"TO HIS FINGER-TIPS A FIGHTING MAN": TOXIC MASCULINITY IN *FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* IMPERIAL GOTHIC LITERATURE
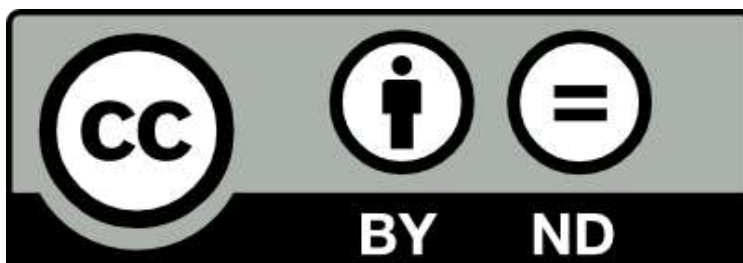
by

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ABSTRACT

In our modern times, toxic masculinity has become a buzzword spouted by the media, scholars, and the woman on the street venting to her friends. Many conceive of this as a new phenomenon in which a small subset of men are regressing to cavemen mentality as a reactionary response to newfound gender ideologies that have proliferated in modern society. *"To His Fingertips a Fighting Man:" Toxic Masculinity in Fin-de-Siècle Imperial Gothic Literature* aims to refute this notion of toxic masculinity as a modern phenomenon by looking at its underpinnings in the late Victorian era. The rise of the New Woman, threats to British imperialism, and an increasingly visible immigrant class constituted significant concerns to white men's traditionally unquestioned place of power at the *fin de siècle*. I highlight how figures of change like the New Woman and imperial subjects were demonized in literature of the period in an attempt to foster suspicion and animosity toward their growing autonomy. Through an exploration of Imperial Gothic texts, I demonstrate how divisive rhetoric was weaponized against women and people of color in order to justify their continued subjugation under patriarchal control. I also exhibit toxic masculinity as not simply limited to the extreme misogyny, racism, and violence that most people today associate with the term, but instead illustrate how discourses that patronize, dehumanize, or alienate marginalized groups are implicated in toxically masculine culture. I exhibit toxic masculinity as insidious due to the antagonistic relationships that it fosters between men within the dominant society and everyone with whom they interact. I additionally show how toxic masculinity harms men within the dominant culture by limiting them to a narrow expression of supposedly appropriate masculinity. The discursive techniques that I analyze in *fin-de-siècle* texts are remarkably similar to those used by toxically masculine men today, proving a consistency to these beliefs that belies the century plus difference between them.

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To Mum, Dad, and Shelle without whose support this would be a half-finished dream.

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INTRODUCTION

Many people conceive of toxic masculinity as a modern phenomenon in which a small subset of

men rail against newfound gender ideologies and the growing heterogeneity of society. By

positing toxic masculinity as a recent occurrence that is limited to a few reactionary men, these

commentators minimize the perverse effect that toxic masculinity has on large swathes of

society. It opens up the room for people to claim "not all men" and then dismiss the larger issue,

which is the fact that toxic masculinity is not new or limited but is instead pervasive in a way

that has persisted for hundreds of years. In order to analyze the insidious nature of toxic

masculinity, it is vital that we historicize it to examine the deep held beliefs that underpin its

perpetuation in western civilization.

This thesis analyzes the increasingly toxic form of masculinity that began to spread

through British society in the late nineteenth century as a reactionary response to expanding

threats to patriarchal dominance at the *fin de siècle*. While there were many social changes that

endangered the patriarchy's hold at the turn of the century, I focus primarily on those associated

with the racial Other and the New Woman since these constitute two primary groups

marginalized within the patriarchal system.[1] These disempowered groups took steps toward

independence at the turn of the century, pushing against the hegemonic, white, male sphere of

power. As white men's traditional place of dominance was encroached upon, I claim that there

was a reactionary response that generated an increasingly performative, combative, repressive,

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[1] I use the term "Other" to refer primarily to foreign, non-white peoples and "New Woman" to refer to the
increasingly independent woman that many men saw as an internal threat to patriarchal control. It is key, though,
that the New Woman and foreigners (both immigrants and colonial subjects) were seen as Other. While there are
numerous threats to the male sphere not touched on in this work, I focus on the Other and the New Woman due to
the especially virulent reactions to these two groups at the turn of the century. I claim these groups as also having the
most profound effect on British masculinity due to their relational contrast of non-Britishness and femininity.

and misogynistic form of masculinity. I define this form of masculinity as "toxic masculinity."

Instead of simply illustrating toxic male behaviors and making a blanket statement as to their

negativity, I investigate how these traits are destructive due to the negative relationships that they

inculcate, including men's relationships with the marginalized groups mentioned as well as

men's relationships with themselves and their male peers. Hegemonic masculinity does not occur

in a vacuum, but instead infects everyone within the patriarchal system.

Articles about toxic masculinity, both academic and non-academic have expanded

exponentially over the last few years, focusing almost exclusively on modern representations of

toxic masculinity. These articles include discussions about toxic masculinity's connections to

populism and nationalism (Kitts), youth radicalization (Burns), transphobia (Colliver and Jamel),

and mansplaining (Grau). Books like Clementine Ford's *Boys Will Be Boys* (2019) aim to take a

broader view of the issue and explores the social aspects that underpin toxic masculinity, as well

as its effects on both women and men—pointing to patriarchy as "a form of structural power that

is woven through every facet of our life" and yet "can be continuously unseen even by those

oppressed by it" (1, 2). This thesis similarly connects toxic masculinity inextricably to patriarchy

to make visible the destructive nature of this system that enforces binary gender roles and a

social hierarchy based on the approximation of those roles.

The common traits that I identify as toxically masculine include, first, blatant and

accepted misogyny where women are treated as people to be ignored or controlled in keeping

with the patriarchal paradigm.[2] In connection to this is the use of the homosocial sphere as a

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[2] See Gilmore for an examination of misogyny as a "male malady" around the world. Most critics, including Mosher and Sirkin, posit violence, dominance, and sexualization of women as critical traits of toxic masculinity. However, it is important to not just see extreme acts against women as toxic but also to identify how the everyday dismissive and patronizing attitudes toward women can be toxic. Gilmore identifies misogyny as "an unreasonable fear or hatred of women" and a "sexual prejudice that is symbolically exchanged (shared) among men" (9). While that fear and hatred can be visceral and acted out through violence and overt sexualization, it can also be seen in conservative men's attempt to limit women's power, and in idealizing submissive forms of femininity. This version of quiet misogyny takes "the form of generally accepted institutions in public culture" and becomes "part of a public value

place to exclude or denigrate others, particularly women. The second trait is the championing of violence or behaving in a combative fashion without necessity. This includes but is not limited to personal violence, threats, xenophobia, and hypernationalism rooted in a jingoistic fervor.[3] The final trait is emotional repression and enforcing that repression in other men. In conjunction is the tendency to feel anger or discomfort when men do not display typically masculine traits.[4] I claim these traits as toxically masculine because they contribute to a form of masculinity that directly antagonizes or threatens other groups, particularly women, racial Others, and men who do not comply with social expectations. All of these traits have been analyzed within modern analyses of toxic masculinity, so by tracing them backward to the late Victorian era, I can prove a connection between the toxic masculinity we see gaining prominence in our own time and the form of aggressive masculinity that became popularized at the *fin de siècle*. Although some argue against the use of the term "toxic masculinity" because it targets a small subset of "marginalized men labelled as 'toxic,' because of violence, lack of engagement in family life, and employment" (Harrington 347), I position toxic masculinity as more invasive, infecting large swathes of men within the patriarchal system and thereby impacting many with whom they interact. While there are certainly extreme examples of toxic masculinity, several of which will be discussed in this thesis, a growing acceptance of toxically masculine traits means that they are perceivable in a range of men. Even though toxic masculinity has claimed a more prominent place in social and academic thought, it is rarely historicized to examine the longstanding systemic and discursive foundation on which modern toxic masculinity is set. Even authors like Jared Sexton who

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system" (Gilmore 14). It is thus possibly more dangerous in the long term due to the way in which it becomes ingrained in society.

[3] See Burns for analysis of violence and racism as key aspects of toxic masculinity. See also Mosher and Sirkin for analysis of violence as a key toxically masculine trait. See Agius, Rosamond & Kinnvall for an examination of xenophobia and what they term "gendered nationalism" and also Kitts for another analysis of masculinity and nationalism in modern society.

[4] See Smiler, especially Chapter 3, and also Sexton, especially 60-70, for analyses of emotional repression as an inherent aspect of toxic masculinity.

attempt to look at the historical basis, date toxic masculinity's rise as beginning post World War II, claiming that it derived from a need to justify the poor conditions of life as a white laborer by emphasizing the "laborer's status as a white male, a privileged position that, regardless of station or worth, prioritized him above women, minorities, homosexuals, and immigrants" (23). Although toxic masculinity may sound anachronistic for the Victorian era, I use it to highlight my assertion that the toxic masculinity so prominently discussed today began to seed itself into the social fabric as an idealized version of masculinity in the late nineteenth century. One of the most compelling aspects of the Victorian era is how much it resembles our current time. The increased globalization during the Victorian era due to industrial advances and greater movement parallels a similar exponential growth in globalization today due to technological advances and heightened immigration. The Victorian New Woman paved the way for successive women's movements, including the most recent wave in the last decade. Social upheaval in our own time has contributed to masculinity being reevaluated, criticized, and bolstered in complicated and contradictory ways and has led to an increase in the conservative valorization of toxically masculine behaviors. By articulating examples of misogyny, xenophobia, hypernationalism, and conformity in the late nineteenth century as toxically masculine, we create parallels to our own time period that further the historization of male dominance.

Even in our modern times, the term "toxic masculinity" is highly contentious, with some claiming that toxically masculine traits only exist "in the narcissistic universe inhabited by radical feminists" to quote one of the more vitriolic opponents of the idea (Gerard 133). Many scholars use the terms "hegemonic masculinity," "hypermasculinity," "traditional masculinity," or "normative masculinity" instead, and I will often use these interchangeably as well. However, I use "toxic masculinity" purposefully throughout to emphasize that these behaviors are harmful

in pervasive and insidious ways to men and those with whom they interact. Mark McGlashan and John Mercer note the elasticity of the term, emphasizing how it is used "to describe (and account for) examples of sexism, racism and homophobia that are associated with a disparate group ranging from politicians and industrialists to religious fundamentalists, alt-right extremists and incels" (1). The ability of the term to be applied to such an extensive range of subjects proves its pervasiveness in western society. It is vital that we expand the discussion around toxic masculinity so that we focus "not only on negative behaviours that might be exhibited by men but also on those institutionalised and socially privileged (i.e. *hegemonic*) forms of masculinity that inform a wide range of social behaviours and (gendered) relationships" (McGlashan and Mercer 2).

It must be acknowledged that during the mid- to late nineteenth century—possibly more than at any previous time—there were multiple competing definitions of the term "masculinity."[5] In keeping with John Tosh's definitions of "masculinity" and "manliness," I recognize the myriad and individualistic definitions inherent in "masculinity" versus the singular definition possessed within "manliness" that constituted a "clearly delineated discourse which set out what was expected of men" (Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities* 3). I use the term "manliness" regularly in this work to refer to this singular definition that is projected outward into the group, but I also posit toxic masculinity, performative masculinity, idealized masculinity, and traditional forms of masculinity as all ways to prove manliness. As such, when I discuss masculinity in this paper, it is in reference to these outwardly projected, homosocial forms of masculinity. When considering the competition of multiple masculinities, Raewyn Connell's framework for

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[5] Some of the competing masculinities during the mid- to late Victorian era include Carlylean masculinity (Sussman, especially Chapter 1), Muscular Christianity (Bristow, especially Chapter 2, and also McLeod), martial masculinity (Masterson), pacific masculinity (Masterson) , New Imperialist masculinity (Deane, *New Imperialism*), the gentleman (Black, especially Chapter 2) and the dandy (Adams, "Dandyism and Late Victorian Masculinity").

hegemonic masculinity is of import here due to her assertion that "'hegemony' does not mean total cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives. It means ascendancy achieved within a balance of forces, that is, a state of play. Other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated" (*Gender and Power* 298). Connell also notes that "The public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support" (299). The focus on hegemonic masculinity's use to sustain power is particularly vital to this thesis since I argue that toxic masculinity became more prevalent as a way to shore up the patriarchal power structure that was being threatened at the *fin de siècle*. Additionally, it is worth echoing Arthur Brittan's claim that "while it is apparent that styles of masculinity may alter in relatively short time spans, the substance of male power does not" (52). Brittan asserts that "the masculine ideology is not subject to the vagaries of fashion—it tends to be relatively resistant to change" (53). As such, although there were myriad versions of masculinity, almost all versions of white masculinity contributed to patriarchal dominance. This study focuses primarily on white, bourgeois masculinity since the middle class was the most influential body in terms of setting and maintaining social norms during the mid- to late Victorian era and indeed in modern times as well.

To understand the shifts in masculinity at the *fin de siècle*, we must understand the social changes that took place during the mid- to late Victorian era and how these affected the patriarchy's traditional control and normative male conceptions of self. The British Empire was at the height of its power and considered the predominant force in the world. However, at the same time, there was increased rivalry for imperial dominion from countries like Germany and the United States of America, "the two nations that outpaced Britain in the international economic competition at the turn of the century" (Tromp 31). Additionally, rebellions by

colonized subjects increased to the extent that "between 1874 and 1902 hardly a year would pass without British forces being involved in some form of conflict in a far flung colonial outpost" (Brown, "Cold Steel, Weak Flesh" 157). Cities were plagued by deepening poverty, and there was growing tension and unrest among marginalized groups in British society. These problems created a deep-seated fear of national decline at the turn of the century as many critics have noted.[6] This pervasive sense of national decline is why I focus my studies on the *fin de siècle,* because it is here where we witness a harsher and more singular definition of manliness as a way to assuage fears of deterioration. As Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett have noted, "Whenever large social and public concerns raise their head [...] then very quickly the issue of boys/men comes to the fore" (8). Masculine strength is often indicative of national power in the social mindset, so increasing fears of national decline led to a hyper-fixation on British masculinity.

British superiority was taken for granted for much of the early Victorian era with the common assumption being that the sun would never set on the British Empire. However, after Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), theories of evolution, devolution, and survival of the fittest "lay at saturation density throughout nearly all layers of Victorian society" (Eby 2) and altered the assumption of continual British dominance.[7] As British men were brought into contact with what they perceived as "fierce savage" races through the colonial endeavor, they began to compare themselves to these native populations whose physical strength was viewed as "masculine standards undiminished by the

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[6] See Arata, *Fictions of Loss*; Stokes; and also Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel,* for well-documented explorations of *fin-de-siècle* anxieties surrounding decline. All of these critics examine the various aspects of Victorian society affected by fears of degeneration and thus offer comprehensive views of the dominant social anxieties discussed in this thesis.

[7] See Hurley, especially Chapter 3, for an examination of the profound effect that Darwin's theories had on Victorian society as they "demolish the model of human centrality in the universe, and replace it with one of human ephemerality, relativity, and potential 'degradation'" (56).

decadence of modern civilization" (Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism* 16), in opposition to the British who were weakened by "an increasingly complex and urban society [that] seemed inevitably to encourage softness and decadence" (Greenslade, "Fitness and the Fin De Siècle" 45). The decline of British strength and resolve was thrown into sharp relief by the many colonial failures in the late nineteenth century with the "Zulu, the Boers, the Afghans and the Sudanese all inflict[ing] humiliating reverses on the British" (Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities* 194). The British populace prominently discussed the Madhi rebellion from 1881 to1899, including General Gordon's death at Khartoum, and the Indian mutinies from 1857 reentered conversation and print culture at the *fin de siècle*.[8] The colonial Other was appearing as a much greater threat to British rule and the assumed dominance of the white race. The British Empire was intrinsically bound up with masculinity at the *fin de siècle*, so much so that "the emergence of imperialism as a conscious ideology was inseparable from anxiety over the decline of the British race figured in masculinist terms" (Arata, *Fictions of Loss* 94). For the empire to be threatened at this time meant that British masculinity was threatened as well.

Not only was the empire's strength and Britain's rule abroad questioned, an increased presence of immigrant communities at the *fin de siècle* also challenged British sovereignty at home.[9] Even though the number of immigrants originating from outside of the European continent remained relatively small until after 1945, populations from non-white countries still carried a fear-induced stigma.[10] Racism due to imperial fervor was compounded by a recognition of the "dangerous capacity of the immigrant to win the battle of survival in competition with the [British] working class" (Greenslade, "Fitness and the Fin de Siècle" 44) as well as fears of

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[8] Novels about the Indian mutiny that appeared in the 1890s include, notably, G.A. Henty's *Rujub the Juggler* (1893) and Annie Steel's *On the Face of the Waters* (1896).
[9] See Ridenhour, especially 20, for analysis of the perceived threat of increased immigration.
[10] See Panayi for in-depth analysis of the immigration history of England.

miscegenation and its correlation to British degeneration. All of these perceived threats associated with the Other created a deep xenophobia in the British populace. Many people became obsessed with maintaining the purity and strength of the British race and culture, leading to the widespread proliferation of theories of degeneration and eugenics.[11] Jerome Buckley notes that "by the last decade of the century, the concept of a national or racial absolute inspired a fervor comparable to that engendered by the older evangelical religions" (134). In *Sexual Anarchy* (2010), Elaine Showalter summarizes the racism and xenophobia of Victorian England succinctly when she states that "racial boundaries were among the most important lines of demarcation for English society; fears not only of colonial rebellion but also of racial mingling, crossbreeding, and intermarriage, fueled scientific and political interest in establishing clear lines of demarcation between black and white, East and West" (5).

As the Other jeopardized British male dominance at home and abroad, other marginalized groups also began to push for increased rights, challenging the traditional sphere of masculine power. Beyond immigrants seeking a foothold in Britain, the working-class sought better conditions, and women fought for entry into traditionally male spaces, including universities, politics, and the middle-class workforce. Whereas this thesis does not focus in depth on the efforts of the working class,[12] I closely examine the New Woman, who became an institution in Victorian media and literature. The New Woman—female activists fighting for everything from the vote to education to sexual liberation—marked one of the largest societal shifts in Britain towards the end of the century. During the early to mid-Victorian era, most bourgeois women were confined to the domestic sphere. They were largely unable to pursue higher education, own

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[11] See Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel*, especially 26-29 and 197; L. Hall, especially 58-60; and also Ledger, especially 33-35, for analyses of the British conception of eugenics in the Victorian era.
[12] See C. Hall, McClelland, and Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation*, especially 71-118 for an analysis of the working-class debates in the late Victorian era that led to the passage of the Reform Acts of 1867 and how the valorization of working men was built into the national identity.

property, vote, or even have a voice in much of their own fate, having to seek the approval of their father or other patriarchs for any major decision.[13] The expectation that women would remain in the domestic sphere was slowly beginning to change in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, many men were highly antagonistic toward the idea of women seeking entrance to traditionally male spheres, seeing it as a direct threat to their masculinity and position of dominance. Showalter states, "The New Woman, university educated and sexually independent, engendered intense hostility and fear as she seemed to challenge male supremacy in art, the professions, and the home" (*Sexual Anarchy* 38). The New Woman also thwarted the traditional ideal of the meek, deferential, British woman who belonged to and obeyed her father and/or husband. The traditional male conception of self as controller, protector, and provider was directly challenged by female autonomy and independence. If women could take care of themselves, think for themselves, or provide for themselves, the role of men would be significantly diminished since the status of Victorian men relied on maintaining the role of women as a balancing opposite. For a caste that had held complete dominion for so long, the call to share power felt like a direct threat to men's position and manhood.

The women's movement in Britain had been growing since the mid-century, so we must ask why the sudden outcry against the supposedly "new" woman who had been present in society for the past fifty years.[14] Firstly, despite the proto-feminist being active since the mid-Victorian era, the New Woman was not named until 1894, synthesized from Sarah Grand's

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[13] Women gained the right to own property in 1870 with the passage of The Married Women's Property Act but it was not until 1922 with The Law of Property Act that both husband and wife were able to inherit property equally. In 1868 the first women gained access to a university education, but their ranks were very small and did not constitute the norm. Women did not gain full degree status at Britain's most elite universities until 1920 for Oxford and 1948 for Cambridge. Women gained full suffrage in England in 1928 due to the Representation of the People Act. See Murdoch, especially "Introduction," for a further examination of the subjugation of women as well as an investigation into the few women who gained rights above their traditional station.
[14] See S. Mitchell for an examination of the early years of the women's movement, 1835-1880. These years set the groundwork for the profound changes in the gender hierarchy that reached their pinnacle in the 1890s.

article entitled "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" (Ledger 9). As Sally Ledger asserts, "by 'naming' and thenceforward largely ridiculing and attacking the New Woman, the editors and hacks of the periodical press unwittingly prised open a discursive space for her" (9). This space was filled largely by antifeminists but also by contemporary women lauding the New Woman's ambition and decrying the constraints imposed on women in the patriarchal structure. Whereas reactionary men and female apologists of patriarchy attempted to castigate the New Woman and pronounce her a degenerate who would lead to the end of British civilization, they actually provided the space women needed to voice their concerns and envision a different future. Admittedly, the New Woman was "predominantly a journalistic phenomenon" (3) and not a representation of how most bourgeois women behaved during the period. As Gail Cunningham notes, "For the vast majority, ideas greatly outstripped practice. The New Woman was held up as a symbolic figurehead for a type of social rebellion which many women might concede to be generally desirable but personally unattainable" (16). While the New Woman may not have been as pervasive as conservatives feared, her vast presence in the media made her appear to be everywhere, invading all aspects of androcentric British society.[15]

At the same time that the New Woman was being flaunted in the media, men's traditionally stable and secure roles were changing, as were the values that underpinned traditional Victorian society. It is crucial to understand the comingling issues that fed Victorian anxieties surrounding the New Woman. At the *fin de siècle* "marriage- and birth-rates were declining [...], particularly among the middle classes" (Russett 122).[16] The much discussed theory of degeneration hinted at the decline of the British race and was irrevocably intertwined

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[15] See Stetz for analysis of how the New Woman exploded in the *fin-de-siècle* media as a way to promote modernity and push sales.

[16] See Woods, especially 52-54 and 100-169, for the statistics regarding birth rates during the Victorian era and analysis of the trend toward fewer births.

with the perceived dissolution of masculine identity.[17] Women's education compacted fears of degeneration since prominent scientists of the era warned that

> if at puberty some of their energy was expended on mental development, there would not be enough left for the proper development of the reproductive organs and thus they would not fulfil their reproductive function. Or worse, women would give birth to weak, sickly children who would spawn further atrophied generations. (Kiersnowska, "New Sporting Woman" 149-150)

In addition, the bourgeois economic position was threatened by recessions as well as socialism and workers strikes, which were often associated with the New Woman movement.[18] Not only was the working class in revolt, but middle class women were conceived as usurping men's place in the workforce. Showalter asserts that "women were certainly no economic threat" since they "earned only 50 percent of what men earned in England" (*Sexual Anarchy* 7). However, though they may not have statistically posed an economic threat to men's dominance in the workforce, they certainly presented a clear incursion into professional life with the number of female clerks tripling between 1881 and 1891 (Cunningham 4). Even if men's dominant position was largely safeguarded, women were perceived as a threat due to periodicals of the time fanning the flames of discontent.[19]

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[17] See Arata, *Fictions of Loss*, especially 1-11; Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel*, especially 1-32; and also Pick, especially 155-222, for an overview of degeneration theory, how the theory was connected to ideas of masculinity, and how these were discussed in society and literature of the time.

[18] See Ledger, especially 35-58, for an in-depth analysis of the connection between New Womanhood and socialism. See also Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, especially 4-7, for an examination of the connection between gender, class, and race.

[19] See Palmer; Fraser, Green, and Johnston, especially 100-170; Stetz; as well as Paz for examinations of how the periodical press engaged with the women's rights movement and the advent of New Womanhood. These authors investigate how the New Woman was largely created and debated within the periodical format. She was either used as a scapegoat for societal evils or as a model of female opportunity at the beginning of the decade and had devolved

To this must be added the other advancements in women's social and legal position since the mid-century that were already regarded by many as an incursion into the male sphere or a diminishment of masculine power. These advancements range from the many legal victories that provided women more power in their domestic life to women's increased role in political campaigning and the debates surrounding women's suffrage.[20] As Ben Griffin notes, "In the space of little more than thirty years legal and political privileges that had underpinned male power for centuries were either swept away or substantially undermined" (5). One can easily see how this rapid diminution of male power might feel catastrophic to men who had relied on that ascendancy for their sense of place, identity, and self-worth. Fraser Harrison articulates this by accentuating that

> it was a rare man indeed who did not feel in some way disconcerted by the unending sequence of alterations that took place in the relative positions of the sexes, and a still rarer one who felt able to offer women an unqualified welcome to that territory hitherto considered the exclusive preserve of his own sex. (F. Harrison 116)

Harrison claims rightfully that the "male self-esteem had been shattered over the course of the forty years" (89) prior to the *fin de siècle* as their position of dominance was continually questioned or subverted. This led to constant reevaluations of British manhood, countless treaties

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into a cliché by its end. However, her prevalence in society's mindset continued through to the 1920s women's movement.

[20] See Griffin, especially 5; Dolin, especially 120-142; F. Harrison, especially 65-74; Crow, especially 14-15; and also Basch, especially 16-25, for overviews of the legal victories women gained during the nineteenth century. See Thompson, especially 2-3, for an examination of the social victories gained in the latter half of the century. See Korobkin, especially 125-158, for an exploration of the changes in marital law in the latter half of the century.

on masculinity, and a steady stream of attempts to formulate an ideal of masculinity that could embolden the British race.

I.   Victorian Theories of Masculinity

British masculinity was extensively re-examined in response to the perceived threats posed by the Other and the New Woman, with theories of masculinity emerging as ways to supposedly counteract these threats. While these theories differ in many ways, they each assume the implied right of men to rule. Thomas Carlyle's writing earlier in the century, for instance, "naturalizes, even sacralizes, male superiority and presents patriarchy itself as the realization through time of divine Will" (Sussman 26). Herbert Sussman examines Carlylean manhood in his influential work *Victorian Masculinities* (1995). Carlyle's idealized masculinity emphasized the importance of constructive labor (including intellectual labor) and the exclusion of women as a way to control male energy—read: sexuality.[21] Women were either excluded from Caryle's narratives or presented as unhealthy. Sussman claims that "the unclean, disruptive quality of the female in Carlyle's writing is [...] powered by intense misogyny, by the fear of female sexuality, and the threatening power of the new woman of letters" (21). Carlyle's antagonism toward women meant that domestic bonds with women were highly fraught. Contrastingly, male bonding was praised as a more productive emotional state. Men were required to maintain a strict psychological control that preserved a balance between maintaining masculine energy and not allowing this energy to erupt in either sexuality or violence. Male bonding was supposedly efficacious in protecting against sexuality, as women were excluded. However, I would suggest that the amount of homosexual acts prevalent, for instance, in public schools proves this to be fallacious.[22] Even

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[21] See Sussman, especially 16-72, for an in-depth examination of masculinity in the works of Thomas Carlyle.
[22] See Bristow, especially 81-89, and also Sedgwick, *Between Men*, especially chapters 9 and 10, for analyses of the threat of homosexuality in Victorian conceptions of manhood, including the homosocial sphere.

so, the value of male bonding was pervasive throughout society, leading to the prized position of the homosocial sphere among men. There is a distinct thread of repression and misogyny running through Carlyle's writings. These same underpinnings can be seen in idealized masculinity at the end of the century.

Carlyle was extremely influential and profoundly affected conversations around masculinity; however, Muscular Christianity (also referred to as Christian Socialism) is more often recognized as the prevalent theory of masculinity during the mid-Victorian era. Muscular Christianity—a term that was coined in an 1857 review of Charles Kingsley's writing in *The Saturday Review*—[23] promoted a connection between sports, physical fitness, and Christian morality. Inherently connected to this movement was a desire to "advanc[e] British imperialism and increas[e] the health and well-being of the nation" (Watson, Weir, Friend 2). The British education system was largely influenced by Muscular Christianity with British public schools entrusted not only to teach British boys arithmetic and Latin but also to create a love of sport, physical activity, and a competitive drive in their pupils. Joseph Bristow in *Empire Boys* (1991) expounds on the ways in which the British public school system was co-opted to focus on "war, honour, and above all, doing well on the playing field" (57) in order to "strengthen the empire" (66).[24] Hegemonic masculinity was impressed onto masses of young boys in British public schools. Several critics including Bristow, Joseph Kestner, and Peter Hugill note that Victorian male romance and boys' adventure fiction also promoted imperial manliness, focused on patriotism, physical strength, Christian morality, and homosociality, thus embedding the tenets of Muscular Christianity in literature for boys and men as well as in the male education system.

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[23] See McLeod, especially Chapter 10, for more on the advent of Muscular Christianity.
[24] See Bristow, especially Chapter 2, and also Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, especially 197-198, for examinations of the ideologies of Muscular Christianity as expressed in the British public school system in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Although Bristow notes the uneasy connection between violence and morality, he depicts Muscular Christianity as somewhat allowing for their cohabitation. Muscular Christianity was purported to create strong leaders—men who would be captains of industry and soldiers who would promote colonial interest but who ultimately did so on a moral basis. Many of the traits extolled by Muscular Christianity, like athleticism and competitiveness, continued to be prized in the late Victorian era, although idealized masculinity becomes increasingly toxic as the century draws to a close, moving from morally-centered Carlylean manhood and Muscular Christianity to the more hyper-performative and jingoistic New Imperialist masculinity. Although "jingoism only became widely manifest towards the close of Queen Victoria's reign [...] commentators saw it as visibly on the increase from the mid-years of the century" (Sandison 8), culminating in New Imperialist masculinity.

New Imperialist masculinity is closely examined by Bradley Deane in *Masculinity and the New Imperialism* (2014). In his book, Deane uses popular fiction to understand the gender norms of the age and argues that Muscular Christianity was replaced at the *fin de siècle* with a less moral and more savage form of manliness in which "transvalued stereotypes of savagery became potent symbols of masculine possibilities, so that atavism could be imagined as a sign of strength rather than weakness, [...] and the relapse into barbarism as an empowering fantasy rather than a paralyzing anxiety" (Deane, *New Imperialism* 8). The increased threats to the empire toward the end of the century led to a far more nationalistic and violent form of masculinity, no longer grounded on Christian morality but on imperialist fervor. As Natasha Rebry notes, "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" (6). Whereas Deane believes that late Victorian masculinity was a revision of previous masculine values, many

of the traits of New Imperialist masculinity that he identifies are also visible in the previous decades, albeit in a more subtle shell. Attitudes of the New Imperialist discussed by Deane include competitiveness, aggressive nationalism, militant readiness to defend or expand national interests, theatrical and performative aspects of power, and a deep concern for honor. Deane notes that New Imperialism brought with it an emphasis on shame and fear of the enervation caused by over-civilization. I would argue that concern about civilization's enervating effect was present in the earlier theories of masculinity as well, particularly Muscular Christianity. Although the place of shame had a stronger role in New Imperialism in which "judgments of the male group superseded the self-scrutiny of moral improvement, and shame surpassed guilt as the paramount mode of male anxiety" (Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism* 7), Muscular Christianity and Carlylean masculinity also used shame as a motivating impetus. New Imperialism's chief divergence was its prizing of barbarism as a masculine quality that needed to be rediscovered. Although Muscular Christianity valued strength and hard play on the sports field, it still sought to create men of culture and morality. New Imperialism was far less concerned with civilized wrappings and morality and instead glorified violence in its own right since "the real threat to manliness conceived in these terms was not savagery but civilization itself" (Deane, *Masculinity and the New Imperialism* 164). The ability to be "savage" became a prized aspect of manliness at the turn of the century and was taught to boys from a young age through the allowed violence of the schoolyard and militaristic adventure fiction.[25] The shift toward the end of the nineteenth century from Muscular Christianity to New Imperialist masculinity marks an important move. Even though previous forms of masculinity had strongly toxic strains, they were somewhat less virulently threatening to marginalized groups due to being

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[25] See Deane, *New Imperialism*, especially Chapter 4; and Bristow, especially 183-184, for examinations of the cultivation of the hooligan in Victorian culture.

morally centered. The change to increasingly performative and jingoistic masculinity created deeper antagonism between those who upheld the status quo and everyone else. Since this thesis examines not just toxic behaviors but more significantly the effect these attitudes have on men's relationships with other groups, the increased hostility at this time is vital to my examination of the rise of toxic masculinity at the *fin de siècle*. Deane's criticism expounds on many of the aspects of toxic masculinity that I use to ground my thesis including its history, social formation, and effects on masculine behavior. Whereas Deane focuses on the cause of this shift in masculinity and how this form of masculinity is visible in popular literature at this time, I focus more on how these traits affect the people with whom men interact, including marginalized groups, male peers, and themselves. Additionally, although Deane argues that New Imperialist masculinity (which I align with toxic masculinity) was caused by British fears of losing control of the empire, I posit that the blame for this hypermasculinity cannot be laid solely at the feet of empire but also must be traced to men's feelings of being displaced in their homes and gender roles in relation to women as well.

As idealized masculinity became increasingly prescribed and more associated with British sovereignty, the threat of those who did not conform was more profoundly felt. Their nonconformity seemed to threaten the very continuation of British patriarchal domination. The Victorian era saw an increased need to classify and categorize social groups in order "'to determine the exact nature of the agents of dissolution and decline' in an attempt to identify and contain what is 'unfixed, transgressive, other and threatening'" (K. Davis 142). This mission to classify and categorize was largely in the service of maintaining the patriarchal status quo, ultimately charging the agents of change in society (foreigners, dandies, homosexual individuals, New Women, and the working class) as those leading to British dissolution. To avoid being

categorized as degenerate, men had to strictly comply with prescribed masculine norms, including, notably, the repression of sentimentality or emotionality, as these were coded feminine.[26] The hegemonic masculinity that was learned in schools was enforced throughout the rest of a British man's life. Anyone failing to meet the standards was quickly corrected or marked as degenerate, thereby losing their social standing in the "pecking order among men" (Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities* 5). In the late Victorian era as the internal struggle became secondary to the external and men's behavior became increasingly regulated by his peers, Sussman notes that "these social formations of the masculine created conflict, anxiety, [and] tension in men." Even so, "in spite of the stress, men accepted these formations as a form of self-policing crucial to patriarchal domination" (9). Though masculine expectations surrounding emotional repression and physical strength were not new, the consequences of non-conformity at the *fin de siècle* were held to be far-reaching and potentially catastrophic. If one failed to uphold the masculine ideal, they were not only failing themselves but also the nation, the empire, and the patriarchy, possibly leading to the decline of all.

These combined threats and social pressures led to what I analyze as "toxic masculinity." This is not to say that men did not possess toxically masculine traits in earlier time periods but simply that this form of hypermasculinity becomes increasingly aggressive and more valorized as a salvational aspect of nationhood and patriarchal power at this time. The strength that men needed in order to oppose the Other in the empire and the evolutionary scheme led to the glorification of violence, xenophobia, and hypernationalism at the same time that their need to maintain a level of superiority over women generated increased misogyny. The tension and animosity that proliferated between men and marginalized groups infected their interactions with

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[26] See A. Smith, *Victorian Demons*, especially 16, for analysis of male emotionality as degenerate in the late Victorian era. Smith cites Max Nordau's influential treatise *Degeneration* (1892) as a key text that connected male emotions and degeneracy.

and discussions about these factions. The need for British men to distinguish themselves as opposed to both women and the Other led to emotional repression and enforced masculinity that could accept no deviation. In this thesis, I demonstrate how a multitude of social issues were created or popularized as a result of toxically masculine beliefs. Some of the issues I discuss are degeneration theory, inherent racism, jingoistic rhetoric and policies, hypernationalism, violent actions (including domestic violence), emotional repression, anti-intellectualism, eugenics, and suicidal ideation in men who struggle to conform. Although not all of these traits would have been considered social ills at the time, most modern thinkers acknowledge the threat these pose to progress, equity, mental health, and justice. They also profoundly affect the relationships in which men participate. While many of these ideas took root in the Victorian era, their legacy echoes on today.

II.   The Imperial Gothic Genre

As Mary Poovey asserts, "every text *works* [her emphasis]; as an ensemble of specific discursive practices and as the outgrowth of a determinate mode of production, every text participates in a complex social activity. Part of the work that texts perform is the reproduction of ideology" (17). This is particularly true of popular literature written for the masses in which writers capitalized on social anxieties to engage their readership. In examining toxic masculinity in the late Victorian era, I selected primary texts from popular literature that can be classified as part of the Imperial Gothic genre because of the genre's ability to be both transgressive and highly conservative.[27] The Gothic genre in general is particularly adept at exploring social conventions

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[27] Brantlinger first used the term "Imperial Gothic" in "Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914" (1985), which was later included as a chapter in his book *Rule of Darkness* (1988). In his original definition, Brantlinger stresses three central themes in the genre: atavism, invasion, and the degradation of adventure (245).

and disruptions. Many critics focus primarily on the Gothic as a subversive genre that contravenes societal expectations, breaks boundaries, and gives voice to the dark recesses of society. Peter K. Garrett notes in *Gothic Reflections* (2003) "much of the recently increased critical attention to Gothic [...] dwells on its oppositional force" (1).[28] In this sense the Gothic is useful for my thesis as it invests itself with characters that defy established conventions, including many foreign figures and New Woman archetypes. These characters attempt to threaten the societal norms to which most of the male protagonists cling and thus provide a fascinating examination of these oppositional forces. Donna Heiland notes that "transgressive acts at the heart of Gothic fiction generally focus on corruption in, or resistance to, the patriarchal structures that shaped the country's political life and its family life, and gender roles within those structures come in for particular scrutiny" (5). The Gothic's preoccupation with gender roles makes it well suited for a study focused on conceptions of masculinity. The complexity of the Gothic's discussions about masculinity can be noted in Cynthia Hendershot's argument that "while the Gothic frequently reveals male lack and hence subverts dominant notions of masculine plenitude, it also frequently demonizes this lack and dispels it by the end of the work" (3). The Gothic thus both exposes and reinforces traditional conceptions of masculinity. It is a complicated and contradictory genre that has both subversive and conservative veins running parallel to one another. In modern society where dismantling the patriarchy and working toward gender equality are commonplace desires, it is tempting to invest the Victorian Gothic with a progressive purpose. However, I assert that the Gothic is a far more reactionary and conservative genre as it is "always accompanied by a strong concern for control" (Garrett 2). The texts I examine in this thesis suggest that the Gothic is not as inherently

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[28] See Robbins and Wolfreys, especially xiv-xix; A. Smith, "Gothic Radicalism"; and also Schmitt, especially 8-14, for arguments positing the Gothic as a subversive genre. These critics claim that the Gothic disrupts the dominant systems, allowing for the destabilization of the status quo.

subversive as many critics posit. Even though the Gothic opens up a space to discuss alternative views of society, the subversive ideas and characters are more often demonized than lauded in these texts. I agree with Heiland's assertion that while the Gothic "holds the promise of breaking through the boundaries of patriarchy and every other social structure," it "often does just the reverse and upholds those structures by quenching opposition to them" (5).[29] The Gothic's impulse to control and suppress is particularly conspicuous in the Imperial Gothic due to its propagandic role in maintaining imperial domination.

When discussing Kipling's Indian fiction, for instance, Peter Morey expresses that "the pliable nature of the Gothic convention makes it a convenient vehicle for [a] kind of disturbing yet ultimately conservative political allegory" in which "the supernatural stands as a surrogate Other, a form of allegorical subversion, and must be combatted" (203). "Gothic novels are above all about the creation of fear" (Heiland 5) and the foreign figures in Imperial Gothic fiction were meant to play on alarmist views about the Other that were inculcated in society. By exploiting the xenophobic fears of late Victorian society, these texts provide a target and scapegoat for the anxieties prevalent at the time. The supernatural substance of the Other in Imperial Gothic literature makes them versatile creatures, in which readers may read a variety of contemporary social concerns, including the foreign threat, the New Woman, masculine degeneration, and myriad other issues of the day.

In *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* (1988) Patrick Brantlinger asserts that one of the motifs of the Imperial Gothic is "an invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism" (230). The Imperial Gothic's preoccupation with invasion is a particularly significant trend to my investigation of men's perception that their privileged

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[29] See Kilgour, especially 37, and also Heiland, especially 5, for analyses of the Gothic as a conservative genre.

social status was being overrun by outside forces.[30] Since I argue that toxic masculinity occurred as a reactionary response to feelings that the hegemonic male space was being "invaded" by the Other and the New Woman, these invasion stories become apt metaphors for the more domestic invasion that white men were facing. Figures in Imperial Gothic narratives quite directly invade men's space, men's bodies, and men's roles. My focal texts for this thesis all depict an invasion on multiple fronts, both physical, spatial, and mental. Although Brantlinger focuses largely, although not exclusively, on texts that take place in the reaches of empire, my thesis centers primarily—although also not entirely—on incursions on British soil. I focus principally on invasions of Britain because the male characters in these texts are more representative of British bourgeois masculinity. Whereas colonial men were offered opportunities to prove their masculinity in the empire in a traditionally aggressive fashion, this possibility was not available to the average British citizen enjoying the comforts of civilization and luxury in the homeland. As such it is important to see how these everyday British characters embody a form of aggressive, performative masculinity more often associated with soldiers even though they are in an environment that should preclude them from the necessity of such hypermasculine displays.

It is worth noting that a large body of invasion texts imagine the invaders as originating from non-colonized countries or imperial rivals.[31] For instance, most of the narratives that I examine focus on Egypt, which became of vital imperial import to Britain after they gained control of the country in 1882 and as such is a common locus used in Imperial Gothic texts.

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[30] While the Invasion Gothic genre is sometimes identified as separate from the Imperial Gothic, I class these two genres together, positioning Invasion Gothic as a subsidiary of Imperial Gothic because invasion stories from the time period are intrinsically connected to imperial threats and competition.

[31] *The Swoop* (1909) by P.G. Wodehouse is a great example of a text that imagines the invaders as originating from countries outside of British imperial control. This narrative features the invasion of Russia, Germany, Switzerland, Monaco, Morocco, Turkey, Somalia, and China—none of which were fully colonized by the British although Northern Somalia and parts of China were colonized. Many invasion epics including *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) by George Tomkyns Chesney, *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894) by William Le Queux and his later novel *The Invasion of 1910* (1906) focus on invasion by European rivals.

However, while Britain controlled Egypt from 1882-1956, it was never formally part of the British Empire. Similarly, although only a small portion of China was ever colonized by Britain, invasion is a common theme in "yellow peril" fiction, which was popularized in the late nineteenth century at the same time that "European incursion into China was entering the accelerated phase that culminated in the dramatic Boxer Rebellion of 1900-1," solidifying China as an imperial threat (Bulfin, *Invasion Gothic* 106). Invasion stories that center on the racial Other are usually referenced as examples of reverse colonization in which "a terrifying reversal has occurred: the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter becomes exploited, the victimizer victimized" (Arata, "Occidental Tourist" 623). However, Britain's lack of complete control over Egypt and China complicates this idea slightly. Their ability to threaten Britain may thus come not just from their position as a partially controlled arena that can rebel but also as a nation with a stronger sense of inherent independence on whom Britain does not have a secure grasp. Toxic masculinity relies on its ability to imagine itself as a dominant, controlling force, so factions that lay outside of this control were threatening to British imperial interests as well as the masculinity enmeshed in the nation's imperial identity. In this thesis I often class Egypt and China as of imperial concern or in conjunction with the British Empire in the sense that empire refers not just to "a country possessing colonies" but may also be used to address "some other political systems, in which one group is dominant over others whom it regards as alien and inferior" (Green 4). Although Britain never fully colonized these countries, they are still certainly orientalized and of imperial concern and as such are vital areas to examine within the Imperial Gothic genre.

In terms of the temporal view of this study, I focus on texts within Brantlinger's timeline for the Imperial Gothic ranging from 1885 to 1914 as this encompasses both the Imperial Gothic

genre and New Imperialist views of masculinity. Although this period spans both the Victorian and Edwardian periods, I argue along with critics like Lesley A. Hall that since "many 'Victorian values' persisted well into the twentieth century: a plausible case can be made for 'a long Victorian era'" (10). While Hall posits that the long Victorian era could be conceived as continuing until around 1960, I posit that it at least lasted until WWI and the modernist writers who proceeded from this war. I thus use the term Victorian to reference both the texts written during Queen Victoria's reign and those written under the sovereignty of King Edward VII. I also selected texts that have not received an abundant amount of critical attention. Some texts like Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) have garnered more attention over the past decade, but still have not been dissected to the extent of more canonical Imperial Gothic texts like *Dracula* (1897) and *She* (1887). Other texts like E.F. Benson's *Image in the Sand* have been virtually forgotten by modern readers and have received almost no critical attention. The comparatively little criticism on these texts opens up the opportunity for me to examine the interrelationship between masculinity and empire afresh.

As writers of popular fiction, the authors I examine had a profound understanding of what sells, so their texts are exemplary reflections of their time and the popular British sentiments of the era. In all of the narratives, strong and influential British men are put in direct conflict with an archetype of the orientalized Other, usually a foreign female presence. I examine these texts not just as exhibiting toxic masculinity but also as products of toxically masculine culture, meaning that these authors do not simply create toxically masculine traits in their characters, but they also "appropriat[e] the romance in the interests of patriarchal propaganda" (A. Smith, "Love, Freud, and the Female Gothic" 85), using their stories to shore up white, male hegemony. This claim becomes somewhat more troublesome when I investigate female authors

of the period, but the toxically masculine traits in their narratives prove how ingrained patriarchal control is in society, enforced by the oppressed as well as the oppressor. It further emphasizes the ways in which toxic masculinity infects not just men but all within the patriarchal system. Similarly, toxically masculine xenophobia and racism is just as present in the writing of Jewish authors like Marsh, mixed-race authors like M.P. Shiel (although he never acknowledged his ancestry), and Irish authors like Stoker. Despite not fitting the archetype of the ideal British man, each of these writers presents a version of idealized British masculinity fighting against outside forces in their narratives. As mouthpieces for the patriarchy, each of the texts have overtly toxically masculine patterns, with regular moments of misogyny, a repeated motif of male emotional repression, and deeply xenophobic roots. Masculinity in these narratives is prescribed and reinforced, underscoring a singular definition of manliness that does not allow for anything but conformity. There is a level of pageantry to masculinity in these texts, with the male characters making a show of their manhood through how they hold themselves, how they interact with others, and who they hold power over. All of these texts present the New Woman and the foreign Other as threats against British male strength. The New Woman characters and the foreign, female antagonists are portrayed as emasculating the British male heroes, creating irrationality or male hysteria, or actively seeking to destroy the male body. Conversely, foreign male antagonists are presented as a Darwinian threat to British sovereignty and have to be violently expunged by the joining together of archetypes of British masculinity. These narratives imagine antagonistic relationships between British men and the forces believed to be working toward patriarchy's dissolution. All of the texts I analyze suggest that these threats to the patriarchy need to be annihilated, or death and destruction of British society will follow. They

end by reinforcing traditional gender roles and shoring up masculine control in opposition to female weakness and foreign immorality.

I class all of these stories under the umbrella of Imperial Gothic, but many may also fall under the categories of mummy fiction, invasion Gothic, "yellow peril" texts, and many of the other imperial-centric genres that have been analyzed over the past several decades in academic criticism. Ailise Bulfin's book *Gothic Invasions* (2018) notes that the theme of invasion in addition to the Gothic elements that are deployed in invasion tales mark a decided trend in *fin-de-siècle* literature, which unites the various genres of crime fiction, "yellow peril" stories, imagined war narratives, and science fiction. I similarly use the Imperial Gothic genre as an umbrella under which multiple subgenres including "yellow peril" stories, adventure fiction, mummy fiction, invasion fiction, and many science fiction texts may be housed. Bulfin's book does an exemplary job of investigating the cultural preoccupation with invasion at the turn of the century, examining anxieties surrounding degeneration, and expounding on the imperial implications of such tales. My thesis examines a similar subset of literature but narrows into the implications on masculinity and employs the invasion scenarios as not just representative of imperial threats but as metaphorical invasions of the male sphere by threats at home as well as abroad.

III.   Structure of this Thesis

Although this thesis is ostensibly about masculinity, its main focus is the toxically masculine power structures that lead to oppression and the discursive techniques used to substantiate male dominance. As such, I begin my argument by examining the ways in which toxic masculinity infects interactions with and discussions about the primary groups oppressed under the patriarchy

—namely the racial Other and New Woman—who are often figured as opponents to patriarchal continuance. Since I claim that toxic masculinity arose largely due to the increasing autonomy of these groups, it is useful to examine how these toxically masculine texts portray oppositional forces and the threat they pose to the patriarchal structure.

In the first chapter, I investigate the discursive techniques used to dehumanize the racial Other,[32] including employing the rhetoric of degeneracy, painting foreign women as *femmes fatales*, as well as presenting miscegenation and immigration as a threat against British strength. Section one investigates the rhetoric of degeneracy in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899), and M.P. Shiel's *The Yellow Danger* (1898). Section two focuses on the *femme fatale* in *The Beetle* and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) with both texts also being discussed in section three's analysis of miscegenation and immigration in addition to H.D. Everett's *Iras: A Mystery* (1896) and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903). I argue that the need to alienate the racial Other stems largely from the threat they pose to white masculinity and that the negative traits attributed to them are often projections of British male insecurity. The villains in Imperial Gothic texts are painted as an alien Other against which British nationality and British masculinity are juxtaposed. By framing the racial Other as a physically and morally degenerate figure, toxically masculine rhetoric ensures antagonism between the races and the continued subjugation of the Other. These discursive techniques also fed a hypernationalistic, jingoistic fervor that provided room for extreme

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[32] I use the term "racial Other" instead of "foreign" or "foreign Other" in order to specify that I am speaking primarily of non-white people. While Frenchmen, Germans, Americans, and other European and white nationalities could still be considered foreign as opposed to British, my focus is not on these groups but on those targeted by proponents of racialized degeneracy theories and Darwinist conceptions of other races as inferior. It should be noted that the British perceived themselves in many ways as superior to other Europeans and definitely saw their empire as threatened by these entities. As such, other European groups are also portrayed as antagonists in many Imperial Gothic texts of the era. However, Europeans are usually perceived as knowable and more similar to the British than not, whereas the racial Other is often depicted as completely alien and incomprehensibly to British subjects. This is why I chose to focus on the racial Other for my thesis since the Gothic more easily imbues them with an animalistic monstrosity due to their non-white status.

violence without pity or remorse. I conclude the chapter with an examination of the jingoistic hypernationalism that was popularized due to racist and xenophobic discourses on the Other as it is displayed in both *The Beetle* and *The Yellow Danger*. I use these texts to prove the pernicious effect that toxic masculinity can have on those of other races and how this form of masculinity can infect the governing bodies that institute policy.

The threat that the New Woman posed to hegemonic male privilege is explored in my second chapter. I begin by surveying a multitude of texts to examine the mid-century feminine ideal that is proliferated throughout Imperial Gothic literature. I claim that *fin-de-siècle* writers nostalgically returned to this antiquated archetype in a bid to preserve or return to the unequal relationships of dominance and subservience that were considered natural during the early to mid-Victorian era. Although very few heroines in the Imperial Gothic genre actually prescribe to this paragon of womanhood, the male characters continually attempt to situate them into angelic archetypes. However, as I outline in sections two and three of this chapter, the female characters are difficult to contain into this constrictive norm and thus act as a threat to male authority. While the narratives depict turn-of-the-century women as more independent and complex than the heroes would like to acknowledge, they also prove that any form of feminine intelligence, agency, or autonomy is disastrous for the heroes and heroines alike. I investigate the distrust toward female education displayed in *Jewel* and E.F. Benson's *The Image in the Sand* (1905) and explore the threat posed by women's autonomy and agency in *The Beetle* and *Jewel*, and *Image*. By examining how intelligent and independent women are presented as dangerous in these narratives, I illustrate the antipathy toward female progress that is indoctrinated by toxically masculine mindsets. I then examine a variety of texts to demonstrate how the Imperial Gothic genre transfigures the antipathy toward these New Woman figures into literal demonization just

like it demonized the Other as a threat to both British men and national security. I ultimately argue that the only relationship toxically masculine men in these texts can imagine sustaining with women is one of dominance and subservience in which patriarchal power is maintained. Through a process of punishment and containment, these texts seek to diminish women's power and secure patriarchal control in a rapidly changing world.

The final two chapters of my thesis look directly at examples of masculinity in the Imperial Gothic genre, focusing first on what would have contemporaneously been considered weak masculinity. Masculine weakness could be examined in a variety of *fin-de-siècle* imperial texts; however, I focus primarily on characters in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897) and Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899) since these novels provide exemplary case studies for discerning the anxieties surrounding turn-of-the-century masculinity and the various ways in which men could fail to embody "appropriate" masculinity. Through an examination of male lack in these novels, I illustrate how toxically masculine culture creates severe anxiety within men who are trying to or unable to appropriate hegemonic masculinity. I then turn my attention to examples of the emasculation of seemingly strong men—primarily focusing on *Jewel*—to highlight the pressure to conform to hegemonic masculine ideals for men who approach normative masculinity as well as men who are unable to conform to expectations of manliness. By examining how toxically masculine culture dictated and policed masculinity, we can perceive the debilitating effect that such views have not just on marginalized groups like the racial Other and women, but also on people who fall within the dominant majority.

The final chapter of this thesis looks at idealized masculinity with a focus on emotional repression, anti-intellectualism, violence, and the homosocial sphere. In section one I use *Jewel* and *The Beetle* to explore the impetus toward action and emotional repression for normative

masculinity and then consider anti-intellectualism in *Image*, Marsh's *The Goddess: A Demon* (1900) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249" (1892). I argue that the emphasis on anti-intellectualism institutes a society unable to question the status quo and thus unlikely to enact change and progress. Emotional repression keeps men from feeling a full range of human emotions, limits their capacity for empathy, and, as I argue in section two, leads to violent tendencies. Although I discuss violence as an aspect of toxic masculinity through the lens of multiple texts within this thesis, section two focuses primarily on the reverence for violence displayed in Marsh's two novels, *The Beetle* and *The Goddess*. I look at violence in Rudyard Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" (1891) in section four as I illustrate how the homosocial sphere is used to shield men from the consequences of toxically masculine aggression. While discussing the homosocial sphere, I explore how this community is used to regulate masculinity and enforce conformity of its members and ideas as seen through *Jewel* and "Lot No. 249." I also highlight how the homogeneity of the homosocial sphere increases the perceived difference of the sexes as portrayed in *The Beetle* and H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887), thus maintaining a vision of masculinity and femininity as irrevocably separate. This final chapter demonstrates how attempting to appropriate toxically masculine traits is destructive to men within the dominant system as well as detrimental to society's ability to progress past the status quo.

Such a thematic structure illustrates the pervasiveness of toxically masculine behavior in *fin-de-siècle* Imperial Gothic texts through their similarities and allows investigation of the nuances of the interrelational dynamics of these traits. By thoroughly understanding how toxic masculinity is exhibited in relation to each theme, we can more fully observe the comparisons between how men interact with these oppositional groups. It may seem recursive at times, but in fact that repetition is essential to proving how endemic toxically masculine culture was at the *fin*

de siècle. Throughout these chapters, I demonstrate the various ways in which toxically masculine culture is inscribed and perpetuated through the Imperial Gothic genre. Toxic masculinity is not just the violent actions against women and racial Others, it is also the rhetoric of difference and inferiority that allows for this violence. By substantiating white men as superior to marginalized groups and then demanding a particular form of virulent masculinity to maintain this dominance, members who enforce the status quo ensure that each group is confined to a limited role in society. Men who want to be accepted are kept from fully embracing a full-range of emotions, women are kept submissive or denigrated for acts of defiance, and racial Others are met with violence and paranoia. All of these relationships are clearly toxic, poisoned by a social system that enforces antagonism between varying groups as well as strict conformity and pressure within the privileged populace. This limited scope of social roles inhibits the progress that flourishes in a society that allows for the prevalence and acceptance of multiple, diverse voices. The toxically masculine behaviors that are so prevalently discussed today clearly have a long tradition, the rise of which can be seen in the late Victorian age. By examining the prevalence of toxic masculinity in the late nineteenth century, we can hopefully discern the cause of this form of masculinity and analyze the implications of allowing it to flourish in society. The parallels we can draw between toxic masculinity at the *fin de siècle* and our own time can only further our understanding of this phenomenon so that once dissected and diagnosed, hopefully we can work toward a cure.

