MAGNETIC REALISM:

MESMERISM, HYPNOTISM, AND THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

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Dedication

For Ivan, on account of his unerring support,

and for Sasha and Katya on account of their regular lessons in the importance of deadlines.

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Abstract

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This dissertation looks to nineteenth-century theories of mesmerism and hypnosis and how their influence helped to give shape to the narrative techniques deployed in Victorian fiction. Rather than focusing on non-realist texts where these phenomena are an explicit part of fictional narratives, this work explores how realist authors, many of whom were familiar with mesmerism and/or hypnotism and believed in their validity, deploy the logic of these practices in their depictions of psychological interiority, shifts in perspective, explorations of characters' bodies, and epistolary technique. Examining the works of William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot, George Moore, and Bram Stoker, I argue that numerous features of realist fiction modern readers accept as representative of day-to-day life have their origins in now defunct pseudoscientific theories that posit mechanisms for human beings having access to one another's thoughts, feelings, and individual subjectivity, and how a trace of this vitalist logic persists in later texts.

Introduction

> With regard to my opinion on the subject of mesmerism, I have no hesitation in saying that I have closely watched Dr. Elliotson's experiments from the first–that I have the utmost reliance in his honour, character and ability, and would trust my life in his hands at any time–and that after what I have seen with my own eyes, and observed with my own senses, I should be untrue to myself if I shrunk for a moment from saying that I am a believer, and that I became so against all my preconceived opinions and impressions.

The quotation above, penned in 1842 to one Dr. R. H. Collyer, is typical of the genre of mesmeric testimonials from its era. It approaches the question of mesmerism from the stance that it is a practice still in question, that the writer is convinced of its reality on account of both the impeccable character of a practitioner and their own experience and observations, and that belief in mesmerism requires an open mind and a willingness to part from "preconceived opinions and impressions."

It was also written by Charles Dickens (qtd. in Peyrouten 38) and speaks to a moment in history in which members of the public, among them a number of prominent authors, were coming to regard this still controversial phenomenon as legitimate.

The history of mesmerism as a scientific area of study throughout Britain in the nineteenth century is well-documented, as are the reactions to the alleged phenomena in both the social and literary domains. From Amy Lehman's explorations of the mesmeric

inflections of the Victorian stage, to Anne DeLong's discussion of the influence of trance states in Romantic literature, to William Hughes discussions of the literary ramifications of the mid-century shift in mesmeric paradigms, there is hardly a lack of historicist investigations as to how Victorian authors deployed literary treatments of mesmerism and mesmeric phenomena. Whether it be in mapping Collins and Dickens' fascination with the mesmeric onto the weirder features of their work (Boehm 15-45; Kaplan 3-5; Pearl 163) or breakdowns of the racial, gendered, and eroticized elements of Stoker and Marsh's mesmeric villains (Wolfreys 13), critics have been quick to address the influence of mesmerism in texts that explicitly deal with the weird and mesmeric. Why wouldn't they? While contemporary readers might dismiss the strange powers of vampires and sorcerers as supernatural, it takes only a little bit of research to discover that there is a rich and varied history of mesmerism as scientific theory, therapeutic technique, and spiritual practice. Looking into the ramifications of mesmerism's history as a meaningfully debated and considered pseudoscience makes sense in the context of mesmeric literature. However, it is seldom the case that we look to the particulars of mesmerism in works where it does not feature prominently, particularly works that do not have a fantastical or non-realist bent.

What this dissertation proposes is that the influence of mesmerism is not limited to texts where mesmerism is at the foreground or even texts in which mesmerism is mentioned at all. The rise of what we have come to term literary realism in the nineteenth-century coincided with prominent developments and purported discoveries in relation to theories of vital magnetism. I hold that the logic of the mesmeric trance, in which subjects are able to view the world remotely, penetrate and influence the thoughts

of others, and understand the world around them in a manner detached from their ordinary senses is something that has been replicated within the realist novel. It may be that the *least* supernaturalized texts, rather than the most supernatural ones, internalized the mechanisms that mesmerism promised to its practitioners. Authors such as Thackeray, Eliot, and Moore–all of whom were interested in or even enthusiastic about mesmerism–incorporate elements of the mesmeric into their work even where direct allusions to the practice might be fleeting or absent. Looking at their works in this project, I outline how mesmeric phenomena–even phenomena discarded as pseudoscientific–helped to shape our conception of the human psyche on a literary level. While mesmerism surely did not invent psychological interiority, it offered an ostensibly scientific avenue through which minds could–in fact–be laid open and thoughts read. The writers of the era–familiar with these theories–delved into the ways in which this operation might be carried out by a narrator, rather than a mesmerist. Turning the narratorial gaze towards psychological interiors coincided with a very real interest in the notion that the bounding line between exterior and interior was illusory: that fluids and forces already did connect the consciousness of one entity with another.

A Brief History of Mesmerism

Before muddying up the waters with all of the many things mesmerism encompasses, let me define exactly what I mean when I refer to mesmerism and to mesmeric phenomena and logic. Mesmerism is a term often conflated in the modern world with hypnotism, and even nineteenth-century literary authors had a tendency to interchange the two terms. The two phenomena, however, operate upon fundamentally

different theories: one vitalist and one physiological. While this dissertation will touch repeatedly upon hypnotism–in which one induces trance states in subjects via discrete physical changes–it is important at the outset to establish that its primary subject is mesmerism. Specifically, I am looking at mesmerism as a system in which human energies and consciousnesses are interlinked through some medium (often described in terms of rays, fluids, or magnets).

Mesmerism as it would have been known in the early nineteenth century was based on the ideas developed by Franz Anton Mesmer,[1] who proposed that "a universally distributed and continuous fluid [...] which by its nature is capable of receiving, propagating and communicating all the impressions of movement" existed and that it was the explanation for "a mutual influence between the Heavenly Bodies, the Earth and Animate Bodies" (54). A practitioner directing this fluid could exploit these "influences" to produce a number of physiological and psychological changes in a subject. This model, also popularly called animal magnetism, was a theory first used in medical practice, with Mesmerism undertaking experiments to treat a variety of ailments by "magnetizing" subjects. Throughout the late eighteenth century, Mesmer would treat patients by performing "passes" over them, looking into their eyes while he gestured with his hands and applied pressure or even magnetized items to key locations of their bodies (Binet and Féré 10). The goal of these operations was to provoke a moment of "crisis" during which those treated would enter a state:

[1] There were authors proposing the medical use of magnets prior to Mesmer's work in the mid to late eighteenth century. Binet and Féré, in their 1888 history of mesmeric phenomena, cite the theory as extending as far back as Paracelsus (2-3), and E. H. Judkins traces the origins of animal magnetism to Thales alleged experimentation with the attractive properties of amber (93). However, for my purposes, I will take Mesmer as the point of origin for mesmerism presented as cohesive scientific theory.

> [...] characterized by involuntary, jerking movements in all the limbs, and in the whole body, by contraction of the throat, by twitchings in the hypochondriac and epigastric regions, by dimness and rolling of the eyes, by piercing cries, tears, hiccough, and immoderate laughter. They are preceded or followed by a state of languor or dreaminess, by a species of depression, and even by stupor." (Bailly, qtd. in Binet and Féré 9).

Some of his practices line up nicely with our contemporary vision of modern mesmerism/hypnosis (e.g. the emphasis on eye contact, the unreality of the trance). However, his magnetic experiments also involved such bizarre undertakings as directing magnetic energies by means of an iron wand, positioning groups of people in a magnetized water bath known as a *baquet*, directing a *valet toucher* to magnetize for him remotely, or magnetizing trees such that subjects might walk beneath them and partake of their energies (Binet and Féré 8-9).

The basic theory that Mesmer espoused spread in a multitude of forms throughout Europe, and mesmeric theories made their way across the channel and into England. Whereas Mesmer's initial experiments terminated in violent paroxysms, his best-known immediate successor, the Marquis de Puységur, induced trance states of placid calm. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, mesmeric practitioners purported to be able to send their subjects into senseless catalepsies or transpose them into states of higher consciousness: enabling prescient visions and remote viewing. Mesmerism could allegedly transmit a magnetizer's sensations ("community of sensation") and movements ("traction") to a subject under their influence (Winter 41). While mesmerism continued to see frequent use in medical contexts–to treat ailments or provide an anesthetic effect, the

practice rapidly converged with theories of psychical phenomena. Telepathy, psychometry, clairvoyance, psychic empathy, astral projection, and spiritual communication were all phenomena that men attempted to explain via vitalist principles.

As I mentioned at the onset, it is easy to focus on mesmerism purely as it relates to the fantastical, the weird, and the ghostly. Many proponents of mesmerism certainly drew attention to these aspects of the practice. However, what will be most fruitful in the course of my examination is to look how theories of mesmerism were regarded by parties closer to what would eventually become accepted science. Famous anatomist Georges Cuvier, for example, wrote simply in his work on animal anatomy that "the proximity of two animal bodies in certain positions, combined with certain movements, have a real effect, independent of the imagination," (qtd. in Zerffi 119). Pierre-Simon Laplace mentioned mesmerism in his *Théorie analytique* as a "singular phenomena which result from extreme sensibility of the nerves," claiming that it might be one of many "instruments which we can employ in order to enable us to discover the imperceptible agents of nature" (qtd. in Zerffi 120). Regardless of whether mesmerism provoked crises or calm, regardless of whether it was dispatched to invoke powers of precognition or sent to cure a toothache, the fundamental premise it rested upon was that living things are capable of making themselves felt by other living things: that there is some unseen mechanism of the world by which we affect one another merely by *being*. This premise, stripped of the theatricality with which historical mesmerism has become invested, does not seem so distant from modern popular discussions of nonverbal communication and subtle environmental influences.

Mesmerism perhaps drew nearest to achieving mainstream recognition in the British medical community during the 1830s. In 1826, the Académie de Médecine in France was convened a committee investigating the authenticity of mesmeric demonstrations performed at the Hôtel-Dieu and Salpêtrière. In 1831, they delivered a report judging the phenomena to be real, a report translated by Scottish attorney John Campbell Colquhoun in 1833. Thereafter it became an occasion for curiosity and discussion in medical and scientific circles. The *Lancet*, helmed by the skeptical Thomas Wakely, printed accounts of the experiments in 1837, with the observer concluding with hopes that the question might be taken up by medical professionals willing to "steer a just course between credulity [...] and a sickly dread of discovering new truths (“Animal Magnetism” 840). While the legitimacy of mesmerism was hotly debated, the 1830s were a moment when it was gaining traction with established scientific and medical institutions. One of the French experimenters involved in the 1836 demonstration, Charles Dupotet, eventually came to England, where he undertook further mesmeric demonstrations. Eventually, he did so in partnership with University College Hospital and one Dr. John Elliotson (Winter 46), the doctor mentioned by Dickens in his attestation to Collyer.

Elliotson eventually became an icon of this era of mesmeric inquiry in Britain, and his rise to prominence and subsequent downfall shaped discourse surrounding mesmeric phenomena throughout the rest of the century. At the time he encountered Dupotet, Elliotson seemed an up-and-coming medical luminary. He was the president of the Medico-Chirurgical Society of London, the founder and president of the London Phrenological Society, and a Fellow with the London College of physicians. He was

additionally lauded in *The Lancet* for his landmark discoveries regarding the medicinal properties of a number of compounds, for his innovations in medical examination practices, and for various publications and translations,[2] and for being "a happy exemplification of 'that noblest work of God,'–an honest man" ("John Elliotson, M. D." 343-4; Winter 48). Wakely, as he had with Dupotet, initially reported on Elliotson's researches into mesmerism in *The Lancet*, and allied with Elliotson in matters of phrenology, novel therapies, and medical reform (Winter 49). Later, in his own highly propagandistic publication *The Zoist*, Elliotson campaigned for the abolition of capital punishment, educational reform, and sanitation efforts. These relatively progressive policies were presented alongside articles advocating for of phrenology and mesmerism, the latter which he lauded as "a new physiological truth of *incalculable* value and importance" that "presents the only avenue through which is discernible a way of hope that the more intricate phenomena of the nervous system—of Life,—will ever be revealed to man" (qtd. in Rosen 534). Mesmerism, at least as Elliotson presented it, was not only a practice approaching mainstream recognition and respectability, but one that could be connected to forward-thinking, socially responsible policy.

Allison Winter describes the historical moment as one in which "animal magnetism was ubiquitous in London [...] and the rest of the country not only followed press reports of Elliotson's experiments but took up the issue week after week in their private correspondence and in their dinner-party conversations" (57). It is this epoch of mesmerism–when it was a practice seemingly on the cusp of scientific validity, being reported upon in respected publications and being touted by respected physicians–that

[2] Specifically, Elliotson is mentioned as having discovered new medicinal properties of prussic acid, quinine, hydriodate of potash,

fired the imagination of numerous nineteenth-century literary giants. While Elliotson and his demonstrations were eventually discredited, with Wakely exposing his ongoing magnetic demonstrations with the Okey sisters as fraudulent, Elliotson won a number of significant authors over to his cause both before and after his fall from grace. Best known among these *is* Dickens, whose enthusiasm regarding Elliotson eventually led him to learn to magnetize others, and numerous critics have described him as drawing upon mesmeric theory into the dreamlike sequence of the 1838 *Oliver Twist* (Boehm 36-40; Kaplan 145-6). His close friend Wilkie Collins was also intrigued by magnetic demonstrations and published a series of letters in the 1850s describing experimental sessions he attended (Collins, "Magnetic Evenings at Home"). Like Dickens, his statements regarding the practice acknowledged its experimental nature, and he offered his assurances as to its authenticity and his belief in its eventual mainstream acceptance:

> [The] future of Animal Magnetism […] seems to me to be already assured. The science has, of late years, gained a vast hold on the convictions of men of intellect and men of honour in all quarters. As such persons continue to study it, year by year, more closely, and to extract from it more clearly the practical uses to which it may assuredly be directed for the benefit of humanity, so will the circle of believers, whose belief is worth gaining, inevitably widen and widen; and so will the masses, who follow, but never lead, be drawn into that circle after them.

This attestation was in addition to Collins collaborating with Dickens in the authorship and performance of plays with mesmerism as their topic (Winter 122) and employing a mesmerist as the villain of his 1859 *Woman in White* (153). As I will address more extensively in a later chapter, Elliotson additionally was friend and physician to William

Makepeace Thackeray, whose *Pendennis* (1848) was dedicated to him (xxxiii) and whose *Vanity Fair* (1848) and *Adventures of Philip* (1862) had elements clearly traceable to his character and theories.

Numerous authors who were neither in Elliotson's immediate circle nor outspoken proponents of his ideas nevertheless had notable brushes with and opinions about mesmeric theory. George Eliot, who famously had her head shaved for a phrenological examination, also allowed herself to be mesmerized during a gathering and corresponded sympathetically about doctors undertaking mesmeric demonstrations. As we shall see, some of her earliest work trades explicitly in mesmeric phenomena. Elizabeth Gaskell penned a letter asking for advice as to the efficacy, safety, and theological implications of mesmeric therapy as medicine (Hilton 34-5), indicating a curiosity that did not quite rise to the level of certitude Dickens and Collins professed. Multiple critics have noted Thomas Hardy wrote using the physiologically inflected language of trance that keeps with the theories of brain scientists such as William Benjamin Carpenter and Thomas Laycock, both of whom addressed hypnotic and mesmeric phenomena (Asquith 94-6; 345-6)

These connections among mid-Victorian literary figures and mesmeric theory are not novel or surprising. Belief in or curiosity about these phenomena were widespread even if mesmerism never fully achieved validity in the medical and scientific communities as several of them hoped. Nevertheless, it is commonplace for critics to treat mesmerism and its associated phenomena as a novelty in their readings of texts from this era. Mesmerism is something frequently seen as incidental to a text that does not explicitly address it. Scholars are fond of discussing the mesmeric in relation to things we

moderns take to be of a similarly pseudoscientific nature.[3] It is easy to write about literary mesmerism when the subject is a Svengali or Fosco; it is simple to invoke an author's belief in mesmeric phenomena when their work is rife with ghosts, future visions, telepathy, seances, or second sight, because the texts already demand the suspension of disbelief. What this approach often fails to capture, however, is how mesmerism might intrude upon literature were it *not* appeasing expectations of pseudoscience. At a point in time when so many authors were willing to entertain the thought of mesmerism as being a legitimate, albeit still emerging, scientific system, it behooves us to ask how the logic of mesmerism might underpin literary depictions of mundane, unsupernaturalized reality—the primary field of application of mesmerism itself.

A Brief History of Realism

Much as mesmerism itself is a fraught and contradictory phenomenon, debated hotly by scholars and scientists of its era, realism is a comparably slippery concept. While there seems to be some general agreement that realist writing sets out to capture *some* aspect of day to day life as we experience it outside of literature, there is hardly a consensus as to what the stakes and characteristics of realist writing are, or even what works qualify as realist.[4] U. C. Knoeplmacher, in his 1968 unpacking of George Eliot and the "limits of realism," describes realism as a divided aesthetic, gesturing to the seeming

[3] For example, Louise Henson's discussion of the mesmeric in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853) arises in relation to the introduction of Signor Brunoni, a traveling "conjuror" (89) and Sharrona Pearl's excellent break down of the mesmeric dynamics of Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859) naturally focuses on the explicit mesmerism claimed by Count Fosco (170-1). While analyses such as these touch on broader issues of human consciousness, they often require the anchor of an magic or mesmerism overtly described in the narrative.

[4] While most critics agree that Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy make the cut, there are a great multitude of contenders for the other seats in the realist pantheon. George Levine champions Mary Shelly and D. H. Lawrence (317-28); Carol Levine Collins and Wilde; Ermath Defoe and Richardson (95-43); Armstrong Haggard and the Brontës (167, 201).

paradox of attempting to inject a dignified idealism into something purporting to capture the realities of everyday life (24-37). Harry Shaw, in his overview of realism's detractors, draws lines as to questions of totality, framing criticism of realist writing in relation to Lukács' claims about its ability to capture a unified social reality (13). George Levine claims that realism must prioritize the ordinariness of everyday life over the excesses of romance and melodrama (qtd. C. Levine 10). Peter Brooks identifies realism with our capacity to visualize (16-7), and Nancy Armstrong ties this more specifically to the ways in which the development of photographic technology altered how we visualized ourselves and others (28), looking to how literature creates fictions that conform to the broad visual categories the photographic age developed. Elizabeth Needs Ermath configures her arguments regarding realism in relation to perspective and the illusions of depth–drawing comparisons to painterly perspective (3-5). Carol Levine makes the bold claim that the quality of suspense–often thought to be a quintessentially non-realist attribute of mysteries and sensation novels–is actually fundamental to the experimental thought processes that allow us to evaluate reality (12). Rae Greiner, whose lead I perhaps follow most in this project, yokes realism to the question of sympathy.

Greiner, leaning heavily upon Shaw and his statements about realism's historicist operations (23-31), makes the case that realism invites the reader into occasions for sympathy in keeping with the views laid out by Adam Smith, who holds that while human beings can engage in "fellow feeling," we are incapable of fully experiencing what another person experiences. There is a draw for the reader to put themselves into a character's situation and to move along with them in the feelings that scenario would provoke. Unlike the later term "empathy," which suggests a feeling *with*, sympathy is an

operation that Greiner frames in terms of parallel motion: it is "going along with" (23). The basic mechanisms of sympathy are that one imagines the "case" of another entity and positions oneself as an observer in that hypothetical scenario. It is impossible to empathize–-to feel *with*– something unfeeling: with a piece of fiction or with corpses. Greiner, however, explains that we may meaningfully interface with fictional persons through the operations of sympathy.

While Greiner's argument is compelling, I wish to explore how nineteenth-century readers may have had a different understanding of the operations of human connection. In applying Smith's Age of Enlightenment reasoning to the novels of a century later, we avoid confronting the ways in which writers at the height of Victorian realism *did* believe in forms of feeling "with" that we view as impossible. Realism came into the world in an era of seances and table tappings: at a time when people believed that corpses and fictions might–in fact–have feelings. While Greiner is astute in her evaluations as to how realist fiction draws its reader through moves analogous to Smith's thought experiments, enabling them to construct and consider a fictionalized person through the abstracted mechanisms sympathy, I wish to make the case–absurd as it might seem–that realist fiction does invite audiences to feel "with." Greiner, somewhat like Carol Levine in her discussion of suspense and the testing of assumptions, describes scenarios in which readers of realist fiction are participants in an experimental operation. We are asked to undertake a project in which we imagine a character and give them shape and substance as we relate their case to ourselves; we are asked to form a hypothesis as to a story's turns and enjoy the thrill of learning if we are right. What I wish to draw our attention to, however, is the impossible experience that fiction gives us without asking

and shows us without demanding our labor. Literature tells readers with *immediacy* what a character is thinking or feeling without walking them through hypotheticals; it offers us our own versions of remote viewing and telepathy. It simulates a connectivity between human minds that is both direct and unstrained.

We are–perhaps–so used to this feature of fiction that it does not strike us as fantastical or in any way supernaturalized. We do not find it strange or uncommon that a narrator should be privy to the intimate thoughts of a character or that they should draw us though scenes and sequences that should be off limits to any human observer bound by the limitations of time and space. While incursions into the minds of characters and shifts in setting are scarcely unique to the Victorian period, it was the early nineteenth century that offered something approaching a valid scientific model through which the logic of fiction might be attained. What I propose is that the forms of narrative omniscience associated with realist texts–in which we dip freely into the minds and emotions of other characters in ways that we are invited to compare to our own experiences–replicates the logic of mesmeric activity. That the promise of shared sensation and a community of feelings is something we have accepted as a defining feature of realist literature even if it might seem distant from the surreal theories of mesmerism that have ultimately been discarded. Even modern readers, far removed from common belief in mesmerism, still experience some of this mesmeric trace embedded within the conventions of fiction that succeeded these texts.

Furthermore, I wish to assert that various forms of narration and perspective may be aligned with specific mesmeric/hypnotic phenomena and practices: that different manifestations of mesmerism lend their logic to specific types of narration. Mesmerism

could be a practice grounded in performance and novelty, an explanation of diverse psychic phenomena such as telepathy and remote viewing, or the basis for later hypnotic claims about the body and its physiological processes. I hold that authors working within the logic of these theories create styles of narration aligned with specific manifestations of the mesmeric/hypnotic. A writer such as Thackeray–invested in the showmanship of mesmeric demonstration–of parlor tricks and cold readings–might craft a world in which magnetically connected people do or do not read one another, sweeping from character to character and how they fall or fail to fall under one another's sway. An author such as Moore, obsessed with bodies and grounded in hypnotic theories of the body, may take up limited, focalized viewpoints enmeshed in the intensity of individual sensation.

Overview of Chapters

This project looks to four very different authors writing about and around mesmerism and hypnotism at very different points in its history, and I will track how the fundamental theory of vital magnetism that underlies Mesmer's original propositions adapts itself to new literary applications even with the evolution of new theories surrounding psychological control and the rise of hypnotism–a phenomenon and practice that differs considerably from the vitalist theories underpinning mesmerism. William Makepeace Thackeray, a friend and patient of Elliotson, writes at a point in time where the potentialities of mesmerism-as-science were still being debated and during which he had a personal rapport with their champion. George Eliot, writing several years later, is clearly familiar and engaged with mesmeric theories, but also would have doubtlessly been exposed via her partner G. H. Lewes both bountiful skeptical debunkings of

mesmeric demonstrations and to new insights regarding the emerging counter theory of hypnotism, named by James Braid in his landmark work *Neurypnology in* 1843. George Moore (despite significant gaps in his biography around the time when he would have been most likely to encounter hypnotic theory) expounds upon the ideas of the Salpêtrière's famous advocate for medical hypnotism–Jean Martin Charcot–offering direct commentary on hypnosis, its potentials, and its limitations. Lastly, looking ahead to a decidedly non-realist writer, we find that Bram Stoker was situated with insider knowledge of medical practices relating to the workings of the brain. His *Dracula* (1897) was written shortly after Charcot's death and Stoker not only anchors his novel to this event but also drew on the expertise of his physician brother William Thornley in shaping the medical discourse offered up by *Dracula's* fictional doctors, who espouse hypnotism to be an established fact.

This slate of authors each may be localized to a different and distinct period in the history of both mesmerism and the interrelated science of hypnotism, and each of them approached mesmeric/hypnotic practices with a decidedly different bent. Thackeray, in *Vanity Fair* (1848) offers us but a passing reference to Elliotson in the midst of a novel that seemingly has little to do with anything smacking of the supernatural, although he uses it to discuss larger order issues of human influence and interaction. One of Eliot's earliest published pieces—the 1859 novella "The Lifted Veil"—is directly concerned with psychical phenomena, and links powers such as telepathy and remote viewing to issues of phrenology, in keeping with some of Braid's earliest writings on hypnosis that connected the physiologically based hypnotic sleep to the pseudoscience of reading human skulls as an exercise in early cortical mapping. Moore invokes Charcot directly

and repeatedly in his 1898 *Evelyn Innes*, and Stoker's 1897 *Dracula* is saturated in contemporary medical discourses regarding brain science and Charcotian theories of hypnosis. One can read the primary authors selected for examination in this project as hailing from the three distinct phases of these practices that William Hughes identified in 2005: the Age of Mesmer, the Age of Braid, and the Age of Charcot.

This project does not however aim to provide a simple history of mesmerism in literature. Mesmerism (and hypnotism's) histories have been thoroughly dissected elsewhere by authors such as Winter, Hughes, or Forrest. What it seeks to do instead is to track four concrete examples of realist narration replicating, reacting to, and re-imagining the mesmeric forms with which these authors were familiar. Rather than looking at ways in which Eliot or Thackeray inserted literal depictions of classical mesmerism or Braidian hypnosis into their texts, I will look at how the fundamental operations of their storytelling operate along mesmeric or hypnotic lines. What do these authors versant in the science of the mesmeric do when given the power to invade, commingle, and magnify human thought and emotion? What debt, perhaps, do they owe to these models of consciousness? What one will see is not a one-to-one correlation between different phases of mesmeric theory and different types of narration. There is not a formula by which we might label one author as distinctly mesmeric, one as Braidian, and two as Charcotian. Furthermore, writers of fiction seldom cleave to one theory or another. An author is seldom a parapsychologist. Even when these writers employ direct and deliberate allusions to specific mesmeric theories, they often intermingle them with other paradigmatic models and inject them with a layman's understanding of the psychical "sciences." Instead, what these writers do is replicate those mechanics of the mesmeric

that strike them and freely incorporate them into new ways of seeing the characters they craft. They take the logic of thought reading, human influence, remote viewing, embodied consciousness, and emotional transfer, and apply it in ways that–to readers both past and present –have become routine. The audience's ability to penetrate the thoughts of characters is a completely fantastical conceit that we have come to accept as commonplace. The origins of what we have come to term psychological realism–while they do not decisively originate with mesmeric theory–certainly parallel it. As it became commonplace to allow readers access to the interiority of protagonists, beliefs that one mind could freely intermingle with another were in increasing circulation.

The first chapter of this project looks to Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, a novel about societal webs and personal entanglements, even if they are (seldom) explicitly named as having any metaphysical component. Looking to Thackeray's own fascinations with Elliotson and mesmeric demonstration I make the case that his expansive, panoramic narrative plays on the same type of showmanship and playfulness as performing mesmerists, drawing parallels between the teasing, inconsistent claims of his unnamed narrator and the briefly mentioned mesmeric demonstrator Alexis. Thackeray's narrator, whose omniscience seems more and more dubious as the narrative reveals him to be embodied, nevertheless makes claims that he is remotely able to view bedchambers, scan the contents of letters, and penetrate the secrets of women's hearts. His constant changes of topic, scene, and place have the effect of giving us a far-reaching spectacle of human experience, even if he occasionally claims the privilege of secrecy or ignorance or key facts. Like classical mesmeric demonstrators, he crafts the illusion of perfect insight from partial insight, skimming through pieces of reportable information to create a collage that

seems a whole and vivid picture. Thackeray's fantastical society is shown to us in sweeping generalizations and externalities, often flitting away from direct insight into the hearts of many of its principals even as it describes them through a dozen different viewpoints and distances.

Foremost among those whose hearts remain unexamined is the story's preeminent non-heroine–Rebecca Sharpe–who I place in opposition to the text's mesmeric narration. The enchanting femme fatale at the center of the text–whom one would expect to be beguiling others with her gaze–is notable instead for her ability to resist the probing eye of the faux omniscient narrator. Becky does not wield her influence through her active entanglement of others (almost all of her attempts at seduction and entrapment ultimately fail); rather, Becky's true power is her immunity from influence and the fact that she can see the threads that bind others and call for them to be severed. The foremost mesmeric character of the novel is instead the quickly departed George Osborne, a character who never does much that is particularly extraordinary, but whose presence haunts the novel like a ghost. Becky serves not as enchantress in *Vanity Fair*, but as exorcist, and her rebuke to Amelia as regards the latter's parasitic relationship with her dead husband proves to be the most effective interpersonal plot she deploys.

The second chapter of this dissertation draws a connection between two works by George Eliot that could not be farther removed from one another in contemporary scholarship regarding her corpus. In it, I make the case that Eliot's early gothic novella "The Lifted Veil" (1859) contains multiple elements that run parallel to her modest celebrated novel, *Middlemarch* (1872). While most readers do not typically conceive of Eliot as a psychical writer, she was undoubtedly conversant in contemporary discourses

regarding mesmerism, telepathy, phrenology, and connected sciences. While these elements are never directly evoked in *Middlemarch*, "The Lifted Veil" is saturated in concerns relating to these pseudosciences, delving into an exploration of telepathy as a constraining force that counterintuitively dulls human sympathy. What I wish to draw attention to is the way in which this fantastic treatment of human consciousness maps almost directly onto the fundamental narrative moves at play in Eliot's best-known work. I argue that she takes the psychological isolation endured by her early protagonist–a reluctant telepath known as Latimer– and reimagines it in the realist familial tragedy of Tertius Lydgate, an anatomist whose inward gaze turns upon physiological structures instead of telepathically opened minds.

