this sexually aggressively, strong-willed, and thus ultra-masculine woman” (144). As Victorian manliness was equated with intellectual energy, moral purpose and sexual purity, Lessingham’s subjugation to the Woman of Songs places him in a feminised subject position.

Significantly, as an adult Lessingham becomes a Liberal Member of Parliament, who synecdochically “stands as a representative of the parliamentary system and potentially of
government itself” (Margree 69). Thus the attack against Lessingham’s individual sovereignty is meant to parallel an attack against Britain’s national sovereignty, made all the more alarming as this is an attack carried out by a foreign Other. In her reading of Mary Poovey, Winter claims that the question of how England should be governed was often asked in ways that joined the management of the body politic with the management of the individual body so that “the ‘constitution’ and the ‘condition’ of England drew anxious reflection from the public health movement, which built social improvement on clean living” (Mesmerized 20). What is clear from the work of critics like Max Nordau and Samuel Smiles is that there was a link between the unhealthy male body and the wider body politic. In order to improve the health and strength of the nation, male subjects needed to be strong, virile and determined. Nordau believed that social rejuvenation could be achieved through hard-work and determination, a view shared by several social commentators of the Victorian era. In his essay “The Science of Health,” sociologist, novelist and clergyman Charles Kingsley asks “Whether the British race is improving or degenerating? What, if it seems possibly degenerating, are the causes of so great an evil? How they can be, if not destroyed, at least arrested?” (21). The solution Kingsley offers is that of health education and physical education. Kingsley claims that over time, wars have worked to deplete the quality of the British race. As “the strongest” went to war, “each who fell left a weaklier man to continue the race; while of those who did not fall, too many returned with tainted and weakened constitutions, to injure, it may be, generation yet unborn” (Kingsley 25). The “stoutest, ablest, healthiest young men” who should have been passing their stock onto the

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62 Originally delivered as a lecture on physical Education, given at the Midland Institute in Birmingham in 1872.
next generation, left the maidens at home unmarried “or married, in default, to a less able man” (Kingsley 25). Much like Nordau, Kingsley hails the middle-class male as the best and most promising of the British race:

The middle-class, being most engaged in peaceful pursuits, suffered less of this decimation of their finest young men; and to that fact I attribute much of their increasing preponderance, social, political, and intellectual, to this very day. One cannot walk the streets of any of our great commercial cities without seeing plenty of men, young and middle-aged, whose whole bearing and stature shows that the manly vigour of our middle class is anything but exhausted. (25)

For Kingsley, the middle-class male is the ideal model of British masculinity, one that should inspire others. As Andrew Smith highlights, Kingsley suggests that all individuals can chose health or ill health. Men need to be taught “that they are the arbiters of their own destinies; and, to a fearfully large degree, of their children’s destinies after them” (Kingsley qtd. in Andrew Smith 21). Andrew Smith notes that “for Kingsley the solution is to be found through an adherence to a manly life of healthy living without which there would be a ‘tendency to sink into effeminate barbarism’” (21). Thus, masculinity is key to social rejuvenation overall.

Kingsley, much like Samuel Smiles, argued that males needed to resist temptation in order to become men. As Andrew Smith states, Kingsley believed that modern, urban society “generates an array of temptations that men are unable to resist” (23). Kingsley claims that the city caters to the indulgence of vice and asks of the urban male population: “Can they live and toil there without contracting a probably diseased habit of body; without
contracting a certainly dull, weary, sordid habit of mind, which craves for any pleasure, however brutal, to escape from its own stupidity and emptiness?” (qtd. in Andrew Smith 23). This leads to “the growing degeneracy of a population,” one that uses “stimulants and narcotics” in order to escape from the “greedy barbarism” of “miscalled civilization” (Kingsley qtd. in Andrew Smith 23). In Kingsley’s view, the modern world creates the possibility of barbarism “by awakening in men their debased appetites” (Andrew Smith 23). Similarly, Smiles focuses on the dangers of an unchecked appetite in men. Smiles believed that it is only through self-denial and self-control that men are able to overcome their baser instincts and become the leaders of nation. In his book Self-Help (1859) Smiles claimed that every loss of will and every temptation succumbed to “causes self-degradation,” (388) which overtime, leads to the decline of the nation. The solution for Smiles is the development of character. In his final chapter, “Character: The True Gentleman,” Smiles writes, “The crown and glory of life is Character. It is the noblest possession of a man, constituting a rank in itself... dignifying every station, and exalting every position in society. It exercises a greater power than wealth” (360). Smiles contends that “Men of character are not only the conscience of society, but in every well-governed State they are its best motive power.... The strength, the industry, and the civilization of nations – all depend upon individual character” (360), securing a link between individual men and the wider nation. Like Kingsley, Smiles believed that men must be “truly self-effacing” and leave behind their baser, biological needs for the greater good of society and nation (Andrew Smith 19). The point for both Kingsley and Smiles is that one should not give in to biology, but “rather
struggle against these in order to fabricate a version” (Andrew Smith 19) of masculine character that will revitalise British society.

While gender ideologies which sought to define masculinity in the nineteenth century were not monolithic, what was fairly consistent was the belief that courage, independence, honour, stability and heterosexuality were the desirable traits for the British male subject. According to Henry Sussman Victorians understood masculinity as an inner energy, “an inchoate force that could be expressed in a variety of ways” (10). This internal energy needed to be regulated or managed in order to prevent it from becoming destructive. In *How Men are Made* (1859) William Landels claims that “men are made...not by passively yielding to an external pressure, but by the putting forth of an internal force, which resists and masters, if it cannot change, the outward” (44). Self-control became a central feature of what the Victorians termed “manliness,” the socially constructed role males had to adopt to regulate their natural masculine energy in order to become model citizens. As Gail Bederman understands it, manliness or manhood is “a continual dynamic process” through which men gain access to public authority (Qtd. in Halberstam, “Gothic Nation” 105). *Manliness* was the most clearly articulated indicator of men’s gender in the nineteenth century, and, as John Tosh contends, the term is “always used in the singular,” indicating “that there was a single standard of manhood, which was expressed in certain physical attributes and moral dispositions” (2). Landels defines “manliness” as “having all the faculties of our nature existing in a healthy and vigorous condition – properly and proportionally exercised and developed, so as to be able to perform, in efficient manner, our various duties” (33). Indeed, as Tosh notes, “manliness” denotes those attributes which
men were happy to own, which they had often acquired by great effort, and which they frequently boasted about, as in having a “manly character” or “manly figure” (3). The common currency of manliness was “assertiveness, courage, independence and straightforwardness” (Tosh 5). To be a “man” in this model meant “the possession of manly vigour,” which included energy, virility, and physical strength: “all the attributes which equipped a man to place his physical stamp on the world” (Tosh 87), and all the attributes Lessinham lacks in his encounters with the Beetle in Egypt.

As this commentary suggests, on one level, the Beetle poses a threat to the stability of the English nation via the threat it poses to the stability of the English subject. Glennis Byron contends that one of the most terrifying things about the Beetle is that she has not remained in Egypt. In fact, the Beetle “penetrates the very heart of England, the city of London” (133). This penetration is disturbing not only because she is a foreign other but because she is a feminine other, and her foreign identity is closely related to her gendered identity. Hurley argues that in The Beetle the orient is presented as a feminised space in part because a female body “embodies” the orient. Moreover, as Edward Said argues, the East has often been characterised within Orientalist discourse as feminine, with its “penetrability” and “supine malleability” (206). As such, the Orient is a highly sexualised site, seeming to suggest “not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies” (Said 188). Said claims that for the West, with its more rigid ethos of sexual behaviour, the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe, thus marking it as a sexual site (190). Based on Said’s model, Hurley contends that “not only is the Orient a space in which the
Victorian male may pursue the luxury of the body, it is also a space he associates with the body itself, with the body’s physicality and fertility, with bodily pleasure” (128). The Orient, argues Said, is the source of one of the West’s “deepest and most recurring images of the Other” (1), which has helped to define the West as its contrasting image, idea personality, and experience. Conversely, as discussed in my introduction, the empire was a massive assertion of masculine energies for the West and came to represent the decidedly masculine traits of strength and virility; therefore, when Holt and Lessingham are classified in colonial terms as “slaves” to the Beetle, more is at stake than their national identity.

Masculine insecurity is tenaciously attached to Lessingham as his suitability as a political leader, as a husband, and as a potential father rests on his possession of manliness. We are first introduced to Lessingham after Holt has been hypnotically compelled by the Beetle to burglarise the MP’s home. Holt describes Lessingham as collected and calm upon discovering a burglar in his office. Holt’s admiration of the statesman is linked to his proverbial “impenetrability” and the general understanding that Lessingham’s success in the political arena is “in no slight measure [due] to the adroitness which is born of his invulnerable presence of mind” (Marsh 75). Indeed, Lessingham’s speeches are said to fill the House of Commons and to captivate audiences. As Victoria Margree points out, the “invulnerability” and “impenetrability” identified by Holt to describe Lessingham clearly expresses “the version of British masculinity the text is trying to assert” (71). But if Lessingham’s is the most ideal version of masculinity, his is also the most impugned by the other men around him. When confronted with the name or image of the Beetle,

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63 For examples see pages 62 and 71.
Lessingham loses his celebrated cool and becomes unmanned, and according to Holt, “sadly lacking in dignity” (Marsh 77). Holt’s claim that Lessingham is “sadly lacking in dignity” is reinforced by the reactions of Atherton and Champnell to Lessingham’s repeated “hysterical” behaviour. When Lessingham sees a picture of a beetle in Atherton’s laboratory, he acts as though he is going mad, cowering and crouching in a corner. At the sight of Lessingham falling apart, Sydney claims that it would be difficult to find a “more uncomfortable spectacle” (180). Atherton’s uncomfortableness at the display stems from the fact that as a man, and especially a political leader, Lessingham ought to have better control over his nerves. In a rather telling explanation, Lessingham claims “my nerves are out of order. – I have been working too hard. – I am not well” (80). Paul has the reputation of “being a man of iron nerve” (108), yet he later asserts that he “has to resort to alcohol to keep his nerves up to concert pitch” (183). The constant association of Lessingham with nerves and nervous disorders sets the stage for his decline into hysteria. Lessingham’s anguish over his fiancée Marjorie Lindon’s disappearance when she is captured by the Beetle is too much for him to bear. Champnell describes Lessingham as having “pallid cheeks,” a twitching mouth and a “feverish glitter” in his eyes as “the Leader of Men, whose predominate characteristic in the House of Commons was immobility” rapidly approximates “the condition of a hysterical woman” (292). Champnell tells him “I confess that you disappoint me, Mr. Lessingham. I have always understood that you were a man of unusual strength; you appear instead, to be a man of extraordinary weakness; with an imagination so ill-governed that its ebullitions remind me of nothing so much as feminine hysterics” (294). Champnell’s advice for Lessingham is to go to the House, deliver his speech, but more
importantly to “play the man” (294), echoing Atherton’s previous assertion “Lessingham! – don’t be a fool! – Play the man!” (183). According to Tosh, “the injunction ‘Be a man!’ implied that there were only certain ways in which one could be a man, and that they demanded a high degree of effort and a suppression of self” (emphasis original, 14). The repetition of the phrase “play the man” throughout The Beetle highlights the practice of an openly-contrived version of masculinity, made popular by the “self-help” theories of Smiles and Kingsley. Lessingham’s identification as “the Leader of Men” makes his hysterical and weak behaviour all the more disturbing.

The unmanning quality of being subjected to the will of the Beetle is stressed in its encounters with Robert Holt, a starving ex-clerk out of work and down on his luck. After being turned out of a Casual Ward, Holt is forced to look for lodgings elsewhere. He is led into a part of Hammersmith that seems a “land of desolation,” scarcely populated by cottages “which were crumbling to decay” (Marsh 45). According to Margree, this vision of the uncivilised at the heart of civilisation “establishes that the threat to civilization comes not solely from the archaic and the foreign but already exists in the centre of modernity itself” (65). As discussed in my introduction, unemployment, poverty and urban homelessness were routinely identified as signs of the nation’s deterioration and decline. Furthermore, Victorian manliness was closely identified with work, and individual men experienced a loss of masculine self-respect through unemployment, a lack of housing and a shortage of apprenticeships. John Tosh claims that “when...men cannot find work, not only their income but their masculinity is threatened” (18). In 1861 William Landels declared “it is by work, work, work – constant, never-ceasing work – work well and faithfully done...that
you are to rise out of things into men” (True Manhood 146). What is more, as Roper and Tosh contend, many late-Victorian male office clerks experienced a challenge to their manly status “as they saw their somewhat ambivalent occupational status undermined still further by the recruitment of female clerks” (19). They maintain that office work was a traditional route into the middle class for the upwardly mobile working-class man in the nineteenth century, but as large corporations and sections of the Civil Service began hiring more women as typists and telegraphists as an allegedly cheaper and more “docile” workforce, male clerks began to fear not only unemployment but also the stigma of an effeminate profession. Tosh argues that office work had long had overtones of effeminacy: “‘born a man, died a clerk’ went the old saying” (204). This point seemed to be proven by the entry of women into office work. In its presentation of Holt’s social decline, the novel emphasises that Holt’s decreased status is as distressing as is his hunger and desolation.

Made desperate by the pain of hunger and exhaustion, Holt climbs through the open window of a seemingly deserted house, only to discover that what is inside is far worse than the wretchedness he faced outside. It is here that Holt first encounters the Beetle in the forms of an insect and a man. Magnetised against his will, Holt is victimised by a succession of psychical and physical attacks that render him passive and penetrable. As both passivity and penetration are culturally coded as feminine, Holt is consequently feminised through these assaults. Already reduced to less than a “man” economically and socially, Holt is easily overwhelmed by the magnetising powers of the Beetle, which leave him feeling “unmanned” despite his efforts “to better play the man” (Marsh 49). In the state of trance, he loses all powers of masculine self-possession: volition, autonomy and strength. Holt
asserts that the words he utters come not from his own willpower, but are ventriloquised in response to the Beetle’s: “It was not I who willed that I should speak; it was he. What he willed that I should say, I said. Just that, and nothing more. For the time I was no longer a man; my manhood was merged in his. I was, in the extremist sense, an example of passive obedience” (54). For Holt “such passivity was worse than undignified, it was galling,” causing him to exclaim, “For the time I was no longer a man,” a state he considers the equivalent of “impotence” (emphasis added, 52, 54, 62). The use of the term “impotence” links Holt’s powerlessness with an image of masculine virility. Holt is denied the privilege of specifically masculine power by being subject to the will of another. When Holt claims that he loses “the capacity...to be [himself]” (56), it is clear by his description that he has also lost the capacity to be a man.

To further emphasise Holt’s effeminate status, Marsh plays with the gender assumptions intrinsic in the mesmeric relationship by making the villain a sometimes woman and a sometimes homosexual. This is accentuated in part by the positions of the Beetle and Holt, which play off the traditional postures of mesmerist and subject. Typically, the male mesmerist would stand over a female subject who would either be sitting or lying on a bed. This posture “satisfied the demands of sexual propriety, and expressed the power relations that justified the trajectory of influence between the male mesmerist and his woman patient” (Winter, Mesmerized 140). Holt’s social degeneration is thus compounded by this inversion of his proper gender role as even when he is standing tall, he is easily dominated by the figure in passive repose. When Holt stumbles upon the “man in the bed,” he does not easily recognise his gender. Later, he is certain that he is dealing with a man as
“it was impossible such a creature could be feminine” (Marsh 53). Gender mutability slips into species flexibility when as both man and insect, the Beetle violates Holt with its body. Holt tells us that “with a sense of shrinking, horror, nausea, rendering me momentarily more helpless, I realized that the creature was beginning to ascend my legs, to climb my body...it mounted me” (51). Simultaneous to the threat of penetration, evoked by the creature’s mounting, is the threat of engulfment: the Beetle envelopes Holt’s face with its “huge, slimy, evil-smelling body and embrace[s him] with its myriad legs” (52) in what Wolfreys describes as a form of “copulative engagement” (Introduction 17). Shortly after, Holt is put into a somnambulistic state by the “man in the bed,” forced to strip naked, and then helplessly invaded by the man’s probing fingers. Halberstam suggests that “the sense of gender confusion” in this scene obscures “who is doing what to whom. Are we to read this scene as the rape of one man by another oddly feminine man? Is it rather the rape of a man by a kind of phallic woman?” (“Gothic Nation” 104). Even when Holt later claims that “about the face there was something which was essentially feminine; so feminine indeed, that I wondered if I could by any possibility have blundered, and mistaken a woman for a man; some ghoulish example of her sex” (61), the suggestion of homoerotic desire is not entirely eliminated. According to Margree this “homoerotic” encounter will have the effect of “permanently emasculating Holt in his subsequent representation” (67) because, as Tosh states, the man who engaged in same-sex practices was pathologised as “‘the homosexual,’ degenerate and effeminate – indeed degenerate because he was effeminate” (emphasis original, 22). Hurley claims that the sexual identity of the characters is dismantled through

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64 As will be discussed in Chapter 3, Oscar Wilde and his fiction were cited as dangerous and
contact with the Beetle, in part because “hers is too fluid to constitute a reference point for theirs, in part because insofar as she is female, she inverts traditional sexual roles, her inappropriately aggressive femininity requiring as object an effeminated version of masculinity” (143). The sexual dominance of the Englishman is inverted through a range of transgressive sexual relations, in which English “manhood” is destroyed or displaced: “passive submission to rapacious female sexuality; usurpation of sexual primacy by superior alien potency; homosexuality; lesbianism” (Garnett 31). Michael Roper and John Tosh contend that “masculinity has always been defined in relation to ‘the other’” (emphasis original, 1) because “masculinity (like femininity) is a relational construct, incomprehensible apart from the totality of gender relations” (emphasis original, 2). Holt’s sexual identity is thus left open and challenged by his encounters with the Beetle.

Critics have focused on the sexual nature of this scene. For example, Hurley claims that the creature’s “teasing advance” up Holt’s body and the “intense, intimate physicality of the contact, combined with the idea of stickiness and overpowering smell, point towards a reading of this as some sort of nightmare of sexual encounter” (138). While these readings are useful in establishing the threat to the masculine subject posed by the gender ambiguity of the monstrous Beetle, they also obscure the obvious connotations of mesmeric treatment, with its emphasis on darkness, intimate physical contact and the exchange of fluid. In what can be read as a horrific rendition of animal magnetism, Holt is entranced by the man in the bed, who, in a violent performance of the magnetic passes, presses his corrupting influences. Max Nordau in Degeneration cites Wilde as the type of degenerate figure whose art would have a detrimental impact on culture and civilization, and Wilde’s trials for gross indecency illustrate that Nordau was not the only one who held such an opinion.
fingers into Holt’s cheeks, thrusts them into Holt’s mouth, and touches Holt’s staring eyes. The sexual undertones of this attack, though amplified, reflect the extensive public belief that mesmerism was a form of sexual seduction. The intimacy of the magnetising process coupled with the direct visual parallels between the “crisis,” sexual excitation, and orgasm left many concerned about the erotic nature of mesmeric treatments. Mesmer believed that the crisis, a strong physical reaction generated in the patient by the establishment of a magnetic current, was essential to the healing process. Crabtree writes that observers claimed that as the crisis is approaching, “the face reddens and the eyes become ardent,” indicating desire. During the crisis, there is a total disorder of the senses often accompanied by convulsions. It was common for patients to collapse, writhing on the floor, and to be carried off to the “crisis room.” This state is followed by “languor, a weakness, and a sort of sleep of the senses which is the rest needed after a strong agitation” (From Mesmer to Freud 93). The link between the crisis and sexual excitation was furthered by Mesmer’s belief in the all-penetrating magnetic fluid, which, much like sexual fluids, was the principle and cause of life. A magnetiser gained his power by possessing an abundance of this fluid, which was exchanged with the magnetised in an attempt to restore health. This focus on magnetic fluid linked mesmeric potency with masculine virility in the discourse of mesmerism. This association is further entrenched by the association of mesmerism with penetration. Even more than the physical attack it is the mental violation that Holt finds so horrific, claiming that “The helplessness with which I suffered its invasion was not the least part of my agony, -it was that helplessness which we know in dreadful dreams...I had not a muscle at my command” (Marsh 51). The dread of this helplessness is expressed in Holt’s
description of the Egyptian’s eyes: “escape them I could not, while, as I endeavoured to meet them, it was as if I shrivelled into nothingness...they held me enchained, helpless spell-bound. I felt that they could do with me as they would; and they did” (Marsh 54). As Julian Wolfreys notes in his introduction to the Broadview edition of the text, mesmerism is readable as an act “analogous with sexual penetration” (13); to be subjected to the will of another is to be invaded in a way that is equivalent to a sort of mental rape – “one that establishes the subject as passive and invade-able, and therefore feminine, whether they be anatomically feminine or not” (Margree 67). Holt claims that the Egyptian’s eyes have “powers of penetration” capable of “exercis[ing]... a degree of mesmeric force...as if he was reading the thoughts which occupied my brain” (Marsh 55, 62).  

The sliminess of the creature’s body as an insect coupled with its “blubber lips” in the guise of a man point to a reading of the Beetle as unnaturally muculent in its constitution. The Beetle’s fluid is characterised as both mesmeric and sexual, as both penetrating and engulfing through its encounters with Holt. Parasitic in nature, the Beetle seeks to possess more of this vital fluid rather than to relinquish it for the health of others. Mesmer believed that all healthy living things have the ability to appropriate what they need of the magnetic fluid to sustain themselves, but the Beetle has a rather voracious appetite. Holt’s final horror is to be drained of his life-fluids by the Beetle in what Luckhurst characterises as the “physical rendering of [Holt’s] psychic enslavement” (The Invention of Telepathy 160). Drained of his vitality, Holt is left emaciated and hollow. Upon discovering Holt’s lifeless body, Champnell states: “I doubt if there was an ounce of flesh on the whole of his body. His cheeks and the sockets of his eyes were hollow. The skin was drawn tightly
over his cheek bones, - the bones themselves were staring through. Even his nose was wasted, so that nothing but a ridge of cartilage remained” (Marsh 303). The marks on either side of Holt’s neck indicate a vampiric draining of fluid, but it is not blood that is lost; the Beetle’s draining of Holt leaves him physically and psychically hollow. For Champnell, what makes Holt’s “extreme attenuation the more conspicuous” and such a “deplorable spectacle” is his masculine attire: “He was decently clad in a grey tweed suit, white hat, collar and necktie” (303). Dressed as a man, Holt is presented as no more than “a little child” (303); his featherweight body offers no resistance when Champnell picks him up off the floor. The use of the word ‘attenuation’ to describe Holt’s physical state and the image of him as a child suggest that he has been quite literally “reduced” from his manly status, a decrease made all the more horrific by his manly clothing as it suggests the fragility of “playing” the man.

This suggestion is further established by the narrative conflation of Holt and the novel’s representative “New Woman,” Marjorie Lindon. As Victoria Margree’s reading of the text indicates this conflation is created by the “masculinisation” of Miss Lindon. After falling into the hands of the jealous and vengeful Beetle, Marjorie’s clothing is torn off and her hair is violently removed, “so close to the head in one place that the scalp itself had been cut, so that the hair was dotted with blood” (Marsh 265). In place of her feminine attire, Marjorie is forced to don the cast-off dirty and torn clothing of Robert Holt as she is paraded through the streets of London in the company of the Beetle. In many ways Marjorie’s costuming as a man is coded as punishment for her masculine and autonomous nature. Marjorie’s desire for independence is a source of anxiety for many of the male
characters, particularly Atherton and her father. Atherton remarks in a somewhat disdainful tone that “this is the age of feminine advancement” (129) after witnessing Marjorie publicly defy her father. According to Margree, the symbolic meaning of Marjorie’s transformation into the “shabby habiliments of Holt” is that if a woman desires to “play the man,” the text suggests the type of man she will be is equivalent to the dissolute, enfeebled and emasculated Holt (74).

That Marjorie is to be read as a New Woman is established in the text by her interest in politics and public affairs, by her defiance of her father, and by her insistence on maintaining a level of autonomy. The New Woman posed a threat to patriarchal propriety as she enjoyed a measure of personal independence, often living on her own and working for her living. According to Sally Ledger, the New Woman was “christened” in 1894 by Ouida, who “extrapolated the now famous – and then infamous – phrase ‘the New Woman’ from Sarah Grand’s essay ‘The New Aspect of the Woman Question’” (9). Wolfreys claims that “what was new about new women was a strongly voiced desired for greater economic freedom and educational opportunities, and for a recognition politically and socially of women’s equality with men” (“The New Woman” 330). The New Woman “as idea, as fictional form, and as reality aroused strong emotions and opinions for and against greater emancipation and autonomy for women” (Wolfreys, “The New Woman” 330). The New Woman was physically active, educated, well read and opinionated, and as Luckhurst argues, she engaged with political questions of suffrage, education for girls, employment rights for women, and “the place of motherhood in the imperial destiny of Britain” (The

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65 Penname of English novelist Maria Louise Ramé.
In 1891 Elizabeth Lynn Linton attacked the New Woman, claiming that “in obliterating the finer distinctions of sex she is obliterating the finer traits of civilisation” (Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* 220). Luckhurst emphasises that many adversaries charged the New Woman with hysteria and nervous disorders, claiming “her perceptions are of the nerves,” and that “she personifies our modern nervousness, and her best characters are a quivering bundle of nerves” (*The Invention of Telepathy* 220), thus linking woman’s ambition and independence with hysteria and nervous disorder.

Marjorie’s narrative cements this view of her as a hysteric as it reads like an automatic text, written and rewritten without agency or volition. Her narrative is produced as if in a state of dissociation, where what can be written cannot be spoken. Automatic writing originated in Rochester, New York, in 1849, and in many ways initiated the Spiritualist movements that would sweep across the United States and England over the next few decades. Spiritualism was the belief that it was possible to receive communications, written or oral, from the dead. Although no pen and paper were used, the case of the “Rochester Rappings” and the Fox sisters is often cited as the first incidence of automatic writing. It became the subject of immense controversy that lead to the movement becoming the object of study for scholars and psychologists. The most discerning of these reached the conclusion that automatic writing was a function of automatism, the process whereby the subconscious functions of the psyche could operate independently of will or volition. The automatic writing of the Spiritualists transformed the subject into a mere text-generating device devoid of full creative agency, a passive receptacle for messages received from some “beyond,” whether that be the spiritual realm
or the subject’s own unconscious. In addition to the séance, the practice of automatic writing is bound up with studies of hysteria. Pierre Janet, one of the foremost researchers on hysteria in the late nineteenth century, believed that hysteria was a condition caused by a splitting (dédoublement) of the personality that in extreme cases could lead to the subject’s consciousness alternating between two (or more) selves, each of which is unaware of the other. For Janet the process of automatic writing helped hysterical patients to “perceive and express ideas they could not account for previously” (The Mental State of Hystericals 282). Janet believed that automatic writing could only take place where there already existed a ‘cleavage’ in the self, a split in the consciousness of the subject. We are told that mentally, Marjorie “hovered between the darkness and the light,” implying a state of psychic duality, and that “her one relaxation was writing” (Marsh 321), indicative of the type of therapy used by Janet in his treatment. Champnell states that “she would never speak of what she had written,” but “she confided to pen and paper what she would not speak of with her lips. She told, and re-told, and re-told again” her story (321-22). We are also told that the narrative we are left with is but one of many versions written by Marjorie, all of which are destroyed with the exception of this one. This lack of narrative authority is also present in the case of Lessingham and Holt. All of their accounts are separate from the supposed narrator or author. We discover that Holt’s narrative is a construct of the fragmented accounts of others, and similarly Lessingham’s story is only revealed through the stories of others. As Wolfreys points out, the narratives of Holt and Marjorie do not so much end as come to a halt, suggestive of irresolution and an impending crisis (Introduction 26).
Marjorie and Holt are both identified as sensitive subjects. Holt claims that he “mentally photographed” the details of the house he breaks into with what “almost amounted to a gleam of preternatural perception” (Marsh 47). He begins to be aware all of a sudden that “something was with [him] in the room,” even though he claims that “there was nothing, ostensible, to lead me to such a conviction; it may be that my faculties were unnaturally keen; but, all at once, I knew that there was something there... It was as though something in my mental organization had been stricken by a sudden paralysis...I was overwrought” (49). As if to confirm Charcot’s view that susceptibility to trance was linked to a predisposition for hysteria, Marjorie, too, is presented as clairvoyant. Convinced that her “brain must be softening” (205), she experiences a vision of Paul crouching on the floor, cowering and shrieking from some invisible terror. “As with a sort of second sight” the vision comes again and again “with a degree of vividness of which [she] cannot give the least conception” (204). Marjorie’s clairvoyant visions are meant to present her underlying feminine nature in contrast to her publically assertive behaviour. The content of her visions is her lover’s torment, suggesting her love and devotion to her fiancé. The overwhelming nature of her visions together with her experience with the unseen beetle in her bedroom causes her to “swoon” for the first time in her life, suggesting her fundamentally weak constitution. There is a persistent association of occult and telepathic sensitivity with femininity. For example, William Stead held that “sex in woman is something which Nature has made more silent on the physical plane, in order that its sense may listen to whisperings on emotional and spiritual planes” (qtd. in Luckhurst, The Invention of Telepathy 214). The common view was that women possess “finer nerves,” which made them more easily
subjugated to the will of another. According to Grant Allen in 1890, “[woman’s] frame is made up of sounding boards. She has a greater number of nervous reservoirs” (qtd. in Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* 161). However, as scholars interested in the history of women’s role in Spiritualism have noted, the association of women with nervous energy was paradoxical. On the one hand, the Spiritualists believed a woman’s surplus (or imbalance) or “nervous energy” made her a more receptive candidate for receiving the higher electromagnetic transmissions of the spirits, and thus marked her constitution as more advanced than her male counterparts. On the other hand, medical science believed this surplus led to dysfunctions of the body, where the nervous system, “as a great telegraphic network, was overtaxed by the variable intensity of this flow” (Sconce 51-52).

