

‘A HAPLESS RACE’: SUPERNATURAL SOCIAL SATIRE IN MAY KENDALL’S

POETRY

by

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ABSTRACT

The decades around the *fin de siècle* are widely regarded as a period of rapid transition and development to which the Victorians reacted with excitement and anxiety. It was also a period permeated by interest in supernatural phenomena such as ghosts, fairies, and telepathic demonstrations, spurred by the challenges of modernity to pre-existing forms of knowledge, belief, and social organisation. This thesis examines the response of the late-Victorian writer and social activist, May Kendall, to such developments, arguing that she utilised the supernatural as a vehicle for social satire and is a significant contributor to the history of a literature of social critique. Largely overlooked in modern academia, there exists only limited criticism of Kendall's work, and no sustained examination of her supernatural poetry. To address this deficiency, I balance close reading of key poems with reference to a wider selection of her work, considered in the context of their original publications, such as Victorian periodicals. I further argue that her distinct sense of humour distinguishes Kendall amongst *fin de siècle* poets, stimulating the popular reception of her work and contributing to the increasing scholarly interest in Kendall as part of the recovery of women writers from the period.

To Glynne William Shilton

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INTRODUCTION

Kendall

As John Holmes notes, a contributing factor in the lack of existing scholarly criticism upon Kendall's work, is the fact that relatively little is known about her life.¹ There are passing comments in scholarship relating to her contemporaries and collaborators, such as Seebohm Rowntree² and Andrew Lang;³ multiple short summaries in anthologies of Victorian women poets;⁴ and, most extensive, an entry on Kendall in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.⁵ Born Emma Goldworth Kendall in Bridlington, Yorkshire, to parents James Kendall, a Wesleyan minister, and Eliza Goldworth Level Kendall, May Kendall spent most of her life in the North of England. Previous sources of biographical information deduce from the quality and content of Kendall's work, as well as her ability

¹ John Robert Holmes, "'The Lay of the Trilobite': Rereading May Kendall', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 11 (2010), 1–15 <<http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/viewFile/575/658>> [accessed 8 November 2011] (p. 2).

² Asa Briggs, *Social Thought and Social Action: A Study of the Work of Seebohm Rowntree, 1871–1954* (London: Longmans, 1961).

³ Roger Lancelyn Green, *Andrew Lang: A Critical Biography; with a Short-Title Bibliography of the Works of Andrew Lang* (Leicester: Edmund Ward, 1946).

⁴ *Victorian Women Poets 1830–1900: An Anthology*, ed. by Jennifer Breen (London: Everyman, 1994), pp. xix–xx; Margaret Reynolds, 'May Kendall', in *Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology*, ed. by Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynolds (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 627–8; *Nineteenth Century Women Poets*, ed. by Isobel Armstrong, Joseph Bristow, and Catch Sharrock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 760; *Victorian Women Poets: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by Virginia Blain, rev. edn (Harlow: Pearson, 2009), pp. 308–10.

⁵ Marion Thain, 'May Kendall', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli and others, 366 vols (Detroit: Gale, 1978–2012), CCXL: *Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century British Women Poets*, ed. by William B. Thesing (2001), pp. 118–23.

to live independently (she never married), that Kendall was a member of the ‘well-educated middle classes’.⁶ Archival research has revealed further evidence in support of this claim: an interview between Frederick Dolman and Miss Maitland, principal of Somerville women’s college at Oxford University in 1897, reveals that ‘Miss May Kendall, the writer, was [...] a Somerville girl’.⁷ However, after a varied and prolific career, she died in poverty, with the Joseph Rowntree trust providing a grant to pay for her funeral.⁸

Best known and most often studied for her poetry, Kendall published two anthologies of verse during her lifetime: *Dreams to Sell* and *Songs from Dreamland*.⁹ She also published in a range of journals, such as *Punch*, *The Magazine of Art*, *Longman’s Magazine*, *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* and *The Cornhill Magazine*. However, her writing was not confined to poetry, as her periodical publications also extended to short stories, literary criticism and essays on religion, society, and theosophy. Other notable publications include the early prose fantasy satire *That Very Mab*, produced in collaboration with Andrew Lang, and three novels: *From a Garret*; *Such is Life*; and *White Poppies*; as well as *Turkish Bonds*, a collection of tales based around the Armenian

⁶ Blain, p. 308.

⁷ Frederick Dolman, ‘Women’s Colleges at Oxford’, *English Illustrated Magazine*, January 1897, pp. 459–65 (p. 460).

⁸ Armstrong, Bristow, and Sharrock, p. 760.

⁹ May Kendall, *Dreams to Sell* (London: Longmans and Green, 1887a; repr. [MT]: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, [2010]); — *Songs from Dreamland* (London: Longmans and Green, 1894; repr. [MT]: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, [2010]).

massacres by the Turks in the 1890s.¹⁰ Later in her career, Kendall moved significantly away from poetry and fiction, conducting philanthropic work and producing, in collaboration with Seebohm Rowntree, *How the Labourer Lives: A Study of the Rural Labour Problem*, and, although her name does not appear on the title page, *The Human Needs of Labour*.¹¹ She did not, however, abandon verse completely in order to make this transition, as she continued to publish in journals, though less frequently, alongside such work.

Reception

Kendall's prose fiction has generally proven less popular than her poetry, both during her lifetime and to the present day. Originally published anonymously, *That Very Mab* is a satire upon many aspects of Kendall's contemporary society, which will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. H. C. Beeching's comments upon this early text during a review of *Dreams to Sell* in *The Academy* demonstrates its mixed reception, as he notes how it highlights both Kendall's 'wits' and 'wit', but '[t]o read it required effort [...] and it was not given to everyone to reach the end'.¹² More severely, in his biography of Lang, Roger Lancelyn Green declares that '[a]s a whole *That Very Mab* is a dull and disappointing

¹⁰ [May Kendall and Andrew Lang], *That Very Mab* (London: Longmans and Green, 1885; repr. [MT]: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, [2010]); May Kendall, *From a Garret* (London: Longmans and Green, 1887b); — *Such is Life* (London: Longmans and Green, 1889; repr. [London]: British Library, [2011]); — *White Poppies* (London: Ward, Lock, and Bowden, 1893; repr. [London]: British Library, [2011]); — *Turkish Bonds* (London: Pearson, 1898).

¹¹ B. Seebohm Rowntree and May Kendall, *How the Labourer Lives: A Study of the Rural Labour Problem* (London: Nelson, 1913); B. Seebohm Rowntree [and May Kendall], *The Human Needs of Labour* (London: Nelson, 1918).

¹² H. C. Beeching, 'Literature', *The Academy*, 12 November 1887, pp. 311–2 (p. 311).

book, the better sparks of humour very occasional, and the topical illusions tedious and unilluminating, even to the student of the period'.¹³ Modern scholars concur, as Margaret Reynolds's description of *That Very Mab* as possessing a 'dry and brittle tone which is both amusing and painful', captures the essence of reviews such as Beeching's published over a century earlier.¹⁴ Despite the shared subject matter of satirical content, *That Very Mab* appears in stark contrast to the more easily comical satire of poems such as Kendall's 'Lay of the Trilobite' and 'Ballad of the Ichthyosaurus', which appeared, also unsigned, in the infamously funny *Punch* in the same year.¹⁵

Comparing *Dreams to Sell* and *That Very Mab*, Beeching writes that in the former 'the cleverness and the wit have more justice done them, owing to the restraints of verse'.¹⁶ This principle for the prose shortcomings can be extended to Kendall's novels, in which the humour is diluted within the greater volume of text. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics appeared predominantly concerned with the realism of plot and characterisation in the novels, which took precedence over the texts' humour. A review of *From a Garret* in *The Saturday Review*, for instance, praises what is deemed 'probable' and realistic in the novel and criticises that which seems 'exaggerated' and unlikely, including Kendall's characterisation of the curate and alderman.¹⁷ Similarly, the reviewer of *Such is Life* in the *Scots Observer*, commends the plausibility of Kendall's depictions of

¹³ Green, p. 66.

¹⁴ Reynolds, p. 627.

¹⁵ [May Kendall], 'Lay of the Trilobite', *Punch*, 24 January 1885, p. 41; — 'Ballad of the Ichthyosaurus', *Punch*, 14 February 1885, p. 82.

¹⁶ Beeching, p. 311.

¹⁷ Anonymous, 'New Books and Reprints', *Saturday Review*, 22 October 1887, p. 574.

female characters in the novel, but despairs that '[h]er young men, indeed, are too goody and abnormal'.¹⁸ After critiquing protagonists Philip and Jim, the reviewer reflects: 'It is a pity, for *Such is Life* is a book worth reading; being very neatly written, and having wit enough, and observation enough, and enough of a certain dry, intelligent humour, to set us asking—(all the Jims and Philips notwithstanding)—for more.'¹⁹ The 'wit' and 'dry, intelligent humour' is thus partially obscured by other literary concerns in the novels, whereas it flourishes in Kendall's poetry, contributing to the selection of predominantly verse texts for the present study.

Despite the tepid reception of her fiction, Kendall's literary career progressed. It may be argued that, in part, Kendall's success was significantly facilitated by her ability to forge and maintain professional relationships with influential literary persons and establishments, most importantly with the increasingly successful Andrew Lang. Lang's acknowledgement of the collaboration behind *That Very Mab*, despite the fact that the majority of the text's authorship is attributed to Kendall, demonstrates his regard for the lesser-known author's work.²⁰ Much of Kendall's verse in *Longman's Magazine* appeared as part of Lang's causerie 'At the Sign of the Ship', and he endorsed *Dreams to Sell* by offering introductory verses, 'A Northern Garland', to the collection and sharing authorship of another of the anthology's featured poems, 'A Pious Opinion'.²¹ A review of *Dreams to Sell* in the *Athenaeum* picks up on this, arguing, 'no doubt she owes a great

¹⁸ Anonymous, 'New Novels', *Scots Observer*, 21 September 1889, pp. 494–95 (p. 494).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 495.

²⁰ Green, p. 65.

²¹ *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 31–32.

deal, both directly and indirectly, to her versatile and accomplished *collaborateur*.²² Marion Thain suggests that the absence of such backing from Kendall's second volume of poetry may contribute to the less enthusiastic reviews it received, indicating the impact of Lang's affiliation.²³ Moreover, Lang's influence with Longmans publishing would also have proven beneficial to Kendall, initially in securing publication of *That Very Mab*.²⁴ From this point, Kendall was a regular contributor to *Longman's Magazine* and the publisher was responsible for issuing both of her verse anthologies and two of her novels.²⁵ Lang was then, as the *Athenaeum*'s reviewer observed, both 'directly and indirectly' a crucial figure in enabling Kendall's success. Similarly, Kendall's collaborative relationship with Seebohm Rowntree was also beneficial, enabling her to personally conduct and record research into the hardships of the labouring classes, exposing the hypocrisy of middle- and upper-class philanthropy and providing evidentiary support for the arguments conveyed through her earlier texts. The formation of such professional relationships thus demonstrated that Kendall held the approval and respect of other literary and socialist political figures of the period, which enabled her to both enhance her own career and pursue the social critique that permeated her literature.

The support of such figures would not have been enough to sustain popular reception of Kendall's literature, however, had her poetry not been of merit. Beeching's

²² Anonymous, 'Recent Verse', *Athenaeum*, 25 February 1888, pp. 240–41 (p. 240).

²³ Thain, 'May Kendall', p. 122.

²⁴ Marysa Demoor, 'Andrew Lang', in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (London: Academia Press and the British Library, 2009), p. 346.

²⁵ *Dreams to Sell; Songs from Dreamland; From a Garret; Such is Life*.

positive response to *Dreams to Sell* typified the popular reception of the volume, with the *Saturday Review* particularly praising

the humorous, the quaint, and the whole sections labelled “Science” and “Art.” These have a flavour all their own. The remainder are graceful, ingenious, pretty enough, it is true; but the piquancy of humour and fancy that belongs to those of our choice is a very individual quality.²⁶

The reviewer’s preferences for the scientific and artistic highlight the success with which Kendall takes up these themes, and correlate with both the themes commended by Thain in her account of Kendall’s work,²⁷ and the texts selected for this thesis, as science is addressed in Kendall’s poems on ghosts, enchantment, and the subconscious, as featured in Chapters 1, 3, and 4, and art in Chapter 2. Moreover, the review commends Kendall’s humorous style, which, it claims, excels in relation to these subjects. The reviewer in the *Athenaeum* agrees, recognising that ‘[h]er scientific lays are full of humour’ and alluding to her publications in *Punch* as evidence towards this marker of poetic style.²⁸ By the time *Songs from Dreamland* was published in 1894, Percy Addleshaw, writing for the *Academy*, commented that ‘Miss Kendall has already made a reputation as a writer of verse, distinguished alike for wit and a certain pathetic quality’, the latter attribute indicating Kendall’s tendency to address social concerns. The later volume, however, he describes as ‘in some measure a disappointment’, but maintains praise of the ‘uncommon humour’ of Kendall’s style.²⁹ A review of the collection in the *Athenaeum*, however, puts forth an alternative suggestion to Thain’s speculation regarding Lang’s lack of prominent

²⁶ Anonymous, ‘Some Minor Poets’, *Saturday Review*, 2 June 1888, pp. 669–70 (p. 669).

²⁷ Thain, ‘May Kendall’.

²⁸ Anonymous, ‘Recent Verse’, *Athenaeum*, 25 February 1888, pp. 240–41 (p. 240).

²⁹ Percy Addleshaw, ‘Some Volumes of Verse’, *Academy*, 29 September 1894, pp. 230–32 (p. 230).

endorsement; it asserts that Kendall's humour may contribute to the more restrained reception of the later volume:

“Songs from Dreamland” is one of those books whose real and considerable merits we are apt to overlook because they do not present themselves with the deadly seriousness of the respectable virtues. There is plenty of fooling in it, but the fooling is excellent, with real wit in it at times, and a fantastical kind of wit which is full of expressive frivolity—full, sometimes, of a quaint, topsy-turvy pathos.³⁰

While praising Kendall's style, this review indicates how Kendall's humour may, at times, become a barrier to the success of her poetry by preventing it from being taken seriously. Indeed, the ‘frivolity’ and ‘topsy-turvy pathos’ typical of Kendall's verse are deemed problematic in Diana Maltz's critical discussion of Kendall's poetic treatment of the poor, in which she argues that the light verse form creates tension with the serious subject matter, leading to an awkward ambiguity in intended reader response to the ‘uncertain portrait’ of the labouring class.³¹ Kendall's humour could thus be both her greatest asset as a poet, and a hindrance. Despite the later mixed reception of her poetry, and her transition towards social inquiry, her poetic success continued, as she received second prize of two guineas for her poem ‘The Fugitives’ in *The Bookman's* ‘Ballad Competition’³² and was the only female contributor selected for inclusion in Alfred Miles's volume *Humour, Society, and Occasional Verse*, in his series of anthologies on *The Poems and Poets of the Century*.³³

³⁰ Anonymous, ‘Two Books of Lighter Verse’, *Athenaeum*, 15 September 1894, p. 349.

³¹ Diana Maltz, ‘Sympathy, Humour, and the Abject Poor in the Work of May Kendall’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 50 (2007), 313–33 (p. 315).

³² May Kendall, ‘The Fugitives’, in ‘Ballad Competition’, *The Bookman*, May 1924, pp. 141–44 (p. 141).

³³ *The Poets and the Poetry of the Century*, ed. by Alfred H. Miles, 10 vols (London: Hutchinson, 1891–97), IX: *Humour, Society and Occasional Verse* (1894), pp. 614–26.

Kendall's poetry was thus distinguished by figures such as Miles and Lang, and was generally popular during her lifetime, yet she remains classified as a 'minor poet'.³⁴ This description is apt in that the proportion of modern scholarly consideration afforded Kendall's work remains limited. Despite her presence in anthologies and publications by Marion Thain, Diana Maltz, and John Holmes, there exists nothing longer than journal articles dedicated to exploring Kendall's work. This lack of critical exploration and acknowledgement restricts the perception of Kendall to that of minor poet. The present study challenges this classification, in one sense by elaborating a more extensive consideration of Kendall's work, including analyses of texts that have not previously been acknowledged in published material on Kendall, let alone studied in detail; and also by demonstrating that she was a significant figure in the history of a literature of social critique, and that her contribution to such literature was poignant, astute, and far from minor. In agreement with the opinions towards Kendall's work discussed above, poems upon the key themes of science and art will feature prominently in the present study, and critical appreciation of her distinct sense of humour will be fundamental. Within her verse, these characteristics and the provision of social commentary converge around supernatural subject matter, yet this topic has received no major critical consideration to date; therefore this thesis will develop a new strand of criticism in regards to Kendall's work.

Literature Review

In order to appreciate Kendall's use of the supernatural as a vehicle for social critique, we must first understand the state and status of this concept at the time in which Kendall was

³⁴ Thain, 'May Kendall', p. 121.

writing. Scholarly publications upon the Victorian supernatural mark this period as distinct in the historical scope of supernatural studies, differentiating the cultural context of the long nineteenth century from surrounding eras. One way in which this manifests is in modern anthologised collections of texts from the period, which provide literature written in response to the same cultural stimuli experienced by Kendall, supported by scholarly introductions highlighting the nature of these stimuli. In the introduction to Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert's *Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*, for instance, the editors observe that 'the Victorian era seems to be invested with a peculiar quality of difference [...] that is reflected in its ghosts', which manifested 'forces of transition'. They argue that

[w]ith the shadow of change falling across virtually every area of life and thought, the receding past became a focus for anxiety, and in literature the ghost story offered a way of anchoring the past to an unsettled present by operating in a continuum of life and death.³⁵

Kendall's poetry on ghosts likewise responds to these 'forces of transition', whether in the form of technological developments allegedly facilitating psychical contact, or commercialised industries' capitalisation upon this contact. Her poetry shares common motifs with many of the tales, addressing issues such as the interrogation of truth and search for evidence, as discussed in Chapter 1 below. Similarly, in *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves*, Jack Zipes identifies that British literary fairy tales in the latter decades of the nineteenth century followed two distinct strands: 'conventionalism and utopianism'.³⁶ Kendall, like fairy-tale authors such as Lewis Carroll and Oscar Wilde, was firmly located in the latter of these directions: 'Their tales reveal a profound belief in

³⁵ *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*, ed. by Michael Cox and R. S. Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

³⁶ *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves*, ed. by Jack Zipes (New York: Methuen, 1987; repr. New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. xxiii.

the power of the imagination as a potent force that can be used to question the value of existing social relations.³⁷ Kendall not only challenged contemporary social conventions through the enchantment and disenchantment of fairy-tale texts such as those featured in Chapter 3; she also engages with Zipes's acknowledgement of imagination as facilitating the interrogation of existing social relations, as in poems such as 'A Pure Hypothesis'.³⁸ The effect of such critical anthologies is to locate Kendall amongst a canon of writers of the period, and to highlight how specific supernatural phenomena, such as ghosts and fairies, were utilised for different purposes in literature.

