Racialized Ecologies and the Literary Afterlives of the British Empire

By

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, whose love and sacrifices have taught me so much.

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characters. You are the best salad chef and pickle-maker, a phenomenal cat-dad, and overall, such a kind, thoughtful, giving partner. I am so grateful to live life alongside you.

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Abstract

Racialized Ecologies and the Literary Afterlives of the British Empire is an interdisciplinary dissertation that places nineteenth-century alongside neo-Victorian texts, and thereby spans a wide range of formerly-colonized locations and brings together postcolonial literary studies and the environmental humanities. Responding to recent calls to "undiscipline" Victorian studies, my aim is twofold. First, to explore connections between nineteenth-century processes of racialization, knowledge about the natural world, and the colonial appropriation and management of natural resources; second, to understand how contemporary authors are using nineteenth-century forms alongside speculative conceptions of nature to grapple with the lingering effects of British imperialism.

I use an expansive and palimpsestic definition of the term "speculation" or "speculative fiction" to analyze neo-Victorian texts that make visible the complexity of racialized experience under two often-overlooked locations with distinct relationships to the British Empire. I claim that speculation can take multiple forms: thematic, formal, analytic, and epistemological. The contemporary authors I study use what I term formal speculation to create alternate versions of our familiar world, therefore requiring that characters, and, in turn, the reader, question their understanding of reality. In approaching these texts, I attempt to analyze speculatively in order to highlight the ameliorative possibilities post-colonial literature might offer as we attempt to grapple with the ongoing aftereffects of imperialism.

The dissertation begins by drawing out connections between affect, ecological thought, resource management, and processes of racialization and nativization before proceeding to draw connections between objective legal and scientific knowledge and race. I then explore how legal and scientific objectivity informed racialized processes of colonial resource management, and, in turn, how contemporary authors are drawing attention to the continued resonances and sometimes surprising trans-continental interconnections of British imperialism.

The first chapter uses the poetry of Charlotte Smith and *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) to consider how different forms of knowledge about the natural world—including naturalism, experiential knowledge involving contact with nature, medical folk knowledge, and more—become racialized and are, in turn, used to justify racialization and racial exploitation. The second chapter, concerning Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Thomas Carlyle's racist pamphlet, "Occasional Discourse on the N* Question" (1849), takes on questions of the racial nature of resource management itself, and studies how "proper" and "improper" forms of resource management were used as justification to divest colonized subjects of their access to land. This chapter connects the claim of property ownership as well to those of nativeness, belonging, and naturalization. In the third chapter, I analyze early detective fiction, including Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and novels, to demonstrate how racialized processes and theories of knowledge-creation, such as objectivity, bled into and ultimately informed policing and the law. Chapter four concerns Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries* (2013) and examines the legal manipulation of nineteenth-century treaty language for the appropriation of natural resources, and Catton's speculative use of astrology to highlight injustices in the colonial legal system. Finally, fifth chapter takes up the

speculative possibilities of fungi for decolonizing readings of Silvia Moreno-Garcia's novel, *Mexican Gothic* (2020).

Introduction

In December 2020, when Netflix released Shonda Rimes's "Bridgerton" series, based on a series of Regency romance novels by White author Julia Quinn, debates quickly coalesced around the show's historical accuracy.[1] At the center of these arguments—many of which happened on the social media site then called Twitter (now known as "X")—was not the accuracy of a genre that invents new aristocratic titles for its heroes, or imagines that nineteenth-century Britons had straight, pearly white teeth. Instead, some critics took issue with the show's approach to casting, a variation of the theater's colorblind casting that created an alternate reality in which nineteenth-century Britain is reimagined as a "post-racial" fantasy, with actors of color

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[1] In the past few years, there has been a shift, both in academic and journalistic writing, toward capitalizing the B in Black. This serves as an acknowledgement of the constructed nature of Blackness, as well as of the way the transatlantic slave trade erased individual national, tribal, cultural, and ethnic histories of origin. This move also brings media treatment of Black cultural and racial identity into line with how other racial and ethnic groups are represented (eg., Hispanic, Asian American), therefore validating Black identity. The capitalization of White has not received the same treatment. The *Columbia Journalism Review* writes that "White carries a different set of meanings; capitalizing the word in this context risks following the lead of white supremacists" (they do not explain how this follows the lead of White supremacists). Kwame Anthony Appiah, meanwhile, argued for *The Atlantic* that "Black and white are both historically created racial identities—and whatever rule applies to one should apply to the other." I agree with Appiah. To reserve a lowercase for Whiteness is to deny its own historical constructedness and therefore to neutralize and naturalize it. I can see how, given that the capitalization of other racial and ethnic groups is linked to pride movements and to validating identity, some might argue that capitalizing White is validating White power. I argue, however, that capitalization identifies historical legacies, which in the case of Whiteness, are fraught with the oppression of other groups via the creation of racial hierarchies. As the American Psychological Association, whose style guide requires the capitalization of any racial or ethnic group, writes, the lowercase indicates color, rather than race ("do not use colors to refer to other human groups; doing so is considered pejorative"). Notably, though, this is an ongoing conversation with different valences in parts of the world with different conceptions of race, and it is a conversation which came to renewed prominence during the writing of this dissertation. See: "Racial and Ethnic Identity," *APA Style Guide*, Updated July 2022, https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities#:~:text=Racial%20and%20ethnic%20groups%20are,Hispanic%2C%E2%80%9D%20and%20so%20on.
Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Case for Capitalizing the *B* in Black," *The Atlantic*, 18 June 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/.
Mike Laws, "Why we capitalize 'Black' (and not 'white')." *Columbia Journalism Review*, 16 June 2020, https://www.cjr.org/analysis/capital-b-black-styleguide.php.

cast in aristocratic roles.[2] The show handwaves away much of the racial politics of this alternative reality, with the brief explanation (given only in the fourth episode) that Queen Charlotte, who the show imagines as Black, has declared racial equality and elevated some Britons of color to the aristocracy.[3] Left unstated is the fate of the British Empire in this alternate history: were its colonies freed? Was slavery ended decades prior to its actual, drawn-out conclusion?

For the showrunners, accuracy was not an issue; they sought to create, as Julia Jacobs noted in her interview of producer Rimes and showrunner Chris Van Deusen, "a vibrant and indulgent dose of escapism."[4] The showrunners made a conscious choice to create an alternative, speculative history in which England made rapid progress on (certain aspects of) racial equality years before even the real-world abolition of slavery; in learning of a theory that claims Queen Charlotte had Moorish ancestry, Van Deusen wondered how history might have gone differently and proceeded as such.[5] Regardless of intent, the decision to cast actors of color—not in true colorblind casting but in the intentional effort to create their imagined alternate Regency ton—was a move that raised several issues for the show, coming from critics at both ends of the

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[2] Though truly colorblind casting casts actors in roles regardless of race, and many reviews of the Netflix series referred to it as such, this was not, as we will see, entirely the approach taken by the "Bridgerton" showrunners.

[3] Following the theories of some historians who trace Charlotte's heritage to a Moorish line of the Portuguese throne. The theory was popularized in the late 1990s by Mario de Valdes y Cocom, who made the claim on PBS's "Frontline," and the theory re-emerged with the news of Black American actress Meghan Markle's engagement to Prince Harry. This is, however, a largely unsubstantiated claim, as a multitude of historians and public critics have pointed out in the wake of "Bridgerton"'s historical rewriting. See, for example, Nylah Burton.
Mario de Valdes y Cocom. "Queen Charlotte." PBS, last updated 11 March 2021. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/secret/famous/royalfamily.html
Nylah Burton, "The Real History of Queen Charlotte, and the Problem with Netflix's 'Bridgerton' Spinoff." *Vox*, 5 May 2023, https://www.vox.com/culture/23712625/queen-charlotte-bridgerton-netflix-real-history

[4] Julia Jacobs, "With 'Bridgerton,' Scandal Comes to Regency England." *New York Times*, 18 December 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/18/arts/television/bridgerton-netflix-shonda-rhimes.html

[5] He told Jacobs, "It made me wonder what that could have looked like…Could she have used her power to elevate other people of color in society? Could she have given them titles and lands and dukedoms?"
Jacobs, "With 'Bridgerton,' Scandal Comes to Regency England."

political spectrum. While conservatives tended to criticize the show's historical accuracy in depicting actors of color in nineteenth-century London, more liberal commentators took issue with the show's lack of engagement with racism and cultural differences.

Criticism of the diverse depiction of historical London was not unique to "Bridgerton." As Hanna Flint wrote for the BBC in an article from earlier that year, which covered the persistent backlash to casting people of color in period pieces, "a loud minority have called this general move towards diversity in period drama 'PC culture gone mad' and suggested that casting ethnic minorities in period biopics and historical fiction is factually inaccurate."[6] Flint cited protests on social media and the comments of actor and director Julian Fellowes. In 2017, Fellowes defended his decision to cast only White actors in "Half a Sixpence," a musical set in the early twentieth-century England, by claiming that a cast with people of color would be inaccurate: "In every contemporary drama, there is a completely realistic option of a much more variegated cast than we are usually being given….Sixpence is set in 1900 in a seaside town—you're in a different territory."[7] British-Chinese actress Gemma Chan, meanwhile, spoke to Allure in 2019 about "internet trolls" who criticized her after her casting as Bess of Hardwick in Josie Rourke's film, "Mary Queen of Scots." Chan claimed that the critics were under a mistaken impression of England's historical Whiteness: "If we portray a pure white past, people start to believe that's how it was, and that's not how it was."[8] As Flint notes, this white-washed version

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[6] Hanna Flint. "Is it Time the All-White Period Drama Was Made Extinct?" *BBC*, 19 January 2020. https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200116-is-it-time-the-all-white-period-drama-was-made-extinct

[7] Kerry Michael, "Memo to Julian Fellowes: Period Dramas Should Reflect Our Diverse World," *The Guardian*, 06 February 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2017/feb/06/memo-to-julian-fellowes-diversity-half-sixpence

[8] Jessica Chia, "Gemma Chan Wants to End Whitewashing—In Hollywood *and* in History Books." *Allure*, 19 March 2019, https://www.allure.com/story/gemma-chan-cover-story-2019

of British history is one crafted by "revisionists and colonial apologisers."[9] Yet, it is a narrative which had taken hold."Bridgerton"'s casting choices and popularity, alongside the racial awakening many White Americans experienced following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, only highlighted the constructed nature of popular imaginings of nineteenth-century Britain as homogeneously White.

Conservatives were not the only critics to levy the claim of inaccuracy at "Bridgerton," however. Scholars of race and colonialism took issue with the many obfuscations of England's history of racial and colonial violence in the series. A roundtable titled "Unsilencing the Past in Bridgerton 2020," organized by Kerry Sinanan, brought together scholars Mira Assaf Kafantaris, Ambereen Dadabhoy, Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, and Jessica Parr, who, along with Sinanan, examined the show's erasure of colonial history. Kafantaris, for instance, deconstructed a seemingly innocuous scene in which the heroine, Daphne, swoons over her fake-beau Simon's sensuous consumption of ice cream. Kafantaris notes the dissonance between the desired sensuality of the scene and the unsettling way she reads the consumption of sugar—a well-known slave-produced commodity—as used to conscript Simon, a Black character, into the service of the British Empire.[10] Sinanan adds, echoing Kafantaris's comment, that "in the sugar-spoon scene, Daphne consumes Simon with her White gaze that reduces him to an artifact. The scene pretends to display him as an entitled consumer: he is not and the series erases what many historians of slavery call 'blood sugar', the sweetness made out of the blood of Black people."[11] More overtly troubling is the show's treatment of the couple's final "obstacle" to be overcome

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[9] Hanna Flint. "Is it Time?"

[10] Kerry Sinanan et al., "Unsilencing the Past In Bridgerton 2020: A Roundtable." *Medium,* 09 January 2021, https://kerrysinanan.medium.com/unsilencing-the-past-in-bridgerton-2020-a-roundtable-792ecffd366

[11] Sinanan et al., "Unsilencing."

prior to a 'Happily Ever After': Daphne's rape of Simon, which raises the specter of forced reproduction under slavery.[12] In Quinn's original novel, Simon (who is White) does not want children due to lingering trauma from his abusive father; after learning that Simon is not impotent, as she had believed, but rather choosing not to ejaculate so as to avoid conception, Daphne holds him down while he is not fully conscious, circumventing his reproductive choice. The assault is unconscionable regardless, and the showrunners' decision to keep it is baffling, especially since, in the television adaptation, Simon's shifted race adds a layer of historical violence. Rimes, who produced the Netflix show, is Black, and would surely have been aware that enslaved Black men and women were forced to reproduce (and were raped by White slaveholders) in order to maintain the supply of enslaved labor. Despite the outcry which occurred due to the inclusion of this plot-line, "Bridgerton"'s popularity led to renewal for a second (and later, third) season. The second season's depiction of two Indian sisters received mixed reviews as well, and some commentators decried its homogenization of Indian culture.[13]

This dissertation does not deal directly with the "Bridgerton" series, either on television or in novel form; however, the conversations surrounding the series and its depictions of race in nineteenth-century England serve as an introduction to the dissertation's overarching interests and themes. In triangulating the show's attempts at racial representation through historical imaginings, its forgetfulness of colonial history, and its depiction of the consumption of colonial

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[12] The scene was included in Quinn's original novel, which depicted Daphne and Simon both as White. However, the casting choices for Netflix's adaptation overlooked the historical racial valences such a scene—already controversial—would evoke.

[13] See Dvani Solani for *Vice*, and Radhika Seth for *Vogue*.
Radhika Seth, "Does 'Bridgerton Do Justice to its Indian Characters?" *Vogue*, 10 April 2022, https://www.vogue.com/article/does-bridgerton-do-justice-to-its-indian-characters
Dhvani Solani, "As an Indian, I'm So Confused About How to Feel About 'Bridgerton 2.' I'm Not Alone." *Vice,* 01 April 2022, https://www.vice.com/en/article/3abw8k/indians-thoughts-on-netflix-bridgerton-shonda-rhimes-show

commodities, I want to identify the connections between understandings of race, control of natural resources, and the British Empire's afterlives in the popular imagination with which I am concerned. In Simon, we see a simultaneous occlusion and slippage of the relationship between the Black body in the nineteenth century and natural resources, such as the sugar eaten in the scene: Simon remains a commodity within the world of "Bridgerton"'s marriage market, and yet the real-world relationship between the Black body and the very commodity he consumes (and the commodification and dehumanization of the Black body as a result of the White desire for that commodity) is obfuscated. This simultaneous representation and occlusion speaks to a wish to at once, make reparations, in the form of casting choices, for past racial harms, and at the same time to satisfy the desires of a White audience for the sexualized Black male body while assuaging their own racial guilt and proving their moral goodness. Furthermore, "Bridgerton"'s creation of an alternate history centered in nineteenth-century racial politics undertakes a distinct but related world-building project to that of the speculative neo-Victorian fictions I explore in the dissertation's last two chapters.

My purpose in this dissertation is twofold. First, I seek to unravel how processes of racialization are yoked to the study and management of the natural world in the nineteenth-century British Empire, through careful eco-critical readings of primarily fiction texts. Second, I consider how and why contemporary authors of neo-Victorian literature turn to the sites and forms associated with British imperialism to confront its continued legacies—particularly those legacies which take the form of systemic racism and ecological injustices. I argue that processes of racialization developed in conjunction with the collection and deployment of imperial knowledge about the natural world over the course of the nineteenth century, with the result that

racialization and natural resource-management were entwined in the service of the growth of Britain's imperial power. We can see this connection between race and the natural environment in, for example, the adjectives used to describe Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* (discussed in the second chapter) or in the health problems Mary Prince developed as a result of her enslavement in the salt ponds, which ultimately led her to seek refuge in England (explored in the first chapter). Beyond this, however, I also demonstrate how post-colonial authors in the twenty-first century have chosen to revisit the nineteenth, using alternative or *speculative* understandings of nature to highlight racial dynamics typically left unwritten by their nineteenth-century counterparts, and the continued legacies of Britain's imperial influence.

Debates & contribution

This dissertation participates in several critical debates within nineteenth-century studies. Foremost among these are the processes of racialization and the social and biological construction of race in the nineteenth century; the development of scientific identities and practices such as objectivity, and their relation to naturalist practice, resource management, and the law; and the neo-Victorian relationship to the colonial past and post-colonial present. The dissertation's unconventional form and wide-ranging subject matter speak to ongoing disciplinary debates, particularly about periodization and the shifting role of nineteenth-century studies today. In the dissertation's final chapters, my critical emphasis on speculation and alternative understandings of the natural world emphasizes the uncertainty of our "post-colonial" present and future as we attempt to grapple with the continued legacies of systemic subjugation, as well as the uncertainty of a past that excluded so many from access to agency, voice, and even

humanity. In bridging the nineteenth century and contemporary rewritings of that era, I want to highlight the difficulty of knowing; all studies of history are in their own way speculative, and all are informed by our present.

This dissertation draws an unabashed critical connection between the colonial past and our contemporary moment. In this, I follow the call from Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong, who in their essay, "Undisciplining Victorian Studies" (2020), argue for the expansion of Victorian Studies beyond disciplinary boundaries and in a way that works across fields and recognizes the continued influence of histories of oppression. This involves, for myself as well as the authors of "Undisciplining," "ask[ing] why contemporary scholarship on a period and a geographical center that consolidated a modern idea of race—the nineteenth century in and beyond Britain—lacks a robust account of race and racialization."[14] As such, Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong highlight how race serves as a thread linking the nineteenth century to the present day; its theoretical concretization in the nineteenth century, in a context wherein race was used as a tool for the upholding of systems of colonialism and enslavement, remains the prevailing understanding through to the twenty-first century. Despite the importance of this through-line, Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong also identify race and racialization as a gap in critical knowledge about the nineteenth century that greatly impacts how we understand the functioning of race in the present day. Our present climate crisis is another thread linking the two periods. As environmental studies scholars have shown, climate change was precipitated by the rapid advancements of industrialized and colonial capitalism, many of

[14] Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong, "Introduction: Undisciplining Victorian Studies," *Victorian Studies* 62, no. 3 (Spring 2020): 370.

which accelerated over the nineteenth century.[15] This dissertation yokes the two issues—conceptualizing race through nineteenth-century literary and environmental studies—together to demonstrate how racialization required the denigration of the human to the level of natural resource and, simultaneously, the continual and ever-increasing exploitation of natural resources. As such, I enter into, and seek to contribute to, debates currently surrounding nineteenth-century literary studies, not least of which examines, as Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong do, "what should nineteenth-century studies be today?"

While scholars have previously written on the relationship between colonialism, empire, and the study of the natural world in the nineteenth century, my contribution consists in unraveling the relationship between the development of *race* and *racialization* and the colonial study and management of natural resources.[16] In thus attending to the construction of race in the nineteenth century, this dissertation serves as an alternative to scholarship of the 1990s and early 2000s in which the appearance of race in nineteenth-century literature is read as metaphorical, or, in other words, used to explain the conditions of a different, White social group (such as married

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[15] See, for instance, Kathryn Yussof's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2019) in which Yussof theorizes multiple origins for the "age of humans," and Elizabeth Carolyn Miller's *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion* (2021) for a study of Britain's transition to a fossil-fuel economy.
Katherine Yussof, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).
Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

[16] See Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (1994); Alan Bewel, *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (2017), and Nathan K. Hensley and Philip Steer', eds., *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire* (2018).
Alan Bewel, *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2018).
Grove, Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).
Nathan Hensley and Philip K. Steer, editors, *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire* (New York: Fordham UP, 2018.)

women or the lower classes).[17] Even today, when an increasing number of scholars are responding to calls, like that of the "Undisciplining" essay, to question the field's pervasive Whitenness, some remain uncomfortable with engaging with the suggestion of race in its canonical (and often assumed White) texts. This is particularly the case when ecological and literary studies collide.[18]

I draw upon the approach taken by Manu Samriti Chander in *Brown Romantics: Poetry and Nationalism in the Global Nineteenth Century* (2017) to examine the consolidation of race and racialization into the forms with which we are familiar today.[19] Chander seeks to understand not the specifics of any one race, but rather the process of racialization or the construction of what he calls "Brownness" as a relationship to White imperial power. I am also influenced here by the work of Paul Gilroy who, in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987), examines what he identifies as the British desire to distance itself from Blackness, and to form a conception of British identity centered around Whiteness. Gilroy notes that the construction of a White British identity developed alongside and was aided by a turn to racial essentialism, which, he points out, disallows coalition-building, and comes from both ends of the political spectrum.[20] Following these scholars, I look to the process of *racialization* as a tool of British imperialism, rather than the study of any one particular racial group. This is not to say that the various racial

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[17] Therein, I offer an alternative reading of Heathcliff's racialization to that provided by scholars including Susan Meyer and Terry Eagleton.

[18] For instance, both Corbin Hiday and Ivan Krielkamp decline to engage with race in *Wuthering Heights* specifically due to Heathcliff's racial ambiguity. My argument serves as a corrective to this line of thinking, which I find reifies false and often biologically deterministic interpretations of race.
Hiday, Corbin Hiday, "Heathcliff Walks." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 54, no. 2 (2021): 248-269.
Ivan Krielkamp, "Petted Things: *Wuthering Heights* and the Animal." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 18, no. 1 (2005): 87–110.

[19] Manu Samriti Chander, *Brown Romantics: Poetry and Nationalism in the Global Nineteenth Century.* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2017).

[20] Paul Gilroy, '*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack': The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 39.

and colonial contexts analyzed within the pages of this dissertation are flattened, homogenized, or otherwise treated as the same. Rather, I attempt to treat each with care and attention to contextual specificity. I recognize that each group has, in its unique way, been defined by and in contrast to an outside, colonizing force (in some cases more than one), which, in subjugating it to imperial control, seeks to divest it of power, resources, and freedom. Focusing on the common process by which groups become Othered, or racialized, is thus a hopeful move, that seeks to enable (in any small way) the coalition-building necessary for working toward a truly post-colonial world.

Kyla Schuller's work on nineteenth-century biological and evolutionary racial theories is helpful to me here, as Schuller studies the construction of racial hierarchy, rather than focusing on a single race. Schuller's work in *The Biopolitics of Feeling* (2018) takes up a particularly Lamarckian strand of evolutionary thought, and I have therefore found her ideas helpful in bridging the theoretical worlds of racialization and ecological thought. In *The Biopolitics of Feeling* (2018), Schuller writes about the racialization of sentimental discourse, drawing attention to the nineteenth-century focus on impressions and the ability to be affected and changed by experiences—a capacity understood as distinctly racialized and reserved for upper-class White men (with White women understood as overly *impressible* and therefore vulnerable and in need of protection). In my own arguments, I make use of and build upon Schuller's work to focus specifically on the impressions left by the natural world. Schuller's work shows how the concepts of impressibility discourse were racialized and how they enabled the racialization of feeling subjects. What my focus adds is how the objects effecting the impressions—and in

particular objects in the natural world—were also racialized depending on circumstance, and in turn became part of the process of racialization.

Schuller demonstrates the importance of sentiment to racial hierarchy. Yet, the nineteenth century also saw the development of a seemingly opposed concept: scientific objectivity. I argue that both concepts are connected by the necessity of control over one's emotions, which also brings both under the purview of masculinity and Whiteness. I make much use of Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's extensive work on objectivity, to examine not only the concept of objectivity as a construction, but to delineate who is allowed access to objectivity and thus scientist identity, and who is, conversely, designated an object of knowledge. As Daston and Galison show, objectivity developed alongside the narrow idea of liberal subjectivity (typically only allowed to White men), which required a specific form of self-control in order to prove the accuracy of one's knowledge. I argue that "objective" knowledge and the attendant self-possession or self-control seen to enable objectivity were used as a justification for control over or possession of nature. Furthermore, I demonstrate how the conception of objectivity was also crucial to the process of denigrating racialized humans to the status of the natural, therefore bringing them under the purview of such knowledgeable control and possession. Linking Daston and Galison's analysis of the history and development of objectivity to D.A. Miller's interpretation of early detective fiction in *The Novel and the Police* (1988) allows me to demonstrate connections between racialized surveillance and discipline and legal and scientific ideas of "objective" truth, which I argue together enabled the colonial management of natural resources—including the divestment of said resources from colonized indigenous populations.

My study of resource appropriation is framed through Elizabeth Carolyn Miller's explanation of extractive exhaustion. Miller's ideas allow me to make a theoretical move beyond resource *appropriation* to demonstrate the continued environmental and racial effects of imperialism. I draw a parallel between Miller's emphasis on the resource exhaustion which accompanies extractivist practices and the racist behavior exhibited by the English characters in *Mexican Gothic*, a connection I make with the help of the ideas central to Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics* (2019).

With regards to the neo-Victorian, I build most closely on Elizabeth Ho's arguments in *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (2013) that "the nineteenth-century British past cannot be thought of as separate from neoimperial presents and futures."[21] My argument is also within the vein of Felipe Espinoza Garrido's recent essay in *Victorian Literature and Culture* on taking an "undisciplining" approach to the neo-Victorian. Espinoza Garrido points out that, despite its de-or anti-colonial potential, all too often, attention within the neo-Victorian remains focused on Whiteness and Englishness: "Among those texts rarely afforded academic attention are countless nineteenth-century narratives written from South Asian, Caribbean, and Indigenous perspectives (often from the Americas or the Pacific region)."[22] The neo-Victorian texts I analyze make visible the complexity of racialized experience under two often-overlooked locations with distinct relationships to the British Empire.

My own arguments, in contrast to Ho's, take a redemptive perspective toward the neo-Victorian. Ho argues, that, "In postcolonial neo-Victorian texts, the legacy of empire asserts itself as an obstacle toward imagining a viable future so that we remain…stuck in the 'colonial

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[21] Elizabeth Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 6.

[22] Felipe Espinoza Garrido, "Neo-Victorian," *VLC* 51, no. 3 (September 2023): 460.

present.'"[23] Meanwhile, Espinoza Garrido claims that "attention to any of these [overlooked] literatures and cultural configurations…opens up alternative genealogies of the Neo-Victorian, which hold the potential to reframe it."[24] In attending to the neo-Victorian texts I have selected I hope to demonstrate how neo-Victorian, postcolonial authors make speculative entries into nineteenth-century colonial history, reframing the traditional historical narrative to include their experiences and understandings of the world.

There are several ways that speculation presents itself throughout the dissertation (and not only in the chapters that explicitly use it as a framework). Speculation can be thematic, as it is in science fiction and fantasy, in which authors ask a "what if" question as their basis for exploring other themes: what if we develop faster-than-light travel and create a federation of planets with intelligent life ("Star Trek")? What if humans evolve the ability to manipulate seismic activity (N.K. Jemisin's "Broken Earth Trilogy")? Closely related, speculation can be a formal characteristic, as it is in both *The Luminaries* and *Mexican Gothic*, which requires that characters, and, in turn, the reader, question their understanding of reality through the process of imaginative defamiliarization. Furthermore, the neo-Victorian is nothing if not a speculative mode, which not only imaginatively and analytically "re-writes" the past, but demonstrates its continued resonances, requiring that the reader reconsider their present.

While the novels I study herein speculate while also engaging questions of historiography, however, they do not use the form of historical speculation explored by Catherine Gallagher in *Telling It Like It Wasn't* (2018). In her study of historical counterfactuals, Gallagher lays out several definitional requirements of the "counterfactual-historical mode" in which she is

[23] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism*, 7.

[24] Espinoza Garrido, "Neo-Victorian," 460.

interested: "that the discourse, whether analytical or narrative, be premised on a counterfactual-historical hypothesis, which I define as an explicit or implicit past-tense, hypothetical, conditional conjecture pursued when the antecedent condition is known to be contrary to fact."[25] The distinction between Gallagher's counterfactual and the speculative historical fictions in which I am interested is this: neither *Mexican Gothic* nor *The Luminaries* is interested in counterfactual renditions of key historical events. Rather, they each speculate upon an aspect of scientific reality, changing how we and the characters understand the rules of their world. Despite their differences, both this speculative mode and the counterfactual histories Gallagher studies allow readers and writers a new perspective on grappling with and addressing the legacies of historical injustice. Whether in changing important historical events or the very way we understand and interpret the world, speculation holds both imaginative and critical possibilities. As Gallagher puts it, "The [speculative] mode's vigorous 'worlding' [...] deepens our perceptions of actuality by shadowing and estranging them. And perhaps most typically, the alternate worlds strip our own of its neutral, inert givenness and open it to our judgment."[26]

Approaching texts that speculate formally opens possibilities for speculative analysis and for speculative knowledge-creation. This is why speculation can also function, I claim, as an epistemological mode, as is the case with detection, with science, and with translation, or as an analytic methodology. Within literary historical analysis, foregrounding speculation or analyzing

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[25] Catherine Gallagher, *Telling It Like It Wasn't: The Counterfactual Imagination in History and Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018): 2.
Gallagher sets forth the following example: "[T]his sentence— "If John F. Kennedy had not been assassinated in 1963 and had lived to be a two- term president, the war in Vietnam would have been over by 1968"— is a historical counterfactual. The antecedent condition (the if clause) is overtly contrary to the normally uncontroversial fact of John F. Kennedy's 1963 assassination; nevertheless, the hypothesis ventures a probable consequence of the assassination's nonexistence" (2).

[26] Gallagher, *Telling It Like It Wasn't*, 15.

speculatively helps me to articulate the palimpsestic relationship between past and present: in order to read the traces of the past hidden beneath and held within layers of historical development, one must think speculatively.

I consider the imperial history and literature studied in this dissertation as a palimpsest whose layers contemporary authors are struggling to unveil (and whose own narratives form new layers of that palimpsest). This is a view distinct from any sort of progress narrative, because, as the neo-Victorian works of the last two chapters makes clear, the colonial past is not truly past. The "post" in "post-colonial" necessarily raises the question, Rey Chow explains, "if a culture is 'postcolonial' in the sense of having gone through colonialism, does that mean colonialism is no longer a part of its life?"[27] For Chow, myself, and, I argue, the authors of the novels I study, the answer is emphatically "no."

Despite historical or genre designations such as "post-colonial," these novels highlight the continued effects of their time as colonies or otherwise under the informal influence of British imperial interests. These effects range from intermingled culture to remnants of colonial government. Simon Gikandi describes how "the temporality of our postcolonial moment is defined by an inevitable conjuncture between the desire for decolonization and the reality of the colonial archive: in the former colonies….the large issues that plague the decolonized polis are mediated through the institutional, ideological, and aesthetic 'shreds and patches' of the British colonial heritage."[28] Furthermore, "territories"[29] still exist under the control of former Empires,

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[27] Rey Chow, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998), 150.

[28] Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 2-3.

[29] See, for instance, the continued colonial occupation of Puerto Rico, Guam, Samoa, and more by the United States and Great Britain's continued Caribbean presence, among others.

including Great Britain and the United States. This dissertation argues that we are still living and grappling with the aftereffects of empire and the continued exertion (often by those former empires) of colonial logics upon formerly-occupied territories *and* other areas of the world. As Christina Sharpe says, "the past…is not past."[30]

I would like to complicate and push back against any imagined natural progress narrative, then, from dark imperial past to hope-filled present. Rather, the effects of contact with empire are not concluded, but rather, *occluded,* something the contemporary authors I study seek to correct through their neo-Victorian narratives. The neo-Victorian authors I study recognize the ways in which the present continues to repeat the sins of the past, and they search for alternate possibilities, moments of possible rupture, where a new narrative might take hold. Yet, any potential rupture between colonial past and (hopeful) decolonial future continues to recognize the influence of the past, the continuity without which rupture is not possible, or becomes meaningless—for what is there to break from if we do not recognize the continued presence of the past? While the narratives and decolonial potential emphasized by the final few chapters on the neo-Victorian are speculatively hopeful, I want, as well, to recognize the speculations undertaken by the nineteenth century texts studied herein. While this is not my emphasis in the dissertation's first few chapters, we can also read those nineteenth-century texts as speculating—sometimes hopefully—about decolonial futures. Heathcliff is driven by a dream of equality with Cathy; Mary Prince by the desire for co-extant home and freedom.

Methodology

[30] Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke UP, 2016), 13.

The leading questions Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong ask are: "How can we make visible Victorian studies' foundations in whiteness, universalism, and liberalism, terms that have historically framed our objects of study as either "about" race or as race-neutral? And just as importantly, how can we, rather than stopping short at critique, develop imaginative proposals for the future of the field?"[31] My dissertation, in its subject matter and its form, is an answer to these questions. I emphasize the construction and consolidation of race in the nineteenth century, demonstrating that race is often foundational to texts and areas of study—such as environmental studies—in which it has been overlooked. Part I, for instance, interrogates foundational terms and ideas—such as English identity and sentimental rhetoric—that have been presumed White. Furthermore, the dissertation's non-traditional form, in explicitly bringing contemporary discourse around the nineteenth century and how it is depicted in our cultural imagination to the fore, offers one imaginative possibility for the future of the field. At the heart of my decision to read contemporary neo-Victorian texts alongside nineteenth-century canonical texts is the necessity of recognizing the ways in which the nineteenth century continues to inform our present. It is also crucial to recognize the impossibility of separating our understanding of the past from our position in the present.

Throughout the dissertation, I often turn to theories drawn from scientific disciplines, with environmental studies in particular playing a prominent role. As an interdisciplinary scholar with undergraduate training and research experience in mathematics and neuroscience, these lingering interests inform my methods as well as topical interests. Ideas from the sciences—whether concerning the alchemical processes taking place in bogs or mycological theories still

[31] Chatterjee, Christoff, and Wong, "Undisciplining," 373.

under debate—provide fruitful ground for theoretical and metaphorical analysis. As an eco-critical scholar, my ability to move between disciplinary discourses enriches my scholarship in both innovation and rigor.

This dissertation is not a project of archival recovery. While some of the scholars, like Chander, whose ideas are crucial to my argument, use archival recovery as a technique for revitalizing, expanding, and diversifying the field, I have taken a different approach. My choice to revisit canonical nineteenth-century texts rather than seeking to highlight "rediscovered" Brown voices speaks to the dissertation's overarching goals. I aim to unsettle the canon and those assumptions of Whiteness which underlie the field of nineteenth-century literary studies by demonstrating that even those texts which have traditionally been read as White hold within their pages clues to understanding the interconnected of life under the British Empire at the time, regardless of location in metropolitan center or colonial periphery.

Part of the project of this dissertation is engaging with what I have termed a speculative analytic methodology. This methodology is particularly apparent in the dissertation's final two chapters and its conclusion, all of which use textual and historical analysis to consider the question: how might we imagine a decolonial future? I analyze the texts which center the final two chapters for the ways in which they speculate upon our relationship to colonialism, and how we might transform it. Some of these transformations include the redistribution of access to narrative agency in *The Luminaries*, and the creation of a severe narrative rupture in *Mexican Gothic* that nevertheless recognizes the uncertain status of the past's continued influence. Analyzing speculatively involves embracing and even foregrounding a sort of rigorously-researched uncertainty by recognizing the varied potential of multiple readings and analyses, or

by interrogating the effects of uncertainty and ambiguity. Within the second chapter, on *Wuthering* Heights, embracing the uncertainty of Heathcliff's racial ambiguity opens the possibility for analyzing race as a construction, a set of features and effects and a relationship to a dominant culture, rather than any single race itself. Embracing uncertainty therefore does not imply a lack of analysis (throwing up one's hands in the face of impossible questions) but rather, through speculative analysis, the creation of an abundance, in the thorough exploration of analytic possibilities.

De-Constructing the Canon

I have chosen texts that speak to and allow me to offer new insights on the topics and debates with which each portion of the dissertation is concerned. In so doing, I have constructed an unusual archive of texts, that spans centuries and continents, and therefore requires a reconsideration of how we conceive of the literary relationship to the Victorian (and neo-Victorian, a topic I will cover in Part III). Therefore, I want to explain how I have created my archive of primary texts for the dissertation before moving on to a more in-depth chapter overview.

Part I of the dissertation emphasizes the connection between affect, ecological thought, resource management, and processes of racialization and nativization. To address these topics, I have constructed what I consider to be odd pairs of canonical nineteenth-century texts—texts which, while often-studied, are not typically read together. The first chapter pairs *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) with the poetry of Charlotte Smith; both are Romantic-era works that deploy sentimental rhetoric to their own ends, and scholars have analyzed the use of affect and

sentiment in each separately, but I am not aware of any other studies in which the two are read together. I argue that, in pairing the two, we are able to better understand the relationship between sentiment, gender, and race. Prince and Smith are both women who use sentimental rhetoric to garner sympathy, but only Prince must prove her sentimental capacities due to her race. Reading Smith's ecological poetry, including the abolitionist "To the Firefly of Jamaica," alongside Prince allows me to highlight the little-attended ecological valences of Prince's, therefore opening critical possibilities for attending to the gendered Romantic approach to cultivating sentiment through naturalist study within the racialized context of the plantation economy. I then read *Wuthering Heights*—an oft-read text within ecocriticism—alongside Thomas Carlyle's racist pamphlet, "Occasional Discourse on the N* Question,"[32] to illuminate Heathcliff's relationship to colonial land-management tactics within the context of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Ultimately, reading these unusual pairings facilitates the connections I seek to draw out between race and ecological thought, knowledge, and management within texts which typically are read only for the consideration of one of these topics.

Part II of the dissertation moves on to draw connections between objective legal and scientific knowledge and race. Part II allows me to bridge the traditional nineteenth-century grounding of Part I and the neo-Victorian novels considered in Part III. To make my argument, I have chosen to focus on early examples of detective fiction for several reasons: the most

[32] While most scholars refer to Carlyle's essay including its full racialized language, with the understanding that the gloss of academia magically removes any hint of racism (and I do not want to fault those who follow this convention), I have made a different choice, and will be using the abbreviation N* in acknowledgement of the term's historical violence. Not only am I a light-skinned Latina woman, someone who does not and should not use the term in regular conversation because I do not belong to a group who has reclaimed it, but I consider the abbreviation to be a form of unsettling. Every time I use it, and every time you read it, requires an acknowledgement of its history and the ways that history continues to be made present through widespread institutionalized racism.

immediate explanation is that both *The Luminaries* and *Mexican Gothic* share the impulse toward detective fiction, and *The Luminaries* in particular takes the form of a neo-sensation novel, a resemblance noted by a number of critics.[33] This similarity in form allows me to highlight parallel concerns with the uncovering or extraction of knowledge and with the colonial legal apparatus. Beyond the thematic elements of detection, knowledge, race, and legality, however, is a quality of sensation fiction that Winifred Hughes identifies in *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (1980), and that allows me to connect nineteenth century sensation to the speculative neo-Victorian fictions that concern the last two chapters. Hughes claims that "the unmistakable tendency of the sensation novel is to undermine the prevailing Victorian worldview, to alter the perception of 'reality' and to revise its traditional meaning." I see this as a tendency shared by both *The Luminaries* and *Mexican Gothic,* which each construct speculative realities which challenge scientific understandings of the natural world.[34]

In Part III of the dissertation I am interested in how legal and scientific objectivity inform racialized processes of colonial resource management. I have identified texts which engage with these topics through the creation of what I consider a speculative historical reality. While fantasy is itself a form of speculative fiction, and while there exist many neo-Victorian novels which deal explicitly with what they themselves term "magic," Silvia Moreno-Garcia's

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[33] Lucy Scholes, for the Guardian, called Catton's novel "Wilkie Collins down under," while Laura Miller of Salon pointed explicitly to sensation fiction and Sarah Lyall of the New York Times wrote that *The Luminaries* took up "the Victorian style of Dickens or Wilkie Collins."
Sarah Lyall. "A Writer Thanks Her Lucky Stars." *The New York Times,* 19 Nov. 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/20/books/eleanor-catton-discusses-the-luminaries.html#:~:text=Catton%27s%20winning%20novel%20is%20an,the%20astrological%20signs%20of%20its
Laura Miller. "'The Luminaries': A Gothic Cathedral of a Plot." *Salon,* 27 Oct. 2013, https://www.salon.com/2013/10/27/the_luminaries_a_gothic_cathedral_of_plot/
Scholes, Lucy. "The Luminaries by Eleanor Catton—Review." *The Guardian*, 08 Sept. 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/sep/08/the-luminaries-eleanor-catton-review.

[34] Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980), 51-52.

Mexican Gothic and Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries* are not among them.[35] For this separate sect of neo-Victorian novels, magic and the supernatural are, if not mundane, an accepted part of life; in contrast, neither *The Luminaries* nor *Mexican Gothic* ever normalizes the odd occurrences which drive their plots. Instead, they provide explanations which either stretch the boundaries of plausibility (as is the case for *Mexican Gothic*, which appropriates current debates in mycology) or which rely entirely on known pseudoscience (the structure and plot of Catton's novel are driven by Western natal astrology, which had fallen out of use by the time of the novel's setting). Neither of the explanations provided by either novel are accepted widely outside of a small circle of characters, creating, in effect, a bubble universe within the plot, in which the rules of reality have shifted ever so slightly. For the majority of both novels, the characters operate using the rules of our "normal" reality for guidance—in both cases, in solving crimes whose explanation shifts them and the reader outside the paradigm of normality. In both novels, their characters must find ways to come to terms with this sudden shift in their understanding of the world—not all are successful in doing so.

Chapter Outlines

The dissertation is composed of three parts, and five chapters. Part I comprises two chapters and covers nineteenth-century texts, Part II is a single bridge chapter, and Part III

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[35] For a small selection of recent examples of this sort of alternate history fantasy, see *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (2004) by Susanna Clarke, *La Hacienda* (2022) by Isabel Cañas, *Babel: Or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution* (2022) by R.F Kuang, and *What the River Knows* (2023) by Isabel Ibañez. My colleague, Molly Keran, has informed me that in popular genre fiction, the more magically-inclined version of "steampunk" (alternate-historical fiction set in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, focusing on alternative scientific or technological innovations) is sometimes known as "gaslamp" fiction. It is typically, though not necessarily, set in Victorian London.
Clarke, Susanna. *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (New York: Blumsbury, 2004).
Isabel Cañas, *La Hacienda* (New York: Berkeley, 2022).
R. F. Kuang, *Babel: Or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution* (New York: Harper Voyager, 2022).
Isabel Ibañez, *What the River Knows* (London: Hodderscape, 2023).

includes two chapters on neo-Victorian fiction. Herein, I study the construction of race through and in conjunction with distinctly racialized ways of knowing, encountering, and using the natural world across the British Empire in the nineteenth century, and draw connections to contemporary authors who are grappling with and speculating upon the continued resonances of colonial history today. As such, the chapters move across time and challenge the academic conventions of periodization. Yet, despite my best efforts, I have found that each chapter proceeds chronologically, from the abolition movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to re-imaginings and speculations on the Victorian in twenty-first century postcolonial literature.

The first chapter considers how different forms of knowledge about the natural world—including naturalism, experiential knowledge involving contact with nature, medical folk knowledge, and more—become racialized and are, in turn, used to justify racialization and racial exploitation. Drawing on the work of Kyla Schuller in *The Biopolitics of Feeling* (2018), I turn to the naturalist sentimental poetry of Charlotte Smith and the autobiographical abolitionist narrative, *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) to examine the co-constitutive and differentially racialized relationship between women's affect and contact with the natural world. This chapter uses the differentiation of different forms of encounter and relationships with nature to theorize the process of racialization—a process wherein closeness to nature is used as justification for dehumanization and therefore the reduction of the human to another mere natural resource. I find a cyclical relationship between racialized dehumanization and subjection to the conditions of enslavement, such that a supposed lack of impressibility becomes justification for enslavement

and subjection to the harsh conditions of nature, and the results of said subjugation result in further dehumanization.

The second chapter, concerning Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Thomas Carlyle's racist pamphlet, "Occasional Discourse on the N* Question" (1849), takes on questions of the racial nature of resource management itself, and studies how "proper" and "improper" forms of resource management were used as justification to divest colonized subjects of their access to land. This chapter connects the claim of property ownership as well to those of nativeness, belonging, and *naturalization*, through the figure of Heathcliff. Using Chander's definition, in which Brownness signifies a relationship to colonial power, in which those marked Brown "are not…marginalized because they are brown; on the contrary, they are 'brown' because they are marginalized," I read Heathcliff as a Brown figure, characterized both by his racial Otherness and, at once, his nativized and markedly naturalized relationship to the novel's setting.[36]

The third chapter is a theoretical step away, necessary to provide perspective on ideas foundational to the study of the natural world, and for laying the groundwork for the two following chapters on neo-Victorian fiction. In this third chapter, I analyze early detective fiction, including Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and novels, to demonstrate how racialized processes and theories of knowledge-creation, such as objectivity, bled into and ultimately informed policing and the law. I consider the relationship between detection and racialized Others; who is allowed to detect or surveil, who is highly surveilled, and who is invisible or forgotten under the law. Using Lorraine Daston and Peter

[36] Chander, *Brown Romantics*, 3.

Galison's exploration in *Objectivity* (2007) of the development of scientific objectivity, I then connect this concept, through the role of the detective and with the help of Alan Sekula's essay, "The Body and the Archive" (1986), and D.A. Miller's argument about the regulatory function of detection in *The Novel and the Police* (1988), to the notion of legal truth. This chapter and the next make the argument that differential legal legibility and visibility are in large part responsible for the codification of racial distinctions in the nineteenth century.

Prior to the fourth chapter, there is a prelude to Part III that enables the transition between nineteenth-century literature and the neo-Victorian of the dissertation's final sections. This brief prelude considers both the definition and role of the neo-Victorian. I then turn to Eleanore Catton's Booker Prize-winning novel *The Luminaries* (2013) in chapter four, which examines the legal manipulation of treaty language for the appropriation of natural resources, and Catton's speculative use of astrology to highlight injustices in the colonial legal system. This novel, set in the goldfields of colonial New Zealand in the 1860s, is an homage to the sprawling sensation genre and also, I argue, unleashes the speculative possibilities of the neo-Victorian in service of a decolonial mode. By highlighting the stories of a prostitute, indentured Chinese laborers, and a Māori man living on occupied land, Catton does more than merely give voice to characters omitted from Victorian narratives. She also takes issue with the legal apparatus underpinning her detective narrative, using that very narrative to highlight instances of legal injustice, and the novel's structure and conceit to imagine other possibilities to British colonial legal objectivity, and to speculate, looking backward as well as forward, and finding alternatives for making sense of the world. In this chapter, I also turn to the translation of a key Pakeha-Māori treaty, the 1940 Treaty of Waitangi, and its subsequent legal challenges, to examine how racialized legal

legibility was used to divest native populations of land and resources during the process of settlement. In particular, I examine the distinctions between the English and te reo Māori versions of the treaty to question the legibility of non-capitalist indigenous relationships to the environment within the context of legal systems centered in capitalist understandings of possession.

The fifth and final chapter concerns itself with the speculative possibilities of fungi as seen within Silvia Moreno-Garcia's 2020 novel, *Mexican Gothic*. Though set in post-revolutionary 1950s Mexico, the novel clearly takes up the neo-Victorian and gothic modes, and draws, too, upon Britain's history of informal empire in Latin America in the late nineteenth century. Through both the novel's heroine, the Mestiza socialite Noemí, and its villainous British colonial family, the Doyles, Moreno Garcia raises questions about how Mexico as a nation and we as individuals grapple with the complex legacies of colonialism. I argue that the Doyle family's relationship to fungi reveals the extent of their engagement with extractive capitalism and informal empire, demonstrating that extractivist colonial logics extend beyond objects like silver to the dehumanization of racialized individuals, who are treated themselves as what one character calls "mulch," natural resources ripe for extraction. Yet, as I show, the fungal figures in the story are also based on still-uncertain scientific theories which also offer speculative possibilities; the uncertain conclusion of their role in the narrative demonstrates both the potential for repeating legacies of harm, or the more hopeful opportunity of renewal following the extractive exhaustion of colonial exploitation.

Before proceeding, I want to return to the analysis with which I began this introduction as a way of explaining the importance of connecting past to present in both literary historical

analysis and in creative re-imaginings of the past. In a panel discussion event among historical romance writers in 2017, Julia Quinn allegedly explained her stance on writing historical romance involving characters of color: she does not write characters of color into her historical romance, audience members recall her saying, because she prefers to write happy stories, not ones about hardship.[37] Yet, in the wake of the success of the Netflix adaptation of "Bridgerton," Quinn announced she would be writing a prequel series regarding Queen Charlotte's marriage to King George in the eighteenth century. While the Netflix series uses theories on Queen Charlotte's racial heritage to explain the world's racial integration, all the characters in Quinn's original "Bridgerton" book series are White. Quinn's online critics decried her decision to write a prequel series as a cash-grab, and worried about the treatment of race in novels written by a woman whose past comments suggested happiness and romance were unavailable to people of color in prior centuries.[38]

While the chapters of this dissertation that center on texts from the nineteenth century do emphasize the difficult predominance of the reality of racialized life at the time, the neo-Victorian novels which make up the latter chapters offer ameliorative possibilities. These occur in both cases not through straightforwardly happy endings, but rather through the simple availability of hope and emphasis on agency. There is a radical power in allowing hope and the possibility for agency to infiltrate narratives about people to whom traditional portrayals offer only pain, rather than reinforcing and reifying the pain and divestment of the past. For, in writing

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[37] Alyssa Shotwell, "Julia Quinn's Past Comments on Black Characters in Historical Romance Reignite Criticism Amid New Book Reveal," *The Mary Sue*, 23 Feb. 2023, https://www.themarysue.com/julia-quinn-past-comments-on-black-characters-in-historical-romance/#:~:text=julia%20quinn%20in%20her%20own,doesn%27t%20write%20struggle%E2%80%9D.&text=Julia%20Quinn%3A%20I%20don%27t,but%20you%20can%20make%20money!