According to Luckhurst, the nerves were perceived as an interstitial system located between mind and body which made them sites prone to metaphor and ideological accents for cultural anxieties regarding the cultural fear of the loss of boundaries of the self. As nerves were most often associated with femininity, women became sites of “dangerous permeability” between self and other, body and mind (Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* 217).

While Marjorie’s narrative and clairvoyance seem to confirm her underlying femininity, her position as “New Woman” suggests that she is, in some ways, a “masculine” woman. As critics like Margree and Wolfreys have indicated, the New Woman’s desire for

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sovereignty was viewed by some as a desire to become masculine. Wolfreys contends that “Arguably, the fear for Victorian masculinity is that the New Woman presents a form of parodic masculinity, thereby transgressing both the boundaries of her own supposedly ‘proper’ gendered identity and that of a certain self-defining Victorian masculinity” (Introduction 29). Within the text, the independent and aggressive woman is presented as the masculine woman, and this female masculinity is a source of much of the narrative’s horror. Indeed, as Halberstam contends, the dreadfulness of the Beetle is directly linked to her “improper” masculinity to such an extent that “the narrative seems explicitly to link monstrous female form with masculinity and not femininity” (“Gothic Nation” 105). For Halberstam, the Beetle “is everything that English women must not be and masculinity seems to be the dominant trait of the counter model of English womanhood” (“Gothic Nation” 113). The image of Marjorie in masculine drag highlights Halberstam’s reading of the text as an illustration of “the danger of masculinisation that may strike the ‘active’ woman” (“Gothic Nation” 106). Marjorie, then, is used to highlight the undesirable forms of masculinity the text wishes to stress. Her conflation with the emasculated Holt drawn in the visual parallel of them appearing together “both in men’s clothing” (Marsh 286) suggests that the New Woman’s version of masculinity is in some ways incomplete, for as Margree contends, Marjorie “is only a poor imitation of a man who is already himself a parody of masculinity” (74). The unsuccessful attempts of Holt and Marjorie to “play the man” are directly related to their inability to maintain personal sovereignty in their interactions with the Beetle, which signals their innate femininity. However, what is more disturbing are the
ways in which characters are indeed successful at this performance. For when Lessingham and Atherton “play the man,” violence ensues.

The ability to wield mesmeric power and to fight the power of suggestion is overtly linked to manliness or virility in the narrative in a number of ways. When the Beetle commands Holt to burglarise Lessingham’s home, he attempts to resist, claiming that “the monstrosity of his suggestion fought against the spell which he again was casting upon me, and...endowed me with the power to show that there still was in me something of a man; though every second the strands of my manhood, as it seemed, were slipping faster through the fingers which were strained to clutch them” (emphasis added, Marsh 66). As Holt’s masculinity is continually reduced, challenged and questioned within the text, it is not surprising that he is easily overcome by the aggressive and thus more masculine Beetle. Furthermore, Lessingham’s ability to overcome his somnambulist state is explicitly linked to his recovery of manliness. The narrative suggests that the only proper response to the overthrow of patriarchal and imperial power and gender inversion is “the recovery and most extreme use of superior and ‘legitimate’ masculine force” (Garnett 41). Lessingham regains a portion of his manhood by strangling the Woman of Songs. When he breaks free from her entrancement, it is “a man, and one who, for the first time for many a day, was his own man” that defeats her in the den in Egypt (Marsh 245). It is only through this reclamation of masculinity that Lessingham is able to overcome her, not as “the fibreless, emasculated creature...she had made of [him]” when she used her hypnotism “to trick [him] of [his] manhood” (245). His greatest accomplishment when he returns to Britain is
not so much his success in politics or his winning of Marjorie Lindon’s heart but the fact that he “had once more become as other men” (246).

Atherton, unlike the young Lessingham and degenerate Holt, is able to resist the Beetle’s powers of psychic penetration, a feat he attributes to his lack of sensitivity, and thus lack of femininity. Sydney Atherton is an upper-middle-class scientist and, as Luckhurst points out, “breeding counts” (*The Invention of Telepathy* 209). According to Garnett, “Atherton represents the best type of Englishman in the novel, and he possesses the highest and broadest sources of knowledge in this society” (47). The “sensitive something which is found in the hypnotic subject” (Marsh 105) is absent in Atherton, whose lack of suggestibility is attributed to his own magnetic ability, and thus, his masculine vitality. We are told by Atherton that “it happens that I am myself endowed with an unusual tenacity of vision” (141) and Marjorie claims that his eyes are “keen, quizzical, [and] not too merciful” (210). Marjorie goes so far as to claim that Sydney’s glances exercised a “sort of hypnotic effect” (210). During his second encounter with Lessingham’s “oriental friend,” Atherton stresses that it is only by an “effort of will” that he is able to resist the magnetising glance of the Beetle. He claims if “given an appropriate subject,” one that is “of a nervous, or a sensitive temperament,” the “oriental” might exercise “an influence of a most disastrous sort” by the peculiar quality of his glance alone (141). At one point, the Beetle comes close to overpowering Atherton’s will: “I pulled up dead, - as if my progress had been stayed by bars of iron and walls of steel. For the moment, I was astonished to the verge of stupefaction” (144). When he realises what has just transpired, Atherton remarks,
The scoundrel had almost succeeded in hypnotising me. That was a nice thing to happen to a man of my sort at my time of life. A shiver went down my back, - what might have occurred if I had not pulled up in time! What pranks might a creature of that character not have been disposed to play. (144)

Atherton is frustrated by the ease with which the Beetle magnetises his well trained servant Edwards and offended by the Beetle’s attempts to overpower his will in his own country, as though London were some “dog-hole in the desert” (106).

The text emphasises Atherton’s dominance by the repeated play between his “magic” and the “magic” of the Beetle. Atherton occupies a somewhat ambiguous position between scientist and magician, and the distinction between the two is continuously challenged in the text, with much of the narrative unfolding against the backdrop of Atherton’s “wizard’s cave” (Marsh 154). For instance, Atherton claims to be “something of a magician” and warns “the Oriental” that his stronghold “contains magic enough to make a show of a hundred thousand such as [him]” (145). While Atherton’s “magic” seems to effectively overmaster the Beetle, who “salaams” and acquiesces to become Sydney’s “slave” after witnessing “a little exhibition of electricity” and the effects of a few drops of phosphorous-bromide (145), this “magic” is also figured as the most dangerous within the narrative for what Atherton aims to accomplish is no less than “legalised murder – on the biggest scale it ever has been planned” (102). As Anna Maria Jones’s recent reading of Marsh’s text makes clear, *The Beetle*’s treatment of British civilisation is much more troubling than its representation of degenerate monstrosity as “civilized England is capable of unleashing forces far more terrifying than one monster on a quest for personal
vengeance” (66). Jones highlights the narrative parallels between Atherton and the Beetle: both are vengeful and jealous, and both exert control over the other characters in the text, particularly by use of their particular “magic.” Furthermore, in both cases this magic is presented as a masculine force, one that can overwhelm and overpower others either through psychic domination or the threat of mass annihilation. Whereas this hyper-masculinity is akin to monstrosity in the Beetle, Atherton’s warmongering version of manhood is presented as the more insidious of the two as it is in many ways representative of a masculine ideal. In fact, Atherton is presented as “a nice type of ideal citizen” (Marsh 99) despite letting Holt escape from his burglary at Lessingham’s, for as Jones suggests, he possesses all of the desirable traits of manliness: he is “an energetic, productive, and industrious citizen, a ‘strong practical man’ who puts scientific ideas into practice and makes things happen” (75). Through Atherton the text suggests that an abundance of masculine energy can be just as disturbing as its absence. In *Victorian Masculinities* Herbert Sussman characterises “manliness” as “the control and discipline of an essential ‘maleness’ fantasized as a potent yet dangerous energy” that exists as part of an “unstable equilibrium,” which demanded constant self-discipline to control (13). Because masculine energy is an “unstable equilibrium,” an overabundance of this energy could be just as dangerous as its reduction. Jones argues that, “the discipline that enables productive, industrious masculinity simultaneously permits pathological, vengeful, and destructive agency,” such as that demonstrated by Atherton (69). It is difficult for the modern reader to not view Atherton’s endeavours in light of the events of the twentieth century. The “mass murder” at the “push of a button” he advocates as indicative of a nation’s advancement and
power seems eerily prescient of the World Wars and the mass devastation caused by technological advancements such as the hydrogen bomb.

The novel ends on a rather ambiguous note without alleviating the fears it raises about the security of English manhood or the English nation. The Beetle has been ostensibly destroyed in a train crash, but science is ultimately unable to determine the nature of its existence; all that is left behind are slimy, evil-smelling spots of “viscid matter” that are variously understood as parboiled human blood, the blood of a wild animal, paint and the excretion of a lizard (Marsh 318-9). Furthermore, Champnell and Atherton, members of the ruling class, prove themselves unable to decode the ‘meaning’ of the Beetle. Champnell’s narrative ends on a rather uncertain note: “I do not propose to pronounce a confident opinion. Atherton and I have talked it over many and many a time, and at the end we have got no ‘forrader’” (322). The confidential agent and the scientist are unable to perform their analytical roles, which according to Wolfreys, leaves them “helpless, impotent” as the Englishman relies on detection and determination in characterising his identity (Introduction 31). Holt, the effeminate male, is killed off, Lessingham is married to Marjorie and as Margree notes, Marjorie is “returned to a position of normative femininity” in a “merely supportive role” as wife and mother (78). After years under medical supervision as a “lunatic,” Marjorie mentions nothing of her time with the Beetle. Lessingham has become a great politician but continues to have a “constitutional disrelish for the subject of beetles” (320), suggesting he retains some of the trauma from his youth and recent events. Additionally, Atherton is married to Dora Grayling, a wealthy young woman with no qualms to funding his research. Perhaps most disturbingly we learn that Sydney has had some
success as an inventor, bringing aerial flight within the range of “practical politics” (321). While, on the one hand, the status quo seems to be reinforced by the removal of the combined threats of the Beetle, the effeminate male and the masculine New Woman, on the other hand, the traumatised statesman and the continued advancement of Atherton’s machinations for mass murder point to an uncertain future for the English nation.
Chapter 4:

Animal Magnetism and the Question of Will: George Du Maurier’s *Trilby*

I will tell you a secret. *There were two Trilbys*. There was the Trilby you knew, who could not sing one single note in tune.... But all at once – pr-r-r-out! presto! Augenblick! ... with one wave of his hand over her – with one look of his eye – with a word –Svengali could turn her into the other Trilby, *his* Trilby\(^67\)

Anxieties about the integrity of the self, the workings of the will and the more general power of “influence” are disturbingly Gothicised in the fiction of 1890s. Philip Holden claims that “it is difficult to find a late Victorian novel that does not in some way touch upon hypnotism, possession, somnambulism, or the paranormal” (471). Discussions of mesmerism, hypnotism and influence revolved around questions of “what impulses come from the self’s desires, what come from an influential other, and what come from elsewhere – that elusive space called variously (and vaguely) culture, the zeitgeist or the social” (Thurschwell 41). Texts like Marsh’s *The Beetle*, Doyle’s “The Parasite” and George Du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894) feature menacing foreign characters with the power to mesmerize, hypnotize and otherwise forcefully influence others. These characters are threatening not only because of the extreme powers they hold but also because they deploy these foreign powers against a range of British citizens. In the process, the traditional ways of conceiving the British subject’s relationship to culture, gender, sexuality, race, class, politics and even literature are called into question. These overlapping issues come to form a particularly ‘Gothic’ narrative; as experiments with mesmerism and hypnotism revealed a model of subjectivity predicated upon inner division, psychic

fragmentation and susceptibility to outside control, Gothic – as “an aesthetics of unease” (Devetak 624) – seemed especially well suited for explorations of disjunctive psychic states brought on by dissociogenic practices. As Pamela Thurschwell and Roger Luckhurst have demonstrated, the hypnotising villain became a staple figure in fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction. Figures like the evil Jewish mesmerist Svengali from the immensely popular Trilby were discussed by doctors like Ernest Hart, who approved of Du Maurier’s representation of hypnotism. In the BMJ Hart remarked, "Mr. Du Maurier may be congratulated on having produced for the first time a literary masterpiece in which the conditions of hypnotism are used with the power of genius, and in which their limitations and nature are correctly indicated if not fully analysed or described" (Qtd. in Leighton 114). Du Maruier’s novel serves as an example for the exchange of ideas on dissociogenic practices between the medical community and its ambient culture, largely influenced by works of literature.

4.1: Dissociogenic Practices and the Limits of Knowledge

Dissociogenic practices like mesmerism and hypnotism were a pervasive fascination in Victorian society, influencing both literature and major intellectual enterprises, most notably psychology and psychiatry. Although such practices have a long history, the last few decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a profound resurgence of interest, revealed in literature, mental science and its ambient culture. Pamela Thurschwell contends that “the fin de siècle is a peculiarly suggestible time, brimming with anxieties about the complete extinction of will brought about by the stage mesmerist, the medical practitioner, and the Society for Psychical Research experiment” (37). From Gothic tales to debates in medical journals, dissociogenic practices were at the fore, not only because of the attention such
practices compelled but also because of their symbolic connotations, for, as Alison Winter points out, experiments with mesmerism “became catalysts for competing assertions about the nature and seat of intellectual authority” (Mesmerized 5). As the mesmeric relationship was one that was saturated with issues of class, gender, and race, discussions on intellectual authority were often also discussions on individual and collective sovereignty.

Recent scholarly interest in the Victorian fascination with trance-states considers mesmerism “an important form of cultural self-expression; one that interrogates the most influential constructions of society, from gender to class and through economics and law” (Willis and Wynne 7). Indeed, critics like Winter, Roger Luckhurst, Martin Willis and Catherine Wynne argue that mesmerism was “one of the key forms of knowledge that the Victorians used to define their sense of self and society” (Willis and Wynne 7). Similarly, Winter claims that “[i]n making their way through a mesmeric trial, people found themselves exploring the major problems of their age. Writ large, Victorians were not merely testing the reality of a particular phenomenon or the veracity of a particular person; they were carrying out experiments on their own society” (Mesmerized 4). These experiments were used to monitor individual sensibilities, to take “measure of the influence they felt from one another,” and to speculate “about the sympathies that bound them” in a rapidly-changing society (Winter, Mesmerized 12). Thus, dissociogenic practices became symbolical of a diverse set of social concerns, covering everything from the seat of will-power to the nature of influence to the character of social bonds. This chapter will explore some of the ways in which dissociogenic practices came to stand-in for questions of influence more generally – under what conditions can the individual become susceptible to
the influence of others? How might the individual guard him or herself against dangerous or otherwise pernicious influences? What is the place and function of “will-power”? Questions such as these come to inform a number of Gothic and Gothically-inflected texts, but it is George Du Maruier’s enormously successful novel *Trilby* (1894) that most vividly engages with these questions through the figure of the demonic Jewish mesmerist and maestro, Svengali. Questions related to the power of influence gain an added charge in the figure of Svengali, whose Jewishness is repeatedly emphasised throughout the text, reflecting nineteenth-century anti-Semitic concerns over the influential nature of European Jewish persons. In his novel, Du Maurier uses mesmerism to explore issues of sexuality, gender identity, cultural identity and the nature of individual will-power in relation to outside influences in order to suggest the dangerous pliability of individual desires to outside forces.

Throughout Victorian England and the empire more broadly, mesmerism could be found almost everywhere and anywhere. Experiments and debates took place across Britain and the British Empire “in universities and mechanics’ institutes, country houses and cottages, vicarages and town halls, pubs and hospitals... in bedrooms and on city streets, from London to the Highlands of Scotland and from Dublin to Calcutta” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 4). Furthermore, members from all social classes and professions attended mesmeric séances. These demonstrations could take place in a private parlor with only a few guests in attendance or in a large, crowded public hall. Typically, the mesmerist would sit facing the subject, and the two would stare intently into one another’s eyes while the mesmerist made magnetic passes over the subject with his hands. After a time the subject would sink into the magnetic trance or magnetic sleep, losing the sense of smell and touch
as well as awareness of her surroundings, only hearing or responding to the prompts of the mesmerist. A “strange communion” (Winter, Mesmerized 3) would develop between them so that the subject would speak the mesmerist’s thoughts, experience his sensory perceptions (such as tasting the food in his mouth), and move her limbs in a physical echo of his. As Winter puts it, “If mesmerism could transform a conscious individual into a marionette, still more extraordinary were the active powers it gave to the mesmeric subject [in a deeper state of trance]... A new sense would open to her shut eyes. Subject might claim to see events occurring in the future, inside the body, in distant lands, and even in the heavens” (Mesmerized 3). In his study of magnetic sleep, Puységur identified five main characteristics of the magnetic trance: a sleep-walking kind of consciousness, a ‘rapport’ or special connection with the magnetiser, suggestibility, amnesia in the waking state of events that occur in the magnetised state, and a notable alteration in personality (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 39). Additionally, he identified the paranormal phenomena of mental communication and clairvoyance. Beyond this synchronisation of minds, somnambulists were able to perceive objects and conditions not available to the senses. Puységur held that somnambulists possess this ability in the form of a special sensation, “a ‘sixth sense,’ which is activated during magnetic sleep” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 90). Mesmeric displays often showcased these feats of perception that seemed to defy the very laws of nature.

After such extraordinary displays, audiences would debate the significance of the phenomena they had witnessed. What was being “tested,” Winter claims, varied.
Sometimes it was the person being mesmerised, sometimes it was the practice more generally. To prove that the subject’s ordinary senses had been suspended,

The mesmerist and members of the audience fired pistols near the subject’s ears, pricked her skin with needles, and waved smelling salts beneath her nostrils. There were crueler tests, too: acid poured on her skin, knives thrust under her fingernails, electric shocks run through her arms, and noxious substances placed in her mouth – vinegar, soap, or even ammonia. (Winter, Mesmerized 3)

If these “tortures,” as Winter calls them, produced a response, sceptics dismissed the experiment and accused the subject and/or mesmerist of chicanery and falsehood. According to Winter, it was vital to determine the veracity of trance states and what induced them because “issues of greater significance hung in the balance,” and whatever conclusions were drawn “would involve ascriptions of relative social and moral standing” (Mesmerized 3). As experimenters determined how a particular trial was to be conducted and evaluated, “they confronted the larger question of who could pronounce upon any scientific and medical controversy” (emphasis original, Mesmerized 4). Winter’s study suggests that mesmerism played a pivotal role in transformations of medical and scientific authority during the Victorian era. As definitions of science “were malleable during these years,” and “[w]hat counted as a proper science, or as a ‘scientific’ practice, remained open to dispute,” discussions of mesmerism and its associated practices helped work to define legitimate versus illegitimate scientific pursuit (Winter, Mesmerized 6).

There were many leading figures in medical science who took up the serious study of animal magnetism. One such figure was John Elliotson, professor of practical medicine at
London’s University College Hospital (UCH). Elliotson was known for his use of new drugs and diagnostic techniques from France and Germany, and he promoted research into areas such as mesmerism, phrenology and phreno-mesmerism, which applied the principles of mesmerism to the practice of phrenology. Elliotson collaborated with Dupotet at UCH in a series of treatments and public displays for almost a year. When he met Dupotet, Elliotson was a “great rising star of medicine” (Winter, Mesmerized 48); he was president of the Medico-Chirurgical Society of London, founder and president of the London Phrenological Society, and a popular figure within the medical school of UCH. Throughout late 1837 and early 1838 Elliotson collaborated with Dupotet, as well as Dionysius Lardner⁶⁸ and Phillip Crampton⁶⁹ in a series of experiments with animal magnetism at University College London (UCL). The UCL experiments were widely discussed in the medical weeklies, which drew the attention of the medical community. In May of 1838 Elliotson held a nationally publicised demonstration in the hospital’s theater, which was attended by hundreds, including “several elite intellectual and medical figures, several members of Parliament, trustees of the UCL board, and prominent aristocratic figures” in addition to author Charles Dickens (Winter, Mesmerized 73). Late in 1838 the Council of University College decided to put an end to the practice of mesmerism at its hospital (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 147). Elliotson resigned in protest, and as Martin Willis and Catherine Wynne write, “by the end of 1838 Elliotson’s orthodox medical career was in ruins” (1). In addition to losing his post at UCH, he suffered “devastating attacks by the Lancet for his experiments” (Willis and Wynne 1). Elliotson continued his mesmeric experiments, founded the London Mesmeric Infirmary,

⁶⁸ A popular scientific lecturer.
⁶⁹ Surgeon general of Ireland.
and “continued to insist on the scientific nature of his mesmeric experiments... [, strongly opposing] those who connected animal magnetism with the occult” (Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 146). The case of Elliotson illustrates how dissociogenic practices came to be used by doctors and scientists as a way to define and defend medical and scientific authority.

In addition to championing mesmerism’s use as a surgical anesthesia, Elliotson’s most important contribution to the history of mesmerism in Great Britain is his founding of *The Zoist*, a journal devoted to the investigation and promotion of the use of mesmerism. According to Crabtree, *The Zoist* (1843-1856) provided an important forum for discussing the details of specific cases of mesmeric treatment: “Elliotson’s support for the use of animal magnetism in medicine encouraged others to investigate other aspects of mesmerism. It was largely due to Elliotson that animal magnetism had much of a history in England at all” (*From Mesmer to Freud*, 147). The first issue of *The Zoist* proclaimed the “discovery of a new truth,” which

> [G]ives to the philosopher intense delight. The science of MESMERISM is a new physiological truth of *incalculable* value and importance; and though sneered at by the pseudo-philosophers of the day, there is not the less certainty that it presents the only avenue through which is discernible a ray of hope that the more intricate phenomena of the nervous system, — of Life, — will ever be revealed to man.

(Emphasis original, 2)

*The Zoist* pursued scientific truth and pronounced mesmerism a “triumph” that “quicken[s] the pulse in the bosom of humanity” (2). Elliotson’s passion for mesmerism was shared by
one of his good friends, author Charles Dickens. According to Willis and Wynne, mesmerism and literature converge in the careers of Elliotson and Dickens (1), and their relationship helps to set the precedent “for the engagement of the mesmeric and the literary throughout the nineteenth century” (2). Elliotson “invokes the literary and seizes on Dickens’ observations on Nancy’s humanity in Oliver Twist in a reprint of his November 1842 address to the Phrenological Society” (Willis and Wynne 2), while Dickens “the artist, was also Dickens the mesmerist” (Willis and Wynne 3). He first practised mesmerism on his wife Catherine in 1842 during a lecture tour of America, but it was his mesmeric treatment of Madame de la Rue in Genoa in 1844 that was more widely discussed, for “it demonstrated the mutual need in the operator-patient relationship,” illustrating one of the central controversies surrounding mesmeric practice – “sexual morality” (Willis and Wynne 3). Dickens’ final, and unfinished, novel The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870), features a malevolent mesmerist, John Jasper, “who penetrates Rosa Bud’s mind to impose his sexual desire” (Willis and Wynne 3). Rosa claims:

He has made a slave of me with his looks.... When I play, he never moves his eyes from my hands. When I sing, he never moves his eyes from my lips. When he corrects me, and strikes me a note, or a chord, or plays a passage, he himself is in the sounds, whispering that he pursues me as a lover, and commanding me to keep his secret. I avoid his eyes but he forces me to see them without looking at them.

(70-71)

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According to Willis and Wynne, Dickens’ treatment of la Rue worked to destabilise his marriage, and Michael Slater claims that for a period of several months Dickens’ “intense therapeutic relationship with Madame de la Rue seems to have been the dominant, not to say the obsessive, interest of his life” (123).
Although incomplete, critics have claimed that *Edwin Drood* is “Dickens’ finest exposition of altered states of consciousness” (Willis and Wynne 3). Daniel Pick claims that, “In his fiction, Dickens was less interested in the miraculous curative promises of the art than in the twists and turns of psychic power and slavery, human infatuation and captivation” (*Svengali’s Web* 109). The contradictory nature of Dickens’ use of mesmerism – as both a therapeutic practice and a literary representation of evil – points to the uncertain status of mesmerism in Victorian philosophical, medical and scientific debates over the practice. This uncertainty stemmed not only from the tension between legitimate and illegitimate scientific practice and medical authority but also from more general debates regarding the power of the individual will and the nature of unconscious mental activity.

Dissociogenic practices raised questions concerning the place of individual will or volition in relation to unconscious or “reflex” behaviours. The work on the subject of the reflexes and the relationship between the mind and the body is vast and would require a separate study to make a thorough examination of it. However, we can gain a sense of the topic by looking at two central issues in the discourse of mesmerism and hypnotism in the late-nineteenth century: the character of individual will and the power to hold influence over others. As Alison Winter notes, “Mesmerised subjects, ventriloquists’ dolls, and inanimate ‘human automata’ were literally interchangeable on the popular stage, and mesmeric displays alternated with puppetry and ventriloquism in an evening’s show” (*Mesmerized* 120). Mesmerism and ventriloquism or puppetry were practices that made living objects appear inanimate and inanimate objects come to life; however, as one involves a lifeless object and the other a sentient being, “people felt a consequent
disorientation when the two practices were combined or when one resembled the other” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 121). Because the mesmeric subject could appear “as a piece of breathing organization, possessed of no independent powers, thinking, feeling, [or] knowing” apart from the mesmerist’s will” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 121), the subject was thought to give over his or her personality and conscious self entirely to the mesmeriser, as though the mesmerist was his or her puppeteer or master. As Martin Willis argues, “The subject’s actions, both physical and psychological, could be controlled entirely by another, as though he or she were a clockwork automaton set in motion by the mechanical inventor” (55). The mesmerised subject and the automaton thus seemed to share the same fate: the loss of self-expression and self-control.

By the end of the nineteenth century, automata had become established symbols for the possible mechanical nature of human beings. Automata were incredibly popular during the eighteenth century, seen as both exciting and disturbing to spectators for the way such figures challenged the distinction between the natural and the artificial. Automata were creatures of great mechanical complexity intended as exact replicas of nature. Two of the foremost creators and exhibitors of automata in the late eighteenth century were Jacques de Vaucanson and Wolfgang von Kempelen (Willis 30). Vaucanson and Kempelen were especially famous for their construction of androids: mechanical models of human beings. According to the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, “one of the foremost producers of accumulated knowledge” in the early nineteenth century (Willis 31), the android is “the most perfect or difficult of the automata or self-moving machines; because the motions of the human body are more complicated than those of any other living creature. Hence the
construction of an Androides [sic], in such a manner as to imitate any of these motions with exactness, is justly considered as one of the highest efforts of mechanical skill” (emphasis original, qtd. in Willis 31). The first working automata were exhibited in England in the 1740s, and similar displays – of mechanical chess players, musicians, dancers, and so on – were a prominent feature of scientific exhibitions, fairs and popular shows held across Europe in the early nineteenth-century (Castle 11). Perhaps the most famous automaton was Kempelen’s chess-playing Turk, “whose success at a game requiring intellectual rigor had the nineteenth-century public flocking to see him” (Willis 32). Androids and mechanical animals were manufactured by technicians who were interested in medicine and natural sciences, and many such creators surrounded themselves with doctors and surgeons to elaborate the different artificial organs; however, as Willis points out, even though automata impressed the public with their ingenuity and fair representation of the human frame and its movements, they were not “simulacra that could not be told apart from the human” (42). Beneath these attempts to construct a human-machine laid the philosophical conception that the human functions in much the same way as a machine, following Descartes’ premise that the human body was machinelike. Simultaneous to mechanical innovations producing the signs of life and spirit in the form of automata, the vital sciences were finding machines in the body. As Alison Winter highlights in her study of mesmerism, many researchers in medicine and science assigned an increasing proportion of human behaviour to the action of bodily mechanism instead of the will (Mesmerized 37). Several of these researchers addressed the question of the extent to which life and mind were mechanical, and advocates of electric medicine began to see the body as a battery, storing
and dispensing electric influence as needed; indeed, the new “reflex” physiology represented the human body “as a system of switches and levers, reflecting incoming stimuli outward again in bodily action” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 37). Actions that had previously been seen as uniquely human no longer appeared so as there was an increasing insistence on the similarity between human and mechanical systems.