Critical studies of Victorian literary and cultural engagement with the supernatural contextualise how such primary productions engage with social and ideological movements of the period, as well as highlighting common themes that unite the various supernatural phenomena. *The Victorian Supernatural*, edited by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell, provides apt examples: essays such as Lynch's 'Spectral Politics: the Victorian Ghost Story and the Domestic Servant', for instance, explore the role of the ghost in relation to class and gender politics; and Luckhurst's argument that 'occult narratives explored the complexities of distance and relation at the colonial frontier' situates the supernatural within an imperial context.³⁹ While class, gender, and imperialism are not the primary direct focuses of the poems selected for this

³⁷ Ibid., p. xxiv.

³⁸ May Kendall, 'A Pure Hypothesis', in Andrew Lang, 'At the Sign of the Ship', *Longman's Magazine*, April 1887, pp. 658–66 (pp. 661–3).

³⁹ Eve M. Lynch, 'Spectral Politics: the Victorian Ghost Story and the Domestic Servant', in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 67–86; Roger Luckhurst, 'Knowledge, Belief and the Supernatural at the Imperial Margin', in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Bown, Burdett, and Thurschwell pp. 197–216.

thesis, the essays are important as they demonstrate the extent to which supernatural concerns permeated society across the Victorian period, providing a broad overview of trends in such cultural engagement. One particularly significant observation that unites the role of various supernatural phenomena is the humorous engagement of the Victorian public with a range of supernatural manifestations: as the book's introduction demonstrates, the editors are well aware that 'the Victorians also mocked their own fascination with the supernatural in satires and skits directed at the earnest foolishness of believers in supernatural phenomena, and often they indulged their taste for it in fun'.⁴⁰ This description corresponds exactly with Kendall's supernatural poetry, as the chapters below will demonstrate how she not only mocked her contemporaries' pursuit of the supernatural, but also, by association, her own. Furthermore, the popular responses to her literature outlined above suggest that her readership found in the poems an outlet for such indulgence.

Temporally, the aim to contextualise movements and trends in the engagement with the supernatural are honed to the latter decades of the era in Alex Owen's *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*.⁴¹ Spanning the period from 1880 to 1914, Owen's study explores the more specific backdrop against which Kendall produced much of her work. Her discussion of 'Culture and the Occult at the *Fin de Siècle*',⁴² for instance, highlights the '*mystical revival*' that was taking place,⁴³ which

⁴⁰ *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Bown, Burdett, and Thurschwell, pp. 1–19 (p. 1).

⁴¹ Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004a).

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 17–50.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

she evidences by citing historical examples of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century societies such as the British National Association of Spiritualists, founded in 1873 (later renamed the Central Association of Spiritualists), the international Theosophical Society, established in 1875; the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), set up in 1882; and the elite Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in 1888.⁴⁴ As the following chapters will demonstrate, Kendall's immersion within the mystical revival meant that she directly engaged with the ideological pursuits of such societies, and at times directly attacked them.

While different supernatural phenomena are employed in diverse ways by Kendall across the poems of this thesis, allowing her to achieve different forms of social commentary, as suggested by the anthologies and texts relating to such specific supernatural manifestations as ghosts and fairies, there are thus overarching trends in the engagement of the supernatural with social concerns. Thomas Lovell Beddoes's poem 'Dream–Pedlary', from which *Dreams to Sell* takes its title, brings together many of the themes addressed in the present study, including ghosts, magic and, of course, dreams, indicating the associative relationship between such supernatural elements and the inclusion of altered states of consciousness under this umbrella category.⁴⁵ Likewise, from a modern critical perspective, Marina Warner's arguments regarding the perception of spirit phenomena 'and the ideas and imagery which communicate their nature' addresses 'curiosity about spirits of every sort'.⁴⁶ Accordingly, there is much useful material that

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 28.

⁴⁵ Thomas Lovell Beddoes, 'Dream–Pedlary', in *Poems: With a Memoir* (London: William Pickering, 1851), pp. 184–85 (p. 184).

⁴⁶ Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty–First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 10.

corresponds with Kendall's use of ghosts, such as discussions of psychical research, spirit photography and materialising mediums, but in addition the 'spirits of every sort' lead Warner's extensive study to consider such material as fairies, dreams, and the focus upon the imagination. The decision to feature the specific chapter subjects of this thesis thus acknowledges Kendall's perception of the interconnected yet distinct roles of various supernatural and parapsychological phenomena, which the Literature Review suggests was reflective of the attitudes of her contemporaries.

Structure

This thesis offers three central arguments: that despite remaining largely overlooked in modern academia, Kendall is a significant figure in the history of a literature of social critique; that she achieves this critique by employing the supernatural, in various forms, as a vehicle for satire; and that she is successful in doing so because of her skill as an accomplished humourist. Each chapter will consider a particular subcategory within the overarching supernatural schemata and each will provide a comparative analysis of two of Kendall's texts, illustrating the particular ways in which they work to critique various aspects and attributes of society. Where existing scholarly criticism relates to selected poems it will be drawn upon, yet for the majority of texts this does not exist. Consequently, this thesis will make a considerable contribution to scholarly engagement with Kendall's work by producing original textual criticism. Such analyses will be supported by references to a wider range of Kendall's work of the poetical, fictional and non-fictional genres. Finally, the thesis will conclude with reflections upon Kendall's humorous legacy: she is, after all, 'remembered primarily as a comic poet'.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Holmes, p. 8.

The chapters correlating with different aspects of the supernatural have been deliberately selected because they demonstrate different aspects of Kendall's social critiques, with the various categories allowing Kendall to argue that society is flawed in different ways. The initial chapter on ghosts identifies how Kendall uses phantoms to assess her society's approaches to the supernatural more generally, ultimately condemning a predominantly materialistic approach to the spirits. This attack upon materialism is elaborated within the poems of the second chapter through the additional consideration of individualism. Here aestheticism is critiqued, with the Pygmalion-inspired animation of artistic objects warning of the psychological and social dangers of commodification and decadent indulgence. The texts of Chapter 3 nostalgically use the fairy character and fairy-tale genre to draw disapproving attention to the departure of Kendall's society from traditional enchantment in favour of modern ideologies and technology, while Chapter 4 uses the parapsychological phenomena of dreaming and hypnotism to undermine the perceived intellectual and political superiority of her race. The conclusion will then discuss how the comic style in which Kendall conveys these criticisms set her aside from her contemporaries and mark her as a significant contributor to social critique.

CHAPTER 1: GHOSTS

Kendall has produced numerous poems concerned with the fate of the soul after the death of the body, such as ‘The Ship of Death’, ‘Otherworldliness’, and ‘The Bird of Paradise’, but the texts selected for analysis in the present chapter specifically explore the dialogic relationship between the living and the dead, which, I argue, allows Kendall to critically expose the materialism of the former.⁴⁸ Kendall was immersed within what Marina Warner terms ‘a fevered—and delighted—search to penetrate the unseen’ in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, facilitated by scientific and technological developments and manifested, in one manner, in the phenomenon of ghosts. The challenge to religious orthodoxy by evolutionary theory, for instance, raised questions about the nature of the afterlife, and developments in technology such as those described by Warner, ‘[t]he identification of radio waves, and the subsequent invention of the wireless, of the phonograph, of telegraphy, of the telephone’, suggested means of identifying and utilising phenomena that, like ghosts, were not readily visible.⁴⁹ It is unsurprising then that the themes of science and empiricism recur throughout the chapter and facilitate the engagement with ghosts in the selected poems. The texts not only employ the supernatural characters of ghosts as literary mechanisms to enable critique, as is the case with the enchanted statues of the next chapter; they also directly address institutional and commercial responses to the rise of the supernatural during the period.

⁴⁸ Kendall, *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 45-46; pp. 136-37; ——— *Songs from Dreamland*, pp. 45-46.

⁴⁹ Warner, p. 254.

In June 1887 ‘The Conscientious Ghost’ appeared in *Longman’s Magazine* as part of Andrew Lang’s serial feature ‘At the Sign of the Ship’.⁵⁰ The playful lyric portrays a ghost whose afterlife is plagued by disruptions from and expectations of ‘*Psychical Societies*’ (line 11), which form the object of the poem’s mockery because of their pseudo-scientific approach. The SPR was one of the most prominent institutions raising enquiries into the supernatural and ghosts were high on their agenda: one of their first tasks was to create a committee for the investigation of haunted houses, and *Phantasms of the Living*, published the year before ‘The Conscientious Ghost’, contained extensive accounts of ghost sightings and spectral activity.⁵¹ These facts would have been well known to Kendall, whose literary interests converged with the subjects pursued by the SPR, not only in the matter of ghosts, but on a wide range of paranormal subject matter. The SPR aimed to explore psychical phenomena ‘in the same spirit of exact and unimpassioned enquiry which has enabled Science to solve so many problems’.⁵² In addition to the devices employed throughout Kendall’s poem to mock the antagonistic relationship between science and the supernatural, there is a larger structural point of interest in the version of the poem later anthologised in *Dreams to Sell*. The contents of the anthology are divided into thematic sections and ‘The Conscientious Ghost’ is located within the portion entitled ‘Science’.⁵³ In contention with Margaret Reynolds’s assertion of Kendall’s tendency to

⁵⁰ May Kendall, ‘The Conscientious Ghost’, in Andrew Lang, ‘At the Sign of the Ship’, *Longman’s Magazine*, June 1887, pp. 216–24 (pp. 222–23).

⁵¹ *Phantasms of the Living*, ed. by Edmund Gurney, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore, 2 vols (London: Rooms of the Society for Psychical Research; Trübner, 1886).

⁵² Alan Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 137.

⁵³ Kendall, *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 5–40 (pp. 17–19).

use ‘grand scientific terms for the sake of their sound and often entirely without regard to sense’,⁵⁴ John Holmes argues that the existence of the ‘Science’ section suggests a ‘level of scientific expertise’ on the part of the author.⁵⁵ He observes that

The overall effect of the series of poems on “Science” in *Dreams to Sell* is to suggest a poet who is at once knowledgeable and sceptical, a poet for whom science can be fascinating but for whom it cannot lead us to more profound truths that might merit more serious poetry.⁵⁶

Kendall is not categorically set against science then. She uses scientific ‘debates as a way of putting contemporary mores to the question’, as Reynolds suggests, but with more insight than the critic concedes.⁵⁷ Consistent with the reviewer’s notion that the success of *Songs from Dreamland* may have been hindered by its humour,⁵⁸ Reynolds’s underestimation of Kendall’s scientific poetry may be due to the fact that it often appears in the form of light verse, with an overriding comical tone. Certainly ‘The Conscientious Ghost’, with its undermining of the scientific theme through the inclusion of pseudo-scientific subject matter, and the humorous depiction of the ghost’s response to the antagonism of supposed scientific enquiry, is far from ‘serious poetry’.

One way in which Kendall humorously undermines the attempt at attaching scientific credence to ghosts is by suggesting that the societies expect him to undertake stereotypically spectral ‘duties’ (l. 1): he is pressured to ‘wander round the moat’ (l. 14); ‘steering my phantom boat’ (l. 16); ‘rattle fetters’ (l. 18); ‘on blood-stained floors | Again

⁵⁴ Reynolds, p. 628.

⁵⁵ Holmes, p. 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁷ Blain, p. 309.

⁵⁸ Anonymous, ‘Two Books of Lighter Verse’.

to fight and fall!’ (ll. 21–22). The imposition of these presuppositions undermines the objectivity of allegedly scientific inquiry. Such stereotypes are subverted within the text as the Psychological Societies are described as ‘Descending upon’ the ghost (l. 12), haunting his dreams in a reversal of roles. The ghost’s reaction is to threaten the ‘remorseless inquirer’, as Lang deems him,⁵⁹ remarking ‘I’d like to haunt him well’ (l. 28).⁶⁰ However, the revenge would not take place until the researcher was dead and would take the form of forcing him to complete his own prescribed activities. In addition to the recurrent subversion of typical imagery and the reader’s expectations, the poem’s light verse form, featuring regular rhythm, structure and alternate rhyme scheme, contributes to the playful tone, which resembles the ‘deadpan absurdist mode’ of Kendall’s ‘Lay of the Trilobite’.⁶¹ Such a tone is appropriate for overtly comical scenes, such as the ghost’s digression during the recounting of his tale:

He paused, his fetters to arrange,
Adjust his winding sheet;
He murmured, ‘In this world of change
One can’t be too complete!’

(ll. 37–40)

The statement highlights the fashionable quality of supernatural investigation, at once deeming the investigation of ghosts frivolous and acknowledging the popularity of psychical research. Humorous scenes such as this are mingled with moments of pathos, such as the ghost’s ‘tears’ (l. 1) and the observation of his oxymoronic ‘rapture grim’ (l.

⁵⁹ Lang, ‘At the Sign of the Ship’, June 1887, p. 221.

⁶⁰ Kendall, ‘The Conscientious Ghost’.

⁶¹ Blain, p. 309.

29), which through their juxtaposition and presentation of hyperbolic anguish create an overall comical tone. Ultimately, the poem's 'dismal' (l. 48), mock-gloomy conclusion expresses pseudo-pessimism about the future of the spirit world and its ability to 'rest in peace', as the prolonged continuation of psychical research seems likely.

Despite the comical portrayal of the ghost, this focal character becomes a mouthpiece for criticism, rather than its target. Kendall's attitudes initially appear to be mirrored by those of Andrew Lang, whose introduction to 'The Conscientious Ghost' likewise seems to suggest that the endeavours of the SPR and similar organisations should not be taken seriously: 'If it causes one member of the Psychical Society to reflect on the extra work and extra hours to which his researches may be condemning some weary and out-worn bogie, it will not have been written in vain'.⁶² This introduction emphasises that it is the institutionalised investigation of such spirits that comes under attack, rather than the spirits themselves. However, both Lang and Kendall's criticisms are apparently undermined by their association with the SPR; in addition to being a member, Lang also later served as the Society's president. Kendall's affiliation with Lang and his substantial influence upon her career, combined with the interests she shared with the SPR as noted above, and the influence of other members such as Lewis Carroll upon her work, revise the reader's perception of the severity her attack. The effect of this contextual knowledge is to emphasise the humour of the text. Kendall was not alone in pursuing such methods of creating textual entertainment: Algernon Blackwood later fictionalised the pursuits of the SPR in texts such as 'The Empty House', in which spirits, like the Conscientious Ghost, simply desire to be permitted to rest in peace: 'The whole dark interior of the old building

⁶² Lang, 'At the Sign of the Ship', June 1887, p. 221.

seemed to become a malignant Presence that rose up, warning them [the researchers] to desist and mind their own business'.⁶³ Discussing Blackwood, Justin Sausman recalls that '[h]e embraced the Theosophical Society during the 1880s, joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1900, and carried out investigations of haunted houses on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research.'⁶⁴ Blackwood's similar personal connection with the institutions at which he pokes fun adds to the entertainment of his short story, an effect which is even more prominent in Kendall's already comical poem, and draws attention to the introduction of Kendall as subject of her own humour.

Although light-hearted, Kendall's critique of the SPR here gestures towards a wider critique of the moral responsibilities of science. The subject occurs in early publications such as 'Lay of the Trilobite' and *That Very Mab* and recurs throughout Kendall's poetry. Kendall's texts thus engage with a subject taken up much earlier in texts such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*,⁶⁵ and more contemporaneously in Robert Louis Stevenson's 'The Body Snatcher'⁶⁶ and 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'.⁶⁷ The malevolent tone

⁶³ Algernon Blackwood, 'The Empty House', in *The Empty House and Other Ghost Stories* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1906; repr. [Charleston, South Carolina]: BiblioBazaar, 2007), pp. 9–26 (p. 16).

⁶⁴ Justin Sausman, 'From Vibratory Occultism to Vibratory Modernism: Blackwood, Lawrence, Woolf', in *Vibratory Modernism*, ed. by Anthony Enns and Shelley Trower (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 30–52 (p. 33).

⁶⁵ [Mary B. Shelley], *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, 3 vols (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor & Jones, 1818).

⁶⁶ R. L. Stevenson, 'The Body-Snatcher' (1884), repr. in *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*, ed. by Michael Cox and R. S. Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 303–18.

of fiction such as Shelley's and Stevenson's is more akin to the foreboding of Kendall's 'A Ballad of Boding'⁶⁸ than 'The Conscientious Ghost'. In a reversal of the action of 'The Conscientious Ghost', 'A Ballad of Boding' presents the narrative of a photographer and publisher harassed by spirits that are increasingly 'Materialising out' (l. 16). This process forms the 'beginning of the end!' (l. 24), cultivating the apocalyptic element of the existential foregrounded by the focus upon manifestations of the dead. The eschatology of Kendall's text is presented as a consequence of enquiries from the publisher and photographer who, like the researcher of 'A Conscientious Ghost', attempt to evidence the supernatural, in this case using the media of text and image.

The professions of the poem's characters reflect contemporary developments in the relationships between publishing and photographic industries, and spiritualism, allowing Kendall to comment upon the materialism of such developments. By the late nineteenth century, publishers were increasingly associated with commercialisation, and texts such as Gissing's *New Grub Street* depicted them as particularly avaricious.⁶⁹ The spiritualist press, which Richard Noakes deems 'crucial' to the spread of spiritualism in the nineteenth century was not exempt from economic exploitation: 'Enterprising journalists, often supported by wealthy spiritualist converts, exploited falling costs of periodical production and the growing fascination for "spirit-rapping", to launch journals promoting

⁶⁷ Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' (1886), repr. in *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1–66.