CHAPTER ONE

"Expressions of fear and undisguised abhorrence:" The Other and Toxic Masculinity

In my introduction, I defined masculinity as "toxic" when it directly antagonizes or threatens other groups, particularly women, people of color, and men who do not comply with social expectations. In these opening chapters, I examine toxic masculinity through the lens of the primary groups oppressed under the patriarchal regime because the increasing autonomy of women and the racial Other triggered the rise in toxic masculinity at this time period. By detailing how marginalized groups were treated and discussed, I outline both the negative relationships that toxically masculine attitudes inculcate and how the discursive techniques used to alienate these groups contributes to the maintenance of the patriarchal power structure. First, it is worthwhile to examine the racial Other since opposition to this group underscores Imperial Gothic literature's propagandic goal of enforcing the empire. Although women, homosexual individuals, decadents, and many outlying groups may be considered as "Other," I primarily use the term to refer to the racial Other in this thesis as all of the other groups in some way are incorporated into British society. Increased globalization led to a large number of immigrants "invading" Britain, creating the "late-imperial fears of the contamination of British national identity through immigration" (Braun 79). The escalation of immigration at the turn of the century, however incremental, in addition to the colonial uprisings at this time both positioned the racial Other as endangering the patriarchal, white regime.[33] Michael Galchinsky notes the

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[33] See Galchinsky, especially 2-6, for an overview of immigration issues during the Victorian era. Galchinsky notes that increased wealth, the slave trade, colonial expansion, and technology broadened the diversity visible in England during the Victorian era, which led to exaggerated stereotypes of the other as well as to the "racial" sciences like craniometry, phrenology, eugenics, statistics, anthropology, and social Darwinism.

prevalence of discussions surrounding race when he states that "Victorians debated the social and political status of Jews, of freed slaves, of immigrants from the colonies, of migrants from occupied domestic regions, and of non-conforming Christian groups" (Galchinsky 2). The obsession with the threat of foreign figures metaphorically and literally invading British, male space is visible in the exponential increase in invasion literature from 1890 to 1914.

In this chapter, I begin with an exploration of degeneracy, a common Victorian anxiety in relation to British masculinity that was projected onto the Other in an attempt to allay white male insecurity. Using Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899), and M.P. Shiel's *The Yellow Danger* (1898) as my focal texts, I investigate how the Other in Imperial Gothic literature is dehumanized through portrayals of their physical and moral degeneracy in order to illustrate how these depictions allowed for continued racism, xenophobia, and imperial dominance. Toxically masculine men require a scapegoat for any perceived weakness they may internalize, and the racial Other is often the victim of such fragility. I then turn my attention to other discursive techniques used to demonize the racial Other, namely the archetype of the foreign *femme fatale* as well as warnings against miscegenation and immigration. I examine *femmes fatales* in *The Beetle* and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) before using these texts in addition to *Iras: A Mystery* (1896) to analyze warnings against racial mixing. British men's sexual license is transferred onto foreign women in these narratives in an attempt to excuse what many Victorians viewed as sexual immorality. Any long-term relationships with racial Others and any social mixing of the races is depicted as enervating to British masculinity and therefore threatening British futurity. I illustrate that these discursive techniques used to alienate and demonize the Other are employed to both engender and justify the jingoistic hypernationalism that I examine in the final section of this chapter

through analysis of *The Beetle* and *The Yellow Danger*. I argue that the extreme acts of violence perpetrated by the characters in these texts prove the valorization of physical aggression against the Other, a path that was paved with their rhetorical dehumanization. These texts validate their violence and xenophobia through hyperbolic depictions of contamination, invasion, rape, torture, and murder at the hands of the Other. The toxically masculine characteristics of xenophobia, hypernationalism, and violence that are exhibited in the texts I analyze have significant repercussions since the men instituting such ideals are the same men making policy and leading society at home and abroad.

I.   Physical and Moral Degeneracy of the Other

One of the most effective ways to position the racial Other as inferior to the British was to depict them as degenerate. Admittedly, Degeneration theory often targeted the poor, decadents, homosexual men, the New Woman, and what was believed to be a weakening British populace so that "respectable classes could justify and articulate their hostility to the deviant, the diseased and the subversive" (Greenslade, *Degeneration Culture and the Novel* 2). However, it is important to remember that "the Other (whether race, class, or gender specific) is conventionally represented in European culture as dark and barbarian" (David 126-127). So, even when Victorian writers attack the degeneracy they perceive within their own citizenry, this is often projected onto racial Others. By placing characteristics of degeneracy on the Other, the British figures look healthy and strong in comparison, alleviating some of the anxiety felt regarding racial decline. Of course, this also leads to the naturalization of hierarchical systems in which

power and privilege are justified through pseudo-scientific assertions that aggrandize the white race.

Degeneracy was a watchword at the time, and the physical and moral depictions of degeneracy projected onto the Other would have been widely recognizable to a late Victorian readership. Pseudosciences like physiognomy and criminal anthropology that attempted to outline attributes of the degenerate have a clear influence on texts of the period that depict moral degeneracy as something that can be easily identified physically. Theories about the physiognomy of the degenerate or criminal class were popularized in widely disseminated texts by authors including criminologist Cesare Lombroso and sexologist Havelock Ellis.[34] The physical attributes of degeneracy categorized by these men can obviously be seen as racialized with traits common among African, Asian, and Middle Eastern peoples decried as markers of the degenerate. Ellis citing Lombroso states, "born criminals have [...] in short, a type resembling the Mongolian, or sometimes the Negroid" (Ellis, *The Criminal* 84). Although wildly racist and incorrect, these theories were largely accepted by the Victorian population, perpetuating British racism against supposedly "primitive" and "barbaric" peoples and allowing oppression of those peoples to flourish under the banner of science and progress.[35] Eve Sedgwick notes that Gothic villains have very similar physiognomy (*Coherence* 10), a claim that can easily be extended to the Imperial Gothic since the authors co-opt the discourse of physiognomy as identifiers of their villains' otherness. A wide range of Imperial Gothic texts go into great detail on the physical

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[34] Cesare Lombroso was one of the first to posit criminality as an inherited trait and one that could be identified through scientific exploration. His work in criminology, particularly *The Man of Genius* (1891) and *Crime: Its Causes and Remedies* (1899) were highly influential to scientists, doctors, and thinkers in the late Victorian era. The dates given here for publication are for the English translation, although they were published in Italian previously. Havelock Ellis edited the English translation of *Crime: Its Causes and Remedies* and heavily referenced Lombroso's theories in his own book on criminality, *The Criminal* (1890), in which Ellis claims that physiognomy could reveal not only criminality but the type of criminality, propounding such ideas as thieves being more likely to have a small head and murderers possessing abnormally large heads.

[35] See Lane, especially 12, for analysis of how rhetoric that painted the Other as degenerate was used to justify imperial land grabs.

degeneracy of their foreign villain.[36] In this chapter, I focus particularly on *The Beetle* and *Pharos the Egyptian* as both of these texts are profuse in their physical depictions of their antagonist's deformity and ugliness and both use this physical deformity to justify animosity toward the villainous figure.

Richard Marsh was obviously influenced by popular pseudo-scientific ideas of degeneration theory and criminology. *The Beetle* (1897), a novel thoroughly of its time, uses the prevailing stereotypes of degeneracy and criminology rather liberally to create an antagonist immediately identifiable as inferior, Other, and therefore dangerous. *The Beetle* centers around London's invasion by the titular character, an androgynous, morphic figure, who threatens the manhood of the British men—particularly disenfranchised clerk Robert Holt and up-and-coming politician Paul Lessingham—and the femininity of the heroine, Marjorie Lindon. The Beetle mesmerizes, assaults, and rapes various characters, ultimately kidnapping Marjorie, which leads the men on an adventure through London to save Marjorie and destroy the Beetle. Almost as soon as the reader is introduced to the novel's villainess, Marsh depicts her using the rhetoric of degeneracy and criminology:

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. The nose, on the other hand, was abnormally large; so extravagant were its dimensions, and so peculiar its shape, it resembled the beak of some bird of prey. A characteristic of the face—and an

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[36] The motif of the physically degenerate foreign figure can be seen in the descriptions of the mummy in Doyle's "Lot No. 249" (1892), as well as in descriptions of the Jamaican populace in *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897). We can also see physiognomy used in Stoker's description of the effeminate Dracula and Shiel's descriptions of the Chinese and Japanese races in *The Yellow Danger* (1898). This is just a limited list to underscore the frequency of this motif in Imperial Gothic texts.

uncomfortable one!—was that, practically, it stopped short at the mouth. The mouth, with

its blubber lips, came immediately underneath the nose, and a chin, to all intents and

purposes, there was none. This deformity—for the absence of chin amounted to that—it

was which gave to the face the appearance of something not human. (18)

The "saffron yellow" skin is an obvious reference to the Beetle's racial otherness, but the other

characteristics would have been just as damning for the majority of *fin-de-siècle* readers. The

Beetle combines physiognomy from myriad criminal types as found in the works of Lombroso

and Ellis. She possesses the small skull associated with the thief, the beak-like nose associated

with the "habitual homicide," and the receding chin frequent in petty criminals. Additionally, the

Beetle has what appear to be "cat's eyes" (13) signifying an assassin.[37] Physically the Beetle

represents a fusion of all criminalities, and accordingly "the antagonist's criminal activities vary

in severity, from breaking and entering through to murder and sexual assault" (Dobson,

"Emasculating Mummies" 400). The connection between the Beetle's physiognomy and her

dehumanization is clear when she is referred to as "not human."

The Beetle's ultimate threat lies in her liminality, primarily in terms of her nationality and

gender, both extensions of her physical degeneracy. While I discuss the Beetle's indeterminate

gender in future chapters, the indeterminacy of her nationality is of significance here because it

delegates her as a general threat from imperial outposts. The xenophobia that I correlate to toxic

masculinity is vividly portrayed through the descriptions of the Beetle, since throughout the

novel, the Beetle is referred to as "the Arab," as the "Oriental," and as having "more than a

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[37] See Dobson, "Emasculating Mummies," especially 398-400; and also Wolfreys, "Introduction," especially 15-17,
for examinations of the Beetle's representation as physically degenerate. Both critics position her degeneracy in
terms of the pseudoscientific theories of degeneration theory and criminology popularized by scientists including
Cesare Lombroso and Havelock Ellis.

streak of negro blood" (Marsh, *Beetle* 79-81, 125). Even the Beetle's voice serves to underscore her foreignness, with Holt referring to it as "malicious," "saturnine," and "guttural," before finishing the thought by proclaiming, "I had no doubt it was a foreigner. It was the most disagreeable voice I had ever heard" (17). The correlation of foreignness with negativity and maliciousness is automatic in Holt's mind, representing the embedded nature of this form of racism. He does not specify that this perniciousness results from any particular nationality, instead attributing it to general foreignness. One can assume that the voice would have sounded equally malign if she were from any other non-white space. As W.C. Harris and Dawn Vernooy state, the "markedly ethnographic descriptions of the Beetle work within expected Orientalist typology to align the bestial, the non-European, and the non-Christian in opposition to a homogenous, white, Christian self" (376). The point is ultimately that she belongs to a non-Christian, non-white, British controlled space, embodying every foreign entity opposed to British sovereignty (both in terms of nationhood and empire). Despite Egypt never being officially colonized by Britain or part of the British Empire, Britain had a strong controlling interest in the country since its conquest of Egypt in 1882. Egypt acted as a locus for fears and animosities against racially Othered groups and will thus be discussed in conjunction with colonized spaces in this thesis. Largely, *The Beetle's* characters' animosity and disgust in relation to the Beetle highlights the inherent racism and xenophobia of many at the *fin de siecle*. However, the text validates this xenophobia as justified by having the perceived threat come to fruition in the novel through symbols of invasion, threats of miscegenation, emasculation of male characters, and destruction of female purity. Such fearmongering serves to instill deep seated distrust of the Other within society.

Pharos the Egyptian (1899) details the interactions between the malign titular character—it is ambiguous whether he is a revivified mummy or a reincarnation of an ancient magician—and the British artist, Cyril Forrester. Upon becoming enamored by Pharos's ward, Valerie, and subsequently being robbed by Pharos himself, Forrester pursues them to Naples and then Egypt. Forrester's feeble attempts to defy Pharos and save Valerie are continually deflected by the villain who ultimately uses Forrester as the carrier of a plague that decimates a large portion of Europe's population. Similarly to the Beetle, the eponymous character in *Pharos*, is regularly referred to in terms of his physical degeneracy and the revulsion this causes in the British characters. Upon first seeing Pharos, Forrester attests that "a great shudder, accompanied by an indescribable feeling of nausea passed over me" (Boothby 27). Forrester's revulsion is caused by Pharos's degenerate appearance, which is depicted in language that echoes the rhetoric used in physiognomic texts from the period. Despite demonstrating impressive physical strength, Pharos is described as having a stature "considerably below the average" with a head "as small as his shoulders were broad" (28). These mismatched features enhance Pharos's discomforting appearance but also reinforce racial stereotypes of the Other as mentally inferior albeit physically strong—a stereotype that is repeatedly complicated throughout the novel as I discuss later. Forrester expounds on Pharos's ugliness and depicts his repulsiveness primarily as a result of his racial Otherness when he states, "It was his eyes, the shape of his face, the multitudinous wrinkles that lined it, and, above all, the extraordinary colour of his skin, that rendered his appearance so repulsive" (28). The allusion to the color of Pharos's skin connotes a racial otherness, which Forrester further connects to mummies and therefore Egypt when he claims that Pharos has the "complexion of a corpse" (28). The fact that Pharos's skin color is the trait that "above all" others leads to repulsion proves that race was a strong motive for British antagonism.

Forrester emphasizes the revulsion associated with Pharos's figure with statements like, "His face gave me quite a turn" (37) and "The man's image was not conducive to peace of mind" (38). Boothby presents the racial Other as a figure around whom the British should feel discomfort, reinforcing the us-versus-them mentality of racist doctrines. Pharos is depicted as unnatural, being "so distorted" that Forrester "instinctively recoiled from him in horror" (56). This instinctive revulsion is echoed toward the end of the novel in "the expressions of fear and undisguised abhorrence his unique personality inspired" in the English populace when they visit the theater (332). It is important to note that Forrester directly connects Pharos's physicality with his personality in this quotation as he does earlier when he refers to Pharos as "that terrible old man whose personality had twice given me such a shock" (38). In neither instance is Forrester referring to Pharos's behavior or actions, but instead Pharos's character is damned immediately due to his physical appearance. Pharos's physiognomy is regularly connected to and conflated with his immoral persona such as when Forrester refers to Pharos's eyes as "wicked" (98) and references the "indescribable look of cruelty and cunning" (36) in them. Similarly, Pharos's countenance is described as a "wicked old face" (38), "crafty" (98) and "sinister" (48). Like the Beetle, Pharos's racial Otherness, physical degeneracy, and evil persona are all irrevocably connected. The natural repulsion felt by Forrester and the other British characters underscores the view that the British have a natural, inborn superiority over these supposedly degenerate races.

While the Other was depicted as physically repulsive in order to prove their degeneracy and inferiority in these texts, they are contrastingly imagined as strong Darwinian adversaries in opposition to white ascendancy. This can be seen in the many places in *Pharos* where the titular character's outward appearance of weakness is proven deceptive. Despite his supposedly

advanced age, Pharos repeatedly proves his great physical strength, representing him as a rival

for dominance. When describing Pharos, Forrester points out the "enormous strength and vitality

contained in his meagre frame" (312) and later that "his diminutive form seemed to grow larger

and more terrible, until it appeared to have attained twice its ordinary size" (358). Such

descriptions echo tales from the empire in which imperial soldiers underestimate the native only

to realize the native's exceptional might.[38] In *Pharos*, the strength of the Other repeatedly

overpowers the might of British masculinity, which is proven no match for Pharos's evil

ingenuity. Pharos's physical degeneracy should prove his racial inferiority in the contemporary

parlance, but his physical strength belies his inferiority repeatedly. This uneasy juxtapositions

hints at a flicker of doubt in terms of Britain's natural superiority over Other races. Not only is

Pharos shown to be physically strong, he also possesses a somewhat genius level of criminality.

Even though his criminal appetite still highlights his degenerate nature, one cannot claim that he

is mentally inferior to the British characters—only morally inferior. I argue that the fear that the

native was ultimately stronger than the British is what necessitated the perception of them as

degenerate in order to assuage the anxiety that their strength created in toxically masculine men.

Such insecurities led to a hyperinflation of manly attributes where men overperformed the

masculine role to prove their dominance, thus creating a toxically masculine performance, a

phenomenon that I trace throughout this thesis.

In Imperial Gothic texts, the villain's physical degeneracy codes them as both subhuman

and dangerous to British security. Robert Mighall associates degeneracy with the Gothic motif of

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[38] See Brown, "Cold Steel, Weak Flesh," especially 164, for analysis of how the strength of the native populations,
particularly the Zulus, caused great anxiety for British imperialists who admired their strength and noble bravery but
felt inferior due to it. Brown notes how advanced British technology acted as a hindrance to masculine identity
because the men were removed from the physicality of war. See also Deane, *New Imperialism*, especially Chapter 5,
for an investigation of how traits of the colonial subjects became prized and incorporated into the British ideal of
manhood.

anachronism, claiming that in late-nineteenth-century texts "the bodies of savages, criminals, and degenerates provided new locations for the unwelcome past to survive into and threaten the civilized present" (xxiii). As members of society that represented a supposedly lower order on the evolutionary scale, foreign entities may be considered emblematic of the savage past that was meant to die out with the advent of civilization. This is complicated by the increased valorization of savagery within New Imperialism at the turn of the century. However, while jingoistic members of society increasingly praised the savagery in men and looked to primitive societies as models of masculinity, there is a level of cognitive dissonance that allows for members of British society to glorify and attempt to replicate the brute strength of the native and still consider them as lower on the evolutionary ladder and therefore less worthy. Savagery in white men is justified as necessary to oppose the Other, but the savagery in the Other is condemned when used against white men. The rhetoric used to describe foreign characters enforces the idea that the Other is less evolved due to the regular references to them in both animalistic and demonic terms. The use of animal imagery may be read as a direct reference to Darwinian ideas, but it also aids in highlighting the Other's general subhumanness. The Beetle is initially described as "something animal," resembling "a bird of prey," and "something not human" (Marsh, *Beetle* 18). This dehumanization continues throughout Marsh's novel with references ranging from a leech to a fox (5) to "some gigantic spider, —a spider of the nightmares" (15). Respectively this animalism characterizes the Beetle as parasitic, untrustworthy, and grotesque. The antagonist is also shown to transfigure into a giant scarab beetle at will. Her animality at once separates the Beetle from the virtuous English protagonists and marks her as a dangerous, inhuman entity that the British subject has every right—and even duty—to squash.

The extensive descriptions of the Beetle's Otherness explicitly connote her as dangerous, but that quickly develops into her establishment as the "personification of evil" (322). Even though scientific reasoning was diminishing some of the unquestioned power of the Christian deity, "Christianity remained the dominant system of belief across the nineteenth century" (Dobson, *Victorian Alchemy* 5). As such, by depicting the pagan Other as evil in contrast to a salvational Christian God, these texts further the binary between the moral British and immoral Other that justified the Other's conversion and suppression. *The Beetle*, like many Imperial Gothic texts, acts as a cautionary tale against the Other's non-Christian influence by depicting the Other's immoral predations against good, Christian characters. Every English character in this novel continually mentions the villainess's "evil presence" (36) or speaks of her as "the demon" (40). She is portrayed as separating the good, English characters from God as a means of control. While Marjorie is under the Beetle's mesmeric powers, she explains, "I all at once became conscious, as I struggled to ask help of God, that I was wrestling with something evil,—that if I only could ask help of Him, evil would flee. But I could not. I was helpless,—overmastered" (207). Marjorie's inability to pray allows the Beetle to maintain possession over her in what Julian Wolfreys calls "an imaginative reversal of colonial relations between master and servant" (15). Marjorie directly claims to be "overmastered," placing herself in the submissive, enslaved role, dominated by an evil and invasive force against which she has no control. She is only able to release herself from the control of the Beetle through the intervention of Atherton, ironically one of the more godless English characters in the novel.

Similar demonizing rhetoric is visible in *Pharos* as Boothby highlights the titular character's malign nature. Even upon first meeting Pharos, Forrester refers to him as a "brute and monster" as well as a "fiend" (26). The narrator declares that Pharos is "an agent of the Evil

One" (68) as if he were sent by the devil to wreak havoc on the earth. The demonic association is furthered as Forrester declares that Pharos's visage "was not the face of a human being, but that of a ghoul, so repulsive and yet so fascinating was it. Try how I would, I could not withdraw my eyes" (151). The fascination with the devil is a common motif in many Imperial Gothic texts where men and women alike are lured into their demise by an irresistible attraction toward the Other. I discuss this further in the subsequent chapter, but it is significant to note here that we can see this captivating quality in *The Beetle* through Lessingham's seduction by the Woman of Songs—whom most critics align with the Beetle—as well as through Marjorie's envelopment by the Other in her bed. Forrester in *Pharos* is no less allured by this diabolical Other. Repeatedly, he describes an irrepressible interest in Pharos, stating, "I was afraid of him very much in the same way as a man is afraid of a loathsome snake, and yet with that fear there was a peculiar fascination which I was powerless to resist" (234). This quotation directly portrays Pharos as Satan in the form of the serpent, and therefore ensconces Forrester in the role of Eve, effectively feminizing him and portraying him as morally weak. The motif of the snake is significant within several of the Imperial Gothic texts that I analyze and will be referenced regularly within this thesis. The serpentine imagery plays multiple, complex roles within my focal texts. Firstly, it proves a level of inherent psychological strength in the Other, which positions them as threatening to British imperial control. Their ability to mentally overpower British characters proves that the Other's strength may exceed British power in many cases. While serpentine imagery highlights the dangers associated with the Other, it also serves the dual purpose of animalizing and dehumanizing them in order to undercut this strength to an extent. The animalization of the Other depicts them as subhuman, which befits the Imperial Gothic's goal of dehumanizing the racial Other in order to justify their subjugation. Additionally, the snake's

connection to Satan further demonizes the antagonists,[39] playing on the rather common depiction of the racial Other as immoral. For instance, the devil-like Pharos preys upon Forrester's weakness to lead Forrester to corruption and dissolution. The portrayal of the Other as unprincipled made the British subjugation of the immoral savage into an almost religious victory, so that "for some, wars of conquest against supposedly uncivilized 'savages' had a moral quality which set them apart from the horrific spectre of European conflict" (Brown, "Cold Steel, Weak Flesh" 157).[40] Inescapably these animalistic and demonic figures are proven in Imperial Gothic texts to be morally degenerate in fitting with their physical degeneracy. Pharos's lack of morality is played out as he gleefully enacts a genocide against the white race. Similarly, directly after the Beetle's first depiction as "something not human" (Marsh, *Beetle* 18), the reader is provided the first instance of rape in the novel as she assaults and unmans Robert Holt.

Although depictions of the Other as morally debased are obvious in the texts discussed above, I focus on the portrayal of racialized moral degeneracy in M.P. Shiel's *The Yellow Danger* (1898) as it offers not just a character as symbolic for the racial whole but spends more time actually instituting the moral degeneracy of an entire race, namely the Chinese. *The Yellow Danger* may not seem like an obvious text to include under the Imperial Gothic genre as it is usually classed as invasion or "yellow peril" fiction. However, Ailise Bulfin argues that "yellow-peril fiction may itself be recast as a type of Gothic fiction because its exorbitant depictions of the inherent cruelty and fiendishness of Chinese people had no basis whatsoever in reality" (*Gothic Invasions* 106). I also think it is worthwhile to class *The Yellow Danger* as an

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[39] See Dobson, *Victorian Alchemy*, especially 197-203, for analysis of the use of snake symbolism in late Victorian texts.
[40] See Brown, "Like a Devoted Army," especially 618, for an examination of how military conquest was waged as a "moral endeavor, an exercise in the dissemination of civilization and 'international law'" (Brown 618).

Imperial Gothic text due its obvious focus on imperialism and its use of horror to create a "peculiar and palpable effect upon its audience" (Kilgour 6).[41]

Even before the Boxer Rebellion solidified China as a valid threat against European imperial control, stories from colonial writers, including M.P. Shiel, inculcated fears about a possible Chinese invasion. Bulfin notes that "these fictions by colonial authors with first-hand experience of Chinese immigration engaged with and distorted existing Sino-British relations, spreading the yellow-peril fear across the empire and to its capital" (Bulfin 105). *The Yellow Danger* is one of the predominant texts that spread and capitalized on fearmongering against the Chinese. The novel traces the battle of wits and wills between the British soldier, John Hardy, and the maniacal Chinese genius, Yen How. Yen How leads the Asian peoples in an invasion of Europe that can only be stopped through Hardy's hardened battle tactics. In this tale of hyperbolic racial antagonism, the rape and destruction doled out by the Chinese invasion is answered with a genocidal end perpetrated by Hardy and his men. This text provides a blatant example of British xenophobia and the racist caricatures of foreign entities that were utilized to justify their continued oppression and subjugation.

The Yellow Danger's primary villain, Yen How, is directly correlated to the East. Yen How is described as the "son of a Japanese father by a Chinese woman. He combined these antagonistic races in one man. In Dr. Yen How was the East" (Shiel 10). By labeling the Japanese and Chinese as "antagonistic races," Shiel points out the long history of war between China and Japan. Shiel's choice to combine these two nationalities in one villain makes the argument that

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[41] While there are no specifically supernatural elements, Yen How's powers of understanding and the Chinese invasion's grandiosity does have an otherworldly, Gothic feel, which Shiel certainly categorizes as demonic. The doubling of Yen How and Hardy's characterization in which Hardy continually embodies more of Yen How's characteristics is also representative of Gothic traits. Other Gothic aspects in this text include the "centrality to the genre of the threat of violence against women" (Schmitt 11), the Gothic's "preoccup[ation] with opposing binaries" (13), "darkened and monstrous images" (Garrett), the ability of the "past to survive into and threaten the civilized present" (Mighall xxiii), in addition to fixation on invasion, confinement, and "the unassimilable" (Hendershot 2).

even foreign races who have a level of enmity against one another may band together to oppose white civilization. The narrative that follows imagines Asian peoples in general, but particularly the Chinese, as brutal, demonic, and depraved animalistic figures similar to how *The Beetle* and *Pharos* demonize their villains. The text regularly dehumanizes Chinese citizens, calling them the "two-legged beast" or the "Chinese beast" (132) and claims that their actions go even beyond animalistic savagery to a demonic level. For instance, the novel declares that "the Chinese instinct of Vengeance is a mystery—it is not human—it is not bestial—it may be demonic. To us, at all events, it is incomprehensible" (146). This quotation at once demonizes the Chinese, valorizes the British, and enforces the dichotomy between the two. The immorality of the Chinese is furthered by the assertion that "the principal points of [the Chinese] character are an immeasurable Greed, an absolute Contempt for the world outside China, and a fiendish Love of Cruelty" (127). Shiel directly cultivates the Chinese character as innately evil and points out that Yen How's "Gospel of Greed, Race, and Cruelty" were "the doctrines which the Chinese were most apt to learn, and had, in fact, already been taught by nature" (287). Shiel's claim that these are the traits instilled in the Chinese "by nature," legitimizes the belief that non-white races possess an inborn malignity in opposition to British righteousness. By positioning the supposedly evil Chinese as ready to invade Britain, Shiel plays on the "underlying but pervasive concern that the integrity of the island of Great Britain might soon and suddenly find itself breached by some form of intrusive alien agency" (Bulfin, *Gothic Invasions* 3). Shiel's fearmongering extends beyond Marsh's and Boothby's novels as he graphically details the invasion of Europe by the Chinese horde. Even though *Pharos* depicts a plague sweeping across Europe and England, this plague is somewhat distantly described without the horrific detail of Shiel's narrative.

The Yellow Danger's fearmongering agenda is clearly displayed in the gruesome depictions of the Chinese assault on Europe which fully encapsulate the extremes of gothicized horror. Shiel paints the streets as "strewn with disemboweled dead" (Shiel 301) as the "yellow wave" (302) descends. The use of the term "yellow wave" conjures up an unstoppable force of nature.[42] The Chinese hoard is alternatively called a "swarm" (319) that has "infested" Europe (321). This diction carries the connotation of a biblical plague destroying all in its path. Instead of being ordained by God though, this plague is clearly satanic in origin. Shiel writes,

> The entire race was by this time no longer in its senses; here was a people dancing mad, gorged with gore, flushed with victory, greedy of agonies. Fear they no longer knew. To celebrate forever a jubilee of devils in a scarlet world—to raise ever higher monuments built of human corpses, and shriek and dance around them—to live, to roll, to die in red—this was their sole remaining instinct. (315)

This description serves to paint the Chinese as insane and demonic, creating a world of satanic frenzy— "a jubilee of devils"— drenched in the blood of the white race. The "monuments" of human corpses may be read as both literal piles of the dead and as symbolic monuments of their victories as they decimate the European population. Shiel continues his description of their demonic revelry when he states, "So red an orgy of massacre, screaming lust, and sighing drunkenness, so mixed a drama of filthy infamy and sabbatic Satanism, as earth and perhaps hell, never saw" (319). He represents the Chinese as the pinnacle of depravity and fetishizes their

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[42] Three years before the publication of Shiel's book, Kenneth MacKay published a text entitled *The Yellow Wave* (1895) that similarly imagined a Chinese invasion. It is possible that Shiel knew of this text and pulled this term from there. Both texts are listed in Mudie's 1907 library catalog showing their simultaneous circulation at the turn of the century.

violence by describing it as an "orgy" of "screaming lust" so that their moral degeneracy is depicted as sexually sadistic as well as satanic.[43] Shiel describes the Chinese raping and killing thousands of people in Europe after which, glutted with conquest, they fall asleep on the "pillow of flesh" of "the naked dead" (319). The Chinese then turn cannibalistic, eating the dead and then offering up human heads in sacrifice at the shrine they create at Notre Dame.

These horrific depictions of Chinese brutality attempt to justify the novel's final genocidal bend. They are extreme versions of fearmongering that force the reader to envision the Chinese as creating a living hell for the white race. The Chinese are presented as a plague from which white civilization will never recover if they allow the disease to progress. The narrator calls the Chinese invasion of Europe, "that week of apocalyptic woes" (317) marking this as the end of the white world. Indeed, Shiel directly states that any Asian invasion necessitated the end of the white race, because "there was no question of conqueror and conquered living together afterwards and fraternizing, like Norman and Saxon. The yellow conquest meant, naturally, that wherever it passed, the very memory of the white races it encountered would disappear forever" (284). Although Normans and Saxons—both white peoples—could intermingle naturally, Shiel paints this as impossible for people of different races, creating not just one unassimilable character in the typical Gothic fashion but an entire mass of unassimilable figures. Shiel plays on another anxiety of the period, predominantly the fear of losing white culture and identity.[44] Even the minimal melding that was beginning to occur in society was enough for the more

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[43] The OED defines orgy as "An occasion of feasting or revelry, *esp.* one characterized by excessive drinking and indiscriminate sexual activity. Now frequently: *spec.* an occasion of group sexual activity." This definition was in use by 1706 and continued to be used in this way during the Victorian era and into modern times. Shiel uses the term to highlight the supposedly uncivilized sexuality of the Chinese and combines this with their violence to characterize them as sadistic. In *The Beetle*, Marsh uses the word similarly when describing the sadistic, sexual rituals of the Cult of Isis, declaring that there "were orgies of nameless horrors" (253) after which he proceeds to detail the rape and sacrifice of white women.

[44] Kerr notes that many at the turn of the century believed that civilized, white culture "was a fragile commodity" (125).

conservative and paranoid of society to declare the doom of the white race. Shiel depicts Europe, namely Paris, as devolving into the East when the Chinese take over, portraying a possible future for Britain if they are not wary of invasion. The text describes "the heaps of dead in the streets, and the bodiless heads and arms with which the screaming Chinese played ball. [Paris] looked Chinese. The Mongolian race, like the English, can adapt itself readily" (Shiel 323). The threat of devolution that was ripe in the *fin-de-siècle* mindset at this time is projected onto the setting itself as Paris devolves into a nightmarish landscape. While Shiel's description of the cabbalistic invasion of Europe and the novel's genocidal response is an extreme version of fearmongering and retributive action befitting the hyperbolic Gothic genre, there are clear correlations in the period as racist depictions of the immoral and savage Other were used to justify military action against them.[45]

The degeneracy that many Victorians ascribed to British men is effectively redirected onto the Other in these texts to substantiate the further dominion of white men over supposedly lower races. By painting the racial Other as physically and morally degenerate, these authors contribute to the dehumanization of foreign peoples. The vilification of these characters allows the authors to revel in their extermination, providing space for the glorified violence that is a hallmark of toxic masculinity. The Genocide Education Project lists dehumanization as the fourth step toward genocide, a result that is discussed in *The Beetle* and comes to fruition in *The Yellow Danger* as I discuss later. Toxic masculinity requires a target over which men can prove their power and dominance. The racial Other here is employed as this adversary, allowing the male characters to prove their superiority and allay the insecurities that were building in

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[45] See Bulfin, "Curse of the Suez Canal," especially 438, for an examination of how the mummy figure fed into discussions about the Egyptian Question and justified extended British occupation of the territory. See Berger and also Willburn, especially 437, for analyses of how the inferiority of the racial Other—presented in both literature and periodicals—influenced imperial politics.

Victorian men as their imperial might and privileged position in society was questioned at the turn of the century.

II.   The Foreign *Femme Fatale*

Another discursive method that the authors used to demonize the Other was to depict the female Other as the seductress of good British men. The female Other was used as a scapegoat for British male desire, displacing the "blame from the British male client to the purportedly seductive and sexually dangerous colonial woman," who is repeatedly portrayed as "sexually loose, sometimes predatory, and frequently excessive" (K. Davis 141, 144). The Imperial Gothic is permeated with foreign *femmes fatales* who destroy the strong, British men that they attract. Ayesha in H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) seduces both Leo and the adamantly misogynistic narrator, Horace Holly. The titular character in Marie Corelli's novel *Ziska* (1897) is portrayed as so seductive that men are willing to fight to the death for her attention. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the three female vampires seduce and dominate Jonathan Harker during his stay in Transylvania.[46] There are several sexually alluring Egyptian mummies littered through *fin-de-siècle* literature, including Iras in the eponymous novel by H.D. Everett (1896), Tera in Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), and Ma-Mee in Haggard's *Smith and the Pharaohs* (1921).[47] Even though many of these mummies do not actively pursue the British men but

[46] See Kuzmanovic, especially 415-418; and also Craft, especially 108-111, for analyses of Harker's seduction by the female vampires in *Dracula* and how this scene both displays an inversion of Victorian gender roles and sexual norms. See Quinn, especially 1-30, for an examination of the vampiric associations of the *femme fatale*.

[47] See Bulfin, "The Curse of the Suez Canal;" Deane, "Imperial Striptease;" and also Corriou, especially 4, for examinations of sexually alluring mummy characters in late Victorian literature. These critics emphasize the simultaneous attraction and threat posed by the Egyptian Other and how allegories for the British occupation of Egypt can be found in mummy literature of the age. See also, Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse* for a contextualization of the rise of mummy fiction within the political upheaval in Northern Africa at the *fin de siecle*. Luckhurst pointed out that "the vengeance of the mummy might have had less to do with powers imputed to the Ancient Egyptians and much more with the contemporary geopolitics of North African resistance to British imperialism" (80).

instead passively draw the attention of their viewer, they are nonetheless implicated as "sexually provoking" since the mummy supposedly "strives to attract the Western man to her in order to be unveiled" (Corriou 4). The fact that even the mummified body of a woman is sexualized and viewed as provoking male attention, highlights the extent to which Eastern women are scapegoated for male sexual desire, furthering the predominant purpose of Orientalism which "populates these strange worlds external to Europe with its own desires and demons projected outward" (Harris and Vernooy 374). The projection of desire onto the foreign *femme fatale* could be discussed in a plethora of texts, but I focus on two Imperial Gothic novels that exemplify this theme. First, I examine the Woman of Songs in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* and the moral corruption of Paul Lessingham when in Egypt. The Beetle acts as the ultimate foreign scapegoat for male sexual license as the novel deploys "the stereotype of the colonial woman as sexually excessive, deviant, and polluting [...]. Notably, she is also portrayed as predatory" (K. Davis 141). The Beetle supposedly preys on the helpless, young Lessingham who is unable to escape her trap. While Paul Lessingham's guilt is largely overshadowed in the narrative by the Beetle's villainy, Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* depicts British men as complicit in their seduction, making this text a significant point of comparison. Male complicity in their sexual liaisons is ultimately presented as immaterial, however, since Harriet is still portrayed as damaging to her British partner. Even though Harriet is not nearly as predatory and calculating as the Beetle, her foreignness is equally implicated in the allure she holds over British men and the damage she causes to them. In both of these texts, the depictions of the *femmes fatales* further the toxically masculine agenda of alienating the Other and excusing men's own actions by projecting their faults onto the Other, thus avoiding complicity.

The Woman of Songs in *The Beetle* is a classic example of a foreign seductress who imperils the future of Britain.[48] Lessingham embodies British futurity, so his weakness and any threats against him endanger the nation metonymically. Lessingham's weakness stems from his time in the empire. Despite the empire often being represented as a place where boys became men through physical prowess and martial strength, it could also be perilous to these same men. This threat usually presented itself in one of two ways: either men became hooligans who could not be (re)integrated properly into genteel British society, or men were morally tainted at the hands of the oversexualized Other. Lessingham's downfall derives from the latter. The threat that the Other presents to men in the empire is explicitly displayed through Lessingham's story that describes how he was morally and physically debased by the "natives" while in Egypt. As Lessingham describes his sojourn in Egypt, the Victorian reader would have been confronted with a familiar representation of a foreign *femme fatale*. Lessingham states that in his youthful naivety he "went, unaccompanied, into the native quarter" where he is ensnared by a beautiful young woman and her enchanting song (Marsh, *Beetle* 246). Lessingham describes the woman's voice, recalling,

I have seldom if ever heard melody more enchanting. All languages seemed to be the same to her. She sang in French and Italian, German and English,—in tongues with which I was unfamiliar. It was in these Eastern harmonies that she was most successful. (248)

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[48] See Hurley, especially 125-126, for an examination of the Beetle's foreignness as inherently connected to her sexuality.

The Woman of Songs's ability to imbibe and present multiple cultures heightens the threat she poses to white men because she can ensnare men from several European countries.[49] Although Lessingham is first lured into danger by the woman's song, there is an emphasis placed on multiple forms of persuasion and manipulation. Beyond the song, she also has Lessingham drink something that made him "incapable of struggling" (249) and uses her eyes as a mesmeric force to keep Lessingham under her control. Marsh portrays the Other as possessing numerous weapons that can be wielded against the unsupposing white man. Through her mesmeric powers, the Woman of Songs enchains him for two months in her den of iniquity.

The Woman of Songs's morally corrupting influence on Lessingham is most notably expressed through her touch. Lessingham proclaims that "her touch had on me what I can only describe as a magnetic influence. As her fingers closed upon my wrist, I felt as powerless in her grasp as if she held me with bands of steel" (250). The fact that her touch has "a magnetic influence" on him hints at the sexualized nature of what is to come. Lessingham's desire for the Woman of Songs must be demonized in the Victorian era both because she was not a white woman and because sexual purity was highly valued in Victorian England. As such, the desire that Lessingham feels is characterized as imprisoning him in shackles and making him powerless, thus emasculating him.[50] By communicating the several methods by which the Woman of Songs renders him inert, Lessingham transfers the blame for sexual indecency away from himself and places it at the feet of the oversexualized Other. This is in keeping with the broader Victorian trend of "displac[ing] of blame from the British male client to the purportedly

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[49] See Vuohelainen, "You Know Not of What You Speak," especially 327-328, for further analysis of how the Beetle's appropriation of English and European languages positions her as a threat because it allows her to navigate London, despite her Otherness.

[50] See Hurley 144, and also Rebry 4 for analyses of Lessingham's emasculation at the hands of the Woman of Songs. Hurley claims that he "behaves as a female subject—passive, resistless, voiceless" (144) when under the Beetle's control.

seductive and sexually dangerous colonial woman" (K. Davis 141). When Lessingham awakens to realize that he "was lying, undressed, on a heap of rugs" (Marsh, *Beetle* 250), the Victorian reader can rationalize Lessingham's implied sexual intercourse with the Other due to him being under her spell. His actions are not his own but are caused due to the supposed deviance of native women who prey on good, white, Christian men. The self-serving nature of this rationalization is clear to modern readers. It is not a reach to argue that Paul Lessingham was looking for a sexual liaison when walking through the native quarter, and yet when he finds exactly what he was looking for, he demonizes it in order to assuage his guilt at his sexual impurity.[51] Lessingham attempts to absolve himself of blame alleging, "The most dreadful part of it was that I was 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" (252). I discuss in the third chapter of this thesis how his inability to resist the Other feminizes Lessingham in this scene, but it is important to note that although he is emasculated here, his sexual guilt is also somewhat alleviated due to his being a victim of the Beetle's mesmeric abilities. Lessingham is overpowered by the supernatural and forced to endure the caresses of a beautiful, foreign woman. Although mesmeric force may seem like a convenient excuse for lustful actions, Marsh employs it to prove that the Other poses a significant threat. With one moment of weakness, otherwise good British men are forced to give into the Other's sexual designs and thereafter become morally tainted.

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[51] See Hurley, especially 144, for an exploration of Lessingham's sexual attraction to the Woman of Songs, which depicts him as an active participant in his seduction instead of a passive bystander. Hurley notes that Lessingham is not simply castrated at this moment but is "aroused again and again" despite his repulsion. Hurley, K. Davis, and Harris and Vernooy all point out that the East was a place where English men went to pursue sexual experiences that were restricted in Europe. This emphasizes the likelihood of sex as an experience that Lessingham directly pursues in the empire.

Since Lessingham presents himself as forced into sexual depravity, he must also exhibit a level of repulsion toward the Other's sexuality in response. This repulsion is illustrated in Lessingham's description of the woman after he wakes up naked in her bed: "Leaning over, she wooed my mouth with kisses. I cannot describe to you the sense of horror and of loathing with which the contact of her lips oppressed me. There was about her something so unnatural, so inhuman" (250). One can surmise that the "unnatural" and "inhuman" qualities are founded in what the British would see as the obscene sensuality and sexuality of the native population. The eroticism portrayed in this scene is common among narratives of the Other, particularly in relation to foreign women.[52] By claiming to be "oppressed" by her kisses, Lessingham flips the oppression that natives face at the hands of the British imperialist and situates British men as the ones being overpowered. Even from his position of power on top of the imperial pyramid, Lessingham can be unmanned by a pretty woman and a tempting touch. While this is targeted at foreign women, there is certainly a pervasive fear of women's generalized sexuality as I discuss further in the subsequent chapter. Kelly Hurley claims that

> by casting its villainess as an Oriental, the text manages to avoid suggesting that abject female sexuality could inhere in any sense in white women, but by casting its Oriental as a woman the text manages to suggest that barbaric sexuality is, in some sense, inherently female. (Hurley 141)

Whether supposedly immoral sexuality is attributed to the Other or women more generally, the demonization of the *femme fatale* serves to avert the blame for any sexual digressions away from

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[52] The frequency of this motif can be seen in the prevalence of the hypersexualized female foreign characters in the novels I analyze, including Ayesha, The Woman of Songs, Harriet Brandt, Ziska, and to an extent the mummies who, although not actively trying to seduce British men, end up creating profound feelings of lust in them.

men and onto marginalized groups. This also firmly implants the idea that sexually autonomous women are debased and threatening. Women having sexual agency poses an extreme risk to the social role of men. This is why the New Woman is so threatening to him and why examples of sexual autonomy in the Other cause instinctive repulsion—at the same time that it causes excitement.

Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* provides another example of a British paragon's seduction at the hands of a racial Other. *The Blood of the Vampire* focuses on Harriet Brandt, a young woman of mixed heritage from Jamaica who is visiting Europe for the first time. Harriet has a weakening effect on all of the British characters she encounters, leading to the death of British men, women, and children. Her debilitating effect is attributed to both her racial makeup and the vampiric disease that she inherited from her Jamaican mother who was bitten by a vampire bat while she was pregnant with her daughter. Published in the same year as *Dracula*, this tale uses similar imagery of vampiric seduction, but whereas the strong men in *Dracula* band together to overcome the enervating vampiric force, Marryat does not provide the hero in her novel the same form of escape. This novel envisions a curious spin on the foreign seductress because there is more inherent ambiguity as to who does the seducing, Harriet Brandt or the British men whom she attracts. The text does point to some mesmeric qualities, which one would expect from a *femme fatale* in an Imperial Gothic text. "Harriet's magnetic gaze" (Marryat 79) is referenced a few times throughout the novel, and, like the Woman of Songs, Harriet possesses a siren-like musical ability that the doctor claims "would be enough to drag any man down to perdition" (119). Ralph Pullen emphasizes Harriet's attraction as hypnotic when he states,

That was the most remarkable thing about her—the ease with which she seemed to attract, looking so innocent all the while, and the deadly strength with which she resisted one's efforts to get free again. [...] only speaking of her seems to have revived the old sensation of being drawn against my will—hypnotised, I suppose the scientists would call it—to be near her, to touch her, to embrace her, until all power of resistance is gone. But I do hope old Anthony is not going to be hypnotised. He's too good for that. (244)

This quotation depicts Harriet as snakelike, hypnotizing her prey and then coiling around them so that they are unable to escape. This serpentine description is often repeated in the novel as Harriet is described as "almost boneless" (30), "like a coiling snake" (30), and "moving sinuously across the carpet as a snake might glide to its lair" (224). The men's fascination with her parallels Eve's fascination with the snake, a symbol that we see repeatedly in Imperial Gothic literature as a way to demonize the Other, as has already been explored in *Pharos*. The men are seduced by their fascination with the Other and meet an untimely end if they refuse to sever that connection. Dobson notes the "complex symbolic ways that [snakes] convey a sense of serpentine eroticism and imply deadly power" (*Victorian Alchemy* 199). Harriet certainly embodies both the exotic eroticism and threat associated with snakes. Despite Ralph asserting that Anthony is "too good" to be hypnotized by Harriet, Anthony does in fact succumb to her allure. However, Marryat complicates the typical *femme fatale* narrative of hypnotic mesmerism by making it somewhat ambiguous whether the characters are actually mesmerized or whether the attraction is straightforward lust.

The men's attraction to Harriet is clearly physical as shown through the extent to which Harriet's beauty is discussed. Ralph declares, "Miss Brandt [...] is so beautiful, that she will have

a great deal forgiven her, that would not be overlooked in a plainer woman" (98). Upon meeting Harriet in England, "Mr. Pennell's inward ejaculation as he saw her" was "By Jove! What a beautiful girl!" (215). While the term "ejaculation" was used to refer to speech at this time, the sexual connotation of the word was also in circulation and clearly lends itself to an analysis of this exclamation as a moment of sexual arousal when Anthony inwardly orgasms at the sight of her beauty.[53] Although one could claim that Ralph and Anthony are mesmerized into their feelings for Harriet, these quotes suggest that it is far more likely that they perceive a beautiful and passionate woman and become infatuated with her as a sexual possibility.

The men regard Harriet as an innately sexual creature due both to her Caribbean heritage and her own obvious sexual desires. As Helena Michie points out, "hunger [...] figures unspeakable desires for sexuality and power" (13), and Harriet "was always eating" (Marryat 55), thus displaying a clear capacity for and interest in sexuality. Harriet's sexuality is directly aligned to her Caribbean heritage when Doctor Phillips states unequivocally, "If this girl is anything like her mother, she must be an epitome of lust!" (120). Indeed, her passionate nature is proven as she demands that Ralph kiss her, to which he accordingly acquiesces so that "her full red lips met his own, in a long-drawn kiss, that seemed to sap his vitality" (105). This is not a chaste, quick kiss but instead is full of longing and sexual potential. Although Ralph is accordingly weakened by his interactions with Harriet, he is not taken against his will but instead "he gave her a second kiss more passionate, if possible, than the first (105). Harriet's sexuality matches his own sexual interest and he "was not slow to accept the invitation so confidingly extended. What Englishman would be?" (105). Marryat asserts the inherent sexuality and sexual

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[53] The OED defines ejaculation as both "The putting up of short earnest prayers in moments of emergency; the hasty utterance of words expressing emotion" and "The sudden ejection or emission (of seed, fluids, etc.) from the animal or vegetable system. *spec.* the discharging of the male sperm." This latter definition was in use as early as 1603 and thus Anthony's ejaculation must conjure at least connotations of sexual desire.

license of British men as universal. Men were typically viewed as being naturally more animalistic and sexual than women, so Harriet's sexuality being paralleled to Ralph's—and later to Anthony's—paints her sexual interest as unwomanly or at least unbecoming for a proper Englishwoman.[54] However, the male characters find this sexuality alluring as is clear when Anthony proclaims, "Miss Brandt possesses the kind of beauty that appeals to the sense of animal creatures like ourselves. She has a far more dangerous quality" (231). Anthony's correlation between men's sexual appetites and animalistic natures is significant since the sexualized *femmes fatales* in Imperial Gothic texts are often depicted in animalistic terms such as the Beetle's embodiment as the scarab and Harriet's connection to the vampire bat. The fact that he associates masculine sexual desire with this animal nature furthers the argument that one of the reasons that these women are demonized is because their sexuality imitates masculine freedom as opposed to feminine reserve. Both the Beetle and Harriet present a sexual threat to these British men; however, despite this threat, the men in *The Blood of the Vampire* are attracted to Harriet's sexualization as it provides them more license than they could claim with British women. While Ralph is able to give Harriet a glance that "spoke volumes!"—an exclamation that clearly establishes sensual intentions—the narrator also points out that "he had never given such a glance at his fiancée" (80). Such a lascivious look would not be well-received by his fiancée, Elinor Leyton, who represents the "proper young English lady" (95), but is received with profound interest by the more sexually free Harriet Brandt.

Harriet's passion is regularly contrasted to the cold, English archetype found in Elinor Leyton. Ralph calls Elinor "a terrible prude!" (106) because she assumes "a proper and ladylike reserve" toward him that "impartial spectators, with stronger feelings, would have deemed [...]

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[54] See Cott, especially 225-236, for an examination of the view that women were inherently passionless and less sexual than men. Cott notes that this formulation of female sexuality was not the norm until the early-nineteenth century under the evangelical tradition.

indifference" (40). By contrast, Harriet "looked amazingly handsome, like a Bacchante, and her appearance and air of abandon, sent the young man's blood into his face" (102). Harriet being compared to a Bacchante, the wild and sexualized priestesses of Bacchus, connotes the abandon Ralph describes in Harriet as sexual freedom, and the blood rushing into his face is obvious arousal at the idea of a sexual woman. The text seems rather conflicted as to the preference for Harriet's passion versus Elinor's cold prudishness, but regardless of whether the novel champions passion or proper English reserve, the men are clearly drawn to Harriet's lack of restraint. Anthony declares, "How few women have the honesty and courage to avow their love as you do. My sweet child of the sun! The women in this cold country have no idea of the joy that a mutual love like ours has the power to bestow" (254). Anthony directly connects Harriet's passion with her ethnicity, employing the stereotype of the uncontrolled foreign woman. Although Anthony speaks of her unreserved affection with approval in comparison to the cold British attitude, this level of passion is ultimately proven untenable.

Marryat depicts part of the men's attraction to Harriet as stemming from the desire to tame her like a wild beast. Anthony is often figured as a paragon of progressive masculinity who "waged a perpetual warfare against the tyranny of men over women" (245). However, even he has a toxically masculine desire to dominate the racial Other and women in general in an aim to prove himself man enough to overpower these wild, savage forces. The narrator describes that Anthony "felt as though he had captured some beautiful wild creature and was taming it for his own pleasure" (305). He claims that he could abuse her if he wished and that "she would submit to any injustice and meekly call it justice if from *his* hand. And yet he knew all the while that the savage in her was *not* tamed" (305). The Other is ultimately proven untameable and unassimilable as Harriet's vampiric curse leads to Anthony's demise. Although the novel is

certainly conflicted about Harriet's culpability and extends a measure of sympathy toward her, Harriet is still depicted as draining the masculinity from her victims and the novel clearly criticizes any liaison between British citizens and the racial Other.

Foreign *femmes fatales* like the Woman of Songs and Harriet Brandt further the demonization of the Other by proving that it is not just the physically degenerate foreign figures of whom one must be wary, but that even attractive foreign women lead to the death and destruction of British citizens. *The Blood of the Vampire* and *The Beetle* differ in the culpability they place at the feet of British men, but both position foreign women as sexually seductive to the detriment of British masculinity. Foreign women are used as a scapegoat to excuse men's sexual license and then are demonized as enervating forces. The foreign *femme fatale* is useful in terms of toxic masculinity because she provides an excuse for what would have been perceived as British men's sexual immorality and simultaneously substantiates racist ideologies of the contaminating influence of the racial Other, thus furthering the us-versus-them mentality that is vital to maintaining the social and racial hierarchies on which white patriarchy is founded.

III.   The Missive to Avoid Mixing: Fear of Miscegenation and Immigration

One of the reasons that the image of the foreign, female seductress was so pervasive and powerful during the late Victorian era was due to the serious fear of venereal disease at the turn of the century.[55] The threat of venereal disease led to the controversial Contagious Diseases Acts

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[55] The restrictions on sexuality were both morally based and very much practical due to a growing fear of syphilis. See Wolfreys, "Introduction", especially 13, and K. Davis for more on how the growing fear of syphilis increased the stigma surrounding sex with foreign women. Davis borrows from Showalter's analysis of "syphilophobia," a term first used in "Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Fiction of the Fin de Siècle" (1986). Davis extends the term to "colonial syphilophobia" in order to highlight the racist perceptions that foreign women were the cause of the syphilis outbreak in Britain. Davis argues that Lessingham's repulsion during his sexual interaction with the Woman of Songs and the subsequent side-effects are symbolic of syphilitic contagion. Hurley in *The Gothic Body* (1996) disputes this point, claiming that Lessingham's contamination is rather "an unmanly susceptibility and weakness"

that attempted to regulate prostitution in England, the influential Social Purity movement, and an increased discussion surrounding sex and sexuality.[56] Even though historically the blame for the spread of venereal disease cannot be placed entirely on the empire, orientalized women were an easy scapegoat, and white men's blame was often displaced onto them just like white men's lust was displaced onto the foreign *femme fatale*. Thus we find repeated instances of what Kristen Davis terms "colonial syphiliphobia" in *fin-de-siècle* literature. Davis posits that in *The Beetle* "the sexual nature of the Egyptian Beetle's contaminating assaults, her paralyzing effects, and the ability to induce physical and mental degeneration on her victims allow Marsh an apt Gothic metaphor for colonial 'syphiliphobia'" (K. Davis 149). While I analyze the phobic responses to the Beetle as more xenophobic than syphiliphobic, these two readings are not mutually exclusive and Davis's insight provides a crucial lens through which to view the mummy romances of the period where "an encounter between a beautiful female mummy and some variety of imperial Englishman awakes an eternal but ultimately doomed passion" (Bulfin, "The Curse of the Suez Canal" 419). H.D. Everett's *Iras: A Mystery*—written under the pen name Theo Douglas— provides a prime example of this narrative arc, illustrating the British hero as debilitated by his union with an orientalized woman.

    Iras is a mummy romance that follows the Egyptologist Ralph Lavenham and his marriage to the revivified mummy whom he names Iras. As Iras and Lavenham flee from the spirit of her ancient spurned lover, Savak, Lavenham and Iras both devolve, ending in Iras's re-mummification and Lavenham's early death. While the hyper-sexualized *femme fatale* is pervasive in Imperial Gothic texts, *Iras* takes a slightly different tack and highlights Iras's virginity at the beginning of the novel, even in her mummified state. When Lavenham procures

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(143). I argue more along Hurley's line due to the novel's preoccupation with masculinity and the many times Lessingham's manhood is called into question.

[56] See L. Hall, especially 30-46, for more on the evolving discussion surrounding sex in the late-nineteenth century.

the mummy, he makes a point of classifying it as "un-violated" (Everett 4). Iras's virginity is later emphasized when the tale of her burial comes to light in which after Iras denies herself to the priest, Savak, he "sealed the virgin" (37) in a tomb to be revivified in a later generation. On taking possession of the mummy case, Lavenham imagines himself as "the despoiler" (4) of this pristine specimen. This is clearly a sexualized image where Lavenham imagines himself as deflowering the virgin mummy thus enacting a scene of white male dominance over Oriental women. When the mummy, Iras, comes to life, Lavenham falls in love with her and determines to make her his wife. The immediacy with which Lavenham falls in love with the mummy mimics texts like Rupert Brooke's poem "Mummia" (1911) that "played explicitly with the suggestions that inhaling ancient Egyptian particles might produce sexually stimulating results" (Dobson, *Writing the Sphinx* 150). Eleanor Dobson notes that "in keeping with a literary tradition extending from the beginning of the nineteenth century, Brooke's poem glamorises close – and sensual – contact with the relics of the past" (150). Whether Lavenham becomes infatuated with the mummy due to inhaling the particles that come from her case or due to her exotic beauty, the novel certainly falls into the tradition of glamorizing sensual contact with artifacts. The symbolic "despoiling" of her mummy case is presumably followed by Lavenham literally taking her virginity after they are wed, although the text is careful to emphasize their chastity before marriage, having him assert, "I would not touch her lips till she was mine" (55). This avowal of morality shields Lavenham from appearing sexually immoral, but after their marriage, one can assume the relationship is consummated and the novel does hint as much when Lavenham states that, once married, "the greater solitude proved a temptation" (58). This is one of the few mummy romances that is implied to have been actually consummated and thus proffers the threat of procreation in addition to contamination by venereal disease.