[38] See social media posts cited in Shotwell, "Julia Quinn's Past Comments."

about and studying history, we are also looking to the future, to how we might deal with the echoes of the past which reverberate through the present. In reading the analyses which follow, then, I encourage you to consider not only the pain and suffering of racialization and colonialism, and the destruction levied on the natural world as a result, but the hope which the conditions of empire were unable to squash. Consider, for instance, the hope of freedom that would have driven Mary Prince to seek asylum in England, or that led soldiers in India to revolt in 1857—for any rebellion by the oppressed against their oppressors is fueled, at least in part, by the hope of freedom. This is not to say that we must insert false happiness to make up for pain, but rather, that to acknowledge the humanity of systemically dehumanized people we must acknowledge them in their wholeness, as capable of suffering and sadness, and equally as capable of making joy and beauty for themselves despite it all. This is something which our colonial historical archive has largely erased. While Prince largely disappears from the historical record following the publication of her *History*, this, too, offers us the opportunity to think speculatively or, as Saidiya Hartman might put it, to fabulate critically, in imagining a full life not captured by the dominant historical accounting.

PART I

Chapter 1

The Affective Landscape: Lessons in Racialized and Gendered Sentiment from Charlotte Smith and Mary Prince

Introduction

During her time in the salt ponds on Turks Island, Mary Prince describes witnessing the mistreatment of one of the other enslaved workers, an older man named Daniel. Prince describes how, following a brutal beating, Daniel would then be further tortured with salt, which would be

> fl[ung] upon the raw flesh till the man writhed on the ground like a worm, and screamed aloud with agony. This poor man's wounds were never healed, and I have often seen them full of maggots, which increased his torments to an intolerable degree. He was an object of pity and terror to the whole gang of slaves, and in his wretched case we saw, each of us, our own lot, if we should live to be as old.[1]

In this passage, Prince uses Daniel as an example of the extreme brutality of enslaved labor. Importantly, though, Daniel becomes exemplary because his body has accumulated the signs of repeated mistreatment, in wounds which never heal. These wounds, inflicted upon him by his enslavers and used to justify further torture, turn Daniel's body from the recognizably human

1 Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince,* edited by Sara Salih (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 21.

into something lowly and natural, writhing on the ground "like a worm," or like one of the maggots that fills his festering flesh.

I use the word "flesh" here not only because it seems an accurate representation of Daniel's brutalized body, but because the word as Hortense Spillers uses it in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" demonstrates how the inhumane conditions of enslavement allow for the erasure of the enslaved human's individuality. Spillers writes that the "undecipherable markings on the captive body render a kind of hieroglyphics of the flesh whose severed disjunctures come to be hidden to the cultural seeing by skin color."[2] The marks left by enslavement, like the wounds that define Daniel within Prince's narrative, tell the story of enslavement to the other slaves. While much of Spillers's focus is on enslaved women, she reads in the mutilated flesh a loss of "relatedness between human personality and its anatomical features, between one human personality and another, between human personality and cultural institutions. To that extent, the procedures adopted for the captive flesh demarcate a total objectification."[3] Through the procedures Prince describes, wherein Daniel's wounds are treated as a cautionary spectacle which the other enslaved people must witness, Daniel's brutalized body becomes *flesh*; in other words, a text in which the other enslaved people can read the story of the unindividuated mass of slaves, "our own lot, if we should live to be as old."[4] I point to Daniel here because, in dramatizing what Spillers would come to term the hieroglyphics of the flesh, what becomes captured on the page of Daniel's body is a story about how the environment was weaponized against enslaved people.

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[2] Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 67.

[3] Spillers, "Mama's Baby," 68.

[4] Prince, *History*, 21.

The relationship Daniel and other enslaved people, including Mary Prince herself, bore to the environment was one that wrote itself into their bodies; it is also one that comes to structure the very act of writing, or, in the case of Mary Prince, of recounting one's story to be written down by another. The affective mode of abolition literature, which Prince hints at in the above passage, is one heavily inflected with pity, or with some other version of what Brycchan Carey calls the "rhetoric of sensibility." Yet, as I seek to show in this chapter, the experience of pity and deployment of sentimental rhetoric differs by race, particularly in the racial dynamics between the narrator, the reader, and the object of sentiment. Prince's pity at watching and recounting Daniel's tortured existence is tinged, as she tells us, with "terror": terror at the slippage of self into flesh, and flesh—teeming with salt water and maggots—into environment. As I will parse in more detail later in this chapter, Prince's terror-tinged pity is an inherently different form of pity from that which her White abolitionist audience would have experienced upon reading the account.

Carey notes that what he calls the "rhetoric of sensibility" or "sentimental rhetoric" was often deployed by abolitionists in service of their cause. Sentimental rhetoric, he claims, "operat[ed] largely without theory, and depend[ed] on its practitioners to take an emotional and often anti-intellectual stance."[5] He is careful to point out, however, that sentimentality was often aspired to, rather than denigrated. This is where I must make a clarifying intervention: while sentimentality was often aspired to, it is important to attend to the gendered and racialized conditions under which the deployment of sentiment was valued. As Adela Pinch tells us, for instance, sentiment was most highly valued when cultivated in the breasts of *men*. Women, it was

[5] Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

assumed, were less likely to be able to distinguish between correct and improper sources of passion, and an overabundance of passion in women was therefore seen as undesirable.[6] We can see how this affected female poets like Charlotte Smith by looking at critical responses to her poems and in particular *The Emigrants* (1793). Furthermore, the value placed on sentiment differs according to race. As Kyla Schuller shows in *The Biopolitics of Feeling* (2018), non-White people, and Black people in particular, were seen as overly "impressionable," meaning they were seen as highly reactive to sensations without being capable of regulating, learning from, and evolving due to their experiences, while White women were thought to be overly "impressible" and thus vulnerable to being transformed by their environments. Black women, then, were understood to be overly susceptible to the ill-effects of an overabundance of passion; this passion was seen as another piece of evidence which proved their closeness to nature and, accordingly, distance from civilization. In order for their narratives of suffering to be taken seriously, then, Black women like Mary Prince had to carve a fine balance between demonstrating their capacity for sentiment, and at the same time distancing themselves from the perception of over-impressibility and attendant closeness to nature.

This chapter examines the ways in which the environment structures the affective experiences of sentimental political writing (including abolition literature) differently depending on race. As I will show through the poetry of Charlotte Smith, White British women's encounters with the environment—often through naturalist and poetic practices—were meant not only as a practical, but more importantly a *moral* education. This education involves understanding the

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[6] Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), 53.

place of sentimentality, and developing an ability to temper sentiment with reason, in effect holding the senses at a proper distance. Black women like Prince, however, were considered less civilized and closer to nature, unable to fit into Western ideas of "reason" and "morality" which privileged—-and I would argue continue to privilege—affective modes like objectivity, which Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison argue in *Objectivity* (2007) developed in the early-to-mid-nineteenth century. Through an examination of *The History of Mary Prince (1831)*, I will show how this distinction was created: forced contact with the environment through enslaved labor erases the possibility of the distance from nature and the senses allowed to White women, and thus also precludes them from adhering to the ideals of Western civilization. Black women thus come to be racialized (and, often, disabled) through forced contact with the environment which enslaved labor requires, completing a circuitous logical route which allows no escape from the conditions of capture.

Charlotte Smith & Naturalism as Affective Education

Sara Ahmed suggests in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004) that "what moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence, movement does not cut the body off from the 'where' of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others."[7] In Ahmed's conception, emotions not only allow for the constitution of boundaries—the separation of self from other, in from out—but they also enable collectivities, the bond between emotional objects and bodies and the breaching of those selfsame boundaries.

[7] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 11.

To start, I will explore how Charlotte Smith uses not only emotion, but the connection of emotion to scientific practice and culture, to craft bonds to other places and other people. These bonds, I suggest, play a key role in her deployment of sentimental rhetoric. To use Ahmed's turn of phrase, Smith's poetics, in their balance between sensibility and scientific empiricism, allow Smith, and through her, allows her readers, to be *moved*, or transported between places and emotional states. This occurs throughout Smith's poetry when she imagines herself writing in far flung locations, such as the Hebrides and the American prairie. It also occurs within *The Emigrants*, a poem which, as critics including Jacqueline Labbe and Kerri Andrews note, was widely criticized for Smith's deployment of her own sad tale in emotive parallel to that of the French emigres. Understanding Smith's capacity for emotional transport and sentimentality is important because it helps us understand Smith's speculative sentimental limits. This, I argue, occurs when she writes on Blackness and abolition and specifically in her poem "To the firefly of Jamaica, as seen in a collection."

Smith's poetry often balances science with sentiment, and Here with Elsewhere. These two facets, I argue, are linked: Smith uses her scientific or naturalistic knowledge to help craft connections to other places, while her turns to emotionality are often linked to inward turns, back toward the speaker, heavily implied to be Smith herself, and the emotions which are both reflective of and keep her trapped in her actuality. In one of my favorites of Smith's short poems, "To the insect of the gossamer," from *Elegiac Sonnets* (which carries a truly phenomenal footnote, longer by far than the sonnet itself), she describes a tiny spider conveying itself by forming a windsail of a mass of web. The poem then takes a turn, as Smith's poems often do, toward the melancholy, and also inward, toward the poet:

...Alas! before the veil

Of denser clouds shall hide thee, the pursuit

Of the keen Swift may end thy fairy sail!—

Thus on the golden thread that Fancy weaves

Buoyant, as Hope's illusive flattery breathes,

The young and visionary Poet leaves

Life's dull realities, while sevenfold wreaths

Of rainbow-light around his head revolve.

Ah! soon at Sorrow's touch the radiant dreams dissolve![8]

While the poet here is a hypothetical male, the specter of Smith's own life hangs heavy over so much of her writing that it's difficult not to see the final line as referring to herself as well. The ultimately tragic, though picturesque, journey of the tiny spider in Smith's poem is linked by the single adverb "Thus" to the disillusionment of the Poet by "Sorrow's touch." Here, it is the imagination or the "visionary" poet's inward life— "fancy," or "sevenfold wreaths/Of rainbow-light [which] around his head revolve," or "radiant dreams"—which allows for the escape from "Life's dull realities," at least until Sorrow intervenes. These poetic visions allow for a form of transport, such as that which we will see in Smith's other poetry; such poetic visions are both vulnerable to certain negative sentiments, and are equated with natural phenomena, suggesting that events in nature, too, might be deserving of the reader's Sorrow.

[8] Charlotte Smith. "To the insect of the gossamer" in *The Poems of Charlotte Smith (Women Writers in English 1350-1850)*, edited by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 66, lines 6-14.

Smith's poems take their subject matter both from nature and from emotions (her sonnets are, after all, Elegiac); while the two are connected through simile in the poem's verse, there is at first glance separation effected through her footnotes, which focus largely on scientific or otherwise "detached" descriptions of natural phenomena without, or with less, emotional intervention. The footnote to this poem interjects with a lengthy explanation of the natural phenomena which is ostensibly the primary subject of the poem. The insect of the gossamer, Smith explains, has been studied and documented by not only Smith herself but also naturalists included in the Encyclopedia Britannica, Shakespeare in Mercutio's speech on Queen Mab as well as in a quotation by Friar Laurence, and Erasmus Darwin—the last a figure who exemplifies the blend of the scientific and poetic with his poems mythologizing the naturalist's learnings for the purposes of educating young women. In citing these various sources in her footnote, Smith puts herself into both a scientific and literary lineage. She also equates the expertise of all three sources in describing the insect (though the naturalist's description does take up the most space), and lends herself authority by including her own description of the gossamer amongst theirs. In doing so, it is unclear whether this authority extends beyond the descriptions offered in her footnotes, to her verse as well. Granted that Shakespeare's primary authority is as a poet-playwright whose genius lies largely in the emotional and psychological realm, and that Darwin's not only bridges poetry and science but does so with the purpose of educating, their inclusion along with the naturalist's perspective allows Smith to connect the various forms of expertise which they each offer, claiming them to at least some degree for her own. This footnote, then, though outwardly a scientific description of the phenomenon described more "fancifully" in verse, effects a subtle elision between naturalist and poetic expertise which

ultimately allows emotions into the scientific realm. This conflation comes into play through a series of Smith's poems in which she takes up the imaginative transport attributed to the male poet in "To the insect of the gossamer."

Footnotes, however, are not the only way Charlotte Smith navigates the dynamic between natural and emotional description. In her verse, some of the most interesting cases of this duality arise when Smith imagines herself elsewhere, suggesting that this dynamic is one influenced not simply by place but by the poet's own emotional and social situatedness. Several of Smith's sonnets are titled "Supposed to have been written in…", followed by the name of the location which inspired their penning; for example: "Supposed to have been written in America", "Supposed to have been written in the Hebrides", "Supposed to have been written in a church yard, over the grave of a young woman of nineteen." Others, such as "The captive escaped in the wilds of America. Addressed to the Hon. Mrs. O'Neill" begin with this conceit, but ultimately return to the sentiments of the writer (who is safe at home), effecting a separation between places which clarifies the role of imagination as that necessary for extended metaphor. The titles of the "Supposed to have been written" poems suggest that writing about the emotions elicited by a place requires (imaginative) transport. In "Supposed to have been written in America," for example, Smith embodies a "superstitious" feeling of dread in the cry of a nighthawk, a bird supposed by the Native Americans, according to Smith's footnotes, to portend misfortune. In the sonnet's first six lines the location clearly aligns with the poem's title: we witness the bird's "cries portentous float/ O'er yon savannah"— "yon" here signaling a distinct point-of-view which guides the reader like a gentle hand on the shoulder.[9] In the poem's second sestet and final

[9] Charlotte Smith. "Supposed to have been written in America" in *The Poems of Charlotte Smith (Women Writers in English 1350-1850)*, edited by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 54, lines 1-2.

couplet, however, we shift to focus on the speaker's emotions, and the poem's sense of place becomes less clear. Without further references to exterior events or landmarks, the poem's title is the only solid anchor-point maintaining the poem's presence in an imagined America. To maintain the illusion of the poem's title, then, the emotions described as elicited by the nighthawk's cry must be understood as dependent on, or at least closely linked to, place.

When Smith writes of slavery in "To the Firefly of Jamaica," then, the poem's setting in Jamaica and the reader's imaginative transport to this setting—the transport in this case effected by seeing a firefly pinned behind glass in a naturalist's collection—attempts to evoke emotions which will instruct the young reader in the moral faculties of sentiment and the necessity of abolition. "To the firefly of Jamaica" is drawn from Smith's educational collection, *Conversations Introducing Poetry*. As Dahlia Porter points out, Smith takes the familiar stance in her collections for children that "moral failings are linked directly to [a] failure to see the natural landscape correctly."[10] The frame of *Rural Walks*, for example, follows the moral development of a young city-dwelling child, Caroline, as she is introduced to nature and poetry through a series of walks. Porter suggests that, by the end of the collection, Caroline "has graduated from description to sentiment. Caroline's moral development… is marked by her new-found ability to observe nature empirically, comprehend it aesthetically, and rearticulate it as a poetic object."[11] In *Conversations*, the possibilities for the child's aesthetic and moral development are expanded; not only can these lessons be learned through direct contact with the natural environment, but

[10] Dahlia Porter, "From Nosegay to Specimen Cabinet: Charlotte Smith and the Labour of Collecting," in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (New York: Routledge, 2008), 31.

[11] Porter, "Nosegay," 33.

they can occur through engagement with naturalist collections and the imaginative transport they evoke as well.

Engagement with scientific frameworks can be useful for moral improvement in part because frameworks such as Linnean categorization emphasize relationality, requiring that the naturalist recognize the harmony and mutual dependence of the natural world. However, the naturalist bent toward categorization and discovering organisms' placement in a vast chain of beings also brings with it certain limits, which I argue ultimately affect Smith's ability to empathize. We can see this occur through Smith's footnotes, which at first glance effect a separation from her poetic voice; as I noted previously, Smith's footnotes throughout her poetry focus largely on scientific or otherwise "detached" descriptions of natural phenomena without, or with less, emotional intervention, when compared to the verse itself. Studying the contrast between information imparted in scientific footnotes versus the more emotional prose, then, helps us better understand the people and objects to which Smith extends the greatest possibility for emotional connection.

In "To the fire-fly of Jamaica," Smith uses naturalist knowledge as a backdrop for both an overt moral message on the importance of avoiding vanity, as well as for the poem's abolitionist undertones. Something complex happens, however, in the transition between science and emotion, and I want, therefore, to examine not only Smith's attempts at connection but her failings as well. For reliance on categorization and relationality can both craft bonds, and, in the case of "To the fire-fly of Jamaica," I argue, cement hierarchies. In this poem, Smith sympathizes with the plight of enslaved Africans, but her reliance on naturalist categorization leads to the suggestion that each subject she describes—including the firefly, whose light fades once taken

from its environment, and the enslaved people, who are kidnaped and transplanted from Africa—has a natural place from whence it should not stray.

"To the fire-fly of Jamaica" makes the case that witnessing artifacts brought back from travel, while enough to spark the imaginative impulse which allows for emotional transportation within Smith's poetry, is an experience lacking the depth which brings life to her other poems. Smith begins her poem with a lament: "How art thou alter'd!"[12] The transplantation of the firefly from its path as a "bright earth wanderer" in the jungles of Jamaica has deadened the literal spark of life contained within it, and through its removal has deprived others within its native ecosystem of its presence.[13] Porter notes that, in this poem and others, Smith critiques the cruelty of naturalist practice. She writes that characters in *Conversations* "[declaim] against the cruelty of scientific collecting—the embowering and drying of 'poor birds' and insects that have 'resigned their short lives in some degree of suffering, which nature would not have inflicted,'" while at the same time using the results of that naturalist knowledge to educate children in morality and sensibility.[14] It is notable that this critique of naturalist cruelty, extends beyond the scientific realm to the often emotional one of abolition. Through crafting a parallel between the firefly and enslaved Africans, Smith denounces the cruelty of slavery, albeit with mixed results and unexpected consequences.

Smith's abolitionist message appears both in verse, and, in a more extended form, in her footnotes. Alongside notes on bats, bananas, and various types of trees, Smith also includes several notes on the conditions of enslaved people in Jamaica. In one, she claims that "The recent

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[12] Charlotte Smith. "To the fire-fly of Jamaica, seen in a collection," in *The Poems of Charlotte Smith (Women Writers in English 1350-1850)*, edited by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 204, line 1.

[13] Smith, "To the fire-fly," line 2.

[14] Porter, "Nosegay," 38.

captive, who in vain,/ Attempts to break his heavy chain,/ And find his liberty in flight;" sometimes hides in caves, waiting to ambush his enslaver.[15] The verse builds sympathy through reference to the "captive" burdened by a "heavy chain" who is seeking only liberty—a theme at the fore of many an English mind at the turn of the century. Her footnote for these lines reads: "The wretched N*, fearing punishment, or driven to despair by continual labour, often secretes himself in these obscure recesses [caves], and preys in his turn on his oppressor at the hazard of his life."[16] In another note, she writes of those who have not been able to escape slavery, that, "After the toils of the day, the poor African often walks many miles, and for a few hours loses the sense of his misery among his friends and companions."[17] Smith is clearly sympathetic to the "poor African" who has toiled all day, and even to the escaped captive who "preys in turn on his oppressor at the hazard of his life"; note the emphasis not only on the vengeance exacted by the escaped man but also on the danger he puts himself in, and thus his implied righteousness. The inclusion of these explanatory asides amongst footnotes relating to Linnean botanical names, however, lends Smith's abolitionist views a slightly scientific valence, as though she were simply describing events rather than using them to make a subtle argument. On the one hand, the scientific valence lent to the footnotes functions in her favor, aligning her abolitionist argument with what we would now call objectivity and drawing it away from the emotional feminine realm it was often associated with; on the other hand, it minimizes slavery to a facet of the ecosystem to be described and categorized for educational purposes. Further supporting this alignment, the captive's relationship to the firefly is one described in terms of survival and instinct: he either

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[15] Smith, "To the fire-fly," lines 17-19.

[16] Smith, "To the fire-fly," 205.

[17] Smith, "To the fire-fly," 205.

hides in terror from the "strange and doubtful light / In the mountain's cavern'd side, / Or gully deep, where gibbering monkies cling" or uses the firefly's light to guide his path.[18] Both of these relationships emphasize the distance of the enslaved man from civilization; he resides in caves, among monkeys and bats, and uses not candlelight but the firefly's glow to find his way (when he isn't cowering from the innocent bug in misguided terror, that is).

The connection between the firefly, whose light fades once trapped under glass in the naturalist's collection, and the enslaved man, who must resort to hiding in caves in order to maintain his freedom, draws less on arguments about freedom and self-governance or on the reader's empathy for enslaved people than on the idea that everything is best when it remains in its natural place. This is mirrored by the poem's final stanzas, which reveal the firefly as a conceit to warn against ostentation and vanity. Beginning in the penultimate stanza, the verse addresses the "human meteors" guilty of these sins directly:

> Ye dazzling comets that appear
> In Fashion's rainbow atmosphere,
> Lighting and flashing for a day;
> Think ye, how *fugitive* your fame?
> How soon from her light scroll away,
> Is wafted your ephemeron name?
> Even tho' on canvas still your forms are shewn,
> Or the slow chisel shapes the pale resembling stone.

[18] Smith, "To the fire-fly," lines 21-24.

Let vaunting OSTENTATION trust

The pencil's art, or marble bust,

While long neglected modest worth

Unmark'd unhonor'd, and unknown,

Obtains at length a little earth

Where kindred merit weeps alone;

Yet there, tho' VANITY no trophies rear,

Is FRIENDSHIP'S long regret, and true AFFECTION'S tear![19]

The lines argue for a privileging of friendship and affection over vanity and ostentation, noting that these actions will survive while fame will fade and distort like the firefly under glass. In doing so, however, Smith also creates a narrative about those who strive to be remembered through their genius: that such genius precludes sentimental attachments and kindness, and that it is a sign of ostentation and vanity—of striving, that is, beyond one's station. Both vanity and ostentation signify a degree of falseness; the true nature of the thing is not so grand as it is imagined or portrayed. The "human meteor," the firefly, and the enslaved African in Jamaica all have one thing in common: they have been removed from their places in the natural order.

Consider, however, the contrasting dynamics between scientific description and emotional appeal which play out in the footnotes of "To the firefly" with those which occur in *The Emigrants*. Critics have previously noted that Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* allow Smith to craft a relationship with her reader; as Labbe notes, this relationship is one with Smith's suffering at its

[19] Smith, "To the fire-fly," lines 57-72.

core.[20] Through purchasing her collections, readers are not only privileged with a sort of public confessional, but are able to feel as though they are financially "rescuing" Smith themselves. When Smith inserted herself into *The Emigrants*, however, she was widely rebuked for, essentially, making it all about herself. I argue, however, that Smith's insertion of her own tragedy serves a different purpose from that of which she has generally been accused.

It is through Smith's own emotions, and specifically suffering, that she suggests the reader connect with the French Emigrants. Her suffering, with which her readers had been long made familiar, serves as a conduit through which the reader can relate to and connect with others like the migrants, allowing, then, for the reader's emotional movement. Smith writes, imagining herself addressing the seven-year-old Louis in his imprisonment, "who knows, / From sad experience, more than I, to feel / For thy desponding spirit."[21] Here, even her reader is posited as unable to properly feel for the child's suffering, *except for through Smith*. This impulse to identify with and emotionally bridge the reader and the sympathetic object is so strong throughout *The Emigrants* that the landscape, so prominent a part of Smith's argument in "To the Firefly," is entirely subsumed by Smith's emotions. She writes,

> …So many years have pass'd,
> Since, on my native hills, I learn'd to gaze
> On these delightful landscapes; and those years
> Have taught me so much sorrow, that my soul
> Feels not the joy reviving Nature brings…

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[20] Jacqueline Labbe, "Introduction," in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (New York: Routledge, 2008), 6.

[21] Charlotte Smith. "The Emigrants," in *The Poems of Charlotte Smith (Women Writers in English 1350-1850)*, ed. Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 141, book 1, lines 169-171.

What is the promise of the infant year,

the lively verdure, or the bursting blooms,

To those, who shrink from horrors such as War

Spreads o'er the affrighted world?[22]

Even the way nature is described here is different; Smith's empathy is so strong that she is not only unable to appreciate nature emotionally (her "soul feels not the joy reviving Nature brings"), but scientifically, as well, referring to generic blooms and verdure. *The Emigrants*, I'll add, is notably devoid of the detailed naturalist footnotes which characterize the rest of Smith's poetry. Instead, the natural descriptions are subsumed by by Smith's reflections on suffering.

Both Smith and, later, Mary Prince, draw a connection between their own suffering and those of others. Mary Prince writes both that she "ha[s] felt what a slave feels, and [she] knows what a slave knows" and thus, that "In telling my own sorrows, I cannot pass by those of my fellow-slaves—for when I think of my own griefs, I remember theirs."[23] In her preface to *The Emigrants,* addressed to William Cowper, meanwhile, Smith makes a claim that her own suffering has increased her capacity for sympathy with the plights of others; her heart "has learned, perhaps, from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others."[24] This is a sentiment which she takes up several times within the lines of the poem itself. Once, she writes, addressing the exiled French clergy, that despite their faults and differences of religion, "I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known / involuntary exile."[25] Later, she draws clear parallels between herself and a French mother who, like Smith, stares out over

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[22] Smith, "The Emigrants," 150-151, book 2, lines 36-46.

[23] Prince, *History*, 21-22.

[24] Smith, "The Emigrants," 132.

[25] Smith, "The Emigrants," 155, book 2, lines 155-56.

the Channel, and even writes "Ah! who knows, / From sad experience, more than I, to feel / For thy desponding spirit, as it sinks / Beneath procrastinated fears for those / More dear to thee than life!"[26] In this instance, it is not just that Smith's sufferings have increased her sympathies, but that her own experiences have vested her with a unique ability to feel for this exiled Frenchwoman. She posits herself, therefore, as uniquely suited to write on this highly sentimental issue and places her own experiences at the center of the poem.

Despite this attestation that her own suffering has a place in relation to that of the emigrants of whom she writes, as Kerri Andrews notes, critics—particularly conservative ones—did not receive Smith's foregrounding of herself so positively. Such critics, Andrews writes, felt that

> Smith ought to have ceded her place as the object of the reader's sympathies; to not do so in a poem which is titled *The Emigrants* is perhaps disingenuous, and unnecessary. Those readers who have bought the poem have already supported Smith through the act of purchasing the text: her financial needs are being met. But they are also buying the poem to show support for the émigrés, whose position and difficulties are not necessarily being addressed so directly.[27]

In reading *The Emigrants*, then, the audience seeks an affirmation of their own capacity for sentiment and magnanimity toward the French Emigrès. Because the sale of the poem does not directly benefit the eponymous emigrants, buying the poem is, instead, a symbol, a reflection of the politics of the purchaser. Yet, what they receive is a poem arguing that it is only *through* Smith that the reader can develop that capacity. Hence, the backlash the poem received reveals a

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[26] Smith, "The Emigrants," 155, book 2, lines 169-174.

[27] Kerri Andrews, "'Herself…fills the foreground': Negotiating Autobiography in the Elegiac Sonnets and The Emigrants," in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (New York: Routledge, 2008), 18.

mismatch between the audience's self conception, and Smith's own understanding of her poetry and what its audience desires from it.

Unlike in the case of the enslaved African in "Firefly," the reader of *The Emigrants* does not need to be taught sympathy for the poem's subjects, does not even need to be imaginatively transported to the site of their suffering; both are too close for comfort as it is. In "To the firefly," where rich, descriptive nature abounds and the emotion of the Africans are flattened, imaginative transport takes the place of true sympathy. Here, the French emigres, regardless of their faults, are emotional beings *akin* to the long-suffering Smith and thus granted detailed interiority to match. The French, white-skinned and from just across Smith's beloved English Channel, are already familiar, identified with the reader, so that instruction in empathizing with them comes across as patronizing. The enslaved African, meanwhile, must be reduced through Smith's footnotes to the level of the firefly in order to merit sympathy: a curiosity to be collected in a cabinet, or better yet, returned to his native land.

Mary Prince & Racialized Ecological Contact

In this section, which considers how *The History of Mary Prince* constructs both sympathy for its narrator, and demonstrates her own capacity for sentiment, I will draw primarily on two theorizations of race: Kyla Schuller's reading of racialized sentimentality in *The Biopolitics of Feeling* (2018), and Roxann Wheeler's research on the codification of the racialized body throughout the eighteenth century in *The Complexion of Race* (2000). Schuller writes not only of the American context but also of the latter part of the nineteenth century; Wheeler's focus, meanwhile, is on eighteenth century Europe. In placing these two texts, along with their analyses

of race, together, I mean to show how race was still solidifying and developing toward the meaning familiar to us today. As Wheeler writes, "The several examples [attributed to religion, commerce, and climate] of the ease with which visible change occurred to individual bodies and to the body politic suggest that Britons' understanding of complexion, the body, and identity was far more fluid than ours is today," with skin color emerging, Wheeler claims, as indicative of race only in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, though this notion, too, remained flexible.[28] I also mean to show the important role of a body's contact with the natural world in determining its racialization, as well as the implications racialization had for ideas regarding internal—moral, sentimental—characteristics. In effect, I hope to triangulate the body, sentiment, and the natural world, in demonstrating how race was understood around the time Smith and Prince were writing (or telling) of their respective suffering.

In emphasizing her conversion to the Morovian Church within her narrative, Mary Prince first seeks to demonstrate a closeness to ideas associated with Whiteness and the political protections afforded therein. As Wheeler notes, Christian theology formed part of the basis for how "complexion" —which was only one aspect of race—was understood:

> *Complexion* referred to inhabitants' temperament or disposition; it arose from the interaction of climate and the bodily humors (blood, bile, phlegm, and choler). Skin color, then, was only one component of complexion. Eighteenth-century Europeans maintained great faith in the strong effects of climate on the body. Their other traditional frame of reference for skin color derived from Christian semiotics, which

[28] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 5-6.

> combined moral and aesthetic meanings, primarily in the binary pair pure white and sinful black.[29]

In placing herself as a good Christian, therefore, Prince construes herself as morally white, and therefore, closer to racial Whiteness as well. Yet, she takes this a step further when she decries the actions of purportedly Christian White slave owners and subtly questions them within the context of religion on the grounds that their treatment of enslaved West Indians indicates that they "forget God and all feeling of shame."[30] In placing herself as a sentimental and moral authority, and bringing the Christianity of the White slave owners into question, Prince reveals the constructed nature of the racial system which upholds slavery, and the use of emotions in its constitution.

Telling her tale within the abolitionist genre requires that Mary Prince and her transcriber walk a fine line between sentimentalism—meant to inspire kindly feelings in her largely (White) female audience and to demonstrate her capacity for feeling—and restraint, intended to indicate self-control and contradict potential claims of sensationalism. As Prince knows, claims regarding the capacity of Black individuals for feeling were one of the key justifications for enslavement. She exclaims, "Oh the Buckra people who keep slaves think that black people are like cattle, without natural affection. But my heart tells me it is far otherwise."[31] Prince therefore calls upon the language of sentimentalism to demonstrate her own capacity for feeling, as part of a claim for her humanity. As Charlotte Smith did in *The Emigrants,* she links her own suffering to those of others, stating that, "In telling my own sorrows, I cannot pass by those of my fellow-slaves—for

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[29] Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race*, 2.

[30] Prince, *History of Mary Prince,* 37.

[31] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 18.

when I think of my own griefs, I remember theirs."[32] Suffering, in this paradigm, becomes something which not only links the sufferer to others, but requires action of them. She must speak out on behalf of her fellow slaves *because* she "ha[s] felt what a slave feels, and [she] knows what a slave knows."[33]. She includes her White audience in this paradigm at various points throughout the narrative when she states her belief—a common one in abolitionist circles, and the thought that drove the publication of slave narratives— that, if only the English could *know* the truth of slavery, they would be driven to abolish it. Knowing the truth of slavery, in Prince's formulation, requires a degree of emotional knowledge and therefore sentimental ability: feeling, or at least understanding, what a slave feels. Through sentiment, then, Prince seeks to draw White and Black womanhood together. At the same time, she calls the emotional abilities of White slave owners into question.

Prince describes White slave owners and those complicit in slavery, who witnessed the auction and separation of enslaved children from their families without intervening: "They were not all bad, I dare say, but slavery hardens white people's hearts toward the blacks… Oh those white people have small hearts who can only feel for themselves."[34] Compare this to the Buckra notion Prince relates, quoted in the paragraph above, that Black people are "without natural affection." When she notes that White people can "only feel for themselves," Prince is reversing this accusation; the White people, whose hearts have been hardened by slavery, have lost their ability for "natural affection." In this way, Prince inspires her White audience to alienate

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[32] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 22.

[33] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 21.

[34] Prince*, History of Mary Prince,* 11.

themselves from the hard-hearted enslavers, and in doing so, to align themselves with the more sentimentally-developed Prince herself.

This loss of natural affection becomes particularly interesting as Prince continually links it to what we might call "Christian feeling." We have already seen how Prince effects a reversal of the racist notion that Black people are like cattle, or other animals, incapable of higher emotions, while White slave owners are the civilized, sympathetic race. In the following paragraph, however, Prince connects these ideas—of animalism, sentiment, and morality—to religion:

> Since I have been here I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame, I think, since they can see and do such things. They tie up slaves like hogs—moor them up like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or cattle, or horses never were flogged; —and yet they come home and say, and make some good people believe, that slaves don't want to get out of slavery. But they put a cloak about the truth. It is not so.[35]

Treating enslaved people like beasts, and explicitly lying about or discounting their feelings, requires a beastliness on behalf of the English slave owners of the West Indies. This beastliness, Prince tells us, indicates that they have forgotten God, therefore calling their Christianity into question. Notably, it also indicates a loss of emotional range; that is, slave owners have forgotten all feeling of shame. This is important because shame is an emotion which involves reflection, and recognition of the consequences of one's actions. It can be understood, therefore, as one of

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[35] Prince*, History of Mary Prince*, 37-38.

the "higher" emotions associated with sentimentalism and a finer development of feeling—as opposed to the "lower" reactive emotions like the rage of the enslavers Prince depicts. This sort of emotional devolution, which Prince claims happens only when the English go to the West Indies, seems to resonate with Wheeler's understanding of eighteenth-century ideas of race as inflected by climate. Yet, this emotional lack may also be transmitted from father to son, as in the case of Master Dickey, who Prince recounts abusing the enslaved: "[Master Dickey] had no heart —no fear of God; he had been brought up by a bad father in a bad path, and he delighted to follow in the same steps."[36]

In drawing attention to the way Prince confronts the reader with the inhumanity of the slave owners, I do not want to suggest that she is effecting a simple reversal of racial logics. To do so would suggest that race was, at the time of the narrative's writing, more fixed and closer to present-day conceptions than it in fact was. But Prince's characterizations do upend or contradict familiar associations of Whiteness with civility, and therefore suggest the mutability of race due to several factors, including those which Wheeler tells us of—religion, education, location, and sentimental capacity. Next, I will turn to an example of how Prince's narrative and its aftereffects draw into question the supposedly civilized process of reflecting prior to engaging in sentimental assessment.

Whereas I started this chapter with the example of Daniel, whose brutal treatment elicited Prince's mixed sympathy and fear, there are moments in Prince's narrative where she herself becomes flesh (to use Spiller's word). One of these instances is repeated after the publication of the narrative, when Prince is asked to bare her back so that the White abolitionists may confirm

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36 Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, 22.

the veracity of her claims through viewing and describing her scar-checkered back. The reader's skepticism implies a desire to confirm the reality of Prince's suffering before investing an emotion such as pity; such an investigation demonstrates the reader's intellectualization of sentiment, and therefore her ability to govern her emotions. However, in disbelieving Prince until her narrative can be visually confirmed by a White authority, and in the abolitionists themselves partaking in this spectacle, they are not only misreading the "hieroglyphics" of her scarred flesh, but repeating the removal of Prince's personhood which was effected through the original violation of her body. As Kerry Sinanan writes in an essay titled "Mary Prince's Back," this moment challenges White English narratives about humanism (and who has access to it) and reveals that "Englishness is not about freedom, or benevolence, or good stewardship, but about merciless, racist, extractive violence. In continuing to extract from Prince's body for their own gain, the abolitionists of Pringle's household reinforce, rather than dismantle these structures of white supremacy."[37] This is the argument which undergirds not only Prince's revelation of her back but also the graphic descriptions of violence throughout: enslavement depends on the myth that Black people do not belong to the category of *human*, while simultaneously revealing the inhumane violence not only of enslavers but of all who benefit from this system.

The idea of sentimentalism, as Kyla Schuller tells us, allows for the above scene—the White witnessing of flesh and repetition of abstracted violence, supposedly in the service of a just cause—to take place: "Sentimentalism stimulates the moral virtuosity and emotional release of the sympathizer and her affective attachment to the nation-state at the expense of the needs of the chosen targets of her sympathy, typically those barred from the status of the individuated

[37] Kerry Sinanan. "Mary Prince's Back and Her Critique of Anti-Slavery Sympathy." *Studies in Romanticism* 61 no. 1 (2022): 70.

Human: often the impoverished, the racialized, the conquered, the orphaned, and/or the animalized."[38] In this portion of the chapter, I will use Schuller's understanding of nineteenth-century sentimentalism to demonstrate how this affective aspect of racialization simultaneously depended on and created racially distinct relationships to the natural environment. As we will see, Schuller's arguments regarding sentimentalism and sentimental biopower rely on the relationship the world outside the body and self bears to the world within—to the mind and its ability to regulate emotions.

I have raised the issue of Mary Prince's back in part because it is one of several instances in which her enslavement—the world outside her self—leaves its mark upon her body. Another moment comes in one of the most graphically gruesome portions of Prince's narrative, when she recounts her time laboring in the salt ponds on Turks Island. She states: "Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, afflicting the sufferers with great torment."[39] Here, it is the environment that leaves its violent—and permanent— impression upon Prince. I use the word "impression" here intentionally, because, using its nineteenth-century meaning as Schuller explains it, allows me to link the literal, physical impressions left by enslaved labor and racialized affective theories of the day. Schuller writes that

> biopower materialized through the deployment of a vast and varied discourse that determined the vitality or unresponsiveness of a living body, and therefore its political claims to life, on the basis of its relative impressibility, or the energetic accumulation

[38] Kyla Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham: Duke UP, 2018), 2.

[39] Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, 19.

> of sensory impressions and its capacity to regulate its engagement with the world outside the self. Sentimental discourse elaborated finely wrought rankings of the disparate corporeal capacity to receive, incorporate, and transmit sensory impressions, and for the mind to direct appropriately nonimpulsive, emotional responses to sensations—named "sentiments"—that would benefit the individual, race, and species.[40]

As Mary Prince's narrative demonstrates, however, enslavement required forms of contact with the world that did not allow the enslaved person to regulate their engagement "with the world outside the self." The enslaved person was not allowed to dictate the terms of their own labor, which often involved dangerous and mutilating contact with nature such as that Mary Prince experienced in the salt ponds; the resulting scars were often left upon the flesh as evidence of their status as enslaved and therefore precluded from the political realm.

The forms of sensory stimulation—in particular pain—forced upon enslaved people, and the permanent evidence left by these torturous stimuli upon their bodies, are important to this chapter because, taking up and modifying Schuller's claims, I argue that certain forms of contact with the natural world, particularly those forced upon enslaved Black people, were involved in the construction of race. Schuller argues that, according to an American school of nineteenth century Lamarckian evolutionary theorists, "species originated in sensory stimulation, and civilization originated in the faculty of sentiment... Impressibility and sentiment became the material basis of race."[41] According to Schuller's formulation, sensibility indicated an ability to receive impressions from the senses, and a capacity to be changed by them—in Schuller's

[40] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 3.

[41] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 37.

biopolitical framing, a capacity to evolve and "improve" the race in accordance with one's environment: "Heightened impressibility enabled growth and the acquisition of knowledge. Yet to be impressible is to be vulnerable."[42] The related idea of *sentiment*, meanwhile, "marks an emotional response to a physical impression and connotes a refined rather than impulsive quality."[43]

The distinctions Schuller draws between sentiment, as refined rather than impulsive, as well as the vulnerability which accompanies impressibility, hints at the racial and gendered facets of these concepts. Upper-class White women, whose capacity for impressibility was understood as overdeveloped, were therefore overly vulnerable and in need of protection or sentimental education. As Schuller writes, and as we saw with Smith's use of botany as an educational aid in proper sentimentality, "Sentimentalism emerged as an epistemological, aesthetic, and political mode of regulating the volatility of the impressible body by subjecting sensory feelings to the reflective capacity of emotion."[44] Sentimentalism, as we might see in poetry about the natural world, was therefore a mode of safely engaging with the environment which could be practiced, learned, and directed to create cultural artifacts. For these White women, knowledge of the environment involved distanced and often sentimental study, structured by the practice of botanizing.

By contrast, populations considered "primitive" were understood as unable to be influenced by impressions, and thus unable to reflect and direct their own evolution. Instead, "The condition of primitivity…becomes the state of penetrability, a heightened affectability in which sensations

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[42] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 40.

[43] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 40.

[44] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 40.

pass right through the body, failing to stick" and instead eliciting immediate, impulsive, and unreflected reactions.[45] This idea of under-impressibility has implications for how enslaved people were treated by enslavers, whose extreme violence and heavy-handedness was at times linked to an idea that Black people could only learn when forcibly impressed upon. When Mary Prince says that she has "felt what a slave feels, and knows what a slave knows," I read in this statement a very different sort of ecological knowledge than that allowed the aforementioned White women poets and botanists.[46]

In what might at first seem to be a bit of cruel irony, Prince describes how one of her enslavers, Mr. D inured himself to the suffering he inflicted upon his slaves:

> There was this difference between [Prince's old and new master]: my former master used to beat me while raging and foaming with passion; Mr D—was usually quite calm… Nothing could touch his hard heart—neither sighs, nor tears, nor prayers, nor streaming blood; he was deaf to our cries, and careless of our sufferings... Yet there was nothing very remarkable in this; for it might serve as a sample of the common usage of the slaves on that horrible island.[47]

Mr. D's behavior can be explained, however, by Schuller's descriptions of impressibility theory. Not only was there a pervasive belief that Black people were less sensitive to physical stimuli, including painful stimuli, and that their cries indicated an impulsive reaction rather than a true and lasting impression; Mr D is also demonstrating his separation from Blackness and its associated "primitiveness" by regulating his own emotional response to the cries of those he has

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[45] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 44.

[46] Prince, *The History of Mary Prince,* 21.

[47] Prince, *The History of Mary Prince,* 20.

injured. Reframing his behavior in accordance with Schuller's understanding of sentimentality not as an empathic ability to feel for others but rather an ability to correctly regulate emotional response to sensory stimuli, we can read the former master, who "foam[ed] with passion" like a rabid animal, as indicative of a sentimental failure to regulate the self. The detached Mr. D, meanwhile, who does not respond to signs of suffering which he does not believe are indicative of true pain, becomes a paragon of White masculine sentimentality.[48]

We can see, therefore, how this eco-racial logic of sentimentality is cyclical and self-sustaining, even enabling and incorporating the brutishness of slave drivers into its self-sustainment. The notion that supposedly primitive enslaved Black people were too close to nature and therefore had to be forced into bearing painful contact with nature which only further denigrated them in the eyes of their enslavers is also very nearly inescapable. The sentimental mode of abolition literature requires that Mary Prince expose the process of being made flesh, in order to elicit the sympathy of the abolitionist reader and to demonstrate her own capacity for sentiment. In doing so, however, she must also confirm her own painful form of ecological knowledge and allow herself to be once again subjected to the process of being made flesh, thereby reaffirming the racial logics underlying her enslavement.

While Prince's relationship to her natural environment is not entirely one of pain, the moments of positive contact she has with nature are gendered and racialized, and therefore systematically devalued. At times, nature is used kindly toward her, to help her heal from the injuries inflicted upon her due to her enslaved status. On several occasions, she mentions how she and her peers used natural remedies: "On Sundays, after we had washed the salt bags, and

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[48] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 20.

done other work required of us, we went into the bush and cut the long soft grass, of which we made trusses for our legs and feet to rest upon, for they were so full of the salt boils that we could get no rest lying upon the bare boards."[49] Prince herself eventually became disabled, suffering from rheumatism—which, notably, is a disability she and Smith shared— and crippled by Saint Anthony's fire in her left leg, both before she had reached her 30s. Prince herself blamed being made to do washing in a freshwater pond, leading her to catch cold ("in the salt water I never got cold").[50] However, by this time, Prince had spent over ten years in the salt ponds, followed by another period of several years doing agricultural work. She was also, as she quotes Mrs Wood, "'used to the whip,'" having received beatings from several masters.[51] Upon first falling ill, Prince tells of how one of the other enslaved women brought her herbal remedies, which likely saved her life.[52]

Prince's narrative, therefore, demonstrates the ecological knowledge that she and other enslaved people deployed curatively. This is a form of knowledge which scholars, including Monique Allæwaert, have noted previously. In *Ariel's Ecology: Plantations, Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics* (2013), Allæwaert describes the Black relationship to ecology in plantation zones as one of resistance. Writing about swamps, Allæwart notes that, despite the many ecological dangers posed by these environments—disease, climate, poisonous flora and fauna— "the most visceral threat to white colonials in the plantation zone came from the diasporic Africans," enslaved people whose populations often greatly outnumbered those of

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[49] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 20.

[50] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 25.

[51] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 26.

[52] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 25.

their enslavers.[53] The dangers posed by the swamp, and their intimate knowledge which came through continual laboring in the swamp, could be used to the advantage of Black rebels and maroons. While Allæwaert here is describing a relationship to a particularly perilous ecosystem, I want to suggest that other forms of ecological knowledge used by enslaved people also functioned as a form of resistance. For, in a system like slavery, which traffics in and continually exposes its subjects to death, any exertion of agency over one's own life is itself a small but significant rebellion.

Despite the ecological expertise demonstrated in these small acts of rebellion, medicinal botany was, throughout the eighteenth century, devalued in comparison to Linnaean botany. This distinction is one Elizabeth Dolan notes Smith understood and which influenced Smith's own poetic engagement with botanical knowledge. According to Dolan, medicinal botanical knowledge was considered "less intellectual, more "aligned with domestic duties" and therefore feminized:[54]

> …the types of cognitive engagement required by Linnaean botany and medicinal botany differ significantly. Linnaean botany is a rubric that, while artificial and imperfect, allows for newly discovered plants to be described or understood in terms of their own structure's relation to that of other plants…In contrast, medicinal botany requires the gestalt recognition of a plant based on one's experience with the plant's healing properties.[55]

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[53] Monique Allæwaert, *Ariel's Ecology: Plantations, Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 36.

[54] Elizabeth A. Dolan, *Seeing Suffering in Women's Literature of the Romantic Era* (London: Routledge, 2008), 111.

[55] Dolan, *Seeing Suffering*, 112.

This means that a propensity for medicinal botany requires a particular and repeated form of engagement with suffering. Regardless of whether this engagement takes the form of direct experience, the devaluation of botanized caretaking as feminized, unintellectual labor removes the possibility for enslaved women to achieve the same status through ecological knowledge that was made available to White women like Smith, who was able to chose her mode of engagement.

While Smith herself suffered from rheumatoid arthritis, and turned to herbal remedies with varying degrees of success, Dolan notes that she greatly preferred Linnaean botanizing: "Although Smith…respects the acquisition of knowledge about herbal remedies, she asserts that the practice of medical botany does not have the same effect on the mind as does the practice of Linnaean botany."[56] This effect, notably, is one which Dolan characterizes as "therapeutic" in the modern sense of the term—healthful for its effects alleviating mental suffering. This does not only mean that ecological knowledge is therapeutic and associated with healing for White Women, whereas for Black Women it is linked to pain. It is furthermore important to note that the form of medicinal botanizing which Smith holds some contempt for, and which is necessary for the survival of a Black woman like Prince, is that which locates suffering in the body, rather than in the mind, and therefore maintains a separation between the two. White women like Smith are able to use (Linnaean) botanizing to transcend the physical—and therefore gain some separation from their feminine corporality—whereas for enslaved Black women, engaging with ecology reifies their status as both feminine and bodily.

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[56] Dolan, *Seeing Suffering*, 112.

This is significant because, as Dolan writes, "Women and others marked by difference were thought of more often as bodies than as reciprocally perceptual beings and thus struggled not only to escape visual objectification, but also to become seeing subjects."[57] While for White women like Smith, engagement with and demonstrated expertise over botanical knowledge offered one way to assert their subjectivity, this avenue was not open to Black women like Prince, whose enslaved status further objectified her.

The Problem of Speaking—and Feeling—for Others

The two bodies of work discussed in this chapter—the poetry of Charlotte Smith and *The History of Mary Prince*—are related through their individual narrative impulses to speak on behalf of others, and to do so through connecting the reader to the suffering and emotional experiences of those for whom they advocate. I have argued that, in both cases, a relationship between nature and suffering forms, which is particular to the different relationships each woman bears to race and to femininity. As I have noted previously, both Prince and Smith point to their own experiences of suffering as that which authorizes them to speak for others—for enslaved people, for French emigres. In this chapter's final section, I will consider a form of suffering which both Prince and Smith share, though, of course, their individual experiences with this hardship vary wildly: the experience of displacement. Both Mary Prince and Charlotte Smith speak to the experience of having lost one's home, one's place in the world, and the hardship that comes with seeking another; this is one of the central impulses of both women's writing. Smith, as critics have widely acknowledged, made her displacement the central tragedy behind her

[57] Dolan, *Seeing Suffering*, 12.

poetic persona, while Prince's *History*, which is remembered and was used primarily as an abolitionist tract, came about because she sought a way to either make a living and home for herself in England, or to have her freedom in England follow her back to her home in Antigua. This dual intention ultimately presented problems for the Anti-Slavery Society, for the *History*'s abolitionist readers, and for England's very self-conception.