⁶⁸ May Kendall, 'A Ballad of Boding', *Longman's Magazine*, March 1895, pp. 512–14.

⁶⁹ George Gissing, *New Grub Street: A Novel*, 3 vols (London: Smith and Elder, 1891).

spiritualism.’⁷⁰ Likewise, Shane McCorristine identifies ‘the burgeoning market for ghost-fiction in middle-class periodicals such as *Dublin University Magazine*, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, *Blackwood’s Magazine* and especially Dickens’s successive periodicals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*’, which demonstrated how ‘the possibility of psychic forces fuelled literary market forces’.⁷¹ From an imagistic rather than textual perspective, the desire ‘to penetrate the unseen’⁷² was capitalised upon since William Mumler’s reputed discovery of spirit photography in 1861, with an abundance of hoaxes designed to elicit money from paying customers. The characters’ professions thus mark them as materialistic in two senses: the pursuit of physical documentation of the supernatural; and the implied financial motivations behind this. Their satirisation by Kendall corresponds with her disapproving views upon the prioritisation of material progression as expressed in essays such as ‘The Social Ideal’.⁷³

However, Kendall’s critique of the photographer and particularly the publisher must be negotiated with her own apparent capitalisation upon the supernatural in her verse publications: through the sale of *Dreams to Sell*, for instance, she is realising Beddoes’s question, ‘If there were dreams to sell | What would you buy?’, by literally and literarily

⁷⁰ Richard Noakes, ‘Spiritualist Press’, in *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism*, ed. by Brake and Demoor, p. 591.

⁷¹ Shane McCorristine, *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 19.

⁷² Warner, p. 254.

⁷³ May Kendall, ‘The Social Ideal’, *Weslyan-Methodist Magazine*, June 1894, pp. 425–27.

selling poetic ‘dreams’.⁷⁴ This likens Kendall to the characters of ‘A Ballad of Boding’. Yet the poem suggests that there is a distinction to be drawn between the types of publications concerned. Kendall situates the unfolding action of ‘A Ballad of Boding’ in London’s Strand (l.1; l. 69), the city location facilitating the commercialism of the new journalism. Moreover, the lines allude to the popular middle-class *Strand Magazine*, established in 1891, and by association identify the poem’s publisher with the founder of the *Strand*, George Newnes. Newnes, described by Katie-Jane Hext in *The Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism* as a late-nineteenth century ‘press baron’, ‘was one of the most influential figures [...] in the development of the New Journalism’.⁷⁵ The *Strand* was also renowned for its abundant inclusion of illustrations, the emphasis upon image consistent with Kendall’s alliance of publisher and photographer in the poem. Kendall’s attack upon the new journalistic style typified by Newnes and the *Strand* can be viewed as an expression of her alliance with Longman’s house publishing. Marie Alexis Easley argues that *Longman’s Magazine* eventually ‘folded due to changes in market forces that favoured illustrated popular newspapers over old-styled literary magazines.’⁷⁶ Kendall thus associates herself and her own publications with a less commercialised literary market. The allusion to new journalism therefore qualifies to some extent Kendall’s position in respect to the groups targeted in the present poem, and emphasises the economic materialism of the protagonists.

⁷⁴ Beddoes, p. 184, ll. 1–2.

⁷⁵ Katie-Jane Hext, ‘George Newnes’, in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, p. 448.

⁷⁶ Marie Alexis Easley ‘*Longman’s Magazine*’, in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, pp. 378–79 (p. 378).

Kendall's decision to feature male characters as mediums engages with the notion of séance as social space during the period and mocks the empirically-driven pursuits of the characters by positing their emasculation as a consequence. While male mediums did exist, they were neither as common nor as renowned for their 'dramatic and theatrical representations' in the séance as women, although notable exceptions include Daniel Dunglas Home, William Eglington, Charles Webster Leadbeater, and Henry Slade.⁷⁷ Owen's astute analysis of the social dynamics of spiritualism declares that spiritualist women 'assumed the mantle of mediumship', becoming 'the "repositories", the "vessels", the bearers of the spiritual message'.⁷⁸ The stereotypically feminine passivity of these descriptions mirrors the scenarios of the protagonists in 'A Ballad of Boding'. The photographer, for instance, declares 'In vain I've threatened, railed, and chaffed— | The phantoms *will* be photographed!' (ll. 41–42), demonstrating his submission to the spirits that pursue him. Similarly, the publisher's forced role as 'Reporter to the Spook' (l. 73) amounts to a mouthpiece for the ghostly concourse: 'Incessantly its vagaries | His gliding pen relates' (ll. 74–76); here the grammatical displacement of the publisher as subject demonstrates his loss of control. Despite the passivity of the descriptions, Owen argues that the séance empowered women to challenge conventional gender roles by displaying potentially subversive behaviour under the guise of mediumship, with the justification that it was beyond their control: 'Renunciation of the conscious personality was the price paid for the authoritative voice.'⁷⁹ In Kendall's portrayal, however, this 'authoritative voice' is

⁷⁷ Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004b), p. 11.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

consistently denied the male characters. This undermining of the characters' masculinity further mocks their materialistic engagement with the supernatural.

The literary and photographic attempts to document the ghosts reflect a growing public demand for evidence, coinciding with the increasing inclination towards scientific enquiry into the supernatural from the 1850s,⁸⁰ and the activities of organisations such as the SPR, brought to the forefront in texts such as 'The Conscientious Ghost'. The search for authenticity was also widely apparent in much ghost-related literature of the period. Examination of Cox and Gilbert's collection of *Victorian Ghost Stories*, for instance, reveals the abundance of short stories across the Victorian era which address the credibility of reports of spectral activity, such as Amelia B. Edwards's 'Was it an Illusion?', in which the title question remains unanswered, and in which credible witnesses are sought and a letter of verification is featured after the suspicious incident;⁸¹ and Mary Louisa Molesworth's 'The Story of the Rippling Train', which features a meta-literary introduction about the credibility of ghost stories relayed by non-present parties.⁸² Across the stories of the collection, initially sceptical characters discredit supernatural phenomena, only to be convinced, or at least have their certainties shaken over the course of the tales. It is this same conversion from 'surprise and doubt'⁸³ (l. 14) to verification, that is played out in 'A Ballad of Boding'.

⁸⁰ McCorrstine, pp. 12-15.

⁸¹ Amelia B. Edwards, 'Was it an Illusion?' (1881), in *Victorian Ghost Stories*, ed. by Cox and Gilbert, pp. 239–55 (pp. 252–5).

⁸² Mary Louisa Molesworth, 'The Story of the Rippling Train' (1887), in *Victorian Ghost Stories*, ed. by Cox and Gilbert, pp. 319–27.

⁸³ Kendall, 'A Ballad of Boding'.

Kendall's deployment of the publisher and photographer to produce this evidence is ironic considering the infamous widespread forgery in spirit photography and other practices of mediumship, as conveyed in Robert Browning's biting satire 'Mr Sludge, "The Medium"'.⁸⁴ Yet more ironic still is the fact that their pursuits do actually materialise the spectral presence of the ghosts. Their experience of the séance engaged with the materialisation of spirit matter in the form of ectoplasm from the 1880s onwards, as the ghosts begin 'Materialising out, | When Matter passed through Matter'.⁸⁵ This physical substance appeared as 'materialized phenomena from the world beyond the senses for its hopeful believers' and was exploited by famous materialising mediums such as Eusapia Paladino, Eva Carrière and Helen Duncan.⁸⁶ The implication of such materialisation is that it forms 'the beginning of the end' (l. 24), by breaking the 'partition' (l. 28) between the spirit realm and that of mankind:

The barrier 'twixt our world of sense
 And one of sense bereft
 You broke with joyous confidence—

(ll. 25-27)

The photographer's accusation in line 27 that the publisher is to blame for the materialisation highlights the catalytic intervention of the poem's protagonists in enabling such developments.

⁸⁴ Robert Browning, 'Mr Sludge, "The Medium"', in *Dramatis Personae* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1864), pp. 171–236.

⁸⁵ Kendall, 'A Ballad of Boding', ll. 16-17.

⁸⁶ Warner, p. 290.

In addition to the overt declarations that the ghosts are ‘Materialising out’ (l. 16), the process is also evident in their dispersion from residing in the spirit realm to the material. Bearing striking similarity to the case in ‘A Ballad of Boding’, William James, president of the SPR from 1894 to 1895, would later muse over the possibility of

diffuse soul–stuff, unable of itself to get into consistent personal form, or to take permanent possession of an organism, yet always craving to do so; it might get its head into the air, parasitically, so to speak, by profiting by weak spots in the armour of human minds, and slipping in and stirring up there the sleeping tendencies to personate.⁸⁷

Years before James’s speculation, the ghosts of ‘A Ballad of Boding’ profit from the curiosity, need for evidence, and commercialism of the publisher and photographer, which can be deemed the ‘weak spots’ of their flawed characters. As a result, the publisher ‘left the haunts of men’ (l.72) and the ‘City’s roar’ (l. 78), the pun on ‘haunts of men’ suggesting his displacement by the ghosts. Similarly, the photographer is forced out of his ‘dusty, drear, and lone’ (l. 80) gallery, leaving behind a host of spirits, who ‘Reflectively [...] eye | A camera o’erthrown’ (ll.81–82). The spirits thus inhabit the photographer’s domain and spread beyond this:

‘whereso’er its owner range,
He never can evade
An escort, shadowy and strange,
Of Phantoms unportrayed’

(ll. 85–88)

‘A Ballad of Boding’ concludes with an ominous portrayal of the future, as the threat of the materialising ghost materialises itself:

⁸⁷ W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries* (London and New York: Henry Frowd, 1911; repr. Glastonbury: Lost Library, [2010]), p. 479.

Though spectral still, they are not quite
 So spectral as they were.
 By slow degrees, before his eyes,
 They steadily materialise!

(ll. 93–96)

The comic bleak outlook of ‘The Conscientious Ghost’ is thus intensified in the latter text, as the characters’ hunt to document the supernatural is shown to carry consequences for the worldly realm of the living, as well as the spiritual plane.

The texts considered thus far do not merely portray typical spectral hauntings, but rather depict an antagonistic relationship in which ghosts both haunt and are haunted by the living. For Kendall, ghosts are the characters that typify and expose her civilisation’s engagement with the supernatural. She mocks the pseudo-scientific approaches of institutions such as the SPR, as well as the commercial capitalisation upon spectral activity, because both hinge upon the prioritisation of the material, in various forms, at the expense of the spiritual. Such an approach is consistent with the views expressed in Kendall’s essays, as well as the disavowal of materialism present in other poems of this thesis. However, Kendall’s affiliation with the SPR and her own literary publications upon ghosts complicate her critiques, as she becomes implicated within them. This undermines the seriousness of her poetic attacks, furthering the comedy within the texts. This chapter has thus introduced key themes, such as science and materialism that will be returned to in subsequent chapters, as well introducing the reader to Kendall’s comic style.

CHAPTER 2: PYGMALION MYTH

Kendall's attack upon science in the previous chapter does not spare its apparent antithesis, art, from supernatural critique. The tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* contains the tale of Pygmalion, a sculptor who falls in love with the statue he has crafted, which is subsequently brought to life.⁸⁸ Variations upon this theme are frequent in Kendall's poetry, as she often animates lifeless objects or personifies non-human creatures in order to utilise them as speakers and reflect upon their human counterparts. In keeping with her interests presented in the previous chapter, this often occurs whilst addressing scientific subject matter, as in 'Lay of the Trilobite' and 'Ballad of the Ichthyosaurus', in which the creatures allow Kendall to 'take the position of the others of evolution' in order to critique the advancements of civilisation.⁸⁹ Alternatively, 'In the Toy Shop' pairs the lamentations of a 'naughty' (l. 2) female child pressured to behave in a doll-like manner, with those of a doll wishing to become real, 'Get cross, and have a will!' (l.16), in order to provide a commentary upon restrictive gender norms.⁹⁰ The two poems that follow, 'An Incident in Real Life Related by an Eye Witness in Marble' and 'The Legend of J. J. Jackson, the Self-Made Man' preserve most clearly the supernatural elements of the Pygmalion myth and also relate most closely to the original subject matter, as they portray statues that come

⁸⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. D. Melville, ed. by E. J. Kenney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), book x, pp. 225–48 (pp. 232–34).

⁸⁹ Gillian Beer, 'Rhyming as Resurrection', in *Memory and Memorials, 1789–1914: Literary and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Matthew Campbell, Jacqueline M. Labbe, and Sally Shuttleworth (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 189–207 (p. 201).

⁹⁰ May Kendall, 'In the Toy Shop', in Andrew Lang, 'At the Sign of the Ship', *Longman's Magazine*, November 1887, pp. 105–12 (p. 108).

to life.⁹¹ The strong scientific elements of the previous chapter are replaced here with a new ekphrastic emphasis upon aesthetics. Developing the commercial critique of ‘A Ballad of Boding’, these poems use supernaturally enhanced artistic productions to explore the role of art in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, criticising the developing capitalisation and commodification of art, and the artistic manifestations of decadent indulgence. Kendall explores both the political and personal implications of such supernatural aestheticism.

In the poems, Kendall negotiates the contested role of art in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Encapsulating the tone of *fin de siècle* aestheticism captured by authors such as Walter Pater and Arthur Symonds, Carolyn Burdett writes that

By the end of the century [...] beauty appeared to have been decoupled from ethics in the hedonistic values of ‘art for art’s sake’ aestheticism. For critics of the latter, ‘taste’ seemed either mere fashion or a fit subject for satire, and aestheticism inevitably conducive of a selfish life.⁹²

Kendall was one such critic, satirising the ‘taste’ of the Philistine in ‘An Incident in Real Life’, and stressing the selfishness of J. J. Jackson’s aesthetic possessions by writing them as self-portraits. Yet, as Jonathan Freedman explains, the concept of *art pour l’art* retained socio-political significance from its importation into English criticism in Algernon

⁹¹ Kendall, *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 90–92; May Kendall, ‘The Legend of J. J. Jackson, the Self-Made Man’, in Andrew Lang, ‘At the Sign of the Ship’, *Longman’s Magazine*, June 1889, pp. 217-24 (pp. 221-23).

⁹² Carolyn Burdett, ‘Introduction: Psychology/Aesthetics in the Nineteenth Century’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 12 (2011) <<http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/article/view/609/708>> [accessed 5 December 2011] (para. 4 of 12).

Swinburne's monograph on William Blake,⁹³ in which Swinburne strove 'to claim a political purpose for art itself, to assert that, in a thoroughly utilitarian culture, even the seemingly apolitical, disinterested pursuit of art is necessarily oppositional in nature'.⁹⁴ Kendall partakes in this 'political purpose for art', as the critiques she levels in her poems mirror her essays on the conduct of society. Moreover, she embodies the paradoxical place of art in doing so, as the aesthetic mode of the *belles lettres* is, for much of her career, the chief genre employed by Kendall for conveying such critiques.

The drama of 'An Incident in Real Life' begins when a collection of statues in a gallery come to life. The representation of Apollo begins to play a moving melody, which the 'terra-cotta Philistine' (l. 3) rudely interrupts, asking instead for a 'comic song' (l. 36). The Philistine statue is a representation of the gallery's owner, present because of the financial affluence that enabled his purchase:

He said the building he had bought,
 Or we should not be there;
 He owned he had the right, he thought,
 To criticise and stare.

(ll. 9–12)

The Philistine thus engages in the perception of aesthetic taste as marker of social standing, in line with Freedman's articulation that as the aesthetic movement developed, the perception and appreciation of beauty became elitist: 'to establish oneself as the arbiter

⁹³ Charles Algernon Swinburne, *William Blake: A Critical Essay* (London: J. C. Hotton, 1868)

⁹⁴ Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

of the aesthetic [...] was to proclaim oneself as a member of an elite whose standing was based on taste and discernment.’ He argues that this approach allowed members of the middle class ‘to make their way in the increasingly fluid social world of late-nineteenth-century England’ by identifying themselves as members of this elite.⁹⁵ Following this understanding of the political implications of aestheticism, the Philistine’s ownership of the gallery would suggest his elevated social standing, but is undermined by the revelation that ‘‘Tis he who never cared a pin | For what was really grand’ (ll. 5–6), in contrast to the superior judgement of the ‘old gods’ (l. 22), whose selective tastes are evident ‘In mockery of the wider range | They had not cared to tread’ (ll. 23–24). Kendall thus brands the notion of middle-class taste as marker of superior social standing unfounded misconception.

Instead, she recognises in the Philistine’s character the transition towards what Regenia Gagnier retrospectively terms ‘consumption aesthetics’.⁹⁶ The equivocation of the word ‘owned’ mocks the Philistine’s misconception that money and subsequently possession imbue him with taste and qualify him to pass judgement upon the other statuses. It also emphasises his status as consumer, partaking in the rise of the commodity and spectacle in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which Thomas Richards argues was spurred by the Great Exhibition of 1851.⁹⁷ The Philistine commoditises the other statuses

⁹⁵ Freedman, p. 48.

⁹⁶ Regenia Gagnier, *The Instability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), p. 13.

⁹⁷ Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 1–5.

by emphasising his status of financial ownership. Moreover, the gallery of Kendall's poem recreates the Exhibition scenario as the statues' status as spectacle is introduced immediately, 'You saw him as you entered in' (l. 1), maintained in their animation throughout the poem, and compounded when, at the poem's conclusion, 'hurrying footsteps entered in, | Men viewed the vanquished o'er' (ll. 49-50). According to Richards, the Exhibition's Crystal Palace and the connotations of grandeur and splendour that it evoked meant that '[e]ven the smallest and most unalluring objects displayed—bits of clay, clods of dirt, hunks of coal—benefited from the Crystal Palace's greenhouse effect. The spectacle exalted the ordinary by means of the extraordinary'.⁹⁸ Such is the means of elevation which the Philistine attempts to exploit, his composition of lowly materials, 'Terra-cotta Philistine | Upon his wooden stand' (ll. 3-4), marking him as the item seeking improvement by association with the grandeur of the other statues. However, it is the antithesis of the desired effect that is realised, as the juxtaposition of the Philistine's wood and pottery, which reflect his ill-bred nature, with the 'stony' (l. 25) composition of his companions, emphasises the contrast between the two and marks him as kitsch by comparison.

