UNIVERSIDAD DE COSTA RICA
SISTEMA DE ESTUDIOS DE POSGRADO

# CONSTRUCTING THE THREATENING OTHER: MONSTROSITY AS A REFLECTION OF IMPERIAL ANXIETIES IN RICHARD MARSH'S NOVEL *THE BEETLE*

Tesis sometida a la consideración de la Comisión del Programa de Estudios de Posgrado en Literatura para optar al grado y título de Maestría Académica en Literatura Inglesa

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***A mi mamá, Ana, y a mi abuela, Marina.***

*Mis ojos, sin tus ojos, no son ojos,*
*que son dos hormigueros solitarios,*
*y son mis manos sin las tuyas varios*
*intratables espinos a manojos.*

*No me encuentro los labios sin tus rojos,*
*que me llenan de dulces campanarios,*
*sin ti mis pensamientos son calvarios*
*criando nardos y agostando hinojos.*

*No sé qué es de mi oreja sin tu acento,*
*ni hacia qué polo yerro sin tu estrella,*
*y mi voz sin tu trato se afemina.*

*Los olores persigo de tu viento*
*y la olvidada imagen de tu huella,*
*que en ti principia, amor, y en mí termina.*

***Mis Ojos Sin Tus Ojos***

***Miguel Hernández***

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## Resumen

La novela *The Beetle*, escrita por Richard Marsh y publicada en 1897, pertenece al género Gótico-Sensacionalista de finales del siglo XIX—una época de profunda crisis que afectó a las clases más desfavorecidas de Gran Bretaña. El propósito de este análisis es demostrar que la producción literaria de esta época—más específicamente la novela *The Beetle*—refleja las consecuencias de esta crisis no sólo a nivel artístico sino a nivel ideológico. En esta novela, las angustias imperiales de gran parte de la sociedad británica de la época toman formas monstruosas que cumplen funciones ideológicamente adoctrinadoras. A través del uso de conceptos relacionados con el Poscolonialismo, el Orientalismo, y la Monstruosidad, esta investigación hace una revisión de la novela para demostrar que la misma funciona como un vehículo estético-ideológico que permea posiciones controversiales relacionadas con el desconocimiento de la identidad de otras culturas y de las minorías en la sociedad victoriana del siglo XIX.

La figura del monstruo es especialmente necesaria para estos propósitos: su presencia y destino presuponen posiciones ideológicas hostiles con respecto a las supuestas amenazas que el foráneo impone a la frágil e ilusoria estabilidad imperial victoriana. La dinámica construcción-eliminación del monstruo no solamente refleja las luchas de poder en la Gran Bretaña imperial—esta nos recuerda una realidad aún presente en el mundo occidental: las conductas hostiles hacia el otro desconocido son aún comunes, y esta actitud se eleva a niveles preocupantes cuando se ve reflejada en conductas generalizadas hacia los migrantes extranjeros en países occidentales. Aunque *The Beetle* es una novela victoriana, su temática es aún visible en la sociedad occidental contemporánea.

## Lista de Ilustraciones

*Creo en todos los frutos que tienen jugo dulce,*
*y creo que no hay frutos que tengan jugo amargo.*
*No es culpa de los frutos si tenemos*
*el paladar angosto y limitado.*

*Creo en el corazón del hombre, creo*
*que es de pura caricia a pesar de las manos*
*que a veces asesinan, sin saberlo,*
*y manejan fusiles sanguinarios.*

*Creo en la libertad a pesar de los cepos,*
*a pesar de los campos alambrados.*

*Creo en la paz, amada, a pesar de las bombas*
*y a pesar de los cascos.*

*Creo que los países serán un solo sitio*
*de amor para los hombres, a pesar de los pactos,*
*a pesar de los límites, los cónsules,*
*a pesar de los libres que se dan por esclavos.*

*Y creo en el amor, en este amor de acero*
*que va fortaleciendo las piernas y los brazos,*
*que trabaja en secreto,*
*a escondidas del odio y del escarnio,*
*que debajo del traje se hace músculo,*
*órgano, experiencia, nervio, ganglio,*
*a pesar del rencor que nos inunda*
*el corazón de funerales pájaros*

***Credo (Fragmento)***

***Jorge Debravo***

# Introduction

The novel *The Beetle* was included in a course I took some years ago. When reading it, I noticed that the novel suggested the impossibility to contain a threatening force rising within the Victorian society. Through a posterior, more specific revision, I observed how the novel develops notions of race, identity, and nationalism, resulting in an ideological construction closely related to general political, economic, and social instability in the nineteenth-century British context. In other words, through a second reading, I identified inner fears about the unknown, foreign presence within Victorian Great Britain, which were externalized through forms of monstrosity; the text indeed develops a monstrous, foreign entity that equals external, fictional ideologies, and their apparent threat to British imperial stability. This conclusion is surprising, especially considering that *The Beetle* is a popular novel, traditionally labeled as "sensational"—it is not considered a canonical text within British literary standards.

This novel reveals a necessity to corporalize our sources of fear as a mechanism of control against their apparent threat. In addition, the text generates a subjective view of the most important historical events that defined the Victorian mindset and which still have important effects in society. The text reveals and constructs ideological views about identity, race, and nationalism, in relation to an imagined and unknown foreign counterpart which is paranoically and systematically perceived as an enemy. The novel develops foreignness as a threatening element embedded inside a British culture that

ignores not only that internal conflicts are a source of instability, but also that these conflicts might ultimately be even more dangerous than the apparent threat the foreign poses. *The Beetle* delves into a dynamics of provocation and revenge which reflect the visceral, irrational attitude the British developed towards the crisis of a declining empire, while depositing the responsibilities of power loss on other—rather than on themselves—and their own faults. In general terms, the novel depicts an allegorical view of British delusions of power and control, as well as fear of losing dominance over other cultures.

Despite apparent thematic and historical specificity (the novel was published in 1897), the notions explored in *The Beetle* are still palpable in current social, economic, and political conflicts, especially in developed countries such as The United States, Great Britain, France, The Netherlands, or Germany, for example. Radical positions on migration and oppressive actions towards economically disadvantaged countries and their inhabitants (which are consequently forced to migrate from their countries), expose insecurities about identity and ignorance about other cultures. Recognizing that these attitudes towards foreigners are not new, but are in fact depicted in earlier literary works through symbolic resources (in this case monstrosity), generated my interest in completing this analysis.

This thesis is divided in four main sections. Chapter I explores the historical and literary contexts in which *The Beetle* is produced and interpreted. In addition, this section offers substantial information about previous research on the novel. Chapter II develops

concepts which will facilitate the analysis of the novel. Specifically, this section focuses on Postcolonialism, Orientalism, and Monstrosity approaches. Despite these approaches are more recent than the novel, their thematic suitability permits their usage in the analysis of a Victorian novel like *The Beetle*. Chapter III analyses monstrous figures in the novel, their origin, and their significance within the Victorian mindset of race, identity, and power perpetuation; it also explores different mechanisms of transmission of the monstrous condition and victims' consequent alienation, and provides a general view of monstrosity and its significance not only within the novel, but also within the historical context in which the text is embedded. Finally, chapter IV explores the effects of the monstrous condition in victims and non-victims and attitudes towards these characters, while analyzing the ideological constructions permeating the text and its readership, as well as their causes and effects.

Despite the fact that *The Beetle* is a Victorian novel, its main conventions reveal an ongoing reality about prejudice and nationalism. Today, the idea of the foreign presence provokes radical reactions, and the novel suggests that this phenomenon is not new. Through this analysis I will prove that literary production, despite its historical moment, not only constitutes a powerful vehicle for the establishment and perpetuation of ideological positions, but also reflects how prejudice is a symptom of the individual's fear of incontrollable weakness and vulnerability—like a scapegoat, those who stand for change are punished for their distinctive nature or behavior.

**Topic**

Construction of the foreigner as a monstrous threat within the British imperialist context in Richard Marsh's novel *The Beetle* (1897).

**Title**

Constructing the Threatening Other: Monstrosity as a Reflection of Imperial Anxieties in Richard Marsh's novel *The Beetle* (1897).

**Conceptual Approaches**

Postcolonialism, Orientalism, Monstrosity.

**Range of the Topic**

**Justification**

*The Beetle*, as an example of Gothic, Sensational literature is not considered a canonical text in terms of quality or aesthetic value, and consequently there is an exceptionally low amount of scholarly work about the novel. In general, this type of narrative is scarcely used as exploratory material regarding its historical context. However, this thesis advocates that the study of Victorian Gothic literature is valuable to understand the British colonialist phenomenon and the complex body of discourses dealing with the development and effects of colonization and social change still current. Despite its origin, it is pertinent to study *The Beetle* from the postcolonialist point of view because there is still a tendency to view this literature exclusively as an aesthetic genre, devoid of any deeper social and cultural connections to its time. A premise of this study is

that Gothic literature and, in this specific case *The Beetle,* serves as a brilliant example of narrative production that exposes the imperialist ideology of Victorian times. Political, economic, and social mechanisms of control are exposed throughout the text, as well as discourses on race which evince not only British perceptions of superiority, but also anxieties about loss of imperial power.

Moreover, *The Beetle* is a novel about fear of a monstrous being. The novel develops monstrosity as a moral condition, inherently connected to the perception of imperialism and the foreign other. In *The Beetle*, monstrosity reveals a conceptual character whose objective is focused on the construction of new ideological positions about the foreigner as a threat to nationalism. Notions on monstrosity, then, complement postcolonial conceptions which choose to depict the foreign other as monstrous and threatening. *The Beetle* provides an opportunity to study how these approaches shed light on the imperialistic context and anxieties of the times.

**Range**

Nowadays, new academic approaches enable the analysis of different types of texts from more alternative analytical positions and *The Beetle* is not the exception. Orientalism claims that western scholarly production of knowledge about the orient reveals the imaginary of oriental cultures as exotic and uncivilized. Postcolonialism examines cultural artifacts such as literature to expose the relationship between colonizing and colonized nations. Moreover, notions about monstrosity complement

postcolonialism through concepts of otherness, thus revealing the foreign, monstrous other in literary texts. This investigation attempts to demonstrate that non-canonical texts and, more specifically, one that has been traditionally considered an inferior narrative work by conventional standards such as *The Beetle*, can expose the complex relation between different discourses that depict a historical reality rarely exposed in mainstream accounts. Moreover, this research aims to contribute to new lines of investigation in the academic environment of Costa Rica and the region by focusing on the often ignored sensational genre through postcolonialism and monstrosity concepts.

**Viability of the Project**

Despite the fact that *The Beetle* has often been ignored in literary analyses, it enables the exploration of notions about political, cultural, and economic instability related to British imperialism. Regarding theoretical, conceptual, and bibliographical resources to examine the novel, numerous texts constitute the basis to use an appropriate methodological approach. Despite scarce existence of varied texts about the novel, the resources consulted provided a solid background to conduct an effective analysis of the novel. This novel develops topics that are particularly relevant even in today's context in which massive migration and the rise of controversial, right-wing political groups generate deep controversy.

**Hypothesis**

The novel *The Beetle* reflects political and social conflicts of the British nineteenth-century society through the development of monstrous characters which encapsulate imperialistic ideological positions of the time.

**General Objective**

Demonstrate that Richard Marsh's novel *The Beetle* depicts anxieties of the nineteenth-century British imperialistic society through the construction of foreign, monstrous others.

**Specific Objectives**

1. Examine literary, historical, and cultural elements in the light of the novel's production and interpretation.
2. Review different postcolonial notions such as imperialism, postcolonialism and orientalism that enable the analysis and understanding of the context of the novel.
3. Identify the construction of monstrosity throughout history and its applications to the concept of otherness within the context of the novel.
4. Identify different forms of monstrosity and the contexts in which they are developed in the novel.
5. Establish a connection between postcolonial notions and monstrosity and the development of the threatening Other as an agent of instability in the British Empire.

# Chapter I
## Historical Background and Criticism about *The Beetle*

Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* is part of the literary production of the Victorian period. Historians refer to these decades as some of the most complex times in British history, and its social, political, and economic conflicts informed the literary production of its times. For this reason, in order to understand *The Beetle*'s aesthetic and academic value, it is essential to revise its historical[1] and literary contexts as well as main conventions and criticism about the novel. Specifically, the revision of the historical background responds to a necessity to understand the different factors which conditioned the creation of *The Beetle* and the environment in which it was interpreted. The complex economic, political, and social phenomena in occurrence during Victorian times are reflected in the novel's main events, characters, and descriptions to be analyzed in

[1] In order to understand the historical background of the novel, it is important to revise the concept of history. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, quote Robert Young (a Marxist analyst) in their book *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory* and state that history has been interpreted from a Hegelian point of view, where the former is "construed as an absolutist and homogeneous evolutionary march of the world spirit, unfolding and creating itself through the dialectical incorporation of otherness, culminating in a total or totalitarian self-realisation" (9). Additionally, Williams and Chrisman state that "history can become completely accessible to the modern historian, without mediation: all the contradictory and heterogeneous aspects of histories—are reconcilable with, or reducible to, historicist methods" (9). In addition, Charles Bressler observes history as "a form of power [that] then becomes the study and unearthing of a vast, complex web of interconnecting forces that ultimately determines what takes place in each culture or society." (243). In a similar fashion, Michel Foucault conceptualizes history as "not linear, for it does not have a definite beginning, middle and end, nor is it necessarily teleological" (qtd. in Bressler 242).

subsequent chapters. Similarly, the British literary mood of the century presented in this section not only establishes the basis that constitutes the structural character of the novel but also defines the different circumstances in which the novel was produced and received by audiences. Finally, criticism about *The Beetle* reveals its value as a document worthy of academic study, especially as a historical text which reflects not only the complexities but also the ideological tendencies of a British society going through an identity crisis.

**A. The Historical Context of the *The Beetle*: Great Britain during the *Fin de Siècle***

*The Beetle* was published during the Victorian period (1837-1901)—an age chronologically defined by Queen Victoria's reign. Historians in general agree that during her rule, the industrial revolution flourished, industry and the arts expanded, and science prospered rapidly. Economic prosperity provided transportation and access to printed information, thus changing people's minds about unknown topics. Eventually, a quarter of the world was under the British rule (*Empire Tales* XI), and the wealth that poured from the colonies boosted the technological and industrial revolution that, contrary to common belief, did not bring immediate progress to the entire British society. A significant percentage of Britain's inhabitants were illiterate, and society was plainly divided into the rich and the poor. In addition, the use of pseudoscientific studies applied to ethnic origin and national identity justified racial attitudes which worsened social inequality. As social, economic, and educational disparity was more evident, general

reactionary actions were triggered inside and outside the country. In addition, the apparent success of the imperialistic rule resulted in a rise of internal and external conflicts in different territories and a recognition of the failure of the authorities to secure control, and economic stability. In general terms, Great Britain faced one of its most critical crises during the nineteenth century—social unrest, political division and economic instability not only provoked general preoccupation but also revealed the reality of a British idiosyncrasy in full fragmentation.

**1. The Economic and Social Milieu**

The industrial revolution (1815) gave Great Britain the tools to become a unique industrial nation—specifically the only industrialized country of the world in the nineteenth century. According to Ronald Hyam's book *Britain's Imperial Century 1815-1914,* one third of the world's manufacturing was produced in Great Britain (21), and the dynamics of *"trade without possession"* boosted the production of agricultural or raw products in specific places to be then traded with other nations (25). Additionally, Rajani Palme Dutt states in his book *The Crisis of Britain and The British Empire* that

> Britain became the workshop of the world. Raw materials were drawn from all over the world. The products of British machine industry dominated the markets of every country…The old basis of tribute and exploitation continued, but became subordinate to the new basis of relations, whereby the colonies served as sources of cheap raw materials, furnished either through the plantation system or by

peasant labour under semistarvation conditions, and as markets for British goods. (72-73)

Governmental influence and consolidated, effective techniques for raw material production and extraction provoked the migration of British citizens to the colonies. 21.5 million British citizens abandoned Great Britain between 1815 and 1912 to work in colonies where industrial work force was needed (Hyam 23).

In this type of "parasitic economy" (Palme-Dutt 82), the British were strongly attached to their colonies for their economy was grounded on the exploitation of those territories. This mechanism was initially believed to be beneficial for all of the British society since it would involve every sector of the population, including the lower classes, whose role in the process would grant them a useful position—that of the factory worker. This system, however, did not secure the well-being of every citizen in Great Britain. As Palme-Dutt affirms, "England…['s] aim was to extract millions from the goldfields of the Rand, the rubber of Malaya or the tin of Nigeria, while leaving the slums to rot in the East End, the fields of England to pass out of cultivation, the looms of Lancashire to become obsolete and great industrial areas of the North East, Scotland and Wales to become derelict" (69).

In addition, "the era of industrial capital had given place to the era of finance-capital" (Palme Dutt 76), hence the British were left behind. The systematic exploitation of goods was not useful anymore, not only because the colonies refused to continue being

oppressed, but because counterparts found ways of entering the markets without direct confrontations. According to Palme-Dutt, in the 1870s, "Britain had lost industrial supremacy to become the great usurer and colonial exploiter, sucking tribute from all over the world" (76), and its internal industry "was allowed to fall behind" (84). In general, the British economy was lost, lack of technical preparation left the workforce in disadvantage, industry was inactive, and economic rivals were gaining advantage. This crisis significantly changed British people's own perception of their role in constructing and redefining the world order, thus provoking the rise of new political alternatives such as Socialism that preoccupied the powerful classes.

From the social point of view, the nineteenth-century Great Britain experienced a contradictory situation: the empire reached economic prosperity, but the same conditions that contributed to its growth also provoked a profound social crisis derived from economic and social disorganization. By living under the constraints of a possible economic and political downfall, social tension was inevitable. Linda Dryden affirms in her book *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles* that uncontrolled urban expansion provoked by the industrial and technological revolutions triggered hostile reactions towards disadvantaged social groups such as the working class and immigrants, since "rapid expansion and overpopulation of the metropolis … contributed to a growing awareness that the nineteenth-century city was not a controlled or controllable environment … The fears and social concerns of the nation became focused on its

capital" (46). London, according to Dryden, was thus a place of massive technological development and accelerated growth; however, its population lived under enormous social and economic differences, and with a "growing population of bourgeoisie emigrating to newly constructed suburban estates to escape the squalor and overcrowding of central London," (56) the poor were packed in the east, cohabiting under deplorable sanitary and work conditions which provoked a crisis of housing, sanitation, and public services (Dryden 53).

Mirroring social division, the city was physically and morally divided. The East End, home of the lower classes, "housed a large immigrant and itinerant population" (Dryden 47), and visually, the city was a "Janus- faced entity: if there is a slum, there is also a clean row of Georgian terraces" (Dryden 66). The visual and social juxtaposition of different London zones conferred the Eastern capital with a negative reputation which associated it to prostitution, criminality, and vice. The East End was seen as a place of "danger, disease and untold horrors that were a scandal to society" (Dryden 51) and one which could bring negative consequences to national progress (48). Due to the fact that the British ignored the harsh realities of the area, Dryden affirms, mass media of the time easily recreated the East and its population as an estranged zone within the country: "Newspaper reports characterized the East End as an alien land, not British, but as a barbarous as the untamed colonies" (49). The capital became a reflection of the reality of

the British society: it was fragmented, internally unknown, conflictive, and highly imagined.

**Science and Racial Attitudes during the Nineteenth Century**

Vast scientific and pseudo-scientific production during the nineteenth century led to the general understanding that the individual and his/her environment were prone to degeneration. Specifically, remarkably subjective notions about human beings' origins, mingled with anthropological studies, produced a series of mistaken ideologies about racial variance and national identity. Within this environment, British *fin de siècle* theories of evolution, whose most important representative was Charles Darwin, facilitated the production of peculiar scientific hypotheses in which anthropometrics mingled with other disciplines to explain racial or distinctive issues in human beings. As Hyam explains,

> Scientific and pseudo-scientific writings played a part in increasing the harshness of racial attitudes, strengthening and confirming the worst suspicious derived from actual experience…Darwin's *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* was published in 1859 and seemed to cast doubt on the adaptation of organism to environment, and thus on the ease with which non-Europeans could respond to an 'improving' environment. (156; ellipsis in original)

Additionally, Kelly Hurley's book *The Gothic Body*, states that consequently "an anxiety generated by scientific discourses, biological and sociomedical … served to dismantle

conventional notions about 'the human' as radically as did the Gothic which arose in response to them. Evolutionism, criminal anthropology, degeneration theory, sexology, pre-Freudian psychology—all articulated new models of the human as abhuman, and bodily ambiguated or otherwise discontinuous in identity. (5) These different views about race, identity, and national progress in trend during the *fin du siècle* were inevitably associated to the colonizing mission of the century. What was an initial interest in other cultures for their exoticism, suddenly turned into hostility for their different cultural dynamics. For Hyam, the early European attitude towards other cultures was influenced by an idealization of foreign individuals as similar to them, but scientific and technological progress changed this perception and transformed the European view of the world into an overconfident understanding of the other as inferior and incompetent. Indeed, Hyam states that

> European racial attitudes were made up of four main elements: belief in the homogeneity of mankind, disbelief that skin colour had any special significance, romantic idealization of the 'noble savage', and respect for non-European civilizations, especially the Chinese and Indian. [Then] Eighteenth-century urbanity gave way to nineteenth-century arrogance and censoriousness as a result of several influences: accumulating experience of closer contact with non-European peoples, industrialisation, the evangelical revival and the rise of utilitarian doctrines. Industralisation enormously increased the disparity in power

> between Britain and the rest of the world, and induced contempt for those regions which did not experience it. (74)

The British "passion to improve other peoples" (Hyam 75) through Christian regeneration and the spreading of civilization based on the British model, as well as the agency of pseudo-scientific studies as a normative for authoritative roles, determined the British Victorian attitude towards foreigners, the low classes, and minorities. This excessive and prejudiced classification externalized an inner contradiction within the British society, for its apparent wish to improve other cultures turned into a pathological classification of the individual in terms of anthropological characteristics. Consequently, the deterioration of racial attitudes in the 1860s was stronger, and the lower classes, especially the inhabitants of the Eastern side of London, faced most of the consequences. As Dryden affirms, the "growth of more authoritarian attitudes towards society in general, 'aspirations to gentility', and the increasing popularity in the 1850s and 1860s of 'black-and-white minstrel shows' boosted negative views about the lower classes, and a harsher attitude towards criminals" (155, 162) that provoked serious problems regarding the increase of admittance into various institutions, such as workhouses, jails, and mental institutions. Moreover, Synophobia[2] was strong, since most settler societies feared the formation of a degraded class of semi-servile labourers, underselling their extremely efficient work.

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[2] Synophobia is: 1. A fear or dislike of China, or Chinese people, their language or culture. 2. A fear of goods made in China or goods labelled as made in China (*Collins Dictionary Online*).

Additionally, the British also feared the social disruption brought about by the Chinese (who always resisted British control) and perceived the way the Chinese lived in very negative terms. Under the premise of good nationalism associated to efficiency, settler groups were striving to build homogeneous, Anglo-Saxon nations outside the country, without success. Their frustrated intentions finally conducted them to reconceptualize the former exotic and romantic colonized communities as uncontrollable, vicious, and harmful for the world—a possible threat to the apparent stability of the empire.

**2. The Political Milieu**

Great Britain`s colonizing mission was one of its most successful national plans. The introduction of the book *Empire Tales* describes that "from the late eighteenth century to 1920[3] … the European powers were engaged in a competitive race of Empire-building. … [As seen in Fig. 1], the British Empire ruled one quarter of the world" (XI). According to Hyam, two necessities provoked the British to begin their colonizing mission: "one was to contain or accommodate to the rival expansion generated by the Great Experiment in North America, [and] the other was to defend the Pax Britannica in India from internal subversion and external pressure from rival European expanding powers" (2). This occurred through the collaboration of local elites, the diplomatic intervention of authoritative figures, and missionary activities (which suffered the most losses due to bellicose conflicts). As stated in the introduction of *Empire Tales*, "the

[3] Hyam affirms this occurred in 1921.

weakening of indigenous political and social structures caused by missionary activity facilitated British trade, settlement, and administration" (XII). Additionally, according to Hyam, the British found solid justifications for their colonizing mission in the following aspects: first, they could offer better and cheaper products, second, the British had a powerful navy, third, British institutions seemed superior, and four, the British driving force for their mission was based on deep religious sanctions (90).

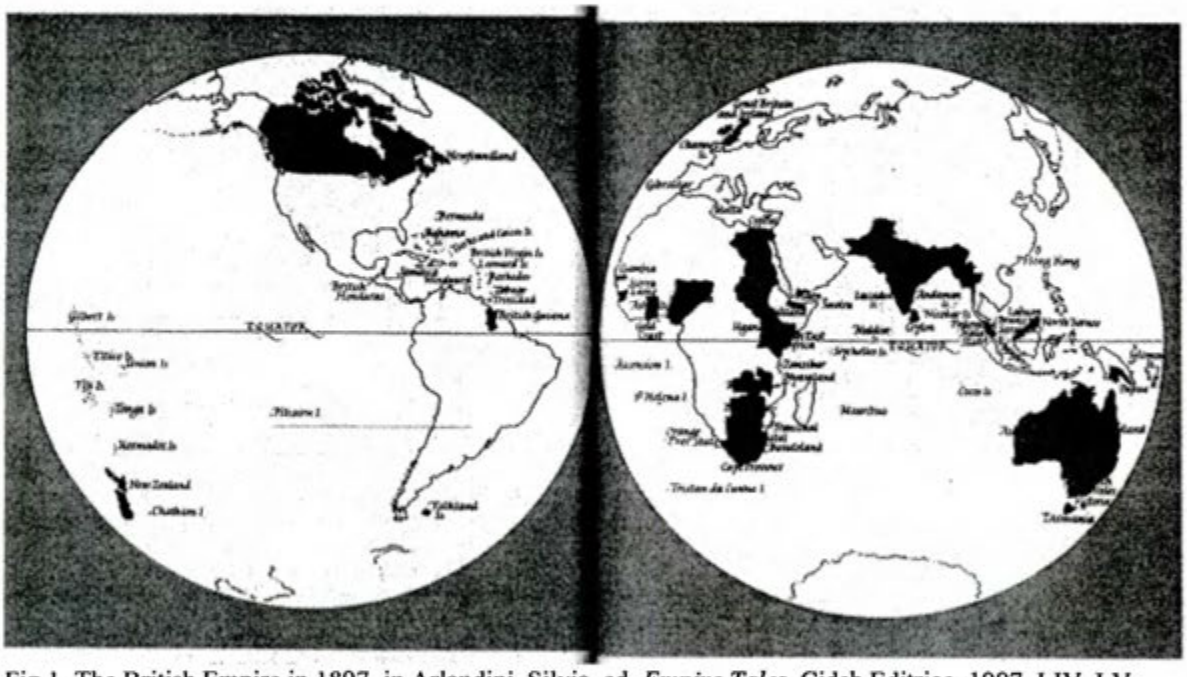

Fig.1. The British Empire in 1897, in Arlandini, Silvia, ed. *Empire Tales.* Cideb Editrice, 1997. LIV, LV.