By looking to Lydgate as a new Latimer, one can see how the natural systems that permeate Middlemarch replicate the mesmeric web underpinning "The Lifted Veil," and see further how Lydgate's failures to navigate the social world he inhabits replicate Latimer's inability–even as a telepath–to see the plots that surround him. Eliot, an ardent natural collector, recreates the fanciful, microscopic vision of psychical powers in her sweeping description of human society as a natural biome, and she shows us throughout *Middlemarch* how to readjust one's vision to appropriately perceive one's environment and those who inhabit it. While explicit telepathy is absent from *Middlemarch*, it nevertheless contains crucial narrative moments that focus on the unspoken influence of characters upon one another. These encounters are saturated in the language of vibration, electricity, and the entanglement of eyes–all features of classical descriptions of the mesmeric trance–although they are simultaneously interwoven into Eliot's descriptions of Middlemarch as a natural environment. While I argue that the underlying logic of the

mesmeric permeates the novel, it has been re-imagined via sciences accepted (natural history and medicine) rather than as sciences proposed (telepathy and mesmerism). Against this backdrop, Eliot demonstrates the appropriate use of our vision–showing us through the empathetic Dorothea Brooke how to calibrate our perception of the networks in which we lie entangled.

My third chapter looks at a work that is seldom taken to be realist: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. In this fever dream of fin de siècle sexual paranoia, mesmerism and hypnotism are explicitly named and deployed in the course of the characters' struggle against a vampire. What is unique about Stoker's brand of horror writing in relation to realism, however, is not his use of mesmeric or hypnotic logic but his fixation on the detailed, mundane minutiae of life. Whereas I affirm with Thackeray and with Eliot that one can read the logic of the supernatural into their stories meant to capture the dynamics of real-world human relationships, I hold that Stoker's supernatural world is underpinned by the networks that govern day to day existence: train schedules, telegraphs, and typewriting. In writing about vampirism as an explicit, invasive force–as a network through which evil can infect bodies and corrupt souls–Stoker walks us through similarities between mesmeric phenomena and the technological networks that govern late nineteenth century living. The Crew of Light–as Christopher Craft terms the protagonists (111)–are reliant on systems of communication and travel that mimic the logic of the mesmeric web.

In her conflict with Dracula, Mina Harker not only utilizes mesmerism against her mesmeriser–directing Van Helsing to hypnotize her and thereby exploit the psychic link between her and the Count, but she also counteracts him through her ability to puzzle through travel networks, through her meticulous recordkeeping, and through her collation

and editing of what eventually becomes the novel itself. The real strength in *Dracula* is not the overt vampiric or mesmeric abilities of the title character, but the ways in which its heroine is able to use the apparatus of everyday life in ways that replicate and counteract the mesmeric. The culminating realization of this is in the act of narrative assembly itself. Dracula as a mesmerist does not have the reach of *Dracula* as novel. The triumph of *Dracula* is not in its accurate and compelling depiction of human consciousness but rather in its ability to elevate the mundanities of ordinary life to the realm of the fantastical, and to show how storytelling itself is in some way analogous to mesmerism.

My final chapter explores matters of hypnotism and embodiment in relation to the works of George Moore, continuing to trace the progression of mesmerism's successors into the era of Charcot and looking to hypnotism's intermingling with hysteria. Beginning with an examination of one of Moore's lesser-known works–*Evelyn Innes* (1898)–I examine how Moore directly and deliberately invokes theories of Charcotian hypnotism in configuring his portrait of a Wagnerian hysteric: using the language of gazes, swoons, and physical ailment in tracing his heroine's life under the sway of multiple male controllers/influencers. While the text shies away from confirming the reality of Charcot's theories, suggesting–in fact–that the vitalist mesmeric model might carry more weight, it also describes the emotional turns of a woman who is continually experiencing the influence of her own emotions and others through the medium of her body, and its explicit invocations of telepathy and magnetism carry with the color of late nineteenth-century hypnotism. Evelyn, whose narrative has an astonishing number of parallels with Du Maurier's *Trilby*, undergoes a series of love affairs and moral

transformations that all play out in relation to her nerves–falling into trances, into reveries, and into fits of pain as she is influence by the various men who hold sway over her.

I use this overt embodied hypnotic imagery in *Evelyn Innes* to look backwards to Moore's earlier and better-known work, *Esther Waters* (1894), to draw attention to how Esther, like Evelyn, experiences emotion and the influence of others through the medium of her body. While there are only a few brief allusions to magnetism and related phenomena in the novel, Esther's intensely narrow and focalized viewpoint is continually relaying her experiences–not as concrete nameable thoughts and statements–but as embodied sensations occurring in the *absence* of thought. Esther's insight into the world she inhabits is mediated entirely through physical sensation. Her connection to her husband and son, conveyed in terms of sensory immediacy and bodily acts such as breastfeeding, often have the same mystical sense of connectivity Moore assigns to the mesmeric theories of prayer and intimacy he later puts forth in *Evelyn Innes*. Like Evelyn–an opera singer–Esther's body is made a site of performance, judged in terms of its physical capacity for reproduction just as Evelyn's is judged in terms of her capacity for sound.

This project showcases not only how different authors intersected with the mesmeric/hypnotic theories of their era but how each specific strain of these phenomena influences the narrative techniques deployed in each given author's work. Thackeray's beguiling, satirical misdirection, Eliot's sweeping, telescopic views of a human community, Moore's hyperfocus on singular women's sensations and thought, and Stoker's collaborative narration all trace the logic of the mesmeric/hypnotic models with

which each author is familiar. While mesmerism and hypnotism may not be overt presences in these texts, nevertheless, these pseudosciences leave their impression in how the logic of human consciousness is presented to us by authors familiar with them. These echoes–traces of ideas now discarded–have in turn shaped *our* perception of how consciousness works in these narrative forms, such that we find ourselves in some way accepting the psychic forms mesmeric theory gave rise to even if we might have long ago shed any belief in mesmerism's scientific validity.

"Seeing Miles Off and Looking into Next Week:" The Magnetic and the Ghostly in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*

Despite his connections to John Elliotson, William Makepeace Thackeray is not an author typically associated with mesmerism. His works are best known for their satire and wit–and it is seldom that his writing is explored in relation to the supernatural, the gothic, or any of the genre conventions we typically associate with mesmeric texts. Unlike Dickens, whose writing delves repeatedly into dreamy psychological states and pseudoscientific theories, Thackeray's oeuvre has not drawn much interest from critics looking to read it in relation to early nineteenth-century mesmerism.[5] Yet, in his best-known novel, *Vanity Fair*, the practice was clearly on his mind as an author. At the opening of Chapter 23, he writes the following as regards the relationship between George Osborne and William Dobbin, mentioning both mesmerism and Elliotson directly and deliberately:

> What is the secret mesmerism which friendship possesses, and under the operation of which a person ordinarily sluggish, or cold, or timid, becomes wise, active, and resolute, in another's behalf? As Alexis, after a few passes from Dr. Elliotson, despises pain, reads with the back of his head, sees miles off, looks into next week, and performs other wonders, of which, in his own private normal condition, he is quite incapable; so you see, in the affairs of the world and under

[5] As will be touched upon in a later footnote, there has been meaningful criticism discussing him in relation to the operations of the mind in a more general sense, particularly in terms of attention/concentration (Dames 77).

> the magnetism of friendships, the modest man becomes bold, the shy confident, the lazy active, or the impetuous prudent and peaceful. What is it, on the other hand, that makes the lawyer eschew his own cause, and call in his learned brother as an adviser? And what causes the doctor, when ailing, to send for his rival, and not sit down and examine his own tongue in the chimney glass, or write his own prescription at his study-table? I throw out these queries for intelligent readers to answer, who know, at once, how credulous we are, and how sceptical, how soft and how obstinate, how firm for others and how diffident about ourselves: meanwhile, it is certain that our friend William Dobbin, who was personally of so complying a disposition that if his parents had pressed him much, it is probable he would have stepped down into the kitchen and married the cook, and who, to further his own interests, would have found the most insuperable difficulty in walking across the street, found himself as busy and eager in the conduct of George Osborne's affairs, as the most selfish tactician could be in the pursuit of his own (222-3).

This passage does not say that the unusual influence of George upon Dobbin is magnetic in nature. Like a majority of Thackeray's authorial asides, it is framed as a string of questions, inviting the reader to come to their own conclusions. It suggests, however, that mesmerism might be the conclusion to which a reader ought to come. Furthermore, it suggests that mesmerism is something that personally affects the reader, who may be "credulous," "sceptical," "soft," "obstinate," "firm" or "diffident" depending on the social circumstances in which they find themselves. In this extraordinary passage, Thackeray offers us the suggestion that both his characters and his audience are subject in

their everyday lives to the same power that allows for remote viewing, painless surgery, and future premonition–that making a bad legal decision operates according to the same principles as men transferring their thoughts and ignoring their pain. The vitalist framework that this suggests, however–in which men and women are bound up together in the connectivity of shared mesmeric fluids–is very much in keeping with Thackeray's general depictions as to the entanglements of human society.

Images of webs, tangles, and strings pervade *Vanity Fair*, and with Thackeray's narrator all but endorsing a vitalist paradigm, it is easy business to read them mesmerically. This chapter is written with the assumption that there is but little work that needs to be done insofar as establishing Thackeray's familiarity with or interest in mesmerism. Rather, it attends to two aspects of *Vanity Fair* that take on different dimensions when looked at in relation to the mesmeric model cited within it. The first is the novel's beguiling, inconsistent, and paradoxically embodied and disembodied narrator, who glides through the text and into the bedrooms of young women only to make himself manifest as a flesh-and-blood theatergoer. The second is Becky Sharp, the foremost player in Thackeray's "puppet show" who is continually ensnaring, fascinating, and then losing her grip on a parade of men. In the case of the former, I wish to make the case that the narrator conforms to the behaviors of vitalist fluid, acting as a slippery and diffuse agent that attaches itself to points of emotion and sentiment; in the case of the latter, Becky does not act in a manner consistent with a mesmerist, as one might assume a woman of her manipulative talents to be. Rather, I argue that what lends Becky her power in the text is her ability to evade and resist entanglement, both in the form of Thackeray's probing narrator and in the form of external human influence. Despite being at the

interstices of so many strings and webs, Becky is a creature whose power rests in observing, avoiding, and severing attachments.

From here, I argue that Becky not only resists the snares of the narrator and setting herself, but that she is instrumental in diffusing the powers of the one character explicitly connected with mesmerism above: George Osborne. George, whose presence drives Dobbin to act against his own interest, is felt throughout the novel following his untimely demise, with his widow spending her days in ignorant worship of him, his son taking on his name and features, and his portrait commanding a presence as though it were a living thing. It is only when Becky interjects herself into Amelia's misplaced mourning and reveals George's imperfections that his "ghost" as it were, is laid to rest. In turning over a letter that speaks to George's attempted infidelity, she both nullifies the hold of the text's named mesmerist upon those around him, but also establishes herself as having possessed information the mesmerically inflected narrator does not. Her own production of (never explicitly quoted) text, is what upends Amelia's griefs, so carefully delineated and explored by *Vanity Fair*, and allows her to move beyond them. Becky, who has evaded the reach of what I will argue is a mesmerically inflected and continually performing narrator throughout the text, exits the novel on a counter-mesmeric note, functioning as the skeptic who deflates a supernatural humbug.

Magnetic Soirees and Moonlight Narrators

The "Alexis" to whom Thackeray gives mention in his rundown of mesmerism's effects is almost certainly Alexis Didier, a Parisian clerk who toured Europe with his mesmerist/manager J. B. Marcillet (Winter 143-4).[6] During their demonstrations, Alexis would be placed under Marcillet's magnetic influence and would thereafter be blindfolded. He would then be asked to identify covered objects, to read books and letters via touch, and to describe locations distant and unfamiliar to him. In a series of accounts concerning Alexis in *The Zoist*, a recurring aspect of his performances was being placed "*en rapport"* with an observer and then successfully being able to describe a location familiar to them or to recount an event significant to them. Notable episodes include him describing to a woman her country house and the particulars of a child's bedroom within it (500), relating the particulars of soldiers' old war wounds and how they got them (494-5), and being able to identify an unseen object as a piece of bone taken from the querant's injured leg (509). Throughout accounts of him, the general pattern of Alexis' responses is to move from the general ("water near a house," "a hard substance") to the specific (a painting of the Virgin Mary in a rouge fonce papered room; a bone separated and cut, so as to leave a flat side), with a number of developing inferences in between.

While a modern observer can easily recognize the technique of cold reading at play—in which psychic performers use broad guesswork to narrow in on details applicable to their audience–those offering accounts seem set to take Alexis' inevitable errors and incorrect guesses as lending him an additional authenticity. An editorial regarding Alexis in *The Critic* attests "these occasional failures give the best assurance of

[6] Thackeray describes his "Alexis" as though Elliotson is his mesmerist rather than; however, the phenomena he describes him performing roughly matches with accounts of Alexis' demonstrations, and Alexis did perform with Elliotson present during the summer of 1844 (Symes 293).

the reality of those which succeeded. Had there been imposture or collusion, there would have been no such failure, for he could have accomplished these experiments as easily as the others" (407-8). Another aspect of Alexis' readings that left an impression on observers was his ability to move beyond the anticipated trajectory of demonstrations. In one instance, Alexis is purported to have been able to identify a former soldier's injuries from dog bite in the midst of being asked to pinpoint old battle wounds (495); in another, he was able to identify the original sender of a nosegay which had been gifted him by a man who had been delivering it under a lady's instructions (515). At one point, in a session during which he read books blindfolded, he is reported to have moved his sight beneath the page he was touching to read one below it and from there to clasp a section of pages between his hands that he might scan them for an engraving (505). The track of Alexis' mesmeric "vision" is error prone and meandering. It offers its audience only a gradually unfolding picture, and it often skips off the beaten track to linger on some hitherto unmentioned detail or to trace an unasked-for path. Alexis himself remarks on this quality of his powers at one point, noting to a querant asking after his home in Lincolnshire "I am with you: but this house is too large for me to describe. Let us fix on some of its rooms" (502).

This process–of guessing, lingering, departing along tangents–is not so different from Thackeray's narration. Long noted for his "slipperiness," the inconsistencies of *Vanity Fair's* narrator have been a point of bafflement and contention among critics, and Thackeray's last-minute improvisations in drafting the text are well established. John Sutherland, in describing Thackeray's composition process, claims that "when he is writing at his best [his] narrative fizzes on the page as he enlarges, refines, or complicates

what he was about to say" (11). John A. Lester, in describing Thackeray's narrative habits, describes his work as "a singular attitude towards time" (393), noting his penchant for "redoubling" his chronology and suddenly shifting back in time only to work back up to the original point (394). Thackeray himself goes so far, in Chapter 25, to explicitly describe the temporal shifts to which he intends to subject his audience, explaining:

> Our history is destined in this chapter to go backwards and forwards in a very irresolute manner seemingly, and having conducted our story to to-morrow presently, we shall immediately again have occasion to step back to yesterday, so that the whole of the tale may get a hearing (246).

James Wheatley argues that it is this "panoramic" view of life enlarges and enables our sympathies, but he notes that it is also "disturbingly external"– that it creates a picture of the world "free from illusions" but does so in a way that cannot get at any deeper meaning hidden beneath things' self-evident forms (92). There is something that still needs to be supplied even as we are exposed to what presents itself as a whole. Thackeray, in the same fashion as Alexis, gives us images and situations not-quite-developed–the shapes of things not in focus and unmoored in time until some addition is given to them.[7]

In addition to his unstable relationship to time and chronology, *Vanity Fair's* narrator claims for himself both omniscience and limitation, flitting between embodiment and disembodiment. At various points in the novel, he announces himself as a person

[7] I would compare this reading to that of Nicholas Dames, who claims that Thackeray's narration enables a reading style in keeping with Victorian notions of attention as a limited resource "a wave-like, in-and-out temporally restricted capacity that, if stretched beyond small boundaries, ceases to become attention at all and instead becomes distraction" (82). The deft juggling of plot after plot and tangent after tangent allows us a vast and encompassing view, but—if we are to draw a comparison to mesmeric performance—also enables something of a slight of hand: a means to draw attention away from the incongruities of our narrator. One might also bring Dames' discussion of attention to bear on later concerns of actual mesmeric telepathy, when we delve into the topic in the next chapter with a painfully distracted psychic.

inhabiting the same world as his principals. He describes the encounters of his childhood (417), mentions his personal experiences at Vauxhall (56), and recounts how he surveyed the field at Waterloo (272)–all before the famous instant in Chapter 62 in which he claims to have seen Amelia Osborne crying at a performance of *Fidelio* and tells us that "I suppose it was because it was predestined that I was to write this particular lady's memoirs that I remarked her" (623). Elsewhere in the text, however, he presents himself as disembodied and clairvoyant. He claims special knowledge of Amelia's bedchamber and the contents of her letters, which he gleans through "the omniscience of the novelist" (158). In Chapter 12, he describes his powers thus, shifting character and shape as he describes his sleeping (non)heroine:

> I know where she kept that packet she had–and can steal in and out of her chamber like Iachimo–like Iachimo? No–that is a bad part. I will only act Moonshine, and peep harmless into the bed where faith and beauty and innocence lie dreaming (122).

It is easy business to brand Thackeray's narrator as unreliable at this juncture, or–if not then–than at the point following the *Fidelio* performance in which he confesses that his knowledge of the Crawleys originated with a lengthy mealtime conversation with a diplomat named Tapeworm (623-4). In 2015, Ryan Francis Murphy made the case that unreliability–in fact–works in the service of Thackeray's satirical narrative, and that a humbug is the most fitting creature to guide us through the landscape of *Vanity Fair* (38).

If, however, we accept the proposition that *Vanity Fair* takes place in a world rife with the "magnetism of friendships," might we not consider the narrator as having some claim on similar powers? In the passage quoted above, he asserts that he takes on the

attributes of Moonshine–of light. If we read the passage in relation to other Shakespearean plays, we can also see him shift into another type of performer–the Moonshine of *Midsummer Night's Dream:* an invented character for a play-within-a-play, based on traditional pareidolic images men attribute to the shadows on the lunar surface. He moves from being an embodied actor affecting the scene to being something as insubstantial and unthreatening as moonbeams.[8] If one wishes to regard him still in his capacity as performer, he has nevertheless taken on a role as abstracted and removed from immediate events as Robin Starveling's much-ridiculed moon. While we can follow Murphy and decide that this is a farce–that no transformation occurs and no bedroom is looked upon, Thackeray introduces *Vanity Fair* as a performance and provides us with the very type of performer who could lay claim to the roles of both actor and omniscient. If *Vanity Fair does* operate according to magnetic principles, there is no reason that the narrator might not be an Alexis himself. The magnetism Thackeray cites, regardless of its validity, is wrapped up in showmanship, and *Vanity Fair*, from the onset, is presented to us as a performance.

Throughout the novel then, we are led back and forth through time and in and out of private chambers by a character who claims the "omniscience of the novelist" despite showing himself to be an embodied man chasing after diplomats' gossip. If we accept his suggestion that the world of *Vanity Fair* is a magnetic one, none of these features are contradictions. A mesmerist, as we are told, may "[see] miles off and [look] into next week" (222). He might read a book through his fingers and out of order. He may also

[8] It is also worth noting that moonlight, which has been thought to have a psychical influence on the minds of men since as far as the term "lunacy" has been in play, was cited as being a particularly good conduit of mesmeric energies according to some vitalist theorists of the mid nineteenth century. Baron Karl von Reichenbach, who championed the idea of "Od" energy as an explanation of various psychical phenomena, wrote about both the purported "odylic" properties of moonlight and his experiments regarding them in his 1845 *Researches on Magnetism and on Certain Allied Subjects* (52-5).

have an "omniscience" that is incomplete, that comes into focus gradually, or that requires the input of another party; like Alexis, he may tread the line between presenting as an enlightened clairvoyant, a practiced performer, and a socially skilled fraud. Thackeray's own personal correspondence regarding Elliotson speaks to the notion that mesmerism belongs to the same sphere as performances and parties. In an undated letter to Mrs. George Warburton, he writes in the postscript "I am going afterwards to a mesmerizing soiree at Elliotsons tonight: and afterwards to a party where I *must* try & show. If after all those there is time for Rutland Gate I shall 'make an effort'" (Harden 2: 1328). It may well have been Thackeray's belief that mesmerism was a valid scientific and medical phenomenon, but in his day-to-day experiences, it was a cause for "soirees" –a social occasion that might be wedged between visits to be wished for and parties to be endured.

The Hand and the Eye

In addition to the unique fluidity and statesmanship of its narrator, *Vanity Fair* trades in other imagery that conforms to a vitalist model of society. While early nineteenth-century mesmerism does not always match with the modern conception of a mesmerist controlling their subjects through the power of their gaze,[9] the eyes were nevertheless thought to be one way that vital energies could be transferred and directed (Binet and Féré 10, Townshend 285). *Vanity Fair*–with its focus on social maneuvering

[9] As I alluded to in the Introduction and will discuss in more detail later, one of the predominant forms of "magnetizing" a subject was to make "passes" over them with one's hands or with a magnetized object. However, the notion that the gaze holds the power to exert psychological control over another dates back to beliefs in the evil eye.

and flirtation–is rife with descriptions of glances and "fascinations."[10] There is a continual mention as to what Amelia and Becky's eyes are doing from scene to scene–be they downcast, sparkling, or evasive–and at one point mention is made of the "telegraphic communication of eyes" (131) among the women of the Osborne household. In the pandemonium of the Vanity Fair–in which so many sentiments never achieve direct expression–the way one directs a glance has a force of its own. Becky, in particular, has a gaze that seems to carry some element of the otherworldly. At one point, her oft remarked upon eyes seem to function in terms of a light or fluid. In Chapter 25, as she looks out upon the moonlit sea by Brighton, we are told "her bright green eyes streamed out, and shot into the night as if they could see through it" (248). Later, they are mentioned as having "shot out gleams of scornful humour" (378). There is a sense that her gaze can project itself here, that there is something about it that has a reach beyond her.

Additionally, while Thackeray is hardly the first author to depict social relationships in terms of threads, tangles, and knots (nor will he be the last); nevertheless, in a story framed as a puppet show, it seems a worthwhile endeavor to follow the lines of strings. When Becky manages to catch Jos Sedley in her knitting, "his arms stretched out before her in an imploring attitude, and his hands bound in a web of green silk" (36) it is clear to readers that his heart as well as his hands are entangled. Men are tied to women

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[10] One of the earliest conceptions of "fascination" was a medical phenomenon hypothesized by Marcilo Ficino some three centuries before mesmerism; it holds that individuals project rarified blood vapors from their eyes and thereby "infect" another human being with thoughts of them). While the term was certainly used to refer to a more general quality of being captivating by the nineteenth century, it still would have held some connotations of entrancement and spellcraft ("fascination, n.").

It is interesting to note that *Vanity Fair's* narrator, in a fashion similar to his brisk tease at mesmeric friendship, assures us that the power to fascinate is not limited to a single gender, indicating that "bearded creatures are quite as eager for praise, quite as finikin over their toilettes, quite as proud of their personal advantages, quite as conscious of their powers of fascination, as any coquette in the world" (22).

throughout *Vanity Fair* by any number of figurative strings, often ones that evoke domesticity and maternity. George's sisters assume him to be "at Miss Sedley's apron-strings" and Thackeray's narrator assures us later that Rawdon is similarly attached as "an honest Hercules at the apron-strings of Omphale" (162); Jos is mentioned as being tethered to "other leading-strings" during his final appearance (679). In the lead up to Becky's fall from grace as regards Lord Steyne, her perceived social climbing is described in terms of a spider:

> And so–guiltless very likely–she was writhing and pushing onward towards what they call "a position in society," and the servants were pointing at her as lost and ruined. So you see Molly, the housemaid, of a morning, watching a spider in the doorpost lay his thread and laboriously crawl up it, until, tired of the sport, she raises her broom and sweeps away the thread and the artificer (445).

Influence in *Vanity Fair*–especially in relation to women–is depicted not only through the palpable force of the eyes, but in terms of ties and webs, and there is throughout these metaphors a sense that these links may be proven absolutely binding and completely insubstantial by turns. The world of *Vanity Fair* is interlaced with eye beams and strings and sets up a model of human influence in which both Becky's green gaze and green knitting have the potential to capture a man. These systems also neatly mesh with the claims of one of mesmerism's major defenders in the 1840s–the Reverend Chauncey Townshend–who states that "The subsidiary agents, which have been found most efficacious in aiding one person to influence another in the manner called mesmeric, are the eye and the hand" (235). At the peak of Becky's social ascent, these seem very much

to be the instruments of her power; we are told: “How her eyes beamed upon all of them! Her hand used to quiver and wave gracefully as they passed” (380).

And yet, Becky–our slipping spider–is not so adept at catching her prey. Jos escapes that initial entanglement. She secures Rawdon at the loss of his father and inheritance, tying herself to a husband who habitually bungles their chances at fortune and gambles away what they have. Whatever relationship she is building with Lord Steyne is undone with the immediacy of a broom’s sweep. While she eventually comes to reacquaint herself with Jos and re-enchant him, the majority of her endeavors to fascinate and bind men to her advantage meet with failure. I would propose that what makes Rebecca Sharp remarkable amidst the tangles and webs of *Vanity Fair* is not her ability to fascinate others but her ability to remain unfascinated. If we read a magnetism into the social relationships Thackeray depicts, Becky is perhaps the character who least seems to carry another’s charge. Whatever secret mesmerism of friendship might exist here, it certainly never compels her to act against her own interests–in gestures, in glances, and in action, Becky’s story repeatedly shows her inability or even her refusal to be subject to the influence of others.

To turn back to Becky’s eyes, it is worth noting how seldom they meet with another’s gaze. In Chapter 3, Becky deliberately avoids meeting Jos’s gaze during their first meeting.

> She had previously made a respectful virgin-like curtsey to the gentleman, and her modest eyes gazed so perseveringly on the carpet that it was a wonder how she should have found an opportunity to see him.

> "Thank you for the beautiful shawls, brother," said Amelia to the fire poker. "Are they not beautiful, Rebecca?"
>
> "O heavenly!" said Miss Sharp, and her eyes went from the carpet straight to the chandelier (18).

She repeats the gesture regarding Jos a chapter later when he arrives with flowers, "[holding] them to her bosom, and [casting] up her eyes to the ceiling, in an ecstasy of admiration," although Thackeray notes for us that "Perhaps she just looked first into the bouquet, to see whether there was a billet-doux hidden among the flowers; but there was no letter" (35), an instant foreshadowing the crucial episode in which George Osborne *does* provide her with both a nosegay and note (290). Elsewhere her eyes are downcast upon confessing that an attachment keeps her from Lord Crawley (153) they are covered with a handkerchief when she has an occasion after her marriage to address Jos (307); they look to the floor when trying to impress Lady Grizzel (504). Whatever beams Becky's eyes may shoot out, her gaze is one whose power is also in its evasiveness–in being able to avoid eye contact and direct her attention to pragmatic concerns. While the beams, glances, and rays of her eyes land on others, she is never mentioned as making deliberate and targeted eye contact. While Amelia, at one point, certainly imagines "Rebecca's twinkling green eyes and baleful smile" as a threat (262), this is a gaze born of her imagination.[11] Becky is only shown to deliberately direct her eyes towards the night sky. In Chapter 11, she takes a moment to exclaim upon it: "O those stars, those stars!" Miss Rebecca would say, turning her twinkling green eyes up towards them. "I feel myself almost a spirit when I gaze upon them" (114) There is perhaps something Becky holds in common with our narrator made of moonlight. If we count her in some

[11] As we will see later, it is not the only one.

fashion mesmeric, her affinity seems to be not for ensorcellment but for insight–reading the web of Vanity Fair and the follies of its inhabitant as though at a distance.

As for Becky's hands, Peter J. Capuano has done thorough work in discussing how they act as a site of power and control, with Thackeray attributing to them qualities of authority that "other Victorian novelists attributed [...] only to men" (168). He unpacks, for example, how Becky deploys a quick squeeze of Jos' hand in the course of her pursuit of him and how this ambiguous gesture fits within the parameters of sexually aggressive behavior permitted to women of her era (169). He also discusses at length a moment in Chapter 14, in which George Osborne attempts to shake Becky's hand during their introduction:

> He would even shake hands with her, as a friend of Amelia's; and saying, "Ah, Miss Sharp! how-dy-doo?" held out his left hand towards her, expecting that she would be quite confounded at the honour.
>
> Miss Sharp put out her right forefinger, and gave him a little nod, so cool and killing, that Rawdon Crawley, watching the operations from the other room, could hardly restrain his laughter as he saw the Lieutenant's entire discomfiture; the start he gave, the pause, and the perfect clumsiness with which he at length condescended to take the finger which was offered for his embrace (147-8).