It is easy to forget while reading Prince's *History* that we are not reading an autobiography; neither is it appropriate to term it a biography, but rather, the reader must recognize that Prince's voice has been mediated through Susanna Strickland's transcription of her story, and then modified for publication by the Pringles for the Anti-Slavery Society. Thomas Pringle's editor's note to *The History* attempts to anticipate potential scrutiny by assuring readers that only minor edits have been made. Pringle writes that the idea of the narrative and its publication were suggested by Prince herself, so "that good people in England might hear from a slave what a slave had felt and suffered" and that what appears in print is "essentially her own, without any material alteration farther than was requisite to exclude redundancies and gross grammatical errors, so as to render it clearly intelligible."[58] While I want to be clear that I am not drawing the veracity of what *is* included in the *History* into question, it quickly became clear following publication that more than mere grammatical errors had been excluded, a revelation which allowed the entwined issues of narrative and truth to be used as weapons by opponents of abolition seeking to discredit Prince and, by extension, the entire abolitionist cause.

This brings me to the issue of the libel cases surrounding the publication of *The History of Mary Prince*. Both cases—that brought by Pringle against Cadell, the publisher of an article

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[58] Thomas Pringle, "Preface" in *The History of Mary Prince*, edited by Sara Salih (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), 3.

written by James McQueen which questioned the veracity of Prince's story, and that brought by Prince's former enslaver against Pringle—highlight the problem of the text as a mediated narrative. In both libel cases, Prince took the stand; these were some of the only instances in which she was able to truly speak for herself to her audience, and yet, our record of her voice is itself abstracted into newspaper summaries of the trials. Readers today cannot read a direct transcription of Mary Prince's words. It seems important to note, too, that following the libel cases, record of Prince seems to disappear, suggesting that, ironically, one of McQueen's claims against the *History* and the Anti-Slavery Society has a ring of truth to it: Prince was treated as a "tool," rather than an individual, a human being.[59] What the libel case brought by Wood, Prince's former enslaver, against Pringle revealed was the manner in which the narrative had been edited to make Prince a more sympathetic subject to a society that allowed women, and Black women in particular, very little leeway for deviation from strict social mores. Mary Prince's complex sexual history, in particular, was shown to have been edited out in order to morally "purify" her.

One facet, then, of what Mary Prince and Charlotte Smith ultimately give us is a lesson in the limits of sentimentality and readerly empathy. Charlotte Smith upset readers of *The Emigrants* in implicitly recognizing that empathy is often a self-centered gesture, one in which the empathizing subject's feelings, and ability to empathize, are at the fore. As I have previously described, in sentimental writing, the reader is moved to feeling, is *transported* into a state in which the narrator's emotion becomes personal: the reader buys Smith's poetry to support Smith because they have felt *close* to her and her suffering. Smith's readers are, in essence, paying for her experiences to make them feel things, for the right to put their feelings at the fore. Similarly,

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[59] Sara Salih, "Introduction" in *The History of Mary Prince*, edited by Sara Salih (London: Penguin Classics, 2001), xxix.

they buy Prince's narrative ostensibly because she has allowed them to feel that, through reading her story, they "know what a slave knows" and "[feel] what a slave feels."[60]

Importantly, even if the reader does not fully sympathize with either author, their purchase of the text and inclusion among the list of subscribers stands in as a proxy for the emotion itself, and, as sanctioned forms of sentimentality are ones which became moralized during the Romantic period, such a purchase, too, became a form of moral signaling. This sort of sentimental writing, therefore, requires that the object of empathy become, in essence, just that: objects. Charlotte Smith objectifies herself and the French emigres by commodifying her suffering, and in the case of Mary Prince, the White abolitionists treat her and her story as *flesh* —useful only insofar as she is not a messy, individuated human, and certainly not one whose circumstances did not afford her moral purity. In the case of *The Emigrants*, Charlotte Smith's turn back toward herself has the unfortunate effect of reminding the readers that their purchase supports the poetess, rather than the Emigrants themselves—whose objectification therefore becomes visible. Prince's *History*, in its mediation and erasures for the sake of crafting an object of empathy, makes Prince flesh; the voyeuristic act that came later, when White women abolitionists sought to verify her pain through the evidence of the scars left upon her back, was enabled by what the process of flesh-making that reading the narrative had begun.

What is obscured in the process of sympathetic objectification is the purpose, or intent, of the sympathetic object, which is thrown over in favor of the purpose and feelings of the sympathizer. As mentioned, the backlash against Charlotte Smith's depiction of the French émigrés in *The Emigrants* makes this clear by making the reader aware of their own involvement

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[60] Prince, *History of Mary Prince,* 21.

in objectifying the poem's subjects. What occurs for Mary Prince is yet more interesting, because it draws into question not only the reader of her narrative and the abolitionists themselves, but the very nature of Englishness.

In the editor's supplement to the *History*, Pringle includes these words from Prince: "I would rather go into my grave than go back a slave to Antigua, though I wish to go back to my husband very much—very much—very much!"[61] Prince was not able to return because, though the Somerset case in 1772 had declared slavery could not exist within the borders of England, her freedom was conditional upon remaining in England. In effect, freedom in England was like a cloak of protection which could be stripped away, rather than an inherent right; yet conditional freedom is not truly freedom. The separation between England and its colonies seen in Prince's conditional freedom exemplifies English exceptionalism. The Somerset decision, upon which Prince's conditional freedom rests, reads in part, "Will not all the other mischiefs of mere utter servitude revive, if once the idea of absolute property, under the immediate sanction of the laws of this country, extend itself to those who have been brought over to a soil whose air is deemed too pure for slaves to breathe in it; but the laws, the genius and spirit of the constitution, forbid the approach of slavery; will not suffer [its] existence here."[62] Of interest here is the way England is imagined: as though the enslaved pass through the shimmering veil of its borders and into a magical land whose very air changes them. There is a conflation of law and nature here, though—the "genius and spirit of the constitution" are what make the air "too pure for slaves to breathe in it." Slavery and its attendant ills are therefore imagined as foreign to England's nature

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[61] Prince, *History of Mary Prince,* 39.

[62] England, Court of King's Bench, *Somerset against Stewart*. 12 GEO 3, Easter Term, 14 May 1772. http://www.commonlii.org/int/cases/EngR/1772/57.pdf

—both to its inherent legal and cultural properties as exemplified by the constitution, and to the land and air themselves.

Mary Prince's account of her treatment by the Woods in England— "[Mrs. Wood] told me…that she did not intend to treat me any better in England than in the West Indies… And she was as good as her word"—demonstrate that England is not a special place whose very soil disallows the existence of slavery. Prince's narrative showed that, contrary to Somerset, slavery was allowed to exist on English soil, for Wood did not pay Prince for her services, and was never prosecuted for enslaving Prince while in England.[63] Indeed, the Woods used freedom in England as a threat to scare Prince into staying and tolerating their abuse: "[Mr. Wood] cursed and swore at me dreadfully, and said he would never sell my freedom—if I wished to be free, I was free in England, and I might go and try what freedom would do for me, and be d–d."[64] Prince describes how her fear kept her from leaving the Woods earlier. She writes that, "I knew that I was free in England, but I did not know where to go, or how to get my living."[65] It is only once she is able to find the Anti-Slavery Society, who might help her earn a living in England, that she feels comfortable leaving her enslavers.

As Kathryn Temple writes in *Scandal Nation* (2003), Prince's continued presence in England troubles the boundaries of this natural conception:

> By displaying her ruined body in England, Prince confounded England's sense of itself as an isolated island. Perhaps the one factor that most allowed England to think of itself as unified and "national" was its geographical isolation. But the spatial sense

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[63] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 31.

[64] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 33.

[65] Prince, *History of Mary Prince*, 33.

> of self produced by the continuous natural boundary of the shoreline, by England's geographical insularity, is easily disrupted by face-to-face encounters with empire. Signs of empire had to be continually distanced from what was seen as naturally occurring within England's geographical boundaries if the fiction of Englishness was to be sustained through recourse to England's island status…[Prince's] insistent presence redrew the frontier, making it impossible for Britons to ignore slavery and changing their relationship to national space.[66]

Mary Prince becomes a problem—for the White abolitionists who vacated her narrative of its troublesome contours, and also for English exceptionalism which imagines slavery and race as "mischiefs" which occur elsewhere—when she is in the courtroom. There, she is neither being spoken for, nor speaking for the experiences of others, but to her own experience alone—individuated and yet demonstrating how the laws of the British empire, its very *nature*, made her into flesh. Prince's presence, which closes the literal and conceptual distance between England and its colonies, implicates the English in allowing for the conditions of her enslavement. It also ruptures the myth of separation which English readers of Prince's narrative rely upon in order to maintain their own sense of moral, sentimental, and national superiority.

Prince's presence in England—made ever more visible when she gave testimony in person at the libel trials—calls into question the English self-conception which imagined a total separation between the archipelago and colonies. As I demonstrated earlier in the chapter, Prince's enslavement and racialization are characterized by a relationship to the natural world inflected by suffering, and very much at odds with the relationship England imagines its own

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[66] Kathryn Temple. *Scandal Nation: Law and Authorship in Britain, 1750–1832*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003, 180-181.

nature confers upon those so lucky as to breathe its air. In my second chapter, I will show how racialized environments existed within the archipelago, and further, how a relationship to one such environment—the bog—naturalizes the colonial logics which England would prefer to imagine as Other.

Chapter 2

Heathcliff as Bog Creature: Racialized Ecologies in *Wuthering Heights*

Introduction

The National Museum of Ireland in Dublin contains an exhibit on bog bodies, the remains of, in this case, Iron Age humans buried in bogs from Ireland to Denmark as part of what the museum refers to as "Celtic" rituals.[1] The bodies are remarkably well-preserved; get close enough to the glass and, in the dim lighting which helps safeguard the specimens against

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[1]As scholars including Huw Pryce and Rachel Pope have noted, the idea of a unified "Celtic" culture is a fairly recent invention. While Pope applies the label (in quotes) to Iron Age peoples from around 700-300 BCE, she explains in a 2022 essay for the Journal of Archaeological Research that the term over the past 150 years has referred not to actual Iron Age people but to an imagined amalgam of multiple European cultures labeled "Celtic," resulting in "a static, romantic notion of 'Celtic society' operating independently of regional-level archaeologies." In a chapter of *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism* (2020), Huw Pryce teases out some of the distinctions between two foci of Celtic revival in nineteenth-century Britain—Welsh and Irish medieval cultures—to demonstrate that what came to be understood as "Celtic" was not, in fact, a monolith. Pryce argues in part that the cultural imagination of Celtic culture was based on romanticized ideas of a pre-Christian era. It is notable, however, that along with romanticization came objectification and denigration, as scholars including Nancy Armstrong (1992), Colin Kidd (1993), and Joseph Lennon (2003) have shown, and as I will explore further in this essay. Lennon in particular notes that distinct narratives about Celtic origin were created and used to different effect: "Native Irish intellectuals and writers had developed the Phoenician model to argue for the ancient pedigree and civilization of the Celts, who had been brought to their poor present condition, they argued, by successive foreign invasions. The Scytho-Celtic model had also been used for generations to rhetorically confirm the barbarity of the Celt." Within these pages, I use the word "Celtic" to designate a socially imagined and constructed racial Otherness (as all races are imagined and constructed, though the effects of their designation remain extremely real) which in the nineteenth century was used to justify both cultural and political subjugation.
Nancy Armstrong, "Emily's Ghost: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Fiction, Folklore, and Photography." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 25, no. 3 (1992): 245–67.
Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 205-215.
Joseph Lennon, "Irish Orientalism," in *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Clare Carroll and Patricia King (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003): 131.
Rachel Pope, "Re-approaching Celts: Origins, Society, and Social Change," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 30 (2022): 2.
Huw Pryce, "The Irish and Welch Middle Ages in the Victorian Period" in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism*, eds. Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2020), 215-234..

deterioration, you can see wrinkles in their skin, the pores on their noses. Despite being several thousands of years old, the bodies have recognizable features. Online, the description for the exhibit, titled "Kingship and Sacrifice," says that it grants visitors "an opportunity to literally come 'face to face' with the past."[2]

The iron age bodies aren't the only ones on display in this collection. People have fallen, been thrown into, and been buried in bogs for centuries, and not only in Ireland. Yet, as Derek Gladwin tells readers in *Contentious Terrains: Bogland in the Irish Postcolonial Gothic* (2016), bogs have historically been associated with Irish Celticism and in particular with a specific form of mysticism and savagery, defying "the observed world of rationality and logic," which the National Museum's display's focus on human sacrifice plays into.[3]

It is interesting, then, to consider what years-long residence in a bog does to a body. And, furthermore, how does the cultural imagination surrounding bogs inflect how we read the bodies with which they come into contact? Bogs are able to preserve material in such pristine conditions for thousands of years because they are acidic, anaerobic environments. Decomposition requires oxygen, and past a certain depth the bog ceases to be so much "compost heap" and becomes instead a sort of living (or rather, half-living, half-decomposing) museum.[4] Yet, the bodies in bogs are not untouched by time and decay; though their features are preserved, they are also transformed in one notable way: long-term residence in the bog changes their color to a deep,

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[2] Irish National Museum, "Kingship and Sacrifice," Accessed 20 March 2023, https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Archaeology/Exhibitions/Kingship-and-Sacrifice#:~:text=The%20exhibition%20is%20based%20around,rituals%20during%20the%20Iron%20Age.

[3] Derek Gladwin, *Contentious Terrains: Bogland in the Irish Postcolonial Gothic* (Cork: Cork UP, 2016), 28.

[4] Gladwin, *Contentious Terrains*, 28.

coppery brown-black. See, for instance, the below image of the bog body known as Tollund Man, discovered in Denmark in 1950:

Figure 1: Tollund Man, Photograph, Robert Clark, *National Geographic*[5]

Or, for a closer look at the details of the skin, see this image of the hand of Old Croghan Man, discovered in Ireland in 2003, and one of the central bodies from the Irish National Museum's exhibit:

[5] Robert Clark, "Tollund Man," *National Geographic*, photograph. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/07/140718-bog-bodies-denmark-archaeology-science-iron-age/

Figure 2: Detail of hand from Old Croghan Man, Photograph, National Museum of Ireland[6]

In the image of Old Croghan Man's hand, his skin is the color of rusty iron ore, his nails the texture of splintered wood. The overall effect is something like weathered mahogany. He has been ecologized, or, to use one of Gladwin's words, his *protean* nature has been revealed. Of interest to me is that this has occurred through a browning, a blackening, of the skin. Given that until fairly recently the Irish were not understood as racially White but instead affiliated with a sense of Othered, Celtic savagery, it seems to me that the bog has effected a potent metaphor through that physical signifier of race—skin color. For bogs, as I will show throughout the pages to follow, are racialized ecological sites, which have historically presented problems for the colonial projects in Ireland and Scotland, and which were for this reason demonized by the

[6] "Detail of hand from 'Old Croghan Man,'" National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland. Photograph. https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Archaeology/Exhibitions/Kingship-and-Sacrifice

English colonizers who sought to manage and control them. Despite their status as racialized, colonial sites, however, bogs are also native features of English ecology, and can therefore serve to complicate our understanding of colonial nature.

As this chapter will show, attending to the ways in which ecology and race inflect one another in the British archipelago allows for new understandings of national identity and belonging in nineteenth-century literature. In particular, I use Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) as a case study in exploring the possibilities that arise from understanding how native English ecology is linked to a racialized Other—here, the novel's villain or antihero (depending on how one understands this complex figure), Heathcliff. Whereas my first chapter looked at colonial ecology and race in the Empire's peripheries via instances of forced contact with nature effected by enslaved labor in *The History of Mary Prince,* as well as at colonial naturalist practices in the poetry of Charlotte Smith, this chapter seeks to bridge the divide between metropole and colony to show how logics of race come to be naturalized "at home," as well.

I turn to *Wuthering Heights* to complete this task because the novel exemplifies the ways in which nature is deployed to structure conceptions of identity and belonging through a process of naturalization. As Charlotte Brontë wrote when defending her deceased sister's novel from critics who bemoaned its savagery, *Wuthering Heights* "is rustic all through. It is moorish, and wild, and knotty as a root of heath. Nor was it natural that it should be otherwise; the author herself being a native and nurseling of the moors."[7] The idea here that Emily's native ecology naturally inflected the author and her work is one which is echoed by the book itself: at the heart of Heathcliff's revenge plot is a desire for belonging to a place and people who have rejected

[7] Charlotte Bronte, "Editor's Preface to the New [1850] Edition," in *Wuthering Heights*, eds. Tatiana M. Holway, Daphne Merkin, and George Stade (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004), xxxviii.

him; throughout the chapter I will highlight Heathcliff's connection to and management of the land and ecology of the Heights as a tool for making himself native. In doing so, I draw on Simon Gikandi's reading of Thomas Carlyle's 1848 racist diatribe, "Occasional Discourse on the N* Question."[8] I use Gikandi's reading as a frame for my own argument because his understanding of Carlyle's "Discourse" demonstrates the way in which control over and management of land were racialized in the nineteenth century, and how race in turn was deployed as an affective tool for mobilizing nationalist feelings of unity and boundary-policing.[9] Understanding land management as racialized allows me to demonstrate how Heathcliff's relationship to the ecology of the Heights, and to the bog in particular, *uses* these colonial logics to undermine the very structures they support, attempting, in effect, to "dismantle the master's house" with his own tools.[10]

Finally, in linking Heathcliff to the bog, I will explore what I've termed his *uncanny* nature, which itself reveals the uncanny cultural status of race in England. What Gladwin terms the "protean" nature of bogs—their ability to distort temporality and reveal deep historical time,

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[8] Thomas Carlyle, *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question* (London: T. Bosworth, 1853), *Slavery and Anti-Slavery: A Transnational Archive*. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CY0100966709/SAS?u=umuser&sid=SAS&xid=03fff3d0&pg=1. Accessed April 30, 2021. While most scholars refer to Carlyle's essay including its full racialized language, with the understanding that the gloss of academia magically removes any hint of racism (and I do not want to fault those who follow this convention), I have made a different choice, and will be using the abbreviation N* in acknowledgement of the term's historical violence. Not only am I a light-skinned Latina woman, someone who does not and should not use the term in regular conversation because I do not belong to a group who has reclaimed it, but I consider the abbreviation to be a form of unsettling. Every time I use it, and every time you read it, requires an acknowledgement of its history and the ways that history continues to be made present through widespread institutionalized racism.

[9] Simon Gikandi. "Through the Prism of Race: Black Subjects and English Identities." In *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism"* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 50-83.

[10] Audre Geraldine Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg: Crossing, 1984), 107. *Black Thought and Culture Database*. Web. Here, of course, I reference Audre Lorde's claim that using the tools of subjugation will ultimately fail to bring about actual liberation and reform: "They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change." It is worth noting that Lorde's claim aligns with the end of Brontë's novel, in which Heathcliff ultimately fails at his violent project of remaking the Heights and Thrushcross Grange in accordance to his plan of degradation.

their dual usefulness as a resource and threat posed to the colonial project, their "formlessness"[11] or ambiguous identity—is linked in my understanding to the Freudian concept of uncanny or *unheimliche*—the unhomely, a native feature which reveals foreignness within.

This chapter, therefore, seeks to understand and reconcile these two seemingly contradictory facets of *Wuthering Heights* — Heathcliff's racialization and his identification with the native ecology of the Northern English landscape—in order to re-examine nineteenth-century conceptions of national identity which posit Englishness and race as mutually exclusive categories, instead insisting on an assumed White neutrality at the heart of English identity. This reading is one which complicates understandings of *Wuthering Heights* as exhibiting straightforward fears of reverse colonization,[12] slave revolt,[13] or as a metaphor for Irish uprising[14]; in short, this is a reading which resists metaphorizing race and using the appearance of race in England only in order to talk about other issues, such as gender or labor under capitalism, and seeks instead to draw race from the peripheries to the center of empire.[15] While each of the aforementioned readings has its merits, the danger of continually considering race as that which happens elsewhere is an inability to recognize racism and its effects when they occur where one does not expect them. As such, this essay rests on the principle that considerations of race as that which happens only outside of England in the nineteenth century fail to recognize

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[11] Gladwin, *Contentious Terrains*, 28.

[12] Susan Meyer, "'Your Father Was Emperor of China and Your Mother an Indian Queen': Reverse-Imperialism in *Wuthering Heights*." In *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996), 96-125.

[13] Maja-Lisa von Sneidern, "*Wuthering Heights* and the Liverpool Slave Trade," *ELH* 62, no. 1 (1995): 171-196. While this article does bring Blackness back to England, its focus remains on Blackness in relation to a port city, which allows for the continued existence of its marginalization within English narratives of history and identity.

[14] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995).

[15] Though not, as has been done before (see Susan Meyer's *Imperialism at Home*), through the figure of the Englishwoman and the figurative colonization of the domestic realm.

racism and its effects. Clearly, race was used metaphorically during the nineteenth century, and English citizens in the metropole did harbor anxieties about the far-off colonies. Rather than a purely oppositional stance against previous readings, then, I want to consider my own contribution to Wuthering Heights scholarship as an attempt to grapple with a central but all-too-often occluded facet of Britain's imperial history—something Heathcliff makes clear. Attending to the complex relationship between Heathcliff's presence in Wuthering Heights as a racialized Other and yet his ultimate status as someone with native knowledge of, kinship with, and power over the land, reveals the unsettling status of race, colonialism, and their attendant logics in the English imagination.

Reading Heathcliff's Brown Identity

In a scene prior to Heathcliff's temporally long (though narratively brief) absence from Wuthering Heights and the surrounding moorland, Heathcliff compares his own appearance to that of his romantic rival, Edgar Linton. Addressing Nelly, the housekeeper and nurse who serves as a confidant for many of the novel's major characters, and who has attempted to console Heathcliff by pointing out his superior strength, Heathcliff laments his ugliness and lack of prospects for inheritance. He says of Edgar, "But Nellie, if I knocked him down twenty times, that wouldn't make him less handsome or me more so. I wish I had light hair and fair skin, [...] and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!"[16] It's not uncommon for White characters in British novels of this period to be vaguely racialized (consider the many comparisons of brunette women to Italians, Spaniards, "gipsies," and sometimes Indians—North American and

[16] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 56.

subcontinental). This is not another example of descriptive brownface, however; Heathcliff is, from his introduction, painted as distinctly not-White.

In response to Heathcliff's professed bodily dysphoria, Nellie suggests he be kinder and smile more, as a "good heart will help you to a bonny face [...] if you were but a regular black." As it is, she continues, Heathcliff is still quite handsome, despite his coloring. "You're fit for a prince in disguise," she tells him, bringing class and lineage into the equation, "Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth."[17] While we never learn for certain that Heathcliff is not, in fact a kidnapped Indo-Chinese prince, the notion is, of course, fanciful; he was found in a wretched condition by Mr. Earnshaw on a trip to Liverpool, a slave port at the time of the novel's setting (1770-1801). When asked to whom he belongs, the young Heathcliff proffers no reply, and thus Mr. Earnshaw brings home a child—who speaks not English but "gibberish"—in the place of the whip and violin he had promised his own children.[18]

When Heathcliff is brought to the Heights by Mr. Earnshaw, he is described by this man as "a gift of God; though it's as dark almost as it came from the devil," and it is with this invocation of blessing brought about by Blackness that our troubles start. Heathcliff is given the name of the firstborn Earnshaw child, who died in infancy,[19] and as he is detested and bullied by

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[17] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 57.

[18] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 36-7. The whip as a symbol and tool of racialized violence against enslaved Black people becomes vested with significance when it is substituted by the gift of a non-White child.

[19] While naming or renaming slaves after members of the family was common practice, this also interestingly brings to mind the 19th century emancipation appeal: "Am I Not A Man And A Brother?" by, in this case, making Heathcliff into a brother of sorts.

his adoptive siblings, Mr. Earnshaw becomes protective of him, quickly taking him on as household favorite. This is not, we soon see, something Mr. Earnshaw's heir, Hindley, takes kindly to. Soon, Nellie tells our narrator, "[Hindley] had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges." This narrative of usurpation is further complicated when one remembers Heathcliff's race: not only has Hindley been replaced in his father's affections, but the child who replaces him is Brown and an orphan, likely intended as a domestic servant or slave. This is a reversal of power which Hindley quickly corrects following his parents' deaths —thereby fueling the resentment which drives Heathcliff to seek vengeance upon the family.

Heathcliff's violent desire for belonging and inheritance drives the bulk of the plot. While *Wuthering Heights* is ostensibly (and remembered in popular media as) a star-crossed love story, and Heathcliff's drive for vengeance is indeed incited by overhearing Cathy claim that to marry him would "degrade" her" much of the plot is driven forward by the struggle between men for control over the family line.[20] Heathcliff's desire for revenge is motivated largely by his mistreatment under Hindley, who has "brought Heathcliff so low" that Catherine cannot imagine marrying him, and results in a plot to gain control and power over Hindley and Hindley's lineage; on the other hand, his thwarted love for Cathy manifests in a parallel plan to degrade the Linton line, as vengeance against the man who he perceives to have displaced him in Cathy's affections through the illegitimate means of money, (White) beauty, and class status. These two goals both arise in reaction against the imposition of the logics of race onto what had previously been a childhood friendship of equals, shared lives amidst the Yorkshire moors.

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[20] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 80. In light of Heathcliff's racialization, Catherine's comment on degradation brings to mind mid-nineteenth century theories and fears of "devolution."

When Cathy returns from her stay at the Lintons, she notes Heathcliff's physical difference from the Lintons: "'Why, how very black and cross you look! —how funny and grim! But that's because I'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton."[21] While these references to "blackness" and "funny" looks may be read as indicating Heathcliff's grumpy expression, Heathcliff clearly takes them as references to his coloring; only a few pages later he complains to Nelly that he wishes he had fair skin and hair like Edgar. This moment emphasizes a new distance between Heathcliff and Catherine, whose fingers have become "wonderfully whitened with doing nothing and staying indoors,"[22] in terms of skin color, which by the nineteenth century had become the favored marker of racial difference. Separating the two children—leaving Cathy at the metropolitan Thrushcross Grange to heal both her ankle and her manners, while Heathcliff remains at the Heights to be "reduce[d] to his right place" by Hindley—has the effect of introducing Cathy to the logic of racial difference, prior to which she understood herself as equal to her companion. Furthermore, Hindley has not simply degraded Heathcliff by forcing him to complete manual labor, but by justifying this imposed hierarchy through the racial logic of inherent or essential difference—a difference that Cathy perceives for the first time upon her return from Thrushcross Grange.

Despite Heathcliff's explicit introduction to the story as a non-White character, as *Wuthering Heights* has evolved in popular imagination, Heathcliff's race has often been overlooked and Whitewashed,[23] particularly by filmmakers; until Andrea Arnold's 2011

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[21] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 53.

[22] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 53.

[23] *Wuthering Heights*, directed by Andrea Arnold, 2011, Tubi TV Streaming, https://tubitv.com/movies/684794/wuthering-heights?start=true&tracking=google-feed&utm_source=google-feed
Whitewashing is often a symptom of overlooking race: White becomes the default, a pattern popular media has recently attempted to highlight and mode it has attempted to push back against (though this fight for representation in the film industry is making uneven strides across varying racial groups).

adaptation, which cast a Black British actor, Heathcliff had been mis-raced in film versions of the novel. While literary critics have taken more interest in Heathcliff's race, his character's misrepresentation in popular culture echoes a Whitewashing of British identity that often occurs in scholarly work on nineteenth century England, affecting even the work of the scholars who do attend to Heathcliff's racialization. While some scholars note Heathcliff's race, there is a lack of thorough engagement with his racial Otherness which seems to indicate a disbelief in the reality of nineteenth century Brown or Black Britishness, or even of brownness as more than an abstract concept to those living in the colonial metropole.

At the time of the novel's writing, enslavement and the effects of colonization were on the minds even of Britons who did not engage with them directly—and certainly for the abolitionist Brontë family. Indeed, the novel is set in part during the years of the Haitian Revolution (1791-804), an event that set the stage for the British abolition of slavery and therefore demonstrated the political might of the formerly enslaved. While Britain technically abolished slavery in 1834, slavery continued in the United States at the time that Emily Brontë wrote *Wuthering Heights*, and in England, tensions over formerly enslaved English colonies and people raged on throughout the nineteenth century.[24] One of the most thorough treatments of race in the *Wuthering Heights* comes from Deborah Denenholz Morse, who in a 2021 article demonstrated how continued debates over slavery greatly impacted the novel's writing; Morse argues that Frederick Douglass's British tour (which began in Liverpool) influenced Heathcliff's

[24] As demonstrated, for example, in the Morant Bay Rebellion (1864) and ensuing debates over Governor Eyre's violent response, and as we will see in the case of Thomas Carlyle's "Occasional Discourse on the N* Question," which was published in close temporal proximity to *Wuthering Heights*.

characterization, and that Douglass may have served as direct inspiration for the character.[25] In another vein, Humphrey Gawthrop deals thoughtfully with Charlotte's and Emily's abolitionist upbringing, arguing that both sisters' writing engages deeply with slavery in the West Indies.[26] Even these careful examinations, however, have the effect of displacing race to the peripheries of empire, effecting a continuation of colonial rhetoric noted by Philip Rogers, who writes, "As early as the seventeenth century, the British thought of the West Indies as 'beyond the line,' which originally meant outside the territorial limits of European treaties but soon came to mean outside the moral boundaries of European society and culture."[27] We can see how this move functions most clearly in the work of Susan Meyer, whose 1996 reading of *Wuthering Heights* is often cited as foundational to studies of Heathcliff's racialization. Meyer interprets Heathcliff's plot for revenge as emblematic of White British fears of reverse-colonization, a move which effects a separation between White England and Black or Brown Colonies, and which prioritizes the purity of white English womanhood over the racial Other with whom she comes into contact.

Meyer, who explores the use of race by nineteenth-century British women writers as a metaphor for the subjection of (White) British women, notes that "the energies embodied in the dark-skinned Heathcliff have a potency that exceeds the role of metaphor," and that his character's energies drive the story to refocus not on the state of women in Britain but on the plight of the subject wronged under colonialism. This occurs, Meyer laments, at the expense of the White women who are the focus of her study, and who become violently subjected to

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[25] Deborah Denenholz Morse, "'The House of Trauma': The Influence of Frederick Douglass on Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*," *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature* 140 (2021): 164-177.

[26] Humphrey Gawthorp, "Slavery: *Idée Fixe* of Emily and Charlotte Brontë," *Brontë Studies* 38, no. 4 (2013): 281-289.

[27] Philip Rogers, "'My Word Is Error': 'Jane Eyre' and Colonial Exculpation," *Dickens Studies Annual* 34 (2004):331

Heathcliff's vengeful designs. Meyer writes: "Brontë's rhetorical strategy also has the effect of deflecting attention from the fully human status of female characters like Isabella, and more generally from women's problems in relation to the unjust distribution of power." While, at the end of this chapter, Meyer briefly notes that Heathcliff's violent actions in response to his treatment at the hands of the Earnshaws and Lintons "suggests the brutality of the imperialist project in part through them," exploring the implications of taking Heathcliff's race seriously lies beyond the scope of her project, which instead highlights important symbolic connections between women and colonized Others often found in Victorian literature. In understanding race metaphorically, however, Meyer maintains a separation between domestic and imperial spheres that disallows intersectional complexities, and imagines that empire enters the English home only abstractly, though symbolism or imported objects.[28]

Other critics take interest in Heathcliff's racial ambiguity not for what it tells us about race but for the symbolic register of its definitional impossibility. This seems to be an especially common move when enacting ecological readings of Heathcliff. For instance, in a recent article titled "Heathcliff Walks," which argues for *Wuthering Heights* as a coal novel, Corbin Hiday writes that he "share[s] [Ivan] Kreilkamp's hesitation regarding any attempt to incorporate Heathcliff into 'human history, lineage, and parentage'" due in large part to the difficulty posed by his racial ambiguity.[29] Along similar lines, Lauren M.E. Goodlad acknowledges Heathcliff's race in what is ultimately an ecological reading of the novel.[30] However, Goodlad's engagement

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[28] The way objects connect colonies to metropole is explored further by Elaine Freedgood in *The Ideas in Things* (2006).
Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[29] Corbin Hiday, "Heathcliff Walks," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 54, no. 2 (2021): 259.

[30] Lauren M. E Goodlad, "The Ontological Work of Genre and Place: Wuthering Heights and the Case of the Occulted Landscape," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 49, no. 1 (2021): 107–38.

of race with respect to ecology is uneven; the two facets are not fully linked and explored in conjunction, in part because, while the argument rests on the ambiguity of Heathcliff's origins, racial or otherwise, it takes *ambiguity* as more interesting than the effects of racialization itself. I, meanwhile, emphasize that despite the difficulty of pinpointing his origins, Heathcliff is *unambiguously* not-White.

Heathcliff's racial ambiguity can be useful, however, so long as the fact of his non-Whiteness is actively engaged with. In *Brown Romantics: Poetry and Nationalism in the Global Nineteenth Century* (2017), Manu Samriti Chander uses the idea of "Brownness" to signify a specific relationship to empire, one which Heathcliff inhabits. Chander writes that

> "Brown Romantics" are not marginalized because they are brown; on the contrary, they are "brown" because they are marginalized. Their capacity to participate as poets in the cultural field is restricted by their relationship to the colonizer prior to their participation in it…This relationship makes it impossible for the colonial writer to enter into the cultural field free of a stigmatizing mark of difference, a sign of inferiority that operates in exactly the way race operates in empire—namely, to justify a form of subjugation so natural, indeed so evident, to the colonizer that it hardly requires any justification at all.[31]

While Chander is writing of poets[32] and a relationship to the literary sphere, he is notably also writing about a relationship to the nation, which we can understand as one which applies to Brown people more broadly. Heathcliff may not be a poet, but his ability to participate in and

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[31] Chander, *Brown Romantics,* 3.

[32] And later uses the idea of marginalization being the key factor in brownness to argue for a reading of Keats as a "Brown Romantic" of which I am rather skeptical.

belong to the nation—through such relationships as marriage and property-ownership—is restricted by the same stigmatizing mark of difference which Hindley uses to justify his treatment of Heathcliff as natural. In this way, attempting to pinpoint Heathcliff's racial origins *so that* his Otherness may be taken seriously misses the point, and enacts a sort of racial essentialism which, in its divisiveness, furthers the projects of empire and White supremacy.[33] Instead of making an argument for Heathcliff's belonging to a specific racial group, this chapter emphasizes his racialization through a distinct lack of belonging to Whiteness and English identity which, in turn, aligns him with Chander's inclusive, though ambiguous, idea of Brownness.

I thus propose reading and taking seriously race in *Wuthering Heights,* not as a symbol but *as race*: a collection of visible and cultural signifiers used to group humans and subject them to different forms of discipline and regulation, including the regulation of belonging. Doing so opens the door to thinking beyond speculative fears of power reversal, and considering how Blackness and Brownness are deployed affectively and rhetorically to police the bounds of local and national belonging. In turn we may begin to account for the ways in which Heathcliff is naturalized and thus named as a product not only of the British Empire, but of England in particular; he is not an invader, but grew up as a child in the Empire's center, coated in its dirt, named for its very geography.

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[33] By, among other things, disallowing coalition-building. See, for instance, Paul Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* for a discussion of the widespread turn toward racial essentialism: "The naming of 'races' [in England] has recently undergone a significant shift. It has moved away from political definitions of Black based on the possibility of Afro-Asian unity and toward more restricted alternative formulations which have confined the concept of Blackness to people of African descent…Its conception of cultural differences as fixed, solid almost biological properties of human relations is…similar to the theory of 'racial' and national differences expounded by the radical right."
Paul Gilroy, '*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack': The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 39.

While fundamentally different, the two aforementioned fears of slave revolt and reverse colonization, of which Heathcliff has been read as indicative, are linked in that they symbolize a visitation of the evils enacted in the name of the British Empire upon the heart of the Empire itself, a land heretofore seen as safe and domestic. However, while Heathcliff's revenge plot certainly results in the (temporary) upending of a status quo that subjects Brownness to Whiteness, reading Heathcliff as a vehicle for fears of colonial revolt not only re-centers the focus of the story on Whiteness as vulnerable and in need of protection—thereby to an extent eliding histories of violence enacted by White colonizers against Black and Brown populations—such readings do not fully engage with the implications of these fears. The fear of reverse colonization, when more deeply analyzed, requires a fuller recognition of the horrors of colonialism and slavery, including confronting one's own complicity with the colonial project; the very idea of "reversal" or "upending" of the colonial power dynamic requires the recognition that the violence of colonialism, regardless of where it is enacted, is at the core of English identity. What is more, arguments that take such reversals as metaphorical, in their reliance on the straightforwardness of such metaphors, fail to account for the ways in which Heathcliff's ecologization complicates his racialization. As I have already mentioned, Heathcliff's link to the native ecology of the Yorkshire region does not serve to fully erase his Otherness, but it does trouble the association of the character with a foreign invader seeking revenge for wrongs committed far away. Indeed, his link to the land might seem to provide him with a further claim to the Earnshaw inheritance, and at the very least raises questions of belonging. Thus, Heathcliff is interesting not merely because his quest for revenge following unjust treatment raises the

specter of violence enacted upon colonized and enslaved populations, but, rather, because his race requires us to rethink British identity and its construction.

Carlyle & the N* Question/ The Value of Otherness in British Discourse

Thomas Carlyle's "Occasional Discourse on the N* Question" (1848) enacts another form of power-reversal to that described by critics such as Meyer in relation to *Wuthering Heights*. This inflammatory diatribe ostensibly protests the state of the West Indies following the abolition of slavery, but, as Simon Gikandi notes, actually uses Blackness as a symbolic image through which to crystalize issues closer to home; Carlyle paints a stark and sarcastic contrast between "beautiful Blacks sitting there up to the ears in pumpkins, and doleful Whites sitting here without potatoes to eat."[34] I find Gikandi's reading of Carlyle's diatribe useful for understanding Brontë's novel because, in Gikandi's argument about the "specular power" of Blackness, I see the possibility for an alternate conception of Heathcliff.[35] The upending of "natural" order which Carlyle takes up in "Occasional Discourse" bears similarities to the sort of reverse-colonial nightmare Meyer claims Heathcliff enacts upon the inhabitants of the Heights, the fear of which extends its reach to the watchful Thrushcross Grange. Heathcliff prevents Hareton Earnshaw from learning to read, instead requiring of him manual labor, as Hareton's father Hindley once required of Heathcliff; he seduces, but then brutalizes and rapes Isabella Linton and maintains bodily control over the other female inhabitants of the Heights; and the

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[34] Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse," 4.

[35] Gikandi, "Through the Prism of Race," 62. Though Gikandi here considers how Carlyle deploys Blackness, we may read "Blackness" here as functioning in a similar mode to Chander's "Brownness." The Black body becomes representative within Carlyle's writing of all that unites White Englishness in opposition; strikingly similar to Chander's assertion that Brown Romantics are "'brown' because they are marginalized."
Chander, *Brown Romantics*, 3.

product of his rape of Isabella, Linton Heathcliff, is depicted in terms which clearly align with the stereotypes of infirmity associated with miscegenation.[36] Framing *Wuthering Heights* with Gikandi's reading of Carlyle, however, adds nuance to readings of the power reversal Heathcliff enacts at the Heights, allowing us to move beyond Heathcliff's actions as metaphor for the subjection of White women, and instead understand him as a figure seeking to bridge metropole and periphery, thereby making visible the relationship between colonized and colonizer, powerful and oppressed.[37] Through attending to Carlyle's deployment of Blackness, we can also see how colonialism and enslavement are justified using racialized arguments about labor and land management; this in turn provides a critical perspective for understanding Heathcliff's project in Wuthering Heights, and how he uses his relationship to the land around the Heights as both a tool for control and a means of making himself native, placing himself on even ground with those who once exploited him.

In *Wuthering Heights*, the power dynamics are so complex that the descriptor "reversal" flattens nuance; ultimately, the aforementioned bridge between powerful and powerless characters becomes corrosive. By the novel's end, Heathcliff finds himself dogged by Hareton and Cathy, who both so resemble the first Catherine that they unsettle him, and the very reversal that he has sought after threatens to undo him.[38] It is not, therefore, revenge but unification with Catherine that takes Heathcliff "within sight of heaven," his "soul's bliss kill[ing his] body."[39] By

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[36] While this plot line on one hand acknowledges the reality of White slave owners raping female slaves, its application to a White woman also has the effect of reinforcing white fears of Black male sexuality which painted Black men as always already rapists and White women as unquestionably pure victims of Black sexual violence.

[37] Which has the effect, as Meyer notes, of emptying the vehicle (the vehicle here being non-White people) "of its full array of meaning." Meyer, "Your Father," 22.

[38] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 311.

[39] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 317, 322.

invoking a reunion with Catherine as his "soul's bliss," Heathcliff paints his driving force in a new light: rather than revenge, the power-reversal he forced upon the families created a mode of bridging the gap between Catherine and himself, returning them to the state of equality they had enjoyed as children, prior to his racially-inflected degradation at the hands of her brother and her subsequent marriage into the upper class Linton family. While I am not suggesting that Heathcliff's story represents any form of plausible plot that might be taken up by a formerly enslaved or colonized person against their oppressors, there does remain some truth to his representation: the horror enacted within the pages of *Wuthering Heights* represents the ways in which the violence of Empire comes round to inform the Empire itself. As abolitionists argued that slavery corrupted those who participated in the flesh trade, Heathcliff serves as a reminder that oppression degrades both sides, that using the master's faulty tools to dismantle his house may result in injury. The truth of Brontë's depiction of Heathcliff lies less in his portrayal as an individual than in the affective horror through which the narrative conveys a message about conditions under the British Empire and the effects that the cruelties of Empire had in shaping and, indeed, *defining* England itself.

Similarly, though functioning in an opposing political direction, Simon Gikandi suggests that Carlyle is less interested in "Occasional Discourse on the N* Question" in the truth of the outlandish picture he paints of the conditions in the West Indies than he is in its affective impact on the reader. According to Gikandi, Carlyle used Blackness as a symbol for the failures and negative consequences of heeding a liberal system of governance rather than as a true threat to the Empire. Hence, Carlyle exploited Blackness to speak to a "crisis" in the British imagination:

> The black body, because of its specular power, provides the background against which the crisis of Englishness can be read through contrast. The black body hence exists as a trope that provides us with insights into what Carlyle considers to be the territory of subhumanity (a world incapable of the self-generation that is possible only through work), and a warning as to what the English might become if the current crisis (which revolves around questions of labor) is not resolved.[40]

According to Gikandi, then, the "specular power" of the Black body is deployed to unify the English by contrast, encouraging them to recognize humanity in each other and their joint Whiteness as opposed to the "subhumanity" of Blackness. Furthermore, Carlyle's cartoonish depictions of emancipated West Indians proves not only an example of racist caricature with which Carlyle argues for the reinstatement of slavery, but a rhetorical device through which Carlyle calls into question the political distance between the center and peripheries of Empire. If Britain is not careful, he warns, it will "have 'emancipated' the West Indies into a *Black Ireland*; 'free' indeed, but an Ireland, and Black!"[41] This warning serves as an indirect reminder of one of England's early colonial projects, close enough to home to cast its shadow upon the metropole.

The deployment of Blackness, Brownness, or Otherness in Carlyle's "Discourse" and Brontë's novel both occur within the context of a struggle over land that ultimately parallels that over the determination of belonging. The value of land for Empire goes beyond what we might deem "territory"— the imaginary boundaries, imposed on geography, over which one power rules—and to the land itself as a means of production, a carrier of culture and identity, and through these, a means of control. Carlyle demonstrates a recognition of the power proffered by

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[40] Gikandi, "Through the Prism of Race," 62.

[41] Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse," 5.

controlling the land's accepted narrative when he cloaks Saxon British rule over the islands in a veneer of "Nature" and "Fact." He creates a form of Manifest Destiny, by which the fact of conquest itself serves as proof of its divine intention:

> Well, all this fruit too, fruit spicy and commercial, fruit spiritual and celestial, so far beyond the merely pumpkinish and grossly terrene, lies in the West-India lands: and the ultimate 'proprietorship' of them, —why, I suppose, it will vest in him who can the *best* educe from them whatever noble produce they were created fir for yielding. He, I compute, is the real 'Viceregent of the Maker' there; in him, better and better chosen, and not in another, is the 'property' vested by decree of Heaven's chancery itself! Up to this time it is the Saxon British mainly.[42]

Here, the form taken by conquest and control over a territory is exemplified in its land use, and specifically, in its cultivation and *improvement*.[43] While Britain was far from alone in using cultivation (and, on the part of the native populations, a lack of "proper" forms of cultivation) as justification for colonialism, Carlyle's "Discourse" takes this several steps further in using it as proof of God's will, not only that Britain should retain control over the West Indies but that the liberal policies that led to emancipation should be reversed.

In *Wuthering Heights,* Heathcliff, too, recognizes that control over the land and its use, or lack thereof, is a key component of belonging; he therefore dictates that the property of the Heights will be as he is, wild and uncultivated. His exertion of control over cultivation at the

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[42] Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse," 20.

[43] In using the term "improvement" here, I hearken back to its original meaning, in which the act of improving was linked directly to financial gain. In particular, one of the earliest meanings the OED lists links improvement to enclosure policies: "To enclose and cultivate wasteland or unoccupied land in order to make it profitable; to undertake or carry out the improvement of land or property."
Oxford University Press, "improvement, n.". *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. March 2020. https://www-oed-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/92858?redirectedFrom=improvement.

Heights becomes part of his despotism there. When the younger Cathy begins her friendship with Hareton, the two set about planting flowers, an "importation of plants from the Grange," in place of Joseph's common currant and gooseberry bushes.[44] While the flowers are only "imported" from Thrushcross Grange, this place's association with the cosmopolitan influence of England's South serves to distance it, exoticising the flowers in contrast with Joseph's prized blackcurrants. Joseph himself, speaking throughout in a strong Yorkshire dialect which necessitates translation, is common like his plants, which grow prolifically in the damp of Northern Europe. Thus, when Heathcliff berates Cathy for her overstep, he is not defending Joseph and his plants but rather defending a common, unimproved, swath of land from the Southern English influence of cultivation. In the exchange between Cathy and Heathcliff, we can see different conceptions of land ownership at work:

> 'You shouldn't grudge a few yards of earth for me [Cathy] to ornament, when you have taken all of my land!'
>
> 'Your land, insolent slut! You never had any,' said Heathcliff.[45]

Note that Heathcliff does not attribute ownership to himself; his point here is to counter Cathy's notions of ownership and entitlement stemming from English improvement and inheritance—both of which exclude Heathcliff from such key components to English identity and belonging. As Gikandi notes, "blackness is the mirror image through which Englishness defines itself; it is through the staging of black idleness that 'Saxon British' manfulness is affirmed" and, I would add, with the affirmation of said manfulness, the right to own and control land is established.[46]

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[44] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 306.

[45] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 308-309.

[46] Gikandi, "Through the Prism of Race," 65.

Both Heathcliff and Carlyle recognize the power in claiming land for oneself, and in justifying that claim through both knowledge and feeling. The claim to land, like the claim to belonging, is wrapped up in a sense of nativeness that connects it to race. The question then becomes whether one who bears the outward signifiers of Otherness can become sufficiently nativized though a connection to and understanding of the land, and, if so, how this changes identity categories, such as national ones, built on exclusion.

"An Unreclaimed Creature": Heathcliff's Ecologization

If, as Gikandi says, "blackness is the mirror image through which Englishness defines itself," Heathcliff's racialization challenges the given definition of Englishness by uprooting it from its native soil.[47] Much has been written about the novel's use of landscape and native ecology, which are rendered in careful detail that, as Jesse Oak Taylor puts it, "make[s] that Yorkshire landscape come to life for a reader far removed in time and space," capturing the imagination of readers for generations.[48] The novel's attention to the detail of setting functions in two distinct ways: highly accurate on the level of individual ecological phenomena, and yet building a selective and composite landscape. Writing on the novel's atmosphere, Taylor notes the literal ecological accuracy of Emily Brontë's descriptions of the Yorkshire environs, and argues that the novel's ecological accuracy is critical because "This is a novel in which human adaptation to a harsh environment is not merely a facet of its plot, but integral to the mode of characterisation that the work itself deploys. In *Wuthering Heights*, all living beings, whether

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[47] Gikandi, "Through the Prism of Race," 65.

[48] Jesse Oak Taylor. "Atmosphere as Setting, or, 'Wuthering' the Anthropocene," in *Climate and Literature,* ed. Adeline Johns-Putra (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019), 33.

human, plant, or animal, are subject to being shaped by their environment, an environment that is not merely that of the Yorkshire moors, but also of the novel itself."[49] While ecologically accurate, *Wuthering Heights* is, according to Christopher Heywood (1998), a composite landscape, an amalgam of two regions of West Riding, which, together form the novel's setting. The selective use of landscape that Heywood identifies invests the novel's setting with further significance, in which "peculiarities of the outlying Yorkshire topography" become "clues in a topographical game which Emily plays with her imagined reader in order to sharpen and clarify her meaning or intention."[50] The descriptive richness of Heathcliff's characterization bridges the novel's distinct uses of landscape and environment, providing fertile ground for eco-critical interpretation.

Not only is Heathcliff racialized, he is, simultaneously, linked so closely to the local ecology that he becomes native. Heathcliff's nativizing relationship to the landscape challenges the idea of Englishness as oppositional to racial Otherness—not only is a racialized Other an indigene of the novel's Yorkshire setting, but all his savagery and violence are then painted as natural aspects of the setting as well. This section will fully unpack how Heathcliff's nativization occurs through descriptive linkages to the Yorkshire ecology, and what his nativization might

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[49] Taylor, "Atmosphere as Setting," 34.