**a. Mechanisms and Attitudes towards Colonization**

The dynamics of colonization used by the British government was theoretically multifaceted, but different in practice. Two principles moved the British to accomplish their colonizing mission: "improvement and regeneration" (Hyam 121). The principles

that defined the British procedures in the colonies were defined, to great extent, by Lord Palmerston.[4] For him, Hyam affirms, British policy was to "assist peoples 'starving for freedom'—by which he meant 'rational government'—and to extend 'as far and as fast as possible civilisation all over the world'" (qtd. in Cromer 108). Through Palmerston's guide, five regenerating methods were used in colonized territories: "constitutional and legal provisions, free trade, conversion to Christianity, education, and technology" (qtd. in Webster 108). The five elements fused together in practice (113). Once the British consolidated their presence in the colonized territory, their government worked on elaborating its influence within the area. The British government defined the construction of their influence in foreign land through four mechanisms: 1. Provision of initial impetus or leverage. 2. Mediation from friends or collaborators. 3. Periodical motivation in the communities, and 4. Accepting responsibilities for keeping rivals out of British spheres of influence (Hyam 117-19).

Despite detractors' clear opposition to the colonizing process, political groups in favor demonstrated a particular, unchangeable optimism and self-assurance that heightened their impressions about the effectiveness of the mission. Arrogant and overconfident at the same time, "they placed undue faith in facile generalisations, general

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[4] Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, byname Pam (born October 20, 1784, Broadlands, Hampshire, England—died October 18, 1865, Brocket Hall,Hertfordshire), English Whig-Liberal statesman whose long career, including many years as British foreign secretary (1830–34, 1835–41, 1846–51) and prime minister (1855–58, 1859–65), made him a symbol of British nationalism (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*).

panaceas and iron laws of self-sustaining progress" (Hyam 123). However, Hyam points out that a positive aspect can be distinguished from the British fixation to exert influence on other lands: they were good risk takers, and looked for new possibilities of redefining progress not only in their country but in their areas of influence (123).

**b. The Egyptian Context**

As the British influence was based on the efficient interconnection of several elements, failure in controlling one of them could bring their structure to total chaos, and the relationship between Great Britain and Egypt reflects the complexity of this dynamics. After the 1850s the British had faced crisis in the West African zone as well as reactionary responses from controlled territories such as India, Ceylon, Persia, South Africa or Hong Kong, but they had contained these insurrections with relative success. However, the 1860s and 1870s were moments of crisis for the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt (another British colony at the time) was suffering the consequences of the implementation of an economic system which severely debilitated her economy. According to Paul Auchterlonie in his article "From the Eastern Question to the Death of General Gordon: Representations of the Middle East in the Victorian Periodical Press, 1876-1885," "the two main Middle-Eastern issues of concern to the Victorian elite were the crisis in the Ottoman Empire from 1875 to 1879 and the financial problems of Egypt, which was unable to meet its obligations to foreign bondholders in 1875, 6 years after the

opening of the Suez Canal[5] in 1869" (10). The foreign presence in Egypt was essential, since it embraced several aspects of the Egyptian culture. According to Hyam, "between 1838 and 1881 the number of resident Europeans increased from under 10,000 to more than 90,000" (178), and bondholders had found their ideal place to profit from the high interest rates they imposed on locals. Additionally, cotton was necessary during the civil war in America, and Egypt could offer an important quantity of this material to Great Britain.

The inexistent limit between the Egyptian economy and Europe and the constant economic abuse committed by bondholders finally resulted in conflict. The "rape of the Egyptian treasury" (Hyam 179) reflected the reality of the loss of economic independence which preceded the loss of political independence for Egyptians (Hyam 179). The first reactionary actions took place in 1881 when Urabi Pasha, an army officer, organized an army revolt, but was put in jail. Close in time, fifty Europeans had been massacred in Alexandria, and the city was immediately bombarded. The British authorities, through

[5] The Suez Canal, Arabic Qanāt al-Suways, is a sea-level waterway running north-south across the Isthmus of Suez in Egypt to connect the Mediterranean and the Red seas. The canal separates the African continent from Asia, and it provides the shortest maritime route between Europe and the lands lying around the Indian and western Pacific oceans. It is one of the world's most heavily used shipping lanes (*Collins Dictionary Online*).

Gladstone,[6] justified their actions by claiming that "every legitimate authority had disappeared in Egypt..." (Hyam 181).

Despite a hidden interest in Egyptian culture, mythology and religion, the British mass media was implacable with the Egyptians. In spite of the economic benefit that the Egyptians had facilitated to the British, "Egypt fared no better at the hands of the writers of the period, if anything rather worse since the country was of great concern to Britain, which had major financial and strategic interests there" (Auchterlonie 15). However, being aware not only of their economic dependence but also of their strategic position as controllers of the Egyptian territory, the British looked for a solution to the crisis. As Auchterlonie affirms, the British ended up "serving in every financial commission from the involvement of Europe in Egypt's budgetary difficulties in 1875 onwards" (15). This, nevertheless, did not stop the British from occupying Egypt in 1882.

**c. The Occupation of Egypt**

Since the British government took a protectionist attitude towards the Egyptians, the riots were interpreted as an unnecessary and violent response from a non-grateful colony. According to Hyam, "this paternalistic approach inescapably led to the

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[6]William Ewart Gladstone, (born December 29, 1809, Liverpool, England—die May 19, 1898, Hawarden, Flintshire, Wales), statesman and four-time prime minister of Great Britain (1868–74, 1880–85, 1886, 1892–94) (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*).

conclusion that Egyptians were hopelessly incompetent," and Cromer[7] concluded that the Egyptians were unreliable and difficult to control: "with these gentlemen I do not think it is possible to deal" (Hyam 189).

Different positions examine the real reasons that determined the British occupation of Egypt. Some of them refer to the protection of the Suez Canal from Russian influence entering the Mediterranean, while keeping the French and Russian influence out of Egypt (Hyam 175). Others refer to the protection of economic interests within the country, or a desire for imperial prestige. For Hyam "it has always been disputed whether the occupation of Egypt resulted from a British determination to bail the boundholders or to protect the route to India. There was significant direct and indirect investment in Egypt" (181). Auchterlonie analyzes the situation and states that the reasons were strongly related to a sense of supremacy within the British idiosyncrasy:

> Many reasons were ostensibly given, for example, for the invasion and occupation of Egypt, but the bottom line, as Malcolm Yapp, succinctly puts it in *The Making of the Modern Near East*, 1792-1923, was prestige [of] many forms, strategic, economic and diplomatic. ... The other major theme which runs through these articles is racial superiority. ... It is important not to forget how important the race

[7] Evelyn Baring, first earl of Cromer, also named (1883–92) Sir Evelyn Baring (born Feb. 26, 1841, Cromer Hall, Norfolk, England—died Jan. 29, 1917, London, England), British administrator and diplomat whose 24-year rule in Egypt as British agent and consul general (1883–1907) profoundly influenced Egypt's development as a modern state (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*).

> card and the consequent *mission civilatrice* were in the political vocabulary of the time. (23-24)

The contemporary press reflected the general mood of the times in relation to the conflict and the causes that triggered it. Auchterlonie affirms that this topic was amplified through its revision in publications of the time: "The reasons for Britain's invasion of Egypt have long been the subject of debate. Many of the motives behind the decision were vigorously discussed in the contemporary periodical press" (15). The general consensus of the time concluded that the economic relation between Great Britain and Egypt was unfair. Auchterlonie affirms that "the sympathy of most writers was not with the investors, [since they] were often seen as greedy in their quest for abnormally high rates of interest" (16). Additionally, the mass media could not define the exact role the Englishmen should have played during the intervention but concluded the invasion was necessary. In this respect, Auchterlonie defines that "there was no consensus among contemporary observers about why Britain invaded Egypt, and while there is considerable criticism of the manner in which it was undertaken …[,]however, once Britain had established military forces in the country, there was general agreement that the occupation was both necessary and just" (17- 18).

The aftermath that followed the crisis significantly changed the British perspective about their influence in the world. The British government could never recover from the political, economic and moral consequences of the Egyptian crisis. As Hyam affirms,

"late nineteenth-century pessimistic attitudes were deeply influenced by two political crises: the occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the Home Rule[8] crisis in 1886" (190). The British messianic vision about "improving" the world was put in question since "[G]ood government and self government, law and liberty, imperial interests and local aspirations, seemed to have become contradictory" (Hyam 191), and as a result, there was increasing skepticism about the ability to influence events or even to retain the empire. Rudyard Kipling's *Recessional* (1897) was written in the spirit that 'the big smash is coming one of these days'" (Hyam 192).

The nineteenth century is one of the most important and controversial periods of British history. Its complex concurrence of social, political and economic changes demonstrate that the British fervent mission of improving the world presupposed a contradiction since they were unable to prove colonialism would benefit everyone equally. Opening markets did not necessarily mean new opportunities for the entire British society (as well as colonized territories), and economic, social disadvantages grew along with general discontent within the British society. The idealistic cause of changing the world, and taking profit from it, was proved to be false and questionably beneficial for all the sectors involved in the process. What the British romantically defined as the great plan of making the world a better place for everyone (and most importantly, for

[8] Also named the Irish Home Rule, it was a movement to secure internal autonomy for Ireland within the British Empire (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*).

themselves), turned into a series of duties and conflicts which were difficult to resolve. The consequent feeling of frustration which dominated the nineteenth century British crisis is identifiable in its literary production, not only because authors found in fiction a possibility to explore their individual feelings towards the environment they observed, but also because they experimented with fiction by creating alternative realities in which this sense of despair was substituted or redeemed—in several cases with the intention of purging guilt or reconciling with the past.

**B. The Nineteenth-Century British Literary Context**

Nineteenth-century literary production manifests the numerous changes that the British society faced during that period. Defined by Dryden as a "catalyst for a series of concerns that emerged during the 'long nineteenth century'" (1), the narrative of the time interpreted the reality of a British society which experienced profound, unexpected changes. Dryden further affirms that the "loss of religious faith, fears about the effects of the expanding metropolis, increasing political unrest in Europe, the emergence of the New Woman, apocalyptic predictions for the future and anxiety about scientific advances found expression in the nineteenth century novel" (1). Literary works like *The Beetle* functioned as vehicles to reflect the changes which prompted the British to go through an inevitable, uncontrollable transition. As a time of "declining Victorianism… and rising Modernism" (Dryden 1), narrative movements such as Realism, Modernism, or Naturalism emerged as new examples of "experiments in narrative techniques, …[which

developed] new ways of presenting the world"(Dryden 4) and exposed social dilemmas of the time. These new trends, heavily criticized for "portraying contemporary life as too sordid and too pessimistic" (4), were consolidated because of their innovative character. Another popular literary trend of the time, Romance, which "explore[s] and expose[s] extremes of moral, psychological and social dilemmas" (3), incorporated the scientific element, to create the *scientific romance*, a literary form "which later became the genre that we know today as '*science fiction*'" (Dryden 2). Moreover, the addition of key conventions regarding imperialism, identity, and the supernatural favored the establishment of the *imperial romance* as an additional narrative proposal of the time. In the case of the latter, the use of the supernatural "for sensationalist effect" (3) gave big popularity to the genre, but sacrificed any possibility of it being considered a serious narrative style.

The different literary styles of this century not only depict the conflicts of a Victorian society under profound social, economic, and political changes leading to social distress and tension, but also function in a synergetic dynamics—they "still depended for their form and expression on their literary sibling" (Dryden 2) to legitimate each other. This reciprocal, indirect dependence, secured their consolidation as part of a discourse which, in a symbiotic connection, reflected and simultaneously defined the ideological dimension of Victorian times. In other words, literature was not a vehicle for imagination anymore, and it also became a space for investigation, reconstruction and redefinition

through the convergence of dissimilar positions about social dynamics and identity. Not only literary production but also social groups defined each other in opposition to their counterparts through the development and analysis of social conflict in fiction.

Reforms in education access, the elimination of taxes on paper, and the creation of new technologies in transportation facilitated the distribution of information throughout the British territories, not only broadening the number and characteristics of the public who read this type of literature, but also spreading publications about more popular forms of fiction. These publications exposed a varied preference regarding reading topics and exerted an important effect on the public, whose main preoccupations were focused on violence and status, uncontrolled urban development, or scientific innovation. The appearance and spread of popular readings not only expose the profound obsession of the British with social order and identity, the notion of degeneration, and destabilization, but also reinforce the construction of a collective imaginary about the individual in relation to an unstable, threatening nation. The significance of these writing styles is still relevant today, for not only do they depict the reality of their times, but also the course of literary evolution, especially in new forms of narrative such as the Gothic and Sensationalism, which despite their negative reputation as part of a canon, contribute enormously to the understanding of British society.

## 1. Nineteenth-Century Literary Trends: Gothic Literature

Literary production of the nineteenth century concentrates a vast quantity of new or redefined narrative trends, including the Gothic[9]—a literary genre which, despite its enormous historical background and evolution, was not considered a serious form of literature during its most popular times. Besides its aesthetic quality, Gothic literature is characterized by its predominant exploration of political expressions, controversy, social unrest, and indeterminacy. In addition, the genre focuses in the influence of the past and its consequences in the present. This literary form, whose first official work in the British context is *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), by Horace Walpole, addresses issues like transgression and deterioration, with a significant use of mysterious and gloomy atmospheres, plots, characters, and motifs. Some characteristics of Gothic literature are: supernatural elements, wild landscapes, ruins, medieval architecture, labyrinths, passageways, secret rooms, feelings of claustrophobia, suspense, mystery, or despair. Gothic characters are associated with an obscure family history, sexual repression and transgression, doubles, and physical, mental and moral disintegration. Initially criticized for its presupposed immorality and violence, this genre became a response to the

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[9] The Gothic is defined as related to the Goths and their Germanic language, or related to a style of architecture prevalent in Western Europe from the middle 12th to the early 16th century. (*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). The Gothic, as a term, was primarily related to medieval architecture before being used to describe literature. The genre arose in the eighteenth century (a period of important changes in England) as a response to the precepts of the Age of Reason. The particularities of this period permitted Gothic authors to produce an important quantity of narrative works. As a tendency, the Gothic is understood either as an extension of Romanticism or as a completely different expression.

Neoclassical movement, whose excessive rational character opposed the distinguishing objective of Romanticism and its darker manifestation, the Gothic: to explore feelings and emotions in an imaginative space of transgression and emotion. From the onset, the Gothic has experienced profound changes, becoming a broad, experimental writing style that has contributed to enrich the knowledge of the environment in which it has been produced and received.

According to Kelly Hurley's book *The Gothic Body*, historically, the word Gothic was associated to the architectural style of the Goth territories (the Goths were German tribes who lived between the third and fifth centuries). During the seventeenth century, the term was applied to early forms of literature in which this type of architecture served as their setting, but then the style evolved in different forms of artistic production, reached its highest popularity at the end of the eighteenth century, and finally declined approximately one century later. However, its influence was still visible in an important number of literary works up to the beginning of the twentieth century (27). Aesthetically, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Gothic took a different direction in Europe, especially in Great Britain, since it became a vehicle for the expression of different political and aesthetic positions. In *Contemporary Gothic*, Catherine Spooner affirms that the Gothic "could be appropriated as representing a specifically British cultural tradition—a tradition of political freedom and progressivism" (13) since it took a more secular and politicized character in accordance with the general schema of its time.

The Gothic underwent its most drastic transformation during the nineteenth century, since the genre experienced not only its highest peak of popularity and consolidation as a narrative genre but also faced harsh criticism for the atmosphere that it presented. Visually, the genre incorporated new elements such as urban and domestic spaces, transgressive characters and events, and scientific experimentation. Moreover, Gothic fiction explored controversial positions about social change such as uncontrolled urbanism, corporality and national identity, or degeneration and imperial stability. Glennis Byron affirms in her article "Gothic in the 1890s" that Great Britain, as a political force going through a moment of tension, was "threatened by the rise of such new players as Germany and the United States, suffering from the loss of overseas markets, faced with growing unrest in the colonies and suffused with new doubts about the morality of the imperial mission" (132). A new scope of imaginary threats emerged within Great Britain, and they became a source of preoccupation that was reflected in the literary production of the times. The Gothic became a tool for the canalization of these anxieties and the exploration of the different scenarios in which these threats might become a reality.

Nineteenth-century Gothic emerges in moments of social chaos and exploits the questionable to reveal the anxieties of its times. Hurley affirms that the Gothic "has been theorized as an instrumental genre, reemerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises" (5). In accordance with Hurley, David Punter and Glennis Byron affirm in their

book *The Gothic* that this genre, as a way to represent the social tensions of its time, has experienced more popularity in moments of "social upheaval" (XVIII). In a similar fashion, Spooner affirms that the Gothic is characterized by a sense of politization that exposed the use of this genre as a vehicle for protest and the necessity of freedom. Finally, Andrew Smith affirms in his book *Gothic Literature*, that the Gothic critiques the rational, concealing it through the depiction of specific political views in particular, demonized ways (3-4).

Moreover, nineteenth-century Gothic depicts a threatening past that is intrinsically connected to the present. Dryden affirms that the genre places action in a "historically remote past or in isolated, wild locations amid the suggestive relics of an ancient past" (19). Specifically, the Gothic is closely connected to a past that provokes great fear and anxiety for a possible return. The past, according to Catherine Spooner, "is a site of terror, of an injustice that must be resolved, an evil that must be exorcised" (18). However, this does not mean the Gothic was specifically concentrated in the past; Gothic narratives, according to Dryden, also "focused on the urban present, refracting contemporary concerns through the lens of a literature of terror" (19). Likewise, Byron and Punter note that the Victorian Gothic "is appropriated to represent new social problems, [sic] it also offers a space in which the past can persist in a modified form" (29). Similar to early forms of the genre, nineteenth-century Gothic kept the notion of chronological

simultaneity in order to revive those aspects of the past which were cyclically repeated in the present as recurring points of conflict within the British society.

Indeterminacy is an essential aspect of the Gothic since the genre deals with notions of the unknown or the incomprehensible in relation to human experience. Its predominant treatment of unintelligible matters in the human condition develops a particular form of narrative expression characterized by a strong sense of suggestion. In Dryden's words, "The Gothic is infinitely suggestive, and the fact that so much of the horror is left unarticulated, unspeakable, is symptomatic of the genre, because Gothic horror is meant to be beyond human understanding, or when it is sexual, beyond normal human experience" (28). To explore the abject character of human experience, and to "assert that something is too horrible to be spoken of is the privileged utterance of the Gothic" (Hurley 48). The attractive character of the genre relies in its capacity to (not) transmit the impenetrable form of its own conventions and open a space for personal interpretations. Notably, the Gothic materializes its inherent connection to indeterminacy through monstrosity for the monster is by itself a form of indetermination—its indefinable character, in relation to other referentials, makes it incomprehensible to the individual.

The Gothic exposes concerns about the limits of the fragmented self not only on an individual level but as part of a public, social collective. First, as a "literature about identity, or even lack of identity" (Dryden 39) the Gothic explores the ontological character of the self as a subject of experimentation since it analyzes the subject as

capable of unfolding diverse and contradictory aspects of the human character, to the point of exposing a multi-dimensional series of personalities within a single individual. Dryden, citing Wolfreys, affirms in this respect that "'the comprehension of the Gothic is expanded through an understanding of the role gothic effects have to play in the constitution of modern, fragmented subjectivity'"(41). Moreover, the fear of losing control over identity is developed in nineteenth-century Gothic through the construction of personality as affected not only by external but also by internal factors which expose the individual as unaware of his/her own limits. For Dryden, "if the traditional tale of Gothic horror tends to explore and expose our fears of agents outside ourselves and their capacity to harm us, then the fiction of duality usually reverses that anxiety, turning it upon ourselves to explore our horror at what we may be capable of" (38). Finally, nineteenth-century Gothic develops the notion of identity fragmentation, degeneracy, and social categorization as ideological constructions that run parallel to nationalism. Byron affirms in this respect that "the discourse of degeneration articulates much the same fears and anxieties as those traditionally found in the Gothic novel, and as concerns about national, social and physical decay began to multiply in late Victorian Britain, so Gothic monstrosity reemerged with a force that had not been matched since the publication of the original Gothic at the previous *fin de siècle*"(132).

The Gothic embraces a common capacity to explore the different aspects of social tension that are rarely developed in narrative because of their negative reception and also

reflects a strong political character, being a subtle but solid criticism of the different aspects which affected the British society from a social, economic and political point of view. Exploring identity through the lens of fictional metropolitan disintegration, the Gothic depicts the catastrophic possibilities of identity loss in the destruction of the space that represents it and. at the same time, takes agency of new scientific findings about the human condition to explore the disintegration of previous ideas about human origin and evolution, thus constructing a fragmented self whose actions and morals bring important consequences to national progress. *The Beetle* survives as an example of the Gothic as a narrative of examination, redefinition, and provocation, whose main characteristics face the reader not only with pivotal aspects about the social environment in which this type of literature was produced but also with the preoccupations and contradictions that this environment generated.

## 2. Sensationalism: National Crisis and Narrative Imagination during The *Fin de Siècle*

Great Britain faced the most critical period of its political and social history in the nineteenth century, and narrative production of the time did not ignore this reality. Several authors indeed exploited different sources of preoccupation for the Victorian society through their narrative production, in order to make it more appealing and financially lucrative. Circumstantially boosted through popular access to printed information, sensational literature became the fictional representation of a complex

society which was unable to adapt to the abrupt changes that imperialism brought to Great Britain. Even though this type of literature exploits the description of violent events in order to generate excitement on readers, it depicts the most controversial, prevalent topics the British discussed during the Victorian times. Sensationalism, then, reveals the preoccupations and interests of the readership.

Difficult to conceptualize due to its still-obscure origin,[10] Sensationalism was probably the most popular literary form in circulation during the nineteenth century, especially during the 1860s.[11] Tragic and violent, and using realistic characters, it is closely associated to the shocking effect it produced on readers. In his article "'A Life Story for the People'? Edwin J. Brett and the London 'Low-Life' Penny Dreadfuls of the 1860s," John Springhall claims that the genre not only focused on the "low-life cycle,"

[10] As part of a "whole range of popular Victorian and Edwardian literature [of not] much historical precision" (226), Springhall establishes that

> an adequate definition of Sensationalism is made difficult because there are at least six different meanings that can be distinguished from its usage in popular discourse. First, it is used as a general term of abuse for cheap papers or fiction of any description written throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Second, it is used to describe highly coloured, criminal, or Gothic penny-issue novels of the 1830s and 40's, ... Third, a more appropriate application of the term is to the successors of these novels—directed, from the 1850s onwards, toward a more specifically juvenile market—culminating in the publications of the of the NPC of the 1860s. Fourth, 'penny dreadful' is just as often used as a label for penny magazines or the cheaper weekly boys' papers appearing from the mid-1860s onwards ... A fifth usage applies the term not only to the boys' journals themselves, but also to the long-running weekly serials they contained. These serials, if successful, were then published in separate weekly parts and later in collected shilling volumes, the latter which provides us with the sixth definition. While recognizing that 'dreadfuls' can embrace all these contingent forms of publication, 'penny blood' is better applied to the earlier serials for adults associated with Lloyd and 'penny dreadful' reserved for their later counterparts addressed chiefly to a more youthful clientele. (226- 27)

[11] Although *The Beetle* was published in the 1890s, it is considered a late form of Sensationalist text for its characteristics coincide with the main conventions that define the subgenre.

but also "utilized highly melodramatic and often incongruous plots situated among sordid and criminal London milieus" to attract more popular audiences (234). Sensationalism, according to Springhall, "can sometimes provide useful information about the life and leisure of mid-Victorian London's street people" (244) and serve to "reinforce rather than subvert existing social and political structures. ...Cheap sensation fiction in England operated within primarily middle-class ideological constraints" (225) for the sake of popularity and, coincidentally, of idiosyncratic acceptance.

The historical circumstances leading to the rise of Sensationalism became so popular are closely related to events that defined the nineteenth century. Changes in education, access to printed information, and rising preoccupations about social unrest, defined the audience's attitude towards Sensationalism. Filled with boredom, the middle class devoured sensational narrative for its capacity to develop topics of their understanding and interest. As Springhall affirms, Sensation narrative

> provided a romantic escape from the uneventfulness of their readers' everyday lives. Assisted by stream-driven printing presses, cheap paper, improved transport, and rising literacy, commercial entrepeneurs set out to supply the popular imagination with what it craved: Gothic horror stories, tales of struggle and warfare, domestic romances, stories of highwaymen and the underworld. (224)

In the article "Are the Victorians Still with Us?: Victorian Sensation Fiction and its Legacies in the Twenty-First Century," Beth Palmer coincides with Springhall when

affirming that Sensationalism did not intend to reinvent literature—it was created to entertain. She affirms that "Sensation novels did not seem to have any moral impetus which might have made their massive popularity easier to stomach for critics. Sensation aimed to stimulate readers' nerves, not their moral faculties. The sensation novel then was situated at the center of these anxieties about a rapidly technologizing print culture and its perceived effects on readerships and was very conscious of its status as such" (1). Additionally, Palmer affirms that "Sensation fiction's most significant and lasting legacy is a self-consciousness about how the contemporary moment is constructed in and by print culture as it mediates the past" (1).