Despite Iras's supposed virginity and Lavenham's sexual morality, the novel still enacts a typical image of syphilitic contamination as Lavenham slowly goes insane.[57] This mental degeneration can be read as exemplifying the "specific dread of sexual disease and degeneracy being passed from supposedly lower race ('less evolved') women to superior race Britons, ultimately leading to degeneration, insanity, and death for British men and their families" (Davis 141). The first hint that Lavenham may be devolving into insanity comes early in the story as he imagines seeing the Egyptian specter of Savak, and wonders, "Was my brain no longer to be relied on?" (Everett 13). He later avows "the awful doubt of my own sanity" (28). After Iras and Lavenham are married, the specter of Savak continually accosts them, driving the pair further north as they flee from him. Throughout their journey, the novel provides continued hints about the doubtfulness of Iras's actual presence as characters repeatedly fail to address her directly and she never speaks to anyone but Lavenham. During their stay in Scotland, Lavenham notes "my wife was not perceptible to all vision as to my own" (75). The novel provides early foreshadowing as to its narrative climax when Lavenham reflects, "They would have me believe it was all a fever-vision; that there were no sweet words and looks and vows—no wife, nothing but delusion and a corpse" (42). Not only does his brain become increasingly disordered, Lavenham also physically degenerates with "aching limbs and throbbing pulse, and a pain in my head" that leads to his being laid up for a week, "utterly prostrate—often, I am afraid, delirious" (72). The emasculation caused by his illness is illustrated by him being "too weak and weary for speech" (73). Lack of speech is a motif that regularly represents male impotence in Imperial

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[57] Dobson also notes that Rupert Brooke supposedly believed syphilis to be the primary cause of death in ancient Egyptian women. Despite this belief, he had an ardent desire to embrace female mummies in some manner, and was hopeful that he would find a clean specimen with which to enact his desires (Dobson, *Writing the Sphinx* 150). Lavenham seemingly succeeds in this search by possessing a virginal mummy, but even Iras does not escape the connection between the Other and venereal contamination, which begs the question of whether there is such a thing as a "clean" foreign woman within the toxically masculine imperialist imagination.

Gothic texts.[58] When Lavenham attempts to flee from Savak during a blizzard, he carries Iras in his arms up a mountain only to falter in the snow due to his weakness. Lavenham relates, "the blackness of utter extinction rose up and engulfed me like a wave, and I remember no more" (87). The use of the word "extinction" extends the ultimate threat of degeneracy as leading to the annihilation of the British race. When Lavenham awakens in the home of the local minister, the only remnant of his wife is her mummified corpse. All of the characters presume Lavenham to be insane and the reader must also question his sanity. Whether one imagines that Iras was reanimated or not, though, Lavenham's life is effectively ruined and he is left "a haggard object" with "cropped head and sunken cheeks, and shoulders bowed by weakness into the similitude of age" (105), physically mimicking a mummy himself. His union with the Other has destroyed him, leaving him both physically and mentally infirm. Ralph's degeneration inculcates the dominant belief that degeneration "could be accelerated by reverse colonisation and the absorption of colonial women into the Victorian family" (Corriou 9). The Other was not just seen as contaminating due to the fear of venereal disease, but the intermixing of races was also believed to threaten the strength of the white race due the creation of "impure" and thus supposedly degenerate offspring. Everett safeguards the future of the British race by ensuring that Iras is destroyed before she and Lavenham can beget children.

As detailed in my introduction, the increased globalization of late Victorian society led to a distinct fear about the preservation of the white race at the *fin de siècle*. Miscegenation was a

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[58] See Vuohelainen, "You Know Not of What You Speak" for analysis of how the failure to speak is indicative of masculine weakness and phobic xenophobia in *The Beetle*. This motif is also visible in *Pharos* when Forrester describes multiple moments of speechlessness under the titular character's power. Forrester declares for instance that "under the influence of his mysterious personality, I stood speechless for some moments, forgetful of everything—the hour, the place, and even his inhumanity to the drowning wretch in the river below" (28). Similarly, when Jack Carbery is unmanned in *Image*, the text notes that "Leonard looked at him a moment, and saw he was struggling with some considerable trouble—saw, too, with his doctor's eye, that speech was difficult. The first necessity, therefore, was to make speech easier for him" (266). Leonard, here, attempts to return Jack to normative masculinity by helping him reclaim his power of speech.

prominent threat to the preservation of the race, and this hazard is explored and impressed on the reader in the Imperial Gothic through several interracial mixings that destabilize traditional British marriages. A visceral example of the supposed threat posed by interbreeding is portrayed in *The Blood of the Vampire*, whose main character, Harriet Brandt, is the offspring of a British father and mixed-race mother. *The Blood of the Vampire* demonstrates a profound fear of miscegenation throughout, largely from the perspective of the scientific, patriarchal figure of Doctor Phillips. Harriet is regularly referred to as a "quadroon" (Marryatt 130) emphasizing her mixed heritage despite her white appearance. When Anthony imagined her with stereotypical Africanized features "as a whitey-brown young woman with thick lips and rolling eyes" the text stipulates that "he had no pity for the poor quadroon" (213) and gleefully imagined making her suffer in order to preserve Elinor Leyton's engagement to his cousin, Ralph. It is significant that such racist thoughts come from the hero of the novel whom the narrator glorifies as the perfect man who "loved his fellow creatures, both high and low, better than he loved himself" (244). His inherent racism when he imagines Harriet as dark-skinned suggests that the love he feels for his "fellow creatures" presumably refers exclusively to other white people. However, when Anthony fails to "associate [Harriet] with the idea which he had formed of the West Indian heiress who was bent on capturing his cousin Ralph" (216) and starts to see her as an acceptable partner for himself, overlooking her mixed parentage, he places himself in danger.

While Ralph's and Anthony's sexual attraction to Harriet blinds them to the danger her parentage presents, Doctor Phillips acts as the spokesperson against miscegenation, spouting racist, pseudoscientific theories prevalent during the period that justified white dominion over other races. Doctor Phillips declares, "When the cat is black, the kitten is black too! It's the law of Nature!" (130). He conveniently knew Harriet's parents in the West Indies and claims that he

"could never believe in anything good coming from such a stock. Whatever the girl may be, she inherits terrible proclivities, added to black blood. She is in point of fact a quadroon, and not fit to marry into any decent English family!" (198). Blood is obviously of paramount importance to Doctor Phillips, and Harriet's blood—as the title of the novel asserts—is the main issue at stake. Her black blood is just as much a mark against her in his opinion as the supposed "terrible proclivities" that he believes to be inherited from her parents. Before seeing her beauty, Anthony agrees with Doctor Phillips, claiming "the idea that there was the least chance of allying herself with their family, must be put out of her head, at once and for ever" (213). A person of mixed parentage was viewed as an unacceptable partner for a British person due the period's prevalent racism. Margaret Pullen claims that Harriet's parentage means she "is not a fit wife for any decent man" (200) and Ralph clearly connects her black blood with being unmarriageable when he states,

> Miss Brandt is not the sort of girl that any man could marry. [...] [S]he has black blood in her, her mother was a half-caste, so you see it would be impossible for any man in my position to think of marrying her! One might get a piebald son and heir! (240)

Although this is an overtly racist remark, it also highlights the prevalence of Degeneration theory in social thought and Marryat's use of the theory to justify her attack against miscegenation. Intermarriage was "impossible" because it would lead to degenerate offspring that would weaken the British race. This echoes the beliefs of pseudo-scientists like Eugene Talbot (1847-1924) who claimed that "it is safe to assume that the admixtures of races of different grades of evolution will, if carried to any great extent, tend to render the superior race more liable to [...] the factors

producing degeneracy" (102).[59] The degenerative effect is described by Doctor Phillips when he tells Harriet,

> You are not likely to make those with whom you intimately associate, stronger either in mind or body. You will always exert a weakening and debilitating effect upon them, so that after awhile, having sapped their brains, and lowered the tone of their bodies, you will find their affection, or friendship for you visibly decrease. (Marryat 274)

Poor musculature, enervation, and idiocy—all hinted at in this description—are popular signs of degeneration—both syphilitic and hereditary. This threat is played out in the novel as Harriet quite literally destroys the vitality of the British characters, leading to the death of British children who are symbolic of the future of the race and strong British men who were meant to sustain the race as agents of empire and fathers of strong, British offspring. Harriet's own internalized racism is laid bare at the end when she declares before taking her own life, "My parents have made me unfit to live. Let me go to a world where the curse of heredity which they laid upon me may be mercifully wiped out" (318). Anthony and Harriet die before they have the opportunity to procreate, thus preserving the British race from any form of supposed contamination through racial mixing.

Harriet and Iras as foreign women who attempt to envision a life for themselves in Britain (although, Iras had little choice in her sarcophagus's destination), may be viewed as not just symbolic of miscegenation but also of increasing immigration. Even though immigration

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[59] Eugene Solomon Talbot was an American dentist and investigator into the causes of degeneracy. He was largely influenced by Havelock Ellis's book on criminality when writing his own treatise, *Degeneracy: Its Causes, Signs, and Results* (1898). Beyond examining the degeneracy associated with interracial mixing, Talbot also looked at physiognomy associated with degeneracy and criminality, echoing many of Ellis's claims from *The Criminal*.

was minimal compared to modern times, it was still a source of anxiety for conservative members of society as I discussed previously. Indeed, As William Greenslade notes, "By the end of the decade the alien immigrant had joined other denizens of the abyss of the fin-de-siècle nightmare: a nightmare of pathological immanence: an intractable, proliferating, polluting cancer eating out the heart of Empire" ("Fitness and the Fin de Siècle" 44). Like *Iras* and *The Blood of the Vampire*, Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* offers a warning against both miscegenation and immigration through a story that imagines the destruction of the male body. In *Jewel*, the narrator, Malcolm Ross, comes to the aid of Margaret Trelawny, whose father, the Egyptologist Abel Trelawny, had mysteriously become cataleptic. After Mr. Trelawny is revived, the story follows a cast of male characters—including Ross and Trelawny—in their attempt to revivify the ancient Egyptian queen, Tera. The men's attempt to unite the ancient and modern ends in their demise along with Margaret who is Tera's contemporary doppelganger. The novel offers a possible example of miscegenation through Margaret Trelawny's connection to Queen Tera, but the fear of the Other polluting Britishness is even more visceral when Tera is conceived of as a symbol of turn-of-the-century immigration. This is ultimately an invasion story, and Tera is an invader.[60] In the paintings surrounding Tera's burial chamber are images of resurrection, coupled with "added symbol[s] of the North" (Stoker 88). Anytime "North" is referenced in this novel in connection to Tera, the reader can understand it as a reference to Britain. The symbols "inscribed on the soles of [Tera's] feet [that] gave sway over Land and Water" (115) heighten this threat since Britain, as an island nation, is innately a country of land and water. Holding "sway

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[60] See Bulfin, especially 420-431, and also Deane "Imperial Striptease," especially 404, for analyses of Tera's reflection of the "Egyptian Question" and the ways in which her character is depicted as an invader pursuing retribution for imperial sins. Bulfin's claim that "the vengeful supernatural invader suggests the imperial nightmare of barbarians at the gates, while the eroticised female mummy holds out the tantalising prospect of secure empire" (421) is fitting for Tera because Trelawny hopes to gain power through her animation but ultimately only succeeds in letting in a destructive foreign force.

over Land and Water" would supposedly allow Tera to possess power over Britain's national body. Stoker reveals that "all her aspirations were for the North" (113) as if Britain were some target for which she was specifically aiming. Her designs inspire some trepidation in the novel's male characters. Ross takes to musing about her intentions, questioning, "What terrible step might she not take to effect her wishes? Nay, what were her wishes; what was her ultimate purpose?" (180). There is an expressed fear of what the Other might want when setting foot on British soil.

This anxiety is elevated when it is not just sparked by one foreign individual but large-scale immigration, as is reflected in the "late-imperial fears of the contamination of British national identity through immigration" (Braun 79). This fear is etched into *Jewel* due to Tera's ability to astrally project. While Tera is just a single individual, the diction used to discuss her astral body reflects a larger influx of the Other. Ross claims that "her body could become astral at command, and so move, particle by particle, and become whole again when and where required" (Stoker 88-89). This parallels what would happen with immigration and the Jewish, African, and Asian diasporas. Increasingly, more immigrants moved to Britain "particle by particle" and joined together in their new country to create cultural communities. The idea of immigration is later repeated when Mr. Trelawny relates, "Each part of her body, though separated from the rest, can be a central or rallying place for the items or particles of her astral body" (119). Immigrant communities regularly act as a "rallying place" for other immigrants.[61] Here, Stoker expresses the fear that increased immigration will lead to Britain being overwhelmed by foreign bodies, bodies that will destroy British culture and supremacy. Stephen Arata notes that "as a transplanted Irishman, one whose national allegiances were conspicuously

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[61] See Panayi, especially 85-135, for descriptions of the various immigrant communities in England.

split, Stoker was particularly sensitive to the issues raised by British imperial conquest and domination" ("Occidental Tourist" 633). Issues of empire manifest repeatedly in Stokerian fiction, accentuating a conflict between his conservative view that "'duty to the [British] state' outweighs all other considerations" and what Arata claims is "a deeply anarchic streak" (634). Although Stoker's political stances at the end of his life are highly contested due to lack of autobiographical evidence, *Jewel* clearly exhibits a concern over foreign invasion by the racial Other. Fearmongering about white culture being overrun by the Other is a common tactic in toxically masculine discourses that seek to instill animosity toward other races and thus justify discrimination against them. An extension of this divisive rhetoric is the tendency to spread alarmist claims about the safety of white women at the hands of the Other.

The threat of immigration and miscegenation appears in consensual relationships between British men and Eastern women but is also regularly threatened through scenes of assault on white women at the hands of the racial Other. This preys on anxieties surrounding miscegenation but also on white men's fear of their impotence in opposition to the Other, both in terms of sexual incapacity compared to the virile Other and in terms of protecting white women from assault by the threatening Other. Cannon Schmitt points out the "centrality to the [Gothic] genre of the threat of violence against women" (Schmitt 11) and that "threatened femininity comes to stand in metonymically for the English nation itself, a generalization with imperial as well as domestic consequences. Supposed threats to the nation provided the perfect casus belli for imperial aggression" (Schmitt 3). Just as any threat against an idealized male figure must be figured as a threat against the national body of which he heads, so too does a threat against British femininity symbolize a threat against the race that she births. One of the chief defenses of racism and xenophobia was the need to protect British women from the polluting influence of

foreigners. The threat of the Other against the purity of British women (often figured in terms of rape) is a common trope in contemporaneous literature and indeed "colonial discourse has always been haunted by the figure of a white woman raped by a dark man" (Paxton 6).[62] This trope worked to bolster white, patriarchal control by propagating racism as well as by asserting the weakness of women and their need of a strong, male protector. Instead of these two marginalized groups finding commonality in their diminished societal position, women and the racial Other were played against one another. This defense of xenophobia is carried out in *The Beetle* as the villainess preys on Marjorie. I look in detail at Marjorie's assault to argue that the threat of the Other is used to keep both groups (foreigners and women) in their place within the patriarchal scheme.

Marjorie's New Womanhood—instead of allying her to the Beetle, another independent being bucking white, male control—ends up putting her in danger at the hands of the antagonist. When Marjorie takes Holt into her house to investigate the threat against Lessingham, Holt—having been corrupted by the Other—passes on this corruption to Marjorie, the implications of which I discuss further in the third chapter of this thesis. As soon as Holt speaks the name of the Beetle, Marjorie is at the antagonist's mercy. This quickly devolves into a scene of assault in Marjorie's bedchamber, and is one of the many times in which Marsh uses language of physical assault to typify the control and mastery of the antagonist. On entering her bedchamber, Marjorie feels the presence of the Beetle on her and tries to get away from it by stripping off her garments, stating, "I tore off my clothes. [...] All else that I had on I flung in the same way after it" (Marsh, *Beetle* 207). Marjorie is portrayed as laid bare in this scene, highlighting her body as a target and the antagonist as a threat to her virginity and purity. This

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[62] Notable narratives representing the sexual threat of the Other against white women include Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *The Beetle*, *The Yellow Danger*, as well as multiple colonial narratives including *First Love and Last Love*: *A Tale of the Indian Mutiny* (1869) by James Grant and *Rujub the Juggler* (1893) by G.A. Henty.

threat is viscerally exhibited as Marjorie retells the story, recounting, "I felt it alight upon the coverlet; [...] It weighed upon me like a ton of lead" (207-208). Marsh draws attention to the fact that the Beetle is on top of her as a sexual partner—or in this case predator—might be, separated from her naked body only by the bedspread drawn up around her. She continues:

> When it reached the head of the bed, what I feared—with what a fear!—would happen, did happen. It began to find its way inside, to creep between the sheets [...]! I felt it coming nearer and nearer, inch by inch; I knew that it was upon me, that escape there was none; I felt something touch my hair. And then oblivion did come to my aid. For the first time in my life I swooned. (208)

The assault of the pure English woman by the Other is hardly veiled in this scene. The expected reading of this as a rape is highlighted through the descriptions of the Beetle finding "its way inside" and creeping "between the sheets." This scene is so charged that Marsh chooses to have Marjorie lose consciousness so as not to subject the reader to a full description,[63] although he is clearly pushing the boundary of what Nancy L. Paxton describes as "perhaps the most powerful literary taboo of the Victorian era, which prohibited the description of the naked (white) female body and silenced mentions of rape in polite literature" (11). Marjorie's assault is horrific in any sense, but the perpetrator being Egyptian adds an extra level in the *fin-de-siècle* imagination as it

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[63] See Harris and Vernooy, especially 351-352; Hurley, especially 135; and also Vuohelainen, "Introduction," especially 14, for analyses of the motif of blackouts at the brink of implied sexual experience in this novel. These blackouts are portrayed during the Beetle's sexual interactions with Lessingham, Holt, and Marjorie. Harris and Vernooy claim these moments to be legitimizing these sexual encounters as homoerotic. Hurley paints these blackouts as ways for characters to not consciously experience these moments of assault. Vuohelainen on the other hand claims that these blackouts relieve the characters of the "humiliation of having to recount [their] ordeal" (14). While all of these arguments have merit, these blackouts also act as a narrative device that saves Marsh from having to fully depict these hypersexualized scenes. By utilizing blackouts, he can transition to the next scene without being more graphic than he already is.

threatens the very fabric of English identity.[64] Such a threat is employed to justify discrimination against people of color and imperial mandates that subjugate the Other, supposedly in order to protect white women and thus prevent both their assault and any racial mixing that may come from union with the Other.

During this scene, Marsh emphasizes the moral as well as physical threat of the Other by alluding to Eve and the serpent as Marjorie claims to be "dominated by something as hideous as, and infinitely more powerful than, the fascination of the serpent" (Marsh, *Beetle* 208). Similarly to the other serpentine symbols discussed in this thesis, this allusion to the Adam and Eve narrative works on multiple levels. Firstly, the "fascination of the serpent" can be read as the Beetle's mesmeric control over Marjorie due to "the snake's place in mesmeric and hypnotic writings as an example of an animal that could induce a trance state in its prey" (Dobson, *Victorian Alchemy* 178). The snake's ability to mesmerize their prey and thus incapacitate their victims before they strike furthers Marjorie's inability to resist in this scene. She becomes the Beetle's prey, resulting in her moral dissolution. Secondly, it characterizes the Beetle as even more powerful and more dangerous than the devil, thereby deepening its evil connotation and the demonization of the Other discussed previously. In this sense, it also calls to mind the temptation of women by Lucifer wherein the "fascination" is Eve's own curiosity and enchantment with the devil. Regardless of the reading of the term "fascination" it portrays women as easily corrupted.[65] Eve's fall is one of the reasons why men have asserted the weakness of the female sex throughout history. Marjorie's inability to stop or fight her persecutor at this moment highlights

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[64] See Scmitt, especially 14, for analysis of how scenes of assault against white women in Gothic literature serve "as the rationale for still more urgent attempts to ensure national purity" (14).

[65] The OED defines fascination as "the action or faculty of entrancing its prey by means of its gaze. Also more generally: the action or faculty of rendering a person or animal unable to move, escape, or resist" and notes that "in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, often spec. in relation to hypnotism or mesmerism, sometimes as a synonym for animal magnetism." Variously, it presents the more modern definition as "the state of being enthralled or intrigued by, or extremely interested in, something or someone." All of these definitions would have been in use at the *fin de siecle* and are applicable to my analysis.

this moral weakness but also emphasizes the inability of women to withstand the polluting influence of the Other. Marjorie is described as "dominated" here to highlight female weakness and how easily they can be overpowered, both mentally and physically, by foreign influences. Similar assertions can be found in pseudoscientific thought of the time, such as degeneration theory, criminology, and sexology. The highly influential sexologist, Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), makes an analogous statement about the degenerate criminal (often featured with foreign characteristics) whose feline eyes sometimes "alternates with a gentle almost feminine gaze; this combination giving them a strange power of fascination which has often been exercised on women" (*The Criminal* 81-82). In Charles Kingsley's lecture "The Tree of Knowledge" (1880), Kingsley similarly envisions Eve as "tempted seemingly, by a rational being, of lower race, and yet of superior cunning; who must, therefore have fallen before the woman" (qtd. in A. Smith, *Victorian Demons* 22). Andrew Smith claims that the lower race represents predatory male desires; to this I would add that this lower race must also be viewed in terms of racial otherness. In all of these instances, women are depicted as highly susceptible to the Other and easily led astray, thus justifying their need for protection by (white) men. Additionally, Eve's eating the apple has often been interpreted as a move from a state of sexual innocence to experience. For instance, the 1877 painting *Eve Tempted* by John Roddam Spencer Stanhope of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood depicts Satan almost as a lover whispering into Eve's ear as she reaches for the apple.[66] It is fitting for the allusion to Eve to be read with sexual implications since one of the greatest fears surrounding the New Woman was the fear of female sexual freedom.[67] In this light, Marjorie may be perceived as being sexually seduced by the Other as

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[66] See Veenker, especially 10-11, for a deeper explanation of the apple's sexual symbolism. Veenker draws a line from the metaphors of fruit as an expression of sexuality in Sumerian texts to the Bible's Book of Genesis and analyzes the text structures that reinforce a reading of the transgression as sexual awakening.

[67] See Ledger, especially 12-16 and 97-101, for an exploration of how the New Woman was posed in late Victorian popular media as hypersexualized and a sexual deviant.

Eve was seduced by Satan. This reading is complicated by the fact that Marjorie certainly presents this scene as an attack; however, Lessingham also presents his sexual encounter with the Woman of Songs in Egypt as assault in order to avoid responsibility for his seduction despite clear implications that his lust was answerable. Even though none of the characters in this text would ever admit to being seduced by the Beetle, their culpability should be considered when in conjunction with allusions to Eve in the garden since Eve was seduced mentally if not physically by the serpent. Eve's fall would then parallel Marjorie's downfall, with the ruination of the freethinking woman caused by her seduction and contamination. Marjorie's seduction also plays on the fear of male impotence as opposed to the more vigorous racial Other. Lesley A. Hall notes the "pervasiveness of male sexual anxieties" (32) during the late Victorian era, both revolving around venereal disease and sexual performance. The fact that Marjorie is in this danger in "the heart of civilised London" (Marsh, *Beetle* 316) demonstrates the threat of the foreign invasion of Britain. Virtuous women—especially without the protection of strong men—are not safe while foreigners walk the streets.

The multitudinous warnings against racial mixing that are espoused in these texts inculcate the view of different races as to some degree different species, any intermingling of which would have disastrous results. Even when British men are portrayed as falling in love with foreign women, these women are visualized as property to be claimed or a wild animal to be tamed. Their unsuitability as a partner for British men is highlighted due to the enervation they cause in their male counterpart. At the same time that foreign women are depicted as ensnaring and destroying British masculinity, foreign men (or characters who present as men like the Beetle) are portrayed as a threat to white female virginity. The Other is thus painted as hazardous to all forms of British society, allowing for the continuance of racist ideologies that called for

white, male dominance over these foreign threats. The violence that this justified is the most obvious form of toxic masculinity, but the rhetoric of difference, dehumanization, and antagonism pervasive throughout these texts is equally a part of toxically masculine culture as it contributes to the system of patriarchal oppression over marginalized groups.

IV. The Jingo: Hypernationalism and Glorified Violence Against the Other

In order to assuage their fears of national and masculine decline, toxically masculine men needed a clear adversary against whom they could fight. The racial Other acted as an adversary that could be targeted and on which male aggression could be acceptably unleashed. Although women were also an opposing group at this time, they were necessary for the continuance of the British race and therefore violence toward them was not condoned, although it certainly increased with the advent of women's expanded autonomy as I discuss later. The racial Other could be targeted, though, as a threat to the empire and a group to be forcibly ground under Britain's imperial heel. As a propagandic genre, Imperial Gothic texts echo the views of the more jingoistic in British society. The jingo spirit of the late Victorian age was noted by radical politician Charles Dilke when he wrote in his journal regarding intervention in Egypt, "Our side in the Commons are very Jingo about Egypt. They badly want to kill somebody. They don't know who" (qtd. in Parry 349). The perceived threat of the Other in terms of racial degeneration and threats against women are clearly unfounded racist ideologies but they were useful to justify toxically masculine desires to destroy the Other in order to alleviate the anxieties of masculine failures at home and abroad. We can see this increased aggression in a variety of Imperial Gothic texts as exhibited by their most dominant and idealized male characters. In *The Beetle*, both

Lessingham and Atherton exhibit violence against the Egyptian Other as a way to emphasize or reclaim their own masculine strength. In *The Yellow Danger*, the idealized British sailor John Hardy regularly proves himself through violent acts against the racial Other, namely the Chinese, ultimately leading to a genocide that is all but applauded in the text. This male violence, especially from Hardy and Atherton, is framed as a form of patriotism, a hypernationalism that leans on the side of savagery.[68]

The hooligan, whom I discuss more in the final chapter of this thesis, is usually portrayed as a burly, sports enthusiast, soldier type, who gains power through violence and physical strength. I define Atherton as a different type of hooligan—the intellectual hooligan. He is no less jingoistic, but while he does boast impressive physical strength, his masculine power derives principally from his rationality and scientific prowess. Atherton has a strong propensity for violence; in fact, he reveals that he awakens "to thoughts of murder" (Marsh, *Beetle* 78). Atherton's predilection for violence is more overreaching than the average hooligan's, manifesting in fantasies of annihilating large swathes of the Other in the name of the British Empire. As he puts it, "I went into my laboratory to plan murder—legalised murder—on the biggest scale it ever has been planned" (78). Through the repetition of the word "murder," Marsh emphasizes war as a state of murder, but he does not actually condemn it. Instead, he allows Atherton to revel in the violence of war just like soldiers who used war as an outlet for male aggression. In war, men could test their strength through violence, slaughtering native populations for the honor of Britain. The only difference between Atherton and a soldier is that instead of taking his aggression out on the battlefield, Atherton channels it in the laboratory,

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[68] See Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, especially 193-194 and 200-202, for an analysis of how violence is prized in connection to empire because "its acquisition and control depended disproportionately on the energy and ruthlessness of men" (193). See also Deane, *New Imperialism*, especially 1-9, for an exploration of how savagery was revalorized at the turn of the century due to imperial anxiety.

creating weapons that could decimate entire populations for Queen and country. Cecil Degrotte Eby notes the "almost loving infatuation with war" that was prevalent in late Victorian culture and claims that it "appeared to result less from fear of a particular foreign power than from a sense of generalized xenophobia" (Eby 7). This befits the depiction of the antagonist in *The Beetle* as a generalized racial Other so that action against her implies dominance over all foreign entities. Despite the hooligan being a contested figure during the Victorian era due to connotations of savagery and uncivilized behavior, their violent actions and bravado were not as oppositional to *fin-de-siècle* masculine ideals as one might think. Due to the New Imperialist valorization of savage qualities and fears that overcivilization were weakening the race, these toxically masculine qualities became directly linked with manliness. Indeed, this period's idealization of such violence is what lends itself to the rise of toxic masculinity at this time.

Many asserted that the hooligan's violence in foreign spaces allowed for peace and prosperity in Britain. Atherton certainly believes he is at the forefront of saving Britain, asserting, "If weapons of precision, which may be relied upon to slay, are preservers of the peace—and the man is a fool who says they are not!—then I was within reach of the finest preserver of the peace imagination ever yet conceived" (Marsh, *Beetle* 78). The hypernationalism exhibited here is a profound example of the extreme xenophobia that imagines or enacts violence on the Other in order to preserve one's own nation or culture. Patrick Brantlinger notes that "during the late-Victorian era, Nationalist fervor and race-thinking came to overshadow class consciousness and the struggle for domestic reform" (245). The fears of the state are entwined with fears of the Other and a desire to destroy outside threats to British sovereignty. The hooligan is largely a tool of destruction used for nationalistic purposes. Violent jingoism is coded as an idealized form of masculinity at the *fin de siècle* since "popular representations of

masculinity were completely governed by those right-wing ideologies of nationalism and supremacism" (Bristow 48).[69] The jingoistic hooligan is a blunt instrument of this nationalistic masculinity, but an effective one. Through science, Atherton aims to sharpen that instrument to a fine point, reveling in thoughts of his power as he declares, "What a sublime thought to think that in the hollow of your own hand lies the life and death of nations" (Marsh, *Beetle* 78). This not only displays Atherton's love of power but also presents his identification as almost god-like in this power of destruction. He later refers to mass casualties, speculating that "in less than an instant of time, a hundred thousand men,—quite possibly more!—would drop down dead, as if smitten by the lightning of the skies" (120). Atherton, as the almighty smiter of foes, wants to play god and has no problem with mass murder and genocide. While these statements may seem hubristic, the desire for power and control over their fellow man was a common characteristic of the toxically masculine hooligan who sought a "degree of mastery exercised over others" (Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities* 200). Simon Marsden claims, "No instance of supernatural possession in this novel is imbued with more destructive potential than Atherton's 'possession' by these socio-political values" (66).[70] Although the destructive potential of Atherton's hypernationalistic violence is certainly recognized in this novel, it does not follow that the text condemns this form of jingoistic aggression. I disagree with Marsden and other critics who claim that Atherton's hypernationalistic warmongering proves the novel's recognition of the threat engendered by imperialism and hypernationalistic political conditioning.[71] Such a realization

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[69] While Bristow references the hypernationalism of the 1930s, his assertion is also applicable to the late nineteenth century when these nationalistic impulses began to cement themselves in British society.

[70] See Marsden, especially 66, for more regarding how *The Beetle* reflects on the destructive possibilities of modern technology. Marsden argues that the novel warns against the nationalistic fervor that could lead to justifying genocide. See also Rebry, especially 12, and Jones, especially 66, for criticisms that argue that Atherton's warmongering is "more insidious" (Rebry 12) than the novel's "representations of degenerate monstrosity" (Jones 66).

[71] See Vuohelainen, "Introduction" 21-22; Wolfreys, "Introduction," 24; Rebry 12; and Pittard 100 for arguments asserting that *The Beetle* represents opposition to or at least guilt regarding the evils of empire. I argue Marsh's

may be true for a reader today, but the same cannot be assumed of the Victorian reader. I am more of Harris and Vernooy's opinion that points to the destruction of the temple of Isis and the Beetle's ultimate demise as "containment by iterations that represent, literally, the affirmation of imperialist and heteronormative ideals rather their subversion or serious questioning" (344). The ending of the novel, which clearly illustrates Britain prevailing over the destabilizing and degenerate Other, points to the Other's role as the prime threat. The Beetle's death and the bombing of the temple of Isis are depicted as victories and not a final statement about the dangers of Britain's imperial mission. Atherton is portrayed as dangerous, as I discuss later, but he is moreso portrayed as a necessity for the continuation of British domination. In every society, there are the men who do the dirty deeds of conquest. Atherton is such a man. The novel's acceptance of Atherton's hooliganesque nature reflects the *fin de siècle's* increasingly toxic shift toward aggressive forms of hegemonic masculinity.

The Yellow Danger similarly illustrates hypernationalism and martial violence to be masculine qualities that preserve British sovereignty. As already ascertained, *The Yellow Danger* effectively demonizes Yen How and the Chinese population in general as directly oppositional to British civilization and the security of its citizens. In response to the perceived Chinese threat, the novel raises John Hardy as Britain's mighty arm ready to smite the Chinese hoard, claiming, "In reality, the arm of England was as strong as her soul. [...] Her arm was John Hardy" (Shiel 331). By correlating the soldier-figure of John Hardy with Britain's soul and therefore national identity, the text depicts Britain as a martial nation led by fighting men. Hardy represents the "vision of the 'soldier hero' that would, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, provide the exemplary model for middle-class imaginings and performances of manhood" (Brown, "Like a

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depiction of Atherton in this scene and the imperial victories at the end of the novel discredit this as an apologist novel for the acts of empire.

Devoted Army" 594).[72] John M. Mackenzie postulates that "it was perhaps, principally through warfare that the racial ideas of the day were diffused to the public at large. Concepts of race were closely related in popular literature to the imperative of conflict between cultures, and the evidence of superiority it provided" (7). *The Yellow Danger* certainly uses war to illustrate its racist doctrine that Asia posed a threat to European races and must be destroyed to protect white continuity. Shiel specifically has Yen How declare that all of white peoples "are equally our foe, and tyrant, and vulture, one not more than the other!" That if we do not eat them all now, at once, they all will swallow us whole some day, soon" (Shiel 19). Yen How declaring thus situates the opposite as equally true: the white race must destroy Asian peoples or eventually be destroyed, which is the culmination the novel carries to fruition. Hardy, as the archetype of the British soldier, is painted as a man who revels in battle, embodying both the idealized British boy raised on adventure fiction and patriotism and the idealized British man whose love of duty and honor defends the homeland.

Hardy is a surprising hero, because he enters into the world of war as little more than a boy, still just a cadet. He is regularly infantalized with the text calling him "little boy," and the "little sailor lad" (104). However, on the same page the narrator states that "his red right hand is thunder, and his eyes shoot lightning out" (104), valorizing Hardy as almost godlike, specifically using traits associated with Western deities like Thor and Zeus. MacKenzie notes the prevalence of imperial propaganda in the late Victorian era and its proliferation in institutions that targeted the youth of the country in an attempt to create a "new type of patriotism" that combined "a renewed militarism, a devotion to royalty, an identification and worship of national heroes, together with a contemporary cult of personality and racial ideas associated with Social

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[72] See Brown, "Like a Devoted Army," especially 594; Stearns; and also Dawson, especially chapter 5, for deeper analyses of militaristic masculinity in the late Victorian era.

Darwinism" (MacKenzie 2).[73] This propagandic influence was highly visible in boy's literature of the time that glorified war and invested boys with an obsession with the empire and belief that devoting oneself to defending the empire was the pinnacle of masculinity.[74] Hardy's martial spirit even at a young age is framed in hypernationalistic terms that show the "intensity of the lad's pride and patriotism" (Shiel 69). When Hardy goes on a suicide mission during his first battle, the text declares that "he was full of a great joy. Now he knew verily for what he was born; it was for this—the mixed and multitudinous roar of cannon sounding over the sea—England's sea—*his* sea! (74). Eby notes that war became "a primary testing ground for national character rather than just a remote game conducted by a caste of professionals" (Eby 2). When Hardy is tested by battle, he proves himself the paragon of British might as his soul sings out for battle and the ability to give his life for his country. Boyish patriotism is summed up when Hardy declares afterwards that "it was natural that one should do what little one could for the old country" (Shiel 85). This propagandic display asserts that a boy's chief aim should be to lay down his life as his patriotic duty.[75]

The Yellow Danger has a strong hypernationalistic tone, with regular propagandic references to Britain's glory and strength, particularly as a race and imperial people. It is declared early in the novel that Britain "is a country hard to conquer, sir—a race hard to quell; at least, it will be a united race and country" (48). The hypernationalistic rhetoric combines with race-centric views underscoring that "a repulsion from the dilution of culture that inevitably accompanies globalization" is a key aspect of nationalism (Kitt 13). These rhetorics lean heavily

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[73] See MacKenzie, especially 2-3, for details about the various propaganda sources prevalent at the turn of the century and the institutions on which they focused.

[74] See Eby, especially 3-9, for analysis on the influence of late-Victorian boy's literature on infatuations with empire and war.

[75] John Tosh notes that schools recorded military achievements of their former pupils and that "no greater honour could be brought on the school than death in action—the epitome of imperial 'sacrifice'. A heroic, sanitized death was both the ultimate duty and the final chapter in a life of adventure" (*Manliness and Masculinities* 200).

on the side of jingoism with war presented as uniting the British nation against a common enemy. When the Chinese are set to invade, the novel declares, "At this time, the people of Britain, if they had never been so before, was genuinely a nation [...]. It is the Marathons and Trafalgars which knit and nationalize" (Shiel 283). The nationalism that war engenders is exhibited as the pinnacle of British identity and the hope for the nation with the glory of battle being portrayed as healing the perceived lassitude that accompanies overcivilization and extended peace. Although the novel does depict the white race as united against the racial Other, Shiel's reference to the Napoleonic Wars here advances the view of Britain as superior to the other European nations and reinforces the longstanding antagonism between Britain and France. Edrapol, the flamboyant Frenchman set on dueling Hardy, also elicits the competition between the two nations and depicts the French as more style than substance. The ease with which the Chinese invade France proves France's inability to put up the resistance offered by the more manly British forces. Ultimately, even though France and Britain are historical and imperial rivals, their enmity is presented as civilized in comparison to the threat posed by the racial Other.

In *The Yellow Danger*, violence against the racial Other is repeatedly glorified as Shiel paints the Asian race as little more than savage animals bent on the destruction of the white race. Even when Asian characters are depicted with more humanity—like the man who helps Hardy escape from Yen How—the text stipulates the importance of believing the racial Other to be entirely evil, asserting,

John Hardy shrank from hearing that there existed anything good, or human, or redeeming in the Chinese character. He was desperately and clandestinely unwilling to

hear it. Some dim and far-off instinct *even then* told him that it would be necessary for him to go on believing this bad race to be *wholly* bad, *wholly* of hell. (205)

The belief that the Other was entirely evil and completely unassimilable allowed violence against them to be perpetuated guiltlessly. Any acceptance of the Other's humanity would undermine imperialist authority and agendas. As such, in order for Hardy and other soldiers to kill opposing groups, they had to convince themselves of the evilness of the Other. At the same time that the text repeatedly demonizes the race hatred of the Chinese toward Europeans, it conversely displays the racism of Hardy and the other white men as justified and necessary. The race antagonism prevalent in this novel is clearly visible when Hardy declares, "Well, what are we to say of such a race, men? [...] Do you not agree with me that the earth would be well rid of such a people?" (223). This xenophobic desire to annihilate the racial Other is not limited to this novel but was asserted by many during the Victorian era. Charles Dickens once declared, "I call a savage a something highly desirable to be civilized off the face of the earth." (qtd. in Bristow 130). Although scholars have debated whether Dickens was calling for a cultural or physical genocide, I agree with Laura Peters that he is advocating for the extermination of Other races, especially considering his diction "off the face of the earth."[76] Although Dickens was specifically referring to Native Americans, Bristow explains, "Dickens's prejudices would be underwritten by apparently scientific accounts of racial differences and thereby extend to all people of colour around the world" (Bristow 130).

Hardy decides to take it upon himself to act as the agent of annihilation against the Other and declares before God and his men to "devote [his] entire life henceforth to their destruction"

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[76] See Peters, especially Chapter 3, for in-depth analysis of Dickens's racist conceptions and how they are integrated into his writing.

(Shiel 223). As is typical in toxically masculine homosocial circles, these extreme desires for violence are spread to the other men under Hardy's influence, and he encourages them to swear on the Bible to kill all Asians. The genocidal preoccupation of this novel is thus presented as a divine duty that these men must undertake. Hardy's violence is justified as an arm of God's righteous justice. When Hardy and his men climb on Chinese warships during the dead of night and kill all on board, the scene is described in biblical language: "Everywhere, with the silence and thoroughness of the Angel of the Passover, they smite, they slay. As a man cries out, he dies; he opens his eyes, and they are sightless. The ship flows with blood" (238). Here, Hardy and his men are paralleled to the Holy Spirit's divine vengeance against Pharaoh's people in the Bible. Their actions are portrayed as heroic and triumphant as they massacre five hundred sleeping Chinese men. This annihilation is then justified as a "massacre for massacre—John Hardy's for Yen How's" (238). Yen How's foreign savagery is used to justify extreme British might, which is then represented as Biblical justice. While Britain does team up with America, "having for its object the salvation of the white races, and the extermination of the yellow" (282), Britain is depicted as the primary means of salvation:

> For Britain, and every Briton, felt that it was England, in the end, who would have to dam the yellow wave, or sink beneath it; that it was she, and she alone, who must needs take up the cross of the world, and, like the Christ of the nations, with many an agony and bloody sweat, redeem mankind. (283)

The biblical allusions in this quotation and direct parallel between Britain and Jesus, highlights how *The Yellow Danger* combines all of the hypernationalism of jingoistic fervor with an

adamant religiosity that does not wish to convert the native but instead annihilate them so that white Christianity can proceed unchecked on the earth. This befits New Imperialist trends that saw "the faith in the possibility of civilizing subject races [...] broadly eroding by the later decades of the nineteenth century" so that the civilizing mission now became about the "consolidation of British authority rather than the transformation of natives" (Deane, *New Imperialism* 14).

It is important to examine the final scene of genocide in this novel as it showcases the extreme lengths that hypernationalistic fervor can be exploited to endorse. After Yen How is killed and the Chinese threat neutralized, the Chinese people are left on barges in the middle of the British Channel. Hardy then leads the effort to tow these barges to a giant whirlpool at some unspecified place in the ocean, steering the barges into the path of the whirlpool so that they are unable to escape as twenty-million Chinese people are sucked into the whirlpool's depths. The text characteristically makes fun of the Chinese ponytail as they descend to their death, a motif that is repeated ad nauseum throughout the text. The narrator describes their demise, stating that "as their speed intensifies [...], their queues stiffen and rise horizontal like darting serpents; and twenty million straight and fluttering pigtails, keeping ever their distances, race in narrowing whorls towards a bottomless, staggering abyss" (374). The callousness of the tone underlines the remorselessness of this scene and the depiction of the Chinese as so far below humanity that they elicit no more empathy or compassion than stepping on an anthill. The text goes further in its vendetta against the Asian race, though, as twenty-million is deemed insufficient. Hardy's platoon of soldiers "had sworn an oath" (375) to kill all of the Asian race and therefore leaves two Chinese men infected with what appears to be the black plague at seventy-five major European ports with the implication being that they would pass it to the rest of their brethren.

The use of the black plague adds a further retributive dimension to this genocide since the bubonic plague that decimated Britain during the Middle Ages is believed to have originated in Asia. Its deployment to destroy the Asian populace here thus enacts a revenge for the invasion imagined in the narrative and the historical contamination from the black death.

The hypernationalism of Hardy's endeavor morphs further into a race campaign as "England became the rendezvous of the white race" (382) when all of the white nations send troops to help "with the long, enormous task of clearing out of Europe over a hundred million yellow men" (381). As the white race battles against the remnants of the Chinese hoard and then oversees the relocation of those left over after the battle, the novel's ultimate racial and imperial argument is starkly clear. America and Britain split up the administration of Asia as the Prime Minister of Britain declares, "Now our way—most marvelously, if you will think of it—has been made plain before us. One all-dominant race has been so clearly marked out by Destiny to renew and administer the earth" (387). This emphasis on Britain's colonial "duty" reinforces their nationalism and "their identity as constructors of Great Britain, creators of the British Empire, pioneers of the worlds' first industrial civilization" (Kumar ix). While the novel had continually reinforced the belief that the white race—and particularly the British—was evolutionarily dominant, the end leaves no doubt of the novel's racist views. Shiel's final portrayal is of a conquering, all-powerful white race who must lord over all others. The imperialist agenda to subjugate the savage is explicit in this section. The Prime Minister's speech is also littered with racist ideology and rationalizations for empire. He claims that the white race has "the task of rehabilitating and administering that portion of the earth [meaning Europe], which, since authentic history, has played the greatest part in its events" (Shiel 387). The racist fallacies here of the white race as the originator of culture is used to diminish all other civilizations as lesser,

negating and ignoring the facts that European culture was relatively new compared to the Asian and Middle Eastern civilizations that flourished before Europe came to power and from whom Europe gained significant knowledge.

As Galchinsky notes, "national and marginal identities alike are both relational: their constructed meaning depends in large part on the definitions they gain through juxtaposing" (6). As such, the emphasis on a clear, stable national identity and increased emphasis on the opposing characteristics of the Other is unsurprising at the *fin de siècle* when Britain felt their dominance waning. Despite both *The Yellow Danger* and other Imperial Gothic texts like *The Beetle* recognizing that the British, and particularly hooliganesque men, are far more similar to the Other than they may be comfortable with, they represent this mirroring as a necessity of imperial domination and therefore often gloss over or justify the savagery of British men. It is in the benefit of the national whole to allow some cognitive dissonance surrounding British savagery and to instead assert the superiority and righteousness of the white race and more specifically the British populace. Robert C. Young posits that "perhaps the fixity of identity for which Englishness developed such a reputation arose because it was in fact continually being contested, and was rather designed to mask its uncertainty" (2). The same may be considered true of masculinity in which hegemonic masculinity is used to mask anxieties about how to reconcile various forms of manhood. Befitting a Gothic novel, these anxieties regarding nationality and masculinity are only assuaged in *The Yellow Danger* after they are proven unstable and allowed to fester.

Homi Bhabha asserts that "the study of imaginative literature [...] is in many ways a profitable one for understanding the nation-centredness of the post-colonial world" (47). The nationalism that is clear in the post-colonial world took root in the Victorian era as is typified in

fin-de-siècle literature that depicts Britain's attempt to conceptualize and preserve its nationhood through narrations that juxtapose Britain with other nations. As has been ascertained, this dichotomy was created through rhetoric that targeted foreign physical and moral degeneracy and the perceived sexual license of non-white women. These traits were often paradoxically attributed to British men at this time and are projected onto the Other in a bid to assuage British male anxieties about their own weakness and decline. The discursive techniques that alienated the Other substantiated increased racism and xenophobia as did warnings against any form of race-mingling. This blurred into hypernationalistic rhetoric that easily coupled with jingoistic attitudes toward the empire, advocating for brutality and domination in order to oppress the imperial subjects into submission. These toxically masculine traits reinforced the oppression of the racial Other and infected social discourse on race that embedded inherent racism into society. Having detailed the rhetorical techniques used to marginalize and subdue the racial Other in order to ensure white, male dominance, the following chapter examines similar techniques that are used to constrain the burgeoning New Woman who threatened patriarchal privilege.

CHAPTER TWO

"Sometimes even charming visions do have tongues": The New Woman and Toxic Masculinity

When looking at the Othered groups targeted by toxically masculine culture, it is vital to examine women's subjugation under the patriarchal regime. Elaine Showalter establishes that when there is a perceived crisis in masculinity, this is often envisioned as or creates an antifeminist backlash (*Sexual Anarchy* 9). The turn of the century was a time of unparalleled change in gender roles, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis. The crisis of masculinity that occurred at the *fin de siècle* due to degeneration theory, the male aesthete, changing family dynamics, and many other concurrent issues equated to conservative members of the patriarchy focalizing on women as the locale of male anxiety. In this chapter, I examine how Imperial Gothic texts respond to the shifting role of women at the *fin de siècle* to show how women's expanded autonomy resulted in the weaponization of gendered discourse against her, leading to her demonization within literature of the age. The Imperial Gothic's ability to viscerally explore social taboos while ultimately reinforcing the status quo makes it the perfect mode for investigating the changing gender norms of society in a relatively open manner whilst still maintaining the rather conservative perspective of the genre. Imperial Gothic texts aim to allay the sense of foreboding prevalent at the *fin de siècle* by promoting a return to a securely patriarchal system of control. In opposition to the New Woman who claimed rights to previously male-coded characteristics and domains, these texts nostalgically idolize the weak, submissive, and cloistered mid-Victorian ideal of womanhood. Through toxically masculine discourses that infantilize, denigrate, and patronize women under the guise of idolization, these authors attempt

to reinscribe passive feminine traits that buttress male dominance and firmly secures women's subservient position in society. I use a survey of Imperial Gothic texts to illustrate the mid-century feminine ideal prevalent in their pages before focusing on the multitude of moments when female characters embody New Woman attributes. These writers paint New Womanhood as problematic, targeting women's education, female autonomy, and women in the public sphere. I explore antagonism toward female education through Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) and E.F. Benson's *The Image in the Sand* (1905) before examining the way in which female autonomy is denigrated in *Jewel*, *Image*, Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), and Marsh's *The Goddess: A Demon* (1900). These narratives uniformly depict female advancement as hazardous to women's health, men's security, and the future of the British nation, thus inculcating fear of women's progress and furthering toxically masculine arguments that maintained the unequal balance of power between the sexes. The Imperial Gothic hyperbolizes the supposed threat of the New Woman through a process of demonization very similar to that which it employs against the Other, as I demonstrate through analysis of *The Beetle*, *Image*, and Marsh's *The Goddess: A Demon*. Society, so these texts allege, can only be redeemed by a return to mid-century gender roles. The New Woman's punishment and ultimate containment into the normative sphere of the home impresses conservative gender norms as the natural order. Men's dominance is secured as the threat that the burgeoning New Woman posed is neutralized. These texts fulfill their role as patriarchal propaganda by enshrining the hierarchical status quo in opposition to progress and equality. The antagonism they exhibit between men and women underscores how toxic masculinity's focus on control and dominance strains relationships between the sexes due to men's constant fear that their traditional place of power will be usurped.

I. Imagining the Ideal Woman

The *fin de siècle* was, as Atherton in *The Beetle* sarcastically relates, "the age of feminine advancement" (Marsh 11). However, many turn-of-the-century Imperial Gothic texts promote a more regressive form of femininity. Despite the opportunities for women having changed, the ideal—the picture of what a woman should and should not be—remained largely consistent. People can be oppressed by their idealization as well as their demonization, so while I discuss antagonistic rhetoric used in relation to the New Woman in later sections, it is also necessary to examine rhetoric that professes to revere women when investigating the toxically masculine discourses that substantiated oppression. The Imperial Gothic's revalorization of the diminutive mid-Victorian ideal was a direct attempt to reinscribe a form of submissive femininity that buttressed instead of challenged male supremacy. Women may or may not live up to the ideal in reality, but by ensconcing an archetype into the cultural norms, these reactionary writers attempted to create and maintain a cage that either kept women in their "proper" place or provided the justification for their condemnation. The mid-Victorian conception of femininity is well-trod ground in academic research, so I do not spend an excessive amount of time detailing the characteristics of the ideal.[77] What is paramount is an understanding of the purpose that this idealization served, which was to maintain patriarchal domination and control.[78] All of the cherished aspects of traditional femininity—frailty, an hourglass figure,[79] domesticity, naivety,

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[77] See Morrison; Welter; Gorham; Kenlon; Burstyn; Thesander; and also Basch, especially xiii-26 for thorough examinations of the ideal Victorian woman. See also, Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* for a description of the feminine ideal in pre- and early-Victorian women's writing from which the mid-Victorian ideas sprung.

[78] See Gorham, especially 5; Fraiman, especially 4; and also Dijkstra, especially 19, for further arguments about how women's idealization was an instrument of their oppression. Fraiman declares that the ideal female image "is quite rightly implicated in shoring up [...] structures of domination" (4).

[79] While I do not have the space to explore women's fashion as a method of oppression in the late Victorian era, Gina Marlene Dorré provides an intriguing analysis that depicts "Victorian woman's wardrobe as physically and mentally oppressive, where corsets, bustles, and heavy layers of cloth were incapacitating, and perpetuated a feminine ideal of women as frivolous, passive, and ornamental" (165).

innocence, and so on—are ways to control or limit the female body and mind, making idealization a potent weapon to wield against women seeking equality. The reversion to this repressive model in a time when the realities of women's lives were quickly changing underscores the conservative desire to maintain control. The texts I analyze particularly valorize feminine weakness, female purity, domesticity, and submission in an attempt to control the burgeoning autonomous woman.

One of the predominant traits extolled as a defining feature of femininity was women's supposedly "natural" physical and emotional weakness. During much of the nineteenth century, the standard beauty—largely developed by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conduct books, periodicals, and novels—was represented as a woman who was delicate and dainty to the point of frailty.[80] However, a new prototype of the strong, athletic woman was taking root at the *fin de siècle* due to women's increased independence, active roles in public life, and participation in sports. Many conceived of this modern woman with her male-coded traits of "self-confidence, independence and a competitive spirit" as a direct challenge to the traditional gender binary on which the existing male-dominated social order rested (Kiersnowski, "New Sporting Woman" 151).[81] One contemporary critic complained that "the world wants its women to be more, and not less, womanly. They never can stand on an equality with men. He has his sphere, they theirs, and the times are indeed out of joint when woman wants to usurp man's place" (qtd. in Kiersnowska, "New Sporting Woman," 152).

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[80] See Michie, especially 20-30; and also Dijkstra, especially 23-29, for analyses of weakness as an attribute of the feminine ideal. Both examine literature's formulation of virtue in connection to illness and note that while illness was sometimes used as an act of rebellion, it became so prevalent that it morphed into "a sign of passive compliance with the cultural image of virtue" (Dijkstra 23). See also Day, especially 81-100, for an exploration of how tuberculosis particularly influenced feminine aesthetics of illness as beauty.

[81] See Kiersnowska, "New Sporting Woman" and also Parratt, especially 154, for studies discussing the advent of women's sport in the Victorian era and its role in shaping women's emancipation. These critics illustrate how women's athleticism challenged existing gender roles and influenced the women's movement.

For their part, Victorian scientists' answer to women's increasing independence was to reassert her "natural" weakness in treatises that codified the differences between the sexes, thus reinforcing the gender binary and women's inferiority.[82] As Jane Wood affirms, "When scientists were called upon to ratify mental differences between men and women they were responding to growing fears that the present trend towards the erasure of difference would lead to social and moral turmoil" (168). Women were thus characterized with long-prevailing stereotypes as "gentle, emotional, nurturant, weak-willed, and dependent" whereas men were "muscular and courageous" (Russett 42, 12). Although there were of course a handful of dissenters who argued against women's inherent weakness, the majority of medical and scientific men agreed on women's natural inferiority. Although Cynthia Eagle Russett claims that most of these scientists "were by no means uniformly misogynistic" (190), I assert that their misogyny was inherently present—although admittedly culturally mediated—as visible in their patronizing attitudes toward women and denigration of female ability. Toxic Masculinity does not need to be deliberate to be prevalent; in fact, the very ingrained nature of toxic masculinity is what makes it so insidious. It is improbable that the writers I analyze would view themselves as misogynists—especially the female writers—however, these reactionary writers performed their own role in fighting against women's emancipation, often borrowing from the pseudo-scientific ideas popularized by the medico-scientific community. They conclusively exhibit the New Woman as unsexed, hysterical, and a threat to British futurity. In order to allay the *fin-de-siècle* fear of capable women, the writers I analyze attempt to diminish this threat by reasserting and valorizing women's "natural" weakness.

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[82] See Russett and also Wood for analyses of the distinctive development of the sexual sciences in the late Victorian era and how they impacted and were impacted by the changing roles of women. While Russett provides a broad look at the prevailing scientific theories of the age, Wood focuses largely on the advent of neurasthenia.

The exaltation of feminine weakness is clearly visible in the Imperial Gothic texts of the period as evidenced through their continual admiration for women's daintiness, delicacy, or pallor in correlation to their beauty and goodness. For instance, Atherton in *The Beetle* admiringly refers to Marjorie as "the daintiest damsel in the land" (Marsh 307), at once substantiating her delicate physicality and her helplessness as the figurative damsel in distress. When Iras is ill at the end of the eponymous novel, she is described as possessing "the air of a woman in a decline, and yet it was hardly ill-health but increased spirituality which was suggested by the change" (Everett 75).[83] Iras's descent into physical weakness manages only to make her more angelic—more ideal. Similarly, Forrester describes Valerie's face as, "bloodless in pallor, and yet so beautiful" (Boothby 237). These are just a few examples, but they prove a clear connection between feminine weakness and beauty, highlighting the male preference for weak women who validate male superiority and strength. The reaffirmation of women's fragility aims to stabilize the established order that was floundering at the *fin de siècle*. As Helena Michie claims, "The aesthetic of weakness [...] only thinly disguises an ideology of male dominance" (22). A weak woman offers no threat to men's position of power since she is diminutive and easily contained. In contrast, a physically strong woman indicates an equally strong mind that can question the established order and challenge the sexual hierarchy on which men's sovereignty was established.