[50] Heywood, Christopher Heywood, "Yorkshire Landscapes in *Wuthering Heights,*" *Essays in Criticism* 48, no. 1 (1998), para. 11.
This to me seems particularly important when one considers the novel's use of the bog, which I will analyze shortly. In his accounting of the two West Riding landscapes which make up the novel's composite setting, Heywood does not mention bogs, and yet we know that the existence of bogs had at least some impact on the Brontë family. As Juliet Barker details in her biography of the family, in 1824, when Emily was six years old, a nearby bog burst, causing flooding and a "seven-foot-high torrent of mud" which nearly swept the children away. Patrick Brontë commemorated the event in a sermon and accounts for several newspapers, as well as a poem which depicts the bog burst as harkening the Second Coming. Barker writes, "If the bog burst caused such excitement and trauma to Patrick, one wonders what effect it had on his children, particularly as the apocalyptic interpretations could not have been lost on them. None of their writings for this period are extant, however, and only one poem by Emily, written twelve years later, even approaches the experience, so we cannot tell what they felt about their own brush with death."
Juliette Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), 131, 133.

mean for our understanding of this racially Othered character's place in the heart of the British Empire, a place that considered itself at this point to be characterized by White domesticity.

Heathcliff himself is descriptively linked so closely to the Northern English moors that to explore his characterization is to draw a map of the novel's setting. In the name "Heathcliff" we have two distinctive features of the moors which serve as the backdrop for the story. Heath, the OED tells us, refers to "Open uncultivated ground; an extensive tract of waste land; a wilderness; now chiefly applied to a bare, more or less flat, tract of land, naturally clothed with low herbage and dwarf shrubs, esp[ecially] with the shrubby plants known as heath, heather or ling."[51] The distinctive plants that grow on the heath are strongly associated with a related environmental feature, the bog, which plays an interesting role in *Wuthering Heights*, and which I will go on to explore in more detail. In the OED's description of heath, we can find adjectives that could be used equally (and which are sometimes used throughout the book itself) to describe Heathcliff: wild, uncultivated. The name and landscape's other distinctive feature are cliffs. Cliffs suggest both the permanence of geography and landscape, and yet the potentially eroding violence inherent in the collision of water against land (however distantly in the past) or of collapse.[52] Cliffs here are also linked closely to inheritance, as the structure of Wuthering Heights itself is described in the first chapter as buffeted by "the north wind blowing over the edge" of the landscape; recall that revenge via the manipulation of lineage and inheritance ranks

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[51] "heath, n.". Oxford English Dictionary Online. Last modified December 2019. https://www-oed-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/85151?rskey=kgOvEv&result=1&isAdvanced=false.

[52] The end of the 18th century had seen discoveries in geological science, and the recognition, via the fossil record, that areas which at present consisted of dry land might have, in the past, been shaped by water. Charlotte Smith hints at this in portions of "Beachy Head," something Kevis Goodman brings to light in her brilliant essay "Conjectures on Beachy Head: Charlotte Smith's Geological Poetics and the Grounds of the Present."
Kevis Goodman, "Conjectures on Beachy Head: Charlotte Smith's Geological Poetics and the Grounds of the Present." *English Literary History* 81, no. 3 (2014): 983–1006.

among Heathcliff's primary motivating forces.[53] This edge likely refers to Penistone Crags,[54] which makes several fateful appearances. In one, the elder Catherine, in a confused state, hallucinates being in a fairy cave below the crags, and imagines she sees a blackened reflection of her own face meet her gaze; this incident occurs directly following her reminiscences on her childhood closeness with Heathcliff, linking by proximity the vision of her darkened visage with his (dark) character.[55] Later on, the younger Cathy develops a fascination with the Craigs and ultimately runs off to visit them, despite Nelly's unsavory description of them as "bare masses of stone, with hardly enough earth in their clefts to nourish a stunted tree."[56] Like the heath, then, the crags or cliffs around Wuthering Heights are not only uncultivated but un-arable, inhospitable to life. Heathcliff seems a fitting name for the character, then. He is wild and uncultivated and, as I will later show, linked to the bog, another inhospitable environment; he also holds a violent and eroding relationship to the inherited landscape of Wuthering Heights, attempting, as I wrote in the previous section, to maintain its freedom from the colonial influence of improvement.

While the name itself seems apt, the conflicted combination of the wild and uncultivated with the domestic and inherited, manifest in the name Heathcliff, finds further expression with the name's history within the book and as it comes to be given to the character. For "Heathcliff," we are told, is a family name, while Heathcliff himself remains on the fringes of familial relation throughout the story, desperately seeking to be included, and ultimately, taking revenge at his

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[53] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 4.

[54] Nelly describes the path to the Crags as winding close to Wuthering Heights, thereby defeating young Cathy's desire to visit them, as she is barred by her father from wandering too close to Heathcliff's home. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 186.

[55] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 122-123.

[56] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 186.

expulsion. The story of Heathcliff's naming, then, in many ways encapsulates the inciting moments that plant the seeds of tragedy and vengeance within the family.

One of the strands of Heathcliff's plan involves currying favor with Isabella Linton in order to gain access to the Linton lineage; the resultant child, Linton Heathcliff, symbolically "degrades" the Linton line with his unhealthfulness and early demise—which, as I have mentioned previously, bear all the signs of miscegenation stereotypes. In a telling moment prior to Isabella and Heathcliff's elopement, Cathy attempts to dissuade Isabella from her crush on Heathcliff. She commands Nelly to "Tell her what Heathcliff is: an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation; *an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone.* [...] He's not a rough diamond —a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. [...] and he'd crush you like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge."[57] I highlight this moment of ecologization because it brings together the threads of race, improper desire, miscegenation, and violence and contains them within the ecology of the Northern English landscape. Just as I uncovered in his name, this description, too, combines a plant native to the area and a stone which undergirds its geology. Here, however, these ecological agents are tied to the civilizing, and thus imperial, notion of cultivation, as whinstone, while it forms the foundation upon which the moorland plants grow, is not conducive to a fertile ground, and thus prevents much modernized (large-scale, capitalist) agriculture, which was used as a tool of colonial expansion and justification.

The issue of cultivation exemplified in Heathcliff's comparison to an "arid wilderness of furze and whinstone" brings me to the bog. As Gladwin notes, bogs were in the 18th and 19th

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[57] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 101-2, emphasis mine.

centuries associated with Irishness and with Celticness as racially Othered, though they in fact are features found across the British isles, including southern England. Gladwin writes specifically about the bog within the context of Irish colonial history, and in the 19th century, as Carlyle demonstrates, Irishness served as one exemplar of failed empire. However, much of what Gladwin notes about land use and the "civilization" of the land as synonymous with colonial policy can be applied to a lesser extent within eighteenth century Scotland as well.[58] Considering how such policies were deployed within the Scottish context expands the boundaries of the colonial encounter such that they encroach upon England,[59] thereby highlighting the constructed nature of national borders and identity. Furthermore, understanding the relationship between such geographically proximal sites as Scotland and England suggests that this sort of deployment of land management was not reserved merely for explicitly colonial sites but "troublesome" ecologies more generally—such as the un-arable wilderness of the Yorkshire moorland.

Scottish historian T.M. Devine brings critical attention, in the vein of Carlyle's attention to the agricultural upkeep and productivity of the West Indies, to eighteenth-century policies of "clearance" and "improvement" of the Scottish highlands and lowlands respectively. Both of these measures served as exercises in English imperialist control through the "cultivation" of the land and the policing of agriculture; the English-enforced agricultural revolution in Scotland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries essentially ended regionally-traditional modes of

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[58] See, for instance, Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), which traces the journey of a young woman from the Scottish Highlands as she walks to London circa 1736, seeking a pardon for her sister, and encounters anti-Celtic racism along the way.
Sir Walter Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian*, ed. Tony Inglis (London, New York: Penguin Classics, 1994).

[59] A proximity by which the Scottish Carlyle was himself preoccupied. Gikandi questions the extent to which "the hysteria that marked Carlyle's engagement with —and indeed hatred of—blacks represent his attempt to disavow 'the Barbaric Celticness' of his own native Scotland in his frustrated quest for the authority of Englishness." Gikandi, "Through the Prism of Race," 58.

land-use and cultivation.[60] Similarly, as Gladwin points out, de-bogging or "bog reclamation" in Ireland constituted an important aspect of the colonial project, which ultimately served the capitalist purpose of seizing control over the land as a means of production and fashioning a more efficient agricultural landscape.[61] The capitalist-colonial project relies upon a justification that enforces the othering of the native population, and the rhetoric surrounding bogs and the peat-cutting peasants whose livelihoods depended upon such traditional modes of land cultivation were no exception. Gladwin writes, "Bogs and the people who lived on or near them were collectively marginalised in order to reinforce their subordinated 'otherness' status, as not only peasants and Irish Catholics, but also colonial subjects."[62] Yet Ireland was not the only region covered in bogs and other un-farmable land and therefore in need of "improvement." In the eighth chapter of *Capital,* Karl Marx notes how the transformation of the Scottish landscape served as a mode of control for the Anglicized Scottish nobility of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and displaced the peasantry, who had until then retained or attempted to retain either their traditional Celtic ways of life, or their Catholic religion.[63]

In his association with an uncultivatable (and therefore uncivilizable) natural environment, then, Heathcliff's non-White racialization might seem at first to be displaced onto what we might now deem an "ethnically White" (but still racialized) debate closer to home: that of the long history of conflict between Anglo and Celtic identity, and further, between

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[60] T.M. Devine, *Clearance and Improvement: Land, Power and People in Scotland, 1700-1900* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006).

[61] Gladwin, *Contentious Terrains*, 65. Crucially for our modern environmental crisis, peat bogs serve as carbon sinks. Debogging practices, which continue to this day, result in the release of massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere; re-establishing lost bogland has been put forward as a possibility for carbon recapture (Biello).

[62] Gladwin, *Contentious Terrains,* 66

[63] Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes, ed. Ernest Mandel (London, New York: Penguin Classics, 1992).

Protestantism and Catholicism.[64] The Anglo-Celtic divide co-opted the language of race (and therefore demonstrates the malleability of such categories at this time), attempting, as Colin Kidd shows, to attribute differences between English and Scottish culture to a differing racial origin, a process of historiography that took on fascinatingly imperialist tones, given its temporal context. Kidd recapitulates the narrative that privileged the Goths, as precursors to the English, over the Scottish Celts: "When the Scythians [Goths] had poured into Europe, the Celts had been to them 'as the tribes of America to the European settlers.'"[65] This telling analogy gives further proof of how narratives of supposed land mis-management by the native inhabitants are crucial not simply to *specific* colonial sites but to the justificatory process of colonial projects through time and across space. In this way, the non-specificity of colonial land-management discourse parallels Heathcliff's ambiguous Brownness in revealing how racialization functions as a relationship to colonial power while, to an extent, transcending specific racial grouping.

Within the context of the British Isles, narratives of land mis-management are exemplified by the bog. As much as England wished to foist the bog onto Ireland, bogs, like Black and Brown bodies, exist within and trouble the nation's borders and therefore its own self-definition. Reading Heathcliff's character, then, requires an uncomfortable realization about the truth of English identity. This discomfort, an effect I think is closely related to the Freudian uncanny, is also present in the bog. In the final section I will explore the bog's chemical-

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[64] Indeed, that the Brontë's father, Anglican priest Patrick Brontë, had immigrated to England from Ireland in 1802 to attend university at Cambridge, might seem to reinforce this idea. Interestingly, Barker writes in her biography of the family that, for Patrick,"life effectively began only when he shook the dust of Ireland from his feet and was admitted to Cambridge." Barker's interpretation of Patrick's autobiographical nativization to his adopted country echoes Heathcliff's own place in the narrative—we know little about his life prior to his arrival at the Heights, as we know little of Patrick Brontë's early life. Heathcliff, in particular, is never able to escape the reminders of his unremembered childhood in some Other(ed) place.
Barker, *The Brontës*, 2.

[65] Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 252

preservative qualities (as demonstrated at the novel's end when Heathcliff uncovers Cathy's grave, her body maintained in a lifelike condition by the anaerobic environment of the bog which engulfed her coffin) and explain how these reveal the bog's uncanny nature. First, however, I want to conclude this section with an example of how the bog serves to nativize Heathcliff through a dismantling of the Nature/Culture divide.

Soon after the novel's start, our narrator, Mr. Lockwood, finds himself stranded at Wuthering Heights, unable to find his way back to his temporary abode at Thrushcross Grange, which he has rented from Heathcliff, due to a snowstorm and the Heights' inhabitants general lack of hospitality. Asking repeatedly for a guide (to which the young Cathy Linton, daughter of Edgar and the elder Cathy, replies dismissively "Who? There is [Heathcliff] Earnshaw, Zillah, Joseph and I"), Lockwood chides young Cathy, "Then, if you hear of me being discovered dead in a bog or a pit full of snow, your conscience won't whisper it's your fault?"[66] Cathy the younger is, unsurprisingly, unremorseful. This scene, which serves to introduce Lockwood to the tale of the late elder Cathy and her bond with Heathcliff, reveals how one's relationship to the bog functions as a signifier of native status on the Yorkshire moors. The bog becomes a source of potential danger for a non-native unfamiliar with the landscape, and, through its ecological threat, a method of delineating belonging and an obstacle to the colonizer.[67] The native in-group of Lockwood's potential yet unwilling guides use their knowledge of the area's ecology to maintain agential control (in this case, through the inhospitable act of refusing to see Lockwood home, while at the same time refusing to make him comfortable while he's stranded at the Heights) and eschew Southern English interference (by ensuring Lockwood knows to whom the

[66] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 16.

[67] Gladwin, *Contentious Terrains*, 44.

land belongs). Heathcliff, as head of household and the person most directly responsible for Lockwood's discomfort and loss of agency, comes in this scene to epitomize a native relation to and claim over the land in both knowledge and actual possession, and over its boggy terrain in particular. In his manipulation of this land-relation, he comes, too, to symbolize native resistance to Lockwood's southern colonial encroachment. In becoming native through his association with and mastery over the Yorkshire ecology, the wild and unreclaimed Heathcliff is also able to undermine the (Southern) English association of the nation with civilization and progress; as with all equations, that of Heathcliff to Yorkshire (as represented by its native ecosystems) flows both ways, linking Yorkshire too, to this Brown figure.

Heathcliff's Bog Nature & the Cultural Uncanny

In a series of lectures compiled and published posthumously as *The Fateful Triangle,* Stuart Hall comments on the ways in which identities become tied to place, or what he calls "landscaped": "To say that all identities are located or imagined in symbolic space and time is thus to say that we can see cultural identities as 'landscaped,' as having an imagined place or symbolic 'home,' a *heimat.*"[68] In choosing to understand identity using the term 'landscaped,' Hall also creates a connection between the imagined home or place of belonging, and the way in which land is subjected to dominant human values—as John Barrell reminds us, the idea of 'landscape' necessarily introduces the pictorial perspective.[69] Using the term "landscaped," therefore, emphasizes that the place of belonging, the *heimat,* must be imagined, created, and

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[68] Stuart Hall, "Ethnicity and Difference in Global Times" in *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 2017), 105.

[69]John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972), 1.

managed. *Heimat* translates from the German to "homeland"; the use of the German here, though, raises some interesting possibilities in my mind, through its root's thorough etymological exploration in Sigmund Freud's essay "The Uncanny"—in German, *Unheimliche.*[70] Considering Hall's idea of landscaped cultural identity in connection with Freud's uncanny leads to the question: what might we define as the "cultural uncanny"? To my mind, this term encapsulates the realization that one's homeland is not only a construction, but that the fundamental truth of such a construction is vastly different from what one had originally imagined. The discomfort Heathcliff elicits in readers such as Charlotte Brontë and the critics who took issue with the character's rusticity and violence indicates, I argue, that Heathcliff himself is an example of such a cultural uncanny; reading him with the uncanny in mind will help us understand this phenomenon.

According to Freud, regardless of whether one examines the linguistics of the term *unheimliche* (un-homely) or compiles and compares the things that evoke the sensation, the same conclusion will be reached: "the uncanny is that species of frightening which goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar"; the challenge, then, is in parsing why the familiar becomes or holds within it the potential to become frightening.[71] On one hand, we have the conclusion Freud reaches from a linguistic examination: there is a telling point at which the seeming antonyms *heimliche* and *unheimliche* merge. Both words hold amongst their meanings something "removed from the eyes of strangers" that has come out into the open.[72] The uncanny or unhomely moment, as Homi Bhabha describes it, thus holds the public and private together,

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[70] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, tran., David McClintock (London: Penguin, 2003). The root of both in German is, of course, *heim,* for 'home.'

[71] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 124.

[72] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 133.

within one another, so that "the intimate recesses of the domestic becomes sites for history's most intricate invasions" and, "in that displacement, the border between home and world becomes confused." This is a moment that Bhabha sees as fundamental to the postcolonial literary experience, and that, I might argue, we can *also* experience when attending to occluded coloniality in British literature of the nineteenth century.

The other approach Freud takes is through analyzing examples of phenomena that elicit an uncanny feeling. While many readers remember his analysis of E.T.A Hoffmann's story "The Sandman" for the presence of the automaton Olympia, who the protagonist confuses for a real woman and with whom he subsequently falls in love, Freud protests E. Jentsch's claim that Olympia is the uncanny exemplar in the story. Rather, Freud writes, the story's most uncanny element is not the "intellectual uncertainty" of being unable to distinguish between human and inhuman, or to determine whether something is human, but the fear of losing one's eyes as demonstrated by the figure of the Sandman, who steals children's eyes.[73] Freud explains that this fear is a form of the castration complex common in children and "primitive" peoples; the uncanny thus involves a resurfacing of "primitive" or infantile beliefs, which the (adult and "civilized") subject had heretofore considered overcome. Therefore, Freud's previous claim, reached through the linguistic tracing, that "the uncanny is that species of frightening which goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar," can be seen to apply: the uncanny can be felt when the subject gains an inkling of their usually-suppressed primitive or infantile nature and beliefs. Following Bhabha's reading of the unhomely, we can link this to

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[73] Freud, *The Uncanny*, 138. While Freud dismisses the ultimate uncanniness of human indeterminacy, one could argue that this potentially-uncanny uncertainty extends to Heathcliff as well through the ongoing debates during the 19th century about the origins of races. Polygenesists argued that, rather than a single species, humanity was divided (racially) into separate species with separate origins; this belief, which facilitated hierarchical racial organization, was used as justification for slavery and other forms of institutional racism.

British imaginings of the private sphere reserved for the homeland or colonial metropole as separate from the wider "world" of Empire. I want to follow this thread more closely because this definition of the uncanny requires a reconsidering of identity which is, I think, what is also required by the reader who grapples with Heathcliff's Brown presence in the Northern English moorland. In order to do so, I will turn to another example of the bog's presence in *Wuthering Heights*.

Bogs are uncanny ecological sites not only because of the many myths and ghost stories surrounding such places, but because of their ability to literalize Freud's definition, returning the long-buried to the surface in highly unsettling ways. Because of their chemical properties, bogs are places where temporality takes on new valances. Beneath the surface, upon which only specifically adapted plants such as heather may grow, the bog is composed of layers upon layers of partially-decomposed organic material, called peat. Past a certain point, the bog becomes an anaerobic environment, and due to the lack of oxygen, decomposition virtually ceases, or slows to a crawl.[74] Bogs are thus able to preserve their contents for centuries —in some instances, millennia— a process only interrupted by human industry. Just as the modern fossil fuel industry relies on the energy stored in decomposed organic matter, so, too, have those who live near peat bogs relied upon peat as a source of energy, ready for extraction. In cutting peat for fuel, artifacts of the past are sometimes unburied, including perfectly preserved bodies, which remain so intact that their fingerprints and the pores of their skin can still be seen clearly. As I noted in this

[74] Gladwin, *Contentious Terrain*, 32.

chapter's introduction, the main change undergone by these bodies as a result of their long slumber in the bog is discoloration: they turn dark brown or a deeply bronzed black.[75]

It is not merely human knowledge of and control over the land that determines belonging and identity; the land itself can change someone, claim them. In *Wuthering Heights*, we see this happen with the bog, which comes to claim both Heathcliff and the elder Cathy. As I will show in this final section, the bog bears affinities with Heathcliff's character, much in the way that the descriptors of heath—the wild, uncultivated terrain which is a marker of nearby bogland—echo and reveal qualities of his identity. Yet, bogs are not only carriers of figurative meaning and cultural history, but are unique ecosystems that are capable of physically altering the organic matter with which they come into contact. These various valences of bog-nature bear fascinating possibilities for informing—and transforming—our understanding of Heathcliff, and his relationship both to Cathy and their native land.

While centuries-old bog bodies make no appearances in *Wuthering Heights*, a relatively fresher corpse is exhumed from its bog-burial: Catherine's, whose coffin Heathcliff opens just prior to his son Linton's death. The location of her grave bears remarking because,

> to the surprise of the villagers, [it] was neither in the chapel under the carved monument of the Lintons, nor yet by the tombs of her own relations, outside. It was dug on a green slope in a corner of the kirk-yard, where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry-plants have climbed over it from the moor; and peat-mould almost buries it.[76]

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[75] Gladwin, *Contentious Terrain*, 33. Gladwin writes of the bog bodies on display in the National Museum of Ireland. This is where I first encountered them, in the summer of 2016.

[76] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 166.

It is this placement that fortuitously allows for her body's preservation. The church and its yard, Lockwood notes near the beginning of the novel, is so located near a "swamp, whose peaty moisture is said to answer all the purposes of embalming on the few corpses deposited there."[77] Heathcliff exhumes Catherine eighteen years following her death, and her face, he says, "it is hers yet!" because, as the Sexton preemptively digging Linton's grave tells him, it has had no oxygen disturb it. In anticipation of his own demise, he bribes the Sexton to remove the coffin walls that would otherwise separate his grave from Catherine's, so that they can decompose together, into an indistinguishable mass of earth.[78]

When he does die, Heathcliff's burial instructions are carried out ("to the scandal of the whole neighborhood"[79]), so that he joins Catherine not only in her grave but, in doing so, in her state of preservation; they will lie together in their unified grave, until her corpse likely turns as brown as his was in life, the natural process of decomposition replaced symbolically by one scientific racists in the latter half of the nineteenth century might have called devolution.[80]As Catherine famously remarks "I *am* Heathcliff," and if this is the case, their inner identity and the relationship to empire carried within is revealed physically in Brownness and in death.[81]

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[77] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 23. A swamp is actually quite a different form of wetland from a bog, which is what Lockwood most likely really refers to, as indicated by his use of the word "peat," which is specific to bogs. The church would not have been able to be located in a swamp without being at least partially under water.

[78] Nelly asks, "And if she had been dissolved into earth, or worse, what would you have dreamt then?" To which Heathcliff replies, "Of dissolving with her, and being more happy still. [...] Do you think that I dread any change of that sort? I expected such a transformation on raising the lid: but I am better pleased it has not commenced till I share it." Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 277.

[79] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 324.

[80] A couple notes here: while Charles Darwin popularized our more current conception of evolution with the publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the notion of evolution in other forms had been popular in the scientific community prior to this time. Secondly, a quote on Heathcliff's burial in the boggy ground: Nelly tells Lockwood that "Hareton, with a streaming face, dug green sods [of the top layer of heath] and laid them over the brown [peat-]mould itself: at present it is as smooth and verdant as its companion mounds —and I hope its tenant sleeps as soundly" —though she has her doubts he does. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 324-5.

[81] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 82.

Heathcliff's desire to rot into oneness with Cathy may be thwarted in the end by the bog itself, but it seems the bog preserves and reunites their spirits, if the superstitions of Heathcliff himself and the country folk are to be believed. Joseph, Nelly tells Lockwood, "affirms he has seen two on 'em, looking out of his chamber window every rainy night since [Heathcliff's] death."[82] Nelly herself, sensible Nelly, is caught somewhere between the superstitions of the country folk and the more "civilized" families, such as the Lintons, who she has long served. Nelly tells Lockwood how she ran into a little boy who refused to herd his sheep past the ghosts of "'Heathcliff and a woman yonder, under t' nab,'" though she herself saw nothing.[83] She says, "He probably raised the phantoms from thinking, as he traversed the moors alone, on the nonsense he had heard his parents and companions repeat. Yet, still, I don't like being out in the dark now; and I don't like being left by myself in this grim house: I cannot help it," betraying the uncanniness she feels despite her professed lack of superstition.[84]

Heathcliff, in his hold—in death as in life—over the land and inhabitants near the Heights and Thrushcross Grange, unsettles what Hall refers to as the "landscap[ing]" of identity, which ties certain people to specific locales.[85] Heathcliff's demonstrated mastery over the land is an instance of nativization that, dialectically, requires the rethinking of the supposedly "native" identity itself. As Nancy Armstrong writes,

> Brontë's novel dramatizes the process by which certain textualizing procedures produced a cultural periphery within Great Britain and subordinated that periphery to an English core. But the novel also shows how those same

[82] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 325.
[83] Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 325.
[84]Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 325
[85] Hall, *Fateful Triangle,*105

> procedures changed consumers of such information who situated themselves at the core. They evidently began to identify precisely the features that branded other people as peripheral with their own most irrational, primitive, and even perverse selves, and they understood that their right to master others was not-altogether-secure ability to master the Other in themselves.[86]

Here, the unsettling of landscaped identity functions much as bog-lands do: the solid-appearing soil shifts underfoot and reveals hidden currents, buried bodies. It is therefore not only the physical preservative properties of bogs which make them uncanny, but their potential to transcend the physical, blurring the boundaries between natural and supernatural phenomena in a way that elicits fear based on what Freud might recognize as a "primitive" belief. This belief is one held not only by the country folk Nelly refers to but by Heathcliff himself, who, by his race, could be aligned with the "primitive" populations to which Freud refers in his essay; since we do not know his origins, we cannot know from whence his belief came, but clearly residence in Yorkshire has not dispelled it.[87] When he disinters Catherine, he tells Nelly that he has, for eighteen years, been haunted by her spirit, but that seeing her perfectly-preserved corpse has "pacified" him a little.[88]

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[86] Armstrong, "Emily's Ghost," 248.

[87] Even Lockwood, the Southern English tenant of the Grange and our outsider-narrator, slips into superstitious language after spending his night in Catherine's bed, claiming that the room is haunted by her ghost and other goblins, and referring to her as a "changeling," a baby believed in Celtic mythology to have been exchanged at birth for a malevolent fairy. While Lockwood's exclamations may be mere figures of speech, elicited by an unsettling dream, the beliefs held by others, including Heathcliff and Joseph, are much more sincere, influencing their behavior and decisions.
Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 29.

[88] Heathcliff proclaims his belief in ghosts boldly: "You know I was wild after she died; and eternally, from dawn to dawn, praying her to return to me her spirit! I have a strong faith in ghosts: I have a conviction that they can, and do, exist among us!"
Brontë, *Wuthering Heights,* 278.

That Heathcliff and the country folk of the Yorkshire moors alike hold such beliefs challenges the divisions England has built up between itself and the places it has colonized. While Charlotte Brontë in her introduction to the 1850 edition dismisses Heathcliff's character, she praises Emily's depiction of the native Yorkshire population, claiming that, despite her lack of interactions with them, Emily "knew them: knew their ways, their language, their family histories; she could hear of them with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate; but *with* them she rarely exchanged a word."[89] This claim would seem to reinforce the undoing of divisions just mentioned, though it remains Heathcliff, and not the native Yorkshireans, at the center of the story. This, then, is another way in which Heathcliff becomes nativized, or in which the native English population of the area surrounding the Heights becomes primitivized; the other, recall, is through his descriptive ecologization. Both of these find expression through the bog.

The uncanniness of these associations is thus the necessity of self-recognition: England, which had in the nineteenth century come to define itself as a nation at the apex of civilization, is brought back to the "primitive" state it believes to have left behind. In defining Heathcliff as explicitly racially Other and yet continually linking him to the native Yorkshire ecology, as well as demonstrating how he shares in its people's "primitive" beliefs, *Wuthering Heights* makes a claim for primitivism and savagery—exemplified through colonial violence—as an inherent aspect of English identity. Reading Heathcliff produces the discomfort of uncanniness because, while critics may want to swear him off, negate his Brownness or represent it as anomalous within the lily-White archipelago, his character unburies a truth that has been intentionally

[89] Brontë, "Preface," xxxix.

repressed: the centrality of the racialized logics that facilitate colonial exploitation to nineteenth-century Englishness. In insisting on his nativeness, Heathcliff challenges the image of England as a singularly civilized nation; in reversing the power structures used against him as a child, he makes visible the violence of racial hierarchies at the core of English notions of belonging that equate Englishness with Whiteness.

Reading *Wuthering Heights* with attention to Heathcliff's bog nature elucidates certain colonial logics at play in England proper. Much as Carlyle's "Occasional Discourse" links racialized difficulties in land management—issues raised by slavery and the plantation economy—in the West Indian colonies to those closer to home in Irish discontent, Heathcliff's racial ecologization elides the conceptual, and to a degree, the physical, distance between the colonies and the metropole. The colonial modes of land-management described in "Occasional Discourse" and antithetical to the sense of rustic decay of *Wuthering Heights* assume specific modes of knowledge labeled as "English" and "civilized," and which are as much impositions in the West Indies as they are on the moors of rural Yorkshire (though they of course function differently in each place). Conversely, the "primitiveness" of superstitious beliefs exemplified by both Heathcliff and the (other) Yorkshire natives (for Heathcliff, as I have shown, becomes native to the region through his long stay and close ties to the land) demonstrate the proximity of specifically English ways of understanding the world to those of the "savages" colonized or enslaved in a place like the West Indies.

The cultural uncanny, in its unsettling of what Hall refers to as the "landscap[ing]" of identity, digs up the bodies buried in the bog. It is not, as my use of "unsettling" might indicate, a scenario in which one encounters a racialized "fish out of water," as that would serve to reinforce

the landscaped nature of identity that ties certain people to specific locales. Instead, the cultural uncanny is elicited in moments of nativization that, dialectically, require the rethinking of the supposedly "native" identity itself. Here, unsettling functions much as bog-lands do: the solid-appearing soil shifts underfoot and reveals hidden currents, buried bodies.

Finally, I want to end by considering the place *Wuthering Heights* holds within England, as both a work of literature initially rejected for its savagery and yet eventually co-opted by the canon. As Manu Samriti Chander pointed out in *Brown Romantics* and others have done elsewhere, we need to reconsider which voices are allowed into the canon, and to do the ameliorative work of centering Black and Brown stories when talking about nineteenth-century British literature. But this work isn't something that can happen only "abroad" or at the peripheries of empire; we need to unsettle the Whiteness that has clung to definitions of literature and identity within England itself. I say "clung" here in order to highlight purposiveness and collective agency: Empire benefits from the myth of racial purity that a story like Heathcliff's clearly disrupts. The heart of empire isn't merely a site of production but one of enactment; the "heart of darkness" is not located only in Africa but in Liverpool, on the streets of London, amidst the bogs of the Yorkshire moors.

PART II

Chapter 3

Early Detection and the Myth of Objectivity

Introduction

In the winter of 2021, when I taught a course on the history of the detective novel, it quickly became clear that my students had one figure in mind when imagining a detective: Sherlock Holmes. The character created by Arthur Conan Doyle first appeared in *A Study In Scarlet* in 1887, and was popularized by the subsequent series of short stories published in *The Strand Magazine* beginning in 1891. According to one of my students, Holmes is "the greatest detective of all time." What stood out about Holmes, in my students' imaginations, was his ability to separate himself and his reasoning process from his emotions, which he claimed as "opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things."[90] While this opposition to emotion is certainly expressed in the original texts of Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories (as seen in the above quote from *The Sign of Four* (1890)), subsequent adaptations take this to the extreme; for instance, in the BBC's adaptation *Sherlock* (2010-2017) in which Holmes is played by Benedict Cumberbatch, the eponymous detective's callousness and derision toward emotion is a major plot point throughout the show's four seasons.

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[90] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, ed. Shafquat Towheed (Ontario: Broadview, 2010), 156.

Of interest to this chapter are both the focus on Holmes's lack of emotion and associations with objectivity, and, relatedly, the conflation of Conan Doyle's original Holmes with recent adaptations' depictions of the character. Roberta Pearson notes fan reactions to the conflation of the original Sherlock with the BBC's version in a chapter on "Sherlockian Fandom" in the *Cambridge Companion to Sherlock Holmes*. Some (particularly male) members of longstanding Sherlock Holmes appreciation societies, Pearson claims, have noticed and bemoaned the recent influx of new fans who focused on Cumberbatch's Holmes (for reasons that other, particularly female, fans claimed were sexist and elitist).[91] Many of my students, too, based their opinions of Holmes in the *Sherlock* version, and referenced the series often in our class discussions. This was, after all, the version which had first introduced these students (mostly eighteen to twenty-two years old, who would have been entering their teen years while it was airing) to the fictional detective.

The *Sherlock* television version of Holmes shares some commonalities with the original: he is highly logical, with an extensive knowledge base, a degree of social awkwardness, and a propensity toward arrogance. However, Cumberbatch's depiction of Holmes takes some of these characteristics to an extreme. For instance, in Series Three of the show, which aired in 2014, Holmes's ability to store even trivial details in what he calls his "mind palace" becomes a major plot point in the season finale.[92] The explanation of a "mind palace" —based on a real technique used to increase memory—indicates the necessity for an explanation of the character's extremely vast knowledge, which verges on superhuman. The *Sherlock* television series also depicts the

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[91] Roberta Pearson, "Sherlockian Fandoms" in *The Cambridge Companion to Sherlock Holmes*, eds., Janice M. Allan and Christopher Pittard (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019), 238-39.

[92] Sherlock, "His Last Vow," *Amazon Prime* video, 89 min, 12 Jan 2014, https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B00HTYTQ5A/ref=atv_dp_season_select_s3.

eponymous detective as brilliant but almost completely divorced from emotions, and unable to feel human empathy. This is a point of contention between the characters throughout the show—while Cumberbatch's Sherlock can solve seemingly impossible cases ostensibly *because* he separates himself from emotion, he often offends and hurts the feelings of his friends and colleagues, and must learn, over the course of the series, to care for others beside himself. Despite this, Cumberbatch's callous Sherlock accrued fans of his approach, including some of my students, who readily repeated the fictional detective's claims about the incompatibility of objectivity and emotion.

The valorization of Holmes's lack of emotion has several critical consequences. Firstly, it ignores the critiques of Holmes's emotional separation which Conan Doyle built into his characterization of the famous detective. These critiques of Holmes's lack of emotion often come through contrast with Watson, by demonstrating through Watson's fuller life what Holmes has chosen to give up. In *The Sign of Four* (1890), for example, Watson finds marital happiness while Holmes denies himself love, claiming that it would merely cloud his reasoning. Secondly, elevating Holmes's supposedly perfect reasoning ignores instances in which the detective does act on emotion. In particular, I am interested in cases in which Holmes falls prey to his racism and xenophobia, such that his reasoning is then based on a foundation of untruth, fear, and hatred. Ignoring these instances of bias risks subsuming racist and xenophobic logics into the realm of objective truth. Finally, the ideal of the unemotional, logical savant detective, who puts "objective" knowledge into contention with affect and emotion, is linked to and has evolved from the nineteenth-century conceptions of masculinity, race, and knowledge-formation I explored in the first half of this dissertation. The idea that Sherlock Holmes is hyper-logical and

hyper-objective places him in opposition to nineteenth-century ideas about femininity and racialized Others which, as Kyla Schuller argued in *The Biopolitics of Feeling* (2018), held women and racialized people as overly "impressible," and unable to hold emotions at the distance required for objectivity. These are ideas that persist to the modern day, as research on gender and racial disparities in the sciences continue to demonstrate.[93] The category of *detective* is therefore closed off from women and racialized individuals when one holds up the emotion/ reason divide as that which makes for the best crime-solving.

I start this portion of the dissertation by raising the issue of Sherlock Holmes because he is one of our culture's most emblematic detective figures, with a lively fan base (though Roberta Pearson notes some prefer the terms "aficionado" or "devotee," because "fan" has feminized connotations).[94] Here. I take up the ideas of racialization and colonialism explored in the first half of the project, demonstrating how they have remained salient through the present day and inform how we see the past. As Elizabeth Ho puts it in *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (2014), "Within the new context of postcolonialism […], neo-Victorianism can be viewed as a strategy with which to incorporate and work through persistent anxieties and uncertainties that emerge in the wake of the British Empire's dissolution."[95] Anxieties surrounding race, I argue, remain particularly salient. It is a central tenet of this dissertation that

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[93] See, for instance: Chang, M.J., Sharkness, J., Hurtado, S.,&Newman, C.B., "What Matters in College for Retaining Aspiring Scientists and Engineers From Underrepresented Racial Groups," *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 51, no. 5 (2014):555–58; Johnson, D.R., "Campus racial climate perceptions and overall sense of belonging among racially diverse women in STEM majors," *Journal of College Student Development* 53, no. 2 (2012): 336-346.
Chang et al. found that Black and Latine students are less likely to persist in pursuing STEM majors, despite equal levels of interest to their White counterparts. In a 2012 study, D.R. Johnson found that women in science majors felt a decreased sense of belonging, which has been linked to decreased persistence for students of color attending predominantly White institutions. See also Shaun R. Harper on the impact of deficit thinking when addressing racial disparities in science fields.

[94] Pearson, "Fandoms," 229.

[95] Elizabeth Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (London: Continuum, 2012), 7.

racial logics persist as one of the most pernicious afterlives of empire, and the racialized epistemologies that arose in the nineteenth century continue to affect realms as seemingly disparate as scientific research, resource distribution, and criminal justice.

I use detective fiction as illustrative of the connection between conceptions of objectivity, race, and the law in nineteenth-century literature. Detection unites the texts with which this chapter is concerned: Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* (1890), "The Speckled Band" (1892), "The Greek Interpreter" (1893), and "The Yellow Face" (1893). I focus on early examples of detection in part because of the genre's legacy as one of the most recognizable and salient cultural artifacts inaugurated in the nineteenth century, whose popularity persists to the twenty-first; in part, also, for its reliance on the idea of objective knowledge, and its ties to colonial logics and disciplinary regimes, which disproportionately affect the racialized individuals they seek to control. I argue that, within nineteenth-century detection, race is never neutral, a fact which, through the genre's connections to the legal system and objectivity, demonstrates justifications for differential treatment of racialized individuals within legal structures in colonial Britain.

An Automaton— A Calculating Machine: The Objective Subject

The Sign of Four (1890), the second Sherlock Holmes story to appear in print, sets out some of the detective's most memorable characteristics, including his staunch belief in the separation of reasoning and emotional faculties, as well as his drug use and cycles of mania and depression. Equally important for my argument, *The Sign of Four* provides some of the earliest and most

drawn-out displays of Holmes's racial and xenophobic biases—attributes which would seem opposed to his claims of objectivity.

It is in *The Sign of Four* that Holmes defines his method, as well as the "three qualities necessary for an ideal detective": the "power of observation and that of deduction" as well as "knowledge" (the type and form of that knowledge remains unelaborated).[96] One of the most notable of Holmes's attributes is the extensive reach of his knowledge, which seems to conveniently cover any field pertinent to the case at hand. This expansive knowledge, in combination with his logical faculties and powers of observation, often lead others (including Watson) to wonder whether he is making miraculous guesses. Holmes claims, however, that, "I never guess. It is a shocking habit—destructive to the logical faculty. What seems strange to you is only so because you do not follow my train of thought or observe the small facts upon which large inferences may depend."[97] Holmes's insistence that, if others could simply observe and reason as he does, they too could solve seemingly impossible cases, reaching an objective truth at the heart of each mystery, is part of his appeal. As Holmes claims, making the process (and also the "truth" behind each crime, separated from its emotional and socio-cultural contexts) sound exceedingly simple, "Eliminate all other factors, and the one which remains must be the truth."[98] It would seem to make him not so superhuman or alien, instead positioning him as an ideal the reader can strive for. And yet, Conan Doyle makes clear through Watson's narration that Holmes's reasoning faculties are not inherently desirable, as they come at a steep cost; or rather, several significant costs.

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[96] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 52.

[97] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 55.

[98] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 54.

One of these costs is Holmes's drug dependency, which he links explicitly to the qualities which make him a good detective. He tells Watson: "My mind…rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation."[99] It is this need for stimulation which leads Holmes, at the end of the story, to turn once again to cocaine, which gives him the same mental excitement as the dogged pursual of a solution. Holmes is, in a sense, addicted to both cocaine (and opium), and to detection, gaining a similar rush from both. These sensations—offered by the drugs and by his work—are themselves a form of emotion. They are simply directed at objects or concepts, which Holmes sees as more acceptable than feelings for other people. In a way, then, he substitutes the sensations and emotions afforded by his addictions for the ones he does not allow himself to feel. For the refusal of emotion—not a natural lack of it—is another cost of Holmes's chosen profession and lifestyle. Holmes's interactions with Watson, particularly in *The Sign of Four,* where Watson meets and falls in love with client Mary Morstan, demonstrate all he has cut himself off from in the pursuit of detection.

When Watson attempts to bond with Holmes by telling him of his attraction to Miss Morstan, Holmes replies that he "did not observe" whether she was attractive. For someone who prides himself on his skill at observation, claiming it as one of the central pillars of detection, this seems a bit of a strange oversight, as Miss Morstan's attractiveness impacts how others interact with her, and could therefore potentially change the outcome of the case. Watson expresses his surprise in the following exchange:

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[99] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 50.

> ‘You really are an automaton—a calculating machine,’ I cried. ‘There is something positively inhuman in you at times.’
>
> [Holmes] smiled gently.
>
> ‘It is of the first importance,’ he cried, ‘not to allow your judgment to be biased by personal qualities. A client is to me a mere unit, a factor in the problem. The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning.’[100]

Here, and again later, Holmes makes clear that he has cut himself off from the possibility of real human connection (such as love, or even friendship) by placing his reasoning prowess before all else. Holmes tells Watson that “love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things,” and that he has therefore foreclosed the possibility of human love due to his profession and love for *reason.*[101] In decrying him as an “automaton—a calculating machine,” Watson expresses his disapproval and amazement at Holmes’s priorities, which separate him from other humans, though not, to Watson’s reckoning, in a positive way. Watson’s assertion of Holmes’s inhumanity aligns with Kyla Schuller’s theory, developed in *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, that both too much and too little susceptibility to emotion creates figurative distance from the category of “the human.” Schuller describes the fine and racialized balance between what she differentiates as “impressionability” and “impressibility”:

> Sensory impressions were understood to be the trace left by contact with another, and impressionability accordingly signals suggestibility and susceptibility in the immediate time of the present, the often-racialized quality of being easily moved. However,

[100] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 61.

[101] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 156

> impressibility indexed the agential responsiveness of the nervous system to external stimuli, the results of which over time would metonymically transform the body as a whole. Impressibility was understood to be an acquired quality of the refined nervous system that accrues over evolutionary time through the habits of civilization that transform animal substrate into the cultural grounds of self-constitution.[102]

According to Schuller, the agential control over one's reactions to stimuli are critical to the distinction between "civilized" man and the overly-reactive and "impressionable" racialized Other. Schuller defines sentimentality as the ability to allow only the "right" kinds of impressions to affect one emotionally. Sentimentality was therefore understood as a sign of culture and refinement that, simultaneously, demonstrated the Lamarckian ability for continued, progressive evolution toward a higher form of humanity. Schuller describes how, "Sentimental discourse elaborated finely wrought rankings of the disparate corporeal capacity to receive, incorporate, and transmit sensory impressions, and for the mind to direct appropriately non-impulsive, emotional responses to sensations—named 'sentiments'—that would benefit the individual, race, and species."[103] That meant that those capable of proper impressibility (typically, the White and wealthy) had the responsibility to further develop their sentiments by "cultivat[ing] their capacity of benevolent sympathy, therefore refining civilization as a

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[102] Schuller, Kyla, *The Biopolitics of Feeling* (Durham: Duke UP, 2017), 7.
Lucy Hartley has pointed out to me that Schuller's conception of impressibility bears many similarities to *associationism*, a theory of learning popularized by John Locke, in which humans gain understanding and conceive of new ideas through cumulatively connecting impressions. Where Schuller deviates is in describing how impressions were seen not only to influence the mind and human learning, but species evolution.
For more on associationism, see: Eric Mandelbaum, "Associationist Theories of Thought," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), last modified 11 Oct. 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/associationist-thought/>.

[103] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 3.

whole."[104] Those who were understood as incapable of proper impressibility, meanwhile—the "overly impressionable" or "reactive" races—were also incapable of further evolution, as they could only respond impulsively to impressions, and were unable therefore to learn and grow from these impressions.[105]

Choosing to engage in sentimental discourse, and to develop a refined ability to receive and give off impressions, was to accept one's responsibility to contribute to the race's continued evolution. To deny one's impressibility, therefore, was to eschew the civilizing mission, in essence, turning one's back on the continued development of their race. As an "automaton" or "calculating machine," as Watson describes him, who refuses to engage in sentimental discourse and acknowledge the benefits of emotion, Holmes denies his own racial evolutionary potential and, interestingly, brings himself closer to the "insensate" and "impermeable" races and the criminal types he hunts.[106] This is critical because the paradigm of evolutionary impressibility did not run in a straight, progressing, line. Rather, Schuller emphasizes, the threat of regression lurked: "Civilization emerged after layers and layers of beneficial impressions that propelled impressible bodies forward through time, yet their animal and savage substrate ever threatened to reemerge."[107] Because the biopolitics of impressibility relied upon Lamarkian evolutionary ideas, it does not matter that Holmes did not intend to find love or bear children. His refusal to engage

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[104] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling,* 8-9.

[105]Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 8. Schuller describes how some nineteenth-century theorists "discussed the possibility that the uncivilized had maxed out their evolutionary potential long ago and been left to fester in bodies that were insensate and impermeable, incapable of the phenomenon of being affected and moving through time, thereby remaining imprisoned in the present-tense mode of impulsive reaction."

[106] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 8.

[107] Schuller, *Biopolitics of Feeling*, 12.

with (or perhaps more properly, his refusal to acknowledge, examine, and cultivate his engagement with) emotion could have a negative racial effect regardless.

Holmes's denial of emotion has narrative as well as social and racial implications. There are instances where Holmes's desire to adhere to objective fact and decry sentiment lead him, ironically, to inject his own perspective into the narrative. Take, for instance, Holmes's remonstration of Watson at the story's start. Holmes takes issue with what he sees as Watson's "romantic" treatment of the case in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887):

> 'Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid.'
>
> 'But the romance was there,' I remonstrated. 'I could not tamper with the facts.'
>
> 'Some facts should be *suppressed*, or, at least, a just sense of proportion should be observed in treating them. The only point in the case which deserved mention was the curious analytical reasoning from effects to causes, by which I succeeded in unraveling it.'[108]

In his assessment, Holmes reveals the extent to which his supposed objectivity relies on his judgment for ascertaining pertinent facts and shaping the narrative. Holmes positions himself as the arbiter of what qualifies a "just sense of proportion," which facts should be "suppressed" from the narrative. He proves, in essence, that his version of the narrative is just as constructed as

[108] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 51, emphasis added.

is Watson's. Before we continue, it will be helpful to consider what we mean when we discuss "objectivity," and what place such a concept has in relation to early detective fiction.

In *Objectivity* (2007), Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison trace the emergence of the now-prevalent epistemology of objectivity to the mid-nineteenth century, when scientists gained access to cameras and, through them, the ability to capture a precise moment of observation. Importantly, they distinguish technologies such as the camera as "vehicles" and "enforcers," rather than "creators" of objectivity; the camera facilitated the epistemological shift, but was not solely responsible.[109] With the ability to capture a moment visually, they argue, came a shift in how scientists viewed their experiences of the world, and their responsibility to accurately describe what they understood as its truths. Objectivity arose, Daston and Galison tell us, in contrast to the epistemology that underlaid the painstakingly idealized illustrations of the eighteenth century. This prior epistemological mode, termed "truth-in-nature," attempted, for instance, to capture the truth of an entire species through a perfected illustration of a single specimen, erasing its individual flaws to better represent the species as a whole.

Mechanical objectivity imagined that the scientist was able to capture the underlying truth of the world as it existed in that single moment when the flash bulb lit the subject and the shutter snapped closed, and that to generalize, fill in missing pieces, or otherwise correct was tantamount to lying to their audience. The preference for the photograph came, Daston and Galison argue, out of a growing suspicion of the scientific self: "what characterized the creation of late nineteenth-century pictorial objectivism was self-surveillance, a form of self-control at once ethical and scientific. In this period, scientists came to see mechanical registration as a

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[109] Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone, 2007), 197.

means of reining in their own temptation to impose systems, aesthetic norms, hypotheses, language, even anthropomorphic elements on pictorial representation."[110] From this suspicion and reactive abnegation, what Daston and Galison at times call a "willed willessness [sic]," arises the moralization of objectivity, which imagined the ideal scientist or objective truth-seeker as machine-like in his quest for the truth.[111] From the development of the objective self as both scientific and moral imperative, then, the conceptual distance to the idea, for example, that Sherlock Holmes is the "best detective of all time," is quite short. While twenty-first century debates about the dangers of Artificial Intelligence cite a lack of inherent machine morality, the nineteenth-century view of machines was quite different: "it was a nineteenth-century commonplace that machines were paragons of certain human virtues. Chief among these were those associated with work: patient, indefatigable, ever-alert machines would relieve human workers whose attention wandered, whose pace slackened, whose hand trembled…In addition to the sheer industriousness of machines, there was more: levers and gears did not succumb to temptation."[112] Without desires to tempt them, machines (or ostensibly machine-like detectives) never stray from their purpose—in Sherlock's case, searching for the truth, without the interference of personal fears, biases, or aspirations.

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[110] Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 174.

[111] Daston & Galison, *Objectivity*, 53.

[112]Dason & Galison, *Objectivity,* 122-23. Daston and Galison here refer to the temptation to impose the self, via "aesthetic norms, hypotheses, language, even anthropomorphic elements" (174). The showrunners of the BBC's "Sherlock," however, took the idea of temptation in a distinctly different direction in a 2012 episode. The episode, based on the 1888 Conan-Doyle short story, "A Scandal in Bohemia," sees Sherlock facing off against a professional dominatrix in a battle of both wits and will. The dominatrix, Irene Adler, notes the detective's reputation for celibacy at several points throughout, thereby linking the idea of Sherlock's detective genius and ability for objectivity to the rejection of physical desire. In this episode, Sherlock's rejection of the sexual temptation Adler presents allows him to do his job and collect the evidence she has hidden from him on a locked cell phone. Adler's own desire for Sherlock is ultimately her undoing: Holmes discovers that her password, protecting the scandalous photos on her phone, is his name.
Sherlock, "A Scandal in Belgravia," *Amazon Prime* video, 89 min, 05 May 2012, https://www.amazon.com/Sherlock-Season-2/dp/B0081336FO.