Automata and mesmerised subjects alike worked to provoke debates regarding unconscious “reflex” behaviour and the “impalpable force” designated as “the will” (Tatar xiii). Physiologists and mental physiologists in England such as William Benjamin Carpenter, John Elliotson, G.H. Lewes, Herbert Spencer, Alexander Bain, and in the latter half of the century, Henry Maudsley and Thomas Henry Huxley, pondered the role of mental reflexes in the “complex relationship of attention, perception, and action” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 327). In the mid-to-late nineteenth-century, discussions of unconsciousness and unconscious behaviour were not new; indeed, the work of the magnetists and Puységur in particular had made somnambulism and the “second self” revealed in trance states topics widely discussed. The idea of unconscious action during consciousness, however, “was unfamiliar and controversial” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 287). William Carpenter, the leading physiologist of his generation, was most directly responsible for developing the theory of “mental reflexes” to explain a wide variety of human action. Carpenter was well known from the hundreds of public lectures he gave to audiences from Manchester to London, and his scientific views were extensively published in his many textbooks and popular encyclopaedias, the most widely distributed of which (published anonymously in the early

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71 Alison Winter 287.
1840s) sold more than 70,000 copies (Winter, *Mesmerized* 287). Carpenter began his career with “efforts to make comparative biology more law-like,” and during the late 1840s and early 1850s he became “increasingly interested in the mind,” reflected in the increased number of passages on mind and will in his treatises, many of which concerned altered states of mind and mental reflexes (Winter, *Mesmerized* 288). A central tenet of the idea of reflex behaviour was that an individual possessed an extensive set of reflexes “ranging from the most basic in the extended nervous system to an elaborate mechanism within higher brain function, all of which operated in semi-autonomy from the conscious mind” (Winter, “The Chemistry of Truth” 215). Carpenter believed that we all build “our own personal ‘automata,’ which act for us both when they carry out routine actions to which we do not pay attention and, in special circumstances, when our conscious minds are impaired from their ordinary vigilance” (Winter, “The Chemistry of Truth” 215). Actions such as sucking (as an infant) and coughing may have always been unconscious, whereas actions such as walking erect would have been intentional at first but have become unconscious through habit. Therefore, Carpenter argued, actions that are performed habitually often become unconscious actions, where the subject performs them without conscious intention or will.

In the fourth edition of his most celebrated text, *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1884), Carpenter defines the “Will” as a determined effort to exercise the power and freedom to act in accordance with self-conscious judgement. He writes, “we may define Volition or Will as a determinate effort to carry out a purpose previously conceived; and this effort may be directed to the performance of either the Mental or the Bodily acts which are adapted to carry that purpose to execution” (emphasis original, 376). Carpenter argues that
in the process of evolution, man has gradually replaced “blind unreasoning Instinct” with “rational Intelligence” (376). He also maintains, however, that even the highest forms of reasoning may be unconscious and thus do not necessarily involve the exercise of the will, and that “ideational as well as emotional states may express themselves in Muscular action, not only without any exertion of the Will, but even in opposition to it” (emphasis original, 377). In his chapter “Of Unconscious Cerebration,” for example, Carpenter claims that a “large part of our Intellectual activity – whether it consists in Reasoning processes, or in the exercise of the Imagination – is essentially automatic, and may be described in Physiological language as the reflex action of the Cerebrum” (emphasis original, 515). Carpenter devoted the second half of this text to discussions of somnambulism, mesmerism, dreams and spiritualism in relation to his theory of reflex behaviour. The “essential peculiarity” of trance states, he argues, “is the suspension of the directing and controlling power of the Will; so that whole course of action is determined Automatically by Suggestion” (xx). Much like Braid, Carpenter attributed trance behaviour to the act of concentrating on an external stimulus, which severed the mental connections between the mental reflexes and the will. As a result, the “‘biologised’ subject’s ‘voluntary control over the current of thought is entirely suspended, the individual being for the time (so to speak) a mere thinking automaton, the whole course of whose ideas is determinable by suggestions operating from without’” (emphasis original, Winter, Mesmerized, 288-9). In Human Physiology (1876) Carpenter argued that the cerebrum may respond automatically to impressions “fitted to excite it to ‘reflex’ action” when the “Will is in abeyance”: “Thus in the states of... Somnambulism [etc.] ideas which take possession of the mind, and from which it cannot
free itself, may excite respondent movements” (emphasis original, 672). Winter argues that Carpenter moved “consensual” phenomena into the realm of ideas, integrating them into “a hierarchy of self-command and judgment, in which different levels of the will and higher reflexes were stripped away by different trance-inducing practices” (Mesmerized, 289). As Winter understands Carpenter’s view,

Hypnosis could demonstrably remove the will from the experimental scene, thereby revealing the extent to which behaviour could proceed without it. During trance period, sensory impressions led directly to ideas and thence to action, entirely bypassing volition. Naturally occurring examples of related phenomena included dreams, drunken behaviour, insanity, and forms of hysteria. (Mesmerized 289)

In Carpenter’s view, then, the mesmeric subject was simply a machine, devoid of agency, authority and even individual character.

4.2 George Du Maurier’s Trilby

Perhaps no other fictional mesmerist is better known than Du Maurier’s Svengali. Svengali’s influence is so overpowering that he comes to dominate not only Trilby’s mind but also “the critical and scholarly life of Trilby in the century since the novel was published” (Coll 743). Indeed, as Ruth Bienstock Anolik claims, “Svengali is now so much more famous than the novel itself, so detached from the text that engendered him that his origins are not commonly remembered” (“The Scandal of the Jew” 99). Svengali – as both character and racialised cultural phenomenon – represents how images of the dangerous mesmerist gave expression to Victorian anxieties about irrational and pernicious influences operating in society. As Alison Winter, Pamela Thurschwell and Daniel Pick have all persuasively argued,
hypnosis and mesmerism offered a language to conceptualise the various ways that individuals were bound together in social groups and the influences that coordinated their thoughts and actions as they engaged with politics, literature, art, and even new technologies. Within *Trilby* Svengali comes to represent a dangerous influence; as a powerful mesmerist, he uses his power to dominate Trilby, arguably reducing her to “just a singing-machine – an organ to play upon – an instrument of music – a Stradivarius – a flexible flageolet of flesh and blood – a voice, and nothing more” (Du Maurier 299). As a musician, Svengali and his mesmerised protégé, the great opera diva La Svengali – a double of Trilby the Parisian *grisette* – hold a powerful influence over the audiences who are enraptured by their music as though in a state of mass hypnosis. Throughout the novel and many of his subsequent representations in theatre and film, Svengali is presented as a demonic, inhuman and predatory “Jew,” bent on possessing Trilby and making his mark on the world as a great musician. His hold over Trilby and the crowds who come to adore La Svengali signifies how powerful influences can corrupt individual minds or otherwise provoke improper and dangerous desires and behaviours. *Trilby* centers on questions of influence; moreover, *Trilby* itself was a powerful influence, spawning marketing campaigns of new proportions: “Trilby hats, Trilby sausages, a *Life Magazine* Trilby contest, even Trilby ice cream molded into the shape of her famous foot” (Gracombe 76-7). *Trilby*, in both its content and its consumption, demonstrates the ways in which “influence” became an important topic in discussions of individual and collective sovereignty in the late-nineteenth century. Influence, as linked with the mesmerising villain Svengali, comes to stand for a
matrix of late-nineteenth-century fears about the permeable constitution of the self and the malleability of individual identity and desires.

Du Maurier’s *Trilby* was an international bestseller and cultural sensation. American reviewer Margaret Sangster wrote “There are people not a few who will remember the first half of 1894 not for the hard times, not for the strikes ... nor any other thing of public interest or private concern, so as for the pleasure they had in reading *Trilby*” (qtd. in Showalter, Introduction vii). The tale of the eponymous heroine, Trilby O’Ferrall, a lovable Parisian *grisette*, was the first modern bestseller in the United States and the first to use modern advertising and marketing techniques; it spawned an international hit play (as well as countless other adaptations in the theatre), a series of popular films, and even inspired trends in fashion, including Bohemian dress and the trilby hat. Set in mid-nineteenth-century Bohemian Paris, *Trilby* follows the lives of the three painters Little Billee, Taffy and the Laird as they come to know and love Trilby, a half-Irish girl who works as a painter’s model and laundress. The most memorable character, however, is the demonic Jewish musician Svengali, who uses his mesmeric power to seduce and transform Trilby into the great diva *La Svengali*. According to Elaine Showalter, Du Maurier’s story of Trilby and Svengali “entered the cultural mythology of the *fin de siècle* along with Dracula, Nora and Sherlock Holmes” (Introduction vii). Laura Vorachek makes a similar claim when she states that *Trilby* is “a novel that entranced the reading public with its descriptions of Bohemian Paris and mesmerism” (197). Indeed, the trope of mesmerism is used in the narrative to explore a number of social issues relating to individual and

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72 A type of fedora worn by the actress playing Trilby in the first London performance of the stage adaptation of the novel.
collective sovereignty, which often intertwine and overlap in complex ways, reflecting Du Maurier’s fascination with hybridity and androgyny. Issues such as anti-Semitism and national character, aesthetics and culture, the nature of individual and collective will, propriety, gender and sexuality are all mediated through the portrayal of mesmeric suggestibility, rapport and the notion of “influence.” Du Maruier’s tale of mesmerism, art and music raises interesting questions regarding the dangers of influence and the nature of consumption, ultimately suggesting that the constitution of individual desires and identity is hazardously – even lethally – malleable to outside forces.

_Trilby_ is, as Sarah Grancombe puts it, “a very weird novel” (77). The novel is a blend of “fictionalized reminiscences of Du Maurier’s student years in mid-century Paris” and a “sensationalist” plot centered on the mesmerisation of Trilby (Gracombe 77). Furthermore, as Showalter points out in her introduction to the Oxford edition of the text, Du Maurier’s portrayal of 1850s Paris “is as much an invention as a reality, and as much a projection of the 1890s as a recollection of the 1850s” (xi). This heterogeneity permeates almost all aspects of the text – from the androgyny of Trilby and Little Billee to the figure of La Svengali, a mesmeric composite of Svengali and Trilby. Moreover, as Gracombe highlights, “Trilby’s narrator and narrative oscillate between different opinions on every issue and at every level, from the depiction of sexuality (in which the androgynous is eroticized) to the examination of class structures (sometimes reified, sometimes disdained) to attitudes toward cultural Englishness (at once mocked and admired)” (77). The novel is also a hybrid of realism and Gothic; with the exception of Svengali, Du Maurier’s characters are all “realistically drawn,” and he “takes great care in locating his particular characters within a
precise place and time” (Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 175). The representation of Svengali, however, infuses a Gothic element into the text, one that is reinforced by the inclusion of Gothic tropes, such as the double, satanic figures and possession.

Much like the tale of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Trilby* is a text permeated by images of doubles, duality, multiplicity and hybridity. The most striking of these is the Trilby/La Svengali dyad. Gecko’s revelation towards the end of the novel that there were “two *Trilbys*” at once explains and confounds our understanding of Trilby’s rise to stardom, apparent marriage to Svengali (whom she has previously found repulsive) and public shunning of her once love, Little Billee. While the notion that there were “two Trilbys” rather than one seems to explain the surprising contradictions in her character, Svengali’s posthumous control over Trilby and La Svengali’s powerful control over the crowds who adore her raise questions regarding the nature of individual identity and volition, for who is La Svengali? Is she, as Gecko suggests, “just a singing-machine,” “an organ” (299) that Svengali plays in order to project his voice? Is this a hybrid of Trilby and Svengali, “a merging and blurring of the identities and powers of both mesmeriser and mesmerised,” as Hillary Grimes suggests (“Power in Flux” 67)? Or, is La Svengali Trilby’s ‘second self,’ a more refined and creative aspect of her personality merely revealed through the act of mesmerism? While there are no easy answers to these questions, an exploration of duality, androgyny, hybridity and agency in the novel works to illuminate Du Maurier’s presentation of individual identity as fluid and malleable.

On one level, the trope of the double is expressed in *Trilby* by images of hybrid identity and androgyny. In many ways Trilby and Little Billee are presented as reflections of
one another through their shared hybrid traits. Little Billee is ambidextrous and androgynous, English with “just a faint suggestion of some possible very remote Jewish ancestor” (Du Maurier 6). He is presented as an effeminate male, “small and slender” with “delicate” features, “graceful” with “very small hands and feet” (6). Trilby, the daughter of an alcoholic Irish gentleman and a “beautiful Highland... [barmaid] of low degree” (37), is the masculinised opposite of the effeminate Little Billee, a “very tall and fully developed young female” clad in military drag with “the grey overcoat of a French infantry soldier” and a “huge pair of male slippers” (12-13). The narrator continues,

[She had] a very healthy young face, which could scarcely be called quite beautiful at first sight, since the eyes were too wide apart, the mouth too large, the chin too massive.... she would have made a singularly handsome boy.... [she had] a voice so rich and deep and full as almost to suggest an incipient tenore robusto; and one felt instinctively that it was a real pity she wasn’t a boy, she would have made a jolly one. (13)

As “Du Maurier’s Aryan-Amazon” (Neil Davison 90), Trilby certainly seems to take on traditionally male characteristics, such as a large stature and powerful voice. Her masculine appearance is in some ways complemented by her personality. Trilby unabashedly announces that she is a model, posing in “the altogether”\(^7\) for an artist downstairs, which Neil Davison claims “further demonstrate[s] her masculinized joie de vivre” (90). Trilby’s “masculinized femininity” (Neil Davison 92) and Billee’s effeminate masculinity work to

\(^7\) A euphemism created by Du Maurier for posing in the nude.
problematise the unitary nature of identity, a challenge that is strengthened by the text’s presentation of mesmerism.

The text’s play with gender and androgyny reflects the bizarre blending of subjectivity in the act of trance. As Daniel Pick argues, hypnosis “provoked deep philosophical uncertainties about identity, and the role of identification with others in the very constitution of the self” (Svengali’s Web 69). In the act of mesmerism, as Elizabeth Barrett puts it, the subject is required to “submit” herself “soul & body to another will,” a process that she was convinced meant a merging of the subject’s identity into that of the mesmerist’s (qtd. in Winter, Mesmerized 238). Such an erasure of identity is illustrated by Elliotson’s description of an experiment he conducted on “two charming youthful patients, of excellent cerebral development and carefully brought up, of high intelligence, and of high moral character, - beautifully illustrating the power of good training upon a well-developed brain” (qtd. in Chapman 335). Elliotson published a letter detailing the experiment in Cerebral Physiology and Materialism in 1843. During the experiments, the patients are said to wholly succumb to the will of the mesmerist, and as Chapman notes, the letter’s description of the mesmeric trances “emphasises their pliancy and apparent loss of will” (335). Elliotson writes, “[They] [a]re thrown into a profound coma, which no impressions of the senses will dispel... their limbs may then be stiffened at pleasure and endowed with enormous force, which, although not yielding to mechanical violence, gives way to contact, or to the breath, or to movements of the operator’s hand, without contact” (qtd. in Chapman 335). Elliotson’s description of the experiments presents the mesmerist as having
absolute power over the mesmerised, a power that “renders the subjects mechanistic” (Chapman 335). Elliotson writes,

[The various muscles of the face may be made to twitch as if with electricity, and the eyes be opened or the body be drawn by movements of the fingers and hands held at a short distance; the position of each finger of the operator’s hand will be minutely imitated, though the eyes may be closed, and the experiment be made out of the patient’s sphere of vision. Though showing all signs of sleep in the breathing, the falling of the head, the aspect, and the exquisite positions, they may be roused to talk, but never to recognise the person nor the place. Their dream, if so it may be called, is perfectly rational; but the real place, and the person addressing, and even the time, are invariably fancied otherwise than is the fact. (qtd. in Chapman 335-336)]

As Chapman notes, Elliotson’s account of the mesmerised body associates mesmeric power with that of a puppeteer “who can alter the very topography of the face with the movement of the fingers,” turning the mesmerised subject into “a machine whose movements are manipulated by the dominant practitioner” (336). Elliotson’s description of this experiment highlights the bizarre merging of operator and subject in the mesmeric relationship, one that ostensibly allows the mesmerist to control the thoughts and actions of the mesmerised subject through a simple execution of his will.

The rapport that occurred between operator and subject often erased the boundaries between two people. As we have seen, Puységur thought of the rapport as a literal fusion of the nervous systems of the magnetist and subject, making the two
individuals functionally act as one. Thomas Buckland echoes Puységur’s ideas on rapport in *The Hand-Book of Mesmerism* (c.1850), where he argues that for the mesmeric relationship to work, the operator and subject must be *en rapport* with one another:

> In order that one individual may act upon another, there must exist between them a moral and physical sympathy, as there is between all the members of an animated body . . . moral sympathy [is established] by desire of doing good to one who desires to receive it, or by ideas and wishes, which, occupying them both equally, forms between them a communication of sentiments. When this sympathy is well established between two individuals, we say they are in communication. (qtd. in Grimes, “Power in Flux” 70-71)

While many who wrote on the topic of mesmerism in the nineteenth century argued that the subject is entirely subjugated to the will of the mesmerist, others conceived the magnetic current as an independent agent, one that existed separately of both magnetist and magnetised, turning both operator and subject into passive receptacles for the power of this force. For example, Chauncy Hare Townshend in *Facts in Mesmerism* (1840) argues that the power in mesmerism “belongs *neither* to the mesmeriser nor to the mesmerised, but rather to the mesmeric agent itself” (Grimes, “Power in Flux” 68). Townshend suggests that the mesmeric agent is “an action of matter as distinct and specific as that of light, heat, electricity, or any other of the imponderable agents, as they are called; – that when the mesmeriser influences his patient, he does this by a medium, either known already in another guise, or altogether new to our experience” (Qtd. in Grimes, “Power in Flux” 68).

For Townshend, the human body becomes the medium of mesmerism, “which suggests that
in mesmerism both the operator and subject are passive conductors of the mesmeric agent” (Grimes, “Power in Flux” 68). Thus, Grimes reads mesmerism as a kinetic process, one that equally involves the mesmerist and subject so that Trilby is as possessed with mesmeric force as Svengali is. This reading highlights what is perhaps the pivotal question inherent in most discussions of dissociogenic practices: is the mesmerised subject an agentic subject?

The question of Trilby’s agency under the mesmeric influence of Svengali is one that has dominated many critical discussions of the novel. In Spellbound: Studies on Mesmerism and Literature (1978), Maria Tatar suggests that Svengali is the portrait of the kind of mesmeric figure who “came to be associated with both divine influence and demonic power,” which he used for “[e]nslavement and domination” (270). Daniel Pick’s Svengali’s Web: the Alien Enchanter in Modern Culture (2000) similarly argues that Svengali has dominance over the mesmerised Trilby, claiming that “Svengali” is the “shado[w]” whose name “has become synonymous with psychological manipulation” (1). For Pick, Svengali represents the “image of a sinister hypnotist, lurking behind the scenes, ambiguously responsible for breaking and remaking another weaker character,” a “charismatic charlatan[n]” who becomes the “dire maste[r] of [his] patients” (1). Alison Winter also argues that Trilby is overtaken by Svengali and “erased” by his mesmeric possession of her: “The sinister role of the conductor-mesmerist as a malevolent demagogue in Trilby... involved a far more frightening image of mental control and the destruction of individual identity than had ever appeared earlier in the century” (Mesmerized 339-341). Indeed, while under the power of Svengali, Trilby appears to lose her powers of volition and self-
control. She is first mesmerised by Svengali after a painful attack of neuralgia in her eyes. Svengali delights in demonstrating his power over the entranced model, telling the Laird that she will not open her eyes, speak or move unless he commands it: “‘See, she sleeps not, but she shall not open her eyes’.... ‘She shall not open her mouth’.... ‘She shall not rise from the divan’... Trilby was spellbound, and could not move” (Du Maurier 49). Even after Svengali “set[s] her free,” Trilby is still under his influence. Svengali emphasises his power when he tells Trilby,

[When your pain arrives, then you shall come once more to Svengali, and he shall take it away from you, and keep it himself for a soufenir [sic] of you when you are gone. And when you have it no more, he shall play you the “Rosemonde” of Schubert, all alone for you.... And you shall see nothing, hear nothing, think of nothing but Svengali, Svengali, Svengali! (Emphasis original, 52)

We are told that Trilby had “a singularly impressionable nature, as was shown by her quick and ready susceptibility to Svengali’s hypnotic influence” (53). She will subsequently be haunted by Svengali’s suggestion, “haunted by the memory of Svengali’s big eyes and the touch of his soft, dirty fingertips on her face” (53). Her “fear and repulsion” grow as “Svengali, Svengali, Svengali!” rings in her head and ears till it becomes “an obsession, a dirge, a knell, an unendurable burden, almost as hard to bear as the pain in her eyes” (53). After a series of misfortunes, from her broken engagement to Little Billee to the death of her little brother, Trilby comes to give herself over to Svengali’s powers, becoming the cosmopolitan diva of the opera, La Svengali.
As La Svengali, Trilby appears as a statuesque automaton, a “magnificent and seductive apparition” with a thin and “haggard” face in spite of its “artificial freshness” (Du Maurier 209). When she performs, La Svengali stares “straight at Svengali” rather than the audience, emphasising his mesmeric influence over her. Even though she is recognisable as Trilby, La Svengali is also markedly different. The Laird notices that her face is narrower and longer, and her eyes are larger and bereft of their familiar expression. Her personality, or lack thereof, is also drastically different – she was no longer the jubilant, kind and gracious Trilby O’Ferrall that the “three musketeers of the brush” had known. As La Svengali, she is cold, pale and lifeless. When she appears with Svengali in a carriage on the streets of Paris, La Svengali is elegantly draped in furs, yet her eyes are blackened beneath, making them appear twice their size and devoid of any feeling. At the command of Svengali, Trilby stares at Little Billee “with a cold stare of disdain, and [cuts] him dead.... with a little high-pitched flippant snigger worthy of a London barmaid” (234-5). The contrast between La Svengali and Trilby O’Ferrall is so pronounced that the Laird exclaims “It’s not Trilby – I swear! She could never have done that – it’s not in her! and it’s another face altogether – I’m sure of it!” (emphasis original, 235). More than her behaviour and appearance, it is La Svengali’s talent that comes to mark her as a separate identity than Trilby. Trilby’s first performance of “Ben Bolt” is described as “too grotesque and too funny for laughter” (18). Her voice, though untrained, is so immense “that it seemed to come from all round, to be reverberated from every surface of the studio” (18). Although she possesses a powerful voice, Trilby is so tone-deaf that “it was as though she could never once have deviated into tune, never once have hit upon a true note, even by a fluke” (19). La Svengali, however, is
said to possess a voice like none other, a “woman archangel” or some “enchanted princess out of a fairy tale” as she sings “higher and shriller than any woman had ever sung before” (211, 212, 218). Despite her talent, La Svengali is described as an “imbecile” (246), “stupid as an owl” (171) - “belle comme un ange – mais bête comme un pot” (170) 74. Her association with Faust (212) and the repeated characterisation of Svengali as satanic and demonic emphasises that La Svengali has achieved this greatness at a cost: “her body and soul in exchange for her musical success” (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 169).

Mesmerism is characterised as a demonic and dark power in *Trilby*, one that robs the subject of not only her will or volition but also her vitality and very existence. After Trilby is first mesmerised by Svengali, the Laird tells her:

“I’d sooner have any pain than have it cured in that unnatural way, and by such a man as that! He’s a bad fellow, Svengali – I’m sure of it! He’s mesmerized you; that was it is – mesmerism! I’ve often heard of it, but never seen if done before. They get you into their power, and just make you do any blessed thing they please – lie, murder, steal – anything! and kill yourself into the bargain when they’ve done with you! It’s just too terrible to think of! (Du Maurier 52)

The Laird’s comments point to public anxieties over the potential for hypnotically-induced criminal behaviour as well as the belief that mesmerism was the work of the devil. One of the most vocal promoters of the view that mesmeric phenomena were the work of the devil was the abbé Wendel-Würtz. In *Superstitions et prestiges des philosophes* (1817) he argued that “among the workers of satanic prodigies of our time, the magnetizers occupy the first

74 “Beautiful as an angel, but as stupid as a pot”
one should give [Mesmer] the ghastly credit of having discovered a diabolic secret that has existed in all ages and has been rediscovered a thousand times in a thousand different forms” (qtd. in Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 183). Crabtree writes that Wendel-Würtz saw the phenomena of animal magnetism as the signs of diabolical intervention:

The ability of the magnetizer to suspend normal sensation in his somnambulistic subject and the somnambulist’s ability to reveal the name, seat, nature, and cause of an illness and prescribe effective remedies; to read the magnetizer’s thoughts...; to predict the future course of a disease; to recall detailed memories of things long forgotten in the waking states; the startling change in personality and intelligence in the somnambulistic state; the sure control the magnetizer has over his somnambulist, by which he can command her to do things of which she would ordinarily be incapable – all of these phenomena were, to Wendel-Würtz, alarming signs that the devil had insinuated himself into the daily fabric of contemporary life, working his evil magic under the guise of a naturalistic healing practice. (*From Mesmer to Freud* 183)

Wendel-Würtz was not the only critic to accuse the magnetists of collusion with the devil. Honoré Tissot in 1841 would make similar claims, arguing that animal magnetism is an “operation by which a person is rendered possessed by a demon by means of certain gestures, by a look, or even by the will alone” (qtd. in Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud* 184). Mesmerism for Tissot was a type of black magic, similar to that of witches or oracles. In the act of mesmerism, an “evil spirit” takes hold of the subject, “puts her in a state of
somnambulism or ecstasy” and reveals “hidden things” which could otherwise not be known (such as reading from closed books or speaking of things happening in distant places) (84). According to Tissot, all of these signs are “indications of demonic possession” (85).

Du Maurier’s novel suggests that Trilby is indeed possessed by Svengali, who is likened to a demon on several occasions. Gecko tells Taffy that Svengali was a “demon, a magician!” and “a god!” (Du Maurier 294). In order to turn Trilby from a tone-deaf model to a grand operatic diva, Svengali had to possess Trilby, to turn her into “his Trilby” (emphasis original, 298). Trilby claims that Svengali “hardly ever left” her side; as soon as he said “Dors, ma mignonne!” she would fall asleep for hours, only to awake to find Svengali kneeling over her, as some dark shadow (258). Svengali’s mesmeric possession of Trilby allows him to quite literally take her over, turning her into his Trilby. Gecko claims:

There were two Trilbys. There was the Trilby you knew, who could not sing one single note in tune. She was an angel of paradise.... But all at once – pr-r-r-out! Presto! augenblick! ... with one wave of his hand over her – with one look of his eye – with a word – Svengali could turn her into the other Trilby, his Trilby – and make her do whatever he liked... you might have run a red-hot needle into her and she would not have felt it... He had but to say “Dors!” and she suddenly became an unconscious Trilby of marble, who could produce wonderful sounds – just the sounds he wanted, and nothing else – and think his thoughts and wish his wishes –

75 “Sleep, my darling!”
76 Immediately
77 “Sleep!”
and love him at his bidding with a strange, unreal, factitious love... just his own love
for himself turned inside out... and reflected back on him as from a mirror.

(Emphasis original, 289-9)

Gecko claims that Trilby’s transformation into La Svengali is the result of Svengali’s demonic
power rather than his tutorage. In Gecko’s description, Svengali has absolute control over
Trilby, making her “the conventional possessed soul, speaking (singing) with the voice of the
Devil” (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 169). As La Svengali, Trilby is a reflection
of Svengali, of his narcissism and vanity. She is “un echo, un simulacre, quoi! pas autre
chose!” (emphasis original, Du Maurier 299). Gecko characterises the somnambulistic
state as one of death, claiming that when she was La Svengali, “Trilby was dead” (emphasis
original, 299). The unnaturalness of Svengali’s mesmeric power is accentuated by the hold
he maintains on Trilby even from the grave. Trilby is entranced by his portrait, which arrives
in London with “no message of any kind, no letter of explanation... which, from the
postmarks on the case, seemed to have travelled all over Europe to London, out of some
remote province in Eastern Russia – out of the mysterious East! The poisonous East –
birthplace and home of an ill wind that blows nobody good” (282). Svengali, in the military
uniform of his Hungarian band, looked “straight out of the picture” with “his big black eyes”
full of “stern command” (282). Trilby becomes mesmerised by his portrait and begins to
speak to him as though he were there — “Battez bien la mesure, Svengali!” (282). Her final
song is the “most astounding feat of musical utterance ever heard out of a human throat,” a
song “not of this earth” (283). The return of La Svengali (itself a kind of spectral return)

78 “an echo, and image, what! Nothing else!”
79 “keep the beat well, Svengali”
causes Marta to cry out “Got in Himmel! wieder zurück! wieder zurück!” (283). Trilby dies with the name “Svengali” on her lips, the final expression of his command over her.