In accordance with Springhall, Michael Diamond establishes in his book *Victorian Sensation* that this type of fiction was used as a term to describe a very specific type of literature during the 1860s. Diamond specifies that this kind of literature, which is connected to Modernism for its use of numerous narrators or a fragmented narration, is characterized by its effective use of common violent events reduction rule published in mass media during those times. Authors seized these events as a base to create fictional plots with the same effect on readers. In addition, these characteristics challenged readers' morality and lifestyle monotony. The genre's name, *Sensation*,[12] refers to its primary

[12] Differing from Springhall, Diamond makes a distinction between sensation fiction written by novelists and sensation fiction called *penny dreadfuls*. In opposition to *penny dreadfuls*, which were brief fragments of a longer text published in series of easy purchase, sold for a penny a chapter, Sensation novels were published as complete works, their prices were higher and their public was more specific. Sensation themes are varied, according to Diamond, since they range from aristocratic evil to criticism of the justice system.

effect on readers—that of "instilling ... the sensations of excitement, surprise, fear, dismay and so on" (190). For Diamond, sensation authors showed a clever attitude in developing sensational plots since they "understood that the best way to achieve this (effect) was not to pile up external 'sensations' but to use them selectively within an everyday setting that the reader would recognise and identify with" (190). For this reason, most sensational works depict unusual or even supernatural events in domestic and urban surroundings, which aims at provoking a profound sense of anxiety on readers.


Fig. 2. Illustration of a brutal stage fight between two women in *Women and Wine* (1899 aprox.). In Diamond, Michael, *Victorian Sensation*. Anthem Press, 2003. 188.

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Novels such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) or Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) are early works in which the development of certain conventions such as the double British moral, mental illness, justified violence, or even criticism of social and legal conventions were common.

For Diamond, the exploitation of violence and sex in sensation fiction becomes a standard feature of the genre. As examples, the covers of each published section included obscure, dramatic and mysterious drawings which could catch the attention of readers (see Fig. 2). Additionally, Diamond mentions descriptions of violent fights where body parts are dismembered or tales of entire families living and sleeping together in the same room and bed, in a poor and cramped London (a situation that was considered immoral and unwholesome by middle and upper-class standards) (192). The popularity of these topics was not limited to a social class, since the middle and high classes were also assiduous readers of this literature. Diamond concludes by indicating that after the 1860s readers lost interest in Sensation literature because it lost popularity and quality, but that this type of fiction contributed to the understanding of social changes in Great Britain during the second part of the nineteenth century in issues like the role of women and other gender changes, specifically the rise of the New Woman in the last decade of the century, during the 1890s.

**3. Sensationalism and the Gothic**

Sensationalism and the Gothic find a point of confluence during the nineteenth century not only because they coincidentally deal with similar topics of the time but also because they develop the complexities of the urban atmosphere and criticize the profound chaos caused by social, economic and political crisis. Byron and Punter affirm that the influence of Sensationalism in Gothic narrative during the last part of the nineteenth

century sheds light on topics of social identity and change during Victorian times. The Gothic becomes a domesticated genre, located in popular spaces, featuring with real people. In their words, "this domestication of the Gothic is partly the result of its appropriation by the sensation novel. …Sensation fiction focuses on the bourgeois world and is characteristically preoccupied with domestic crime and disorder" (26). Classified in two main categories, the authors affirm that Sensationalism looks to the classic Gothic resource of a female character, which could be either a heroine, normally imprisoned in a home or an institution, or the mad criminal woman (26). Usually transgressive, these works deal with boundaries of sanity and identity in relation to gender issues. For these authors, the fact that women embody these roles in this type of narrative provokes "anxieties about the instability of identity and the breakdown of gender roles" (27).

Sensationalism gave more flexibility to the Gothic, since it related it to a vast background of events occurring during the *fin de siècle*. As Byron and Punter affirm, "Victorian Gothic is marked primarily by the domestication of Gothic figures, spaces and themes: horrors become explicitly located within the world of the contemporary reader" (26). "Dispersed into a variety of fictional forms" (26), the Victorian Gothic was heavily influenced by the Sensation novel and made the genre even more popular with the middle and low classes of the time. The Gothic finally became a genre of familiar spaces, scandalous events, and conventional conflicts—a popular form of literature, accessible to everyone in Victorian society. The preoccupations, fears, and constraints of the Victorian

society were placed in the fictional space of the Sensational Gothic genre, in the hope that it could be controlled or, at least, denounced. However, this was not the trend within the entire writing community, for certain groups considered social chaos and degeneration to be inevitable, even natural. According to Dryden, "Writers of Gothic horror and scientific romance were to expose such [general] fears through sensationalist narratives, but the realists and naturalists saw the primitive as an ever-present aspect of modern civilization" (19). Despite the controversy generated by new literary forms such as Sensationalism and the Gothic, both genres conserve the impetus of their times—the most complex period of British history.

**C. Review of the Literature**

**1. About *The Beetle* and its Author**

Gothic Sensational fiction, as a popular literary genre during the nineteenth century was notable not only because of its entertaining role, but also for its capacity to fictionalize political, economic, psychological, and historical issues related to imperial concerns about identity and power. However, the fact that this type of fiction manifested and embodied transgression in several ways alienated this subgenre from the literary mainstream as a potential tool for understanding social, political, and economic conditions of the Empire. *The Beetle*, published in 1897 by Richard Marsh, is an example of Gothic Sensational fiction, with clear references to horror, Romance, and Science Fiction. Its historical context suggests that the novel is the combination of previous forms

of Sensational literature, in decline at the end of the century, and new narrative forms such as Modernism and the Victorian Gothic. It was continuously reedited until 1917 and remained definitely out of publication around World War I, only to be reprinted just a few years ago. Its interrupted publication consequently resulted in a lack of subsequent or current analysis of its main conventions. It is currently difficult to find instances of this work as a subject of academic study or even as a noteworthy example of gothic or sensation literature. *The Beetle*, now considered a sensationalist gothic novel, was published the same year as *Dracula* (1897), with great success,[13] but in later years could not keep up with Stoker's work. Despite evident parallels between both works, *Dracula* has demanded great attention from scholars, while *The Beetle* was practically ignored. Both works are very similar but while Stoker's novel presents a clear plot where the main events encounter a solid finale, *The Beetle* works more profoundly with indeterminacy of actions and characters. Likewise, both works deal with gender and class issues—*Dracula* concentrating on gender roles and sexuality and *The Beetle* on social status in relation to sexual identity.

Even the figure of Richard Marsh (pen name of Richard Heldmann) is not commonly mentioned in literary analysis or other printed sources. Julian Wolfreys' prologue for *The Beetle* establishes that Marsh's life in general is still in scrutiny. Almost

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[13] Minna Vouhelainen affirms in her article "Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897): a late-Victorian popular novel" that "*The Beetle* achieved substantially higher sales than Stoker's vampire classic (*Dracula*): in 1913, when the fifteenth impression of *The Beetle* was issued, *Dracula* was only in its tenth" (94).

everything about him amounts to speculations, including his school background, hometown, and life in general. Moreover, in "'Richard Marsh', Victorian Fiction Research Guide 35" Minna Vuohelainen establishes that "scholarly work on Marsh is seriously hampered by the lack of indexing tools making his work accessible to researchers" (3). This current situation exposes a long and significant silence towards the novel which substantially affects its identification as a notable piece of writing of the second part of the nineteenth century. The few available works about the author and even about the novel, remain accessible in very few sources or even in very exclusive editions of literature such as unique- edition books or old novels; its indexing is scarce, and the novel is hardly used as an instance of different manifestations of social issues of the time. All of these elements function as drawbacks which prevent the inclusion of *The Beetle* into the literary canon, not only as one example of the vast work of the author, but also as a reflection of a social, economic, and political reality during the British nineteenth century.

Regarding Richard Marsh, his life could be compared with *The Beetle* in terms of obscurity. With respect to the author, Vuohelainen affirms in her article "Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897): a late Victorian Popular Novel" that "Richard Marsh has largely escaped biographical detection, just as his literary work has defied scholarly analysis" (89). Her words effectively summarize the main obstacle for researchers: the current availability of secondary sources about Marsh and his literary work is still scarce and the

few available works are relatively brief or excessively general. However, a few authors such as Wolfreys or Vuohelainen have contributed not only to offer a substantial background about the author and the historical context in which *The Beetle* is written, published, and received by the audience, but also to expose the novel's capacity to reflect the different aspects concerning the British Victorian society. Regarding Marsh, it is known that his literary production was extensive, as he published more than eighty works of fiction and uncountable stories (89). Marsh's career begins in the 1880's as a writer of boy stories in *Union Jack*, a popular boys' weekly in those times. His publications appeared under the name of Richard Bernard Heldmann (1857- 1915), and besides working as a writer, he was also an important journalistic collaborator for G. A. Henty. In 1882 his prolific production entitles him to become the co-editor of the weekly, but his success was interrupted by an apparent discrepancy with Henty, probably based on the tone of the story "A Couple of Scamps," which "had taken a surprising, and, for *The Union Jack*, unsuitable turn towards the violent and the supernatural" (Vuohelainen, "Late-Victorian" 90). This caused Heldmann to separate from the weekly permanently and not to publish under his real name anymore but under the pen name of Richard Marsh beginning in 1888. It is believed that during his authorial disappearance from 1883 to 1888 he might have published anonymously (90). Some accounts given by Vuohelainen establish that Heldmann's disappearance was based on Marsh's issuing of forged checks around Britain and France in 1883, until he was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labor

in 1884.[14] Wolfreys believes that Marsh's life might have made evident the transgressive nature of his works by showing an "occasional depiction of somewhat sadistic sexuality or, as in the schoolboy stories, the expression of homoerotic affection" (10), although this could be an extension of the literary conventions of sensationalism in general.

Robert Aickmann, Marsh's grandson, makes a significant contribution in *The Attempted Rescue* (1966), an autobiographical novel with important references to Marsh. Vuohelainen, quoting Aickmann, clarifies that Richard Marsh was the son of Joseph Heldmann, a German immigrant, and Emma Marsh, the daughter of a Nottingham Lace merchant (*Research Guide* 3). She also states that Richard Marsh died of apparent heart failure in 1915 in Sussex, England. His works were so numerous that he published in at least sixteen publishing houses ("Late-Victorian" 90), working "in the genres of crime, detection, thriller, popular romance, and humour" (*Research Guide* 3). The popularity of Marsh's early work is related to his capacity not only to approach his audience through a clever development of topics which were relevant for them, but also to take advantage of new trends in literary diffusion which permitted the publication and distribution of popular literary works among the middle classes in Victorian England. However, not much is known about his personal life or relations with other people in the places where he lived. Regarding Marsh's literary production, Vuohelainen has indexed his

[14]Wolfreys also gives account of this information but goes further by establishing that it is no more than speculative to believe that it is possible to draw conclusions about Marsh's life by studying his literary production. According to him "(t)here is no hard evidence on which to draw, either concerning Marsh's life or in the narrative details of his publications" ("Introduction" 10).

complete literary work, which is extensive. However, Vuohelainen is clear in affirming that "such was the volume of the author's literary production that the periodical section, in particular, is unlikely to be complete" (*Research Guide* 3). Considering Vuohelainen's claim about Marsh's vast production, it is particularly odd to find out that Marsh's fiction "is practically out of print and remains outside the late-Victorian canon of popular fiction" (Vuohelainen, "Late-Victorian" 90). A possible explanation for Marsh's lack of recognition as a productive author is probably his reputation as a sensationalist author. The majority of his work was published in different inexpensive serials ("Late-Victorian" 90). Under the name of Richard Heldmann, he published seven first editions of different stories and 13 different works in periodical issues. Under the name of Marsh, there are 76 first editions and 170 periodical publications. His literary production is very varied, for it covers diverse types of topics, from romance to religion (*Research Guide* 3), making him a very popular author with the public in general.

*The Beetle* was published for the first time in March 13, 1897. In 1927 it had already been published 24 times, translated to several languages and adapted to a movie and dramatized at the Strand Theater Dalby (Vouhelainen, "Late-Victorian" 94). However, it is still difficult to find documented opinions about the novel and its different aspects. Vuohelainen claims that the novel, in its year of publication, was considered "surprising and ingenious, weird, thrilling, really exciting, full of mystery, and extremely powerful" ("Late-Victorian" 89). Moreover, quoting "*Answers*' Summaries," she claims

that most of the reactions towards the novel in its first year of publication appealed to its "frightening, occult, and titillating aspects of this 'strange drama of modern life' which introduced readers to a vision of 'a creeping horror, a kind of gigantic BEETLE'" ("Late-Victorian" 91). Also, Stanley Weintraub states in "Reclaiming Late- Victorian Popular Fiction" that "Marsh vividly uses the city and the eponymous Beetle to reveal urban crime, moral corruption, shifting gender roles (the New Woman emerges), racial and sexual stereotypes, divisions of class, the long reach of empire" (173). This last commentary suggests the significance of Marsh's novel when studying socio- historical and cultural elements of the society in which it was written.

**2. Scholarly Criticism on *The Beetle***

As with reviews, academic analysis about *The Beetle* is also valuable but limited. Despite its significance as part of an important model of ideological construction and expression, only some examples of analysis can be found in different publications such as articles or prologues, and very few are dedicated exclusively to the study of the novel in particular. However, in those particular cases in which the novel has been the subject of study, varied topics such as corporality, gender issues, the medical discourse, urbanism, thermodynamics, mesmerism, or degeneracy, demonstrate that *The Beetle* is a valuable piece of literature, not only because it entertains but because it reflects specific aspects of the context in which it was created and read. For instance, Hurley focuses on the gothic body and its implications on fundamental issues of the time. She establishes that *The*

*Beetle* "shares with other fin-de- siècle Gothic fiction the narrative strategy [she has] identified as hysterical, deploying sexual euphemism, elision or indirection in representing and naming sensational, perverse sexualities, despite the text's nonetheless unmistakably sexual and perverse content" (125). However, she believes that this hysteria is not expressly provoked by sexual trauma but by the monster's "racial difference and …species fluctuability as (well as) her metamorphic sexual identity" (125). Hurley strongly believes that the anthropomorphic and sexual conditions which are attached to the monster's body become the strongest fear in the text—a fear that is even stronger than the monster's supernatural condition or its incomprehensible presence.

Considering gender issues, in "Both in Men's Clothing: Gender, Sovereignty and Insecurity in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle,*" Victoria Margree emphasizes that representations of gender play an important role in the story's narrative style and plot. Her article analyzes how different characters in the novel embody essential representations of presupposed threatening tendencies regarding gender and national identity in British society. She exemplifies this notion by offering three different essential characters: the Vagrant Clerk, the Liberal politician and the New Woman. All of these characters reflect new changes in British society in different ways and face tragic fates for their particular position. Margree, however, states that there is a notable tendency in the novel to favor more masculine characters over feminine or feminized ones and that the characters who cross the line of gender representation undoubtedly suffer negative

consequences. She states that "neither the masculine woman nor the emasculated man will survive: the novel suggests that both are improper subjects who cannot persist" (78). Moreover, Margree revises narrative authority in the novel, establishing that female testimony in the novel suffers interferences through narration which forbid feminine or feminized characters to tell their own version of events. Readers never have the possibility to directly encounter the testimonies of those characters who exhibit feminine characteristics, for their testimony is delivered through more masculinised characters, and this aspect alters the perception of those narrators. Margree establishes that "the narrative authority that comes from telling and knowing what one has told, being able to retain it in consciousness, potentially to defend or confirm it, belongs solely with the male establishment figures" (78), referring to the novel's particular model of testimony transmission.

Regarding *The Beetle* as a discussion of discourses concerning mental illnesses, Vuohelainen, quoting Trotter, states in her article "Cribb'd, Cabined, and Confined: Fear..." that "medical men often used Gothic terminology to discuss psychological, particularly phobic experiences in the nineteenth century" (23). According to Vuohelainen, medical discourse was present in gothic narratives, especially in representations of fear and modernity. This assumption is very important for the characters who present these symptoms are those who embody undesirable characteristics for British Victorian society. Vuohelainen focuses on two special representations: the

unemployed and the New Woman. Vuohelainen's article presents an important distinction between the medical discourse and gothic narrative:

> … that both types of discourse shared the same register is immediately apparent in their focus on the detrimental consequences of modern urban living: where medical accounts insist on the chronic, morbid character states of fear, produced by the experience of modernity and, particularly, modern city life, late-Victorian Gothic writing characteristically focuses on the contemporary, decaying city as a site of corruption and ruination of the independent human subject. (24)

These phenomena are visible in Marsh's fiction, for *The Beetle* deals with conventions of fear, mesmerism, and phobias in relation to urban spaces and peculiar social representations of human change. Vuohelainen exemplifies this assumption through the analysis of two special characters: Holt and Marjorie Lindon, who present symptoms of fear and phobias according to the medical discourse and, at the same time, are portrayed in the novel as weak or socially unacceptable characters. First, Vuohelainen states that medical discourse of the time established that fear, or at least its symptoms, was pathological. Citing Mathias Roth, Vuohelainen claims that

> Those pre-disposed to suffer from states of fear included 'weakly constituted, sickly, ailing, highly imaginative persons, those who have been shaken by a railway or other accident, convalescent after severe illness', people suffering from a range of illnesses, women at the 'critical periods' of life, 'children, adolescents

> and adults whose education has been neglected [or] whose mental education has been conducted on false principles', 'persons addicted to drink', those indulging in 'sexual excesses', people suffering from depression, 'professional' or 'commercial men' engaged in stressful situations, and in general 'students and others who over tax their mental powers.' (26)

In other words, the medical discourse of Victorian times states that episodes of fear are directly connected to a type of pathological behavior typical of specific members of society who are in a disadvantaged position. Examples are taken directly from the novel in characters such as Marjorie Lindon and Holt, who portray some of the characteristics offered by clinical diagnoses and, at the same time, are represented as damaged products of urban life and "progress."

In his article "'Sensationalism and the City'...," Adam Paulden explores the topic of urban space as a sensationalist technique to develop notions of degeneration and Otherness in the novel. For him, authors such as Marsh use the "everyday Gothic" style to expose anxieties regarding degeneration and Otherness within Victorian Great Britain. According to Paulden, "sensationalist novelists aimed to draw the readers' attention to the potential for terror within their own society" (247). Authors such as Marsh, Paulden insists, took advantage of those fears which were intrinsically generated during the *fin de siècle* and created a piece of writing that could exacerbate those concerns through the construction of an urban environment that embodies threatening characteristics.

According to him, "the chosen localit(ies are) depicted as overwhelming the narrator's senses, to such an extent that the locality is objectified and turned into a terrifying entity in its own right" (246). In this way, locality takes importance because, more than a description, it is a physical representation of the potential fears that the British society faced during these times. For Paulden, the use of landscapes with trapping or degenerative characteristics provoked a sense of anxiety in readers, especially when these landscapes were connected to foreign or degenerate characters. Finally, Paulden observes the treatment of the Other in Marsh's narrative through the figure of the foreigner, particularly the Egyptian. According to him, "the nature of Marsh's Otherness is more specific …, therefore, as it deals specifically with the Egyptian people and, in doing so, accesses the specific late Victorian anxieties surrounding Orientalism"(249). Marsh's depiction of Egyptian elements in the novel demonstrates the depth of the prejudice against Orientals, and the narration "serves to reinforce the reader's fearful prejudice of the oriental 'Other', creating terror through illustrating that the Egyptian people, and the land of Egypt as a personified entity, have powers of seduction beyond what can be deemed rational and controllable"(250). For Paulden, Marsh's narration exacerbates the sense of fear that the British already felt towards the foreign presence in Great Britain.

Another innovative approach to this novel is developed in "Conservation of Energy…" by Maria Jones. Her explorations rely on thermodynamic theories of energy transformation. Entropy and energy, as oppositional notions, are represented in *The*

*Beetle*'s main characters, particularly in masculine ones. Jones introduces her article conceptualizing the law of thermodynamics and pointing out its main parts. According to Jones, Victorians knew of these laws and understood them within the context of their political role as a dominant nation. Jones's analysis encounters a connection between these laws and current theories of degeneration in those times as well as a demarcation of suitable masculine behavior for the benefit of the empire.

According to Jones, Victorian society expected men to use their energy positively for the sake of imperial prosperity and to have the discipline to maintain it. Contrary to masculine productiveness, dissipation or misuse of energy would compromise the standards of masculinity, which was a main concern of national identity. The fear of masculine entropy is materialized in literary production as a way to expose the threats of change in an already decadent empire. For Jones, *The Beetle* "show(s that) the discipline that enables productive, industrious masculinity simultaneously permits pathological, vengeful, and destructive agency" (69). This last notion explains the existence of villains in fiction who have the tendency to produce more efficiently and to be more controlled and hard-working, but whose industriousness is aimed at accomplishing destructive objectives.

Jones supports her arguments by citing some specific texts published during Victorian times which contributed to justify and perpetuate the notions of productive masculinity, such as Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Samuel Smiles's

*Self Help* (1859), and Balfour Stewart's *Conservation of Energy* (1875).[15] By going through the rhetorical arguments that validate each work, she associates them with fictional characters in the novel. Beginning with Sydney Atherton, the prolific scientist who is working on an important weapon of mass destruction, she affirms that his industriousness and unpredictability evince how energy can evolve negatively. Jones juxtaposes Holt and Lessingham's loss of control to Atherton's controlled demeanor.

Jones concludes by stating that *The Beetle* expresses an open preference for entropy (dissipation of energy) over positive energy change, and this is reflected in the last pages of the novel, where basically, masculine characters experience violent mood outbursts, and the monster is not defeated, but just disappears in a train wreck. At the end of the novel, Marjorie is saved thanks to the train crash and possible death of the monster. However, nothing is clear and incalculability takes an important role in final events. Jones's analysis not only gives an important account of the implications of science in human behavior but also of the value that these implications had during the Victorian period.

Finally, Wolfreys offers an extensive commentary while affirming that *The Beetle* is certainly a novel about fear, "engaged in an imaginative encryption of historical,

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[15] These three works were published during the nineteenth century and focus on different forms of using energy in relation to efficiency for the Nation. While *Self Help* refers to the good use of positive energy for the productiveness of the Empire, *Culture and Anarchy* focuses on the destructive potential of misused energy. *Conservation of Energy* deals with the incalculability of energy change and its effects on the nation –more specifically on criminality and self-destructive behaviors.

cultural and political fears emanating from and mediating particular aspects of the English psyche at the end of the nineteenth century" (25). All these fears are materialized in noteworthy aspects which construct the novel's main structure and motives. The novel, based on its sensationalist character, deals effectively with the eventual sense of anxiety that it produces in its audience, specifically focusing on the main struggle between modernity and the archaic in the lives and identities of the British.

While providing a very general review of the novel's main themes and historical context in which it was read, Wolfreys refers to the text as "a novel in which the various facets of late Victorian modernity, science, parliamentary democracy, imperial identity, and, most generally expressed, the nineteenth- century investment in the attainability and efficacy of knowledge as a form of power and control are confronted by the non-rational, the inexplicable, the archaic, The Other" ("Introduction" 12). For him, several conventions developed in the novel work as resources which expose and explore the contradictory conditions of British hegemony and identity in opposition to external influences during the second part of the nineteenth century. In this fashion, Wolfreys examines the different dimensions in which main conventions of Imperial identity are present in the novel, especially through the recognition of a foreign threat depicted through specific characters.

Wolfreys also notes how mesmerism[16] is reflected in the novel as an equivalent to ideological foreign control. Mesmerism works in two different directions: First, it functions as a symbolic act of foreign control, and second, it is equivalent to sexual contamination. In this respect Wolfreys comments that "mesmerism provides the opportunity for the unscrupulous predatory alien to control and devastate not merely through physical attack and corporeal destruction, but also through the psychic erasure of the boundaries which one imposes on oneself as the necessary limits of self- definition" (13). Added to this issue, fears of reverse colonization are also represented through mesmeric symbolic acts throughout the novel. Wolfreys states in this respect that "Allowing the foreign other control over the Englishman or woman produces an imaginative reversal of colonial relations between master and servant, as there is produced in such a narrative the association of the 'vulnerability of the mesmeric subject with colonial subservience'" (qtd in Winter 15).

Regarding degeneracy, Wolfreys affirms that *The Beetle* presents decadence as a moral and anthropological depiction related to criminality during Victorian times: "Degeneration was founded on and promoted notions of psychological deviance and criminal behaviour according to the reading of supposedly typical racial and corporeal features" (15). Degeneration and atavism where directly connected through a discourse of

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[16] Mesmerism: (*psychology*) is defined as a hypnotic state induced by the operator's imposition of his will on that of the patient, or an early doctrine concerning this practice (*Collins Dictionary Online*).

anthropometric recognition and enhanced by publications of different authors such as Lombroso, Ellis and Nordau.[17] This discourse generated a sense of paranoia towards certain appearances and behaviors in relation to identity and nationalism. Moreover, Wolfreys sees a main character, Marjorie Lindon, as an example of another form of degeneracy, that of the "New Woman." The specific characterization of Marjorie seems fabricated, on purpose, in order to associate her with the threatening, the foreign, and the primitive. This same convention is repeated with other fictional characters, as well as with the monster itself.

Within its own structure, *The Beetle* embodies a series of elements which heighten the constant struggle between the modern and the archaic, the centripetal and the centrifugal, disruption and the maintenance of order. Wolfreys emphasizes the notion of doubleness, the uncanny, or the Unheimlich in the narration, represented in characters, actions, and narrative contradictions. All of these conventions are, according to him, a reflection of a rising interest in the primitive and the occult in a British society obsessed with clarity of order and identity. What Wolfreys mainly observes in the whole narration is its predominant indeterminacy, its lack of definition, and its capacity to reflect the imaginary of disruption in a society tormented by political, economic, and social change. The text explores but negates, suggests existence but never confirms it, and finally leaves

[17] These authors published works that focused on anthropometrics and criminality, degeneration or social instability. They believed in the capacity to identify problematic behaviors or potential criminals through specific character or physical traits. Nordau focused more specifically on artistic works and literary fictional characters that exposed and transmitted this condition.

open interpretive gaps which reflect a latent ideological reality. Referring to the end of the novel, Wolfreys affirms that "not all the forces of modernity, deployed in concerted and co-ordinated fashion, can rid the Empire of this 'creature born neither of God nor man,' to call up the most haunting line of the text, its very last, in which negation opens once more, onto an abyssal undecidability, all ontology rejected in the face of this radical order" (33). His words refer to the incapacity to confirm the existence of the monster after the train wreckage and how this uncertainty leads to the impossibility of definition. This impossibility finally provokes desperation based on the incapability to control the unknown.