Kendall uses the disparity between the Philistine and the main group of statues, comprised of figures of historical importance with legacies of greatness, such as Pluto, Enone, Homer, Dante and Apollo, to differentiate between the truly beautiful representations of noble art and the Philistine's poor attempt to meet their standards. The numerical deficiency of monuments of Kendall's contemporaries, in addition to the deficit in quality, foreshadows Kendall's later articulation of the disparity between ancient Greek

⁹⁸ Richards, p. 4.

civilisation and her own society in ‘Relative Selfishness’, in which she expresses reluctance to indulge the leisurely pursuit of ‘culture’ within her society:

Well, if we could be like some of the old Greeks, so much the better. If we could produce works as great as theirs, every one would be only too thankful. If individuals like Pheidias or Plato or Aristotle arose, they would be warmly welcomed. [...] Any sacrifice the world could make for them would be richly repaid.

But when it is a question of people who can do nothing wonderful, who can never really enrich art or poetry or philosophy, the answer is different.⁹⁹

‘An Incident in Real Life’ posits the suggestion in lyric form, ahead of its direct acknowledgement in ‘Relative Selfishness’, that Kendall ascribes true greatness to the figures of earlier eras, rather than her own contemporaries. The temporal distance between the generations, which highlights the distance between the value of their contributions to society, is evoked in the poem’s nostalgic tone and juxtaposition of past and present. Apollo’s song, for instance, is

[...] a music sad and strange,
Of living days and dead,
The echo of the years of change
Since the old gods had fled.

(ll. 19–22)

Kendall positions ‘the old gods’ and other ancient figures within the modern setting; the ‘echo’ is a reflected remnant of original sound; and ‘the years of change’, recall the ‘world of change’ of ‘The Conscientious Ghost’ (l. 39), both poems emphasising the transformation that the world has undergone. Apollo’s song is contrasted with the

⁹⁹ May Kendall, ‘Relative Selfishness’, *Weslyan–Methodist Magazine*, February 1895, pp. 115–18 (p. 116; p. 117).

Philistine's disruption, in which he addresses the God as 'Mr. What's your name' (l. 35), his uninformed ignorance associated with modern England through the custom of the 'Mr' title, used patronisingly in this instance.

The positive portrayal of the ancient statues indicates that Kendall is not opposed to all art, but raises questions about her own poetry of the 'mood aesthetic'.¹⁰⁰ As Marion Thain discerns from poems such as 'Shakespeare', Kendall does not associate herself with literary greatness; therefore how can she justify her aesthetic productions in line with her resistance to non-improving literary and artistic contributions described above?¹⁰¹ Critics such as Reynolds suggest that she cannot, resulting in the later minimisation of her poetry, yet the answer lies in the reconciliation of socialism and aesthetics within her verse.¹⁰² Like contemporaries such as Dollie Radford (nee Caroline Maitland), Kendall negotiates between socialist political discourses put forth in her essays and realised in her work with Seebohm Rowntree, and the aestheticism of the poetic mode which occupied most of her career. Discussing Radford's relationship with aestheticism and politics, Ruth Livesey observes that 'she maintained her socialist beliefs alongside her growing confidence in her identity as a poet', much like Kendall did;¹⁰³ while Radford continued membership of the Fabian Society alongside publications in the infamously decadent *Yellow Book*, Kendall produced her socialist essays alongside her poetical publications, and continued publishing poetry after her shift towards social activism with the Rowntrees. Livesey's discernment

¹⁰⁰ Reynolds, p. 628.

¹⁰¹ May Kendall, 'Shakespeare', in *Dreams to Sell*, p. 93; Thain, 'May Kendall', pp. 120-21.

¹⁰² Reynolds, p. 628.

¹⁰³ Ruth Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 136.

of Radford's use of 'allegory to render political questions in an aesthetic register' within the "'feminine" lyricism' of her poetry, highlights Kendall's socio-political agenda behind her own verse.¹⁰⁴ While aesthetic in, for instance, their humour, her poems also largely aim to be edifying, allowing her to convey commentary upon the flaws of her culture.

The suggestion that the main group of statues belong to a vastly different version of the world, located within the distant past, is consistent with their positive enchantment. Bown's study of *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* highlights the association of enchanted phenomena such as fairies with the pre-industrialised world, and Owen notes that part of the appeal of the occult in late-Victorian England was its throwback to 'secret traditions' and 'ancient wisdom'.¹⁰⁵ The normality of the Philistine is thus juxtaposed with the paranormal attributes of the other statues, suggested through their identification with 'gods' (l. 22), the 'mystic cadence' of Apollo's song (l. 33) and his 'mystic wand' (l. 43). The last of these attributes is fundamental to the Philistine's demise: the 'mighty harper' (l. 37) demonstrates his power and superiority over the uncultured Philistine who, in the elevated register of mock-epic, is 'vanquished' (l. 50) using the 'mystic wand' (l. 43). The poem ends with the vividly visual image of 'A terra-cotta Philistine | In fragments on the floor' (ll. 53–54), demonstrating spatial domination as the Philistine is physically displaced from his pedestal to the ground, with appropriate connotations of lowliness. In spite of this, he retains his 'old superior grin' (l. 51), suggesting that even at this stage he is unable to recognise his own inferior position. The lack of supernatural qualities in the Philistine not only distinguishes him from his superior

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Nicola Bown, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Owen, *The Place of Enchantment*, p. 32.

associates, but also emphasises his normality, and suggests the commonplace frequency of characters of this kind in Kendall's society.

'The Legend of J. J. Jackson, the Self-Made Man' develops the aesthetic critique of aestheticism in 'An Incident in Real Life', highlighting the psychological and social implications of aesthetic commodification. In the supernatural narrative, Jackson, a 'self-made man', is standing in his 'tower' (l. 2) when artistic representations of himself come to life and murder him. Jackson's 'self-made', successful status is subject to critique in line with Kendall's theosophical arguments regarding both materialism and individualism. Developing Freedman's observation that 'aestheticism realized itself in social terms as a means of upward mobility', Jackson's possession of aesthetic objects indicates that this upward mobility has been achieved by attesting to his wealth and status, thus once again associating aestheticism with materialist consumerism.¹⁰⁶ This is evident not only in the grandeur of 'The drawing-room, wide-open set' (l. 29) and the rest of his lavish abode, but in the portraits that attack him. These are comprised of paintings, fresco, "Strange medallions, busts of clay' (l. 17), a 'green bronze Jackson' (l. 25), 'A Jackson done in chalks' (l. 28), 'The Parian Jackson statuette' (l. 31), all of which are indulgently decadent objects. Kendall's criticism of consumption aesthetics is consistent with her condemnation of the prioritisation of material want over spiritual needs as expressed in the 'Christian ethics' of her essays.¹⁰⁷ Despite her socialistic preoccupations and the underlying call for

¹⁰⁶ Freedman, p. 50.

¹⁰⁷ Holmes, p. 8.

the introduction of a minimum wage in *How the Labourer Lives*,¹⁰⁸ Holmes attests that in her theosophical essays,

Kendall argues against the position [...] that the aim of socialism should be the abolition of material want in order to enable the emergence of a more elevated spiritual or cultural life for all. [...] Her own position, by contrast, is that people's spiritual and moral well-being must come first, and that social reform, including material betterment, must follow and will follow from proper religious commitment.¹⁰⁹

The alternative to materialistic aesthetic indulgence is, Kendall argues, asceticism. In 'A Plea for Asceticism', she commends the ascetic 'who renounces the world, who mortifies the flesh' for the purpose of 'deeper spiritual life'.¹¹⁰ Jackson, however, is punishable because his social advancement and subsequent materialistic acquirement of possessions demonstrate the subjugation of the spiritual life in favour of the material.

'A Plea for Asceticism' also associates the materialistic lifestyle with the prioritisation of the individual over the collective, asserting that dedicating oneself to asceticism involves 'the death of the particular, as opposed to the universal self, whose will is one with the divine will'.¹¹¹ This statement recalls Kendall's discussion of individualism in 'Relative Selfishness', in which she contemplates the role of the individual and the cultured lifestyle, which Jackson appears to embody:

¹⁰⁸ Maltz, p. 328.

¹⁰⁹ Holmes, pp. 9–10; May Kendall, 'Fear and Hate', *Longman's Magazine*, November 1889, pp. 78–82; — 'The Fear of Death', *Weslyan-Methodist Magazine*, October 1895, pp. 767–68; — 'A Plea for Asceticism', *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, January 1900, pp. 124–30; — 'Relative Selfishness'; — 'The Social Ideal'.

¹¹⁰ Kendall, 'A Plea for Asceticism', p. 124.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

In this realm of culture there is often a good deal of talk about ‘individual expansion,’ and the like. Let us expand by all means; but we cannot expand as individuals merely. Sometimes there seems to be an idea floating in people’s minds [...] that an individual can somehow be separated from the mass, put into a suitable hothouse, and left to absorb culture of all kinds, and grow bigger, like a literary and aesthetic cucumber. Only it must be remembered that the hothouse and the atmosphere are other human beings, not wood and glass and heated air.¹¹²

It is exactly this individual betterment to which Jackson has succumbed, and for which Kendall sees him punished. The process of self-improvement (and its ultimate failure) is conveyed through Kendall’s mixing of old and new, which mirrors Jackson’s transition to successful self-made man and his subsequent decline throughout the poem. Connotations of tradition are present in the ‘legend’ genre and the poem’s castle location, while being subverted by the modern décor of the ‘new fangled tower’ (l. 2). The tower thus becomes the object correlative of Jackson’s internal struggles, the ‘bartizan’ (l. 1) a fitting location for the fatal battle that will take place between the man and his images.

Indeed, the portraits are more intentional than merely decorative objects because of their personal connection to Jackson. As self-portraits they visually express the vanity and focus upon the individual evident in his ‘self-made’ progression. He is described as ‘The proudest and self-madest man | The moon beheld that hour’ (ll. 3–4), in which his social mobility is directly associated with the sinful pride that led to the creation of his images, ultimately bringing about his demise in the biblical context of pride as capital vice. This Christian perception of pride is consistent with the connoted association of the ‘bartizan’ location (l. 1) with the church and the portraits as false idols. In addition, the temporary nature of Jackson’s success suggested in line four insinuates that such an occurrence was frequent, fashionable and fleeting in Kendall’s society, much like her representation of

¹¹² Kendall, ‘Relative Selfishness’, p. 116.

psychical research as a subject in vogue. The particular animation of Jackson's portraits is far more malevolent than that in 'An Incident in Real Life', in which the reader is aligned with the statues that destroy the Philistine. Here they are presented as destructive, frightening: they 'came looming' (l. 18); we witness their 'baneful influence' (l. 21); as oppressive as it was in 'A Ballad of Boding', here 'The ghostly concourse swelled' (l. 24); we are even presented with 'a form one would not care | To meet *without* his frame' (ll. 35–36). Recalling the Conscientious Ghost's threat 'I'd like to haunt him well' (l. 28), the last of these descriptions mingles a menacing but comical tone, the humour of which can be traced to the fashionable connotations of the phrase. However, unlike the scenario in 'The Conscientious Ghost', here the threat is realised: 'The frame alone was on the wall, | The portrait on the floor' (ll. 39–40). The malevolence of the images befits their purpose as arbiters of punishment, but they evoke additional disquietude through their embodiment of 'the double', which Freud associates with the uncanny.¹¹³

In addition to the cultural consequences of social mobility then, the poem explores the individual implications for Jackson's psyche, engaging with developing psychological theory. As Warner explains, '[i]deas of doubled and contradictory selves coexisting were increasingly coming under serious consideration', for instance in Myers's consideration of the subliminal self, later published posthumously in *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, and Freud's theories of the unconscious.¹¹⁴ Although the poems selected for analysis in Chapter 4 discuss mental processes, it is notable that this is the only focal poem

¹¹³ Freud, Sigmund, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Vintage, 2001), xvii, 217–256 (p. 233)

¹¹⁴ Warner, p. 242.

of the thesis in which the protagonist is referred to by name, rather than represented through *antonomasia*, conveying a deeper exploration of the individual. The second stanza of Kendall's poem presents Jackson's self-reflective recognition of his transformation as 'He thought on how he'd cut his way, | On what he'd been before,' (ll. 5–6). While indulging in these reflections, 'dreamily he muttered "J. | J. Jackson". Nothing more' (ll. 7–8). Aside from the vanity of the utterance, its position within the stanza is also revealing; the fracturing of Jackson's identity through his transformation is suggested by the enjambment and broken rhyme in the placement of the name across the lines. Each subsequent time the full name appears within the poem it is in this same divided manner. This fracturing of the self is visually represented in Jackson's images. When the portraits first begin approaching, 'drearily he murmured "J. | J. Jackson. Here we are!"' (ll. 19–20). In this instance of incremental repetition, the altered adverb 'drearily' contrasts with the optimistic use of 'dreamily' in the poem's second stanza (l. 7). The collective pronoun 'we' emphasises the multiplicity of Jackson's fractured identity and reminds the reader that he is trying in vain to escape himself. As the situation develops, 'bitterly he moaned: "Twelve J. | J. Jacksons against one!"' (ll. 43–44). The severity of the negative adverb intensifies from 'drearily', as Jackson's adverse reaction to the representation of himself increases. The opposition between aspects of his identity that was implicit in the collective 'we' is thus explicitly recognised in the latter lines. Continuing this is the parallelism of "'The Statue!" That was all' (l. 50), which mimics line eight of the poem, in which Jackson's own name was voiced; the focus has now been transferred to the statue. These interactions demonstrate the unfolding psychological conflict between Jackson's various selves.

Jackson's self-portraits convey the internalised desire upon which Freud would later elaborate in 'On Narcissism'. As the unhealthy imbalance of channelling desire back to the self is realised through the creation of self-portraits in the poem, Jackson's images represent, in Freudian terms, the increasing dominance of the 'ego-libido' and the subjugation of the 'object libido', as he disavows the other in favour of the self.¹¹⁵ Kendall thus deviates from Ovid's original text, in which Pygmalion falls in love with the female statue he has crafted, by presenting Jackson's self-love, implied in his upward social mobility and explicitly manifested in his self-portraits. The union of Pygmalion and his statue then is parodied in 'The Legend of J. J. Jackson' by the union of the man and his images, which culminates in the poem's murder scene. Describing the development of a truly 'great soul' in 'Relative Selfishness', Kendall writes that in prioritisation of the collective need, this individual 'transcends self after self, till at last his being is so identified with the universal that for him there is no death possible.'¹¹⁶ This explicit recognition of the multiplicity of self highlights the immortality of the soul, should one prioritise the universal and spiritual needs of the mass over individual development. Personifying the antithesis of this ideological outlook, Jackson does not transcend 'self after self' to attain immortality, but is rather engulfed by these selves:

He clasped him in the moonlight grey,

He banged him on the floor,

He laughed a marble laugh, and J.

J. Jackson was no more!

¹¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' (1914), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Vintage, 2001), XIV, 73–104 (p. 76).

¹¹⁶ 'Relative Selfishness', p. 116.

(ll. 53–56)

Like the spatial demonstrations of power in ‘An Incident’, the statue exercises his mastery over Jackson by lowering him to the ‘floor’, in contrast to his previously elevated position in the tower, employing the same method of destruction and spatial displacement as in the previous poem. The verb ‘clasped’ highlights the embrace, bringing together the different elements of Jackson’s identity, the effects of which are fatal. The scenario precedes a similar account in the dramatic climax of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which Dorian stabs his magically-imbued portrait in an attempt to free himself from the curse of sin that accompanies his eternal youth.¹¹⁷ Whereas the attacker in the poem is reversed in the novel, in both texts it is the portraits that survive and the men that perish; death, it would seem in both cases, is the only possible outcome given the sinful lives the characters led. Following the murder, ‘the grisly murmurs run | From floor to bartizan’ (ll. 57–58) about the dangers of portraiture for the self-made man. This, coupled with the rhetorical question at the poem’s close, ‘Why *are* so many portraits done | Of any Self-made man?’ (ll. 59–60), highlights the fable-like warning against aesthetic indulgence at the expense of ‘[s]piritual life’.¹¹⁸ Jackson, whose individuality is probed so during the poem, thus becomes the cautionary everyman against individual and material development.

¹¹⁷ Wilde, Oscar, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. by Norman Page (London: Ward and Lock, 1891; repr. [Peterborough]: Broadview, 1998), p. 250.

¹¹⁸ Kendall, ‘The Fear of Death’, p. 768.

In 'The Social Ideal', Kendall writes that '[w]e see men who have gained a good deal of the world, and nearly lost their souls in the process'.¹¹⁹ The poems of this chapter depict this danger, as the wealth and social standing of both Jackson and the Philistine leave their souls vulnerable to corruption and their characters exposed to satirical attack. Using variations upon the mythical tale of Pygmalion enabled Kendall to foreground her views regarding materialism and individualism in aestheticism. While she accepts and embraces what she deems worthy cultural contributions in the form of art, such as the depictions of noble figures in the statues of 'An Incident in Real Life', and Pygmalion's own sculpture, she contrasts what is perceived as an antiquated respectability with the development of the aesthetic movement during her own time. The consumer aesthetics of her contemporary society reflect the preoccupation with material and individual development which is in contention with the ideological treatises she propounds in her essays.

¹¹⁹ Kendall, 'The Social Ideal', p. 426.