J. M. Dent suggests that in his possession of Trilby, Svengali exemplifies the traits of an archetypal Gothic villain: “Like Dr Jekyll, who leads a double life through the evil Hyde, Svengali cannot find a way of expressing one side of his nature – he cannot sing. In order to do so, he violates the rules of basic human morality and takes over another person, both sexually and hypnotically” (qtd. in Grimes, “Power in Flux” 68). Svengali is marked as degenerate, lecherous, inhuman and demonic through his Jewishness, his dirtiness, his mesmeric power, his enchanting music and his “macabre sexual fantasies” (Vorachek 199). These characteristics are emphasised from our first introduction to Svengali, who is increasingly dehumanised in his subsequent representations in the text. A “tall bony individual . . . of Jewish aspect, well-featured but sinister... very shabby and dirty” (Du Maurier 11), Svengali is classed by stereotypes of racial degeneracy. Ruth Bienstock Anolik argues that “the essence of Du Maurier’s monstrous Svengali is that he is a Jew” (“The Infamous Svengali” 164). His Jewishness is his “primary identifying feature, the sole source of his malevolence” (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 164). He is described in stereotypical fashion, with a “long shapely Hebrew Nose” (Du Maurier 230), “thick, heavy, languid, lustreless black hair [falling] down behind his ears to his shoulders... [and] bold, brilliant black eyes, with long heavy lids, a thin, sallow face, and a beard of burnt-up black” (11). Svengali does not so much appear in as he “intrudes” upon the text, as “the stereotypically obtrusive Jew” (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 164). He is “both

80 “God in Heaven! Back again! Back again!”
tawdry and dirty in his person... greasily, mattedly unkept” (Du Maurier 39). The narrator repeatedly underlines Svengali’s dirtiness, which is contrasted with the cleanliness of the British artists who bathe regularly, a practice the “filthy black Hebrew sweep” Svengali scoffs at (Du Maurier 48). According to Laura Vorachek, Svengali’s filth “marks him as less civilized than the British and raises the possibility of disease as well” (199). Furthermore, Vorachek argues that Svengali is marked as degenerate by his gruesome sexual fantasies of Trilby; he tells Trilby,

[A]ch! What a beautiful skeleton you will make! And very soon too, because you do not smile on your madly loving Svengali... You shall have a nice little mahogany glass case all to yourself in the museum of the École de Médicine, and Svengali shall come in his new fur-lined coat, smoking his big cigar of the Havana... and look through the holes of your eyes into your stupid empty skull. (Du Maurier 92)

Later, Trilby tells the Englishmen that Svengali used to tell her he would come and see her at the Paris Morgue (256). Vorachek writes, “Svengali makes love to [Trilby] by conjuring scenes of her body decaying or wasted away to bones, thereby linking love and sex with death” (199). Svengali’s behaviour, like his appearance, is meant to distinguish the “physically and morally offensive foreigner” from the English heroes of the novel (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 164-5). His offensive “Hebrew-German accent” (Du Maurier 166) and “throaty rook’s caw, his big yellow teeth baring themselves in a mongrel canine snarl” (Du Maurier 88) not only establish Svengali’s non-Englishness but also his non-humanness.
In his portrayal of Svengali, Du Maurier calls upon two well established and often related anti-Semitic tropes: “the lecherous Jew” and “the satanic” or “diabolical Jew.” As the “lecherous Jew,” Svengali is “unnaturally focused upon Trilby’s body” (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 168), often viewing her body in pieces:

The roof of your mouth is like the dome of the Pantheon... The entrance to your throat is like the middle porch of St Sulpice when the doors are open for the faithful on All Saints’ Day...and your little tongue is scooped out like the leaf of a pink peony, and the bridge of your nose is like the belly of a Stradivarius. (Du Maurier 50-51)

Svengali “literally pull[s] Trilby apart” (Thurschwell 50) in his description of her singing organs. Svengali, however, is not alone in his objectification of Trilby’s body. Her feet are anatomised in the pictures of several artists, Little Billee included. Nevertheless, Svengali’s objectification of Trilby is figured as dark and demonic, in part because he seems to possess Trilby in body and mind. As Svengali takes possession of Trilby’s mind, he also takes possession of her body, turning the mesmerised Trilby into his mistress. Svengali is an “incubus,” a “bol[d] wooer,” who toys with Trilby with a “terrible playfulness, like that of a cat with a mouse – a weird, ungainly cat, and most unclean; a sticky, haunting, long, lean, uncanny, black-spider cat, if there is such an animal outside a bad dream” (Du Maurier 73). He is a “big hungry spider” who makes Trilby “feel like a fly” (Du Maurier 52). In the original serialisation of the text by Du Maurier, a “particularly powerful” illustration of Svengali as a spider with the caption “an incubus” accompanied these descriptions (Pick, Svengali’s Web 13). As an “incubus,” Svengali is associated with a powerful, sexual demon who seeks sexual dominance over a sleeping subject, typically a woman. The sexually predatory nature of
Svengali as “lecherous Jew” is further emphasised in the images of him as a spider. Pick notes that “to compare Svengali to a spider was to emphasise not only his speed and guile, but also his horror; the arachnid is, after all, the very emblem of entrapment” (*Svengali’s Web* 13). In the psychoanalytic tradition, however, the spider also comes to take on sexual connotations. Pick cites the work of Karl Abraham, who discusses at length clinical material which associated spiders with male and female genitalia. In one case, a patient’s picture of a spider suggested an infantile representation of a “horrible” sexual intercourse (Pick, *Svengali’s Web* 13). Thus, Svengali’s arachnid characteristics serve to emphasise his “lecherous” nature.

The representation of Svengali as a “haunting... uncanny, black-spider cat” removes him further away from the realm of humanity and into the realm of the dark supernatural. Indeed, Du Maruier’s narrator tells the reader “Nobody knew exactly how Svengali lived, and very few knew where (or why)” (41). Although the narrator here is referring to Svengali’s place of residence, it is clear that he is also referring to Svengali’s existence itself, for a few paragraphs later, he writes, “Svengali walking up and down the earth seeking whom he might cheat, betray, exploit, borrow money from, make brutal fun of, bully if he dared, cringe to if he must – man, woman, child, or dog – was about as bad as they make ‘em” (Du Maurier 42). This image of Svengali “walking up and down the earth” points to the legend of the Wandering Jew, a long-standing anti-Semitic trope common to Gothic fiction. In Gothic writings, the Wandering Jew often appears as a version of the Devil through “his alliance with... superhuman power” (Rosenberg 245). According to the legend, made popular in Medieval Christian folklore, “a spiteful Jew” refuses Christ rest on the way to his
crucifixion, causing Christ to curse him to wander the earth until the Second Coming (Pick, *Svengali’s Web* 143). As Frank Modder notes in *The Jew in the Literature of England to the End of the 19th Century* (1939), the Wandering Jew “curiously persisted in English literature from an early age” (353), appearing in a number of Gothic texts, including Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Lewis’s *The Monk* (1795) and William Godwin’s *St. Leon* (1779). The Wandering Jew is also a figure that appears in discussions of dissociative states. Charcot, for example, “had often pointed to the idea of an innate Jewish nervousness” and declared Jews “to be the finest subjects for the study of nervous disease,” marking the Wandering Jew as “the prototype for the modern psychiatric condition of the race” (Pick, *Svengali’s Web* 143). Charcot insisted that the Jews were “disproportionately prevalent” amongst hysterics, neurasthenics and epileptics (Pick, *Svengali’s Web* 144). In 1893 one of Charcot’s followers, Dr Henri Meige, conducted a psychiatric study of homeless Jews, who, he argued, turned up in unusually large numbers at Parisian hospitals. In a review of his work, the *Revue de l’hypnotisme* claimed that this “over-representation of the Jews in the wards was not surprising given their propensity to neurosis” (Pick, *Svengali’s Web* 144). Similarly, Edouard Drumont concluded that in place of “surface leprosy” the modern Jew was afflicted with leprosy of the brain; thus, during the *fin-de-siècle* the legend of the Wandering Jew was “linked to concepts of psychological and physical pathology... attendant upon the race’s lack of a geographical or personal ‘homeland’” (Pick, *Svengali’s Web* 144).

Carol Davison argues that the Gothic version of the Wandering Jew is typically demonic, growing increasingly vampiric throughout the nineteenth century. This figure “is not just a wanderer, but a shape-shifter who reappears in the 1890s in Gothic form as the
bloodthirsty Count in *Dracula* and as the mesmeric Svengali in George du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894)” (Carol Davison 2). The association of Jewishness with vampirism reflects long-standing anti-Semitic rumours about the Jewish use of Christian blood in religious rituals. Pick argues that the “so-called ‘blood-libel’” as a type of ritual murder involved the blood of a murdered Christian (usually a small male child) to be used in Jewish feats and celebrations: “there were numerous variants of the narrative; material gathered from Russia and Poland, for example, shows how Jews were thought to use Christian blood to smear the eyes of their newborn babies since Jewish children ‘are always born blind’” (Pick, *Svengali’s Web* 173). Judith Halberstam writes that “Gothic anti-Semitism makes the Jew a monster with bad blood and it defines monstrosity as a mixture of bad blood, unstable gender identity, sexual and economic parasitism, and degeneracy” (*Skin Shows* 91). Halberstam sees Stoker’s Count Dracula as an example of the “anti-Semite’s Jew,” claiming Dracula resembles anti-Semitic discourse in several ways: “his appearance, his connection to money/gold, his parasitism, his degeneracy, his impermanence or lack of allegiance to a fatherland, and his femininity” (*Skin Shows* 92). Dracula’s exsanguination of British citizens, then, reflects anti-Semitic fears of the Jewish need for Christian blood and the lack of a geographical or personal ‘homeland,’ identified by Halberstam as a type of “parasitism.” Like Stoker’s Count, Svengali drains his victim of her life, feeding on her vitality. While Svengali’s death releases Trilby from her dissociative condition, her prolonged state of entrancement has greatly deteriorated her health. She is said to suffer from “some great nervous shock” (Du Maurier 254); she “seemed ill and weak and worn out” (254) and had “rapidly aged” (261). Trilby seems quite literally drained of life: her “hands were almost
transparent... there were grey streaks in her hair; all strength and straightness and elasticity seemed to have gone out of her with the memory of her endless triumphs.... [she was] physically a wreck” (261). Moreover, she “lost weight daily... [and] seemed to be wasting and fading away” (264). Trilby’s physical and mental attenuation seem to prove the Laird’s previous assertion that mesmerism is a destructive act, one which annihilates the subject.

Svengali’s violation and consumption of Trilby synecdochically stands in for the Jews’ perceived violation and consumption of British culture more generally. Carol Davison claims that the “Wandering Jew vampire simultaneously endangers the health of individual British bodies and that of the British national body politic” (90). Thus, Svengali’s demonic possession of Trilby and his vampiric draining of her vitality reflect broader fears regarding the status of Jewish persons in England. Du Maurier’s Svengali “appeared at a time when preoccupations with both insidious hypnotists and with successfully insinuating Jews were strikingly evident in many works of literature, journalism and political thought” (Pick, Svengali’s Web 4). Moreover, Halberstam contends that within the discourse of nineteenth-century anti-Semitism, the Jew “was marked as threat to capital, to masculinity, and to nationhood” (Skin Shows 14). Whereas Africans and Indians represented “the threatening other abroad,” the Jew came to represent an internal other, threatening to undermine the integrity of the British nation as a colonising other from within (Halberstam, Skin Shows 14), or as George Vacher de Lapouge puts it, “the Jews presented a kind of grotesque mirror of the imperial powers; they were secret colonizers” (emphasis original, qtd. in Carol Davison, 120). Saul Friedländer claims that the threatening Otherness of the Jew is of a “peculiar nature”:
Whereas in general the Other’s most threatening aspect seems to reside in an identifiable difference, the most ominous aspect of the Jewish threat appeared as related to sameness. The Jews’ adaptability seemed to efface all boundaries and to subvert the possibilities of natural confrontation. The Jew was the inner enemy par excellence. (Emphasis original, 213)

Because of this, the figure of the Wandering Jew is “the master image of Jewish identity” in the European worldview, and the Wandering Jew has been “the figure through which feelings about the Jewish Question have been most popularly articulated in Europe since the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition” when Jewish refugees were literally dispersed throughout Europe, having been expelled from Spain (Carole Davison 2). By the mid-nineteenth century, Jewish persons in Western Europe had achieved a level of emancipation, or, the “removal of civil disabilities” (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 170). By the late-nineteenth century, “the English Jews emerged into political emancipation and social acceptance,” resulting in the expansion of the Jewish population in England (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 170). More and more of the higher offices of the city of London came to be “filled by Jews” (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 170), and more and more people came to view “Jews” as “middlemen in business” (Halberstam, Skin Shows 14), which lead to an increasing fear that the Jews were “Judaizing Britain” (Carol Davison 4). Powerful and prominent Jewish figures, like Prime Minister

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81 As Carol Davison understands it, the Jewish Question refers to religious, legal, racial, etc. issues related to Jewish peoples in Europe, such as emancipation, assimilation in the Diaspora, and Zionism.

82 Bienstock Anolik claims that the Jewish population in London expanded from about 8,000 in 1800 to 160,000 in 1900.
Benjamin Disraeli, only worked to further anti-Semitic anxieties that “Britain was being demonically converted” (Carol Davison 4).

Svengali as both “Jew” and mesmerist also reflects more general fin-de-siècle concerns regarding the power of politics, literature, art and music to influence minds and transform individuals. Winter suggests that towards the end of the century, the language of mesmerism pervaded discussions of mass movements and political consensus as a new and more widespread sense of human suggestibility began to be developed.⁸³ Pamela Thurschwell echoes this, arguing that at the end of the century, “diffuse questions about suggestibility and the formation of public opinion [intersect] with specific monsters of influence; the idea that people in general are dangerously suggestible crosses with elaborate imaginings of powerful personified influences who want to do the suggesting” (42). Thus, Svengali’s powerful mesmeric hold over Trilby comes to symbolise other compelling influences, such as literature, art and music, all of which are seen as capable of moving the masses to various states of frenzy in the late-nineteenth century. The public consumption of Du Maurier’s novel illustrates the powerful force of literature and art and the concern raised by some individuals that such consumption would lead to a degeneration of the British race. The success of Trilby resulted in what was termed “Trilbymania,” figured by one reviewer in Great Britain as the “attack of [a] mental disorder” (qtd. in Leighton 113). According to Mary Elizabeth Leighton, British readers flocked to booksellers and audiences flocked to London’s Haymarket Theatre to see actor-manager Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s stage production of Du Maurier’s bestseller (113-4). That Trilby’s popularity came to

⁸³ See for example “The Social Body and the Invention of Consensus” in Winter’s Mesmerized.
be viewed as a “mental disorder” reflects the anxieties associated with an expanding popular press and a growing reading public. Winter notes that in the latter half of the nineteenth century, discussions of reading increasingly borrowed the language of mental physiologists, which provided a framework for understanding the “psychological and physiological phenomena that accompanied reading in general” (*Mesmerized* 327). Texts that enraptured the reader, like *Trilby*, were thought to be dissociogenic, directly affecting the reader’s nervous system. When the reader’s attention was so intensely focussed on the story, his or her judgement and will were suspended, locking the subject into a dissociative or semi-conscious state where the book had a “hold” on the reader’s mind. Winter writes, “The act of extreme, sustained concentration severed the connection between the perceptual powers and the discriminating judgment, dissolving the distinction between a verbal assertion and a physical reality” so that “readers were possessed by the experiences recounted in the narrative” (emphasis added, *Mesmerized* 328). Thus, the reading subject enraptured by a text lost the ability to think independently and to distinguish fictional reality from objective reality.

Some late-nineteenth-century critics, like Max Nordau and Alfred Austin, expressed great concern over the dangers of indiscriminate literary consumption. In 1874, Austin complained that some books were “so exciting to the attention, to the imagination, to the passions, that they produce a mental debauch” (qtd. in Winter, *Mesmerized* 330). In reading such books, “the mind is often in nearly a passive state, like that of dreaming or reverie, in which images flit before the mind without any act of volition to retain them” (Austin qtd. in Winter, *Mesmerized* 330). Taking this argument a step further, Nordau’s *Degeneration*
presents his belief that the consumption of popular literature could lead to the decline of the entire nation. Nordau claims that periodicals and books affect all elements of society and life, and he accuses society of becoming more and more inclined to imitate what is seen in art. He writes that in the fashionable society of Paris and London, “Every single figure strives visibly by some singularity in outline, set, cut or colour, to startle attention violently, and imperiously to detain it. Each one wishes to create a strong nervous excitement, no matter whether agreeably or disagreeably” (9-10). Nordau goes on to identify what he sees as an illness in society brought on by the consumption of art, both visual and literary:

In the fin-de-siècle disposition, in the tendencies of contemporary art and poetry, in the life and conduct of men who write mystic, symbolic and “decadent” works and the attitude taken by their admirers in the tastes and aesthetic instincts of fashionable society, [we see] the confluence of two well-defined conditions of disease, with which he [the physician] is quite familiar, viz. degeneration and hysteria. (15)

Nordau’s concern is that authors and artists could, in fact, “manifest the same mental characteristics” as “criminals, prostitutes, anarchists, and pronounced lunatics,” and that these characteristics could in turn be manifested in their works (vii). To that end, Nordau claims that “books and works of art exercise a powerful suggestion on the masses. It is from these productions that an age derives its ideals of morality and beauty” (viii). Thus, literature and art by “degenerates” – Nordau cites Oscar Wilde as an example – can “exert a disturbing and corrupting influence on the views of a whole generation” (viii). While the debate over the nature and purpose of art was by no means new at the close of the
nineteenth century, the suggestion that artistic influences could alter an entire populous had certainly gained force as theories of degeneration, individual vs. collective volition and dissociogenic practices were brought to the fore of such debates.

At the center of *Trilby* is a community of English artists living in Bohemian Paris: Taffy, the Yorkshireman and “Man of Blood”; Sandy, the Scottish Laird; and the delicate and talented Little Billee. Billee, with his “quick, prehensile, aesthetic eye” (Du Maurier 141), his effeminate masculinity, his modicum of Jewish blood, and his suggested hysteria, represents a confluence of ideas about the corrupting social influences of Jewishness, artistic talent, effeminacy and degeneracy. Whereas Svengali’s Jewish blood marks him as a “mongrel” (88) and a “demon” (294), Billee’s “faint suggestion of some possible very remote Jewish ancestor” contributes to his artistic talent. It is Little Billee “and not the other racially pure Englishmen, who succeeds in becoming a great artist, just as Svengali... ‘had been the best pianist of his time at the Conservatory in Leipsic’” (Bienstock Anolik, “The Infamous Svengali” 165). Indeed, in Billee’s veins, Jewish blood is said to be “strong, sturdy, irrepressible, indomitable, indelible” and “of such priceless value,” but this is only because it is in a “diluted homeopathic [dose], like dry white Spanish wine called montijo, which is not meant to be taken pure” (Du Maurier 6-7). Indeed, as Sarah Gracombe contends, “Du Maurier frequently links Jewishness to artistic talent, implicitly drawing on several works, including those by George Eliot and Benjamin Disraeli, that suggest that Jews possess a quasi-biological predisposition toward creativity” (91). However, as Pick highlights, the attitude towards the creative powers of Jewish persons was highly

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84 The most notable example from Eliot is *Daniel Deronda* (1876), where both Daniel’s mother and Mirah sing beautifully.
ambivalent: “In some views, Jews were profoundly musical; in others, they could at best achieve a superficial, if enchanting, expressive power” (*Svengali’s Web* 128). Neil Davison contends that the notion of "the Jew" as mere imitator of great art “especially that which expresses a nation’s volkgeist” saw one of its earliest and “ultimately most authorized versions” in Richard Wagner’s influential essay *Das Judenthum in der Musik (Judaism in Music)*, first published in 1850 (83). Moreover, through Svengali, the novel also makes use of Wagner’s argument that, because “the Jew” can only “imitate the speech of any European nation,” and because song can be seen as an extension of speech, “Jews can never be great singers” (Neil Davison 83). Therefore, Du Maurier seems to suggest that Jewish blood, in its pure “Oriental Israelite” (234) form results in the artist as sinister ventriloquist, a creature “absolutely without voice” (42), that must borrow the voice of another to be heard.

The ventriloquising Svengali is not the only potentially disrupting artistic force in the novel. As an effeminate artist, Little Billee might be regarded as an aesthete – “an emergent form of masculinity that embraced the feminine... at the end of the century and soon became associated with homosexuality and degeneration” (Vorachek 199). The aesthete represents the type of artist Nordau feared would spread degeneration to the masses through the corrupting influence of his work. The aesthete was seen as effeminate, decadent and immoral, creating art merely “for art’s sake.” The philosophy of the aestheticism movement in art is perhaps best summarised by the words of Oscar Wilde, who comes to embody the aesthete in the *fin-de-siècle* imagination. In his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Wilde writes, “There is no such thing as a moral or an
immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.... Vice and virtue are to
the artist materials for art” (41). Thurschwell argues that “the sophisticated, ambiguously
sexual aesthete” becomes one version of the late nineteenth-century hypnotising villain:
“an amoral artist figure who values art over life, and who sometimes, quite literally, sucks
the life out of his victims” (38). According to Thurschwell, Wilde represents an example of
“the aesthete as a dangerous influential monster” (38). In his criminal trials for gross
indecency in 1895, the word influence “was invoked repeatedly by the prosecution,” and
the “spectre of Wilde’s corrupting ‘influence’ on young men” hovered over the proceedings
(Thurschwell 38). Edward Carson, Queensberry’s defence counsel, made extensive
references to The Picture of Dorian Gray, using it as evidence of Wilde’s “interest in
‘perversion’” (Page 29). The conclusion Carson drew was that “a man who could write such
a book would be capable of immoral and unlawful behaviour” (Page 29). As Thurschwell
explains it, The Picture of Dorian Gray “centers around questions of influence over others’
personalities: Lord Henry’s influence on Dorian; Dorian’s compelling influence over the
painter Basil Hollward; the painting’s influence on Dorian’s life; the influence of certain
books such as J.-K. Huysman’s À Rebours (1884) and Walter Pater’s The Renaissance (1873)”
(39). Moreover, The Picture of Dorian Gray itself was thought to have a corrupting influence
on the public. Thurschwell claims that it was described as a “contagious disease that could
spread and affect the reading public” (56). For example, the Daily Chronicle called Dorian

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85 As Norman Page explains it in his introduction to the Broadview edition of The Picture of Dorian
Gray, Wilde was involved in three trials that took place in London during April and May of 1895. Wilde had
been involved in a scandal with a young aristocrat, Lord Alfred Douglas, son of the Marquess of Queensberry.
When Queensberry left a note for Wilde at his club accusing him of “posing as a sodomite,” a misspelling of
“sodomite,” Wilde brought an action for libel against Queensberry, but soon it became Wilde who was on
trial. As Page claims, “a good deal of [Wilde’s] dirty linen was washed in the courtroom,” and at the end of
trial, a warrant was issued for Wilde’s arrest for accusations of “homosexual offences” (29).
Gray “unclean and leprous,” and accused Wilde’s words of “defiling” those they touched. Similarly, the Scots Observer claimed that the novel would “taint every young mind that comes in contact with it” (qtd. in Thurschwell 59).

Consequently, Wilde and his writing came to symbolise not only aestheticism but also a dangerous and corrupting influence operating in society, one that connected artistic taste with sexual preference (Thurschwell 39-40). As Elaine Showalter notes in Sexual Anarchy, the fin-de-siècle was a time of “sexual anarchy,” influenced by an emerging homosexual culture. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 made sexuality a topic of legal importance, and its section 11, commonly referred to as the Labouchere Amendment, made gross indecency a crime in the United Kingdom. Additionally, the discourse of sexology, made famous by texts like Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s Psychopathia Sexualis (1886) and Havelock Ellis’s Man and Woman (1894), made sexuality a topic of medical and scientific study. Ellis claims that one of the central problems in defining male desire is its strange mobility. According to Ellis, the locus of female desire was in procreation, but “in men the sexual instinct is a restless source of energy which overflows into all sorts of channels” (Qtd. in Andrew Smith 29). This meant that sexuality needed to be monitored and regulated so as to “suppress” dangerous desires (Andrew Smith 29). Thus, as Thurschwell notes, the aesthete comes to embody fears “about the suggestive potential of gay male sexuality” alongside the issue of “the seductive potential of consumption, and the uncertain status of the potentially seducing as well as the potentially enthralled mass public” (40). Consequently, the hypnotic aesthete threatens to manipulate his audience through art as well as sex, illustrating the perceived dangers of hypnotic compulsion.
Although the aesthete Little Billee becomes a famous painter in his native England, *Trilby* is primarily concerned with another powerfully influential form of art: music. The public concert became a popular form of entertainment, made all the more so by the development of the baton conductor, who Winter claims looked like a refracted image of the mesmerist, “partly as a result of a shared vocabulary of influence” (*Mesmerized* 309). The baton conductor was a fascinating figure as he demonstrated the “powerful ability to unite and direct a group,” a power that also made him “controversial” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 310). While the baton conductor was able to unify an orchestra into “harmoniously coordinated action,” he was disliked by some musicians, such as leading violinists who “resented” how the baton conductor “completely usurped” their “authority” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 310). Winter contends that from the 1820s onward, visiting foreign conductors where “as fascinating and almost as controversial as that of their fellow travelers, the Continental mesmerists” (*Mesmerized* 310). They even drew similar descriptions: “One could be dismissed as a ‘tricksy professor of charlatanerie’ or resented as a potential predator – as when the twenty-year-old Felix Mendelssohn visited London in 1829, ‘mounted the orchestra and pulled out [his] white stick’” (*Mesmerized* 310). The music critic Francis Hueffer was struck by the “immediate rapport” established between Richard Wagner and his orchestra when he raised his baton, remarking that each player was “equally under the influence of a personal fascination, which seems to have much in common with animal magnetism. Every eye is turned towards the master; and it appears as if the musicians derive the notes they play, not from the books on their desks, but from Wagner’s glances and movement” (qtd in Winter, *Mesmerized* 312). The conductor’s power
was not limited to the orchestra; audiences, too, were enraptured by the music the conductor “pour[ed]... from his body” into the orchestra (Winter, Mesmerized 312). Conductors used their power to transform chatty and unaffected audiences into groups united by their silent, concentrated attention. This passive model of audience was “able to receive the music in a way that was likened to a physical transmission” (Winter, Mesmerized 314). The content of the music was also infused with “mesmeric and mental physiological themes,” such as Berlioz’s use of the term “idée fixe” to refer to a recurrent musical phrase, threaded through his Symphonie fantastique. Even Wagner “brushed up on animal magnetism to prepare for writing a number of his operas” (Winter, Mesmerized 314-5). Thus, Du Maurier’s conceptualisation of Svengali as a mesmerising conductor derives much of its power from the symbolic associations already existing in late-nineteenth-century society.

Daniel Pick argues that portrayals of “musical possession” in the late Victorian era simultaneously reflect tremendous anxieties about the individual’s ability for self-control and about vulnerability to outside forces (Svengali’s Web 117). Hence, La Svengali’s control over audiences throughout Europe points to fears that the self might not be fully acquiescent to the discipline of the will or the reasoning mind. The developing discourse of “crowd theory” in the late-nineteenth century presents a model of dissociated subjectivity, one that suggests individuals in a crowd lose their individuality and, in extreme cases, their sanity. Gustave Le Bon based his theories of crowd behaviour on a variety of scientific practices, ranging from psychiatry to anthropology to craniometry. In Le Bon’s work, the crowd “was endowed with [an innate] psychology, depicted as an ominous force unsettling
the stability of the individual by connecting each member with a crowd of primitive ancestors” (Pick, *Faces of Degeneration* 90). According to Daniel Pick, Le Bon “developed a sociological and psychological concept of the crowd as the place of inevitable regression,” the expressed aim of which was to “instruct politicians in the defence of the social order against mass democracy, syndicalism and anarchism” (*Faces of Degeneration* 91). As Winter notes, the question of how to make the “mass” into a healthy part of the modern state was one that perplexed Victorian politicians and political commentators. Winter claims that before the mid-nineteenth century, there were many benign representations of crowds, but the most powerful image was a “destructive one, established in conservative reactions to the French Revolution” (*Mesmerized* 331).

Discussions of the masses were often characterised by the language of mesmerism and degeneration. Winter claims that when people were united into a single body, this was often by “an ‘electrical’ or ‘magnetic’ process,” one that caused them to lose “their power of independent judgment,” to become “insensitive to proper guidance” and vulnerable to “illegitimate political leaders” (*Mesmerized* 331-332). But the real concern was that “there was... uncertainty about who was really in charge” (Winter, *Mesmerized* 332). Le Bon, for example, connected the crowd to theories of hypnotism and atavism in his text, *The Crowd: a Study of the Popular Mind* (1896). Here, he claims that the leader of the crowd is “hypnotised by [an] idea,” just as “Robespierre [was] hypnotised by the philosophical ideas of Rousseau” (68). Such leaders are men of action, not thinkers, who “are especially recruited from the ranks of those morbidly nervous, excitable, half-deranged persons who are bordering on madness” (68). Le Bon characterises the crowd as suggestible, “always
ready to listen to the strong-willed man, who knows how to impose himself upon it. Men gathered in a crowd lose all force of will, and turn instinctively to the person who possesses the quality they lack” (68). Like “magnetised subjects,” crowds instinctively sought leaders (Pick, *Faces of Degeneration* 91), yet this leader is “hypnotised” himself, so for Le Bon, the crowd is dangerous because it is an example of mass hypnosis, where all members have been stripped of their individual will and cognisance. Le Bon marks the crowd as atavistic, “a throwback to the evolutionary past” (Pick, *Faces of Degeneration* 91), and also feminine: like “women it goes at once to extremes” (Le Bon 30). Le Bon claims that women “are the most impressionable persons” (27), and that the predominant traits of the crowd – its “impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of the sentiments, and others besides” – are “almost always observed in beings belonging to inferior forms of evolution — in women, savages, and children, for instance” (20). Du Maurier similarly presents the crowd as suggestible, irrational and impulsive in *Trilby*, as evidenced by the reaction of the crowds to La Svengali.