Women's stereotypical emotional weakness is also accentuated in many of these texts in order to insinuate their incompatibility with the overstimulating public sphere. While I analyze women's residence in the private sphere as an aspect of idealized femininity later, it is of import

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[83] Although Iras cannot be explicitly claimed as an English ideal due to her foreign nationality, the traits attributed to her are the same as would have been idealized by many in society at the time. The same can be said for Valerie in *Pharos*. Their foreign identity precludes them from living happily in England, but their idealized characteristics are consistent with their British counterparts and therefore are worth including as informative of women's expectations at the *fin de siècle*.

here that her "natural" weakness was employed as a means to confine her to that sphere since it was believed that women did not have the energy or fortitude necessary to sustain involvement in the tumultuous and sometimes unsavory public sphere.[84] Women's exclusion from experiences intrinsically allowed to men is exhibited in *Ziska* when Helen is withheld from viewing the demonic painting of the titular character and similarly in *Image* when Jack directs the women to not view a similar painting called *La Démonique* for fear that it would be too upsetting for them. Furthermore, in *Jewel*, the men spend an inordinate amount of time deciding exactly how much information to share with Margaret or deciding to deny her a role entirely due to the supposed emotional weakness of her sex. After the men consult on the investigation, they not only decide to exclude Margaret from the initial discussion, despite her being the nearest concerned, but they also preclude her from any future involvement. Ross explains, "For we had arranged amongst us [...] that she was not to be brought into the range of the coming investigation. We considered that there might be some shock to a woman's mind in matters of apparent mystery" (Stoker 75). The investigation is upheld as men's work from which women must be "protected" due to their alleged weakness—despite many proofs throughout the novel of Margaret's strength and intelligence. In these examples, patriarchal command is reasserted by retaining complete control over information, which the men carefully censor for the women under their influence. Without knowledge and information, women were unable to effectively act separate from their patriarchal representative. Women's education—which I discuss further in the subsequent section—was so threatening to the male establishment largely because it diminished men's control over women. Toxic masculinity is inherently invested in maintaining women as inferior beings, and

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[84] See Griffin, especially 172, for analysis of how women's "natural" weakness was used to justify her containment in the domestic sphere. Even though some progressive men, such as the radical liberal politician Joseph Cowen, "pointed out that Antis were using the female weakness which originated in her social deprivation to justify woman's continued subordination" (B. Harrison 66), the predominant view—bolstered by many of the period's scientists—proclaimed women's natural weakness and need for protection from excess exertion.

patronizing rhetoric that professes to idolize or protect women due to their inherent weakness is often wielded to diminish female power as is clearly evidenced in the texts I analyze.

One of the ways in which women's weakness was implied and enshrined in literature and social commentary was through their infantilization as perpetual children. Deborah Gorham asserts, "while the ideal woman was to have womanly strength, she was also to remain permanently childlike, childlike even in maturity" (6). This idealization of female childishness leads to the somewhat disturbing motif in Imperial Gothic literature of an older man fostering and grooming a childlike figure to become his sweet, subservient wife. The husband becomes father, brother, teacher, and lover in this motif of late Victorian texts and vice versa. For example, In Kipling's "The Phantom Rickshaw" (1888), the narrator speaks of his engagement to "Little Kitty Mannering" and then later addresses her directly as "child" (14, 23). In *The Image in the Sand*, Ida is described with "[a] smile very childlike," with "the face of a child," and with the "irresistible charm of childhood" (123, 134). Jack refers to Ida, declaring, "She is such a child, [...] I love her for that white innocence" (311). Jack's statement directly promotes childlike femininity as a characteristic engendering love and affection. By the time we meet Bessie in *The Goddess*: *A Demon*, she is suffering from amnesia—unable to recall even her name. Bessie reverts to a childlike persona that enthralls Ferguson when he emerges as her ardent protector and proposed lover. Ferguson's perception of Bessie as "a timid child" and "puzzled child" (Marsh 15, 31) corresponds to his desire to act as her male-coded protector, gratifying his patriarchal vanity and sense of antiquated chivalry.[85] This admiration for female childishness is in accordance with "the idealization and idolization of little girls [which are] long acknowledged features of the Victorian era" (Robson 3).[86] While the prominent research on this idolization

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[85] See Masterson for an examination of the prevalence of neo-chivalric masculinity at the turn of the century.
[86] See Robson, Kincaid, and also Steedman for more on the idolization of children in the Victorian era. All three authors take widely varying views on the topic. Robson uses recapitulation theory to claim that men are seeking

focuses primarily on representations of literal girlhood in Victorian literature, I am more interested in the pervasive infantilizing of adult women. Women's infantile representation marked them as "weak-willed, impulsive, perceptive, markedly imitative rather than original, timid, and dependent" (Russett 54). Whereas the adult woman—especially at the *fin de siècle*—could provide for herself, make her own choices, and promote her own opinions, the child was inherently reliant on her male provider. As Catherine Robson notes, "relative powerlessness in some ways makes the girl more 'feminine' than the grown woman" (52). At a time when the "natural" subservience of women was being contested, painting women as children reestablished the traditional toxically masculine hierarchy of male domination over a dependent, childlike charge. Men's attraction to child-like women is clearly evidenced in many texts from this period, including quite prominently in *Iras: A Mystery* by H.D. Everett.

In this mummy romance, Iras is a truly "blank page" on which Lavenham can write his own narrative. She is yet one more in "a series of 'blank pages,' or heroines who are acted upon, written upon, and shaped by inscriptions of male desire" (Michie 109).[87] Rising from the sarcophagus, Iras essentially starts her life anew from a childlike state with Lavenham as her guide and the author of her new life. Lavenham references her childlike nature when he recounts, "She looked at me with a sweet half-comprehension, like a child at once perplexed and confiding" and later states "[she] trusted me with such childlike confidence, such complete innocence" (Everett 43). Here, Lavenham becomes a father-figure, possessing the trust of his innocent, dependent child. This father-figure image is furthered when Lavenham gives Iras her

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their past girlhood. Steedman focuses on the child as a reflection of the growing sense of personal interiority. Kincaid, more radically, looks at the modern reading of Victorian "child-loving" as pedophilic and claims this is a cultural conception that we should question since creating an image of an asexual child inherently eroticizes children.

[87] See Gubar, "The Blank Page" for a study of how women in literature are portrayed as blank pages on which men write their wills.

name—similar to how Ferguson recovers Bessie's name in *The Goddess*—firmly establishing himself in the role of paterfamilias.[88] In addition to his paternal role, Lavenham also acts as Iras's teacher, instructing her in infantile lessons like the alphabet or how to write her name. He translates the world for Iras by imprinting his views onto her, creating her knowledgescape, and thus shaping her thoughts and actions. Iras—like the dutiful, childlike woman that she portrays—fully relinquishes all individual thought, relying instead on her masculine translator. Lavenham relates that Iras directly receives her understanding from him and is "unable to comprehend what was said to her, unless a touch completed the link with [his] understanding" in order "that [his] understanding of it could supplement hers" (Everett 39, 56). He is the lens through which she sees the world, and his power is never questioned or impugned. Iras instead has "a child's confidence on [his] power to explain and make clear every perplexity" (64). Iras's inability to act or interpret the world apart from Lavenham codifies a female immaturity that reinforced the need for male protection and maintained the toxically masculine view of women as inferior to and dependent on men.[89] This text exhibits an "intense valorization of the little girl at the expense of mature femininity" (Robson 4). The diminishment of mature female capacity—which is indicative of the toxically masculine mindset—is significant here when one considers that this novel was written by a woman, Henrietta Dorothy Everett, under the pen name Theo Douglas. The female authorship provides excellent proof that "both men and women have supported a restrictive female ideal" (Kenlon 11). Whether or not Everett personally endorsed traditional gender roles, her readership could certainly understand the virtues of normative femininity as extolled in her novel. The ideal of feminine subordination was

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[88] See Griffin, especially 165-182, for analysis of the significance of the masculine role as paterfamilias. Griffin claims that "to fulfil the role of paterfamilias was usually seen as the height of masculine achievement" (171).
[89] Iras's infantilization also befits the written tradition "in which 'natives' are constructed as children" in order "to legitimate the exercise of imperial power and this mobilisation" (Beetham 232). Iras's race in addition to her sex positions her as below Lavenham on the social and perceived evolutionary scale.

internalized by the oppressed class as well as the oppressive class, underscoring the pernicious effect that patronizing, toxically masculine discourses have on large sects of society. The existence of the childlike motif in texts by male and female writers proves its pervasiveness in the cultural mindset of the *fin de siècle*. By situating women as children, these authors enact a rhetorical attempt to discredit the New Woman's capacity for autonomy and respect.

When examining female infantilization, the inherent associations of children with purity and innocence is also of significance. Purity was another bastion of idealized femininity resulting from "centuries of concerted efforts to create and enforce a specific set of standards intended to control women's actions, thoughts and bodies" (Kenlon 2). Even though the ideal Victorian woman was a wife and mother,[90] and therefore categorically not virginal, "having never been sexually active, girls are better suited to represent the self-sacrificing ideal, unperturbed by currents of desire" (Robson 52). The texts I analyze are tied to the marriage plot; as such, these heroines are idealized not as a present wife and mother but in terms of their capacity to fulfill this role in the immediate future, making their virginity of the utmost importance to their value as a marriageable commodity. By characterizing their heroines as childlike, *fin-de-siècle* authors categorically associate her with innocence and purity and attempt to separate the nostalgic ideal from New Women who were often represented in the media as "erotomaniacs" (Stutfield 836). The emphasis on women's virginity also implies that women's bodies are the property of their father who is protecting their virginity or their husband who will take their virginity.[91] Ida in *The Image in the Sand* directly claims that her body is the property of her patriarchal protector when

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[90] See Dijkstra, especially 7-24, and also Basch, especially xviii-10, for examinations of the institution of the domestic woman in Victorian ideology starting from the late eighteenth century. See also Kenlon, especially 2, for a view of the Victorian ideal as including motherhood.

[91] Men no longer claimed unequivocal rights to his wife's property after the passage of the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, which allowed married women to own and control property in their own name. However, men still claimed a level of ownership over women's bodies since "a man can be sure that his name and his estates will be passed on to those of his own blood only if he has absolute possession of a woman's body" (S. Mitchell xi). Women's chastity was honored as a father's investment and a symbol of the husband's control.

she states while staring at herself in a mirror, "all that she saw she no longer really regarded as hers, but another's. All this, this beautiful mirrored reflection, was but a gift she had already made" (Benson 124). Her purity is essential because without it, her gift is valueless. When she threatens this purity by visiting Henderson's apartments, an action with clear sexual undertones, her future as an honorable wife and mother is in peril. It is ultimately her internalization of her role as property that influences Ida to denounce a life of intellectual—and I would suggest sexual—gratification with Henderson. When she chooses to relinquish her visits with Henderson, she reasons that "she was her own no longer. She had given herself to her lover" (280) and therefore must sacrifice her desires for Jack's peace of mind. New Women's sensuality sought to create a level of equality between men and women in the sexual domain. In reestablishing the necessity of feminine purity, these authors reassert the power structure that keeps women controlled and contained.

Despite women's expanded involvement in the public sphere at the end of the century, most of my focal texts still adhere to the separate spheres ideology that imprisons women in the private sphere of the home as opposed to men's "distinctively masculine privilege of enjoying access to both the public *and* the private sphere" (Tosh, *A Man's Place* 77).[92] Although the cult of domesticity peaked at the mid-century and was now facing severe scrutiny, many of the texts I analyze attempt to reinvigorate the view of home as a temple and resituate the woman as the angel of this space.[93] They envision female characters as the mid-century heroines who "are

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[92] See B. Harrison; Shoemaker, especially 32-33; Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, especially 2-17; and also Griffin, especially 164-184, for in-depth discussions about the separate spheres ideology. While the ideology of separate spheres is vital to this thesis, it is important to keep in mind Griffin's assertion that "not the least problem with the separate spheres framework is that it effectively removes men from the critical gaze: the object of study remains the female body as seen by men rather than the masculinity of the men discussing women" (23). In this thesis, I focus on the use of the separate spheres ideology as a way to reassert the hegemonic masculine ideal and patriarchal control and thus make masculinity my chief concern.

[93] See Parratt, especially 142, for more on how men looked to the home as a "guardian against the chaos and turmoil of social upheaval" that was prevalent at the *fin de siècle* (142). It must be acknowledged that even in its heyday the separation between public and private was overstated since "even the ideology of domesticity allowed women some

simplified, and seem to conform to a few stereotypes inspired by a tyrannical and narrow ideal of the woman in the home" (Basch xiii). While the heroines in these texts are often complex, conflicted, and ambiguous figures, the masculine characters and often the narrator continually describe them as a paragon and not as an actualized individual. The idealized female characters are presented with "a gilded halo round her head" (Benson 8) or with "her sweet face, framed in its angel aureole of bright hair" (Corelli 74). Alternatively, they are directly equated as "an angel,—one of the best!" (Marsh, *Beetle* 70). These angelic description directly invoke the "angel in the house" figure that was popularized in the 1850s,[94] and which "organised masculinity and femininity around a division between public and private that relegated women to the domestic space, a space paternalistically envisaged as one of protection from the corrupting influence of the 'public' world of business and politics" (Margee 72). The "angel in the house" model was antiquated by the 1890s but was adopted in *fin-de-siècle* texts to nostalgically refer back to a time that these authors perceive as preferable to the contemporary age of bicycles and bloomers.[95] By positioning the ideal woman as an angel, these texts rhetorically enact women's removal from ordinary human life. When Ida is called "a radiance almost more than a girl" (Benson 205), her humanity is directly negated in favor of viewing her as an idyllic paramour. The "angel in the house" was always an enforcing ideal that pushed women to adhere to subservient, confined positions in society. Even though protofeminists of the mid-Victorian era

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public activities" (Shoemaker 306). However, the extent to which middle class women were able to enter the public sphere was greatly expanded at the turn of the century. Even if the public versus private dichotomy was overstated, it was still a powerful myth that regulated the predominant gender roles. I am of Beata Kiersnowska's opinion that "separate spheres did not constitute a spatial category but rather the conceptual ground for the exercise of power relations that produced a hegemonic, paternalistic male-dominated system" ("Female Cycling" 89). Even if the separation is more imaginative than realistic, this ideal still had a profound effect on gender relations during the mid- to late Victorian era and thus should not be undervalued.

[94] See Gorham, especially 4-7 and 106-107, for an overview of the "angel in the house" ideal.

[95] Elizabeth Macleod Walls explains that in the 1920s, the New Woman became the idealized figure that conservative members of society nostalgically harkened back to as "their rhetorical strategy for containing the militant" (236) modern feminist. The use of previous ideals to rhetorically suppress modern progress is thus shown to be a common occurrence in conservative discourse.

"began a struggle to become human beings instead of angels" (S. Mitchell xiii),[96] more conservative members of the patriarchy persisted on characterizing women in this patronizing and alienating manner in an attempt to control the modern woman who was dispensing with her halo and white robe in favor of a bicycle and college textbooks.

While the "angel in the house" cliché was very much alive and well through its prevalent appearance in conservative *fin-de-siècle* literature, it is useful to examine Michie's analysis of "the angel in the house" as a dead metaphor which had been so overused as to lose its meaning. Michie claims that "the operation of cliché in Victorian heroine description [...] defines and perpetuates an unceasingly iterable notion of "woman"; all women are alike, all replaceable" (89). Accordingly, "by using the cliché of the angel, the authors ultimately destroy any possibility of looking at the character as an individual and instead class her with the ideal that is perpetuated throughout literature" (86). Michie's argument is corroborated by the angel persona given to heroines such as Ida, Helen, and Dora, which is uncritically replicated from text to text. However, this clichéd image is largely provided through the lens of the male characters or the narrators themselves—all of whom I interpret as defenders of patriarchal control or at the very least complicit in reinforcing the patriarchal norms that sustain such control. Although Michie claims that "the lack of surprise involved in 'dead' heroine descriptions underscores the heroine's role as subject and provides a linguistic frame beyond which she cannot stray" (89), I argue that many of the heroines do stray, at least briefly, from these constraints. Despite the heroine inescapably being a "subject" that the other characters expect to subscribe to traditional expectations of womanhood, I discuss later in this chapter multiple examples of *fin-de-siècle* heroines who deviate from the framework of traditional femininity. Critically, it is this

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[96] See Fraiman 1-4 for an overview of how women writers aimed to destroy the "angel in the house" persona. Even as late as 1932, Virginia Woolf claimed that "killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer" (Woolf 286).

divergence that makes it so vital for the men to reestablish them in the traditional feminine frame. Within toxically masculine culture, any threat to the status quo threatens to topple the entire gender hierarchy. Women in these narratives are finally returned to the restrictive cage that the narratives assert she should have never left. The New Woman is replaced by the mid-Victorian ideal, the angel is returned to the house, and the traditional social order is reestablished.

The preeminent feminine virtue of submission encompasses and embraces all of the other feminine ideals. Women's subservience to men, which is implied by her weakness and childlike dependence, is idolized in many of the texts I analyze in an attempt to mitigate the issues and anxieties surrounding female emancipation. Iras's deference to Lavenham, for instance, is clearly exhibited when she refers to him as "My lord" (Everett 39) and "O my master" (40) echoing the outdated language used to discuss *coverture* where "the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage" since she is presumed to be "under the protection or influence of her husband, her *baron*, or lord" (Blackstone 285).[97] Because Iras is Egyptian, this enacts a double subservience of imperial subject to imperialist and woman to man—in both cases white men are provided the position of power. It is significant that Lavenham names Iras after one of Cleopatra's handmaidens, an inherently subservient role, instead of naming her after Cleopatra herself who represents a woman with distinct claims to power and authority in her own right. Lavenham, subconsciously or otherwise, wishes to feature Iras in the traditionally servile feminine role, thereby situating himself as her ruler. Iras is truly the ideal, "passively obedient" (Everett 86) woman whose opinions, thoughts, and wishes are completely relegated to those of her husband as he literally impresses the ideas onto her mind. Lavenham even admits that "My

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[97] See Dolin, especially 121-122, for a discussion of *coverture* and its effect on the realities of women in the Victorian era.

decision would have ruled hers" (50). His desires become her desires and his will supplants her own.

Similarly, Ross's love for Margaret in *Jewel* originates largely from her submission to him at the beginning of the novel. When he takes her hand early on, Ross relates, "Miss Trelawny's hand somehow became lost in my own. It was not that it was a small hand; [...] it was the unconscious self-surrender" (Stoker 7). Michie asserts that "Victorian novels are frequently about women's hands" and that "the synecdochal chain shifts the burden of female sexuality away from the body as a whole, through the heart to the hand" (98). As such, in giving Ross her hand, Margaret offers both her heart and body to him as well. This small moment displays—at least from Ross's perspective—a woman renouncing her power and being overwhelmed by the masculine. The scene also enacts a form of sexual submission on Margaret's part and anticipated sexual domination for Ross.[98] It is not surprising that this self-surrender furthers Ross's attachment to Margaret so forcefully, especially when one takes into account that his initial dream of Margaret at the beginning of the narrative imagines her as distinctly queenly. Margaret's self-surrender becomes even more important when one considers the power associated with a queen and Ross's toxically masculine need to feel superior to such a dominant persona.

The greatest failing of most of the heroines I analyze is their inability to enact complete subordination to men. Instead, they repeatedly defy their patriarchal representatives and assert their own power and desires. As I have illustrated, the retrogressive feminine ideal that is praised

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[98] The symbolic and sexualized nature of hands in *Jewel* can be extended to argue that Trelawny's possession of Tera's hand symbolizes the sexual conquest of English men over the Egyptian other, although significantly, "Queen Tera's hand appears as the instrument of her revenge and a constant threat for the men" (Corriou 6). Tera's acts against Trelawny thus represent a possible revenge for the sexual exploitation of foreign women. See also Briefel for an in-depth analysis of the implications of the mummy's hand and its ability to "marry aesthetic pleasure with repulsion" (265).

at the *fin de siècle* is defended predominantly as a means to buttress the traditionally submissive

position of women that had begun to crumble toward the end of the century. As women's identity

expanded to include traditionally masculine attributes like intellectual capability, a public role,

and even physical strength, the masculine sense of self began to falter. If women could act like

men, then what made a man manly and therefore secured his position of power? Could women

usurp his traditional roles and leave him on the sidelines in a game that he used to dominate?

These were serious concerns for many men at the turn of the century, so in order to re-enforce

the traditional systems that guaranteed masculine control, the ideal of the submissive, weak, and

dependent woman was consecrated in toxically masculine discourse. Men's ideal of what women

should be causes a great deal of consternation in relationships between the sexes as is clearly

exhibited in the Imperial Gothic texts I analyze. Men are constantly confused by women who do

not behave in the prescribed manner and women who fail to live up to the standard are criticized

or demonized. The rest of this chapter examines the many women in *fin-de-siècle* fiction that fail

as a perfect representation of the ideal Victorian woman. As texts that fit the toxically masculine

paradigm, these narratives chastise "unwomanly" traits like intelligence and independence and

either destroy the threatening New Woman or confine her to women's traditional position in the

home as a self-sacrificing wife and mother.

II. Distrust of the Educated Woman

Women's access to education had been slowly increasing since the mid-nineteenth century and

had been hotly debated in the press since the first women's college opened in 1848.[99]

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[99] The first women's college opened in 1848 but was focused primarily on training governesses (Ledger 17). Almost twenty years later, in 1864, the Working Women's College was founded for middle-class women and the first women's medical college was established. Girton, the Cambridge college most closely associated with the New

Conservative men had routinely protested women's entry to what they saw as the male-only world of academia. However, even by the turn of the century women were not a preponderance at the university level with fewer than 850 female students represented among the nine women's colleges.[100] So, why the hostility toward the educated woman at the *fin de siècle* if she was by no means a new occurrence nor represented to any significant degree in the academic world?

Part of this antagonism can fairly be ascribed to the press's satirical and vitriolic portrayal of the New Woman as "the Girton Girl [who] was much maligned and ridiculed through the period" (Ledger 96). The perception of the New Woman as pervasive and invasive would have made the educated woman appear equally omnipresent to people who blamed female education for women's increasing independence and agency. Indeed, secondary education was becoming ubiquitous for middle-class girls, so that it was quite common for a young girl at the *fin de siècle* to achieve a secondary education comparable to her brother's, preparing her for a life in the public sphere or university, although most did not continue onto the collegiate level.[101] Additionally, while men had been fighting women's entrance to higher education for fifty years, the new language of sexology, psychology, and degeneration theory figured her entrance into education as not just a threat to the male sphere but the British nation. Scientists warned that education—or any role in the public sphere—would deplete women's already limited reserve of

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Woman—styled the Girton Girl—was founded in 1869 (Cunningham 4). By the 1870s, Britain had its first female pharmacists, and women were working as clerks, possessing jobs traditionally held by men (Cunningham 10). London University became the first university to grant women degrees, with female students graduating for the first time in 1880—the same year as the first suffrage demonstrations (F. Harrison 68). See A. Young, especially 6-7; and also Cunningham 4 for more on advancements in women's education, including the colleges that were founded for women during the era.

[100] Ledger claims that by 1897, there were 784 female university students (*The New Woman* 17), while Showalter claims 844 (*Sexual Anarchy* 7). Although the exact enrollment may be of historical significance, the important aspect for this thesis is that the number was still quite small even almost fifty years after the first college opened its doors.

[101] See Ledger 17 for analysis of the growth of secondary education. She cites that "by 1898, 80,000 girls over the age of twelve were attending secondary school" (17). See also Gorham 105 for an examination of how the curriculum at girl's school began to increasingly prepare them for a role in public life.

energy so that they would not have the energy required to fulfill their "natural" role as a mother. They claimed that "no woman could follow a course of higher education without running some risk of becoming sterile" (Burstyn 94). Furthermore, the New Women "courted nervous illness if they resisted their biological destiny of marriage and motherhood, and were liable to give birth to weak and sickly children if they fulfilled it" (Wood 163).[102] So, whether they became mothers or not, women's exertions outside of the home meant their inevitable failure in their primary social role as mothers of strong men who could uphold the empire. The decrease in birth rates—largely due to the increased use of contraception—was painted by some overwrought members of society as proof that women's education led to sterility, and the New Woman was thus painted as a threat to Britain's continuity.[103] Additionally, both antifeminists and feminists admitted that increased educational and professional opportunities made women less likely to marry since women no longer needed "to marry in order to leave their parents' home" (Ledger 22). Even though most New Women were not anti-marriage nor opposed to having children, the periodic press exacerbated these incendiary beliefs by depicting the educated New Woman as a bad mother, rejecting motherhood entirely, or at the extreme end as infanticidal.[104] This demonstrates how gendered language was weaponized at the turn of the century to target independent women. Discourses that painted the New Woman as destroying the familial bedrock of British society

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[102] See Wood, especially 163-166; Russett, especially 118-123; Ledger, especially 17-18; and also Burstyn, especially 84-96, for analyses of the perceived physiological and psychological effects of women's pursuit of advanced education. Wood asserts that pseudoscientific findings about degeneration led to reactionary members of society reasserting "old warnings about limited resources of energy [...] with new conviction" (166). The theory about human capacity was popularized by Herbert Spencer in *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical* (1860) where he claimed "the amount of vital energy which the body at any moment possesses is limited; and that, being limited, it is impossible to get from it more than a fixed quantity of results" (Spencer 268). Spencer was a highly influential thinker of his age, and his ideas were proclaimed with new vigor toward the end of the century to assert women's natural inferiority.

[103] See Ledger, especially 18, for analysis of how "the New Woman was construed (or constructed) as a threat to [the] national need" (Ledger 18) due to the decrease in birth rates at the turn of the century.

[104] See Ledger, especially 10; Palmer, especially 167; Ardis, especially 91-107; and also Cunningham, especially 45-50, for examinations of how the New Woman was criticized as an opposition to the institution of marriage. These critics also discuss the many New Women who were advocates of motherhood and the ways in which New Woman concerns about the role of women within marriage were subverted to position them as anti-marriage.

directly attempted to turn public opinion against them and enforce women's continued subjugation within the patriarchal power structure.

All of these factors influenced the increasingly loud, although ultimately impotent cry against the educated woman. Women's education had proceeded too far to be substantially diminished by the *fin-de-siècle* conservative cry against the "Girton Girl," so these reactionary voices amounted to more-or-less a final rale before the demise of the separate, male intellectual sphere. The texts I analyze participate in this death rattle by depicting the educated woman as dangerous in order to play on or express the anxieties of the time. They highlight their toxically masculine underpinnings by attempting to create an air of paranoia surrounding the educated woman by co-opting scientific discourses and social beliefs that depicted the educated woman as diseased, alternatively overly sexed or unsexed, and as invaders of the male sphere. While a feeling of distrust toward the educated woman is pervasive in many of the period's novels, I focus on two texts that have as yet garnered little attention in the academic community in terms of female education: Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and E.F. Benson's *The Image in the Sand*. I argue that by exhibiting female intelligence as suspicious and threatening, these texts attempt to instill fear of women's education in their readership.

In *Jewel*, the threat of the educated woman is most potently established through Tera, the Egyptian queen who pursued knowledge for her own purposes and power. Margaret's New Womanhood is largely a shadow figure, glimpsed occasionally through Ross's required rationalizations of her character or through her own failed attempts to comply with inscribed gender roles. Tera, on the other hand, is a loudly proclaimed New Woman. She is described as educated in "statecraft [as well as] the lore of the very priests themselves" (Stoker 87), exhibiting

her as a figure of political, spiritual, and intellectual power.[105] Tera's father has her instructed in specifically male-coded areas of politics and religion, but he also has her instructed in magic where she "had gone further than her teachers [...] [and] won secrets from nature in strange ways" (Stoker 88). Here, intelligence is accentuated as dark and "unnatural" when claimed by a woman. Tera surpassing what was deemed "natural" for women leads to her being unsexed through her representation in men's clothing. Although I discuss her masculinization further in a later section, it is significant that she is at once presented as an extremely educated woman, an ambitious woman, and an unsexed woman. This echoes the contemporary view that "for women to engage in public life [including education] would be to 'unsex' them" (Griffin 180).

Margaret's and Tera's intelligences are strongly aligned, and both possess and potently wield the knowledge that was traditionally relegated to the male sphere. Tera's unnatural knowledge provides her a means of invading England thousands of years later, which parallels Margaret's continual invasion of the male homosocial sphere, which I discuss in the final chapter of this thesis. This invasion of male spaces by educated women is a continual motif in the story, creating an underlying current that emphasizes the threat of women's education.[106] The male character's eventual approbation of female intelligence is not lauded as progressive but instead leads to their undoing. Both Margaret and Tera are represented as direct threats to the safety of all involved and more generally to the safety and security of Britain. Stoker thus protests against the turn-of-the-century expansion of women's education and proffers the opinion that such a move threatens the British race. What is essentially threatened though is not the British race but

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[105] See Deane, "Imperial Striptease," especially 405, for analysis of Tera's education as an aspect of her New Womanhood that threatens patriarchal control.

[106] See Murdoch, especially 162-169, for an overview of women's education in the Victorian era. Murdoch examines the various educational opportunities available by class and notes that "middle-class girls' education continued to encourage the ideal that women's primary role was domestic, and thus female learning had value not in and of itself but as a means to promote the accomplishments of men" (163). While Murdoch also claims that female members of the aristocracy had more extensive education, this education was also meant to make them a more desirable wife and not to be used beyond the domestic sphere.

the patriarchal power structure that Stoker clings to and seeks to maintain. E.F. Benson's *The Image in the Sand* provides us with another example of a woman, like Tera, claiming knowledge for her own purposes and the dangers created by allowing a woman to pursue knowledge without restraint.

The Image in the Sand centers on Ida Jervis and the men who seek to claim her. Ida's fiancé, Jack Carbery, must contend with Ida's independence and spiritualist studies as well as her mentorship under Henderson, a renowned adventurer and spiritualist. When Henderson attempts to control Ida by possessing her with the spirit of Set-nekht, an ancient malevolent entity, the British characters and Ida's Egyptian servant, Abdul, must save her from his evil machinations. *Image* is a story largely focused on the corruptive influences of forbidden knowledge with many characters—both male and female—corrupted or threatened in their pursuit of wisdom. However, Ida's corruption is the most damning because she is otherwise an idealized British woman. Ida is beautiful, innocent, sweet, and has a childlike adoration for her beloved. However, all of these idyllic characteristics are threatened by her pursuit of knowledge and the autonomy that this creates. Ida's connection to the educated New Woman is emphasized by the text's proclamation that Ida was "always ready to learn" (Benson 358) and her description as an "advanced spiritualist" (134). Admittedly, this is complicated by the fact that Ida's sphere of knowledge is spiritualism and she largely acts as a medium. There were many female mediums during the period, and despite these women being viewed with some skepticism, they were not necessarily viewed as unfeminine since spirituality was conceived of as a properly feminine domain.[107] However, while this fact makes it easier for the novel to redeem Ida in the end, her

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[107] See Owen, especially 202-234, for an examination of how womens' roles as mediums both played into their gendered expectations and deeply subverted them. See also J. Oppenheim, especially 3-10 and 160-162, for analysis of the gender implications of mediumship. Oppenheim notes the difference between the feminine role as a medium and the more masculine sphere of psychical research. Ida's increased studies under Henderson depicts her moving from a female-coded spirituality to the more masculine realm of intense study.

single-minded pursuit of her studies and the perils that result from her learning still conclusively position her as an educated New Woman figure.[108] Ida's New Womanhood is further bolstered by her assertion that her right to pursue knowledge was "common fairness" (154), presenting the modern view that women had an unqualified right to education. Ida's name may also be a reference to the opera, *Princess Ida*, by W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, which debuted in 1884. *Princess Ida* satirized the New Woman's quest for education with the heroine founding a university for women and teaching that women are the superior sex and should rule instead of men. Although Benson's Ida is far less extreme in her views, her demands for women's right to knowledge does suggest a possible connection with this earlier New Woman archetype.

While Ida's fiancé, Jack, is largely uncomfortable with her studies and refuses to have anything to do with them, Henderson functions as a foil to Jack's reticence. Although hardly the epitome of respect for female autonomy, Henderson truly believes in Ida's capabilities and her purposeful pursuit of knowledge. Henderson asks Aunt Julia, "But what if [her studies are] her work? Supposing her mission, the design of her life, is to do just that" (227). Henderson depicts Ida's intellectual pursuits as a vocation here and exhibits himself as a proponent of women's professionalization. He speaks of Ida as someone with a design and purpose in life, as someone who can enact change in the world, as someone to be respected and encouraged—all male-coded enterprises. Aunt Julia counters with "Ida has to live the life of a girl and of a woman in the world" (227). For Aunt Julia, the voice of respectable society, the acceptable life of a "woman in the world" does not include chasing after obscure knowledge but instead requires sociability and preparing for a respectable marriage. Although Henderson appears the more likely hero to a

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[108] It must be remembered that psychical research—of which spiritualism was a decided part—was a valid field at the turn of the century that garnered intense study. While some women, such as Eleanor Sidgwick, were involved in psychical research, this field was still largely dominated by men; as such, Ida's foray into psychical studies firmly categorizes her as a New Woman. See Alvarado for an overview of Eleanor Sidgwick's life and her contributions to psychical research.

modern reader as he defends Ida's right to knowledge and purpose, his vilification ultimately proves the reactionary politics of this novel. Instead of freeing her, Ida's intellectual pursuits bring her under the influence of an immoral and dangerous man and threatens a moral fall akin to the fall of Eve as I discuss more fully in the following section.

Marjorie, Tera, and Ida are all illustrative of the New Woman who has intellectual pursuits of her own, mentors beyond her family, and rights to personal freedom and independence. However, this autonomy is not presented as a positive form of progress, but is instead maligned as leaving the young, innocent women of Britain in imminent moral and physical danger. Educated women are more likely to challenge the status quo and question the gender hierarchy that sustains their oppression. By presenting advanced female education as both unseemly and dangerous, *Image* and *Jewel* reaffirm the educational sphere as the sole property of men. This attempt to detract from women's educational options aims at maintaining the power structure that toxically masculine men found necessary to their continued domination.

III. The New Woman with Agency and Autonomy

The New Woman writers and activists were diverse women with varying opinions on New Womanhood, but the hystericized media figure of the New Woman was largely a monolith of the mannish, cigarette-smoking, domineering woman.[109] Both New Women advocates and antifeminists characterized the New Woman as independent, mentally strong, and determined, although they had very different views on the virtue of such autonomy. Whereas most New Woman writers attempted to prove that women's mental and emotional strength meant that they

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[109] See Collins and also Ledger, especially 96, for investigations of *Punch's* role in developing the masculinized New Woman character, both sexual and unsexed.

should be valued and given the same opportunities as men, opponents characterized such strength as unwomanly and degenerate. The latter view is clearly visible in the Imperial Gothic texts I analyze. These toxically masculine texts depict the agency and autonomy exhibited by their heroines as undermining the male characters and signaling the heroine's failure of womanhood. In this section, I examine the masculine-coded strength of multiple heroines before turning to how these characteristics were condemned instead of lauded. By examining the ways in which these texts denigrate female autonomy, I illustrate how toxically masculine discourse attempts to limit female capacity in order to substantiate men's undocked power.

Marjorie Lindon in *The Beetle* is an interesting liminal character: half New Woman and half Victorian ideal. Despite her moments of socially-ingrained dependency, Marjorie represents a budding female autonomy that many men found distasteful—even downright dangerous—at the *fin de siècle*. Marjorie's non-adherence to traditional femininity is hinted at by Holt early in the novel as he characterizes her penmanship as "unusual, bold, decided" (Marsh, *Beetle* 60)—terms commonly associated with the New Woman.[110] Marjorie's defiance is most clearly established in her continual stand against her father, separating her from the "good daughter" ideal who put "her obligations to her father first" (Gorham 38). Marjorie does not acquiesce to her father's opposition to Lessingham, but instead maintains her resolution to marry him regardless of her father's opinion. Marjorie states, "I fear that my pride will out,—I do feel it so strong within me. I should be delighted to have a trial of strength with papa; anywhere, at any time" (Marsh, *Beetle* 190). While she is likely referring to a mental "trial of strength," the exclamation conjures up the image of physicality, fashioning this as a very masculine response.

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[110] The pseudoscience of graphology dispersed the belief in penmanship as allusive of character. Graphology started gaining prominence in the mid- to late Victorian era following influential writings by Jean-Hippolyte Michon (1806-1881). Rosa Baughan published *Character Through Handwriting* (1877), claiming in her subtitle that handwriting was an "infallible guide to [someone's] character" (1). The Strand ran articles on the subject in 1888. See Macnicol for an overview of the history of graphology.

Here, Marjorie is aligned with the male characters in the novel, whom the reader sees continually exhibiting strength through physical aggression. Marjorie's male-coded strength is enforced when she professes, "I feel like hot-blooded soldiers must feel, who, burning to attack the enemy in the open field, are ordered to skulk behind hedges and be shot at" (190). Marjorie comparing herself to a soldier furthers her association with masculinity, often correlated with acts of war. She wants to be active, aggressive, and brave, proving herself just like a young man would on the battlefields of empire.

Even in her love story, Marjorie demonstrates strength of character when she explains her love for Lessingham as originating not from his handsome figure or anything else equally frivolous, but from admiration for his political stances and skill as a statesman. She recounts, "the first stirring of my pulses was caused by the report of a speech of his which I read in the *Times*" (183). Politics would not have been on the acceptable reading list for the traditional Victorian woman since, in the conservative ideology, women were meant to be withheld from "the corrupting influence of the 'public' world of business and politics" (Hurley 121).[111] Marjorie, however, personifies the female political activist who was becoming increasingly common at the *fin de siècle* to the ire of the conservative male class.[112] Her first meeting with Lessingham occurred at a radical meeting of the Working Women's Club in Westminster at which they both gave speeches. Here, Marsh conflates worker's rights and women's rights—two key liberal issues during the Victorian era that were confronting male bourgeois power because

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[111] See Kenlon, especially 116, for a description of appropriate reading for women. Kenlon asserts that even those who thought women should be well-read, believed that the goal of reading was to make a woman more companionable to her husband and not for her own interests. While science, history, and religious texts are on the list of texts that make a woman a good companion to her husband and teacher to her children, political treatises are notably absent. Griffin highlights the perceived need to regulate women's reading material when he explains that "women's magazines were extremely cautious about dealing with any kind of political material, and magazines like the *Queen* used a definition of news that contrasted the masculine world of politics with a feminised world of social, leisure and cultural events" (264).

[112] See Ledger, especially 39, for details of the many political organizations that women were staking claim in during the late-nineteenth century.

these groups advocated for advancement in a traditionally middle-class, male world.[113]

Marjorie's speech at this meeting portrays her as not just an onlooker, but an active participant in politics. The staunch Victorian male response to a woman speaking on politics is comically typified by Marjorie's father who "regards a speechifying woman as a thing of horror" (Marsh, *Beetle* 186). Mr. Lindon would not have been the only Victorian man to shake his head angrily at Marjorie's actions. In 1895, Mary Jeune, a noted philanthropist and periodical writer of the time, attested that "there is something repugnant to the ordinary Englishman in the idea of a woman mounting a platform and facing the noisy, gaping, vulgar crowd of an election meeting" (Jeune 453).[114] Although Marjorie's political activities are largely glossed over in the novel, her active participation and interest in politics positions her as a New Woman. Other critics paint this activism as superficial or as no more than a ploy to garner Lessingham's attention.[115] However, Marjorie's very attraction to Lessingham is based on his politics, proving her interest in these issues to be sincere even if her activism is partially motivated by her prescribed role in the marriage plot. She may not meet the expectations of modern-day feminists, but she is a budding New Woman. Indeed, she is much more active, autonomous, and politically engaged than many other characters, like *Dracula's* Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker, who are extolled in criticism as New Women of the era.[116]

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[113] See Griffin, especially Chapter 1, and also Dolin for detailed examinations of the mid- to late Victorian women's rights movement. See also Greenslade, "Socialism and Radicalism" for analysis of the prevalence of workers' rights debates in late Victorian society.

[114] See B. Harrison 58 and also Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 24 for analyses of conservative men's animosity towards women's public speaking.

[115] See Harris and Vernooy 346 and Wolfreys 27 for examinations of Marjorie's political pursuits as of negligible importance to her New Womanhood. Harris and Vernooy advance the idea that her activism is "ancillary to her romantic pursuit of Lessingham" (346) and Wolfreys claims that her political interests are "expressed only in shallow and passing ways" (27).

[116] See Senf, Kistler, and also Prescott and Giorgio for analyses of the New Woman attributes found in Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra.

Finally, Marjorie's greatest moments of autonomy come in conjunction with her first meeting Holt. Marjorie first encounters Holt after he causes a commotion outside her house—presumably at the Beetle's behest. Marjorie, driven by an "impulse of curiosity" (Marsh, *Beetle* 193), goes to investigate. On hearing Holt utter a warning about Lessingham, Marjorie assumes the typically male roles of protector and investigator.[117] Marjorie asserts her agency and autonomy in relating, "there was a mystery here which needed to be unravelled. [...] It was for me to learn the why and the wherefore" (195-196). Marjorie desecrates the sanctity and security of the home by inviting Holt inside due to her determination to find out what threatens Lessingham and to actively endeavor to protect her beloved. Despite Marjorie ultimately applying to a man—Atherton—for help on hearing Holt's tale of horror, she also refuses to be left behind in the conventionally submissive and clueless female role. Marjorie recognizes that if she trusted Atherton to investigate Holt's story alone, he "would tell [her] just as much as [he] chose,—which would be nothing" (217). Marjorie "instinctively resent(s)" Atherton's protection and proclaims her intent to "go with Mr. Holt alone" (217-218) if he refuses to bring her along. Marjorie's independent spirit forces Atherton—who I go on to argue is an archetype of toxic masculinity—to succumb to her wishes, thereby placing the agency of the New Woman above that of the English man. Atherton is ultimately correct about the danger that this poses to her, thereby enforcing the threat that autonomy and agency—key characteristics of the New Woman—engender for the female sex.

Margaret in *Jewel* also exhibits masculine-coded strength of character that is inconsistent with the submissive and dependent woman idealized in these novels. Stoker foreshadows

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[117] The trope of the female detective was increasingly used from the 1850s onwards. Important examples include "The Diary of Anne Rodway" (1856) by Wilkie Collins, Andrew Forrester's *The Female Detective* (1864) and Leonard Merrick's *Mr. Bazalgette's Agent* (1888). While the texts illustrate an exciting trend in Victorian literature that recognizes female agency, this rarely translated to real life.

Margaret's break from the traditional paradigm early in the novel in his description of her white skin and black eyes, which he regularly uses to connote "physical and moral strength," "occult power," and "oriental racial otherness" (Shaw 183).[118] I discussed Margaret's alignment with the foreign Other in the previous chapter, but the connotation of her features with what Ross calls "animal strength" and "a strong nature" (Stoker 19) is important to her exhibition as a New Woman here. Ross immediately refutes these conceptions of her power, asserting instead, "though there was no suggestion of weakness, any sense of power there was, was rather spiritual than animal (19). Although he laments the lack of weakness displayed, Ross rationalizes Margaret's strength as spiritual, aligning her with "the feminine realm of domesticity, family, morality, and spiritual guidance"—the only contexts in which British women were truly supposed to demonstrate strength (Murdoch xxiv). Correlating Margaret's strength with spirituality allows Ross to hold onto his idealization of Margaret as the traditional epitome of femininity. Ross's rationalization of Margaret's strength and intelligence is a continual motif in this narrative as the reader witnesses him rationalize her extensive Egyptological knowledge, her pride, and her composure in order to position her as a paragon of mid-century femininity. Ross's need to perceive Margaret as an idealized figure is proof of his internalized toxic masculinity that requires him to diminish Margaret's power so that he can maintain his dominant position within their relationship.

Margaret's self-possession is proven to provoke male anxiety as Stoker juxtaposes Margaret's composure with examples of masculine unease. While self-possession was a desirable trait in idealized femininity as well as masculinity, Stoker implies that an overabundance of feminine composure is illustrative of male-coded strength that serves to threaten hegemonic male

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[118] See Shaw for an exploration of other characters with black eyes and white skin in Stokerian fiction. Shaw asserts that black eyes and white skin connote dualistic personalities and power, both negative and positive. This depiction aligns with Margaret's characterization in *Jewel*.

authority. When the lamps are discovered to be lost, Ross notes that "even [Mr. Corbeck's] iron nature was breaking down under the sense of loss" (58). This is immediately followed by a description of Margaret:

> All the passion and pain which had so moved her seemed to have taken the form of resolution. Her form was erect, her eyes blazed; energy was manifest in every nerve and fibre of her being. Even her voice was full of nervous power as she spoke. It was apparent that she was a marvellously strong woman, and that her strength could answer when called upon. (58)

Margaret's resolution in this passage accentuates her determination and tenacity, traits prized as masculine virtues. Her strength is repeatedly emphasized and acquires increased significance following so closely behind an instance of male weakness. The masculinization of this strength is clear due to the references to her "erect" form and the "power" in her voice. There is meant to be some suspicion that Margaret is so calm at this moment due to her involvement in the theft of the lamps as the possessed embodiment of Queen Tera. However, I claim Margaret's composure as her own and Queen Tera's control over her as negligible. It has been asserted by other critics that Margaret changes throughout the novel, becoming more autonomous as the experiment and Queen Tera's presence draws nearer.[119] I disagree with this appraisal because Margaret always displays a level of power that regularly subverts the stereotypical representations of women at the time, particularly in terms of her self-possession, pride, and intelligence. Early in the novel,

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[119] See A. Smith, "Love, Freud, and the Female Gothic", especially 86; and also Shaw, especially 183 and 185, for views of Margaret's changes throughout the novel. While Smith is correct that Margaret "becomes increasingly assertive" (86), I posit that her nature does not inherently change but that it is given more freedom once her father gains consciousness.

Ross asserts that Margaret "seemed to rule all around her" (7) and that when he was going to answer a question for her to the inspector, "her warning hand was raised to me pointedly and she spoke herself" (13). If Margaret truly embodied the ideal in the beginning and only began to exhibit strength closer to the Great Experiment, Tera's control over her may have more credence. However, Margaret's strength is visible almost immediately and therefore cannot be entirely attributed to Tera's influence. As such, Ross's detailed description of Margaret accentuates her male-coded composure, resilience, and strength instead of her complicity. Either way (whether through connection with Tera or by her own merit), this strength is connected to New Womanhood as both Tera and Margaret exhibit male-coded strength that threatens patriarchal dominance.[120]

At a similar moment when the "nervously anxious" men are compared to the "divinely calm" Margaret, Ross admits, "I think I envied her, even whilst I admired and loved her for it" (164). The envy to which Ross admits may seem innocent enough, but it proves that Margaret's self-possession, while often admired, also serves to ostracize her from the men because they look weak in comparison. Margaret's calm only serves to highlight male fragility and threaten the toxically masculine male ego. This presents the conundrum that many Victorian women faced. Deborah Gorham asserts that although "the feminine role was conceived of as radically different from the male role, self-discipline, order, regularity and self-control were advocated as being as necessary for girls, in their own way, as they were for boys" (112). However, all of these attributes had to be enacted in a properly feminine fashion or a woman ran the risk of appearing masculine. Victorian women had to perform an immense balancing act between embodying the bourgeois virtues and making sure they were not too austere or too strong so as to be perceived

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[120] See Dobson, "Cross-Dressing," especially 46-47, for an examination of how Tera's masculinization is imprinted on Margaret. Dobson posits Tera as a corrupting influence on Margaret due to "the transference of Tera's masculine influence" (47).

as unfeminine. This also explains why Ross seems conflicted between admiring Margaret's strength and feeling uncomfortable when it is displayed. Whilst Margaret attempts to enact the appropriately feminine version of bourgeois virtues, she ultimately fails by proving herself stronger than the men around her to whom she is supposed to pale in comparison.

Many of Margaret's characteristics connote masculine-coded strength. In the previous quotation, Ross refers to her "erect" posture, which I discuss in later chapters as a performative way in which men exhibit courage. She is said to be filled with "energy" and a "form of resolution," evoking the physical description of Corbeck with his face that contained "marks [of] energy" and "great resolution" (Stoker 54). Additionally, reticence—"a quality which a strong man always respects" (105) in other men—is ascribed equally to Corbeck, Trelawny, and Margaret in the novel. By using these terms that were previously adopted to depict masculinity, Stoker directly aligns Margaret to male power, underscoring this by describing her as "a marvellously strong woman" (58) echoing his continual use of the phrase "strong man" to reference the male characters. Her alignment with masculinity is furthered by Ross's continual comparisons between Margaret and her father. Ross calls them "two great, silent, reserved natures" (103) and then later "two proud, strong people" (108). Mr. Trelawny is meant to embody masculine strength, intellect, and activity; however, his daughter matches him in all of this. Mr. Trelawny later refers to his daughter as "tender, and thoughtful, and strong, and true, and brave!" (103). Margaret combines both masculine and feminine characteristics here. Like Tera, who claims power in both masculine and feminine attire, Margaret is a woman who defies categorization or classification and therefore threatens the entire Victorian social hierarchy that relied on the gender dichotomy to substantiate male dominance. Although Margaret seems to be celebrated here, she is also depicted as highly dangerous.

Margaret truly comes into her own autonomous selfhood—and cements her position as a New Woman character—during her impassioned speech on Tera's behalf. Margaret almost glorifies Tera, calling her a "great and far-thinking and high-souled lady of old" (119), asserting an understanding of Tera that surpasses that which any of the men can muster. This may be attributed to Margaret being "compelled to speak or act as she might be instructed [by Tera]" and therefore not being a "free agent" (Stoker 180) as Ross believes. Similarly, Damian Shaw paints this narrative as a battle of wills between Margaret and Tera with Margaret representing "the possibility of an ideal modern queen who is simply unable to overcome a more powerful ancient one" (187). However, I do not read Margaret as battling against Tera so much as being willingly influenced by her. Margaret being the mouthpiece of a gender-bending ancient queen is a reflection of Margaret's budding New Womanhood. Margaret sees her own desires and hopes mirrored in those of Queen Tera. In Margaret's speech on behalf of the ancient queen, Margaret portrays Tera in terms that could have equally applied to the British New Woman, articulating, "such a one had nobler dreams!" and that she can see Tera "in her loneliness and in the silence of her mighty pride, dreaming her own dream of things far different from those around her." Margaret paints Tera as "so different from her surroundings, so high above her time" (120). These same phrases could be transcribed onto the New Woman who has "mighty pride" and "noble dreams" of a world where women are equal instead of dominated by the patriarchy. The New Woman can also be deemed to be "different from her surroundings" and "high above her time." Margaret cements this connection when she declares, "I know the feeling, for I have shared it myself" (120). Margaret lives a double life, partially trying to live up to the traditional expectations of her sex and partially trying to break free as an independent and capable

woman.[121] Tera is symbolic of the latter half of Margaret's personality, and in this scene Margaret seems to fully embrace the worth of her New Womanhood. Critically, this endorsement of Tera proves fatal in the novel because within the toxically masculine mindset, the autonomous woman is a peril that must be thwarted instead of progress to be applauded.

Another way in which women claimed autonomy at the *fin de siècle* was by entering the professional sphere, such as Bessie and Miss Adair in *The Goddess: A Demon* who possess a level of independence due to their careers as actresses. *The Goddess* begins with a dream-like murder and the arrival of a woman—who turns out to be the famous actress Bessie Moore—covered in blood at John Ferguson's window in the middle of the night. Ferguson commences on a quest to discover his neighbor's murderer and clear Bessie's name. Ultimately the culprit turns out to be an Indian automaton who skewers its victims through machinery instead of malice. While Bessie's and Miss Adair's professions are not central to the story, the independence it provides them is seen in their living arrangements, freedom of movement, and often the brashness of their characters. Kerry Powell argues that the stage was a career that "offered women a voice—the ability to speak compellingly while others, including men, sat in enforced silence" (3). This counters "one of the organizing ideas of Victorian culture as a whole," which was the "lack of a voice in women—or the sound of a voice without significance, without effect" (11). As a woman who claimed her own voice, autonomy, financial independence, and interests, the Victorian actress must be considered a precursor to the *fin-de-siècle* New Woman. Bessie and her roommate, Miss Adair, in *The Goddess* are two examples of this privileged caste of independent women.

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[121] The "double nature of Margaret, who is both Margaret and Tera" is also noted by Andrew Smith in "Love, Freud, and the Female Gothic," when he points to Hopkins' revelation of how the confluence is "expressed in how Tera is reversed in *Margaret*" (83). This anagram is also analyzed by Glennis Byron who furthers the importance of Tera's name by stating that "Tera has its roots in the Greek *teras* or monster" (61) and that Tera is very close to the word "terror," (59) emphasizing her dangerous nature.

Miss Adair's physicality echoes the perceived masculinization of actresses and New Women when she is described as

a tall, commandingly built young woman, with about her more than a suggestion of muscularity [who] was accustomed to play the part of the dashing adventuress; the sort of person who could not, under any possible circumstances, be put down. (Marsh, *Goddess* 55)

Her ethos is one of masculinized strength, both physically and mentally. Her inability to "be put down" is apparent upon her first meeting Ferguson. He describes the interaction, stating, "[Miss Adair] confronted me as if I were some despised, but lifelong enemy" (55). Her enmity towards Ferguson hints toward a mistrust of men that is later specified when Miss Adair avows, "I never trusted a man yet without regretting it" (56). Her brashness and confrontational style preclude her from representation as the ideal Victorian woman. Curiously, Ferguson regards Miss Adair if not admiringly then at least tolerantly as they banter throughout the novel. This forbearance for a clearly masculinized New Woman may be attributed to the special role that the actress played in the gendered mindset of the Victorian era where "Victorian men could permit the actress a limited freedom and a certain power" (Powell 3) by considering her outside and separate from femininity and domesticity. An actress was not representative of women at large but was classed in a category of her own, not female or male, but an animal of the stage.

Bessie does a better job of appropriating submissive femininity, but even she (prior to meeting Ferguson) seems incompatible with traditionally docile and dependent womanhood. While Bessie plays the role of the dependent woman for much of the novel, her stereotypical

femininity is called into question by her autonomous choice to actively defend her brother by pursuing his blackmailer at his private apartment. Bessie's brother also characterizes her as "obstinate as a mule" (Marsh, *Goddess* 60) and claims "she never would take my advice, never!" (60). Even though her brother is hardly a paragon of moral virtue, this still marks a departure from the traditional feminine role of subservience to men. Hume, one of Bessie's admirers in *The Goddess*, equates Bessie's profession with her departure from normative femininity as he laments that "every cry of applause took [Bessie] farther from [him] still, and farther!" (90). He believes that Bessie's profession provides her a sense of satisfaction, purpose, and influence that makes her unlikely to relinquish it for the role of wife and mother. The theater critic Clement Scott argued in 1897 that acting would result in "dividing [an actress] irremediably from domestic femininity" (qtd. in Powell 19).[122] This separation is a result of the freedom allowed to women in this career that makes the profession suitable "for those to whom social restraints are irksome, and who would lead the life their instinct dictates" (qtd. in Powell 20). The actress's freedom from social constraints and separation from domesticity anticipates fears associated with the New Woman who defies the traditional expectations of women. The professional New Woman—represented by Bessie and Miss Adair—claims a freedom and autonomy traditionally only allotted to men and therefore supersedes the bounds for normative femininity.

The heroines in Imperial Gothic texts demonstrate a profound level of personal and professional strength and autonomy. They display an obvious desire for freedom and reflect the liberation hoped for by feminist activists. Marjorie abandons the confines of her domestic domain and pursues adventure. Margaret has "noble dreams" of a time where women are not confined to the traditional roles expected of them by patriarchal society. Bessie and Miss Adair

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[122] See Powell, especially 18- 21, for further analysis of the perceived social incompatibility of the life of an actress and the traditional roles of wife and mother. See also, L. Davis, especially 52-56, for an examination of the practical difficulties of being an actress with a husband and children.

are living independent lives before the narrative even begins. These heroines represent a level of courage, pride, tenacity, and determination that most New Women would have lauded. However, these are not New Woman texts, but products of toxically masculine culture. As such, their strength masculinizes these heroines and threatens the safety of themselves and those around them. One final way to denigrate New Womanhood and try to influence public reception of her was to employ the press's depiction of the New Woman as an oversexualized, immoral character.

The conservative fear of female sexual autonomy is hinted at, although never directly mentioned, in the texts. The New Woman embodies the interesting contradiction where she is at once configured as asexual and as overly sexed.[123] These two views of her lived side-by-side and were separately deployed depending on the argument required at the moment to criticize her. The press's representation of New Women as overtly sexualized played into the Victorian obsession with female purity and was used as a way to increase sales either by engendering hostility toward this figure or by creating desire for this sexually available woman.[124] This highlights the fact that there was a "simultaneous terror and fascination with which Victorian men regarded the prospect of an active female sexuality" (Hurley 145).