The terms "subjective" and "objective" as we use them today come, perhaps surprisingly for the twenty-first century reader who understands such disciplines as opposed rather than complementary, from the realm of poetry and not that of "hard" science. According to Daston and Galison's account, Samuel Taylor Coleridge bastardized the terms, which had fallen out of use in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and popularized them in 1817. They quote from Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*:

> Now the sum of all that is merely OBJECTIVE, we will henceforth call NATURE, confining the term to its passive and material sense, as comprising all the phaenomena by which its existence is made known to us. On the other hand the sum of all that is SUBJECTIVE, we may comprehend in the name of the SELF or INTELLIGENCE. Both conceptions are in necessary antithesis.[113]

Coleridge therefore posits the "objective" as representing an underlying truth of the world outside any human self. This truth is passive: it simply exists. Coleridge's idea of objectivity separates, and contrasts, the body's experiences of the world's underlying truth from the influences of the mind, which might act upon and warp it. When the self intercedes in our experience of the world, that experience becomes subjective. Of course, the relationship between mind and body is not so neat, as any philosopher or psychiatrist worth their salt can tell you. Most importantly for the terms discussed here, there is no way to keep the self separate from our experiences of the material world. Yet, for the nineteenth-century scientist seeking that elusive, underlying truth, Daston and Galison tell us, "[s]ubjectivity was the enemy within, which the extraordinary measures of mechanical objectivity were invented and mobilized to combat. It is

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[113] Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Biographia Literaria, or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, vol. I, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 254-55, emphasis in original.

no accident that these measures often appealed to self-restraint, self-discipline, self-control: it was no longer variable nature or the wayward artist but the scientific self that posed the greatest perceived epistemological danger."[114] From this view arose a set of observational and data-recording practices meant to facilitate surveillance of the self, and ultimately eliminate the self from the scientific process: "By a process of algebraic cancellation, the negating of subjectivity by the subject became objectivity."[115]

As D.A. Miller argues in *The Novel and the Police*, the nineteenth-century detective novel, in its depiction of crime-solving, is a Foucauldian disciplinary tool, meant to encourage surveillance of the self and of others. The detective novel and mechanical objectivity, therefore, already have some things in common, even before one brings Sherlock Holmes into the equation. While the surveillance of mechanical objectivity is ostensibly about *self*-control, Miller claims that the detective novel operates in the realm of *social* control. Social and self-control, therefore, are not so distinct; after all, Foucault's conception of discipline bridges the individual and the social. A disciplinary regime is one in which surveillance in the form of social norms and mores is so cemented and enforced that the subject polices themselves automatically, thereby conserving and indeed affirming the existing social order.

The affirmation of the social order is at the heart of the detective novel, according to Miller. The "point" of the Victorian novel, and the Victorian detective novel specifically, Miller writes, "is to confirm the novel-reader in his identity as a 'liberal subject,' a term with which I allude not just to the subject whose private life, mental or domestic, is felt to provide constant inarguable evidence of his constituent 'freedom,' but also to, broadly speaking, the political

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[114] Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 197-98.

[115] Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 204.

regime which sets store by this reader."[116] Notably, in this quote Miller presumes the novel-reader is male, despite concerns in the nineteenth century about the popularity of novels among women readers. Miller's masculine presumption does reveal that, in the political regime of Victorian England's burgeoning empire, liberal subjecthood was reserved for White, property-owning men.[117] Not coincidentally, this definition of liberal subjecthood overlapped quite exactly with the prevailing vision of the scientific self who was capable of self-regulating and emptying themselves of subjectivity in order to become an objective conduit or mirror for the underlying truth of the world. The disciplinary practices of objectivity, therefore, allowed certain individuals —liberal subjects—authority and claim over knowledge about the world. The question then becomes who is allowed access to liberal subjecthood.

Race, Colonial Subjectivity, and the Detective Figure

I want to proceed now to look at the investigative roles played by various characters in early detective fiction, and at their relationships to reason, objectivity, and the scientific process. In *The Moonstone*, the relationship between scientific process and liberal subjectivity is particularly fraught, as exemplified by the novel's treatment of its most successful and yet tragic detective figure, Ezra Jennings. For, in *The Moonstone*, the professional detective, Sergeant Cuff, is not the one to solve the crime. Neither is it the young aristocrat, Franklin Blake, who, it turns out, is the character inadvertently responsible for the diamond's theft (Blake is crucial to unraveling the mystery, though he does not solve the puzzle himself, because he is responsible

[116] D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), x.

[117] At least, until the Second Reform Act of 1867, when urban working-class men gained the right to vote. The right to vote wasn't extended to rural working-class men until the 1880s. Granted, the right to vote is not the sole constituent of liberal subjecthood.

for collecting the narrative pieces). Instead, it is the biracial Jennings who solves the mystery through the deployment of scientific theories and experimentation. Critics including Lillian Nayder often read Jennings's inclusion as the novel's most successful detective figure and scientist as a sign of Collins's progressive message:

> Because Victorian science was understood to wield a 'democratizing power' and 'threaten traditional boundaries it provides one vehicle for the social transformations that characterise sensation fiction, challenging assumptions about authority and provoking anxieties about political change. In Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868), the lowly 'half-caste' Ezra Jennings scientifically reconstructs the theft of the Hindu gem, incriminating a gentleman and overcoming social prejudices, while John Herncastle, the English officer who initially stole the diamond, performs chemical experiments that signal his social and moral decline.[118]

Here, Nayder reads the novel's use of scientific principles as a challenge to colonial discourse, with Jennings, as scientist-detective, exemplifying this turn. I argue, however, that the novel's characterization of Jennings is complicated in its depiction of his race and scientist identity—while he is allowed access to sufficient scientific prowess to solve the mystery, he is also depicted as feminized by nervous and emotional excess that ultimately result in his death. As Miller has argued, *The Moonstone* teaches the reader to guard against and seek control over the self, as desires and anxieties can lead to unconscious harm and social upset; Jennings clearly lacks the emotional self-possession necessary for liberal subjecthood, a characterization which

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[118] Lillian Nayder, "The Empire and Sensation" in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. Pamela K. Gilbert (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 155.

challenges ideas of scientist and detective identity present much of Victorian detective fiction while also adhering to nineteenth-century stereotypes about racialized Others.

The Moonstone concerns the theft and recovery of a reputedly cursed diamond, gifted to Rachel Verinder on her eighteenth birthday. The eponymous diamond, which was originally pilfered from an Indian temple, is followed everywhere by three Hindu priests, who hope to recover it and return it to its rightful place in India. The primary detective in the story is Rachel's cousin Franklin Blake, who compiles narration from members of the household and guests present for the events of the night in question in an attempt to fill in the gaps and discover the diamond's whereabouts. Ultimately, we learn that Blake himself initially took the diamond from Rachel's boudoir in a bout of opium-induced sleepwalking. The diamond was then taken from still-asleep Blake by cousin Godfrey Ablewhite, who planned to sell it to pay for debts and his lavish lifestyle. The novel ends with Ablewhite's murder at the hands of the priests, and the return of the diamond to India. While the ending, which sets right the initial crime of colonial theft, is of interest to me here, I will first provide some historical context critical to understanding the novel's depictions of Indian characters, and then turn to the event through which the mystery is solved: the recreation of Blake's sleepwalking episode in an experiment suggested by Ezra Jennings.

Published in 1868, *The Moonstone* is set two decades earlier, prior to the events of the variously-named Indian Rebellion of 1857.[119] Instead of directly referencing the Rebellion, Collins sets its inciting event—the theft of the Moonstone diamond by "Honourable" John

[119] The event has been called, among other things, The Indian Mutiny, the Sepoy Mutiny, the Indian or Sepoy Insurrection, the Indian or Sepoy Rebellion, the Uprising, and India's First War for Independence. I prefer "Rebellion" or "War of Independence"as these recognize the intent and importance of the event as among the most impactful early rebellions against British colonial control. The rebellion contributed to the dissolution of the East India Company and formalization of British rule in the subcontinent.

Herncastle[120]—amidst the Siege of Seringapatam[121] in 1799. Despite its earlier setting, however, English readers of Collins's novel would have thought immediately of the Rebellion and its attendant atrocities. As Patrick Brantlinger put it in a chapter of *Rule of Darkness* (1988) dedicated to the uprising's literary impact, "No episode in British imperial history raised public excitement to a higher pitch."[122]

The Rebellion was ostensibly incited by accounts of what amounted to religious hate crimes: rumors that the British were greasing the cartridges of the new Enfield rifles with pig and cow fat, which Muslim and Hindu sepoy troops were expected to bite in order to load their weapons. However, as Saverio Tomaiuolo points out, other power struggles, including religious, class, and caste discontent with imperial rule, had long been brewing in the colony. Tomaiuolo quotes Benjamin Disraeli's comments in the wake of the uprising (as does Brantlinger): "As Benjamin Disraeli declared before the House of Commons on 27 July 1857, 'the decline and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges', and the Indian war was in truth 'the result of two generations of social disruption and official insensitivity.'"[123]

The Rebellion of 1857 stood out in the British imagination for two main reasons: the shock of the violence, and its magnification and exaggeration by the British media. Reports and articles, often based in hearsay, decried the rape, mutilation, and murder of White English women at the hands of Indian soldiers—events that, according to Tomaiuolo, were never proven. However, the event was shocking for symbolic reasons beyond indignation at the crimes

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[120] Notably, "Honourable John" was a nickname for the British East India Company.

[121] Anglicized from Srirangapatnam

[122] Patrick Brantlinger, "The Well at Cawnpore: Literary Representations of the Indian Mutiny of 1857" in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 199.

[123] Saverio Tomaiuolo, "Sensation Fiction, Empire, and the Indian Mutiny" in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 114.

committed: “For the first time, an ‘Oriental race’ (as Dickens put it) dared to fight against its rulers and, even worse, dared to commit ‘cruelties’ against the two emblems of Victorian domesticity, women and children.”[124] The Rebellion not only raised questions about the legitimacy of Empire—which was justified in part as beneficial to and even desired by the colonized— but changed the narrative lens through which Britons understood Indians. Prior to the Rebellion, Brantlinger tells us, the assumption that the subcontinent’s people were capable of being “civilized” was largely uncontested. There were, of course, a plethora of negative racist stereotypes claiming that Indians were deceitful, lustful, decadent, and depraved. Yet, the Indian people were also seen as largely peaceful, and ignorant, incapable of revolt. Indian men in particular were compared with British men and found wanting, painted as weak and effeminate. Emasculating Indian men helped the British justify their ever-increasing colonial incursions. According to critics including Catherine Hall and Angela Woolacot, colonists saw themselves as improving the situation of Hindu women in India by teaching Indian men and women British family values.[125] This allowed the British to justify their colonial experiment: if Indian men could not look after their wives (by adhering to British familial conventions), they could not look after their country.[126] This narrative painted Indian men as weak and effeminate, and made British men appear strong in contrast; Hall tells us that, “by rescuing [Hindu women], the British could both reinforce their own masculinity and legitimate their rule.”[127] According to Woollacot,

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[124] Tomaiuolo, “Indian Mutiny,” 114.

[125] Notably, British women were legally considered the property of their male relations at this time, and socially treated as akin to children. Until the Married Women’s Property Act of 1870, women’s inherited and earned property passed to their husbands.

[126] Catherine Hall, "Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 55.

[127] Hall, “Gender and Empire,” 53.

this was a convention of British imperialism which allowed not only for its justification but for the empire's maintenance:

> Colonizers were cast in gendered terms in their relations with colonized others, such that colonial rulers and by extension Europeans in general could be represented as wiser, more responsible and self-disciplined, characteristics seen as masculine, while the colonized were cast as sensual, childlike, and irresponsible, and hence were feminized.[128]

This feminization of the colonized allowed the British (and other Europeans) to paint their rule as benevolent and necessary. Rather than oppressors who were benefitting from the seizure of others' land and resources, they considered themselves caretakers for helpless women or children.

In casting the colonized as feminine, then, colonizers disregarded the possibility of revolt, and violent revolt in particular. Thus, the events of the rebellion not only challenged British notions of Indian masculinity; by extension, British masculinity was shaken as well. As a result, indignation, fear, and hatred towards Indians spread through England and the colonies as the British attempted to reassert their masculine superiority and rule over not only India but other parts of the empire as well. Hall explains:

> The 'Mutiny,' with its terrifying narratives of unspeakable things done to white women, was constantly replayed in the Anglo-Indian imagination throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The events of 1857 meant that forms of Britishness, ways of being a white man or woman in India, had to be re-made.[129]

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[128] Angela Woolacot, *Gender and Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4.

[129] Hall, "Gender and Empire," 72.

The result was that British masculinity was reinforced not through the feminization and "weakness" of Indian men but through a shift to describing Indians as sly and treacherous. Thus, the British emphasized the dangers supposedly present in India, and through conquering these dangers, British men proved their manliness and worth. Published in the rebellion's aftermath, sensation novels had to navigate the shifting waters of British masculinity, as well as the country's changing relationship to its growing empire.

We can see how Collins both attempts to question the practices of empire, and yet reaffirms racial hierarchies through adherence to gendered stereotypes in *The Moonstone*. Critics including Lillian Nayder, Tomaiuolo, and Vicki Corkran-Willey have argued that *The Moonstone* is Collins's attempt to redress the English public's racist hatred toward India in the wake of the 1857 Rebellion. Tomaiuolo argues that, "In having the 'pure' upper-class Englishman John Herncastle as the true villain of the tale, Collins turns the Indians into victims of imperial violence," though, he adds, "Collins's handling of the colonial question in The Moonstone is not exempt from ambiguities"[130] Corkran-Willey, however, reads the novel as more starkly as progressive, and considers it "Collins's thinly veiled effort to counteract what Ian Duncan calls 'imperialist panic.'"[131] My own reading falls closer to Nayder's, who recognizes the unevenness and contradictions that accompany Collins's attempts at critiquing empire. Nayder claims that "Collins uses *The Moonstone* to expose the pretense that India is a 'land of . . . tender adoption' for the British, recognizing, instead, the criminality of empire-building," though she reads his

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[130] Tomaiuolo, "Indian Mutiny," 116-17. The only ambiguity Tomaiuolo addresses, however, is the colonial apologist attitude of narrator Gabriel Betteredge.

[131] Vicki Corkran Willey. "Wilkie Collins's 'Secret Dictate': The Moonstone as a Response to Imperialist Panic" in *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre,* eds. Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006), 227.

critique as one imbued with latent hesitations.[132] However, I want to be careful in separating Collins's intent from the novel's actual effects. While *The Moonstone* does offer a critique of practices such as looting, Collins's depictions of Indian and other non-White characters as either homogenized (in the case of the priests, as well as the worshippers at the novel's end) or as weak, feminized, and submissive (as Ezra Jennings is depicted) ultimately reifies racial stereotypes that elevate White colonizers above Brown Others. In particular, I argue, *The Moonstone* does not allow its Brown characters the equal entry to intellectual conversation and scientist (or detective) identity that it offers its White ones.

Nayder and Corkran Willey point to Collins's use of and identification with the biracial character Ezra Jennings as a signifier of the text's progressiveness (or attempted progressiveness, as Nayder sees it). As Hall notes, "those of mixed race could challenge the distinction between colonizer and colonized and act as sources of subversion, threats to white prestige."[133] Jennings is no exception, as Collins portrays him sympathetically and allows him to partially solve the mystery. According to Willey, "Collins venerates the biracial Jennings in order to engender a favorable reaction not only in Franklin Blake but also in the novel's readers," using him as a sort of gateway to sympathy with racialized Others.[134] Furthermore, Collins, a notorious opium-eater, seems to connect himself with Jennings, who similarly abuses opium to deal with chronic illness.

The sympathy Collins garners from Jennings is enabled largely by his tragic arc and his position of relative powerlessness. In both circumstance and characterization, Jennings is largely emasculated, depicted as proud but servile and somewhat fanciful—stereotypes of Indian

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[132] Nayder, "Empire and Sensation," 446.

[133] Hall, "Gender and Empire," 50.

[134] Corkran Willey, "Secret Dictate," 29.

masculinity (or supposed lack thereof) prior to the Rebellion. Jennings even claims that he was born with a "female constitution."[135] In addition to his "female constitution," Jennings suffers from an "incurable internal complaint," that has left his nervous system "shattered" and that kills him by the novel's end.[136] His emasculation, numerous health complaints, and sad backstory, along with the incongruous aspects of his appearance, such as his piebald hair, all align Jennings with the proto-eugenic stereotype of the infirm, tragic mulatto/a. Though the reader doesn't learn the specifics of Jennings's mixed heritage, he does tell Franklin Blake that he was born and raised in an English colony. Blake, who is fascinated by Jennings and ultimately befriends him, comments that he has learned two things about his history upon their first meeting: "He had suffered as few men suffer; and there was the mixture of some foreign race in his English blood."[137] While ostensibly separate, the two facts are connected both syntactically and, in the minds of many English readers, naturally: his suffering flows directly from "the mixture of some foreign race in his English blood."

Because of his apparent racial Otherness, Blake and Jennings both find themselves needing to justify Jennings's role in the story and the trust placed in him by more reputable narrators. Blake does this by painting Jennings, essentially, as "one of the good ones." He describes Jennings as having "what I may venture to call the *unsought self-possession*, which is a sure sign of good breeding, not in England only, but everywhere else in the civilized world."[138] In referring to Jennings's "good breeding," Blake implicitly includes his non-White heritage among the acceptable breeding stock, with the caveat that the non-White side of Jennings's family has been "civilized" via colonization; Jennings, meanwhile, does all he can to distance

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[135] Wilkie Collins. *The Moonstone*, ed. Sandra Kemp (London: Penguin, 1998), 373.

[136] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 380.

[137] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 371.

[138] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 370, emphasis in original.

himself from his racial Otherness. In recounting his tragic backstory, Jennings begins to discuss his parentage before breaking off: "My father was an Englishman; but my mother—We are straying away from our subject, Mr Blake; and it is my fault."[139] Jennings stops himself even from acknowledging his own biraciality, declining to name his Otherness, as though to speak it would be to make it real. At the same time, Jennings feels he must apologize or admit fault for even acknowledging, both in this stilted speech and through his very existence, the reality of interracial sexual relations and their products.

Jennings's "female brain," as well as his racialization, would seem to make him a poor example of nineteenth-century objective prowess. And yet, he is responsible for the correct theory of the crime, which leads to the rediscovery of the diamond's whereabouts. By this point in the novel, Blake has discovered evidence which links him to the crime. By dint of a paint smudge on his nightclothes matching that on the newly-painted doorframe to Rachel Verinder's rooms, Franklin Blake finds he unconsciously took the diamond. The questions, however, remain: how did this unconscious theft occur, and where did the diamond go? Jennings uncovers a theory of the case when he transcribes the delirious rantings of his boss, Dr. Candy. The doctor had thought to play a prank on the know-it-all Blake by dosing him—without his knowledge—with laudanum[140] to prove its effectiveness as a solution for Blake's insomnia. Unfortunately, Dr. Candy falls ill on his way home from the dinner party, and forgets about his prank, which turns out to be far more potent than anticipated. While nursing Dr. Candy, Jennings transcribes the

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[139] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 371.

[140] Nayder notes that "Blake's alibi for the crime of which he stands accused— his having acted unwittingly, under the influence of the drug—is…double-edged because the Indian production of opium, which was imported to China, was one of the most lucrative and controversial 'achievements' of the British empire."
Nayder, "Empire and Sensation," 448.

doctor's fevered rantings, later piecing them together, like "a child's 'puzzle,'" a description that minimizes the role Jennings plays in solving the mystery.[141] Jennings explains to Blake:

> I reproduced my shorthand notes, in the ordinary form of writing—leaving large spaces between the broken phrases, and even the single words, as they had fallen disconnectedly from Mr Candy's lips…I *filled in each blank space* on the paper, with what the words or phrases on either side of it suggested *to me* as the speaker's meaning, *altering over and over again*, until my additions followed naturally on the spoken words which came before them. The result was that I not only occupied in this way many vacant and anxious hours, but that I arrived at something which was (*as it seemed to me*) a confirmation of the theory that I held.[142]

Jennings's solution to the puzzle of Dr. Candy's speech bears more similarities to what Daston and Galison term "truth in nature" than to the mechanical objectivity that has come to characterize contemporary conceptions of detection. Jennings inserts himself, relying on his knowledge of Mr. Candy, to fill in the blanks. Furthermore, he repeatedly alters the evidence until it matches his preconceived theory of the case, rather like a botanist who alters his illustrations to match what he understands as the most perfect specimen of a species.

Daston and Galison describe the desired characteristics of a truth-in-nature naturalist as "more than just sharp senses: a capacious memory, the ability to analyze and synthesize impressions, as well as the patience and talent to extract the typical from the storehouse of natural particulars, were all key qualifications."[143] In fact, they point to Carl Linneaus as a prototype of the truth-in-nature schema, noting the extent to which *curation* played a role in his

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[141] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 374.

[142] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 374-75, emphasis mine.

[143] Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 58.

practice: "Linnaeus's ways of looking at, describing, depicting, and classifying plants were openly, even aggressively selective…[The botanist] must prevent their illustrators from rendering accidental traits, like color, as opposed to essential ones, like number, form, proportion, and position."[144] Parsing which traits were accidental and which were essential lay with the expertise of the botanist, hopefully achieved by looking at hundreds of plant specimens. As is the case with Jennings, who emphasizes the role his perception played in reconstructing Candy's ramblings through phrases such as "suggested to me as the speaker's meaning" and the parenthetical "as it seemed to me," truth-to-nature naturalists like Linneaus believed the naturalist's mediation and interpretation of their observations was essential to uncovering truth. Yet, Jennings is also careful to qualify his discovery: "Don't suppose…that I claim to have reproduced the expressions which Mr Candy himself would have used if he had been capable of speaking connectedly. I only say that I have penetrated through the obstacle of the disconnected expression, to the thought which was underlying it connectedly all the time."[145] Jennings's qualification draws a distinction between what we might call objective truth—the exact expressions Candy would have used—-and the "essential" (to use Linneaus's term) meaning he has drawn from the evidence presented.

Franklin Blake accepts Jennings's conjectures on the basis of Jennings's expertise—with Mr. Candy, scientific principles, and the effects of opium. Ronald R. Thomas writes in an essay on *The Moonstone* and nineteenth-century forensics that "The remarkable achievement of this novel is to convince Blake (and us) to approve of this bold experiment as an acceptable practice and to submit to the sanctions of science for determining our guilt or innocence. This assumption

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[144] Daston and Galison*, Objectivity,* 59.

[145] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 387.

forms the foundation of modern forensic science, the discipline in which Jennings was a shadowy and intriguing fictional pioneer."[146] In order to convince Blake (and us) that this is an acceptable practice, there must be a degree of belief in the infallibility of science, and the idea of an objective truth that science is capable of unveiling. Yet, as Jennings points out, a belief in science and his own expertise in this matter is insufficient to convince others more skeptical than Blake, due to the circumstances under which the evidence was produced, their "medical and metaphysical" nature, and finally, their maker.[147] Jennings, whose reputation and honor are besmirched by his race, queerness, and disabled status, as well as some other, unspeakable event in his past, is an inadequate authority. Instead, he declares, "We must put our conviction to the proof—and You [Franklin Blake] are the man to prove it….Are you willing to try a bold experiment?"[148] This experiment, Thomas writes, is "rigorously scientific in nature, is based on the most recent research and theory in forensic medicine, and involves an elaborate chain of physical, physiological and chemical interactions," that "succeeds where [Sargeant Cuff's experiment] failed because this experiment is sanctioned by a science that focuses on the body of the suspect as a text to be read."[149] The proof, which involves recreating the night of the theft and Candy's original experiment as closely as possible, aligns with an important element of the scientific method: replicability. The need to conduct this "bold experiment" also speaks to the importance of authority in the scientific—or detective—process (which in this case, are one and the same). Blake, who is an aristocratic (if, prior to his investigation of the theft, irresponsible and dandyish) White British man, carries far more authority than Jennings, whose clearly

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[146] R. Thomas. "The Moonstone, detective fiction and forensic science" in *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins,* ed. J. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 74.

[147] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 388.

[148] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 388.

[149] Thomas, "Forensic science," 67.

racialized appearance and demeanor mark him for suspicion. This is why Jennings, always aware of how he is perceived by the aristocratic White characters, recognizes Blake as "the man to prove it."

One of the primary purveyors of this skepticism is Gabriel Betteredge, the novel's first narrator and the Verinder family's butler. Betteredge, who is a kindly, older gentleman with a propensity for quoting that prime example of colonial literature, *Robinson Crusoe*, calls Jennings a "conjurer" and a "person whose head is full of maggots," and refers to the experiment as "hocus-pocus."[150] Other characters treat Jennings with "excessive civility that is clearly the offspring of downright terror."[151] They stumble over their words upon first seeing him, and in one case, even scream "at the first sight of my gypsy complexion and piebald hair."[152] The experiment, once it is complete, exonerates Franklin Blake (though the diamond's theft from the somnambulant Blake remains a mystery until several chapters later), and affirms Jennings's expertise. In light of Jennings's semi-successful proof, Betteredge apologizes.[153] The lesson Betteredge, and the reader, take from Jennings, then, is not to assume, or judge based on appearances. Yet, Jenning's characterization as feminine and sickly, and his ultimate death, give the lie to this moralizing; Collins merely eschews some stereotypes of biraciality in favor of others. Under this schema, racialized Others like Jennings are not harmful and therefore need not be feared. Instead, in Collins's depiction, they are impotent and weak, hence posing no threat to the (reproductive capacity of the) White race and deserving of pity, mixed, perhaps, with mild

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[150] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 403; 405; 408.

[151] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 414.

[152] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 416.

[153] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 428. "'Mr Jennings, he said, 'when you read *Robinson Crusoe* again…you will find that he never scruples to acknowledge it, when he turns out to have been in the wrong."

curiosity.

Detecting the Criminal Type

Within the stories of Sherlock Holmes, we see a contrasting racial schema, one in which criminal and detective types are clearly delineated and also racialized, leading to and justifying differential treatment under the law. The detective genre demonstrates how the law lends a sense of objectivity and credence to racial typology, and therefore justifies racialized treatment—and indeed visibility—under the law, in a circular and self-perpetuating cycle of injustice. Racialized differential legal treatment extends beyond the criminal justice system to other legal jurisdictions, such as property law, as will become clear in the next chapter for understanding the critiques of nineteenth-century colonial law levied by Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries* (2013).

In an essay titled "The Body and the Archive" (1986), Alan Sekula claims that the rise of photography coincided with and reinforced the regulatory function of policing, the latter of which was, in the nineteenth century, largely dependent on criminal typology. Based in part on physiognomy, typology was an essentialist classificatory system which sought to identify, learn about, and master criminal "types." A critical component of criminal typology was the notion that types could be identified by eye. Lucy Hartley writes in *Physiognomy and the Making of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (2001) that "the crux of physiognomic practice is a classificatory act which functions in a profoundly normative manner in so far as it takes a particular expression as the exemplification of a general kind and then uses this to describe the character of an individual."[154] As Hartley demonstrates, various practitioners, from Johann

[154] Lucy Hartley, *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001): 2.

Caspar Lavater to Herbert Spencer to Charles Darwin, made claims to physiognomy's scientific value and attempts to scientifically explain the relationship between outer expression and inner faculties of mind. For example, Lavater laid out three distinct types of man. This delineation enabled him, Hartley explains, to "[ground] his work on the ability to jump from particular observations to general principles, and in so doing implied that physiognomy can stand squarely within the remit of the sciences as a generalised system of knowledge with a specific methodology derived from particular experiences."[155] Both physiognomy and photography (recall, Daston and Galison traced the camera's association with mechanical objectivity) thus offered criminal typology a valence of scientific authority, thereby legitimizing its adoption as a policing tool.

Beyond policing, Sekula claims, the availability and reproducibility of the photograph "introduce[d] the panoptic principle into daily life" by, along with the use of typology, "enlist[ing] a wider citizenry in the vigilant work of detection."[156] Sekula describes how, "Every portrait implicitly took its place within a social and moral hierarchy."[157] People's appearances, then, insofar as they align with a supposed "criminal type," pre-condemn them, serving in the nineteenth century as objective evidence of their predisposition to crime, if not necessarily of their connection to any particular crime. Yet, Sekula tempers the association of photography with truth within policing, claiming, "If we examine the manner in which photography was made useful by the late-nineteenth-century police, we find plentiful evidence of a crisis of faith in optical empiricism. In short, we need to describe the emergence of a truth-apparatus that cannot

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[155] Hartley, *Physiognomy*, 36.

[156] Sekula, "Archive," 10, 9.

[157] Sekula, "Archive," 10.

be adequately reduced to the optical model provided by the camera."[158] The "archival promise" of the photograph to encode the "mathematical" or "geometrical essence" of the world (what I am referring to here as a notion of underlying objective truth), Sekula continues, "was frustrated, however, both by the messy contingency of the photograph and by the sheer quantity of images. The photographic archive's components…are subject to the circumstantial character of all that is photographable."[159] This resulted, Sekula claims, into a division between two camps: those who saw photography as able to capture representative types, and those who denied typology, for whom the photograph was not "necessarily typical or emblematic of anything, but only…a particular image which has been isolated for inspection."[160] Of interest to my analysis is the similarity the former view—which emphasizes representative types—bears to what Daston and Galison call "truth in nature," and that the latter's emphasis on the particularity of any one photograph bears to "objectivity." However, Sekula claims that the former approach, which privileges generalization and type, was seen within policing as more scientific and widely-applicable: "Thus, the scientists of crime sought a knowledge and mastery of an elusive 'criminal type.'"[161]

While Sherlock Holmes is not an employee of Scotland Yard and often decries the skills of official police detectives, he is a clear example of how the regulatory regime of policing extends beyond its official capacities. In *The Sign of Four*, Holmes even refers to his network of "street Arab" spies, the Baker Street Irregulars, an "unofficial force" Holmes pays to "go

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[158] Sekula, "Archive," 16.

[159] Sekula, "Archive," 17.

[160] Sekula, "Archive," 18.

[161] Sekula, "Archive," 18.

everywhere, see everything, overhear everyone."[162] The serialized format of the Sherlock Holmes stories and the emphasis on case facts and reason might seem to imply a focus on individual criminality. However, even a brief interrogation of Conan Doyle's famous detective finds that he often relies on what Sekula calls the "scientific" side of criminology, using typology to shape his interactions and confirm his suspicions of suspects, at the expense of what we would now refer to as objectivity. In T*he Sign of Four,* we can see blatantly how criminal typology is used to describe the perpetrators of the crime—Jonathan Small and his Andamanian accomplice, Tonga. Even the features of the White characters' faces are read for signs of a criminal type. Jonathan Small, who attempts to steal the treasure but ultimately sinks it (and Tonga) in the Themes, is a "sunburned, reckless-eyed fellow," with "mahogany features," "heavy brows and an aggressive chin," a chin whose "singular prominence…marked a man who was not to be easily turned from his purpose."[163] He is furthermore described by another character as "a brown, monkey-faced chap," emphasizing his degenerative qualities and distance from both civilized Whiteness (through his time spent in the colonies, under a tropical sun that tanned his formerly pale skin) and the related category of the Human.[164]

We also see how Holmes applies classificatory principles of typology to White working-class informants, explicitly letting their "type" inform how he interacts with them. For instance, in seeking information from a family of boaters who rent out their crafts by the hour, Holmes tells Watson that "'The main thing with people of that sort…is never to let them think that their information can be of the slightest importance to you.'"[165] While this may seem like he's

[162] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 107.
[163] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 126-27.
[164] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 103.
[165] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 103.

referring merely to a mercenary "sort" of person, who has shown they might increase the price they require for valuable information, this is a book in which "sorts" are raced and classed, where criminality has a type, and Brownness is a sign of savagery. The woman in question, who Holmes had been plying for information, had been nothing but open with the detective—a complete stranger gently prying into her business—in sharing personal information about her family and their trade. Holmes has assumed her "sort" based on her class background.

It is unsurprising, then, that, operating within a framework in which White working-class characters are treated with automatic suspicion, the non-White characters in the story receive egregiously racist treatment. Tonga in particular is described in terms that read his facial (and racial) characteristics and background as indicative of a criminal disposition. Watson says that he has never before "seen features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty" and writes of Tonga's uncontrollable "savage instincts," which him to kill with poison-tipped darts.[166] Upon learning that Small had spent time in a prison work-camp on the Andaman Islands, Holmes reads to Watson about the Andamnians from a book that Shafquat Towheed notes in his introduction is horribly outdated, and in some cases, as in those of the allegations of poison arrows and cannibalism, simply incorrect:

> They are a fierce, morose, and intractable people, though capable of forming devoted friendships when their confidence has once been gained… They are naturally hideous, having large, misshapen heads, small fierce eyes, and distorted features. Their feet and hands, however, are remarkably small. So intractable and fierce are they, that all the efforts of the British officials have failed to win them over in any degree. They have

[166] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 125; 98.

always been a terror to shipwrecked crews, braining survivors with their stone-headed clubs or shooting them with their poisoned arrows. These massacres are invariably concluded by a cannibal feast.' Nice, amiable people, Watson! If this fellow had been left to his own unaided devices, this affair might have taken an even more ghastly turn.[167]

The passage not only implies that it is in Tonga's nature to both murder and cannibalize his victims, it also generalizes, anthropologically describing the Andamanians as a people and culture as a naturalist might describe a *species* of animal. The Andamanians' physical and temperamental characteristics are intermixed, suggesting though not elaborating a linkage between the two; just as the Andamanians are "naturally hideous," so too is their temperament implied to be "naturally" terrifying. They are described as "intractable" multiple times, and the text explains that "all the efforts of the British officials have failed to win them over in any degree." Yet, this neglects to mention that the British officials had not only occupied and colonized the Andamanians' land, but had used it as a prison. In fact, the loyalty the passage acknowledges they are capable of, and which Tonga extends to Small, is shown in "The Sign of Four" to be engendered through small acts of kindness and humanity.

Small saves Tonga's life by nursing him back to health, and learns a few words of Tonga's language, a small kindness that allows them to communicate and that, Small says, "made him all the fonder of me."[168] Though Small sometimes speaks about Tonga as though he is an unruly pet (referring to him as a "snake,"[169] a "cat,"[170] and a "bloodthirsty little imp"[171])

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[167] Conan Doyle, *Sign* 109.
[168] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 152.
[169] Conan Doyle, *Sign,* 152.
[170] Conan Doyle, *Sign,* 153.
[171] Conan Doyle, *Sign,* 153.

and even commodifies him ("We earned a living…by my exhibiting poor Tonga at fairs and other such places as the black cannibal"[172]) he is, throughout, the only character who treats Tonga with kindness and anything approaching respect. When Small planned his escape from the Andaman Islands, he tells Holmes and Watson, he went to Tonga and "talked it over with him," including him and allowing him to contribute.[173] He allows Tonga autonomy: involving him in planning and acknowledging his misguided attempts to help with Small's revenge plans, rather than imagining that the Andamanian is ruled by base instincts. Though this does have the effect of exonerating Small somewhat by foisting direct responsibility for the central murder onto his accomplice, it also allows Tonga a touch of the humanity denied him by the other characters in the story.

Watson and Holmes's bigoted reactions to Tonga's appearance inform their treatment of him, and ultimately lead to Tonga's death. In Watson's first proper look at Tonga (when he first glimpses him crouched aboard the boat, Watson says Tonga looks like a lump, or a Newfoundland dog) he describes not only the Andamanian's appearance, but his own reaction to it:

> a little black man—the smallest I have ever seen—with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, disheveled hair. Holmes had already drawn his revolver, and I whipped mine out at the sight of this savage, distorted creature…Never have I seen features so deeply marked with all bestiality and cruelty. His small eyes glowed and burned with a

[172] Conan Doyle, *Sign,* 153.

[173] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 152.

> sombre light, and his thick lips were writhed back from his teeth, which grinned and chattered at us with half animal fury.[174]

While Holmes has already drawn his revolver, expecting Tonga to shoot (inaccurate) poison darts at his pursuers, Watson describes drawing his own weapon "at the sight of this savage, distorted creature." The "distorted features," which Watson reads as a sign of "all bestiality and cruelty," lead him to pull his pistol and to shoot Tonga without hesitation when he puts his blowdart to his lips. While the killing is described as self-defense, it is difficult to separate this from Watson's own admitted reaction leading up to it. It is also difficult to reconcile the descriptions of loyalty Small bestows on Tonga only pages later with Watson's assessment of unequivocal evil. Yet, Watson is, as we have seen, judging within a typological schema that reads physiognomy for its moral implications; Small, meanwhile, has spent years with Tonga, learning his language, habits, and individual temperament.

We can see how the ideas of criminal typology are drawn into contention by mere individual, in-depth experience. One contemporary reviewer notes how Tonga's character and his obviously racist depiction give the lie to Sherlock's supposed genius in detection:

> This purely fictitious little monster enables us to detect the great detective and expose the superficial character of his knowledge and methods. The Andamanese are cruelly libelled [sic], and have neither the malignant qualities, nor the heads like mops, nor the weapons, nor the customs, with which they are credited by Sherlock. He has detected the wrong savage, and injured the character of an amiable people.[175]

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[174] Conan Doyle, *Sign,* 125.

[175] Andrew Lang. "The Novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle," in *The Sign of Four,* ed. Shafquat Towheed (Ontario: Broadview, 2010), 214.

The reviewer, Andrew Lang, continues to list the actual qualities of the Andamanese people, and ends by chastising Holmes (and by extension, Conan Doyle), for his shoddy detective work, stating "if Mr. Sherlock Holmes, instead of turning upon a common work of reference, had merely glanced at the photographs of Andamanese… and at a few pages in Mr. Man's account of them… he would have sought elsewhere for his little savage villain with the blow-pipe."[176]

There are other moments, throughout the Sherlock Holmes oeuvre, in which Holmes (and Watson) allow themselves to be waylaid by their (often racialized) assumptions and prejudices. In "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1892), for instance, Holmes at first assumes the guilt lies with a band of Romani. In "The Adventure of the Yellow Face" (1893), Holmes completely misses the mark, ignoring all signs telling him to dig deeper due to his gendered and racist assumptions. I bring attention to the racial prejudices throughout the Holmes stories because doing so demonstrates the truly unsettled nature of objectivity; far from unveiling fundamental (or "geometric," as Sekula might call them) truths, what is considered objective knowledge changes with scientific developments and *trends*—including those which carry prejudice at their core. Because Holmes bases his reasoning processes on the biased worldview of criminal typology, all of the conclusions of his detective-work, and their uses by the legal apparatus, are flavored by those underlying assumptions.

Take, for instance, "The Adventure of the Yellow Face," in which Holmes uncharacteristically jumps to a conclusion which entirely neglects some details, including the unnaturally rigid and livid yellow appearance of a face in a cottage window. Though the rigidity and odd color are mentioned several times, Holmes doesn't consider that it might be a mask,

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[176] Lang, *"*The Novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*,"* 214.

instead fitting the details of the case to the most obvious (yet incorrect) hypothesis without even conducting a more thorough investigation. Following the client's first visit and explanation of the case, Holmes theorizes bigamy and blackmail, and asks Watson what he thinks of the conjecture. "It's all a surmise," Watson says, in a moment which recalls Holmes's diatribe against guesswork in "The Sign of Four." Holmes is unbothered: "But at least it covers all the facts. When new facts come to our knowledge which cannot be covered by it, it will be time enough to reconsider it."[177] Yet, Holmes does not take new knowledge into account, as he does not even conduct his own investigation before the case is concluded. Instead, Holmes and Watson meet their client soon after to assist him in forcing his way into the cottage his wife has requested he not enter, and in whose window he has seen the masked face several times. Rather than investigating further on his client's behalf, a task which would easily give Holmes the further knowledge needed to reassess his earlier theory, he tells Mr. Munro, "I think that you are in the right. Any truth is better than indefinite doubt. We had better go up at once. Of course, legally, we are putting ourselves hopelessly in the wrong; but I think that it is worth it."[178]

The yellow mask, it turns out, is hiding a Black child, who is presumably wearing it to avoid drawing attention in a White London suburb (though the strange mask color itself seems to negate this attempt). The child is biracial, the result of a union between a White woman and lighter-skinned Black man. The girl's dark complexion is referred to by her White mother as a "misfortune," and additionally seems to raise eugenicist fears of "reversion"—the idea that

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[177] Arthur Conan Doyle. "The Yellow Face," in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and The Memories of Sherlock Holmes*, eds, Iain Pears and Ed Glinert (New York: Penguin, 2001), 316.
Notably, this conforms to the construction of scientific theories, in which knowledge is considered provisionally correct until new paradigms or better explanations arise.

[178] Conan Doyle, "Yellow," 317.

children of interracial families would "revert" to the "lesser" race by becoming darker or showing other racialized characteristics.[179] This case is notable because Holmes's *surmise* falls short due to his lack of investigation; the lack of investigation itself stems from Holmes's sexism (having assumed the worst of his client's wife[180]) and his racial assumptions in which White is the color of neutrality, and thus automatically assumed, despite the many people of color with whom he comes into contact over the course of his investigations. In this case, racial assumptions render people of color largely invisible within Holmes's imagination; as we have seen in "The Sign of Four," race can at times be hyper-visible. Regardless, for Holmes, race is never neutral, but rather, serves as a component of the criminal typology he uses to determine differential treatment within the legal structures he is involved in supporting.

Another issue I must raise in covering Conan Doyle's approach to criminal typology arises with respect to Holmes himself: the distinction between the criminal and law-abiding (or even enforcing) types is often slippery. As Sekula explains,

> The law-abiding body recognized its threatening other in the criminal body, recognized its own acquisitive and aggressive impulses unchecked, and sought to reassure itself in two contradictory ways. The first was the invention of an exceptional criminal who was indistinguishable from the bourgeois, save for a conspicuous lack of moral inhibition: herein lay the figure of the criminal genius. The second was the invention of a criminal

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[179] Conan Doyle, "Yellow," 318. It is also hard not to read the title of the story itself and the plot's use of a yellow mask to hide a biracial child without thinking of the racial designation "yellow," meaning light-skinned person of African descent.

[180] As Watson tells the reader in "A Study in Scarlet," Holmes tends to consider women to be easily compromised by emotion.

> who was organically distinct from the bourgeois: a *biotype*. The science of criminology emerged from this latter operation."[181]

The Sherlock Holmes stories, such as "The Sign of Four" highlight both the criminal biotype, wherein criminal characters share a distinct and—to the minds of the Victorian Holmes and Watson—suspicious phenotype, as well as the possibility of the criminal genius in Sherlock Holmes himself. Watson muses while observing Holmes at work, "So swift, silent, and furtive were his movements, like those of a trained bloodhound picking out a scent, that I could not but think what a terrible criminal he would have made had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law, instead of exerting them in its defence."[182] In Watson's estimation, Holmes's career in service of the law seems almost a matter of chance, an inclination that could "turn" as though at the flip of a coin.

While his appearance makes him indistinguishable from the bourgeois and separates him visually from the other "types" which the duo encounter, his behavior remains animalistic in Watson's description, like a "trained bloodhound," ruled by his impulses to seek out stimulation, be it crime-solving or cocaine. As Watson tells Holmes at the story's end, it is "Strange…how terms of what in another man I should call laziness alternate with your fits of splendid energy and vigour."[183] The question then arises: in what other man would Watson see this behavior as laziness? And, further, how would Victorians such as Watson understand someone like Holmes and his peculiarities? In the collected contemporary reviews of *The Sign of Four*, Towheed notes that reviewers were somewhat lukewarm upon the novel's first publication. Several likened it to

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[181] Sekula, "Archive," 15, emphasis in original.

[182] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 85.

[183] Conan Doyle, *Sign*, 156.

The Moonstone, though many note the singularity of Holmes as a character.[184] One reviewer writes that he greatly prefers Watson, who is loyal and tranquil, to Holmes: "Dazzled by the brilliance of Sherlock, who doses himself with cocaine and is amateur champion of the middle-weights, or very nearly…the public overlooks the monumental qualities of Dr. Watson."[185] Despite—or perhaps, as the reviewer, Andrew Lang, suggests, because of—his eccentric qualities, Holmes rapidly acquired a fan following so strong that, when Conan Doyle attempted to kill the detective off so that he could focus on other writing, he was berated with angry letters.[186] The fandom of readers contemporary to the stories' publication was, as Roberta Pearson tells us, almost entirely male, and often inspired to apply Holmes's principles of detection to their own actual lives in an attempt to approach the desirable qualities associated with Holmes's genius (Pearson does not mention whether or not fans took up Holmes's other eccentricities).[187] These qualities, however, are closely linked with Holmes's significant negative qualities as well.

While he is not a *criminal* genius, Towheed notes that Holmes is "perhaps the most overt depiction of genius in the period" and can, therefore, serve to illustrate the type: "Holmes glosses many contemporary concerns about defining and explaining genius, seen in books such as Lombroso's *The Man of Genius* (1891) and Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* (1869). Lombroso considered genius to be…akin to insanity, typified by a dependence on narcotics, a

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[184] Shafquat Towheed, "Appendix E: Contemporary Reviews" in *The Sign of Four,* ed. Shafquat Towheed (Ontario: Broadview, 2010), 209.

[185] Lang, The Novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*,"* 212.
Notably, Lang laments Conan Doyle's lack of creativity, writing that "he sees the footmarks of Poe always in front of him" and suggesting that "possibly the homicidal ape in 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' suggested the homicidal Andamanian islander in *The Sign of Four*" (213-14).

[186] Roberta Pearson, "Fandoms," 230.

[187] Patterson, "Fandoms," 231.

love of difficulty, extreme egotism, bipolarity, and a disposition to psychosis."[188] Within the world of Victorian detection, what separates the genius from the madman or the criminal is often a matter of phenotype, which is itself then racialized; as Mayhew demonstrates, even class distinctions among people we would, in the twenty-first century, call "White" could, in the nineteenth, slip easily into racial ones. Further enforcing the racial nature of this distinction is the idea that genius and criminality are both inherited, views popularized (as the title would suggest) by those aforementioned texts, including Galton's *Hereditary Genius*, and parroted by Sherlock Holmes himself. In "The Greek Interpreter," Holmes tells Watson that his "faculty of observation and…peculiar facility for deduction" are due only *in part* to his "systematic training."[189] "My turn that way is in my veins," he tells Watson, and says he knows his genius is hereditary "Because my brother Mycroft possesses it in a larger degree than I do."[190] Upon meeting Mycroft, Watson immediately knows him to be Sherlock's brother. Despite their size difference (Mycroft is described as "corpulent"), his face "had preserved something of the sharpness of expression which was so remarkable in that of his brother," and his eyes in particular "seemed to always retain that far-away, introspective look which I had only observed in Sherlock's when he was exerting his full powers."[191] In contrast, the villain of the story is described as having a face which inspires "loathing and terror" through its features and which betray him as "a man of the foulest antecedents."[192]

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[188] Shafquat Towheed, "Introduction" in *The Sign of Four,* ed. Shafquat Towheed (Ontario: Broadview, 2010), 12.

[189] Arthur Conan Doyle. "The Greek Interpreter" in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and The Memories of Sherlock Holmes*, eds, Iain Pears and Ed Glinert (New York: Penguin, 2001), 435

[190] Conan Doyle, "Greek Interpreter," 435-36.

[191] Conan Doyle, "Greek Interpreter," 438

[192] Conan Doyle, "Greek Interpreter," 445, 452

Legal Visibility & Capital Accretion

Understanding how Victorians viewed criminality and genius is important because it allows us to understand how markers of these types influenced differential treatment—who is assumed to be a criminal, and thus hyper-surveilled by the law, who is allowed to be a detective, and thus in charge of both surveilling and also narrating. It also helps determine who is overlooked by or rendered invisible to the law. This becomes crucial when we consider that the law determines who is able to hold property. For instance, *The Sign of Four* in its very premise concerns returning stolen Indian property to the daughter of one of its (many) thieves. The novel never questions its foundational premise: that the looted treasure, got by ill means and transported out of its country of origin, "belonged rightfully to Miss Morstan," the White woman who stood to inherit it from her father, a colonial official who stole it from one of its original thieves.[193] That thief, Small, says, "I tell you that no living man has any right to it, unless it is three men who are in the Andaman convict-barracks and myself."[194] (132). He then adds, "Whose loot is this, if it is not ours? Where is the justice that I should give it up to those who have never earned it?" But Small himself "earned" the treasure by killing a man, taking advantage of the chaos sewn by the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

A similar attitude toward looted cultural artifacts is on display in *The Moonstone*, and, in this case, clearly reveals both the racial aspect of legal visibility and the access to other commodities and privileges granted by Whiteness. For, just as Jennings, while allowed to solve a crucial component of the mystery, is not allowed the narrative space nor title of detective that Franklin Blake or Sergeant Cuff claim, the narrative never fully questions Rachel Verinder's

[193] Conan Doyle, *Sign,* 105.

[194] Conan Doyle, *Sign,* 132.

right to the titular gem. The characters' concern with recovering the gem is inextricably linked with their desire to keep it out of the hands of the three nameless Hindu priests who seek to return it to its rightful place. Furthermore, in the scene of the gem's eventual return to India, we can see the uneven effects of racialized surveillance.