Within *Trilby*, mesmerism and art, particularly music, are aligned by the parallels in the language describing them. On the one hand, as Gracombe notes, both mesmerism and art have healing properties: “Svengali’s power over Trilby begins when he alone can cure her of her severe headaches; likewise, Gecko’s foreign music provides the only effective medicine for Little Billee’s nervous breakdown” (102). On the other hand, both reveal the audiences’ vulnerability: “in response to Svengali’s music, the English are a ‘susceptible audience’ who go ‘crazed with delight and wonder’... [and] in response to Svengali’s hypnotism, Trilby has a ‘ready susceptibility’” (Gracombe 102). Furthermore, both are
figured in terms of seduction: “Svengali’s seduction of Trilby parallels his music’s ‘strange seduction’ (p. 209) of the audience” (Gracombe 102). Indeed, just as Svengali mesmerises Trilby, La Svengali mesmerises the masses. We are told that her voice “gives one cold all down the back! it drives you mad! it makes you weep hot tears by the spoonful!” (Du Maurier 171). When she performs in Paris, as the narrator recounts, the “haunting” tones of La Svengali’s voice “kept echoing in [the Laird’s] brain all night..., and sleep had been impossible to him” (230). As though the Laird is mesmerised by her music, “Ben Bolt” “kept singing itself over and over again in his tired consciousness, and maddened him with novel, strange, un hackneyed, unsuspected beauties such as he had never dreamed of in earthly music” (230-1). When La Svengali performs in St. Petersburg, all the women go mad, pulling off their pearls and diamonds, giving them to the diva as they fall to their knees, crying and kissing her hands. One man tells Billee that after hearing La Svengali sing, “all the fellows went mad and gave her their watches and diamond studs and gold scarf-pins. By gad! I never heard or saw anything like it. I don’t know much about music... but I was as mad as the rest – why, I gave her a little German-silver vinaigrette I’d just bought for my wife; hanged if I didn’t” (171). And as the fame of La Svengali was “like a rolling snowball that had been rolling all over Europe” (195), her strange influence over the crowds is figured as deeply concerning. Indeed, she is said to stir “a chorus of journalistic acclamation gone mad, a frenzied eulogy in every key” in the papers (230). Du Maurier presents the crowds as mad and frenzied, acting without thought or volition. In their enraptured state, members cannot even account for their actions, a problem made all the more disturbing by the fact that these members are not all that passionate about music. That someone who “couldn’t tell
‘God Save the Queen’ from ‘Pop Goes the Weasel’” (171) could become so grossly enraptured by the music of La Svengali that he could no longer account for his own actions suggests that Svengali employs mesmerism to do more than “make [Trilby] do any blessed thing [he] please[s]” (52); such power seems to transcend the dyad of mesmerist and mesmerised, implicating the audience in the mesmeric spell as well.

The question of exactly who leads the masses – Svengali or Trilby – once again returns the conversation to a debate over agency in the mesmeric relationship. While some, like Laura Vorachek, argue that through his control of Trilby’s voice, Svengali is able “to control audiences throughout Europe and gain the acclaim he desires” (205), such descriptions of Svengali’s power work to efface the power Trilby herself possess, a power she certainly retains in her remodeling as La Svengali. For some theorisers of dissociogenic practices, the second self that emerged during the hypnotic trance was creative, intelligent and active. Psychical researcher F.W.H. Myers, for example, believed that humans possessed psychical capabilities of which they were only dimly aware: “Just as the visible part of the spectrum includes only a fraction of the radiation emitted by the sun, so too our conscious self is only one small part of an extended psychical entity” (cited in Lomas 67). Myers maintained that individuals could catch a glimpse of their subliminal or “second” self under the right circumstances. For Myers, this secondary self was “vast[ly] superior to our mundane, everyday self” (Lomas 67), and “the secondary personalities revealed in trance states, dreaming, crystal gazing, and automatic writing – potentially possessed a higher intelligence than one’s waking or supraliminal personality and often served to convey messages of guidance” (Shamdasani, “Encountering Hélène” xv). Myers saw mediumship
and automatism as evidence of a subliminal self, potentially separable from the body, and for a romantic strain in fin-de-siècle studies of mind (represented by Myers, William James, Henry Sidgwick and others), this self possibly represented the ‘true’ self or a higher level of being.

Pierre Janet as well believed that the “second personality was intelligent and purposeful, with palpable good sense, capable of carrying on a line of thought simultaneous with but completely independent of the thinking taking place in the normal personality” (Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud 314). In L’automatisme psychologique (1889), Janet countered the popular claim that the somnambulist was merely a puppet, maintaining instead that somnambulists are able to speak, resolve problems and sometimes even resist the commands of their hypnotist or magnetiser. Janet develops these claims further in The Mental State of Hystericals (1901), in which he tells the story of Bertha, who exhibits “real talent” while she performs various acts (such as costume making and writing) in a dissociated state. According to Janet, the “very pretty things” that Bertha produces in these states of disconnected creativity “remind us of those attributed to people of genius who obey inspiration without being themselves conscious of what they are accomplishing” (The Mental State of Hystericals 149). Thus, Janet would most likely attribute La Svengali’s musical talent to Trilby herself, and would interpret La Svengali as a ‘second self,’ a self that surfaces from within the psyche as something both inherently congruent to yet inexorably “other” to Trilby herself. Furthermore, Bertha’s own comments illustrate the possibility that Trilby can be both agentic and passive in the act of creative expression. Bertha writes,
When I want to sing, I find it impossible, and yet at times, listening to myself, feeling my lips move, I think that I sing such and such a song very well. . . . When I want to write, I find that I have nothing to say; my head is empty, I must let my hand write what it pleases; it thus fills four pages; I cannot help it if it is all absurd trash. . . My ideas are no longer comprehensible to myself; they come of themselves; one might say that they are written on a big roll which unrolls before me. (The Mental State of Hystericals 146)

Bertha’s description of her dissociative experiences along with Trilby’s amnestic life as La Svengali point to traditional conceptions of inspiration, where the artist or writer figures only as a mouthpiece, and inspiration comes from the muse or an outside source: “in both the Platonic and the biblical traditions inspiration described the supposed possession of an individual voice by some transcendent authority. The muse speaks, and the poet is only her...servant” (Clark 2). Since the eighteenth century, classical and Renaissance conceptions of the furor poeticus have often given way to theories of individual creativity as a form of inspired madness. That is to say, “a crucial part of the process of composition is understood as a desired or even calculated suspension of reasoning or deliberation, a temporary mania or insanity. This suspension is valorised as a mode of access to ‘deeper’ or spontaneously productive areas of the psyche” (Clark 2). Therefore, rather than reading La Svengali as the passive vessel through which Svengali exerts his power to enthrall the masses, it is possible to read her as a manifestation of Trilby’s own captivating creative powers, no matter how latent they might have been.
Throughout the novel Trilby is presented as powerfully influential, charming the people around her with her simple, unimposing manners, good looks and benevolent disposition. To the English painters, Trilby was “a sunny and ever-welcome vision of health and grace and liveliness and unalterable good-humour” (Du Maurier 62). Taffy tells the Reverend Bagot that Trilby is “one in a thousand” (128). She is painted and loved by all of the artists, but it is Little Billee, with his “nervous little frame” (31) that is the most susceptible to Trilby’s influence. Indeed, one deep look into Trilby’s “shining” eyes causes Billee’s slight frame to shake. The “young and tender... [and] innocent” (8) Billee is prone to experience emotion with a dangerous intensity. He flies “petrified” from the sight of Trilby posing at Carrel’s in the “altogether” (82), and the stress of his mother’s rejection of Trilby as his fiancée causes him to “gas[p] and screa[m] and [fall] down in a fit on the floor,” unconscious (135). The attack is diagnosed as a “kind of epileptic seizure... which ended in brain fever and other complications” (135). Little Billee suffers a “long and tedious illness” (135), which results in a type of dissociative state reminiscent of hysteria. He is “languid and listless” (135) and has lost his “powers of loving and remembering clearly” (142), as though “some part of his brain where his affections were seated had been paralysed, while all the rest of it was as keen and active as ever. He felt like some poor live bird or beast or reptile, a part of whose cerebrum... had been dug out by the vivisector for experimental purposes” (146). Locked in this state of “anxiety and alarm” (146), Billee’s “brain trouble” continues for nearly five years. It seems as though Billee’s habitual self – the emotional, delicate and loving self – has been replaced by another self, one that is incapable of feeling or emotion but that paints with such intensity, Billee’s fame in England skyrockets. Billee catches
glimpses of his former self during sleep and in “blissful dream[s],” where “the lost power of loving... would be restored to him, just as with a blind man who sometimes dreams he has recovered his sight” (160). Trilby is presented as both cause and cure of Billee’s “brain trouble.” The “strangely sympathetic quality” (211) of La Svengali’s voice and the “poignant sympathy” (212) of her song cause Billee to lose control of himself, “shaking with his suppressed sobs” (212) as “something melted in his brain, and all his long-lost power of loving came back with a rush” (213). He “was himself again at last, after five years, and wide awake; and he owed it all to Trilby!” (221). Yet, as the old memories and emotions come flooding back, Billee once more finds himself oppressed by Trilby’s influence, for “how could he escape, now that he felt the sight of her face and sound of her voice would be a craving – a daily want – like that of some poor starving outcast for warmth and meat and drink?” (223). After Trilby dies with Svengali’s name on her lips, Billee suffers another fit from which he will never fully recover.

Trilby’s powerful hold over Little Billee’s thoughts and emotions suggests that she herself is in possession of a great power, one that clearly shines through in her reincarnation as La Svengali. Billee’s nervous and sensitive nature marks him as “an easy prey [for] the sirens” (Du Maurier 43), a term used to describe both Trilby (271) and La Svengali (241). Indeed, Trilby’s power of influence is used in the narrative to single out those with a weak intellect and constitution, in turn endorsing a model of English masculinity predicated upon strength, discipline and regulated emotion. Billee’s model of effeminate masculinity is associated with disorder and disease; his inability to respond to his broken engagement with Trilby with anything but “uncontrollable” and “unintelligible”
emotion is said to be “a pitiable sight and pitiable to hear” (135). Billee is aware that he is an “unmanly duffer,” a “highly strung, emotional, over-excitable, over-sensitive, and quite uncontrolled mammy’s darling” (225). Neil Davison argues that the three British artists form a “hierarchy of virility,” which places Billee at the bottom. The Laird “is a neutral figure whose midway point suggests him as a good-natured dullard, a blend of the masculine and feminine so common as to become uninteresting” (Neil Davison 88). Taffy, the “Man of Blood,” with his large stature, “brawny arm[s] ... [as] strong as iron bands,” and his military background in the Crimean war from which he emerged “without a scratch” (Du Maurier 4, 5) represents the type of English masculinity the text wishes to sanction. Taffy is established throughout the text as a highly masculine figure, muscular, strong and brave enough in the face of war to amuse himself with a game of “leap-frog” in the trenches (5). Neil Davison argues that Taffy’s “conflation of aristocratic, racial, and gender purity will be recapitulated throughout the narrative in discussions of [his] Hellenic male beauty, stoic fortitude, paternal nurturing, and, most significantly, the ease with which he physically punishes and shames Svengali in the novel’s closing scenes” (88). Taffy repeatedly uses physical force to keep Svengali in check, tickling “the creature” in the ribs until he “howled and became quite hysterical” (Du Maurier 77) and seizing “Svengali’s nose.... [swinging] his head... backward and forward by it, and then from side to side” (239). Significantly, as Vorachek points out, Taffy is the only character to reproduce, “thereby ensuring the race will continue, fathering three boys with Little Billee’s sister Blanche” (198). Appropriately, it is Taffy and his aristocratic, soldier’s blood that will cultivate the next generation of British citizens.
Taffy’s blood is contrasted with the “mongrel” blood of Svengali, “the Jew.” Despite the narrator’s early claim that such blood in “diluted” doses can improve the stock of the race (as the blood of the bulldog turns greyhounds into champions), it is clear that neither Billee nor Svengali is deemed appropriate to procreate. Trilby, too, is “[disqualified from] being a proper English” parent (Wiehl 31). Trilby’s Englishness is a cause of concern for Billee’s mother, Mrs. Bagot, who asks Taffy “is she English?” (Du Maurier 123). Taffy assures her that Trilby is “an English subject,” but as Sarah Grancombe states, “being an ‘English subject’—a legal citizen of the English nation— is not quite the same as being ‘English’” (75-6). Yet, as Gracombe points out, the delineation of Englishness within Trilby is complex because the novel includes characters from other parts of the United Kingdom: “the Laird is Scottish, Trilby has Irish and Scotch lineage, [and] Taffy’s name might suggest Welsh origins” (78). Trilby is presented as a European hybrid: “her father was an Irish Protestant gentleman and lush, her mother a Scottish barmaid and dancer in Paris” (Gracombe 81). As Billee falls in love with Trilby, he attempts to convert her into a proper English girl. Like “many conversionists,” Little Billee “begins with education” (Gracombe 84). He lends Trilby “books—English books: Dickens, Thackeray, Walter Scott—which she devoured in the silence of the night . . . and new worlds were revealed to her” (Du Maurier 64). Gracombe notes that the names of Dickens, Thackeray, and other mid-Victorian writers appear frequently within the novel, “almost always as conscious markers of Englishness...[establishing] a causal connection between reading English books and becoming truly English” (82). But Trilby’s English training “goes beyond recommended reading: Trilby must also learn how to behave

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86 Svengali is said to have father three children, but he denies that they are his own (257).
in an English fashion” (emphasis original, Gracombe 84). Under the direction of the three English painters, Trilby acquires other habits that, “within the novel, are coded as markers of everyday Englishness”: manners, dress, modesty, giving up smoking, and eating more English food than French (Gracombe 85). As Showalter notes in her introduction to *Trilby*, Trilby’s “Anglicization” is also reflected in her appearance (xviii). Trilby is said to grow thinner, especially in the face, which causes an “astonishing” improvement (Du Maurier 90). Furthermore, she loses her freckles, lets her hair grow, and her mouth, “always too large, took on a firmer and sweeter outline, and her big British teeth were so white and regular that even Frenchmen forgave them for their British bigness” (Du Maurier 90). Each day that Trilby spent with her English companions caused her to grow “more English,” which the narrator tells us “was a good thing” (64). Thus, Trilby’s Anglicisation represents “a second and opposing conversion effort at work in the novel” to Svengali’s attempts “to convert Trilby into his lover, his slave, his surrogate voice” (Gracombe 80). While this Anglicising influence can be seen as a positive force within the economy of the novel, it nonetheless indicates the invasive potential of culture and the nineteenth-century concern over the malleability of will, identity and desire.

By the *fin-de-siècle* fictional portrayals of hypnotic influence work to reflect general anxieties about the limits of suggestive influence that emerge in a variety of discussions on art, politics and the mass public. Fears about influence cluster around the mesmerising and dissociating potential of literature, art and the vaguely titled “culture, the zeitgeist or the social” (Thurschwell 41). Du Maurier’s haunting representation of the power of love, art and music to move individuals and groups into states of detachment and madness has remained
popular with readers and critics alike for over a century. Through his conflation of mesmerism and malevolence in the figure of Svengali, Du Maurier presents the possibility that individual impulses and desires might not originate from within the autonomous self; rather, such impulses and desires might be the product of an influential other’s design.
Chapter 5:

Gothic Brain, Uncanny Mind: Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan*

Until quite recently ... the human mind ... was largely an abstraction. Its normal adult traits were recognised. A sort of sunlit terrace was exhibited on which it took its exercise. But where that terrace stopped, and there was nothing farther left to tell of in this kind of philosophy of the brain and the other physical facts of nature on the one hand, and the absolute metaphysical ground of the universe on the other. But of late years the terrace has been overrun by romantic improvers, and to pass to their work is like going from classic to Gothic architecture, where few outlines are pure and where uncouth forms lurk in the shadows. A mass of mental phenomena are now seen in the shrubbery beyond the parapet. Fantastic, ignoble, hardly human, or frankly non-human are some of these new candidates for psychological description. The menagerie and the madhouse, the nursery, the prison, the hospital, have been made to deliver up their material. The world of mind is shown as something infinitely more complex than was suspected; and whatever beauties it may still possess, it has lost at any rate the beauty of academic neatness.

What has Mind to do with brain substance, white and grey? Can any facts or laws regarding the spirit of man be gained through a scrutiny of nerve fibres and nerve cells?\(^87\)

I do not know whether any human being has ever lifted [the] veil; but I do know, Clarke, that you and I shall see it lifted this very night.... a slight lesion in the grey matter, that is all; a trifling rearrangement of certain cells, a microscopical alteration.... with a touch I can complete the communication between this world of sense and – we shall be able to finish the sentence later on.\(^89\)

In his treatise *Mind and Brain* (1860), British physiologist Thomas Laycock argues that if it is true that “in man there is nothing great but mind,”\(^90\) then “we cannot too highly estimate the importance of that living organ by which it is manifested and energizes, and which is known as the Brain” (1). Laycock contends that all of man’s “desires and motives” are experienced in, expressed by and act upon the brain “so that what the man is, in character and conduct, is the expression of the functions of this nervous system” (1). Thus, to understand

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\(^90\) Laycock here is discussing Sir William Hamilton’s inscription on the wall of the class-room of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh, which reads “‘On earth there is nothing great but man; in man there is nothing great but mind.’"
The laws, and modes of existence of man as a rational being,—how he may be perfected, and how his wants may be best determined and fulfilled,—it is necessary to know, not only how the encephalon is constructed mechanically, and how it acts dynamically, but under what conditions it is constructed, and according to what laws it is operative. (2)

Laycock was not alone in his belief that the brain is “the organ of mind” (4) or that it is the “seat of man's energies and feelings” (2). As the science of neurology began to develop, biological explanations of psychological states became increasingly popular. Practices like phrenology and cerebral localisation experiments revealed a brain that was multiple and divided, consisting of two hemispheres and many distinct regions, each capable of determining the subject’s intellect and character. Some Victorian physiologists, like Henry Holland, Arthur Wigan, Charles Édouard Brown-Séquard, and Henry Maudsley argued that the hemispheres of the brain could become disjointed and, in extreme cases, each could take on an independent life of its own, thus encoding the potential for multiplicity and dissociation in the very physiology of the subject. As Anne Harrington argues, “The idea that human beings are an uneasy composite of conflicting opposites is a very old theme in the history of Western thought but, with the rise of evolutionary theory in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is a theme that would become increasingly ‘biologized’” (Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 101). In her study of neurological advancements in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Anne Stiles claims that by suggesting certain parts of the brain controlled specific emotions and behaviors, cerebral localisation theories “contradicted the popular belief in a unified soul or mind governing human action, thus
narrowing possibilities for human agency” and presenting the “threat that human beings might be soulless machines governed solely by physiological impulses” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 6, 4).

In the fin-de-siècle, this “threat” was taken up by some of the period’s most famous Gothic texts, including Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. However, the dark territories and uncharted regions of the brain are perhaps most disturbingly Gothicised in the work of Welsh author Arthur Machen, whose texts are often overlooked or undervalued by scholars of fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction. At best, Machen’s *The Great God Pan* (1894) and *The Three Impostors* (1895) receive a cursory examination in volumes such as David Punter’s *The Literature of Terror* (second edition, 1996), Fred Botting’s *Gothic* (1996) or Kelly Hurley’s *The Gothic Body* (1996). Machen’s tales are both exceptional and exemplary of fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction, featuring unspeakable acts of horror, insalubrious sexual desires, multifarious and hybrid forms of identity and the blending of the mystical with the scientific. His works are most often noted as examples of decadence, degeneration and mysticism, represented by the clash of Judeo-Christian and Pagan beliefs. Machen’s fiction, however, is also conversant with contemporaneous theories of mental science, particularly those related to the fields of mental physiology and neurology. Knowing that Machen sat for the medical school entrance exam, it can be assumed that Machen had some knowledge of and interest in the medical discoveries of his day. And, as Dr. Raymond from *The Great God Pan* notes to Mr. Clarke, “I suppose you have read, casually, in out-of-the-way corners of your paper, that immense strides have been made recently in the physiology of the brain” (5), as such stories were well known in the
late-nineteenth century. Anne Stiles maintains that given “the frequency with which neurological discoveries and methods appeared in the popular press, not to mention the social and intellectual prestige of neurology as a discipline, the Victorian public could hardly remain ignorant” of neurological research (*Neurology and Literature* 6). Authors of fiction, particularly those trained in the sciences, “were among the most articulate public figures to voice their concerns about new neurological developments” (Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 6). Furthermore, as neurology was a “highly influential” and “increasingly professionalized science” (Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 6), the public would have been acutely aware of neurological developments and the threats these developments appeared to pose to the most fundamental beliefs about human physiology and psychology.

In Machen’s rather large oeuvre, the brain is presented as both a portal to other dimensions and a permeable barrier between the worlds of spirit and matter. In particular, *The Great God Pan* (1894) and “The Inmost Light” (1894) engage with philosophical issues raised by cerebral localisation theories, neurological mapping and the concept of “shock,” reflecting the general malaise brought about by shifting perceptions of human agency and biological determinants for human behaviour. By rearranging the cells of the brain, Pan’s Dr. Raymond is able to pierce the veil and see into the “real world... beyond this glamour and this vision” (Machen 4), allowing a dark entity to enter into his world tellingly in the guise of a woman. Similarly, in “The Inmost Light,” Dr. Black uses his wife’s brain as a portal to access “that which is more awful than death” (Chapter 4). This chapter will investigate studies of dissociative phenomena in relation to the brain, the ways in which the brain comes to be used as a metaphor in the late-nineteenth century, and how this metaphorical
space comes to be imbued with Gothic qualities, using the work of Arthur Machen as an example. Machen characterises the brain as an interstitial site between spirit/matter and mind/body; as such, the brain becomes a locus for symbolically rendering and passing judgement on perceived deviances of mind, gender and society, giving voice to uneasiness about Britain’s changing social fabric and the apparent fragility of man’s social superiority over women and “brutes.” The horror of Machen’s fiction stems not just from his villains’ repellant physiognomy and degenerate behaviour; it also arises from the erosion of social stability occasioned by the seemingly-normal brain’s inability to process overwhelming and inassimilable experience.

5.1 Arthur Machen’s Gothic Brain

Machen’s literary corpus might be thought of as one extended project, in which the same themes, ideas and even character names recur constantly. His work displays a profound fascination with the liminal: shape-shifting and hybrid villains, the admixtures of occult mysticism with scientific experimentation, and, as Daryl Jones notes, “the permeable borderland between the two worlds of spirit and matter,” which are all “imaged forth in geographical terms on the Welsh border in Caerleon, and in the occult investigations of seedy men of letters, theosophists and scientists, working in exile, obscurity and poverty in the secret labyrinths of the shabby outer suburbs of West London” (36). Helen Vaughn, for example, in The Great God Pan petrifies the inhabitants of a village on the border of Wales named Caermaen, Machen’s habitual fictive name for Caerleon (Jones 37). It is here that she is said to meet a “strange naked man” (Machen 18) in the fields beyond the borders of the village, a sight that shocks a young boy into a state of profound idiocy. In “The
Adventure of the Missing Brother,” one of the interlocking tales from the novel *The Three Impostors* (1895), the ethnologist Professor Gregg rents a house on the Welsh border, “in the west of England, not far from Caermaen” (Machen 53). There in the “faded house on the hillside” Gregg conducts his occult research in the “barren and savage hills . . . a territory all strange and unvisited, and more unknown to Englishmen than the very heart of Africa” (Machen 56). Gregg “covet[s] the renown of Columbus,” but the “undiscovered countries and continents of strange extent” that he pursues are to be found in psychology rather than geography. Gregg tells us, “Life, believe me, is no simple thing, no mass of grey matter and congeries of veins and muscles to be laid naked by the surgeon’s knife; man is the secret which I am about to explore” (Machen 51). The “terra incognita” (Machen 53) explored by Gregg leads him to the discovery of “protoplasmic reversion” (Machen 85), or the breakdown of matter into the primordial slime from which it came, a theme not uncommon in the work of Machen.  

The impermanence of the human form is also expressed in “The Novel of the White Powder,” “Adventure of the Deserted Residence,” “The Inmost Light” and, perhaps most famously, in *The Great God Pan*, where the villainess Helen Vaughn is said to transform from “woman to man, from man to beast, from beast to worse than beast” in the throes of death (Machen 76). As spectacular as Helen’s death is, it is her conception that generates the true horror of the text. The offspring of an ancient

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91 Machen may have been influenced by the work of Thomas Henry Huxley, who found a gelatinous substance in samples from some specimens of North Atlantic bottom sediment that he came to believe was a type of primordial protoplasmic substance from which all organic life sprang. He named this substance *Bathybius haeckelli*—*Bathybius* after its oceanic habitat, and *haeckelli* after his friend German philosopher Ernst Haeckel, who had previously theorized the existence of this type of primordial slime. For example, see Kelly Hurley *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the fin de siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, Philip F. Rehbock “Huxley, Haeckel, and the Oceanographers: The Case of *Bathybius haeckelli*.” *Isis* 66.4 (1975): 504-533, or A.L Rice “Thomas Henry Huxley and the Strange Case of *Bathybius haeckelli*; a Possible Alternative Explanation.” *Archives of Natural History* 11.2 (1983): 169-180.
amorphous life force and a teenage girl “rescued” from the urban gutter, Helen is presented as a dissociogenic force which “threatens to destroy the social and psychological order of London's West End” (Ferguson 475) through the mental devastation, or “shock” that she causes.

Much like Dr. Gregg, Pan’s Dr. Raymond conducts his occult experiments in an isolated laboratory, buried deep in the rural Welsh countryside. Here, in an inversion of H.G. Well’s Dr. Moreau, he seeks to surgically alter the human brain in order to efface the wall between spirit and sense and unleash the Great God Pan into the brain of his teenage ward, Mary. Unconcerned with the ethics of such an experiment, Raymond tells Clarke, “As you know, I rescued Mary from the gutter, and from almost certain starvation, when she was a child; I think her life is mine, to use as I see fit” (Machen 7-8). As Christine Ferguson notes, “The purpose of Raymond's project is unclear [;].... He wishes to breach the limits of perception simply because they exist” (475). In his years of neurological research, Raymond has become convinced that the modern subject exists in a state of permanent dissociation, cut off from true reality. He claims that the world he inhabits, “from that star that has just shone out in the sky to the solid ground beneath our feet,” is nothing “but dreams and shadows; the shadows that hide the real world from our eyes” (Machen 4). He tells Clarke, “There is a real world, but it is beyond this glamour and this vision... beyond them all as beyond a veil. I do not know whether any human being has ever lifted that veil.... the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan” (4-5). Raymond believes that this world beyond the veil – “a sphere unknown” made up of “continents and islands, and great oceans in which no ship has sailed... since a Man first lifted up his eyes
and beheld the sun, and the stars of heaven, and the quiet earth beneath” – lies hidden in
the “familiar lines and paths” of the human brain (5-6). In his experiments with cerebral
localisation, Raymond believes that he has discovered the doorway to this ancient world.

Having “devoted [himself] to transcendental medicine for the last twenty years,”
Raymond is said to be a “quack and charlatan” by his scientific peers (Machen 5). However,
with “a perfectly simple” procedure, an operation “any surgeon could do” (Machen 4),
Raymond “cuts into living flesh to unleash the primordial truth of existence from its last
hiding place” (Ferguson 475). Raymond tells Clarke that the procedure involves “a slight
lesion in the grey matter, that is all; a trifling rearrangement of certain cells, a microscopical
alteration that would escape the attention of ninety-nine brain specialists out of a hundred”
(Machen 5). For Raymond, the brain is the bridge over the “unutterable, [and] unthinkable
gulf that yawns profound between two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit;
... a bridge of light” that spans the abyss between the earth and an “unknown shore”
(Machen 7). He tells Clarke,

You may look in Browne Faber’s\footnote{Possibly a reference to physiologist and neurologist Charles Édouard Brown-Séquard.} book, if you like, and you will find that to the
present day men of science are unable to account for the presence, or to specify the
functions of a certain group of nerve-cells in the brain. That group is, as it were, land
to let, a mere waste place for fanciful theories. I am not in the position of Browne
Faber and the specialists, I am perfectly instructed as to the possible functions of
those nerve-centers in the scheme of things. With a touch I can bring them into play,
with a touch, I say, I can set free the current, with a touch I can complete the
communication between this world of sense and—we shall be able to finish the sentence later on. Yes, the knife is necessary; but think what that knife will effect. It will level utterly the solid wall of sense, and probably, for the first time since man was made, a spirit will gaze on a spirit-world. Clarke, Mary will see the god Pan! (Machen 7)

The result of the experiment is the union of Pan and Mary in the form of the monstrous progeny, Helen Vaughn: a woman of many different aliases but no true name as “Only human beings have names” (Machen 27). She is said to be “at once the most beautiful woman and the most repulsive” of women, “a sort of enigma” who brings about the mental collapse of a string of wealthy and unfortunate lovers (Machen 32). Mary, left incapacitated by the procedure, becomes “a hopeless idiot” with a “vacant” grin (Machen 13), dying shortly after she gives birth. As will be seen, Mary’s response to her encounter with Pan is emblematic of the typical response to overwhelming horror in Machen’s fiction.