The aspects mentioned previously suggest that *The Beetle*, despite its infrequent recognition, is an exceptional source of study of British society during the second half of the nineteenth century. The examination of literary and historical backgrounds along with the analysis of current studies about the novel indicate that *The Beetle* is clearly a rich text, intricate enough to encourage its study through different points of view such as Postcolonialism, Orientalism, or monstrosity concepts, for instance. However, proper studies about the text remain scarce, even though the few available do offer intriguing analyses. This study will delve into political and social implications of the construction of imperial identity through Gothic narrative devices employed by the author. The novel will be approached internally through representations of monstrosity in its different forms and its relation to identity construction. Moreover, the novel will be analyzed as an

ideological depiction and construction of corporeal and moral identity, ultimately revealing fundamental aspects of the British society at the time.

# Chapter II
# Conceptual Considerations

The following section discusses main conventions about Postcolonialism, Orientalism, and Monstrosity, which are the approaches chosen to analyze the novel *The Beetle*. Specifically, this chapter reviews Postcolonialism to analyze the mechanisms in which power is exerted in the relationship colonizer-colonized, while Orientalism provides an innovative perspective about the conceptualization of the oriental culture in opposition to the Occident, and the consequent construction of the Occident as culturally and intellectually superior. Finally, the revision of Monstrosity concepts unfolds different mechanisms in which corporality depicts internal and external notions about the human condition in relation to society—Monstrosity notions permit the analysis of monstrous figures as a representation of ideological forces whose inevitable influence provokes instability in the individual and the surrounding environment. The perspectives presented in this chapter will contribute to understand *The Beetle* as a representative text of its times. Through the recognition of the different forms in which monstrosity is developed in the novel, and the symbolic value given to monstrosity as an ideological vehicle for the construction or destruction of identity, the text reveals not only the complexities of the context in which it was produced and received (especially the unequal relation between

cultures and their struggle for dominance) but also the capacity to perpetuate the different ideological positions generated from the conflicts of its times.

**A. Postcolonialism**

Scholars in postcolonial studies affirm that Postcolonialism is the result of a series of social phenomena where political and economic powers play an important role in different expressions of the human condition, including artistic and literary productions. Andrew Smith states in his article "Migrancy, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Literary Studies" that Postcolonialism is also focused on "cultural facts and values [as] mutable, contested, and shaped in and through storytelling" (248). As the product of resistance to Colonialism and Imperialism, Postcolonialism was first used in the late 1980s along with other terms such as *post-colonial*. Robert Young declares in his book *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* that Postcolonialism emerged out of the rise of "anti-colonial practices of cultural resistance to the dominant ideology ... [which] encouraged the critical analysis of common forms of representation and the process of knowledge formation" (18-19). Embracing the work of authors such as Edward Said, Fredric Jameson, Gayatri Spivak, or Franz Fannon, Postcolonialism focuses on the clashing of cultures and on a consequent unequal relation, where one culture defines itself as superior to the other (Bressler 265). In addition, for Bressler, Postcolonialism as a discipline occurs just after the colonized peoples become aware of the domination process they have

experienced. Bressler states that "only after colonization occurs and the colonized people have had time to think and then to write about their oppression and loss of cultural identity does postcolonial theory come into existence" (266). In other words, Postcolonialism is not only the critique of the different mechanisms of authority and control over subjugated cultures but also a form of creating new ways of confrontation against those mechanisms.

As a heterogeneous field, Postcolonialism is divided into two branches. The first group of critics, of whom Homi Bhabba and Arun P. Murkerjee are part, observes the discipline as "a set of diverse methodologies that possess no unitary quality," while the second group sees Postcolonialism as "a set of cultural strategies centered in history." The second group is divided into two more branches: "those who believe postcolonialism refers to the period after the colonized societies or countries have become independent and those who regard postcolonialism as referring to all the characteristics of a society or culture from the time of colonization to the present" (Bressler 266). In a similar manner, in the article "Defining Imperialism and Colonialism," Dean Baldwin and Patrick J. Quinn separate Postcolonialism into two main areas:

> One of these [areas] is to examine works by authors from decolonized countries for evidence of their response to the colonial experience and its aftereffects. The other is to read or reread the literature of the colonial period to ask whether it

> challenges or supports colonialism, or whether it contains subtle or obvious reflections of imperialist attitudes and values. (10)

According to these authors, the discipline can demonstrate literature has the capacity to depict not only the author's position towards his or her historical environment (especially considering the author is a representation of a community), but also to examine literature as evidence of political, economic or ideological influences during the colonial times.

One of the most important objectives of Postcolonialism is to use literary analysis to raise awareness about the aspects that define identity. In other words, "one aim of postcolonial study is to 'decolonize' the minds of colonized peoples, ... [and] to look for ways in which colonialism is consciously or unconsciously reflected in the literary work" (Baldwin and Quinn 10). By "looking at the literature for its social and political discourse, the conditions under which it was written and published, and the underlying assumptions, biases, values, and ideas of the cultures from which it arises" (10), both authors state that this discipline "urges readers to be alert to the ways by which cultural divisions and power relations are mediated by literature" (13). Postcolonial theorists work with specific texts of particular times, geographical zones or cultures, and revise the different aspects that generate the specific character of the text. For Baldwin and Quinn, "Postcolonial critics and theorists ... focus much more directly, sometimes even exclusively, on the regional historical, literary, aesthetic, and political conditions that produce a given work of literature" (9).

**1. Imperialism**

Due to the fact that Imperialism is a complex process where several elements are involved, a brief definition is difficult to establish. However, several authors have extensively revised its meaning in different contexts. Currently considered a global political system which "operated with distinct national identities and ideologies" (Young 17-31), Imperialism works as a method of organized control which embraces aspects such as economy, politics, religion and culture. First, quoting Hodgart in the article "Imperialism in World-System Perspective," Patrick J. McGowan not only defines theories of Imperialism as "concerned with the international reallocation of resources … and with international trade" (59), but also poses two questions related to the significance of Imperialism as an effective economic system: "has the reallocation of resources occurred sufficiently to promote economic growth and political development in peripheral nations; and if it has, why has growth and development not happened everywhere?" (59). Other authors such as John Darwin observe in his article "Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion" that Imperialism is

> the sustained effort to assimilate a country or region to the political, economic or cultural system of another power[,]…the explicit transfer of sovereignty and, usually, the imposition of direct administrative control. [Imperialism also develops around] the links created by trade, investment or diplomacy, often supplemented

> by unequal treaties and periodic armed intervention, to draw new regions into the world-system of an imperial power. (614)

Moreover, Young establishes that Imperialism is a "defensive response to emerging freedom movements (28)", characterized by the "exercise of power either through direct conquest or (latterly) through political and economic influence that effectively amounts to a similar form of domination: both involve the practice of power through the implementation of institutions and ideologies (27). Young states that Imperialism is "driven by ideology[18] and a theory of sorts, in some instances even to the extent that it can operate as much against purely economic interests" (27). For him, Imperialism is finally a matter of political and economic power, based on exploitation and an "increased separation between the ruler and ruled" (28).

Imperialism, as a system, involves diverse forms of exchange between different cultures or countries, but this relationship is not based on equal terms. According to Baumgart, "[Imperialism] cover[s] a wide range of relationships of domination and dependence that can be characterized according to historical and theoretical or organizational differences (qtd. in Young 26). Williams claims Imperialism holds two predominant denotations: "a description of a political system of actual conquest and occupation [and] … a general system of economic domination, with direct political

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[18] Baldwin and Quinn agree with Young in stating that Imperialism is the exercise of power driven by and through ideology.

domination being a possible but not necessary adjunct" (qtd. in Young 26). For Williams, Imperialism is not necessarily about political control, but it is predominantly a matter of economic regulation. Hobson's account of Imperialism is more specific when he observes the dynamics in which this process affects its participants. For him, Imperialism is "a system of economic exploitation, in which the metropolitan centre drains the resources of the periphery while at the same time encourage[s] it to consume its manufactured products in an unequal, unbalanced system of exchange" (qtd. in Young 47). Finally, Young provides an interesting position towards Imperialism when he states that it is characterized for being a contradictory and inefficient system whose own internal weaknesses evidence its incapacity to hold itself as a stable, durable model. For him, "the British Empire was dualistic, and this division had the effect of constantly putting the empire at the edge of dissolution" (35).

Young claims Imperialism operated in two major forms: "the Roman, Ottoman and Spanish imperial model, and that of late-nineteenth-century Europe" (17). In the specific case of British Imperialism, Young identifies its beginning in the 1880s and 1890s, specifically in the bombarding of Alexandria and the occupation of Egypt—both events occurring in 1882 (29). British Imperialism is closely connected to the ideal of race and Nation, since its model supported the settlement of British descendants in the colonized territories (35). Based on self-acknowledged notions about racial superiority, the British Empire's colonizing objective not only set its dynamics on political, economic

and spiritual foundations, but also on justifications of ethnic superiority over the colonized.[19] For Young, "the imperial phase was intrinsically linked to the development of a cultural ideology of race from the 1860s onwards," since the colonizers were strongly convinced of their "presupposed racial superiority" as a motivation to civilize other groups (Young 32). Key leaders such as Dilke[20] proposed racial difference as an alternative to redefine an imperialistic mission which was a failure in terms of economic profit. In this sense, Young claims that "a reformulation of the empire as predominantly racial rather than commercial institution articulated a fundamental contradiction that could only be resolved within imperial ideology by the invocation of a paternalistic racial hierarchy" (36).

The eventual establishment of a *Greater Britain* as "a cohesive racial and political structure for the global diaspora of an Anglo-Saxon race which continued to share the same language and institutions" (Young 33) was strategically based on selective policies where the rulers did not interfere in the cultural or spiritual spheres, but rather exerted their influence in educational terms, based on the assumption that the colonized communities were intellectually disadvantaged and consequently needed constant

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[19] During these times, pseudoscientific research about race and aptitude was in trend. Most of this research was taken seriously by the general population, and was finally considered a form of justification for the colonizing process in other territories (see chapter 1).

[20] Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, 2nd Baronet, (born Sept. 4, 1843, London, Eng.—died Jan. 26, 1911, London), British statesman and Radical member of Parliament who became a member of the Cabinet in William E. Gladstone's second administration but was ruined at the height of his career when he was cited as correspondent in a divorce suit. (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*).

guidance from more superior groups. Through colonializing practices such as the establishment of settlement and exploitation colonies and the development of the Assimilation Doctrine[21], "the British system of relative non-interference with local cultures … was in fact also based on the racist assumption that the native was incapable of education up to the level of the European—and therefore by implication required perpetual colonial rule" (Young 33). The consequences of this assumption redefined the new objectives of British imperialism, converting it into a race-based domination project (Young 36).

**2. Colonialism**

Colonialism, as the "practice of imperialism" (Young 25), is more performative—it refers to the actions that are completed in order to make Imperialism possible. Colonialism is extremely important to understand the eventual efficacy of Imperialism and is based on two principles: the extraction of riches (see Fig. 3) and the conversion of the indigenous population. Williams and Chrisman note that Colonialism works directly in geographical zones with the objective of controlling their use. However, for these authors, Colonialism is a less homogeneous practice, and one which is incoherent, uncontrolled, poor in ideological bases, and driven by economic motives (2).

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[21]Assimilation Doctrines or Assimilation Theories are derived from assumptions supported by empirical studies to explain the varied processes and paths that immigrants have undertaken to incorporate into the mainstream of the destination country. Some forms of Assimilation Theories are Anglo-Conformity, Process Theory, Melting Pot, Segmented Labor Market and Multiculturalism (www.immigrationinamerica.org).

Young establishes that Colonialism was adapted to the particular characteristics of each culture. The use of the direct and indirect rule, Assimilation Theories (British form), and direct imposition of a metropolitan culture (French form) are some examples of different colonialist strategies used in relation to the particularities of each zone. As

*Elephant tusks in the storehouse of an African trading station.*

Fig. 3. Elephant tusks were used to make ivory products which were purchased by the middle and higher classes. In Arlandini, Silvia, ed. *Empire Tales.* Cideb Editrice, 1997. 81

Young states, "Colonialism involved an extraordinary range of different forms and practices carried with respect to radically different cultures" (17). Besides Hammand's identification of settlement and exploitation colonies as predominant forms of colonialism, Osterhammel distinguishes a third category: *maritime enclaves*: "bases for

the purpose of global military and naval operations, sometimes with the added purpose of trading and commercial interaction with a mainland." Some examples are Guam, Hawaii, British Gibraltar, and Hong Kong (qtd. in Young 17). Regarding settler colonies, they are set up by emigrants from the home country who take most of the land and dominate it economically and politically (for example, Canada and Australia), while administered colonies are created for mere economic exploitation (India and the Congo). In the particular case of administered colonies, "Europeans dominate politically and economically but do not settle a large portion of the land" (Young 15-16).

From a historical point of view, in the colonialist process the relationship between colonizers and the colonized was clearly based on oppression: "the appropriation of land and space meant that colonialism was ... an act of geographical violence" (Young 20). During the nineteenth century, in Great Britain, the idea of a colony implied, as with Imperialism, racial superiority, and consequently, coercive control methods and separation were practiced based on ethnic distinctions. As Young states,

> [In 1849,] Roebuck[22] still confidently defined a colony as a land without indigenous people whose inhabitants looked to England as the mother country. Later colonizers sought to retain a distinction between the colonizers and natives,

[22]John Arthur Roebuck(1801—1879), politician. Radical MP for Bath (1832–7, 1841–7) and Sheffield (1849–68, 1874–9). Born in Madras, raised in Canada, and qualified as a barrister, Roebuck was nicknamed 'Tear 'Em' for his fierce personality towards military affairs (*Oxford Reference*).

> rather than integrate with the local population as generally occurred with earlier migrations. (20)

Economic motivations provoked the British to find new strategies to uphold a questionable economic model. Trade restrictions motivated the creation of alternatives that could secure the existing system, which at the end benefited the colonizers in every possible way:

> The Navigation Laws forbade the carrying of any goods to British ports except in British ships. … High duties were imposed on any raw materials or manufactured products coming from foreign colonies, while the importation of colonial manufacturers into Britain was forbidden. As a result, the early colonial economy of the importation of food crops and strategic military supplies developed into a systematic trading bloc based on importing raw materials and exporting British manufactured products to colonial monopoly markets. … By the 1830s this system had become obsolete and was gradually abandoned in favour of free trade. It was, however, reinstituted, in a different form in the 1880s as part of a new imperial preference system. (Young 23)

The circumstances in which the British occupied other regions and took control over them made of England a "colonial, not an imperial power" (Baldwin and Quinn 3), and consequently, created a specific discourse of the colonies, based on the British imaginary of the subaltern territories. Williams and Chrisman refer to this discourse as "the variety

of textual forms in which the West produced and codified knowledge about non-metropolitan areas and cultures, especially those under colonial control" (5). Colonialism not only put territories in a condition of subjugation, but also malformed their identity through abuse, intervention, and the creation of an imaginary of the other as uncivilized and dependent.

**a. Colonialism Today**

As a system of control, Colonialism has evolved—Nowadays, its concept revolves around the notion of global, capitalist mass production. Williams and Chrisman affirm colonialism is "now best understood as the globalisation of the capitalist mode of production" and its penetration on previously non-capitalist forms of social organization (2). In this sense, new Marxist analysis takes into consideration several aspects related to new forms of colonialism. For them, these influential aspects can operate in combination with the economic aspect overriding the others, to form new structures of control, in what they call neo-colonialism. As Williams and Chrisman state, "this continuing Western influence, located in flexible combinations of the economic, the political, the military and the ideological (but with an over-riding economic purpose), was named neo-colonialism by Marxists" (3). Regarding criticism, the discipline has focused not only on dominating agents, but also on subjugated subjects. Currently, "Colonial discourse analysis has concerned itself with, among other things, the ways in which the 'subaltern' *native is* constructed within these discourses" (Williams and Chrisman 16). These authors affirm

that dominated groups have not been given enough attention, especially considering their role in the colonialist process. They claim that "colonial relations need to be rethought [since these connections] between domestic and overseas versions of culture and authority are so complex as to need further analysis" (17). They claim that previous forms of analysis have been based on a unique dynamics of domination, being the colonialist territory the point of focus. However, they believe it is necessary to consider the periphery as an active agent whose role has exerted a strong influence in the construction of the colonialist discourse:

> What has been less explored is the extent to which the subaltern may have played a constitute rather than a reflective role in the colonial and domestic imperial discourse and subjectivity. Rather than being that other onto which the coloniser projects a previously constituted subjectivity and knowledge, native presences, locations, and political resistance need to be further theorised as having a determining or primary role in colonial discourses. In other words, the movement may have been as much from 'periphery' to 'centre' as from 'centre' to 'periphery'. (Williams and Chrisman 16)

Analysis about colonialism is focused on understanding the ways in which the periphery zones defined the center directly or indirectly. These dynamics work as a tool to understand the model which defined the relation between the colonizer and the colonized territories, and how both areas not only permeate but also construct each other in a

symbiotic process. New forms of analysis recognize the importance of understanding the periphery as part of a process of constant cultural redefinition.

**3. Imperialism vs. Colonialism**

Generally, Imperialism and colonialism are easily confused since both notions share common characteristics, but these presumable similarities have deviated attention from their differences. Although both "involved forms of subjugation of one people by another" (Young 2), their mechanisms were distinguishable. First, their origin and transmission dynamics are opposite. Second, their purposes are defined by that particular origin. Colonialism not only worked as a centrifugal force, but this force was hardly controlled. Besides its dissipated, uncontrolled development, its economic motivation justified its prevalence. On the other hand, Imperialism was centripetal, ideologically driven and strongly organized, since its predominant ideological structure was constantly discussed in the authoritative center. As Young establishes, colonialism must be observed more as an activity, while Imperialism must be predominantly considered a concept:

> Colonialism functioned as an activity on the periphery, economically driven; from the home government's perspective, it was at times hard to control. Imperialism on the other hand, operated from the centre as a policy of state, driven by the grandiose projects of power. Thus while imperialism is susceptible to analysis as a

> concept (which is not to say that there were not different concepts of imperialism), colonialism needs to be analysed primarily as a practice. (17)

Despite the fact that Imperialism was initially believed to embrace economic purposes, its development proved it to become an ideological justification for superiority which paved the way for the implementation of organized, systematic forms of control over the colonies. As Young claims, Imperialism worked in an administrative and ideological level, setting the ethical bases which permitted colonialism to be possible as a practice:

> The term 'empire' has been widely used for many centuries without, however, necessarily signifying 'imperialism'. Here a basic difference emerges between an empire that was bureaucratically controlled by a government from the centre, and which was developed for ideological as well as financial reasons, a structure that can be called imperialism, and an empire that was developed for settlement by individual communities or for commercial purposes by a trading company, a structure that can be called colonial. Colonization was pragmatic... while imperialism was typically driven by ideology from the metropolitan centre and concerned with the assertion and expansion of state power." (Young 16)

In other words, despite a general understanding of both Imperialism and Colonialism as systematic forms of control, Imperialism is always distinguished by its conceptual character in opposition to Colonialism, which operates locally through more practical principles. Finally, it is important to observe that Imperialism and Colonialism, as forms

of control, were not only defined through ideological and economic motivations, but also through racial parameters. While colonial practices showed eventual counterproductive results through dynamics that were disorganized and hardly homogeneous, imperial motivations about the racial question eventually overran any possible objection to these colonial practices and perpetuated the idea of genetic superiority as an ethical motivation and colonialism as a morally "correct" practice.

**B. Said's *Orientalism***

A pivotal work within the area of postcolonial studies is *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said. Said's work conceptualizes Orientalism as a

> growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and the unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history; furthermore, to this systematic knowledge was added a sizeable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travelers. (39-40)

Despite several critics externalize polarized positions towards Said's criticism (for instance, James Clifford affirms Said's work presents polarizing and essentialist views, while Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak supports his views on Discourse and culture), [23] his

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[23] Regarding *Orientalism* as a criticism exercise, James Clifford affirms in his article "On Orientalism" that despite "Said's refusal to appeal to any authentic and especially traditional oriental realities against the false stereotypes of Orientalism is exemplary" (34), he has a tendency to dichotomize and even essentialize the

contributions to the discipline are exceptionally valuable for their analytical application to the construction of the colonized individual through idealized and predetermined interpretations by the colonizer. As Williams and Chrisman state, "Said notes the lack of any systematic study of the relation between imperialism and culture" (5), and proposes one of the first essential studies about the topic. In general terms, Said claims that Western cultures created—more specifically fabricated—an image about Eastern cultures which justified a position of power over the colonized territories, in a system of relations where the Occident would never be in the position of "losing … the relative upper hand" (7). Consequently, for him, "the relationship between occident and orient is a relationship of power, of domination, [and] of varying degrees of a complex hegemony …" (5).

Said revises Orientalism from a historical point of view, and besides identifying the preconditions that gave rise to this discipline,[24] he identifies specific factors which

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relationship West-East (23). In addition, Clifford believes that Said limits his critique when he does not offer any alternatives to the discourse he criticizes (25). Indeed, Said, according to Clifford, "writes as a Palestinian but takes no support from a specifically Palestinian culture or identity, turning to European poets for his expression of essential values and to French philosophy for his analytical tools" (36). However, for Clifford, Orientalism "still succeeds in questioning a number of important anthropological categories, most important, perhaps, the concept of culture" (33). Spivak, on the other hand, strongly supports Said's views, even if they are based on Foucault's criticism, which she believes ignore the real voice of the subaltern.

[24] First, in the eighteenth century, the Orient was expanded. It was "being opened out considerably beyond the Islamic lands" (Said 116). This widened the horizons of comparative studies. Second, scholar studies outside Europe, and non-European texts' usage, become more common. For instance, the first translation of the Koran becomes available (Said 117). Third, scholars made efforts to "exceed comparative study, and its judicious surveys of mankind from 'China to Peru', by sympathetic identification" (Said 118). Fourth, new physiological-moral classifications of humans arouse in scientific circles, defining conclusions such as: "the American is "red, choleric, erect," the Asiatic is "yellow, melancholy, rigid," the African is "black, phlegmatic, lax" (119). Said restates that Orientalism is only possible due to these conditions: "The four elements I have described—expansion, historical confrontation, sympathy, classification—are the currents

permitted its success within the imperialistic mission. Initially, Said defines geography as an illusory notion—for him, an imaginary division was constructed between the Orient and the Occident, and with this line, a fictional identity was created. Additionally, Said claims that the first historical manifestations of Orientalism as a discipline emerged in the eighteenth century, with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. Within his troops, Napoleon not only kept soldiers for military protection but also included scholars whose function was to describe the Orient in a way that could justify his incursions. These scholars recollected the information that was prepared and communicated to Occident when deemed necessary by superiors.[25] Referring to British Imperialism, Said affirms that the British rule in Egypt produced information about the Orient based on filtered accounts of these territories. The British studied the Orient believing it was a distant—but

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in eighteenth century thought on whose presence the specific intellectual and institutional structures of modern Orientalism depend. Without them Orientalism, as we shall see presently, could not have occurred" (120).

[25]As an example, Said mentions the *Description de l'Egypte*, a discursive attempt to make Egypt French, presented in 23 large volumes which were published between 1809 and 1823. Said describes the text's message was

> to instruct ... the Orient in the ways of the modern West; ... to formulate the Orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place in memory, its importance to imperial strategy, and its "natural" role as an appendage to Europe; to dignify all the knowledge collected during colonial occupation with the title "contribution to modern learning" when the natives had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the natives; ... to divide, deploy, schematize, tabulate, index, and record everything in sight (and out of sight); to make out of every observable detail a generalization and out of every generalization an immutable law about the Oriental nature, temperament, mentality, custom, or type; and, above all, to transmute living reality into the stuff of texts, to possess (or think one possesses) actuality mainly because nothing in the Orient seems to resist one's powers. (86)

fascinating—foreign land, whose mysterious character only heightened its appeal. Eventually Great Britain and Europe in general, were attributed a dominant position, enabling them to redefine their own borders and everything pertaining to their construction, in opposition to a passive Orient which did not participate in its own definition process. As Said asserts, "it is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries" (57). As an elaborated juxtaposed creation, the Occident not only recreates the Orient but also confers it with a silent character which deprives it from any autonomy or from taking part in its own definition. Regarding the British, travel documentation, which in many cases was subjective, worked as the basis to construct an imagined Orient. According to Said, "the Orient studied was a textual universe by and large; the impact of the Orient was made through books and manuscripts" (52). The result was "Europe's collective day-dream of the Orient." (52) as an exotic geographic dimension of unexplored customs and practices which demanded external evaluation from Occident.

Strongly based on Michel Foucault's criticism, Said states that the mechanisms which permitted Orientalism to rise as an intellectual discipline were strongly based on the production of knowledge from skilled scholarship during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This cultural and academic project of Orientalizing the Orient was

institutionalized in scholarly societies, academic journals, and conceptual views (like Darwinism or Marxism).[26] The resulting amount of fabricated information about the Orient provoked not only to shape the Western identity as superior to its Eastern counterpart, but also to distort the notion of the Orient, the latter being a product shaped by imagination and prejudice. The Orient was eventually designed by the West through the extensive production of literature which transmitted an imagined, simulated Oriental culture, unknown in its real form. Consequently, the study of Eastern culture, or Orientalism, through ideological indoctrination and scholar authority, became an instrument for the perpetuation of mechanisms of control over these territories. Domination through the regulation of knowledge becomes the tool for the reconstruction of political and economic supremacy from the colonizing territories.[27]

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[26] As an instance, during the nineteenth century, new racial theories influenced the construction of Orientalism as a discipline of ethnic differentiation. Ethnographical classification, as Trilling asserts, was "stimulated by a rising nationalism and a spreading imperialism," to be finally "supported by an incomplete and mal-assimilated science, [which] was almost undisputed" (qtd. in Said 232). Racial classification was developed as a discipline, and despite its inconsistencies, was supported as serious science. The appropriation of these theories and their incorporation to the construction of an Orientalist discourse generated a body of erroneous, xenophobic information which not only positioned the Occident over the Orient, but also undermined the Orient to the point of associating it with the savage (see "Science and Racial Attitudes during the Nineteenth Century" in Chapter I for more information on this topic).