The novel's ending takes the stance elaborated earlier in the chapter in relation to Jennings and other Indian men—pity, mixed with curiosity—toward the Indian priests who have been attempting to return the diamond to its place in their temple, and to Indians en masse as well. Notably, it does so through a scene of colonial knowledge-gathering, in which the British explorer Murthwaite covertly gains entry to a religious ceremony in which the diamond is restored. As well as the replaced Moonstone, Murthwaite witnesses the separation of its three protectors. Nayder highlights the significance of this ending, claiming that "Collins brought his readers to tears as the novel ended—not by uniting the English hero and heroine but by dividing three South Asian men."[195] Yet what brings the readers to tears is the seeming unfairness of the separation; even though the men have fulfilled their service through sacrifice, they must be purified because they have relinquished their caste. Murthwait explains, "The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage…Never more were they to look on each other's faces. Never more were they to rest on their wanderings, from the day which witnessed their separation, to the day which witnessed their death."[196] The ceremony of return and separation is accompanied, Murthwaite details, by "plaintive music" to reinforce the romantic sadness of the event, which later shifts to jubilation as the restored diamond is unveiled. Furthermore, the context of purification, commanded by a god (one of many in

[195] Nayder, "Empire and Sensation," 139.

[196] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 471.

Hinduism), prompts the English reader to remember that these are heathens, idolaters of what was considered a cruel religion.[197]

Murthwaite witnesses this scene disguised "as a Hindoo-Boodhist from a distant province, bound on a pilgrimage."[198] His dress, knowledge of the language, tanned skin, and feigned religious affiliation allow him welcome into what he describes as a "throng" of pilgrims, "tens of thousands of human creatures, all dressed in white, stretching down the sides of the hill, overflowing into the plain, and fringing the nearer banks of the winding rivers."[199] Among these, only Murthwaite, and the three priests, retain any semblance of individuality—yet these three priests have, for the course of the novel, been treated as one nameless entity, and soon, these "doomed men" are swallowed into the "grand white mass of people."[200] The differentiated treatment reifies the boundaries discussed earlier: Englishmen are allowed individuality and thus the subjectivity necessary for knowledge formation and resource appropriation, while the Indians are treated as a mysterious mass, only knowable or *discoverable* by the wiley and tenacious English explorer. As Nayder notes, "Murthwaite's ability to pass as a South Asian Hindu suggests his affinity for Indian culture, which he prefers to 'humdrum' English life. But it also illustrates his superiority over those who mistake him for one of their own, since the ability to cross racial boundaries is a privilege only the Englishman enjoys."[201] Indeed, we have only to recall Jennings's inability to fit into English society in order to see the double standard: while Jennings

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[197] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 471.

[198] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 470.

[199] Collins, *The Moonstone,* 471.

[200] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 471.

[201] Nayder, "Empire and Sensation," 149.

was shunned despite attempts to fit in, the British laud Murthwaite for his ability to blend into foreign populations—an ability which allows him to commodify the culture of colonized Others.

As I will show in the next chapter, the ability to transcend boundaries and identities, to shed one's old self and begin anew, is fundamental to the cultural imagination of the colonial resource frontier and, at the same time, only experienced by White men within this space. Legally and culturally, some bodies are too hyper-visible, subjected to an overabundance of surveillance, to move so easily across the borders of the self. Others, like the indivisible mass of Hindu worshippers in *The Moonstone*, or the poor, ill-fated Jennings, are intentionally rendered invisible to keep them from accumulating the social and resource capital necessary, or to divest them of all they might have been privy to in another world, one without the regulatory regime of colonial management.

PART III
Neo-Victorian Speculation: A Prelude

There is a crucial moment in Arthur Conan Doyle's second Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Sign of Four*, in which the villain, Jonathan Small, recounts how three Sikh men convinced him to join forces and aid in stealing treasure during the chaos of the 1857 Indian Rebellion. They convince him to swear his loyalty by telling him, "We only ask you to do that which your countrymen come to this land for. We ask you to be rich."[1] A desire for wealth, accrued through colonial looting, explicitly drives Small to set aside racial loyalties he had previously espoused and unite with the three Sikh men in murder and theft. Fortune-seeking is also what unites almost all of the disparate cast of Eleanore Catton's 2013 Booker Prize-Winning novel, *The Luminaries.* Among the main cast of thirteen point-of-view characters brought together in this detective narrative set on the gold fields of late 1860s New Zealand, two are Chinese and one Māori; the remaining cast is composed of Frenchmen, Scotts, Englishmen, and other White colonials born or raised on the colonial frontier. All are united—save, perhaps, for Te Rau Tauwhare, the Māori greenstone hunter motivated primarily by a desire for justice—by their individual quests for the riches (however falsely) promised by the colonial frontier and, relatedly, in a hunt for a mysteriously disappearing and reappearing fortune in gold.

In turning to *The Luminaries* and *Mexican Gothic* for my final chapters, I must consider not only what the neo-Victorian has to tell us about the themes of this dissertation—the

[1] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, ed. Shafquat Towheed (Ontario: Broadview, 2010), 140.

construction of race and the control over the natural world—but what the genre *is* and how these novels fit into it. Dana Shiller coined the term "neo-Victorian" in 1997 in "The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel," in which she identified a spate of novels published in the preceding decade that she understood to be using and "revising" the Victorian past. Shiller claims, "neo-Victorian fiction is motivated by an essentially revisionist impulse to reconstruct the past by questioning the certitude of our historical knowledge, and yet…even as these novels emphasize events that are usually left out of histories, they nonetheless manage to preserve and celebrate the Victorian past."[2] Shiller's essay takes up George Eliot's conception of history in *Middlemarch* as fundamentally quotidian, arguing that the neo-Victorian novels she identifies use this view of history and in so doing challenge Fredric Jamison's critique of postmodernism, along with its attendant claim that "the historical novel can no longer represent the historical past, but can only represent our ideas and stereotypes about that past."[3] According to Shiller, the neo-Victorian novel concerns itself with the "series of private moments and undocumented acts." According to Eliot, the private, quotidian moments which escape historiographic documentation are the fundamental units composing history. In focusing on the moments lost to the historical record, Shiller argues, the neo-Victorian highlights the constructed nature of history and renders it open to revision.[4]

Perhaps because Shiller's argument specifically takes on Jamison's critique of postmodernism, subsequent theorizations of the neo-Victorian have tended to write about the

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[2] Dana Shiller. "The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel," *Studies in the Novel* 29, no. 4 (winter 1997): 541.

[3] Shiller, "Neo-Victorian Novel," 539. The Neo-Victorian novels with which Shiller is concerned are Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* (1987) and A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990).

[4] Shiller, "Neo-Victorian Novel," 540.

genre in relation to postmodernity. For instance, John Kucich and Diane Saddof claim, in *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century* (2000)*,* that "rewritings of Victorian culture have flourished…because the postmodern fetishizes notions of cultural emergence, and because the nineteenth century provides multiple eligible sites for theorizing such emergence."[5] Several of the major cites of cultural change which this dissertation takes up, for instance, are the expansion of the British Empire and paradigm shifts in the natural sciences.

In her definition of the term for the "Keywords" issue of *Victorian Literature and Culture* in 2018, Molly Clark Hillard noted that, "recently, twenty-first century critical study has broadened the definition of neo-Victorian: now virtually any literary, filmic, or cultural text may signal our contemporary investment in Victorian modes, ideologies, and problems." In centering the "contemporary investment in [the] Victorian," Clark Hillard's definition echoes Jamison's concerns about the postmodern impulse to presentism.[6] Yet, Elizabeth Ho counters Jamison's claims that most narratives of continuity between the past and present are false in *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire.* Ho argues that "the nineteenth-century British past cannot be thought of as separate from neoimperial presents and futures."[7] This is a claim central to this dissertation as a whole, and which I take up through the neo-Victorian. We do not yet live in a post-colonial world, though both the British and American empires hold fewer territories now than they did in decades past. Rather, the forms of empire have shifted, yet continue to bear influences of the nineteenth-century colonial and imperial past. Neo-Victorian novels can

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[5] John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff, "Introduction: Histories of the Present" in *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century,* eds. John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xv.
As we can see in the title, this text often uses "Victorian" and "nineteenth century" interchangeably—an elision of periodizing distinctions not unique to these critics.

[6] Molly Clark-Hillard. "Neo-Victorian," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 46, no. ¾ (2018): 780.

[7] Elizabeth Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 6.

highlight both little-documented facets of life under British colonial rule, and demonstrate the continued resonances of imperial and colonial intervention. *Mexican Gothic*, for instance, is set decades following Britain's failed attempts at informal imperialism in Mexico, yet the novel's uncanny atmosphere comes partly from the lingering vestiges of the past.

Most critics note that the genre includes the sense of "revision" that Shiller identified, to highlight aspects of the past not captured by the Victorian novel or by official histories. Cora Kaplan's definition of the genre includes "the self-conscious rewriting of historical narratives to highlight the suppressed histories of gender and sexuality, race and empire, as well as challenges to the conventional understandings of the historical itself,"[8] while Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn argue that "the neo-Victorian is *more than* historical fiction set in the nineteenth century…texts must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re) interpretation, (re) discovery, and (re) vision concerning the Victorians*."[9] Rather than revision and rewriting, I argue that the neo-Victorian novels with which I am concerned engage in *speculation* about colonial relationships centered in the Victorian past and resonating through to the present day. While "revision" is inherently retrospective, *speculation* is temporally unbounded, as we can speculate both on the future and on events not captured by the historical archive. Speculation requires an analysis of the connection between cause and effect, and therefore enables a clear articulation of the connection between past, present, and potential future. Because speculation can involve a consideration of how our past and present actions may

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[8] Cora Kaplan, *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007), 3.

[9] Ann Heilmann & Mark Llewellyn. *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 4, emphasis in original.

inform a future reality, it is a better tool than revision for re-centering hope, though not all speculative futures are necessarily positive.

I follow Ho's argument in "explor[ing] the restaging of the nineteenth century not only for consumption and as the moment of 'rupture' or 'origins' for postmodernism but as a means to rethink postcolonial politics and experience."[10] In analyzing the neo-Victorian novels which follow, then, I am thinking about how these works speculate on the Victorian in a multiplicity of ways: from imagining the narratives that the Victorians did not tell, in the voices the period silenced, to the alternate understandings of the natural world held by colonial subjects, and the possibilities for grappling with the afterlives of empire in the present and future. But whereas Ho argues that, "In postcolonial neo-Victorian texts, the legacy of empire asserts itself as an obstacle toward imagining a viable future so that we remain…stuck in the 'colonial present'," my argument takes a different direction.[11] Instead of imagining the legacy of empire as necessarily curtailing the future, I read these postcolonial neo-Victorian texts as speculating on how we live and grapple with its afterlives, and the possibility for new futures based on decolonial logics. In highlighting the injustices of the colonial legal system, *The Luminaries* also provides its characters with the agency to enact their own justice; *Mexican Gothic* allows its characters to embrace hybridity and uncertainty, to fight against histories of oppression, and to confront legacies of trauma. Both contain critiques of the voracious and unjust appetites of capitalism, and its close relationship to colonial enterprises and empire-building.

Using the term "speculation" enables me to emphasize the connections between empire and capitalist resource appropriation that both novels emphasize within their respective settings.

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[10] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism,* 7

[11] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism,* 11.

For, speculation bears important connections to the development of the British Empire in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Kucich and Sadoff describe the rise of financial speculation, in which assets are purchased in the hope that their value will increase. They explain that speculation emerged as a means for Britain to retain economic power in the face of increasingly exhausted resource frontiers. Kucich and Sadoff argue that "machine-extractive and manufacturing activities became the means by which capitalism expanded; yet when trade (via the railroads or colonizing joint-stock charter companies, such as the East India Company) could no longer create markets and therefore expand capital and production, an increased specialization in financial speculation gradually emerged as a mode of British national economic dominance."[12] Financial speculation—on railroads, Mexican silver mines, farmland, and other colonial commodities and ventures—drove the continued growth of the British Empire into the twentieth century. The two novels I consider—*The Luminaries* in this chapter and Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020) in the next—make use of England's history of speculative colonial projects in varying ways. In *The Luminaries*, the context is the gold rush frontier of New Zealand in the 1860s, in which prospectors were directly involved in speculation through the purchase of claims that they hoped would reveal a strike. *Mexican Gothic*, meanwhile, concerns the aftermath of Britain's attempts at informal empire in Latin America through speculating on abandoned Spanish silver mines, a late nineteenth-century project that the novel looks back on from its setting in 1950s post-Revolutionary Mexico.

While both novels base their premises on speculative colonial ventures, I will primarily be using the term in a more theoretical sense, expanding beyond its typical literary associations

[12] Kucich and Sadoff, "Introduction," xvii

with science fiction to consider how speculative postcolonial neo-Victorian fiction might function similarly (though with a different purpose) to Saidiya Hartman's *critical fabulation*. Hartman's critical fabulation uses archival research alongside fictional narrative and critical theory to fill in archival silences that omit marginalized populations, and the voices of enslaved individuals in particular.[13] Hartman writes that, "by playing with and rearranging the basic elements of the story, by re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view, I have attempted to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done."[14] Critical fabulation, therefore, serves to "illuminate the contested character of history, narrative, event, and fact, to topple the hierarchy of discourse, and to engulf authorized speech in the clash of voices. The outcome of this method is a 'recombinant narrative,' which 'loops the strands' of incommensurate accounts and which weaves present, past, and future."[15] With this in mind, I want to suggest that the speculative impulses of both *The Luminaries* and *Mexican Gothic* seek, among other aims, to recover or attend to oft-forgotten episodes and voices in the history of the British Empire. It is critical, though, that they each do so through the creation of what I call a speculative reality, in which the very physical rules of our world are altered in the service of historical narrative.

In challenging conventional historical narratives, the novels and my study of them test the bounds of disciplinary convention and historical periodization. These novels do not confine or

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[13] Hartman's scholarship centers on enslaved Africans and African Americans, and she writes in her essay "Venus in Two Acts," that "The intention here isn't anything as miraculous as recovering the lives of the enslaved or redeeming the dead, but rather laboring to paint as full a picture of the lives of the captives as possible." Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *small axe* 26 (June 2008), 11.

[14] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus," 11.

[15] Hartman, "Venus," 12.

content themselves merely with a return to the *Victorian* period, but echo other strands of nineteenth-century discourse, such as the Romantic. It might be more properly said that these novels are neo-nineteenth-century, but because the neo-Victorian is already an established field, and similarly, for the sake of clarity and expediency, "neo-Victorian" will suffice. Still, this question of terminology serves to highlight the difficulty of periodization and returns us to the constructedness of historicity. Does the turn to the unexplainable in both *The Luminaries* and *Mexican Gothic* serve to challenge *Victorian* conventions in which seemingly supernatural phenomena are ultimately revealed as ordinary?[16] Or does it align with the *Romantic* emphasis on man's struggle for control and knowledge over nature? Both novels are also involved in revisiting nineteenth-century genres including sensation fiction and its predecessor, gothic fiction. For this reason, I will sometimes refer to *The Luminaries* as *neo-sensational*, to emphasize its relation to that genre and its impulses. Sensation fiction has been widely acknowledged by critics including Patrick Brantlinger, Marlene Tromp, Lillian Nayder, and Pamela Gilbert for its socially transgressive qualities, and the play it makes out of social boundaries and distinctions. Winifred Hughes claims in *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (1980) that "the unmistakable tendency of the sensation novel is to undermine the prevailing Victorian worldview, to alter the perception of 'reality' and to revise its traditional meaning," and this is something which both *The Luminaries* and *Mexican Gothic* take quite literally, both constructing realities that challenge *scientific* understandings of reality.[17]

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[16] See, for instance, *The Woman in White*, *The Moonstone*, *Jane Eyre*, or *Bleak House* (for which Dickens famously defended the possibility of spontaneous combustion).

[17] Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980), 51-52.

In nineteenth-century sensation fiction, as Brantlinger tells us, the "Gothic is brought up to date and so mixed with the conventions of realism as to make its events seem possible if not exactly probable," doing away with Gothic settings abroad in favor of the drama of the English drawing room.[18] Yet, despite their domestic settings, as we have seen in the previous chapter, sensation novels were often involved in depicting and commenting upon the increasingly global flow of people, objects, and ideas that resulted from England's expanding empire. This is a facet of the genre that both novels covered in the fourth and fifth chapters make use of and, at times, bend or push. *The Luminaries* mixes domestic drama with the concerns and novelties of the colonial frontier, and *Mexican Gothic* sets its scene in an English manor house in the *Mexican* countryside; both, too, blow past Brantlinger's "not exactly probable" into questioning the realm of the possible. If, as Ho contends, the Victorian has become a contemporary cultural shorthand, correctly or not, for the height of the British Empire, the novels covered in the rest of this dissertation are both stellar examples of how contemporary novelists seek to understand and confront the legacies of the period. As Ho explains, "the return to the Victorian in the present offers a highly visible, highly aestheticized code for confronting empire again and anew; it is a site within which the memory of empire and its surrounding discourses and strategies of representation can be replayed and played out."[19] For Ho, the return to the Victorian signifies only the ways in which the trauma of colonialism replays itself in the present and demonstrates its continued psychic, cultural, and political influences. While I agree that the neo-Victorian holds the potential to demonstrate the continued resonances of the colonial past, I argue that

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[18]Patrick Brantlinger. "What is 'Sensational' About the Sensation Novel?" *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 37, no. 1 (June 1982): 9.

[19] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism,* 5.

replaying these traumas does not necessarily mean perpetuating them. Rather, in "confronting empire again and anew," the novels I study in the following chapters offer the cathartic possibility of imagining—speculating upon—resistance to and even triumph over imperial and colonial violence and its legacies. Importantly, however, these novels do not sugarcoat the difficulty of such decolonial ventures. Instead, they imagine decolonial resistance expansively, holding tight to hope while also clearly illustrating the harm caused by British imperialism. In doing so, they demonstrate the reality of post-colonial life and the dream of decolonization: not a rejection of the past, but a palimpsestic future that acknowledges and learns from the multiplicity of the past.

Chapter 4

"The law is united against us; we must have the means to unite against the law": Treasure, Truth, and Law in Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries*[1]

A third of the way through Eleanor Catton's *The Luminaries* (2013), there is an explicit scene of racial violence. Dick Mannering, the town's brothel owner, is looking for information on the connection between a stolen fortune and one of his former whores. In trying to extract information from two Chinese men, Quee Long and Sook Yongshen, he threatens them with a pistol, then beats Ah Quee, telling him, "Nobody misses a Chinaman."[2] Following the encounter, Mannering muses on his updated list of subjects, enumerating as he does so his own prejudices: "If you'd asked me last week who was to blame…I would have guessed the Jew. If you'd asked me yesterday, I would have guessed the widow. This afternoon, I would have told you Chinamen. And now?...I'm d—ned if I don't lay my money on that whore."[3] Meanwhile, Ah Sook and Ah Quee are reflecting on the events as well, and Ah Quee reaches a distinct conclusion: he cannot report Mannering's behavior because he is Chinese, and Mannering is White. Ah Quee entreats Ah Sook for solidarity, "The law is united against us; we must have the means to unite against

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[1] Eleanor Catton, *The Luminaries* (New York: Little, Brown, & Co., 2013), 325.

[2] Catton, *The Luminaries,* 277.

[3] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 322.

the law."[4] In this declaration, Ah Quee identifies one of the foremost concerns of Catton's novel: what do we do when the law is not structured to enable justice?

The Luminaries confronts the law's shortcomings through highlighting its structural gaps in justice and by crafting a narrative that challenges legal and scientific conceptions of truth necessary for procedural function. As the first section of this dissertation has shown, mastery of the natural world—whether scientific or managerial—was intimately connected to racialization and the justification of colonial exploitation; colonized subjects were dehumanized and viewed through the lens of nature in order to justify their treatment as natural resources, available for exploitation. This chapter, in building on the last, demonstrates the slippage between underlying structures of knowledge and imperial governance and law that were used to disenfranchise colonized subjects, divesting them of their rights and property. The novel is told, in the style of sensation novels like *The Moonstone*, by an ensemble cast of voices, each of whose thirteen individual perspectives provides a puzzle piece in the central mystery. Each perspective is, however, narrated in third-person by an omniscient yet reticent narrator, who occasionally reminds the reader that they know the whole of the story, and are revealing their hand at an intentional pace. The mystery, which revolves around a missing and rediscovered homeward-bounder—a four-thousand pound fortune in mined gold—is so convoluted it might impress even Collins and Dickens. Nevertheless, I will attempt a summary.

At the novel's start, we learn that three seemingly unrelated events have transpired in the course of a single night. First, local hermit and drunk, Crosbie Wells, has been discovered dead of a suspected laudanum overdose, with a four-thousand pound fortune in smelted gold bars from

[4] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 325.

the Arahura mine, privately rumored to be a duffer claim. Soon after, his wife—a wife no one knew existed—appears to claim the fortune. Secondly, Hokitika's favorite prostitute and opium-eater, Anna Wetherell, is jailed for attempted suicide—a charge she denies—after she is found insensible from an overdose. Finally, the young Emery Stains, Anna's lover and purported richest man in Hokitika, has disappeared. Over the course of the novel, we learn that the fortune did indeed belong to Crosbie Wells, though he did not originally find it at the Arahura claim. Instead, he made the find back in Dunedin, where it was subsequently stolen by his wife, Lydia Wells (a madame and fortune teller) and her lover, Francis Carver (a former convict who trafficked in opium and betrayed Sook Yongshen back in Canton; Ah Sook has sworn revenge, but in the intervening years winds up in Hokitika working as a hatter and opium dealer, and befriends Anna). Carver and Lydia Wells had stolen Crosbie Wells's identity and used this to blackmail politician and Lydia's former lover (and, unknown to either, Crosbie's half-brother) Alistair Lauderback into handing Carver the deed to his ship, *The Godspeed,* to be used for smuggling the stolen gold, which had been sewn into the lining of several dresses and packed into a trunk for transport to Hokitika. Crosbie, however, was able to intercept the trunk and have it moved to a different ship, which then foundered on the rocky Hokitika coast. The trunk, with its four-thousand pound load of smuggled gold, washed ashore and the dresses were bought by Anna Wetherell, who, under the influence of opium, did not discover that they contained gold until after her overdose. By then, the gold had been discovered by Quee Long, a Chinese man who traveled to Hokitika under indenture and worked mining the Arahura claim, owned by Emery Staines, in the hopes of saving enough money to return home.

Ah Quee is one of Anna's clients, and took advantage of her opium dependence to lift the gold from her dresses and replace the nuggets with lead makeweights while she slept. Quee decided to smelt the gold, stamp it with the Arahura name, and bank it so that he might receive his commission on the fortune. Before he could, though, the gold was discovered by Staines, who knew that his claim was a duffer; Staines had entered a sponsorship agreement with Carver under which Carver would receive a fifty percent commission of Staines's findings, but, having decided Carver is a villain, Staines took on a duffer claim to thwart him. To prevent Carver from gaining two thousand pounds, Staines stole the gold before it could be banked (in the process, he also robbed Quee Long of his share, completely forgetting about his employee). Staines decided to bury the gold on Māori land in the Arahura Valley for safekeeping, as prospecting in the Valley was not allowed. It was then dug up by Crosbie Wells.

Wells, it is revealed, had retained only a hundred pounds of his fortune following its theft, and had asked a newly-arrived Staines to launder it by claiming it as his own find (this is how Staines gained an undeserved reputation for wealth and luck). Wells then gave Staines a cut, and used the rest to buy land in the Arahura Valley, on which he built a cottage and a logging operation. Wells had then befriended both Staines and Te Rau Tauwhare, a Māori guide and pounamu (greenstone) hunter. At the novel's end, when Carver's betrayal and eventual murder of Crosbie Wells via laudanum poisoning are revealed, Tauwhare takes revenge on Carver by bashing his head in with his pounamu club—an act that goes unwitnessed and therefore unpunished. Tauwhare thereby completes the mission of Ah Sook, who had been shot by the Hokitika gaoler, George Shephard, before he could take his revenge upon Carver. Shepherd had aligned himself with Carver, mistakenly believing Sook Yongshen had killed his brother (in fact,

his brother's wife had killed him in self-defense, and Shephard had gone on to marry her out of a sense of obligation).

While this explains the mystery of the gold and the hermit's death, complications arise when attempting to explain the matters of Anna Wetherell's overdose and Emery Staines's disappearance. It is these complications and how they are addressed by the novel and its characters which interest me. For, the novel tells us, Anna and Emery are connected in a manner that can only be described as *mystical*, their fates entwined and bodily health connected by dint of their natal star charts. This connection manifests in several ways during Emery Staines's prolonged absence: a bullet that Anna misfires somehow hits Emery, despite his absence at the time; Anna's opium cravings disappear and Emery develops a dependence, though he has never tasted the drug; and it appears that whatever food Anna eats sustains Emery while he is missing and unconscious, keeping him alive, while she mysteriously loses weight. Their connection is explained through the novel's ruling structure: western astrology. Soon after their meeting, Lydia Wells reads Anna's star chart and tells her of how the date, time, and city of her birth exactly. match those of a young man whose fortune she told only a few hours earlier, so that they were born "under the exact same sky."[5] Excited by the rarity of the phenomenon, Lydia explains that, "It means you may share a destiny, Miss Wetherell, with another soul! … You may have an astral soul-mate, whose path through life perfectly mirrors your own!"[6] She wonders what might happen were they to meet.

The novel's narrator and characters are aware that this astral connection and the events it explains defy conventional definitions of reason. Therefore, when Anna and Emery must each

[5] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 719.

[6] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 718.

stand trial in the novel's final quarter, their defense attorney, Walter Moody, refashions the events to align them with the jury's expectations. This requires some bending of the truth, but, as Ronald R. Thomas suggests, this approach aligns with the lawyer's shifting role in the nineteenth century courtroom: "Blending the testimony of witnesses with corroborating material evidence, the lawyer's task was to make an argument that turns *even false testimony* to account."[7] I am interested, therefore, in the novel's depiction of the legal system as something that must (and can) be gamed in order for its characters to receive just treatment. For, despite its framing in both detective fiction and reality as a system concerned with truths, the law operates unevenly to uphold the status quo. Different forms of knowledge hold different weight within the courthouse walls, as *The Luminaries* demonstrates, and so, too, are people variably visible to the justice system. Thus, I want to show how studying early detective fiction can highlight these discrepancies in knowledge and acknowledgment under the law. Ultimately, I explore how *The Luminaries* uses the form of early detection to challenge the colonial functions, including the divestment of property from native ownership and its appropriation by settlers, of the legal systems in which it is imbricated.

As explained in the previous chapter, the sensation fiction and the other early detective narratives which inform *The Luminaries* were often skeptical of law enforcement, supplanting the authority of the official police detective with the reasoned methods of the citizen or private investigator. However, the effect is, as D.A. Miller noted in *The Novel and the Police*, that the citizenry is enlisted in the task of surveillance, caught up in reinforcing the disciplinary regime. The colonial frontier, where social relations are still unsettled and settlers vie for the opportunity

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[7] Ronald R. Thomas, "The Moonstone, Detective Fiction, and Forensic Science" in *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins,* ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), 75, emphasis added.

to make their fortune and transcend class hierarchies, would seem at first an ideal match for the libertarian impulses of detective fiction. Yet, what *The Luminaries* shows instead is not a lack of social order but rather, a lack of justice in the law and an unevenness in the application of the penal system enabled by the lack of infrastructure and oversight. Ultimately, while the novel identifies a villain in Francis Carver, who plots to steal Crosbie Wells's fortune and later murder him, another arises in the novel's most visible representation of frontier law: the gaoler George Shepard.

Throughout the novel, Shepard repeatedly uses his authority to make life difficult for, and even prosecute, characters he dislikes. This is most clearly the case with Ah Sook, whose mere purchase of a gun incites Shepard to seek his arrest, and Anna Whetherell, who Shepard repeatedly attempts to jail on the grounds of insanity, simply because she is a prostitute and opium-eater. The novel makes clear that other characters recognize these injustices, and yet feel largely powerless to intervene in the face of Shepard's legal authority (which, within the context of the colonial frontier faces no additional oversight), or simply do not doubt him due to the same. For instance, when the legal clerk Gascoigne tells Anna that Shepard intends to prosecute her for attempted suicide, something Anna vehemently denies, Gascoigne does not take Anna at her word but rather prods her with Shepard's own line of reasoning:

> Gascoigne blew out a narrow jet of smoke. 'Most whores *are* unhappy,' he said. 'Forgive me: I only state a simple truth.'
>
> 'How could they charge me for attempted suicide, without first asking me whether I—? How could they? Where's the—'
>
> ' —Proof?'

[...]

'The gaoler fears that you are insane,' he said.

'I have never spoken one word to Gov. Shepherd in all my months in Hokitika,' said Anna. 'We are perfect strangers.'

'He mentioned that you had recently lost a child.'[8]

Shepard's argument, recapitulated by the clerk, not only uses his own prejudices but plays upon those of others to prosecute Anna, despite being backed by little evidence. In this case, as in many others under Shepard, widespread or commonly-held prejudice is substituted for proof. Anna quickly identifies the driving impetus: "Every man wants his whore to be unhappy."[9] The implication goes unstated: if a whore is happy, she may no longer need or desire to be a whore, and therefore presents a threat against social order. As Anna herself accuses Gascoigne of thinking, "once a whore, always a whore? That's the only option left me, I suppose!"[10] Despite the supposed promise the frontier holds for escape from old lives, burdens, and identities—something the male characters, from Crosbie Wells to Francis Carver to Walter Moody and even Aubert Gascoigne himself, take advantage of—there are certain circumstances that disallow the possibility of a fresh start. Anna demonstrates that prostitution is one such mire. Another (though to call it a circumstance obscures its more complex nature) is race.

Sook Yongshen, or Ah Sook, a hatter and the proprietor of the mining settlement's opium den, is another character who faces Shepard's prejudicial treatment. Unlike the treatment Anna faces, however, Sook's interactions with Shepard reveal the functioning of the latter's racial

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[8] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 224.

[9] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 224.

[10] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 237.

prejudices. Ah Sook had previously been acquitted for the murder of Shepard's brother, a crime he did not commit but for which Shepard remained convinced of his guilt. Years later, meeting again in Hokitika, Shepard takes the opportunity for revenge. Upon hearing that Ah Sook has purchased a gun, Shepard puts out a warrant for his arrest, and later kills him. The warrant puts the entire town on alert for a Chinese man, resulting in the racially-motivated assault of Ah Quee (When they realize they have the wrong man, one of his attackers says, "What's the difference?...He's still a Chinaman. He still stinks.").[11] Notably, this time, even other characters protest the warrant, pointing to the lack of an actual crime. The jail chaplain, Cowell Devlin asks Shepard, skeptically, "You would arrest a man for simply purchasing a pistol?"[12] Yes, Shepard answers, if he suspected the man's motive for the purchase was criminal. As Gascoigne had pointed out some fifty pages earlier, however, "A man cannot be convicted simply because it can be proved that he had good reason to commit the crime in question."[13] Yet, this is quite near to what Shepard intends, preemptively, to do: arrest Ah Sook on the suspicion of *future* attempted murder, based only on motive. This, we see time and again, is Shepard's view of the law; it is inseparable from him, his knowledge and suspicions, his prejudices and moral code.

In his role as a representative of the law, Shepard illustrates both the slippery relationship between systemic and individual racism, and between individual prejudice and racism. For, regardless of Shepard's personal Shepard's hatred of Ah Sook, his racism also extends to other Chinese men. The narrator notes this in the preface to an interaction between Shepard and Quee Long, describing the contents of the chapter: "*In which Quee Long brings a complaint before the*

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[11] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 552.

[12] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 622.

[13] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 571.

law, and George Shepard, whose personal hatred of Sook Yongshen has grown, over time, to include all Chinese men, declines to honor it, an unjustice for which he does not, either then, or afterward, feel any compunction."[14] With this complaint, from months prior to the main events of the plot, Ah Quee attempted to inform Shepard that the Aurora was a duffer, and being used to essentially launder money. Had Shepard paid him heed, Ah Quee's complaint could have easily unraveled the entire mystery before it had truly begun; the events of the novel's 800-plus pages, therefore, are due in large part to Shepard's racism.

These examples demonstrate a sliver of how Shepard's own prejudices inform his law-keeping. Yet, while Shepard is the most easily identifiable representation of the law, there are other examples in which characters—particularly characters of color—are not served by, or even taken advantage of, by the legal system. Throughout, we see how these characters are forced to make their own justice, sometimes working outside the law, and sometimes working within it to game the system. As Ah Quee says to Ah Sook, "The law is united against us; we must have the means to unite against the law."[15] While most of the characters of color are left out or, in Ah Sook's case, have been murdered by the time the other men unite against the law, this is essentially what happens in the trial that concludes the novel's plot and provides a degree of justice for some of the characters, through revealing Shepard's and Carver's villainy. The men of color within the story, however, are often left socially isolated and must therefore make and define their own justice outside a legal system that is structured to aid in their disenfranchisement. In these characters, then, Catton offers a speculative alternative to colonial (in)justice, demonstrating both the actual gaps and inequities in the colonial legal system and,

[14] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 804, emphasis in original.

[15] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 325.

should we read or examine closely enough, different systems of relationality which characters—like Te Rau Tauwhare, to whom I turn next—use to inform and enable their agency in the face of colonial regimes.

Near the novel's conclusion, in a chapter aptly titled "Crux," we see yet another example of the differential visibility of characters of color under the law. In this instance, however, the novel offers a redemptive possibility, demonstrating how colonial regulatory regimes are not only insufficient in accounting for but *unable to contain* its colonized subjects, who are at times able to use such shortcomings to enact their own justice. This does not in any way make up for the harm inflicted by the colonial legal apparatus, but it does offer a necessary counterbalance to the more often-told colonial narrative, which emphasizes the pain, hopelessness, and lack of agency of the colonized individual and community. Through this example, then, I want to transition from analyzing how Catton highlights the inequalities and injustices of colonial law, to the brief moments in which the novel demonstrates the inability for these systems to fully contain their subjects—in particular those who offer alternate ways of understanding and interacting with the world.

The chapter begins with the statement that, "Te Rau Tauwhare had not been invited to testify at either trial."[16] This despite his proximity to the events of the interrelated trials, having discovered Emery Stains after his weeks-long disappearance, his friendship with Crosbie Wells, and his interactions with Francis Carver as Carver sought the hermit. Instead, Te Rau watches the trial from the back of the courtroom, leaving when the court is adjourned for a recess following the surprise revelation of Carver's crimes. When Carver is arrested and placed in the police

[16] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 698.

carriage, to be conveyed to the gaol, the sergeant asks Te Rau if he'd like to ride with him on his errand. Te Rau declines, but the narrator notes that "He was staring at the latch upon the carriage door" as he did so.[17] The narrative perspective shifts back to the courthouse, where the trials conclude with Staines sentenced and Anna acquitted. Before the justice can dismiss the court, however, the sergeant bursts into the courtroom with the news that Carver has been murdered, his head "bashed in": "Some point between here and Seaview—someone must have opened the doors—and I never noticed. I was driving. I opened the doors to unload him—and there he was —and he's *dead!*"[18]

Moody immediately looks around the courthouse, taking account of everyone but unable to put the pieces together. He counts the witnesses, who were all required to remain in the courthouse during the recess, "Shepard was there—and Lauderback—and Frost—and Löwenthal, and Clinch, and Mannering, and Quee, and Nilssen, and Pritchard, and Balfour, and Gascoigne, and Devlin. Who was missing?"[19] But Moody is, as a solicitor, a representative of the law, and is using its own authority—in the form of the witness list—to attempt to solve this mystery. In so doing, he repeats the omission of Te Rau, rendering his actions doubly invisible; because Te Rau Tauwhare's testimony is not considered, he is overlooked as a potential perpetrator; his actions are likewise left unrepresented by the novel's narration. Because Carver's death is not shown on the page, Catton leaves the reader to *speculate* about who committed the act. In ascribing Carver's death to Te Rau, then, the reader is not only playing detective, putting together the clues Catton has left in place of a definitive answer, but also speculatively meting

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[17] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 699.

[18] Catton, *The Luminaries,* 702, emphasis original.

[19] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 702.

out justice on his behalf—a justice that escapes the bounds of the legal system. Te Rau Tauwhare's justice—and Te Rau Tauwhare himself—therefore escapes containment by both the colonial legal system and the neo-Victorian narrative.

This moment, in which Te Rau Tauwhare takes his revenge for Carver's murder of his friend, constellates two other examples of boundary-challenging: the fiction created by Moody and the extended cast for the trial itself, and Te Rau's greenstone club, used to enact his justice against Carver. The former ties into the novel's overarching astrological structure, and reveals how the cast of characters chooses to make sense of, or at least use of, the elements of the plot that defy legal and scientific reason. The latter demonstrates a specific instance of Māori culture that refuses the constraints of capitalist systems, and whose incompatibility with the British colonial legal and financial systems is central to the injustices of the colonial encounter in New Zealand. I will now detail these, beginning with the greenstone—or pounamu in Māori.

The novel grants us a few moments of insight into Te Rau Tauwhare's friendship with Crosbie Wells. One, which comprises the entirety of a brief chapter near the novel's end, titled "Papa-tu-a-nuku," which is a Māori word translating to "Earth Mother," documents the following exchange between Wells and Tauwhare:

> 'What I'm saying is that there's nothing in it. You with your greenstone, us with our gold. It might just as well be the other way about. The greenstone rushes, we might call them. A greenrush, we might say.'
>
> Tauwhare thought about this, still chewing. After a moment he swallowed and shook his head. 'No,' he said.

> ‘There’s no difference,’ Wells insisted, reaching for another piece of meat. ‘You might not like it—but you have to admit—there’s no difference. It’s just one mineral or another. One rock or another.’
>
> ‘No,’ Tauwhare said. He looked angry. ‘It is not the same.’[20]

What Te Rau’s response does not reveal (and the novel does not further elaborate) is the specific ways in which pounamu cannot be contained by capitalist systems of value in which commodities are fetishized, divorced from both the labor put into creating them, and their social and cultural contexts. Pounamu, which is also known as “New Zealand jade” and comprises the minerals nephrite and bowenite, is used to create objects sacred to the Māori. Pounamu is rare—found only on New Zealand’s South Island, and specifically in the Arahura River, where the novel takes place—and the stones are prized as carriers of mana, or authority, and of mauri—“the vitality, or life force of both living and inanimate things.”[21]

According to Te Ara, or The Encyclopedia of New Zealand (2006), a government resource that serves as “the complete guide to our peoples, environment, history, culture and society,” mere pounamu and toki poutangata, or weapons made of pounamu, “are seen as being tapu (sacred) and having great mana (status). They were a talisman to remind people of stories of battles and great events in which their ancestors took part; they were also a physical representation of connection, through whakapapa (genealogy), to venerated ancestors.”[22] Because pounamu were carriers of mana, understood to accrue it as they passed from hand to hand over generations, they are inherently incompatible with capitalism, unable to be reduced to

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[20] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 816.

[21] Keane, Basil. “Story: Pounamu—jade or greenstone: Symbols of Chieftanship” Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Last modified 12. June 2006. https://teara.govt.nz/en/pounamu-jade-or-greenstone/page-5

[22]Keane, “Pounamu.”

commodities. Pounamu objects are more than, as Crosbie says, "one rock or another," unable to be exchanged for or their value quantified through comparison with gold. Instead, they are gifted within tribes and families, and used to symbolically seal peace agreements, in a practice known as tatau pounamu, translating to a "greenstone door," or permanent, peaceful passageway between warring territories.

While Te Rau Tauwhare does not explain the distinction that sets pounamu apart from other resources in the above passage, his anger can be read to encompass not only offense at the reduction of pounamu to a tradable commodity, but also the effects that such a lack of understanding of Māori ways has wrought in New Zealand, by settlers seeking to use colonial law to take advantage of differences in perception. For, while the Māori tribe, Ngāi Tahu, which controlled the area of the novel's setting, entered into agreements with the British Crown for the sale of land in Otago under the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, they did so with a different comprehension of the agreement from that which the British enforced. In a 1991 report on grievances filed by the tribe over the government's treatment—grievances spanning nearly 150 years—the Waitangi Tribunal writes,

> This claim is not primarily about the inadequacy of price that Ngai Tahu was paid…Ngai Tahu have certainly a sense of grievance about the paucity of payment they received for their land but then Ngai Tahu have always regarded the purchase price not as a properly assessed market value consideration in the European concept but rather as a deposit; a token, a gratuity. Ngai Tahu understanding and the substance of their expectations was that they agreed to share their resources with the settler. Each would learn from the other.

> There was an expectation that Ngai Tahu would participate in and enjoy the benefits that would flow from the settlement of their land.[23]

As the report makes clear, one of the key benefits the Ngāi Tahu were interested in retaining was access to the pounamu of the Arahura River, something the Crown ceded, allowing them to retain control of the riverbed, tributaries, and adjacent land.[24] Yet, the Ngāi Tahu claim, the Crown subsequently acted in breach of these agreements, and Crown representatives "ingeniously used the Crown's right of pre-emption to extinguish Maori rights to vast tracts of land in the South Island for nominal sums and pave the way for settlement."[25]

The treaty also severely restricted the tribe's access to land used for procuring sustenance, or mahinga kai, which the tribe claims "is one of the most emotionally charged elements of the tribe's grievances and further explains how commercial exploitation and use of natural resources both for tribal consumption and trade was basic to the Maori economy and to the whole social fabric of tribal and intertribal life."[26] The inability of the colonial government to understand the importance of mahinga kai and pounamu as extending beyond natural resource or tradable commodity, necessary not only for physical survival but also for the maintenance of tribal life and culture, is at the heart of the grievances filed against the Crown for the damages stemming from the Treaty of Waitangi.

At the heart of these grievances is the issue of translation, which Lydia H. Liu explains played a crucial role in securing state interests in nineteenth-century treaty negotiations and in shaping cultural and linguistic shifts. Liu describes how, in the context of nineteenth-century

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[23] Waitangi Tribunal. *The Ngai Tahu Report 1991*, 2015 ed., vol. I (Wellington: GP Publications), xv.

[24] Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Report*, 128.

[25] Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Report*, 128; xvii-xviii.

[26] Waitangi Tribunal, *Ngai Tahu Report*, xviii.

Anglo-Chinese relations, translation can enable the subordination of one language and set of meanings to another. Liu explains, "one does not translate between equivalents; rather, one creates tropes of equivalence in the middle zone of translation between the host and guest languages. This zone of hypothetical equivalence, which is occupied by neologistic imagination and the supersign, becomes the very ground for change."[27] This means that, in functioning in the interstitial space between meanings, translation offers treaty writers an opportunity for speculation on which newly-created equivalency will best serve their own purposes. In the Treaty of Waitangi, this involved crafting a false equivalency between British capitalist and Māori words relating to land and resource possession. Translation is itself a speculative act, yet speculation requires imagination and, as we can see in the Treaty of Waitaingi, the British imagination is shaped by the self-interest of capitalism.

The Treaty was originally signed in English by the Crown, and in te reo Māori by the tribal chiefs. Yet, newer translations such as the one quoted below note significant differences in the language used to cover Māori possessions in English and in te reo Māori. In English, Article Two reads, "Her Majesty the Queen of England confirms and guarantees to the Chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand and to the respective families and individuals thereof the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their Lands and Estates Forests Fisheries and other properties." Meanwhile, the version signed by the chiefs guarantees that "The Queen of England agrees to protect the Chiefs, the subtribes and all the people of New Zealand in the unqualified exercise of

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[27] Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 2004), 110.

their chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their *treasures*."[28] The translation provided here ends with the word "treasures," or *taonga* in the te reo Māori, a word which is not fully translatable to English but which generally encompasses "treasured possessions," and which the *OED* now notes can also include "anything valuable, whether tangible or intangible, including cultural heritage such as language or knowledge, and natural heritage such as native species of plants, animals, etc."[29] We can see, therefore, the fundamental discrepancies between "undisturbed possession of…properties" and "unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over…[taonga]." The unqualified exercise of chieftainship is different from undisturbed possession, and, further, taonga, such as pounamu, are not reducible to *properties*, a word which strips cultural and spiritual significance and implies subordination rather than interdependence.

Catton attends to this distinct manner of understanding a sort of reciprocal possession and relation between humans and their environs in several parts of Te Rau's narrative. In particular, this perspective arises when Te Rau considers Crosbie Wells's cottage, which lies on a tract of land the hermit had bought in the Arahura Valley. Take, for instance, Catton's use of the word "claim," which appears in the following passage, wherein Te Rau mourns the funeral rites Crosbie has been given: "It was senseless that he should have been laid to rest here, among men

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[28] "The full text of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi," Museum of New Zealand, Last Modified December 2023, https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover-collections/read-watch-play/maori/treaty-waitangi/treaty-close/full-text-te-tiriti-o

[29] "taonga, n.," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Last Modified July 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9082122619.
Liu explains that translatability in the context of international law and its applications, "refers to the historicalmaking of hypothetical equivalences between the semiotic horizonsof different languages. These equivalences tend to be makeshift inventionsin the beginning and become more or less fixed through repeated use orcome to be supplanted by the preferred hypothetical equivalences of a later generation." In this way, the capitalist understanding of possession of property comes slowly to dominate and supplant indigenous collectivist conceptions. Liu, *Clash of Empires*, 110.

who were not his brethren, upon soil he had not worked, and did not love—while his dear old cottage stood empty and abandoned, some dozen miles away! It was *that* soil that ought to have claimed him. It was *that* earth that ought to have turned his death into fertile life."[30] Here, the *claim* is not one-sided possession, but social and reciprocal, with land as a place of relation and labor and love, and the human as steward, contributing labor and love which should continue after death. The sort of possession, or of property relations, which settlers rely upon, does not entitle one, in Te Rau Tauwhare's understanding, to a claim on the land. Rather, as Catton writes,

> despite all the transactions between Maori and Pakeha [settlers, derogatory] that had occurred over the past decade, Te Rau Tauwhare still looked upon the Arahura Valley as his own, and he was made very angry whenever any tract of Te Tai Poutini land was bought for profit rather than for use… It was a hollow dividend that required no skill, no love, and no hours of patient industry: such a dividend could only be wasted, for it was borne from waste, and to waste it would return. Tauwhare could not respect a man who treated land as though it was just another kind of currency. Land could not be minted! Land could only be lived upon, and loved.[31]

It is that living upon and loving, for the mutual care provided between land and people, that make something taonga, sacred and treasured, more than resource, which cannot be encapsulated in the neat exchange-values of currency.

Te Rau Tauwhare offers an example of how the novel's colonial subjects are at times illegible to, and thus, perhaps, uncontainable by, the colonial legal apparatus. I want to return, however, to the trial, in which Catton also offers the suggestion for how characters may work

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[30] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 311, emphasis original.

[31] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 369-370.

within and make use of the flaws in this system to seek justice. In this example, the novel also highlights the distinction between what is and is not knowable, the constructed nature of the legal narrative, and how truth and knowledge may not always result in justice under the law. The courtroom scenes that wrap up the novel also set up a separation between our familiar, logical world, as most of the characters within the courtroom understand it, and the underlying reality of the novel, witnessed by some and understood by fewer, in which astrology is able to influence lives and change the outcome of actions. The legal portion of the novel therefore presents its characters—and readers—with a conundrum: what do they do when forced to confront and make sense of the unexplainable?

The twelve men who weave the tale within the courtroom are involved in crafting a legal fiction the truth of which only the reader and narrator are privy to. Even those twelve men, it is implied throughout, are uncertain what to make of certain "particulars that do not…lead [one] to an immediately rational conclusion."[32] The rational narrative constructed by the group for the courtroom performance of justice is one that directly contradicts some earlier events in the novel, thereby forcing the reader to question whether they believe the version presented by the omniscient narrator or the one constructed to make sense within our rational understanding of the world. I return here to Hughes's claim that "the unmistakable tendency of the sensation novel is to undermine the prevailing Victorian worldview, to alter the perception of 'reality' and to revise its traditional meaning;" while Hughes refers within this quote to *social* realities rather than physical or scientific ones, the events which take place in the novel's courthouse scenes bring this aspect of the novel's neo-sensational tendencies to the fore.[33] Tatiana Kontou interprets

[32] Catton, *The Luminaries,* 353.

[33] Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar,* 51-52.

sensation's turn from realism as presenting "not an alternative but an enhanced reality," and yet what Catton's novel does is push this boundary further, into the realm of alternatives and speculation.[34]

Despite the degree of ambiguity that the courtroom proceedings inserts, and the novel's lack of stated confirmation for its own astrological explanation reinforces, then, I continue in my readings to take the novel's narration at its face. The characters themselves make various attempts throughout—including in the courtroom scenes—to make sense of the unexplainable events that have occurred. In all of these attempts, they demonstrate an unwillingness or embarrassment at considering supernatural possibilities which signals their uncertainty. Moody, for instance, must "gather" himself before revealing, with embarrassment at sounding "foolish," that he has seen something that "did not seem—natural."[35] The narrator, meanwhile, repeatedly speaks with authority, revealing details about characters' histories and inner lives in the same straightforward tone they use for describing the workings of the stars. At times, they remind the reader that we are at their whim, able only to watch as they unveil pieces of the puzzle.[36] Furthermore, the novel's structural similarity to sensation fiction, in which each character holds a piece, and the whole picture is only revealed at the end, reminds the reader to take each

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[34] Tatiana Kontou."Sensation Fiction, Spiritualism, and the Supernatural" in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013), 146.

[35] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 358-59.
The narrator tells us, "Moody looked embarrassed. He had faith in the analytic properties of reason: he believed in logic with the same calm conviction with which he believed in his ability to perceive it. Truth, for him, could be perfected, and a perfect truth was always utterly beautiful and entirely clear. We have mentioned already that Moody had no religion—and therefore did not perceive truth in mystery, in the inexplicable and the unexplained, in those mists that clouded one's scientific perception as the material cloud now obscured the Hokitika sky" (358).