Similarly, Dr. Black of “The Inmost Light” claims that he has devoted himself “to the investigation of curious and obscure branches of knowledge,” specifically “that great abyss... the gulf between the world of consciousness and the world of matter,” which is once again reflected in the physiology of the brain (Chapter Five). In his pursuit of occult scientific knowledge, Black removes his wife’s soul from her body, allowing something unspeakably evil to take its place. This evil becomes encoded in the neurological constitution of Mrs. Black, her death the result of “a somewhat obscure and scientifically interesting form of brain disease” (Chapter One). During her autopsy, it is discovered that “The tissue of the brain and the molecules of the grey matter had undergone a most
extraordinary series of changes” (Chapter One). One physician, with something of a reputation “as a specialist in brain trouble,” claims that,

At the commencement of the examination I was astonished to find appearances of a character entirely new to me, notwithstanding my somewhat large experience. I need not specify these appearances at present, it will be sufficient for me to state that as I proceeded in my task I could scarcely believe that the brain before me was that of a human being at all.... Some of the appearances I noticed... indicated a nervous organization of a wholly different character from that either of man or the lower animals. (Chapter One)

The doctor later affirms that it was the brain “of a devil” (Chapter Three). In explaining this rather odd pronouncement from a man of science, he claims,

No one recognizes more decidedly than I do the impassable gulf, the fathomless abyss that separates the world of consciousness from the sphere of matter. We know that every change of consciousness is accompanied by a rearrangement of the molecules in the grey matter; and that is all. What the link between them is, or why they occur together, we do not know, and the most authorities believe that we never can know. Yet, I will tell you that as I did my work, the knife in my hand, I felt convinced, in spite of all theories, that what lay before me was not the brain of a dead woman -- not the brain of a human being at all... [it was the] brain of a devil. (Chapter Three)

His final assertion is that whatever Mrs. Black was, she was “not fit” for this world (Chapter Three).
While Machen’s Gothic doctors at first glance seem to propose nothing more than fanciful theories on the occult nature and hidden powers of the human mind, neurology itself was often perceived as controversial and at times disconcerting in the late-nineteenth century. Indeed, Anne Stiles goes so far as to say that as a discipline, neurology had a decidedly “Gothic” character since it worked to destabilise prevailing notions of what it meant to be a “human,” which for some felt “apocalyptic” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 5). Stiles notes that the late-Victorian and early Edwardian periods witnessed watershed developments in neurological science, particularly the cerebral localisation experiments of scientists like Paul Broca in France, David Ferrier and John Hughlings Jackson in England, and Gustav Fritsch and Eduard Hitzig in Germany. By surgically altering or applying electrical current to the brains of animals such as dogs, frogs, cats and monkeys, these scientists established that distinct sections of the brain are responsible for specific mental and physical functions. Cerebral localisation theories gained force in the early 1860s when French neurologist Paul Broca “linked the third frontal convolution of the left brain hemisphere to linguistic ability” in his study of the brains of aphasic patients (Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 1). Broca’s findings were pivotal to much late-Victorian neurology. Firstly, his results inspired his peers to trace other mental faculties back to discrete cerebral locations, “ushering in a period of biological determinism and physiological reductionism that reigned until shortly after the First World War” (Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 1). Secondly, his experiments revealed the inherent asymmetry of the brain, posing a challenge to previous theories of the brain as a unified and wholly integrated system.
Broca’s discoveries would have a profound impact on the medical community and beyond. By suggesting that certain parts of the brain controlled specific emotions and behaviors, “These findings stirred controversy because they apparently challenged the possibility of free will or an extra-corporeal soul” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 1). Such claims were controversial even within the professional scientific community, where some theorists lamented an overly mechanistic view of the human mind. French physiologist Jean Pierre Marie Flourens “numbered among many scientists who felt that pinpointing the cerebral origin of movements and thoughts apparently ‘undermin[ed] the unity of the soul, human immortality, free will, and the very existence of God’” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 6). Others, like physiologist Marshall Hall argued for “a neural province within which the immortal soul enjoyed unquestioned sovereignty” (qtd. in Matus, 29), and Henry Holland claimed that human mental faculties were “signs and products of the wisdom and benevolence of the creator” (Matus 29). Similarly, English physiologist William Benjamin Carpenter worried about “the physiological reductionism of cerebral localization theory,” arguing that dividing up the brain into functional units “offended religious conceptions of humanity and contradicted ‘the universal testimony of experience,’ which would tend to suggest ‘the conception of an Ego as something unconditioned by material states and physical forces’” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 6). Thus, many leading scientists struggled to accept a purely physiological understanding of human character.

The philosophical and psychological impact of neurological theories extended beyond the professional scientific community, however, finding expression in the popular press and popular literature – especially the more “commercially successful genres such as
the romance, the neo-Gothic novel and the ‘shilling shocker’” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 1). Stiles claims that Gothic became the “preferred mode for probing the uncharted territories of the human brain” in the late nineteenth century (“Neurological Romance” 10). In their work, Gothic writers like Machen, Bram Stoker, R. L. Stevenson and H.G. Wells grappled with the ramifications of emerging neurological theories, exploring issues like “unconscious cerebration,” dual personality and shock. Stevenson’s Strange Case, for example, can be understood alongside concurrent developments in neurological research. One interpretation of the Jekyll/Hyde dyad, made popular by Anne Stiles and Anne Harrington, is that Jekyll manifests civilised “left brain” tendencies while Hyde manifests the emotional, animalistic tendencies of the “right brain.” As both Stiles and Harrington note, cases of dual personality were often attributed to bilateral brain hemisphere asymmetry in the late-nineteenth century. Victorian physiologists like Henry Holland, Arthur Wigan, and Charles Édouard Brown-Séquard argued that if one brain hemisphere was larger than the other, criminality and madness could result: “Moral depravity and intellectual regression stemmed from an oversized right brain hemisphere, which supposedly housed primitive instincts and emotions (in stark contrast to the highly evolved left brain)” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 3). Stiles claims that according to Victorian neurological thought, “Dr. Jekyll would be guilty of allowing his right-brain tendencies to overwhelm his more highly evolved left-brain functions” (“Neurological Romance” 3-4). Stoker similarly expressed a fascination with the dark possibilities of the human brain in his fiction, most notably Dracula. His Gothic masterpiece contains references to prominent Victorian neurologists such as David Ferrier, John Burdon
Sanderson, and William Carpenter; additionally, as Stiles notes, Stoker’s manuscript notes for *Dracula* “demonstrate that he sought medical advice on head injuries from his brother, the distinguished physician Sir William Thornley Stoker, then president of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland” in an attempt to make his fictional representations more scientifically accurate (“Neurological Romance” 4). Stoker’s nefarious count and his vampire underlings exhibit dissociative, somnambulistic behaviors which, according to much late-nineteenth-century cerebral localisation theory, could be traced back to the brain stem.

As the comments made by William James at the opening of this chapter illuminate, Gothic was a likely fit for literary explorations of neurological theories because the mind itself could be construed as “Gothic” in structure. In his piece “Frederick Myers’s Service to Psychology” (1901), written to commemorate the death of the great psychical researcher, James claims that “Until quite recently... the human mind... was largely an abstraction,” figured as a “sort of sunlit terrace” by the classic academic and psychologist. However, James notes, recently

the terrace has been overrun by romantic improvers, and to pass to their work is like going from classic to Gothic architecture, where few outlines are pure and where uncouth forms lurk in the shadows. A mass of mental phenomena are now seen in the shrubbery beyond the parapet. Fantastic, ignoble, hardly human, or frankly non-human are some of these new candidates for psychological description... The world of mind is shown as something infinitely more complex than was suspected; and whatever beauties it may still possess, it has lost at any rate the beauty of academic neatness. (193-4)
Although James is discussing the work of Myers, which explored telepathy, automatic writing, mediumship, spirit communication and, perhaps above all else, the survival of the human personality after death, his comments could be readily applied to other “romantic improve[r]s” to conceptions of human psychology, Gothic writers like Machen, Stoker and Stevenson, “who explored the human mind in all its troubling complication, without the artificially imposed linearity of mainstream scientific discourses” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 11). Stiles maintains that Gothic “opens up more immediate, sensational, and baroque possibilities” in discussions of the human mind so that “it may be no coincidence that the convoluted narratives, subterranean passages, and involved storylines traditionally associated with the late-Victorian Gothic subtly remind us of the convoluted surfaces of the brain” (“Neurological Romance” 12). Machen’s fiction in particular explores the “Fantastic, ignoble, hardly human, or frankly non-human” aspects of human psychology noted by James, exposing “the dark, tangled corners of the human mind that seemingly had no place on Ferrier’s maps of the cerebral cortex” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 12). And if, as James suggests, “Nature is everywhere gothic, not classic. She forms a real jungle, where all things are provisional, half-fitted to each other, and untidy” (“Frederick Myers” 201), then the convoluted storylines, embedded fragments, multiple and sometimes contradictory narrators, impostors, doubles, and shape-shifters of Machen’s fictitious landscape represent a contrast to the “far too neat” (James, “Frederick Myers” 201) storylines of scientific discourse.
5.2 Finding the Soul in the Brain

In his presentation of the brain, Machen returns to earlier scientific and philosophical conceptions of this organ as the seat of the soul. Although Dr. Raymond is concerned with surgically altering the brain in order to breakdown the “solid wall of sense” (Machen 7), it is the soul which is most affected by the procedure. When Mary awakens from the operation, her eyes shine “with an awful light” that makes Clarke “[quail] before them” (Machen 12). As she looked far away into the distance,

a great wonder fell upon her face, and her hands stretched out as if to touch what was invisible; but in an instant the wonder faded, and gave place to the most awful terror. The muscles of her face were hideously convulsed, she shook from head to foot; the soul seemed struggling and shuddering within the house of flesh. It was a horrible sight, and Clarke rushed forward, as she fell shrieking to the floor. (12-13)

Here, as in much of Machen’s work, the mind and the soul are intertwined so that the alteration in Mary’s brain cells is simultaneously an alteration in her spirit. This equation is also visible in “The Inmost Light,” where the soul is encoded in the physiology of the brain. As Mrs. Black becomes “a nameless terror,” the tissue of her brain and the molecules of the grey matter undergo “a most extraordinary series of changes” (Chapter One), resulting in its transformation into “the brain of a devil” (Chapter Three). Thus, Dr. Black’s experiment to draw “that essence which men call the soul” from the human body becomes, in turn, a neurological experiment, revealing the ways in which the character of the subject is exhibited in the structure of its nervous system and encephalon.
Machen’s positioning of the soul as a component of the brain touches on two longstanding debates within the field of neurology: the seat of the soul and the place of mind. Harrington claims that debates over the structure of the brain began “not so much as a scientific or a medical problem but as a theological one” (*Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 6). The earliest physiologists were occupied by the search for the “seat of the soul,” and as the soul was thought to be singular and unified, they had “naturally tended to look for centrally located, unitary organs in the body that could be supposed to correspond to the indivisible unity of the ruling conscious self” (Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 6). As this view gradually held sway in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Harrington argues that “the workings of the soul were intimately related to the workings of the nervous system” (*Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 6). One of the most famous scientific minds of the seventeenth century, Rene Descartes, believed that the brain’s pineal gland “served as the site of the soul’s interaction with the body, though not the site of its physical locale, the soul being nonextended and immaterial” (Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 6). In his “Passions of the Soul” (1649), Descartes writes,

> The reason which persuades me... is that I reflect that the other parts of our brain are all of them double, just as we have two eyes, two hands, two ears, and finally all the organs of our outside senses are double; and inasmuch as we have but one solitary and simple thought of one particular thing at one and the same moment, it must necessarily be the case that there must somewhere be a place where the two other impressions which proceed from a single object by means of the double
Descartes, in believing the pineal gland unique to humans, assumed this to be the location of the soul: “Since only man was endowed with an immortal soul, it seemed logical to assume that the site of this soul’s operations would be a uniquely human endowment as well” (Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 7). However, as the pineal gland does indeed exist in many animals, Descartes’ view was eventually challenged. Harrington writes that those who denied the pineal gland was the seat of the soul would turn instead to a number of other more or less unitary structures in the brain – the corpus callosum, the pons varolii, the septum lucidum, the central ventricle – in “their no less earnest search for some central and unitary meeting ground between mind and matter” (*Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 7). In the Western tradition of neurological thinking, many believed “that there had to be some place in the brain where all sensory messages from the outside world could come together and coalesce into a coherent unity, the so-called *sensorium commune*. Otherwise, the seamless unity of the soul’s consciousness was inexplicable” (emphasis original, Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 7). According to Harrington, the search for some “*sensorium commune*” was to remain one of the chief themes in the eighteenth-century study of the brain.

The search for the soul in the nineteenth century can be found in the discipline of psychology, the etymology of which comes from the Greek word “psyche,” itself a blending
of the concepts “mind” and “soul.” In the early nineteenth century, psychology was conceived of as the study and knowledge not of the mind, but of the soul, “that is, everything spiritual as opposed to corporeal” (Matus 26). As Edward Reed claims in From Soul to Mind, although psychology moved from being “a science of the soul” to that of the mind, it was still intended “to reinforce important religious beliefs,” such as the belief that man possessed a spiritual self as true as his physical self (3). For Reed, much nineteenth-century psychological thought “emerged from ... efforts to justify specific views of the deity or the soul” (3). Though Victorian mental science “increasingly promoted materialist explanations of the mind” because of developments in neurology and physiology, psychology “was shaped by debate about the place of spiritual explanations for material phenomena” (Matus 26). In Problems of Life and Mind, George Henry Lewes, for example, asks, “Who that had ever looked upon the pulpy mass of brain substance, and the nervous cords connecting it with the organs, could resist the shock of incredulity on hearing that all he knew of passion, intellect, and will was nothing more than molecular change in this pulpy mass?” (qtd. in Matus 30). Lewes’ question reveals the resistance towards purely materialistic explanations of human intellect. Lewes concedes that mental phenomena are indeed “functions of the organism” (75), but he claims that to study such phenomena without an element of subjective understanding is to gloss over the complexity of human sentience. For Lewes, to study the molecular changes of the brain without asking how material changes can be “feelings and thoughts” (75) is to miss the “significance” of mental phenomena (76).
Although the disciplines of the mental sciences often overlapped in multiple ways, nineteenth-century scientists increasingly found ways to distinguish one discipline from the rest. Neurologists, unlike psychologists, “could conceive of no physical locus for spirituality in the human brain” (Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 3). The span between phrenologist Francis Gall’s *Sur les fonctions du cerveau* (1822-5) and neurologist David Ferrier’s *The Functions of the Brain* (1876) “witnessed the emergence of neurology as a discipline, related to but distinct from developing sciences like psychology, psychiatry, and the study of mental illness” (Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 4). As German physiologist Ewald Hering wrote in 1887, “The neurologist is... placed between the physicist and the psychologist. The physicist considers the causal continuity of all material processes as the basis of his inquiry; the thoughtful psychologist looks for the laws of conscious life according to the rules of an inductive method and assumes the validity of an unalterable order” (qtd in Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 4). Stiles maintains that Hering’s remarks suggest that nineteenth-century neurologists occupied “a liminal position, confining themselves neither to the study of the tangible apparatus of the brain and nerves nor to intangible matters of the psyche” (Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 4). This liminality, coupled with the relatively inaccessible character of neurological writings, worked to create the public perception that neurology was “more intellectually threatening than its neighbor disciplines” (*Neurology and Literature* 5). However, despite its relative inaccessibility, neurology became one of the most prestigious of the mental sciences during the Victorian and Edwardian periods.93

93 It is interesting to note that Sigmund Freud began his career in neurology.
The belief that the brain is the organ of mind was perhaps most famously proposed in the nineteenth century by Austrian physician Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828), who founded the discipline of phrenology, commonly dismissed by contemporary scholars as a “pseudoscience.” Harrington claims that the phrenologists, led by Gall, “were among the first to take the growing body of evidence as they found it and map out the human soul boldly upon the convolutions of the cerebral hemispheres” (*Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 7). Phrenology operated on the basis of three fundamental principles: “(1) the brain (above all, the cortex) is the organ of the mind; (2) the brain is a composite of parts, each of which serves a distinct, task-specific ‘faculty’; and (3) the size of the different parts of the brain, as assessed chiefly through examination of the cranium, is an index of the relative strength of the different faculties being served” so that the shape of the skull became a reliable indicator of an individual’s talents and personality traits (Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 7-8). According to Harrington, Gall was the first to distinguish between the white and grey matter of the brain, an invaluable contribution to the burgeoning science of neurology. Gall is perhaps better known today for his theories regarding the multiplex character of the structure of the brain. In addition to proposing that the brain was a composite of individual organs, Gall also proposed that each of the mental faculties existed in perfect symmetrical duplicate, with each pair localised in corresponding regions of the two brain hemispheres, “so that in the end each half of the brain could serve as a complete and independent organ of mind” (Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 11). For some “such a doctrine could be construed to mean that each hemisphere at least was potentially capable of generating a ‘soul’ of its own” (Harrington,
Although Gall believed that the two hemispheres of the brain were functionally symmetrical, he did not assume that they functioned in synchrony. Rather, he suggested that each of the two halves were used singly; when one hemisphere became worn out, the other would take over (Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 15). Gall’s model of the brain produced, as the German philosopher F. A. Lange puts it, “a parliament of little men together, of whom, as also happens in real parliaments, each possesses only one single idea which he is ceaselessly trying to assert... Instead of one soul, phrenology gives us nearly forty” (emphasis original, qtd. in Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 8-9), reminding us of Henry Jekyll’s claim that “man will ultimately be known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens” (Stevenson 79). Gall was treated as a heretic, refused a Catholic burial and his works were placed on the Catholic Index of forbidden works because his ideas, “particularly his assertion that the brain was the organ of mind” felt “disturbingly materialist to his contemporaries” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 7). Severe as this reaction may seem, Stiles claims that it was “a predictable response” to an “ideologically threatening” concept, which called into question the existence of the soul alongside the integrity of the self (“Neurological Romance” 7).

As studies of the human brain began to reveal its asymmetrical character, some mental scientists speculated if it was possible for each hemisphere to act independently from its other half. Many phrenologists, for example, concluded that the “unity of mind must depend upon the two halves of the brain functioning in a symmetrical, synchronous fashion” and that insanity might be the result of independent, incongruous action “of this
double structure to which perfect unity of action belongs to the healthy state” (Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 21). As mental scientists became increasingly interested in dissociative phenomena like alternating or dual consciousness, multiple personality and semiconscious, trance-like behaviours such as somnambulism and magnetic sleep, they looked for physiological explanations for such behaviours. In discussing cases of somnambulism or dual personality, American alienist Benjamin Rush claimed that the explanation for such phenomena might be in “the mind being ... a double organ, occupying the two opposite hemispheres of the brain” (qtd. in Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 19). Similarly, in Edinburgh, phrenologist Hewitt Watson argued that “many cases of insanity,” and especially “two-fold personality,” might be explained by assuming pathological dissociation or disequilibrium between the two hemispheres (Qtd. in Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 19). In 1874 Brown-Séquard pronounced, “the very fact that the loss of speech depends on a disease of the left side of the brain... is extremely important in showing that the two sides of the brain may act independently of each other” (qtd. in Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* 105). Additionally, Henry Maudsley argued that dual or multiple personality was caused by “the failure of the organic driving force,” resulting from “the incomplete union or actual disunion... [and] almost independent action of the disunited halves” of the brain (“The Double Brain” 195). In their search for organic causes to mental illness, mental scientists were hoping to discover ways to effectively bring about cures for the feelings of “horror” and “unspeakable anguish” identified by Maudsley as characteristic of “the disintegration of the Ego or self” found in dissociative states and other forms of mental illness (Maudsley, “The Double Brain” 195-6).
However, in attempting to locate the roots of mental disorder in a disorderly body, mental physiologists like Maudsley undermined the popular belief that the psyche was fundamentally unified in their suggestion that the mind was physically divided into antagonistic halves in the structure of the brain.

Although most neurological experiments were perceived as being grounded in established scientific principles, they nonetheless seem to have “trailed an odor of Gothic mystery left over from [their] pseudoscientific predecessor,” phrenology (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 8). In addition to its perceived challenge to the existence of the soul and thus the existence of God, neurology was shocking to many Victorians because of the “the abrupt, brutal manner in which many laypeople first confronted cerebral localization theories and experiments in 1881” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 8). Although these experiments, especially David Ferrier’s, “ushered in the modern era of neurosurgery, in which neurosurgeons could save lives by using functional maps of the brain to locate tumors, infections, and skull fractures,” to the general public and even some conservative scientists, men like Ferrier were “often figured as villains, due to their controversial research methods (especially vivisection) and the obvious ways in which their research undermined the widespread lay perception of the ‘soul’ or the ‘will’ as the governing force behind human action” (Stiles, Neurology and Literature 2-3). Stiles notes that because cerebral localisation theories often raised disturbing doubts, much nineteenth-century neurological research was initially met with ambivalent or openly hostile public reaction.

British neurologist David Ferrier offers a dramatic example of the public vilification of controversial neurological theories and practice. Stiles claims that in 1881 Ferrier found
“not only his experimental methods but also his theoretical conclusions (and their philosophical ramifications) on trial” when he was accused of violating the 1876 Anti-Vivisection Act (Neurology and Literature 3). Ferrier’s trial was extremely well publicised, drawing “unprecedented public attention and scrutiny” to neurological theories and experimental methods (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 8-9). From 1873 on, Ferrier had been performing cerebral experiments in which he applied electrical currents to the brains of live animals, including monkeys, cats and dogs. He studied changes in the animals’ behaviour upon awakening from anesthesia, which he used to develop cortical maps that neurosurgeons could use to save lives by locating tumors, infections and skull fractures (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 8-9). However, many members of the public, antivivisection activists in particular, found Ferrier’s experiments cruel and disturbing. Frances Power Cobbe, the leader of the antivivisectionist Victoria Street Society (the group responsible for bringing Ferrier to trial), was perhaps his staunchest opponent. Stiles claims that in The Modern Rack: Papers on Vivisection (1889), Cobbe described the neurologist’s experiments “in frankly Gothic terms,” claiming that “The experiments of Ferrier on monkeys and of Goltz on the brains of dogs involve different mutilations, with scooping out of the brains, till, in some cases, they resemble, as Goltz has said, a ‘lately-hoed potato-field’” (qtd. in Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 8-9). Ferrier was eventually acquitted, but his trials had a profound impact on the public imagination. Stiles maintains that antivivisectionists felt repulsed “not only by the visceral details of the experiments, but also by their philosophical ramifications,” to say nothing of the ethics of such practice (“Neurological Romance” 9). She argues,
That human brain function could be predicted on the basis of animal experimentation irrefutably demonstrated the similarity between men and beasts, reaffirming the disturbing conclusions of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). More troubling still, Ferrier’s ability to produce complex behaviors by applying electrical current to the brain suggested, in Laura Otis’s words, that “there was nothing sacred about the human will, not even human consciousness.” (“Neurological Romance” 9-10)

After the trial, novels like H.G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) “invoked the specter of the Ferrier trials to generate fascination and horror” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 9-10) in the presentation of Moreau’s seemingly-pointless experiments with humanoid animal subjects, resulting in the enduring association of neurological experimentation with inhumane experimental methods.

Machen, too, points to the “specter” of Ferrier in his presentation of Raymond and Black, both of whom unscrupulously use human subjects for their occult neurological experiments. Raymond’s treatment of his young ward Mary and Black’s sacrifice of his wife’s soul in the pursuit of supernatural knowledge raise questions regarding the ethics of scientific practice, including what sacrifices are allowable in the name of “progress.” Kostas Boyiopoulos argues that Raymond’s procedure on Mary’s brain is “exploitation akin to rape” (364). Raymond’s penetration of Mary’s skull with his scalpel “is an emphatic metaphor for sexual penetration,” and the “seeing” of Pan on the operating table “suggests sexual intercourse between Mary and the ancient, goat-like Pan/Devil” (Boyiopoulos 364). Thus, Boyiopoulos suggests, science, in the way it violates the human body, is perceived as evil in
Machen’s text. Similarly, Adrian Eckersley argues that in “The Inmost Light” Dr. Black displays “an amoral, Faustian eagerness” in his attempt to make his wife submit to his ministrations, which produce an “obvious demon” in the form of the altered Mrs. Black (284). In both cases the demonic forces raised by neurological experimentation suggest that soul is indeed an inherent part of the brain, and any attempts to alter the physiology of the encephalon could work to undermine the very humanness of the subject.

In his presentation of experimental subjects in these texts, Machen engages with several sexist and racist assumptions underlying studies of the brain. As Harrington notes, neurological theories were often used to uphold the superiority of the white European male. A white European woman was typically regarded in scientific circles as “intellectually more or less on par with a man from one of the ‘inferior’ nonwhite races; that is, somewhere just above the higher apes, but definitely below the white European man” (Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 87). Gustav le Bon, for example, declared that the brains of many Parisian women “resemble more closely those of gorillas than those of adult white men” (Harrington, Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 87). He admitted that there were a few women more intelligent than men; however, he labelled these women monstrosities, “like a gorilla with two heads” (Le Bon qtd. in Harrington, Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 87). Furthermore, as Broca found it difficult to “accept the idea that nature could create two (apparently) identical structures that functioned differently” (Harrington, “Unfinished Business” 8), he argued that there were developmental differences between the two sides of the brain, with the left side being “slightly more mature” than the right. Broca suggested that in childhood, “when we are forced to master the complex
manual and intellectual skills that characterize civilized human life – articulate language being preeminent among them,” we tend to rely on the more advanced left frontal lobe, demonstrated by the predominance of right-handed people (Harrington, “Unfinished Business” 8). According to Harrington, Broca’s proposal that functional asymmetry was not inborn, “but was an artifact of education and civilization upon the human mind, is remarkable” for the way it declared that such asymmetry was a “reflection of man’s (particularly man’s) capacity to lift himself by his own efforts beyond mere animal existence into a civilized, human state” (Harrington, “Unfinished Business” 8). For Broca, then, the encephalon was a reflection of the character and caliber of the subject.

Furthermore, since many mid-nineteenth century neurologists believed that the effects of education upon the brain were inheritable, Broca also argued that the asymmetrical nature of the brain would become more pronounced after time in particular groups. For him these were “the more motivated races – those capable of what [he] called ‘perfectability’ or continuing self-improvement” (Harrington, “Unfinished Business” 8-9). Thus, by 1869 Broca had become convinced that asymmetry “was less pronounced in the brains of blacks than in those of whites,” and, in a similar vein, French biologist Gaétan Delaunay argued that women’s brains were less asymmetrical than those of men, “resembling in that respect the relatively symmetric brains of savages and young, uneducated children” (Harrington, “Unfinished Business” 8-9). One of the initial effects of these views on brain asymmetry was to encourage the belief that the left side of the brain was the intelligent, educated “human” side of the encephalon, which was “accompanied by a growth of a certain suspicion toward the speechless right hemisphere, which seemed to
be allowed to remain in an uneducated, animalistic state” (Harrington, “Unfinished Business” 9). In establishing the inherent binary nature of the brain, neurologists invested it with much metaphoric potential.

The two hemispheres of the brain came to take on a cultural significance beyond the scope of science in the way they came to be ascribed a wide-range of cultural symbols. The left hemisphere came to be associated with humanness, civilisation, motor activity, volition, intelligence, consciousness, reason and also the masculine and “white superiority” whereas the right hemisphere was linked to animality, sensory activity, instinct, passion/emotion, unconsciousness, madness, the feminine and “nonwhite inferiority” (Harrington, Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 100). Harrington concludes,

[T]hat the rise of a perception of the brain as bilaterally polarized in late nineteenth-century neurology, especially French neurology, is more than just a story of changing ideas about the functions of the brain; though it is that, too. It also is a story about how the language and imagery of science and medicine may unconsciously be used by a society to express and sanction certain of its cultural “truths.” (Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 100)

Firstly, it is important to note, as Harrington does, that this model of the brain clearly “sorted out the ‘good guys’ and the ‘bad guys’ of the nineteenth century bourgeois imagination” (Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 101). “Social undesirables” and “social inferiors,” like women, criminals, “primitives” and the mentally ill “were shuttled off into the inferior right lobe,” where they coexisted “with all the suspect and dangerous dimensions of the human mind: those irrational, nonvoluntary, emotional processes that
modern civilization could tame, perhaps, but that it was incapable of wholly suppressing, just as it was incapable of wholly controlling its more violent and unpredictable inferior members” (Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 101). In Machen’s neurological horrors, the use of women’s brains and bodies for occult science implies – and perhaps even justifies – an evolutionary scale, where women are closer to “nature,” thus animals and “primitives,” which allows them to act as portals to supernatural forces. Yet, Machen somewhat paradoxically demonstrates that the walls neurologists erected between the two hemispheres of the brain “were shifting, problematic structures” (Harrington, Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain 101) in his distressing portrayals of the mind’s inability to deal with overwhelming emotions or fright. Thus, while certain individuals (women and degenerates in particular) seemed prone to mental disunity, if the character of the brain could be altered by cultural and educational experiences, anyone could be susceptible to insanity.