[27]Baldwin and Quinn, quoting Said, state that "Western societies constructed their 'knowledge' of the 'Orient' in a way that justified colonial domination. ... Western scholars ... did not investigate Eastern cultures so much as they imposed on them previously held assumptions, using what they observed to reinforce and verify these assumptions. ...The whole idea of the 'Orient' but also virtually everything that was claimed to be true about it was in whole or in part an imaginative construct, a fantasy, by which the West defined itself in opposition to the East, legitimized its power, and justified its superiority" (10). According to both authors, in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said states that literature exerted a preponderant role in the connection between culture and imperialism by claiming that "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. (3)

Said claims that Orientalism not only makes a clear distinction between "the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (2), but also uses this distinction to establish a system in which the West will restructure the Orient through manipulation (3). Through the "corporate institution of dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, teaching it, settling it … [and] ruling over it" (3), the West not only constructs the Orient for its convenience, but also justifies its dominant position over it. Framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, and the illustrated manual, "the Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks" (40-41), fabricated with the specific purpose of restructuring the Orient without its own participation in the process. As Said asserts, "what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West" (40). Additionally, based on Michel Foucault's ideas about power and knowledge, Said emphasizes the importance of knowledge as a tool for exerting dominance by establishing its direct connection with authority. For him, knowledge defines an authoritative role which can deny autonomy. Said establishes that

> knowledge means rising beyond immediacy, beyond itself, into the foreign and distant. The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this

> object is a fact which, if it develops, changes or otherwise transforms itself in the way which civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge or such thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for 'us' to deny autonomy to 'it'—the Oriental country—since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it. (32)

The Orient, in short, was subject to whimsical forms of manipulation which could only be exerted by the West by taking full control of information about the Orient. Controlling knowledge about dominated territories secured new forms of passive transformation and perpetuated occidental authority over ruled territories.

Said places significant attention on travel writing and its function in the construction of the orientalist discourse. This type of writing serves as the basis which permitted Orientalists to construct a fabricated image of the Orient, not only by giving shape to an imagined, exotic culture, but also by establishing an important relation between the construction of the oriental discourse and literary production of the time. As he states, different travel accounts, literary fiction, or histories, are "the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West" (58). In the particular case of writings produced while being in residence in the Orient, Said states that the already fabricated discursive forms of the Orient were strongly established in the mind of the colonizer, consequently imposing

already existing forms of meaning on the new cultural expressions they encountered during their permanence as foreigners. It is important to note that in this activity, the idea of cultural exchange is undermined, since the relation between both cultures develops in terms of a one-way exchange (160). The Orient is silenced—the possibility to refer to its own description is denied.[28]

The idea of constructing the Orient from previous documentation involves the notion of continual inspection. Said claims that the Oriental discourse was created out of examination and documentation, but in this process, a conscious, respectful understanding of the Orient was never present. The occidental understanding of the Orient is formed under observation premises, not through real contact or experience of the culture, turning the Orient into a spectacle for evaluation. The multiple participants involved in the process, Said states, created an illusion of a culture out of the parts of their own experiences, which, in several cases, were inconsistent. However, a solid, elaborated position towards the Orient

> converted [it] from the consecutive experience of individual research into a sort of imaginary museum without walls, where everything gathered from the huge distances and varieties of Oriental culture became categorically Oriental. It would

[28] As an example, Said mentions scholars of the time fabricated a negative image of Islam. For them, Islam was a heresy and Mohammed was considered a "false" Christ. Mohammed became "the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy, and a whole battery of assorted treacheries" (62). This body of beliefs was later imposed to Orientals in general, generating a stereotype that has acquired a renewed strength due to recent events.

> be reconverted, restructured from the bundle of fragments brought back piecemeal by explorers, expeditions, commissions, armies, and merchants into lexicographical, bibliographical, departmentalized, and textualized Orientalist sense. (166)

The resulting information was editorialized, to be finally considered a consistent form of understanding the Orient. As Said asserts, "the Orient is watched, since its almost (but never quite) offensive behavior issues out of a reservoir of infinite peculiarity; the European, whose sensibility tours the Orient, is a watcher, never involved, always detached…" (103). The resulting position of Orientalism as a discipline was reinforced at the end of the nineteenth century, since it was more organized and systematized as a specialized body of knowledge.

Regarding discursive appropriation and literature Said establishes these are closely connected in a symbiotic relation. Both notions share similarities not only in their authoritative roles, but also in the circumstances which reinforce those roles. Considering that the novel was enormously popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the conditions of its production are closely related to Imperialism, as Said states:

> Without Empire, I would go so far as saying, there is no European novel as we know it, and indeed if we study the impulses giving rise to it, we shall see the far from accidental convergence between the pattern of narrative authority

> constitutive of the novel on the one hand, and, on the other, a complex ideological configuration underlying the tendency of Imperialism. (70)

In other words, Said conceptualizes the novel as the result of its context, intrinsically related to the system in which it develops. For him, "the novel is an incorporative, quasi-encyclopedic cultural form. Packed into it are both a highly regulated plot mechanism and an entire system of social reference that depends on the existing institutions of bourgeois society, their authority and power" (71). Said is not trying to say that the novel caused imperialism but as he states in *Culture and Imperialism*, "Imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible … to read one without in some way dealing with the other" (71). Literary production and discourse go together, hand in hand, strengthening each other—literature creating and perpetuating discourse, and discourse manifesting itself in literature.

Said concludes that Orientalism, as the construction of cultural superiority through scholarly production, should be seen as a discourse instead of a practice since, for him, this discipline is more than an "elaboration … of a whole series of 'interests'" (12). In his words, Orientalism is not "a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious 'Western' imperialist plot to hold down the 'Oriental' world" (12). He establishes that "without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously

systematic discipline by which the European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post- Enlightenment period" (3). Through this discursive construction, the Orient was converted into a system of beliefs which was not necessarily connected to its geographical location, but trespassed these limits by becoming a phenomenon of deep collective change: "Orientalism overrode the Orient. As a system of thought about the Orient, it always rose from the specifically human detail to the general transhuman one" (Said 96). Finally, Said observes in this discursive manipulation that the Orient was not only "a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference …" (43), but also (was distinguished as) a passive participant in a form of unilateral cultural exchange, subjected to historical subjectivity. In Said's words, "Orientalism can also express the strength of the West and the Orient's weakness—as seen by the West" (45). It concentrated Eurocentric attitudes by being constructed as the depository of imagined forms of an unknown, silent Other whose identity was articulated to justify oppression. The vindication of Orientalism was not only its intellectual or artistic successes but its effectiveness and absolute authority over the Orient (123). In other words, Said affirms, the discursive construction of the Orient contrasting against a magnified Occidental identity is similar to "a form of Paranoia, knowledge of another kind, say, from ordinary historical knowledge" (73) which converts the Orient into an imagined nemesis that must be dominated.

## C. Monstrosity

The notion of monstrosity is relatively similar in different cultures since its ontological construction is based on parallel fundamentals. Etymologically, the word *Monster* is possibly associated to the latin word *monstrare*, meaning "indicate," "denounce," or "show forth" (Herra 70). Leslie Fiedler affirms in her book *Freaks, Myths and Images of the Secret Self* that besides the word *monstrare,* the word *Monster* can be associated to the term *moneo*: "to warn" (20). Moreover, Umberto Eco affirms in his book *On Ugliness* that monsters were not only humans characterized for embodying unconventional physical characteristics, but also beings that carried a special moral purpose: "the real monsters were non-human individuals born in the normal way to parents who were the same as them … and permitted or wanted by God to serve as signs of some allegorical message on his part" (241). In addition, Fiedler affirms that the specific context in which the monster is created provides it with a fated personality, since "human abnormalities are the products not of a whim[sical] nature but of the design of Providence" (20). The different circumstances in which the monster is conceptualized, its function in society and its deviating image grants it an intriguing position, especially considering its contradictory nature—the monster shows what is hidden.

### 1. Monstrosity in History

From a diachronic point of view, the origin of the monster is ancient, since its conceptualization is closely connected to primary ideas of beauty, ugliness, and

difference.[29] Moreover, monstrosity has been commonly associated to the unknown or to the uncommon, as it occurred in ancient times with unusual people or animals (Eco 241).[30] As an example, Fiedler states, monsters could have been an attempt to "represent anomalies found only in aborted fetuses" (26) that could justify the destroying of malformed children in ancient times (21) (see Fig. 4). Moreover, Plato imagined inhabitants of Africa and Asia as monsters, and placed exotic animals in the same level since they were recognized as uncommon beings (Eco 107). Marco Polo, in his memoirs, gives account of a fantastic animal which he calls a unicorn;

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[29] Aesthetically, beauty is conventionally associated to symmetry and harmony. For example, Immanuel Kant states in *Critique of Judgment* that beauty is "what ... is liked universally" (64). In opposition, ugliness is related to disproportion. For example, for Plato, ugliness was present in everything out of balance. In *Sophist*, he states that "the ugly is wherever there is the deformed class of disproportion" (II, 95). Additionally, George Hagman claims in *Aesthetic Experience* that ugliness is "the provocation and projection of unconscious fantasies that alter the sense of aesthetic experience" (7). In general terms, ugliness was not considered a suitable element for artistic production. However, Aristotle believed the ugly could be materialized in art if it is beautified, since artifice can make it enjoyable (qtd. in Eco 30). Finally, other forms of conceptualization about ugliness involve more ethical interpretations. The Greeks, for instance, understood physical and moral ugliness as a single notion (Eco 30).

[30] Eco mentions the witch as a primary example of this notion. According to him, during the Middle Ages evil was associated to medicine women and female figures who had knowledge about herbs. These women were demonized in the figure of witches (203) (see Fig. 4). From the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century witches were formally accused as a social threat (Eco 207), and one important reason to be socially judged was ugliness. Superstitious beliefs surrounded the witch figure, as "some people even imagined that during their hellish Sabbats they were able to transform themselves into attractive creatures, but always characterized by ambiguous features that revealed their inner ugliness" (Eco 212).

Eco's second example refers to physiognomy and monstrosity. A pseudoscientific discipline in trend during the nineteenth century, Physiognomy associates physical features, especially facial ones, with character traits and moral disposition, and consequently, could help identify socially problematic individuals by studying their face. Physiognomy was used as a scientific excuse to justify xenophobic attitudes towards individuals whose physical or behavioral traits did not resemble more "civilized" cultures (see "Science and Racial Attitudes during the Nineteenth Century" in Chapter I for more information on this topic).

Fig. 4. Francisco de Goya's *Aquelarre* (1797-1798) depicts women offering their children for sacrifice. According to general recounts of the times, witches offered children as gifts to "Cabrón"—Satan in the form of a Goat. In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. Rizzoli International Publications, 2007. 202.

however, the animal's description corresponds to that of a rhinoceros (Eco 127). Curiosity about these unknown beings gave rise some of the first scientific documents about monstrosity; monks were the authors of the first occidental documents which include references to monstrous beings such as *The Book of Kells* (Ireland, eighth century) (Eco 112). In fact, the oldest surviving document about monsters, according to Fiedler, is a Babylonian lexicon of monsterology, inscribed in clay tablets, from about 2800 B.C. In this text, monsters are classified according to excess, lack or doubling (20, 21).[31] Another

[31] For instance, Priapus, the God of fertility, was depicted with a giant penis. This deity was discriminated for his apparent disproportionate condition (Eco 132).

literary example about monsters are *Mirabilia* and the *Physiologus*[32]—Medieval texts where monsters were described and classified in diverse ways. Particularly, some of the monsters presented "were certainly not considered examples of beauty not all were felt to be dangerous" (Eco 116)—they were observed in the same way animals are recognized in a zoo (See Figs.7, 8 and 9).

Interestingly, the Medieval Christian church found in the redemption of monsters some benefit for evangelization. For example, St. Augustine declared that monsters are beautiful because they are creatures of God; and, in a similar fashion, the posterior invention of moralized bestiaries ascribed every being a moral teaching (Eco 114). Differently, during the Renaissance, monsters served not only for aesthetic purposes in visual art—they also had a friendly function because of their impressiveness. For instance, paintings and sculptures included unusual beings (see Fig. 10), and students' rooms were decorated with illustrations of portents, gargoyles, or fantastic figures since it was believed students could remember information much better if they associated it with those figures (Eco 125). Travelling, science and interest in new forms of knowledge gradually changed the concept of monstrosity—during the Romantic period, the ugly and the damned were closely related, and interest in the Sublime[33] gave emphasis to the ugly

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[32] Greek text from between the second and third centuries (Eco 114).

[33] Sublime: "in literary criticism, grandeur of thought, emotion, and spirit that characterizes great literature. It is the topic of an incomplete treatise, *On the Sublime,* that was for long attributed to the 3rd-century Greek philosopher Cassius Longinus but now believed to have been written in the 1st century AD by an unknown writer frequently designated Pseudo-Longinus. The author of the treatise defines sublimity as

(276). Additionally, during the nineteenth and twentieth century, new forms of knowledge and the influence of pseudosciences such as Physiognomy convert the monster into a threat that must be silenced. In the same manner, Cortés states not only that these

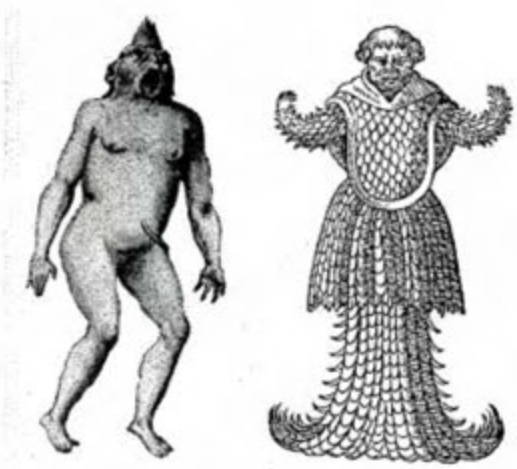

Fig. 5. Left: Illustration presented in *Monstrum Foemina, in Monstrorum Historia*, 1658. Right: The "Bishop Fish", presented in *Opera Chirurgica*, 1594. The idea of monstrosity, in medieval terms, is related to deformities or duplicity and to lack of parts of the body. In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. Rizzoli International Publications, 2007. 243.

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"excellence in language," the "expression of a great spirit," and the power to provoke "ecstasy." Departing from traditional classical criticism, which sought to attribute the success of literary works to their balance of certain technical elements—diction, thought, metaphor, music, etc.—he saw the source of the sublime in the moral, emotional, and imaginative depth of the writer and its expression in the flare-up of genius that rules alone could not produce. The concept had little influence on modern criticism until the late 17th and 18th centuries, when it had its greatest impact in England" (*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*). The Sublime did not only focus on classical forms of beauty—ugliness could also provoke it. Additionally, the Sublime can arise from the experience of other forms of art such as painting or music, or from the admiration of natural landscapes.

Fig. 6. The monster of Ravenna (1506). Accounts of the time describe a woman who gave birth to a creature whose body presents a mixture of animal, female and male characteristics. In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. Rizzoli International Publications. 2007. 242.

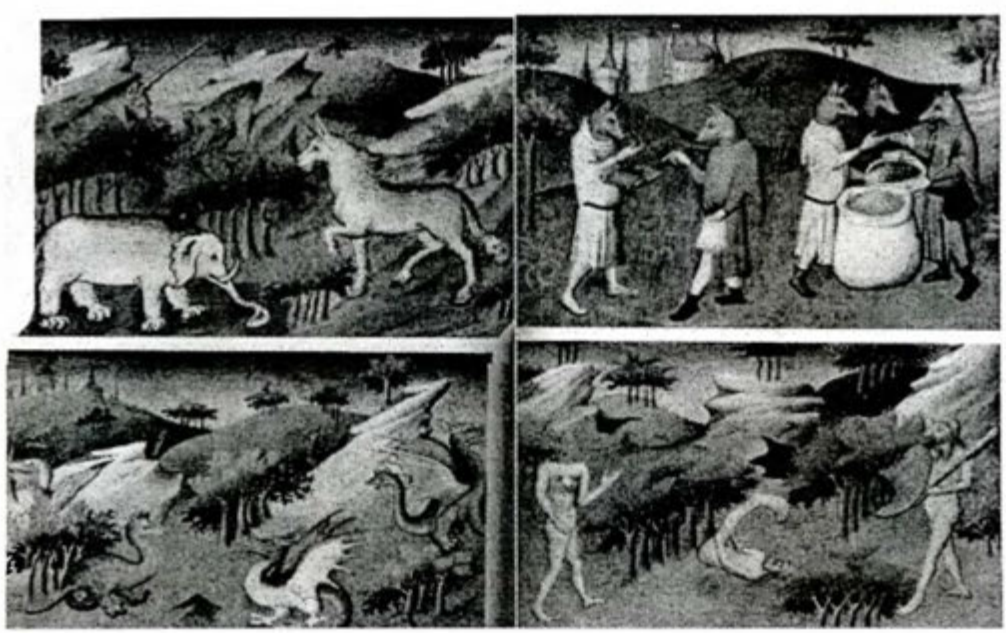

Fig. 7. The Master of Boucicaut, unicorns, dragons, cynocephalae, blemmyae, sciapods, and one-eyed men, in *The Book of Marvels*, fifteenth century. In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. Rizzoli International Publications. 2007. 123.

Fig. 8. Acephali and Africans (Illustration from 1440- 1450). These groups were associated to anti-Christ adorers or dissident communities. In Stenou, Katérina, *Images de L'Autre*. UNESCO, 1998. 21

Fig.9. The imagining of monsters. Illustration presented in *Monstrous Races of Ethiopia* (1460). In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. (Rizzoli International Publications. 2007) 117.

Fig. 10. Agostino Carracci, *Arrigo Peloso, Pietro Matto e Amor Nano* (1598- 1600). Carracci's baroque painting exoticizes physiognomic distinction by associating the men with exotic animals. In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. Rizzoli International Publications. 2007. 202.

monsters are deprived of a voice: "es interesante señalar como [algunos]... seres monstruosos ... de finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX tienen en común la privación del uso de la palabra" (21), but also that the reasons for this muteness rely on mechanisms of control over the individual: "frente al mutismo al que la bestia se ve reducida, se alza implacable el discurso de las instituciones, ... que no tiene otra función que la de restablecer el orden" (21). Today, the idea of monstrosity embraces forms of mental and psychological disintegration along with physical difference.

## 2. The Creation of the Monster and the Monster as a Threat

Monstrosity arises not only from cultural or religious precepts but also responds to internal doubts about identity and social order. As the monster is, in several cases, the product of mental conjecture, José Miguel Cortés identifies a correlation between fear of monstrous forms (or interest in them) and early forms of social and moral threats. Cortés calls these threats "rostros del terror" and classifies them into three groups:

a) *La amenaza seductora [o] la mujer castradora*: women (and their genitals) are conceived as a devouring monster (43). Special importance is given to the mouth for its capacity to create a point of connection between the monster and the victim (67).

b) *La amenaza esquizoide, la búsqueda del otro*: this threat links the individual with fantasies about fear (93) which consequently disintegrate identity. According to Cortés, this threat deals with "el cuestionamiento de la identidad del ser humano, [en la cual] el sujeto aparece fragmentado y mutilado por un conjunto de fuerzas dislocadoras" (94).This type of threat is closely related to studies of the unconscious in the nineteenth century.

c) *La amenaza disgregadora, la negación del cuerpo humano*: this threat questions corporality and its ontological dimension (38). Cortés affirms that in this type of threat "la vida humana es observada como un eslabón más en una cadena de formas cambiantes donde se afirma, simultáneamente la identidad y la diferencia,

> lo permanente, y lo fugaz" (147). Through this threat it is possible to explore interior life through external signs (148) which are developed in the monstrous figure.[34]

These three groups of threats materialize in estranged physical figures—monsters, whose threatening condition and subversive image remind one of the necessity of maintaining forms of social control. For Herra, the extensive development of this position in fiction allows one to interpret monstrous threats as real, or in an inverse direction, real threats are corporalized in allegorical figures which externalize those dangers. For Herra, the individual "sedimenta ... en ficciones frecuentemente definidas como reales ciertas amenazas que el hombre percibe o instituye" (23).

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[34] Cortés's *amenaza disgregadora* is closely related to the abject. In this respect, Julia Kristeva states in her book *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* that the abject in the individual

> would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being. ... Abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded. ... Abjection can constitute for someone who, in what is termed knowledge of castration, turning away from perverse dodges, presents himself with his own body and ego as the most precious non-objects; they are no longer seen in their own right but forfeited, abject. (5)

Cortés places important attention on the idea of the abject as a form of transgression. Paraphrasing Kristeva, he establishes that "lo *abyecto* es lo rechazado, lo expulsado." (184), and quoting the same author he claims that:

> lo abyecto está emparentado con la perversión ... . Lo abyecto es perverso pues no abandona ni asume una prohibición, una regla o una ley; pero las altera, corrompe; se sirve de ellas, las usa para mejor negarlas. ... Lo abyecto aparece siempre en una posición de oposición, no define tanto un objeto como una cualidad posicional, una estructura de oposición, e indica un lugar o una práctica transgresiva. (184-85)

Herra delves into the idea of the origin of monstrosity as a psychological process. For him, individual speculation about fears and threats is transferred to collective understanding of the monster as a representation of the rejected or the abject. For Herra, several aspects explain the creation of the monster. In his words, the idea of monstrosity rises out of veiled

1) Unbearable moments of reality;
2) Obscured or rejected understanding of reality;
3) The real as monstrous fiction;
4) Configuration of the monster as a cultural artifact that substitutes the real in a bearable way; [and]
5) Pseudorecognizing of the process, without reaching the origin of the monstruous. (40)[35]

Herra states that the monster not only is closely related to the limits between the real and the fantastic but also works as a depiction of the humanly unacceptable. The monster, as a representational form, enters a symbiotic association with a context which defines its significance and validates its acceptance. As Herra states, the monster, "...no se forma al

[35] 1) Momentos insoportables de la realidad;
2) Visión velada (o rechazo de la realidad);
3) Efecto de monstruosidad de lo real reconvertido en ficciones;
4) Configuración del monstruo como artefacto cultural que sustituye a lo real soportablemente; [and]
5) Pseudorreconocimiento del proceso, sin llegar hasta la fuente misma de lo monstruoso (= la realidad humana desfigurada por su propia acción). (Herra 40)

vacío sino en una situación histórica, en un contexto cultural, en un estado de civilización, en un dominio de 'valores' empíricamente observables y coactivos: la idea nace y se nutre ahí, teniendo este mundo como horizonte, negándolo, afirmándolo, arrojándolo en la indiferencia" (176). Furthermore, Herra explores the idea of monstrosity as a process of reformation and order. Referring to the construction of monstrosity in artifice, Herra affirms that "crear es un proceso de rechazo y ordenamiento. Crear es reordenar. Las bellas artes [the monster in fiction, for example], son creación en este mismo sentido: se reordena lo existente, lo irresistible, y con sus expolios se rearma una cosa nueva, tal vez más benévola y agradecida, más complaciente con su creador" (86). To create the monster is to produce a vehicle for social reorganization, and by establishing a new order, a more acceptable system is introduced, leaving the undesirable traces of the old order out of influence.

**3. Types of Monsters**

Conventionally, monstrosity is perceived under sole physical parameters. This condition will be determined by the level of eccentricity presented in the described creature or being. However, monstrosity is more complex since it involves the role of social, moral and psychological parameters in its creation. Cortés, quoting Gilbert Lascault, establishes three basic forms of monstrosity, the first one being a combination of shapes and beings, the second one a symbolic form of human fears and ideologies, and the third one a reflection of human mental disintegration (23,28). Regarding type one, "el

Monstruo como combinación de seres y/o formas" (23), Cortés establishes that "confusión de géneros, transformación física, desplazamiento, composición de nuevos seres formados con elementos animales y humanos, indeterminación de las formas, metamorfosis, [and/or] transformación dinámica del ser" (23-24) describe this type of

Fig. 11. The Melusine is a Medieval folkloric figure well known in Southern Europe, especially in France. Usually depicted as half woman-half fish, the Melusine was also described with dentate genitals. In Herra, Rafael Ángel. *Lo Monstruoso y lo Bello*. Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica. 1999. 56.

Monster. The "combination" monster is the most common since it comprises physical forms related to asymmetric features, unhealthy appearance, shape-shifting powers, among other characteristics (see examples on figs. 4 to 9 and 11).

The second type of monster is the symbolic one—a metaphorical representation of the detested. As Cortés affirms, "Los monstruos situados en un plano simbólico [son] la imagen de cierto yo; ese yo que conviene vencer para desarrollar una identidad superior" (24). Created under specific circumstances, the symbolic monster will acquire its

significance according to the context in which it has been created (Cortés 25). This monster is inevitably controlled not only by its context but also by its own purpose within discourse. In this respect Cortés affirms that this form of monstrosity "es un discurso, y … su finalidad, su destino, vendrá dado por aquello que quiere decir" (25)[36] (see Figs. 12 and 13). The third form of monstrosity developed by Cortés is called "lo monstruoso y los fantasmas de la mente" (26). This form of monstrosity works as a visual extension of the repressed. The monstrous form becomes the vehicle by which the individual deals with fears and finally gives them a value.

In this respect, for Cortés, "al observar un ser monstruoso, se nos revela una parte de nosotros mismos que desconocemos, se despierta en nuestro interior la ocasión de expresar, de proyectar … los deseos y los temores … que conforman lo más profundo de la existencia" (26).[37] The third type of monster is particularly appealing because its capacity to illuminate the complexity of the human mind puts the individual in a position

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[36] As an instance, Cortés explores the idea of ugliness and monstrosity. Ugliness by itself is not detestable for the individual—what is rejected is ugliness as a symbolic resemblance to evil and decadence. In Cortés's words, "el ser humano occidental considera la fealdad como signo de algo desgraciado, como el equivalente visible del mal" (25).

[37] Cortés affirms that the individual canalizes fears, predominantly, to female sexuality and the mutilated body. Fears about female sexuality, according to Cortés, are related to the capacity of the female genitalia to generate or terminate life, or specifically, to their capacity to produce offspring as well as to castrate or mutilate the male genitalia through physical contact (26). Moreover, for Cortés, the fear of transgressing corporal limits is placed in mutilation. Referring to this monster as a devourer (27), Cortés gives special importance to the use of the mouth to transgress the body. In his words, these monsters "chupan la sangre [pues] la Boca se transforma, es pura voracidad, ya no es el órgano de intercambio y comunicación, sino que se impone como agresividad pura, deseo de dominar y destruir al otro" (28).