[36] At one point, the narrator interrupts their recounting of the inciting convening among the thirteen men, and says, as though turning to the reader, "But we shall leave them in the present, and bear onward, in the past." The inclusion of the reader via the pronoun "we," as well as the transition this sentence marks from what was previously past tense to future perfect, together remind the reader of the narrative's constructedness.
Catton, *The Luminaries*, 206.

character's assessments with a grain of salt. As Moody reflects on one facet of the novel's mystery, "none of the twelve men…could answer this question with any kind of objective certainty, of course; they could only describe what they had been told to be true."[37]

In the face of the characters' various hypotheses, and the narrator's omniscient authority, the reader is left with little choice but to accept the narrator's astrological explanation, at least within the world of the novel. I therefore read Moody's courtroom narrative as a consciously speculative, constructed fiction that imagines how the events may have occurred in a world following familiar rules. This distinction marks the world of the novel as separate, one in which astrology is taken seriously as a natural force, the alignment of stars and planets able to influence, and perhaps even intervene, in its characters' fates. That the novel makes visible the distinction between a speculative, alternate reality and the familiar world, and then proceeds to claim the speculative world as truth, paints the truth-making process on the page for the reader to witness and be involved in.

The act of fabrication for the performance of justice in the courtroom—the moments when the twelve central men agree upon a narrative they will piece together for their desired outcome—is not shown on the page. Instead, the reader is led into the courtroom to witness the drama unfolding, unsure how justice will be served despite knowing the facts of the trials at hand. The reader's guide for this experience, Walter Moody, is the solicitor charged with representing both Anna Whetherell and Emery Staines in their respective trials. In the moments of the trial, in which Moody gradually unveils the twists and turns of the constructed narrative, including dramatic moments in which he leads Carver into incriminating himself, and uses

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[37] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 346.

Shepard's biases to cast doubt upon his authority as an objective agent of the law, demonstrates the changing role of the lawyer at this time. Thomas claims that, over the nineteenth century, "the lawyer's role gradually changed from being a master of legal tradition and precedent to acting as rhetorical specialist skillfully managing information. Blending the testimony of witnesses with corroborating material evidence, the lawyer's task was to make an argument that turns even false testimony to account."[38] The narrator's commentary makes clear that the narrative is certainly constructed, including through either perjury or mere omission, noting that certain inconvenient elements of the story are left out.[39] The reader is also privy to the process by which Moody and his witnesses construct an alternative or speculative truth,[40] having seen the discrepancies between the novel's narration of events and the version Moody and the witnesses construct within the courtroom.

As both detective figure and lawyer, Moody is closely involved in the process of creating the novel's various versions of the truth. This is a role he is conscious of, and that consciousness adds an interesting layer to his scene of courtroom speculation. When listening to the group first recount the events they are trying to piece together—a secret gathering that Moody accidentally disrupts, thereby inserting himself unwittingly into the story—he thinks, "So I am to bee the unraveler…The detective: that is the role I am to play." In this moment, Moody reveals an

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[38] Thomas, "The Moonstone, Detective Fiction, and Forensic Science," 75.

[39] Catton, *The Luminaries,* 673.
"They made no mention whatsoever of Anna's gowns, nor of the foundered barque, Godspeed, nor of any of the concerns and revelations that had precipitated their secret council in the Crown Hotel three months ago."

[40] I use this seemingly oxymoronic phrase here to demonstrate both the constructed nature of "truth," as previous chapters on objectivity have covered, and also to emphasize how one's perspective on or understanding of the world of Catton's novel might change which version of events is considered true. For those who understand the world as rational, and astrology as opposed to this rationality, Moody's courtroom narrative presents a truer version of events than the one which the novel itself gives its readers. This also inadvertently echoes strands of twenty-first century and, in particular, post-Trump and Covid-19 era "alternative facts," which demonstrate the difficulty of convincing someone of a truth which seems rational when their worldview is fundamentally opposed.

awareness of the constructed nature of the narrative, in which he is playing a *role*—whether detective, as he says in this instance, or, later, courtroom lawyer. In both cases, he is tasked with creating the narrative from its mismatched and uncertain parts, whether this is "unraveling" the twisted tale, composed of thirteen sometimes impossible-seeming strands, as a detective, or weaving these various strands back together into a cohesive and *realistic* picture for an audience lacking the awareness granted to the reader or member of the main cast.

We see the construction of the two versions of reality at several crucial moments within the legal narrative. These moments, created through careful witness preparation, contradict earlier, seemingly-impossible events in the novel. One of these, in which Anna is able to perfectly replicate Emery Staines's signature despite her own illiteracy, makes use of the courtroom audience's biases toward Anna as a former prostitute, as well as a convenient legal exception which grants clergymen powers of confidentiality. Through this rule, Devlin is able to omit details of his conversation with Anna, prior to her forging of Staines's signature. Because Devlin was out of the room when Anna committed the forgery, he is also able to truthfully state that he did not witness her signing the document, a deed which would grant her a large fortune, gifted by the (at the time of the signature, missing) young prospector Emery Staines. This instance, in which Anna perfectly forges Emery Staines's signature, is documented by the narrator, who states that "Anna had never seen Emery Staines's signature before, but she knew without a doubt that she had replicated its form exactly."[41] The exactness of the forgery is later corroborated in the court by Shepard, who, despite accusing Anna of forgery, states he was unable to "detect any differences whatsoever" between the signature on the deed of gift and those

[41] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 542.

known for sure to be Staines's, of which, Moody states, "the Reserve Bank has an extensive and verifiable supply."[42]

Anna's forgery is one of the most explicitly unexplainable moments in the plot, something Anna herself asks Devlin for help understanding. Anna asks Devlin, calling upon his religious expertise: "Have you ever—I mean, in your experience—[...] Do you know why I can read this?"[43] She tells him that she never learned to read, but can read the deed, "Quick as thinking," despite never having seen it before.[44] And, as Anna proves mere pages later, her thinking *is* quite quick; she sets aside the impossibility of this new reality she's been confronted with, and makes use of her newfound literacy to sign Staines's name on the previously-invalid deed of gift when Devlin is out of the room. In his role of lawyer, Moody later uses the impossibility of this event to Anna's advantage, presenting Anna's own signature, an X marking her illiteracy: "If Miss Whetherell can't even sign her own name, Governor Shepard, what on earth makes you think that she can produce a perfect replica of someone else's?"[45] The courtroom, where a shadow of a doubt may result in a declaration of innocence, is ruled by the "traditional meaning" of 'reality' which the sensation—and neo-sensational—novel revises.[46]

The innovation of Catton's novel, like Silvia Moreno Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*, lies in making the construction of this revised definition of reality visible without ultimately providing an accepted or acceptable explanation. The embrace of the unexplainable is a departure from the sensation novels of the 1860s, which often present plausible explanations for what at first

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[42] Catton, *The Luminaries,* 656.

[43] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 539.

[44] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 540.

[45] Catton, *The Luminaries,* 657.

[46] Hughes, *Sensation Novels,* 51-52.

seemed supernatural phenomena. Kontou writes of the appearance of supernatural phenomena such as spirits in sensation fiction that, "the emergence and widespread practice of spiritualism in the second half of the nineteenth century introduced a new way of thinking about ghostly and supernatural occurrences, as convinced spiritualists and sceptical scientists engaged in experiments aimed at providing natural explanations for seemingly supernatural phenomena."[47] What is interesting about the approach taken by *The Luminaries*, then, is that while Mrs. Wells does engage with spiritualism, at one point orchestrating an elaborate and provenly-fake seance meant to raise the spirit of the still-living Emery Staines, the novel's ruling supernatural logic is astrology, a practice which, by the nineteenth century, was largely understood to be unscientific, though this, of course, increased its appeal for Romantic artists and philosophers.[48] In using western natal astrology, therefore, Catton provides an entirely "aesthetic and symbolic" (or

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[47] Kontou, "Sensation Fiction, Spiritualism, and the Supernatural," 142.

[48] See Gunther Oestmann's chapter "J.W.A. Pfaff and the Rediscovery of Astrology in the Age of Romanticism," in which he writes that, "Confined to literature and philosophy, this aesthetic and symbolic reception of astrology was separated from the rapid development of the natural sciences at the turn of the nineteenth century" (242). See, also *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe* (2001), edited by Anthony Grafton and William R. Newman, and the chapter "Some Problems with the Historiography of Alchemy" (which touches on astrology and other "occult" disciplines as well), by Lawrence M. Principe and William R. Newman.
Laura Andrikopoulos's section on Natal Astrology, or the use of horoscopes to gain information on individual human lives, in *Astrology Through History: Interpreting the Stars From Ancient Mesopotamia to the Present* (2018), edited by William E. Burns is also useful here. Andrikopoulos agrees with other critics cited here, who all date the decline of astrology to the seventeenth century and rise of Newtonian physics, and adds that the modern resurgence in the popularity of natal astrology is often attributed to Alan Leo, a theosophist who was prosecuted for fortune-telling in 1917, and to the famed psychoanalyst Carl Jung, who practiced in the early 20th century and who Andrikopoulos claims gave astrology its "second boost" of the time (245).
Laura Andrikopoulos. "Natal Astrology" in *Astrology Through History: Interpreting the Stars from Ancient Mesopotamia to the Present*, ed. William E. Burns (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2018), 245.
Günther Oestmann, "J.W.A. Pfaff and the Rediscovery of Astrology in the Age of Romanticism" in *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology,* eds. Günther Oestmann, Darrel H. Rutkin, & Kocku von Stuckrad (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2005), 242.

literary and philosophical) explanation for the reality her characters inhabit, rather than a scientific one, by the standards of both the novel's setting and its publication date.[49]

In presenting the speculative, astrologically-ruled reality of her novel and clearly differentiating it, through the courtroom drama, from the familiar old world of her readers, Catton forces her audience to attend to the constructed nature of our own reality. In particular, we see how our conceptions of truth—scientific and legal—coalesce around axes of power, such as those central to the translation of the Treaty of Waitangi, which itself constructed two distinct legal truths in its English and Maori versions. In this spirit, I end by briefly presenting two distinct interpretations of Catton's use of astrology to highlight the variable nature of reality.

One interpretation highlights the flexibility of truth and reality at the colonial frontier. This may take the form of the malleability and therefore exploitability of legal truth and definitions, as we have seen in the history of Māori-Pakeha treaties and dealings. But it also may speak to the promise of self-remaking and re-discovery the frontier offers to the White man, as we saw at the conclusion of *The Moonstone* and as a scene near the conclusion of *The Luminaries* also highlights. In our final glimpse of Walter Moody, we find that he has finally left about his waffling (as a proper hero of sensation fiction must) and decided to make his fortune and his future—not as a solicitor but as a prospector. As Moody finally heads out to the gold fields, he runs into an Irishman named Paddy Ryan, who asks him to share his story to pass the time as they walk. This presents an issue for Moody who tells Ryan that he is "trying to decide

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[49] Oestmann, "Rediscovery of Astrology," 242.
Notably, Catton makes almost no mention of other forms of astrology which her characters might believe in or practice more seriously, such as the Chinese Zodiac. The Chinese Zodiac functions somewhat differently from the form of astrology at the formal heart of *The Luminaries*, but it is still in practice today. A longer chapter, such as in a book project, would likely undertake the task of exploring these distinctions and their relation to the novel's Chinese characters.

between the whole truth, and nothing but the truth… I'm afraid my history is such that I can't manage both at once." Here, Ryan interrupts him: "Hi—no need for the truth at all…Who said anything about the truth? You're a free man in this country, Walter Moody. You tell me any old rubbish you like, and if you string it out until we reach the junction at Kumara, then I shall count it as a very fine tale."[50] Here, Paddy Ryan offers Moody the (somewhat false) promise of freedom to start over, unencumbered by his past and social identities such as class; he also unwittingly gives Moody license to tell the whole truth, unbelievable though it is, and therefore to unburden himself of it while having it taken as nothing more than "a very fine tale." This is a hopeful interpretation for White settlers like Moody, but less so for those who, like Te Rau Tauwhare, find they cannot or *do not wish to* transcend certain aspects of their identities, or, like Ah Sook and Ah Quee, find themselves reduced entirely to the saliency of their race. It is also notable that this promise of class transcendence, which is offered by the frontier, is made possible only by the seizure—through "proper" legal means or otherwise—of native land.

I turn, then, to another avenue open for interpretation, offered near the novel's midpoint, in the shift from "Part One" to the ever-shortening chapters of the novel's remaining eleven sections. In the opening chapter of this section, titled "Auguries," the narrator both explains and predicts, inviting the reader to speculate on the rest of the novel:

> With the Sun in Capricorn we were reserved, exacting, and lofty in our distance. When we looked upon Man, we sought to fix him: we mourned his failures and measured his gifts. We could not imagine what he might have been, had he been tempted to betray his very nature—or had he betrayed himself without temptation, better still. But there is no

[50] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 715

> truth except truth in relation, and heavenly relation is composed of wheels in motion, tilting axes, turning dials; it is a clockwork orchestration that alters every minute, never repeating, never still. We are no longer sheltered in a cloistered reminiscence of the past. We now look outward, through the phantasm of our own convictions: we see the world as we wish to perfect it, and we imagine dwelling there.[51]"

In this passage, Catton acknowledges the relational nature of truth, both within one's own perspective and in relation to others; the heavenly bodies are relational and interconnected, a "clockwork orchestration" whose constant shifting alters the perspective with which one views the world. Likewise, that perspective, or "phantasm of our own convictions," affects our experience and interactions with the world. In the final clause, Catton acknowledges the speculation inherent to human life, which strives to create a better future for itself, and emphasizes the relationship between astrology, positionality, and agency. For Catton, the shifting heavenly gears of astrology emphasize imaginative possibility, without divesting the characters (or readers) of their individual perspective or agency. At the same time, the role of astrology within the novel is a gentle reminder against the hubris of imagining human dominance over the natural world. While astrology, in its historical relationship to the occult (hidden) or the supernatural (the heavens being quite literally *above* the natural world of our planet), tests the limits of what it means to *know* and therefore have dominion over the natural world, it is not a deterministic philosophy. Instead, we are encouraged to consider—through the interconnected and relational nature of the stars—the living, global systems in which we dwell, and how we may imagine our role within them.

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[51] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 364.

Catton's novel uses and subverts tropes of early detection and the genre's connection with the law, with the effect of challenging the disciplinary logics that privilege White male colonizers in the colonial contact zone. By setting *The Luminaries* at the colonial periphery, in the goldfields of 1860s New Zealand, on the South Island town of Hokitika, Catton provides a place where the sheer diversity and attendant tensions of the British Empire are thrown into relief. In structuring the novel around western astrology and using it to explain the plot's strange occurrences, Catton forces the reader and characters to confront the constructed natures of truth and narrative, and our ability to achieve mastery over nature.

While reading contemporary alongside Victorian texts may invite accusations of presentism, I argue that it is impossible to study the past without being colored by our present situatedness, and that to imagine otherwise risks repeating some of the very fallacies of objectivity that this dissertation critiques. Instead, we must interrogate our present perspective on the past, to understand how the events of such critical periods as that which saw the rise of the British Empire continue to affect us to the present day. Authors like Catton do this by shining a light on the less-attended aspects and sites of the Empire, and using forms and tropes originating from the period to push back against continually-persistent imperial logics. In *The Luminaries*, the interconnected facets of imperialism pinpointed for critique include Western science and reason, and the legal structures of imperial governance; the latter depends on the former for the evidence underpinning its criminal convictions, but as Catton shows, under the logic of imperialism, evidence itself is often flavored by racial prejudice.

Chapter 5

Myco-colonialism and Extractive Capitalism in *Mexican Gothic*

Introduction

In an interview with *Vox* correspondent Constance Grady in November of 2020, Mexican-Canadian author Silvia Moreno-Garcia discussed her fascination with mushrooms. In Moreno-Garcia's novel, *Mexican Gothic* (2020), which had become a *New York Times* bestseller and been named one of the best books of the year by outlets including *The New Yorker Magazine* and *NPR*, mushrooms play a central role. In the *Vox* interview, Moreno-Garcia discusses the theories of conservation scientist Suzanne Simard regarding how mycelium networks facilitate resource sharing and "communication" between trees in forests.[1] She describes how, "there's a mycelium colony that colonizes all the trees and all the plants and is allowing different species to communicate with each other. It has that central node, the hub tree, the mother tree."[2] The figurative link Moreno-Garcia establishes between mushrooms and colonialism is central to her novel. *Mexican Gothic*, set in the Mexican countryside in the 1950s, is, in its form and subject-matter, a neo-Victorian text, deeply concerned with the lasting effects of Britain's informal empire in nineteenth-century Mexico.

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[1] Theories which, as I will discuss later, have faced challenges by new studies in recent years, as well as pushback and accusations of anthropomorphism.

[2] Constance Grady, "Why white supremacy is a cult, according to novelist Silvia Moreno-Garcia" *Vox,* 06 November, 2020, https://www.vox.com/culture/21551859/silvia-moreno-garcia-interview-mexican-gothic

Mexican Gothic follows Mestiza Mexican socialite Noemí Taboada, whose father sends her to check on her recently-married cousin, Catalina, after receiving a letter in which Catalina alleges her new husband is poisoning her. Though set in 1950s post-revolutionary Mexico, Noemí soon finds herself in a situation fit for a nineteenth-century gothic novel, complete with a general air of deep malaise which pervades the crumbling manor home, belonging to a secluded English family whose former fortune—made in mining Mexican silver—has lapsed into genteel poverty. Catalina's odd behavior is attributed by her husband, Virgil Doyle, to that quintessentially Victorian disease: tuberculosis. Despite Noemí's surprise at this diagnosis, which by the mid-twentieth century had strong treatment options, Virgil, his mother, and the family patriarch Howard all push back against her desire to seek a second opinion. Noemí's sense of unease only grows as all but the youngest member of the family—the sickly and studious Francis—treat her with suspicion, hostility, outright racism, and grasping control. To make matters worse, Noemí soon begins to experience strange dreams and then hallucinations, which lead her to believe that something is wrong with the house itself, and that she and Catalina must escape it.

At the novel's climax, Noemí attempts to leave High Place but discovers that the Doyle family has trapped her and intends to use her to carry forth their family line. As if the threat of forced reproduction were not sufficiently abhorrent, Howard Doyle reveals that Noemí and Catalina's hallucinations are caused by a fungus that suffuses the house with what the family calls "the gloom," altering the brains and biology of its inhabitants and priming them for mycelial connection with both it and each other. Howard has used this fungus—which he transplanted from England—for centuries to colonize new host bodies into which he can transfer his memories and consciousness, therefore extending his life. Since arriving in Mexico, however,

the fungus's potency has been fading, and Howard believes the solution lies in Noemí's indigenous heritage. With help from Catalina and Francis, Noemí is able to escape to the family crypt, where they discover yet another horror: the fungus's mother tree is the colonized corpse of Howard's wife Agnes. The psychic echoes of her pain and terror make up the gloom that connects the house's inhabitants and allows for Howard's quasi-immortality. The house is haunted, therefore, by the pain, rage, and trauma of a woman who is both colonizer and colonized.

In the novel's penultimate scene, reminiscent of "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1840) and *Jane Eyre* (1847), Noemí sets Agnes's spirit free from her eternal torment by lighting the corpse, and the crumbling house, on fire. As the mansion burns, she imagines what she is destroying along with it: "Invisible, beneath the paintings and the linens and plates and glass, she imagined masses of fine threads, delicate mycelium, also burning and snapping, fueling the conflagration."[3] And yet, by bringing Francis, the sole Doyle family survivor, along in the escape, the novel ends on a note of uncertainty, which Francis admits, asking, "What if it's never gone? What if it's in me?"[4] In voicing his fear, Francis raises a question of responsibility with which inhabitants of formerly-colonized locales continue to grapple: what if he inadvertently continues the legacy of cruelty into which he was born? *Mexican Gothic* takes a somewhat optimistic stance on the issue, with Noemí repeatedly assuring Francis that he is not his family. The uncertainty of the ending, however, reminds us that escaping one's history—whether mycelial or colonial—is never so simple.

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[3] Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic* (New York: Del Rey), 293.

[4] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic,* 299.

Mexican Gothic was lauded upon publication as "pitch-perfect" and "thought-provoking,"[5] and "deliciously true to the gothic form, grotesque without becoming gross."[6] The *New York Times* praised its "archly intelligent tone and insightful writing."[7] Most reviewers highlight the novel's use of the gothic form or its appeal to the neo-Victorian in order to comment on race and colonialism in a context typically separated in the popular imagination from the British Empire. When Leah Donnella, a reporter for *NPR's* podcast "Code Switch," which covers topics related to race, interviewed Moreno-Garcia about the novel, she asked why the author had chosen to set the story in Mexico, rather than the traditional European gothic setting. Moreno-Garcia referenced the real location, a town called Real or Mineral del Monte, that served as inspiration for the story. Then, she added,

> "I think when people think about Mexico, sometimes they do know that it was conquered by the Spanish. And they think the Spanish left and that was it. That was the only case of colonialism that existed. But obviously, many other forces came into Mexico throughout the years and engaged in explicit warfare or more subtle types of control…And I just thought it was an interesting bit of the colonial legacy, to look at the British legacy, and to set it in Mexico to examine some of those forces colliding."[8]

Moreno-Garcia draws an explicit connection to challenging what she understands as the popular conception of Mexico's colonial history through the novel's gothic form, therefore subverting an

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[5] Jessica P. Wick, "Pitch-Perfect 'Mexican Gothic' Ratchets Up the Dread," *NPR,* 02 July, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/07/02/886008274/pitch-perfect-mexican-gothic-ratchets-up-the-dread.

[6] Constance Grady, "In the deliciously creepy new novel, 'Mexican Gothic,' the true evil is colonialism," *Vox,* 16 July, 2020, https://www.vox.com/culture/21325651/mexican-gothic-review-silvia-moreno-garcia

[7] Danielle Trussoni, "Where Evil Lurks," *New York Times,* 22 July, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/22/books/review/malorie-josh-malerman-new-horror-novels.html

[8] Leah Donnella, "Colonialism, Eugenics, & Downright Terror in 'Mexican Gothic,'" *Code Switch,* 24 September, 2020, https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2020/09/24/398263892/colonialism-eugenics-and-downright-terror-in-mexican-gothic

English literary genre through an entanglement with England's own colonial history. The consistent interest in the novel's use of setting, genre, and obvious reference to the Victorian, along with a spate of other neo-Victorian novels set in Mexico published subsequently, raises the question: what is unique about the Mexican setting that lends itself to a rewriting and exploration of neo-Victorian treatments of race and coloniality?[9]

In the case of *Mexican Gothic*, *Vox* writer Constance Grady theorizes that the Gothic obsession with troubling borders and boundaries—and the generic usefulness of this interest for interrogating colonial power structures—is central.[10] The novel's use of genre conventions, and its clear references throughout to nineteenth-century England, certainly support this theory, as does the novel's use of mushrooms as a critical plot point. As Theresa Kelley showed in *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (2012), mushrooms have historically troubled western scientific boundaries through their unusual reproductive capacities, and therefore offer potent metaphorical possibilities to a novel so interested in colonial regimes of race and reproduction. In the following pages, I will attempt to draw out connections between the novel's various, boundary-crossing interests, which together constellate around the question of how individuals, families, and communities grapple with the aftereffects of empire—or, in the case of Mexico, *empires*. In *Mexican Gothic*, Moreno-Garcia highlights several ways in which colonial history lingers, hence I follow her lead in exploring race and racial hybridity, various

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[9] For those related novels, see Isabel Cañas's *La Hacienda* (2022), Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* (2022), and Liana De La Rosa's *Ana María and the Fox* (2023), all of which approach transplanting the Victorian to Mexico in vastly different ways.
Isabel Cañas, *La Hacienda* (New York: Berkeley, 2022).
Liana De La Rosa, *Ana María and the Fox* (New York: Berkeley, 2023).
Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* (New York: Del Rey, 2023).

[10] Constance Grady, "Gothic novels are obsessed with borders. Mexican Gothic takes full advantage," *Vox*, 16 October, 2020, https://www.vox.com/culture/21517606/mexican-gothic-silvia-moreno-garcia-post-colonial-empire-vox-book-club

forms of capitalist extraction, and the coexistence of multiple perspectives and beliefs about how we understand the world around us.

The novel's ultimate reveal of the mycelium network that underpins the family's reality helps to draw these issues together. The novel's speculative use of contemporary and contentious mycological theories create a world characterized by what I am calling "myco-colonialism," wherein the Anglo family uses a unique property of mushrooms to enact colonial control, and extractivist resource and reproductive practices. Studying the debates surrounding the novel's foundational mycological theories serves to challenge the eugenic discourse that permeates the Doyle family's racial and reproductive politics; it also helps reveal that both race and science remain far more open, malleable, and troublesome than we often consider them—and therefore, too, more open to imaginative and interpretive possibility. *Mexican Gothic* raises questions about such disparate topics as the process of scientific development and acceptance of new theories, and grappling with the lived legacies of colonialism and its effects on family dynamics and the environment. Yet, the novel provides no easy answers. Instead, it reveals a pervading interest in the hybridity, uncertainty, racial and cultural mixture, and coexistence of multiplicity. Uncertainty, multiplicity, and hybridity—both racial and of worldviews and systems of knowledge—characterize extractive zones of colonial conquest. Mexico's history of multiple colonial conquest and influence make it an ideal setting to highlight these characteristics of formerly colonized and exploited sites and question our continued grappling with their aftereffects. Understanding *Mexican Gothic,* therefore, requires parsing the racial and national particularities of its various historical contexts: a setting in post-revolutionary mid-twentieth

century Mexico, literary and historic lineage in nineteenth-century gothicism and informal empire, and twenty-first century Mexican-Canadian authorship.

Informal Empire and the Resource Frontier

To begin, we must consider the nuances of English-Mexican colonial relations, and Mexico's unique racial and colonial milieu in interpreting the novel's treatments of race, reproduction, and eugenics. The Doyle family, who arrived in Mexico in the late nineteenth century, is part of a British rush for power over Mexican resources—and those of other Latin American countries—following the end of Spanish rule. While it soon became clear that Mexico would remain independent, England sought to exert informal influence through industry, trade, and policy. As Jessie Reeder explains in *Forms of Informal Empire: Britain, Latin America, and Nineteenth-Century Empire* (2020), "the story of Latin American economics after the wars of independence is the story of those nations' emergence into an international system increasingly dominated by British capital and influence" and therefore, the independence and development of these countries' nascent self-governance was intimately tied to British interest in the region.[11] Reeder enumerates the many ways in which this British interest manifested itself: through migration between Britain and Latin America, through the political maneuverings of British officials, through British influence over trade and industry policies (which, of course, favored Britain, encouraging the import of British goods over the development of independent economies), and through a huge British interest in mining. By the end of the nineteenth century, when *Mexican Gothic*'s Doyle family made its way to El Triunfo to take over a mine that had

[11] Jessie Reeder, *Forms of Informal Empire: Britain, Latin America, and Nineteenth-Century Empire* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2020), 6.

been abandoned by the Spanish, "British informal empire [had] solidified and reached its peak," achieving such heights of influence that "Only India did more trade with Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century."[12]

Mining was of particular interest to British investors and politicians who sought to gain an advantage in the still-unsettled landscape of newly-independent Mexico. Mexico's abundance of natural resources had been mythologized in the popular European imagination by tales of conquistadors' searches for gold and even the fountain of youth, and Alexander von Humboldt's account of his travels in South America had piqued scientific interest. So naturally, Robert Aguirre says, in *Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture* (2005), "British merchants and bankers clamored for a trade agreement with a nation whose wealth was the stuff of legend."[13] Yet, as the variable fortunes of the Doyle family—once prosperous but now lapsed into genteel poverty—demonstrate, British hopes for extracting wealth from the colonial frontier of Latin America were often disappointed. Elizabeth Miller explains in *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion* (2021) how "British firms and investors had thought that abandoned mines left by the Spanish and Portuguese could be brought back to life with British industrial technologies, but the going proved much harder than expected" and resulted in catastrophic failures for the mine owners and the markets that had speculated on them.[14]

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[12] Reeder, *Forms of Informal Empire,* 7.

[13] Robert D. Aguirre, *Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 1.

[14] Elizabeth Miller, *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2021), 36.

Despite the failures of British mining in Mexico, empire—whether formal or informal—requires that its shortcomings be either ignored or reconceptualized to fit into its broader justificatory narrative. When Noemí asks for tasks to make herself useful and perhaps curry some favor from her hosts, Francis's overtly racist and ill-tempered mother Florence sets her to polishing the family's silver ("You expect to win my praise this way, I think. It would take more"[15]). Hoping to humble Noemí, Florence tells her, "Most of this is made from silver from our mines… Do you have any idea how much silver our mine produced? God, it was dizzying! My uncle brought all the machinery, all the knowledge to dredge it from the dark. Doyle is an important name. I don't think you realize how lucky your cousin is to be part of our family now. To be a Doyle is to be *someone.*"[16] Florence ignores the centuries of pre-Columbian gold and silver mining by Mayan and Aztec empires. Robert Aguierre notes that this logic and historical erasure were common among British colonial interests in Mexico. In order to effectively claim innocence of colonial violence—what Mary Louise Pratt calls the rhetoric of "anti-conquest"—the British had to position themselves as stewards of the culture they were infringing upon, which, as Florence expresses, should consider itself privileged to be under colonial protection.

Aguierre walks his reader through this argumentative move, recounting the perspective taken by museum collector William Bullock: "Whereas Spain came to plunder and sack, Britain comes not only to trade and exchange but also to shed light on the mysteries of the Mexican past, to increase wealth *and* knowledge."[17] The British therefore construct a narrative in which native Mexicans are not only ignorant of the past but careless of it and incurious, so that the British

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[15] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 113.

[16] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 113-14, emphasis original.

[17] Aguirre, *Informal Empire*, 25, emphasis original.

must become the caretakers of Mexican cultural and historical legacy as well as its natural resources. In Florence's formulation, not only is the long history of mining erased from Mexico's pre-Columbian past, but the British Doyles are furthermore responsible for ensuring prosperity through mining knowledge and imposing proper *resource management* practices to ensure the wealth of the land does not go to "waste"—a colonial logic covered extensively in the previous chapter on *Wuthering Heights* and Carlyle's "Occasional Discourse." Aguirre demonstrates how Bullock espouses this paternalistic logic through his belief that "Mexico…lacked only the 'fostering hand of a free, enlightened and enterprising' nation and the 'knowledge imparted by modern science' to usher it into a prosperous and technologically sophisticated modernity."[18] In this conceptualization, the native population's own knowledge and resource management practices are denied in favor of capitalist colonial ones. Insisting that the colonized are incapable of "proper" management allows the colonizer to imagine themselves as not only innocent of colonial violence but *altruistic* in taking the resources for themselves. Within this frame, "proper" management means that resources must function under the English conceptions of *property*, as individual possessions functioning within a capitalist system.

Yet, British resource management strategies such as mining, logging, and de-bogging are extractivist, often intentionally subverting and delegitimizing existing indigenous management practices that steward the environment and benefit tribal communities, and therefore result in an ever-dwindling supply of desired materials.[19] As Miller explains, extraction is characterized by

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[18] Aguirre, *Informal Empire,* 3.

[19] All mining which removes non-renewable resources from the earth are extractivist, including the mining practiced by indigenous populations. However, it is the sheer scale of capitalist extractivism that sets it apart from other traditional mining.

its finitude and therefore, a lack of reproductive capacity.[20] We can see this clearly illustrated through the Doyles, as Francis tells Noemí that the family moved to Mexico because they had exhausted the limited supplies of their mines and local goodwill back in England. Francis describes, "It had run out, over there. Silver, tin, and our luck. And the people back in England, they suspected us of odd doings. Howard thought they'd ask fewer questions here, that he'd be able to do as he wished. He wasn't wrong."[21] In this way, the Doyles fit neatly into the relationship Miller lays out between extractivist capitalism and imperialism, in which "the resources of the colonial frontier are demanded as continual recompense for local exhaustion."[22] In escaping to Mexico, the Doyles found decreased oversight both for their nefarious mushroom-doings, and their ability to exploit native workers, treating people as yet another resource to mine. Yet, the present state of the Doyle mine is further proof of the "necessity of the frontier to extraction capitalism" wherein "endless growth means endless appropriation,"[23] For, by the time Noemí arrives, the entire region has been exhausted—of silver, of labor, of life. Indeed, it is this exhaustion of resources—and specifically reproductive resources in the form of childbearing women—that underpins Catalina and Noemí's presence in High Place; they represent an as-yet untapped resource frontier which the Doyles seek to exploit.

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[20] Miller, *Extraction Ecologies*, 33. Many supposedly responsible stewardship practices, such as carbon offsetting and planting trees following logging operations still result in greatly diminished biodiversity within local ecosystems. See the lack of old-growth forests in England, for example. Elaine Freedgood details England's history of deforestation in *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2006). England's lack of native trees was a result of three main historical episodes, according to Freedgood: Roman conquest, England's later need for timber for the Royal Navy's ship-building, and enclosure.
Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chigaco: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 37-38.

[21] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic,* 244.

[22] Miller, *Extraction Ecologies*, 12.

[23] Miller, *Extraction Ecologies*, 85.

Race and Reproduction

On Noemí's first night of her stay at the Doyle family home, she is introduced to elderly patriarch Howard, and the eugenic discourse that comes to dominate the novel's political thematics. The first thing Howard says to Noemí upon meeting her, following introductions, is "You are much darker than your cousin, Miss Taboada," before proceeding to speculate on Noemí's indigenous heritage.[24] Despite—or perhaps egged on by—the girl's obvious discomfort, and the complicit silence of the rest of his family, Howard pushes on to ask Noemí whether she believes, "as Mr. Vasconcelos does that it is the obligation, no, the destiny, of the people of Mexico to forge a new race that encompasses all races? A 'cosmic race? A bronze race? This despite the research of Davenport and Steggerda?" "What are your thoughts," he presses on, "on the intermingling of superior and inferior types?"[25]

Here, Howard Doyle refers to a 1929 anthropological publication from Charles Davenport and Morris Steggarta titled "Race Crossing in Jamaica," in which the authors attempted to quantify differences between Black, White, and mixed-race ("Brown") individuals. The study concluded that "the Whites are relatively swift and accurate; the Blacks are slow and accurate; while the Browns are slow and inaccurate," aligning with common eugenic views that created a racial hierarchy with Whiteness as supreme, and the (human) products of racial miscegenation as degraded and inferior to either originary race.[26] With this passing reference, Moreno-Garcia plunges the reader headfirst into the landscape of early twentieth-century eugenic theory. It is assumed, however, as indicated by the brevity of the reference, that even if the reader

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[24] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic,* 29.

[25] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic,* 30.

[26] Charles Benedict Davenport & Morris Steggarda, "Race Crossing in Jamaica," (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1929; repr. Westport, CT: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 345.

does not know of Davenport and Steggarda, they know enough about eugenics to catch their—and Doyle's—typically racist meaning. As though to confirm, Moreno-Garcia follows this with Doyle's reference to the "intermingling of superior and inferior types."[27]

Howard's introduction and the explicitness with which he voices his interest in eugenics serve to clarify the vague sense of ominousness that has thus far pervaded the novel like the fog which hangs perpetually over its crumbling gothic manse. That sense of dread, of the danger in which Noemí and her (lighter-skinned) cousin Catalina find themselves, can now be attributed, by both Noemí and the reader, to the family's racism. Yet, as Noemí soon finds—and as Howard Doyle referenced when citing José Vasconcelos's idea of la raza cósmica—the various strands of eugenic discourse present in mid-century Mexico are convoluted and yield unexpected consequences that challenge both Noemí's and the twenty-first century audience's understandings of race and racism. We can see a hint of this by examining Noemí attempt to push back against what she perceives as Doyle's traditionally White-supremacist eugenic views: "I once read a paper by Gamio in which he said that harsh natural selection has allowed the indigenous people of this continents to survive, and Europeans would benefit from intermingling with them… It turns the whole superior and inferior idea around, doesn't it?"[28] Noemí attempts to use the language of Howard Doyle's own eugenics to challenge him and "win" the debate, imagining that besting him with cool temper and wits on his own playing field will humble the man into silence. Yet, in doing so, Noemí inadvertently plays into Howard Doyle's hands, and it

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[27] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 30.
As the novel ultimately shows, in this scene and others throughout, there were a vast array of eugenic theories which often ran counter to one another. In Mexico, with its long history of Spanish colonization, casta, and limpieza de sangre policies instituted through the Catholic church, Mestizaje and multiraciality are vastly complex and often function in ways which run counter to Anglo and American eugenic expectations, as Howard Doyle's reference to Vasconcelos suggests.

[28] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 30.

is he who gets the last word in, paying Noemí the twisted compliment of admiring the beauty of her mixed heritage: "Your countryman, Vasconcelos, he speaks of the mysteries of 'aesthetic taste' which will help shape this bronze race, and I think you are a good example of that sort."[29]

Rather than believing in the "unnaturalness" of miscegenation, as Davenport and Steggarda do, Doyle's eugenic impulses run with Vasconcelos's idea that racial admixture might be deployed to select for desirable traits. It is, we learn by the novel's end, the reason he brought Catalina, and now Noemí, to High Place: he believes Noemí's indigenous background makes her more fit for colonization by the gloom. While Noemí's strength allows her to stand up to the Doyles, then, it also makes her a target for them. At one point, Virgil Doyle calls her a "strong-willed creature," and says, "Your cousin is a bit of a weakling, isn't she? But you have a certain mettle in your bones."[30] Not only does referring to Noemí as a "creature" dehumanize her, but in light of the Doyle family's views on eugenics, Virgil's comments comparing the women suggest that he views her as breeding stock, better fit for withstanding the conditions which have proven too much for her Whiter cousin.

As the above example demonstrates, the novel is not a straightforward story of decolonial power struggle; Noemí is herself caught up in a political moment that has not fully shaken off the vestiges of internalized racism and coloniality.[31] The novel navigates a veritable mire of historical and cultural legacies and competing interests relating to race, nationalism, and empire in Mexico. While the Doyle family represents the fading vestiges of England's colonial ploys in

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[29] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 30.

[30] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 144.

[31] Something the country is still grappling with today. Author Moreno-Garcia's choice to center so much of the novel's discourse and framing on race and eugenics is exemplary of a newly-developing occupation with interrogating Mexico's own legacy of internalized racism and coloniality. It also bears mention that Moreno-Garcia's Mexican-Canadian background provides a diasporic flavor to her interests in race and particularly Mestizaje and national identity.

post-independence nineteenth-century Mexico, Noemí's character clearly encompasses the post-revolutionary twentieth century Mexican political interests that sought to craft national unity in the wake of a tumultuous period of civil war.

Moreno-Garcia does not shy away from noting Mexican involvement in eugenics, as demonstrated in the above example, which introduces Jose Vasconcelos's idea of la raza cósmica. However, the novel does not fully address the extent to which eugenics was involved in shaping a national identity and consciousness in post-revolutionary Mexico, its roots in Spanish colonial caste policies and limpieza de sangre, or even the privileged status Noemí holds as exemplary of the Mestizo Mexican identity crafted for political purposes of unification. Before proceeding, therefore, I want to outline, through a sort of primer, the involved histories of racial mixture and hierarchy in colonial and post-colonial Mexico.

Mestizaje and National Identity

While slavery and racial and caste distinctions had been officially abolished with Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821, their legacies have continued to inflect the experiences of Mexicans and diasporic Mexicans, including through official state policies instituted in the wake of the Mexican Revolution in the 1920s. One of the most remarkable and widespread ideologies that came to shape Mexican national and cultural identity through such wide-ranging effects as education, land distribution, art, and eugenics, was that of indigenismo. As Lourdes Alberto explains, "The multiple aims of *indigenismo,* as governmental policy as well as cultural production, facilitated the formation of a modern Mexican nation by creating a myth of origin through the selective incorporation of indigenous history—while at the same time

excluding actual indigenous people through assimilation programs and land dispossession."[32] Contrary to outward appearances that seem to privilege indigeneity, upholding it in contrast to the oppressive colonial regimes of Spanish conquest, Alberto claims, the "Mexican indigenist aesthetic… had been largely responsible for dismantling indigenous culture and society through its assimilationist policies throughout the Americas."[33] The assimilation Alberto references is a homogenization to a unified Mestizo identity, which, as David S. Dalton describes in *Mestizo Modernity: Race, Technology, and the Body in Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (2018), imagines that "Amerindians had become Mestizo through modernization."[34] The privileging of Mestizo identity in the project of national unification therefore continues a racist temporal dichotomy that posits indigeneity as an important part of the past, and denies extant indigenous communities, however much they have adapted, a place in the idea of (racial) modernity associated with progress, intelligence, and unified Mexican culture. Those who are visibly Mayan (or simply darker skinned), or who maintain traditional ways of life, are therefore, Dalton explains, associated with "backwardness" and "primitivity."[35]

It was not only indigenous communities that bore the brunt of assimilationist policies which, ironically, continued to appropriate and pay lip service to indigenous history and culture. Enslaved Africans had been forcibly brought to Mexico by the Spanish and, in the wake of independence and the abolition of slavery, Asian laborers (often indentured Chinese laborers) had been imported to replace the formerly-enslaved African population. Francesca Contreas

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[32] Lourdes Alberto, "Nations, Nationalisms, and Indígenas: The 'Indian' in the Chicano Revolutionary Imaginary." *Critical Ethnic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2016): 108.

[33] Alberto, "Nations," 108.

[34] David S. Dalton, *Mestizo Modernity: Race, Technology, and the Body in Post-Revolutionary Mexico* (Gainsville: University of Florida Press, 2018), 2.

[35] Dalton, *Mestizo Modernity*, 2.

explains that eugenicist policy-makers such as "Andrea Molina Enriquez exalted the Mestizo as the ideal cultural and biological byproduct of the fusion of European and indigenous lineages. This notion of *Mestizaje*—cloaked in a discourse of inclusivity— contributed to a transformation of racial, national and socioeconomic boundaries."[36] However, this idealized Mestizo identity excluded not only the non-Mestizo indigenous, but also Afro- and Asian-Mexicans. In the case of José Vasconcelos's raza cosmica, the aestheticism of Mestizaje took the form of eugenic beauty, and he imagined that "The Negro race and other undesirable mixes (including Afro-Chinese) would vanish on their own in order to make room for the beautiful races. In the 1940s Vasconcelos' obsession with perfect hybridity and dreams of a super race led him to support the project of Nazism."[37] Therefore, when Howard Doyle tells Noemí that she is a "good example" of the "aesthetic taste" which Vasconcelos claims will help shape la raza cosmica, claiming that she is "of a new beauty," he not only reveals his ideological hand, but also reminds Noemí of her own racial privilege under the eugenic order of Mestizaje and indigenismo.[38]

Recognizing Noemí as a beneficiary of these post-revolutionary racial policies, though still at odds with the more familiar British eugenic hierarchy which posits Whiteness as supreme, complicates readings in which the novel portrays a straightforward anti-colonial power struggle, with the native character triumphing over the encroaching colonial power. While Noemí is explicitly described as darker-skinned, she explains how her family background is mixed: "My

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[36] Francesca Contreas, "Eugenics in Nation-Building: Post-Revolutionary Mexican Identity Formation," *Modern Latin America: Web Supplement for the 8th Edition*, Brown University Library Center for Digital Scholarship, accessed 04 Nov, 2023, https://library.brown.edu/create/modernlatinamerica/chapters/chapter-3-mexico/moments-in-mexican-history/eugenics-narrates-the-nations/

[37] Contreas, "Eugenics in Nation-Building."

[38] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 28-29.

father is from Veracruz and my mother from Oaxaca. We are Mazatec on her side."[39] While her mother is left almost entirely out of the narrative, save for references to her indigenous heritage, we receive a bit more information about Noemí's father and his background. We learn that he "had never been poor, but he had turned a small chemical dye business into a fortune" after inheriting it at a young age.[40] Despite his supposedly modest-to-middle-class origins, Noemí also imagines her father driving fancy cars in his youth to "flaunt his wealth."[41] These hints at class and property ownership, along with Noemí's specification that her indigenous ancestry comes from her mother's side, indicate that her father is likely from a criollo family, or, if not entirely of Spanish descent, from a family that has successfully disavowed its Mestizaje to approximate Whiteness. Furthermore, Noemí has been raised as a socialite, an elite due to her father's business success, and outside of her appearance and interest in anthropology,[42] we never learn of deep connections to her indigenous ancestry. Instead, she is described as culturally Westernized: "Noemí, like any good socialite, shopped at the palacio de hierro, painted her lips with Elizabeth Arden lipstick, owned a couple of very fine furs, spoke English with remarkable ease, courtesy

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[39] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 29.

[40] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 5.

[41] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 16.

[42] Anthropology, Aguirre reminds us, was one of the developing cultural structures responsible for continuing coloniality and encouraging British informal empire in post-independence Mexico. This occurred in part through the disciplinary centrality of developing racial discourse, as manifested in the subfield of ethnology: "In 1855, John Connolly, president of the Ethnological Society of London, discussed the connection between Britain's commercial relations and the study of ethnology. From about 1830 onward those relations, along with information brought back by travelers, transformed London into a leading center for anthropological inquiry and the study of racial difference" (xxviii). While the discipline had evolved in the hundred years between Aguirre's period of study and that of the novel's setting, it is important to remember the field's origins in empire and race science. Noemí's interest in anthropology is therefore complicated by her Mestiza identity. As Aguirre details, "While British science had already subjected Africans to racial measurement, it took longer and struggled harder to theorize the racial composition of Latin American peoples, particularly the *Mestizo*, whose hybridity confounded the binary models that upheld most racial theory" (105-06, emphasis original). The involvement of the field in racial pseudoscience is something Howard Doyle is clearly aware of. When, during his interrogation of her eugenic knowledge, Noemí affirms that she knows about Davenport and Steggarda, Howard is pleased: "Splendid, Catalina was correct. You do have an interest in anthropology" (30).
Aguirre, *Informal Empire*, xxviii.
Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 105-106 (emphasis in original); 30.

of the nuns at the Montserrat—a private school, of course—and was expected to devote her time to the twin pursuits of leisure and husband hunting."[43]

As upper-class Criollos, Noemí's father's side of the family belongs to a group which, just a generation or two removed, was involved in and at times benefited from expansion of British trade and colonial interests in Mexico. Aguirre writes that "We need to consider…the ways in which the center and periphery were mutually constitutive, formed by the back and forth movement of persons, capital, ideas, and objects. Latin American elites, for instance, did not passively await British influence but actively sought it out," though many later came to resent the British plundering of Mexican artifacts and antiquities.[44] In addition to trade, cultural, and political influences, and despite the racialized contempt in which White Britons held them, Spanish-descended Criollos adopted and adapted some of the British racial rhetoric to separate themselves from their indigenous contemporaries:

> When British travelers commented on the ignorance of the indigenous toward their monuments, they rhetorically divided them from history and thus from progress. Nineteenth-century Creoles shared this rhetoric, imposing an internal version of center/periphery power relations to control and manipulate the indigenous past for their own political ends—ends that denied the indigenous as rightful inheritors of that past.[45]

Noemí's interest in anthropology is therefore ambiguous and fraught: she may seek to reclaim the discipline for the indigenous communities to which she has familial ties, but she may just as

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[43] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 6.

[44] Aguirre, *Informal Empire,* xxi.

[45] Aguirre, *Informal Empire*, 32.

easily unintentionally participate in this stewarding of the past away from indigenous people and communities and into the hands of those Whiter, more westernized Mestizo elites.

Mexican Gothic makes very little of Noemí's interest in anthropology; it is treated largely as a sign of her flightiness, only the latest in a line of short-lived pursuits. Early on, her father berates her for this, saying, "First you wanted to study history, then theater, now it's anthropology. You've cycled through every sport imaginable and stuck to none. You date a boy twice then at the third date do not phone him back."[46] Throughout the book, Noemí does very little to dispel this depiction of her, at one point describing a masters degree in anthropology as "the plan for now."[47] When Catalina teases her ("Always with a new idea, Noemí. Always a new pursuit"), she concedes, "She supposed that her family was right to view her university studies skeptically, seeing as she'd changed her mind already thrice about where her interests lay, but she knew rather fiercely that she wanted to do something special with her life. She hadn't found what exactly that would be, although anthropology appeared to her more promising than previous explorations."[48] By the end of the novel, even Noemí's future in anthropology is uncertain, having gone without mention for several chapters. Instead, by the final chapter, it seems the experiences of racial and reproductive trauma have rewritten Noemí's future, and she finds herself trying to comfort herself and Francis by imagining new ones, engaging in her own form of speculative world-building.

Over the course of the novel, we receive only one concrete clue about what Noemí finds interesting or promising in the field: the first book that sparked her interest, she says, was E.E.

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[46] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 11.

[47] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 98.

[48] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 48-49.

Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, first published in 1937 (This is also the only book Noemí seems to have brought with her to High Place). The book, an anthropological study of the Azande people of southern Sudan, argues for the treatment of their beliefs not as "primitive" or "superstitious" but rather akin to other systems of belief including Western religions.[49] This (radical for its time) idea that non-White, non-Western cultures and ontologies are valid and deserving of respect is one which has resonances throughout *Mexican Gothic*, and to which I will return later in the chapter.

Despite the messiness we must recognize as part of Noemí's background and place in the story, she remains the novel's unequivocal heroine, rising to match Howard Doyle's clear villainy. Howard's turn to Mexican eugenics is an example of how the Doyles shape their view and ordering of the world around what makes sense for their survival and further appropriation of wealth. As the mild-mannered Francis explains to Noemí, Howard had long forbidden marriage to "outsiders" in an effort to keep the bloodline isolated and "ensure we were all able to interact with the fungus, that we would keep this symbiotic relationship" and along with it, Howard's method for controlling each member of the family.[50] The family's insularity allows for the extractive logic that rules the mines to slip into other areas of the family's life, making

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[49] A 1937 review in Nature begins, "Europeans who have visited primitive people have always been attracted by the notions which they think they have found concerning witchcraft, oracles and magic; but most of them have attempted to interpret these notions mainly in the light of their own, or what they consider to be their own, habits of thought. Consequently, these topics have been treated as if their main interest lay in their curiosity, their oddity; and not infrequently they have been taken to indicate that there is some sort of primitive logic exceedingly different from that of the Western world. Dr. Evans-Pritchard is no mere curiosity hunter; he realizes that many of the Azande notions about witchcraft, and the ways in which the people use them, are not far removed from some of our own current ideas and practices about medicine and the chances of life."
Bartlett, F. "Native Science in Southern Sudan: Witchcraft, Oracles, & Magic Among the Azande." *Nature* 140, no. 28 (August 1937): 338.