5.3 Shock and the Debilitating Brain

Although Machen does not specifically reference the “double brain” in his fiction, he does deploy the brain as a vehicle for symbolically rendering and passing judgement on perceived deviances of mind, gender and society, giving voice to uneasiness about the apparent fragility of man’s social pre-eminence over women and “brutes” and the divided and permeable nature of his mental apparatus. Specifically, this is achieved by Machen’s presentation of “Shock” – an early precursor to psychological trauma – as a destabilising force in London high society. Machen’s fiction often explores moments of great emotional upheaval, strain or terror at both to the impact of the event and its after-effect. The effects
of such shocks are often both psychological and physiological so that psychic shock can cause bodily illness. Shock in Machen’s fiction reveals man’s capacity for social and mental decline. When confronted with unspeakable evil, Machen’s hapless victims are unable to cognitively process their experience, resulting in their physiological and psychological decline and, in many cases, eventual demise. In both “The Inmost Light” and *The Great God Pan* the source of this unspeakable, inassimilable horror is a demonic woman, reflecting *fin-de-siècle* anxieties over women’s changing social presence. This is especially true of *The Great God Pan*, where Helen Vaughn’s various incarnations are seen as shocking, in part, because of their indecorous behaviour. Helen’s dark and secret knowledge is often coded as sexual knowledge. As a youth, she is seen in the grass with a “strange naked man” (18); as a bride, she shocks her newlywed husband with her pillow-talk of things that dare not be whispered “in the blackest night” (26); as Mrs. Beaumont, Helen is said to entertain a variety of men at all hours of the night, enticing them to stay with the most wonderful of ancient wines. The narrative suggests that Helen’s ability to terrorise is in some ways linked to her overtly sexual nature.

Much like Helen Vaughn, Mrs. Black from “The Innermost Light” is a demonic dissociogenic force, capable of causing severe shock simply from a glance. Although Mrs. Black was said to be “uncommonly pretty,” when Austin sees her peering out a window, he claims “I felt my breath caught back, and my teeth began to chatter... It was as if I had had an electric current down my spine” (Chapter One). Even though he only looked upon her face “for some short fraction of a second,” he “knew [he] had looked into another world -- looked through the window of a commonplace, brand-new house, and seen hell open
before [him]” (Chapter One). Austin claims, even when “the first shock was over, I thought once or twice that I should have fainted; my face streamed with a cold sweat, and my breath came and went in sobs, as if I had been half drowned” (Chapter One). The effect of the shock remains with Austin, who claims to be “a good deal puzzled and horrified too by what [he] had seen” (Chapter One). Dr. Black himself degenerates through his contact with the creature that has made his wife “no longer a woman.” An “ugly customer to deal with,” Black is haunted by nightmares and the horror of what he has done. Black falls from his respectable position of doctor and dies in abject poverty as “a poor garret eer in the backwoods of London” (Chapter Three).

As the recent work of Jill Matus has shown, theories of shock formed a crucial aspect of the way Victorians attempted to think through the relationship between mind and body as well as understandings of the nature of emotions. Matus notes that railway accidents brought “strange cases” to medical attention and provoked a range of diagnoses, from railway spine to railway brain (52). As doctors were called upon to assess the claims of accident victims, some of whom had no obvious physical injuries, the medical profession began to pay attention to so-called railway shock. Matus claims that doctors debated whether railway shock was a physical ailment, undetectable to the naked eye, caused by jolts to the spine and brain, or whether it was psychological, the result of overwhelming fright. Edwin Morris’s *A Practical Treatise on Shock* (1867) was written in response to such disasters and the phenomenon of “railway shock.” Although Morris was suspicious of malingerers, he describes shock as “that peculiar effect on the animal system, produced by violent injuries from any cause, or from violent mental emotions – such as grief, fear, horror
or disgust” (qtd. in Matus 52). In his conclusion, Morris examines the ways in which the brain and nervous system are paralysed by shock, and “volition and sensation are temporarily suspended” (qtd. in Matus 52). Matus claims that Morris’s “attention to emotional causes is part of a continuous thread in nineteenth-century scientific and pseudoscientific discourse giving at least cautious credibility to the power of emotions” (52). Shock, as a “borderland concept,” helped broach the physiological with the psychological (Matus 4). For example, in *Illustrations of the Influence of the Mind on the Body* (1872), Daniel Hack Tuke argues that

> An emotion may also be conceived to cause structural change in the higher centres of the encephalon.... It is easy to see how, from Fright or sudden Joy, there may be a shock, more or less temporary, to the motor centres, by which some part is rendered unable to respond to the stimulus of the Will, or of ideas, or emotions, just as a man is sometimes deaf for days after firing a cannon, or is blind for a time after his eyes have been subjected to intense light. (212)

Tuke concludes, “Probably all we can say with certainty is that the shock which the brain receives from a violent emotion like Terror disturbs the normal relative nutrition and vascularity of the volitional and motorial centres” (194). Thus, for Tuke psychologically overwhelming emotions, like terror, can alter the physiology of the subject, demonstrating the powerful effect of the mind on the body.
Although shock has been often characterised as a primarily physiological concept in nineteenth-century thought, Machen’s fiction is populated by examples which imply emotional or psychological causes rather than the strictly physiological. In “The Novel of the White Powder” in *The Three Impostors*, for example, Dr. Harberden declines and shortly dies after witnessing the horrible physical transformation of Francis Leicester from a young man into “a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing... and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch,” at the center of which “shone two burning points like eyes” with something “that might have been an arm” (Machen 122). Haberden claims that “what I saw made me, a medical man of many years standing, grow sick with loathing... It has tempted me to doubt the Eternal Goodness which can permit nature to offer such hideous possibilities... I have not, I think, many more weeks to live” (127). In the last line of the story Miss Leicester recounts that "In the course of two or three months I heard that Dr Haberden had died at sea shortly after the ship left England" (127). The doctor’s mind, destabilised by what he has witnessed, eventually works to weaken his body to the point of death.

Indeed, death and lunacy are the habitual responses to overwhelming fright or terror in Machen’s fiction. In *The Great God Pan*, those who come into contact with Helen Vaughn can expect to live out the remainder of their lives in a state of steady mental and physical decline. While living in the rural village of Caermaen, Helen is responsible for the eventual demise of at least four people: a young boy named Trevor, a young girl names

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Rachel, and her parents, who “had undoubtedly died of grief and horror caused by the terrible death of their daughter, and by what had gone before that death” (Machen 72). The first of these victims, Trevor, is so deeply wounded by what he witnesses that he is said to never recover, becoming a hopeless idiot much like Helen’s mother Mary. While it is unclear what, exactly, Trevor witnesses (he claims to have seen Helen playing on the grass with a "strange naked man," who he is unable to describe in more detail), it is clear that the boy is “terribly frightened” (Machen 18). His father is horrified “at hearing the most dreadful screams, evidently the result of great terror” coming from his son, who “for many weeks... gave his parents much anxiety; he became nervous and strange in his manner, refusing to leave the cottage by himself, and constantly alarming the household by waking in the night with cries of ‘The man in the wood! father! father!’” (18-19). Approximately three months later, Trevor is “shocked” again by a statue of a faun or satyr, which he claims to be “the man in the wood.” His father finds “the child lying senseless on the floor, his face contorted with terror,” suffering from “a kind of fit, apparently produced by a sudden shock” (Machen 19). Trevor recovers consciousness only “to pass into a condition described by the medical man as one of violent hysteria” (Machen 20). The child is frightened once more by the “grotesque” stone head of the faun, and “this second shock seemed too severe for the boy,” who “at the present date... suffers from a weakness of intellect, which gives but little promise of amending” (Machen 20). Rachel, too, is overwhelmed by what she witnesses in her forays with Helen in the forest. After these visits, Rachel’s mother finds her daughter's manner “rather peculiar; she seemed languid and dreamy, and as it has been expressed, ‘different from herself’” (Machen 21). One night her mother finds her weeping, “lying, half
undressed, upon the bed, evidently in the greatest distress” (Machen 21). Once again Machen spares his reader the details of the horrible encounter; all that is known of Rachel’s fate is that she disappears, vanished in broad sunlight while walking in a meadow.

As Helen matures, so too does her taste in victims. Before long she is a destabilising and degenerative force unleashed upon the men in London high society, suggesting that degeneration itself is presented as a feminine or feminized force. The first of these victims is Charles Herbert, a once-prosperous and educated man now “altered and disfigured by poverty and disgrace, his body barely covered by greasy ill-fitting rags” (Machen 24). Herbert had married “a girl of the most wonderful and most strange beauty” (Machen 25), but on his wedding night he begins to hear her speak “of things which even now I would not dare whisper in the blackest night” (Machen 26). Within a year Herbert is “a ruined man, in body and soul—in body and soul” (Machen 26). He tells his friend Villiers:

[Y]ou can have no conception of what I know, not in your most fantastic, hideous dreams can you have imaged forth the faintest shadow of what I have heard—and seen. Yes, seen. I have seen the incredible, such horrors that even I myself sometimes stop in the middle of the street and ask whether it is possible for a man to behold such things and live. (Machen 26)

For Villiers, Herbert’s story “needed no confirmation: he himself was the embodied proof of it” (Machen 27-8). Helen destroys several other men from the London elite, acting as a “contagion... on the mind” (Eckersley 283-4). The most extreme example of this is the “suicidal mania” that is said to sweep through the city without explanation. Several respected, upper-class men kill themselves seemingly without reason. The first to be found
dead is Lord Argentine, a nobleman “widely known in society, and much liked for his genial manner and sumptuous hospitality,” who “no doubt” committed suicide, “though no motive can be assigned for the act” (Machen 49). The belief held by most is that Lord Argentine “had been suddenly attacked by acute suicidal mania” (Machen 51), but as Austin claims, “everybody knows that it's all nonsense. Suicidal mania is not small-pox” (Machen 53).

However, within three weeks, three more gentlemen, one of them a nobleman and the two others “men of good position and ample means,” perish miserably in almost the exact same manner (Machen 51). Lord Swanleigh is found one morning in his dressing-room, hanging from a peg affixed to the wall, and Mr. Collier-Stuart and Mr. Herries “had chosen to die as Lord Argentine,” hanging themselves on a bedpost (Machen 51). Dubbed “The West End Horrors,” the outbreak of “suicidal mania” is compared to the “sordid murders of Whitechapel” (Machen 51). Whereas the victims in Whitechapel had been prostitutes, “each of these men who had resolved to die a tortured shameful death was rich, prosperous, and to all appearances in love with the world, and not the acutest research should ferret out any shadow of a lurking motive in either case” (Machen 51). The narrator claims, “There was a horror in the air, and men looked at one another’s faces when they met, each wondering whether the other was to be the victim of the fifth nameless tragedy.... no man knew when or where the next blow would light” (Machen 51-52). What is disturbing for Machen’s London gentlemen is the apparent lack of cause for the suicides coupled with the nature of the victims. As Barbara T. Gates notes in her text Victorian Suicide for most Victorians there was something subversive and anti-social about suicide.
Gates discusses Italian professor of psychology Henry Morselli’s highly influential book *Suicide: an Essay on Comparative Moral Statistics* (1881), translated into English and published in London. Morselli argued that the study of suicide was most useful as a study of society, in “its wants and tendencies, that is in the functions of its complicated organism,” suggesting that the individual body could be read as symptomatic of the body politic (qtd. in Gates 19). His “grand conclusion,” according to Gates, is that "suicide is an effect of the struggle for existence and of human selection which works according to the laws of evolution among civilized people" (emphasis original, qtd. in Gates 19). Thus, Morselli believed that weaker individuals who were unable to cope with the stresses of civilised life committed suicide, which he characterised as a "sad law of necessity" that worked to eliminate weaker types in order to maintain the integrity of civilisation (qtd. in Gates 19).

Since Morselli understood suicide as a “voluntary” act of “human will” (1), he concluded that the only way to prevent suicide was through the development of a strong moral and therefore masculine character.

In England, mental scientists like William Carpenter explained the suicidal impulse in terminology derived from theories of hypnosis, as a fixed or dominant idea, the product of moral insanity. In *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1874) Carpenter claimed that the “insane impulse” was often “the expression of a dominant idea,” capable of controlling an individual so forcefully that he would think of himself as driven by necessity (qtd. in Gates 17). Carpenter categorised suicide among somnambulistic phenomena, as the product of a suspension of will in the presence of a dominant idea so powerful, it “operates by taking full possession of the mind and by forcing the body (so to speak) into the movements which
express it” (Carpenter 666). According to Carpenter, the suicidal impulse is “one that is particularly liable to be induced in persons who habitually exercise but little Volitional control over the direction of their thoughts, by the influence of suggestions from without, and especially by occurrences which take a strong hold of their attention” (666). In much the same way, Machen characterises the “suicidal mania” as a dissociative state, emphasising the unsettling nature of the suspension of individual will. The last man to commit suicide, Mr. Sidney Crashaw, is seen by Villiers leaving the house of “Mrs. Beaumont” – an alias of Helen Vaughn’s. Villiers claims, “It made my blood run cold to see that man's face. I could never have supposed that such an infernal medley of passions could have glared out of any human eyes; I almost fainted as I looked” (Machen 58). Feeling that he had “looked into the eyes of a lost soul,” Villiers tells Austin,

[T]he man's outward form remained, but all hell was within it. Furious lust, and hate that was like fire, and the loss of all hope and horror that seemed to shriek aloud to the night, though his teeth were shut; and the utter blackness of despair. I am sure that he did not see me; he saw nothing that you or I can see, but what he saw I hope we never shall. I do not know when he died; I suppose in an hour, or perhaps two, but when I passed down Ashley Street and heard the closing door, that man no longer belonged to this world; it was a devil's face I looked upon. (58)

Villiers views the suspension of will as the most abject of horrors, as an “utter blackness of despair.” What is truly unsettling in the “West End Horrors” is the erosion of individual agency, which, as Matus notes, points threateningly to “a lack of social responsibility and accountability, an open door to unconscious and therefore unpunishable crimes” (Matus
The dark implications of this unaccountability were widely recognised by late-Victorian authors. Novelist Marie Corelli, for example, feared that if science were to reveal man as biologically determined by the hardwiring of his nervous system, “the result would be, first Atheism, next Republicanism, and finally Anarchy and Ruin” (qtd. in Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 6). Corelli worried “that neurologists who cited biological origins for insane and criminal behaviours discouraged people from listening to the promptings of conscience” (Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 6). In Corelli’s novel *Wormwood* (1890), the protagonist excuses his criminal behaviour on physiological grounds: “Plenty of scientists and physiologists could be found to prove that my faults are those of temperamental and brain-construction, and that I cannot help them if I would” (qtd. in Stiles, *Neurology and Literature* 6).

Machen expresses similar concerns regarding the suspension of individual will and a lack of personal or social accountability. Suicide, after all, is not only a slight against God and religious sentiment but also an affront to society, especially when it is carried out by the social elite. Barbara Gates claims that in his discussion of suicide in *The Pathology of Mind* (1879), Henry Maudsley stressed the point that all of society is threatened by the potential for destruction evident in those who are morally insane. The fear that any man could become susceptible to “suicidal mania” reflects the larger anxieties brought on by discussions of unconscious cerebration and the role of the will in determining thoughts and behaviour. Despite some “necessary concessions to automatic mental processes,” many Victorian psychologists and mental physiologists, like William Carpenter, were invested in “an active mind whose agency is intact and uncompromised” (Matus 24). In opposition to T.
H. Huxley’s view that “Man is only a more complicated and variously-endowed Automaton,” Carpenter argued “for the phenomenology of agency and the importance of disciplining and educating ‘the Will,’ that great bulwark against claims of human automatism” (Matus 25). As Samuel Edward Dole Shortt notes, mental scientists like Carpenter, neurologists W.A. Hammond and George M. Beard, and alienist Henry Maudsley were “wedded to a concept of mind that allowed little speculation for the role of the dynamic unconscious.... Certainly unconscious cerebration was acknowledged and popularized as a variety of mental activity by Thomas Laycock and W. B. Carpenter” (116); however, as Shortt claims, most scientists would have accepted Carpenter’s notion that the control of mind ultimately rests with the will. Carpenter argued that the will is a faculty by which the individual,

[Can] to a great degree direct his thoughts and control his feelings... and keep his appetites and passions under subordination... And in proportion as he does this, will he so shape his Cerebral mechanism (which, like all other parts of the organism, grows-to the manner in which it is habitually exercised). (Emphasis original, qtd. in Shortt 117)

Thus, the will became the prime determinant of both immediate behaviour and permanent character. Shortt argues that this notion “was clearly resonant with the values that permeated the economic and political rhetoric of liberal individualism. If a deficiency of will might express itself in a social sense as cowardice, pauperism, or immorality, in neurological terms it vividly revealed itself as insanity” (117). For Victorian mental science, as for social theory more generally, the concept of individual volitional control was of the upmost importance.
In his presentation of Crashaw wandering as a “lost soul” that “no longer belonged to this world,” Machen once again links mental instability with the compromise of the “soul.” In his study of Multiple Personality Disorder, *Rewriting the Soul*, Ian Hacking argues that studies of dissociative disorders contributed to the advent of the “science of memory,” which became a secularised science of the soul. Hacking claims that although science had been largely excluded from the study of the soul, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, “memory, already regarded as a criterion of personal identity, became a scientific key to the soul, so that by investigating memory (to find out its facts) one would conquer the spiritual domain of the soul and replace it by a surrogate, knowledge about memory” (198). For Hacking, the soul in its broadest sense has something to do with inwardness and the consciousness of being a self: “[I] speak of the soul not to suggest something eternal, but to invoke character, reflective choice, self-understanding, values that include honesty to others and oneself, and several types of freedom and responsibility” (*Rewriting the Soul* 6). Hacking claims that “We constitute our souls by making up our lives, that is, by weaving stories about our past, by what we call memories” (250). Thus, in scientific and secular circles “memory became the way to have knowledge of the soul” (95). Machen, too, links the soul with memory and the sense of self. Herbert, a man ruined “in body and soul” tell Villiers that his “memory is very queer” (23). He cannot easily recall the details of his life before marrying Helen, and the evil that he has witnessed has left an imprint on his mind so that he can longer control his memories be an exertion of will; “the incredible... horrors” that he has seen interfere with quotidian life, causing him to “stop in the middle of the street and ask whether it is possible for a man to behold such things and live” (26). As he
cannot escape these memories, Herbert lives his life as “a haunted man, a man who has seen hell” (27). Clarke, too, is subject to overpowering memories that come of their own accord. In Raymond’s laboratory, the smell of some “odd odour” brings on the memory “of a day, fifteen years ago, that he had spent roaming through the woods and meadows near his own home” (9). While he is fixed in a “half conscious” state, the memory of that “[wonderfully hot day] Strangely... rose up again in Clarke's imagination; the sense of dazzling all-pervading sunlight seemed to blot out the shadows and the lights of the laboratory, and he felt again the heated air beating in gusts about his face, saw the shimmer rising from the turf, and heard the myriad murmur of the summer” (9-10). While in this semi-conscious state,

Clarke heard the words quite distinctly, and knew that Raymond was speaking to him, but for the life of him he could not rouse himself from his lethargy. He could only think of the lonely walk he had taken fifteen years ago; it was his last look at the fields and woods he had known since he was a child, and now it all stood out in brilliant light, as a picture, before him. Above all there came to his nostrils the scent of summer... overpower[ing] all. His fancies made him wander, as he had wandered long ago... Thoughts began to go astray and to mingle with other thoughts.... Clarke, in the deep folds of dream... was wondering at the strangeness of it all. (10)

In the throes of his daydream, Clarke becomes aware of a presence “that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form,” and in this moment, “the sacrament of body and soul was dissolved” (11).
In many ways, then, Machen presents memory as the key to the soul; thus, Herbert’s “queer” memory is one indication that his soul has been “corrupted” (27), and Pan’s intrusion on Clarke’s recollection of that hot summer day fifteen years ago brings about the dissolution of the soul. In both of these cases, although the ruination of the soul is accompanied by the deterioration of the body, it is the psychological torment that is the most severe. Clarke, for example, escapes from Raymond’s laboratory without any physical injury, but “the face of Mary, shuddering and convulsed with an unknown terror” remains in his memory for “many years” (14). Significantly, Clarke is described as Raymond’s “witness,” and the “horrors that he witnessed” cause him “to [cling] bravely to the commonplace, and [to reject] all occasions of occult investigation” (13, 14). This emphasis on the psychological effects of bearing witness to some great horror demonstrates the shift in theories of shock that occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century. Hacking claims that “Trauma took the leap from body to mind just over a century ago, exactly when multiple personality emerged in France, and during the time when the sciences of memory were coming into being” (Rewriting the Soul 183). The current understanding of traumatic experiences as “psychological blows, [and] wounds to the spirit” gained currency in the late-nineteenth century as the result of what Esther Fischer-Homberg calls the “psychologization” of trauma (qtd. in Hacking, Rewriting the Soul 183). Although the emergence of trauma as a psychological concept is most profoundly illustrated by the cases of “shell shocked” soldiers returning from the trenches in World War I, studies of hysteria and multiple personality

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95 In November 1914, Dr. Charles S. Myers saw a number of cases of mental breakdowns among soldiers being treated in France. In an article for The Lancet in February 1915 describing his treatment of the nervous disorders in these men, Myers “assumed that the physical force or chemical effects of a shell bursting
towards the end of the nineteenth century worked to propel the understanding of “shock” in that direction. Hacking maintains that “we can quite easily construct a chain of ideas that takes us from brain damage – straightforward physical and neurological trauma – to the idea of psychological trauma that produces hysterical symptoms and is to be relieved through recollection of lost memories” (Rewriting the Soul 183). For Hacking, the association of amnesia with both head injury and hysteria – double consciousness being the most extreme form – led to the belief that “the idea or memory of the shock, rather than the actual physical shock, could produce [amnesia]. Thus a painful idea or psychological shock could cause hysteria” (Rewriting the Soul 184). Once this belief had been established, psychologists, like Pierre Janet, began to treat cases of hysteria and double consciousness by way of work on memory.

Although they took decidedly different approaches to the treatment of painful and injurious memories, Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud both helped to establish the contemporary understanding of psychological trauma. The study of trauma forms a “very complex story,” one that is based on a “rich mix of elements from medical and social history” (Hacking, Rewriting the Soul 184). Therefore, the scope of this study permits only a rather cursory view of the multifaceted and ever-changing views of Janet and Freud on the subject of psychological injury. As we have seen in Chapter 2, Janet, Breuer and Freud used similar strategies in the treatment of hysterical symptoms, thought to be the result of painful “reminiscences,” buried or dissociated memories. For Janet, pathologies like

at close range” had caused symptoms such as loss of sense and memory, which he called ‘Shell shock’” (Showalter, Malady 167). But as Eric Leed notes in No Man’s Land: Combat and Identity in World War I, “The symptoms of shell-shock were precisely the same as those of the most common hysterical disorders of peace-time ...what had been predominantly a disease of women before the war became the disease of men in combat” (163).
hysteria and multiple personality were the result of a faulty synthesis of memories so that painful or inassimilable memories were dissociated from the rest, resulting in the creation of separate memories groups and, in extreme cases, separate identities. In order to repair this psychological disunity, Janet attempted to integrate the separate memory chains, often by use of “distracted” or automatic writing. If a memory was too painful to be assimilated with the others, Janet used suggestion and hypnosis to “convince the patient that the trauma had never happened,” a practice he described as the substitution of “positive images” (Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul* 195). Breuer and Freud, too, believed that hysterical symptoms were the result of some painful memory. For them, hysterical symptoms were caused by “reminiscences”: the original traumatic memory is unavailable to the patient, so it can manifest itself in the actions of the patient, as in the case of Anna O’s deafness after being shaken in a carriage, which was reminiscent of “having been shaken angrily by her younger brother when she caught her one night listening at the sickroom door” (Breuer and Freud 36). In order to treat these symptoms, they believed that the memory had to be brought into conscious awareness: “each individual hysterical symptom, immediately and permanently disappeared when we had succeeded in bringing clearly to light the memory of the event by which it was provoked and in arousing its accompanying affect” (emphasis original, Breuer and Freud 6). Whereas Janet sometimes created salutary “false memories” in order to help his dissociative patients, Freud maintained that his patients “had to face up to the truth,” no matter how painful (Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul* 196).

In Machen’s fictions there is no cure for psychological trauma, no “potential for recuperation” (Ferguson 474). Those who are unfortunate enough to witness unspeakable
horror are left to die as the artist Meyrick in *The Great God Pan*: utterly devastated “by some severe shock” of which “the patient would tell... nothing” (68). Surviving witnesses remain deeply traumatised, unable to return to society. Machen’s occult scientists discover that “no human eyes can look on” (*The Great God Pan* 75) that which “the lips can hardly utter, [that which] the mind cannot conceive without a horror more awful than the horror of death itself” (“The Inmost Light” Chapter Five) “with impunity” (*The Great God Pan* 75). In its presentation of the dark territories and uncharted regions of the brain as Gothic spaces, Machen’s fiction expresses the *fin-de-siècle* fear that disunity and madness might be encoded in the very physiology of the mental apparatus.
Chapter 6: Conclusion:

“The Ramblings of a Mind Terminally Damaged”96: Contemporary Narratives of Dissociation

Under and behind and inside everything I took for granted, something horrible had been growing.97

It was almost not Harry’s voice at the other end of the phone. It was as if he were talking in his sleep, or as if it were an actor playing the part of Harry. He said “There’s this permanent mist of water droplets in the air, like an almost invisible veil or film between you and the bottom of the chasm... there are these fragments of rainbow everywhere, and through them you see shapes and images shifting... If you look for a while you become mesmerised, you start to see a whole world of things.... I saw a man falling into that horrible place, and it was like it was me falling out of myself.... And I watched him fall, and it was as if I’d fallen, I felt like I’d lost a part of myself. I tell you, it was the strangest feeling. It was as if I’d watched myself go to my own death.”98

This project has worked to uncover some of the ways in which the discourse of dissociation came to be Gothically inflected during the fin-de-siècle as writers and mental scientists alike attempted to come to terms with new models of mind and self. Dissociation and altered states of mind such as those found in trance, dreams and hallucinations, or those induced by mesmerism, magnetic sleep and hypnosis, were a source of cultural fascination and scientific investigation throughout the Victorian period, especially in the period between 1870 and 1900. Unusual or aberrant forms of consciousness raised an array of questions about the unitary nature of the self, the unreliability of memory, the perviousness of consciousness and the instability of identity. Gothic fiction, already permeated by images of duality, multiplicity, aberration, transgression, perversion, atavism and madness, was especially well suited to explorations of dissociative states, and dissociative phenomena became staple tropes in fin-de-siècle Gothic fiction. However, as

98 Robertson 386-7
most recent historians interested in nineteenth-century mental sciences agree, the demarcations between scientific writing, literature and ambient cultural discussions more generally were not strictly maintained.

The acknowledgement of literature’s role in disseminating ideas about mind and consciousness, however, does not go far enough, as this study has demonstrated. Indeed, the assumption that literature simply disseminates scientific discoveries and theories itself must be re-evaluated. One main premise of this study has been to show that the relationship between scientific and cultural discourses is complicated and multivalent – “circular rather than linear, multidirectional rather than one-way” (Matus and Goldman 616). On one level, this is to acknowledge, as Janet Oppenheim does in her history of the discourse of nerves, that “Scientists and medical doctors, [belong] integrally to the public... [and] share many of its biases and expectations. Their pronouncements are not objective, or free of implicit moral judgment, for science and medicine are interpretative endeavors into which the surrounding social context constantly intrudes” (4). Oppenheim highlights that scientists and doctors are “moulded, too, by systems of values, ethical codes, religious beliefs, and all manner of preconceived opinion” (4). Going beyond Oppenheim’s contentions, we must also acknowledge the ways in which literature and other cultural artifacts like art, theatre, music and film are implicated in scientific theory. While it is unclear that lesser known works like Machen’s The Great God Pan or Richard Marsh’s The Beetle had any impact on the mental sciences, works like Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Du Maurier’s Trilby most certainly did. Stevenson’s Gothic “case” influenced scientific work on Multiple Personality Disorder on an international scale, as
demonstrated by the writings of Frederic Myers in England, Morton Prince in the United States and Scottish psychiatrist Lewis Bruce. And as Stevenson was most likely influenced by the case studies of dual and multiple personality in France, the story of *Jekyll and Hyde* serves as a primary example for the circular and “short-circuiting” relationship between Gothic and mental science illustrated by Žižek’s Moebius band. In Žižek’s model, the Moebius band typifies a relationship that eludes simple oppositions, illustrated by the circuitous way the band loops one surface with its reverse without any perceptible transition; thus, as Anne Stiles notes, rather than view Victorian intellectual culture as “a one-way exchange of information between science and literature – science influencing literature or vice-versa,” it should be seen as “a dialogic or circular conversation in which scientific researchers and literary authors were mutually responsive to one another” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 5).