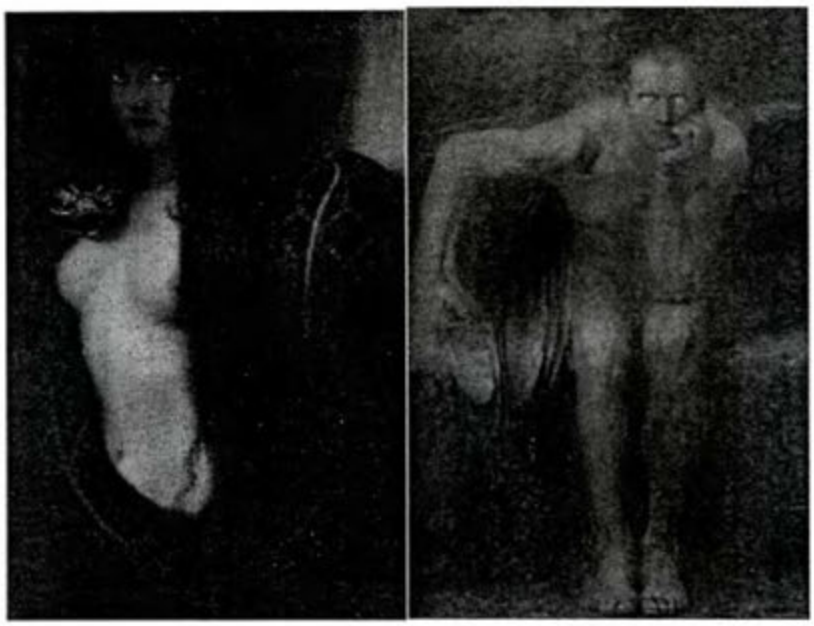
Fig. 12. Anti-communist campaign poster. Note the visual association between the soviet iconography to death. In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. Rizzoli International Publications. 2007. 193.

Fig. 13. This photomontage created by John Heartfiled for the magazine *Regards* (May 7, 1936) is presented with the phrase, "Have no fear, he's a vegetarian." The illustration refers to Hitler's apparent vegetarianism as opposed to his brutality towards his political enemies; in this case, the French, symbolized in the rooster. In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. Rizzoli International Publications. 2007. 194.

of recognition of internal contradictions and weaknesses. In other words, this type of monster reveals the instability of the human mind and its unknown consequences. Additionally, this type of monster explores the notion of identity loss and integrity. In this respect Cortés states that "en el campo psíquico, la pérdida de la razón y/o confusión de la identidad, al desplazarnos más allá de la consciencia y cuestionar nuestra integridad y seguridad, se evidencian como algunos de los temores más terribles que se le presentan a las personas" (28). "Los fantasmas de la mente" do not need to be physically threatening—their threat is posed in their capacity to destroy the individual's own knowledge and identity (see Figs.14 and 15).

**4. Monstrosity, the Individual and the Other**

The monster is inevitably dependent on the individual's understanding of identity in its different forms. More specifically, the monster is demarcated in accordance with rejectable forms of human identity and this will define its own fate. Cortés observes that "lo monstruoso representa el Otro depredador que hay en cada ser humano" (19), and Herra states that although the monster is not real, it is also "lo otro, cierta comunidad aborrecible, el mal encarnado" (22). For Herra, the monster embodies a contradictory condition—that of being hostile but at the same time embracing characteristics which are inherent to the human condition. He states that "lo otro de la monstruosidad tiene que ver de alguna



Figs. 14 and 15. Franz Von Stuck. *Sin* (1893) and *Lucifer* (1891). Both paintings evoke an obscure, forbidden side of the human condition. Both characters, in their human complexion, relate to non-physical human traits such as evil and sin. In Eco, Umberto (editor). *On Ugliness*. Rizzoli International Publications. 2007. 292, 285.

manera con fuerzas íntimas que repudio. Muchas veces nada en el mundo es capaz de repugnarme más que lo que el otro reproduce de mí mismo y que yo percibo recónditamente" (29). As monsters are "hostiles como el demonio, pero al igual que este, dejan entrever algo de uno mismo, el doble maldito" (28), they have the capacity to show and hide contradictory characteristics of the human condition at the same time. The identification of ostracized forms of identity in the monster turns this figure into a form of alienated enemy that, although appealing for its concealed nature, deserves punishment for embodying negative human values. Referring to the monster as a reflection of the

individual's internal contradictions, Herra affirms that "el malo siempre es el otro [el monstruo y su significado], al que nuestros deseos verán caer en fosas profundas, fuegos chirriantes y diablos prestos a clavarles garras ponzoñosas... pero lo otro es también uno mismo, el hombre occidental desgarrado por los abismos, los demonios internos y la fascinación de las propias contradicciones" (70).

For the individual, the monster, as a despicable form of identity, becomes an instrument for self-discipline and expurgation. In fiction, the monster becomes a form of malleable mirror which will reflect the individual's internal contradictions according to the individual's own necessities: "El monstruo, depositado fuera de mí, metaforiza mi interioridad y plasma muchas de mis fantasías, me salva de ellas o me auxilia en la manera de representármelas cuando las encuentro ya elaboradas por mi sociedad" (Herra 61). Conveniently, the individual deposits depreciated values in the monster as a way to calibrate morals and guilt. In Herra's words, "la actitud ... pre-crítica [propia] ... [m]e inclina a interpretar mi acción en el sentido de mis intereses [pues] interés y conciencia moral suelen andar placenteramente juntos" (52). In this way, providing the monster with a specific fate gives the individual a form of moral purification: "cuanto me disgusta de mí mismo y en mí mismo se me hace tolerable en el monstruo de ficción: infestándolo, me libero de los horrores excrementales" (Herra 29-30).

The monster purifies the individual by becoming a representation of the disagreeable and receiving a punishment for this. The monster is placed in distance and

destroyed (through fiction) in order to remind the individual about moral precepts already established in society which must be followed. The monster in fiction, according to Herra, "es lo que he depositado en él de mí mismo, para que me sirva como artefacto de rechazo. Con él y en él impugno mi obra y mis actos, [y] me impugno a mí mismo como portador de los hechos de mi civilización" (30). The individual finds in the monster the possibility to detach from moral waste by destroying the representation of his/her worst condition. The monster, as a scapegoat, assumes the fate the "improper" individual should take. In this way, the individual is liberated from guilt and rejection. Herra states that the monster "es sucio, se alimenta de inmundicias, puesto que es un sucio símbolo de descargo, el basurero moral, el hombre-animal y fantasma que devora mis basuras morales. Por estructurarse así, por ser podredumbre que se rechaza, el monstruo cumple efectos de desculpabilización" (31). Finally, the monster not only stands for personal purifications but also for ethnic or cultural divisions. For instance, Herra observes that the individual finds in monstrosity a possibility to separate from others by defining him/herself as superior in opposition to a "monstrous" other. According to Herra, the monster

> es un recurso de amortiguamiento moral que suministran las máquinas de lo imaginario, tematizando al otro, al "tercer mundo", como incivilizado, como "bruto" y, de alguna manera, como monstruoso. … Existe el horror a

> contaminarse de subhumanidad, y por ello también el monstruo simbólico redime, creando el efecto de separar al "nosotros de "ustedes". (78) [38]

The individual attempts to reach moral purity through the construction of an imaginary figure that can take responsibility for his/her vile actions. If redemption is not possible in a real context, it will be plausible in the fictional world. As Herra claims, "el monstruo, que es en realidad lo imaginario, produce el efecto de agente de males real. Así, al endosarle los actos perversos y la violencia a las ficciones monstruosas encarnadas, el hombre, que históricamente se ha convertido en destructor real, vivifica su pretendida inocencia" (26).

**5. Monstrosity and Divergence**

In general, the monster is feared because it unfolds outside the standards of normality (Cortés 18). As the monster can transgress schemes of cultural categorization (Cortés 38) its capacity to disturb the established order confers it with a subversive character which needs to be contained in order to secure social homogeneity. According to Cortés, "lo monstruoso perturba las leyes, las normas, las prohibiciones de que la sociedad se ha dotado para su cohesión" (18), and for Herra, "lo que salta sobre la norma,

[38]As an example, Herra states that culturally, the individual alienates others by converting them into monsters. He states that "la edad media monstrificó también a otros pueblos: a los pueblos del anticristo, a los gog y los magog, a los inclusi, a los tártaros, comedores de inmundicias: la suciedad es la más impronta de su condición, lo otro, lo intocable, como esas castas repugnantes. La porquería está en el ojo ajeno" (76 ) (see Fig. 16). Additionally, foreigners and criminals are usually associated with the despicable, and fictionally, these figures are conferred with a negative fate in movies, novels, or plays, for example.

lo que sobresale, lo que relumbra por su diferencia suscita movimientos urgentes de homogenización" (32). The fear deposited in the monster responds to a necessity to exert control over society and convert it into a homogeneous collective. Within the social context, the monster is designated as a scapegoat which will secure order and justice through its disgraceful fate. Monsters are, in Cortés's view, "seres que la sociedad necesita y llega a fabricar, para demostrar la justeza del orden sobre el que se asienta" (20), and to purge behaviors of questionable ethics or morals.

The approaches developed in this chapter—Postcolonialism, Orientalism, and Monstrosity—work as solid bases in which T*he Beetle* unfolds as a vehicle for the understanding of British society and its history in one of its most complex times. The understanding of *The Beetle* as a text in interaction with it historical background, its relation to Imperialism, Colonialism and Orientalism as phenomena in occurrence during the nineteenth century, and its treatment of the monstrous condition as an anti-foreign discursive element within the text, demonstrates the importance of literary production as a vehicle for the comprehension of its historical background. The artistic artifact (in this case the novel), transmits the notion of history as a complex phenomenon where different discourses clash for control reasons, and the text by itself becomes an extension of this struggle. Chapters III and IV will delve in the different mechanisms the text utilizes to depict, construct, and transmit ideological concepts in trend during the nineteenth-century

Fig. 16. Jesus Christ exorcizing the possessed of Gadara. Possessed figures, as demons, are depicted with darker skin. In Stenou, Katérina, *Images de L'Autre*. UNESCO. 1998. 75.

British context related to national identity and Imperialism, political and economic crises, and the rise of prejudice against foreign cultures, materialized in the monstrous figure in the novel.

# Chapter III

## About the Monstrous Condition in *The Beetle*

Social instability was a source of extreme preoccupation for the British during the nineteenth century, and its literary production reflects this reality. In fact, *The Beetle* reflects this concern through the development of monstrous characters that resemble not only social sectors of questionable reputation for the traditionalist classes in Great Britain but also negative models of behavior in British nationalistic individuals. The novel is divided in four sections, each one narrated by a different character. Every testimony offers substantial information about the main events surrounding the arrival of a foreign being in London whose mesmerizing behaviors conduct others (particularly a woman and an unemployed man) to perform dangerous actions against Paul Lessingham, a prominent politician. The denotative character of the novel describes a furious, monstrous being, whose actions suggest a strong desire for vengeance, but connotatively, *The Beetle* explores imperial fears of reverse colonization and loss of identity through its fragmentation. Several characters in the novel embody physical, psychological, and symbolic forms of monstrosity whose condition hints at the eventual sense of destruction Great Britain fears experiencing if it were to lose political, economic, and cultural dominion over controlled territories.

In order to explore the monstrous condition in the novel, this chapter is divided into two sections—the first one detailing different types of monstrosity in the novel. As

previously mentioned in Chapter II, Leslie Fiedler defines monstrosity as a condition of difference. This means that monstrosity is defined to a great extent by excess, lack, or repetitive patterns whose social function has evolved historically—the initial, exotic idea of monstrosity became a negative one when erroneous conceptions about the human condition configured the monster as a deformation of civilization. Consequently, the monstrous condition placed the individual in a position of disadvantage and discrimination that still works as a mechanism of control—the monster is alienated or eliminated in order to keep the established order. In *The Beetle,* monstrosity forms expose the complexity of social instability during the nineteenth century in Great Britain. Specifically, physical, psychological, and symbolic monsters denote fears about migration, reverse colonization, or loss of stability within the British Empire. Depictions of monstrosity in the novel reflect conflictive or undesirable behaviors within the Victorian British society. Moreover, in the novel, the monstrous condition works as a mechanism of alienation towards the characters who resemble those conflictive sectors. In other words, monsters in *The Beetle* not only are conferred this condition because of their characteristics but also experience a tragic destiny since they become the scapegoats that enable the perpetuation of order and control within the British Empire.

The second section of this chapter analyzes the issue of transmission of the monstrous condition. Besides monstrosity forms, transmission of the monstrous condition is important to understand the creature's negative role in the novel. Mesmerism, sexual

contact, and questionable behaviors are presented in characters who coincidentally present monstrous qualities. Characters perform or are influenced by these actions, and through their subversion, they are associated to monstrous behaviors. However, the actions described in *The Beetle* are in reality emotional reactions towards imaginary danger, or are the product of discursive manipulation about morals and identity. That is, monstrosity is the visual product of an inherent association between identity and subversion. It will constitute the visual construction of the unknown, the uncontrollable, or the rejectable.

### A. Types of Monstrosity in *The Beetle*

Monstrosity is the product of moral speculation towards corporality and behavior. Its existence presupposes the questioning of standards and uniform configurations. As mentioned in Chapter II, Cortés states that monstrosity is associated to internal and external threats caused by individuals' fears and anxieties. First, the seductive threat is based on female sexuality, especially in the significance of the mouth and genitals as a point of dangerous contact. Then the schizoid threat reveals the possibility to lose identity, and the fragmentary threat ("amenaza disgregadora") exposes fears about corporal disintegration and its connection to identity issues. These threats generate the conceptualization and classification of monstrosity according to the different ways in which these threats affect the individual. The combination, psychological, and symbolic monsters become the visual embodiment to the imaginary of the potential effects these

threats impose on the British individual, especially the threat of the loss of control and identity.

**1. "Combination" Monster**

The combination monster is, according to Cortés, the usually confusing amalgamation of gender traits or animal and human traits, or the composition of metamorphic, indefinable forms with the capacity to physically transmigrate. The combination monster embodies licentious characteristics in the individual based on precepts imposed by social standards, while providing a graphic approximation of the individual's subversive behaviors. The novel *The Beetle* depicts the combination monster not only through the beetle, but also through its victims, since the monster possesses the capacity to transmit its monstrous condition onto them. Specifically, the beetle represents every type of characteristic embodied by the combination monster, while its victims depict specific combinations pertinent to their social condition.

Marjorie Lindon, Paul Lessingham's fiancée, depicts combined monstrosity through the visual juxtaposition of social status. She is a high-class, educated, refined, and intelligent woman, informed about the current affairs of her country. For instance, she is aware that "The Agricultural Amendment Act was then before the Commons" (Marsh 147). Also, she questions her fiancé's political enemies, including her father and Sydney Atherton, who is interested in her. When Atherton affirms Lessingham is not a good speaker, she responds to him: "My Dear Sydney, are you not aware that it is an attribute

of small minds to attempt to belittle those which are greater? Even if you are conscious of inferiority, it's unwise to show it" (88). Similarly, her engagement to Lessingham provokes immediate rage in her father, Mr. Lindon, whose political positions strongly differ from those of Lessingham's. Marjorie believes part of the problem relies on her father's weak, conservative position about politics, for she thinks her father's opinions "are the opinions of those with whom he mixes. The reason why he consorts with Tories of the crusted school is because he fears that if he is associated with anybody else—with Radicals, say—before he knew it, he would be a Radical too" (147). Additionally, Marjorie is more independent and does not fear public scrutiny about her relationship with Lessingham. She is seen leaving the parliament with him, instead of doing it with her father (89). The beetle knows about Marjorie's importance for Lessingham, and for this reason it kidnaps Marjorie and tries to escape from London, so that it can offer her as a sacrifice to the goddess Isis. In order to conceal the kidnapping, the beetle not only dresses Marjorie with a masculine attire, but also tears her hair (including parts of her scalp) in order to make her look like a man. Marjorie is finally found in a train wagon, severely affected by the incident, looking as a low-class man, presumably a criminal, according to witnesses. Marjorie, an outspoken woman, is turned into a monstrous, hermaphroditic form of herself. The absence of long hair and feminine clothing, plus the use of inexpensive attire, causes confusion on viewers, who think of her as a "tramp" (234), and viewers describe her looks as those of a lunatic or unintelligent person (246).

Marjorie becomes an example of a combination monster, for her physical appearance becomes the visual extension of her loss of social status after being in contact with the beetle. Her social position contrasts with her looks, since she is the daughter of a respectable man and part of the British political class, but is found looking as a male criminal.

In a similar fashion, Robert Holt depicts forms of combination monstrosity in the novel by resembling the juxtaposition between civilized and uncivilized appearances. Holt is a relatively educated and well-mannered man who is unfortunately unemployed, and his desperate condition makes him break into a house in order to spend the night. He initially looks for entrance inside different shelters for the homeless, but he is rejected in all of them. This situation not only depresses but also anguishes him: "I had neither strength nor courage left" (Marsh 9). Exhausted and hungry, he sees an abandoned house and decides to spend the night inside the place. There, he encounters the beetle and is immediately mesmerized. The beetle constantly calls Holt a "thief" (17) and orders Holt to break into Paul Lessingham's house and steal some letters. Holt, hypnotized, accomplishes this objective, but later, he is left free by the beetle and found in a street, in a deplorable state comparable to that of a savage:

> a man was lying on his back .... He was so plastered with mud, that it was difficult, at first, to be sure that he really was a man. His head and feet were bare. His body was partially covered by a long ragged cloak. It was obvious that that

one wretched, dirt-stained, sopping wet rag was all the clothing he had on. (153)

Holt's description is that of a primitive, atavistic[39] being. Coincidentally, Marjorie Lindon rescues Holt and helps him recover his health, but Holt finds the beetle again and is mesmerized. This time, Holt is kidnapped and left in a hotel room, since he is not useful to the monster anymore. He is fatally wounded and extremely sick, and dies soon after being rescued: "his cheeks and the sockets of his eyes were hollow. The skin was drawn tightly over his cheek bones—the bones themselves were staring through. Even his nose was wasted, so that nothing but a ridge of cartilage remained" (Marsh 258). Holt belongs to the British working class—a social group deeply affected during the nineteenth century due to economic distress. Although Holt describes himself as an honest and educated man, he is unemployed, and this situation becomes his disgrace in the novel. His encounter with the beetle transforms him into a victim of his own social situation, for his vulnerability makes it easier for the monster to control him. Visually, Holt resembles a combination monster for his appearance is equitable to that of an atavistic individual, since he not only mumbles, but is not wearing western clothing or shoes. His body is in terrible conditions, and he looks dirty and smelly. Holt embodies a civilized-primitive juxtaposition by depicting a combination of both conditions—his looks contrast with his

[39] In biology, atavism is the reappearance of genetic characteristics of an ancestor that have been absent in several generations. Atavism was considered a form of degeneration or primitivism in Victorian times (see Chapter I: Science and Racial Attitudes) (*Dictionary.com*).

speech when he gets to speak to doctors. In general terms, Holt embodies a visual combination of the civilized and the savage, and his appearance, as well as his fate, become symbolic forms of attitudes towards the unemployed or the lower classes in general. His physical transformation associates his current situation to that of a disgrace which bring consequences—Holt is finally positioned as an atavistic, dangerous being, for his social status and unfortunate condition.

The beetle is the best example of combination monstrosity in the novel. Its appearance and behavior correspond to all the possible forms of amalgamation or ambiguity that are applicable to the combination monster. First, the beetle is indefinable. Its capacity to transform into various animals or to become invisible, makes it difficult to discern what the entity really is. In his first encounter with the beetle, Holt describes it as a man of disagreeable voice, whose looks resemble a deformed, animal-like being. He cannot either agree whether the monster "was anything human" (16) or whether the monster is young or old, but he describes the face as characteristically deformed:

> There was not a hair upon his face or head, but to make up for it, the skin, which was a saffron yellow, was an amazing mass of wrinkles. The cranium, and indeed, the whole skull, was so small, as to be disagreeably suggested of something animal. The nose, on the other hand, was abnormally large; so extravagant were its dimensions, and so peculiar its shape, it resembled the beak of some bird of prey. A characteristic of the face … was that, practically, it stopped short at the mouth.

> The mouth, with its blubber lips, came immediately underneath the nose, and chin, to all intents and purposes, there was none. This deformity … gave to the face the appearance of something not human … (Marsh 16)

Moreover, the beetle is feminine and masculine at the same time. Holt sees it as masculine, but Atherton describes it as feminine (110). If it wishes, the beetle can incorporate animal-like traits to its appearance, without losing its human shape. Throughout the novel, the beetle transforms itself into a rat, a fox, an insect, a man, a woman, a young or old person, or a combination of all these forms. Those who have been in the places where the monster lives report a fetid animal smell (179), and investigators inspecting the train where the monster apparently dies find only some type of animal or human blood; however, they are not sure about their conclusion: "some maintain that the stain [left by the beetle in a train] was produced by human blood, which had been subjected to a great heat … Others declare that it is the blood of some wild animal—possibly of some creature of the cat species" (273). Finally, the beetle makes "squeaking" sounds when its shape changes (22), thus resembling an animal. Visually, the beetle is the strongest combination monster in the novel, but in opposition to Holt and Lindon, its appearance is not associated to a loss of status[40]—it is connected to its origin. The beetle

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[40]In accordance with Patrick Brantlinger, Jonathan Loesberg states in his article "The Ideology of Narrative Form in Sensation Fiction," that a very important theme developed in sensation narrative is loss of status as an indicator of social identity. For Loesberg, "the sensation novel sees the problem (of identity loss) in its legal and class aspects rather than in its psychological aspect. (…) this common image links up with the fear of a general loss of social identity as a result of the merging of the classes (…)" (117). *The Beetle*, as

represents the western imaginary of the foreigner—a product of ignorance about others who are associated to negative, exotic behaviors. The beetle embodies the uncontrollable, unknown other, whose identity must negatively clash with the positive characteristics of the occidental identity.

**2. The Psychological Monster**

Cortés establishes that the psychological monster reflects repressed aspects of the individual mindset—the development of the psychological monster allows the individual not only to evaluate internal and external fears as good or bad, but also to validate or condemn the different representational forms of these fears. In *The Beetle*, Robert Holt, Marjorie Lindon, Sydney Atherton, and the beetle, reflect characteristics of this type of monster. Specifically, these characters' monstrous conditions is depicted through behaviors that are severely judged, such as criminality, open sexuality, or violence—illegal or licentious activities by British social standards of the nineteenth century.[41]

Even though Robert Holt's encounter with the beetle and his forced stealing of Lessingham's letters victimize him, they also associate him with the homosexual (or

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part of this literary trend, approaches this topic through the characters of Marjorie and Holt. See Chapter I (Sensationalism).

[41] Nineteenth –century pseudoscience exposed preoccupations about degeneration and phrenology as complementary notions. Scientific influence changed initial idealizations about the foreign other as similar, and converted it not only into an inferior being, but also associated its behaviors with the primitive, the immoral and even the evil. Robert Mighall states in his article "Moral Monstrosity and Representation" that "the sciences of moral monstrosity (mental pathology, criminology, and sexology) sought to replace the 'metaphysical' notion of evil with theories that equated deviance with sickness", taking the figure of the monster "as an exemplum of viciousness or deviancy" (173). Individuals who exposed questionable behaviors were directly associated to the degenerate and, consequently, to the evil.

sodomite) and the criminal, two figures who are severely reprimanded in the British context of the day.[42] Consequently, Holt becomes a form of moral monster in the novel. First, when Holt is mesmerized by the beetle, the monster attacks him physically—this suggests that the beetle sexually abuses Holt in order to psychologically weaken him. Inside the house where Holt finds the beetle, the monster crawls through his body, beginning in his legs, and moving to the head, where it touches his chin and lips, and finally "embrace[s him] with its myriad legs" (Marsh 14-15). Holt not only feels terrorized, but constantly describes himself as "incapable of distinctly formulating the desire to offer resistance" (31). Additionally, when the beetle calls him a thief, Holt rejects this behavior; however, the beetle tells him thieves come through windows, just as he did. Holt feels defenseless: "what would my contradiction have availed me?" (25). The beetle manipulates Holt into convincing him he must steal the letters because he is essentially a criminal, despite Holt's insistence on not being one. Holt's incapacity to resist the beetle's control associates his psychological weakness to stereotypes about

[42] According to Michel Foucault, homosexuals were previously called "sodomites," and in many cases their actions were considered a crime or sin. However, at the end of the nineteenth century (specifically in 1870) the medical discourse created a variety of terms to refer to homosexuality as a type of sickness. For Foucault, the proliferation of new scientific discourses classified sexual activities and transformed individuals who exhibited different sexual behaviors into beings of different categories who were in need of scientific observation. For Foucault, while "the sodomite had been a temporary aberration ... the homosexual was now a species ... [and this condition was seen] as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behavior" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 42-44). Classifying and controlling homosexuality as a sickness secured social homogenization—it was an exercise of power over this part of the Victorian community. In *The Beetle*, Holt is circumstantially associated to the homosexual for he is sexually attacked by the monster, and even though the attack is not provoked by him, he is inevitably judged as a dangerous element embedded within the Victorian society.

human behaviors that were common yet censored by the British. As Holt embodies the representation of the criminal and the homosexual—two examples at odds with an exemplary British individual during Victorian times—he is consequently exposed as a moral monster.

Marjorie Lindon resembles the intellectually, sexually-free woman (or The New Woman,[43]) but her independent behavior constitutes a destabilizing, moral threat towards the Victorian ideal of asexual femininity[44]. Her relationship with Paul Lessingham opposes conventional standards of a romantic relationship since this one is not based on economic interests or family impositions—Lessingham and Lindon are a couple because of their own conviction. Moreover, they spend time together without the presence of other relatives, and Marjorie's particular independence (visiting Lessingham at the parliament

[43] The New Woman was a term in use during the nineteenth century—specially the 1890s—to refer to women who desired "greater economic freedom and educational opportunities, and for a recognition politically and socially of women's equality with men" (Wolfreys 330). They presupposed a threat for social stability since they were sexually active, and, according to their detractors, posed an apparent wish for becoming men. In Margree's words, "detractors of the movement for women's rights repeatedly characterised women as actually desiring masculinity" (72). The New Woman was independent, could work, and have a better access to education, and the idea of marriage was not associated to a duty, but could be put into question. These changes were not ignored by the most conservative sectors of society, who perceived a potential crisis of identity through a possible fragmentation of gender roles, and tension arose, since the notion of female liberation was strongly associated with social chaos. As Glennis Byron affirms, "the breakdown of traditional gender roles, the confusion of the masculine and the feminine, was seen as a significant indication of cultural decay and corruption, an attack on the stability of the family structure" (139). Women's claims for a change in their social, economic and political conditions were misinterpreted and associated to sexual aspirations of change. As science challenged concepts of the self, and this one was "intimately linked to sexual identity, ...very much under construction during the period" (Hurley 8), the understanding of women's presence and role in a changing society was severely blurred and misunderstood.