Capuano, looking to etiquette texts of the era, discusses the power play implicit in George rudely extending his left hand only to find himself "routed" by Becky's refusal to engage (174), and–like other critics commenting on Thackeray's illustrations to accompany *Vanity Fair*, notes the stiff posture and awkward positioning of George as he is presented in the illustration (*fig. 1*).

fig. 1, Thackeray's illustration of Becky "routing" George

What I wish to draw attention to, however, is that this "rout" in its arrangement of bodies also bears similarity to archetypal early nineteenth-century poses between mesmerists and their subjects. From the late 1700s on, there was a common depiction of seated female subjects being magnetized by standing male operators, their hands outspread as they directed magnetic energies via "passes." George, the character implicitly acknowledged as a mesmerist by *Vanity Fair,* has his hands arrayed in a fashion that might suggest this sort of control were they still outstretched. Their positioning is similar to the (now) iconic

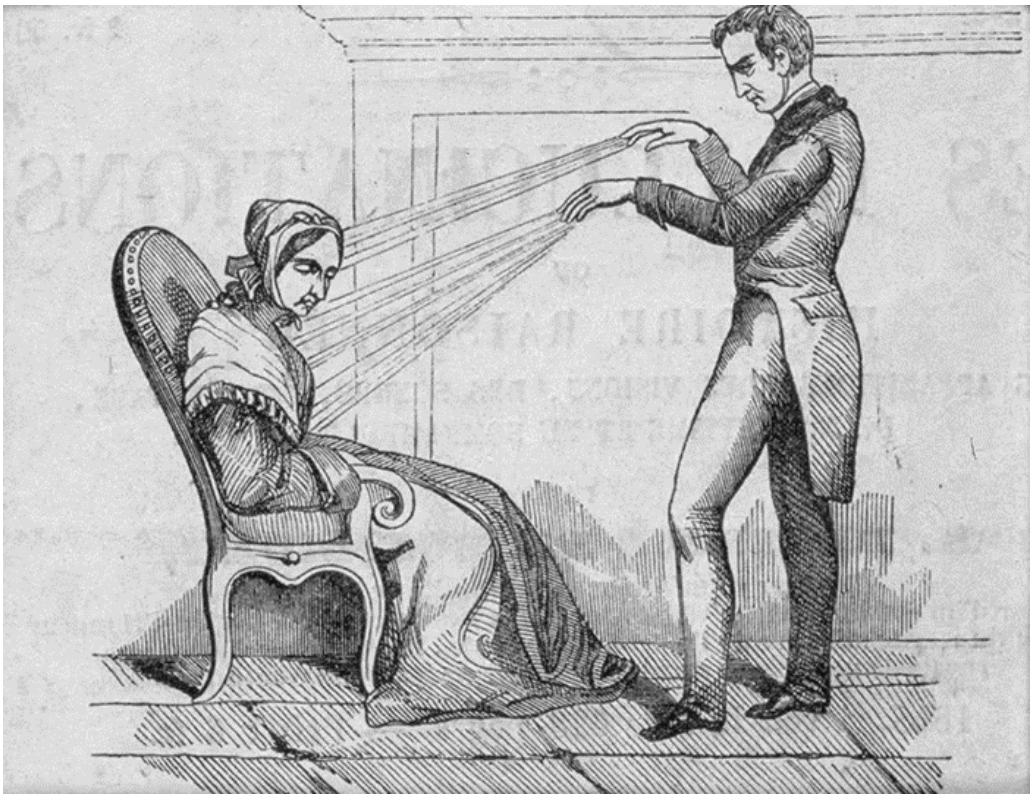

fig. 2, A mesmerist using animal magnetism on a seated female patient. Wood engraving, ca. 1845 (Wellcome Library).

image of Mesmer that accompanies Ebenezer Sibly's 1795 *The Key to Physic* and is in keeping with the general genre of mesmerism illustrations, including at least one

contemporaneous with *Vanity Fair's* writing, which was circulated in French newspapers to advertise A. Brierre de Boismont's 1845 work *Des hallucinations, ou, Histoire raisonnée des apparitions.* With Becky and George, however, the would be subject is alert and the would-be mesmerist's hands have fallen. While it is doubtful that Thackeray, even as familiar with magnetism as he seemed to be, intended the illustration to be read as a botched mesmerism attempt, the botched etiquette in at play traces the logic of a magnetic encounter. George attempts to assert his influence/power in relation

fig. 3, from Ebenezer Sibly's The Key to Physic, 1795.

to Becky by extending a hand, and Becky immediately disrupts him, altering the nature of the physical connection between their bodies and the tenor of the introduction taking

place. For a woman described as a doll or puppet, the gesture is one that threatens to cut across a row of strings. Once again, Becky triumphs not by the direction of her own powers, but through misdirection and evasion.

In addition to her evasive glances and disruptive gestures as regards other characters, Becky is unique in her ability to evade the ever probing performances of the Narrator. Numerous turns in her story are revealed to us as surprises and shocks. Her marriage to Rawdon is revealed only upon the elder Crawley's proposal. Her reappearance at Pumpernickel is as surprising to us as it is to Amelia, Jos, and Dobbin. Elsewhere, moments of crucial significance in her story are never directly described; the particulars of her entanglement with Lord Steyne are never laid bare before us; her involvement or lack thereof in Jos's death is never made explicit. The Narrator does tease that he should have some access to Becky's interiority in Chapter 15, stating:

> If, a few pages back, the present writer claimed the privilege of peeping into Miss Amelia Sedley's bedroom, and understanding with the omniscience of the novelist all the gentle pains and passions which were tossing upon that innocent pillow, why should he not declare himself to be Rebecca's confidante too, master of her secrets, and seal-keeper of that young woman's conscience? (158)

However, this is a question he does not answer, and the remarks that follow, regarding Becky's reaction to Pitt Crawley's proposal, hardly seem to be penetrating observations as to Becky's inner psyche, even if the narrator is overtly claiming omniscience. They are a tongue-in-cheek description of the most basic motions of her sentiment, followed by yet another string of questions in want of an answer:

> Well, then, in the first place, Rebecca gave way to some very sincere and touching regrets that a piece of marvellous good fortune should have been so near her, and she actually obliged to decline it. In this natural emotion every properly regulated mind will certainly share. What good mother is there that would not commiserate a penniless spinster, who might have been my lady, and have shared four thousand a year? What well-bred young person is there in all Vanity Fair, who will not feel for a hard-working, ingenious, meritorious girl, who gets such an honourable, advantageous, provoking offer, just at the very moment when it is out of her power to accept it? (158)

The narrator goes even further by diverting us through an overview of his own experiences in "the Fair" smoothing over the fact that he has barely told us anything probing about Rebecca Sharp at all and has–in fact–asked that we bring our own rationale and experience to the table in trying to understand her motivations. A few pages later, he finally returns us to the topic of Becky's feelings, stating:

> But Rebecca was a young lady of too much resolution and energy of character to permit herself much useless and unseemly sorrow for the irrevocable past; so, having devoted only the proper portion of regret to it, she wisely turned her whole attention towards the future, which was now vastly more important to her (159).

Rebecca's interiority is hardly on display here. The emotional moment that the narrator claims privileged access to is never named and measured. The "sincere and touching regrets" are hinted at only through rhetorical question and personal anecdote, and their intensity and depth are only described as a "proper portion." Unlike Amelia's love for George–which is explicitly named and described in terms of the frequency of her

thoughts, the rate of her heartbeat, and the regulation of her mind–the specifics of Becky's regrets elude us. Just as she evades the other men of Vanity Fair through misdirected glances and subversive gestures, Becky redirects her thoughts before the Narrator might dwell on them.

The redirection of thought, in fact, is a technique that Becky explicitly uses to thwart one of the novel's brushes with the supernatural Gothic–one of the scenes in this decidedly non-Gothic novel. Upon Becky's arrival as a governess at Queen's Crawley, she meets with a situation not that far removed from ones experienced by other literary governesses traipsing about unfamiliar estates circa 1847. Her bed chamber is described as being "so funereal and gloomy, you might have fancied, not only that Lady Crawley died in the room, but that her ghost inhabited it" (71). Later that night, as she composes herself to sleep, we are told:

> The mantelpiece cast up a great black shadow, over half of a mouldy old sampler, which her defunct ladyship had worked, no doubt, and over two little family pictures of young lads, one in a college gown, and the other in a red jacket like a soldier. When she went to sleep, Rebecca chose that one to dream about (72).

This instant is noteworthy for its parody of the Gothic, in which it establishes Becky's pragmatism as trumping the possibility of a traditional ghost story. However, it also suggests that, within a world operating according to magnetic principles, Becky Sharp is able to decide what influences enter her mind. She can assess the presences at play in her room and determine which penetrates her thoughts, rejecting an impression of the ominous sampler in favor of the appealing young soldier. Lady Crawley's spirit cannot pierce the thoughts of her would be successor, and the threat of the Gothic–like poor

George's handshake–is routed by Becky's subversion of the scene. Beyond this, Becky is *also* ascribed the power to decide which images *may* influence her, and her decision to focus on the man in military garb is suggestive of her eventual aims on Rawdon. Unlike the Narrator's failed attempts at claiming confidence and George's failed attempts at exerting social power, there is a sense here that a man may leave some impression upon Becky if she invites him to do so. In this case, Rawdon does not even have the substantiality of a character introduced to us. Becky only yields to a man when he is one of her own imagining.

This emphasis on Becky's *evasion* of others' influence is not quite what one might expect of a ruthless social climber casting about her glances. If we accept the premise of a magnetic *Vanity Fair*, it seems intuitive to conceive of Becky as the foremost mesmerist within the novel's cast of characters. Still, again and again what makes Becky stand out is not her adroitness at forging social connections but her skill at ignoring or severing them. Failing for much of the novel to secure the relationships she desires, she is nevertheless a force within the Fair owing to her resiliency–her ability to rebound from disappointment and avoid falling thrall to anybody else's influence. Her power rests in that she remains–even to our narrator–something of a cipher: a woman who can interrupt and restructure the rules of the world and the text that enclose her. This talent of hers, in fact, proves instrumental in combating the influence of the one near-to-acknowledged mesmerist within the text: George Osborne. Not only does she confound his handshake and resist his advances, but she ruins the power his memory holds over his widow, producing in the final hour a piece of evidentiary text that the narrator himself

has never mentioned and cannot read out for it. Insofar as the novel *does* contain something like a ghost story, Rebecca Sharp operates as its exorcist.

Gazes and Ghosts

In reading *Vanity Fair* in relation to magnetism, it behooves us to take the narrator's queries and suggestions regarding George Osborne and William Dobbin in earnest. *What is the secret mesmerism which friendship possesses?* What, in particular, is the mesmerism possessed by George Osborne? While the opening of Chapter 26 seems primarily concerned with establishing Dobbin's selflessness, it also implies that George, in securing his friend's assistance, has placed him under some manner of magnetic spell– albeit one that is common to cast. If there is some magnetic quality about George Osborne that draws others to abandon their self-interests, however, it finds its expression most forcefully with a character other than Dobbin. Even more so than George is able to compel Dobbin to act against his own interests in the pursuit of Amelia Sedley, he is able to ensorcel Amelia herself to the extent that death itself proves no barrier to his influence. The power his memory holds over his widow commands her obedience just as securely as a flesh and blood husband, and he persists in the text both in the visage of his son and the eyes of his portrait. The magnetism he wields once he is removed from the action of the narrative becomes the stuff of seances rather than soirees; in a text that resists the gothic, he manages to become a ghost.

Like Dobbin, Amelia is of a complying disposition, being described as a "soft and gentle creature [who takes] her opinions from those people who surround her" (263). While George is able to draw Dobbin's loyalty through some magnetic force of

personality, his power over Amelia is even more absolute. Unlike Becky, who is able to direct her dreams as she will, Amelia's thoughts are invaded by George from the moment of their first meeting, with considerations of all other male figures invariably leading back to him and his virtues:

> She thought about him the very first moment on waking; and his was the very last name mentioned in her prayers. She never had seen a man so beautiful or so clever: such a figure on horseback: such a dancer: such a hero in general. Talk of the Prince's bow! what was it to George's? She had seen Mr. Brummell, whom everybody praised so. Compare such a person as that to her George! (121-2)

Later, after several careworn nights, Amelia revives in an instant within her love object's presence, ("The little cares, fears, tears, timid misgivings, sleepless fancies of I don't know how many days and nights, were forgotten, under one moment's influence of that familiar, irresistible smile" (127)). She becomes subject to hypersensitivity and presentiment, taking the ringing of the claret bell as an omen (133). Her passions are described as "loving wrongly, too violently, against reason" (181). All these descriptions–while certainly not atypical in their depiction of love and infatuation–emphasize the disproportion between the actions George undertakes and the extent of their influence. Unlike Becky, who rejects George's expectation that she be "quite confounded at the honour" of an extended hand, Amelia is "quite confounded" by every gesture, glance, and word George has to offer. Just as Thackeray's narration highlights for us the extent to which George's presence could make Dobbin abandon his own interests, it underscores at every moment the degree to which it makes Amelia seem to abandon reason. The fervor of Amelia's entrancement–with its overthrow of the senses,

hyperresponsiveness to stimuli, and general altered consciousness–carries with it something of the trance.

George, however, only truly comes into his own as a mesmerist once he is deceased, when he moves from being a source of frenzied reverie to weigh upon Amelia's memory and affections. This dynamic, in which Amelia still maintains a tie to an absent partner, has its early moment of foreshadowing with the collapse the Sedley family fortune and the order that Amelia and George sever their attachment, where Amelia's grief at the upset is compared to a mother still trying to retain the fluid connection to a dead infant:

> That effort was too much for her; she placed them back in her bosom again–as you have seen a woman nurse a child that is dead. Young Amelia felt that she would die or lose her senses outright, if torn away from this last consolation (182).

George himself is not yet dead, of course, but we have here established the image of a woman seeking consolation by her refusal to let go of an entanglement–to morbidly prolong a relationship that should be dead. This moment–in which the figurative mother seeks out the sensations of nursing an absent infant–is in step with Amelia's idolization of George, where she feels the force of affections that may not be present and reads warmth and attentiveness into his letters regardless of their content. Despite its parodic rejection of the Gothic, *Vanity Fair* sets us up with its own logic for the ghostly–not only in terms of the fantastical and gothic, but in terms of the everyday, mundane connections human beings develop. In this world of tangles and entanglements, the absent still exert a

pull. In knitting and in webs, a gap exerts its tension on the surrounding threads as surely as a knot.

Once he dies at Waterloo, George's hold on Amelia does not cease. It intensifies in ways that mesh with the novel's flirtations with the mesmeric and with the gothic. For Amelia, George's visage remains as a portrait hung in his widow's home, exerting the exact sort of influence upon her that the articles at the Crawley manor failed to exert on Becky. While George as a living man found his gesturing routed and his eyebeams unentangled, once dead, he is noted for his unrelenting gaze. Early on, during one of her earlier contemplations of remarrying, we are told that "But George's picture and dearest memory are there to rebuke her" (492). As the novel winds down, Amelia's rejections of Dobbin's suit are connected to the eyes of her former husband, peering out at her from his picture:

> She paced the room, trembling and indignant. She went and leaned on the chest of drawers over which the picture hung, and gazed and gazed at it. Its eyes seemed to look down on her with a reproach that deepened as she looked. The early dear, dear memories of that brief prime of love rushed back upon her. The wound which years had scarcely cicatrized bled afresh, and oh, how bitterly! She could not bear the reproaches of the husband there before her. It couldn't be. Never, never (665).

What's more, George has a gaze that multiplies itself, re-emerging both in the features of his son and in the additional portrait young George creates of himself. Little George, much as the imagined dead infant of earlier chapters, becomes a conduit through which a mother hopes to reach something lost:

> The elder George returned in him somehow, only improved, and as if come back from heaven. In a hundred little tones, looks, and movements, the child was so like his father that the widow's heart thrilled as she held him to it; and he would often ask the cause of her tears. It was because of his likeness to his father, she did not scruple to tell him (388).

Just as Amelia's initial infatuation multiplied George's virtues, her grief transforms him into new images and living forms. For a man who dies halfway through the text, Thackeray's named mesmerist is overabundantly present as the narrative progresses. He is a constant weight upon the memory of his wife and father; a specter living in the features of his son. He exists throughout the story as a lacuna–a gap in the social fabric of *Vanity Fair* and its presumed magnetic underpinnings. The image of George–both in his painted image and his son–serves to reaffirm the hold he has over his wife, replicating earlier scenes of maternal grief and affecting portraiture.

Beyond his replication in children and paintings, of course, George is also given his afterlife through the machinations of the narrator, who is not only happy to continue in his claims to the inner tremblings of Amelia's breast, but who explicitly names himself as a creator of ghosts. In Chapter 51, he reveals himself once more as an embodied agent, describing his past dining experiences in terms befitting a seance:

> Ladies, are you aware that the great Pitt lived in Baker Street? What would not your grandmothers have given to be asked to Lady Hester's parties in that now decayed mansion? I have dined in it–*moi qui vous parle,* I peopled the chamber with ghosts of the mighty dead. As we sat soberly drinking claret there with men

> of to-day, the spirits of the departed came in and took their places round the darksome board (500-1).

Again, we see the narrator intermingling the supernatural and the social, with the same ease as Thackeray himself jaunting between parties and magnetic "soirees." This knack for summoning the dead carries over to the narrator's treatment of Amelia, whom he marks out as being central to his narrative. While *Vanity Fair* is an ostensibly heroless novel, the foremost character the narrator seizes upon repeatedly as "not a heroine" is foremost in the discussion of the work's creation. Throughout all of his asides acknowledging his embodiment, he reveals himself most directly when he claims himself a man destined to write *Amelia's* memoirs; he specifies *her* as his topic. Amelia's thoughts are seldom veiled in the same fashion that Becky's are, and our narrator, through them, reinserts George's specter again and again into the text. In moments of free indirect discourse and sudden lapses into present tense, Amelia's idolization of George is given the shade of reality. The reader is told of George that "From heaven the hero must be smiling down upon that paragon of a boy whom he had left to comfort and console her;" (459) they are assured too that should Amelia die after surrendering little George to his grandfather "she would go to George, and they would watch over the child and wait for him until he came to them in Heaven" (493). The narrator, who only glances across the surface of Becky's motivations, presents the beatified George to us with the immediacy of a party still living.

What Becky accomplishes at the novel's conclusion–by producing George's letter, revealing his attempted infidelity, and liberating Amelia to marry Dobbin–is an act that thwarts both the ghostly George and our beguiling narrator. The revelation dissipates

the image of George Amelia has been worshiping–once more defusing the power of portraiture–and it also provides for us a text that the narrator has not presented and cannot claim as having read. This is in contrast to the narrator's prior assertions as to Amelia's letters; he states in Chapter 12:

> [W]ere Miss Sedley's letters to Mr. Osborne to be published, we should have to extend this novel to such a multiplicity of volumes as not the most sentimental reader could support; that she not only filled sheets of large paper, but crossed them with the most astonishing perverseness; that she wrote whole pages out of poetry-books without the least pity; that she underlined words and passages with quite a frantic emphasis; and, in fine, gave the usual tokens of her condition. She wasn't a heroine. Her letters were full of repetition. She wrote rather doubtful grammar sometimes, and in her verses took all sorts of liberties with the metre. But oh, mesdames, if you are not allowed to touch the heart sometimes in spite of syntax, and are not to be loved until you all know the difference between trimeter and tetrameter, may all Poetry go to the deuce, and every schoolmaster perish miserably! (122-3)

It seems, of course, unlikely that Tapeworm was able to provide full documentary evidence of Amelia Sedley's private papers, if the narrator's claims about the novel's generation are to be believed. Much as Alexis might remotely probe closed books and sealed letters, our narrator gives us the image of these papers without–perhaps–all of the substance, giving us the hints of a developing picture not quite at the point of clarity. This level of detail, however, is scarcely present in the text's most important letter, which is revealed to us thus:

> "Look there, you fool," Becky said, still with provoking good humour, and taking a little paper out of her belt, she opened it and flung it into Emmy's lap. "You know his handwriting. He wrote that to me–wanted me to run away with him–gave it me under your nose, the day before he was shot–and served him right!" Becky repeated.
>
> Emmy did not hear her; she was looking at the letter. It was that which George had put into the bouquet and given to Becky on the night of the Duchess of Richmond's ball. It was as she said: the foolish young man had asked her to fly (680).

Here, the narrator gives us no description of George's syntax or grammar; he barely gives us information as to the letter's substance, deferring entirely to *Becky's* account of the document. Instead of being offered a vivid account as to its tenor and appearance by our allegedly omniscient narrator, it is *Becky* who gives us assurances as to the handwriting and the content. In doing so, she performs a trick the narrator cannot accomplish, producing a paper he cannot read out. She also alters his relationship to his non-heroine, dispelling the ghostly George that both he and Amelia have been giving shape to.

After keeping pace with her heart's flutterings and griefs for so much of the novel, the narrator's description of Amelia's reaction to the letter also suddenly retreats into the same vagaries as his claims to Becky's thoughts. We are no longer confidant to the tremblings of her breast, no image of George–fallen from angel to philanderer–appears before us. Instead, we are treated to yet another series of inconclusive questions:

> Who shall analyse those tears and say whether they were sweet or bitter? Was she most grieved because the idol of her life was tumbled down and shivered at her

> feet, or indignant that her love had been so despised, or glad because the barrier was removed which modesty had placed between her and a new, a real affection? (682)

Amelia, who has finally been instructed by Becky as to how to break the power of men and their image–recedes from the narrator's vision just as she escapes her late husband's gaze. The supernaturalized elements of the text–a named mesmerist and a would-be clairvoyant–suddenly lose their grip on the woman supposedly the subject of the novel. Becky herself, who is continually slipping from the gaze of both narrator and fellow characters alike, finally moves beyond all parties' penetration as she concludes the text having at last completed her first attempted conquest; Jos is finally entangled, although the particulars of his fate remain shrouded. In attempting to neatly shut his puppets in their box, the narrator withdraws from his claims to intimacy, having reduced his characters from fellow human beings he might meet at an opera to figures–ostensibly–under his own control.

What ought we make of this final exorcism of George Osborne and the subsequent withdrawal of the narrator? If we accept both as having elements of the mesmeric, it might seem that we end with a skeptical debunking of such powers. Becky–perhaps–might occupy the same space as the Wakelys of Elliotson's day. However, I counter that there is every room to take *Vanity Fair's* invocation of mesmerism as an earnest one; even if the majority of magnetic forces that seem to play throughout the novel end up diffused or routed. What Thackeray describes is explicitly the mesmerism of ordinary human relationships. If Alexis actually can read out the back of his head or if the narrator actually can exist as moonlight is not what is truly at stake in magnetism as

Vanity Fair presents it; the conditions of friendship that are described as magnetic (people bending against their character under the influence of others) are commonplace enough that their existence can hardly be doubted. Whether or not we theorize the late George Osborne exudes any vital rays is irrelevant; he still has a pull. Vanity Fair as a world, for all its foibles, is fundamental a space about how human beings exude, dodge, and absorb influence. What's more, Becky's culminating act is–perhaps–the strongest case one might make for the flavor of mesmerism presented to us in Chapter 27. In the presence of Amelia and her plight, she departs from type, undertaking an act of charity with no evident self-gain. Thackeray's beguiling, deceptive, continually performing narrator is not–perhaps–all that skilled a mesmerist, given how quickly he is thwarted and dispelled by her, but the wide, sweeping view of human nature he displays allows us to see the threads by which more skilled operators play.

This playful unwinding of the ties that bind together superficial high society and misplaced human sentiment offer us no immediate answers to Thackeray's teasing questions during his discussion of Elliotson and Alexis. To a modern reader, the aside regarding mesmerism may register as nothing more than an interesting tangent. Without a background in vitalist theory, the interplay of eyes and threads may not convey anything that evokes psychical forces or the faux gothic elements of the narrative. Still, the mesmerically inflected elements of this novel help to shape its portrayal of human relationships, and the figurative haunting and exorcism at its core remain familiar to us even if the theories underlying them are no longer a part of contemporary scientific discourse.

"World within World": Braid, Telepathy, and the Calibration of Sight in George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" and *Middlemarch*

In 1859, George Eliot published two very different texts that touch upon the subject of perception and human understanding. The better known of these, *Adam Bede,* was Eliot's first foray as a novelist, and it features a number of elements that eventually came to be emblematic of Eliot's realist style. Like later works, it leads the reader through various characters' points of view, leaving broad impressions of intersecting lives within a rural community. Later in 1859, Eliot also published the short novella "The Lifted Veil" in *Blackwood's Magazine.* This text–which Eliot's publisher was initially reluctant to print–has long been held by critics to be striking for its departure from Eliot's typically realist topic matter, because it delves into concerns of psychical phenomena, phrenology, and Frankensteinesque experimentation. Kate Flint observes, for instance, that it is frequently regarded as something of "a cuckoo in Eliot's literary nest" (458), and Beryl Gray–in 1982, one of the first scholars to undertake a rigorous examination of the text's origins–remarks how it had long "arouse[d] embarrassment rather than interest" (408). While scholars since have shown interest in the work for its connections to the scientific and pseudoscientific discourse that circulates in Eliot's oeuvre, the piece remains something academics regard as an oddity and exception.

In addition to handling material that has seemed atypical of Eliot's generic commitments, "The Lifted Veil" is also an anomaly with regards to its narrative style.

Outside of the 1879 *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, "The Lifted Veil" is Eliot's only work to adhere to the perspective of a single first-person narrator. The protagonist of the piece–a man whose name is only given as Latimer–speaks to the audience in anticipation of his impending demise, explaining that he has foreseen his own death owing to his powers of clairvoyance. He then goes on to relate the history of his life and how his psychic powers (which also include telepathy and remote viewing) have led to his continual disappointment with his fellow man. Latimer explains that his abilities developed shortly after a fever in his youth and that he was thereafter saddled with a knowledge of others' thoughts and futures that led him to grow disenchanted with the shallowness and banality of those around him. After being drawn to the one individual whose mind remained closed to his own–a beautiful, vain woman known as Bertha Grant–Latimer makes the decision to marry her despite having a premonition that she would grow to hate him. Their marriage proves to be an acrimonious one, and Bertha sets upon a scheme of poisoning him–which he does not notice on account of the drugs muddling his mental faculties and impairing his precognition. The plot is eventually revealed, however, when Bertha's co-conspirator, a domestic known as Mrs. Archer, dies of illness and is briefly brought back to life by the efforts of Latimer's friend Charles Meunier. Upon her revival, she gives an account of her mistress' crimes. Latimer and Bertha are then separated, leaving Latimer to live the remainder of his life in the solitude that he laments throughout his account. The text itself is framed as an appeal to the reader to let Latimer "win a little more sympathy from strangers when I am dead, than I ever believed it would obtain from my friends while I was living" (25).

As it does in its subject matter, “The Lifted Veil’s” protagonist has drawn mixed judgements from critics. Early treatments of the work characterized Latimer as “an interesting deviant” (Hardy qtd. in Kidd 38), as a fetishist to be punished and destroyed by his creator (Knoeplmacher in Kidd 38), or even as the embodiment of Eliot’s themes of unfulfillment (Rubenstein). More recently, however, Eliot’s tragic psychic has been defended as “call[ing] forth our deepest sympathy” (Kidd 37) and being worthy of our pity as a victim of Bertha in a manner similar to the plight of Lydgate when he is ensnared by Rosamond (46). This range of critical reactions is no doubt informed by the limited nature of Latimer’s account. The omniscient narrators more typical in Eliot’s work direct our gaze and implore us to feel with and for those creatures upon whom it rests–even if they are a Causabon or a Bulstrode. Latimer may only plead his own case, and it stands to reason that not all readers will judge him with the same charity. There is no narratorial intercessor to give us context as to what we are to make of him. Yet this should appear deeply ironic, given that of all of Eliot’s characters and narrators, Latimer is best equipped in his faculties to comment on others’ interior states and motives.

By virtue of his telepathy, clairvoyance, and remote vision, Latimer is a figure who *ought* to be able to accomplish what Eliot’s telescoping omniscient narrators do. He has–for most of the novella–the free access to people’s minds that we as readers may achieve through the abstractions of fiction. However, regardless of how we might feel for him, he seems unable to sympathize with or convey sympathy toward the people who surround him. His insight into the social world he inhabits is stunted, misanthropic, and limited to the point where he is unable to detect a flagrant plot by the inhabitants of his own home to murder him. The one figure in Eliot’s literary corpus who should be best

poised to understand those around him is a portrait of ignorance and loneliness, and of the many parables one might make of his sad story, one is that knowing another's mind is not enough to draw one into sympathy with their soul. Latimer's powers are clearly mesmerically inflected, but they bring to him none of the promises of spiritual fulfillment that mesmeric phenomena were often touted as having. At the end of his narrative, he leaves off writing to await his own death, not knowing if the reader will ever meet with his plea for pity. Whereas Eliot's narrators elsewhere aim to have us recognize, connect with, and feel for her characters, Latimer's account serves to underscore how removed we are from him. Even if we *are* piteously inclined towards him, the document itself serves to confirm that it is a sympathy he could never recognize or experience: both on account of the very practical considerations of his impending death and because Latimer has never been able to recognize and/or experience sympathy with anyone.

As unlike the rest of Eliot's work as "The Lifted Veil" might seem - generically, topically, and stylistically - what I would like to propose is that it is a text that might be best understood not as an outlier but as an *origin*. The narrative is fundamentally concerned with the same questions of understanding and recognition that Eliot tackles elsewhere. As strange as its conceits regarding clairvoyance and telepathy might seem, they fit an ongoing pattern through which Eliot attempts to illustrate the ways in which human beings interact through scientific metaphor. The novella's relationship to contemporary sciences has been rather thoroughly unpacked by Meegan Kennedy in her 2016 ""A True Prophet: Speculation in Sensory Physiology and George Eliot's 'The Lifted Veil.'" While modern readers might see clairvoyant visions of distant cities as a radically different from mundane undertakings such as the manipulations of microscopes

or the taxonomy of sea specimens, Eliot would have been familiar with mesmeric phenomena in much the same fashion that she was with more normative medicine and science. This chapter argues that "The Lifted Veil" inaugurates a strain in Eliot's work that explores human connectivity through natural phenomena. The fundamental logic of mesmerism in "The Lifted Veil" is in effect re-imagined and re-purposed across Eliot's other fiction, particularly in her depictions of human consciousness that rely upon metaphors of microscopy, vivisection, and natural environments. While evidence suggests Eliot herself may not have been convinced of the realities of animal magnetism, she appears to have channeled the fundamental promises of mesmerism into metaphors aligned with better-established scientific phenomena. In this redirection of mesmerism, her realism has threaded through it the apparatus of the fantastic. While the consensus has long been one that relies on a deep division between Eliot's realist literature and her "literary cuckoo," "The Lifted Veil" in fact provides a map for human interaction that guides the understanding of human community and interconnection of her later novels.

"The Lifted Veil" can bring a helpful perspective to the most central of Eliot's work, *Middlemarch.* In particular, Latimer's continually overfocused second sight, which does not enable him to form lasting bonds or find human sympathy, appears an early model for *Middlemarch's* scientific vision, especially embodied in the metaphor of the microscope.

The shift from the psychical to the scientific form of vision tracks with what would have been the paradigmatic replacement of vitalist mesmerism with the physiologically based hypnotic model set forth by Braid. Seen in this light, Latimer - whose powers are never fully explained–actually appears in step with theories of

consciousness that are more hypnotic than mesmeric in nature, even if his telepathy still seems to cleave to a largely vitalist paradigm. He is–much like his narrative itself, written in anticipation of his own death–straightjacketed by the limitations of a body born to death and decay. Eliot's later figure Tertius Lydgate might be read as a realist re-imagining of Latimer whose perpetual focus on a specific *kind* of interiority (in this case very literal anatomical insides) proves fundamental to his misapprehensions regarding society. Eliot, by reconfiguring the idea of humans interlinking via mesmeric consciousness into a portrait of mankind brought together via natural ecosystems, gives us a world in which the surroundings are familiar even as the stakes are identical to those of her fantastical gothic novella. The vitalist web envisioned by Mesmer is something Eliot builds upon to create a scientific vision of human community as biome, moving from a narrow, claustrophobic first-person form of narration to a wide-reaching and continually moving viewpoint. Just as "The Lifted Veil" proves to be fundamentally in keeping with the structures of Eliot's later realist works, her productions such as *Middlemarch* do–in fact–carry with them something fundamentally mesmeric. Eliot, after a fashion, accomplishes what Elliotson could not: recasting the promise of mesmeric human connection in the language of established science and in the approach to narrative viewpoint.