Many of the texts I analyze—including *She*, *The Beetle*, *The Blood of the Vampire*, *Ziska*, and *The Image in the Sand*—feed into this interplay, titillating an assumed male readership while also censuring the New Woman as opposed to highly valued Victorian virtues. Although many moderate thinkers could support women's education and professionalization, most would have been appalled by the idea of an independently sexual woman because it defied deep seated Victorian values about feminine innocence and trespassed on the male-coded arena of desire and

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[123] See Palmer, especially 168, and Ledger 16 for descriptions of how the New Woman was figured as either an "erotomaniac" or the prudish, asexual "Girton Girl."

[124] See Stetz, especially 279-280, for an examination of how the press played up the sexuality of the New Woman in order to increase sales.

sexuality.[125] Readers can see denigrated examples of female sexuality in Ziska's erotic dance in Marie Corelli's eponymous novel and in Harriet's symbolic hunger and siren song in Florence Marryat's *Blood of the Vampire*. Threatening female sexuality is clear through Ayesha's unveiling in H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and subsequent sexual domination of both Leo and Holly and in the sexually aggressive Woman of Songs in *The Beetle*.[126] While these New Woman characters certainly display a threatening level of overt sexuality, they are also aligned with the racial Other who was stereotyped as naturally "sexually excessive, deviant, and polluting" (K. Davis 141). However, British heroines of the Imperial Gothic were also exhibited as liable to an overt sensuality that was deemed threatening, although there are admittedly fewer examples of these characters since imperial texts often relegate sexuality to the Other. The most commonly analyzed is Lucy Westenra in *Dracula* whose sexualization has been explored at length by previous academics.[127] Alternatively, Ida's sexualization in *The Image in the Sand* has gone largely unexplored as this novel has received minimal attention. However, Ida's connection to the modern educated woman makes her sexualization an arguably more damning assault on New Womanhood as opposed to Lucy's conspicuous flirtations.

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[125] See Langland, especially 112, for an examination of how women's sexuality was considered debased because "passion, or desire, was the province of the masculine" (Langland 112).

[126] Although some critics would classify these characters as *femmes fatales* instead of New Women, the distinction between the two is more one of degree than true difference. Kenneth Paradis defines the *femme fatale* as "a woman who thinks she is a man, who arrogates to herself the masculine privilege of autonomous, self-determined action even while exploiting her sexed capacity to attract and engender the hero's trust. She is a kind of transsexual, in other words: outwardly a powerfully attractive feminine woman, inwardly, deceptively, a man and an antagonist. What closure there is in hard-boiled narrative is often involved in a kind of violent exorcism, an exercise of violent refutation of this figurative transsexualism that reveals and punishes this deception" (5). Both the *femme fatale* and New Woman are proactive and self-determined women who defy social categorization and overturn conservative values. Both are violently exorcized in texts in order to maintain patriarchal control. While the New Woman is sometimes depicted as disfigured and mannish—unlike the *femme fatale* who is almost always figured as beautiful, exotic, and seductive—New Women were also represented as highly sexual figures capable of seducing men. Patrick Quinn alludes to the New Woman when he claims that *femmes fatales* "legitimize the Victorian patriarchal establishment's fear that women were beginning to dispute male natural supremacy" (21). Quinn calls the *femme fatale*, the New Woman's "extremist sister" (61); however, the difference seems negligible enough that I posit that the terms can often be used interchangeably.

[127] See Senf, especially 42-45, and also Craft, especially 119-122, for examinations of Lucy's sexualized New Womanhood.

The threat of Ida's fall from grace is alluded to continually throughout the novel due to her value of wisdom over virtue. The fact that Ida's search for knowledge is within the realm of Spiritualism furthers the sexual allusion since "women's physical desires, because illicit, are often encoded in literature as spiritual ones" (Langland 118). This threat reaches its climax toward the end when Ida is controlled by Henderson and the occult forces at his command. Ida is depicted as "afraid that her brain, her self-control, would play her some dreadful trick, that she would find herself answering him, unable any longer to control her tongue and lips" (Benson 276). The overtly sexual reference to Ida's inability "to control her tongue and lips" and Ida's body responding to Henderson's desire for her paints Ida as a woman seduced by this experienced man. Henderson awakens a longing that in women would be considered depraved and unacceptable since prevalent scientists of the time asserted that "as a general rule a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attention" (Acton 164).[128] Ida is frightened by these new sexual feelings and tries to deny them, but when she stays away from Henderson, the "week-long drought and abstinence [...] made her parched and agonized with thirst" (Benson 277). The reference to abstinence continues the sexual allegory, and her thirst parallels Henderson's lustful look of "the face of a man who thirsts with an unquenchable thirst" (277). Ida's sexual desires are directly correlated with masculine sexual desires, and she is ultimately proven too weak to deny Henderson:

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[128] The perception that women lacked interest in sex—first established at the end of the eighteenth century and firmly entrenched by the mid-nineteenth century—was still the predominant view at the *fin de siècle*. While female sexual desire was argued as early as the 1870s, the view of women as sexual creatures did not gain full force until the 1890s with New Woman literature and her connection to free-love and the decadent movement. See L. Hall, especially Chapters 2-3, for more on the changing views of women's sexuality. See Cominos, especially 157, and also Michie, especially 41, for analyses of women's sexual desire as socially unacceptable in the Victorian era. See Michie, especially 30-58, for an examination of women's work as analogous to the representation of women's bodies and sexuality in literature so that Ida's pursuit of knowledge is implicated in her moral failings.

Bent head, beaten. She had done her utmost, but there was something too strong for her, [...]. The struggle was over; she had been unequal to it, and she had yielded. And this 'No, no!' that came from quivering lips, was but a drowning cry, an appeal like the dying wail of an animal, to the blind, deaf, inexorable law that demands its death. There was no more fight left in her. (277)

The weak woman is beaten by the will of the seductive man as she hangs her head in both shame and submission. Ida is overcome, and her proclamation of "No, no!" is portrayed as a false refusal that the man easily ignores as he figuratively kills her by taking away the virtue that constituted women's worth.

The sexual implications of this scene are furthered when Henderson deplores that he cannot stand to see Ida "expanding like a flower, and then see [her] go away and give that flower to another" (278). This statement aligns Ida's growth to a sexual awakening since women's maturation is often referred to as "flowering" or "budding" and the loss of their virginity is called their "deflowering."[129] The sexual relationship between Ida and Henderson is only allegorized in the novel and therefore as one contemporary reviewer in the July 1905 edition of *The Academy* claims, Ida represents "a Marguerite who never really falls" (711).[130] However, Ida's sexualization presents another form of feminine freedom against which conservative thinkers were warning contemporary society. The novel is careful to assert Ida's own desires as her ultimate downfall instead of depicting Henderson physically forcing himself upon her.

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[129] The OED defines "deflower" as "To deprive (a woman) of her virginity; to violate, ravish" and "To violate, ravage, desecrate; to rob of its bloom, chief beauty, or excellence; to spoil." Both definitions have been in use since the Middle Ages and both represent losing one's virginity as something that is taken away from a woman, something that makes them less than they were previously.

[130] This reviewer is alluding to the seduction of Marguerite in the 1855 Opera *Faust and Marguerite*. In the opera Marguerite is seduced, accused of infanticide, and goes insane. Many of these actions concur with the conservative media representation of New Womanhood. The fact that Ida does not actually "fall" provides room for her ultimate salvation in the novel.

Henderson uses extreme influence to bring her to that point, but ultimately "all the longing, all the thirst, that Ida felt [...] she could not resist that desire" (Benson 283). By showing Ida succumb to temptation, the novel depicts women's probable moral failure in this masculine realm where she is proven unequal to the risks inherent in public life. Such depictions legitimized the belief that women should be constrained to the private sphere—supposedly for their own safety.

By sexualizing the New Woman figures in addition to depicting them as inappropriately masculine in their autonomy and strength, these texts attempt to promote a return to the mid-Victorian ideal of the submissive woman that these narratives continually glorify. After painting these heroines as unfeminine, immoral, and threatening, these novels demonize their New Woman representatives by characterizing them as atavistic and degenerate. In so doing, they fully express their aim to obliterate any sympathy with this modern figure and promote an outdated ideal that was easier to control so as to maintain the power structure necessary for toxic masculinity to thrive.

IV. The Demonization of the New Woman

The Imperial Gothic is largely representative of the conservative discourses surrounding the New Woman at the *fin de siècle*. While there are certainly texts that are trying to say something more radical and progressive at this time—I would point to the New Woman literature of the era—the goal of popular literature in general is to reflect social precepts, not question them. The Imperial Gothic's depictions of the distrust, anxieties, and dangers associated with New Womanhood are certainly indicative of conservative modes of thinking that are exhibited in the periodicals of the time as I previously noted. What makes this genre unique and particularly well suited to an

exploration of gender antagonism is the Gothic's ability to hyperbolize social concerns so that these threatening women become quite literally demonized within its pages. These women are exhibited as masculine, castrating, and degenerate due to their non-compliance with the gender norms traditional Victorian society outlined. In this section, I show how the authors thus propagate the misogyny inherent in toxic masculinity by either classifying these women as unsexed, insane, or monstrous.

Though many of the heroines in the novels I discuss are masculinized through their male-coded strength of character and autonomy, two characters are specifically "unsexed" as they take on the physical aspects of masculinity to reflect their masculinized personality. This symbolic hermaphroditism equates to monstrosity in Victorian England where the gender binary acted as the organizing principle of civilized life. In *The Beetle*, while Marjorie is under the titular character's control, symbols of Marjorie's femininity including her engagement ring, dress, and hair are forcefully extricated from her. After being stripped, Marjorie is dressed in Holt's old clothing "like a tramp, all rags and tatters, a disreputable looking object" (Marsh, *Beetle* 310).[131] When Champnell first explains his theory that Marjorie was dressed in male attire, both Atherton and Lessingham stare at him, more shocked by this masculinization than by the thought of Marjorie assaulted or dead. Atherton puts a fine point on this as he declares, "Marjorie, the most retiring, modest girl on all God's earth, walk about in broad daylight, in such a costume, and for no reason at all! My dear Champnell, you are suggesting that she first of all went mad" (306). The men's view of Marjorie as the idyllic English woman is incompatible with her being masculinized in this way, so her male habiliments become the greatest insult to both Marjorie's honor and the men's sensibilities. Marjorie's independence and agency in demanding

[131] See Margree, especially 74, for analysis of how Marjorie being dressed in Holt's clothing further delegitimizes the New Woman as not entirely feminine but only an almost laughable example of masculinity.

she be allowed to assist in the investigation directly led to her defeminization, furthering the argument that the New Woman can no longer claim womanhood any more than they can claim manhood. Critics largely agree that "Marjorie's costuming as a man is coded as punishment for her 'masculine' and autonomous nature" (Rebry 9).[132] Atherton's assertion that she must be mad to parade about in male attire illustrates the conservative Victorian view that autonomous New Women were often hysterical.[133] Indeed, a diagnosis of lunacy and a stint in the asylum is Marjorie's fate at the novel's end, returning her to an appropriately feminized position as a hysterical woman.[134]

Marjorie's masculinization parallels the Beetle's androgyny, one of the key characteristics in Imperial Gothic texts that marks the antagonist as degenerate and deviant. Reflecting upon first meeting the Beetle, Holt remarks, "I could not decide at once if it was a man or a woman. 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" (Marsh, *Beetle* 18). Holt and other characters waver continually regarding the Beetle's gender, shifting from masculine to feminine and back again—although mostly referencing the antagonist as male. Critics often mention her hermaphroditic or more often androgynous qualities;[135] however, the reader sees through

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[132] See Rebry 9; Margree 73-74; and also Wolfreys 29 for examinations of Marjorie's crossdressing as punishment. Vuohelainen alternatively claims Marjorie's crossdressing as demonstrating that the antagonist "brings out the rebelliousness inherent in the attractive but headstrong Marjorie" ("Introduction" 15), alluding to this as a conscious act. Vuohelainen believes Marjorie's punishment is not so much her crossdressing but the deleterious acts to which she was exposed while with the Beetle after her crossdressing—included possible sexual assault.

[133] See Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, especially 40, for more on how science positioned the New Woman as hysterical.

[134] See Margree, especially 77, for another analysis of how Marjorie's hysterical state at the end of the novel reinforces traditional gender norms, thereby allowing her to be subsumed back into the patriarchal mainframe.

[135] See Dobson, "Emasculating Mummies," especially 399, 405; Harris and Vernooy, especially 353; K. Davis, especially 141; and Hurley, especially 133-134, 142, and 149-50 for more on the Beetle's gender mutability. Hurley relates the Beetle's unspecifiable gender and sexuality as indicators of her abhumanness: "Abhuman entities must of necessity confound traditional sexual identities. They are simultaneously male and female, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual" (150). Harris and Vernooy highlight the perceived threat of gender mutability. While Harris and Vernooy focus on the threat this gender mutability poses for Lessingham, I argue that it is far more compromising for Holt who is forced into sexual actions whilst the Beetle presents as male and for Marjorie who is assaulted by the Beetle after the reader has been made aware that the antagonist is biologically female. Also of interest are Adams, "Dandyism and Late Victorian Masculinity"and Ledger, especially 106-111, who both expound

Atherton's description of the naked Beetle that she is most likely biologically female—although her ability to shapeshift makes even her naked body subject to speculation. What is called into question is her presentation versus her identification as male versus female. When Lessingham first meets the Beetle in Egypt, she presents and seems to identify herself as feminine. W.C. Harris and Dawn Vernooy assert that Lessingham and the Beetle's relationship is homoerotic, and that Lessingham's repulsion is due to the Beetle's masculine or androgynous gender designation.[136] I find this analysis intriguing; however, Lessingham's subsequent repulsion from the Beetle can just as easily be explained as stemming from the woman's foreignness and his fall from morality. Moreover, the Beetle's identification as female more aptly fits with her representation as an Oriental Other. As Natasha Rebry has noted, "her foreign identity is closely related to her gendered identity" because "the orient is presented as a feminised space" (6). Even when the Beetle appears in England, presenting as masculine, she asks questions like "Is there a better thing than to be his wife?" (Marsh, *Beetle* 32), suggesting a continued identification with the female gender. The quotation that puts my theory to question is when she asks Holt, "If I were a woman, would you not take me for a wife? (59). The "if" in this sentence implies a possible divergence from the Beetle's identification as female, and Harris and Vernooy depict this question as indicative of the Beetle's gender mutability. However, I assert that this more likely shows her realization that the male characters view her as masculine and her choice not to disabuse them of this notion. If we claim that Margaret's masculinization is coded as punishment

on the connection between the anxieties surrounding gender mutability and Oscar Wilde's social persona and subsequent trial. They extol that Wilde unavailingly disturbed traditional gender norms, and his highly public trial threw non-traditional forms of masculinity and sexuality into the public spotlight—imprinting this threat on not just the dandy but also the New Woman.

[136] See Harris and Vernooy, especially 358-361, for analysis of Lessingham's repulsion as due to the homoerotic nature of his sexual experiences with the Beetle. They claim, "If the Beetle is or, at times, seems to be male, Lessingham's intimacy with the creature—however disguised—is queer, is at least potentially homosexual" (361). While their analysis has merit, I read his supposed depravity as more situated in loose sexuality and sexual relations with a foreigner since, insofar as the novel relates, the Beetle presents as female the entire time Lessingham is in Egypt.

for her New Womanhood, the same must be asserted for the title character. The Beetle is viewed as male because she is strong, independent, and sexually aggressive: all characteristics that code as masculine.[137] The Beetle's masculinization enacts a sort of cautionary tale for the New Woman, accentuating that in the extreme form, the New Woman becomes sexless and degenerate. This analysis is supported by the likes of Dr. William Withers Moore, president of the British Medical Association, who, in 1886, "warned that educated women would become 'more or less sexless'" (qtd. in Showalter 40). Marjorie already appears to be regressing toward sexlessness when she is masculinized by wearing Holt's clothes. The novel implies that if she had not been saved by the male heroes, she may have become very much like the Beetle: a sexless deviant and degenerate monster.

Similar to Marjorie and the Beetle, Tera in *Jewel* is physically unsexed through masculine attire in an attempt to warn against New Womanhood. Tera's male-coded ambition and intelligence indicates that she is unacceptably masculine as symbolized through the depictions of Tera in the tomb, wearing a crown that was "worn only by a king" in ancient Egypt (Stoker 86). Tera is portrayed as appropriating men's role of authority and power. Her encroaching on the male sphere is explicitly stated in the text:

Prominence was given to the fact that she, though a Queen, claimed all the privileges of kingship and masculinity. In one place she was pictured in man's dress, and wearing the White and Red Crowns. In the following picture she was in female dress, but still

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[137] See Rebry, especially 2-4; Hurley, especially 139 and 143; and Vuohelainen, "Introduction," especially 14-15, for examinations of the Beetle's characteristics as masculine coded. Vuohelainen asserts as I do that the Beetle can be viewed as representative of the New Woman due to these normatively masculine characteristics. See also Dobson, "Cross-Dressing," especially 41, for an analysis of the connection drawn between the Beetle and Marjorie due to their gender transgressions.

wearing the Crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, while the discarded male raiment lay at

her feet. (88)

Tera's depiction in men's clothes echoes Marjorie's masculinization in *The Beetle*. However,

while Marjorie is presumably forced into men's clothes, Tera claims them for herself. She wears

masculine garb as a way to symbolize her ability to appropriate the traditional male position of

power.[138] For many during the Victorian era, a woman choosing men's clothing—like

fin-de-siècle women playing sport or wearing bloomers—threatened not just womanhood but the

whole British social structure that relied on strict gender binaries.[139]

What makes Tera truly compelling and threatening to the male establishment is that she

also claims the same place of power when in women's clothing. Even with the masculine clothes

lying at her feet, she is "still wearing the Crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt." The unstigmatized

claiming of female power is the preeminent threat in the text as it would overthrow the current

patriarchal system. This parallels the contemporaneous belief that the New Woman "ranged

herself perversely with the forces of cultural anarchism and decay" by claiming both masculine

and feminine attributes (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 39). Since relational gender roles were

directly connected to the stability of the nation, anything perceived as opposing the status quo

was imagined as leading to the dissolution of British sovereignty. The penultimate warning

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[138] See Gilbert & Gubar, *Sexchanges*, especially 324-376, and also Dobson, "Cross-Dressing," for in-depth analyses of the sociocultural implications of cross-dressing in the Victorian era. Gilbert and Gubar claim that "cross-dressing became a way of addressing and redressing the inequities of gender categories" and that "one way woman could define herself as human and thereby function effectively in the world was by determining to imitate man" (347). In *Jewel*, Tera seems to use cross-dressing in a similar fashion, claiming her humanity and right to a place in the world, more specifically a place of power. Dobson directly relates the threat that Tera poses to traditional Victorian gender codes and details the influence that the discovery of the tomb of Hatshepsut by Howard Carter in 1902 likely played in Tera's creation. Hatshepsut was similarly portrayed as an amalgamation of both masculine and feminine traits, crossing "distinct gender lines in an assertion of masculinised female power" ("Cross-Dressing" 45).
[139] See Kiersnowska, "New Sporting Woman" 157 for more on how women appropriating masculine attire caused indignation within conservative society.

seems to be that if the New Woman is allowed to carry out her plans, British supremacy will be destroyed. This is clearly communicated in the first version of *Jewel* where all of the male characters other than Ross are killed as a result of Tera's supposed resurrection.

Many of the New Women characters in Imperial Gothic texts physically attack their heroic counterparts in a vampiric fashion that has come to be closely associated with the New Woman in criticism. The connection between vampirism and the New Woman is most thoroughly explored through the character of Lucy Westenra in *Dracula*, but it is also clearly displayed in Imperial Gothic texts that have been largely overlooked. Harriet in *Blood of the Vampire* is directly connected to vampirism, although her method of enervation is far more passive. Her strength weakens the more idealized characters, particularly the British Madonna, the manly British man, and the baby who represents British futurity. Similarly, the New Woman was perceived by conservative members of society as destabilizing the traditional feminine role of wife and mother, emasculating men, and threatening British continuity. Ida's autonomy is also coded as insane and vampiric when her independence leads to her demonic possession by Set-nekht. Ida speaks of Set-nekht as a genderless "It" (Benson 363) just as the goddess and the Beetle are degendered as the embodiments of Bessie's and Marjorie's New Womanhood respectively. This furthers the argument that Set-nekht—who is demonized and presented as monstrous throughout—is the embodiment of Ida's New Womanhood. Ida's autonomy, agency, and strong-mindedness empowered this virulent spirit, which ultimately overpowers and corrupts her. She proceeds to physically injure Jack as she "bit to the bone the hand with which he grasped her" (352). She emerges as the monstrous vampire with "the blood from her lips where her teeth had bitten to the bone the man she loved" (353). As the masculine paragon, Jack is also

representative of the British body, so by extension, Ida injures British strength and preys on the love the nation gives her.

Bessie's autonomous nature leads to a similar demonization to that which occurs with Ida and Harriet. Bessie, despite presenting as the damsel in distress for much of *The Goddess*, is representative of New Womanhood in many ways as discussed in the previous section. This is made clear when Edwin says of her, "Sometimes even charming visions do have tongues" (Marsh, *Goddess* 161). The theme of seeming versus being that is highlighted in this quotation is strongly connected to Bessie's characterization. Although she may seem to be the charming, helpless ideal, there is a determined and independent woman within her. Bessie's agency in defending her brother not only places her into physical contact with the goddess, but it also leads to a conflation between the two that will be carried out for the rest of the novel. As such, it is not too far a stretch to align one's actions with the other.

The conflation of Bessie and this monstrous goddess figure manifests throughout the novel. Bessie is introduced with a "blood-stained face" and hands. She is painted red by the blood similar to the goddess whose "whole figure was of a brilliant scarlet" (163). Bessie even conflates herself with the goddess when she recounts the murder, pondering, "I wonder if I could make out where I struck him, and where it hacked" (73). She separates the genderless "It" from the helpless, feminine self that she presents to Ferguson. However, she contends that both she and "It" attacked Lawrence. Like many New Woman characters—including Marjorie, Ida, and Margaret—Bessie presents herself as split between two sides, claiming, "It is as if I were two persons" (70).[140] The two sides are presumably that of the traditional lady that she enacts for Ferguson and the strong, autonomous New Woman aligned with the goddess and violence. A

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[140] The Victorian actress, Mary Anderson, expressed the commonality of this binarism when she stated after retiring from her public life on the stage, "I have always thought that no woman can serve two masters: public and domestic life" (qtd. in Powell 21).

similar motif of the duality of the New Woman can be seen in *Image*, symbolized by Ida's perfectly feminine room with its hidden inner chamber and by Ida's realization that she cannot "lead two lives" (287) as an intellectual and as a wife. The split between Tera and Margaret also represents this duality, along with Marjorie's idealization versus masculinization. Bessie depicts this as a form of insanity, claiming, "I'm not well; I can't be; I wish I were" (70).[141] Bessie's professed madness mimics society's expectations of such an untraditional figure.[142] The New Woman side of Bessie—the goddess—is significantly referred to as a non-gendered entity like the Beetle and Set-nekht. The goddess is both given a feminine designation as a female deity and simultaneously stripped of its femininity through non-gendered pronouns because it breaks from the traditional feminine narrative. This parallels the plight of the New Woman in the media who is feminized as a "woman" but is often illustrated as masculine or as a betrayal of both femininity and masculinity. In *The Goddess*, this "unwomanly" alter ego is the one that attacks and destroys men. Bessie recalls that "it came in. It! It!" (Marsh, *Goddess* 69). While this statement could refer to the goddess's entrance into the room, Bessie's conflation with the goddess makes it more likely that the goddess infiltrates Bessie herself, leading to Bessie's panicked cries of "Don't let it touch me! I can't bear to think of its touching me!" (69). As such, this moment depicts Bessie imagining the first instance when the goddess contaminated and possessed her, ostensibly influencing violent actions of which a lady was presumed incapable. Ultimately Bessie admits, "I killed him" (72) and fully aligns herself with the goddess-destroyer.

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[141] See Fee, especially 633-635, for an evaluation of how rebelling against traditional values was viewed as indicative of disease in late Victorian psychology. She asserts that normative gender roles were presented by the Victorian medical men as not just appropriate but "healthy." To go beyond those norms was to devolve into a degenerate figure that needed to be treated or confined. See also Showalter, *The Female Malady*, for an extensive investigation into female insanity during the nineteenth century. Showalter positions female insanity and hysteria as ways in which women's minds were controlled by dominant, male society.

[142] See Powell, especially 37, for analysis of how actresses were portrayed as insane and diseased. The actress's association with mental illness parallels and prefigures the New Woman's association with the same forms of degeneracy.

The end of the novel displaces the blame for Lawrence's death onto the racial Other, specifically an Indian automaton; however, I posit this ending as a smokescreen made to ease anxieties and reclaim normative British femininity. Bessie's guilt is too dubious for most of the work to be ignored. The reader is only provided an image of the goddess on two pages of the novel; whereas, Bessie's culpability in the murder occupies the reader's mind for the majority of the narrative. While Bessie's culpability is ultimately ambiguous, the suspicions cast about her are enough to depict her as perilous and present the question of whether she is also "the goddess: a demon."

These texts are representative of a reactive trend at the *fin de siècle* in which conservative thinkers figuratively demonized the New Woman as destroying the values that were perceived to uphold respectable society. The Imperial Gothic is unique in its ability to actually demonize the New Woman within its pages. By hyperbolizing the threat that the New Woman poses to British society, these texts capitalize on current anxieties surrounding women's independence and multiply them to a cacophonous degree, thus emphasizing that the supposed advances made by proto-feminists of the era are actually opposed to women's and the nation's best interests. The attempt to inculcate such misogynistic views underscores the toxically masculine beliefs inherent in these texts.

V. Taming the New Woman

The texts I analyze try to quell the anxieties surrounding the New Woman's ability to usurp male dominance by reforming rebellious female characters into an appropriately feminized role. For these imperialist narratives that promoted traditional gender roles, the ultimate goal was to

constrain the New Woman back into the mid-Victorian model of the dutiful wife and mother. By following the prescribed marriage plot, these texts reincorporate the rebellious woman into the patriarchal system that they initially threatened. Their marriage also makes it easier for these New Woman to be enshrined into a traditional ideal that by the 1890s "reluctantly [...] came to be applied to married women only" (Burstyn 131).[143] As Denzil states in *Ziska*, "An independent woman may do many things that a married woman may not. Marriage brings its own duties and responsibilities" (Corelli 108). The novelists often emphasize the previous state of New Womanhood as degenerate by associating these characters with mental diseases like hysteria, neurasthenia, and other emotional disturbances. The rhetorical linking of the New Woman with mental instability not only depicts them as diseased but also appropriately feminizes these masculine women since mental disorders were often coded feminine.[144] Gendered language of mental illness is weaponized to ensconce these women in an asylum or hospital—male-run institutions—where they are suppressed by the patriarchy until they can conform to the subservient role envisioned as their proper realm. Marjorie, Ida, and Bessie all meet this fate.

After her masculinization, Marjorie can only reclaim traditional English virtue at great personal cost, spending "three years under medical supervision as a lunatic" (Marsh, *Beetle* 348). Her foray into politics had to be countered and her independent spirit restrained. Marjorie's masculinized strength is decimated by her characterization as a lunatic, thereby restoring the status quo that she threatened. Her time masquerading in men's clothes cannot even be alluded to for her continued sanity:

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[143] See Burstyn 131 and also S. Mitchell 171 for examinations of how unmarried women at the *fin de siècle* were difficult to encapsulate into the mid-Victorian ideal since "politically, from 1869 onwards, a woman could to a limited extent be a person in her own right as long as she chose to remain unmarried" (S. Mitchell 172) due to the legal and social changes of the mid- to late-Victorian era.

[144] See Wood, especially 168-178, for analysis of how New Women were labeled as mentally unstable and how this classification served to reinscribe women into a traditionally feminine role since nervous disorders were conventionally ascribed to the female sex.

Nothing has been said to her about the fateful day on which she was—consciously or unconsciously—paraded through London in the tattered masculine habiliments of a vagabond. She herself has never once alluded to it. With the return of reason the affair seems to have passed from her memory. (348)

Here, Marsh admits that Marjorie may have consciously chosen to wear men's attire, which supports this as a symbol of her chosen departure from female gender norms. It also gives credence to a reading of her downfall as direct punishment for this departure from traditional gender roles. Relinquishing her masculinity and accepting her supposedly proper role as a submissive woman and "universally reverenced wife of one of the greatest statesmen the age has seen" (348) is characterized as a return to reason. Marjorie's bout with insanity and subsequent marriage sufficiently constrains her into the submissive feminine role that she had previously flaunted. Her identity and sphere of action is narrowed to her role in the domestic realm in which she would be recognized as nothing more than Paul Lessingham's wife. Indeed, since Marjorie is conflated with both the Beetle (our archetype of the foreign Other and sexually excessive New Woman) and Holt (our symbol of the working class), her return to traditional gender roles purportedly protects British bourgeois masculinity from three of the main threats it faced at the end of the century.

Similarly, Ida is depicted as suffering from feminized mental illness, namely neurasthenia, a late Victorian disease associated with fatigue caused by fast-paced modern life.[145]

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[145] See Wood, especially 167-186, for an examination of neurasthenia as a *fin-de-siècle* disease that was used to delineate the New Woman as degenerate and in need of mental help. Wood points out that while much of the medical discourse around neurasthenia is about men who were forced to deal with the chaos of the public realm, it became a moral judgment when directed at women as a punishment for the willful refusal to conform to societal norms.

Public life for women is synonymous with danger in this novel—morally, emotionally, and physically—echoing the self-serving masculine rhetoric of Victorian writers like the Oxford divinity professor John Burgon that framed the public sphere as "the battle of life" which was "fought out by the rougher sex" (qtd. In Burstyn 33). Ida's continual exhaustion in pursuit of her studies is contrasted to a restful domestic life. The text contends that "she was tired: she longed to lay it all down and rest, her hand in Jack's" (Benson 275). Ida envisioning her hand in Jack's alludes to their union in which she imagines being relieved of a weighty burden. Masculine levels of agency and achievement are proclaimed too much for women with their limited capacity, and the domestic sphere is valorized as a place of peace. In the domestic realm of the country house, the narrator specifically claims, "Could this moment have been lengthened out, just as it was, to the end of her life, she would never have tired of it" (235). Ida's exhaustion is limited to the male-coded public realm, thereby emphasizing the novel's argument that women belong in the domestic sphere under patriarchal control. Ida's rejection of her ambitious intellectualism is depicted as a religious conversion, something done "with almost rapture" (316).[146] In abandoning her intellectual pursuits, the text affirms, "She was happy, and her happiness was complete and unreserved" (318). The novel directly equates her departure from intellectual life as Ida "becoming more fit for the consummation" (318). Ida can only be suitable for marriage in the absence of her masculinized yearning for knowledge—thus before she marries Jack, Ida relinquishes her studies and is deprived of both the men who previously encouraged her education. Ida's choice of the traditional domestic life is ultimately what allows for her salvation.

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[146] See Davidoff and L. Hall, especially 108-113 and 114-118, for an examination of the religious doctrines concerning masculinity and femininity respectively in the early Victorian era. By embracing her domestic role, Ida conforms to religious beliefs about women's submission.

If one conceives of all of these Imperial Gothic texts as attempting to reinforce the patriarchal status quo exemplified by the separate spheres ideology, then it is particularly important for Bessie in *The Goddess: A Demon* to be subsumed into the domestic sphere because she is one of the few heroines I analyze who claimed an actual profession. Since working, acting in particular, was seen as incompatible with domesticity, it was impossible for Bessie to maintain her career and become a proper wife and mother. The first fact the text relates when detailing the aftermath is that "Bessie never acted again" (Marsh, *Goddess* 168). By forsaking her profession Bessie is afforded the possibility for salvation but only after the novel punishes her for her former autonomy, similar to Marjorie's punishment in *The Beetle*.[147] After her interactions and conflations with the goddess, Bessie is at the verge of insanity and death. The narrator states, "After that hideous night brain fever supervened. For weeks she lay between life and death. More than once the doctors gave her up" (Marsh, *Goddess* 168). Brain fever was considered akin to a nervous breakdown in the contemporary vernacular since most people "believed shock or excessive intellectual activity could produce a severe and prolonged fever," especially in women (Peterson 449).[148] Bessie is suitably controlled and contained as a result of her illness and is thus restored to proper femininity by immediately marrying once she recovers. Correspondingly, our other New Woman character, Miss Adair, is also soon to "retire from the stage; and the whisper is that Hume, who for some time has been her constant attendant, has something to do with her intention" (Marsh, *Goddess* 168).[149] Both Miss Adair and Bessie therefore are transformed into

[147] See Powell 34 for analysis of how "the actress is often submitted to patriarchal discipline and pays a price, at least a symbolic one, for the life she has led" (34). This directly parallels depictions of the New Woman in Imperial Gothic literature. Bessie's punishment can thus be ascribed as resulting from both her career as an actress and her New Woman independence.
[148] See Peterson for a detailed analysis of brain fever as both an actual malady during the Victorian era and as a literary conceit that connoted mental instability.
[149] Bessie and Miss Adair's leaving their careers as actresses after marriage conforms to the conventions of theatrical novels where "once married or betrothed, women in these novels are expected to subjugate themselves to a man and give up their professional lives (Powell 18-19). Moreover, "once domesticated in marriage, the actress was expected to look back without regret, even with loathing, upon her life on stage" (21).

powerless and contained domestic figures, their New Womanhood effectively neutralized. Bessie is depicted as Ferguson's possession when he claims, "I have come to have for my very own the woman of my dreams. Sleeping and waking she is mine" (Marsh, *Goddess* 169). Significantly, the Bessie that he claims as his wife is "the woman of his dreams" and thus the idealized version of her that he cherishes throughout the novel—the helpless but attractive child who depends on him implicitly. Bessie's autonomy is thus contained both by her role as wife and mother and by Ferguson's imagining of her as an idol instead of a realistic woman.

If a New Woman character was regarded as irredeemable or unable to be contained in the domestic sphere, the only option these texts present is death.[150] Despite this also being true of progressive New Woman texts, as I discuss later, the conservative texts I analyze present their death as creating positive stability for British futurity. The death of the heroines in the New Woman narratives by contrast is presented sympathetically and often implies a failure on the part of society. In Imperial Gothic texts, the New Women most commonly dispatched are the characters who are also connected to a racial Other. The destruction of the racial Other is hardly a new concept in imperial texts, but the deaths of these women serve to allay two simultaneous issues. Not only are they representative of New Women who defy traditional gender roles, but they are also foreign and therefore threaten the purity of the British race as well as patriarchal power. It is important to remember that these texts have imperialist—and inherently masculinist—agendas. In order for the empire and British masculinity to prevail over the foreign Other, they could not kill off British women who were necessary for propagating the race. However, strong foreign women did not need to be saved in order to further the empire. In fact, their survival only threatened British supremacy as any offspring would dilute the British

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[150] See Gilbert and Gubar, *War of the Words*, especially 23, for analysis of the tendency to kill off representations of the New Woman. They claim that "many British and American literary men regarded feminism as in some sense deadly, and they fantasized about 'killing' its proponents to save the life of male tradition" (23).

bloodline, leading to the degeneration and ultimate ruination of the race. Harriet's demise in *The Blood of the Vampire* and Iras's death in the eponymous novel ensures the continuation of the British race in the conservative view just like Marjorie, Bessie, and Ida being subsumed into their traditional role promotes British futurity.

It is worthwhile concluding this chapter with an exploration of how these imperial texts stand in relation to the New Woman novels that were prevalent during the 1890s. I claim the texts I analyze in this thesis as conservative and reactionary examples of imperialist and toxically masculine propaganda. Contrastingly, the New Woman novels of the 1890s were viewed as radical and forward-thinking. Griffin claims that "the 'new woman' novels represent the culmination of the critical discourse that was eroding the foundations of Victorian domestic ideology" (Griffin 108).[151] Externally, Imperial Gothic and New Woman texts appear antithetical to one another, and yet they enact a strikingly similar narrative plot. Both represent a New Woman who endeavors to act upon her strength and autonomy only to experience a physical or mental collapse and an ultimate return to traditional domesticity. Ann Ardis termed the scope of New Woman novels as "'boomerang' plots" (154) which is an accurate portrayal of the character arc for women in both New Woman novels and Imperial Gothic texts. So, one must ask what makes one set of texts progressively radical and the other reactionary and patriarchal?

The answer lies in whether the conventional ending was regarded as positive or pessimistic. The authors I analyze use the boomerang narrative arc to assert the toxically masculine belief that women do not belong in the public sphere and that female autonomy separates them from a preferable idealized femininity. In contrast, the New Woman writers use the boomerang narrative to prove that the current social structure crushes women who should be

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[151] See Griffin, especially 108, and also Parratt, especially 142, for analyses of how New Woman writers challenged the gender hierarchy and women's traditional roles.

allowed to flourish and break free of their constraints. The New Women writers suppress their heroines because "since the system is so pernicious, the odds so heavily weighted, it would be absurdly utopian, the argument goes, to portray a New Woman succeeding in her aims" (Cunningham 50). Their ending in the domestic realm is not presented as achieving domestic bliss but instead foreshadows a life of unfulfilled monotony or worse. In the Imperial Gothic texts I analyze, it is not the social structure that is at fault but the women who fail to conform to it. As such, their entry into domesticity signals their relinquishing of New Womanhood and affords the heroines what the authors perceive as a happy, domestic life. Domesticity is predominantly regarded as the best possible outcome for women in Imperial Gothic texts. These novels stress the "implications of harmony and continuity traditionally symbolised by the marriage ending of romantic comedy" (Dolon 133). So, although the endings of Imperial Gothic fiction and New Woman novels are strikingly similar—with the New Woman character classified as insane, returned to the confines of domesticity, or killed—the politics of these two genres is vastly different. The toxically masculine Imperial Gothic novels I study attempt to delay the progress of female emancipation by asserting the domestic sphere as the proper place for women. New Womanhood is proven a threat to the male-dominated status quo, and with the New Woman's subjugation in these texts, the patriarchy is protected and social order maintained, supposedly for the good of the nation.

Within toxically masculine culture women are perceived as objects to manipulate or roadblocks to be overcome. The texts I have analyzed all conform to this worldview to some degree. These narratives all advance the antiquated mid-century archetype of femininity because the "angel in the house" does not pose a threat to the patriarchal system under which they have subsisted. The mid-century ideal is firmly objectified on her pedestal and is malleable to the

thoughts and wishes of her patriarchal overlord. By contrast, New Woman characteristics are rationalized away, met with distrust, or openly demonized. Even the novels written by women depict their female characters as oppositional if they dare to claim the right to male-coded characteristics such as sexuality, independence, and intelligence. The New Woman's demonization, whilst hyperbolic, illustrates the profound threat that she poses to the masculine conception of self, at the foundation of which is their privilege and power. If the degree to which the New Woman is demonized in the Imperial Gothic genre proves the threat she poses to the toxically masculine ego, then her reclamation and reformation into the submissive ideal demonstrates the misogynistic objective of toxically masculine men. Women's strength, intelligence, and independence are punished because these traits are envisioned as the sole property of men, and then after being physically and/or mentally shattered, they are placed as the subservient property of their male controllers or destroyed if not useful for making British offspring. Women are oppressed under this system but are continually portrayed as saved from the Other and from themselves by the heroic men who oversee their lives.

While men definitely benefit from the patriarchy and the toxic masculinity used to defend their position of power, they are also harmed by toxic masculinity's insistence on a hegemonic version of unemotional, aggressive manhood. In the subsequent section on stigmatized masculinity in Imperial Gothic texts, I explore how Victorian antagonism toward what they viewed as weak masculinity cleaved men from the ability to embrace a full range of emotions, led men to denigrate learning for learning's sake, created emotional crises for men who could not fulfill societal expectations, and limited men's access to empathy.

CHAPTER THREE

"Fibreless, Emasculated Creature": Stigmatized Masculinity in Imperial Gothic Texts

Imperial Gothic literature provides significant insight into toxically masculine views regarding nonconforming masculinities because the imperialist agenda is directly invested in promoting toxic masculinity and ridiculing expressions of manhood that were perceived as unhelpful to the maintenance of empire. The perceived masculine decline at the *fin de siècle* was imagined as a direct threat to empire, so it is fitting that these texts that act as a form of imperialist propaganda denigrate masculine weakness and prize martial masculinity. Martial masculinity was viewed as necessary to the success of the empire, and as such this aggressive and performative masculinity is glorified throughout Imperial Gothic literature and is used as the standard by which men are judged.

The previous two chapters explored the ways in which toxic masculinity interacted with marginalized groups. This chapter begins my direct exploration of forms of masculinity in Imperial Gothic texts and outlines how peripheral types of masculinity are denigrated in favor of aggressive, unemotional, hegemonic masculinity. I start with an investigation of what would have been perceived as weak masculinity by contemporaneous standards to illustrate that toxic masculinity does not just harm people outside of the dominant society, but it can also be detrimental to people who should fit into the patriarchal paradigm but fail to do so. First, I analyze the two primary examples of masculine weakness in *The Beetle* (1897), namely Robert Holt and Paul Lessingham to demonstrate the emphasis on hegemonic masculinity and the repercussions for any perceived male lack. I build on the multitude of previous critics who have

analyzed Holt's emasculation through mesmeric forces and extend these by also claiming that Holt's emasculation is not just indicative of individual male weakness and degeneracy but is also blamed at least partially on the British state's inability to provide for their downtrodden.[152] I compare Lessingham and Holt's emasculation since both characters are portrayed as sexually involved with the Beetle and both at some point fall under her mesmeric powers. Critically, it is Holt's full-scale inability to act in opposition to the Beetle that marks him as irredeemable in contrast to Lessingham who regains his manhood through acts of violence, a toxically masculine motif that I explore in the final chapter of this thesis. After expounding on failures of hegemonic masculinity in *The Beetle*, I turn my attention to Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899) and the multitudinous examples of masculine weakness present in this novel. The dominant criticisms of *Pharos's* protagonist, Cyril Forrester, analyze him as a highly ineffectual, degenerate character.[153] I build on this criticism but diverge from looking at Forrester as just a version of the degenerate aesthete and instead analyze him as a version of pacific, gentlemanly masculinity, which the novel proves to be ineffective against imperial threats. I expand on this to investigate not just Forrester but the other male characters in *Pharos* as well. While the critics who have examined this novel typically only focus on Forrester's masculinity, he is but one in a host of what the novel deems to be weak men. *Pharos* includes a variety of masculine failures including the man who refuses to provide for his family, the unemployed man, the inveterate gambler, and the dandy with his implied homosexuality. I examine each of these instances and pay particular attention to the novel's use of suicide as the primary means of dealing with their

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[152] See Rebry, especially 7-12; Margree, especially 64-68; Hurley, especially 129-135; and also Davis, especially 145-151, for explorations of Holt's emasculation in *The Beetle*.
[153] See Duesterberg, especially 385-468, and also Bulfin, "In That Egyptian Den" for analyses of Forrester's degeneracy and ineffectuality.

masculine failures. I argue that such depictions highlight toxic masculinity's danger toward men who fail to live up to the masculine ideal.

I.   Masculine Lack in *The Beetle*

The Beetle, as a novel that is obsessed with notions of manliness, provides a model of emasculation in the character of Robert Holt. The first male character that Marsh introduces reflects *fin-de-siècle* anxieties surrounding masculinity and strength through his embodiment of male weakness, albeit not entirely of his own making. What is fascinating about Holt's characterization is that he embodies the economic threats that impinged on masculinity as well as other perceived male weaknesses like homosexuality and inaction that are prominently examined in Imperial Gothic texts. Most of the narratives I examine focus on upwardly mobile bourgeois characters instead of the lower-middle and working classes and as such largely ignore one of the vehicles of emasculation experienced by many in this period. Although Britain was still the wealthiest nation in the world at the *fin de siècle*, and most people in the middle class could still live comfortably, two economic depressions and the perceived economic threat posed by women entering the workforce undermined the economic stability that produced masculine confidence.[154] Marsh reflects the fear of social and economic decline and its corresponding emasculation by depicting Holt as a clerk who has lost his job and fallen to the position of a self-described "penniless homeless tramp" (*Beetle* 3).[155] While women may not have offered a serious economic threat to most professions, they did represent a credible threat to the male clerk

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[154] See Harrision, especially 62-63, for analysis of the economic recession from 1873-1896 and its demoralizing effect on middle class masculinity despite Britain ultimately still being one of the richest countries in the world.
[155] See Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, especially 204, for an examination of the clerk as a profession particularly threatened by claims of effeminacy. The clerk was figured as unmanly because it was a profession that included no hard labor, but clerks were also unmanned because they were being displaced by an increasingly female workforce. Holt's joblessness thereby reinforces his emasculation at the hands of a New Woman archetype.

since many companies at the turn of the century were hiring women to do office work at significantly cheaper rates than their male counterparts. As John Tosh states when discussing the rise of female clerks, "Male clerks opposed this trend not only because they feared redundancy or wage reduction, but because the gender status of their occupation was at stake" (*Manliness and Masculinities* 204). Holt risked being feminized due to his profession as a clerk but is even more emasculated by losing his position. Despite it never directly being stated that he lost his position due to the new female workforce, the prevalence of the female typist at the *fin de siècle* would have presented this as a clear possibility to contemporary readers. Holt is thus unmanned by the advent of the working woman and proceeds to be further unmanned by a New Woman archetype in *The Beetle*, as I go on to explore. Due in large part to the philosophy of Muscular Christianity, which I discussed in my introduction, in addition to a connection between masculinity and the Protestant work ethic, work and utility were defining characteristics of manhood throughout the Victorian era.[156] Martin Danahay notes that in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, the "compulsion to work was described as a moral issue and a question of masculine character" (Danahay 8). Holt's inability to find work immediately displays his failure to live up to the masculine ideal. Although the New Woman's entry into masculine professions is indirectly implied as responsible for Holt's social slide, Marsh shows that his emasculation is at least partially the fault of the state as well.[157]

There was a distinct realization at the turn of the century that part of the failing of bourgeois masculinity was that in their race to claim wealth and status, large portions of society

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[156] See Danahay, especially 1-9, for analysis of how masculinity became associated and defined by the Protestant work ethic.

[157] See Wolfreys, "The Hieroglyphic Other"; Margree, especially 64-66; Vuohelainen, "Introduction," especially 10-11; and Marsden, especially 62, for more analysis on the failings of the city in relation to Holt. Margree believes the displacement of the threat onto the Egyptian Other is only ever superficial. While I argue that the threat of the foreign Other is very real in *The Beetle*, it works in conjunction with a realization of England's failure to protect its citizens at home.

had been abandoned to poverty and destitution. In his destitute state, Holt forsakes his pride—and by implication his manhood—and applies to the workhouse for a night's lodgings. Even this is denied him. In the face of extreme hunger and exhaustion, Holt is pushed to the fringes of society and acts of desperation that serve to fully emasculate him and lead to his dissolution. After Holt breaks into a house for shelter and is accosted by an evil presence, which the reader comes to recognize as the Beetle, Holt is inundated with thoughts of his own manliness. Holt tries to take possession of himself, making "an effort to better play the man" (Marsh, *Beetle* 13), underscoring the extent to which outward projections of masculinity were internalized. Holt's effort, though, is pointless, as Holt's autonomy is quickly overtaken by the Beetle's mesmeric powers. Holt claims, "I could not control a limb; my limbs were as if they were not mine" (14). He is unable to "play the man," and this inability to resist the Beetle's mesmeric charm underscores his loss of masculinity. In this scene, Marsh lays the responsibility for Holt's weakness at least partially at the feet of mother England as Holt blames his lack of agency on the weakness caused by his poverty:

> I take it that the stress and privations which I had lately undergone [...] had much to do with my conduct at that moment, and with the part I played in all that followed. Ordinarily I believe that I have as high a spirit as the average man, and as solid a resolution; but when one has been dragged through the Valley of Humiliation, and plunged, again and again, into the Waters of Bitterness and Privation, a man can be constrained to a course of action of which in his happier moments, he would have deemed himself incapable. (14)

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Victoria Margree declares the "possibility that it is some fundamental masculine 'lack' in Holt that is responsible for his unemployment and his social slide" (67). However, in these passages, Marsh goes to great effort to show that this social slide could happen to anyone in the middle class or below. Holt compares himself to others of his sex, describing himself as an everyman, not inherently inclined to weakness or depravity; he is just a good man down on his luck. Not naturally weak, he was forced out of his profession and forsaken by his government, leading to his current state of enervation and hopelessness. The language is highly biblical in this passage, heightening the drama of the scene and painting Holt as a sufferer directly out of the Old Testament.[158] Marsh goes so far as to have Holt later exclaim, "how easy is the descent!" (*Beetle* 20), which recalls the fall of man due to Eve. The weakness created by England's failure is what allows the Other to gain a foothold over the English, analogously to how Satan is portrayed as taking advantage of Eve's supposed weakness. In this analogy, the weakened male is connected to Eve as the original fallen woman. As such, even though England may have let these desperate men down, they are still rendered feminized by their situations. Although Marsh recognizes the failings of the state in relation to Holt, he does not offer Holt a pathway to redemption but instead throws him onto the ash heap of modern civilization. Holt's emasculation in the professional sphere quickly turns into acts of deviant sexuality that serve to underscore another anxiety surrounding masculinity at the *fin de siècle*: homosexuality and sex work.

Once Holt is accosted by the Beetle after breaking into her house, the scene devolves into one of sexual assault.[159] In this thesis's first chapter, I examined how the scenes of sexual assault in *The Beetle* accentuate the stereotypical sexual depravity of the foreign and savage Other;

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[158] The term "Valley of Humiliation" comes from *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan (1678), while "bitter" water is referenced regularly in the Bible, most notably in Exodus 15:25 and later Numbers 5:24.

[159] See Margree, especially 66, for analysis of Holt's housebreaking as a "violation of social boundaries" that puts him at the Beetle's will. Both Margree and Vuohelainen, "Introduction" 12, observe that all of the characters who are assaulted or mesmerized by the Beetle enact some form of transgression, either sexually, socially, or morally.

however, it is worth examining here how these scenes also emasculate Holt. Although Holt is the first character the reader sees assaulted in *The Beetle*, he is by no means the last, and the language used in Marjorie's and Holt's scenes of assault are remarkably similar. Holt relates his experience:

> It mounted me, apparently, with as much ease as if I had been horizontal instead of perpendicular. It was as though it were some gigantic spider,—a spider of the nightmares; a monstrous conception of some dreadful vision. It pressed lightly against my clothing with what might, of all the world, have been spider's legs. There was an amazing host of them, I felt the pressure of each separate one. They embraced me softly, stickily, as if the creature glued and unglued them, each time it moved. Higher and higher! It had gained my loins. It was moving towards the pit of my stomach. (14-15)

While sexual assault is never explicitly stated, Marsh's highly sexualized language represents this as a scene of rape as other critics have not failed to note.[160] The diction of "mounted," "embraced," and "loins" lends itself to the analysis of this as a forced sexual transgression of Holt's body. This language is furthered as Holt is later "enveloped," "embraced," and undressed by the Beetle before her fingers are "thrust into [his] mouth" and her "blubber lips were pressed to [his]" (Marsh, *Beetle* 16, 23). At the same time that the Other is portrayed as a sexually deviant predator in this scene, Holt is rendered as emasculated and weak. As other critics have asserted, the Beetle penetrating Holt places her in the masculine sexual role and Holt in the feminized, submissive position making this an "extended homoerotic and masochistic fantasy"

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[160] See Margree, especially 66; Hurley, especially 124; and also K. Davis, especially 146, for examinations of Holt's assault by the Beetle as an instance of rape

(Margree 67).[161] Even if, as I claim, the Beetle is read as female, this scene still must be analyzed as inherently homoerotic because the reader presumes that the antagonist is male at this juncture in the narrative. When Holt states that "the soul of something evil entered into me in the guise of a kiss" (Marsh, *Beetle* 23) that corruption can be presumed to be homosexual acts, even though those acts are forced. While I do not, as Margree asserts, believe Holt symbolizes the "possibly homosexual man" (67), I concur that this perceived homosexual act is one of the things that marks Holt as irredeemable as opposed to the other men in the novel. Even Lessingham, who is also shown as entering into sexual acts with the Beetle, is ultimately redeemable because he commits these acts when the villainess is presenting as female.

Though the rhetoric of assault distances Holt from inherent homosexuality, his destitution does lend itself to a possible reading of Holt as representative of the easy slide into male sex work. The legal policing of homosexual acts during the late Victorian era has been explored by scholars including Morris B. Kaplan and Dennis Grube,[162] particularly in relation to the notorious case of Oscar Wilde which "catalys[ed] not just a generation, but a society into the patterns of homophobic and homosexual identification we now recognize, rightly or wrongly, as the decisive parameters of modern sexuality" (Broughton 13-14). More germane to a conception of Holt as representative of male sex workers are cases such as the 1889 Clevelend Street Scandal in which several telegraph delivery boys confessed to engaging in sex work for aristocratic members of Parliament including, it was rumored, Queen Victoria's own grandson.[163] This highly publicized

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[161] See Margree, especially 66-68; Harris and Vernooy, especially 353-354; and also Rebry 8 for an examination of the homoeroticism of Holt's assault by the Beetle and its use to feminize Holt at the hands of the sexually aggressive and masculinized Beetle. Dobson, "Emasculating Mummies," especially 403, and Harris and Vernooy, especially 361, examine the link between the Other (mummies in Dobson's analysis and the generalized Orient for Harris and Vernooy) and homoeroticism in Victorian England. Margree claims that this moment of homoeroticism serves to permanently emasculate Holt.

[162] See Kaplan, especially 166-224, and also Grube, especially Chapter 9, for more detailed analyses on the legal strictures surrounding homosexuality at the turn of the century.

[163] See Kaplan, especially 167-223, and also L. Hall, especially 47-48, for analyses of the Cleveland Street Scandal and its effect on the social understanding of homosexuality.

case made clear to the public "the casual route of young working men into homosexual prostitution" (L. Hall 48). Although Holt's housebreaking is the one illegal and immoral act to which readers are privy, his presumed homosexual acts would also have been illegal and more socially damning to late Victorian society. This scene looks very much like a down-on-his-luck man being co-opted into male sex work. Holt claims that the Beetle "reached my chin, it touched my lips,—and I stood still and bore it all" (Marsh, *Beetle* 16). Holt deplores his passivity, declaring that it "was worse than undignified, it was galling" (17) but he does allow these homosexual acts to occur. His allowance of the Beetle's physical and mental control over him unmans Holt. Implied homosexuality and emasculation are connected when Holt declares, "I was no longer a man; my manhood was merged in his" (19). The merging of two manhoods has clear homosexual connotations. From this first encounter, Holt devolves into a creature entirely at the Beetle's will, becoming an instrument of corruption for the novel's other characters. When the Beetle forces him to break into Lessingham's home, Holt admits, "Hapless slave of another's will although in very truth I was, I cannot repeat too often that I realised to the full just what it was that I was being compelled to do" (41). The novel asserts that even though he is compelled into his actions, he is still morally responsible and tainted by them. This is true of his sexual conduct as well since although his destitution and not his nature leads him into homosexual acts, the novel still depicts him as morally unsalvageable. One of Holt's final claims before his death is that "the Beetle killed me" (330) and certainly, the Beetle's attacks on Holt's mind and body did precipitate his downfall, but ultimately he is irredeemable because he is unable to fight against the Beetle's control and allows himself to be used by this contaminating influence.

What decisively categorizes Holt as beyond saving is his inability to resist the title character during this scene of assault, or indeed at any point in the narrative. Lack of masculine

power and autonomy is a central theme in this novel with Holt emasculated to the point of figurative castration. Holt claims his desire to act in the normative masculine way when he declares, "I would have given much to have been able to strike him across the face, —or, better, to have taken him by the neck, and thrown him through the window, and rolled him in the mud" (59). His desire to physically prove his strength highlights the internalized nature of violence as a manly attribute in the late Victorian era. However, Holt is unable to muster the strength to prove his manhood and thus is firmly emasculated. Holt is the only male character who never gains enough masculine strength to oppose the Other. Many critics have connected Holt's physical penetration by the Beetle with his mental penetration through mesmerism.[164] Holt claims, "the helplessness with which I suffered its invasions was not the least part of my agony,— [...] I had not a muscle at my command" (15).[165] Holt remains under the Beetle's mesmeric control, never regaining his mastery of self. The use of the word "invasion" represents this as a symbolic transgression as much as a literal one, with this scene symbolically depicting a weak English man allowing for the invasion of the British body.[166] As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, this is one of the great fears for many Victorian men—male weakness allowing for the decline of the British race and terminally the invasion of the country by a strong and ruthless

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[164] See Wolfreys 13; Rebry, especially 2-4; Margree, especially 67-69; and Davis 147 for analyses of mesmerism as a form of sexual penetration. Margree argues that "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 a person as passive and invadeable, and therefore feminine" (67). See Luckhurst, "Trance-Gothic," and also Rebry, especially 2-3, for an examination of the history of mesmerism and its prevalence in Victorian England.