[44] According to historians, the ideal role of women during Victorian times was reduced to the general administration of the home. Victorian traditional women were passive, silent, asexual and obedient.

without her father's permission or leaving the place alone with Lessingham) is not a common behavior in single women during nineteenth-century Great Britain. Consequently, Marjorie's independent personality exposes her to the beetle's attack. Aware of Marjorie's vulnerability, the monster physically assaults Marjorie, presumably raping her. Marjorie does not remember the possible rape; however, her anxious, unstable behavior suggests she had inappropriate physical contact with the monster. In other words, Marjorie becomes a hysterical, destabilized woman. Psychologically, Marjorie's mental weakness associates her to the monstrous, and her condition suggests she is paying the consequences of representing an intellectually and sexually-free woman. By putting herself in a fragile moral position, Marjorie personifies the consequences of subversive behaviors as she is transformed into the visual representation of the fear of lose sexual behavior within a patriarchal Victorian mindset.

Sydney Atherton is an important inventor, popular in the high classes on account of his intelligence and creativity. However, his ego and aggressive attitude presuppose a destructive behavior that associates him with repressed violence and sadism, for his productiveness contrasts with his evil intentions and irresponsible use of scientific knowledge. In book two, Atherton is presented as an inventor working on weapons of mass destruction (Marsh 63). More specifically, he wants to test his weapons on animals in South America (78), in order to later use them in human beings:

> I went into my laboratory to plan murder—legalised murder—on the biggest scale it ever has been planned. I was on the track of a weapon which would make war not only an affair of a single campaign, but of a single half-hour. … Once let an individual, or two or three at most, in possession of my weapon-that-was-to-be, get within a mile or so of even the largest body of disciplined troops that ever yet a nation put into the field and—pouf!—in about the time it takes you to say that, they would be all dead men. If weapons of precision … are preservers of the peace … then I was within reach of the finest preserver of the peace imagination ever yet conceived. (63)

Atherton's attitude towards his experiment is practical, but unethical: he wishes to make war more economic and lethal. He believes his weapon will eventually bring peace for his effectiveness in eliminating the enemy. Indeed, Atherton deals with his invention the way a child plays with a toy. In chapter 16, Atherton shows his friend, Percy Woodville, how the weapon works, but in doing so, he almost kills Percy. Both had been drinking before going to Atherton's laboratory, and Atherton insists on showing Woodville the effectiveness of the weapon. Atherton finds a cat in the street and uses the animal as his victim. He then places the cat in a special chamber and gasses it, killing the animal after some minutes and provoking discomfort in Percy, who not only asks Atherton to let the cat go, but also regrets having visited him: "I wish I'd never come!" (96). In trying to leave the laboratory, Woodville accidentally releases the mortal gas, and faints.

Curiously, he is saved by the beetle, which coincidentally appears at Atherton's laboratory in that moment. Atherton does not seem to be conscious about the consequences of his actions, and although he reacts with preoccupation when Percy faints, he had previously joked about killing the cat by declaring the animal is Lessingham's pet. By killing him, Atherton externalizes his hate against Lessingham and showcases his irresponsible behavior in showing Percy the capacities of his invention while being drunk. Atherton is unaware of the potential capacity of destruction he can provoke with his weapon; instead, he carelessly shows it to other people, and emphasizes the economic advantages of using it in war. Violent thoughts about unjustified, dominant violence emerge through Atherton—he embodies irresponsible forms of manipulation and sadism through his innovative, technological inventions.

In addition, Atherton's monstrous ethics are depicted in his attitude towards individuals of a different social or economic class. Elitist and classist, Atherton judges others based on their appearance and social status. His repeated encounters with Holt, whom he calls a "beggar" (Marsh 181) serve as an opportunity to humiliate him. When inspecting the beetle's home with Holt and Marjorie Lindon, Holt is mesmerized by the beetle again, and is unable to move or obey orders from others. Atherton's reaction towards Holt's situation is distressing—he threatens Holt with a gun if Holt doesn't obey: "'listen to me, my lad. Don't think you can deceive me by playing any of your fool tricks, and don't delude yourself into supposing that I shall threat you as anything but dangerous

if you do. I've got this.' He showed the revolver … 'Don't imagine that Miss Lindon's presence will deter me from using it'" (178). Atherton feels entitled to generate fear in Holt, not only by threatening him but also by showing him the weapon. Moreover, Atherton's capacity to control his frustration is questionable. When inquiring about the beetle with Paul Lessingham and Augustus Champnell, a private detective, the men consult Mrs. Coleman, the owner of the house. She agrees to being interviewed by the men, but categorically rejects the presence of Mr. Atherton in her house. When consulted about her reasons, she responds she does not want anything to do with Atherton's "impertinence" (224). Atherton apologizes to Mrs. Coleman; however, she insists on not letting Atherton into her house. Atherton's frustration is evident—he claims it is the first time he has been refused entrance to a house (226) and consequently calls Mrs. Coleman an "old pussy" (236). Exceptionally, the only person who rejects Atherton's intentions is Miss Lindon, but his attitude towards her is not offensive; he does not dare criticize her for her social status is different. Psychologically, Sydney Atherton personifies violence, manipulation, and stubbornness—through him, repressed notions of sadism and power emerge in the novel. The Victorian mindset conceives violent behaviors as equivalent to mental weakness and, consequently, to morally licentious personalities like Atherton's. However, Atherton becomes a reflection of the double Victorian standards: he depicts the intelligent but manipulative British individual.

The beetle embodies fears of identity fragmentation and violent sexuality as it destabilizes its victims by exposing them to sexual acts that weaken their identity. The beetle kidnaps Marjorie and disguises her as a man, demoralizes Holt by coercing him to commit a crime, and destabilizes Lessingham by harassing him—the common point of these actions relies on their capacity to create a sense of identity weakness in victims through sexual control. First, the most notable example of identity destabilization is observed in Lessingham's gradual loss of mental strength when persecuting the beetle in the train with Mr. Champnell and Atherton. Despite the mental distress the beetle provoked in him in the past, Lessingham is well known for his phlegmatic behavior and is accustomed to constant criticism. However, when Mr. Champnell recommends him to come back to the parliament to give an important speech and to let the police find Marjorie, Lessingham feels incapable of doing it: "'Mr. Champnell, Do you know that I am on the verge of madness? Do you know that as I am sitting here by your side I am living in a dual world? I am going on and on to catch to that—that fiend, and I am back again in that Egyptian den… and Marjorie is being torn and tortured, and burnt before my eyes! … her shrieks are ringing in my ears!'" (Marsh 249). The beetle attacks Lessingham by disturbing his mental stability and, consequently, provoking others to perceive him as a fragile man. Indeed, Champnell exteriorizes his dissatisfaction about Lessingham's behavior: "'I confess that you disappoint me, Mr. Lessingham. I have always understood that you were a man of unusual strength; you appear, instead, to be a

man of extraordinary weakness; with an imagination so ill-governed that its ebullitions remind me of nothing so much as feminine hysterics'" (249). Lessingham's altered mindset portrays him as different from the strong politician he is supposed to be. His identity is placed not only within the line of insanity but also of gender definition. Being perceived as a hysterical woman not only fragments Lessingham's masculine strength but also deconstructs his mental stability—the beetle provokes Lessingham to behave as a mentally unstable or hysterical woman.[45]

In addition, the beetle employs sexual, violent behaviors to demoralize its victims and to manipulate their perception of identity in relation to the ideal prototype of the British individual. By establishing forced, sexual contact with its victims, the monster instills fears about sexuality as a mechanism of control. Holt's contact with the beetle initially reveals feelings of confusion and terror since he cannot define which type of being he is having contact with:

> … I, presently, perceived that a figure, clad in some queer coloured garment, was standing at my side, looking down at me … My only covering was unceremoniously thrown from off me, so that I lay there in my nakedness. Fingers

[45] Several events in the novel reveal characters suffer from conversion disorder or hysterical conversion. According to The National Center of Biotechnology Information, "hysterical conversion disorders represent 'functional' or unexplained neurological deficits such as paralysis or somatosensory losses that are not explained by organic lesions in the nervous system, but arise in the context of 'psychogenic' stress or emotional conflicts" (PubMed.gov) In other words, within psychiatric nosography, this disorder is basically the symptomatization of anxiety. Although different characters in the novel exteriorize symptoms of this disorder, other episodes expose an incorrect use of the term in a vulgar context.

> prodded me then and there, as if I had been some beast ready for the butcher's stall. A face looked into mine, and, in front of me, were those dreadful eyes … this could be nothing human … Fingers were pressed into my cheeks, they were thrust into my mouth, they touched my staring eyes, shut my eyelids, then opened them again, and—horror of horrors!—the blubber lips were pressed to mine …He moved away from me[46]. I heard a door open and shut … (Marsh 20)

The beetle's physical contact not only terrorizes Holt but also weakens his own sense of resistance. He states that "something was going from [him]—the capacity… to be [him]self" (19). Similarly, the beetle attacks Marjorie by getting into her bed when she is going to sleep. Initially, the beetle buzzes around her bed in order to anguish her and finally flies and dives into the sheets. Marjorie is naked and extremely terrorized. Again, the beetle blocks her capacity to resist control. Feeling "helpless—overmastered" (Marsh 162), Marjorie cannot react against the presence: "My heart … melted like wax within me, I was incapable of movement—dominated by something as hideous as, and infinitely more powerful than, the fascination of the serpent" (163), and then finds herself "trembling," without the capacity to remember what occurred to her during the night: "what had actually happened to me I did not know—could not guess" (164). The beetle's attack on Marjorie suggests she might have been raped—however, this is never

[46] The role of eyes and fingers is very important to understand the idea of monstrous contamination in the novel. See "Amenaza Devoradora" in Chapter II.

corroborated in plain words. This attack not only overwhelms Marjorie—it weakens her sense of equanimity.

Finally, the beetle's use of aggressive sexuality is most notable in its contact with Lessignham. When Paul explains Mr. Champnell about the possible reasons the beetle has arrived in London, he narrates his experience with the monster in Egypt twenty years before. Lessingham narrates that he had travelled to Egypt when he was very young and had seen a group of women in a disreputable location at Cairo. They were singing—apparently, their music attracted visitors. Inside the place, he was intoxicated, kidnapped, and taken to a secret hall, which served as a place for the adoration of the goddess Isis. Lessingham affirms that he was sexually attacked by one of the women during two months of constant horror. He affirms the woman "wooed [his] mouth with kisses" (Marsh 197)—an act that, according to him, provoked the worst horror and repulsion. He affirms he "cannot describe the sense of horror and loathing with which the contact of her lips oppressed [him]" (197) and, as Holt and Marjorie, the woman made him feel "incapable of offering even the faintest resistance to her caresses. … She did with [him] as she would" (198).This woman, who apparently is the monstrous figure attacking Lessingham in London, uses physical contact to demoralize Lessingham, by undermining his sense of masculinity, and consequently, his identity. In brief, the beetle depicts fears of dominance loss through mental and moral weakness—this suggests a preoccupation with national identity, since the British concept of nationalism is based on a strong sense

of both self-dominance and control over other cultures. If mental and moral manifestations of identity cannot be controlled, identity is put at risk. Similarly, sexuality as a tool for destruction and manipulation emerges as one of the most notable characteristics of the monster—it dispossesses its victims from understanding themselves in relation to their environment and social standards.

**3. The Symbolic Monster**

Cortés argues that the symbolic monster is the representation of that which is loathed in the individual and that the significance of this monster varies with its context and discursive purpose. Specifically, in *The Beetle*, the symbolic monster not only is one of the most solid forms of horror but also reflects the ideological, Victorian perceptions about its society. The symbolic monster in *The Beetle* is that which the British society rejects or hates about itself. Through symbolic, monstrous representations, these abhorrent aspects of identity maintain their negative status, not only perpetuating Victorian identity as dominant over unknown cultures but also neutralizing (or eliminating) negative internal aspects of the Victorian identity. Symbolically, Holt is the embodiment of social and economic deterioration, Marjorie stands for social and gender unrest, Atherton resembles internal, negative forces, and the beetle represents the external threat to nationalism. These forms of symbolic monstrosity serve as reminders of the consequences of undesirable attitudes within the requirements of Victorian society.

Symbolically, Robert Holt is the corporeal representation of the eventual loss of political control and social stability in Victorian Great Britain. Holt is unemployed— his condition suggests that Great Britain's economic crisis predominantly affects the lower classes. As mentioned in the historical background, Victorian Great Britain lost influence under the dominance of emerging economies such as Germany or the United States, while its metropolitan areas were developing without control. The agricultural crisis forced thousands of people to work in factories, after abandoning their farms. Great Britain was unable to deal with change, and economic crises affected not merely a few inhabitants, but the most numerous sector of its society—the working class. When the economy failed, the most vulnerable classes faced impoverishment, and social tension inevitably rose in the country. However, this reality was not easily accepted, and the illusion of a stable, powerful empire, still lingered. In *The Beetle*, Holt embodies a working-class sector which is experiencing the consequences of the economic crisis in Great Britain. Although honest and well-mannered, Holt has been looking for a job for nine months. He explains that the company that had employed him for a long time simply stopped paying him. He found himself economically abandoned after working in several places:

> The firm by whom I had been employed for years had suspended payment. I obtained a situation with one of their creditors, at a lower salary. They reduced their staff, which entailed my going. After an interval I obtained a temporary engagement; the occasion which required my services passed, and I with it. After

> another, and a longer interval, I again found temporary employment, the pay for which was but a pittance. When that was over I could find nothing. That was nine months ago, and since then I had not earned a penny. (Marsh 18)

Holt's incapacity to become stable in work terms not only reveals part of the Victorian problem of economic instability but also depicts the injustice of social inequality within a context in which the lowest classes are obliged to be productive despite the lack of opportunities to do so, and are heavily judged for their eventual faults. Holt pays the consequences of economic crisis and becomes the representation of failure to maintain social stability within the British Victorian context. His monstrous condition associates him with a detested sector of the British society, for the presence of these individuals revealed the consequences of general instability and became the shame of the British higher classes. For these reasons, and as an expurgation mechanism, Holt must be linked to the horrific and transformed into a criminal. His failure to immerse into a productive British society presupposes an undesirable condition that must be ignored or eliminated, and this is done through his transformation into a criminal.

Marjorie Lindon is, symbolically, the monstrous corporality of social change. Her threatening condition results from only her independent behavior and challenging intellect, but also her sexuality —personality traits that are considered excessive and transgressive in the British Victorian female. For these reasons, her presence works as a destabilizing agent within the rigid Victorian social and gender standards, and her tragic

destiny presupposes a form of symbolic punishment for her position[47]. As previously mentioned, Marjorie maintains a romantic relationship with Paul Lessingham in which not only there are moments of privacy but also of the expression of sincere love feelings. These behaviors, and her relationship p*er se*, were openly disapproved by her father and Sydney Atherton. Besides her unconventional relationship, Marjorie is an outspoken, confident, and independent woman. She questions Sydney Atherton and her father, who considers her to have a terrible behavior: "Papa regards a speechifying woman as a thing of horror" (Marsh 146). During the Victorian period, these behaviors were not valued in women since their role was reduced to administering their homes—consequently, traces of an independent, challenging personality conferred women with a bad reputation. In *The Beetle*, Marjorie's negative image associates her to the monstrous, for her non-conformist, outspoken personality constitutes part of the detested aspects of the conservative Victorian identity. For this reason, Marjorie is sexually attacked, kidnapped, and dressed as a man —she will, symbolically, be punished for crossing the limits of proper behavior by being transformed into a disreputable individual—a monstrous feminine form, and the representation of the consequences of social change, especially in terms of gender roles and public opinion.

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[47] In sensational, Gothic and mainstream literatures, women are chastised or going against patriarchy. In *Dracula*, for example, the libertine Lucy Westenra is turned into a vampire by the Count and then symbolically finished by the gang of men by Van Helsing.

Sydney Atherton is one of the most intriguing characters in *The Beetle*. His personality aligns him to a foreign threat; however, he is a native monster. In other words, Atherton embodies the internal threat—the incontrollable destructive force of misused knowledge and power within the Empire. His intelligence competes in strength with his unstable behavior—what presupposes questionable acceptance within the standards of the Victorian society.[48] In addition, Atherton's description directly associates him with the beetle, especially, in his knowledge of unconventional disciplines and his vengeful behavior. First, Marjorie Lindon describes Atherton as "a curious person" who possesses "the hypnotic power to an unusual degree." For her, Atherton's charm is so powerful that "if he chose to exercise it, he might become a danger to society" (Marsh 151). The beetle possesses the same characteristic—the power to control others to a dangerous level. Besides his charming behavior, Atherton possesses scientific knowledge—this confers him with an advantageous position in relation to other characters, the beetle included. In fact, the beetle fails to mesmerize Atherton, despite its attempts to control his behavior. Instead, Atherton uses his intelligence to scare the beetle by making tricks with different chemical substances—an action that provokes the beetle to think Atherton is a representation of divinity. Atherton takes advantage of this situation, as demonstrated in his conversation with the beetle: "'My Lord! my Lord! [the beetle] whined. 'I entreat you, my Lord, to use me as your slave!' [Atherton replies:] 'I'll use you as my slave!'... 'I am

[48] See Maria Jones' commentary on entropy and nationalistic behaviors in Chapter I.

going to ask you some questions. So long as you answer them promptly, thruthfully, you will be safe. Otherwise you had best beware.' 'Ask, oh my lord.'" (104-05). In the same encounter, the beetle proposes Atherton to take revenge against Lessingham, since the monster knows about Atherton's jealousy against the politician. The beetle suggests that they both attack Lessingham; however, Atherton refuses this proposal for he believes the beetle is just a mentally unstable person:

> [the beetle says…]'We will try experiments together, you and I—on Paul Lessingham'
>
> [Atherton replies:] … I haven't the faintest notion what is the nature of your interest in Mr. Lessingham.'…
>
> While [Atherton] was wondering whether [the beetle] was really as mad as he sounded, or whether he was some impudent charlatan … [the beetle] had vanished from the room." (66-67)

The beetle's fear and adoration and interest to join Atherton, suggest how the scientist is similar to the monster in terms of behavior and purposes—the beetle makes this offer to Atherton not only because the monster considers him to be close in the desire to destroy Lessingham, but also because Atherton might accept the proposal.

In a similar way to the beetle, Atherton's attitude towards Lessingham's engagement to Marjorie depicts not only a passionate, irrational behavior, but also portrays the destructive feelings he professes towards Lessingham, who is the symbolic

embodiment of social and political progress in the novel. Atherton cannot accept a friendship with Lindon—he wants all or nothing from her: "If I can't be something else, I'll be no friend," he tells Marjorie (54). Similarly, his opinion of Lessingham is dominated by his subjectivity: he believes Lessingham is a "wretched radical" (58). Atherton even curses Lessingham, wishing him political disgrace:

> May your party follow after other gods! May your political aspirations wither, and your speeches be listened to by empty benches! May the speaker persistently and strenuously refuse to allow you to catch his eye, and, at the next election, may your constituency reject you! (59)

Atherton's attitude to the couple is identical to the beetle's, which presupposes an ethical approximation between both characters—Atherton and the monster—and the resulting perception of them as an internal and external threat, respectively. Atherton transmits intelligence, but also contained rage which, if uncontrolled, can bring terrible consequences. He feels pleasure in controlling life and death; excited about his new weapon, he declares: "What a sublime thought to think in the hollow of your own hand lies the life and death of nations—and it was almost in mine" (Marsh 63). Atherton is the worst form of monstrosity in the novel because he is not exported from foreign origins, but emerges from the internal contradictions of the Victorian society. His destructive behavior affects his own people, and his whimsical attitudes depict an implacable conservative position towards social change. Symbolically, Atherton stands for a

concealed tendency toward violence and disaster originated within Great Britain—one of the strongest fears of the Victorians.

From a symbolic point of view, the beetle is the most prominent monstrous figure in the novel. Its presence destabilizes national and individual British identities as a dominant culture during the nineteenth century. Along with its origin and characteristics (and the preoccupation this generates)[49], the beetle embraces the most controversial, but implacably repudiated, aspects of the British identity—aggressive, destructive sexuality, irrational thought, and irresponsible spread of horror. The beetle's personality and actions resemble a concealed side of Victorian identity that might change to inevitably destroy their identity. Victorians fear apparent primitivism reflected in their behaviors, and the beetle exposes them to this possibility, thus revealing the weaknesses of Victorian British identity.

The beetle is possibly of Egyptian origin,[50] since Lessingham affirms the creature is the woman who kidnapped and raped him in his younger years in Egypt (for

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[49] In this respect, Wolfreys states that "Egypt was a source of constant fascination for the Victorians, whether through travel, research, or the opportunities afforded by that curious offshoot of Victorian colonialism and imperialism, the exhibition, of which there were many in London, and elsewhere, especially throughout the second half of the nineteenth century … Egypt … had a history and culture older than that of European countries; hence the fascination expressed in some of the articles with what are called the occult sciences, with ancient Egyptian mythology and religion, with Egypt's architecture and rites, and forms of knowledge. At the same time, however, Egypt in the late Victorian period was, for a number of years, a source of anxiety as a result of rebellions and uprisings" (Introduction 340).

[50] Great Britain and Egypt experienced important political, and even military tensions, during the nineteenth century. Towards the end of the conflict, Egpyt's image in Great Britain was severely damaged. The connection between the monster's origin and political conflicts between Great Britain and Egypt will be discussed in chapter IV.

Lessingham, the beetle has come to Great Britain to take revenge on him for killing her). In addition, the beetle describes itself as a "child of Isis" (Marsh 108), the Egyptian goddess of fertility and family. Apparently, the monster is an Isis priestess.[51] The beetle's origin is extremely important in symbolic terms: the fact that the monster emerges from one conflictive colony during Victorian times confers it with a bad reputation. In addition, fabricated images about the Middle East produced an imaginary of foreigners as evil and dishonest. The depiction of the beetle is not the exception, since it is suggested that the creature is part of an evil cult to Isis and, more specifically, that as a priestess of the group, she looks for sacrificial victims. The beetle is described in the novel in terms of ideological convenience—it exemplifies the values attributed to individuals of unknown oriental cultures of the time: unreliable, highly sexualized, primitive, or violent.

The beetle's sexual behavior associates the creature with Victorian negative values and fears about sexuality and identity.[52] The beetle not only is sexually active with men and women (as suggested in its attacks to Lessingham, Holt, and Marjorie), but also uses

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[51] W. Max. Müller states in the book *Egyptian Mythology. The Mythology of all Races* that Isis was also the goddess of sorcery (200), and was a very popular deity in the Egyptian culture. Preference for this type of deities depicts a particular characteristic of Egyptian religion: it is closely associated to magic in its ritualistic sense: "it is, however, very difficult to state where religion ends and magic begins; and to the Egyptian mind magic was merely applied religion" (198).

[52] The British nineteenth century was obsessed with sexuality as a sign of pathology. Smith states that "the emergence of a scientia sexualis ... gauged the physical, and the implied moral, health of the subject by categorising their sexual behavior through a series of putatively scientific models which identified 'aberrant' sexual practices ...What was needed was a particular kind of scientific practice which could police the boundaries between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal'" (99). Those boundaries would define the strict code of morals of Victorian times.

physical contact to control or neutralize others. As aforementioned, the beetle sexually attacks a man and a woman (Holt and Lindon). Previously, it had attacked Lessingham in Egypt. In addition, the beetle's sexual contact denotes dominating intentions, since the weakening of others' identities seems to be its main objective. Holt describes the creature feels sticky and moves through his entire body trying to embrace his complete self (Marsh 14-15). Also, the creature thrusts its fingers into his mouth and kisses him, provoking a sensation of horror and powerlessness in him. Holt refers to his incapacity to control himself as undignifying: "such passivity was worse than undignified, it was galling; I knew that well. I resented it with secret rage. But in that room, in that presence, I was invertebrate" (15). The beetle symbolically sticks to Holt and enters his self, generating uncertainty about Holt's courage as a man as well as his sexuality (Holt believes the creature is a man). In Lindon's case, the beetle weakens her capacity to express her thoughts or to move. In its presence, Marjorie loses control of her speech, feels cowardly, and even becomes paralyzed: "I was powerless to move a finger" (159-61). As Holt, Marjorie Lindon's sense of control disappears in the beetle's presence, symbolically becoming a cowardly, useless woman. Lessingham experiences the same situation when kidnapped by the monster in Egypt—he states the monster's contact with him controlled his sense of will: "I was only incapable of offering even the faintest resistance to her caresses. I lay there like a log. She did with me as she would, and in dumb agony I endured" (Marsh 198). The only one who is not attacked by the beetle is Sydney

Atherton, since his moral approximation to the monster does not depict him as a threat to the creature. The beetle does not destabilize Atherton's identity because he is already an unstable man, and his instability is directed to the destruction of the same person the beetle wants to eliminate. For the beetle, Atherton is an ally.

Violence and irrational thought are essential characteristics of the beetle. Although the beetle not always uses direct, physical violence on its victims, its actions embody rage and vengeance, and are aimed at recovering its dignity. When visiting Atherton, the beetle explains to him its reasons to hate Lessingham: "'What is the nature of your objection to Mr. Lessingham?' 'Revenge.' … 'On his hands is the blood of my kin. It cries aloud for vengeance'"(105). Lessingham's crime is a symbolic action of destruction against a foreign culture which provokes a desire to get for revenge in the beetle. However, using violence as a means of dignification is, to the Victorian view, a primitive, irrational behavior, despite the British using violence to contain insurrections in their dominated territories and even attacking foreign lands under the premise of being threatened. The beetle's motivations are not necessarily whimsical; however, the Victorian mindset condemns them since vengeance, in this case, is not perpetrated by a native, but by a foreigner. In general terms, the beetle's presence unveils fears about irrational violence—the creature's behaviors generate preoccupations about incontrollable viciousness within the Victorian society as they depict resentful attitudes towards the enemy.