CHAPTER 3: FAIRY TALE

Books such as Nicola Bown's *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* and Caroline Sumpter's *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale*¹²⁰ explore the cultural contexts in which Victorian fairy tales developed and demonstrate that the subjects of fairies and the fairy tale (the former often absent in the latter) can have significant social and political implications. This chapter seeks to explore Kendall's utilisation of these enchanted creatures and literary forms in fairy texts identified as harbouring social and political agendas: reviews from the period and critical reception demonstrate that both *That Very Mab* and 'The Fatal Lift'¹²¹ were received as satires upon the follies and vices apparent in Kendall's contemporary society.¹²² While the other texts selected for analysis within the thesis are poetic, this chapter is distinct as it features a segment from Kendall and Lang's prose fantasy satire *That Very Mab*, which includes a small amount of poetry together with meta-poetical commentary in which the portrayal of the fairy alongside the poet and other characters serves to mock each of the human archetypes. While the text may not be deemed as funny as Kendall's poetry, as established in the Introduction, it is important as it introduces Kendall's first literary engagement with the supernatural, from which the consistency of her supernatural social critiques can be gauged. Comparatively, analysis of 'The Fatal Lift', which contains a number of fairy-tale elements and combines traditional enchantment with modern scientific alternatives, will demonstrate how Kendall seeks to

¹²⁰ Caroline Sumpter, *The Victorian Press and the Fairy Tale* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹²¹ May Kendall, 'The Fatal Lift', *Longman's Magazine*, April 1889, pp. 603–06.

¹²² Green, p. 65; Anonymous, 'Literature of the Week: The Magazines for April', *Hampshire Advertiser*, 6 April 1889, p. 7; ——— 'Literary Notices', *Liverpool Mercury*, 17 April 1889, p. 7.

critique civilisation in light of the latter. Like the poems upon ghosts, Kendall's texts on the fairy and fairy tale allow her to scrutinise her society's engagement with the supernatural. Consistently, materialism comes under attack, but the texts of the present chapter suggest a more nostalgic yearning for prior relations with the supernatural, building upon the enchanted attachment to the past introduced by the group of statues in 'An Incident in Real Life'.

That *That Very Mab* is the product of a collaborative effort between Kendall and Andrew Lang is significant to understanding both the literary and social implications of the text. The professional relationship between Lang and his 'esteemed contributor'¹²³ was cultivated within the context of literary enchantment, as Kendall contributed to Lang's series of coloured fairy books, in which '[t]he tales themselves were retold, translated or adapted mainly by Mrs. Lang, though in the earlier volumes she had the assistance of many people, including May Kendall'.¹²⁴ In particular, Green's biography of Lang notes the inclusion of

a condensed version of the first part of *Gulliver's Travels* made by May Kendall. How Lang came to allow this last to be included is inexplicable, for it is quite alien to anything in any of the fairy books, which never again depart from the traditional tales further than Madame d'Aulnoy, Hans Andersen and 'The Three Bears.'¹²⁵

Kendall's deviation from 'traditional tales' and Lang's permissive attitude that Green finds so 'inexplicable', can be traced back to *That Very Mab*, which portrays society as seen

¹²³ Lang, 'At the Sign of the Ship', June 1889, p. 221.

¹²⁴ *Coloured Fairy Books*, ed. by Andrew Lang, 12 vols (London: Longmans and Green, 1889–1910); Green, p. 82.

¹²⁵ Green, p. 81.

through the eyes of the outsider fairy Queen Mab, as she encounters stock characters that represent oppositional attitudes. In line with the utopian movement in late-Victorian fairy tales, the text's political commentary manifests the concerns important to both Lang and Kendall, who balance enchantment with social conscience. Lang, for instance, was both anthropologist and historian and in addition to exploring enchantment and the supernatural in a fictional mode, also served as president to the Folk-lore Society and the SPR.¹²⁶ Similarly, in addition to the moral and political messages of the poetry produced over the course of her career, Kendall's late publications in *The Occult Review* occur at a time when she had moved significantly towards fighting social injustice proactively through her collaborative efforts with Seebohm Rowntree, demonstrating the prolonged endurance of mutual interests.¹²⁷

Bown's in-depth study of the significance of fairies within Victorian art and literature reveals how fairyland became a realm of imaginative escape from anxieties regarding the rapid development and 'deadening rationalism of modern forms of thought, technology and social organisation' in the period, which shook the foundations of religious ideology and traditional ways of life.¹²⁸ Given Kendall's evident dissatisfaction with her modern society as established in previous poems, it is appropriate that the archaic fairy is employed to highlight the extent to which modernity has changed the world, predominantly for the worse. In *That Very Mab*, Queen Mab is forced by the arrival of the

¹²⁶ Green, p. 71.

¹²⁷ May Kendall, 'The Dark Host', *Occult Review*, January 1916, p. 47; — 'Beauty for Ashes', *Occult Review*, January 1920, pp. 36-37; — 'The Garden', *Occult Review*, March 1921, p. 155; Rowntree and Kendall, *How the Labourer Lives*; Rowntree [and Kendall], *The Human Needs of Labour*.

¹²⁸ Bown, *Fairies*, p. 11.

English to relocate from Samoa and ‘the remote isles of the South’, akin to fairyland in their exotic remoteness and lyrically rural description:

*How soft the breakers come and go,
How bright the fragrant berries blow
The fern–tree scents the shining reach.*¹²⁹

The English arrivals, swiftly followed by German counterparts, bring with them destruction: they ‘chopped every branch of the pine clean away and turned the beautiful tree into a bare [flag] pole’.¹³⁰ When the German sailors engage in battle with the British, native dwellers, who had previously been dancing and content, are caught in the crossfire between modern weapons, and ‘fell down bleeding and dying’.¹³¹ Such occurrence mimics the destruction of the fairyland motif as articulated by Bown: ‘Railroads, gasworks, mowing machines, telegraph poles; civilisation, economical arrangements, commercial enterprise: these are the effluvia of modernity which despoil the landscape of fairyland and which drive away the fairies’.¹³² By transporting Mab into their contemporary society, Kendall and Lang force the reader to confront the anxieties of modernisation. As in Bown’s example of Edward Hopley’s painting, *Puck and a Moth (Pre-Raphaelite Version)*,¹³³ which relocates the fairy from traditional fairyland into a modern context, this ‘highlights the contrast between the fairy and his modern surroundings’, and ‘draws attention to the ways in which modernity has shaped the

¹²⁹ [Kendall and Lang], *That Very Mab*, p. 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³² Bown, *Fairies*, p. 40.

¹³³ Edward Hopley, *Puck and a Moth (Pre-Raphaelite Version)* (Private Collection, 1854).

world'.¹³⁴ Kendall and Lang satirise overly-developed civilisation by presenting its supposed modes of progression as absurdities. The chief method employed for this purpose lies in the farcical behaviour of characters representing different archetypal sectors of society.

Of the complex interactions of a wide variety of characters in *That Very Mab*, I will focus upon exchanges between the poet, professor, and theologian, as these characters not only personify a range of perspectives in response to the supernatural, but encompass Kendall's own stances as poet, Oxford-educated intellectual, and devoted Christian. The characters observe Mab being worshipped as a deity by the professor's young son after the fairy's capture.¹³⁵ Of the three men present, it is only the poet that acknowledges Mab to be a 'fairy',¹³⁶ as the professor dubs her a 'butterfly', stating 'that fairies were unscientific, and even unthinkable, and the divine declared that they were too heterodox even for the advanced state of modern theology'.¹³⁷ While the poet's apparent recognition of the fairy would suggest him to be more credible than his company, this impression is undermined by the revelation that he no longer believes in such enchanted creatures, having voiced the opinion 'partly because it was a pose he affected, partly to "draw" the professor',¹³⁸ signalling the antagonistic relationship between the seemingly oppositional stances of science and poetry, an impression developed through the on-going dispute between the men.

¹³⁴ Bown, *Fairies*, p. 44.

¹³⁵ [Kendall and Lang], *That Very Mab*, pp. 36–38.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The poet's response to the encounter with Mab is to begin writing a sonnet: 'Fair denizen of deathless ether, doomed | For one brief hour to languish and repine'.¹³⁹ The traditional subject matter of the sonnet form means that it continues to carry connotations of love.¹⁴⁰ The poet's use of this form, coupled with his hyperbolic, sentimentalised lexical choices romanticises the fairy, corroborating Bown's observations of the nostalgic role of fairies in reaction to modern society.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, it contributes to the archetypal portrayal of the poet by emphasising the artistic and romantic elements of the character-type, which are contrasted with the professor's analytical scientific language and the divine's anti-aesthetic attitudes. While the other focal texts of this thesis have comprised the finished products of poetic endeavours, here we are presented with the process of composition, as Kendall uses literary theory to achieve social criticism. Searching for a rhyme to pair with his composed lines the poet muses, 'Entombed? That will do, but I'm afraid there are not many more rhymes to "doomed." "Loomed," "boomed," "exhumed," "well-groomed." My thoughts won't flow, hang it all!'¹⁴² In addition to encouraging the reader to laugh at the poet's frustration, the meta-poetical musings during the creative process expose his lack of skill. As Gillian Beer explains in discussion of the passage of *That Very Mab* quoted above, the constraints of rhyme pose difficulties for poetic composition as they restrict available lexical choices, leading to

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁴⁰ John Lennard, *The Poetry Handbook*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 385.

¹⁴¹ Bown, *Fairies*.

¹⁴² [Kendall and Lang], *That Very Mab*, pp. 48–49.

potential conflicts of appropriate semantics and register.¹⁴³ Such is the downfall of the poet in question, as he equally considers the options ‘loomed’ and ‘well-groomed’, despite the semantic clashes involved. This comical incompetence serves to mock the archetypal poet and his approach to the ethereal.

Kendall’s technique is elaborated further as the ridiculed characters also highlight each other’s flaws as well as their own deficiencies. As such, the poet’s attack on the professor is heightened by the reader’s knowledge of the former’s inadequacies. Kendall’s contemporary Constance Naden similarly highlights the destructive power of poet and scientist alike in ‘Poet and Botanist’,¹⁴⁴ in which the latter figure destroys the plant subject ‘with his cruel knife and microscope’ (l. 7), ‘Yet the mild Poet can be ruthless too’ (l. 9) in his twisting of the flower’s beauty to serve as his own imagery. Naden’s comparison of the poet’s depiction and botanist’s dissection of the flower corresponds with Kendall’s portrayal of the poet and professor’s reactions to the fairy, both of which are conveyed negatively. Marion Thain’s observation regarding the poet and scientist of Naden’s poem, that ‘the two are much closer in their relation with the world than might be expected’, can therefore also be applied to the corresponding characters in *That Very Mab*.¹⁴⁵ According to Bown, ‘[t]he fairy and fairyland [...] were widely used as metaphors for anxieties about the progress and implications of science’,¹⁴⁶ yet the charge against the poet by both Kendall and Naden is innovative.

¹⁴³ Beer, p. 194.

¹⁴⁴ *The Complete Poetical Works of Constance Naden* (London: Bickers, 1894), p. 332.

¹⁴⁵ Marion Thain, ““Scientific Wooing”: Naden’s Marriage of Science and Poetry”, *Victorian Poetry*, 41 (2003), 151–69 (pp. 155–56).

¹⁴⁶ Bown, *Fairies*, p. 105.

The character of the professor personifies the disenchantment and spiritual decline that ensues from scientific investigation of the supernatural, such as that conducted by the SPR. In addition to disenchanting Mab, he uses science to evidence the origins of religious belief, undermining the nature of faith. While studying his child's worship of Mab, he associates religion with 'supernatural' phenomena such as bogies and deems it a 'terrible' practice.¹⁴⁷ His observations lead him to conclude that religious faith is the result of 'unconscious inherited memory, derived from Palaeolithic Man',¹⁴⁸ who must have lived in an environment that contained species similar to 'butterfly' Mab: 'the origin of religion [...] is worshipping butterflies'. This reduction of the higher power of religion to the self-serving product of instinctual human psychology resembles developing psychological theories such as Myers's views on the subliminal self and what Jung would later coin as the collective unconscious.¹⁴⁹ Accordingly, the professor personifies the challenges made to religion generally, and Christian orthodoxy specifically, by the modern science of Kendall's time. However, his credibility is undermined by his erroneous assertion that Mab 'is as dead as a door-nail'.¹⁵⁰ This basic failure to distinguish between a living and dead creature undermines all scientific learning that the professor claims to possess and leads to Mab's escape when he attempts to put her under a microscope.¹⁵¹ This

¹⁴⁷ [Kendall and Lang], *That Very Mab*, p. 37.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁴⁹ Frederic W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, 2 vols (London: Longmans and Green, 1903); C. G. Jung, 'The Concept of the Collective Unconscious' (1936/7), in *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, ed. by William McGuire, trans. by R. F. C. Hull, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1968), IX, Part I, 42-53.

¹⁵⁰ [Kendall and Lang], *That Very Mab*, p. 43.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

act is a metaphor typifying scientific disenchantment, a subject which Kendall and Lang return to in ‘A Pious Opinion’.¹⁵²

Despite the predominantly critical tone of Kendall’s engagement with science in her poetry beyond *That Very Mab*, she was not categorically opposed to the subject. ‘Woman’s Future’,¹⁵³ for instance, evidences the emancipatory potential of evolutionary theory in contrast to the potential abuses and dangerous consequences of scientific advancement conveyed in other poems in the ‘Science’ section of *Dreams to Sell*.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, in ‘Pessimism and Thomas Hardy’s Poems’, her admiration for figures such as Darwin and Huxley is clear: lives such as these ‘are no caprice of doubt, but a triumph of faith. They are the honourable soldiers whom God sets apart for foreign service’.¹⁵⁵ This statement encapsulates one of Kendall’s key oppositions to science: its relationship with religion. John Holmes observes that ‘[f]or Kendall, faith is necessarily distinct and separate from science. This is not a weakness, however, but a strength’,¹⁵⁶ as ‘Fear and Hate’ articulates Kendall’s sense that scientific endeavours to evidence religion lead to ‘false certainty’, which undermines the very nature of faith: ‘faith is in its nature incapable of proof’.¹⁵⁷ Such is the mistake of *That Very Mab*’s theologian, who attempts to explain a

¹⁵² *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 31–32.

¹⁵³ Kendall, *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 38–39.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–40.

¹⁵⁵ May Kendall, ‘Pessimism and Thomas Hardy’s Poems’, *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, April 1899, pp. 223–34 (p. 227).

¹⁵⁶ Holmes, p. 9.

¹⁵⁷ Kendall, ‘Fear and Hate’, p. 9.

mathematically inept ‘scientific religion’,¹⁵⁸ which the professor deems ‘unmitigated nonsense’, a failure from both religious and scientific perspectives.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the theologian dubs the poet ‘misguided’ in his apparent belief in fairies, which he deems unsuitable ‘to the pressing needs of modern society’.¹⁶⁰ This misconception of the role of the fairy ridicules the theologian’s character, as Bown’s study of fairies within the popular imagination of the period offers abundant evidence of the Victorian dependence upon such creatures to vent and explore both their ‘optimistic and anxious reactions’ to the progression of their race.¹⁶¹ In marking the fairy as oppositional to ‘reason and religion’, the theologian also demonstrates the displacement of enchantment by modern theology as well as science.

That Very Mab uses the fairy to introduce the disenchantment which Kendall and Lang evidently perceived to be permeating their society as a consequence of modernisation. ‘The Fatal Lift’ develops this argument, depicting in verse form the tale of a prince who asks a wizard to help him raise the masses, but when they arrive he realises that they are Philistines and sacrifices his life in order to suppress them. Developing the critique of modernisation evident in the previous texts, ‘The Fatal Lift’ also foreshadows the socio-political critique of social mobility that would emerge months later in ‘The Legend of J. J. Jackson’. Kendall’s separation of the poem into parts immediately creates a mock-epic style recalling, for instance, Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*, which contains the

¹⁵⁸ [Kendall and Lang], *That Very Mab*, p. 49.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁶¹ Bown, *Fairies*, p. 3.

first example of winged fairies.¹⁶² Nicola Bown explains that in contrast to the historical tradition of wings enabling movement ‘between different realities [...] the wings of Victorian fairies are meant for flight’.¹⁶³ She links the development to inventions such as the manned hot air balloon in 1783, which fed a cultural God-complex through man-made means of limit-defying mobility, as well as by bringing man physically closer to the envisaged location of God. In ‘The Fatal Lift’, such vertical movement is representative of social mobility, but rather than featuring innately supernatural winged fairies as the means of achieving such progression, Kendall juxtaposes archetypal fairy-tale elements with man-made, technological imagery closer to the mechanised modes of movement in her contemporary society; the enchantment of the supernatural has been stripped from the fairy tale, as it is the mechanical lift that offers the means of mobility. While fairies were by no means a staple ingredient of the fairy tale, here their absence, and the absence of all such magic and enchantment, is significant. It recalls Mab’s persecution in England by the products of modern society¹⁶⁴ and engages in a contemporary cultural departure of the fairies, evident in texts such as Rosamund Marriott Watson’s ‘The Last Fairy’.¹⁶⁵ As Bown articulates, this exodus bespeaks contemporary anxieties regarding rapid cultural development:

Fairies always belong to yesterday, because today’s world is corrupt, sophisticated, urbane and disenchanting. The repeated elegy for their departure bespeaks a

¹⁶² Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock: An Heroi-Comical Poem in Five Canto’s*, 2nd edn (London: Bernard Lintott, 1714).

¹⁶³ Bown, *Fairies*, p. 48.

¹⁶⁴ [Kendall and Lang], *That Very Mab*.

¹⁶⁵ Watson, Rosamund Marriott, ‘The Last Fairy’ (1889), in *Poems* (London: John Lane the Bodly Head, 1912), pp. 141–3

recurrent sense of the erosion of tradition by the demands of the present and the pressure of the future. The fairies leave at times of change and trouble when the stable order of society is pulled into a new shape, when new beliefs shake older faiths or when people leave the countryside and head for towns and cities: when the present pulls away from the past and people become conscious of the rapid pace of social change.¹⁶⁶

Aside from the fairies' absence in 'The Fatal Lift', the technological underpinning of the wizard's power simultaneously evokes the 'erosion of tradition' by modern amenities and satirises the halted progress of the aspect of social change that is class mobility.

The wizard is an amalgamation of the ancient and modern, the latter characteristic becoming increasingly apparent over the course of the poem. 'An ancient sorcerer' (I.9) is sought to raise the masses by magical means and initially the wizard appears to suffice; 'With magic were his accents fraught, | His locks were grey with time' (I.11–12). Moreover, his age and wisdom are suggested through the 'patriarchal joy' (I.14) of the Prince at his arrival, the juxtaposed youth of the latter further emphasising the distinction between 'Master' (I.15) and 'Boy' (I.16). However,

The Wizard's speech, in sooth,
 Half like an Ancient Man's, had too
 A certain air of youth.
 And half of Henry George it seemed
 To his bewildered ear;
 And half of Chamberlain he dreamed,
 And half of Bass's Beer.