Mesmerism Through a Braidian Lens

There can be no question that Eliot was familiar with theories surrounding the various psychical phenomena that she relies upon in "The Lifted Veil." In 1852, Eliot exchanged a number of letters with phrenologist Charles Combe regarding the veracity of

animal magnetism, with Combe relating to her he had been witness to. This was the same year that she formed a friendship with Harriet Martineau, who was co-author of a text describing her belief that mesmerism had cured her chronic illness. One year later, Eliot met with John Elliotson himself. While we do not know the details of their meeting, Eliot later wrote to Cara Bray in seeming defense of Elliotson amidst an academic feud between Elliotson and physiologist William Benjamin Carpenter, remarking that Carpenter "blinks all the facts of mesmerism" (*George Eliot Letters* II, 126; Gray 412-4) As Beryl Gray has observed, Eliot also appears to have been familiar with the content of Dr. Gregory's *Letters to a Candid Inquirer on Animal Magnetism*—given that aspects of Latimer's powers seem to correspond directly to a cases outlined in Gregory's work (417-8).

Furthermore, it must be noted that Eliot invokes mesmerism in her own letters when describing an episode with notable parallels to one occurring in "The Lifted Veil." During an 1849 visit to Geneva, she writes the following about the effect of her surroundings on her nerves:

> This place looks more lovely to me every day—the lake, the town, the campagnes with their stately trees and pretty houses, the glorious mountains in the distance—one can hardly believe one's self on earth —one might live here and forget that there is such a thing as want or labour or sorrow. *The perpetual presence of all this beauty has some what the effect of mesmerism or chloroform.* I feel sometimes as if I were sinking into an agreeable state of numbness on the verge of un consciousness and seem to want well pinching to rouse me. The other day there was a Fête held on the lake—the Fête of Navigation. I went out with some

> other ladies in M. de Herder's boat at sun set and had the richest draught of beauty. [...]. The mingling of the silver with the golden rays on the rippled lake, the bright colors of the boats, the cannon, the music, the splendid fireworks, and the pale moon looking at it all with a sort of grave surprize, made up a scene of perfect enchantment [...] (*George Eliot Letters* I: 302, emphasis added).

While Latimer's reflections of boating at Geneva are of a less social and more melancholy tone, he nevertheless recounts an experience similar to Eliot's, focusing on the dreamy state of consciousness he falls into during moments of watching the light over Lake Geneva:

> My least solitary moments were those in which I pushed off in my boat, at evening, towards the centre of the lake; it seemed to me that the sky, and the glowing mountain-tops, and the wide blue water, surrounded me with a cherishing love such as no human face had shed on me since my mother's love had vanished out of my life. I used to do as Jean Jacques did–lie down in my boat and let it glide where it would, while I looked up at the departing glow leaving one mountain-top after the other, as if the prophet's chariot of fire were passing over them on its way to the home of light (27).

We do not have any in depth accounts of Eliot's own beliefs regarding mesmerism and its related phenomena (her letter to Combe regarding the cases he reports reads as tactfully skeptical of his reports, although she does not elaborate as to the extent of her own beliefs (Grey 410)). It is clear that she would have been aware of discourse regarding mesmeric phenomena at the time "The Lifted Veil" was written, and that she had experience with mesmerism and with spontaneously arising states of mind she identified as mesmeric.

Modern readers may not immediately categorize the powers that Latimer displays as mesmeric in nature, given how the practice is now imagined as one by which one person might exert control over another (and Latimer is miserably impotent to affect any change in his fellow men). This, however, is the result of over a century of the wide-ranging properties of vitalist theory being supplanted by the much more narrowly defined practice of hypnotism: a process which was only just being started at the time that Eliot was writing.

While we have little evidence bearing upon Eliot's knowledge of hypnosis in relation to mesmerism, her depiction of Latimer indicates that his condition may have a physiological origin. James Braid, who coined the term hypnosis in the 1840s, radically altered the dynamics by which we people understood mesmerism to operate. He posited that mesmerists' ability to entrance and direct others was rooted *not* in the manipulation of vital fluids or magnetic currents. He offered instead the explanation that these phenomena had a physiological origin, with trance states (which he termed "nervous sleep") resulting from "a fixed and abstracted attention of the mental and visual eye, on one object, not of an exciting nature" (*Neurypnology* 12). The key to mesmerism's secrets was no longer some undiscovered substance interconnecting living bodies, but the muscular operations of the human eye. While Latimer's precognitive visions–as Grey has established–are more in keeping with Gregory's descriptions of animal magnetism than with Braid's descriptions of nervous sleep, throughout "The Lifted Veil," there is an ongoing concern with bodies and their operations. The onset of Latimer's abilities is heavily implied to be the result of a childhood fever. Despite his initial hopes that his first remote viewing of Prague is the onset of an artistic awakening, Latimer later

hypothesizes that the transformation in his consciousness was brought about through bodily illness:

> Was it that my illness had wrought some happy change in my organisation–given a firmer tension to my nerves–carried off some dull obstruction? I had often read of such effects–in works of fiction at least. Nay; in genuine biographies I had read of the subtilising or exalting influence of some diseases on the mental powers (28).

Braid, in describing his early skepticism of vitalist theories, makes particular note of mesmeric phenomena as "being capable of being excited in so few, and these few individuals in a state of disease, or naturally of a delicate constitution, or peculiarly susceptible temperament" (*Neurypnology* 15) and thereafter determines that hypnosis operates by means of "destroying the equilibrium of the nervous system" (12) through the aforementioned manipulations of the visual organs. He also goes on to note that "It is also well known that occasionally the [mesmeric] phenomena *arise spontaneously in the course of disease*" (33, emphasis mine) as part of his proofs that the effects attributed to magnetic energies are–in reality–entirely explainable as the workings of the human nervous system. Even if remote viewing was not a power that Braid would attribute to nervous sleep, Braid's reframing of the trance state as physiologically rooted lends force to the notion that trances may occur spontaneously as a result of illness.

Another moment that marks Latimer's condition as being informed by his physical body is the phrenological examination he undergoes as a child. Eliot grounds her protagonist's experiences in his physiology the moment she introduces Mr. Leatherall–who is brought over to examine Latimer during his childhood and, after groping about his

skull, declares to the boy's father that "'The deficiency is there, sir–there; and here [...] here is the excess. That must be brought out, sir, and this must be laid to sleep'" (26). The implication is that all of the dreamy, potentially poetic nature that Latimer continually attributes to himself is somehow writ on the surfaces of his head. Latimer's father, following this diagnosis, attempts to "bring out" the qualities that his son is apparently lacking, and Latimer's education undergoes a radical change during which he recognizes that "private tutors, natural history, science, and the modern languages, were the appliances by which the defects of my organisation were to be remedied" (26). Here then, we are meant to understand both that the phrenological bumps on Latimer's head tell us of his mental deficiencies *and* that these physically legible qualities might be altered or transformed. It must be noted at this point that this view as to the malleability of phrenological zones is in keeping with the views of phrenologists in the early half of the nineteenth-century, and more specifically it is in keeping once more with James Braid. In Chapter VI of *Neurypnology*, Braid writes:

> However, when we have ascertained the points where, by acting in any peculiar manner, we can excite into activity particular sympathetic physical and mental associations, whilst the other faculties are put into a state of quiescence, it appears to me to be a matter of far greater importance, and a subject still more curious, than any thing ever brought forward by phrenologists. It is far more available for practical purposes too. Phrenologists could at best only pretend to tell the natural tendencies of an individual, and direct that he should be educated in accordance with a specific plan, as has hitherto been done independently of phrenology, from watching the natural dispositions and habits of different individuals, by

> encouraging and directing their studies in such and such a direction; but here, in addition to this, we have the power of giving a decided impulse in any particular direction (101).

Braid goes on to propose something he names hypno-phrenology: a system by which hypnotism and phrenology might be combined. He thereafter offers details of a number of experiments in which he hypnotized subjects while applying pressure to specific phrenological organs and ostensibly was able to activate the "natural tendencies" they governed. According to Braid, pressing on a particular zone with a finger or with a piece of cork tied to a string could produce exhibitions of acquisitiveness, in which subjects might be driven to steal; conscience, in which subjects might be driven to confess to various crimes committed (including–at times–the theft brought about by the "acquisitiveness"); or even philoprogenitiveness, in which subjects were reported to begin nursing phantom infants.

While Leatherall, unlike Braid, does not seek to apply hypnosis in addition to phrenology during his examination of Latimer, the description of phrenological sympathies that Braid gives seems in keeping with Leatherall's diagnosis. Latimer's "natural tendencies" *are* read and he *is* thereafter given over to be "educated in accordance with a specific plan." While Latimer's abilities do not correspond to the trance state as understood by Braid, the physiological conditions that precede them are very much in agreement with the Braidian model of the mind. Latimer's archetypally mesmeric clairvoyance follows an assessment of his mind that may be characterized as distinctly hypnotic–in a fashion similar to how the narrative of "The Lifted Veil" teases at

offering us omniscient access to other minds despite opening in a way that shows us we will be limited to a single perspective.

How are we to position Eliot's depiction of what reads as mesmeric phenomena situated–not in vital magnetism–but in the confines of the human body? While Latimer seems in some ways to be a textbook case of a mesmeric clairvoyant, the way that his powers are couched in physiological terms is more in keeping with later Braidian hypnotic models. I would argue that we ought to understand Latimer's powers as being a hybrid of mesmerism's fanciful potentialities and hypnotism's physiological constraints, and likewise we ought to read his narration of his powers of insight as a strange hybrid of narration both limited and omniscient. He is, it would seem, one of the earliest literary hybrid mesmerist-hypnotists: the forerunner of the menacing figures who later feature in so much late nineteenth-century non-realist fiction. However, unlike the Draculas and Svengalis of the world, Latimer is hardly threatening. He is portrayed as a prisoner of his telepathy, which–given its embodied nature–also makes him a prisoner of his own physiology. He practically attests to this with one of his opening lines, in which he muses: "Unless, then, I am cursed with an exceptional physical constitution, as I am cursed with an exceptional mental character, I shall not much longer groan under the wearisome burthen of this earthly existence" (24). Even though he draws a distinction between mind and body here, he still describes the results of his telepathy and precognition in terms of physical encumbrance, and he morbidly envisions the possibility that the "curse" of his insights might be accompanied by the curse of immortality. As Yizhi Xiao discusses, the record he offers bears certain likenesses to "Déal," a suicidal Frenchman who made an exacting scientific account of his death throes and who was

cited in H. G. Lewes' *Physiology of Human Life* (68). His entreaty to us is innately linked to the inevitability of his own demise, and we know about his *angina pectoris* before we learn of his name or his purpose in writing. The limitations of his body are introduced to us at the same time he endeavors to test the limits of his storytelling. There is no way to disentangle Latimer's narration from Latimer's body.

In addition to this, it must be noted that Latimer reports to us the day-to-day realities of his powers, not in the language of spiritualism or vitalism, but in metaphors drawing on the natural sciences. Just as the precursors to his insight are given to us in relation to physiology, his powers are described in relation to scientific explorations of the material world. As Xiao elaborates, Latimer talks about telepathy as a form of microscopy, and the consciousnesses he penetrates as a compost heap begetting plant matter:

> But this superadded consciousness, wearying and annoying enough when it urged on me the trivial experience of indifferent people, became an intense pain and grief when it seemed to be opening to me the souls of those who were in a close relation to me—when the rational talk, the graceful attentions, the wittily-turned phrases, and the kindly deeds, which used to make the web of their characters, were seen as if thrust asunder by a microscopic vision, that showed all the intermediate frivolities, all the suppressed egoism, all the struggling chaos of puerilities, meanness, vague capricious memories, and indolent make-shift thoughts, from which human words and deeds emerge like leaflets covering a fermenting heap (30).

"The Lifted Veil" continually couches the fantastical events it portrays as belonging to unabstracted, material reality. The narrative's climax, in which a message is carried to the principals from beyond the grave, gives us a resurrection borne of medical experimentation with barely anything smacking of the mystical or spiritual. Just as the narrative opens with a clinical description of a death already foreseen and described, its culminating moment is one filled with the terror of a death undertaken twice. As with Latimer's introductory account of the sensations of his demise, Mrs. Archer's second death is given to us in predominantly physiological terms:

> The lips continued to murmur, but the sounds were no longer distinct. Soon there was no sound—only a slight movement: the flame had leaped out, and was being extinguished the faster. The wretched woman's heart-strings had been set to hatred and vengeance; the spirit of life had swept the chords for an instant, and was gone again for ever. Great God! Is this what it is to live again . . . to wake up with our unstilled thirst upon us, with our unuttered curses rising to our lips, with our muscles ready to act out their half-committed sins? (47)

While there is some nebulous talk of spirits and flames, the emphasis here is on the physical attributes of the body: on utterances, heart-strings, thirst, and movement. The real terror of Archer's death lies not in the condition of souls, but in the incomplete contractions of muscles. When Latimer segues from this scene almost immediately into the story's finale and a return to the doomed 20th of September 1850, mentioned in the introduction, he follows up the collapse of one body with that of his own. The text of "The Lifted Veil" is demarcated in deaths, with Latimer's plea to us being bookended in depictions of bodily failure. In terms of its content and its structure, the story is not so

much about what is lifted but rather about what is enclosed; “The Lifted Veil” provides us with a vision of telepathy as something that impedes knowledge instead of procuring it. Even offering the reader a direct, first-person plea, Latimer remains fundamentally unable to escape the confines of his bodily doom—nor is he able to convincingly make his case.

The Narrow Room of the Soul

Latimer’s narration–so atypical of Eliot–only adds to the sense of suffocation that permeates this coffin of a story. Unlike the glib narrator of *Vanity Fair,* who invades women’s secret spaces like a moonbeam, Latimer is an embodied narrator limited by his own embodiment, even if his powers of perception extend beyond those of his fellow men. The way in which Eliot mingles hypnotic and mesmeric paradigms in her depiction of telepathy is thoroughly reinforced by her mode of literary presentation. By giving us access to Latimer’s thoughts and perspective–and only Latimer’s thoughts and perspective–Eliot crafts a story that plays into the real horrors of Braid’s physiologically-grounded model, allowing us to experience the obstructed promise of omniscience through a painfully limited narrator. The reader is offered the sensations of a trance which lacks the vitalist potential for connection. Latimer may read the sentiments of others but lacks the capacity to feel with them as readers, we replicate Latimer’s insight via our own insight into Latimer–reading *him* as he begs for an intimate connection we cannot furnish. We are invited to feel the same sense of constraint and misanthropy that plagues the novella’s protagonist, having only Latimer’s miserable outlook to guide us through a cast of characters he assures us to be detestable. We encounter firsthand how

Latimer can know the innermost thoughts of those around him but still feel no sense of camaraderie with his fellow creatures. It is a fascinating contrast that we must receive Latimer's record of the fantastic and preternatural through the mundane confines of an extended letter, whereas Eliot in the same year invited readers to experience the stark realities of human life via *Adam Bede's* scrying mirror.[12] "The Lifted Veil" is, throughout, an exercise in rendering telepathy impossibly banal; it shows us how little direct knowledge of others might avail us when it comes to *understanding* human society.

It is significant that the one mind Latimer is least able to fathom throughout his narration is that of his *wife,* whose thoughts are initially shielded from his telepathy through unknown means and who–even when her mind becomes open to his powers–is able to conceal an ongoing plot to poison him. He tells us over the course of his account how thoroughly unlikeable he finds her both before and after his telepathy can penetrate her thoughts. He notes in the days when her mind was still a cipher to him that he found her "keen, sarcastic, unimaginative, prematurely cynical, remaining critical and unmoved in the most impressive scene" (31), and after finally gaining access to her thoughts, he describes her interior as containing "the light floating vanities of the girl defining themselves into the systematic coquetry, [...] scheming selfishness, [...] repulsion and antipathy harden[ed] into cruel hatred, giving pain only for the sake of wreaking itself" (41). While we may assume that some of these judgments may be the product of looking

[12] While *Adam Bede*'s most famous discussion of depiction and narration relates to Dutch and Flemish painting, the novel's opening lines are concerned with the art of scrying and foresight. The novel frames itself explicitly in terms of psychic phenomena at its onset:

> With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen, I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder, in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799 (5).

his life over in hindsight, his botched relationship with Bertha makes it frustratingly clear how little his telepathy has ever allowed him to achieve any degree of human intimacy. He pursues Bertha knowing that she is capricious and that she will grow to hate him, continuing the pattern of entrapment upon which his powers seem to rely. For a man who introduces himself to us lamenting his "burden" and the forthcoming "suffocation" he is to suffer, the younger Latimer seems eager to fall in step with what he believes to be fated and to plunge himself into misery. Unlike the archetypal heroes of so many fairy tales and myths, who routinely attempt to circumvent the ill-favored futures prophesied for them, Latimer resigns himself to everything he foresees: from his unfortunate marriage to his agonizing death. He accepts the immutability of the future and the failure of his body without question, despite having been witness to such a startling reversal of both fate and dying in the incident with Mrs. Archer. His account, which opens and closes with what he proclaims to be the date of his death, draws us likewise into accepting that Latimer is correct. Commentary and scholarship on "The Lifted Veil" seldom question the notion that Latimer's death is inevitable, even though it lacks the verification of multiple viewpoints often found in epistolary gothic tales.

Latimer's knowledge, in addition to never translating to meaningful action, also never translates into meaningful *sympathy* for others, either on Latimer's part or–possibly–on our own parts. Instead of experiencing "The Lifted Veil's" cast through narratorial omniscience, such that we might probe into their thoughts and motivations directly, we can only receive impressions of them through the testimony of a man claiming direct access. To feel for anybody aside from Latimer is difficult, and this seems very much Latimer's own design as a man who begs so profoundly for our feelings.

Latimer's inability to understand other characters or correctly evaluate their motivations *even as a telepath* is well-fitted to his unrelenting despisal of them. His misanthropy stands in ironic contrast to the understanding he demands of us. While it obviously falls to the individual reader as to whether they will grant him the compassionate attitudes that he so craves, his own account of his fellow men is a testament to how little interior knowledge of others might elicit sympathy. His proclamation that "we have all a chance of meeting with some pity, some tenderness, some charity, when we are dead" is belied by his callous recounting of Mrs. Archer's death. Immediately before she dies, he notes his relief that he cannot know her thoughts, not wanting to be "obliged to see what had been breeding about two unloving women's hearts," and he describes her self-evident fear and agony upon her revival as a "wretched woman's heart-strings [...] set to hatred and vengeance." He dreads that we will meet him with the same callousness that he has reserved for others. This plea for sympathy becomes yet another way that the account collapses in on itself. Latimer cannot sympathize with anyone else and cannot direct us to the sympathetic qualities of those people he knows with the intimacy of telepathy, leaving us no map as to how to sympathize with him. Marcia Taylor observes Latimer's "insights" into his wife (and presumably into others) may be read as his own fictions. As she so eloquently puts it, "Latimer's text has become yet another veil," and I would suggest that it is one that enshrouds its own maker, underscoring how he himself is but another fiction.

Latimer's powers, rather than offering up showmanship and social rapport of the mesmerism characteristic of *Vanity Fair,* are part of a story embodying the sense of suffocating death with which it opens. The text shows us a man who is explicitly bound

by his own mind, who is implicitly bound by his own body, and who is binding us and those around him in a structure that seems to preclude the possibility of human sympathy. The story seems at odds with the injunctions Eliot makes in her famous "Natural History of German Life," which defines art as "a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow men beyond the bounds of our personal lot" (145). This is art that diminishes rather than amplifies, that veils rather than unveiling. And yet, this early exercise in the fantastical gives us a starting point for understanding *how* art might expand and extend our sympathies. It shows us how little telepathy, precognition, and similar phenomena can offer us insight when constrained by the isolation of a single human perspective. "The Lifted Veil" often remarked upon for its divergence from Eliot's realist subject matter, is unique in that it might be considered Eliot's most realistic form of storytelling. It is a letter: a form of human narrative that one might easily encounter outside of the realm of fiction. It shares little with the impossible narrator of the contemporary *Adam Bede;* it does not give us multiple viewpoints, shift impossibly through time and space, or promise us the revelations of an Egyptian mirror. It demonstrates for us how even preternatural powers of perception cannot avail us in developing human sympathy when they are bound up in the limitations of a lone body and a lone human perspective. It therefore shines a light as to how Eliot's later work operates through an inversion of 'The Lifted Veil's" dynamics, giving us a portrait of reality through the fantastical operations made available to us through fiction.

Fermenting Heaps and Fertile Brains

If "The Lifted Veil" is fantasy delivered to us by commonplace methods, *Middlemarch* is the commonplace delivered to us through purest fantasy. It is a catalog of the day-to-day events of people's lives displayed for us through a wandering perspective that telescopes in and out of whatever locations, pasts, and minds it chooses. Not every instance of disembodied, omniscient narration is explicitly mesmeric (and *Middlemarch's* omniscient narrator is hardly anomalous amongst Eliot's novels), there is a very direct relationship between narrative presentation and the scientific/pseudoscientific paradigms at play in both "The Lifted Veil" and *Middlemarch*.

While the latter is not invested in any literal instances of mesmeric phenomena, it is concerned with the same issues of limited vision and limited sympathy that pervade "The Lifted Veil," and it employs similar scientific metaphors in describing them. Xiao, in his observations as to the ways in which Latimer's powers are described in terms of microscopy, alludes numerous times to famous passages in *Middlemarch* that discuss the limitations on our perceptions in terms of microscopy observation and the natural world. Although *Middlemarch's* narrator will never claim for themselves the gift of telepathy, the language Eliot previously used to describe telepathy is recycled here into the language of everyday human perception and misperception, and its meaning is further complicated by the prominence of actual microscopists in the narrative.

While the evidence that Eliot would be familiar with contemporary discourses surrounding magnetism, mesmerism, hypnosis, and quite possibly hypno-phrenology is compelling, we have little information as to her precise opinions on several aspects of these pseudosciences. Conversely, the evidence that Eliot was conversant in issues

pertaining to microscopy and natural collecting is both direct and overwhelming. The enthusiasm both she and Lewes had for natural specimen collecting is well-documented in Lewes' 1858 *Seaside Studies*, which tracks the course of the couple's 1857 holiday to gather various types of marine life at Ilfracombe. This exuberant, playful, and accessible account not only offers a vast number of descriptions of marine specimens, but it also touches heavily on the philosophy that Lewes and Eliot brought to their hobby as naturalists. The musings and observations both writers made regarding microscopy, as Xiao has already observed, have clear echoes within Eliot's literary productions. For example, in Chapter I of *Seaside Studies,* Lewes addresses how the examination of microscopic specimens might turn the examiner's attention forever back towards singular, all-consuming ideas, remarking at one point upon a particular notable time when he felt himself repeatedly drawn to contemplate the polyps he examined, such that he came to see their form in all manner of everyday objects surrounding him:

> The typical forms took possession of me. They were ever present in my waking thoughts; they tilled my dreams with fantastic images; they came in troops as I lay awake during meditative morning hours; they teased me as I turned restless from side to side at night; they made all things converge towards them. If I tried a little relaxation of literature, whatever was read became the starting-point for the wandering fancy, or more obtrusive memory; a phrase like "throbbing heart" would detach my thoughts from the subject of the book, and hurry them away to the stage of the microscope, where the heart of some embryo was pulsating. I could not even look intently. but the chance was that some play of light would

> transform itself into the image of a mollusc or a polype. THE THINGS I'VE SEEN IN TAPIOCA PUDDING! (35)

This basic mode of recurring and intensely focused thought is replicated near exactly within one of *Middlemarch's* more famous scenes, in which Dorothea finds herself inextricably drawn to thoughts of Will Ladislaw following his departure:

> Unhappily her mind slipped off it for a whole hour; and at the end she found herself reading sentences twice over with an intense consciousness of many things, but not of any one thing contained in the text. This was hopeless (764-5).

In another chapter of *Seaside Studies*, Lewes offers us an enticing view as to how the microscope–when employed correctly-can put us on guard against issues of perception, albeit only if an observer appropriately guard themselves against the pitfalls of microscopic observation:

> So far from the Microscope being in itself deceptive, I maintain that it is less so than the unassisted eye; and for this reason: all vision is mainly inferential; from certain appearances certain forms are inferred; this holds of the eye as well as of the Microscope, the optical principles of which are essentially the same; but while the physical conditions are similar the mental conditions attending vision with the assisted and the unassisted eye are different. The microscopic observer is on his guard against fallacies of interpretation which seldom suggest themselves to him when observing with the naked eye; and this critical caution makes him not only less rash in interpreting appearances, but makes him anxious to verify interpretations by other means (40).

Elsewhere, in an 1856 article for *Blackwood's* entitled "Only a Pond!" Eliot gives an accounting of microscopy that could be applicable to both "The Lifted Veil" and *Middlemarch* and the limitations of their characters' insights:

> A man buys a microscope, expecting to plunge at once into the world of wonders, and he finds he can do nothing with it–knows not what wonders to look for. Had he begun with a lens, he would have grown up to the microscope. It is thus Science has grown (585).

Throughout the 1850s then, immediately prior to "The Lifted Veil" both Eliot and her partner were thinking through issues of microscopy and its applications and making determinations as to what sort of "zoom" is and is not beneficial to human perception and appreciation. This fascination with the lens, as Xiao informs us, is reflected in Eliot's depiction of Latimer's telepathy. They write: "The fragmentary, unusually vivid and ambiguous visions of Latimer parallel the hyperreality under the microscope, and his struggle to interpret them is akin to that of a microscopic investigator attempting to make sense of the curious shapes he or she perceives" (76). As I hope I have made clear in the prior section, even if Latimer is able to make sense of his impressions, his understanding of them is incomplete. If his vision is to be likened to a microscope, he gleans nothing from whatever specimens he puts under his psychical lens. Compare this fundamental problem to the one alluded to in *Middlemarch's* most famous invocation of microscopy:

> Even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a

> stronger lens reveals to you certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom (53-4).

This, taken in tandem with Eliot and Lewes' descriptions of the appropriate *calibration* of microscopic vision makes it abundantly evident that Eliot was deeply concerned about how enhanced perception, be it psychic or scientific, requires an appropriate sense of how closely or distantly one must observe to achieve the vision most beneficial to the observer. Latimer's curse of insight may–in fact–be a curse of insight's misuse. Eliot's gloomy psychic may well have been able to find some shred of sympathy for others and for himself were he better able to direct his gaze. The "fermenting heap" that he so derides might have held one of Lewes' worlds of wonder" were he to direct his gaze upon it with an eye towards finding one. Lewes (and presumably Eliot) would have been liable to agree. A "heap" in fact figures in one of Lewes' recounted episodes in *Seaside Studies*, in which he encounters a man "stooping and fumbling among the oyster-shells, not knowing what his insane party might possibly think worth carrying home, and for his part thinking the whole as big a heap of rubbish as ever he saw" (90). Upon stopping "Jack" to request a look at his "bit of dirt," Lewes relates

> Jack [...] stretches out his honest fist, and places on the seat a small lump of sand, having no definite shape, and looking no more like an animated creature than the mud-pie which ingenious youth delights to construct. I know it at a glance to be an *Ascidian* (*Molgula arenosa*), for only last week, while scrambling over the rocks, I looked into a shallow pool, on the sandy bottom of which there was one of these sand-lumps alone in its glory. I cannot tell what made me suspect it to be an animal. *The mind sees what the eye cannot. Do we not distinguish a friend by a*

> *certain undefinable something long before he is near enough for us to distinguish his dress or his features? With the same mental perception one learns to distinguish an animal, even when one has never seen it before.* (91-2, emphasis mine)

Here, we have not only a panegyric on the virtues of the rubbish heap, but an explicit connection made between mental vision, natural science, and the pursuit of friendship. Given the enthusiasm evident in Eliot's own accounts of natural collecting, it hardly seems likely that she penned Latimer's despisal of fermented, life-bearing manner with an eye towards agreeing with him.

To bring us back to *Middlemarch*– a novel rife with discussions of both microscopic vision and natural collecting–I wish to assert that Tertius Lydgate is Latimer's direct successor, and that we can read his narrative as a realist re-imagining of Eliot's tragic telepath. Gillian Beer, in her 1975 examination of the two texts, believes Latimer speaks of similar themes to those in *Middlemarch*, although she claims him as the forerunner to Causabon rather than Lydgate. I would posit, however, that "The Lifted Veil's" narrative of psychical awakening, suffocating insight, and a poisonous wife are all re-configured rather directly in Lydgate, whose overfocus on anatomical interiors has much the same consequences as Latimer's overfocus on psychological ones.

One of the early moments in which Lydgate's character parallels Latimer's is in the general character of their childhoods. Both of them suffer an early loss of a parent or parents, and both of them spend their earliest years engaged in an aimless and promiscuous reading of classical and literary texts. In the case of Latimer, his reading is

an escape from studies meant to set his mind on a specific and specialized course: on in keeping with the plans for improvement that his father and Leatherall have for him:

> [I] read Plutarch, and Shakespeare, and Don Quixote by the sly, and supplied myself in that way with wandering thoughts, while my tutor was assuring me that "an improved man, as distinguished from an ignorant one, was a man who knew the reason why water ran downhill." I had no desire to be this improved man; I was glad of the running water; I could watch it and listen to it gurgling among the pebbles, and bathing the bright green water-plants, by the hour together. I did not want to know *why* it ran; I had perfect confidence that there were good reasons for what was so very beautiful (26).

In the case of Lydgate, there is not so much of a sense that his youthful reading is in contradiction or rebellion to his scholastic endeavors, but it is clear that he reads outside of his studies and reads in a fashion that does not lend itself yet to greatness or achievement:

> He was a quick fellow, and when hot from play, would toss himself in a corner, and in five minutes be deep in any sort of book that he could lay his hands on: if it were Rasselas or Gulliver, so much the better, but Bailey's Dictionary would do, or the Bible with the Apocrypha in it. Something he must read, when he was not riding the pony,[13] or running and hunting, or listening to the talk of men. All this was true of him at ten years of age; he had then read through "Chrysal, or the Adventures of a Guinea," which was neither milk for babes, nor any chalky mixture meant to pass for milk, and it had already occurred to him that books

[13] Curiously enough, Latimer's childhood is also characterized by pony riding, drawing yet another parallel between the two characters.

> were stuff, and that life was stupid. His school studies had not much modified that opinion, for though he "did" his classics and mathematics, he was not pre-eminent in them. It was said of him, that Lydgate could do anything he liked, but he had certainly not yet liked to do anything remarkable (135).