[165] See Vuohelainen, "You Know Not of What You Speak," especially 313-314, for an analysis of Holt's lack of agency as a paralyzing form of xenophobia. Similarly, Vuohelainen positions every moment of failed language and inability to act in this novel as a phobic response from the various English characters. Vuohelainen posits that the narrative "undermines [the English character's] authority by emphasizing the irrationality of the phobic impulse" (316). I disagree that their phobic response is irrational since the novel justifies their reaction with the sexual predations and violence of the Other.

[166] See Wolfreys, especially 14-15, for further on the connection of mesmeric control to colonial power and domination. Holt's, Lessingham's, and Marjorie's being overpowered by the antagonist's mesmeric control places them in the position of the enslaved with the Beetle as their master. Lessingham, as an idealized male character, is significantly the only one of the three to reclaim his position of dominance over the Beetle through acts of adventure and violence.

Other.[167] As Marjorie's inability to escape the Beetle illustrates her feminine weakness, Holt's inability to act aligns him with this feminine weakness in opposition to manliness. Marjorie's weakness is expected and accepted for women since it plays into gender norms that buttressed patriarchal control. On the other hand, Holt's weakness represents him as negating the normative expectations of men that were deemed necessary for the strength of society and thus ultimately hints at a possible cause for British decline and constitutes a threat to patriarchal power. While Marjorie's internalized weakness acts as her saving grace, that same weakness marks Holt as irredeemable. Beyond allowing for the invasion of the British body, Holt is also depicted as passing on the virus of degeneracy to Marjorie during his stay at her house, causing the pollution of a pure English woman through their connection. Marjorie is portrayed as especially vulnerable to this attack due to her autonomy and refusal to follow the advice of the patriarchal influences in her life. Marjorie and Holt enact dual threats posed to normative British masculinity from opposite sides: the New Woman taking over the male sphere and the weak man leading to the degeneracy of the race. Both are punished because of their transgression, but Holt cannot be saved as Marjorie can. She can be diminished back into the role of subservient woman, but Holt's weakness and forced homosexual acts cannot be redeemed, requiring his death at the end of the novel in which he is drained of all vitality by the Beetle.

Despite seeming like polar opposites, Lessingham and Holt in *The Beetle* both represent emasculated men, albeit to differing degrees. I examined in this thesis's first chapter how Lessingham's seduction by the Woman of Songs in Egypt provides an excellent example of how the racial Other, particularly the female racial Other, was scapegoated for white men's sexual

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[167] The fear that masculine weakness would lead to invasion is a common theme in the literature of the period with invasion epics gaining in popularity at the turn of the century. Nationalistic and xenophobic texts like *The Swoop!* (1909) by P.G. Wodehouse, *The Yellow Danger* (1898) by M.P. Shiel, *The War of the Worlds* (1897) by H.G. Wells, plus a plethora of other Imperial Gothic texts, exhibit this threat as prevalent on the minds of those invested in the imperial scheme.

lapses. Even though Lessingham tries to divert blame from himself in terms of the sexual acts he committed while in Egypt, these still decisively illustrate a profound moral and masculine failing. The traditional role of the romantic hero in imperial fiction was to show them "going out to the colonies and taking up the white, teenage male's burden [so that] they could demonstrate their Christian ability to resist sexual temptation, at least until it found its appropriate outlet in marriage to a European woman" (Hugill 326). Lessingham fails at this test of his manhood and his masculinity is thus brought under scrutiny. Beyond simply being morally weak, though, Lessingham's susceptibility to mesmerism and repeated inability to act emasculates him in a similar manner to Holt. In Egypt, Lessingham is portrayed as unable to ward off the sexual predations of the Other and, more damning, he is unable to protect the virtuous, white women whom he witnesses being sacrificed whilst in the Beetle's den of iniquity. Lessingham particularly dwells on the sacrifice of "a young and lovely Englishwoman" and how he "lay there helpless, looking on" during the outrages perpetrated on her (Marsh, *Beetle* 254). Lessingham in this state calls himself a "fibreless, emasculated creature" (255), putting a fine point on the fact that his inability to act lessened his status as a man. Lessingham only regains his manhood by physically fighting against the Beetle and freeing himself from her control. Lessingham describes his escape, stating,

> I knew that she was putting out her utmost force to trick me of my manhood. But I fought with her like one possessed, and I conquered—in a fashion. I compressed her throat with my two hands as with an iron vice. I knew that I was struggling for more than life. (255)

The text's emphasis that the Woman of Songs had tricked Lessingham out of his "manhood" proves that his seduction and inability to oppose the *femme fatale* emasculates him. It is significant that he regains his manhood through physical force, manually squeezing the life from his captor. The use of the word "conquered" shows this as a battle of wills, but the fact that it is used to reference him strangling a woman proves the threat that toxic masculinity poses since men see physical dominance over opposing forces as a way to win the battle. While I discuss violence and toxic masculinity further in the subsequent chapter, it is critical here that Lessingham describes this fight as a struggle "for more than life" because it proves the extent to which manliness was valued within hegemonic male culture.

After returning to England, Lessingham becomes highly respected both socially and politically, and wins the love of one of the most sought-after women in London. By all appearances he is the paragon of respectable British masculinity. However, when the Other invades England and he is again confronted by his prior connection to the Beetle, Lessingham's crafted performance of masculinity begins to falter, threatening to undo all of the work that he has undergone to situate himself as the ideal British man. The reader meets Lessingham as a model of manliness with his "inpenetrability [*sic*]" (46) that connotes his manhood in contrast to Holt's mental and physical penetration by the Beetle. The text also describes his "broad shoulders," "calm, airy tones" and eyes that are "considering just when, where, and how to pounce" (46). However, these manly characteristics are quickly undermined when Holt utters the Beetle's name, after which, Lessingham falls back against his bookcase, physically brought lower, "crouching [...] in the attitude of a man who has received a staggering blow" (47). Lessingham's psychological struggle is paralleled to a physical fight, which he is significantly losing. Although Lessingham attempts to recover both his physical and mental presence— trying

to maintain his manhood through anger and threats against Holt—it is only an impotent gesture or, as Holt calls it, "a burst of childish fury" (48). Even Holt, the very embodiment of male weakness, recognizes the futility of Lessingham's words: "He might not have been aware of it, but the repetitions of the threats were, in themselves, confessions of weakness" (52). For Holt to be the first character to point out Lessingham's weakness underscores Lessingham's total unmanning due to his prior relationship with the Beetle. Lessingham's weakness is furthered even more when Atherton later describes Lessingham's reaction on seeing an image of a beetle, calling him "a nerveless, terror-stricken wretch, grovelling, like some craven cur, upon the floor, frightened, to the verge of imbecility, by a shadow, and less than a shadow" (106). The novel implies that Lessingham's reaction to the Beetle is due to a supernatural effect that her name has on him, like a hypnotic word that triggers a hysterical reaction.[168] I qualify this to add that Lessingham's reaction is additionally caused by guilt and the fear of what the Beetle can do to his reputation. In such a case Holt's verbalization of the Beetle's name positions him almost as a blackmailer who is threatening Lessingham with the revelation of his previous indecency. Whether one reads Lessingham's reaction as resulting from supernatural powers, shame and fear, or a combination of these, Lessingham has to fight physically and spiritually against his weakness in order to maintain his mask of manliness. Holt describes that after Lessingham's first reaction, "he himself seemed conscious, the moment after, that his passion was sadly lacking in dignity, and to be ashamed of it. He drew himself straight up" (48). Lessingham's shame at his

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[168] Many critics dismiss the possibility that the Beetle's name itself has a supernatural effect on Lessingham, blaming his reaction on sheer weakness. Hurley calls Lessingham's reactions "delusions" and "attacks resembling epileptic fits" (Hurley 143, 145). Davis calls them "phobic and irrational" (148). However, I argue that the instantaneous reaction to the name hints at something supernatural in the same way that hypnotists may use a word to trigger certain reactions in their subjects. I claim, however, that the word is given power by Lessingham's guilt. Similarly, Vuohelainen in "You Know Not of What You Speak," claims these words to act as a "spell" or a "curse" (328), although she ultimately deems the character's reaction to the Beetle as phobic instead of supernatural.

reaction is just as much, if not more so, about the fact that his weakness is on display for others as the weakness itself.

On seeing Lessingham's weakness there is a common response from all of the British men in the novel: discomfort. In my introduction, I claim that masculine discomfort when men do not display "typically" masculine traits is a characteristic of toxic masculinity, and this is clearly exhibited by all of the male characters in *The Beetle*.[169] Natasha Rebry posits correctly that "if Lessingham's is the most ideal version of masculinity, his is also the most impugned by the other men around him" (6). On witnessing Lessingham's initial reaction to the name of the Beetle, Holt alleges to be "filled with a most discomforting qualm" (Marsh, *Beetle* 47) and describes Lessingham's emotional state as demonstrating "a species of excitement which it was unpleasant to witness" (48). Despite his own personal weakness, Holt still has internalized societal expectations of masculinity and freely judges what he perceives as Lessingham's emasculation. Holt's description of Lessingham recalls feminized hysteria, undermining Lessingham's self-possession and manliness even in the eyes of the weakest male character.[170] Atherton makes a similar statement later, saying, "The sight of him set every nerve of my body on edge" (175). For a man who values performative aspects of masculinity as much as Atherton, Lessingham's expression of weakness was almost unforgivable. Atherton calls such weakness "pitiable to witness" and attempts to enforce normative masculinity by telling Lessingham "don't be a fool!—play the man" (178). John Tosh states that "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

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[169] See Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities,* especially his introduction, for analysis of manliness as "fundamentally a set of values by which men judged other men" and as "the basis of a pecking order among men" (5).

[170] See Dobson, "Emasculating Mummies," especially 397-398, for an exploration of the trope of the Other "unmanning male characters [...] by stimulating hysterical responses" (397). Dobson's analysis of mummy fiction is applied to *The Beetle* due to the antagonist's nationality and reincarnation after Lessingham strangles her. Other critics have also commented on the uses of male hysteria in Victorian Gothic narratives including Hurley (drawing on Freud) who calls it a response to "an unexpectedly 'phallic' woman" (145) and Davis, especially 148, who posits this hysteria as symptomatic of syphilis.

of effort and suppression of self" (*Manliness and Masculinities* 14). In this novel, the phrase "play the man" is used conversely, highlighting the performance of normative masculinity. Margree notes the performative aspect of Lessingham's masculinity as creating this feeling of ambivalence around his character "manifested around the fear that the politician's virility, authority and masculinity (the text tries to make these synonymous) may in fact be a sham" (Margree 69). Similarly, James Eli Adams claims that the idea of masculinity as performative would be "deeply disturbing to most Victorians" ("Dandyism and Late Victorian Masculinity" 220). Although I agree that Lessingham's moments of weakness create profound doubt in the male characters as to his worthiness, I posit that it is because he allows the masculine performance to be visible rather than because it is a performance in the first place. Atherton's own statement that Lessingham should "play the man" illustrates that it was understood that masculinity was to an extent performative. Where Lessingham fails is in maintaining the show; he allows his mask to slip and as such breaks a cardinal rule of normative masculinity by allowing the performance to be conspicuous. While wearing the mask of manliness was necessary, it was also vital that this front seem authentic and that a man's personal and physical strength were viewed as inherent to his character. Men had to perform an Orwellian act of doublethink, at once knowing that they had to perform their manliness and at the same time believing the show to be true.

The need for the performance of stoic masculinity is elucidated again through Champnell after Lessingham reads the report that Champnell wrote on Marjorie's disappearance. Champnell describes Lessingham's physical reaction—"pallid cheeks, the twitched muscles of his mouth, the feverish glitter of his eyes"—and declares that "this Leader of Men, whose predominant characteristic in the House of Commons was immobility, was rapidly approximating to the

condition of a hysterical woman" (Marsh, *Beetle* 314). While Holt hints at the fact that Lessingham is hysterical, Champnell directly states it, simultaneously emasculating him. Champnell is the voice of reason throughout the novel, with his judgments of Lessingham being free of Atherton's jealous bias or Holt's lack of credibility. As such, his criticisms of Lessingham are truly damning in a way that Holt's and Atherton's are not and express the threat of male weakness with more authority. Lessingham's reactions would be recognized as minor to a reader today—simply going pale, a tightening of the mouth, and tears (unshed at that) in his eyes. These are all reasonable reactions to your fiancée being kidnapped and possibly raped and tortured. However, the simple fact that Lessingham's emotions are showing, even minimally, is enough for Champnell to allege that Lessingham is approaching hysteria and "was nearer to a state of complete mental and moral collapse" (314). A loss of any self-possession equates to a collapse of manliness and a moral failing. This has far-reaching consequences due to Lessingham's representation as "the hope for the future, including the security of the nation, and the cure for existent social ills" (Margree 70). As stated previously, the decline in male strength was one of the aspects that many believed was leading to degeneration of the British race and the possible downfall of the British Empire. Max Nordau (1849-1923), the noted degeneracy theorist, believed a "mental stigma of degenerates was their emotionalism" (Nordau 10).[171] Andrew Smith notes that for Nordau "unmanly emotionalism [w]as a key indicator of a society's ill health, and therefore, what is at stake "is the link between masculinity and nation" (A. Smith, *Victorian Demons* 16). We have already seen how Holt's weakness can be analyzed as allowing for the invasion of the Other. If a man like Lessingham is also seen as weak and capable of being unmanned on his own soil, then what hope do the British have?

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[171] Max Nordau was one of the most prevalent degeneration theorists of the Victorian era. His book *Degeneration* (1892) was widely read and attacks what Nordau saw as unmanly sentimentality and emotionalism, largely focusing on Victorian aesthetes and artists.

By comparing the endings provided to Holt and Lessingham, we can see how toxically masculine culture necessitates the performance of normative masculinity. Both encounter the Beetle in a neighborhood where respectable gentlemen were not meant to frequent, Lessingham in the native quarter of Egypt and Holt in an impoverished area of London that he indirectly parallels with the empire by claiming that he was "leaving civilization behind me" (Marsh, *Beetle* 7).[172] Holt and Lessingham are both mesmerized and unmanned by the Beetle. They both have sexual relations with the Beetle—although it is significant that Lessingham has sex with her when presenting as feminine versus Holt who is accosted by her when she is presenting as masculine. Lessingham is allowed a happy ending though, whereas Holt is killed off having supposedly "died of exhaustion" (350). I discuss Lessingham's idealized masculine attributes in the following chapter, but it is significant here that he is presumably deserving of survival not because of a flawless masculine character, but because he can perform the hegemonic masculine role well enough to be considered respectable. Holt, on the other hand, fails to perform in a manly fashion throughout the novel. His inability to find a job emasculates him; his failure to fight against mesmeric control feminizes him; his contamination of Marjorie is far from honorable; and his homoerotic acts with the Beetle correlate him with sexual perversion and deviance that was socially unacceptable and legally prohibited at the *fin de siècle*. Even Holt's physical appearance connotes weakness as Marjorie calls him "not bad-looking,—in a milk and watery sort of way" (210). He is too delicate, too impressionable, and too submissive to constitute normative masculinity, which marks him as a threat to hegemonic male power. As R.W. Connell deftly states, "The 'justifying' ideology for the patriarchal core complex and the

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[172] Holt's parallel of the East End with the empire is comparable to how many viewed exploring the East End of London as "delving into an unknown territory as awesome and terrifying as any in the 'savage' outreaches of the Empire" (Ridenhour 50). Impoverished areas of London were often likened to the empire, illustrating the interchange between British conceptions of empire and their understanding of poverty and crime. Both the colonies and these impoverished British arenas were often depicted as filled with degenerate figures and lawlessness.

overall subordination of women requires the creation of a gender-based hierarchy among men"
(*Gender and Power* 185). Masculine domination was justified due to men's supposedly natural
strength, power, and vigor. If a large sect of men failed to meet these requirements, then
masculine domination would seem contrived instead of the natural consequence of assigned
gender traits. As such any man who does not fit the mold at least in his outward appearance must
be separated from masculinity, unmanned and exiled to the margins of society. Holt's death
represents the toxically masculine desire to check the outliers whom they perceived as
threatening to patriarchal power. Holt's treatment in the novel illustrates the negative effect that
toxically masculine culture can have on men who fail to meet the standards of hegemonic
masculinity. Both Holt's and Lessingham's attempts to "play the man" exhibit the anxiety caused
by such stringent expectations, an anxiety that is also conspicuous in Guy Boothby's *Pharos the
Egyptian*.

II. Failed Masculinity in *Pharos the Egyptian*

Pharos the Egyptian is a prime text for analyzing late Victorian constructs of appropriate
masculinity due to the profusion of masculine weakness exhibited in its pages in conjunction
with high levels of anxiety surrounding the performance of masculinity and the catastrophic
results of male lack. Cyril Forrester in *Pharos* is a prime example of the masculine weakness that
Imperial Gothic texts uniformly caution against. While Forrester's friend Sir William Betford
claims, "a more honourable being does not walk this earth" (Boothby 10) and Forrester himself
believes that he is "an honest man" (238), this sense of gentlemanly honor does not equate in this
novel to masculine strength. There is also the strong sense that while Forrester may present to

many as manly, this front hides a man who is actually extremely inept and constantly anxious about his masculine performance. Performing acceptable masculinity is presented as necessary and healthy in the novel, but at the same time, the text exhibits definite anxiety that performative masculinity may simply put a pretty package on a contaminating influence.

Despite Forrester's best attempts at performing the normative masculine role, the reader witnesses Forrester's inaction or ineffectuality repeatedly throughout the novel. Often his futility is couched in the ineffectiveness of overly-civilized gentlemanly behavior that relies on social reprimands and legal strictures to solve problems instead of physical conflict. For instance, one can see from the earliest interactions between Pharos and Forrester that in his attempts to play the gentleman, Forrester allows Pharos to dominate him. When Pharos breaks into Forrester's apartment, Forrester declares, "I must exert myself to conciliate him" (52). This is a very different response to that of the more assertive Lessingham in *The Beetle* who responds to Holt's illegal entry by becoming "something suggestive of a bird of prey considering just when, where, and how to pounce" (Marsh 46). It is significant that Lessingham is referred to here as a "bird of prey," which is a phrase previously ascribed to the Beetle. This illustrates how strong British men were expected to co-opt certain characteristics of the Other, namely aggressive violence, in order to physically oppose threats against the empire. I discussed previously how British men admired the might of native peoples like the Zulus even as they constructed racist arguments for their oppression. While the villains are dehumanized through these animalistic descriptions, a level of acceptance is proffered to the hero who embodies these characteristics because martial masculinity requires having the tenacity to match these qualities of the Other when necessary. Granted, Lessingham immediately falters in his attack upon hearing the Beetle's name, but he shows a readiness to defend his territory that Forrester never approaches. In *Pharos*, the titular

character verbally and physically attacks Forrester, before mesmerically rendering him unconscious and stealing the sarcophagus in Forrester's possession. Moreover, upon leaving Forrester's apartment, Pharos proceeds to murder a local shopkeeper, a crime which leads the police to Forrester's door. Forrester's response to this list of outrages is not to physically subdue this villainous character as most would expect of a turn-of-the-century hero, but instead he asserts, "I would seek Pharos out, accuse him not only of the theft, but of the murder, and make him understand, with all the earnestness of which I was master, that justice should be done" (Boothby 72). This is a somewhat ludicrous statement after the extent of Pharos's crimes even this early in the novel. It amounts to Forrester's belief that he can convince Pharos to turn himself in or accept justice simply by earnestly detailing Pharos's moral failing. Forrester claims that speaking to Pharos face-to-face about this matter would preserve Forrester as "an honourable man" (81). His desire to verbally confront Pharos may very well portray him as honorable, but it does not in the Imperial Gothic genre make him very manly. Forrester's ineffectuality is on full display when he goes all the way to Naples to confront Pharos only to be immediately mollified by Pharos's dubious explanation of the situation. Forrester constantly tries to use the gentlemanly code of conduct with Pharos to laughable inadequacy. When upset by Pharos abandoning him in a tomb overnight, Forrester states, "I resolved to let him know my opinion of his conduct at the earliest opportunity" (229). Even though Forrester berating Pharos would be pointless in itself, he fails to even verbally rage against his foe. Forrester constantly declares his intent to oppose Pharos and then immediately acquiesces to Pharos's desires upon their next meeting. There is definitely meant to be some suspicion that Forrester's susceptibility to Pharos comes from Pharos's mesmeric powers. However, this does little to lessen Forrester's perceived weakness due to the connection between mesmerism and emasculation.

During the late nineteenth century, there was an ambivalent feeling toward pacific versus martial masculinity, with both being acceptable forms of masculinity in various situations. Although the mid-nineteenth century favored physically restrained gentlemanly behavior, by the late Victorian era, militant male behavior was increasingly valorized under the atmosphere of New Imperialism as discussed in my introduction. The mid-century pacific masculinity existed concurrently with the late-century neo-chivalric knight, so *fin-de-siècle* men had to navigate the precarious channel between polite gentlemanly demeanor and the ability to play the hooligan if the occasion arose.[173] As Margery Masterson asserts,

> A gentleman had recourse to the courts and to the newspapers to arbitrate a disagreement, but *not* because he was afraid to meet the scoundrel in the street. A gentleman could delegate the protection of his person and family to the authorities, yet he must be able to defend himself and his home if attacked. And, of course, a gentleman should not fight a duel—provided he was unafraid to do so. (627)

As Masterson illustrates, although gentlemanly behavior was expected of the ideal, it could not exist as idealized masculinity without the accompaniment of martial capabilities. Befitting an imperialist text, *Pharos* repeatedly denigrates pacific masculinity as incapable of preserving British sovereignty, thus advocating for a more martial manliness. Forrester is clearly a depiction of pacific masculinity in this novel. Although he is aware that as a man he should be capable of violence and regularly claims with masculine bravado that he will "show no mercy" (Boothby 95) to Pharos, he is never able to fulfill the martial masculinity required to be appropriately

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[173] See Jones 67; Rebry 5, 12; Masterson, especially 627; and also Sussman, especially 3, for examinations of the unsteady balancing act that mid- to late Victorian men had to achieve between extremes of masculinity.

manly. Instead, Forrester attempts to use mid-century gentlemanly codes of pacific conduct to solve his conflicts or blames his inaction on diplomacy. For instance, when the Egyptian priests tells Forrester to lie down on a slab in the temple, Forrester claims,

> Under other circumstances I should have protested most vigorously, but I was in such a position now that I came to the conclusion that it would not only be useless but most impolitic on my part to put myself in opposition against him thus early in the day. I accordingly did as I was ordered. (217)

Forrester literally offers himself up as a sacrificial object out of fear of being "impolitic." The use of this word highlights the futility of gentlemanly politeness. In order to be polite and diplomatic, Forrester places himself at the mercy of men who infect him with the plague. Boothby directly connects Forrester's ineffectuality with illness when Forrester states, "I did as he desired. [...] I was feeling too ill to protest or to care" (230). Many in late Victorian society would see male apathy and inaction as symptomatic of the degeneracy that threatened the nation, whereas a determined will, self-control, and action were the epitome of masculinity. Forrester proves to possess none of the latter qualities. Instead of fighting against Pharos, he claims, "We are in the hands of a remorseless fate, and are being dragged along by it, powerless to help ourselves" (308). He uses his feelings of helplessness as an excuse for inaction and therefore fails to enact normative masculinity. Boothby does not present Forrester's gentlemanly demeanor as a desirable quality but instead repeatedly proves this over-refined instinct to be futile, weak, and dangerous to society because Forrester fails to back it up with physical capacity.

There is a strong moral component to Forrester's weakness and ineptitude as well. Forrester's inability in the beginning of the novel to confess Pharos's crimes to the police is the first hint of moral corruption. Forrester recognizes his own moral failings when he declares, "Could it be true that I, who had always regarded a liar as the most despicable of men, had sunk so low as to become one myself? God help me! God pity me!" (68). His exclamation of help from God falls on deaf ears as he is instead further corrupted by Pharos who is regularly paralleled to the devil. After their Egyptian escapades, Pharos smuggles Forrester and Valerie back into England despite the ban against incoming ships due to the outbreak of plague on the continent. Forrester describes their return to England by comparing their crew to "gaol-breakers" and claims, "You might have supposed, from the way we stopped and shrank back into the bushes, that we had come near being caught red-handed in the committal of a deed of the most determined atrocity" (310). Forrester easily allows himself to be duped by a man he knows to be treacherous and is led into actions that are not just criminal but rather horrific in their scale as he spreads the plague throughout Europe. Forrester is not only culpable as the plague carrier but also in that he withholds the cure that could act as Europe's salvation. When Valerie contracts the plague and is cured by Pharos, Forrester capitulates to Pharos's command that the hotel staff not be informed of her illness. Forrester is either so corrupted or so obtuse that he fails to realize the implications of his silence. By concealing Valerie's illness, he also withholds the evidence of her being cured. Although he carries the recipe for the cure in his hands, Forrester never even briefly considers releasing knowledge of the remedy to the public, even though it could save countless lives. It is not until after the plague has already eaten through his homeland that he sees fit to mention the cure's existence. The moral component of masculine weakness elevates Forrester's

failures from a simple character flaw to a threat to British national identity and western civilization.

Forrester's weakness is highlighted most poignantly by Valerie's strength, marking another example of feminine power that emphasizes male fragility. Valerie is both physically and morally stronger than Forrester. Her moral prowess is not shocking since morality was deemed part of the feminine sphere, but it is worth looking at here to point out how her strength highlights Forrester's weakness. Whilst on the ship bound for England, Valerie finds out that the plague had reached their departure point of Hamburg. Upon hearing this, she immediately declares that they should not go to England because "we may carry the infection from Hamburg with us, and thousands of innocent people will suffer in consequence" (296). At this point, Forrester knows that the plague is not just in Hamburg but is on the very ship that carries them to his homeland. Despite this knowledge, he had still planned to return to England and admits "the true consequences of the action to which she referred had never struck me" (297). The fact that Forrester had not even fully evaluated the consequences of landing a plagued ship on British soil is inexcusably negligent. Unlike Valerie, a foreigner, who immediately knows that they must protect innocent British life, Forrester tarries, weakly claiming that Pharos had already decided they would go to England and "if he has made up his mind to go, how are we to gainsay him?" (297). He is ready to throw up his hands in defeat and put his country at peril. It is Valerie who declares the necessity to avoid England at all costs as a moral imperative:

At any cost to ourselves we must not go," she said firmly and decidedly. "The lives of loving parents, of women and little children, the happiness of an entire nation depend upon our actions. What is our safety, great as it seems to us, compared with theirs? (297)

Her "firm" and "decided" declaration imbues her with the masculine virtue of stalwart determination. This is directly opposed to Forrester's futility and helplessness. He takes on the feminine submissive role when he declares to Valerie, "Whatever you wish, I will do" (297) and later, "You have decided for me" (298). Both Forrester and Valerie confess that they would rather infect the mainland than risk each other's health on board the ship; however, Valerie's first instinct toward heroic and moral action still distances her from Forrester's complete uselessness.

Whereas Forrester desperately tries to position himself as Valerie's savior, it is Valerie who is more often the heroic character. From first meeting Forrester, she attempts to save him from a fate that she knows is worse than death. Valerie tells Forrester, "I am only trying to save you [...] I read disaster in your face, and from that moment I desired to prevent it" (134). Indeed, if he had listened to Valerie and turned away from Pharos in the beginning, Forrester would have been saved from his disastrous fate. However, Forrester perceives himself as the chivalric protector of weak women and therefore refuses to relinquish his attempts to save Valerie. His one attempt to whisk her away from danger fails dismally as Valerie contracts the plague, remains under Pharos's power, and ultimately must rely on Pharos to save her life. Forrester's attempts to verbally debate with Pharos or flee from conflict are proven inadequate and Pharos rightly shouts at Forrester, "Frail atom in the path of life, who are thou that thou shouldst deem thyself strong enough to cope with me?" (358). This exclamation echoes the degenerate description earlier of Pharos as a "deformed atom" (69), proving that both Pharos and Forrester were in some sense degenerate and lesser than the ideal British man. Forrester as a weak man does not have the power to oppose Pharos and in fact never so much as raises a hand to him throughout the entire novel. On the other hand, directly after this encounter, Forrester describes Valerie's attempt to

overcome Pharos, stating, "I saw Valerie rise from the place where she had hitherto been crouching, and snatch an oriental dagger from a table. Then, swift as a panther, she sprang upon him, only to be hurled back against the wall as if struck by an invisible hand" (358). Valerie tries to fight back and shows an animalistic strength in her attempt. Male heroic characters in Imperial Gothic texts often embody the animalistic traits more often associated with the other in order to fight back against these savage forces, such as when Lessingham and the Beetle are both depicted as a "bird of prey" (Marsh, *Beetle* 18, 46) as discussed previously. Valerie's parallel to a panther firmly aligns her with this version of masculine heroism. Despite failing to prevail against Pharos, she is still presented as stronger than Forrester who, "obedient as a little child, [...] closed [his] eyes and slept" (Boothby 358). Valerie's physical courage directly contrasts Forrester's passive obedience. She is willing to embrace the martial strength necessary to oppose the Other; whereas, Forrester never progresses past his gentlemanly passivity. Both fail here since Valerie's femininity precludes her from defeating Pharos physically. However, at the end of the novel, it is Valerie's vision and not any action taken by Forrester that leads to Pharos's downfall. Valerie is depicted as the ultimate hero of the novel when she tells Forrester at the end "I have saved you" (376). This could be alluding to her nursing Forrester back to health in an appropriately feminine fashion, but it also suggests her taking up the masculine mantle of protector that Forrester failed to claim.

Forrester exhibits a profound level of anxiety about his performance of masculinity as evidenced by his defensiveness about moments he knows may be read as weak. Since this entire narrative is written as letters between male friends, the narrators are constantly aware of and anxious about how they might be perceived as they relate their actions and feelings. Forrester becomes defensive and makes excuses for his moments of weakness several times throughout the

novel. For instance, when he admits to not attacking Pharos, he states, "Old man as he was, a braver man than myself might have been excused had he declined the task of tackling him, and I had the additional spur of knowing that if he got the better of me he would show no mercy" (60). Forrester knows that the prescribed actions for manliness would have required a martial competition with his foe, so he projects his shame outward, attesting that even the bravest of men would have failed to physically oppose Pharos. His defensiveness proves that he is aware of, albeit in denial of, his cowardice. In another moment of cowardice during the storm at sea when he "clung to the rails like a drowning man" (154), Forrester argues, "I had excellent reasons for being afraid, for the picture before me was one that might have appalled the stoutest heart" (154). Again, he inherently feels his failure of normative brave masculinity and tries to appease his shame by attesting that any man would feel similarly. This is clearly denied by the depiction of the stalwart sea captain who drags Forrester to safety when he sees him above board and the sailor steering the ship who "was as undaunted by the war of the elements going on around him as if he were sitting by the fireside, smoking his pipe, ashore" (155). The text presents these seamen as exhibiting the ideals of manliness: determination, composure, and dependability. Even the sailor's physiology connotes manliness with his "bushy eyebrows" and "the largest hands [...] ever seen on a human being" (155). Since Forrester is writing this account, he can be seen as subconsciously comparing himself to these masculine paragons and coming up short. Forrester constantly tries to buttress his manly character with references to his past strength. For instance, at the beginning of the text when he feels faint at the party—a state that is highly feminized—he argues, "I was not subject to fainting-fits, but was, in every respect, as strong as the majority of my fellow-creatures" (43). Later, when he quakes under Pharos's attack at his apartment, Forrester declares "I had never regarded myself in the light of a coward; on the contrary, I had on

several occasions had good reason to congratulate myself upon what is popularly termed my 'nerve'" (61). Forrester displays a clear understanding of appropriate masculinity and displays constant anxiety about his failure to meet standardized expectations.

Anxieties around lapses of masculinity are not just visible in Forrester but also in Forrester's friend, Sir William Bedford, to whom Forrester relates his tale of woe. After reading Forrester's letter, Bedford relates,

> Tears stood in my eyes. [...] And why should I not have been affected? Forrester and I had been good friends in the old days, and it was only fit and proper I should mourn his loss. Handsome, generous, clever, who could help loving him? I could not, that's certain. (19)

There was clearly a strong homosocial bond between Bedford and Forrester during their schooldays. His admission of loving Forrester can easily be read as a straightforward example of male friendship, but there is at least the possibility that his love for Forrester went deeper, especially since he references Forrester's good looks. Like Forrester, Bedford tries to project his own feelings on the greater male populace by declaring "who could help loving him?" He attempts to defend against a reading of his own possible weakness and shore up his masculinity. If Forrester were the only character to display masculine anxiety, one could claim it was isolated to an extremely inept class of men. However, it must be remembered that Forrester imagines himself as a strong, honorable man throughout the novel and Sir William typifies himself as a paragon of masculinity at the beginning by emphasizing his straightforward nature as "a plain man, fond of a plain life and plain speaking" (9). Anxiety regarding gender performance is thus

presented as a common part of the male experience and shows the dangers of a toxically masculine culture that promotes hegemonic masculinity.

Pharos provides a catalog of supposedly unacceptable forms of masculinity. Not only does the main character present as an entirely ineffectual man, but we are given example after example of men that Pharos is able to manipulate, take advantage of, and then ruin—each with his own form of failed masculinity. While none of the men are wholly effeminate, each has a warning sign in their character that proves them unworthy in the conservative Victorian mindset. When the reader first meets Pharos, he is at the scene of a "wretched suicide" (26) of what Forrester calls "a poor tattered creature, yet still possessing some pretensions to gentlemanly address" (24). The reader first perceives this suicidal individual as a poor man, desperate and down on his luck—very much like Holt in *The Beetle*. When Forrester demonizes Pharos for allowing this man to drown, Pharos argues, "He was starving; he was without hope. [...] Would you therefore have had me, knowing all this, prolong such an existence?" (54). He raises a question prevalent throughout the novel of whether weakness should be paid with death in order to protect society at large. Pharos asserts that poverty is such a deplorable state that death is better—a stance that has extreme consequences for a society with a high rate of poverty due to increased urbanization. Although Forrester calls this "a detestable" argument (54), Pharos pushes the matter when he calls the man "a contemptible scoundrel in every way" (54). He explains to Forrester that the man "robbed his father's till to indulge in debauchery" and that "though employment was repeatedly offered him, he refused it, not from any inability to work, but from sheer distaste of labour" (54). This provides the reader with their first example of degenerate masculinity and the downfall precipitated by such a condition. This character's refusal to work immediately distances him from respectable masculinity with its emphasis on productivity. His

preference for "debauchery," probably some mixture of gambling, drinking, and cavorting with sex workers, depicts him as morally tainted as well as idle. His failings as a man are all self-induced since as Pharos asserts, "He came of respectable stock, was reared under the happiest auspices. Had he chosen he might have risen to anything in his own rank of life; but he would not choose" (54). Far from being part of the working class who were naturally considered to be more prone to immoral behavior, this man was well-off and as such was expected to represent a higher character. To add to his sins, he had "married a girl as good as he was bad, and as a result starved not only himself but his wife and children" (54). Not only does his depravity disgrace his parents and his upper-class upbringing, but it also harms his wife and child. By painting the wife as morally good, his sin against the idealized Victorian Madonna figure becomes particularly damning. This character fails as a productive member of society, a moral member of society, and a paterfamilias—all aspects of prized masculinity. His contaminating influence can be seen when Pharos states "upon all with whom he came in contact, he brought misery and disgrace" (55). This quotation provides the first inkling of the novel's obsession with physical and moral contamination, reflecting the anxieties surrounding degeneracy at the *fin de siècle*. The novel continually questions whether the weak masculine figures that Pharos encounters are deserving of their fate in a narrative that abounds with male fragility and suicide.

While the nameless man who takes his own life in the Thames is considered degenerate due to his refusal to work thereby disgracing class and family, being unable to work despite wanting to is depicted as equally emasculating. One of the male characters exploited by Pharos is Johann Schmidt, a character similar to Holt in that he is emasculated as a result of "endeavoring to obtain work" but being "unsuccessful" (108). After Pharos murdered the curiosity dealer, Herman Clausand, he mesmerically convinces Schmidt to turn himself in to the authorities as the

supposed killer. Schmidt claims that after Clausand denied him employment or "at least money sufficient to enable him to find shelter for the night" (108), he stabbed the man out of anger. Schmidt's lack of employment positions him within the conservative Victorian frame of mind as a failed version of masculinity. Like all of the novel's men, his weakness positions him as easy prey for Pharos's mesmerism and manipulation. The novel lends Schmidt slightly more pity than the previous man but still ends with his suicide, either out of shame or more likely under Pharos's mesmeric influence. In either case, he is presented as an unacceptable specimen of masculinity that is easily wiped from existence. Olive Anderson asserts that for some eugenicists at the *fin de siècle*, "suicide was thus part of the mechanism which ensured 'the survival of the fittest'. It followed that it could be regarded as all to the good if these 'diseased unfortunates', by destroying themselves, removed the risk that they would perpetuate a diseased strain" (70). *Pharos* certainly seems to follow in this vein of thinking and presents little lenience for circumstance, prescribing suicide for both the well-to-do man who refuses to work and the working-class man who cannot find work. They both fail to meet the standard of productive labor prescribed for manliness and therefore are disposed of.

On the other side of the socioeconomic spectrum, the novel provides us an example of an English "nobleman" whom Pharos calls "one of life's failures" because "his accession to the title [...] and the wealth it carried with it, completely destroyed him" (Boothby 119). Although he was a relatively talented writer, his coming into his title and the privileges associated with aristocracy caused his ambiguous downfall. He most likely gambled away his wealth and is then completely ruined when attempting to regain it at the gaming-tables. Pharos claims his failures in gambling as partially due to his "[in]sufficient courage" (119), thus highlighting his masculine weakness. However, this nobleman's degeneracy was supposedly already in his blood as hinted at when

Pharos describes his daughter as "a paralytic" (119) who later dies. Her weakness is presumably inherited through a faulty bloodline passed on by her degenerate father, furthering the novel's argument that masculine weakness causes future degeneration. Although Pharos is "the very man who [...] had brought about his ruin" (120), the novel never casts the nobleman as innocent. He is a victim of Pharos's manipulation but only due to his own weakness. Similarly, toward the end of the novel, another member of the peerage is mentioned when Forrester relates that "the late Lord Tollingtower had reached the end of his extraordinary career under circumstances that had created rather a sensation at the time" (320). The reader understands this as being due to Pharos's influence when Pharos states, "I stayed with him throughout his last illness and was with him when he died" (320). The reader is not privy to Lord Tollingtower's masculine indiscretion, but it is significant that until his ambiguous scandal, he had an extremely successful career and was well respected. Lord Tollingtower's appearance of respectable masculinity served to hide private practices that eventually undermined his position. Whilst the novel acknowledges and accepts a level of falsity in one's outward persona as necessary, it is conflicted about the ultimate benevolence of this false public face. Lord Tollingtower's demise and Forrester's corruption at the hands of the supernatural indicates the likelihood that the internal weakness of men will lead to destruction even if covered up or denied.

The last of the minor male characters I discuss is Sir George Legrath. The ambivalent stance that the novel takes on Sir George's character is particularly important for a study that examines the deleterious effects of hegemonic masculinity. Forrester describes Sir George as "kindly of heart and the possessor of a comfortable income, [so that] it is certain that but few of those in need who applied to him did so in vain" (77). Sir George fulfills his social role of giving generously to those less fortunate, and in his position as benefactor proves his wealth and

professional competency. Forrester also claims that Sir George was "plain and straightforward" and "usually the most self-contained of men" (87, 126)—values that were synonymous with masculinity during the Victorian era. However, Sir George also exhibits certain forms of masculinity that did not comply with mainstream manliness. Significantly, Sir George is clearly a dandy as evidenced by his "velvet office-coat" (77) and Forrester's declaration that Sir George "had also the reputation of being one of the best-dressed men in London, and was at all times careful to a degree of his appearance" (77). Appropriately masculine figures of the period were expected to give little thought to their clothing beyond appearing clean and tidy. A black frock coat, trousers, and a top-hat were the almost constant attire of most men in power at the time.[174] By contrast, dandyism was "the performance of a highly stylized, painstakingly constructed self" that emphasized "the suppression of the 'natural'" (Garelick 3). Sir George is also ambiguously connected to Pharos, which speaks to some form of corruption or deviance. Sir George's life may have presented as appropriately upright and honorable; however, there was clearly something beneath the surface that caused his downfall. Considering the media storm behind the Wilde trials—Wilde being quite possibly the most notorious dandy of the period—Boothby is quite likely hinting toward hidden homosexual tendencies. If one presumes this as the cause of his corruption, then Sir George is an excellent example of the dangers of a toxically masculine culture that demonizes an otherwise kind, generous, and good man for how he dresses and who he loves.

More damning in Forrester's view is that Sir George is too cowardly to reveal what he knows of Pharos. When Forrester first mentions Pharos, Sir George "sprang to his feet with an exclamation that was as startling as it was unexpected" (78), turns "ashen pale" and starts

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[174] See Griffin,especially 189-190, for more on how clothing was used as representative of forms of masculinity particularly in reference to the male governing bodies.

"shaking as with the palsy" (79). When Forrester pushes him for knowledge, Sir George claims that whatever he knows he will take with him to the grave—a rather accurate claim—and significantly declares "I am powerless, how powerless" (81). The gender hierarchy was predicated on masculine power, so for a man to be powerless emasculates him and takes away his position of respectability. Sir George's cowardice also possibly damns Forrester who may have been saved by a clearer revelation of Pharos's nature. When Forrester and Sir George meet again after Forrester's disastrous misadventures, Forrester claims, "For the first time in my life his presence was almost distasteful to me, though if I had been asked the reason I should have found it difficult to say why" (344). Although Forrester is unable to find the words for it, he presumably feels that Sir George failed him. Instead of enacting a homosocial male adventure where they overcome the racial Other together, these men are separated by their hidden shame and therefore come to destruction unaided by their fellow man.

All of the supposedly weak men in this novel take their own lives with the exception of Forrester, who wishes he had died and is exiled, and possibly Lord Tollingtower, whose cause of death is never stated. The correlation between masculine weakness and suicide in this novel highlights one of the dangers of a toxically masculine culture. Any failure, especially public failures, diminishes one's manhood and therefore humanity since the non-manly man was viewed as almost monstrous to conservative voices of the age. While some of the masculine failures—like gambling away your fortune and ruining your wife and children or in Forrester's case causing the death of millions through plague—are extreme in fitting the melodrama of the genre, some of the male characters are proven unworthy for more commonplace failings such as being unable to procure a job or being gay and interested in fashion. Regardless of how these men fail to live up to the normative expectations of the period, they are labeled in some way

degenerate and destructive. Despite Forrester being the plague carrier, the novel asserts that all of these weak men contributed in some way to the contamination of western civilization and the destruction of the European races. Sir George's silence places Forrester at Pharos's mercy; Tollingtower, Schmidt, and the English nobleman all allow Pharos to gain control over them and increase his power. The suicide in the Thames led to the dissolution of his innocent child and Madonna-like wife. The men in this novel kill themselves rather than face the disgrace of failing in their masculine roles. This represents the extreme end of the dangers inherent in toxically masculine culture. The anxiety that the male characters experience throughout in terms of their masculinity reaches a crisis point when they perpetrate a clear violation of normative manhood. A study by William Ogle in 1886 shows that educated, professional men were more likely to die by suicide than laborers and that men were more than twice as likely to take their own lives than women. Education and professional standing equate to greater social status and greater expectations. One of those expectations for men was a performance of acceptable masculinity and throughout the century that performance became progressively more difficult. I am not making the claim that anxiety surrounding normative masculinity solely caused the ten percent increase in suicide between 1861 and 1884 (Ogle 112) or the "upward jump in official suicide and attempted suicide rates which took place in the early 1890s" (Anderson 244) since there were a plethora of situations that may have contributed to this increase. However, manliness was intricately intertwined in the male experience with professional success, mental health, domestic life, public standing, and many of the other causes of self-harm. *Pharos* certainly equates masculine failings with suicide, and it is fair to say that it may be a contributory factor. The toxic nature of hegemonic masculinity comes to the fore when we analyze the pernicious effect it has on all within its range of influence. Not only are women and the foreign Other oppressed by its

strictures of control, but men within the dominant system are also harmed as a result of the pressure to conform to masculine standards.

III. The Imperial Gothic as a Cautionary Genre

Weak men like Holt and Forrester are easily depicted as emasculated and impotent in Imperial Gothic literature, but the greatest danger in terms of hegemonic masculinity is that strong men can be unmanned as well. Kelly Hurley attests that "masculinity is an unstable construct" in *The Beetle* as male characters are unmanned by the titular character (Hurley 143). This is less troublesome in Holt's case because he does not present as normatively masculine, but the instability of masculinity is more alarming in a man like Lessingham who presents as an idealized male figure. The same destabilizing effect can be seen throughout the Imperial Gothic genre as otherwise strong, active, healthy men are proven impotent. There is a prevalent feeling running through Imperial Gothic literature at the *fin de siècle* that men need to be constantly on their guard, cautious never to allow their weaknesses to be exposed. Above all, strong men must not allow for the weakening influence of either the New Woman or the racial Other, any allying with whom would ostensibly lead to their unmanning. I have already analyzed Lessingham's emasculation at the hands of strong women and foreign influences in addition to how interracial relationships are usually depicted in the Imperial Gothic as leading to male effeminacy, insanity, and death.[175] It is worth restating my conclusion that each of these instances depicts an otherwise strong man who is weakened by his relationship with a foreign Other or New Woman archetype. These men allow themselves to be influenced by these groups that were meant to be lower on the

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[175] Some of the Imperial Gothic texts that explore the motif of miscegenation leading to British dissolution include H. Rider Haggard's *Smith and the Pharaohs* (1921), H.D. Everett's *Iras a Mystery*, and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*.

social hierarchy. By giving marginalized groups more power, the men threaten their own place on the pyramid and either fall to their destruction or have to destroy the foreign Other and contain the New Woman to maintain their position at the zenith. In each case, the men's moments of weakness threaten not just their own position but the futurity of Britain as they allow for the foreign Other to gain dominion on British soil.

While the unmanning of strong male characters is obviously visible in a plentitude of texts from the period, in this section, I explore this motif in Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* because its male characters are far more idealized than many Gothic male characters; their virtuosity is far less ambiguous and their masculinity slightly less impugned than the characters in other *fin-de-siècle* narratives. They do not possess the obvious sexual depravity of Lessingham with the Woman of Songs and his subsequent hysterical moments, nor are they ineffectual versions of masculinity like Forrester. They are not economically down-on-their-luck, nor are they dandies, aesthetes, nor overly intellectual at the expense of their masculine strength. The men in *Jewel* are paragons of bourgeois professionalism and respectability. As such, their downfall illustrates the difficulty of fulfilling hegemonic masculine expectations and the dire consequences imagined for even the smallest failing. The novel paints the ideal male as an everyday man of work and as such is populated by a lawyer, a doctor, a police sergeant, and two explorers—capable men who take these roles seriously.[176] Many at this time believed that "it was through the middle class, specifically through their supposed diligence, level-headedness, and capacity for hard work, that society could be revitalised" (A. Smith, *Victorian Demons* 15). We see all of these idealized traits exhibited in the male characters in *Jewel*, so when these archetypes of middle-class, male respectability are undone by the female Other, the threat is

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[176] Sir James Frere, whom I discuss later, may be considered as an exception to this rule due to his aristocratic position. However, he is also a man of work as a brain specialist in the medical field.

more poignant and more destabilizing. The only social sin these men commit is an overabundance of understanding and acceptance of the New Woman and the racial Other. This acceptance is what qualifies them as supposedly weak men that allow for patriarchal downfall and the rise of foreign entities. I primarily focus on the original version of *Jewel* published in 1903, although I also look briefly at the revised version published in 1912 when analyzing the end of the narrative. While the men in this novel do exhibit toxically masculine traits—particularly performative masculinity and misogyny—I posit this novel as toxically masculine primarily because the novel's ending propagates the misogynistic and xenophobic idea that furthering the "agenda" of either the New Woman or the Other leads to the destruction of the male body and, symbolically, the demise of British sovereignty.

For most of the novel, the male characters display a misogynistic and patronizing attitude toward Margaret, and thus fulfill the expectations of the male dominating class. They overlook her in favor of working with Ross, exclude her from the homosocial sphere, and regulate what knowledge she is allowed to possess, thereby keeping Margaret in her normative feminine space. These toxically masculine attitudes depict the male characters as men in charge and ensure their position of power. It is when they abandon these principles of masculinity that they are most threatened by the encroaching forces of the New Woman and the foreign Other. The shift from this system of exclusion takes place almost immediately after Mr. Trelawny awakens from his comatose state. Mr. Trelawny is the character primarily responsible for inviting Margaret into the homosocial sphere. I discuss the homosocial sphere more fully in the final chapter of this thesis; however, it is significant here that the homosocial was envisioned as a bastion of male privilege from which all others were rejected. Before Mr. Trelawny awakens, Margaret is categorically excluded from the male spaces of the library and the study. She regularly invades these areas but

quickly departs out of what appears to be shame. However, one of Mr. Trelawny's first acts upon

waking is to invite Margaret into the male space of the library with Ross and himself, instructing

her to "Come to the library, where we will be alone" (Stoker 109). This request echoes an earlier

moment when Winchester appeals to Ross for a private homosocial meeting in the library. On

being allowed into the homosocial sphere, Margaret's strength is exhibited more freely and

finally without apology. When Ross protests being sent home for the night, Margaret cuts him off

to proclaim everyone in the house safe. Ross comments on this action, recounting, "To my

surprise Margaret interrupted me" (109). Margaret proclaiming her voice above his is unexpected

and shocking for Ross, but he cannot protest because her father is in the room condoning it. Mr.

Trelawny, in fact, seems to honor Margaret's voice and opinion. Later, he invites Margaret into

his study—another primarily male space—to speak again with himself and Ross. Here, Margaret

openly disagrees with her father's wish to distance her from the experiment. Furthermore, she

almost demands that Ross side with her, declaring, "love is trust; and you must trust me in

danger as well as in joy. You and I must stand beside Father in this unknown peril" (111). The

repeated use of the word "must" makes this a command that Ross is forced to follow, turning him

into the submissive figure and Margaret into the dominant. There is no wavering in Margaret's

opinion, nor does she apologize for being so direct. She is painted as "standing erect" and "like a

Queen" (111). Neither Ross nor Mr. Trelawny resolutely forces Margaret back into her

submissive feminine role, instead acquiescing to her wish to attend the experiment along with the

other men. Directly following this moment of feminine strength, the other male characters enter

the study and gather themselves into a circle around Mr. Trelawny. Margaret is seated directly on

his right, claiming the seat traditionally associated with the highest power, besides Mr. Trelawny

himself. She positions herself as quite literally "at the right hand of the father" and thus enacts a turning point in the power hierarchy previously established.

The respect previously only accorded to the men in the novel is extended to Margaret once she has been accepted into the homosocial sphere. The male characters begin to perceive her intelligence as worth heeding. The men feel some anxiety about Tera's purpose once reanimated and begin to waver on the desirability of bringing this figure back to life, but Margaret defends the queen's motives and paints her as a benevolent figure who simply dreams for a better future. Ross claims after her speech that "even her tone was new to us all, so that we listened as to a new and strange being from a new and strange world" (121). Margaret's tone is one of determination and purpose and would certainly have been new to the men who had only viewed her as a diminutive figure and had rationalized away any proof of her strength and intelligence up to that point. The men are portrayed as almost bewitched by Margaret's words, and allow themselves to be convinced by her opinion, assuming the best of Margaret and her understanding of Tera's motives. Trelawny declares, "Margaret has given us the true inwardness of the feeling of the other Queen! [...] I sincerely hope she is right" (122). Despite recognizing that Tera's intentions may be nefarious, he chooses to ignore that possibility and allow both Margaret and Tera to have sway over him. The men's previous caution is characterized as eminently rational but is overcome by feminine sentimentality that leads to reckless action and dissolution. Ultimately, Margaret is not characterized as a wise, forward-thinking woman but is instead depicted as duped by Tera, her New Woman role model. Listening to her is not a sign of masculine progress but instead proves foolhardy and dangerous.

Under Mr. Trelawny's influence, the male characters first include his daughter into their sphere and then forcefully attempt to reanimate Margaret's ancient, foreign doppelganger. The

men go along with Trelawny's dangerous plan, inviting the foreign Other into their world and thereby willingly enacting Tera's plans of invasion. Mr. Trelawny dreams of combining ancient, mystical knowledge with that of the modern world, and all of the other men flock to help him in his endeavors. Although it is true that "Trelawney's [*sic*] determination to restore Tera is less a matter of kindness or sympathy than an expression of a will to power in the form of omniscience" (Deane, "Imperial Striptease" 405), Trelawny is ultimately playing into the hands of the Other, even whilst trying to gain power for himself. Trelawny places his faith in the reinvigoration of foreign, ancient entities instead of British modernity and this alignment with the East is proven disastrous. All of the men in this novel can be criticized as suffering from an overabundance of acceptance for the Other. They picture, partly through Margaret's misinformation, the foreign queen as benevolent and able to be integrated into their current society. Andrew Smith notes that "the group of resurrectionists believe that she is really 'human' and can therefore be accommodated in their world" ("Love, Freud, and the Female Gothic" 83). This results in their doom as all of these men's acceptance and hopes for inclusion are proven disastrous. The novel thereby asserts that sympathy or empathy for the Other only serves to threaten Britain's safety and sovereignty. Such a stance substantiates the toxically masculine divide between men and marginalized groups, and this divide is ultimately what maintains the male dominated power structure.

The more power these men afford to Margaret and Tera, the more they are emasculated in the wake of these powerful women. All of the novel's men succumb to either the New Woman or the Other, and most succumb to both. Ross, Daw, Corbeck and Mr. Trelawny are all overcome by mesmeric force at some point and are thus emasculated as their agency and autonomy is stripped away from them. There is an inordinate amount of shame associated with this form of

emasculation as can be seen by the extreme guilt Ross feels after falling asleep while watching Mr. Trelawny, presumably entranced by the Egyptian curios that surround him. Ross tells Margaret, "Don't give me a thought! I don't deserve it. [...] I didn't mean to, and I tried to avoid it; but it was over me before I knew it" (Stoker 28). The halting staccato of this speech displays Ross's confusion, guilt, defensiveness, and shame. Even though Ross uses a respirator to attempt to avoid the influence of the Egyptian objects around him, this proves unsuccessful. The force of the Other is portrayed as pervasive as if it were an airborne disease from which no one is safe. By being emasculated, Ross forfeits his claim, at least temporarily, to Margaret's considerations and respect. Ross refers to his falling prey to the mesmeric force as his "default" (29) implying that it was something inherently wrong or degenerate in him. The anxiety and shame internalized even by men who predominantly comply with hegemonic male standards demonstrates the universality of such feelings and suggests the infectious nature of toxically masculine culture.

We can see the threats woven throughout this novel come to fruition in the final scene of the great experiment. As the cast of characters perform the ritual to reanimate Tera, "a faint greenish vapour" (202) begins to emanate from the coffin. Since green is regularly associated with the Orient throughout the novel, this can be read as symbolizing a foreign invasion sweeping through the room.[177] That green smoke quickly turns to deathly black—another color associated with racial Otherness—and suffocates the entire cavern. It is in the obscurity of this black smoke that everyone is lost—first to sight and then in death. The demise of all of the characters—except Ross who must remain alive to tell the story—can be read as representing the victory of the New Woman, the foreign Other, the archaic pagan world, or all of the above. This

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[177] Ross references the color "green" when being drawn into a trance in Mr. Trelawny's room, as "the green edging of the lamp-shade became Maori greenstone rather than emerald" (Stoker 35) and also when he is reading the story about Tera's discovery when "the soothing fringe of green silk round the shade intensified [...] the gloom of the sick room" (75). The reference to the color during discussions of the Other illustrates their connection within the text.

novel is paranoiac on multiple levels and envisions a variety of threats, all of which oppose the white-patriarchal world. Although some critics believe that the great experiment failed and that Tera was not revived, I agree with Glennis Byron who maintains that "in the original version there is no doubt that Tera is resurrected" (58).[178] The strong, foreign, female Other is thus allowed to survive at the expense of the British characters whom she sacrifices. When discussing *Dracula*, David Glover notes that "for all the strength of character and passion for adventure upon which Stoker's novels depend, there is always a sense that 'muscular liberalism,' despite its many imperial achievements, will finally be found wanting" (998). The men in *Jewel* are equally found wanting and are not offered a chance for redemption. It was not uncommon at this time for weak male characters to be killed off in the end, as we have already seen in *Pharos* and *The Beetle*. Fraser Harrison argues that

> death provided the only euphemism sufficiently grandiose to substitute for the condition with which the writers were actually concerned; for death was capable of representing castration, impotence, etiolation, or plain spinelessness, in short, any of the states to which they feared men might be brought if women took up arms against the sexual hierarchy. (132)

In this sense, the death of the male characters in *Jewel* represents their emasculation at the hands of the New Woman and racial Other—an unmanning that occurs due to their attempt to share power with these marginalized groups. These characters' deaths are a direct result of their inability to properly objectify the New Woman and foreign female characters. Women were

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[178] See Senf 82, Daly 110, and also Hughes 46 for arguments about the Great Experiment's failure. Alternatively, see Glover 996 and also Shaw 183 for readings of the experiment in the original version as a success. Byron, on the other hand, evaluates the experiment as successful in both the original and second version.

meant to be objects upon which the male will could be acted. To use Susan Gubar's analogy, "If we think in terms of the production of culture, she is an art object: she is the ivory carving or mud replica, an icon or doll, but she is not the sculptor" ("Blank Page" 250). The male characters in *Jewel* provide these marginalized figures a voice and power and thus lose their own privileged position.