(I.26–32)

¹⁶⁶ Bown, *Fairies*, p. 163.

The modernity suggested through such ‘youth’ and modern comparative references to ‘Henry George’, ‘Chamberlain’, and ‘Bass’s Beer’, induce fear in the prince due to the discordance between magical enchantment and modernity, a fear that proves justified. The wizard’s ‘Remedy’ (I.20) to the issue of the suppressed masses is the employment of ‘A Lift’ (I.21), as Kendall exploits the polysemy of machinery, replacing the literary convention of textual machinery in the epic with technological machinery, to create satire. Kendall was drawing on contemporary progress as the lift mechanism had been recently significantly developed, with the first electric lift demonstrated by Werner Siemens at an exhibition in Mannheim, Germany, in 1880, and major innovations in lift safety and sophistication produced by the company later known as the Otis Elevator Company, in the same year as the publication of ‘The Fatal Lift’.¹⁶⁷

In keeping with Kendall’s unfavourable depictions of modern society, the affiliation of attributes of modernity with the wizard hint that his character will develop into the villain of the tale. He engages with the transient trends of contemporary society by carrying his model lifts in a ‘Gladstone bag’ (I.37), and he expresses the fashionable sentiment that ‘Lifts are all the rage’ (I.39). This concern with popular trends foreshadows the *à la mode* aesthetics that prove fatal in ‘The Legend of J. J. Jackson’. Like the hot air balloon then, the lift realises the surpassing of supposedly divine-intended restrictions enabled by the product of modern society’s technological innovation. The wizard’s materialism can be discerned through his association with the lift machinery and his

¹⁶⁷ J. Bashford and others, ‘The History of Lifts’, <<http://www.liftadvice.com/history2.html>> (2005) [accessed 1 March 2013].

subordination of the spiritual to material concerns is evident as he muses over the rewards his creation will bring:

He murmured: 'You will win
 In the present world a hundredfold,
 And the Next World thrown in!'

(I.54–55)

The offhanded treatment of the 'Next World' in the Wizard's *obiter dicta* as a secondary consideration is replicated in J. J. Jackson's prioritisation of material concerns and individual success. As in the later-published text, there are fatal consequences for embracing such values. A personification of materialism and modernity then, the wizard and his lift fulfil the religious element of Bown's criteria that the departure of the fairies is resultant from the destabilisation of 'older faiths' and imply spiritual corruption representative of the ideological decline of Kendall's society.¹⁶⁸ The dispersion of the wizard's sacrilegious principles is evident in wider society's worship of the figure: 'The Wizard's portrait they had hung | On every gallery's wall' (II.5–6), with the general population and members of the church succumbing to such heresy (II.7–8). The false idolatry of the wizard thus once again precedes that in 'The Legend of J. J. Jackson'.

Kendall also employs Bown's postulation of a 'new shape'¹⁶⁹ of society literally, as the prevalent motif of spatial positioning signifying power relations, present in previously-analysed poems, recurs again here: at the opening of 'The Fatal Lift', 'Prince Philarete remained on high, | The masses were below' (I.1–2). The juxtaposition of their locations

¹⁶⁸ Bown, *Fairies*, p. 163.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

visually emphasises the social distance between the two and creates a visuo-spatial impression of the established shape of society. The intention to physically raise the masses using the lift will alter this shape, elevating the social position of the masses by putting them on a level with those already located both spatially and socially higher. The second part of ‘The Fatal Lift’, in which the device is utilised, expands the initial imagery by identifying the masses at the bottom of a ‘Chasm’ (II.2), seemingly at the extremity of spatial and social inferiority. Other members of society, the literally upper classes, are present above with the Prince, and ‘felt a common interest | In seeing the Lift sink’ (II.3–4), their intrigue in the (de)mystified phenomenon resembling the common interest in Mab spurred by the differing motivations of the poet, professor and theologian.

While the portrayal of the wizard is obviously scathing, the depictions of Prince Philarete and the masses are more ambiguous, concurring with Maltz’s observation that ‘Kendall’s treatment of human social evolution is complex and inconsistent’.¹⁷⁰ Kendall outwardly advocates philanthropy and the fight against social injustice throughout her career, yet highlights the dangers of social mobility, as in ‘The Legend of J. J. Jackson’. When the masses are raised in ‘The Fatal Lift’, they emerge as ‘Philistines’ (II.24), but the suggestion is put forth by the Wizard that the lift is responsible for this transformation: ‘But—this confounded Lift, in brief, | Sends them up Philistines!’. The technological product of modern society is thus to blame for their corruption. Moreover, the suggestion that the masses were not innately flawed in this way is consistent with Kendall’s depiction of the Philistine in ‘An Incident in Real Life’. The Philistine statue of the previously-discussed poem would certainly have been identified amongst the prosperous bourgeoisie

¹⁷⁰ Maltz, p. 316.

rather than the masses, and the Philistines' actions upon their arrival, 'Repeating all they knew' (II.40), recalls the earlier Philistine's contrast to the more discerned taste of his fellow statues. Moreover, Prince Philarete's remark, "'Had we *no* Philistines" [...] | "That ye must bring us these?"' (II.43–44), suggests that the more elevated level of society was not devoid of this defect prior to the incident.

Nevertheless, the masses are depicted negatively, likened to a 'plague' (II.48), suggesting the spread of philistinism like a disease and capturing the panic of the upper society through the image of contagion. Like 'the old hawker' (l. 1) of Kendall's 'Ballad of the Cadger',¹⁷¹ the masses in 'The Fatal Lift' are portrayed as unappealing. Diana Maltz analyses how the 'shifting voices' throughout the narrative of 'Ballad of the Cadger' convey 'both a scathing critique of philanthropy and a rehabilitation of it, an illustration of its genuine Christian merit'.¹⁷² For Kendall, there is a fundamental distinction between truly positive and ultimately self-serving philanthropy:

It is this preoccupation with self that renders much so called philanthropy worse than useless. When the leisured people who decide to toil for humanity are more conscious of their own moral attitude than of the needs of those whom they wish to serve, true service is impossible.¹⁷³

Whether it is for public approval as the Cadger accuses: 'It isn't *us* he cares for, | It's showing hisself off!' (II. 27-28);¹⁷⁴ or the selfish desire for spiritual reward as the persona

¹⁷¹ Kendall, *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 76–78.

¹⁷² Maltz, p. 321.

¹⁷³ May Kendall, 'The Brotherhood of Sin', *Weslyan–Methodist Magazine*, January 1898, pp. 29–31 (p. 31).

¹⁷⁴ Kendall, *Dreams to Sell*, p. 77.

of ‘A Hedonist’ learns,¹⁷⁵ Kendall makes clear that the only acceptable form of philanthropy is that which serves mankind in order to serve God. Prince Philarete’s motives for raising the masses remain unclear, whether out of childish curiosity or a genuine desire to alleviate the position of his people; hence the reader is left uncertain as to how to respond to him.

This ambiguous depiction of prince and masses, and by association philanthropy and social mobility, culminates in the development of the poem’s humour to a carnivalesque conclusion, similar in style to scenes from Lewis Carroll’s postulation of alternate versions of reality.¹⁷⁶ In mock-horror realisation, the wizard exclaims that the progress of the rising masses cannot be halted as the lift is ‘Warranted *not* to stop [...] ‘Till the millennium!’ (II.35–36), extending the mockery of modernity beyond the technology itself to the legal practices surrounding it. This necessitates the prince committing an act of martyrdom that subverts the established order of society further by lowering him to the position of the masses: ‘Prince Philarete upon the lift | Sank, and the plague was stayed’ (II.47–48). The enjambment between these lines emphasises the antithesis of the rise and fall and the destabilization of the social levels depicted within the poem. Ultimately, the objective to permanently raise the masses is not only unfulfilled, but the opposite scenario occurs in the Prince’s downward movement. This ironic paradox is captured in the poem’s nonsensical ending:

Though if you stand upon your feet

Upon the moon, ‘tis said,

¹⁷⁵ May Kendall, ‘A Hedonist’, *Weslyan–Methodist Magazine*, March 1898, p. 221.

¹⁷⁶ Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Macmillan, 1866); ——— *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (London: Macmillan, 1872).

The Masses and Prince Philarete

Also are overhead.

(II.53–6)

The influence of Lewis Carroll is evident in this Alice-style finale, which puts into perspective the nonsensical nature of the social order, conveying once again Kendall's scepticism towards highly developed civilisation. While Carroll sees Alice experience such absurdities in alternate realms, in Wonderland and through the looking-glass, Kendall's characters experience them in their own society; Mab upon her return to her native England, and Prince Philarete in a location evidently dislocated from the abstract land of the fairy tale, and more akin to England in its contemporary references. The effect is to emphasise the locality of Kendall's attack.

That Very Mab and 'The Fatal Lift' both convey a deep sense of nostalgia that expresses Kendall's dissatisfaction with the modern state of her society. The enchanted elements of these texts, Mab in the former, the classic fairy tale of the latter, are both tainted by modernity. Mab's persecution and mistreatment by archetypal, if exaggerated, personifications of ideological perspectives, such as the scientist, the poet, and the divine, widen the scope of Kendall's critiques in previous chapters, targeting larger, potentially oppositional subsets of society and deeming them all corrupt products of modernity. The modern technological substitutions for magic in 'The Fatal Lift' are demonstrably inadequate and dangerous to the development of society as portrayed in the text. For Kendall then, the fairy and fairy tale provide a stark contrast to the advanced civilisation in which she was located, lamenting the disenchantment and corruption that ensue from abandonment of the imaginative and magical in favour of modern preoccupations. Whereas the separate supernatural subsets of ghosts and Pygmalion-inspired animation in

the texts of prior chapters targeted specific subsections of society, the enchantment of the present texts enables Kendall to produce a wider critique upon numerous fallacies of modern civilisation as a whole.

CHAPTER 4: ALTERED CONSCIOUSNESS

The version of ‘The Lay of the Trilobite’ published in *Dreams to Sell* two years after its original appearance in *Punch*, contains a footnoted amendment by Kendall regarding the species of her trilobite: ‘He was not a Crustacean. He has since discovered that he was an Arachnid, or something similar. But he says it does not matter. He says they told him wrong once, and they may again.’¹⁷⁷ As John Holmes observes, this note rejects ‘knowledge as impermanent and so ultimately trivial’.¹⁷⁸ Kendall introduces this argument in ‘A Pure Hypothesis’, which interrogates the nature of knowledge and fact in order to undermine the perceived intellectual superiority of her society. ‘A Hypnotic Suggestion’¹⁷⁹ then furthers this critique by illustrating the potential for political reform as a result of altered states of consciousness, but emphasises the transient nature of such amended perspectives. Texts such as Pamela Thurschwell’s *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking*,¹⁸⁰ Alex Owen’s *The Place of Enchantment*, and Shane McCorristine’s *Spectres of the Self*, all demonstrate the burgeoning relationship between the supernatural and the developing discipline of psychology during the period, upon which Kendall capitalises. This enables her to continue utilising characteristics of her supernatural social critiques from previous chapters, such as the provision of a critical other by which to expose the follies of her own society, while also foregrounding her intellectual critique through the affiliation of altered states of consciousness with the mind and the destabilised

¹⁷⁷ Kendall, *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 7-9 (p. 9).

¹⁷⁸ Holmes, p. 8.

¹⁷⁹ May Kendall, ‘A Hypnotic Suggestion’, in *Songs from Dreamland*, pp. 77–9.

¹⁸⁰ Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

perception of knowledge that is evident in the contested and obscure nature of dreams and hypnosis.

Kendall was responding to ‘an explosion of interest in the nature of dreams’ in the nineteenth century, in which ‘theorists repeatedly discussed the origin of dreams in order to elucidate the relationship [...] between our human consciousness and whatever supernatural forces or beings might surround us’.¹⁸¹ As Bown notes, there were numerous dream theories propounded from differing perspectives, including the physiological outlooks of Henry Holland in contestation with the supernatural accounts of figures such as Emmanuel Swedenborg.¹⁸² Within the wider, contested public perception of dreams, they also formed significant subject matter for Kendall, included in the titles of both of her anthologies and featured in many of her poems, yet the present is by far the most reflective upon the dream experience itself, which is associated in the text with forms of knowledge. To quote the introductory note to ‘A Pure Hypothesis’ in its reproduction in *Dreams to Sell*, the poem presents the scene as ‘*A Lover, in Four-dimensioned space, describes a Dream*’.¹⁸³

Another poem initially published as part of Lang’s ‘At the Sign of the Ship’, the original appearance of ‘A Pure Hypothesis’ is framed by a commentary by this author, which grapples with the verse’s complex intellectual material for the benefit of the

¹⁸¹ Nicola Bown, ‘What is the Stuff that Dreams are Made of?’, in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell, pp. 151–72.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 160–65.

¹⁸³ *Dreams to Sell*, p. 11.

reader.¹⁸⁴ In his summation of the lover's dream, in which the character glimpsed the three dimensional world of the reader, Lang makes clear that the reader's world fares the worse by comparison: 'Very well, life in Three-dimensional space being undeniably rather a failure, it is presumed that people who live in Four-dimensioned space are perfectly happy, and find everything for the best in the best of worlds.'¹⁸⁵ Certainly the lover's recounting of his 'awful' (l. 23) dream portrays the 'fatal wilds' (l. 42) of the three-dimensional world in a particularly negative light, full of 'Inexplicable terrors' (l. 51); a 'lurid star' (l. 53) harbouring 'a hapless race' (l. 55). As in *That Very Mab*, Kendall thus uses the position of an outsider from a distant land in the four-dimensional characters of 'A Pure Hypothesis', to cast a critical eye upon her society. The dream vision is the catalyst for this perspective, enabling the revelation that such a nonsensical world as ours might exist. The trope of mankind's over-development within Kendall's poetry has been well established in the texts above, but is particularly evident in relation to science, from the fatal consequences of technological innovation in 'The Conquering Machine'¹⁸⁶ and 'The Fatal Lift', to the aristocratic revelation after meeting a trilobite: 'I wish that evolution could | Have stopped a little quicker!'.¹⁸⁷ Yet 'A Pure Hypothesis' subverts the usual portrayal of overly-civilised humanity, in which Kendall mocks the fallacy of her subjects' supremacy, by locating her race as lower in the evolutionary scale than their four-dimensional counterparts.

¹⁸⁴ Andrew Lang, 'At the Sign of the Ship', *Longman's Magazine*, April 1887, pp. 658–66 (p. 661; p. 663).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 661.

¹⁸⁶ Kendall, *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 28–30.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10, ll. 65–66.

Postulating the reader's world as a hypothetical construct dreamed of by intellectually superior beings heightens the overt criticism expressed by the four-dimensional characters and represents the pronounced concern with the instability of knowledge at the time of Kendall's writing. This issue was of particular prominence to questions of an existential nature because scientific disciplines such as evolutionary theory shook the foundations of previously accepted religious beliefs, much like the professor's antagonistic relationship with the theologian in *That Very Mab*. In 'A Pure Hypothesis', Kendall specifically focuses on the discipline of mathematics, engaging with the development of non-Euclidean geometry that had destabilised the established mathematical principles that had been in place for millennia and invalidating previously accepted knowledge. Kendall was not alone in addressing such subject matter through literature, as Linda Dalrymple Henderson and Alex Jenkins discuss, reflecting a cultural literary response to the anxieties of knowledge destabilisation through rapid developments in a range of disciplines.¹⁸⁸ Mathematics remained more theoretical and abstract than many of its experimental scientific counterparts. This aligned it with psychology and the ambiguous nature of the dream, as Laura Otis explains that '[t]he emergence of mental science [...] proceeded slowly, amid much controversy, and studies of the mind retained their philosophical roots', from which they developed since the 1830s.¹⁸⁹ Equally, Stephen Connor traces how mathematical developments translated into supernatural concerns

¹⁸⁸ Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *The Fourth Dimension and non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art*, 2nd rev. edn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013); Alex Jenkins, *Genre and Geometry: Victorian Mathematics and the Study of Literature and Science* (London: Pickering and Chatto, in press)

¹⁸⁹ *Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology*, ed. by Laura Otis, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 325.

because experiences of and speculations about the uncanny, the Gothic, the otherworldly and the supernatural seemed to involve so much complication of the sense of here and now. At the same time, the supernaturalist mood may itself have been propitious for scientific speculation, helping it to stretch and skew its own conceptions of space and matter.¹⁹⁰

In this manner of ‘spiritualising the spatial’, Kendall embodies the late nineteenth-century’s ‘heightened concern with the shape of space’,¹⁹¹ continuing and complicating her recurring trope of spatially mapping power relations.

Directly influenced by Edwin Abbott’s *Flatland* (a fact made all the more obvious in the anthologised version of the poem, in which the introductory note mimics the key components of Abbott’s sub-title, ‘A Romance of Many Dimensions’), ‘A Pure Hypothesis’ shares fundamental narrative similarities with the novel, as the Square protagonist of Abbott’s text, a dweller of Flatland, gains visions of realms such as Lineland and Pointland through dreams, which are mimicked through the lover’s dream-vision in Kendall’s poem.¹⁹² Exploring the shape of space is paramount in both texts, as *Flatland* can be read as a thought experiment in which geometry is represented as fiction, mathematics as an impersonal mind. The Square’s adventures belie social commentary regarding the positions of women and the lower classes by exposing the absurdities of the accepted shape of the social order. In the more concise context of ‘A Pure Hypothesis’, Kendall sets aside class and gender politics in order to focus upon the issue of knowledge itself and the relation of knowledge systems to social organisation.