Certainly, the language of dissociation permeated much of the ambient culture of the late-Victorian mental sciences. Cases of unconscious cerebration, cerebral localisation, cerebral lesions, alternating consciousness, hysteria and multiple personality, contradicted popular beliefs in a unified soul or mind governing human action, presenting the threat that human beings might be “soulless machines” (Stiles, “Neurological Romance” 4). This “threat” was simultaneously invoked by cultural commentators, like Max Nordau, who worried that the mindless consumption of literature and art was an indication of the nation’s decline. Similarly, Gustave Le Bon understood the individual in the crowd as hypnotised and dissociated, unable to think and act independently from the horde, which

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99 Anne Stiles notes Stevenson’s influence on Bruce in *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) at p. 6.
was itself under some kind of spell, “hypnotised by [an] idea” (68). In response to the threats raised by dissociative phenomena, new models of gendered and national identities needed to be produced. For Victorian theorists of masculinity like Samuel Smiles, Charles Kingsley and William Landels traits like self-control, power and freedom of will were the essential traits that made a male subject a Man. Many Victorian psychologists and mental physiologists, like William Carpenter, believed in an active mind, which could be educated and disciplined to resist the pulls of implanted suggestions and the dissolution of subjective unity. This is, of course, not to say that such models were the direct and unique product of theories of dissociation; British society was being reorganised on a massive scale from a multitude of sources. Nevertheless, the increased insistence that subjects must guard themselves from pernicious influences and mental disintegration by strengthening the constitution of their Will reveals that many were indeed paying attention to theories of mind.

Although this study focuses on late-nineteenth-century representations of dissociative phenomena and the ways in which these mental disorders became Gothicised in the period’s fiction and mental science, the correlations I discuss have not gone away. Fears spawned by multiple and split personality, hypnotism, somnambulism, dissociative amnesia and fugue have persisted in twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature, film and popular culture, especially in North America. From the tales of Shell-Shock in the early-twentieth century to the stories of Multiple Personality Disorder in the late-twentieth century to the fascination with dissociation, insomnia and violence in twenty-first-century film, contemporary depictions of dissociative experiences retain their Gothic character. As
Marta Caminero-Santangelo claims, attention to all forms of mental illness was a “hallmark” of post World War Western culture: “never before had the disordered mind been to such a degree a topic for popular consumption” (52). The science of individual psychology seemed directly relevant at a time when international situations became “particularly bewildering and frightening” (52). Caminero-Santangelo suggests that this is because psychological explanations for large-scale tragedies such as the Holocaust “often gave those tragedies a manageable aspect” (52). From this broader cultural fascination with individual psychology came a particular interest in the effects of psychological trauma and abuse. In the twentieth century, dissociative disorders became increasingly tied to traumatic experiences, particularly childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse. As Steven Gold notes, the resurgence of interest in the study and treatment of dissociation in the latter part of the twentieth century is closely tied to the interest in trauma so that “currently the assumption that most, if not all, dissociative symptoms have their origins in exposure to traumatic events continues to be the prevailing etiological perspective” (Gold 14). The association of dissociation with trauma in the twentieth century demonstrates a continued interest in the theories of psychopathologists and psychoanalysts like Janet, Breuer and Freud, who had all connected dissociative disorders like hysteria and multiple personality to traumatic or overwhelming experiences.

The language of contemporary trauma studies perhaps best epitomises the ways in which Gothic continues to permeate the study of mind. In his article, “The Contemporary Gothic: Why we Need It,” Steven Bruhm suggests that contemporary Gothic largely resembles its previous incarnations in its presentation of “historical settings and narratives
that look back to a distant past in order to comment on the state of the present, concerns with the dynamics of the family, the limits of rationality and passion, the definition of statehood and citizenship, the cultural effects of technology” (259). Bruhm maintains that contemporary Gothic, like the Gothic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is centrally concerned with subjectivity and psychology. For Bruhm, the narratives of contemporary Gothic “circle around a particular nexus” related to trauma, inassimilable experience and, most centrally, “the very process of psychic life that for Freud defines the human condition” (261). Bruhm suggests that contemporary Gothic is based in the need to work through trauma and the prohibition of those desires arising from the mourning of the lost object. He claims:

[We] are what we have become in response to the threat of violence from anything like the figure of the father. Furthermore, the mode in which the late modern subject most enacts this scene of prohibition – and the mode in which we as audience take it up – is the Gothic, itself a narrative of prohibitions, transgressions, and the processes of identity construction that occur within such tensions.

(Emphasis original, 261)

In a similar way, Alexandria Warwick contends that “contemporary Gothic is the manifestation of the desire for trauma.... It seems that contemporary culture wants to have trauma, it is induced, predicted and enacted, persistently rehearsed even when it is not actually present” (emphasis original, 11). Warwick sees the “dominant rhetoric of contemporary experience” as an acknowledgement that there are defining events in our individual, social and national lives “that are insufficiently assimilated or experienced at the
time of their occurrence, which we are then belatedly possessed by, unable to proceed until the fallout is dealt with..... we must be haunted, because *something* must have happened (emphasis original, 11). If we take Warwick’s premise to be viable, then Robert Mile’s claim that Gothic is primarily and persistently connected to the history of the ‘subject,’ generating “a coherent code for the representation of fragmented subjectivity” (2) seems all the more accurate. In an era marked by a fascination with the haunting and shattering character of inassimilable experience, it is perhaps no surprise that representations of the self as “dispossessed in its own house, in a condition of rupture, disjunction, fragmentation” (Miles 3) come to be coded in Gothic terms.

If contemporary Gothic is centrally concerned with trauma, then contemporary studies of psychological trauma are equally reliant on Gothic. In *The Trauma Question* Roger Luckhurst maintains that “trauma psychology frequently resorts to the Gothic or supernatural to articulate post-traumatic effects,” which he takes a sign that “genre fictions can become imbricated in the formation of new psychiatric subjects” (98). Robert Jay Lifton, for example, views large-scale traumatic events as “permanent encounter[s] with death” that leave behind a host of “homeless dead” who cannot easily be laid to rest. Survivors of such disasters are treated as liminal beings, possessing “a quality of supernatural evil” (Lifton qtd. in Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* 98). Judith Herman, in her pivotal text *Trauma and Recovery* (1994), argues that “the language of the supernatural, banished for three hundred years from scientific discourse, still intrudes into the most sober attempts to describe the psychological manifestation of chronic childhood trauma” (96). We have already seen the important role that narratives of popular fiction have played in the
diagnostic construction of dissociative disorders, illustrating how such scripts provide narratives for what Ian Hacking terms “making up people,” defined by Luckhurst as “the dynamic interaction between subjects and psychiatric categories” (The Trauma Question 98). Thus Gothic, as Luckhurst notes, might “prove appropriate” to provide the scripts for narratives of trauma and dissociative disorders because of its relation to the “fragmented subject” identified by Miles100 (The Trauma Question 98).

As part of the larger narrative of “trauma,” what would be termed Multiple Personality Disorder (now known as Dissociative Identity Disorder) came to be identified as “an ongoing torment, [and] a horror” by twentieth-century researchers and clinicians (Glass xvi). Colin Wilson claims that “multiple personality is perhaps the most baffling enigma in the whole realm of abnormal psychology” (xvi), so it is no wonder that it has been the subject of many fictive, filmic and psychological case studies since it was “discovered” in the nineteenth century. One of the most striking examples comes from American author Shirley Jackson, whose 1954 novel The Bird’s Nest drew much of its material from Morton Prince’s Dissociation of a Personality (1905). Jackson’s fictional representation of the “frightened, screaming phantoms” of Elizabeth Richmond – four personalities in all – and Dr. Wright’s attempts to integrate and unify them depicts a process similar to that of Prince’s in his work with Miss Beauchamp. Much like Prince, Wright (who for one personality is “Dr. Wrong”) sees it as his job to sort through the personalities, destroying any unwanted traits in the attempt to formulate an originary and complete personality.

100 Luckhurst also cites Miles’ claim that Gothic is “embroiled” in the history of the subject, citing it as the “script” most appropriate for representations of the fragmented and traumatized subject.
In a manner similar to Prince’s characterisation of Miss Beauchamp as a series of alters (B1, B2, B3, and so on), Elizabeth Richmond is separated into different personas by Dr. Wright. The “first” Elizabeth Richmond (or R1) is described as “colorless,” a “lady” without sexuality; Beth (R2) is the figure of the maiden in distress, “weak and almost helpless, [but] at least possessed of a kind of winsomeness...engaging in her very helplessness” (275). Betsy (R3), the most childish and petulant of Elizabeth’s personalities, is the “fresh dragon to slay” (198) in Dr. Wright’s fairy tale fantasy where he imagines himself to be “setting free a captive princess” (195) in his quest to unify the various components of Elizabeth’s personality. Rather than create a fairy tale, however, Dr. Wright pieces together a Gothic tale of multiplicity and monstrosity, resorting to Gothic modes of storytelling to describe the “horrors” he experiences in the face of his patient’s mental fragmentation. Of Betsy the doctor tells us: “She was not, I saw, at all handsome, and as I watched her in horror, the smile upon her soft lips coarsened, and became sensual and gross, ... and she laughed, evilly and roughly...a devil’s mask...What I saw that afternoon was the dreadful grinning face of a fiend” (192). A little later, Wright claims that “I saw myself...like a Frankenstein with all the materials for a monster ready at hand, and when I slept, it was with dreams of myself patching and tacking together, trying most hideously to chip away the evil from Betsy and leave what little was good, while the other three stood by mockingly, waiting their turns” (276). Like Prince, Wright considers “psychological murder” and warns Bess (R4): “Consider that it is only through my misguided sufferance that you continue to exist at all...do you think that you may with impunity bring your pert words to bear against a power like [mine]?...you are at best, young lady, only a slight, only a poor and partial creature...and
you will not stay long” (316). In playing with the forces of life, however, Wright recognises that “Elizabeth R. [is] gone... corrupted... beyond redemption,” realising that he has made “a monster and turned it loose upon the world” (185). Much like Dr. Frankenstein, Wright is “a villain” for in his “vanity” and “arrogance,” he has “created wantonly... [and] destroyed without compassion” (185), illustrating how “supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world” (Shelly 11).

Jackson’s The Bird’s Nest was later adapted for film in 1957 under the title Lizzie alongside The Three Faces of Eve (1957), based on Thigpen and Cleckley’s study of the multiple identities of Chris Costner Sizemore. These films mark the beginning of a longstanding cinematic attraction to Dissociative Identity Disorder, which is often used to place unexpected twists and turns in narratives featuring murder, mystery, and suspense. Although not necessarily “Gothic” in nature, films like Michael Walker’s Chasing Sleep (2001), Brad Anderson’s The Machinist (2005) and David Fincher’s Fight Club (1999) use dissociative disorders to explore questions of gendered and national identity and the effects of a rapidly changing society on individual psychology, much like their Gothic textual predecessors of the late-nineteenth century. It is easy to see the impact of Stevenson’s Strange Case, for example, on films like Fight Club, which depicts a respectable middle-class male subject’s decline into violence, mayhem and madness. Fincher’s filmic adaptation of Chuck Palahniuk’s novel tells the story of an average white-collared American who becomes disillusioned by the corporate world and contemporary consumerist culture. Designated simply as the “unnamed narrator,” the film’s protagonist (played by Edward Norton) suffers
from what he believes to be insomnia; however, his account of his insomnia more closely resembles the experience of dissociation, claiming that “I nod off. I wake up in strange places. I have no idea how I got there” (*Fight Club*). Eventually, he meets Tyler Durden (played by Brad Pitt), an enigmatic soap salesman who eventually becomes his roommate and mentor. Together, they create Fight Club: an underground group of men who battle one another, in what is presented as therapy for the contemporary, emasculated man. Eventually, it is revealed that Durden and the narrator are in fact two personalities in the same psyche. As the two personalities vie for dominance, the narrator can only successfully defeat Durden through an act of self-violence; in one of the final scenes of the film, the narrator shoots himself in the head in order to kill Durden. Successful in his attempt to terminate the Durden personality, the narrator is left to watch as the destruction of Durden’s Project Mayhem – a systematic annihilation of corporate America – unfolds.

*Fight Club* presents what Steven Gold labels “the dissociative impact on men of the image of masculinity promulgated by contemporary society” (18). Gold argues that the tension between “the image of power and success promoted by contemporary culture as the masculine ideal, and the reality that most men have little or no hope of attaining this coveted status” works to promote “a poignantly fragmented and confused sense of self in many men” (18). Within the film, this identity confusion is expressed as an act of violence, strikingly exemplified by the scenes in which the unnamed protagonist fights himself. In at least one of these scenes, the narrator believes that he is fighting Durden; however, when we revisit this scene later with the knowledge that the narrator and Durden are indeed the same person, we see a despondent and solitary man fighting only himself. As bizarre as the
fight appears to be, it is nevertheless attractive to the male spectators who witness it, and
this fight becomes the catalyst that begins Fight Club. Much like Stevenson’s *Jekyll and
Hyde*, *Fight Club* uses the experience of dissociation to probe the impact of social
constraints on the psychological make-up of the individual. The perceived political and
social emasculation of men in an era of consumerism and office work is strikingly expressed
by the figure of the unnamed protagonist – a man who creates a hyper-masculine
anarchistic personality as a way of compensating for his sense of disempowerment.
Seemingly imprisoned in his job and possessed by his possessions, the protagonist
constantly searches for new identities to replace his mundane, habitual self. For over a year
he attends various self-help groups for sufferers of illnesses, such as tuberculosis, testicular
cancer, sickle cell anemia, and brain parasites. At each of these groups he assumes a
different identity, taking on a new name, a new disease and a new self-narrative. This series
of false identities “becomes the core of his existence” (Gold 18) as well as the cure for his
insomnia: in attending support-group meetings and assuming alternate identities, the
narrator is able to sleep. The implication, however, is that this practice also contributes to
the creation of Tyler Durden, suggesting that - as J. Michael Clark puts it – “white,
middleclass American men are their own worst enemies” (67). Each personality represents
a reaction to a culture that allegedly provides little guidance in the construction of
masculine self-identity: the narrator is effeminate while Durden is violent and destructive.

In a rather telling statement regarding the state of masculinity in contemporary
American culture, Kevin Alexander Boon claims:
In America during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a cultural ethic emerged that
\textit{dissociated} men from aggression in an attempt to create a more congenial masculinity.

Fueled by feminism(s), racial reform, and other popular and important movements of the period, the rhetoric of anti-aggression... spread widely through American culture, radically altering the way men are perceived and the way men perceive themselves. (Emphasis added, 267)

Seemingly cut-off from the active, heroic models of masculinity championed in previous generations, the “modern man” of \textit{Fight Club} must turn to acts of violence in order to recuperate his sense of masculine vigour. Although Boon is not using the term “dissociation” in a psychological sense, his statement nonetheless points to a “splitting” in the modern American male psyche, one that is predicated upon the tension between the necessity to present an acceptable social self and the desire to act out conflicting desires. For the narrator, this tension results in the creation of an idealised masculine self. As this second self is violent and anti-social, \textit{Fight Club}’s narrator represents a modern example of the \textit{fugueur}: an amnesic wanderer with a propensity for committing criminal acts. In his article “\textit{Automatisme Ambulatoire: Fugue, Hysteria, and Gender at the Turn of the Century},” Ian Hacking claims that if hysteria can be called “the body language of female powerlessness,” Fugue can be seen as the “body language of male powerlessness” (32). Hacking makes this claim in response to the disproportionately large number of reported cases of dissociative disorders in women. As dissociative disorders are currently understood
to be markedly more prevalent among women than men. Hacking claims that there is “a
great cry” among those who treat these disorders, asking ”Where are the men with multiple
personalities?” (“Automatisme Ambulatoire” 34). To put it simply, Hacking claims, “they are
in jail” (“Automatisme Ambulatoire” 34). If we return to the anecdote of Emile and his
criminal tendencies while in a dissociative state, we can gain a better sense of how fugue
has been commonly understood as "an anti-social act" (Hacking, “Automatisme
Ambulatoire” 37). As Hacking explains it, “Every individual has obligations under which he
[sic] lives. From the moment that he breaks the social contract, be it instinctively or
voluntarily, he puts himself outside legality. That is the case of the fugueur who abandons
his domicile, and that is why fugue is an anti-social act” (“Automatisme Ambulatoire” 37).
Whereas Emile, the Parisian lawyer, was said to gamble, lie and steal while in a dissociative
state, the dissociated narrator of Fight Club takes anti-sociality to an extreme, seeking no
less than the total collapse of capitalist society.

Most recently, James Robertson’s The Testament of Gideon Mack (2006)
demonstrates the persistence of Gothic language, narrative strategies and symbolism in
tales of dissociative disorders. In Robertson’s text, mental illness and traumatic events are
understood in supernatural and religious terms as encounters with the devil. Gideon Mack,
a faithless-minister in the Church of Scotland, attempts to negotiate his gendered and social
identity while he endures the pain of losing his father, watching his mother succumb to
Alzheimer’s disease, the sudden death of his wife, and a three-day journey into the

underground caverns of The Black Jaws, a dangerous local gorge where many unfortunate souls have met their end. It is here that Mack claims to have met and conversed with the devil. Using the classical Gothic device of the “found manuscript,” Mack’s Testament is presented by the editor Patrick Walker, who has been given the document by a journalist. The editor’s prologue to this “strange narrative” recounts Mack’s bizarre disappearance, the discovery of his body and the subsequent sightings of what is presumably his ghost by hikers in the area of his disappearance. The story itself is an obvious homage to Hogg’s The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824), made all the more apparent by the explicit reference to Gil Martin, the name the devil uses to identify himself to Mack (355).

On one level, Gideon Mack is concerned with issues of religion, faith and the perceived absence of God in contemporary society. Mack’s lack of faith forms one of the major currents running through the narrative as a whole, and it is only in his conversations with the devil that Mack ironically finds the faith that he has been searching for his whole life. From the time of his accident until the time of his disappearance and death, Mack’s behaviour becomes more and more strange. His behaviour – claiming to see a standing-stone that no one else can, performing a “Day of the Dead” themed burial for an atheist at his church and publically announcing in a sermon that he had conversed with the devil – was “considered not just unorthodox and irreverent, but incomprehensible” (Robertson 13). When he shares the details of his miraculous survival and claims that it was the devil who saved him from certain death, Mack is discredited as a lunatic and rebuked by the Kirk for his sacrilegious and unconventional behaviour. He is estranged from his community and
becomes increasingly isolated, culminating in his eventual disappearance. His body is discovered some months later on Ben Adler at the top of the Black Jaws, an apparent suicide. It is left uncertain whether Mack did indeed encounter the devil; much like the young Robert Wringham, Mack is the only person who actually sees the figure haunting him. This is also true of the standing stone he discovers in the woods on one of his runs. The eight-foot stone seems to materialise out of nothing, standing in a clearing where no stone had stood before. Mack, it seems, is the only witness to the phenomenon, and thoughts of the stone come to dominate his mind. He claims that “All the way back to town I could not get the thought of the stone out of my head. There was something cruel and alien about it” (33). He later reveals that the devil put the stone there for him to find for no certain reason.

The novel is laced with clues that suggest the cause of Mack’s unusual behavior might be related to inassimilable traumatic memories and an inherent capacity for dissociation. Mack suffers from somnambulism and hysterical paralysis, or what today would be termed conversion disorder: the existence of neurological symptoms without any apparent neurological cause. When he is a child of about seven or eight, Mack goes “through a phase of sleepwalking” (Robertson 39). He tells us, “I would wake up and find myself on the stairs, or in the kitchen... I did not panic on these occasions. Perhaps I only half woke up, although I remember the sensation even now” (39). As an adult, he is subject to repeated spasms in his left arm and suffers from a feeling of estrangement, as though the arm is not his own, in what might be interpreted as hysterical paralysis. As Mack explains it, Not long after we first arrived in Monimaskit I’d become aware of twitches and spasms down my left arm.... I began to notice a pattern: I’d feel the arm getting
ready to shudder, and a fuzzy, numb sensation would come over my head and face.

There would be a dim roaring in my ear, like the waves breaking on a gravel beach,
then the arm would start to shake from the biceps all the way down to the hand.... I
felt like it wasn’t happening to my arm but to somebody else’s. I observed it with a
detached curiosity. (Emphasis original, 56-7)

Mack’s sense of detachment from his own body mirrors the sense of detachment that he
feels from his father. He claims, “My flesh was his flesh, yet I felt no connection between
us” (126).

Significantly, the attacks of his left arm begin shortly after he and his wife arrive at the
parish where he will serve as minister. Mack is not a man of faith and feels no passion for
his chosen vocation. It would seem that his decision to become a minister is informed solely
by his desire to feel some form of connection to his father. The last thing Mack tells his
father is “Dad ... you were right all along. I’m going to follow in your footsteps. I’m going to
be a minister in the Kirk” (127). Mack’s sense that he is “taking [his] father’s place” (128) is
reflected in his sense of disconnection from his own arm. Simultaneous to his inability “to
interfere” (57) with the movements of his “disembodied conductor’s arm at the finale of
some great orchestral concert,” he hears a voice he claims is not his own say “you are your
father” (58).

In Robertson’s text, masculine identity, especially within the parameters of religious
identity, requires a high suppression of self. Like his father, Mack becomes committed to
suppressing his desires in order to maintain an outward appearance of propriety. In a
manner reminiscent of Henry Jekyll, Mack claims that he lives a double life, maintaining an
“air of piety” in an attempt to mask his lack of faith (Robertson 87). He speaks of a “fire burning deep inside,” which he keeps “batten down, the door of the furnace tightly shut, because that seemed necessary in order to get through life” (28). However, “like [his] father, [he] was boiling away within,” while trying to keep a “lid on [his] passions” (53). He does this “unconsciously at first, and then deliberately” (53). It is perhaps his father’s claim that sentimentality “enfeebles the intellect” (117) which prompts Mack to “keep [himself] well disguised” (27) as he goes through life. Under his father’s stern and watchful eye, Gideon constantly tries to transform himself in order to become the man his father wanted him to be: reserved, devout, serious and unemotional. His mother tells him that his father was “a very strong man” (129), and it is clear that in many ways Mack wishes to be a man like his father. When it becomes obvious that Gideon is left-handed, his father “battles” with him, making him use his right hand as “Left-handedness [was] seen as a mark of the Devil” (48-9). It is with his left hand that Mack chooses to write his final Testament, or rather, it is his left hand that chooses to write. He tells us that his arm “is like some sleeping animal, separate and distinct from the rest of [him]” (38). Although he does not “altogether trust” this limb, when he begins to write, he picks up his pen with his left hand. However, Mack’s sense of agency in performing this act is undercut by his claim that “it is writing again” (emphasis added, 38). If it is the hand, and not Mack, that writes the Testament, we might ask “who is writing?” Much like the anaesthetised hand of the hysterical or medium, Mack’s hand seems to be guided by some unseen or unconscious force. Moreover, the Testament itself seems to be a kind of therapy for Mack, who claims that, “I am active again, my mind is buzzing, excited, and a great burden of doom and duty has been lifted
from me. This task of ordering my thoughts and writing them down is doing me good” (35). However, the editor tells us that “towards the end of the document... the handwriting deteriorate[s]” (11), suggesting that Mack’s thoughts have become increasingly disordered. Significantly, Mack admits that he is uncertain if his ideas are his own or if they “had been put there by some power of [the Devil’s]” (298). Conceding that memory is “a tricky substance” (173), Mack, along with the reader, is ultimately left uncertain about which of his memories are accurate.

The sense that Mack’s Testament might be the product of a dissociated or otherwise disordered mind is reinforced by his repeated out-of-body experiences. Overwhelmed by the sudden death of his wife, Mack finds himself unable to cope with the experience directly. He claims that, “without warning I was outside myself looking down, just as I had been on that previous occasion. I saw my hand touching the dark, thick hair that framed her face.... Tears that had nothing to do with me poured from my eyes.... [then] the sensation ended, and I was back in my body again” (Robertson 161). As this is the second reference to an out-of-body experience, it would seem that this type of response to overwhelming emotion is common for Mack, which suggests that he possesses a capacity for dissociation. Mack describes a similar experience when he is trapped inside the Black Jaws, allegedly with the devil. As he is tossed and battered around in the water of the underground gorge, he believes that he is dead because of the profound sense of calm that he experiences. In this feeling of profound calmness, he imagines that his conscious self is a kite, “attached but at a distance, outside, above, looking down on [his] body as it was swept

102 Mack is referring to the out-of-body experience that accompanied the first attack of his arm.
along the tunnel... hovering above it, keeping pace and yet not moving at all” (257). He awakens in the hospital several days later, “badly battered” and with “a large bruise on the side of his head” (13). He is unconscious for over a day, and when he awakens, his memories are all a blur; he remembers nothing of his time in the gorge. Yet, he claims that he “was clutching at some kind of memory” from within “a deep and dreamless sleep” (262). After a while, what he had “presumed to be a figment of the human imagination” becomes a vivid memory (269). At first his remarks are “taken... as an indication of a severe shock to his system, and possibly damage to the brain sustained during his ordeal” (13), and as Gideon claims that he was “in a daze” (274) for most of his time underground with the devil, it becomes impossible to clearly draw the line between fantasy and reality. However, considering the devil’s intimate knowledge of Mack’s unconscious thoughts, their shared initials (G.M) and the familiar nature of their conversations – Mack claims the Devil reminds him of his friend John Moffat – it seems likely that Mack’s Devil is a figure of his own design.

At the end of The Testament editor Patrick Walker recalls a telephone conversation he had with Harry Caithness, the journalist who discovered Mack’s tale. In this conversation Caithness recalls his excursion to the Black Jaws in an attempt to understand Mack’s experience. The novel ends with Caithness’s rather strange description of his experience at the Jaws. Here, Caithness undergoes a similar out-of-body episode to that of Mack. He tells Walker that at the Jaws,

There’s this permanent mist of water droplets in the air, like an almost invisible veil or film between you and the bottom of the chasm... there are these fragments of rainbow everywhere, and through them you see shapes and images shifting... If you
look for a while you become mesmerised, you start to see a whole world of things....

I saw a man falling into that horrible place, and it was like it was me falling out of myself.... And I watched him fall, and it was as if I’d fallen, I felt like I’d lost a part of myself. I tell you, it was the strangest feeling. It was as it I’d watched myself go to my own death. (Robertson 386-7)

Caithness recalls feeling as though he were someone else while simultaneously believing that this someone else was, in some strange way, truly himself. Having been absorbed in Mack’s story, interviewing those closest to Mack and attempting to retrace Mack’s steps, Caithness is perhaps merely experiencing a moment of intense sympathy. After all, he has gone to the Black Jaws to understand Mack’s state of mind after his accidental fall. However, it is his manner in recalling the event to Walker that makes his story so bizarre. Walker tells us that “It was almost not Harry’s voice at the other end of the phone. It was as if he were talking in his sleep, or as if it were an actor playing the part of Harry” (386). The novel ends in much the same way it begins: with a man claiming to be distanced from himself in such a way that he is unrecognisable to himself – a man “well disguised” (27) who is only “a part of [himself]” (387). In his presentation of the tormented and divided minister Gideon Mack, Robertson, much like Stevenson and Hogg before him, suggests that a life based on duplicity and self-suppression inevitably results in psychic dissolution, characterised as an encounter with a devil.

One of the reasons studies of dissociative phenomena were so popular in the late Victorian period was that they spoke to a very specific moment. Such studies were at their peak during a time when conceptions of human identity were being called into serious
question by the mental and natural sciences. In era marked by discussions of evolution, degeneration, unconscious mental processes and cerebral localisation, the belief in a unified and hermetic psyche no longer held sway. Gothic, as an aesthetic of unease, was a mode well suited for writers wishing to explore the anxieties and general malaise occasioned by the mental sciences. And just as mental science furnished Gothic writers with an abundance of interesting material for their works, Gothic fiction provided mental scientists with a language for articulating the uncharted and sometimes unknowable regions of the human mind. Once again, in contemporary North American culture, the question of “identity” is being vigorously debated in social theory. The feminist, civil rights and gay rights movements of the twentieth century together with the postmodern contention that the subject is multiple and “characterized by simultaneous pluralism” (Howell 41) have worked to once again call conceptions of human identity into serious question. As Stuart Hall puts it, “the old identities which stabilized the social world for so long are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual as a unified subject,” a process that has been characterised as a “crisis of identity” (274). Perhaps this helps to explain why dissociative phenomena have remained so popular in the media, fiction and film, and why these phenomena have retained their “Gothic” character.
Works Cited


*Fight Club*. Dir. David Fincher. 20th Century Fox, 1999. Film.