What follows after both of these descriptions of undirected literary explorations, however, is markedly similar in its revelatory nature. Both boys suddenly awaken to a sense of clarity and purpose, with Latimer being overwhelmed by his rapturous vision of Prague and Lydgate suddenly being entranced by the valves of the human heart. Both boys also have a sudden shift in vision that simultaneously turns their respective gazes both outward and inward. While the two of them will later both have lives defined by their focus on the interiors of others (as a telepath and as an anatomist), the initial moment of crisis they both undergo begins with a sudden awareness of the vastness of the world around them. In the case of Latimer, this is self-evident in his literal development of powers of remote viewing. In the case of Lydgate, however, there is an instant where his introduction to anatomy suddenly *opens* his sense of the scale of things yet undiscovered, with "the world [being] made new to him by a presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight by that wordy ignorance which he had supposed to be knowledge" (136). Lydgate's awakening sense of vocation is presented in terms parallel to Latimer's awakening psychic powers.

Lydgate's realization of his passion certainly sets him on a more auspicious path than Latimer's realization of his telepathy; both men find themselves subsequently cursed with an inwardly turned gaze that allows them to see human interiors while simultaneously lacking any real appreciation for human behavior. Lydgate's quest after

some elemental, primordial form of biological matter leads him to a poorly-calibrated view of life in general–in keeping with Eliot's cautioning remarks as regards what befalls a man who uses a microscope before a lens. His belief that there is some essential truth underlying animal functioning might be taken as what sets Lydgate up for his personal failures; he is a man forever assuming simplistic causes behind the complexity of human behavior. In the course of his first, doomed romance to Laure, he appears in the midst of ongoing vivisectionist experiments regarding frogs and rabbits, before he heads for the stage upon which Laure commits murder. He moves directly from puzzling over the galvanic reactions of animals in the throes of galvanic shocks to misunderstanding the impulses that led a dagger into the breast of Laure's husband. There is an implicit connection between his inability to sound out the functions of animal flesh and his inability to sound out the motivations of a murderess. Despite having seen the killing performed before him, he cannot fathom it as an intentional act; he believes incorrectly that her lack of motive precludes her from guilt. He misapprehends the causes of muscular actions both on a stage *and* in a laboratory. Throughout his narrative, Lydgate's passion for anatomy is linked to his inability to understand the social web in which he lies entangled. Unlike Latimer, he narrows his vision through a literal, rather than a figurative microscope, looking continually at incomplete interiors without the context of the greater organism.

Lydgate's conduct, with regards to the wider Middlemarch community and with regards to his wife, suggests that he continually misjudges the importance of human sentiment and social relations. While we are never told if anything came from Lydgate's frogs and rabbits, his emotionally blind suggestion to dissect the body of Mrs. Goby

shows that he has learned little about the social ramifications of wielding a scalpel. Just as Latimer is a surprisingly clueless telepath, Lydgate is astounding in how little he understands human hearts in the figurative sense, even if he might be an expert on the literal organ. He is unable to navigate the social threads that ensnare him into an unlucky union with Rosamond, that lead to his wife's discontent and spendthrift behavior, or that tether him to the scandal involving Bulstrode and Raffles. Instead, he shows a passionate interest in human beings insofar as they are material specimens, composed of so many tissues and bones, and he routinely looks at people not through the lens of social relations but through the anatomist's microscope. The "vampire's taste" that Rosamond associates with his "preoccupation with scientific subjects" leads him to an expertise in human life only when it is dead and dissected, and it is noteworthy that virtually all of the natural specimens with which he is mentioned in conjunction are all in some way incomplete; he revels in such things as "macerated muscle or [...] eyes presented in a dish (like Santa Lucia's)" (328). The one specimen of a complete animal he is shown to possess is a jar of sea mice, which he trades away to Farebrother for an "anencephalic monster," in what I hold to be a perfect moment of chill foreshadowing as regards the consequences of his social ignorance. Sea mice, a genus of marine polychaete worms, are known by the Latin name *Aphrodita,* named for the Greek goddess of love on account of their alleged resemblance to female genitalia. Immediately prior to his ill-starred marriage to Rosamond, Lydgate gives away these complete specimens, creatures associated with romantic and sexual love, and in exchange receives the pickled remains of a fetus or baby that is missing crucial components of its cranium and brain. Here, the Lydgate tragedy

plays out for us in apothecary jars: a rejection of what is complete in favor of what is partial, an exchange of symbolic love for a dead infant.

If Lydgate's hyperfocus on material interiors parallels Latimer's hyperfocus on mental ones, nowhere are the pitfalls of this flawed form of vision clearer than in how they blindside them to their "water nixies" of wives. While it is a gap in Latimer's mesmerically inflected insights that leads to his courtship of Bertha, Lydgate's decision to marry Rosamond is one of the points in *Middlemarch* that might be read as potentially mesmeric:

> [A]s he raised his eyes now he saw a certain helpless quivering which touched him quite newly, and made him look at Rosamond with a questioning flash. At this moment she was as natural as she had ever been when she was five years old: she felt that her tears had risen, and it was no use to try to do anything else than let them stay like water on a blue flower or let them fall over her cheeks, even as they would.
>
> That moment of naturalness was the crystallizing feather-touch: it shook flirtation into love. Remember that the ambitious man who was looking at those Forget-me-nots under the water was very warm-hearted and rash. [...] an idea had thrilled through the recesses within him which had a miraculous effect in raising the power of passionate love lying buried there in no sealed sepulchre, but under the lightest, easily pierced mould (286-7).

The emphasis on vibration, on a power that touches, shakes, and thrills: all of what is described here is unseen, subtle, and mysterious. It not only fits with the dreamy language of the trance, but it also hinges on the operation of the eyes, which so frequently

figure into depictions of both mesmerism and hypnotism. What's more, these "forget-me-nots under the water" stand in contrast to the prior "eyes presented in a dish"[14] that are firmly in the realm of things about which Lydgate might claim expertise. Lydgate is a man who can understand eyes severed and dissected but who is unable to comprehend the powers that they possess when socketed and directed upon him. Like Latimer, he is ultimately bound by the considerations of bodies and tethered to materiality, although unlike Eliot's telepath, there is no pretense that he might possess some psychological insight. Lydgate exists in a state where the unspoken social ties between people might as well be an undiscoverable magnetic fluid; he is incapable of dealing with humanity at the scale of the individual and at the level of the personal.

The end result of both characters' narrative arcs is much the same: both men die unhappily after a life in which the dreams promised by their moments of boyhood awakening never come to fruition. While Rosamond's overspending and disdainfulness is not quite so melodramatic as a poisoning plot, Lydgate does go so far as to implicate her as his murderer, calling her "his basil plant [...] which had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains" (791). Both men have lived lives bounded by the limitations of physical bodies; both have failed to perceive what is important even with their atypical gifts of perception; both have found themselves unhappily married to a woman they cannot understand and who proves to be a fatal presence in their lives. All the fantastic melodrama of "The Lifted Veil" finds a reimagining in *Middlemarch* as the mundane decay of a marriage. This thread of *Middlemarch* replicates Eliot's most fantastical

[14] If we are to focus on the botanical metaphor, it should be noted that this description of Rosamond's eyes also hearkens back to the earlier episode with Laure, who is compared to another purple-hued flower attracting Lydgate's gaze: "Lydgate's only relaxation now was to go and look at this woman, just as he might have thrown himself under the breath of the sweet south on a bank of violets for a while" (143).

narrative in a way that trades microscopy for telepathy and acrimony for poison; it takes what the author once communicated through the strange and gothic and renders it as a hopelessly realist type of tragedy.

The Power of the Artist

While reading Lydgate as a realist version of Latimer allows us to see the ways in which the logic of telepathy and precognition can be reimagined as the mundane realities of provincial life, what is striking about this shift between "The Lifted Veil" and *Middlemarch* is how Eliot's omniscient narration re-opens the potentialities of the mesmeric model for a world without explicit mesmerism. If "The Lifted Veil" strips psychical phenomena of their glamour and renders them mundane, *Middlemarch* injects an element of the fantastical into its portrait of the everyday. Lydgate is *not* subject to the same isolation as Latimer because he is part of a vibrant ecosystem of other characters presented to use as having innately connected fates. As mentioned above, the narrator of *Middlemarch* gives us our own sort of telepathy and precognition; they work to calibrate the reader's vision correctly that we might direct our gaze on what is significant and delightful. Throughout *Middlemarch* also, there are a number of characters who are able to hold to ways of seeing more in keeping with the sympathetic, continually telescoping narrator, avoiding the pitfalls to which Lydgate is subject. Camden Farebrother presents for us an immediate foil to his friend's overfocus on anatomical structures, acting as a natural collector who is able to understand Middlemarch's fauna (both human and insect) on the collective level. Dorothea Brooke, full of idealism and saintly hopes, looks to the communities she inhabits with a gaze that strives to see others as they ought to be and

that seeks to improve them through her sympathies. Lastly, in one of the novel's most profound emotional climaxes, Rosamond herself, who first ensnares Lydgate in a mesmerically inflected episode, undergoes a similar trance-like moment in which she is capable of receiving and reflecting Dorothea's influence in a instant that brushes against pure mysticism. *Middlemarch* shows us that even in a world without explicit mesmerism, we might have all the potentials mesmerism promises: that we might be able to see others as they truly are, to feel for others far removed from our sphere, and to transform the world around us in subtle and meaningful ways.

While Farebrother, as a naturalist, represents a form of scientific inquiry rendered obsolete by anatomists like, he is attuned to a universe simultaneously much larger and much smaller than the one which his friend observes. His collections reflect this ability to understand and appreciate the world in a manner more in keeping with Eliot and Lewes' own philosophies as regards the harvest and examination of specimens. Rather than limiting himself to partial segments of human anatomy, he collects a bit of everything from the world around him, indicating that he's "going on both with the fauna and flora" despite having made an "exhaustive study of the entomology of this district" (163). This wide-ranging interest in the natural ecosystem surrounding Middlemarch, although it does not provide him with the same opportunities for ground-breaking research that Lydgate's anatomical inquiries do, affords him an opportunity to appreciate his surroundings both with regards to single, seemingly insignificant organisms and with regards to the greater, interconnected world comprised of those organisms and their interrelations. Farebrother is capable of adjusting his vision in ways that Lydgate cannot, and his ability to understand and accept the particulars of animal life that surround him

seems to correlate to his ability to trace the various threads of human connectivity at play in Middlemarch and to make accurate judgements about his neighbors. He is not a telepath, but he is equipped with a sense of human organization and community that fits well to a vitalist model. If we are to read Lydgate as the successor to Latimer–a decidedly Braidian-flavored psychic–perhaps we ought to read Farebrother as having something in common with pre-Braidian mesmerisers: that he taps into the animal magnetism that precedes physiologically based hypnotism just as natural history preceded anatomists.

Farebrother's collecting–unlike Lydgate's–tends to focus on insect life, and particularly insects associated with swarms, plagues, and crop blight. In addition to studying a number of *orthoptera* (locusts and grasshoppers, often associated with crop destruction), he also makes mention of *Aphis Brassicae* (a species known for devouring cabbage crops) and discusses an article about etymology in relation to the Pentateuch, a collection of texts in which insects most memorably feature as pestilential punishments from the divine (163). This fascination with insect life known for its destructive capacity en masse seems to align with his awareness as to humanity's capacity for pettiness, folly, and destruction. He draws, for example, a brief comparison between Bulstrode's "set" and the pestilential figure of the carrion-eater, noting that his kind "look on the rest of mankind as a doomed carcass which is to nourish them for heaven" (167), and this observation is later echoed by the mention of the vulture-like attendees of Peter Featherstone's funeral, who are referred to as "Christian Carnivora" (313). This awareness of the destructiveness of the animal world and the fallibility of the human one, however, does not lead Farebrother into misanthropy or cynicism.

Instead, I would argue that it is Farebrother's ability to regard the petty and often uncharitable human masses around him as being as commonplace as the aphids devouring one's *brassicae* that set him up to be a successful clergyman. This is reflected in his description of his own perceived commonality in Chapter 18:

> [T]he Vicar of St. Botolph's had certainly escaped the slightest tincture of the Pharisee, and by dint of admitting to himself that he was too much as other men were, he had become remarkably unlike them in this – that he could excuse others for thinking slightly of him, and could judge impartially of their conduct even when it told against him (178).

Here, Farebrother, unlike Lydgate, is capable of a detached appreciation of life at the collective level, being able to see the relative insignificance of himself, his fellow men, and the insect world while nevertheless being, like the pseudonymous aphidologist Philomicron, a "lover of small things" (163), with an ability to appreciate and tend to the individual despite its mundanity or capacity for harm. His mode of seeing seems in keeping with the vision of Middlemarch given us by the novel's narrator, who repeatedly invites us to spend a moment in the mind of the Causabons and Bulstrodes of the world– offering us insight into the very human predicament of those men the narrative might otherwise invite us to despise. There can be little question that Farebrother, unlike the ill-starred Latimer or the myopic Lydgate, is a man who might find some occasion for joy in poking about a fermenting heap: be it a figurative one housing the uglier matter of human consciousness or a literal one housing some creeping collection of life in miniature.

There is one instance, however, in which Farebrother's observational skills fail him, and that is in relation to Lydgate, whose innocence in the case of the scandal

involving Raffles he initially has cause to doubt. Here, the character who is shown to have the best apprehension of, or at least the best social approach to, the ecosystem that is Middlemarch is Dorothea Brooke, Lydgate's lone initial supporter whose faith in his character and willingness to vouch for him and pay his debts proves to be the impetus subtly but drastically reshaping the lives of the Lydgates, and—following her climactic encounter with Rosamond—her own life in relation to Will Ladislaw. Anne DeWitt has made the case that Dorothea is the ideal scientific mind in *Middlemarch* (91), combining the analytical and moral strengths of Lydgate's anatomy and Farebrother's taxonomy. I, however, differ from her in my conclusions, albeit only slightly. Dorothea, for all of her intellectual polish, is not a scientist, as her interest in the world around her is not to catalog or observe her surroundings, but to transform them. From her plan to redesign cottages in conjunction with James Chettam to her continual engagement in social projects and charitable interventions, her interaction with the world marks her as a character whose limitations of apprehension are almost entirely colored by a tendency to see others as being more noble than they may, in fact, actually be. However, unlike Lydgate, who assumes that the underlying character of others is a concrete and unshifting given, like the material features of bone and muscle, Dorothea strives within her limited scope of ability to fashion the world around her into the noble forms she believes she sees. In this way, Dorothea exults the artist over the collector, making her a fitting match for the artistically inclined Will Ladislaw and a fitting vessel for Eliot's own artistry.

This power of Dorothea’s extends even beyond her perception of other or her attempts towards worldly improvements, however; in her momentous interview with

Rosamond, Dorothea very literally is described as initiating a transformative exchange of energies:

> The waves of her own sorrow, from out of which she was struggling to save another, rushed over Dorothea with conquering force. She stopped in speechless agitation, not crying, but feeling as if she were being inwardly grappled. Her face had become of a deathlier paleness, her lips trembled, and she pressed her hands helplessly on the hands that lay under them.
>
> Rosamond, taken hold of by an emotion stronger than her own—hurried along in a new movement which gave all things some new, awful, undefined aspect—could find no words, but involuntarily she put her lips to Dorothea's forehead which was very near her, and then for a minute the two women clasped each other as if they had been in a shipwreck (757).

Much like Rosamond's interview with Lydgate that terminates in their marriage, there is a clear unspoken transfer of energy here–another emphasis on vibration, on trembling, on force. Rosamond is literally described as being seized by feelings belonging to Dorothea, who later interprets Rosamond's response as a "generous effort which had redeemed her from suffering, *not counting that the effort was a reflex of her own energy*" (758, emphasis mine). This phenomenon would have been commonplace in accounts of mesmerism, and in the works of Dr. Gregory–with whom it has been established Eliot would likely have been familiar–we find descriptions of the operator/subject relationship as allowing for this bleed of emotions:

> There is often, but perhaps less so than in regard to the senses, a Community of Emotion. In these cases, whatever mental emotion occurs in the magnetiser, or in others placed en rapport with the sleeper, is also experienced by him (104).

The takeaway here is not that we *need* to read Dorothea as a literal mesmerist, bombarding Rosamond Lydgate with psychic energies so as to effect a change in her. Rather, this moment shows the potentials for a mesmeric form of human relationship that stands in contrast not only to the poorly calibrated social vision of Lydgate, the selfish ignorance of Casaubon, or even the shrewd societal observations of Farebrother–but also to the visions of Eliot's literary psychic. This is an instant in which a thoroughly realist character accomplishes exactly what Eliot's telepath could not. Dorothea's influence goes beyond penetrating the human mind and manages to penetrate the human soul, achieving the exact outpouring of empathy that Latimer, with a lifetime of telepathic knowledge could not.[15]

Eliot's narrator in works such as *Middlemarch* follows the same mesmeric logic that allows for moments of connection such as this one. In *Middlemarch*, we are invited to dip in and out of human minds across the whole of an active and vibrant community, looking at Middlemarch the town through a lens that aims to show us human life in the way most conducive to understanding and sympathy. It offers an alternative to the isolated, incomplete view of interiority fostered by characters in the mold of Latimer and Lydgate and harkens back to a worldview that looks towards a holistic view of reality. It intertwines the gaze of taxonomists like Farebrother with the sense of feeling that would

[15] If we are to accept Latimer's telepathic powers as in some way Braidian, it should be noted that one of Braid's early experiments as regarded trance states was to disprove any continuity of senses or feeling between persons in hypnotic sleep, in which he ran physical threads between is subjects and endeavored to see if they might become in some way connected.

have been typical of pre-Braidian vitalists. It traces humanity's web-like structure through paradigms that allow for the free flow of human emotions and understanding, giving us an all-encompassing vision of a community that we cannot actually possess as regards the real communities we inhabit. Unlike Latimer's letter to us, which exists as an artifact we might encounter from a real petitioner, Middlemarch documents an intimacy of perspective beyond our capabilities.

I will close by returning to the "Natural History of German Life"–a perennial favorite amongst academics writing about Eliot. As regards the power of the artist, she writes:

> The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is a part from themselves. [...] Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot (54).

Eliot's sentiments are clear: art extends sympathy, amplifies experience, and allows us an intimacy impossible to us in the confines of our solitary minds. While it might be "near" to life, the function of art seems, in fact, to be to go beyond life, to affirm for us those truths that we cannot perceive as lone observers. There is something in art that is innately extrasensory and unreal, and that paradoxically brings us closer to reality for it. What Eliot does in her compositions is to adjust our way of seeing in ways we cannot: to give us a sense of human existence that extends beyond what lenses, microscopes, or even the

promise of telepathy might render us capable of, and to give us a vision that encompasses humanity with the immediacy of feeling that vitalism once might have offered. “The Lifted Veil,” miserable as it is, gives us means to see what modes of seeing will never avail us, and it sets the stage for later works that fulfill all the promises that telepathy alone could not deliver. Again, while contemporary readers may, and certainly do, read *Middlemarch* without any knowledge of its potential mesmeric underpinning, the portrait it conveys regarding human life and experience is one that strikes us now as cohesive and intuitive.

"This Paper is as Sunshine:" Networked Communication and Collaborative Storytelling as Anti-Mesmerism in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Dracula is rarely classed among narrative realism, and Bram Stoker, even in his non-supernatural romances, was seldom concerned with portraying life as it was. A self-confessed proponent of didacticism and self-censorship,[16] Stoker crafted his stories to present moral lessons, and the characters he creates to present them change little from text to text. His books are filled with good-hearted, independent women who scoff at suffragettes, menacing villains with petrifying gazes, and promising young lawyers with histories snatched from their author's autobiography. Despite this reliance on exaggerated archetypes, his best-known work is one into which he poured a great deal of research, and as is the case with Eliot's "Lifted Veil," it is a text that presents unrealistic events and personages through authentic documents within the story world. *Dracula* is hardly a realist novel, but the elaborate and *realistic* nature of the unreal world Stoker crafts is striking. *Dracula* is filled with exact railway times, with remarks as to minor landmarks and locations, and with sundry minutiae that could easily be glossed over but that they are so clearly intertwined with the supernatural elements of the text. There is a sense throughout that one is supposed to be anchored in quantifiable and recognizable elements

[16] See "On the Censorship of Fiction."

of day-to-day life, to a degree atypical of contemporary gothic fiction.[17] *Dracula* is often restrained in its fantastical content to the point of being surprisingly dry.

Take, for example, the beginning of a storm—a staple of Gothic fiction. In *Varney the Vampyre* (1847), one of *Dracula's* numerous precursors, such an event is described with all the excesses of penny dreadful theatrics:

> All is still–still as the very grave. Not a sound breaks the magic of repose. What is that–a strange, pattering noise, as of a million of fairy feet? It is hail–yes, a hail-storm has burst over the city. Leaves are dashed from the trees, mingled with small boughs; windows that lie most opposed to the direct fury of the pelting particles of ice are broken, and the rapt repose that before was so remarkable in its intensity, is exchanged for a noise which, in its accumulation, drowns every cry of surprise or consternation which here and there arose from persons who found their houses invaded by the storm (6).

In *The Beetle*, an epistolary gothic novel published in the same year as *Dracula's* release, the narrator describes the progress of poor weather, priming us for a deeply personal account of his individual sufferings as a psychic host:

> For some time there had been a suspicion of rain in the air. Now it was commencing to fall in a fine but soaking drizzle. It only needed that to fill my cup to overflowing. [...] A more miserable night for an out-of-door excursion I could hardly have chosen. The rain was like a mist, and was not only drenching me to the skin, but it was rendering it difficult to see more than a little distance in any

[17] This is not to say that similar novels do not trade in anchors to contemporary issues and everyday living (ex: the minutiae of bohemian living in *Trilby*, the framing of *Jekyll and Hyde* as case study). *The Beetle*–which is perhaps the novel of the decade that most directly parallels *Dracula*–contains specific train times. I counter–however–that the extent to which *Dracula* obsesses over these details is unique, and as I will argue, Stoker's investment in their accuracy is steadfast to the point that the text breaks with the narrative suspense typical of the gothic in favor of other aims.

> direction. [...] How it rained out there! My scanty clothing was soaked; I was wet to the skin! I was shivering. And, each second, it seemed to rain still faster. My teeth were chattering. The damp was liquefying the very marrow in my bones (3-8).

Both of these openings serve to heighten the anticipatory dread regarding what is to come, with the former building up to the horror of Flora's assault by Varney and the latter leading us towards Robert Holt's increasing physical and psychological distress. *Dracula* itself, in introducing the first rumbles of a storm, opens with neither *Varney's* theatrics nor Marsh's description of personal sensation; instead, we are given the following prelude:

> [T]he gossips who frequent the East Cliff churchyard […] called attention to a sudden show of "mares'-tails" high in the sky to the north-west. The wind was then blowing from the south-west in the mild degree which in barometrical language is ranked "No. 2: light breeze." The coastguard on duty at once made report, and one old fisherman, who for more than half a century has kept watch on weather signs from the East Cliff, foretold in an emphatic manner the coming of a sudden storm (75).

This type of description—with wording taken directly from a Fishery Barometer manual and supplemented with notes from Stoker's own visit to Whitby (Stoker, *Notes for Dracula* 133-7)—is typical of the text. While Stoker uses the oncoming storm to great dramatic effect, the bad weather announces itself in simple descriptions of cloud formation and wind speed.

Understandably, Stoker's meteorologically accurate cloud formations are seldom at the forefront of readings of *Dracula*. Still, numerous authors acknowledge how the novel's detail-oriented features—its documentary structure, unerring train times, and attempts at medical authenticity—might work in the service of critiquing scientific materialism (Greenway 215-6), reinforcing the superiority of Western infrastructure (Arata 622-3) or commenting on the technological work bound up in depictions of the New Woman (Brownell 13-4). I would like to expand on their observations and make a case that these realistic details are not only meant to situate the text in the real-world concerns of its era, but that *Dracula's* focus on the technologies of transportation and communication runs parallel to depiction of infectious, mesmeric evil. The networks by which the heroes move, speak, and write mirror the network of psychical and physical fluids that the Count seeks to infect. Furthermore, I argue that this clash between real and surreal, in which the reader is dragged through fantasies of telepathy before being plunged into the minutiae of train tables, has its ultimate expression in the epistolary format of the novel. At the heart of this narrative, we find that Mina Harker is not solely engaged in a psychical struggle with the Count, pitting her mind against his through the mesmeric link they share. She also counteracts his invasive vampiric mesmerism with the text itself. Mina, who is constantly organizing, reading, copying, and collating the novel we ourselves are reading, sets up her own links between human minds and hearts, creating a web that can ensnare the creature seeking to invade and pollute the systems that bind together mortal mankind. This work provides us with a blueprint by which people may genuinely learn to work and feel together–showing us in its own construction how a group of people beset by mesmeric powers come together through other networks

and experience an intermingling of sentiment and thought through non-mesmeric means. It is a successful version of Latimer's letter, opening with a note that the documents ordering and significance "will be made manifest in the reading of them" (5) instead of offering any instruction or plea as to how an audience should read the account.

The novel's depiction of mesmerism is a complex one, as depictions of the power are inextricably bound up with sanguinary vampirism. While Count Dracula is indisputably a mesmerist, this is not the attribute upon which most readers first turn their focus. The vital fluids that draw our attention most in Stoker's novel are *not* magnetic ones, and the Count–as far as mesmerists of the 1890s go–is easily overshadowed by other, more explicit *fin de siècle* mesmerists/hypnotists such as Du Maurier's Svengali or Marsh's Beetle. While numerous critics have acknowledged the importance of Dracula-as-mesmeriser or Dracula-as-hypnotizer (Brownwell 35, Stiles 71), the Count's psychic powers are often reckoned as a characteristic separate from his hematophagy. Despite a large body of literature throughout the nineteenth-century that positions vampires as innately psychical beings and that describe the act of mesmerism as innately vampiric, our modern conception of vampirism seldom interlinks vampirism and mesmerism to the same degree that Stoker and his predecessors did. This is a shame, as *Dracula*'s themes of pollution, invasion, and infection have the potential to take on new dimensions when we read them as explicitly interconnected to mesmerism's earlier vitalist model. Re-orienting our perspective such that we ask what it means for Dracula to be a *psychic* vampire specifically allows us to look toward questions of Stoker's spiritual narrative with the sort of blunt, heavy-handed obviousness the man delighted in. We can ask very literal questions about the metaphysics of what occurs when the Count and Mina mingle

their minds or what to make of Lucy Westenra's supposedly absent soul. We are also able to look out from the patterns of vitalist activity that characterize a mesmeric vampire and to see how well they match to some of the elements of the novel that may strike a reader as fundamentally boring and banal: the concerns of telegraphs and train stations. The act of blood exchange is simultaneously psychical and physiological in *Dracula*, and theories of mesmeric networks guide the text's presentations of mundane particulars.

Stoker, like many authors after Braid, mingles his depiction of mesmerism with that of hypnotism, which further muddies the waters as to what falls to the realm of the spiritual and what to the realm of material. He specifically invokes Jean Martin Charcot in arguing for the phenomenon's scientific validity, even if the acts he depicts are hardly Braidian *or* Charcotian. His model of mesmerism is clearly embodied–even more so than Eliot's–and it takes place in a text where even the most fantastic components are thoroughly medicalized. As Anne Stiles argues, *Dracula* is a text thoroughly concerned not just with the dynamics of minds and souls, but also with physical brains (70)**.** Dracula's predation of Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra is a simultaneous attack on psychical and biological structures, and because of this, it establishes the universe of *Dracula* as being one in which bodies themselves might be read as following a supernatural logic. It is only through witnessing Dracula's incursions into a woman's body *and soul* that Seward is capable of recognizing the innate, unseen bonds of human connectivity that allows predators like Dracula to act. Seeing the soul displaced in a vampiric body affirms the existence of the soul on a broader level, and as Seward sheds his skepticism, the novel's theoretical discussion of Charcotian hypnotism shifts to overt

depictions of classical mesmerism. The mesmeric logic that underpins *Dracula's* sanguinary vampirism goes on to color the whole of its medical science.

Once *Dracula* establishes its world as being a fundamentally spiritualist one, the novel moves us towards a show-down frequently lamented as anticlimactic. Most of the final pages of the story are concerned with three tasks: the tracking of the Count via Mina's telepathic bond, the planning of many sundry travel logistics, and the final compilation and assembly of the novel itself. What I would argue is that these three movements are all interconnected aspects of the protagonists' counterassault on a psychic predator, and that Mina Harker, who directs them all, manages to beat the Count at his own game by replicating the web of his own hypnotic mesmerism through mundane, everyday manifestations of human connectivity. Not only does she combat him by directly replicating his powers of mesmeric telepathy, but she thereafter matches his telepathic reach with the technologies of transport and communication; she takes the mesmeric logic that underpins the Count's actual supernatural powers and brings it to bear upon the elements of the novel that Stoker most painstakingly connected to the real world. Mina exploits the features of day-to-day 1890s commutes and communications to ensnare a creature continually bound by limitations that affect his movement–just as the Count uses his own powers to paralyze or redirect his thralls. Finally and most significantly, Mina writes a book. As the collator of *Dracula,* the novel, she ties together the experiences of the cast, marrying their separate anxieties, fears, and sentiments into something like a single consciousness that might shine light on an entity that lurks in the dark of the night at the edges of individual narratives. Just as Mina re-purposes the psychic web upon which Dracula relies, she repurposes both networked transit and–more

importantly–*networked text* to countermand him. While *Dracula* is very much concerned with mesmerism and the vitalist web, its real power is in how it ultimately re-imagines those types of connections in relation to contemporary methods of communication, physical spaces, and the written word. It takes the most mundane realities of human intercourse and shows how they both replicate and overwhelm the fantastic threat at the heart of Stoker's story.

Psychic Vampires

Dracula is in several ways a textbook mesmerist. We have ample evidence as Stoker drew upon specific texts relating to mesmerism during the course of his research for *Dracula*, and for much of the nineteenth-century, literary vampires were assumed to be mesmeric and mesmerism was assumed to have a vampiric component. Characters such as Eric Stenbock's Vardalek, Le Fanu's Carmilla, and "The Mysterious Stranger's" Azzo von Klatka all are characterized by their ability to induce trance states. While Svengali and the Beetle remain the standout mesmerists in fin de siècle non-realist fiction, lesser known texts from during and before this period make an explicit link between mesmerism and the draining of vital energies. Allen Grant's "The Beckoning Hand," Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Parasite," and J. Cobban's *Master of His Fate* all feature explicit connections between mesmeric/hypnotic powers and psychic parasitism, which is presented as an innate extension of the phenomena. In much the same fashion as contemporary reviews of *Dracula* seem to indicate that its readers would have seen vampirism as innately connected to lycanthropy (with several commentators referring to the Count as a werewolf), I would argue that those who encountered the Count during the

year of its publication would have understood vampirism as having an inherent psychical component and may even have understood mesmerism as having an innately vampiric aspect.