¹⁹⁰ Steven Connor, ‘Afterword’, in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell, pp. 258–77 (p. 261).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Edwin Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, ed. by William F. Lindgren and Thomas F. Banchoff (1884; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Exploring both the professor's and the lover's attempts at explaining the three dimensional world allows Kendall to highlight the similarly abstract languages employed by mathematical and literary discourses, and likewise their similar limits. It is the character of the Professor, 'In mathematics drenched and dyed' (l. 3), that first postulates the possibility of the existence of a three-dimensional world, his theoretical perspective allowing the possibility to emerge whereas it was inconceivable to the lover in his unaltered state: 'Too glad were we in this our scheme | Of things, his notions to embrace' (ll. 21-22). However, the professor is unable to reach any firm conclusions about the nature of such a world, the theoretical guise of the mathematic discipline not affording an experimental means of determining it with any certainty: 'We can but say "It *may* be so," | To every theory propounded' (ll. 19-20). The nineteenth-century notion that 'dreams and ideas are of the same stuff' qualifies the lover's reconsideration of the professor's previously discounted theory as a result of his dream.¹⁹³ However, upon waking and returning to a fully conscious state, he struggles to explain his vision to his companion without the logic-defying vehicle of the dream: 'No wonder *you* can't understand: | *I* could not, till last night!' (ll. 31-32). The insufficiency of purely logical consciousness is suggested by the dreamer's deterioration of language when attempting to describe the three-dimensional world:

'What *is* "askew"?' my love, you cry;
 I cannot answer, can't portray;
 The sense of Everything awry

¹⁹³ Anonymous, 'Such Stuff as Dreams are Made of', *Eclectic Review*, n.s., 9 (1865), 516-30 (p. 526).

No language can convey.

I can't tell what my words denote,

I know not what they mean;

Inexplicable terrors float

Before this spirit once serene.

(ll. 45–52)

The abundant adynaton across these stanzas recalls the difficulty of Abbott's characters in articulating their experiences outside their own realms.¹⁹⁴ The technique emphasises both the alterity of the three dimensional world from a four dimensional perspective and suggests the inferiority of mental abilities in comparison to the altered 'dream-distorted' (l. 41) consciousness.

Consequently, both the mathematician and the lover resort to nonsense in their accounts, since the creativity of the imaginative nonsense genre enables them to overcome the flaw of their three-dimensional counterparts, for whom, in all their 'feeble comprehension' (l. 10), 'No contradictories were thought | As truthfully combined' (ll. 39–40). The professor, for instance, recalls the topsy-turvy conclusion to 'The Fatal Lift' as he muses,

But of these beings incomplete,

Whether upon their heads they walk

Or stand upon their feet—

(ll. 14–16)

¹⁹⁴ Abbott

Similarly, the lover combines the abstract and idiomatic in his description ‘Where Present, Past, and Future all | Appeared at sixes and at sevens’ (ll. 35-36). Kendall is thus partaking in what Daniel Brown discerns to be a Victorian renaissance in both science and nonsense literature, in which ‘the difference between science and nonsense was not always clear-cut’.¹⁹⁵ Brown marks Lewis Carroll as highly significant in this movement, as beyond the nonsensical style of his literature, by which Kendall was influenced; he is also represented in the duplicity of the characters themselves, as he was both fantasy author and ‘mathematically brilliant’,¹⁹⁶ much like Abbott. Kendall thus uses the imaginative creativity of abstract modes of thought, empowered by altered states of consciousness, to both highlight the multitude of challenges to more rigid knowledge systems, and to suggest her society’s tendency to partake in the latter, if they reach the level of intellectual enquiry at all.

Like the supernatural and psychological approaches to dreams, hypnotic states were both a commonplace feature of the séance and were also utilised by psychologists such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer for the treatment of hysteria.¹⁹⁷ Similarly animal magnetism, or mesmerism, in which hypnosis had its roots, came to be viewed as pseudo-scientific, hoax spectacle, despite claims from its physician creator, Franz Anton Mesmer, that it was a ‘treatment’ applied to improve ‘bodily

¹⁹⁵ Daniel Brown, *The Poetry of Victorian Scientists: Style, Science and Nonsense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 9.

¹⁹⁶ Karoline Leach. 2004. ‘Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll): A Brief Biography’, (2004) <<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/carroll/bio1.html>> [accessed 26 March 2013] (para. 2 of 13).

¹⁹⁷ David B. Stevenson, ‘Hypnosis and Catharsis in Freud’, (1996, last updated 1998) <<http://www.victorianweb.org/science/freud/hypnosis.html>> [accessed 8 July 2013].

health'.¹⁹⁸ The notion of influence in both mesmerism and hypnotism is played out in 'A Hypnotic Suggestion' when a 'wily Democrat' (I.1) in the House of Commons bores his audience to sleep and hypnotises them into passing his 'socialistic bill' (II.4). As Jill Matus identifies, the ability to exert such influence raised anxieties regarding the vulnerability of subjects during these altered states, which left them susceptible to abuse and manipulation during 'the suspension of the will'.¹⁹⁹ Yet 'A Hypnotic Suggestion' differs from the glamour of hypnosis in popular culture and fictional representations, which tended to feature '[c]harismatic figures' such as Svengali, the notoriously devilish yet enthralling magician of Du Maurier's *Trilby*, published the same year as Kendall's *Dreams to Sell*.²⁰⁰ Instead, Kendall portrays a hypnotist that is decidedly lacking in charisma as a jibe at the political state: he is 'calm' (I.9), with 'bland but vacant eye' (II.36), boring his audience with 'dreary' (I.11) political subject matter.

Fitting with the patterns of sleep, the hypnotism takes place at 'midnight' (I.13), a time ripe with supernatural connotations, which continue to be evoked in the comparison of the sleeping chamber to 'some legend old' (I.15). While the 'legend' does not necessarily denote supernatural activity, it is often associated with such in Kendall's work, as in 'The Legend of J. J. Jackson', 'A Legend', which sees a spectral actress return to the stage, and 'The Legend of the Crossing Sweeper' and 'The Legend of the Maid of all

¹⁹⁸ Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of the Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ Jill Matus, 'Victorian Framings of the Mind: Recent Work on the Mid-Nineteenth Century Theories of the Unconscious, Memory and Emotion', *Literature Compass*, 4 (2007), 1257–76 (p. 1270).

²⁰⁰ Warner, p. 211; George Du Maurier, *Trilby* (New York: Harper, 1894; repr. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Work’, which both feature hints of death and dreaming.²⁰¹ Yet despite the legendary status afforded the events in ‘A Hypnotic Suggestion’, the coercive suggestion itself is not otherworldly, but rather the Democrat’s desire for drastic social change, ‘A bloodless revolution!’ (I.23). As such, his purpose was ‘to introduce | One socialistic bill’ (II. 27–28). The poem thus engages in Kendall’s socialist political ideology, but avoids the ‘sentimental’ treatment of the poor which Diana Maltz critiques in much of her poetry, circumventing the uncomfortable combination of ‘comedy and pathos’ that Maltz discerns by taking a more detached, overtly comical stance in ‘A Hypnotic Suggestion’.²⁰²

It is much to the surprise of bystanders whose consciousness remained unaltered that the bill receives a favourable response from those who possess power: ‘The Premier— could it be true?— | In favour of the bill!’ (II.15-16), suggesting Kendall’s incredulous perspective that such reform was unlikely to take place in her own society, hypnotism or no. Despite the questionable ethics of coerced political allegiance, the proposed ‘socialistic bill’ (II.4) appears overwhelmingly popular:

It seemed to bring millennial bliss
 For some brief seconds near;
 It disestablished all that is
 And rectified the sphere.

(II.5-8)

²⁰¹ May Kendall, ‘A Legend’, *Scots Observer*, 24 August 1889, p. 380; — ‘The Legend of the Crossing Sweeper’, in *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 64–65; — ‘The Legend of the Maid of all Work’, in *Dreams to Sell*, pp. 68–70.

²⁰² Maltz, p. 318; p. 315.

However, this positive account is undermined by the doubt communicated by the word ‘seemed’, and the transient nature expressed through the antithesis of ‘millennial’ and ‘brief seconds’. The lack of conviction that such political reform would initiate a transformation of the world as it was known, in favour of a ‘rectified’ version, can be linked to Kendall’s non-fiction prose, in which she argues that resolving ‘physical hardship and distress’ will not create a permanent solution to the problems of her society:²⁰³ ‘It is certain that no “right” based on a skilful adjustment of these [‘money and houses, food and lands’] could not last a day; it could not last an hour’. Her playful caricature of Gladstone, who finished his final stint as prime minister in 1894, illustrates that it is such material alleviation prioritised by the public. Her depiction emphasises the frailty and age of the ‘Grand Old Man’ (II.24) while parodying the anecdote famously recounted by Evelyn Ashley, in which Gladstone received news of his first office of premier while chopping wood.²⁰⁴

Slowly he raised his axe, and said,
 His voice suffused with tears:
 ‘This, this shall earn my frugal bread
 In my declining years!’

(II.25–28)

²⁰³ Kendall, ‘The Social Ideal’, p. 426.

²⁰⁴ H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 147.

Instead of such material concerns, she argues for the importance of recognising ‘the difference between things temporal and eternal’.²⁰⁵ The material alleviation that such a socialistic bill might initiate is therefore secondary to ‘far more important matters’,²⁰⁶ namely spiritual devotion and devotion to the community of mankind:

If the social reformer’s conviction of the importance of spiritual life is true and deep enough, there will be no fear of his neglecting any material means for its development. But he must never lose sight of what is really wanted of his new democracy—the spirit that will make a man die or live for his friend, or for his enemy, and merge his purely personal aims in aims common to many; the spirit that in the face of death will not fear to love, and that, by loving, will even conquer death.²⁰⁷

Briefly, the potential for this sense of community is highlighted upon the Members’ departure:

Into the lobby whoso viewed
Them press had dreamed there passed
The Universal Brotherhood—
While states hypnotic last.

(II.29–32)

The Christian idyllic political harmony of the Universal Brotherhood, matched with the phenomena of hypnotism and dreaming may allude to a possible mode of attaining such social concord in the Theosophical Society. Edward Abdill, Vice President of the Theosophical Society in America, discusses how the development and revision of the Theosophical Society’s aims in the late 1870s emphasises the role of the ‘Universal

²⁰⁵ Kendall, ‘The Social Ideal’, p. 425.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

Brotherhood’ and also encourages the pursuit of the ‘Occult Sciences’.²⁰⁸ In ‘A Hypnotic Suggestion’, however, the impression is illusory, as it is ‘dreamed’ (ll.30), and temporary, lasting only as long as the hypnotic state. Such an outcome suggests both the possibility of improvement, and undermines this.

In both ‘A Pure Hypothesis’ and ‘A Hypnotic Suggestion’, the altered states of consciousness provide the opportunity to occupy an otherwise inaccessible perspective. The effect is to interrogate accepted ideological and social norms of the period, which through the uncertain parapsychological status of hypnotism and the dream, Kendall shows to be already residing on unstable grounds. By interrogating the established systems of knowledge Kendall takes a markedly different, yet equally critical stance to that employed in the poems of previous chapters; whereas formerly her critiques were rooted in the perceived over-development of civilisation, here she lowers the status of her readership by placing them further down on the intellectual spectrum than those imbued with quasi-supernatural abilities. As the dream and hypnotic states are temporary, however, so is the progress deemed possible in the texts; the dreamer, upon waking, cannot comprehend the intellectual other of the reader’s world, and the utopian ideal of social harmony will be dispelled once the hypnotic state is broken. Kendall thus undercuts an idealistic potential for reform with an undeceived realism, saved from the brand of pessimism through her humour.

²⁰⁸ Edward Abdill, ‘The Universal Brotherhood of Humanity’, *Quest*, 96 (2008) <<http://www.theosophical.org/publications/quest-magazine/1642>> [accessed 15 June 2013].

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed May Kendall's poetic utilisation of supernatural subject matter in order to express commentary upon what she discerned to be the faults of her contemporary society. As the analyses have demonstrated, she employs different supernatural subsets in order to satirise different aspects of her contemporary social, cultural, and political milieu. Kendall's attitudes towards modes of engagement with the supernatural are introduced in the poems upon ghosts, the apparitions particularly appropriate for her association of such supernatural phenomena with the spiritual realm. The downfall of the poems' human protagonists, by contrast, is their materially-grounded pursuit of evidence and physical contact with the spirits. Such enterprises are located within scientific and commercial contexts within the poems, introducing key perspectives with which Kendall critically engages across the thesis. The artistic origins of the Pygmalion myth enable Kendall to introduce aestheticism into her repertoire of satirical subjects, as she uses human interaction with the magically-animated artistic representations to identify developing trends in the aesthetic movement towards consumerism and decadence. In addition to maintaining Kendall's disavowal of materialism, the chapter also illustrates her opposition to self-serving individualism, which is realised in the concerns of the characters with the elevation of their social standing. The enchanted subject matter of texts featured in chapter 3 highlights how the values and concerns of Kendall's society as established in the previous chapters ultimately led to disenchantment. Despite being enthralled by the supernatural in a multitude of forms, Kendall uses the fairy in *That Very Mab* and the poignant absence of magical fairy-tale content in 'The Fatal Lift', to argue that the materialistic priorities of modern civilisation had stripped the wonder and enchantment from such phenomena. Finally, the parapsychological practices of dreams and hypnosis

undermine perceived intellectual and political superiority in the last chapter by emphasising the instability of knowledge. The chapters thus demonstrate how Kendall, much like contemporaries such as Lewis Carroll, Oscar Wilde and Andrew Lang, utilised the supernatural as a vehicle for satire.

Her importance as social critic is reinforced through the success with which she conveyed such criticism in her poetry. Despite the critical content of her verse, which often took its middle-class readership as chief subjects for satire, Kendall enjoyed a largely popular reception and habitually avoided a cynical or didactically-moralising tone. The reason for this success lies in her humour, which transforms each poem into a comedy of manners that exposed the follies, dangers and negative qualities of her civilisation, while still sounding light-hearted. Although Kendall was located amongst a group of female social critics who used humour to address the flaws of their contemporary culture, such as Helen Dufferin, May Probyn and Violet Fane,²⁰⁹ her personal comic style, the ‘individual quality’ of her ‘piquancy of humour and fancy’, set her apart.²¹⁰ Even Constance Naden, with whom Kendall is often compared, does not match her humour. The comparison of the two is long-standing, ranging from reviews such as that by ‘The Bookworm’ in 1902, which observes that ‘[t]he late Miss Constance Naden [...] showed in some of her verses a sense of humour, and that sense is still more prominent in certain pieces penned by Miss May Kendall’, to modern critics’ acknowledgement of the similarities between the two.²¹¹ Ultimately, it is only Kendall that attains the distinction of sole female contributor to

²⁰⁹ Reynolds, p. 627.

²¹⁰ Anonymous, ‘Some Minor Poets’, p. 669.

²¹¹ The Bookworm, ‘Bibliographical’, *The Academy and Literature*, 3 May 1902, p. 450; Thain, ‘Scientific Wooing’, p. 164.

Alfred Miles's *Humour, Society, Parody and Occasional Verse*, Miles discerning that 'Miss Kendall's poetic work shows a grip of intellect and a depth of feeling not always found together, and a sense of humour rarely found in the verse of women'.²¹²

Miles's introduction to Kendall's segment of the anthology highlights the characteristics that make her humorous style so successful, such as her skill in

dealing with serious issues without being morbid, and treating all her subjects without losing the dominating influence of a robust common sense. It is this faculty, associated with a true sense of humour, which not only projects itself in her writings, but which prevents her from taking herself too seriously, and qualifies her for the office of self-criticism that distinguishes her from the school of the women poets of the past.²¹³

These attributes are supported by evidence from the chapters above. In particular, Miles's acknowledgement of Kendall's 'self-criticism' as distinguishing from other poets has also been recognised in modern academia, as Virginia Blain argues that Kendall was 'much more conscious than, say, Naden [...] of her own position of comparative privilege as a member of the prosperous, well-educated middle classes'.²¹⁴ Beyond general affiliation with both her readership and targets, this thesis has demonstrated the particular ways in which elements of Kendall's life and work were often associated with the characters she critiques, such as her mutual interests with the SPR attacked in chapter 1, her shared profession with the poet of *That Very Mab*, or the intellectual advancement afforded through her Oxford education, which associates her with the perceived yet flawed intellectual superiority of her race in 'A Pure Hypothesis'.

²¹² Miles, p. 613.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 616.

²¹⁴ Blain, p. 308.

Kendall's prestigious education at Somerville College is important in shaping our appreciation of the poet. During his 1897 interview with the College's principal, Fredrick Dolman inquires as to the 'subsequent careers' of Somerville alumni. Miss Maitland's response begins, 'About the usual proportion have married, I believe, to begin with. Of those who have not, about half have entered the teaching profession'. There follow occasional entrants into other professions such as medicine, but Kendall is amongst a select named few who deviated from common employment. After outlining these, Maitland qualifies such professions with a statement upon the importance of maintaining an air of domesticity:

Many came to study here, of course, purely for the sake of study, without thought of any vocation. They have returned to their homes, where, nevertheless, they are doubtless doing good work of one kind or another and doing it, I believe, all the better for having been at Somerville. It is a calumny to say that college unfits a girl for home life; in our work here we never lose sight of the domestic virtues.²¹⁵

Miss Maitland's answer emphasises the significance of Kendall's deviation from the common post-educational activities, since the nature of the poet's self-sufficient career distinguished her from what appeared to be the prevalent domestic and conventional outcomes. Her self-awareness of being part of the society she critiques must therefore be balanced against an acknowledgement of her resistance to its norms.

As Blain observes, Kendall 'has a much more objective view of the age than most, with an ability to occupy an outsider's position'.²¹⁶ This thesis has demonstrated that the supernatural is effective as a vehicle for social satire precisely because it allowed Kendall to take up this outsider perspective in opposition to the outlooks of her society. Kendall,

²¹⁵ Dolman, p. 460.