[50] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 213.

everything a limited resource—from doctors, knowledge, and mining equipment (all imported from England), to reproduction.

Howard's description of his second wife Alice demonstrates this slippage between extractive mining productivity and human reproduction: "She was fruitful. A woman's function is to preserve the family line…she did her duty and she did it well…This is her wedding portrait. See there? The date is clearly visible on that tree in the foreground: 1895. A wonderful year. So much silver that year. A river of it."[51] Just as the mine's function is to produce resources, a woman's function in Howard's estimation is to produce heirs—resources of another kind. At the same time, the family's practices of intermarriage limit their reproductive capacity such that Howard's survival is so prioritized over the wellbeing of future generations that his progeny themselves become a valuable resource available for him to exploit.[52] However, a series of murders and suicides has whittled the family to near-extinction, and their changed circumstances require a reassessment of Howard's worldview to incorporate the acceptability of racial admixture.[53]

We can see how Howard justifies this shift in the following passage, wherein he insists on continuing to engage Noemí in conversation on eugenics, explaining his views to her despite her clear discomfort:

> "You mentioned Gamio when we last spoke," Howard said, grabbing his cane and standing up to move next to her. Noemí's attempt at distance had been in vain; he

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[51] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 75-76.

[52] Francis details how Howard takes over the bodies of his younger family members, obliterating their consciousness and therefore using them to achieve a form of immortality.

[53] In this way, the Doyles echo the Spanish approach to coloniality, which incorporated just enough indigenous culture (see Día de Muertos, for instance), gave Mestizaje just enough social standing over other racial categories like Blackness, to ease the path for continued colonial domination with the least amount of resistance possible.

> crowded her, touched her arm. "You're correct. Gamio believes natural selection has pressed the indigenous people of this continent forward, allowing them to adapt to biological and geographical factors that foreigners cannot withstand. When you transplant a flower, you must consider the soil, mustn't you?"[54]

In this telling, the Doyle family is the flower, transplanted from England, and much like the actual roses the family brought with them, they have until now been kept in the European soil that Howard also imported.[55] This makes Noemí, like the indigenous workers Howard referred to as "mulch," the soil that will facilitate transplantation. Or, more properly, by mixing her half-indigenous heritage with the existing Britishness to which the Doyles cling, he hopes to confer racialized advantages while retaining most of the characteristics he imagines set his family apart.

Extractive decay

Early on, reproductive, labor, and natural resource exhaustion come together within descriptions of the region where most of the action takes place. Noemí's first glimpses of the area suggest infertility and death as ruling characteristics, hinting at the novel's core preoccupation with the relationship between reproduction and capitalist coloniality. As Noemí approaches El Triunfo, the closest town to High Place and the Doyles' silver mine, she notes how the landscape changes from pastoral and lush, the mountain "carpeted with colorful wildflowers and covered thickly with pines and oaks" to rugged and barren.[56] The presence of silver seems to

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[54] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 77.

[55] Marta Duval, a curandera from El Triunfo, tells Noemi about the Doyles' peculiarities, such as this one. While roses are perennials, meaning they should return and bloom each year under the right conditions, in the wrong environment they will die without care, which had previously been provided by Virgil's mother: "She took care to cut out the weak and useless shoots, to look after each flower. But when she died, nobody much cared for the plans, and this is what's left of it all." Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 88.

[56] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 15.

preclude other, surface-dwelling, sources of wealth: "At the bottom of the mountains farmers tended groves and fields of alfalfa, but there were no such crops here, just the goats climbing up and down rocks. The land kept its riches in the dark, sprouting no trees with fruits."[57]

The barrenness of the landscape is mirrored by the region's poverty, even linked explicitly. The town is described as having "the musty air of a place that had *withered away*. The houses were colorful, yes, but the color was peeling from the walls, some of the doors had been defaced, *half the flowers in the pots were wilting*, and the town showed few signs of activity."[58] The next paragraph attributes this lack of life—both economic and literal, as the verbiage "withered" and the dying flowers signal an environment inhospitable to life—to the mine's demise. This, Noemí reflects, "was not that unusual…There were many hamlets like El Triunfo where one could peek at fine chapels built when money and people were plentiful; places where the earth would never again spill wealth from its womb."[59] Again, in this passage economic development and wealth are linked to literal life, this time to reproduction, tying the two forms of labor together.

Bernadine Marie Hernández reminds us in *Border Bodies: Racialized Sexuality, Sexual Capital, and Violence in the Nineteenth-Century Borderlands* (2022) that, "Because the woman in the monogamous family does not produce commodities as the wage-laborer, but rather produces children who transform into labor power, Marx and Engels do not consider her reproductive labor of value."[60] What this does not account for is what Hernández calls "sexual

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[57] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 16.

[58] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 17, emphasis added.

[59] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 17-18.

[60] Bernadine Marie Hernández, *Border Bodies: Racialized Sexuality, Sexual Capital, and Violence in the Nineteenth-Century Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 6.

capital": "how different bodily qualities…are codified in relation to the circulation of capital, the myriad ways in which sex is not an exception to the labor theory of value, and the ways racialized gender and sexual practices are abstracted labor in order to create value."[61] Here, Hernández is concerned with forms of sex that do produce value or enable its circulation, including prostitution and the reproduction of upper-class families, whose intermarriages were often used to secure economic advantages. In particular, *Mexican Gothic* takes up the latter: what Noemí is expected to produce through her sexual labor is not the next generation of laborers for the Doyle family mines, but rather a *commodity* in the form of a new body for Howard Doyle to use to prolong his life. The designation by which Noemí is to serve as the intended progenitor of this White, aristocratic family is racialized, indicative of "how sex was prescribed to different women," with some understood as properly feminine and others as marred by imagined excess.[62] Notably, due to her indigenous background, Noemí does not fit neatly into the "properly feminine" mold (something Florence Doyle makes a point of reminding her). Yet, to Howard, she is both White enough, and indigenous enough, to serve as a reproductive intermediary.

As we learn, the connection between life and productive labor is, in El Triunfo, complicated by the Doyles's reliance on extractive processes, and the imposition of death on others—laborers, the outsiders with whom they seek to reproduce, and even the family members they deem expendable. This manipulation of life and death for the benefit of a select few can be explained through Achille Mbembe's theory of "necropolitics." In contrast to Foucauldian biopolitics, necropolitics is the uneven, racialized exposure to death, including social death—"the expulsion from humanity altogether"—which creates a regulatory regime that "subjugat[es]

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[61] Hernández, *Border Bodies,* 7.

[62] Hernández, *Border Bodies,* 8.

life to the power of death."[63] In El Triunfo, the mine's operations sustained the livelihoods of only a select few, and wrought death on the largely indigenous community who came into direct contact with it. Here, as in most colonial ventures, the possibilities of life and prosperity are unevenly distributed, with the majority of workers and even Doyle family members subjected and exposed to conditions of death.[64]

Notably, *Mexican Gothic* attributes the failures of the mine to striking laborers and the Mexican Revolution, which was (at least ideologically) driven by a desire for a more egalitarian state—including a large push for indigenous rights, and land and labor sovereignty. As Miller explains, "Using racial capitalism as our analytic lens, it is evident that European profit came from the exploitation of human labor as well as from environmental resources in the extraction of raw material in the Global South, even in the era after the abolition of slavery. This was not only through the regular form of surplus value afforded by waged labor, but through the augmented surplus value created under conditions of racialized hiring practices."[65] This can be seen clearly in the descriptions of the Doyle family's treatment of native Mexican workers that are peppered throughout the novel. Howard refers to these workers as "mulch," dehumanizing them to the level of fertilizer that he imagines as a never-exhausted resource; at one point, Virgil off-handedly remarks that "You need a constant influx of workers at a mine like this," which raises the question of what happens to the workers that requires them to be replaced so often.[66]

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[63] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 75; 92.

[64] For Mbembe, the colony and plantation are originary necropolitical sites. He explains that, "in modern philosophical thought and in the imaginary and practice of European politics, the colony represents a site in which sovereignty fundamentally consists of exercising power outside the law (*ab legibus solutus*) and in which 'peace' is more likely to assume the face of 'endless war.'"
Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 76, emphasis in original.

[65] Miller, *Extraction Ecologies,* 91.

[66] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 201.

The answer the novel supplies is death: the Doyle family's mine is plagued with a series of sicknesses which kill the majority of the native worker population, and which we later learn were not due to a virus but to the fungus Howard has imported to extend his own life and power. In town, there are rumors of mass, unmarked graves.

Even among those whose lives are ostensibly sustained by the mines, however, Howard Doyle's use of the fungus makes death the ruling schema. The sheer amount of death required for both the Doyle family's silver mining and the extension of Howard Doyle's life emphasizes the finitude that underpins extraction. After all, he must continue to produce family members only to sacrifice them to his own immortality, and the family's insularity and reproductive difficulties requires the expansion of their genetic pool; the decision to expand the extractive frontier via marriage in fact precipitated the novel's plot. As Miller claims, "[t]he extraction economy… implie[s] a new relation to futurity," one in which (as is the case with fossil fuels) "extraction-based life [is] claimed at the expense of future generations."[67] For the Doyle family, this is literalized, with the lives of future generations claimed by Howard Doyle himself. In *Mexican Gothic*, therefore, the Doyle family's relationship to futurity comes into play both with their foundered silver mine (which Virgil dreams of restoring to its former glory with Noemí and Catalina's money) and in the family's own twisted reproductivity, in which reproduction itself becomes a resource ripe for extraction.

As the Doyle family makes clear, whether through reproduction or labor practices, racialized or Othered individuals are ones the family can most easily subject to extraction and to

[67] Miller, *Extraction Ecologies,* 33, 28.

death.[68] We can see this not only in Howard's plans for Catalina and then Noemí, but Francis as well. For, as Noemí learns, Howard Doyle plans to sacrifice his grandson to satisfy his ambitions of immortality. While Noemí had originally imagined that Virgil—who has been described throughout as stronger and more handsome than Francis— would serve as the vessel for his father and the gloom, the revelation makes some sense: "Why would Howard have forfeited his son, his favorite? It made sense that he would pick the boy he cared little about, whose mind he might obliterate without remorse."[69] It is worth noting that not only is Virgil Howard's son, while Francis is only the weaker, effeminate grandson, but that Francis's parentage is suggested to be the cause of his ill-health, in an echo of racist anti-miscegenation theories which are, of course, twisted by the fact of Francis's Whiteness (his extreme pallor is also mentioned as an indicator of sickliness). His father was the first outsider brought into the family, due to their dwindling reproductive capacity. Rather than the hoped-for daughters to continue the family line, however, his mother gave birth to Francis, and the gloom drove his father insane, and to his death.

Francis's father's outsider status and inability to survive the fungus's effects aligns him to an extent with the miners who Howard refers to as "mulch," whose deaths are seen as signs of weakness rather than as the natural result of the inhumane extractive process to which the family has subjected them. At one point, Howard excuses his own role in their deaths, suggesting he merely hastened the inevitable: "They would have died anyway. It was an assortment of underfed peasants, riddled with lice…The strong survive, the weak are left behind."[70] In their broadly spanning application of this logic of strength and weakness, the Doyle family demonstrates that

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[68] Though, of course, Howard branches out from necessity; Agnes Doyle, whose corpse forms the mother tree for the mycelium to colonize, was White.

[69] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 268.

[70] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 236.

racism is therefore simply another way to justify the application of extractive logic to human lives, enforcing a slippage between the extraction of natural resources, human labor, and human lives. As Miller writes, "Extractive capitalism was premised on the exploitation of [Indigenous] workers as on the exploitation of natural environments."[71] Yet, this formulation maintains a distinction between "workers" and "natural environments" which racism erases. By logically eliding the separation between humans and natural resources, racism makes human lives available for use,[72] and not only use but specific forms of abuse: enabling the exploitative extraction of various forms of labor, including reproductive labor, in the service of the perpetually unsatiated appetite of a "cruel god."[73] Historically, the cruel god served by racism is the interplay of capitalism and empire, while in *Mexican Gothic*, it is Howard Doyle and his fungus. When Noemí learns of Howard's plan to take over Francis, she articulates how this dehumanization functions within the family: "A body. That's what they all were to them. The bodies of miners in the cemetery, the bodies of women who gave birth to their children, and the bodies of those children who were simply the fresh skin of the snake."[74] The miners, the women, and the children all become *bodies*, resources to feed the family's growth, and therefore subjected to both literal death and to the social death Mbembe describes as the denial of humanity. As a horrified Noemí says, "This house had been built atop bones. And no one had noticed such an atrocity, rows and rows of people streaming into the house, into the mine, and

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[71] Miller, *Extraction Ecologies*, 92.

[72] In order to make natural environments available for use, colonial projects have typically had to figuratively "empty" them by either imaginatively erasing the existing inhabitants (usually indigenous populations) or their labor and management practices (by declaring them incorrect and improper, as seen in the previous chapters). Rather than simply ignoring their existence in order to imagine the environment as empty, however, racism presents another option: emptying through dehumanization, and therefore incorporation into the body of possible resources available for exploitation.

[73] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 270

[74] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 269.

never leaving."[75] Here, the house, in contrast to the gothic novels of the nineteenth century, stands in not for the "home" nation but for its colonies; the house itself is a site of colonial exploitation, oppression, and extraction as opposed to a threatened site of domesticity.

Within *Mexican Gothic*, the extractive figure is represented symbolically on one level by the Doyle family's crest, which features an ouroboros, a snake eating its own tail—fittingly indicating perpetual growth predicated on the shedding and consumption of old selves. Virgil tells Noemí that the family has decided to open the mine again, with Catalina's money—he plans to extract from his Mexican wife in order to once again extract from the Mexican countryside. Virgil explains how, "We've long been simply existing at High Place, Noemí. Too long. It is now time to grow again. The plant must find the light, and we must find our way in the world…I find it natural."[76] In order to grow, however, all things must consume, must take in or make additional energy to convert into more of themselves. This is where the family's other key symbolic figure comes into play: the mushroom. For the Doyle family and its wealth has all been built upon death, such that even reproduction is predicated on decay.[77] Noemí describes the process through which Howard will continue his life by erasing Francis's humanity: "Howard's body was covered with boils and he smelled of rot, and he would fruit and he would die. He would die, he would slide into a new body, and Francis would cease to exist. A demented cycle. Children

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[75] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 244.

[76] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 202.

[77] While Howard's second wife, Alice, was the biological mother of his children, his first wife, Agnes, is also honored with the title of "mother" and a statue adorning the family mausoleum (150). Though Agnes had borne no children, she was sacrificed to the fungus, her corpse becoming the "mother tree" from which the mycorrhizal network which composed the gloom branched out: "*...the gloom needed a mind…The gloom was alive. It was alive in more than one way; at its rotten core there was the corpse of a woman, her limbs twisted, her hair brittle against the skull. And the corpse stretched its jaws open, screaming inside the earth, and from her dried lips emerged the pale mushroom*" (218, emphasis original).
Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic,* 150; 218, emphasis in original.

devoured as babes, children devoured as adults. Children are but food. Food for a cruel god."[78] More than simply a reproductive capacity limited by the logic of extraction, the Doyle family's continuance, with Howard's life as its guiding star, is based on literal and social death. As mushrooms feed on decaying organic matter, Howard must continuously subject his domain—the productive realm of the silver mine and the reproductive realm of the household—to the conditions of death in order to retain the power and control offered by his relationship with the fungus.

Despite how Howard Doyle has used it, and the social valences that death takes on, the fungus, and even its need for a symbiotic relationship, remain neutral. As the novel explains, "The fungus by itself, it had no mind. It held no real thoughts, no real consciousness."[79] Rather, it is the symbiotic relationship with the human family that imposes morality, and specifically evil, onto the gloom, the symbiotic relationship between sacrificed human mind and mycelial network: "The fungus and the proper human mind, fused together, were like wax, and Howard was like a seal, and he imprinted himself upon new bodies like a seal on paper."[80] In this explanation, the "wax" composed of fungus and mind is shapeless, malleable, *neutral* until imprinted upon by Howard. It is, therefore, Howard, who furnishes the malevolent contents of the pervading gloom.

When the Doyles try to infect, to colonize Noemí with the fungus, it affects her like a drug, making her sleepy, stilling her muscles, providing hallucinations of a shared familial, historical memory. She sees the family's origin story, where Doyle seeks cures and immortality

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[78] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 270.

[79] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 282.

[80] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 283.

underground, where he has found a cult worshiping a healing mushroom ("*Instead of a peregrination to a holy site, he'd come to this wretched cave*"[81]). When Howard returns, having stolen the mushroom and taken it into his own body, one of his sisters thinks he has become possessed by evil, "but the other one, she knew this had always been him, under the skin."[82] The mushroom is simply looking to propagate itself, as are all living beings. Human morality, or lack thereof, is what brings evil into the equation. And yet, upon seeing Agnes's colonized corpse, her lips frozen in a silent scream, Noemí revises her conceptualization of the gloom, understanding it rather as "the manifestation of all the suffering that had been inflicted on this woman… Driven to madness, driven to anger, driven to despair, and even now a sliver of that woman remained, and that sliver was still screaming in agony. She was the snake biting its tail."[83] In this passage, the novel describes the outcome of enforced slippage between human and environment: without a separation between human and natural environment, the resources (and environment from which they are extracted) lose their neutrality; they become tainted by human suffering, and therefore, by social death.

The role mushrooms play throughout the novel emphasizes the place of death in the extraction economy; it also brings us back to the issue of form, and questions of detection, knowledge and ontology, and the logics upon which the novel is built. Ultimately, the novel's foundational use of twenty-first century mycological theories highlights ambiguity and the impossibility of knowing anything with certainty—after all, and however much we might imagine Western science as a totalizing ontology, the scientific method is premised on

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[81] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 205, emphasis original.

[82] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 207.

[83] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 289.

contingency, and the understanding that all current knowledge is theoretical, a placeholder for the next iteration.

Multiplicity, uncertainty, coexistence

Mushrooms function as a well-fitting metaphor for some of the questions of ambiguity and boundary-crossing—racial, geographic, historical, generic—that *Mexican Gothic* takes up. As Kelley reminds us in *Clandestine Marriage*, mushrooms have troubled Western science's classificatory systems for centuries, therefore challenging the totality of Western man's mastery over the natural world. Carl Linneaus's system of botanic classification was based on identifying and categorizing plants' reproductive mechanisms, which mushrooms—which are themselves the visible reproductive organs of a subterranean network of mycelia which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century botanists had not yet identified—confounded. As fungi, mushrooms are now classified in a kingdom entirely separate from both the animal and botanic. Linnaeus, however, classified them with plants, though in a catchall category he called "the Cryptogamia, [that] included all plants that at this period were thought to 'hide' or disguise their reproductive parts and procedures."[84] (Kelley 19-20). Linnaeus's recognition that the cryptogamia—which included fungi, mosses, ferns, algaes, and lichens[85]—stood apart from the remainder of the botanical classes he had identified, suggests what Kelley calls a "creeping hybridity" that resonates in its use of reproductivity with the discourse of Mestizaje and the particular forms of eugenics present

[84] Theresa Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2012), 19-20.

[85] Lichens, fascinatingly, are composite organisms, a symbiotic relationship between fungi and algae. This relationship was not discovered until the mid-nineteenth century.

in post-revolutionary Mexico.[86] Both take up—for better or worse—the imaginative possibilities of reproductive amalgamation.

Beyond their reproductive capacities, fungi are associated with other forms of boundary-crossing, and in particular with the spiritual and the fantastic. In discussing mushrooms with Francis, who keeps spore prints along with elaborate catalogs of preserved plants, Noemí notes the ceremonial use of specific mushrooms: "'Teonanácatl,' she said. 'The flesh of the gods… My grandmother was Mazatec, and the Mazatec ingest similar mushrooms during certain ceremonies…it's communion. They say the mushroom speaks to you.'"[87] Here, Noemí not only points to the documented fungal ability, when ingested, to expand the user's consciousness and challenge the boundaries of individuality; in evoking communion, she also draws a parallel between the Catholicism imposed during colonization and the preexisting indigenous religions, keenly elevating and validating the ostensibly "primitive" religion. The novel's acknowledgement of the centrality of mushrooms to indigenous Mesoamerican religious ceremonies also serves as a reminder of the existence of non-Western epistemes that offer alternatives to the scientific for making sense and use of the natural world.

These two worldviews exist alongside one another in *Mexican Gothic*, and present themselves in fascinating and horrifying ways, as when Noemí is shown a vision by the gloom of the family's history, and sees them engaged in cannibalizing the flesh of one of Howard's infant children, infected with the fungus. The phrase returns to her: "flesh of the gods."[88] Howard is, within his domain, a god, and the cannibalistic act of consuming the flesh of his flesh is one of

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[86] Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage,* 41.

[87] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 98-99.

[88] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 217.

communion, a literalized version of the eucharist which ends Catholic mass. Francis describes it as such: "A communion. Our children are born infected with the fungus, and ingesting their flesh means ingesting the fungus; ingesting the fungus makes us stronger and in turn it binds us more closely to the gloom. Binds us to Howard."[89] Within the Doyle family, spiritual and religious hybridity takes perverse forms: the monstrous Howard is worshiped as a god, and both Mesoamerican and Catholic rituals are twisted in his service.

These are not the only examples of spiritual amalgam, however. The novel also offers gentler portrayals of unconventional religiosity, alternatives that demonstrate the possibility for positive mixture of colonial and colonized cultures. One of these is the figure of Jude the Apostle, considered by many Mexicans to be the brother of Christ and the patron saint of lost and desperate causes, who is venerated in Mexico alongside folk saints not recognized by the Catholic Church, such as la Santa Muerte. The village curandera from whom Noemí seeks help and historical background on the Doyle family asks for payment for her storytelling services in cigarettes, which she offers as tribute to a statue of the saint. At the novel's end, Noemí—who has not been heretofore religious—comforts herself by praying to a figurine of Jude the Apostle, mirroring Marta's act by "placing a cigarette before its feet as an offering."[90] Through balancing the Doyle family's beliefs and practices with depictions of the beliefs of the people present in the nearby town, the novel demonstrates how the cultural hybridity resultant from centuries of colonial domination may take on both monstrous and regenerative valences.

The novel's concern with the coexistence of multiplicities—and particularly the multiplicity of belief—is present, and perhaps even clarified by, Noemí's interest in

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[89] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 281.

[90] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 294.

anthropology. As previously mentioned, the only clues we receive about Noemí's stated plan to become an anthropologist regard E.E. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, which Noemí says sparked her interest in the field. Though neither Noemí's interest in this work nor its contents are expounded upon in *Mexican Gothic*, a look into the study provides a lens through which to better understand he novel's interest in the relationship between Western science and the worldviews of indigenous peoples.

First published in 1937, thirteen years prior to *Mexican Gothic*'s setting, Evans-Pritchard's book was groundbreaking for its respectful treatment of a non-Western culture and people (the Zande people of Central Africa) and their way of understanding the world. This, of course, is not a perfect example of an academic treatment of difference; after all, its audience is clearly White and Western, and its author is concerned with making the Zande culture legible to these presumed skeptics. Yet, Evans-Pritchard treats a worldview which is not his with respect, seeking to understand how others might believe something he does not. We can see how Evans-Pritchard attempts this balance when he writes that, "Witches, as the Azande conceive them, clearly cannot exist. Nonetheless, the concept of witchcraft provides them with a natural philosophy by which the relations between men and unfortunate events are explained."[91] Referring to the Zande belief in witches not as superstition or religion but as a "natural philosophy" lends it a degree of credence and authority; natural philosophy was the term given for the study of the natural world which predominated in Europe prior to modern science, and referring to the Zande conception of witchcraft in this light suggests that it is a reasonable belief. At the same time, the term does seem to place the Zande people on a timeline in which their

[91] E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, ed. Eva Gillies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 18.

beliefs, though understandable, are akin to an *earlier* iteration of Western man's. Within the linear progress narrative held by Western ontologies and which characterizes nineteenth-century ethnography, the Zande are not seen as primitive, but are nonetheless considered developmentally a century or two behind Europeans like Evans-Pritchard and his readers.

Yet, Evans-Pritchard does at times relate the Zande belief directly to Western ones, including science, therefore suggesting that science is not an ultimate, infallible system, but a logical *conceptualization of reality* like that of the Zande.[92] He also suggests ways in which some Europeans retain beliefs which might seem equivalent to, but which he suggests are further at odds with logic than, the Zande belief in witches.[93] Evans-Pritchard's references to Western superstition serve as humbling reminders to the reader of the sheer diversity and constant evolution of human culture and understanding. In this way, Noemí's interest in *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* is a clue: there are multiple ways to understand reality, but in order to understand this one, we must leave our preconceived notions behind, making the novel a speculative fiction, premised on the question "what if twenty-first century theories of mycological communication were not only true, but taken to their logical end?" The version of reality in which we find ourselves is not the one we as readers nor Noemí as quasi-detective had

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[92] Evans-Pritchard creates a parallel between science and the Zande belief in witches when, for example, he demonstrates their similar applications: "We accept scientific explanations of the causes of disease, and even of the causes of insanity, but we deny them in crime and sin because they militate against law and morals which are axiomatic. The Zande accepts a mystical explanation of the causes of misfortune, sickness, and death, but he does not allow this explanation if it conflicts with social exigencies expressed in law and morals" (27).
Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, 27.

[93] "We have a notion of an ordered world conforming to what we call natural laws, but some people in our society believe that mysterious things can happen which cannot be accounted for by reference to natural laws and which therefore are held to transcend them, and we call these happenings supernatural. To us supernatural means very much the same as abnormal or extraordinary. Azande certainly have no such notions of reality. They have no conceptions of 'natural' as we understand it, and therefore neither of the 'supernatural' as we understand it. Witchcraft is to Azande an ordinary and not an extraordinary, even though it may in some circumstances be an infrequent, event. It is a normal, and not an abnormal, happening" (Evans-Pritchard 30).
Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, 30.

imagined at the start. It is, however, adjacent. The world Moreno-Garcia creates is one interested in indigenous knowledge but premised upon theories drawn from Western science. Her use of both stretches scientific bounds and makes visible its ongoing debates and processes, demonstrating that Western science holds few certain answers.

In her interview about the novel in *Vox*, Moreno-Garcia references the theories of Suzanne Simard, a conservation scientist whose research has popularized the idea that mycorrhizal networks—the symbiotic relationship between mycelium networks and the plants in whose roots the fungi reside—enable communication, collaboration, and resource-sharing between organisms in an ecosystem. This theory is attractive, in part because it provides an alternative narrative to the extractive approach to resources through which humans have wrought havoc on both social and environmental scales. If forests can work together for the good of the larger community/ecosystem, certainly people should be able to do so. Yet, in recent years, Simard's theories (which have come to be known as the "wood-wide web") have faced pushback from scientists in her community, including some former collaborators, who seek to temper the life they have taken on in the popular imagination.

Part of what is at issue in the debate about fungal and ecosystemic "communication" is a matter of scale. As Gabriel Popkin writes, covering the debate between mycologists for the *New York Times* (2022), botanists have long known[94] that individual plants are often involved in

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[94] In 1984, Francis and Read used autoradiography (a form of imaging which captures traces of radioactive decay) to demonstrate that the transfer of carbon between roots of plants connected via a mycorrhizal network was enabled primarily by the pathways created by the fungus. The plants used in the study were weeds commonly known as the buckhorn plantain, and sheep fescue grasses, not trees. However, the study did suggest that the observed carbon transfer was driven by source-sink gradient dynamics, an ecological theory in which plants in patches of poorer conditions within an ecosystem are kept alive through the resources of nearby plants with better access. The authors noted that source-sink dynamics do not always result in mutual benefit for the source and sink plants, as source plants may lose too many nutrients to the sink group
R. Francis & D. Read, "Direct transfer of carbon between plants connected by vesicular–arbuscular mycorrhizal mycelium." *Nature* 307, no. 05 (January 1984): 53–56. https://doi.org/10.1038/307053a0

symbiotic relationships with fungi that colonize their roots: "The fungi gather water and nutrients from the soil; they then swap some of these treasures with plants in exchange for sugars and other carbon-containing molecules."[95] And, while studies have also shown that trees in forests may be connected by underground mycorrhizal networks, scientists continue to debate whether and how these networks function—including whether they enable forest-wide resource-sharing, let alone allow for "communication" about ecosystemic threats, as the "wood-wide web" idea theorizes. Popkin notes that in 2012, Dr. Simard led a team study that confirmed that fungus formed a mycorrhizal network between the roots of Douglas fir trees. However, he clarifies, "that study did not examine what resources, if any, were flowing through the network, and few other scientists have mapped fungal networks with such rigor."[96]

Most studies either focus on the presence of mycorrhizal networks, or on the distribution of resources between trees, so that the connection between the two remains a hypothesis, a case of correlation slipping into causation in the popular imagination. Furthermore, because scientists have thus far been unable to confirm that fungi are in fact responsible for enabling resource-sharing in forests, studies cannot yet determine whether this hypothesized relationship benefits forests as a whole, or the fungal networks: "No one has demonstrated that fungi distribute meaningful amounts of resources among trees in ways that increase the fitness of the receiving trees, Dr. [Jason] Hoeksema said. Yet nearly all discussions of the wood-wide web, scientific or popular, have described it as benefiting trees."[97] The attribution of intentionality to the fungal networks, and specifically intentional cross-species *collaboration*, to ensure the success of a

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[95] Gabriel Popkin, "Are Trees Talking Underground? For Scientists, It's in Dispute," *New York Times*, 7 Nov., 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/07/science/trees-fungi-talking.html

[96] Popkin, "Trees"

[97] Popkin, "Trees"

broader ecosystem, makes some scientists uncomfortable for its personification and accompanying suggestion of something akin to human morality. Within *Mexican Gothic*, Howard Doyle's outright villainy provides the (lack of) moral code through which the fungus functions, imprinting his will upon it "like a seal" molding an image into melted wax.[98] Thus, Morenno-Garcia attributes human characteristics such as intention, goals, and villainy to Howard, rather than to the fungus he controls, and in so doing circumvents the threat of personifying the fungus.

The speculative world of *Mexican Gothic* is dependent on the assumption that the theories about fungal collaboration and communication built on Simard's research are true. But what is illuminated through the novel's form of speculation is the extent to which scientific theories remain unsettled—in their nature, theories are not conclusive but rather placeholders until new information or a new perspective comes along. By crafting a novel reality based on still-uncertain scientific theories, *Mexican Gothic* plays with the conventions of its namesake genre, eliding the already-hazy bounds between gothic and detective fiction. While gothicism may answer its readers' questions with dark, supernatural phenomena, it is a hallmark of Victorian detection that all answers are revealed as grounded in a logical reality. In creating a speculative reality based on actual scientific theories, Moreno-Garcia bends the distinction between the two, and between our world and that of the novel.

The pervasive atmosphere of suspicion that Moreno-Garcia creates—and attributes to the mycelial network within the mansion's walls—casts the reader into the role of detective, certain that something is amiss and digging for clues, but unsure what crime has even been committed.

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[98] Moreno, Garcia, *Mexican Gothic,* 283.

Even before Noemí begins to suspect more is amiss, the reader is placed into a mode of extracting what has been hidden or buried, attempting to parse nuggets of useful information from the gloom of unease that seeps through every page. Yet, Noemí is not a helpless and virtuous gothic heroine swept along on a tide of misfortune, in need of rescue. Instead, she is plucky, and active, and seeks out her own answers—and with them, trouble. Soon, her mission to help her cousin Catalina (who, along with the youngest Doyle, Francis, better occupies the role of gothic heroine, though agency and maleness respectively keep them each from being a perfect match), and her own curiosity about the odd place and its inhabitants, lead Noemí to take on the role of casual detective. When Francis helps by taking her into town, she counts asking Marta Duval about the family's history and trying to "understand" it as one of her "errands," along with visiting the post office and talking to the doctor.[99] As the novel goes on, Noemí seems to consider herself more and more within the role of detective, at one point claiming she is on a "quest" to find answers which are clearly being obfuscated, and later admitting to herself that the "tingle of disquiet" she'd felt early on in her stay at High Place had felt more thrilling than ominous, "a mystery to solve."[100]

However, Noemí is not always a "good" detective—or, at least not one able to put together the clues and solve the mystery. Much of this is not her fault. Sherlock Holmes describes knowledge as one of the basic qualifications for a good detective, but in Noemí's case, her knowledge is based on incorrect assumptions. Like the reader, Noemí is learning the rules of her new reality as she goes along, and accordingly amending what she considers possible. When Noemí writes to update her father, for example, she leaves out details that do not seem connected

[99] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 136.

[100] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 195, 262.

and which she thinks would only worry her father: "She did not write that Virgil was extremely reluctant to let anyone see Catalina…. She also did not mention anything about her nightmares, not the sleepwalking episode. Those, along with the rash blooming on her wrist, were unpleasant markers of her journey, but they were superfluous details."[101] To the reader, however, these superfluous details amount at minimum to a nagging sense of wrongness and unease and, at worst, to something sinister being signaled by their narrative proximity.

At another point, Catalina manages to slip Noemí a note, a page from a diary that contains what seems to be the unhinged, paranoid raving of a deceased Doyle family member, who tried to kill her family before turning the gun on herself. On one corner, Catalina writes, explicit about her intentions, "This is proof."[102] But the novel also requires that we question what counts as proof, or evidence, within the reality it constructs—a reality new to both the reader and to Noemí (as Noemí tells Francis, "It is very difficult, in this place, to discern what's real from what's false."[103]). She and the reader are therefore placed in the position of sifting experiences, like gold miners panning to separate precious metal from riverbed sludge. Noemí chides herself, "*Put the facts together, you fool,*" looking back over the diary entry and attempting to connect it to the strangeness of her own experiences, simultaneously convinced there is something there and that none of it makes sense.[104] Despite feeling certain of herself, she is uncomfortably aware that "One could conclude that this was a case of three silly, nervous women. Physicians of old would have diagnosed it as hysterics."[105] Considering her options, she asks herself whether there

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[101] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 134.

[102] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic* 171.

[103] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic* 242.

[104] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic* 173, emphasis original.

[105] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic* 173.

might be "a more rational answer" than ghosts or a curse, or whether she is connecting dots that don't align: "After all, that's what humans did: look for patterns. She could be weaving three disparate stories into a narrative."[106] In attempting to parse the clues, both Noemí and the reader are, therefore, engaging in the speculative side of detection, which bears similarities to the speculative hypothesizing engaged in by scientists at the start of an experiment. Reading detection and the scientific process through the lens of speculation highlights that both are engaged in attempting, through logic, to understand the bounds of the possible. In effect, both are engaged much more with uncertainty than they are with settled fact.

Francis tells Noemí that "There's no such thing as ghosts," when she asks whether he has considered that the house might be haunted, though this does not quite answer the question. As Noemí puts it, "Maybe there is a haunting in this house, but it can be explained logically."[107] Ultimately, the novel argues that yes, there is a rational explanation behind the mansion's "haunting": the network of mycelium that stores family traumas and infects all who enter, altering their mental states. Noemí uses the analogy of hatters, whose exposure to mercury made them mad—she separates the hatter's original psychology from their mercury-addled state, implying that the removal of the cause (whether mercury or exposure to what she does not yet know is a fungus permeating High Place) would result in a return to normal. However, according to the Cleveland Clinic, exposure to large amounts of mercury can cause permanent brain damage.[108] (Interestingly, mercury poisoning is common in silver and gold mining operations, which use the substance to extract and purify the precious metals from surrounding ore.) While

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[106] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic* 173.

[107] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic* 176.

[108] "Mercury Poisoning," *Cleveland Clinic,* Updated 07 July, 2022, https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/23420-mercury-poisoning#outlook--prognosis

mercury toxicity may not be a perfect analogy, the family's repeated comments about being inseparable from the gloom, about the fungus being "in the blood," raises questions about the intrinsic nature of both reality and the self: is there a fundamental self or nature, incapable of change (as both Virgil and Florence suggest)? And if change is possible, what are the boundaries and porosity of the self? Furthermore, there is the issue of objective reality. As Noemí points out at the novel's end when she dismisses Catalina's concerns about the police investigating the conflagration which incinerated High Place, systems and processes meant to find objective truth are only capable of functioning within the rules of the reality on which they were built: "Statements would be taken, a cursory report would be typed up, but they couldn't really prove much."[109] The evidence has burned, yes, but also, never adhered to the foundational expectations upon which a police investigation would be built.

The classically-gothic conflagration that consumes the Doyle home and most of its inhabitants represents a rupture from the imperial past. Yet, the novel emphasizes that despite the stark break offered by the plot, the past maintains a degree of influence. The novel's ending is rife with uncertainty, and not only because none of the characters has proof of their experiences or a story which fits neatly within the logic of the outside world.[110] While Noemí declares, putting on a show of certainty to assuage Francis's anxiety, that "High Place is gone, and the fungus must be gone with it," and "If there's anything left we could find it and burn it," Francis himself is less certain.[111] The youngest and gentlest Doyle has studied mushrooms, and tells

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[109] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 296.

[110] Noemí seems to realize the necessity of maintaining a separation between the two. Preparing herself to leave the experience behind, she declares, "It was a dream. Dreams can't hurt you." Francis is again more skeptical, and asks, "Then why won't you go to sleep?"
Moreno-Garcia, *Mexicano Gothic*, 299.

[111] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 297.

Noemí that "mycelia can be pretty resistant to fire," a fact which leads him to ask, "What if it's never gone? What if it's in me?"[112]

Francis might be right. Yet, this does not necessarily make the ending tragic. Francis's knowledge of mushrooms is correct, and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing notes in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015) that certain fungi, like the matsutake Tsing studies and some subspecies of morels, thrive in environments disrupted by human activity and wildfires. Yet, Tsing reads the matsutake mushrooms, which spring up in the aftermath of environmental disturbances like logging, as a symbol of hope for a world ravaged by capitalist greed. Tsing writes, "*Industrial transformation turned out to be a bubble of promise followed by lost livelihoods and damaged landscapes. And yet: such documents are not enough. If we end the story with decay, we abandon all hope—or turn our attention to other sites of promise and ruin, promise and ruin*. What emerges in damaged landscapes, beyond the call of industrial promise and ruin?"[113] In response to Francis's worries, Noemí begins to craft a speculative future for them, telling him of the growing city, "where buildings were rising up, fresh and new, places that had been open fields and held no secret histories."[114] As Noemí holds up the false promise of a landscape without history, Francis tells her that she is "spinning fairy tales," but Noemí continues, reflecting that "he needed a story and she needed to tell one, so she did until he didn't care whether she was lying or speaking the truth."[115] Even as she performs this comforting act of speculation, Noemí tells herself that, "The future…could not be predicted, and the shape of things could not be

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[112] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 297, 299.

[113] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015), 18, emphasis original.

[114] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 300.

[115] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 300.

divined. To think otherwise was absurd. But they were young that morning, and they could cling to hope."[116] The hope they cling to is that, though they might be building upon a landscape ravaged by colonial, racial, and reproductive trauma, these traumas need not be reproduced in the future they build.

Mexican Gothic ends with a sort of decay, balanced on the fulcrum of promise and ruin which stem from the colonial and industrial transformation wrought by the Doyle family and the silver mining operation which they established in the Mexican countryside. What might emerge from the damaged landscape of the fire-ravaged Doyle property? While Francis reads the fungus as necessarily evil and therefore fears it, the mushroom itself has no mind or will beyond survival. Without Agnes's corpse and the family living within its walls, any remnants of the mycelium network which might regenerate from the ruins could be free of Howard Doyle's imposed evil. They might even be free of the haunted family memories and the pain to which Agnes had been subjected, though Francis is sure to carry his own generational trauma regardless. Would such a remnant be able to exist as a neutral—though non-native—component of the environment?

This is a possibility offered to Francis—inheritor not just of the fungus but of the family's fraught colonial history—as well. Described from his introduction as "fair-haired and pale" (so pale that Noemí is unsure she's ever seen paler), there is little doubt of Francis's Whiteness.[117] Yet, due to the country's colonial history, he is both English and Mexican regardless of his race. Francis's Whiteness makes visible that which Noemí's dark skin allows us to forget throughout: both characters belong to the same place and both are the results of its history of colonial

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[116] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 301.

[117] Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*, 17.

encounter. Neither is, by virtue of race or skin color, more Mexican than the other; neither is inherently more virtuous than the other.

Mexican Gothic highlights Mexico as a site of colonial multiplicity and a place still echoing with a cacophony of empires, races, ontologies, and forms of extraction. In bringing these facets together, it asks whether and how they might coexist. This is, after all, the question that arises in the aftermath of colonial occupation, when the empire has dissolved but its afterlives linger: how do we make sense of our own hybrid identities, the conflicting beliefs and worldviews of our ancestors, our responsibilities as both beneficiaries and victims of extractive capitalism? The novel's response is to dwell in the discomfort and hope proffered by uncertainty within a world that trades in surety and absolutes.

Within the walls of High Place, virtue was attributed to both Whiteness and to the rightness of the fungal symbiosis for the purposes of familial unity. In post-revolutionary Mexico, Mestizaje was elevated to strengthen national consciousness and identity at the expense of still-extant indigenous communities and Blackness and Asianness and, too, while denying the complexity of individual identity. Yet, both Whiteness and Mestizaje are imagined, and neither is an objective good, nor an objective truth. In living with the legacies of colonialism in a pluralistic society, we must each grapple with its vestiges within ourselves, the ways we have and continue to benefit from it and the pains it has caused us. We must turn it over and examine it, know its history and its logics, and must every day do our best to make our own moral choices, as Francis must do with the possibility of the small fungal colony within himself, to avoid falling into the traps and patterns of the past.

Contemporary neo-Victorian novels such as *Mexican Gothic* and *The Luminaries* take the opportunity to re-examine the past and challenge its pervading logics, using the forms and genres inaugurated by the period to unravel them. I find that *Mexican Gothic* in particular, in its choice of setting, is able to critique the past while simultaneously highlighting the ways it remains present for twenty-first-century readers. *Mexican Gothic*'s choice to create a speculative reality allows it to unsettle the traditions of its namesake gothic form, to the extent that the novel is unable to be contained by either temporal periodization or geographical specifications with which the field of literary studies typically categorizes objects for analysis. In its unruliness and multiplicity, however, it is able to disrupt the hegemonic underpinnings of those categories and highlight often-overlooked global connections and their effects across time. This is (some of) the hope offered by the neo-Victorian: the ability to examine the pervasive and *persistent* narratives crafted by and for the benefit of the British Empire, and to imagine new ones that challenge us to reconsider what we think we know about the times and places held within a novel's pages, and their relations to the world today.

Coda

Conclusions have always been hard for me. Part of this is, I believe, because rarely does anything feel final. When I was a child, I hated books ending because I wanted to know what came next for the characters. As I grew older, I came to an understanding that the bounds of a story were different from the bounds of a life; that is to say, we can imagine more life for a character than there is story worth telling, and it is in that imagining that the characters become real to us. What happens, then, when the story told is not fiction? I mentioned at the start of this dissertation that Mary Prince disappears from the archival record following her libel trials. The archive is not simply full of these gaps, it is composed entirely of them. Some are more prominent than others. Yet, every story told is a fragment, and thus, open to speculative possibility. The past is not truly past, and so neither is it finished.

This dissertation has emphasized the continuity between the nineteenth century and the present. (This is not to say that ruptures and key moments of massive change do not exist, but instead, to emphasize that these ruptures themselves must be understood within the historical contexts that give them meaning, and often led to their very creation.) I now want to extend that continuity to the future in order to imagine the possibility of historical rupture. It is not simply that understanding the past keeps us from repeating its mistakes. Rather, understanding the past helps us see how its mistakes continue to fuel injustice today, and therefore to imagine interventions and ruptures designed at breaking these old patterns. Studying the throughlines

between past, present, and potential futures allows us, as Catton writes, to escape the "cloistered reminiscence of the past," and "look outward, through the phantasm of our own convictions: [to] see the world as we wish to perfect it, and [to] imagine dwelling there."[1]

In a recent article for Al Jazeera, journalist Tommy Greene wrote, "The political leaders caught up in the 30-year Troubles of Northern Ireland were so consumed with fighting over 'land, soil, territory', that they completely neglected the environmental welfare of that very same land, soil and territory, say young people born since the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) 25 years ago."[2] Yet, the Troubles were an extension of historical colonial conflict stretching back to England's colonization of Ireland during the reign of King James VI and I in the seventeenth century. Understanding the colonial roots of a defining conflict such as the Troubles, and, furthermore, understanding the environmental impacts of colonization, allows us to reframe the work necessary to rectify our relationship to the environment. This dissertation has argued that control over the natural environment and management of natural resources was a central aim of British imperialism. Control over nature was both the aim of the Empire—so that nature could be plundered by capitalist extractives practices—and a weapon used against colonized and enslaved people in the fight for imperial control. Therefore, healing our relationship to the environment is necessarily a decolonizing act, which requires a confrontation and reimagination of our relationship to the colonial past. This is especially crucial as formerly colonized places often face the greatest effects of the changing climate—itself largely a result of the greed of wealthy

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[1] Catton, *The Luminaries*, 364.

[2] Tommy Greene, "'Our lives are still fractured': Northern Ireland's 'peace babies.'" *Al Jazeera English*, 23 December 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/12/23/our-lives-are-still-fractured-northern-irelands-peace.

countries, many of which have benefitted from colonization and its legacies.[3] In particular, then, the countries that did the colonizing must face up to their histories and responsibilities and imagine how to live in such a way which does not perpetuate legacies of colonial and climate injustice.

I grew up and came into adulthood hearing what felt like every year that we were, collectively, at a precipice, the last exit on the road to climate apocalypse. In such cases, it can be difficult to imagine an alternative to what feels like a very certain, very bad future. Conversely, it is in such moments when we most need an imaginative rupture. Ruha Benjamin writes in C*aptivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life* about the potential of speculative imagining. Following Michael Brown's murder by a police officer, Benjamin saw a photo online of a wall spray-painted with the words "Ferguson is the Future." This led her to consider whether that future was one "of militarized police who terrorize residents using technologies of war *or* a future of courageous communities who demand dignity and justice using technologies of communication? The uncertainty, I think, is what we make of it."[4] Benjamin argues, writing on the speculative imaginings of science fiction writers like Octavia Butler, that "fiction writing and other creative works offer some of the most compelling post-postracial visions for challenging entrenched social hierarchies in a way that do not flatten

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[3] See the following:
Andrew L. Fanning & Jason Hickel, "Compensation for atmospheric appropriation," *Nature Sustainability* 6 (2023): 1077-1086. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-023-01130-8
Courtney Lindwall, "Rich, Polluting Nations Still Owe the Developing World," *Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)*, 22 January 2022, https://www.nrdc.org/stories/rich-polluting-nations-still-owe-developing-world#:~:text=There%27s%20no%20denying%20it%3A%20Wealthy,of%20all%20historical%20CO2%20emissions.
Nadja Popovich & Brad Plumer, "Who Has the Most Historical Responsibility for Climate Change?" *The New York Times*, 12 November 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/11/12/climate/cop26-emissions-compensation.html

[4] Ruha Benjamin, *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday* Life (Durham: Duke UP, 2019), 7.

differences."[5] I do not want to over-ascribe the political impact of fiction writing, or of the study of literature, for that matter. Yet, all revolutions, all liberatory movements, begin with a speculative imagining.

What does a truly decolonized, "post-postracial" world look like? This dissertation has argued that being decolonized and post-postracial requires a break or transformation away from continued imperial vestiges and systems, that simultaneously recognizes their effects through the present's continuity with the past. We cannot be post-postracial without acknowledging the very real lived effects of systems of Othering and dehumanization created to assist in subjugation to colonialism and, eventually, to empire. A decolonized, post-postracial world must also, I argue, include climate and environmental justice in its very foundations, as it is the formerly-colonized who currently bear the brunt of our rapidly-changing climate (itself an issue created largely by the beneficiaries of empire).

Yet, this necessity does not curtail our speculative imaginings. We must believe in the multiplicity of possible futures, or risk cloistering ourselves, as Catton puts it, in our reminiscence of the past. Naomi Klein writes in *This Changes Everything* (2014) about the necessity of hope in the face of climate catastrophe:

> At some point about seven years ago, I realized that I had become so convinced that we were heading toward a grim ecological collapse that I was losing my capacity to enjoy my time in nature. The more beautiful and striking the experience, the more I found myself grieving its inevitable loss—like someone unable to fall fully in love because she can't stop imagining the inevitable heartbreak.[6]

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[5] Benjamin, *Captivating Technology*, 10.

[6] Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 419.

The point is not simply that hope allows us to fully enjoy life, its great loves alongside its heartbreaks, but that our imagination of the future dictates action is possible in the present. It wasn't until, Klein explains, she immersed herself in the international climate justice movement that she was able to imagine hopeful futures.

Liberation scholar Robin D.G. Kelley argues for the importance of visionary or speculative imagination, "Without new visions we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not just a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us."[7] Imagination, however, takes practice, and speculating in such a way that escapes the colonial frameworks which curtail our imaginings, rather than inadvertently reproducing them, does not come easy. We must, therefore, study and learn from the many times throughout history when people have fought oppression. And, if they do not comprise the archive created by the victors of those conflicts, we can make our own archives by speculating upon the past, as the neo-Victorian authors I've studied have done. For there has always been hope, and people have always imagined better futures for themselves and their kin, and that has always led at least some to resist the seemingly-given oppression of the past and present.

[7] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), xii.

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