Bradley Deane asserts that *Jewel* comprises one of the "most stunningly abrupt and inconclusive endings in Victorian fiction" ("Imperial Striptease" 404) echoing a contemporary review in the *Spectator* which avows, "What happens on the last scene only Mr. Bram Stoker can understand" (298). However, Stoker's argument is conclusive even if the ending is ambiguous. The novel ultimately makes the same claims as the other Imperial Gothic texts I analyze: the New Woman and racial Other must be razed in order to save British masculinity and British sovereignty. Before the experiment, the men burn Tera's mummified cat—a figure symbolically connected to her—in order to protect from the perceived threat it poses. When killing the mummy cat, Trelawny states, "[This] will take away all danger for the future; even an astral body cannot materialize from ashes!" (Stoker 194). They burn the mummy cat for safety, but they do not destroy Tera, perceiving her as a partner instead of a threat. The resulting calamity proceeds from this mistaken tolerance. While most Imperial Gothic texts work to both express and allay contemporaneous anxieties "through strategies of representation and narrative resolution" (Siddiqi 1), this version of *Jewel* fails to allay any fears because there is no definitive or clear ending. The social hierarchy is not reinforced, and the future of Britain is not protected. The story ends in the midst of wonder and confusion, leaving the reader to muddle through the consequences. It is a warning, not a salvation and illustrates the dire consequences of furthering women's rights or championing the cause of the Other. Tera—the ultimate liberated and

powerful, foreign woman—is demonized and Margaret dies due to her belief in her own intelligence and her stubborn agency in demanding to be part of the experiment.

The second version of this novel claims a much more optimistic ending, but ultimately reaches the same conclusion regarding the need to subjugate the Other and the New Woman. In the second version, the Great Experiment looks to be a complete failure.[179] When the black smoke pervades the cavern, Ross speaks out to see if he should turn up the light. Where he was met with silence in the original version, in the second version, Margaret's voice calls out for him. Ross takes Margaret's hand, and she assures him that the other men, although unconscious, would be alright. As the smoke clears, all that is visible in the sarcophagus "was a scattering of black ashes'" (Stoker 160). In this version, it seems as if Tera has gone the way of the mummy cat.[180] Stoker now portrays Margaret to be the ideal, submissive woman, an ending that feels more convenient than realistic. Margaret's many moments of personal autonomy are glossed over, and as her role model dies so does her New Womanhood. As a contemporary reviewer contends, the "somewhat indifferent treatment of a modern love affair meant to be idyllic does not quite undo the effect of his bizarre imaginings" (*Saturday Review* 768). However, by quickly repositioning Margaret as the docile ideal, Stoker suppresses the threat of the New Woman and places her under the control of her future husband. As Ross takes her hand, he describes how "she reluctantly left her father to whom she was administering, but she came docilely enough" (Stoker 160), foreshadowing Margaret's future role as a dutiful bride. In this version, Stoker works to allay the fears that the first allows to fester. As in the other Imperial Gothic texts

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[179] There is some controversy as to whether Stoker wrote this second version or whether it is the work of his publisher, but it is generally agreed upon that the second version was at his publisher's request even if written by Stoker.

[180] See Glennis Byron, especially 59-61, for an alternate reading of the second edition where Tera possesses Margaret's body, unbeknownst to the male characters. This is a compelling take on the alternate ending that most assume to be a complete victory over the Other.

discussed, the strong woman becomes submissive, the Other is destroyed, and men are once again in control.

Before concluding this section, it is worth examining Sir James Frere, who provides an intriguing contrast to the male characters led astray by the female Other. Frere is largely ignored by critics, but he provides a very informative study in terms of masculinity and its relation to the occult. Frere is a minor character, only appearing for a couple of pages and dismissed by all of the other characters. However, his is the one voice in the novel, masculine or otherwise, that fully opposes the superstitious and mystical elements that permeate the story. Frere is a specialist asked to consult on Mr. Trelawny's illness. At the beginning of the novel all of the capable, professional men fail to resuscitate Mr. Trelawny or uncover the cause of his comatose state. Frere is called in to consult as a brain specialist and is portrayed as a strong man and a man of learning:

> Sir James Frere was a man who commanded attention followed by respect. He
> knew so thoroughly what he wanted himself, that he placed at once on one side all
> wishes and ideas of less definite persons. The mere flash of his piercing eyes, or the
> set of his resolute mouth, or the lowering of his great eyebrows, seemed to compel
> immediate and willing obedience to his wishes. (Stoker 38)

This characterization largely aligns with idealized Victorian masculinity where men were meant to be decisive, commanding, and serious. The fact that his very presence calls for respect and obedience from all those surrounding him, both men and women, proves him to be a dominant character, rising above even the other professional men, not just due to his superior social

ranking but also his superior masculinity. This obvious strength and authority fortifies those around him, and Ross notes that "somehow, when we had all been introduced and he was well amongst us, all sense of mystery seemed to melt away. It was with a hopeful spirit that I saw him pass into the sick-room with Doctor Winchester" (38). While the other characters fall prey to the superstition and mysticism around them, Frere provides a light of rationality that dispels the uncertainty, stating "For myself I do not take much account of mysteries" (39). Only when the mystical atmosphere is weakened by the presence of masculine strength and authority is Ross able to feel hope that everything will be alright. It is as if Frere's presence heals Ross's female-coded irrationality—at least temporarily.

However, this healing hope does not last long as the temptation of mysticism prevails among the other men. Frere paints the other characters as irrational when he claims that their superstitious fears come "by any number of 'penny dreadful' mysteries" (40). On the other hand, Frere personally refuses to associate with mysticism or to mix science and the mystical, declining to work with them to address Mr. Trelawny's case unless they remove the Egyptian artifacts from his room, as opposed to Mr. Trelawny's orders.[181] Frere considers these foreign influences bad for Mr. Trelawny's health.[182] Even though Frere's stringent requirements lead the other characters to dismiss him, it proves him to be possibly the only truly ideal Edwardian male in this narrative. He is the only one that recognizes that being surrounded by foreign intrigues is dangerous, although he does not allege the danger as coming from any supernatural origin. He

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[181] See Daly, *Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siècle,* especially 95-102, for analysis of how the Orientalist collector attempted to provide "a way of 'domesticating' objects, making origins and function subservient to a scheme of classification imposed by the collector" (95). While this was presumably Trelawny's goal, he only succeeds in making "the domestic space [...] increasingly experienced as foreign; the present is increasingly infiltrated by what it has designated as archaic" (100). Frere seems to be trying to ward against this latter eventuality, with his warnings bearing fruit in the end as Trelawny's house is indeed invaded by the archaic Other.

[182] See Dobson, "Emasculating Mummies" 397 for analysis of the Victorian era's anxieties surrounding ancient Egyptian artifacts. Dobson notes that during this period "ancient Egyptian artefacts—specifically the bodies of the ancient Egyptian dead—began to be held as objects which might trigger moments of psychological disturbance" (397). Frere's concerns about the artifacts in question echo this Victorian idea.

states, "It's enough to put any man into an abnormal condition, to have such an assemblage of horrors round him, and to breathe the atmosphere which they exhale" (39). While this warning and his characterization of Egyptian artifacts as "horrors" is highly xenophobic, Stoker proves his concerns correct. By ignoring his request, the other characters doom themselves to be overrun and ultimately destroyed by the influence of the Other. Frere seems to be used in this story mostly to exhibit the ignorance of modern society in respect to the mystical, but dismissing him so easily is clearly a mistake considering how Stoker ends the first version of his novel. The narrative would have ended very differently if the characters had listened to this paragon of rational masculinity early on.

The novel's ending and the contrasting character of Sir James Frere marks this as a prime piece of patriarchal propaganda. All of the men possess aspects of toxic masculinity, but this text must be considered toxically masculine as a whole due to its final misogynistic and xenophobic vision. *The Jewel of Seven Stars* is ultimately a cautionary tale that warns against acceptance of the New Woman and the Other, and paints any tolerance or equality given to them as leading to the fatal destruction of both good British men and British women. While *The Beetle* offers some hope for male survival, *Jewel* dooms all of the male characters (except the narrator), killing them off at the hands of the experiment that they worked so hard to enact. Their demise is caused because, unlike the male characters in *The Beetle*, these men do not condemn the Other or attempt to reinforce the submission of the New Woman. Instead—although they initially exclude Margaret from the male sphere—they eventually invite both Margaret and Tera into their space, condemning the patriarchy to annihilation. The text argues that the best path forward for the patriarchy is to either destroy the foreign Other like in the second version of *Jewel* or to completely cleave healthy British masculinity from contaminating foreign influences as Sir

James Frere suggests. Concurrently, modern female empowerment must be belittled and discarded in favor of traditional mid-century femininity, and women must be eschewed from the male sphere in order to protect the status quo and British futurity. In a world that is quickly changing and progressing, Stoker provides a cautionary novel that presents the dark side of progress as annihilation, furthering a toxically masculine agenda of male domination.

This chapter's focus on what the authors position as male weakness and masculine lack is vital to an understanding of toxic masculinity because toxic masculinity does not just target and alienate women and racial Others, but it also has a profound effect on men within the dominant society as well. It limits various forms of masculinity and enforces conformity to the hegemonic masculine culture. Masculine weakness is delineated in both *The Beetle* and *Pharos* as a threat to British futurity. Men have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and feel both extreme anxiety and shame when they fail to meet these expectations. Even strong men like Lessingham and the characters in *Jewel* have to continually reassert their masculinity and maintain their social position above women and the Other. The fact that empathy and tolerance for marginalized groups is depicted as a form of masculine weakness, emphasizes the antagonism created within toxically masculine culture in which men must assert dominance over others to achieve manliness. Men who are afraid of not fitting the normative expectations have often been the loudest proponents of xenophobic and misogynistic principles as they try to perform the exclusionary values of hegemonic masculinity in order to prove that they belong. The voices opposing acceptance, tolerance, and diversity thus echo louder and louder into a deafening cacophony of abuse toward any form of difference. Stoker, for instance, was an Irish author who had a lifelong obsession with his friend and employer Henry Irving.[183] Both his

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[183] See Boudreau and also Homem for more on the relationship between Stoker and Irving, a relationship that is often understood in terms of idol-worship on Stoker's part.

nationality and his ardent devotion to Irving would be cause to speculate on his role in the masculine order. Stoker's texts, on the other hand, while demonstrating extreme anxiety about masculinity, also uniformly demonize the Other and strong female characters in an attempt to uphold the patriarchal order. Similarly, Richard Marsh would hardly be considered a paragon of British masculinity due to his German-Jewish ancestry and legal sentencing for fraud. However, his novels freely judge moral failings in other men and substantiates hegemonic masculinity as opposed to the Other and New Woman. Moreover, M.P. Shiel's mixed-race heritage does not preclude him from valorizing the annihilation of the racial Other. All of these texts written by men who do not fit the prescribed mode of idealized masculinity have a pronounced vein of xenophobia, misogyny, and racism running through their pages. In a time when men feel threatened, they have to present others as inferior to feel like they still have power in the world. Toxically masculine culture relies on hierarchies of power between the genders, races, and between various forms of masculinity. It is by creating these dichotomies and furthering antagonisms between various groups that the status quo is maintained and toxically masculine men find validation.

CHAPTER FOUR

"When I am pushed, I push": The Idealization of Toxic Masculinity

Having examined how toxic masculinity is injurious to marginalized groups and men who do not

meet normative expectations in some manner, I now turn to an examination of how idealized

masculine traits have a deleterious effect on men conforming to these norms. Imperial Gothic

texts from the late-nineteenth century provide a relatively clear rulebook of what is required to

be considered ideally masculine. Masculine attributes included a manly physical appearance (that

is, strong body, bold physiognomy,[184] plain dress, and so on), athleticism, stoicism, fearlessness,

discipline, homosocial belonging, rational thought, authority, independence, and a profuse

smoking habit. These characteristics are directly opposed to stereotypically feminine

characteristics that are used to emasculate male characters, including delicate features, physical

weakness, sentimentality, uncontrolled emotions, fear, superstition, dependence, and the ability

to be easily swayed or manipulated. These gendered characteristics were largely accepted as

definitive by most Victorians who viewed the "sexes [as] complementary and mutually

dependent" (F. Harrison 95). Even men who attempted to thwart the gender roles of the era, like

the aesthetes, subconsciously subscribed to these views. The shared expectations of masculinity

made it easy for authors to typify characters as either healthy or problematic based on their

gendered characteristics. When a male character's "firm mouth, broad forehead, and clear-cut,

somewhat hard-featured face" (Doyle 209) is described or when they are depicted as a

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[184] See Davison, especially 135, for an overview of the physiognomic traits prized in nineteenth century men, including the projection of the chin that "represented will" and "a high forehead [that] represented intellect, but broadness was also needed to be truly wise" (135). While I do not have the space to expand on the physiognomy of idealized masculinity, it is significant that many of these traits can be found in the British heroes of Imperial Gothic novels.

"wholesome, straightforward young man" who implies the "very absence of scheming, of finesse" (Benson 312), a clear representation of ideal masculinity is being portrayed. Alternatively, when someone is described as being in "his familiar state of fluster" (Marsh, *Beetle* 69) or having a "velvet office-coat" (Boothby 77), one understands that these men fall short of the ideal and are unlikely to be categorized heroically. Manliness was largely outwardly projected at the *fin de siècle* and was thus physically inscribed just like degeneracy and criminality. By positing a single way to enact masculinity, Imperial Gothic texts and other conservative discourse pushed alternative versions of masculinity to the periphery, often diminishing or demonizing them so that anyone who transgressed against the normative expectations faced a steep cost if their transgression threatened patriarchal control. Any divergence from the expected roles was quickly censured by other members of the patriarchy in order to enforce the codified expectations of manliness. By situating masculinity as a narrow type instead of an ever-changing and diverse range of traits, the authors I analyze attempt to enforce a version of masculinity that was almost impossible for most men to achieve. The inability to live up to idealized masculinity led many men to overcompensate as they self-consciously attempted to enact the masculine values that they were unable to fulfill physically or emotionally. As discussed in the previous chapter, anxieties regarding the inability to fulfill masculine expectations often lead to overperformance of toxically masculine traits like aggression, xenophobia, and hypernationalism so that these masculinist views proliferate in society more vociferously. The propagation of toxically masculine viewpoints, even from those that do not meet dominant masculine ideals, is what allows these beliefs to persist despite changing times.

The fact that there was a relatively homogenous ideal did not mean that men of power all fit this model in Victorian Britain. However, although "normative definitions allow that different men approach the standards to different degrees" (Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity" 32), to belong all must prescribe to some extent to the rules of masculinity as decried by dominant society. Men could be pacific or martial, intellectual or simple, married or single, religious or scientific, but they must present in a way that fits closely enough to prescribed modes of masculinity. Therefore, if you subscribed to pacific masculinity, you could not be afraid to fight if the situation required. While a man could be intellectually-minded, he must also be ready for action when called upon. A man may not be physically fit himself, but he should have an abiding interest in sport and voice advocacy for physical health. The more characteristics of idealized masculinity that one could appropriate, the less vulnerable their manhood would be to scrutiny. As Ben Griffin notes, "The dominant social group will not be those who embody the normative ideal, but those who can most plausibly present themselves as doing so" (Griffin 185). Thus, in the Victorian era, we have diminutive art-critics like John Ruskin preaching on the values of martial strength and war and claiming that "all healthy men like fighting, and like the sense of danger" (Ruskin 109). One cannot call Ruskin an idealized male archetype by any means but he internalizes the masculine type enough to spout speeches and treatises on idealized masculinity.[185] Even late-Victorian aesthetes who appropriated feminine characteristics in many respects and consciously opposed the formulation of Victorian masculinity, internalized masculine traits and their position in the patriarchy. Thus, readers can see a profound level of misogyny and racism in the works of Oscar Wilde, the Pre-Raphaelite

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[185] Ruskin's speech on war was published in *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866) but was reprinted regularly by publishers in both England and America over the next half-century. His position on war was also regularly discussed and reprinted in newspapers and periodicals throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian ages.

Brotherhood, and other aesthetes.[186] Toxically masculine culture means that even those who do not fit the dominant expectations often claim some degree of authority and position by being born a white man and thus do not fully oppose the patriarchal system that benefits them. As I establish in this chapter, Imperial Gothic texts are filled with male characters who have internalized dominant masculinity, unquestioningly following the expectations prescribed to them or attempting to redeem themselves when they fall short of the paradigm. The negative effect this has on social progress in addition to men's relationships and mental health is clearly exhibited throughout my focal texts.

This final chapter examines the characteristics that were vaunted at the time as constituent of accepted masculinity and why these characteristics were toxic to the men who followed them and the society that enabled them. I start by analyzing the valorization of emotional repression and anti-intellectualism and demonstrate how the Victorians contrasted emotions and pure intellect with an imperative toward action. I prove how action is depicted as salvational to men by examining the male cast in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) and how they are feminized in states of idleness but regain mastery of themselves through action. I also examine how *Jewel* valorizes stereotypical masculine attributes, most notably emotional repression. From there, I compare Sydney Atherton and Percy Woodville in *The Beetle* (1897) to exhibit how action—even violent action—is depicted as preferable to female-coded emotions. I assert that the emphasis on stoicism keeps men from experiencing supposedly softer emotions that allow for empathy and healthy relationships outside of the homosocial sphere. Emotional repression also correlates to acts of violence as men must displace feelings of sadness, fear, and hurt into a more masculine-coded anger and aggression. I investigate the preference for

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[186] See Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, especially 169-187, for an examination of the misogyny of the aesthetes and decadents at the *fin de siècle*.

anti-intellectualism in *The Goddess: A Demon* (1900)*, The Image in the Sand* (1905) and *She* (1887) to highlight how the simple man is situated as the idealized hero because physical strength becomes more important than mental strength at the turn of the century. Men of pure intelligence are often painted as less evolved and less desirable. For men of intelligence to preserve their manliness, they had to couple their intellectual pursuits with clear sportsmanship and brawn, as I prove through an analysis of "Lot No. 249" (1892). I argue that the emphasis on anti-intellectualism leads to a class of men who do not question the system and status quo but instead are more likely to conform to expectations. Although male violence has been a common theme in multiple chapters throughout this thesis, I focus in this chapter on how masculine violence is employed as a means to gain respect within the homosocial sphere. I examine male violence in *The Goddess* and *The Beetle* to illustrate how Ferguson and Atherton assert their dominant position through acts of violence and how Lessingham regains his manhood through aggression. In the final section, I explore the homosocial sphere and the ways in which it reinforces patriarchal control through limiting voices of power and enforcing conformity within the dominant culture. I focus on *Jewel*, *The Beetle*, and "Lot No. 249" in my analysis of these issues before turning to an examination of Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" (1891) to exhibit how the homosocial sphere is employed to safeguard those belonging to its ranks from censure for toxically masculine acts. I argue that the homosocial sphere preserves the patriarchy through limiting access to power, enforcing conformity, and protecting its members from criticism. By examining how these vaunted aspects of patriarchal culture negatively impact men and social progress, I demonstrate how toxic masculinity has a deleterious effect on all in society whether or not they claim a privileged position.

I. The Imperative of Action Over Emotion and Intellect

Stoicism, or one might say emotional repression, is a trait that is particularly lauded in the nineteenth century and today as exemplifying masculinity. Emotional repression is paired in the masculine imagination with determined action and is fervently contrasted to female-coded emotions and sentimentality. Women feel and men act is the basic dichotomy that is asserted by these gender norms. However, as Jared Yates Sexton points out in his 2019 memoir discussing toxic masculinity, "Humans are not intended to suppress their emotions indefinitely, to always be confident and unflinching. Traditional masculinity, as we know it, is an unnatural state, and, as a consequence, men are constantly at war with themselves and the world around them" (Sexton 9). Sexton claims that "a whole range of 'softer' emotions like sadness, tenderness, fear, are often displaced into anger because this can be seen as affirming rather than threatening our masculine identity" (Sexton 62).[187] While I agree with this statement and myself discuss aggression as an outlet for supposedly unmanly emotions, I would add that it is not just anger and aggression that is visible as a way to protect against the softer emotions, but in addition there is an emphasis in the Victorian age and modern times on action—often heedless and reckless action—as a way to oppose forces and feelings that make men feel weak. I examine the valorization of action over emotional responses in the Victorian era through an analysis of the male characters in *Jewel* and *The Beetle*.

The Jewel of Seven Stars is a great example of a novel that places primacy on emotional repression and the capacity for determined action. *Jewel* fittingly glorifies the very idea of action—of movement forward. Ross regularly claims a "determination of doing something" (Stoker 94)—really of doing anything to be productive. The characters in *Jewel* are men of

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[187] While Sexton's memoir focuses on modern society, it is significant to this thesis that such claims are equally true in the late Victorian age as is abundantly clear in the literature of the era.

action who seem incapable of inactivity. Stagnation, in the form of sitting by Mr. Trelawny's bedside, is actually when the men are shown to be most vulnerable to corruption. This befits the turn-of-the-century theory of masculinity that asserted that "idleness [...] would lead to sin and should be repudiated through self-disciplined physical exertion" (Danahay 7).[188] In such an idle, inert position, the reader sees both Daw and Ross fall prey to the mesmerism that attacks the male characters in this novel.

As discussed in the previous chapter, mesmerism acts as an emasculating trope in which the victim is mentally penetrated by a more dominant entity, forcing the one mesmerized into the submissive, feminine position. When at rest, the men are overcome by the mesmeric control of the Other; therefore, productive work not only engenders respect between men but also functions as a salvational force in opposition to the immoral, emasculating influences of the Other. Since work is aligned with masculinity, as discussed previously, it is fitting that action protects the men from being feminized by mesmeric forces in addition to protecting them from feminine emotions, fear, and irrationality. Action is quite directly equated to manhood when Ross goes for a swim which he claims "braced my nerves and made me my own man again" (Stoker 185). When Ross is feeling overwhelmed and emasculated, he is able to regain his composure and manliness through physical activity. This athleticism realigns him with masculinity, allowing him to overcome his female-coded emotions and recenter himself on rationality.[189] When chaos and

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[188] The Victorian repugnance for idleness may be viewed as a reaction to the Romantic valorization of productive indolence. See Spiegelman, especially 10-12, and R. Mitchell for more on societal views of indolence during the Victorian era. Spiegelman focuses on the metamorphosis of indolence and the aesthetics of the Romantic poets that reinforced a revaluation of the term. Rebecca Mitchell illustrates how this quality of indolence was still prevalent in the Victorian era and the ways in which active Victorian masculinity and creativity was developed beside and often in opposition to this indolence.

[189] See Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, especially 85-114; Bristow, especially 67; and also Deane, *New Imperialism*, especially 179-207, for examinations of the importance of athleticism in Victorian culture and masculine life. Athleticism became an increasingly important part of boyhood education in the Victorian era. Bristow notes that public schools were meant to cultivate in boys a "love of healthy sports and exercise" (67).

anxiety attain their height in the novel as the characters pursue the great experiment, Ross states, "It was to be a day of work; and we all braced ourselves to it with an energy which wrought its own salvation" (186). Work provides the men an outlet so that they are not overrun by the mysteries permeating the house. David Glover explains how in this novel "at one pole we are offered fantasies of perfect self-control founded upon absolute knowledge, a self wholly transparent to itself, the best of all possible worlds; while at the other everything is so uncertain that the world all but lies in ruins" (999). Activity provides the men a way to navigate this world of polar opposites and contradictions. It offers a sense of control in a situation that is uncontrollable, allowing the male characters to maintain their manhood, even when faced with the emasculating influence of the ancient and mystic.

Ross prizes masculinity in a way very much befitting an Edwardian paragon, and as such, he regularly praises traits of normative masculinity—such as self-control, privacy, and plain speech—when describing the other male characters. For instance, Corbeck's reticence in disclosing Mr. Trelawny's private matters is held up as a mark of his masculine honor and trustworthiness: "In no case could one make a mistake by being reticent. Reticence is a quality which a strong man always respects" (Stoker 105). Ross also points to Corbeck's masculine manner of speaking, observing that "he did not go through any process of explanation or limitation, but spoke right out at once to the point, and fearlessly like a man" (73). These nuggets of advice on manliness act almost as a how-to guide throughout the novel as Stoker informs male readers what to honor in men and what to guard against. The subtext is of course that any other action—like an abundance of sharing and communication—would be feminine and therefore lesser and unacceptable. Other pieces of advice on how to be a man come as Ross describes his admiration for "the cautious, cool-headed precision with which [Corbeck] stated his case" (59)

and Daw's "iron self-control" (106). Mr. Trelawny is regularly referenced in the novel in relation to his stoicism. Ross admires Mr. Trelawny's impassiveness, or lack of emotion, as a mark of his manliness. When Mr. Trelawny awakens from his trance, Ross has the duty of explaining all that had occurred since the beginning of the novel, including attacks on Mr. Trelawny's body, the theft of the lamps needed to reanimate Tera, and instances of supernatural and mesmeric control. Whilst recounting the story, Ross notes Mr. Trelawny's reaction:

> He listened with a self-control which, under the circumstances, was to me little less than marvellous. It was impassiveness, for at times his eyes would flash or blaze, and the strong fingers of his uninjured hand would grip the sheet, pulling it into far-extending wrinkles. (101)

We can see Mr. Trelawny physically fight to repress an emotional response as Ross relates the tale. His hand may convulse around the sheets, but his emotions never extend beyond that impulse of control. It is this level of self-possession that Ross admires and considers "marvellous"—meaning both surprising and, I would also claim, awe-inspiring. This level of emotional repression and self-control is what it means to be a true man for Ross and is the primary attribute that builds respect among men. Through these descriptions that are directly accredited to each character's manhood the reader can see the traits that are most prized in contemporaneous normative masculinity. Self-control and composure—in other words, emotional repression—rank of the highest consequence.

The singular definition of idealized masculinity in late Victorian society allowed it to be highly observable as an overt category of classification and therefore required its constant

performance. The reader witnesses this need to perform or exhibit masculinity when Ross and

Mr. Trelawny first meet. Ross's admiration for Mr. Trelawny's strength, as discussed previously,

leads to a heightened need for Ross to exhibit "something of my own" (101). Ross

self-consciously reflects on his appearance of masculinity as he claims, "My friends, and

sometimes my opponents, say that I am a strong man" (101). This "strong man"—the very words

he uses to describe Mr. Trelawny upon their first meeting—is the version of himself that he

wants Mr. Trelawny to witness. It is important to Ross that he be perceived as strong, and as such

the reader can see Ross enact masculinity as he makes a point to hold himself "erect" and look at

Trelawny "straight in the eyes" (101). There is a level of combativeness displayed when male

figures stand more "erect" in *Jewel* in order to exhibit their strength, as if daring the other man to

test their might and resolve. The use of the word "erect" also alludes to a phallic manliness that

directly attributes strength to biological maleness.[190] These are examples of needing to physically

prove power and masculinity in a truly toxic sense. By standing tall and eye-to-eye with Mr.

Trelawny, Ross endeavors to assert himself as Trelawny's equal in courage and physical strength.

The need to demonstrate fearlessness is largely equated with performative masculinity in this

novel as the men take pains to maintain an appearance of fearlessness at all times. Fear, more

than any other emotion, must be hidden in *Jewel*, as fear is equated with weakness and

femininity. Corbeck describes Trelawny admirably as "a fearless man" (84). Later, when Mr.

Trelawny calls Ross "a fearless and honourable gentleman" (102), he proves that fearlessness

equates to male worth. All of the men assess one another using the same language, reaffirming

this version of masculinity as a shared ideal that creates mutual admiration. Anyone who does

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[190] See Hurley, especially 145-147, for analysis of the importance of phallic erectness as a means of reassuring men
of their manliness, especially in response to emasculating influences like the New Woman and hypersexual Other.

not comply with these masculine standards would presumably be criticized and marginalized to reinforce the hierarchy of masculinities, as can be seen in *The Beetle*.

A comparison of Percy Woodville and Sydney Atherton in *The Beetle* provides a clear example of how emotional repression helped maintain societal respect for men at the *fin de siècle* but also the ease with which this emotional repression can devolve into toxically masculine acts of aggression. When Percy's feelings for Marjorie are unreturned, he is described as "being dissolved in tears" (Marsh, *Beetle* 103) as he shares all of his worries with Atherton despite Atherton declaring "heaven knows I am not sympathetic" (103). In contrast to Percy's feminized emotional responses, Atherton employs male-coded aggression and violence to deal with his feelings. Atherton is a model example of a man primed by a society that "encourages them to attack rather than cry when someone hurts or threatens them" (Eisler 212). Atherton is just as in love with Marjorie as Percy is, and it is equally unrequited; however, Atherton does not share his feelings of hurt, anger, and jealousy since that would present him as unmanly. Instead, he chooses to enact his aggression with extreme behaviors like killing Lessingham's cat. I look more at toxic masculinity and violence in the following section, but it is important to note here that violence is employed as a masculine emotional outlet as well as a means of exhibiting strength. Atherton not only uses violence as an outlet for his jealousy towards Lessingham but is also aggressive toward Marjorie when she refuses to accept his love. Modern theorists note that "men who practice traditional masculinity are left with little way to express themselves other than to lash out" (Sexton 62), so when Marjorie continues to deny him, Atherton becomes hyper-defensive, showing her "a glimpse of the cloven hoof" (Marsh, *Beetle* 69). His language becomes increasingly forceful, with the expressed goal being to frighten Marjorie. Atherton narrates that "she looked at me, with wide open eyes, as if I almost frightened her. To be frank,

that was what I wished to do" (69). He even goes so far as to profess "I could have shaken her"

(69). Atherton's deepest instincts are that of violence, even against a woman he allegedly loves.

Marjorie's denial threatens to unman him, so violence and aggression are used to reinforce his

masculinity and prove that he is superior to this woman who spurns him. Even so, Atherton is

viewed as a "largely positively depicted character" (Margree 73) and "a type of ideal citizen"

(Jones 75) as opposed to Percy who is depicted as ineffectual and weak.[191] While mid-century

Victorians saw displays of emotion-driven aggression as unmanly, the late Victorian focus on

martial masculinity largely destigmatized combative masculine displays. Although I would not

argue that Atherton is the ideal man in *The Beetle*, he at least adheres to an accepted form of

masculinity. Percy is depicted as a victim, passive and feminized; whereas, Atherton uses

aggression to save himself from victimization and situate himself as a victor.

The late-Victorian glorification of men of action over men of sentiment proliferates

throughout the Imperial Gothic genre. *Jewel* provides a plenitude of examples of idealized men

of action, composure, self-control, and fearlessness, proving that these men are only at risk when

they stagnate. Atherton in *The Beetle* clearly scoffs at any form of emotional expression and

chooses to repress his own disappointment at Marjorie's rejection. Instead, he turns his feelings

into actions against his rival, thus allowing him to escape the victimization impressed on Percy.

Emotional responses were regularly denigrated as ascertained in the previous chapter; whereas,

action—including acts of violence—were proven to be edifying for masculinity. Men within a

toxically masculine society are often kept from experiencing a full range of emotions,

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[191] See Jones 75, and also Rebry 12 for analyses of Atherton in an idealized light. Jones notes that Atherton is "a type of ideal citizen: an energetic, productive, and industrious citizen, a 'strong practical man' who puts scientific ideas into practice and makes things happen" (75). While I agree that he has some traits of the ideal, productive citizen, I posit that his hooliganesque version of toxic masculinity marks him as a non-ideal English gentleman. He has many traits of the ideal man but does not combine those with the self-control necessary to fit the ideal. Even so, his version of masculinity is accepted; whereas, Percy's weak masculinity is more ridiculed.

particularly the female-coded softer emotions, a form of repression with far-reaching psychological and societal consequences.[192] In the Imperial Gothic genre, we can see how Abel Trelawny's emotional repression distances him from his daughter, how Atherton struggles to maintain a healthy relationships with anyone, how characters are unable to empathize with the Other, and how countless male characters are restrained from feeling normal, healthy emotions.

The imperative toward action not only denigrated emotions, but also impugned the intellectual sphere since learning for learning's sake was viewed as inactive and unproductive in the utilitarian sense. David Newsome depicts late Victorian manliness as "the cultivation of all that is masculine and the expulsion of all that is effeminate, unEnglish and excessively intellectual" (Newsome 216). At the same time that masculine action was accorded such great importance in the Victorian definition of masculinity, there was a clear devaluing of hyper-intellectualism due to the belief that intellectualism eroded masculine vitality. Ferguson in *The Goddess* can be perceived as the height of evolutionary manhood due to his physical might and stature, but it is important to note that he is described as equally dimwitted as he is strong. While the novel repeatedly applauds his masculine strength, a modern reader might be excused in thinking that it also denigrates his character due to continual references to his lack of intelligence. Hume calls him "dense" (Marsh, *Goddess* 25); Mrs. Peddar claims "I don't think I ever did know quite so simple-minded a gentleman as you are, sir" (20); and Miss Adair paints him as a loyal dog, claiming, "there is something about you which reminds me of a St. Bernard. You're big—very big; you look strong—awfully strong; you're hairy. [...] You look simple; somehow one associates simplicity with trustworthiness" (56-57). Ferguson even refers to himself as "dull-witted" and admits that his "mental processes are slow" (53). However, although

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[192] See Sexton, especially 58-76; Pollack; and also Barrett and Whitehead for examinations of the social consequences of male emotional repression.

the novel does accede Ferguson's simple-mindedness, it does not present him as any less manly for his lack of intelligence. In fact, it repeatedly proves that he does not require intelligence to get things accomplished. Ferguson's representation coincides with a strong vein of anti-intellectualism present in the Imperial Gothic genre. In fact, it is the men of learning who are painted in a skeptical light. Ferguson refers to Hume's psychological research claiming, "Some strange stories are told of experiments which he has made" (24), placing doubt on the appropriateness of his studies. Even though Hume redeems himself throughout the novel, he never reaches the heights of manliness that the novel affords to Ferguson.

Similarly, in E. F. Benson's *The Image in the Sand* and H. Rider Haggard's *She*, the intellectual characters, although displaying other masculine traits like strength and stoicism, are also characterized as ape-like, depicting them as lower on the evolutionary ladder than the male paragons with whom they are connected. Leonard Compton in *Image* is described as having "a face like a rather good-looking monkey, shrewd, plain for a human being, and almost painfully intelligent" (Benson 91). In contrast, the text regularly refers to Jack Carbery as "the wholesomest young man in the world" (86). Part of his wholesomeness is his simplicity. Ida depicts his simpleness as "nice white bread" (86) and represents it as preferable to more exotic flavors. By describing Jack as white bread, Ida also aligns simplicity with idealized white manhood, making the claim that the best British men are simple, straight-forward men of character over intelligence. It is worth looking at an extended characterization of Jack as it provides an excellent example of the valuation of physicality and simplicity over intellectualism:

He stood some six feet in height, was nearly as broad as he was long, and was devoted to every form of athletic exercise. His capacity also for laughter was amazing, and his

mouth, clean-shaven, seemed always to be smiling so as to be ready for the laughter which was sure to be not far off. He was not in the least clever, but he was even more markedly not in the least stupid, and brains very serviceable for the straightforward conduct of his life pursued their pleasant thoughts beneath the thick crop of rather curly hair. (90-91)

Jack is painted here as a truly ideal model of turn-of-the-century masculinity. One contemporary reviewer typifies Jack as "the very type of the sane, healthy Englishman" (*Manchester Courier*). The fact that this reviewer characterizes Jack as sane and healthy is telling of the period's obsession with health and what characterized the healthy man both mentally and physically.[193] Jack's primary devotion is to athletics over books; he is not morbid but instead has a light and agreeable disposition, and he has just enough brains to go about the simple life he leads. Jack's simplicity is just as much part of his manly, healthy character as his athleticism.

Walter E. Houghton argues that during the Victorian era, "middle- and upper-class society was permeated by a scornful or frightened view of any free and detached play of the mind" and points to the preference for utilitarian learning during the Victorian era (291). Classical education still predominated in the universities; however, many found liberal education to be pointless and "exalt[ed] the man of action at the expense of the thinker and the artist" (295). Intelligence was respected insofar as it was applicable to work or the immediate betterment of society, but the emphasis placed on productive action during the Victorian era meant that intellectualism was viewed with suspicion if simply for the sake of learning itself. Thomas Carlyle believed that "man was created to work, not to speculate, or feel, or dream" (*Reminiscences* 10). Charles

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[193] See Haley, especially 3-22, for an overview of the Victorian obsession with health. Haley asserts that "no topic more occupied the Victorian mind than Health" and that they "adopted the well-knit body as their model for the well-formed mind" (3).

Kingsley claimed that "many a man is very learned in books, and has read for years and years, and yet he is useless" (*Charles Kingsley* 146).[194] These mid-century thinkers set the tone for the latter half of the century and their anti-intellectualism was still abundantly represented in *fin-de-siècle* texts, particularly in the conservative imperial texts that valorized might over brains.

When considering the distrust of intellectualism at the *fin de siècle*, it is particularly important to examine a text like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249," which provides the reader with Abercrombie Smith, one of the rare leading men who proves to be a great scholar as well as an ideal of productive masculinity. "Lot No. 249" centers on the Oxford student, Abercrombie Smith, and his encounters with his neighbor Edward Bellingham. Bellingham reanimates a mummy and employs it to attack his enemies, including Smith. Despite being initially unmanned by the mummy's attack, Smith ultimately forces Bellingham to burn both the mummy and the magical scroll with which it is revivified. In this short story, Doyle takes great care to make sure that Smith's academic pursuits are balanced by his athleticism and homosocial life. Although Doyle's descriptions of Smith are heavy-handed, they provide a clear model of manliness:

> With his firm mouth, broad forehead, and clear-cut, somewhat hard-featured face, he was
>
> a man who, if he had no brilliant talent, was yet so dogged, so patient, and so strong that
>
> he might in the end overtop a more showy genius. A man who can hold his own among
>
> Scotchmen and North Germans is not a man to be easily set back. Smith had left a name

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[194] While both Kingsley and Carlyle died before the turn of the century, their thoughts remained influential and the posthumous memoirs and biographies of their lives in which these quotations appeared—*Reminiscences* (1881) by Thomas Carlyle and *Charles Kingsley: His letters and memories of his life* (1877)—were both published in the late-nineteenth century and regularly reprinted throughout the century.

at Glasgow and at Berlin, and he was bent now upon doing as much at Oxford, if hard

work and devotion could accomplish it. (Doyle 209)

Smith's physiognomy implies his masculine strength with the use of words like "firm,"

"clear-cut," and "hard," which were often used to describe masculine features as well as manly

attitudes. While he has made a name for himself in the academic world, he has done so through

the idealized Victorian traits of hard work and dedication and not through natural genius which

was often associated with degeneracy at the *fin de siècle*.[195] His ability to "hold his own" against

Scots and Germans places him at the pinnacle of masculinity and underscores the English ability

to succeed in an international world. Critically though, Smith is equally able to hold his own on

the sports field as well as in the classroom. The first description of his room lists the tools of his

studies including "A litter of medical books upon the table, with scattered bones, models and

anatomical plates" alongside sports equipment including "single-sticks and a set of

boxing-gloves" (206). Both of these athletic pursuits are combative, emphasizing Smith's

singular ability to compete against other men. Doyle regularly refers to Smith's athleticism

throughout the text, calling him a "varsity man" and "old oarsman" (221, 225). Doyle's first

description of Smith and his friend Jephro Hastie emphasizes the association of athleticism with

manliness: "No one could look at their hard-cut, alert faces without seeing that they were

open-air men—men whose minds and tastes turned naturally to all that was manly and robust"

(205). Doyle places weak male characters like Monkhouse Lee at the bottom of the social

pecking order, even below ambitious and decisive but immoral characters like the short story's

villain, Bellingham. Smith demonstrates a clear internalization of the strong, stoic, fearless male

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[195] See Lombroso, *The Man of Genius* (edited by Havelock Ellis for its first English edition in 1891) for a
contemporary view of genius as a state of degeneracy.

ideal, thus saving him from any claims of over-intellectualism. When Lee tries to warn Smith against Bellingham, Smith declares, "Why should I fear him, or any man?" and then proceeds to elaborate that it "would be a little too feeble" for him to move due to an unspecified threat (227). His desire to appear strong makes him averse to any action that would seem "feeble." Smith sees Lee's refusal to provide specific evidence against Bellingham as ineffectual and "childish" (227) and therefore refuses to be cowed by his warning.

This aversion to appearing emotionally weak is shortly put to the test when Smith is besieged by Bellingham's revivified mummy. When Smith goes to visit his friend, Doctor Peterson, he is accosted by the mummy and unmanned by the excessive amount of fear that the instance creates. Upon seeing the mummy, Smith does not stay and fight this creature as would be expected of a masculine paragon, but instead "he turned, and with a cry of terror he ran for his life up the avenue" (233). His impotent cry of terror is later echoed with his "shriek [as] he flung himself against the door, slammed and bolted it behind him, and sank half-fainting on to the hall chair" (233). If screaming and running away were not already clear enough forms of feminization, Smith almost fainting seals his emasculation. Smith is hyper-aware of the fact that his actions were unbefitting masculine expectations and he uncomfortably admits to Peterson when he recovers his composure, "I am my own man again now. [...] I was never so unmanned before" (235). Even after admitting to his weakness though, he is unable to immediately shake the feeling and requests to stay the night because he cannot "face that road again except by daylight." Again, he admits, "It's weak, I know, but I can't help it" (235). This climactic scene depicts a strong man emasculated by feminized fear; however, it is immediately followed with a depiction of the English ideal's ability to overcome through determined action and force of will.

After telling Peterson his suspicions that Bellingham had reanimated the mummy and was using it for his nefarious ends, Peterson tries to impress on Smith the unlikelihood of his story and the fact that the law would simply laugh at him if he shared the tale. Smith's response to this fact reinstates his masculine persona when he proclaims, "That is why I mean to take the matter into my own hands" (238). Smith depicts his decision to oppose Bellingham and his monster as "a public duty" (238) and directly sites his desire to avoid emotional weakness as one of his reasons for action, claiming, "I must do it for my own safety, unless I choose to allow myself to be hunted by this beast out of the college, and that would be a little too feeble" (238). Doyle's repetition of Smith's unwillingness to look "feeble" emphasizes the masculine imperative to display emotional and physical strength. Like many of the male characters in the Imperial Gothic genre, determined activity redeems Smith from his moment of emasculation. When Smith claims, "There is only one course open to me, and I am determined to take it" (238), he is not declaring that there are no other choices, because he has already clearly established that there are technically other choices such as abandoning the college or running to the police. What he is stating is that there is only one option if he wishes to maintain his manly status. Leaving or running to the police would further emasculate him as running away would be cowardly and the police would believe him hysterical. Smith has fully internalized the importance of maintaining a masculine persona and so is willing to do anything, even possibly murder Bellingham in order to rid himself of the emasculating fear engendered by the mummy. While Smith was naturally "slow and easytempered" as a proper gentleman should be, he also proves his idealized nature by demonstrating the capacity for martial manliness that made him "not an entirely pleasant man to have as an enemy" (239). His male-coded "deliberate resoluteness" (239) and willingness to act when necessary is clearly on display as he holds Bellingham at gunpoint, forcing him to burn the

mummy and the Egyptian scroll that detailed how to reanimate the mummy. Smith does not use his brains but instead employs his brawn to deal with the threats in this narrative. This male-coded action can be contrasted to Lee's indecisive weakness throughout the short story and Bellingham's deployment of arcane knowledge to reanimate an entity to do his dirty work for him. This scene is meant to depict a man who gets things done, destroying foreign occult figures and degenerate masculine adversaries. He further threatens Bellingham, stating, "I think I have pretty well drawn your teeth. You'll hear from me again, if you return to your old tricks" (242). Smith takes on the role of active defender of Britain, and the narrative valorizes his action. However, I argue that this is a classic case of "self-doubting men [who] are much more likely to overcompensate by behaving in an 'extremely masculine way'" (Sexton 158). Smith was ashamed of how he responded to the mummy's attack, especially because it was witnessed by Doctor Peterson, and therefore enacts the role of the penultimate, dominant male. His female-coded fear is replaced by aggression and strength, which allows him to retain his position of respect in the homosocial world in which he lives. The expectation of masculine stoicism is constantly reinforced in the Imperial Gothic genre. Though many of the male characters fail to live up to the stoic ideal, this failure is always felt with shame on their part, is censured by other men, and then is redeemed through overcompensation of masculine bravado.

The devaluation of learning for learning's sake that can be perceived in *The Goddess*, *Image*, and "Lot No. 249" enforce a hegemonic view of masculinity as active and physically productive. Anti-intellectualism works in tandem with emotional stoicism to limit both a full range of emotions and a full range of thought. Men in these texts are thus confined into thinking, feeling, and acting in a prescribed manner in order to fulfill their role in the patriarchal standing. Any deviations from these expectations are chastised and must be immediately remedied for the

men to maintain their social position. While men have the advantage of claiming power and privilege through these toxically masculine expectations, they are still clearly confined into a limited role similarly to how women are confined in traditional gender norms. Even though these masculine traits are vaunted in toxically masculine culture, they ultimately harm men as well as those with whom men interact.

II. Violence and the Making of the Man

Violence was one of the more hotly debated masculine characteristics during the Victorian era. At mid-century, pacific masculinity was preferred over a combative masculinity that was viewed as uncivilized and overly reactive. However, the heightened imperial threats of the latter half of the nineteenth century led to a greater appreciation of and desire for a more martial masculinity that illustrated the ability to defend the empire. I discussed the jingoistic attitudes of New Imperialism in this thesis's first chapter and how they resulted in depictions of extreme violence against the racial Other. We saw this repeatedly enacted in Imperial Gothic texts of the era from the Cult of Isis's annihilation in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* to the mummy being dismembered and burned in "Lot No. 249" to the genocidal ending in M.P. Shiel's *The Yellow Danger*. War is often used as an excuse for extreme acts of violence with racism and xenophobia being rationalized as necessary for victory. The authors discussed in this thesis certainly justify the actions of their characters and depict the hooligan as a necessity of imperial dominion. However, it is not just in the realm of empire that violence is prized; the acceptance of hooliganism spills over into the British homeland. Today, the hooligan is often associated with youth and male, group mentality. It is significant that since its earliest usage in 1898, the term was more often

discussed in terms of life on the London streets.[196] Once violence is considered necessary to masculinity, it cannot be contained to distant shores. Even men of station and respectability are expected to have the ability to turn violent when they need to defend themselves or others—or simply when they need to enforce their wishes. This is made clear through characters like Ferguson in Richard Marsh's *The Goddess: A Demon*.

Ferguson made his career in the empire but is unable to leave his martial practices behind in the colonies. Marsh immediately situates Ferguson as a man of empire even on the civilized streets of London. On the first page, Ferguson visits the Empire music hall and then explains that he "lived in Imperial Mansions" (*Goddess* 5). His time in the empire is explained as having turned him into a strong man who is capable of extreme violence:

> I am a hard man. My life has been lived, for the most part, in odd corners of the world, where, single-handed, I have fought the fight for fortune; in places where human life is not held of much account, and where one would have thought as little of killing such a man as Edwin Lawrence appeared to have been, as destroying any other noxious animal. I have ever been a fighter. Men have called me "Fighting John." I have had to defend my own life, and have not hesitated, when circumstances required, to take the lives of others. I learnt, long ago, that there are occasions when killing is not alone the best, but the only cure. (83)

Ferguson directly characterizes himself as a man who has vast experience with killing without thought or remorse. He paints fighting as a regular aspect of his imperial life and claims that the

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[196] The OED defines hooligan as "A young street rough, a member of a street gang," citing its first usage in 1898.

death of those who get in his way is curative. Ferguson's experience with violence bleeds over into his life in England, with violence being his first instinct when someone annoys him or as an expedient to getting his way. The narrative provides constant examples of his violent instincts with statements such as "I should like to have taken him by the scruff of the neck and shaken him" (118), "I should have liked to commit an assault upon the coroner" (119), and "Had he known it, he was never so near having his head twisted off his shoulders. Had he allowed a sign of recognition to have escaped him, there would have been murder done" (134). Ferguson understands that gentlemen do not immediately resort to violence in Britain, and although he bemoans the irrational, overly soft state of civilization, he does attempt to adhere to expectations, but the gentleman is just the gloss that he uses to cover his violent actions. The novel emphasizes this when Isaac Bernstein attempts to push his way into Philip Lawrence's house while Ferguson is there. Ferguson points out his masculine strength when he declares, "I am not a man with whom every one finds it easy to play that kind of game. When I am pushed, I push" (100). And he does indeed push Bernstein, "backwards across the pavement at a run" whilst Ferguson shouts at him "Manners, sir! Manners!" (100). Ferguson's insistence on proper manners as he physically assaults Bernstein is somewhat comical and shines a spotlight on the veneer of gentlemanliness evident in Ferguson's character. This veneer is proven to be incredibly thin when directly after this, Ferguson relates, "As he showed a disposition to make a noise, I took him by the throat. Lifting him on the big oak table, and laying him flat upon his back, I kept him quiet while I went through his pockets" (102). Ferguson is obviously no gentleman, but is instead an imperial hooligan in gentlemanly garb. He uses his size and strength to manhandle every situation he encounters, deploying gentlemanly language largely ironically such as when he ends this encounter with Bernstein by politely stating, "I hope I have put you to no inconvenience" (102).

Even when he plays the gentleman, he intends violence in the end. He says of Hume, "though, I hoped, at the proper time, to take him by the neck and drop him from the window, my desire was, in the mean time, to treat him with the utmost courtesy" (94). Violence is Ferguson's first instinct, and although this is often expressed in the novel as a desire to commit violence without any follow through, there are plenty of moments like the instance with Bernstein when the threats are acted upon.

Ferguson repeatedly uses his strength and violence in order to enforce his will. He regularly downplays these acts of violence as encouragements or hints for the other characters; however, the other characters' reactions obviously indicate the power he puts behind these acts of "encouragement." When Thomas Moore attempts to walk away from him, Ferguson states, "I had to give him a gentle hint in order to detain him. He winced under my touch like a hound which fears punishment" (61). When he detains Inspector Symonds by the shoulder, Symonds demands, "Remove your hand; do you wish to dislocate my shoulder? You forget your own strength, as well as other things, Mr. Ferguson" (75). Such moments of brute force over other men prove his opposition to the overly soft Londoners that he encounters. Ferguson exhibits no shame or remorse for these violent actions and the narrative presents them as almost humorous. However, there are moments in this text that display a slightly more ambivalent response to his hooliganesque behavior.

Ferguson's quick temper not only leads to several men being injured, but more damning are the injuries that he causes Bessie. Early in the narrative when he is exasperated with her cryptic responses, he relates, "I gripped her roughly by the wrist. She gave a cry of pain. I loosed her, ashamed. She eyed me as if bewildered. [...] As I hesitated she, coming closer, drawing up the sleeve of her dress, showed me her wrist, on which were the marks of my fingers" (33).

Although he did not mean to assert so much force on Bessie and demonstrates guilt and shame for his actions, he also defends them with statements like "You should not play with me" (33) and "I did not mean to do it—I beg your pardon. But this morning I'm afraid I am impatient; things have tried me" (34). Ferguson excusing his violence against the men as constrained may be excused to an extent because men were expected to physically demonstrate their authority and dominance in relation to one another. However, Ferguson harming Bessie cannot be glossed over or presented as acceptable despite his attempts to excuse his actions. The fact that Ferguson even attempts to excuse his violence against Bessie proves the danger that toxic masculinity poses in terms of violence against women. Patrick Quinn asserts that "It is not coincidental that reports of sexual abuse cases involving men beating women grew significantly during this period" (81) as a result of the threat that women's increasing autonomy posed to toxically masculine men's normative conceptions of male dominance. Violence is always a way to try to assert power, especially when that power is threatened. Ferguson tries to justify his aggression toward Bessie, but even more significantly, Bessie also excuses his violence and blames herself, declaring, "What things [have tried you]? Am I one of them? I am so sorry—please forgive me!" (34). The cultural expectation that men act violently and that when they do so it is for good reason is one of the most dangerous aspects of toxic masculinity and leads to a culture of abuse that is perpetuated throughout patriarchal society.

While many modern readers may read the character of Ferguson as toxically masculine, the narrative itself presents him as a man of authority and respect. Far from considering Ferguson's repeated use of violence problematic, Marsh presents him as the ultimate man's man as opposed to gentlemanly Hume and the ineffective police and court officials. After Ferguson literally carries Hume out the door when exasperated by him, Ferguson states that Mr. Morley

"seemed impressed by the way in which I had handled Hume" (43) and is therefore convinced to trust him. When he shakes Thomas Moore, Miss Adair declares "That was good! [...] I feel better" (63), thus presenting violence as cathartic. Both Bessie and Mr. Morley refer to Ferguson's violence as his "persuasive manner" (104, 126). They all excuse his acts of violence as necessary and effective and are directly impressed by his physical abilities. This is a great illustration of the respect gained through violence in toxically masculine narratives and culture. Even when the characters are not in favor of his violence, they still stand in awe of it and allow Ferguson to get his way as a result. Symonds admits, "You're not the sort of man with whom I should care to struggle" (111) and later declares, "You are a curious person, Mr. Ferguson. You have your own ideas of the way in which justice is administered in England. However, you shall have your own way" (147). Symonds is a high-level inspector but is still cowed and swayed by Ferguson. Even the official court seems to have no power over him. When the judge tries to hold Ferguson in contempt for his extraordinarily churlish behavior in court, Ferguson simply laughs and walks out of the room while "the people made way to let me pass as if I had been the plague" (122). Marsh is not casting Ferguson as the perfect embodiment of masculinity—he is slightly too dimwitted and many consider his size freakish—however, Marsh does present him as the epitome of muscular, martial, manliness. Hume references him as almost a scientific specimen of possibilities for men—what they may become at their height of strength and power, claiming, "I don't resent your physical configuration; it's educative, as showing what the strength of a man may be" (86). Ferguson is thus situated at the height of the evolutionary pyramid of masculinity as if he has evolved beyond the constraints of the over-civilized, modern world. This is a significant departure from the mid-Victorian view of unrefined might as emblematic of unevolved savagery. New Imperialist masculinity repositions the hooliganesque figure at the top

of the Darwinian ladder. Although he may claim a sense of savagery more often associated with the Other, he does so to further the interests of Britain and is thus justified.

While Ferguson is a paragon of martial masculinity, Hume is also presented as an acceptable form of masculinity—specifically, Hume is the gentleman. Ferguson tries to act the gentleman but repeatedly fails due to his low intelligence and penchant for violence, but Hume naturally embodies the role. The text presents Hume as slightly less manly than Ferguson because he is not as physically strong nor is he experienced with combat. When Hume pulls a gun on Ferguson, Ferguson quickly realizes, "there was something in the way in which he gripped his weapon which told me that he was not yet acquainted with all its capabilities" (85). Ferguson easily disarms him and proceeds to shake him, effectively emasculating Hume due to the ease with which Ferguson overcomes him. This emasculation is furthered by Ferguson's description of the gun as "a natty little thing, [...] not of the kind one carries where a gun is one of the chief necessities of existence" (85). Hume is not an empire man though, and in civilized London a man does not need to be able to "send a bullet through an inch board at the distance of a dozen yards" (86). Hume is a product of overly-civilized, modern Britain; however, unlike Forrester in *Pharos* who is condemned because he never displays any capacity for martial strength, Hume is redeemed in the novel by descriptions of his willingness to fight and his choice to stand up to Ferguson despite Ferguson's great size. Ferguson compares Hume to a predator when he states, "There was something hawk-like in his attitude, as if he was ready to pounce on me the instant he could find an opening" (39). Hume's characterization as a bird of prey ready to pounce parallels Lessingham's description in *The Beetle*, painting both as strong men who are capable of defending themselves and Britain metonymically. Ferguson later admits that "the increased pressure of [Hume's] grasp showed that his strength was greater than I imagined" (65).