²¹⁶ Blain, p. 309.

described by those who knew her as an ‘other-worldly person’,²¹⁷ thus negotiates her place within the natural order of society and outside of it, with objectivity enabled through the literary device of the supernatural subject matter. The ‘excellent’ ‘fooling’ of her texts is thus heightened by the supernatural connotations of her ‘fantastical kind of wit’.²¹⁸ Kendall therefore partakes in Alex Owen’s argument that the ‘mantle of mediumship’ empowered women; whereas the publisher of ‘A Ballad of Boding’ was emasculated by literarily conveying supernatural messages, Kendall’s poetry propounds the ‘authoritative voice’ of supernatural social criticism. This significance established, it is the greater loss that there remains much unknown about Kendall and a great deal unstudied in her work, which from social and literary criticism perspectives holds the potential for much of promise. Accordingly, there is a need for modern academia to recover the highly significant work of the woman buried in the unmarked grave at York cemetery:²¹⁹ ‘Such things were too good for a dull world if the wise knew not how to value them’.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Briggs, p. 83.

²¹⁸ Anonymous, ‘Two Books of Lighter Verse’, p. 349.

²¹⁹ Armstrong, Bristow, and Sharrock, p. 760.

²²⁰ Anonymous, ‘Some Minor Poets’, p. 669.

APPENDIX A

The Conscientious Ghost

1. 'My duties,' he remarked with tears,
2. 'I've never sought to shun;
3. Yet hard it is that at my years
4. They have again begun.

5. 'No one believed in me, or cared
6. If I my vigil kept;
7. My diligence the public spared,
8. And undisturbed I slept.

9. 'Yet now I never close my eyes
10. But in my dreams I see
11. These *Psychical Societies*
12. Descending upon me.

13. 'They ask me whether I forgot
14. To wander round the moat;
15. They wonder what I mean by not
16. Steering my phantom boat.

17. '*They* would not think it such a joke

18. To rattle fetters through
19. The weary night till morning broke,
20. As I have got to do.

21. ‘Alas,’ he groaned, ‘on blood-stained floors
22. Again to fight and fall!
23. To shiver round the secret doors,
24. The draughty banquet hall.

25. ‘I say, it was a heartless thought
26. Wherever he may dwell
27. Who upon us this disaster brought;
28. I’d like to haunt him well.

29. ‘And ah!’ he cried, with rapture grim
30. ‘One thing consoles me most:
31. We’ll make it very warm for him
32. When once he is a ghost!

33. ‘When every honest phantom sleeps
34. He’ll have to freeze in cells,
35. And wring his hands by mouldy keeps,
36. And jangle rusty bells.’

37. He paused, his fetters to arrange,
38. Adjust his winding-sheet;
39. He murmured, 'In this world of change
40. One can't be too complete!'
41. He fixed on me a glance of woe,
42. Then vanished into air;
43. I heard his clanking fetter go
44. Right down the winding stair.
45. Yet sometimes, when 'mid wind and rain
46. I'm lying warm and dry,
47. I seem to hear him clank his chain
48. Beneath the dismal sky.

APPENDIX B

A Ballad of Boding

1. Adown the Strand they held their way—
2. The deft photographer,
3. Who even phantoms could portray,
4. And *Spookdom*'s publisher.
5. I saw, with sorrow and amaze,
6. Each fix on each a baleful gaze.

7. 'Twas the Photographer who broke
8. A somewhat painful pause.
9. 'Though your achievements, sir, evoke
10. Unanimous applause,
11. Permit me once, ere all is o'er
12. To lay *my* ruin at your door!

13. 'The outcome did you never guess
14. When, in surprise and doubt,
15. You saw the Ghost at *séances*
16. Materialising out,
17. When Matter passed through Matter, when
18. Furniture floated, likewise men?

19. 'Oh! Did you really think that *they*,
20. With their gigantic powers,
21. Would evermore consent to play
22. With bells, planchettes, and flowers?
23. *That*,—did you never comprehend?—
24. Was the beginning of the end!
25. 'The barrier 'twixt our world of sense
26. And one of sense bereft
27. You broke with joyous confidence--
28. There's no partition left.
29. With terror did I first perceive
30. A phantom on my negative!'
31. He wiped his brow, with anguish wet,
32. He cried: 'They come in hosts;
33. A photograph I cannot get
34. That is not chiefly ghosts.
35. I take a thousand in a day—
36. The mischief is, they never pay!
37. 'A sitter when I focus, all
38. Elate these shadowy troops;
39. And into attitudes they fall,

40. Or range themselves in groups;
41. In vain I've threatened, railed, and chaffed—
42. The phantoms *will* be photographed!
43. The Publisher, he tore his hair,
44. Exclaiming: 'Do not try
45. To aggravate the dark despair
46. That I am tortured by.
47. At your misfortunes I repine—
48. But what are they compared with mine?
49. 'How could I dream an end so thin
50. Would such a wedge invite?
51. A spirit fair and feminine
52. Borrowed my pen to write.
53. Clorinda! Had I only known
54. 'Twas an irrevocable loan!
55. 'E'en now a hundred poets wait
56. On this right hand of mine;
57. And homiletics would dictate
58. How many an old divine!
59. They fairly compass me about,
60. They've crowded my Clorinda out!

61. 'This strange, inexplicable doom
62. If I alone might know!
63. But deeper depths your words illumine
64. Of universal woe.
65. What if—my heart within me dies—
66. *All* phantoms should materialise?
67. 'That thought forbear!' The artist's hand
68. He desperately wrung;
69. 'Forgive me, friend!' Along the Strand
70. He passed with mien unstrung.
71. His form I have not seen again—
72. 'Twas thus he left the haunts of men.
73. Reporter to the Spook he is,
74. And on its bidding wait.
75. Incessantly its vagaries
76. His gliding pen relates,
77. And never more—ah, never more!
78. He'll wander 'mid the City's roar.
79. *That* Photographic Gallery,
80. Is dusty, drear, and lone;

81. Reflectively, the Spirits eye
82. A camera o'erthrown,
83. And lying shattered on a mass
84. Of chemicals and broken glass.
85. But wheresoe'er its owner range,
86. He never can evade
87. An escort, shadowy and strange,
88. Of Phantoms unportrayed;
89. And foreign ghosts their numbers swell—
90. *As yet*, they are impalpable.
91. But one dark omen, day and night
92. Increases his despair:
93. Though spectral still, they are not quite
94. So spectral as they were.
95. By slow degrees, before his eyes,
96. They steadily materialise!

APPENDIX C

An Incident in Real Life Related by an Eye-Witness in Marble

1. You saw him as you entered in,
2. He stood at the right hand,
3. A terra—cotta Philistine
4. Upon his wooden stand.
5. 'Tis he who never cared a pin
6. For what was really grand.

7. He treated us as things of nought,
8. The statues calm and fair;
9. He said the building he had bought,
10. Or we should not be there;
11. He owned he had the right, he thought,
12. To criticise and stare.

13. The earliest dawn of morning crept
14. Into the gallery wide;
15. We all, as though we had not slept,
16. Stood calmly side by side:
17. His glimmering lyre Apollo swept,
18. That in low tones replied.

19. It breathed a music sad and strange,
20. Of living days and dead,
21. The echo of the years of change
22. Since the old gods had fled,
23. In mockery of the wider range
24. They had not cared to tread.

25. Rolled stony tears down many a face,
26. Pluto was reconciled,
27. And sad ænone, for a space,
28. Was from her woe beguiled,
29. And Homer looked down from his place,
30. And even Dante smiled.

31. It was the Philistine – ah, shame!
32. Who did the fearful wrong;
33. Down on the mystic cadence came
34. His accents harsh and strong.
35. He cried: ‘Now Mr. What’s your name,
36. Give us a comic song.’

37. Silent the mighty harper stood,
38. But with a look askance
39. The luckless Philistine he viewed,

40. The calm, complacent glance,
41. The virtue of his attitude,
42. His vacant countenance.
43. Apollo touched the mystic wand
44. That was for him alone;
45. The statues all looked cool and bland
46. As if they had not known:
47. A tremor shook the wooden stand –
48. The Philistine was prone.
49. And hurrying footsteps entered in,
50. Men viewed the vanquished o'er,
51. With yet the old superior grin,
52. But crumbling more and more,
53. A terra—cotta Philistine
54. In fragments on the floor.

APPENDIX D

The Legend of J. J. Jackson, the Self-Made Man

1. He stood upon the bartizan
2. Of his new-fangled tower,
3. The proudest and self-madest man
4. The moon beheld that hour.

5. He thought on how he'd cut his way,
6. On what he was before,
7. And dreamily he murmured, 'J.
8. J. Jackson!' Nothing more.

9. There was no echo that replied,
10. Yet his low tone, I wis,
11. Like a strange summons, seemed to glide
12. Thro' all the edifice.

13. He gazed around, his blood ran chill—
14. What was there to appal?
15. Himself in fresco stood there still,
16. But it had left the wall.

17. And strange medallions, busts of clay,

18. Came looming on afar,
19. And drearily he murmured, 'J.
20. J. Jackson. Here we are!'

21. Some baneful influence, down the stair
22. His heavy steps impelled.
23. At every stage, the Jackson there
24. The ghostly concourse swelled.

25. The green bronze Jackson leaves his stand,
26. The green bronze Jackson walks!
27. The water-colour Jackson, and
28. A Jackson done in chalks!

29. The drawing-room, wide open set,
30. His frenzied glance surveyed.
31. The Parian Jackson stauette
32. Was taking off his shade!

33. Only with bland benignant air
34. The Portrait hung the same—
35. And yet, a form one would not care
36. To meet *without* his frame,--

37. Jackson in oils, life-size, and all
38. Complete. He looked once more.
39. The frame alone was on the wall,
40. The portrait on the floor.
41. He counted by the moonlight's ray
42. The foes he sought to shun;
43. And bitterly he moaned, '*Twelve J.*
44. *J. Jacksons* against one!
45. He turned in mortal horror, yet
46. One hope he pondered o'er.
47. 'At least,' he muttered, 'I can get
48. Before them to the door!'
49. Then faltered, with one look of dread,
50. 'The Statue!' That was all:
51. His alabaster arms outspread
52. The Jackson in the hall.
53. He clasped him in the moonlight grey,
54. He banged him on the floor,
55. He laughed a marble laugh, and *J.*
56. *J. Jackson* was no more.

57. And lo! the grisly mumurs run
58. From floor to bartizan:
59. ‘Why *are* so many portraits done
60. Of any Self-made man?’

APPENDIX E

The Fatal Lift

Part I

1. PRINCE PHILARETE¹ remained on high,
2. The Masses were below.
3. This was the fact: the reason why
4. Was what he wished to know.
5. For book or playmate, game or skiff,
6. He did not seem to care,
7. He said he did not want them if
8. The Masses were not there.

9. An ancient Sorcerer they sought,
10. A Sorcerer sublime:
11. With magic were his accents fraught,
12. His locks were grey with time.
13. On Philarete he fixed a gaze
14. Of patriarchal joy.
15. 'Master, instruct me how to raise
16. The Masses,' said the Boy.

17. Serenely spake his wizard guest,
18. And bowed his hoary head.

19. 'I fancy that I can suggest
20. A Remedy,' he said.
21. 'A Lift, your Highness!' That was all.
22. 'A Lift!' cried Philarete,
23. Letting his whole regalia fall
24. At that Magician's feet.

25. And yet a faint surprise he knew.
26. The Wizard's speech, in sooth,
27. Half like an Ancient Man's, had too
28. A certain air of youth.
29. And half of Henry George it seemed
30. To his bewildered ear;
31. And half of Chamberlain he dreamed,
32. And half of Bass's Beer.

33. And Philarete 'gan sore to quake
34. Lest he had asked amiss;
35. And very fearfully he spake,
36. 'Father, what Lift is this?'
37. A Gladstone bag unlocked the Sage,
38. With many models packed.
39. He answered: 'Lifts are all the rage,
40. Yet only *one* will act.'

41. The Prince surveyed them with respect,
42. 'Nirvana, Entrance Free,'
43. There was one labelled. 'Too select,'
44. The Wizard said: 'you see,
45. The mystery we cannot guess
46. Of why it did not please,
47. But there returned, to their distress,
48. All to the Patentees.'

49. A tear of pride there dimmed his eyes:
50. 'It won't be so with *this*,
51. This will expand to any size,
52. It's warranted, *it is!*'
53. There crossed his mind some memory old;
54. He murmured: 'You will win
55. In the present world a hundredfold,
56. And the Next World thrown in!'

Part II

1. A mighty gathering there pressed
2. About the Chasm's brink,
3. Men felt a common interest
4. In seeing the Lift sink.

5. The Wizard's portrait they had hung
6. On every gallery's wall:
7. The Priests, their benediction sung,
8. Strewed incense over all.

9. Yet as the Chasm the Lift received
10. Before their very eyes,
11. Only the Sorcerer believed
12. That it would ever rise.
13. He peered into the darkness. Cheers
14. Were hushed. All waited then,
15. Reporters, Artists, Bishops, Peers,
16. And Literary Men.

17. But when they saw him turn and glare,
18. Like one in sore distress,
19. They asked him: 'Are the Masses there?'
20. Wildly he answered: '*Yes!*'
21. (He trembled like an aspen leaf,
22. He's trembled ever since)—
23. 'But—this confounded Lift, in brief,
24. Sends them up Philistines!'

25. The Artists sighed: 'Too many, or—

26. The Poets turned away.
27. The Bishops cried: 'Excelsior!'
28. But the Archbishop: 'Stay!'
29. For learned he was in canon law,
30. And in the old Greek text,
31. And he by intuition saw
32. Just what would happen next.

33. 'Too late!' the Sorcerer replied,
34. '*They have all got to come!*
35. Warranted *not* to stop,' he cried
36. 'Till the Millenium!
37. Unless'—He groaned and hid his face.
38. The horror grew and grew;
39. And Philistines filled all the place,
40. Repeating all they knew.

41. Prince Philarete gazed far and wide,
42. It gave him little ease.
43. Had we *No* Philistines,' he sighed,
44. 'That ye must bring us these?'
45. Then, ere the Wizard's fatal gift
46. Another load conveyed,
47. Prince Philarete upon the Lift

48. Sank, and the plague was stayed.
49. It rose, in vacancy complete.
50. Sadly they murmured: 'So
51. The Masses and Prince Philarete
52. Must both remain below.'
53. Though if you stand upon your feet
54. Upon the Moon, 'tis said,
55. The Masses and Prince Philarete
56. Also are overhead.

APPENDIX F

A Pure Hypothesis

1. Ah, love, the teacher we decried,
2. That erudite professor grim,
3. In mathematics drenched and dyed,
4. Too hastily we scouted him.
5. He said: ‘The bounds of Time and Space,
6. The categories we revere,
7. May be in quite another case
8. In quite another sphere.’

9. He told us: ‘Science can conceive
10. A race whose feeble comprehension
11. Can’t be persuaded to believe
12. That there exists our Fourth Dimension,
13. Whom Time and Space forever baulk;
14. But of these beings incomplete,
15. Whether upon their heads they walk
16. Or stand upon their feet—

17. We cannot tell, we do not know,
18. Imagination stops confounded;
19. We can but say “It *may* be so,”

20. To every theory propounded.’
21. Too glad were we in this our scheme
22. Of things, his notions to embrace,—
23. But—I have dreamed an awful dream
24. Of *Three-dimensional* Space!
25. I dreamed—the horror seemed to stun
26. My logical perception strong,
27. That everything beneath the sun
28. Was *so unutterably wrong*.
29. I thought—what words can I command?—
30. *That nothing ever did come right*.
31. No wonder *you* can’t understand:
32. *I* could not, till last night!
33. I would not, if I could recall
34. The horror of those novel heavens,
35. Where Present, Past, and Future all
36. Appeared at sixes and at sevens,
37. Where Capital and Labour fought,
38. And, in the nightmare of the mind,
39. No contradictories were thought
40. As truthfully combined!

41. Nay, in that dream-distorted clime,
42. The fatal wilds I wandered through,
43. The boundaries of Space and Time
44. Had got most frightfully askew.
45. ‘What *is* “askew”?’ my love, you cry;
46. I cannot answer, can’t portray;
47. A universe that’s all awry
48. No language can convey.

49. I can’t tell what my words denote,
50. I know not what my phrases mean;
51. Inexplicable terrors float
52. Before this spirit once serene.
53. Ah, what if on some lurid star
54. There should exist a hapless race,
55. Who live and love, who think and are,
56. In Three-dimensioned Space!

APPENDIX G

A Hypnotic Suggestion

Part I

1. It was the wily Democrat
2. Who occupied the house;
3. His fiercest foes admitted that
4. He had his share of *nous*.

5. Where was it now? “We have deplored
6. His principles,” said they,
7. “But never been so wholly bored
8. As we have been to-day.”

9. Yet he spoke on. His gestures calm
10. And vacant eye revealed
11. No knowledge of what dreary balm
12. His hearers’ senses sealed.

13. Yet ere the midnight clock had told
14. Its numbers on the air,
15. Before him, like some legend old,
16. They all were slumbering there.

17. He gazed around. No member woke;
18. They sat and never stirred.
19. Again he spoke, but *what* he spoke
20. Only those members heard.

21. A smile that there was none to see
22. Stole sweetly o'er his face.
23. "A bloodless revolution!" he
24. Remark'd, and left the place.

Part II

1. A month rolled by. It was his use,
2. Session by session, still
3. With tranquil air to introduce
4. One socialistic bill.

5. It seemed to bring millennial bliss
6. For some brief seconds near;
7. It disestablished all that is
8. And rectified the sphere.

9. Yet forth *en masse* the members filed,
10. Each time, with artless glee;
11. Calmly the British public smiled:

12. “The deluge—after me!”

13. Yet once again ‘twas read. The new
14. Reporter’s heart stood still:
15. The Premier—could it be true?—
16. In favour of the bill!

17. “Our race’s empty honours hide
18. Our true nobility.
19. My fatherland, accept,” he cried,
20. “My wealth, my peerage—Me!”

21. Wildly they cheered; but more intense
22. The thrill of pride that ran
23. Through the impassioned audience
24. As rose the Grand Old Man.

25. Slowly he raised his axe, and said,
26. His voice suffused with tears:
27. “This, this shall earn my frugal bread
28. In my declining years!”

29. Into the lobby whoso viewed
30. Them press had dreamed there passed

31. The Universal Brotherhood—
32. While states hypnotic last—

33. Rank, learning, wealth, each virtue that
34. A realm could e'er supply—
35. Among the rest a Democrat,
36. With bland but vacant eye.

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