Stoker's own research in this vein is clear; his notes and research sources for *Dracula* clearly show that he was interested in vampirism as it related to phenomena such as trance states, somnambulism, dreams, and mesmerism/hypnosis. The most striking of his sources in this regard is Herbert Mayo's *On the Truths contained in Popular Superstitions, with an Account of Mesmerism.* While we have no explicit notes from Stoker regarding this piece, the entirety of its second chapter is a treatment of vampires, which proposes that the myth originates from normal people being buried alive while in a death-like trance and thereafter psychically projecting themselves in a ghostlike fashion to haunt those with whom they were connected in life. Part of this view–that vampirism is the result of premature burial–is one that Stoker explicitly endorsed in his 1897 interview in the *British Weekly* with Jane Stoddard, in which he stated:

> It rested, I imagine, on some such case as this. A person may have fallen into a death-like trance and been buried before the time.
>
> Afterwards the body may have been dug up and found alive, and from this a horror seized upon the people, and in their ignorance they imagined that a vampire was about.
>
> The more hysterical, through excess of fear, might themselves fall into trances in the same way; and so the story grew that one vampire might enslave many others and make them like himself (185).

This notion that the true power of the vampire lies in the trance is further borne out by his other sources. In addition to Mayo, he also consulted other volumes specifically concerned with disembodied powers of the mind. Frederick Lee's *The Other World* (1875) and John Jones' *The Natural and Supernatural* (1861) both present themselves as repudiations of materialism, and like Mayo cite a litany of testimonials regarding apparitions, telepathy, and psychic projection. His notes on Robert Grey's *The Theory of Dreams* (1808) may seem far removed from the contents of a vampire story until one observes that they are concerned with the origins and causes of ill dreams (including one account in which a dream is the result of a dead body directing the dreamer (14-5)). Even if the Count is clearly *not* a creature explainable by the real-world phenomena proposed by Mayo and Stoker, a major component of his vampirism is clearly meant to go beyond the physiological mechanics of drinking blood. His gaze induces trances; his bite sends poor Lucy Westenra out of her body as she's assaulted; and even if he is a physical being, he still shares numerous characteristics of an apparition. His body fades to transparency at key moments, allowing the flickering St. George's Eve flames to shine through him and the knives of various ill-prepared attackers to slip through his flesh. It is worth noting that throughout the entire course of the novel, there is no firsthand narration describing the instant of a vampire biting somebody;[18] in *Dracula*, the emphasis is always on the surrounding psychological sensations and the medical aftermath. Even in Mina's account of her own assault (relayed via Seward's account of her description), she shifts from "He placed his reeking lips upon my throat!" to "he took his foul, awful, sneering mouth away. I saw it drip with the fresh blood!" (251) with the actual particulars of the bite

[18] Mina's description of her assault by the Count is the only time we have any textual description of a vampiric assault, and the record of her describing it is made by Seward (241).

itself being lost in her insensible "half-swoon." The described sensations of vampiric assault are never solely a matter of physiological mechanics. There is always a component of the mesmeric in each vampiric episode.

And yet–the Count is still very much embodied. He has a body, described in exacting detail by Jonathan Harker as he attempts to take his physiognomy. While his body is changeable, it is not the wholly immaterial apparition proposed by authors like Mayo. The emphasis on the scent of his rank breath; the animal pointedness of his ears, teeth, and nails; and the color and quality of his skin and hair are pointed and clearly meant to convey the sense of an embodied being. Furthermore, while the novel never directly shows us the moment in which he attacks his victims, it is *saturated* in medical evidence of his predations. The immediate presence of the vampiric in *Dracula* is experienced in sensations, trances, and swoons, but the aftermath is always presented with great physical specificity. We are given thorough descriptions of the wounds the Count inflicts, of the calloused edges of Lucy's neck wounds, of the vivid tableau of Mina's climactic assault, of the medical diagnoses and procedures used in the wake of attacks. It is clear that the vampire in Dracula is meant to be taken as a material being, even if the scope of his power is immaterial. While this might all seem typical of the vampire genre as it existed when Stoker was writing, I propose that what Stoker did with his embodied vampire was unique. While his research seems very much concerned with the phenomenon of vampires as psychic entities[19] and their connection to trance states, the discovery and hunting of Dracula is characterized throughout by an emphasis on the

[19] While Stoker best known source on vampirism (Emily Gerard's *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1876)) is not a treatise on psychical phenomena, the creatures from Romanian folklore it describes as vampires should not necessarily be taken as embodied, mobile corpses; as Christina Artenie has pointed out, the stregoica that is central to Gerard's descriptions is an entity that might be read as a witch *or* as a ghost (12).

sciences. Van Helsing–eccentric and inaccurate as his scientific claims may be–introduces the concept of vampire in relation to established medical phenomena. In particular, he does so by a variety of psychical powers, including hypnotism, which is the point at which his incredulous, skeptical student finally concedes that some of his litany of oddities *has* been proven:

> But yet we see around us every day the growth of new beliefs, which think themselves new; and which are yet but the old, which pretend to be young – like the fine ladies at the opera. I suppose now you do not believe in corporeal transference. No? Nor in materialisation. No? Nor in astral bodies. No? Nor in the reading of thought. No? Nor in hypnotism–"
>
> "Yes," I said. "Charcot has proved that pretty well" (171).

The point at which the weirdness of vampiric activity is first tied to something smacking of scientific legitimacy is with Charcot, whose influence on medical hypnotism throughout the later half of the nineteenth century cannot be understated. Here, Stoker marries the mesmeric, incorporeal figure of the psychic vampire to the embodied model of Charcotian hypnosis, and in doing so, he creates a hybrid mesmerist/hypnotist for whom magnetic and bodily fluids might well be one and the same. Dracula is a type of mesmerist whose incursions transcend the psychic; he is an operator with the reach of a vitalist model and all the threats of an embodied one. He can corrupt and transform the human body from a distance.

Anne Stiles proposes that we can read Dracula in relation to the novel's mentions of cortical localization and animal experimentation–that we might understand him as the ultimate vivisector. She claims that:

> [D]racula replicates Ferrier's experiments in pervere and distressing ways. He first "narcotises" his victims via hypnosis, dulling the pain of initial penetration. Victims later wake to pain and blood loss, similar to how Ferrier's animals regained consciousness after their anesthesia had worn off. Dracula then electrically stimulates victim's brains using telepathy (70).

She draws a clear equivalency between the act of psychic coercion and the physical cutting of the body. However, she presents this argument in a fashion where we are to take the psychic as signifying the biological; Dracula's mesmeric transformation stands in for the surgeon's scalpel. I wish to collapse these considerations and explain Dracula is an entity whose mesmerism reaches into the physiology of the human brain and alters it on its own terms: both physical *and* metaphysical. As a vitalist mesmerist, he is capable of invading minds and bodies by remote means, without having to hold to the physiological constraints that Braid sets out; as a Charcotian hypnotist, however, his intrusions are innately physical–and what's more than that, they alter something seemingly immutably. The main characteristic that separates Charcotian hypnosis from Braidian hypnosis is in its hypothesis that the capacity to be hypnotized was a unique characteristic of hysteria, and that hypnosis could not be performed on individuals not already possessed of some form of biological irregularity. For Dracula to have the range of hypnotic power that he has in a Charcotian paradigm, he must either have victims already predisposed to hypnosis (and thereby prone to hysteria and the great mass of nineteenth-century baggage that comes with it) or he must be able to render victims into hysterics. The mesmeric/hypnotic process that Stoker outlines is already poised to

produce the sort of monstrous, degenerative transformations that lie at the heart of the novel's horrors, and this is without even a drop of blood being spilt or imbibed.

If we read Dracula foremost as a hypno-mesmerist and secondly as a vampire, Van Helsing's theatrical arguments about immortal parrots and airless toads might strike us as less absurd. We might even ponder whether Dracula might be read as a narrative that has little to do with sanguinary vampirism at all. Stoker clearly seems to have believed in the reality of trance states as per his interview with Stoddard, and he makes it clear in his 1910 book *Famous Imposters* that he holds mesmerism to be an established medical science, even if he denounces Mesmer himself as fraudulent (95-103). His other fantastical novels all have a veneer of scientific explanation for the strange events taking place in them. *The Jewel of Seven Stars* dedicates a chapter to how ancient Egyptian astronomers might have been working their arts in relation to the observable properties of electro-magnetic radiation emanating from space (190-5). *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909), which is read in conjunction with *Dracula* far less than it probably ought to be, is staged as a vampiric narrative in which a psychical researcher discovers the vampire at the heart of the story to be a dissembler (19-22). Even the nearly incomprehensible *Lair of the White Worm* (1912) tries at arguing for the scientific reality of giant primordial worm women, when Nathaniel de Salis gives his long rationalization as to how alterations of prehistoric metabolisms could create the horrors underlying his monstrous neighbor, Arabella Marsh (439-42). That Van Helsing should finally break through to Seward with an escalating list of psychic phenomena feels as though it is on the precipice of these other Stokerian explanations of the supernatural. Stoker will not make the additional leap to confirm vampires as operating wholly under what he would have assumed to be

scientifically valid paradigms of hypnotism and/or magnetism (170-3). However, there is a suggestion here that the Count is explicable to men such as Seward before his change of heart–that there might be an order by which vampires operate that would fall in step with contemporary science without any unexplained diablerie. We are offered the suggestion that Lucy Westenra, like the victims mentioned in Mayo, might be in a "death trace," that elements of her initial victimization were a result of her constitution as a somnambulist, that the Count's descent into vampirism was instigated by his role as an alchemist–might the Count's powers be read purely as a result of trances and coincidences?

Dracula's vampirism is a great tangle of converging paradigms, and it is little wonder that other authors have taken it as a stand in for biological degeneration, for both colonialist and reverse colonialist powers, for queer sexuality and forbidden attractions, for any other number of elements fit to plague the Victorian psyche. It is easy to read it as standing for any and all of these things; however, looking to the specifics of Stoker's research into vampire lore, psychical phenomena, and medical science, we can see that it has a few specific traits that we can use to position it in relation to the mesmeric phenomena we are examining. It is indisputably mesmeric just as it is embodied—supernatural just as it is scientific. I am in agreement with Stiles that Stoker's portrayal of a simultaneously mesmeric and embodied vampire may be taken as a commentary on the potential horrors of medical science, but what I find more striking is that it sets the stage for supernaturalizing medicine and bodies altogether: for offering us a vision where mesmeric fluid accompanies the flow of bodily fluid. The Count shows us mesmerism that operates in conjunction with bodily mechanics we can both apprehend and comprehend, and he does so in relation to contemporary theories of Charcotian hypnosis.

Stokerian vampirism infects bodies with spiritualist properties, and suggests to us that the mesmeric might someday be—or perhaps already is—within the province of everyday medical science.

Trains and Telegraphs

Dracula suggests a mesmeric logic to human bodies, and its supernaturalization of the mundane extends from biology to other aspects of the material world. Stoker's insistence on a dual psychic/sanguinary vampirism is in keeping with the technologically advanced setting in which he places his vampire. Much as *Dracula* foregrounds a barometric realism in its rendering of the storms—much as Stoker sought medical realism to the text, consulting with his brother William Thornley to fine tune the minutiae of blood transfusion protocol and the localization the motor cortex (Stoker, *Notes for Dracula* 179-85; Klinger 203)—the narrative is enmeshed in accurate descriptions of contemporary transportation and communication. The Count, in readying himself for his journey west, is discovered by Harker to be lounging around the sofa reading a Bradshaw's guide. The novel itself opens with an account of train travel and commentary as to its rapidity or lack thereof ("3 May. Bistritz. –Left Munich at 8.35 p.m. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6.46, but train was an hour late" (9)). Mina Harker, amongst her many other secretarial virtues, boasts that she has undertaken to memorize the local train times to be a better help to her husband. While its

topic matter is clearly fantastical and its characters all variants on broad, simple archetypes,[20] *Dracula* seems very concerned with being true to life in its train tables.

Stoker's obsession with trains is unrelenting. Several pages of his notes are copied out times for various modes of transport, and characters seldom take any cab, train, coach, or boat without remarking on the timing. His zeal for accuracy with regards to transport is such that it bends the logic of the narrative around it. While editors have commented more than once as to the inconstant nature of Stoker's chronology, there is at least one instance where an illogical delay in the story can be traced back to the book's obsession with transport. In Chapter 24, Van Helsing insists that the company be prepared to leave by the next day (October 6th) for Varna, only to have the next entry discussing the party's trip take place nearly a week later on October 11th. While annotators like Clive Leatherdale have pointed out this discrepancy with confusion (Leatherdale, Note 3062), there is a very straightforward explanation as to the delay: the Orient Express would not have run until Thursday in the 1890s, and in 1893—the commonly accepted year in which the novel takes place—October 11th fell on a Thursday (*Cook's Continental Time Table, Steamship and Air Services Guide* 9). Elsewhere, Stoker seems committed to keeping accurate accounts of time tables, even going so far as to alter the train times given in the 1897 stage play performance of *Dracula*, which was read out once to a limited audience merely as a device to preserve Stoker's copyright claims (86). Despite most of the script having been hastily copied and

[20] Stoker unfailingly wrote the same series of characters across all of his novels, and there is scarcely a Stokerian production that wants for a handsome young lawyer, a man-brained idealized woman, a stalwart American, and a character or three with personal details lifted from Stoker's physiology and/or biography.

pasted into play format, the specific train times mentioned by the Harkers differ from those in the original text, presumably out of Stoker's sense of accuracy.

Arata and Brantlinger have attested to the ways in which *Dracula* may be read as a narrative about travel and more specifically about invasion. What I wish to focus on, however, are the very practical considerations as to how a vampire fails as a tourist or a conqueror when his progress is impeded by the material effects of sunlight and tides, and the mystical effects of apotropaics. While the Count attacks his victims via fluids—be they magnetic or sanguinary—all of his attempts to move bodily in a fluid-like fashion meet with resistance. As per relatively well-established vampire lore of the period, he is limited in his ability to cross running water, to act during daytime, or to enter places warded with appropriate objects (garlic or cross). However, Stoker took it upon himself to add additional hindrances to the Count's movement. Borrowing, no doubt, from the supernatural mechanics at play in the Lyceum's much lauded performance of *Faust*, Stoker was responsible for introducing the idea that a vampire requires invitation to enter a building. He added a variety of provisos and additional complications to vampiric rules concerning water and daylight travel. Dracula may only transform at noon, sunrise, or sunset; he must bury himself in sanctified earth; he is bound specifically by the change of ebb or flow tide. Even though the Count may travel in a variety of forms: as animals, as mist, and even as motes of light, he may not replicate the uninhibited flow the fluids that form the basis of his powers. He requires a laborious series of actions in order that he might invade Lucy Westenra's bedchamber in Chapter 11, having to go to a zoo to ensorcel the wolf Bersickir that he might break through a window sealed with garlic, after which he subsequently has to drift in as moonlight, drug the domestics, and return to

assault his prey. The chase the protagonists undertake to track him across his various properties in London is one in which the Count must navigate around considerations of the flow of the Thames. Once he is in the final stretch of his journey homeward, he must contend with prolonged periods of helplessness and dark as he relies on his retainers to carry him home. In the finale, where the Count is finally killed by the combined actions of Harker and Morris, he is not even capable of moving. The mesmerist is suddenly limited to the operations of his eyes, and the "look of hate […] turned to triumph" (325) can effect no change. Dracula's threat of invasion—of infection and corruption—is hampered at every turn by his immobility. His desire to "go through the crowded streets of […] London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is" (26) speaks to a desire for free movement that is ultimately impossible for him.

At the moment that Mina Harker's attempts to combat the Count through their shared mesmeric bond is thwarted, she alters her participation in the activities of her fellow vampire hunters. At first, she merely withdraws from their company during meetings—hoping to keep Dracula from intercepting their plans. Later, however, she draws up a memorandum regarding transportation methods that is used to predict when and where the Count is heading. *When mesmerism fails, the heroes' recourse is to transit.* Dracula is capable of actions on the level of biology and fluids, infecting the bodies and minds of his victims with ease. However, he is incapable of effective infection or invasion on the geographical level. The protagonists are –at best–amateur mesmerists in comparison to an ancient vampire lord, but they are able to traverse the network of railways and stagecoaches with ease. If the Count's vampirism/mesmerism

supernaturalizes and invades material bodies, if vampirism takes on a medical dimension—then material transportation proves a material counteractant. The world of modern transport surrounds and rejects the Count as the foreign body he is.

The other networked technology that the Harkers and their allies have at their disposal is that of communication, although for much of the novel, letters and telegrams fail. The letters that Harker entrusts to the Count's servitors are delivered back to their master. Mina's letters to Lucy are never received by her as she falls ill and dies. At one of the most crucial points in the text, a misaddressed telegram prevents Seward from attending Lucy on the night of the Count's final assault upon her. In the meantime, the Count is capable of communicating with the animal world, with telepathically conveying instructions to Renfield, and with compelling his victims to follow him. All these methods of communication—of course—are mesmeric in nature, and it would appear upon observing these facts that telegraphs do not trump the supernatural as trains do. In most cases of communications failure on the part of the protagonists, speed and timing are key factors. Communications between Britain and Transylvania suffer delays. Van Helsing's crucial telegram—informing Seward that he must go to Hillingham to watch over and protect Lucy–arrives one day too late. Whereas the Count can immediately invade thoughts or issue commands to his animal or human thralls, the humans opposing him cannot achieve the same instantaneous effect, even in an era where communication had become more rapid and convenient.

Nevertheless, I would argue that the network of shared communications also serves as a counterpoint and counteractant to the Count's mesmeric network: telegraphy

to oppose telepathy.[21] The emphasis on modern communications technology in Dracula is not upon its rapidity but on its permanency. Where letters and telegraphs fail, diaries, receipts, and recordings succeed. Stoker, who seems almost as in love with communications technology as he is with train tables, is primarily interested in speed as it pertains to recordkeeping rather than as it pertains to direct person to person messaging. *Dracula*—as an epistolary novel—is unique in that it provides a reasonable and realistic framework through which characters can actually produce the massive amounts of writing required to describe a novel's plot in documentary form. The bulk of the writing in *Dracula* comes to us in the form of diaries kept in shorthand and transcripts of a diary kept via phonograph. Unlike most epistolary novels, in which we must suspend disbelief as we read the fifty-page letters and multi-chapter diary entries characters are producing, we are presented with epistolary writing produced with the aid of stenography and phonography. There is an assurance generally not present in this medium that characters are able to capture what is happening to them—more or less—in the moment, even if a communication of that experience may take time. Unlike the epistolary works of Collins—who was cited multiple times by Stoker's contemporaries as Dracula's forerunner—we do not encounter any long accounts solicited by the principal characters to explain events long past. We are told at the novels onset that "all the records chosen are exactly contemporary."

Throughout *Dracula,* characters comment upon the extent to which they are able to accurately reproduce their experiences and observations. Harker, immediately after

[21] Other scholars have responded to the novel's overabundant technology in a variety of ways, with R. J. E. Riley drawing attention to the way that phonographic reproducibility echoes vampiric reproduction (104-5) and Sharon Gilstrap–taking a rather opposite approach to my own–noting how the gradual dissolution of "authentic documents" serves to preserve, rather than dismantle, the Count's power (90-3).

being approached by the three women in Dracula's castle, quotes *Hamlet* in the need to put down his observations to counteract the shock to his brain. Mina, in describing her diary to Lucy calls it "an exercise book" and remarks that "I shall try to do what I see lady journalists do, interviewing and writing descriptions and trying to remember conversations. I am told that, with a little practice, one can remember all that goes on or that one hears said during a day" (56). While there are obviously lapses in the believability of the protagonist's records—what with all the excruciatingly reproduced dialects and uncharacteristically wordy newspaper articles—*Dracula* is still an epistolary novel uniquely concerned with establishing the believability of its own construction. Mina—as the principal collator of the text shows us in detail how both the heroes ability to manipulate documentation and transport work together against a man who is supernaturally untraceable and mobile. She is the character who explains again and again how documents were translated, typed, circulated, and copied. It is she who is able to inhabit, record, quantify, and describe the vibrant, mobile world around her that Dracula is prevented from becoming a part of. He is, as Van Helsing puts it, "even more prisoner than the slave of the galley, than the madman in his cell" (211), and his attempts to invade and infect the world cannot make him a living and functional part of it. While he deploys attacks that operate on the level of literal magnetic vitalism and that even descend into the matter of animal biology, he is not able to actually connect to the world as it exists. On the most basic level, he is unable to move—both in human society and in the mapped world that humanities railways and telegraph lines cross.

Light of All Lights

Mina not only provides documentation of how the vampire hunters use contemporary technologies to match the Count's powers and exploit his weaknesses. What Mina does as the collator, transcriber and functional author of Dracula is to create a web of human relationships that replicates once more the mesmeric web of vampirism. While numerous authors have commented on narrative ramifications of *Dracula* as an epistolary novel (Gilstrap 74-8, Seed 71-4), it is significant in particular that we examine *Dracula* as an epistolary novel that not only creates conceits for how its voluminous wordcount is produced but that shows us narration as a collaborative and dynamic exercise. *Dracula* the novel continually being read, referenced, and written about throughout the process of its composition. Throughout the text are numerous points at which characters are clearly reading segments of the assembled novel and assembling more writing in reaction to them. Van Helsing is only able to understand the true history of Lucy's condition by going through letters we have already read in chapters prior. The Harkers are only able to confirm Jonathan's experiences through Mina's transcription and distribution of his diary. The vampire-hunting heroes come together as a unified force through the collation and reproduction of the documents that comprise the novel. *Dracula* is an epistolary novel that is continually in the process of its own assembly. It is–after a fashion–always reading and writing itself. What Mina does as the editor in chief of its production is to bring together not only the evidence that is used to catch Dracula in the actual hunt after him; it also serves as a counteractant against the form of invasion Dracula enacts. Mina's ultimate mesmeric act is not just to counteract Dracula as a mesmerist but to use narration to do mesmerism's work.

In the course of characters continually re-reading and re-writing one another's accounts, the protagonists derive the ability to re-*feel* the agonies that their fellow sufferers have undergone. This is–perhaps–most clearly articulated at the moment where Mina undertakes to transcribe John Seward's sprawling phonographic record of Lucy's decline. Seward (in a moment where he is recording his reaction to Mina's transcription–an act which will later, of course, be transcribed) says the following:

> I have been more touched than I can say by your grief. That is a wonderful machine, but it is cruelly true. It told me, in its very tones, the anguish of your heart. It was like a soul crying out to Almighty God. No one must hear them spoken ever again! See, I have tried to be useful. I have copied out the words on my typewriter, and none other need now hear your heart beat, as I did (197).

Mina's transcriptions, however, do not sterilize Seward's pronouncements of their emotionality. We–as readers–are obviously unable to evaluate what Seward's "original" expressions of heartache are like; they do not exist. However, it is clear at other points that Mina does not aim to strip Seward's language of its sentiment, but to record it faithfully. Later, during the course of her own premature funerary mass, she faithfully transcribes the wavering break up of his own words: "I–I cannot go on–words–and–v-voice–f-fail m-me!" (288) While we might not be privy to the precise transfer of emotion that occurs between the narrating heroes, we are shown repeatedly how they *must* encounter, experience, and redirect those sentiments. Still elsewhere, Mina remarks on Quincey Morris' use of the endearment "little girl" to refer to her, highlighting the parallel between her and Lucy. When Mina finally reads Jonathan's journaling, she exclaims that it "gets hold of my imagination and tinges everything with something of its

own colour" (162), although it later proves to be the means of revivifying Jonathan from his weakened state. What's more, the act of Mina and Van Helsing reading his lurid account of the supernatural allows them to affirm its validity. It is the act of *feeling with* one another through shared documents that enables the principals one to affirm those emotions in the other. The act of writing Dracula is–on a very basic level–a therapeutic one in addition to an evidentiary one. While Robert Menke observes that all of these rerecordings and re-inscribings might be understood as "lossy," removing the text more and more from "authentic documents" that are all burnt and lost by the narrative's end (144), I would argue that they succeed in transferring sentiment even if they fail at reproducing the character's exact experiences. While the material proofs of Dracula's embodied existence may never be replicated, one can argue that some trace of his mesmeric self is preserved. The ability for characters to share in their collective suffering through the written word gives them the ability to confront and counteract the Count in the space of thoughts and emotions: in the subtle energies that mesmerism trades in.

What the heroes of *Dracula* are doing–and what Mina in particular is doing–is to allow for a transfer of information and emotions where the Count would leave the heroes ignorant and isolated. The Count works to alter and transform biology while simultaneously working via traditionalist vitalist mechanisms; he embodies the negative potential of both mesmerism and hypnotism. When he attempts to overtake these networks through which men had long theorized that humans were able to influence one another, the human element of influence moves onto new forms and avenues. With the mesmeric web contaminated (and contaminated in a way that leaves characters biologically vulnerable), the ways in which characters interface with one another shows

us how we may use the medium of writing itself to transmit thought, Unlike the Latimer's letter in "The Lifted Veil," memoranda and missives here enable us to access human emotionality rather than constraining it. It is not through any supernatural sorcery that the Count is thwarted, but with the mundane particulars of writing, reading, transcribing, and feeling. *Dracula* is a story in which the day-to-day human intercourse mimics the supernatural in a way drains it of its potential: it is all about the nullification of the magical by the mundane. In a fashion similar to how documentation exorcises George Osbourne's figurative ghost, *Dracula's* "mass of type-writing" (326) serves as a counteractant to the very real mesmerist it concerns.

At several points throughout the novel's depictions of mesmerism and vampirsm, the victim of vampiric powers makes a direct plea to characters not present whom they hope will eventually read their words and understand their plight. Jonathan Harker, in particular, peppers his early journal entries with invocations of his wife, hoping that even if he cannot reach her, his words may. During his first premonitions as to the haunted nature of Transylvania, he writes "if this book should ever reach Mina before I do, let it bring my good-bye" (13), and at the moment of his escape from the castle, he bids Mina adieu twice more. When he is assaulted by the three vampiresses in the Count's castle, he feels it necessary to recount the sexual desire he feels while mesmerized in ways that acknowledge Mina's feelings ("It is not good to note this down, lest someday it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain; but it is the truth" (42).) Despite the increasingly dire outlook as regards his escape and the improbability of the journal being retrieved should he not survive, Jonathan frames his documentation in anticipation of Mina's receipt of it. Much as Dracula's influence reaches across the ocean to cast its spell on

Renfield, Jonathan's initial narrative is directed to Mina despite the miles and circumstances that separate her from its author. When his words do—at last—reach her, months later when she feels it her duty to finally read his sealed diary, she is not only filled with the pity and understanding her husband desired of her, but she furthermore feels it her immediate obligation to prepare his words for further transmission. Her impulse upon receiving this document in which her husband unburdens himself to her is to transcribe it. She writes: "I shall get my typewriter this very hour and begin transcribing. Then we shall be ready for other eyes if required" (161).

Lucy too—who "feels influences more acutely than other people do" (85)–is similarly driven to create a document that both conveys her sentiments to her partner and serves to transmit information meant to be put to use by unknown future parties. Her account as to the events of the Count's final assault upon her end with:

> I shall hide this paper in my breast, where they shall find it when they come to lay me out. My dear mother gone! It is time that I go too. Good-bye, dear Arthur, if I should not survive this night. God keep you, dear, and God help me! (132)

As Jonathan calls out to Mina, Lucy calls out to Arthur; both of them prepare their documents with the hope and anticipation that they will be received. Dracula's final assault upon Lucy is never revealed to us, and he has taken on the vampiric form most associated with trance: the "myriad of little specks [...] wheeling and circling round like [a] pillar of dust" (131). It is in this shape that the women in the castle appear to hypnotize Jonathan and that Dracula appears to lull Mina to sleep. At the moment where the Count is in his most fluid and mesmeric shape, however, we do not see the trace of his final actions beyond what Lucy transmits: a message filled with sentiment and hopes

for a future she is aware she may not see. The document does not directly make its way to Arthur, of course, being intercepted by Van Helsing, who—like so many other of *Dracula's* authors—must wait until Mina is able to assist him in making sense of it. Van Helsing's conclusions about Lucy's vampirism, and the memoranda's eventual circulation, must wait until Mina's is able to transmit her first typewritten copy of a journal. The moment is one framed in terms of overwhelming brightness—in keeping with Mina's eventual epithet as "light of all lights." Upon reading it, Van Helsing remarks: "This paper is as sunshine. It opens the gate to me. I am daze, I am dazzle, with so much light, and yet clouds roll in behind the light every time" (165). Transcription here is an illuminating force: sunlight standing in opposition to the vampire's moonlight forms, written reproduction that outpaces vampiric irreproducibility.

Not only do characters in *Dracula* write in anticipation that their immediate experiences will someday be received, but once characters are able to exchange documentation, they experience transfers of energy and of feeling. Jonathan, who is given over to enervation and weakness following his brain fever, returns to full vitality once he is able to process his experiences through Mina's circulation of them. He emerges as "full of life and hope and determination" (202) once he has his own recollections confirmed and can be sent off to gather more evidence regarding them. The psychological drain of his encounters with vampires is reversed through the sharing of documents. Later on–during Chapter 17, at which point Mina has managed to compile, copy, and distribute what functionally consists of a draft of *Dracula* Chapters 1-16—she is able to serve as a surrogate Lucy to her friend's bereft suitors. She is able to bear witness to Seward's personal suffering, to allow Arthur to unburden himself to her, and to re-play the

highlights of Quincey's moment of intimacy with his idol (sharing a kiss and allowing the nickname "little girl" (204). Lucy's sympathies for the men in love with her are transmitted to Mina via her letters and then *continue through her*. The undertaking of collating and arranging *Dracula* in this portion of the novel allows the protagonists to not only have their experiences verified through the narration of others, but the act of collaborative narration allows their feelings and vitality to blend together as well. Collaborative storytelling here proves an anodyne to vampirism.