Despite both men being at odds with one another, there seems to be a reluctant respect given for Hume's tenacity. Both Ferguson's martial masculinity and Hume's gentlemanly demeanor are illustrated as acceptable forms of manliness and both necessary. Whilst Ferguson cannot solve problems without violence, Hume is able to use his words and rationality to get his way. For instance, when Inspector Symonds attempts to detain Bessie, Ferguson physically threatens the man, whereas Hume scientifically explains the detriment that such actions could have on her mental health. When Symonds suggests that a policeman stay with Bessie, Ferguson demands "One of your men will do nothing of the kind" and relates that "Hume said the same thing with a greater flow of language" (77). In the end, Hume and Ferguson get their way, but it took both the threat of violence and the use of calm, polite rationality to achieve their ends. Both of these characters represent forms of masculinity that were viewed as acceptable in this era and while one is more manly and productive, the other is more fitted to civilized society. They are both necessary to British stability and their codependence is characterized by the begrudging friendship that occurs between Hume and Ferguson in the end. Hume directly perceives Ferguson's hooliganism and Ferguson relates, "Indeed, he once assured me that he was becoming more and more convinced that men whose physical and muscular development went beyond a certain limit were, *ipso facto*, mad; and, *ergo*, I must be insane" (168). Men whose penchant for violence went beyond the civilized level were to an extent considered outside of the norm; however, their violence was productive for the empire and ensured that British might persisted. As such they were tolerated if not directly appreciated. Ferguson goes on to relate that despite Hume thinking him insane, "However, we are tolerable friends, and he seems not unwilling to allow that I am as well out of an asylum as in" (168). Even though the gentlemanly

man may not always appreciate the hooligan's way of doing things, he can at least recognize his importance to the British imperial and patriarchal system.

Marsh does provide an example of unacceptable male violence in this novel through the character of Philip Lawrence whose regular abuse of his little brother leads to Edwin's slide into mental instability, vengeance, and his association with the goddess. Although Edwin is hardly blameless and attempts to swindle his brother out of money, Philip's actions are still referred to as "unreasoning violence" (166) and paint him as "a raving lunatic [...] capable of anything" (48). Morley, Philip Lawrence's manservant, describes an attack, stating, "Once Mr. Philip thrashed him—broke his stick across his back, he did; Mr. Edwin must have been black and blue with bruises" (45). Philip's use of a walking stick to assault his brother paints this violence as cowardly and unfair in a society that places great value in a man's ability to "trust to his own right hand" (28) in matters of honor or defense. Ferguson's actions by comparison are excusable in the novel because he never uses a weapon other than his own body. The novel condones casual acts of masculine violence as long as they are to a purpose and not simply acts of uncontrolled emotional rage. The novel's terming of Philip's outbursts as "unreasoning" indicates that his actions proceed from a lack of self-control that would be considered unmanly. I examined in the previous chapter how weak men are often killed off as unfit in the Imperial Gothic genre, and Philip Lawrence's death is presented as equally necessary as the death of the degenerate, weak Edwin Lawrence and the corrupt Thomas Moore. Ferguson's gentlemanly veneer and calm attitude while perpetuating acts of violence in addition to his proclaimed rationales present his use of force as justified. Even though one form of violence may be excused and the other condemned, both originate from a toxically masculine culture that teaches men that violence should be their first instinct.

Another of Marsh's characters that gains respect and defends his masculinity through violence is Paul Lessingham. I have already discussed the fact that Lessingham regained his manhood in Egypt through violence but it is significant that he also regains respect in London through acts of aggression and violence, not against the Other but against his peers. The idea that violence and agency were measures that made the man is a prevalent theme in Imperial Gothic texts. What makes Lessingham different from Holt, and ultimately what makes him redeemable despite showing a similar weakness, is Lessingham's willingness and ability to fight. Atherton, who for most of the novel is Lessingham's biggest critic, sees this fighting spirit for the first time when Lessingham is giving a speech in the political arena. Though Atherton spent a good deal of his earlier discussion on Lessingham criticizing his coldness and dry personality, after the speech Atherton contends,

> I confess that my feeling rapidly became one of admiration. I love the fighter. I quickly recognised that here we had him in perfection. There was no seeming about him then, —the man was to the manner born. To his finger-tips a fighting man. I had never realised it so clearly before. He was coolness itself. He had all his faculties under complete command. While never, for a moment, really exposing himself, he could be swift in perceiving the slightest weakness in his opponents' defence. (Marsh, *Beetle* 107)

This passage highlights Lessingham's composure, which was undermined earlier as he was unable to maintain his masculine performance. However, here Atherton pronounces that there is "no seeming about him." This speech convinces Atherton that at Lessingham's very core is what he calls "a fighting man." Atherton for the first time sees Lessingham's stoicism as a benefit to

his position, and indeed as a methodical strategy to combat his opponents. His self-possession makes him untouchable whilst giving him the chance to pinpoint weaknesses in his opponent. "Masculinity was very prominent in Conservative idealization of leadership" (Jarvis 184) and the ability to fight was a hallmark of masculine authority both physically and socially, which is primarily why Lessingham symbolizes the ideal of manhood and the hope for Britain's future.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, this was a time in British history when the weaknesses of the country were being thrown into sharp relief by strong colonized peoples and imperial rivals. The ability to fight, overcome obstacles, and conquer perceived threats was therefore key to British survival. This is one of the reasons why the toxically masculine traits of violence and combativeness were prized at this time. Lessingham's weakness in this story is ultimately forgiven because, at the end of the day, he fights and wins.

Marsh uses Atherton as both Lessingham's greatest critic and his greatest admirer to illustrate that even someone predisposed to hate Lessingham cannot help but admire the man. Atherton is the perfect character to comment on Lessingham's masculinity because he symbolizes both a hooligan and a scientist. In a time when eugenics was gaining a foothold in Britain due to prevalent theories about degeneration, Atherton uses his role as a biologist to highlight the genetic superiority of a man like Lessingham. Lessingham is in peak form physically. Atherton records, "He possesses physical qualities which please my eye—speaking as a mere biologist. I like the suggestion conveyed by his every pose, his every movement, of a tenacious hold on life" (Marsh, *Beetle* 85-86). Atherton's admiration has clear homoerotic undertones, as discussed by Harris and Vernooy,[197] but his statement also proves that

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[197] See Harris and Vernooy 359 for a convincing argument that Atherton's admiration of Lessingham is homoerotic, focusing on the use of the phrase "well-hung" which has the same connotation as today, referring to large male genitalia. While I do not explore Atherton's homoeroticism here for reasons of space, it is an intriguing point especially when considering Atherton as a hooliganesque character. Toxic masculinity has been a noted feature of

Lessingham's bodily makeup seems to qualify him as a specimen capable of thriving and surviving. As degeneration theorists aimed to prove that degeneracy was hereditary, Lessingham's biological traits are proposed as what the British race requires to hold onto its authority. Atherton continues his admiration of Lessingham, recording,

> The fellow's lithe and active; not hasty, yet agile; clean built, well hung,—the sort of man who might be relied upon to make a good recovery. You might be at him in a sprint,—mental or physical—though to do that you would have to be spry!—but in a staying race he would see you out. (86)

The metaphor of the race is particularly important when thinking of natural selection. Atherton believes that Lessingham is biologically predisposed to strength in such a competition. Atherton admits that in a short race, Lessingham may be beaten, perhaps by the Other, who has won many battles and mutinies. However, Atherton paints Lessingham—and by extension the entire British race—as the winner of the war of domination. Lessingham will always make a strong comeback and come out on top in the end. Most critics analyze Lessingham as an idealization of manhood undercut by his weakness.[198] I posit him as a hope for the future despite—maybe even because of—his weakness and his ability to overcome it. With men of strength who possess the ability to fight and persevere, Britain can retain its status at the top of the world.

In discussing Lessingham and Atherton, it is important to look at the depiction of their toxic masculinity during the search for Marjorie because it highlights various forms of toxic

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repressed homosexual men, overcompensating for homoerotic feelings. Dobson in "Cross-Dressing," especially 38-39, also notes Atherton's sexual attraction to the androgynous beetle.

[198] See Jones 74, Rebry 6, and also Margree 69-71 for analyses of Lessingham's diminished masculinity in relation to his moments of feminized weakness throughout *The Beetle*.

masculinity—both the churlish version that is often denigrated and the more socially accepted stoic version. Although they both clearly display forms of toxic masculinity during these scenes, these expressions of manliness vary between inspiring admiration and undermining their respectability. Lessingham and Atherton are both fighting men in their own ways. While Atherton is far more performative in his violence, and therefore is more obviously associated with toxic masculinity, Lessingham maintains his own vein of the toxically masculine as well. When Lessingham exhibits this performative masculinity, it is often applauded as improving his manliness. Champnell describes an incident of physical violence that Lessingham displays against Atherton: "He shook Sydney as if he had been a rat,—then flung him from him headlong on to the floor. [...] Never had I seen a man so transformed by rage. Lessingham seemed to have positively increased in stature" (Marsh, *Beetle* 265). Male anger and violence here increases Champnell's respect for Lessingham despite the weakness Lessingham displayed previously. Though one would expect Atherton to resent being thrown around like a rat, he actually admires Lessingham all the more for it, exclaiming, "By God, Lessingham, there's more in you than I thought. After all, you are a man" (266). This is an explicit equivocation of violence to manhood.[199] After this fight, Atherton shakes Lessingham's hand, proving the respect gained in that moment. Lessingham's political adroitness, respectability, and social persona meant nothing to Atherton until he proved his manliness with an exhibition of physical strength. Soon after this, Lessingham thrusts Atherton aside and physically extricates Marjorie's engagement ring from Atherton's hand. Again, the physicality of this interaction only increases Atherton's respect for Lessingham. Champnell describes how "ravished of his treasure, Sydney turned and surveyed the ravisher with something like a glance of admiration" (270). The repeated use of the word

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[199] See Rebry, especially 10, for another examination of masculinity being framed in terms of violence in *The Beetle*. She notes that "when Lessingham and Atherton 'play the man', violence ensues" (10).

"ravish" elicits ideas of romance and possession, providing more evidence for Harris and Vernooy's theory forwarding Atherton's homosexual inclinations but also emphasizing Atherton's increasing admiration for Lessingham. Atherton, every inch the hooligan, expresses his esteem and respect with a desire to fight Lessingham "with the bare ones, sir, as a gentleman should do" (271). Lessingham fights primarily out of anger and desperation in his fear for Marjorie. Atherton fights for its own sake, exposing his selfish desire to prove his physical prowess against Lessingham despite Marjorie being in mortal danger. Many today only accept Atherton's form of aggression as toxic masculinity and therefore limit the term to a small group of men; however, it is vital for us to analyze toxic masculinity as a more pervasive and ingrained set of gender norms so that we can see how these standards reinforce hegemonic, patriarchal power structures.

It is important that Lessingham is portrayed as fully regaining his normative masculinity during the quest to save Marjorie, which enacts the plot of a typical adventure novel of the time. This befits the conventions of Victorian male romance novels "which extolled the masculine and homosocial 'romance' of adventures and quest" (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 79). This plot was usually carried out in the empire where adventure and risk were meant to breed strong men. In the safety of the British Isles there was comparatively little opportunity for men to prove themselves. While other countries in Europe were fighting revolutions and imperialists were staving off mutinies, middle-class and upper-class British men were working at their desks, reading, and navigating social events. It is hard to showcase your manliness in such an atmosphere. Brantlinger notes that the Imperial Gothic exhibits "the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world" (230). In order to contravene the lack of adventure in the modern age, Imperial Gothic texts import invasive characters from imperial

settings to recreate the adventures of empire within Britain. With this new adventure at hand, Lessingham can prove himself every inch the man that most view him to be. This adventure has an invigorating effect on him as Champnell describes, "he was getting a firmer hold of the strength which had all but escaped him, and that with every jog and jolt he was becoming more and more of a man" (Marsh, *Beetle* 342). Finally, Lessingham has the chance to truly be a man in Champnell's terms by embarking on a similar adventure to that found in the empire, namely pursuing and conquering the Other. It must be acknowledged that Lessingham is initially unmanned through his escapades in the empire, seemingly disproving the fact that the empire develops masculinity. However, I claim that his initial emasculation is due to his exiting the homosocial sphere. By going alone into the native quarter, Lessingham discards the safety and community of a gathering of like-minded men. His solitude allows him to be overcome by the Other. However, when he embarks on an adventure within homosocial confines, taking along Atherton and Champnell, he is able to engage in risky activities and exhibit his manliness in a protected environment. The homosocial sphere was meant to give men a place to be men, apart from the weakening influences of women. They could perform athletic feats, talk about politics with those considered equals, and tell stories about the glories of empire. The social safety that this created in Victorian England is depicted as also creating physical safety in *The Beetle*. That Lessingham's companions are representatives of the hooligan and the detective highlights the masculine characteristics that are most prized by men in this sphere: strength and rationality. Through risk, adventure, and violence Lessingham regains his manhood and is redeemed. While Holt is finally killed off as a result of a level of weakness from which there is no return, Lessingham is rewarded with a happy ending due to his ability to persevere. He becomes "one of the greatest statesmen the age has seen" (348) and marries Marjorie who has officially become a

dutiful wife after her stay in the asylum. However, it is not enough that the Beetle is killed in the end and that "he has ceased to be a haunted man" (349). Britain itself must be redeemed and proven dominant in this novel. This dominance is exhibited through the toxically masculine trait of violence, as befits a representation of the empire. Marsh, in the final chapter, describes how during an imperial campaign the temple of Isis is destroyed. It is bombed to the extent that "a huge hole was discovered in the ground,—as if blasting operations on an enormous scale, had recently been carried on" (Marsh, *Beetle* 349). The Other is not only killed but obliterated. Britain—and, I also claim, British masculinity—conquer the Other. Not only do they vanquish the foreign Other, but they seem to subdue all things that defy classification, including categories of gender and sexuality. Marsh describes the bodies that were found around the crater as "bodies neither of men nor women, but of creatures of some monstrous growth" (349). Marsh chooses in the last few pages to place a final emphasis on the fact that not conforming to gender roles makes people monsters who are unworthy of sympathy or mercy. The temple of Isis is destroyed and overcome by the dominant and purer race in what Marsh calls "a consummation devoutly to be desired" (350). As a piece of patriarchal propaganda, *The Beetle* reinforces the traditional role of white men as the sole leaders of society. The threats posed to their position of power are either completely destroyed or are thrust back into their traditionally submissive roles. Both the New Woman and the Other are neutralized in order to shore up hegemonic male control. In true toxically masculine fashion, men who do not comply with normative views of masculinity are either shamed into compliance or destroyed for the sake of British sovereignty. Toxically masculine traits are held up as redeemers of British strength and are viewed as characteristics that allow Britain to continue its domination over the "uncivilized" world.

The Goddess and *The Beetle* illustrate how violence is glorified in toxically masculine culture. Physical aggression creates and enforces respect within the homosocial sphere because it proves that the man is strong enough to defend himself, his interests, and his country. In Imperial Gothic texts, the fighting man is repeatedly valorized because he assuages fears of Britain's effeminacy while also proving Britain's ability to overcome the Other. Lessingham's assertive violence and Ferguson's purposeful violence (against other men) are the forms of martial masculinity most aggrandized, but even Atherton's performative desire for violence is accepted with minimal criticism because it still exhibits his martial manhood. Similarly, Ferguson's aggression against Bessie is almost glossed over in the novel as she excuses his actions and takes the blame on herself. Toxically masculine culture's ability to justify violence against women and the Other is one of the chief dangers it poses to society. The wars, street violence, genocides, and domestic violence that ensue as a result of toxic masculinity proves the harmful nature of these aggressive gender norms and the need to dismantle systems of oppression that rationalize these acts.

III. The Homosocial Echo Chamber

The homosocial sphere is an aspect of masculinity that is often glorified in patriarchal culture. This is highly evident in the late Victorian age when men's homosocial universe at gentlemen's clubs, on athletic fields, or in the empire was believed to make the man. Many scholars cite the "flight from domesticity" at the turn of the century, claiming that there was "in late Victorian England a much keener sense of the drawbacks of domestic life for men" and a corresponding "reluctance to marry" (Tosh, *A Man's Place* 172). Men chose to eschew their role as the

paterfamilias for longer in favor of homosocial settings like the university, gentleman's clubs, and the empire.[200] Although the role of paterfamilias was still important to masculine identity, there was a greater sympathy for men who chose to abscond from their paternal duties in favor of the homosocial sphere of male camaraderie. We can see this growing ambivalence if not antipathy to domestic roles in many Imperial Gothic texts. Thus characters like Horace Holly in *She* insist that when a man marries, he "place[s] his life under the influence of a mysterious creature of evil tendencies" (Haggard 215). The narrator in Kipling's "Mark of the Beast," when speaking of his fellow imperialists who entered the matrimonial state, declares rather plainly "some were married, which was bad" (71). The retreat into the homosocial sphere is more comprehensible when one considers that men's traditional place of dominance in the domestic realm and workplace was increasingly threatened by women's expanding rights. While women had a minor presence in the empire, in universities, and on the playing field, these atmospheres were still male dominated and offered a bastion of solace to men whose sense of kingship in the world was being threatened. As Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett state, performative masculinity "can only be sustained and reaffirmed through fraternal groupings, often misogynistic male bonding rituals, rejection of intimacy and avid denial of the 'Other'" (10). Homosociality therefore acts as a foundation of masculine culture and patriarchal power.

The emphasis on homosociality as a bedrock of masculine culture leads to multiple but entangled societal issues entwined with patriarchy and toxic masculinity. Firstly, the homosocial sphere purposely excludes all those who are not accepted as part of the dominant, white, male culture. This limits, quite purposefully, the access of marginalized groups to seats of power. It also limits the diversity of thoughts and opinions in the homosocial setting so that they often

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[200] See Tosh, especially 172; Francis, especially 641; and also Heathorn, especially 2, for analyses of men's flight from domesticity.

constitute an echo chamber of masculinist ideas. Secondly, the homosocial sphere reinforces the men's conformity because their position in this sphere is so important to their social being and masculine identity that they refuse to threaten it by acting in opposition to societal expectations. Boys perform masculine dictates in school in order to gain acceptance from their male peers, later enshrining these performative tactics in their male identity. They then enforce these toxically masculine traits on other peers and eventually teach their sons that these traits are what constitute manhood. It is a cyclical structure that can be repeated perpetually unless the loop is forcefully broken by a close examination and illumination of the patriarchal system. In this section, I use *Jewel* to examine the exclusion of other voices in the homosocial sphere and the way this limits various views and access to power. From there, I analyze the emphasis on conformity that is perceivable in various Imperial Gothic texts and finish by highlighting how this conformity and need to defend the homosocial can result in horrific acts carried out and accepted by the group. Whilst the proliferation of heinous acts against an outside force has been previously analyzed in relation to *The Yellow Danger* and *The Beetle*, hereafter I focus primarily on Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" to elucidate the extent to which the homosocial sphere justifies and covers awful acts by men who belong to its ranks. By examining the use of the homosocial sphere in these texts, we can see how the homosocial sphere perpetuates an exclusive, restrictive culture that limits power to white men, dismissing other voices and justifying the harm that toxically masculine culture precipitates in society.

In *Jewel*, there is a strong focus on the homosocial sphere, with the importance of the homosocial prevalent throughout the novel. The men in this novel form a mutual admiration society, each praising one another in turn. Sabine Lenore Müller notes that a "mutually supportive sphere of intimate male friends" (81) is common in Stokerian fiction. Even though

these men are not intimate friends, their bond increases throughout the story as their trust in and reliance on one another expands. From the early Victorian era through the Edwardian period, the social and literary emphasis on the homosocial highlights men's "attraction to a world of chaste masculine bonding from which the female has been magically eliminated" (Sussman 5).[201] The library and the study are common settings for the homosocial scenes in *Jewel* and are constantly situated as places for discovery, trust, and comradery between men. This is first seen when Sergeant Daw seeks out Ross in the study to disclose his suspicions against Margaret. Ross is only ambiguously connected to the Trelawny family, but Daw implicitly trusts him due to his gender and professional abilities.[202] The respect Daw accords to Ross is immediately reciprocated, and although Ross's feelings for Margaret lead him to dismiss the charges placed against her, he acknowledges Daw as a man worth admiring because "the man's courage and honesty and consideration compelled respect" (Stoker 46).[203] Daw follows the social conventions expected of men and consequently garners esteem despite differences of opinion. Similarly, Doctor Winchester later seeks a man-to-man meeting with Ross in the library. His request for this meeting highlights the desire for the homosocial sphere to be private and separate as he propounds to Ross, "I want to have a talk with you. And as I wish it to be quite private, I thought the least suspicious way would be to have a cigar together late in the evening when Miss

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[201] See Sedgwick, especially Chapter 5, and also Boudreau 43 for examinations of the changing worries concerning the homosocial sphere and homosexual desire. While the homosocial was still very much prevalent at the turn of the century, it began to be questioned more as public awareness of homosexuality came to the forefront of Victorian discussion.

[202] See Daly, *Modernism, Romance and the Fin de Siècle* especially Chapter 1, for an investigation into how the rise of professionalism is displayed in Stokerian fiction. He points out that as shown in Stoker's narratives, "the Victorian ethos of independence [...] yields to one in which 'rights and obligations [are] seen in terms of collective solidarities and responsibilities" (43). This is evident in *Jewel* as the professional men work together to achieve a common goal, each fulfilling their own responsibilities for the good of the group.

[203] See A. Smith, "Love, Freud, and the Female Gothic," especially 81-82, for analysis of love in Gothic novels as amounting to a dangerously pathological and a neurotic state (drawing on Freudian theories). Smith claims that Ross's belief that he is in a love story instead of a Gothic narrative leads to his "disempowerment." Ross's love for Margaret leads him to dismiss any suspicions about her culpability, and his trust in her leads to the death of most of the male characters.

Trelawny is watching her father" (47). Brigitte Boudreau notes that "for a 'homosocial' bond between males to occur, an isolated environment or delineated space is required, where there is often a conscious and deliberate exclusion of women" (43). The simple masculine activity of smoking a cigar—a phallic symbol that connotes "erectness" and masculinity—provides Ross and Winchester an excuse to exclude Margaret from their conversation and keeps their discussion protected within the male sphere. During their talk, Winchester also throws suspicion upon Margaret, citing the fact that she was not affected by whatever caused the cataplectic state of the nurse and Mr. Trelawny. Significantly, Margaret's absence of feminine weakness, shown through her lack of susceptibility to the trance state, is what leads Winchester to distrust her. Undeniably, there is a distinct lack of faith bestowed upon Margaret compared to the confidence and respect provided Ross, making the case that trust is solely reserved for those that are accepted into the homosocial male sphere. Those outside of the sphere are targeted as Other and threatening.

In the chapter "The Need of Knowledge," the reader is provided a decidedly homosocial scene with Ross, Mr. Corbeck, and Doctor Winchester in Ross's room—an obviously private, male space. Winchester initially comes to Ross's room to ask his advice about consulting Corbeck on the "superhuman and supernatural possibilities" (Stoker 70) associated with this case. Though Winchester does not yet fully trust Corbeck, he still seeks his assistance and knowledge because he trusts Corbeck's professional expertise if not his character. There is a distinct need to be able to talk things over with other men—people whose intellect and rationality is respected. Ross relates, "For myself, I had perfect confidence in both men; and any comparing notes, or mutual assistance, might bring good results. Such could hardly bring evil" (70). Accordingly, Ross invites Corbeck into the homosocial setting to share a pipe with the

other men. Again, smoking is used as a masculine act, marking the homosocial sphere and providing an excuse for the men to meet.[204] During this scene, Corbeck gains the respect and trust of the other men. Ross relates, "He spoke with great dignity; and he grew, moment by moment, in the respect and esteem of both Doctor Winchester and myself" (72). This is the power of the homosocial sphere; it provides a place in which men can speak openly to one another, creating a feeling of fellowship and respect. Despite Corbeck initially being tight-lipped and mistrustful of those around him—and therefore mistrusted in return—the chance for open discussion between men provides a common ground that ties these men together. Those excluded from this sphere—namely women and the racial Other—have limited chances to earn the same level of respect and therefore are often dismissed as inferior, as can be seen by the men's treatment of Margaret for much of the novel. Corbeck reciprocates the respect given to him and agrees to share whatever knowledge he can with the other men. Ross does his part for open confidence by sharing all that has happened to him since entering the story. This open divulgence allows for perspective and greater clarity in the case, permitting the men to devise a plan to further their investigation into the mystery. It also provides a chance for Corbeck to give Ross a book about the initial discovery of Queen Tera's tomb, which later provides Ross and the reader further enlightenment on the situation. Knowledge of Tera in the form of this book is entrusted to Ross only after this meeting, once confidence is established between the men.

Ross lauds the function of the homosocial in terms of sharing knowledge when he says, "This is the merit of entire, or collected narrative. Isolated facts, doubts, suspicions, conjectures,

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[204] While the homosocial sphere is inherently social, it is also a place to do business, make plans, and create alliances. As Eve Sedgwick states in her influential work *Between Men* (2016), "heavily freighted bonds between men exist, [...] as the backbone of social form" (86). James Eli Adams makes a similar claim stating, "central to social power [...] traditionally almost every social structure [...] locates power in some form of bond between men" ("Victorian Sexualities" 134). The respect gained in the homosocial sphere and the bond created allied men to one another, allowing them to continue propagating patriarchal control and power.

give way to a homogeneity which is convincing" (73). While Ross—fittingly for a lawyer who is used to compiling evidence—represents this as men using their knowledge to uncover truth, this quotation exhibits a much darker function of the homosocial and the patriarchy's fundamental means of power.[205] The "collected narrative" is only the narrative as seen through the eyes of white men. Marjorie as a woman is explicitly excluded instead of being invited to contribute, and Tera as a representative of the racial Other is entirely expunged from the possibility of participation, being unable to move (except for a single hand) let alone talk. The homogeneity of ideas follows the homogeneity of the group assembled, creating a narrative that solely supports those in charge—the oppressive class. As Sussman concedes, "a study of masculinities examines the history of the oppressors, of the hegemonic discourse, of the patriarchy" (8). This "hegemonic discourse" is then dispersed to the rest of society who are under the influence of patriarchal forces. Any diverging ideas get swept away in favor of the common narrative that dismisses problems to the fringes of society. Dominant narratives ignore counternarratives that may undermine those in power. The fact that this chapter is called "The Need of Knowledge" and is comprised largely of homosocial meetings definitively demonstrates that knowledge is relegated to the world of men. This can also be seen by the fact that the library and study—both places of work and knowledge—are used as homosocial meeting places. The knowledge afforded to men is used to reinforce their supremacy. Ultimately in *Jewel*, the men are threatened only when they expand the common, patriarchal narrative to include Margaret (a budding New Woman with questionable racial parentage) and Tera (an Egyptian queen and New Woman

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[205] While Tosh posits that "masculinity is as much about homosociality as about patriarchy" (*Manliness and Masculinities* 5), these two things cannot be entirely separated from one another. The reinforcement of manliness and use of the homosocial as a place of male bonding directly correlates to the continuation of male power and control.

archetype), reinforcing the misogyny and xenophobia that aimed to exclude these groups in the first place.

Although the men gain acceptance and strength through the homosocial sphere, in keeping with misogynistic tendencies, Margaret is regularly excluded from and disrupts this male space. When Ross and Daw are having their private meeting, Margaret interrupts their conversation by entering the study, at which point, the men's discussion is immediately halted. Although Margaret interrupts the homosocial meeting, she also recognizes that she does not have free license to fully enter it, and therefore "the moment she saw [the men] she drew back quickly" (Stoker 47). While she stands on the threshold of the study, she is called away by Mrs. Grant to attend to her womanly duties of welcoming and attending to Doctor Winchester, thereby preventing her from joining the men. Later, Margaret is pointedly excluded from the discussion between Winchester and Ross but again interrupts the homosocial meeting, stopping their conversation dead. Before she even enters, Ross avows, "There was over me some grim, vague apprehension. [Margaret's] interruption in the morning, when I was talking with the Detective, came back upon me with a rush" (50). The fact that her possible entry into this space causes a "grim, vague apprehension" proves just how unwelcome Margaret is in this space. Based on the unease that her presence causes, Margaret is presented by the men as a nuisance at the very least or, more darkly, a threat to their sphere. Upon entering the library whilst Winchester and Ross are speaking, Margaret blushes as if embarrassed or ashamed. She again quickly dismisses herself, but her interruption casts her in a suspicious light even to Ross who expresses, "how strange it was that she had interrupted me on two such occasions" (51). Ross projects guilt onto Margaret, even though these interruptions are not altogether unexpected considering that Margaret is in her own home and that these men, and not she, are the guests. Even though the men are technically

in Margaret's space by being in her home, they usurp that space, claiming it as male property and pushing Margaret to the fringes, alienating her and painting her as an invader. This is the privilege of being the controlling class; men can take over whatever space they want and project guilt onto anyone who tries to dispute their claim, similarly to how British imperialists invaded Asia and Africa and then painted themselves as oppressed when native populations resisted.[206]

One of the ways in which the exclusive, homosocial sphere perpetuates toxic masculinity is by limiting social interactions between the sexes and therefore maintaining a social system where men are more comfortable with people of the same sex. They come to see other men as the only people they can truly understand or with whom they can have close relationships. Some men in Imperial Gothic fiction perceive women as an entirely alien species with whom they have no hope of finding commonality. We see this in the most toxically masculine characters like Horace Holly in *She* and Atherton in *The Beetle*. Atherton reflects this preference for the homosocial when he reveals, "When I am with a man I feel so much more clear-headed than I do when I am with a woman" (Marsh, *Beetle* 148). Atherton cannot understand women, is often belittled by women, and loses rationality in the face of women. This feeling of weakness when in their company leads Atherton to prefer the homosocial sphere, which by definition excludes women. The homosocial helps Atherton to feel more dominant and in control since it reinforced the gender barriers and hierarchy on which the patriarchy was built. This unitary preference for male companionship largely reflects a misogynistic view of women as being beneath the

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[206] The British occupation of Egypt is the perfect example of Britain's habit of populating a place and then claiming themselves oppressed by their position of power. British interference in Egypt embroiled them in a war against Madhists, Sudanese nationalists who opposed Khedive and later British rule in Sudan. As referenced in my introduction, General Gordon's beheading in Khartoum while fighting this war created outrage among British citizens, and in many cases heightened the xenophobia felt throughout British society. The Madhists were painted as villains, despite originally possessing the land fought over, and General Gordon became a national hero. See Harris and Vernooy, especially 368-370 for an overview of the Madhist war.

company of men and is one of the defining characteristics for my definition of toxic masculinity because it perpetuates antagonistic and unequal relationships.[207]

Similarly, Horace Holly is unmanned by his past experiences with women, being ignored or emotionally abused by women due to his "abnormal ugliness" (Haggard 16). Holly is a slightly more complex character because not only do women shun him but "the spruce young men [...] did not even care to be seen walking with [him]" (16). However, at least in the company of men he was respected for his "feats of endurance and physical prowess" (16-17). Constrastingly, Holly describes his usual interaction with women, stating, "Only a week before I had heard one call me a 'monster' when she thought I was out of hearing, and say that I had converted her to the monkey theory" (16). Holly is classed by this woman as lower on the evolutionary scale, similar to how other races were regarded. This threat to Holly's masculine dominance leads him to be "noted for what [his] acquaintances are pleased to call [his] misogyny" (146). His shame at his appearance and his past experiences with women cause him "to be as much afraid of a woman as most people are of a mad dog" (12). Holly's clear antipathy toward women is so strong that he even refuses to hire a nurse for baby Leo because as he states, "I would have no woman to lord it over me about the child, and steal his affections from me" (26). As has been already capably analyzed by various scholars, this accepted misogyny predicates a novel that centers around homosocial adventure and bonding in opposition to the threatening incursion of women, namely Ayesha who is significantly called she-who-must-be-obeyed.[208] Ayesha must be destroyed in order to preserve the homosocial universe that Holly requires to feel secure of his position. Both Atherton and Holly showcase the

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[207] See Smiler, especially 91, for analysis of how misogyny is perpetuated within the male group. Smiler also notes that while men in homosocial arenas often feel strong bonds to their male peers, these relationships are still strained by their inability to fully display emotions. This is equally true in the Imperial Gothic texts I analyze since men may rely on each other but must continue to suppress their emotions even within the safety of the male group.
[208] See Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, especially 84-88, for further analysis of the homosocial misogyny in *She*.

antipathy felt toward women that is both inculcated in the homosocial sphere and leads men to rely on belonging and ownership of that position. Neither man is ashamed of his misogynistic outlook but instead wears it almost as a badge of manhood that they simply cannot find common ground with the supposedly weaker sex.

Beyond lending men respectability, affirmation, and comfort, the homosocial sphere within the upper echelons of late Victorian society was utilized to reinforce the conformity expected of men, making it a key tool not just to limit marginalized groups but also to control men belonging to the dominant order who "are kept in line by those closest to them" (Sexton 68). We have already seen how *The Beetle* employs Atherton and Champnell to condemn Lessingham's emotional weakness and elicit a more masculine response of aggression and action. Similarly, when Jack Carbery is coming apart in *Image in the Sand*, Leonard responds, "If you are going to behave in a silly hysterical manner, I'll have nothing more to do with you. [...] You're all jingling with nerves" (Benson 336). This criticism leads to a typical male response where "Jack rose up, huge and square" (336) attempting to regain his masculine power, reminiscent of when Lessingham rises up after being unmanned by the Beetle's name. Leonard shames Jack into a better representation of masculinity, thus preserving masculine authority.

The homosocial sphere in "Lot No. 249" is also valorized as preserving masculinity. The short story's university setting makes it a prime example of homosociality. In general, both public school and university were viewed as arenas in which masculinity and homosocial bonds were cemented. Increasingly in the mid- and late Victorian eras, the education system was used to impress hegemonic masculine ideals onto boys and young men as they developed into the future leaders of the empire. The homosocial aspects of school were crucial to cementing the establishment of male entitlement, dominance, and social and self-control. Michael Roper and

John Tosh assert that "codes of manliness served as gender boundaries [and] attendance at public school was an apprenticeship for privilege over the weaker sex as well as the lower orders" (Manful Assertions 4). Sports, particularly team sports like cricket and rugby, were emphasized in the public schools so that boys could learn and exhibit their strength, teamwork, and in some cases physical aggression early on, creating an understanding of these traits as constitutive of manliness. Boys who did not excel on the sports field were often bullied and demeaned throughout their education. Critics predominantly examine the relationships between sport and masculinity in relation to public school texts like *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857),[209] but we can also see it at the university level in "Lot No. 249."

Doyle places a primacy on male relationships and paints the homosocial sphere as protective of masculine values. Hastie and Smith's close bond is established early in the short story when the narrator states, "They knew each other very well—so well that they could sit now in that soothing silence which is the highest development of companionship" (Doyle 206). It is significant here that the marker of their friendship is a lack of feminized communication. Hastie and Smith both stand for accepted forms of masculinity with Smith presenting as the athletic intellectual and Hastie as the more "rough and strong-fibred" (209) sportsman—although obviously also intelligent enough to be attending Oxford. They are also representative of the two forms of British masculinity—Celtic and English—which were employed to oppose the threat of the racial Other. The Celts were often envisioned as hot-blooded, virile men who maintained a bit more savagery than the refined, gentlemanly Englishman.[210] Hastie's name connotes this brashness while Abercrombie Smith's name paints him as an everyday English sportsman.

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[209] See Markwick, especially Chapter 5, for analysis of masculinity in *Tom Brown's School Days* including the use of athleticism to mark manliness.

[210] See Streets, especially 55-62; and also Masterson 611 for brief overviews of the late Victorian perception of Celtic masculinity.

Although Smith is certainly athletic, as discussed previously, Smith's intellectualism threatens to diminish his masculine prowess without the balancing influence of his athletic pursuits which he achieves "with Hastie's help" (206). Every time that Smith seems to be retreating into an isolated life of contemplation over action, Hastie appears, taking two steps at a time, and joining Smith for a masculine ritual of smoking or drinking. The importance of the homosocial sphere is also emphasized through Smith's friendship with Doctor Peterson. Smith reflects that "a good walk and a friendly chat would be welcome to his jangled nerves" (233) and paints the trips he takes to Peterson's house "with [its] good cellar and a better library" as "a pleasant goal for a man who was in need of a brisk walk" (228). Peterson's house takes the place of the gentlemen's club and offers a retreat for Smith that reinforces his position in normative male spheres. It is quite literally a sanctuary when Smith is besieged by the mummy and provides Smith the time and companionship needed to regain his manhood and enact a plan to destroy those that threatened it. Peterson acts as the witness for Smith's statement against Bellingham, all but validating his decision to fight Bellingham to the death if necessary. Peterson warns him against doing anything rash, but he does not try to stop Smith from executing his plans. Hastie then serves as reinforcement on Smith's quest. Before confronting Bellingham, Smith employs Hastie's aid, asserting somewhat defensively that "We are neither of us chickens, Hastie," but that even though "I think I can do this job alone, [...] I take you as a precaution" (240). Both Hastie and Peterson reinforce Smith as he works to regain his masculine strength and conform to the dominant role expected of him. In recompense for conforming to the masculine standards required, the homosocial sphere acts as a protective and insulating force for men, condoning or covering their actions as long as they aid the patriarchal order.

Before closing this chapter, I want to examine an extreme case that highlights the threat of the homosocial sphere and its complicity in glossing over toxically masculine acts. In the first chapter of this thesis, I examined how Hardy's acts of violence against the Other in *The Yellow Danger* are aided by his fellow soldiers. I want to provide one further example here that exemplifies how racist and hooliganesque characteristics flourish in direct relation to the homosocial sphere. In Rudyard Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" a curse is placed on British Imperialist, Fleete, after he drunkenly disrespects the Indian god, Hanuman. The short story portrays the depths into which his two friends—Strickland and the narrator—will delve in order to save him, including the torture of the leper who placed the curse. From the beginning of "The Mark of the Beast," the narrator describes "a general closing up of ranks" (Kipling 70) among the imperial men at the party and excuses their drunkenness as a natural effect of the homosocial atmosphere of the colonies, claiming, "When men foregather from the uttermost ends of the Empire, they have a right to be riotous" (70). The defense of the homosocial sphere (both the actions occurring within it and the members of such groups themselves) can also be seen in the first description of Fleete as "a big, heavy, genial, and inoffensive man" (70). By calling him "genial" and "inoffensive," the narrator is clearly attempting to paint Fleete in a positive light before embarking on a tale in which Fleete is in fact extremely offensive to Indian culture. The narrator himself claims respect for the Hindu religion and specifies, "Personally, I attach much importance to Hanuman, and am kind to his people" (71). When Fleete defiles the idol of Hanuman, the narrator and Strickland are obviously distressed and annoyed by his actions, but ultimately and unequivocally take Fleete's side over that of the Hindu population. As the leper's curse starts to take effect, Fleete regresses to the point of being likened to a "wolf, not [...] a man" and begins to be referred to as "the beast" and "it" (76). This parallels the classification of

other foreign, supernatural entities that were previously analyzed like the goddess, the Beetle, and Set-nekht. However, because Fleete claims a position in the homosocial sphere before his encounter with the leper, his comrades do not simply cast him aside but instead go on to perform terrible acts in an attempt to save their peer.

Strickland and the narrator's friendship is underscored before they enact their vendetta when the narrator describes, "We walked about the garden smoking, but saying nothing — because we were friends, and talking spoils good tobacco" (74). This is very similar to the description of male friendship in "Lot No. 249" and simultaneously highlights their masculine stoicism and homosociality. The male friendship in "The Mark of the Beast" continues to parallel Smith and Hastie's as Strickland declares to the narrator, "I shall take the law into my own hands. I order you to help me" (77). Not only does he take the active, masculine position as a way to stave off the fear that has invaded the story, but he also enlists and even demands the help of his friend, implicating both in the actions to follow. The men significantly go out into the garden with polo-sticks to capture the leper, connecting their aggression in this scene to strength learned on the playing field in their early years. The team-mentality is implicated as the narrator declares, "I put away all my doubts and resolved to help Strickland from the heated gun-barrels to the loop of twine-from the loins to the head and back again — with all tortures that might be needful" (78). In order to protect one friend against a foreign Other and assist another in his defense, the narrator willingly and fully engages himself to commit horribly violent acts. What is extremely significant here is that these acts are shielded and obscured by the secrecy of the homosocial sphere. The narrator states as they began their torture of the leper, "we got to work. This part is not to be printed" (78). The details of their torture thus stay within the strict confines of their homosocial grouping.

Admittedly, the characters do admit some trepidation at these acts, with Strickland claiming, "I've done enough to ensure my dismissal from the service, besides permanent quarters in a lunatic asylum" (79) and the narrator declaring that they "had disgraced [themselves] as Englishmen for ever" (80). Their choice to protect Fleete from the knowledge of what they had to do to save him simultaneously insulates them against others knowing the extent of their heinous acts. Although they admit the shame of these affairs, they are later able to consider "the incident dispassionately" (80), which points to an easy dissociation from their acts. Their willingness to "put [the story] before the public" (80) proves that they believe their actions justified under the circumstances. Even so, the extent of their crimes remains shrouded within their homosociality. Such a story calls into question how many other horrific acts have been justified and covered up by the homosocial sphere. There is a constant theme in Imperial Gothic literature of homosocial groups joining together to destroy anything that threatens the patriarchy, be that a racial Other, the New Woman, or men who do not conform to the dominant order. The trio of Atherton, Lessingham, and Champnell join together to save Marjorie and defeat the androgynous, foreign Beetle. The band of men in *Dracula* all voyeuristically watch as Lucy Westenra, the token New Woman character, is dispatched.[211] The squadron in *The Yellow Danger* all enact their promise to kill as many Asian people as possible, committing a genocide at the end of the novel. The racism and misogyny that are key attributes of toxic masculinity are allowed to thrive in the homosocial sphere that envisions any outsider as a threat that must be dealt with by the group as they defend their position in society.

Through investigating idealized traits of masculinity, we can see that the very traits extolled as defining manliness are detrimental to both the men who perpetuate these views and

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[211] See Ledger, especially 104-106; Dijkstra, especially 344-346; Craft, especially 123-124; and also Chez, especially 85-86, for analyses of Lucy's death as the homosocial crowd voyeuristically watches.

the society with which they interact. By criticizing intellectualism in favor of utilitarian ways of thinking, the late Victorian era ensured that men were more likely to comply with expectations instead of freely questioning the status quo. By demanding that men suppress normal emotional responses, toxic masculinity cripples men's ability to healthily feel a wide range of emotions, thus pressuring them to rechannel female-coded emotions into aggression and violence. The inability to fully feel emotions limits men's capacity for empathy and positive relationships with people outside of the homosocial sphere. The texts I have analyzed show a clear valuation of violence and aggression, correlating acts of violence in the empire and at home with idealized masculinity. Extreme acts of violence, while not always valorized, are often shielded by the homosocial sphere and justified as an unfortunate necessity. By examining the role of the homosocial sphere in these texts, we can see that the social structures that uphold patriarchy perpetuate toxic masculinity in a variety of ways. By reinforcing the hegemonic, male echo chamber that excludes outlying people and ideas, the homosocial sphere makes sure the only views substantiated are those of the ruling class. The homosocial sphere ensures the conformity of those within this dominant group through peer pressure and threats of social exile. The harm that the patriarchy causes the outside world is then concealed and whitewashed in order to defend the patriarchy against outside criticism. As can clearly be seen, toxic masculinity has a truly pernicious effect on all levels of society.

CONCLUSION

While masculinity is by no means a new topic of discussion within Victorian Studies—nor is the New Woman nor the racial Other—by looking at the intersection of these three groups, this thesis explores the profound effect each had relationally on the others at the *fin de siècle*. The belief that the maintenance of white, male superiority required a contrasting female subservience and foreign inferiority is reinforced in the narratives discussed throughout this thesis. Although the critical attention given to the texts highlighted here is still greatly eclipsed by more canonical Imperial Gothic texts, they have garnered increased attention recently, pointing to their renewed relevance today. Over the past decades more critics have investigated masculinity, the New Woman, and the Other in *The Beetle*, *Jewel*, *The Blood of the Vampire*, and others. Perhaps the rise in valorized toxic masculinity in our own times drew critics to these Imperial Gothic texts, similarly to how it attracted me. I hope this thesis has contributed to the work done by others and that it sheds new light on the pervasiveness of toxically masculine traits in Imperial Gothic literature as well as the interrelational effects of toxically masculine power structures. I also hope that this thesis brings to light almost completely ignored texts like *The Image in the Sand*. Even in popular media, we can see an example of these toxically masculine texts being repopularized with "Lot No. 249" being turned into a production for BBC this past year. While it is the only one of the texts I have analyzed that has a modern adaptation, it is exciting to see these largely forgotten narratives come to mainstream attention.

In Mark Gatiss's 2023 Christmas production of "Lot No. 249," some of Doyle's more obviously toxically masculine overtures are glossed over but the toxically masculine underpinnings of the thirty-minute show are still clearly prevalent in fitting with the late Victorian setting. The story starts with the climactic scene of Abercrombie Smith (played by Kitt

Harrington) banging on Doctor Peterson's door, demanding brandy as he collapses into a chair, and repeating how he was "unmanned," after which he embarks on his tale of horror from the beginning. Smith's masculinity is emphasized by Bellingham (played by Freddie Fox) as he claims that Smith is "just the sort of chap to keep the flags of empire flying" (Gatiss). Fittingly, Harrington plays Smith with the same sense of no-nonsense bravado displayed in Doyle's text. Despite Hastie's character being entirely absent, Oxford is still "redolent of tradition and propriety, where hierarchies are understood and respected. Scholarship is esteemed, as are manly performances on the sports field" (Sweeting); this is, as one reviewer states, a "world of moustachioed men jogging around quads in white shorts" (Ramaswamy). In contrast to these virile, masculine men, Bellingham's possible homosexuality is emphasized more clearly in this production, with the character mimicking the Victorian dandy's "suitably louche, floppy-haired form" (Ramaswamy). His possibly queer relationship with Monkhouse Lee is strongly alluded to as the actor playing Lee (Colin Ryan) provides a heavy pause before claiming that Bellingham exposed him to new pleasures. Whereas Doyle's short story preserves normative masculinity by having Smith prevail over the degenerative Bellingham and his mummy, Gatiss's production takes a more sinister turn. In the BBC production, Smith's self-assured victory is quickly destroyed as Bellingham reveals a second mummy and scroll that he immediately employs to kill Lee and attack Smith. The production ends with an image of male hysteria as Abercrombie Smith relapses into hysterical laughing before the mummy snaps his neck. Hegemonic masculine dominance seems much more questionable in Gatiss's production. Perhaps this hints at a more progressive lack of faith in toxic masculinity's ability to solve every problem through might and brawn. Perhaps Gatiss wanted to fix the largely unsatisfying and rushed ending in Doyle's short story. Either way, it is an interesting comparison to explore for the future.

The rise of toxic masculinity is an important study in our present times in which toxic masculinity has garnered so much attention. It has become such a prevalent topic because of the many examples of toxically masculine men whose ideas are flourishing. In the last few years, we have seen Silicon Valley executives challenging each other to bench-pressing competitions and MMA cage-matches, American politicians calling for physical confrontations on the Senate floor, and world leaders flaunting masculine physiques online. While most men may adamantly deny a designation as toxically masculine, the popularity of men like Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Andrew Tate proves that their rhetoric is hitting home with many. As Whitehead and Barrett state, "To understand masculinity we must first understand something of the historical dynamics of the gender order" (27). However, it is not enough to simply identify toxic masculinity in history; we also must examine how toxically masculine rhetoric contributes to the maintenance of patriarchy and its pernicious effects on the groups oppressed within the patriarchal system as well as the men perpetrating this oppression. My goal in this thesis has been to examine the history of toxic masculinity, the rhetoric of masculinism that underpins Victorian society and our own, and the interrelational interplay of the various groups affected within a toxically masculine system. We can learn so much as to why toxically masculine men are valorized in conservative sects by looking at similar circumstances at the *fin de siècle*. A brief foray into Tate's Twitter account, for instance, exposes rhetoric and ideas that are remarkably similar to those in the narratives I have analyzed throughout this thesis.

Tate's Twitter feed is a litany of transphobic and homophobic posts, sexist diatribes calling women "hoes" and commenting on their level of attractiveness, bullying rhetoric toward any men he considers weak, fearmongering about immigration, and constant diatribes on masculinity. His messages to men repeatedly emphasize action, fearlessness, competition, and

power. Tate uses militaristic language to parallel his success in the economic sector with war, equating himself and other men to soldiers. For instance, his online, men-only, networking system is called "The War Room" and the people who lead the group are called his "generals." Tate further connects his work to war when he declares, "Men used to conquer foreign lands. Now we make money, train, build our bloodline, and more. Men MUST conquer something." This directly parallels how Victorian men discursively framed the workforce as a battlefield to elevate their sense of heroism in an overly civilized world and paint the workforce as a place unfit for women. Tate's rhetoric echoes the arguments about masculinity that populate *fin-de-siècle* speeches, articles, and literature. Anachronistic ideals like physiognomy even resurface in his tweets, such as when he attacks American politician, Nikki Haley, claiming that men should be afraid of her based on the knowledge of "how vindictive, evil, short sighted and psychotic women can be. Coupled with a basic understanding of physiognomy." Tate unironically asserts that "her victory would spell the end of the free world." Tate's vitriol toward women in power befits his highly traditional view of gender roles, which again echo those of the late Victorian era. He claims that while men's "power is harnessed through war and surviving the unsurvivable," women's magic comes from "a pure life" and that when women exercise sexual empowerment, "angels die." Though 1920s feminists may have sought to kill the "angel in the house" image, it is obviously still employed today by proponents of toxic masculinity. In the same way that toxically masculine ideals were valorized as protecting British futurity at the end of the nineteenth century, Tate claims that "'All masculinity is toxic.' Until bad things happen. Then it's the most important thing in the world." He spouts that his version of pugilistic, competitive, power-obsessed masculinity is the way to gain wealth and prestige so as to avoid the weakness of more cowardly and less active men. His 8.6 million followers—even after being

accused of rape and sex trafficking—illustrate the resonance of his ideas with a considerable global audience. Although many may wish to believe that toxic masculinity manifests in only a small subset of men, Tate's global following belies this view. Tate's popularity, particularly among teenage boys and young men is particularly alarming, as it signals a possible subsistence of these ideas in future generations. Piper Sandler's 2022 survey of 14,500 American teens cited Andrew Tate as the top influencer for this demographic. In Britain, statistics vary but proffer that men under thirty are anywhere from twenty-seven percent (YouGov) to forty-five percent (*The Independent*) likely to have a positive outlook on Tate's views. Toxically masculine social media stars are dangerous due to their ability to influence their followers, but "popular culture is a driving force in the transnational movement and adoration of [political] figure[s] like Trump" as well due to "internationally available images and ideas that are used to heroize" these personas (Butter 117). The lionization of toxically masculine political leaders has severe implications for governmental policies that control human rights and progress.

Donald Trump's presidential campaign was "largely defined by racism, religious bigotry, homophobia, misogyny, class hatred, and virulent xenophobia" (Burns 176). Trump's rhetoric framed him as a virile savior of traditional American ideals as opposed to the weak men and unfeminine women who threatened the future of the country with their progressive, empathetic views. These discursive techniques are the same reflected in my thesis. Instead of targeting the New Woman, Trump targets powerful women in leadership positions, particularly female politicians. In lieu of focusing on imperial threats and Egypt, Trump focuses on the Mexican border and refugees. Significantly, the rhetoric of invasion is substantially the same as is the false correlation that he draws between immigrants and the rape of American women. Instead of referencing the "yellow wave" like M.P. Shiel in order to elicit fearmongering against Asian

races, Trump paints China as a devious economic rival and employed divisive rhetoric against China during the COVID epidemic. Lucas Kwong notes that the "derogatory epithets encouraged not only by then-President Donald Trump, but also by US politicians such as Paul Gosar [...] incited a wave of anti-Asian hate" (68). In his article on Trump's demagoguery, Paul Johnson notes the rhetorical shift from "they" to "it" in one of his speeches, which

> …suggests that presumably dangerous others are an entity rather than a group of individuals, objectifying a population and dehumanizing them. His warning about the potential for rape gestures at an attendant fear of miscegenation, drawing on stereotypes about the inherent criminality [of] racial others and stoking White supremacist fantasies. (242-243)

Trump's discursive choices that point to miscegenation and the inherent criminality of the Other directly reflect the rhetoric used by Victorian writers analyzed in this thesis, as does his dehumanization of the Other by referencing them as an "it." Although not using terms such as degeneracy or references to evolution, Trump still spouts vitriol against weak men and liberal "snowflakes." While the specific targets may have changed, the basis of targeting racial Others and women is largely the same at the *fin de siècle* and in modern politics as is the message: white men are meant to dominate and everyone else needs to get on board or get out of the way. This is not just an American phenomenon but as Michael Butter notes, "anti-elitism, xenophobia, and the desire to restore 'proper' gender norms and relations [...] resonate with many Europeans, as the success of right-wing populists in countries such as Austria, Poland, and Hungary but also France, Germany, and the United Kingdom shows" (122).

The reactionary hypermasculinity exhibited by Trump's and Tate's fanbase highlights the prevalence of masculine fragility at this time within western culture. As Arwa Mahdawi puts it in a 2023 article for *The Guardian*, "All these grown men are so clearly worried about their masculinity that they feel the need to puff out their chests and show everyone just how strong they are." Sarah Manavis in an article for the *New Statesman* decries this as "a crisis of masculinity that makes one feel the need to aggressively perform it—a phenomenon that is closing in on us from all corners." This phenomenon of reactionary, overperformed masculinity is an occurrence that was equally present at the *fin de siècle*. Conservative men today feel a similar anxiety to Victorian men who perceived their traditional sphere of dominance as quickly diminishing. Butter asserts that many conservative Americans and Europeans

> tend to see Trump as the remedy for what they regard as a broken political system and the threats to white supremacy, traditional masculinity, and the wealth of the nation in general that are posed by such diverse phenomena as, for example, globalization, immigration, feminism, and the growing acceptance of same-sex partnerships. (117)

Alarmist rhetoric that paints these forms of progress as paradoxically marginalizing white men lead self-conscious men to believe that their "rightful" place at the top of the social pyramid is being stolen. "Trump's repeated scapegoating of racial and gendered figures compensated for growing awareness of the nation's heterogeneity" in which white men struggled to sustain their feeling of unquestioned dominance (Johnson 242). This is fed by alarmist claims that "real men" are disappearing, with rightwing spokesmen like Tucker Carlson asserting in his 2022 documentary, *The End of Men*, that testosterone levels are falling, leading to the downfall of western masculinity. The anxiety that toxically masculine men feel due to fearmongering about

competing ideologies and male lack must be assuaged by finding a scapegoat for all of the perceived ills that these men must combat. Simon Marsden asserts that "it is relatively easy for a society to make its monsters out of those it perceives as Other. It is more difficult—and, ethically and politically, more urgent—for a society to recognise in its monsters the image of itself" (Marsden 65). The ability to recognize the monstrous within the dominant system is vital to allowing progress for the future. My hope is that by taking a historical view of toxic masculinity this thesis creates parallels that further our ability to recognize the injustices and dangers in our current systems. A further understanding and dismantling of the systemic power dynamics of the patriarchal system benefits all levels of society. As Whitehead and Barrett assert,

> In terms of sustaining unequal material advantage, opportunity, status and privilege, men have much to lose with the rise of feminist thinking. Conversely, we would also argue that men have much to gain, not least in achieving emotional well-being, empathy with others, quality of relationships, reflexivity, and balance in their lives. (Whitehead and Barrett 3)

Many men see the destruction of the patriarchy as leading to their own disenfranchisement, but creating a more equitable world and exposing the fallacies of toxic masculinity would benefit men in the dominant system as well as those oppressed by it.

I undertook this thesis the year after Donald Trump came to the presidency. During his campaign, every time that he made a claim about his penis size or being able to sexually assault women, I thought that was the last straw and he would be forced by popular consent to withdraw his candidacy. Instead his support group grew louder and larger, "reminding us that the

national imaginary of the United States often secures and facilitates—rather than undermines— structures of oppression" (Johnson 229).[212] When I witnessed those around me become disciples of this demagogue, I struggled to understand his allure for people who had never struck me as aggressively racist nor sexist prior to Trump coming to power. I couldn't understand the irrationality and vehemence of the toxic masculinity attached to Trump and his supporters because I had not done the work to understand the history of masculinity. As Michael Roper and John Tosh assert, "attempts to fathom the perplexities of present-day masculinities will founder unless they are securely based in a historical perspective" (*Manful Assertions* 19). This thesis to an extent is my attempt to understand. I hoped by looking at a period that is remarkably similar to our own in many ways and examining how men in that period dealt with the changes they faced, I could develop a better understanding of our present time. What I found is not just a similar distrust of women and racial Others but discursive techniques that are eerily similar to the toxically masculine rhetoric spouted by conservative members of modern society. The polarization between those in the status quo and everyone else that we see today is not a new phenomenon but the continuation of a historical trend. As such, we can analyze this trend, expose the cycle, and hopefully work toward disrupting it to allow for future progress.

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[212] See Johnson for analysis of how Trump's toxic masculinity and presentation as a demagogue facilitated his success in American politics. Johnson explains Trump's fanbase, noting that "Demagogues encourage audiences to self-identify as victims on the basis of *felt* precarity, encouraging the well-off and privileged to adopt the mantle of victimhood at the expense of those who occupy more objectively fraught positions" (230)

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