The work of narration as a counteractant to Dracula's mesmeric invasions reaches a culminating point in Mina's funeral oration—the moment where even through layers of transcription and copying cannot efface the stuttering cry of Seward's outburst. Mina, who at this point is infected by the Count's blood and is locked in a psychic bond with him, is not only poised to thwart the Count through literal telepathy and through her organization with regards to transportation networks. She is able to set the terms of her own death before the vampire might claim her. Before they undertake their journey to Transylvania, Mina tells Jonathan:

> You must read it over me some day. Whatever maybe the issue of all this fearful state of things, it will be a sweet thought to all or some of us. You, my dearest, will I hope read it, for then it will be in your voice in my memory for ever–come what may! (288)

Here Mina preempts the circumstances that led to Jonathan and Lucy's written farewells. She anticipates her coming death and is able to establish a connection between her loved ones and herself that she might be able to draw upon. She is arranging, through ritual oration, that she will be able to die upon a farewell already given. Mina—as full of soppy

Stokerianisms as her funeral might be—rehearses her death in what proves to be a cathartic emotional event for those bearing witness. She is able to write an anticipated end of her own narrative that the Count is unable to countermand, and in doing so it almost becomes fitting that Dracula—for all his grandiose speeches—is so utterly inconsequential in his end. Control of the novel—of what is written, recorded, and in this instance spoken–not only allows Mina to thwart the power of vampires to infect and infiltrate; it allows her to lay a claim to death that vampires cannot.

Mina throughout *Dracula* functions not only as New Woman, but as a new mesmerist, and *Dracula* is a novel that ironically showcases how outmoded and insufficient classical mesmerism is. It is not a realist or even a particularly realistic novel, but it pits its antagonist against the reality in which Stoker was invested: one in which human ingenuity and interconnectivity allowed people to experience one another's feelings and thoughts through the purely mundane mechanisms of technology and shared documentation. Furthermore, the novel's construction of *narrative* as something produced by the conditions of everyday people riding trains, writing in diaries, and making sense of the world through collaboration shows us a way in which the functions of mesmerism and hypnotism that are directly present and prominent in the text might be supplanted by somebody writing them into the fabric of everyday living. As far from a realist novel as *Dracula* is, it is a work enmeshed within the fabric of reality, with both its narrative threat and its antagonist itself being rendered inert through a networked reality more potent than the one envisioned by Mesmer, Braid or Charcot. Mina, through her collation of documents, transcription of material, and decisions as to what stories are told,

offers us a model as to how those connections we encounter in our daily lives may give us something *like* a supernatural power.

Dracula as a novel is a work obsessed with marrying the metaphysical to the physical, and the medicalized, embodied vampire with whom it shares its name is a perfect case of hybrid hypno-mesmerist, functioning both as a Charcotian hypnotist and as a traditional mesmerist. Suffused with concerns about vivisection, cortical mapping, and the materiality of human bodies, *Dracula* in many ways has its true horror rooted in what is *not* supernatural: in the materialist world that vampires–in making evident their soullessness–disprove. It not only refutes the notion that we are in a world wholly physical–divorced from the promise of any spiritual existence–but it goes on to spiritualize the mundane: to position the fin de siècle landscape of telegraphs and trains as something that replicates and counteracts the mesmeric logic upon which vampires operate. More so than the incursions made by *Dracula*'s title character, the framework upon which he operates is shown to permeate Stoker's world even at what must seem its most boring and unremarkable. We are invited by *Dracula* to see our commerce with other human beings, be it at railway stops, telegraph offices, or through letters or even novels, as having power comparable to those attributed to psychics and monsters, and we are shown how narration and narrative collaboration extends this power. At the end of the century, we begin to trace one way in which the logic of mesmerism became an intuitive part of our daily landscape, even as it began to cleave away from any overt expression of or belief in mesmerism itself.

"Rustling of the Blood": George Moore and the Respiritualization of Charcot

The 1890s saw two novels focused on the lives of a prima donna opera singer who faces neuralgic pain, who is entangled in multiple love affairs, who is compelled onto the stage, and who eventually undertakes a career governed by trance and hypnosis. The better known of these, George du Maurier's 1895 *Trilby,* is known as *the* nineteenth-century mesmerism novel: a wild success that cemented the archetypal Svengali as a corrupting mesmeric force and that stands as a landmark in the same decade that saw *Dracula* and *The Beetle* in 1897.[22] The other is George Moore's *Evelyn Innes* (1898), a comparatively obscure work that tracks one woman's seductions into bodily love, into mysticism, and eventually into Catholic austerity and which uses throughout the explicit language of hypnosis and Charcot. With little scholarship presently existing for this latter overlooked text, I wish to draw attention to a text that is both relentlessly realist and overtly mesmeric. Unlike *Trilby*, which veers into the realm of the Gothic where it departs from its exuberant bohemianism, *Evelyn Innes* is a novel that–like *Esther Waters*–concerns itself with the immediacy of human bodies and psychological states. Evelyn gives forth a "magnetic stirring" (294); she is "hypnotised by her audience" (257); she comes to surrender to the "continual hypnotism" of life (480)–and all throughout, we track the particulars of her physical condition and the immediacy of her

[22] I acknowledge that this opening narrative comparison owes its composition to the one with which Jules Law opens his 2018 chapter on *Esther Waters* in describing its narrative parallels with Stoker's *Dracula*, describing how both novels are concerned with the circulation of a bodily fluid, terminating in the creation of a child in receipt of those fluids and destined to fulfill the demands of British imperial interests (159).

thought in ways that read true to daily life. Moore falls just short–as Thackeray does–of overtly endorsing the mesmeric, but the hypnotic permeates his storytelling in ways that are explicitly signposted. His descriptions of Evelyn's dream states and moments of trance invoke the mesmeric far more directly than any realist author hitherto covered.

As with Thackeray, Moore directly alludes to the mesmeric/hypnotic sciences of his day. A passage in *Evelyn Innes* explicitly mentions the work of Jean Martin Charcot and positions his discussions of these phenomena in relation to Charcot's work. In Chapter 23 of the novel, Evelyn's lover Ulick Dean discusses Charcot's limitations:

> He held that we are always warned of our destiny and it had been proved that in the hypnotic sleep, when the pulse of life was weakest, almost at pause, there was a heightening of the powers of vision and hearing. A patient whose eyes had been covered with layers of cotton wool had been able to read the newspaper. Another patient had been able to tell what was passing in another mind, and at a distance of a mile. The only explanation that Charcot could give of this second experiment was that the knowledge had been conveyed through the rustling of the blood in the veins, which the hypnotic sleep had enabled the patient to hear. And Ulick submitted that this scientific explanation was more incredible than any spiritual one (299-300).

In this remarkable moment, Ulick seems to propose a return from the embodied dynamics of hypnosis back to the vitalist theories of mesmerism, and–as we shall see–*Evelyn Innes* is very much a novel concerned with moving from the bodily to the spiritual. However, something I wish to draw our attention to is how little absurd Charcot's whispering blood actually seems in Moore's narratives. Well known for his explicit depictions of the body

and its functions, Moore is continually describing characters thoughts, feelings, and connections with others in terms of purely physical sensations–trading at times in Eliotesque metaphors regarding the natural world and at other times eliding over specific thoughts to delve into the purely sensory apprehension of a revelation. Despite all of the narrative's eleventh-hour attempts to re-establish its heroine as moving towards the purely spiritual, blood throughout *Evelyn Innes* seems to do nothing but rustle. Evelyn's anxieties sublimate themselves into physical pain, her talents are imagined in terms of the capacity and size of her bosom, and throughout both her performances on stage and her entanglement with men, she is imbued with unmistakable characteristics of embodied hysteria. Grace Kehler–who dubs *Evelyn Innes* one of the first experiments in stream-of consciousness narrative–argues that Evelyn embodies the "the Wagnerian and psychological fantasy of the female who tends to hysteria" (154), and that the novel's shifting portrayal of consciousness is "wholly implicated in the physical instincts common to all organic beings" (150).

This intermingling of the mesmeric and the hypnotic–the spiritual and the physical–is not unique to Evelyn, and I argue that Moore's best-known work, *Esther Waters,* is threaded through with similar moments of in which read as mesmeric instances reconfigured into the particulars of bodily sensation. While Esther is not described as magnetized, hypnotized, and mesmerized in the same way that Evelyn is, she is placed in a similar position as the performing hysteric, thrown into the center of medical theater as her reproductive body asserts itself over her conscious mind. She experiences her most significant revelations not as discernable, discrete thoughts but as moments of intense bodily sensation. What is explicitly hypnotic in *Evelyn Innes* is still implicit in *Esther*

Waters. From his early work in *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886), Moore hints at human experience as having a mesmeric quality, describing the sensation of youth and the vibrancy of specific locations as "magnetic" (78) and questioning whether love itself is "a magnetism which we sometimes possess and exercise unconsciously?" (182) It is in a work like *Evelyn Innes* that we see an explicit blueprint for how one might navigate the real, enfleshed world we inhabit through hypnotism, and in *Esther Waters* the same structure is described even if the hypnotic apparatus is not explicitly named. Both Evelyn and Esther unite the mesmeric and bodily in ways that echo Charcot's renowned hysteric subjects, falling away from their conscious selves in ways that align them with archetypes of both theater and medicine.

Additionally, even in instances where Moore does not assert bodily sensation as hypnotic, he adheres to a hypnotic logic as to how human's think: with their bodies–with their breasts, their wombs, and their organs. Something more is going on here than Charcotian hypnotism. Throughout both works I will examine, Moore's use of bodies as vectors for hypnotic sensation still gestures to the promise of the mesmeric model. As the earlier quoted section from *Evelyn Innes* above indicates, there *is* something more compelling about the spiritual explanation for these connections. In his unrelenting depictions of thought as embodied, however, Moore is also reintroducing the trappings of spiritualism to the day-to-day biological realities of human experience. A woman's frenzy in the presence of her lover, a mother's reaction to the sight of her child, a penitent's reaction to the promise of religion: all of these scenes play out in the language of bodies while simultaneously holding the promise of spiritual revelation. While he trades in a vision of human biology that falls in line with Charcot and his hysterics,

Moore's heroines experience states that hearken back to the age of Mesmer. The naturalist experiment, as Moore conducts it, paints us a picture of the forces acting upon human lives that echoes the findings of the late eighteenth century just as surely as it does those of the late nineteenth. As a naturalist, Moore's examination of human passion and impulse manages to trace the logic of both Charcotian and mesmeric trance. Even when invoking the supposed material sciences of his era, some aspect of his work still calls back to the foundational theories of vitalism upon which hypnosis was built.

Wagnerian Hysteria and Charcotian Love Affairs

Moore was living in Paris at the time of Charcot's most noteworthy exhibitions regarding hysteria and hypnosis, although we do not have any insight as to when and how he became familiar with Charcot's theories and writing.[23] Charcot, like Braid, fundamentally believed in a physiological basis for hypnotic phenomena; what set his work apart was how he interlinked the trance to hysteria and to a medically materialist understanding of both conditions (Ferber 123; Theodoridou 196). He explicitly rejected vitalism, claiming that it "detached from the organism the principles of life in order to make them rule over it as capricious tyrants" (qtd. in Owen 21) and was emphatic that human thought/psychology was "necessarily formed in [the] human mould" (qtd. in Owen 14). While Charcot distanced himself from earlier historical claims that "the origin of all hysteria lies in the genital organs," he was emphatic that hysteria was a physiologically borne condition, identifying specific bodily markers such as ishuria

[23] During the time when he would have been most likely to encounter Charcot theory (1873-80 when he was living in Paris), there is very little record of his undertakings or interactions with persons of note. Biographer Adrian Frazier notes that there are "not two dozen rock-solid dates concerning Moore's life" (35).

(retention of urine) and hemiaenesthesia (insensibility on one side of the body) as indicative of various subtypes of hysteria and advocating for therapeutic techniques such as the physical compression of the ovarian region in its treatment.[24] He reckoned hysteria among "a considerable number of pathological conditions evidently situated in the nervous system, which leave no material or appreciable trace on the cadaver, or at the most only display trifling and inconstant lesions, incapable of explaining in every case the main facts of the morbid drama," however, confessing that "sphinx-like [it] still [defied] the most minute anatomy" (149) and that the scientific community did not truly know "anything about its nature, nor any lesions producing it" (Owen 63).

Hysteria–which encompasses a multifarious and broad bundle of pathologies in our conceptions of Victorian medicine, but fundamentally concerns a conversion between psychological and physiological symptoms–was initially described by Charcot as a nervous disorder, and he appears to have resisted attempts to categorize it as psychological.[25] His early writings are detailed in their description of discrete physical signs and subcategories, and he emphasized the significance of convulsions, phantom pain, tics, tremors, and muscular reactions (66-7). In eventually interconnecting the ailment with hypnosis, he looked to the seeming disproportion between physical injuries/trauma that precipitated a hysterical incident and the disproportionate bodily reaction to the instigating event. He came eventually to consider that during certain

[24] "In one of his lectures regarding this technique, he repudiates M. Briquet, an author rejecting the connection between hysteria and reproductive organs ("In attempting to attribute everything to the ovary and uterus, hysteria is made a disorder of lubricity, a shameful affection, which is calculated to render hysterical patients objects of loathing and pity.") He dismisses this view as "prudery" and "sentimentality," asserting that while the ovary is not an organ key to every case of hysteria, it features in a certain subtype (247).

[25] Owen, in his biography of Charcot, offers up the examples of a girl's hand contracting in conjunction with hemianesthia and ovarian pain over a year after receiving a small cut on that arm; a black smith whose arm fell to numbness a few days after receiving a minor burn; and a man given over to hysterical attacks after suffering small damage to his hand in an incident with a falling barrel (97).

phases of a hysterical attack, the sufferer fell into a somnambulistic state that related to the particulars of the *emotion* experienced at the time of a given physical trauma. He concluded that the hypnotic state and the hysterical state were in some way analogous: that some minor stimulus to a patient afflicted with either condition is eventually realized in new forms by muscular contracture (117). Hypnosis was, in a way, an artificially induced variant on hysterical delirium. And like hysteria, his conception of hypnosis, at odds with the more archetypally Braidian school espoused by physicians at Nancy, was distinctly intertwined with this notion of hysteria as an ailment that lay *imperceptibly* within the brain and the body. The physiological basis upon which Charcot through both hysteria and hypnosis was to operate remained somewhere hidden–unseen–deep in the brain–perhaps within the region of the motor cortex. Despite his positivist background and his rejection of vitalism, the phenomena of hysteria and hypnosis still had some traces of the mystical in Charcot's realization. Instead of being born of unseen interconnective fluid and movement, they were the result of some not yet localized quirk of anatomy.

And like Mesmer and his inheritors, Charcot's theories also found their expression in performance. While the demonstrations of the Salpêtrière have a different cast to them than those at King's College, they are no less notorious. Charcot would regularly undertake hypnotic demonstrations involving his female hysteric patients, hypnotizing them into exhibiting the various stages of hysterical contractions and poses. Notably, these sessions were also the subject of both artistic performance and visual representation. In addition to using hypnosis to provoke demonstrations of postures and expressions, there were taken multiple photographs of women in trance states under

Charcot's care, as well as being explicitly linked to performances undertaken for entertainment. Well known for his high regard of Shakespeare, Charcot frequently described the subjects of trance in terms taken from *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* (Goetz 920-1). The women Charcot hypnotized remain visible to us in photographic collections in which they assume certain set poses and phases Charcot attributed to the archetypal hysterical crises, catalogued and documented in a fashion similar to players in a tableau. Within the walls of the Salpêtrière, it seems, the operating theater and the stage overlapped. While Charcot's model of hypnosis–clearly in the tradition of Braid–emphasized embodiment and pathology, it retained and even exceeded the tradition of mesmerism as performance.

Against this post-Braidian backdrop, we see the mesmeric-hypnotic model moving in a direction that simultaneously continues to assert hypnosis' basis in the material body outside of the vitalist principles of mesmerism while also imbuing the practice with some of the classical characteristics of mesmeric trance: the emphasis on performance and showmanship, with an undercurrent of uniquely female vulnerability. There is–I would argue–a tension in Charcot's demonstrations and work where the phenomena being described are framed as wholly physiological but nevertheless presented in a light that smacks of spiritualism. It is this revival of classical mesmeric tropes that helped to drive the mesmeric/hypnotic content of many of the late nineteenth-century's gothic novels, as Charcot and similar experimentation is cited throughout a number of them. As we have seen, *Dracula* is explicitly Charcotian in its depiction of mesmerism,[26] and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*[27] frames the practice in explicitly

[26] John Seward explicitly mentions Charcot and his recent death during a discussion of strange and unexplained phenomena with Van Helsing:

physiological terms, describing how the title character uses it to instill moral education and religious fear into his subjects. For Moore, obsessed with bodies and their material conditions, hypnotism had never been more bodily.

In *Evelyn Innes,* Moore presents us with a performer given to hysterical symptoms, and he presents through her a narrative rife with where all the potentialities of embodied Charcotian trance play out wholly in the realm of the real. The novel, written as a veiled account of the life of virtuoso Hélène Dolmetsch (Frazier 258), traces the life of the titular character through three different seductions. The first, vaguely analogous to Trilby O'Farrell's initial entrapment by Svengali, is in her initial decision to elope with the wealthy aesthete Owen Asher as a young woman, who bids her follow him to Paris in order to fulfill her "destiny" of becoming a great singer. Throughout this initial arc of the narrative, Evelyn's reactions to Owen are laden with the language of trance. She finds herself bereft of *thought* under his influence ("Owen [...] carried her forward with the force of a swirling river. She tried to think, but thoughts failed her" (50)). She is given over to apparitional visions:

> She closed her eyes so that she might drink more deeply of the vision, so that she might bring it more clearly before her. Like aspects seen on a misty river, it was

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> "But yet we see around us every day the growth of new beliefs, which think themselves new; and which are yet but the old, which pretend to be young--like the fine ladies at the opera. I suppose now you do not believe in corporeal transference. No? Nor in materialisation. No? Nor in astral bodies. No? Nor in the reading of thought. No? Nor in hypnotism----"
>
> "Yes," I said. "Charcot has proved that pretty well." He smiled as he went on: "Then you are satisfied as to it. Yes? And of course then you understand how it act, and can follow the mind of the great Charcot--alas that he is no more!--into the very soul of the patient that he influence (Stoker 171).

[27] "He said that was so, and proceeded to point out that the possibility of vivisection does not stop at a mere physical metamorphosis. A pig may be educated. The mental structure is even less determinate than the bodily. In our growing science of hypnotism we find the promise of a possibility of superseding old inherent instincts by new suggestions, grafting upon or replacing the inherited fixed ideas" (132).

> as beautiful shadows of things rather than the things themselves. The meditation grew voluptuous, and as she saw him come into her room and take her in his arms (90).

At times, her consciousness, will, and personhood are sublimated entirely by the figure of Owen:

> It was a sort of delicious death, a swooning ecstasy, an absorption of her individuality in his. Just as the spring gradually displaced the winter by a new branch of blossom, and in that corner of the garden by the winsome mauve of a lilac bush, without her knowing it his ideas caught root in her. New thoughts and perceptions were in growth within her, and every day she discovered the new where she had been accustomed to meet the familiar idea. She seemed to be slipping out of herself as out of a soft, white garment, unconsciously, without any effort on her part (80).

This entrancement plays out in bodily symptoms. Her dreamy states are relayed in explicit assurances that "the sensation was almost physical" (89) and are characterized as "nervous agitation" (102). Towards her climactic leave-taking for Paris, we are told that "[h]er brain seemed to effervesce and her blood to bubble with joy" (104). In addition to this, her indecision as to whether or not she should abandon her father for her lover manifests as something like physical pain:

> The agonising question continued at every moment to present itself. Whatever she was doing or saying, she was always conscious of it, and as the time drew near, with every hour, it seemed to approach and menace her. She seemed to feel it beating like a neuralgic pain behind her eyes (93).

Compare this to the symptoms that precede Trilby O'Farrell's first hypnotic encounter with Svengali, where she complains of "neuralgia in her eyes, a thing she was subject to; that the pain was maddening, and generally lasted twenty-four hours" (67)

Once more, the introductory plot is rife with echoes of *Trilby*: a woman beset by neuralgic pain, a seductive and controlling figure spiriting her away to stardom, and just a hint of the Parisian bohemianism that Moore reveled in within the scope of his *Confessions*. Like Svengali, Owen also looks to the capacity of Evelyn's body in terms of its potential as a musical instrument; instead of doing as Svengali does–assessing the apparatus of her mouth and lungs as a sounding board[28]–he weighs his erotic desire for Evelyn against the capacity for her body to perform Wagner:

> She was a rather tall and strongly-built girl, but the Wagnerian bosom was wanting. He had always considered a large bosom to be a dreadful deformity. A bosom should be an indication, a hint; a positive statement he viewed with abhorrence. And he paused to think if he would be willing to forego his natural and cultured taste in female beauty and accept those extravagant growths of flesh if they could be proved to be musical necessities (133).

Later, he conceives of Evelyn as a musical instrument under his control:

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[28] Svengali, upon asking Trilby to open her mouth to assist with her toothache, exclaims:

> "Himmel! the roof of your mouth is like the dome of the Panthéon; there is room in it for 'toutes les gloires de la France,' and a little to spare! The entrance to your throat is like the middle porch of St. Sulpice when the doors are open for the faithful on All-Saints' day; and not one tooth is missing – thirty-two British teeth as white as milk and as big as knuckle-bones! and your little tongue is scooped out like the leaf of a pink peony, and the bridge of your nose is like the belly of a Stradivarius – what a sounding-board! and inside your beautiful big chest the lungs are made of leather! and your breath, it embalms – like the breath of a beautiful white heifer fed on the buttercups, and daisies of the Vaterland! (71)

> She was the instrument, he was the hand that played upon it, and all that had happened from hour to hour in their mutual existence revealed in some new and unexpected way his mastery over life (127).

Compare to Gecko's chilling description of Trilby under Svengali's influence:

> That Trilby was just a singing-machine – an organ to play upon – an instrument of music – a Stradivarius – a flexible flageolet of flesh and blood – a voice, and nothing more – just the unconscious voice that Svengali sang with (441).

While Moore's narrative is a fundamentally different one from Du Maurier's, they trade in the same language of trance and embodiment: in both novels, the female capacity for performance is mapped out on the physical body, reimagined as a manipulatable object. This dynamic is one that echoes those of Charcot's demonstrations and their predecessors: female performers and female hysterics become the apparatus upon which men perform.

However, Evelyn is not simply a realist Trilby, despite the abundant parallels between them. Whereas Trilby's consciousness and point of view becomes increasingly inaccessible as the novel progresses–until she fades away into one final trance under the power of Svengali's image–Evelyn's story is continually grounded in the ebb and flow of her own consciousness. She navigates both the physicality and the spiritual ramifications of being both an elevated diva and a fallen woman. While she is–arguably–forever succumbing to the control of one male operator or another (even as she makes the decision to move towards the life of the convent and away from the world of public performance), the novel's focus is her perceptions and reactions to the influences surrounding her. Unlike Trilby, whose capacious lungs and mouth are only a vehicle for

Svengali's visions, Evelyn's relationship to her lovers and to the stage is mapped out across dreamy states and bodily changes of which she is continuously aware.

In addition to her lapses of consciousness and embodied anxieties that play out with Owen, Evelyn's eventual performances on the stage trend towards method acting to the point of morbidity. During these episodes, she reverts repeatedly to broad dramatic archetypes, becoming—after a fashion—the mythical figures that she performs. Much acclaimed for her role in *Faust*, she approaches her Margaret via her own instabilities: "She had had sensations of madness—she supposed everyone had—and she threw herself into those sensations, intensifying them, giving them more prominence on the stage than they had had in her own personal life" (160). As Gehler observes, her entanglement with operatic characters spills over into her own life in ways that border on the absurd (151). Her seduction by Owen involves synesthetic entrancement as he plays for her the love theme from *Tristan und Isolde* until Owen becomes "the only one thing that exists for her–Tristan" (73). Later, in supplicating her father after her return from Paris, she enters a state in which her circumstances and those of operatic figures become indistinguishable. Falling on her knees before him, singing Brunhilde's address to Wotan, she "she knelt at her father's or at Wotan's feet—she could not distinguish; all limitations had been razed. She was *the* daughter at *the* father's feet" (210). For Evelyn, who exemplifies notions of the trance-prone Wagnerian female finding self-actualization only through her surrender to male figures (Gehler 155), performance and life merge into the dual consciousness of trance. Like a Charcotian hysteric, her selfhood falls away as she comes to embody some greater generic figure. Her hypnotic reveries–clearly marked as embodied phenomena–

serve as a bridge between her material life and other realities, be they fictional, mystical, or spiritual.

The novel *does* progress through these latter two categories, with Evelyn taking another lover fascinated by theories of occultism and eventually surrendering herself to the will of a priest who moves her towards a penitent life in a convent. The second major arc of the novel, which contains the text's most explicit discussion of Charcot, is set when Evelyn, having established herself, takes on an affair with Ulick Dean, a fan and reviewer of hers who is patterned after W. B. Yeats (Heilmann and Llewleyn 140-1). With Ulick, there is a clear distinction made between his spiritualism and Owen's materiality; there is a shift from the raw physicality of Evelyn's relationship with Owen to an emphasis on fate, mysticism, and Paganism. Ulick is a fitting mouthpiece for the sentiment that Charcotian hypnosis–with its denial of the vitalist underpinnings of classical mesmerism–is suspect. Still, Evelyn's seeming movement away from the carnal, embodied passions represented by Owen does not signify a simultaneous move away from the particulars of embodied trance. For all of Ulick's protests as to the limits of physiologically based trance, she still succumbs to him in ways unmistakably combine the hypnotic with the embodied. As Anne Heilmann and Mark Llewelyn describe it, Ulick's mysticism and Irish nationalist character only serve to stand in contrast to responses "entirely instinctual, emotional, and articulated in and through the body" (143).

One of Evelyn's earliest encounters with Ulick is an all but explicit attempt at telepathy[29] and Ulick, again and again, denounces the limitations of materialist

[29] "She spied him sitting in the far corner, and wondered when he would look in her direction, and then remembering what he had said about the transmission of thought between sympathetic affinities, she sought to reach him with hers. She closed her eyes so that she might concentrate her will sufficiently for it to penetrate his brain. She sat tense with her desire, her hands clenched for more than a minute, but he did not

philosophy in ways that throw into contrast Evelyn's prior seduction by Owen and her present infatuation with him. Yet, despite Ulick's lectures on fate, spiritualism, and ideas that occupy as space beyond Owen's materiality, the connection between them still manifests as the "rustle and confusion of their blood" and the moments of sympathetic connection between them still play out in language emphasizing eyes, nerves, and brains. Most significantly, what eventually draws the two of them together is *not*–as was the case with their initial meeting–an unspoken interplay between minds and wills, but an instant of physical touch:

> Unable to resist he kissed her cheek, fearing that she would order him from the room. But at the instant of the touching of his lips, she threw her arm about his neck, and drew him down as a mermaiden draws her mortal lover into the depths, and in a wondering world of miraculous happiness he surrendered himself (294).

The affair with Ulick, clearly meant to represent an intermediary stage between the physicality of Owen and the eventual spirituality of convent life, still plays out in the realm of physiology and touch.

Finally, when Evelyn moves towards and begins her determination to leave Ulick, Owen, and the stage alike and to devote herself to God, the pattern of her relationships repeats itself yet again. Instead of a prospective lover, however, the final man that Evelyn comes under the sway of, performs on behalf of, and transforms herself in relation to, is a

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answer to her will, and its tension relaxed in spite of herself. "He sits there listening to the music as if he had never heard a note of it before. Why does he not come to me?" As if in answer, Ulick got out of his stall and walked toward the entrance, seemingly in the intention of leaving the theatre. Evelyn felt that she must speak to him, and she was about to call to one of the chorus and ask him to tell Mr. Dean that she wanted to speak to him, but a vague inquietude seemed to awaken in him, and he seemed uncertain whether to go or stay, and he looked round the theatre as if seeking someone. He looked several times in the direction of Evelyn's box without seeing her, and she was at last obliged to wave her hand. Then the dream upon his face vanished, and his eyes lit up, and his nod was the nod of one whose soul is full of interesting story" (182).

priest: Monseigneur Mostyn. Mostyn, in converting Evelyn over to a renewed life of faith, is described in terms of mesmeric influence in much the same manner as Ulick and Owen. When Evelyn reaches a point in her life where she decides to part from her lovers and the stage, it is through a process in which she falls under the sway of yet another man. As she is driven towards the uncertain penitence with which the novel ends, she finds herself encouraged by Mostyn whose pleas she return to the church are another moment of explicitly mesmeric language ("The magnetism of his faith thrilled her, and, in a moment, it had all became real to her" (333)). The final conflicts of the novel concern Evelyn resisting the draw of Owen and Ulick in the hopes of retaining her grasp on God. While Owen is desirous throughout the novel of her playing the penitential role of Kundry in Wagner's *Parsifal*, Evelyn must give over to the quiet of a wholly earthly and subdued repentance, and her final actions are anticlimactic and mundane rather than having any of the trance-like exaltation of the opera. While Owen "declare[s] his right to use all means to save her from a terrible fate," vowing to return to London and save her from the cloth, he never arrives. There is no final confrontation, nor any direct assertion of Evelyn's salvation. The novel concludes with her merely leaving the convent she has been visiting, observing as she does that:

> Life is but a continual hypnotism; and the thoughts of others reach us from every side, determining in some measure our actions. It was therefore certain that she would be influenced by the prayers that would be offered up for her by the convent. She imagined these prayers intervening between her and sin, coming to her aid in some moment of perilous temptation, and perhaps in the end determining the course of her life (480).

Evelyn's attempt to break from thralldom to her hypnotically inflected lovers does not allow her to break with hypnotism itself. The forces that move her through carnality and towards salvation seem here to be one and the same.

In this final, wholly spiritualized vision of hypnosis, the specter of hysterical illness and embodiment permeates Evelyn's experience. In an episode that echoes her mad embrace with Ulick, Mostyn observes that in preaching to her "she seem[s] like one fascinated, trembling in bonds that were loosening, and that in the next moment would break, leaving her free—perhaps to throw herself into his arms; he did not dare to withdraw his eyes." Most significantly, the decisive instant in which Evelyn finds her renewed faith in the Church is another episode of physical illness, psychological instability and–once more–neuralgic pain. In a depressive fit over the conflict between her lovers and her faith, Evelyn finds that "Nervous pains began again in her arms and neck, and she experienced the same wasting away of the very substance of her being, of the protecting envelope of the unconscious" (384). Beset by physical symptoms of her distress and persistent insomnia, she procures a vial of chloral hydrate as treatment and then–in the middle of the night–grows tempted to drain it in a suicide attempt. She is "saved" only through the presence of a scapular on the shelf containing the vial. Taking the instant to be intercession by the virgin Mary, she makes her decision to reembrace religion. The moment of her spiritual salvation coincides with one of medical crisis, echoing Trilbyesque progression of the novel's earliest chapters. While Evelyn has made what we are to take as spiritual progress, the pattern of her entrancements does not alter: she remains subject to the influence of men, to the ecstasy of trance, and to the vicissitudes of the body.

While a superficial reading of *Evelyn Innes* can easily read the novel as tracking a movement from the bodily to the spiritual, with Evelyn moving from a lover obsessed with bodies, voices and bosoms to a lover obsessed with mysticism and spiritualism to a spiritual retreat that prioritizes godliness and escape from the world, mesmerism/hypnosis is signaled as being in play throughout all three phases of Evelyn's existence, and throughout there is an undercurrent of undeniable physicality. Owen's seduction of her to the stage is overtly carnal. Ulick goes as far as to offer a breakdown of Charcot and the mesmeric explicitly, exhorting her to believe in a spiritual connectivity that moves beyond the body while still connecting with her with her in touches and glances. At the uncertain ending of the novel, it is Evelyn herself explicitly drawing a connection between the mesmeric and the religious, imagining the prayers of the nuns she has just visited as a silent hypnotic influence that may or may not keep her safe from the temptations to come. Instead of aligning herself with Wagner's penitent wild woman, she explicitly chooses a different figure upon which she might map herself—Saint Theresa—trading roles without necessarily trading her mode of performance.

What is consistent throughout *Evelyn Innes* is the extent to which mesmeric/hypnotic phenomenon, even if they escape a physical explanation, are couched in physiological terms. Evelyn, from her initial flirtations with Owen through her questionable redemption, experiences the influence of others operating on her life through tremors, sleeplessness, pain, breath, and other embodied sensations. The two most prominent examples of this are medical events that mark the beginning and the end of her spiritual journey: an attack of neuralgic pain before she leaves her father for Owen and nights of agonized insomnia terminating in a near suicide that she takes to be

thwarted by the intervention of the virgin Mary. All throughout, the narration is focused on the immediacy of Evelyn's internal reveries and flights of sensation, and if we take Moore at his word that these encounters have something to do with the mesmeric/hypnotic, Evelyn's body is the medium through which these forces manifest.

Thinking Without Thought: Esther Waters

Evelyn is not alone in this. Sioban Chapman has astutely observed how *Esther Waters'* presentation of a fallen woman is given a shocking-for-its-time frankness by virtue of the novel's focalizing viewpoint (309). Unlike Hardy's 1892 *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* the 1894 *Esther Waters* seldom diverges in its narration from its heroine's point of view. Chapman notes that we are virtually never granted access to the world beyond doors Esther does not cross–that her speech is almost always direct rather than indirect (315). We experience Esther's life in a way that forces us continually into the particulars of her perception and thoughts, and what I wish to draw our attention to is how very often her most intimate and intense moments in the novel appear to us without the particulars of thought at all, with the narration lapsing out of concrete discussions of Evelyn's internal consciousness and into the particulars of physical sensations. For Esther, like Evelyn, the human body becomes a medium through which internal sentiments are made manifest. Like Evelyn too, Esther is subject at one point to moving out of personhood and into archetype, although this is largely manifest in a moment of complete unconsciousness, during which she is reduced to an anatomical type instead of an aesthetic one.

Esther never attains the literacy or philosophical polish to articulate her experiences as Evelyn does. The novel's invocations of magnetism are vague and come with no exposition or explanation. When we are told about Esther's innate attraction to Mrs. Barfield or that Sarah is bound to Bill by something like sleepwalking, there is no Ulick equivalent to provide a lecture on Charcotian theory, nor does Esther have the language to describe these sensations–as Evelyn does–in terms of psychical phenomena. For Esther, in fact, the structure of language and religion is perpetually falling away.[30] Throughout the novel, the most intense of Esther's experiences come to her in ways that she cannot express, cannot write, and cannot–at times–even think. Illiterate and unable to cleave to the rule of her faith, Esther's intuition as to matters such as her pregnancy, her postpartum bond with Jackie, and the inevitability of her marriage to William all come to her through action and sensation. For her, the body as a whole is its own spiritual organ.

We first get an inkling of Esther's inclination towards embodied thought/feeling during the novel's one invocation of "magnetism" with Mrs. Barfield, mentioned above. It is after this immediate recognition of affinity that we are introduced to Esther's illiteracy and her poor aptitude for remedying it. Once Mrs. Barfield finally asks if she can read, what we receive is a description, not of Esther's reactive thoughts or response, but of her reaction to the sensory experience of sound:

> "Can you not read, Esther?" she heard a kind voice saying; and the sound of this voice loosed the feelings long pent up, and the girl, giving way utterly, burst into passionate weeping. She was alone with her suffering, conscious of nothing else,

[30] Francesca Marinaro, describing Esther's experience as an assertion of the value of unwed motherhood outside of the maternal body's commodification, draws attention to the ways that the story is one in which Esther is "denied the right to construct a maternal narrative for herself" (4). I would take this further in looking to the ways in which personal narrative escapes Esther altogether. Unlike Evelyn Innes, who can continually retell her life in terms of Wagnerian stories, narration escapes Esther, and her experience with motherhood is one of sensory immediacy rather than personal authorship.

> until a kind hand led her from the room, and this hand soothed away the bitterness of the tittering which reached her ears as the door closed (33)

The attempt to draw her into other modes of reception/expression fail both in the immediate aftermath of the incident ("It was hard to persuade her to speak, but even the first words showed that there was more on the girl's heart than could be told in a few minutes.") and in Mrs. Barfield's subsequent attempt to teach Esther to read ("Esther's powerlessness to put syllables together, to grasp the meaning of words, was very marked. Strange it was, no doubt, but all that concerned the printed page seemed to embarrass and elude her."). Esther is presented to us in a fashion that aligns her with embodied sensation and opposes her to written and spoken language.

This ineptitude with words and hypersensitivity to bodily stimuli continues throughout her budding relationship with William. In the early phases of her relationship with him, her realization of her own happiness appears without relating to the conversation in which she is enmeshed, after which she is drawn into the specificity of (likewise unrelated) visual objects:

> He told her all he knew about the chap who had jilted Miss Mary, and the various burlesque actresses at the Shoreham Gardens who had captivated Ginger's susceptible heart. While listening she suddenly became aware that she had never been so happy before. Now all she had endured seemed accidental; she felt that she had entered into the permanent; and in the midst of vague but intense sensations William showed her the pigeon-house with all the blue birds dozing on the tiles, a white one here and there. (47-8)

Later, when she grows apprehensive, her anxieties are again allayed not through any consideration of them, but through the immediacy of bodily contact and sound:

> Allusions to the police, and the care that must be taken not to bet with anyone who had not been properly introduced, frightened her; but her fears died in the sensation of his arm about her waist, and the music that the striking of a match had put to flight had begun again in the next plantation, and it began again in their hearts (49).

At the moment William assaults her, the link between sensory apprehension and will is explicit: "The words were delicious in her fainting ears, and her will died in what seemed like irresistible destiny" (76). This latter passage is the one that reads as most mesmeric (especially considering Sarah's later characterization of the hold of men over women in terms of trance states). However, in *Esther Waters*, Moore lets sensory and bodily "thought" occur without commenting as to the hypnotic/mesmeric apparatus that might underpin it. We see the same immediacy we see with the overtly mesmeric Evelyn, and like Evelyn, Esther's early brushes with the force of those around her are grounded in the power of sound.

Esther's most prominent moments of embodied understanding, of course, are those linked to reproduction. It is crucial that in these instances, Moore makes it explicit that we have moved beyond thought. At the instant she realizes her pregnancy, we are given her connection to William and to the unborn Jackie as things explicitly *not* thought and outside the reach of memory:

> She did not think–her mind was lost in vague sensation of William, and it was in this death of active memory that something awoke within her, something that

> seemed to her like a flutter of wings; her heart seemed to drop from its socket, and she nearly fainted away, but recovering herself she stood by the kitchen table, her arms drawn back and pressed to her sides, a death-like pallor over her face, and drops of sweat on her forehead (89).

It is clear here that there is some manner of hold William has upon her–something that echoes earlier vitalist notions of human interconnectivity, even over a distance. The expression of it, however, is purely physical. It comes in a "vague sensation" that leads into the more concrete sensations of Jackie's quickening and into the physical manifestations of her revelation. William's hold on her, while it is couched in terms that could clearly match with Evelyn and Ulick's sense of mysticism and destiny, is presented not through mesmeric metaphor or conscious thought but through a series of physical reactions. Once she *does* have the capacity to give the matter of her pregnancy conscious thought–to worry about the particulars of leaving service and finding lodging–embodied sensation returns to alleviate her anxiety:

> A sickly faintness crept up through her. *The flesh had come to the relief of the spirit;* and she sank upon her chair, almost unconscious, sick, it seemed, to death, and she rose from the chair wiping her forehead slowly with her apron.... (90, emphasis mine)

Here the body and the spirit are juxtaposed, placed in a relationship with one another that might seem opposite. However, what the faintness of her body extinguishes is not spiritual awareness–which comes to Esther throughout the novel in bursts of sympathy and sensory meditation–but rather the conscious expression of anxiety. Words and thoughts once again prove insufficient, and here the body exerts its supremacy over them.

In much the same fashion as Mrs. Barfield's magnetism of spirit could not be transmuted into knowledge of written scripture, Esther's body refuses to render her revelations into tangible thought.

This emphasis on human connection via spirit and body, without the transmission of words and thought, finds its boldest expression at the moment when Esther's body is most clearly on display and most obviously entangled with another's separate from her own. In the moment where Esther first witnesses Jackie, we see the same emphatic withdrawal from conscious thought, followed by an even more crucial emphasis on bodily connection:

> Her personal self seemed entirely withdrawn; she existed like an atmosphere about the babe, an impersonal emanation of love. She lay absorbed in this life of her life, this flesh of her flesh, unconscious of herself as a sponge in warm sea-water. She touched this pulp of life, and was thrilled, and once more her senses swooned with love; it was still there. She remembered that the nurse had said it was a boy. She must see her boy, and her hands, working as in a dream, unwound him, and, delirious with love, she gazed until he awoke and cried. (131-2)

Esther here not only is robbed of thought, but of selfhood. She moves from the containing body surrounding an unborn child to the environmental emanation surrounding a newborn one. As with Charcot's subjects and Evelyn's performances, she is clearly within the realm of trance, and what's more, it is trance in the wake of performance. While the surgical stage is different than the theatrical one–it is the theater that unites both Evelyn and Esther and that connects them back to the theatrics of Charcot. While we are not party to the particulars of Esther's delivery and the lead up within the hospital is

one of degradation and medical callousness (not–perhaps–all that different from the Salpêtrière):

> "Come, come, no nonsense!" said the nurse; "you can't have what you like; they are here to learn;" and when he had tried the pains she heard the midwife say that it wasn't necessary to send for the doctor. Another said that it would be all over in about three hours' time. "An easy confinement, I should say. The other will be more interesting...." Then they talked of the plays they had seen, and those they wished to see. A discussion arose regarding the merits of a shilling novel which every one was reading, and then Esther heard a stampede of nurses, midwives, and students in the direction of the window. A German band had come into the street. (128-9)

Esther's body is the subject of physical/medical spectacle before it is presented to us in the throes of entrancement. The atmosphere is jovial and fitted to an occasion for entertainment, segueing seamlessly into the enjoyment of performed music. Esther herself is evaluated in terms of her potential for learning and the interest she can generate. While she is not reduced to a specific aesthetic type in the same fashion Evelyn is in her Wagnerian trances, she *is* rapidly categorized and evaluated in terms of the educational value of her pregnancy. Without consciousness or direction, Esther's body nevertheless performs and is performed upon. She exists in the same state of hypersensitivity as Latimer in the midst of his visions or Evelyn in the ecstasy of the stage, but the framing is purely in the realm of the embodied and not the mystical. Unlike Evelyn, however, she stands in opposition to the archetypal state to which she has been reduced, demanding for herself the dignity of not being dehumanized for the benefit of young male medical

students (“Let me go! take me away! Oh, you are all beasts!” (128)) Esther, imitating the figure of the hysteric subject in an entirely different fashion—as objectified and exploited—sets the stage for the eventual return of her body as the focalized origin of her own experiences. The subsequent infant bonding scene provides a stark alternative to the indignity of Jackie’s birth.

In the eventual emphasis on Jackie as “pulp”–as flesh–the need for immediate physical contact supersedes the immediacy of conscious thought. This instant is one that all the escalating moments of prior physicality have been moving towards. Esther, were she framed differently, would be a textbook case of mesmeric trance, a woman led to the stage, robbed of consciousness, and then imbued with a hypersensitivity as regards the influence of those around her. Unlike traditional mesmerism or the mysticism in *Evelyn Innes,* however, Esther remains wholly grounded in the realm of the body and the natural world, in a move echoing Eliot’s networked world in *Middlemarch*, Esther’s interactions with her baby are explained in the metaphor of natural environments and animal life. The “emanation” of love is an extension of herself–her body–her own name in that it is likened to water.

And once Jackie appears, bodies and fluids will once more become the principle by which he and his mother are interconnected. The chapters concerning breastfeeding, while they are very much about the practical biological concerns set the stage for a realistic version of Charcot’s whispering blood: the circulation of breast milk, and its very literal vitalist potency creates an interconnectivity that exists–like so much of *Esther Waters*–beyond the realm of thought but still within the realm of spiritual and emotional emanation and transference. Just as the various explicit literary mesmerists of the era left

their victims innervated and frail, Esther's breastfeeding saps her physical strength and–once again–the capacities of her conscious mind:

> [S]uckling her child seemed to draw all strength from her, and her nervous depression increased; she was too weary and ill to think of the future, and for a whole week her physical condition held her, to the exclusion of every other thought (145).

Once again, as there was after his birth, there is an emphasis on the physicality of the maternal bond and the presence of bodies against bodies when she determines to leave Jackie:

> She could not sleep; she lay with her arms about her baby, distracted at the thought of parting from him. What had she done that her baby should be separated from her? What had the poor little darling done? He at least was innocent; why should he be deprived of his mother? At midnight she got up and lighted a candle, looked at him, took him in her arms, *squeezed him to her bosom till he cried*, and the thought came that it would be sweeter to kill him with her own hands than to be parted from him (149-50, emphasis mine)

As Law has convincingly argued, Esther's hopes for exclusivity in the fluid bond with her child are ultimately futile, but I must underscore the degree to which the physical connection between her and Jackie supplants thought and facilitates feeling in a fashion similar to the–ostensibly outmoded–theories of magnetic fluid that Charcot denies. When the novel delves into the explicit discussion of life for life and child for child, Esther's revelations take on the form of animal sensation:

> The children of two poor girls had been sacrificed so that this rich woman's child might be saved. Even that was not enough, the life of her beautiful boy was called for. Then other memories swept into Esther's frenzied brain. She remembered vague hints, allusions that Mrs. Spires had thrown out; and as if in the obtuseness of a nightmare, it seemed to this ignorant girl that she was the victim of a dark and far-reaching conspiracy; she experienced the sensation of the captured animal, and she scanned the doors and windows, thinking of some means of escape (153).

Beyond its immediate physicality, were one to alter the nature of the fluid being exchanged–to explicitly magnetic fluid or to blood–it would not be so hard to fit this moment of horror into the framework of typical mesmerism/psychic vampirism narratives of the fin de siècle: *Trilby*, *Dracula*, *The Beetle*, "The Parasite," and *Master of His Fate*. The sudden thoughtless anxiety, the dreadful secret of life transference: it all could fit within the context of the gothic were this a wholly different sort of novel. However, the particulars of this moment and Jackie's subsequent rescue from the baby farmer are commonplace to the point of mundanity. What Moore does, however, in shining a light upon them is to give both the mother/child interconnectivity of breastfeeding its own sort of supernaturalization. The body is the basis of both anxiety and discovery here: Esther–like a Julius Courtney or a Svengali–holds the capacity to innervate or vitalize another life. Her thoughtless, embodied energies throughout the novel are here concentrated into tangible, liquid form: vital fluid in a literal sense, stripped of all the trappings of supernatural theory even as it still provides a supernatural function. Whereas Evelyn touches more closely upon vitalist *theory* in the framing of her ecstasies via Ulick's

mysticism and Mostyn's religion, Esther has a concreate avenue through which a literal vital transfer may occur.

Throughout *Esther Waters*, then, there is the same pattern of dreamy and entranced states that we see in *Evelyn Innes*: the same emphasis on a woman's will and inclinations to be subject to the draw and push of the lives around her. However, while Evelyn explicitly tries to navigate these threads through the framework of the mesmeric, surrendering explicitly to trance in both carnal and spiritual contexts, Esther undertakes them with only the barest hint of supernaturality or consciousness. Moore's Evelyn has a forerunner even farther removed–in description–from an explicit vitalist model: a woman whose experiences exist much acutely in the realm of pure sensation, divorced from any talk of theory. In both cases too, the women touch upon similarities with the figure of the Charcotian hysteric, being rendered into quantifiable templates of feminine being—even if one does so through her lapse into the personae of archetypal heroine and the other does so through her status as medical specimen.

Turning Back to Mesmer

What takeaway might we have from these two very different texts aligning themselves–either explicitly or implicitly with Charcotian logic and performance? First and foremost, Moore's vision of human sensation and embodiment changes the stakes with regards to how readers experience the spiritual. The influence of the hypnotic throughout *Evelyn Innes* is all but explicit, even if the text itself never comments as to its validity or veers into the full-blown non-realist trance fiction; throughout its narrative, however, trance is nevertheless used as a model as to how the spiritual works upon an

embodied world. As she moves from carnality to penitence, Evelyn's experience with awakening consciousness and religion is mapped out across the immediate sensations of her body and described in hypnotic terms. Even as Moore's Ulick Dean dismisses the physiological sciences of Charcot, Evelyn shows how the excesses of embodied trance and hysteria can still capture the spiritualist bent of classical mesmerism. Moore provides for us a model of hypnotism that preserves the promise of mesmeric connectivity while still cleaving to theories of embodiment. Even with all the vitalist trapping in which eyes, wills and prayers intermingle, *Evelyn Innes* gives us a world in which the hysterical, nervous, embodied sciences of Braid and Charcot hold the potential of spiritual revelation.

And in setting up this model, Moore gives us the means to look back to his less overtly hypnotic work and to read its obsession with bodies through a hypnotic lens. In looking to *Esther Waters* after having seen how Moore would later interconnect Charcotian trance and women's bodies, we can see the way in which physicality in a Moore novel reflects and replicates the vitalist web now absent from Charcotian science. Esther, whose constantly shifting thoughts and perceptions we are directly subject to, shows us the ways in which she is able to intuit, perceive, and feel her husband and child through physical sensation, absent either the conceptual framework of spiritualism or the written out particulars of conscious thought. Between these two novels, Moore presents for us a vision of a post-Mesmeric, and perhaps even post-Charcotian world that still retains the promise of interconnective feeling that Mesmer offered. In rendering the particulars of psychic empathy, thought transference, and trance into everyday physical sensations, he restores to the physiological science of hypnotism the spiritual cast it lost

with Braid. Additionally, he is able to undertake the question of naturalist experimentation—the inquiry into material forces and human passions and how they play upon our unfolding lives—and quietly unite it with earlier models of interpersonal connectivity that eventually lapsed into new forms of medical theory.

Conclusion: Charcot's Successors

Following the end of the nineteenth-century, mesmerism and hypnotism did not vanish from scientific and literary discourses. However, the modes of consciousness that these phenomena touch upon found a new outlet through which they might be explored. If one wants to add a fourth age to William Hughes' progression of mesmeric history, the successor to Mesmer, Braid, and Charcot is undoubtedly Freud. Having studied under Charcot, Freud's own hypotheses of hysteria were deeply informed by Charcot's physiologically-oriented models. While psychoanalysis is clearly far removed from the basic mechanics of mesmerism and hypnosis as a means of control/direction, its theories and the practices that came along with them follow the track of these practices and their handling of human consciousness. With its emphasis on interiority and transference, psychoanalysis crafts a similar map upon which different models of consciousness might be laid—even if its gaze is entirely inward-facing instead of looking to the potentialities of consciousnesses intermingling in the greater world. In a fashion, the analyst/subject relationship, with its emphasis on direction and subconscious states, echoes that of the mesmerist/subject. The chaise longue is the new magnetic tub, even if its empire looks to interiors rather than to the outside world.

Freud came to Paris as a student in October of 1885, attracted to the Salpêtrière by "the great name of Charcot." Here, he spent nineteen weeks in study, absorbing Charcot's theories and occasionally visiting him at his home. During this period, Freud

notably lodged and objection to Charcot's links between hysteria and various physiological features (such as hemianesthesia) and although he would later go on to translate and eulogize Charcot, he eventually came to reject his insistence on the condition as being innately born of biology (Didi-Huberman 75-80). While Charcot located the various species of hysteria–and their interlinked capacity for nonclinical trance–with regards to physiological features and nervous shock, Freud eventually came to understand the effects of hysteria in relation to the nonclinical concepts of repression and displacement. For Freud, these alterations of consciousness were not born of the influence of an operator or a specific biological feature but from memories displaced beyond the grasp of the ego (155). Hysteria and trance become the matter of dreams, displacements, and psychological shifts that leave no biological trace.

Although mesmerism and/or hypnotism feature as a plot element in texts extending into the twentieth century (Stoker's later works–if anything–doubled down on the validity of the phenomena), gothic and non-realist fiction eventually turned to depictions of mesmerism as charlatanry rather than science (Stableford 300). Many of the potentialities of consciousness these outmoded practices presented, however, could emerge in new forms following the turn of the century, as Freudian theory regarding consciousness took root. Subconsciousness ran to personal depths rather than across interpersonal boundaries. Whereas mesmerism offered the possibility that one's thoughts could reach and transform a stranger, psychoanalytic models of consciousness expanded on the idea that thought could reach somewhere unseen and untransformed within the self. There is still the same residue of vitalist logic that permeates the realist narrative projects of the nineteenth century, but the focus is now on self-exploration and discovery.

We can see, for example, in the work of D.H. Lawrence, unquestionably understood as writing in a mode inviting psychoanalytic reading, that there is a shift in how interconnectivity is phrased. Lawrence, whose works were interpreted even by his contemporaries in explicitly Freudian terms, personally rejected such readings of his work– resisting the notion that his aesthetic work was an expression of psychoanalytic complexes–particularly ones that implicated him as sharing said complexes with his heroes (Beckett 217-9). Lawrence, like Moore, revels in the physicality of the human body and lapses in and out of conscious thought; his own later writings on psychoanalysis affirm his commitment to removing the dichotomies he sees Freud as establishing and repositioning the subconscious *within* the body (226). However, his writing diverges from the paradigms we saw present in the age of Charcot. In one passage of *Sons and Lovers* (1913), we find a moment of maternal bliss that closely echoes the one that Esther experiences upon witnessing Jackie. When Mrs. Morel first beholds the newborn Paul, we are told:

> In her arms lay the delicate baby. Its deep blue eyes, always looking up at her unblinking, seemed to draw her innermost thoughts out of her. She no longer loved her husband; she had not wanted this child to come, and there it lay in her arms and pulled at her heart. She felt as if the navel string that had connected its frail little body with hers had not been broken. A wave of hot love went over her to the infant. She held it close to her face and breast. With all her force, with all her soul she would make up to it for having brought it into the world unloved. She would love it all the more now it was here; carry it in her love. Its clear, knowing eyes gave her pain and fear. Did it know all about her? When it lay under her

> heart, had it been listening then? Was there a reproach in the look? She felt the marrow melt in her bones, with fear and pain (50-1).

Compare this again to Moore's depiction of birth:

> Her personal self seemed entirely withdrawn; she existed like an atmosphere about the babe, an impersonal emanation of love. She lay absorbed in this life of her life, this flesh of her flesh, unconscious of herself as a sponge in warm sea-water. She touched this pulp of life, and was thrilled, and once more her senses swooned with love; it was still there. She remembered that the nurse had said it was a boy. She must see her boy, and her hands, working as in a dream, unwound him, and, delirious with love, she gazed until he awoke and cried (50-1).

This instant in Lawrence set the stage for a dynamic that would spur almost innumerable Oedipal readings (Becket 219; Kuttner 69-70), and it diverges notably from Moore in its framing. Here, unlike the mindless, spongelike Esther, whose reverie about Jackie is thoughtless and without introspection, Mrs. Morel's thoughts turn inward: towards speculation as to her own emotions, towards the interior of her own body. While we are still given a language that echoes the particulars of early vitalist models (the "wave of hot love" and the imagined umbilical link), the moment is one of awakening consciousness and radiating thought towards Paul; but without the same implication that the child and environment are forces also acting upon her. The passage wends not towards affirmations of the mother-child link but towards questions regarding it (Did it know all about her? When it lay under her heart, had it been listening then? Was there a reproach in the look?). Mrs. Morel, confronted with the visage of her son, can begin to quantify and unpack her own interiority and identity–her lapse in spousal love, her newfound

commitment to motherhood–but the interiority of her son, even insofar as he was previously a part of her own body, remains a mystery. Whereas Jackie and the environment he inhabits seem to permeate and penetrate his mother beyond her capacity for conscious recognition; Paul remains exterior. In this passage, the narrative traces and articulates her own thoughts and questioning ("Did it know all about her? When it lay under her heart, had it been listening then?"). Unlike Esther, her embrace of the child is framed in terms of her own volition, mentioning "her force" and "her soul." The transformative aspects of the instant are deliberate and introspective–contained within Mrs. Morel herself–even if it is the infant who sparks them.

In the novel's finale, we see a similar moment of cognition in which the other serves as instigator even as the process remains internal and self-contained. Paul, reeling from the death of his mother, reason out his continued connection to her–to the force she still exerts upon him:

> "What am I doing?"
>
> And out of the semi-intoxicated trance came the answer:
>
> "Destroying myself."
>
> Then a dull, live feeling, gone in an instant, told him that it was wrong. After a while, suddenly came the question:
>
> "Why wrong?"
>
> Again there was no answer, but a stroke of hot stubbornness inside his chest resisted his own annihilation.
>
> There was a sound of a heavy cart clanking down the road. Suddenly the electric light went out; there was a bruising thud in the penny-in-the-slot meter.

He did not stir, but sat gazing in front of him. Only the mice had scuttled, and the fire glowed red in the dark room.

Then, quite mechanically and more distinctly, the conversation began again inside him.

"She's dead. What was it all for—her struggle?"

That was his despair wanting to go after her.

"You're alive."

"She's not."

"She is—in you." (455-6)

Trance is invoked specifically here, and the palpable presence of another entity is at the heart of the "conversation." However, the dialogue here is not between mother and son but between self and self. Mrs. Morel exists–not as an exterior entity who can intrude upon this moment of introspection, but as a the point around which Paul's interior discourse anchors itself. There is none of the immediate sense of vibration and entanglement we see with authors like Eliot or Thackeray, tracing the logic of vitalists. The sense of the biological is contained in a way that Moore's Charcotian-inflected texts are not. Mrs. Morel is an influence, but she remains abstracted, and Paul's meditations upon her fall into the uncertainty of questions unanswered:

> She had been in one place, and was in another; that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together. But yet there was his body, his chest, that leaned against the stile, his hands on the wooden bar. They seemed something. Where was he? (464)

We have moved here past the certitude of interconnected relationships that mesmeric logic trades in. When Paul tries to trace the energies of his mother, the new entity he discovers is himself. Both his internal dialogue and the narrated conclusions thereafter are expressed as a series of questions alternately answered and unanswered, prompting readers to grapple with the extent to which one can ever truly reach the core of one's own consciousness

This is not to say that by the time Freudian readings are in full swing, the traces of mesmerism and its cousins have fully lapsed or that the idea of thought-to-thought human connection has evaporated. Lawrence, himself, invokes hypnosis multiple times as a means of explaining the pull that the sexes have on one another (his attempts to reposition the psychoanalytic as having roots in flesh and blood certainly smack of something Charcotian). Simply because the connection between Mrs. Morel and her son fits into a psychoanalytic framework does not mean we should discard the mesmeric/hypnotic antecedents these connections tease at. Still, a useful takeaway as regards the trajectory of these practices in the twentieth century is that, even though we can still see the logic of mesmerism and hypnotism in post Freudian works, a new apparatus emerged that allowed us to interpret these phenomena in ways that look inward.

Even as mesmerism and hypnosis fell out of scientific popularity, their stamp on literary consciousness and narrative style remains–transforming still, perhaps, even as Freud himself has lost his hold on medical authority. We live now in a moment where conceptions of the subconscious, the ego/superego/id, and the resonance of trauma are all a part of our day to day understanding of consciousness–regardless of how well Freud has

held up over the past century within the realms of medicine and psychology. What I hope to gesture toward by using the example of Lawrence and his similarities with Moore is not how the mesmeric model has been replaced, but merely overwritten. While the Oedipally entangled Morel family differs considerably from Esther and Jackie, the move towards psychological interiors does not negate the same biologically linking language of the uncut cord, the vitalist overtones of the "wave of love." The various lenses of perspective one can wrest from the mesmeric logic of the nineteenth century do not die upon the advent of the twentieth Many of the techniques of narration that emerged at the same time as mesmeric theory (alternately focalized and shifting viewpoints, telescoping presentations of human life) have grown into a natural part of our expectations for literature. They are able to carry new theories and forms that have emerged in our post-Freudian world.

What I contend is the value of being able to read fiction mesmerically goes beyond the ability to position texts within the quirky historical context of nineteenth-century pseudoscience. Rather, it extends to understanding narrative styles and techniques that remain with us and how some trace of these theories might still cling to them. As we see via Lawrence's work, Moore does not have a sole claim to focalized points of view relating to maternity and embodiment. Neither does Thackeray have a monopoly on glittering, panoramic satire nor Eliot on telescoping psychological interiors. While authors of a later era, working within different paradigms of consciousness and cognition, surely may not intend to write within the vitalist/physiological models that allowed for these theories, however, I hold that the trace of Mesmer still remains in a post-Freudian world. Looking at how foundational authors write human connection under

the influence of these theories gives us the potentiality that the connections they forged might still function within the literary sphere: that the threads we follow in modern reading might lead out instead of in.

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