Finally, the beetle's presence and influence in its environment instills constant terror—predominantly, terror about the incapacity to control the unknown. The British mindset fears the incapacity to control those foreign elements they believe might threaten their (falsely assumed) identity stability. When Marjorie is attacked by the beetle, she claims that the threat she perceives is also harassing Lessingham. The feels the "dreadful terror"(161) is omnipresent. In addition, the beetle openly expresses the desire to provoke intense, eternal horror in his victims, more specifically in Lessingham:

> 'In the meantime I will have vengeance in my own fashion. [Lessingham] knows already that the avenger is upon him—he has good reason to know it. And through the days and the nights the knowledge shall be with him still, and it shall be to him as the bitterness of death—aye, of many deaths. For he will know that escape there is none, and that for him there shall be no more sun in the sky, and that the terror shall be with him by night and by day, at his rising up, and at his lying down, wherever his eyes shall turn it shall be there—yet, behold, the sap and the juice of my vengeance is in this, in that though he shall be very sure that the days that are, are as the days of his death, yet shall he know *The Death*, *The Great Death*, is coming—coming—and shall be on him—when I will!' (Marsh 106)

The creature's words about Lessingham expose not only profound hate but also demonstrate the intention to provoke continual terror in victims before killing them. The idea of inflicting constant psychological torture on helpless individuals instills fears of

impotence towards incontrollable threats. The beetle inspires preoccupations about unknown external dangers for Victorian society, while revealing the impossibility to control, neutralize, or eliminate those dangers.

## B. Mechanisms of Transmission: Acquired Monstrosity and Degeneration in *The Beetle*

In *The Beetle*, monstrosity encapsulates the fears and preoccupations of the Victorian society during the nineteenth century. However, this condition is not inherent in every character—some of them acquire it. This means that monstrosity is portrayed not only as an intrinsic condition, but also as an acquired symptom, comparable to a disease. In *The Beetle*, monstrosity is transmitted among individuals who possess questionable reputations, or who represent different social, economic, or identity risks during the Victorian period. In *The Beetle*, the predominant mechanisms of transmission are sexual contact, mesmerism, or licentious activities. All of these actions are morally questionable or negative and suggest different forms of ideological contamination in individuals who depict undesirable characteristics of the Victorian identity. These characters' monstrous conditions are condemned in order for the individual to purify or expurgate the vices of identity. In addition, the acquisition of the monstrous condition suggests a symbolic transformation: individuals who expose the flaws of Victorian identity are assigned fabricated characteristics of unknown or imagined cultures, especially those from controlled territories, in order to group them with the undesirable. The depiction of

monstrosity as a "contaminated" condition justifies violent attitudes towards the culturally unknown and sets the parameters to reconstruct British identity and dominion for its own convenience.

**1. Sexual Contact**

According to Cortés, "amenaza devoradora" resembles fears about monstrous forms and their corporal equivalences, especially the mouth and the genitals. "Amenaza devoradora" reveals fears about ideological contamination through physical contact. In this sense, *The Beetle* exposes sexual contact as a vehicle for degeneration. These forms of degeneration are not depicted only in physical or behavioral terms—the corporeal aspect becomes a symbolic indicator of ideological deterioration in the novel. Sexual contact links the individual to the detested within the Victorian context through characters who have physical contact with the beetle and, consequently, become socially ostracized elements. As aforementioned, Holt becomes the representation of the criminal, Marjorie corporalizes the dangers of social change, and Lessingham suggests the loss of mental stability.

In Holt's case, the creature takes advantage of his desperation to exert control on him. First, the creature lures Holt by offering him food and shelter. However, the creature forces him to undress and then runs through his body in the shape of an insect. Then, the insect tries to get into Holt's mouth, but only kisses him. Symbolically, this episode possesses a profound sexual connotation for the monster is portrayed as a sexual predator

that ideologically weakens its victims through physical contact. In addition, the effects of sexual contact are immediately perceptible in victims: from an initial corporalization of degeneration, the victims' capacities to resist the attack are inexistent, and in the case of men, they feel that their masculinity has been severely damaged. In Holt's case, he not only feels incapable to resist these actions, but also loses his capacity to understand his own gender identity. Holt becomes a disposable form of man—he is dispossessed of any trace of dignity as a result of the beetle's attack and becomes the monster's instrument of destruction towards Lessingham.

Similar to Holt's case, the beetle's attack on Marjorie Lindon constitutes another mechanism of contamination in the novel. Marjorie's image (as a New Woman, and as Lessingham's love interest), exposes her to public scrutiny and even acts of violence. Indeed, taking the shape of a beetle, the monster gets into Marjorie's room and harasses her, provoking her to undress frenetically and lose consciousness (in Marjorie's case, the beetle does not need to lure her but harassment makes the effect). She claims that this experience provoked her to question her mental health: "Am I going mad? I had heard of insanity taking extraordinary forms, but what could have causes softening of the brain in me I had not the faintest notion" (Marsh 161), and effectively, her emotional state changes substantially after this incident—Marjorie becomes a nervous and insecure woman. Her psychological decline takes her to the verge of loss of rational behavior, and in her specific case, the loss of her independent personality. Most importantly, her

unstable behavior emerges under the control of a foreign, unknown force. In the novel, individuals in contact with the beetle (which symbolizes the external ideological threat) undergo a transformation in their personality—they become more unstable and psychologically weak, while symbolically, their mental decline is the symptomatic consequence of ideological and cultural contamination by the beetle. Influenced by unknown cultural manifestations (the beetle's presence), these characters lose their capacity to find identification with their cultural environment and, consequently, to represent it through their behaviors. They do not embody characteristics of the ideal British individual, for their mental weakness poses them as a risk to the stability of the Empire. In Marjorie's case, her mental instability not only destroys her strong, independent image, but also deters her from becoming an exemplary model of the Victorian British woman.

The beetle's attack to Lessingham constitutes the exception to the previous cases of ideological contamination through sexual contact. Despite being repeatedly raped by the beetle (when the beetle was a priestess), Lessingham seems to have the capacity to overcome the effects of contamination. This does not mean Lessingham is free from the effects of the attack—he is still prone to emotional instability. When Lessingham is used as a sexual slave by the beetle, he affirms that the experience destroyed his sense of courage and manhood. However, Lessingham's witnessing of a sacrificial rite encourages him to attack the creature, finally killing it. In his own words, the rage he feels neutralizes

his emasculated condition and provokes him to take revenge: "the accumulating rage which had been smouldering in my breast through all those leaden torturing hours, sprang into flame. Leaping off my couch of rugs, I flung my hands about her throat … I compressed her throat with my two hands as with an iron vice … (200). Lessingham is, apparently, the only one whose sense of frustration conducts him to attack the creature, and his resistance against the beetle stands for a symbolic act against cultural oppression from the external threat. If Lessingham represents British identity, the unexpected killing of the creature depicts control over the external threat. Finally, it is important to note that although Lessingham kills the creature and eventually recovers his mental health, he can still experience episodes of emotional distress. When Lessingham kills the priestess-monster, he is found in the desert, behaving like a lunatic, but he is rescued by two missionaries who help him undergo physical and mental treatment to recover his health. He was "a wreck of [his] former self" (202), but he eventually recovers and becomes an important politician. However, his condition is not eliminated— he is contaminated by the creature—but Lessingham learns to control his emotional weakness. He still exhibits traces of contamination as forms of a latent threat in moments of distress.

## 2. Mesmerism

The practice of Mesmerism,[53] or hypnotic induction, "spread rapidly throughout Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century, becoming a widespread source of entertainment [and] it came to occupy the shady territory between science and pseudo-science" (Wolfreys 353). Its reputation produced several followers and enemies. For instance, detractors formulated paranoid positions towards the practice—fears about mental disequilibrium emerged with it. In *The Beetle*, mesmerism constitutes a powerful strategy of ideological control which suggests not only that characters are mentally weak, but also that they do not have the capacity to overcome external control. In the novel, manipulative characters use mesmerism to dominate or neutralize characters with weaker personalities, especially those that represent more vulnerable sectors of the British Victorian society. Sydney Atherton and the beetle possess mesmerizing capacities, especially in their use of speech and, in the particular case of the beetle, through the use of the eyes.[54] Victims not only become physically paralyzed or are forced to perform

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[53] Mesmerism is a type of hypnotic induction based on the practices of F. A. Mesmer. Mesmer started a career in orthodox medicine but soon began to explore new theories of medicine. He began experimenting with the use of magnets as curative agents and gradually developed a theory of animal magnetism. He believed in the presence of invisible fluids in the body and that disease resulted from an interruption in the free flow of these fluids. The flow of the fluid could be corrected through magnetic force. Eventually he came to believe that his own body possessed special magnetic forces. In 1778 he began practicing mesmerism in Paris and created a popular sensation. In 1784 his followers started to apply his techniques to hypnosis. Mesmer was regarded as a fraud by contemporary medical authorities (*Dictionary.com*).

[54] The beetle's capacity to control others through the use of the eyes is associated to the belief in several cultures that the eyes work as a vehicle for the transmission of disgrace. The "evil eye," a common belief that an envious gaze can bring disgrace, is widely spread in several cultures throughout the world. For

actions against their will, but can scarcely recover emotionally from the trance they undergo. The threat exposed through mesmerism instills fears about hypnotism and loss of national identity in Victorian Great Britain—characters represent a weakness in cultural identity and social disintegration.

The beetle uses mesmerism as a mechanism of control over its victims. This transforms the creature into a source of anxiety for its unpredictable proceedings. The creature mesmerizes victims through two predominant devices: visual contact and speech (other strategies are used in a lesser degree). Its key phrase against victims is "the beetle." When used against Lessingham, the politician loses psychological control. The beetle even tells Holt to use the same phrase if Lessingham tries to attack him during the burglary incident. When the beetle uses these words against Holt, its intention is different: to manifest its power and mental dominion over others. In both cases, victims experience the same effects that sexual attacks provoke in them: they not only feel mentally paralyzed, but also question their own understanding of their identity. Identity instability portrays both men as incapable to control external forces, and their lack of courage places

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example, the Greek call the evil eye "Mati," the Serbian "Urokljivo oko," and Spanish speakers "Mal de Ojo." Particularly, in Egyptian mythology, eyes do not bring bad luck but the opposite—they offer protection. For instance, the "Eye of Horus," one of the most well-known, popular images of Egyptian iconography, is a protection amulet. By using it, users are protected by Horus, whose eye was harmed in a fight against Seth, but was healed by Thoth. The eye of Horus represents rejuvenation and resurrection—characteristics that also represent the beetle (*sofiatopia.org*).

them in a compromised position—that of the problematic, useless British males. Consequently, they are turned into disposable elements of the Victorian society.

Despite his origin, Atherton possesses similar skills to the beetle—Marjorie affirms that he "possesses the hypnotic power to an unusual degree" (Marsh 151). In addition, Atherton does not seem to have been hypnotized by the beetle (although his erratic behavior after he encounters the beetle might be connected to the monster's influence). His relative immunity suggests he is close in condition to the monster and, consequently, the beetle's attempts to control him are useless. Initially, the beetle paralyzes him; however, Atherton not only resists the beetle's attacks but also analyzes the effect of the attempt: "The sensation was peculiar. I was as incapable of advancing another inch … I was even incapable of attempting to attempt to advance … The scoundrel had almost succeeded in hypnotising me" (103). Atherton's capacity to neutralize the beetle's attack constitutes an exception to the monster's mesmerizing capacities and, ethically and symbolically, positions Atherton in a similar position to the creature in his destructive, manipulative behavior.

As aforementioned in Chapter II, Cortés affirms that the "Amenaza Devoradora" manifests its influence through the use of specific parts of the body, especially those that can establish physical contact with other bodies. Genitals, hands, eyes, or the mouth, exemplify specific zones of contact and consequent transmission. Individuals possess the capacity to transmit or contaminate others with particular conditions through these parts

of the body. In *The Beetle*, explicit references to the mesmerizing effect of the eyes endow the monster with manipulative powers. The beetle's capacity to control its enemies through the gaze is comparable to the capacity of external forces to control the individual through constant, incontrollable observation. For instance, several characters provide evidence of the effect of the beetle's eyes on victims. First, Holt describes how the creature's eyes transmit vitality despite the creature's old looks (16), and Lessingham also describes how the beetle's eyes "robbed [him] of [his] consciousness" (196). In general, individuals who have had visual contact with the creature keep a common impression about the eyes: the creature possesses an overwhelming capacity to impress, control and neutralize others, despite their condition or origin. This ability is equal to the capacity to control and fragment identity through continuous surveillance, or to military and political surveillance over controlled territories of the time.

**3. Licentious Behaviors**

Questionable moral behaviors are the third strategy of ideological contamination in *The Beetle*. Victorian morals were dual in nature—while proper behaviors confer the Victorian individual with an admirable reputation, disreputable activities were practiced extensively in secret. These activities were publicly condemned and were directly associated to moral monstrosity and degeneration. In *The Beetle*, these behaviors emerge in moments of mental distress provoked by the monster. Characters who have been contaminated by the beetle exhibit questionable moral behaviors that approximate them to

identity fragmentation and degeneration. Activities such as drinking, swearing, stealing, threatening or provoking public disturbance not only reveal emotional weakness in characters but also convert them into public threats, especially in terms of national identity. Even though some characters are aware that their actions are problematic, they do not have control over them—they are unable to revert or stop their course. In other cases, these actions are unconscious consequences of establishing contact with the monster.

Robert Holt exposes the first manifestations of these behaviors. Through mesmeric actions, the beetle incites Holt to commit burglary, even if Holt resists the monster's intentions. The beetle insistently calls Holt a thief, and even if Holt always rejects this accusation, the beetle provokes him to break into Lessingham's house and steal some letters written by Marjorie. Holt is given instructions to neutralize Lessingham if necessary: he must use the words "the beetle" when Lessingham tries to attack him (the beetle uses this phrase against its enemies or victims) (Marsh 31). The beetle's capacity to neutralize others with this phrase is transmissible—its mesmerized victims can use it when committing crimes. Holt eventually uses the phrase when Lessingham finds him inside the house, but manages to escape successfully. Holt, who initially is portrayed as a humble but respectable man, is inevitably conducted to perform actions that go against his will, and although he knows these actions are incorrect, he is unable to oppose them. Ideologically, Holt becomes a representation of the detested—he is not only unemployed

but also transformed into a burglar, and his criminal behaviors, although coerced by the beetle, convert him into the embodiment of negative nationalistic attitudes in Victorian times.

In Marjorie's case, her contact with the beetle provokes her to depict a fragmented form of identity. This does not happen internally, for Marjorie does not hesitate about her gender or morals, but externally, since the beetle changes her looks to disguise her as a man and escape Great Britain with her. The beetle attacks Marjorie when she is looking for the creature in the marginal zones of London, not only by dressing her as a criminal man, but also by dispossessing her from her hair—a conventional sign of femininity (Marsh 221). Marjorie is not necessarily aware of this, since she might be mesmerized or in trance when she is being transported to the harbors in the East of the city. However, her appearance changes inevitably, and she is not aware, or cannot control, the aggressions that the beetle inflicts upon on her. In addition, when kidnapped, Marjorie is seen wearing strange clothes, according to Mrs. Coleman, and in constant company of an arab man, who is the beetle. As an instance, Mrs. Coleman affirms she saw a "young man" (Marjorie) wearing "a dirty, [and old] cloth cap pull down right over him" (234-35). Contact with foreigners, or adopting their customs was considered a serious sign of moral degeneration and erosion of nationalism during Victorian times; thus, Marjorie's actions are directly associated to the rebellious and immoral. In general, Marjorie's actions are, in the Victorian frame of mind, deviant conducts that indicate not only her moral aberration

but also a possibility that she is suffering from mental illness. This means that Marjorie's incapacity (or unawareness) to recognize the effects of her behavior depict her as a moral threat for the stability of the Victorian society, especially in terms of gender roles and nationalism.

In opposition, Sydney Atherton is apparently immune to the beetle's mesmerizing capacities. However, the beetle's influence over him is not necessarily inexistent—the creature provokes enough chaos to reach Atherton's mind. Although the monster is incapable of directly mesmerizing or controlling Atherton, it leaves an effect on him. Atherton does not change physically, but he gradually becomes more intense and violent. After his encounter with the creature, he speaks to Marjorie about the incident, and together, with the help of Mr. Holt, they decide to look for the creature and contain its attacks. They visit the house where the creature has been observed but they don't find it. However, their driver reports he has seen a silhouette in the second floor of the house, which makes Atherton give a gun to the man and order him to kill the creature. He even offers money as motivation: "'If you shoot him I'll give you fifty pounds'" (Marsh 223), and even tells the man that shooting the creature "won't be murder'" (223). Atherton's violence is either inherent or transmitted by the monster, but his exaltation suggests that he is in a constant but unconscious state of alert against a threat. His order—killing the beetle—works as an extension of the effects the creature leaves on victims: they exhibit immeasurable violent, vengeful, and unethical behaviors against others. In addition,

Atherton's mental distress becomes more evident in his speech, especially after finding out Marjorie has been kidnapped. His violence is not only physical but also verbal—he uses offensive, derogatory words against others, especially those who are in a different social position. For instance, he is offensive towards Mrs. Coleman when she does not let him enter her house and approaches Mr. Holt with constant mistrust and arrogance. He habitually uses derogatory words towards them and even towards the monster. In addition, he uses more expletives as long as he is closer to the monster during the train persecution. Even though Atherton does not exteriorize any obvious behavior regarding monstrous contamination, his attitude reveals similarities with the beetle—he shows unnecessary use of violence and a destructive behavior towards his equals.

Despite his phlegmatic personality, Lessingham also exhibits licentious behaviors as a consequence of his contact with the monster. As already mentioned, Lessingham experiences more prolonged suffering since the beetle raped him for several weeks, provoking serious mental problems in him. However, Lessingham recovers after some years. His recovery, though, does not guarantee he is free of the monstrous condition—he still manifests degeneration signs. First, his hysterical behavior is not common—it is manifested only in moments of emotional distress, such as the train persecution or the view of the paper with the drawing of a beetle. When observing it, "there came into his eyes a glint of something that was almost terror" (Marsh 73). In both cases, drinking becomes his sole way to control the eventual loss of control he is exposed to. In addition,

when persecuting the creature in the train, he must drink alcohol in order to control his profound anxiety, and he does so profusely, according to both Atherton and Mr. Champnell. In the Victorian context, heavy alcohol drinking was yet another symptom of loss of control. Heavy drinkers and alcoholics were considered deviant, weak individuals who provoked immense damage to their society. Their degenerate activities presupposed a problem for they were considered to be prone to different types of vice and to unemployment and crime. Lessingham's shady past and excessive drinking clashes with the ideal of a political leader and, consequently, functions as a threat to the stability of the country because of his unreliability.

Monstrosity is essentially related to descriptive features about the feared or the detested. However, it reveals more complex aspects of the human condition, especially those related to repression. In basic terms, monstrosity is constructed through physical, psychological, and symbolic frames where the individual places the worst aspects of the human condition in the hope of purging guilt from them. For this reason, monstrous forms are closely related to morality, ethics, and values—they are the embodiment of human redemption. The individual will find piety through adjudicating responsibilities about vice and sins on the monster, deserving or undeservingly. In addition, the monstrous condition is not only inherent—it is transmitted. Acquired monstrosity forms are conferred to individuals whose dissenting personalities pose a threat to the ideological stability of society. Signs of difference associate the individual to monstrosity, although those

differences merely reflect an uncomfortable, but genuine side of the human condition. In *The Beetle*, individuals who unveil the complex reality of Victorian Great Britain either embody monstrous conditions or are contaminated with them. Characters are symbolically punished or socially condemned due to their position, consequently portraying the consequences of social, ideological, or political dissent within the Victorian context. Their condition must be suppressed in the fictional perspective in order to maintain the false illusion of dominance within Victorian Great Britain.

# Chapter IV

## The Influence of the Monster as a Threatening Other in the Empire

In Chapter III, monstrosity is studied in its descriptive context, through a discussion about its physical, psychological, and symbolic representations. In addition, Chapter III revises forms of monstrosity transmission and their significance in order to understand the anxieties of the nineteenth-century British identity. In Chapter IV the effects of monstrous transmission will be presented by considering three distinct aspects: first, the "orientalization" of contaminated characters based on imagined discursive forms of the unknown culture, specifically the Egyptian one; second, the association of these figures to the socially and, consequently, to the ideologically degenerated; and third, the fragmentation of monstrous figures' identities in order to associate them with anti-nationalistic positions. These aspects will be studied as ideological approximations to national identity and the threatening, foreign Other. Specifically, these effects will be analyzed under postcolonial and Orientalist views on the ideological construction of the monstrous other as a threat to nationalism and imperial dominion. This analysis will delve into imagined parameters of cultures and identities which construct the monstrous Other in relation to national superiority, paying particular attention to the different factors that generate this discursive construction. Finally, possible causes and current effects of his phenomenon will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

In order to develop the analysis of the aforementioned aspects, main conventions of monstrosity will be reviewed. The monster, in any of its forms, evolves under its historical circumstances. Moreover, the individual conceptualizes the monstrous figure as a tool for the relocation of human vice. In fictional (and even real) contexts, the monstrous condition will embrace the defects of the human condition, and as a consequence, will be punished, eliminated, or purified, but never ignored (see chapter II). In addition, the recognition of the monstrous condition is closely connected to the idea of abjection for two reasons: the monster is relegated to a liminal space between the realm of the alive and the dead, the human and the abhuman, or the moral and the immoral. Consequently, the individual conceptualizes the detested, but inevitably intrinsic view of the human condition, through monstrous figures, by turning the monster into the depositary of individual and social refuse; this means that fears and anxieties about the foreign and shameful or negative internal aspects are placed within the monster. Like a scapegoat that receives the most ostracized aspects of the human condition, the monster becomes a reminder of what human beings are, while revealing the contradictory nature of the human condition and catalyzing the reaction of the destructive forces directed to condemn it. In addition, and in accordance with main conventions about Postcolonialism, the monster is the symbolic form of political, ideological, and economic domination the British exert over subaltern territories. Moreover, the monster not only is the visual reminder of ideological constructions of the other as inferior and dangerous, but also

illustrates the implications of power struggles between the center of the Empire and its subaltern territories.

**A. Consequences of Monstrous Contamination: Pseudo-Orientals as Monsters**

Cortés affirms that the monster mirrors a marginalized community that exhibits forms of human misbehavior. In addition, the monstrous condition reflects not only the execrable, disposable form of the inner individual—it also replicates the ignorance and fear about foreign communities and their identity manifestations. As a result, the construction of a foreign monstrous being responds to the necessity to contain imaginary threats and homogenize the collective. Literature, as a cultural artifact, and more particularly *The Beetle*, reflects this notion by revealing the underlying social tensions in which the text has been created and interpreted. The novel "orientalizes"[55] characters who have experienced contact with the monster—in other words—the monster's oriental-monstrous condition and its ideological significance is transferred to its victims, positioning them as part of a non-western, cultural threat that puts British identity at risk of fragmentation. Consequently, orientalization, as a fabricated image of the unknown other, alienates estranged monstrous characters because they are ideologically threatening—that is, irrational, violent, mystic or primitive.

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[55]In *The Beetle*, oriental characters confirm Said's position about imagined, discursive constructions of foreign cultures as a mechanism to justify racial or cultural superiority in occident. For him, the discursive construction of the oriental other, in opposition to a superior occidental identity, is based and transmitted through editorialized forms of fabricated knowledge about the orient. This means that artistic artifacts, literature included, expose and perpetuate notions about the foreign as threatening.

**1. Orientalization in Victims**

Robert Holt's signs of orientalization are predominantly physical and justify the direct aggression and discrimination that he experiences. As aforementioned, he is contaminated when he is sexually attacked by the creature and then found in a street, in an unfortunate state. His appearance is relatively similar to that of a primitive being—he is barefoot, wears only a cloak, and looks dirty. Atherton affirms the man was naked, "covered with dust, and dirt, and blood—a dreadful sight," (Marsh 122), while Marjorie claims she "never saw a man who stood more obviously in need of the good offices of soap and water" (155). His dirty, primitive appearance, and his incomprehensible speech, pose Holt in similar conditions to those of an atavistic, wild creature, since he is basically unable to communicate with others and his emaciated looks portray him as a degenerate individual for Victorian standards. Holt's appearance and behavior was commonly associated to the morally deteriorated, a condition commonly attributed to foreign cultures through Victorian discourses on pseudoscience and social politics (see background information in chapter I). Holt is stereotypically depicted as a vicious criminal, or as an onanist[56]—figures who were discriminated in Victorian times for their association with the mentally and morally weak. His personality is considered a defect

[56]Onanism: masturbation (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). In Victorian times, Onanism was considered a compulsive, pathological behavior, which doctors treated as an illness. Onanists were believed to look physically deteriorated, and this presumption was presented in literary works of the time. According to Mighall, nineteenth-century British literature explored "the 'problematics' of representation suggested by pathological and criminological comment on the visibility of vice" ("Moral Monstrosity" *187*). Onanism was an example of vice and its physical manifestations were suggested in fictional works of the time.

within the parameters of British Victorian nationalism. In addition, the assumption that Holt established contact with the monster instills negative judgment over him regarding "wild" sexual behaviors that are supposedly prevalent in foreign cultures. Holt becomes an ideological extension of the oriental individual as morally questionable and physically primitive. Even if Holt's case is purely accidental or coercive, his fate becomes an example of the unfair attributions assigned to vulnerable sectors of the British Victorian society—his primitive depiction, unintelligible speech, and unfortunate fate, reflect the consequences of the oriental threat within the center of the British empire.

Similarly, Marjorie Lindon's contact with the beetle "orientalizes" her image. Marjorie exhibits masculine looks and an apparent foolish behavior as a form of ideological punishment for her contaminated condition. Punishment, in this case, works as an indoctrination mechanism where the rebellious individual, in this case Marjorie, is turned into a monstrous, foreign entity, whose identity must be destroyed. Initially, Marjorie's oriental depiction is identifiable in her masculine appearance. When Lessingham, Champnell, and Atherton look for Marjorie at the monster's house, they find that her clothing has been hidden under the floor. Also, they realize that her scalp has been ripped off, leaving Marjorie vulnerable, by being both hairless and naked. As the men state, "whoever had worn those clothes had been stripped to the skin" (Marsh 219). Later, the men confirm that Marjorie is moving to the East end of London with the monster, looking as a low-class man. All of these actions, perpetrated by the monster,

help the creature disguise Marjorie as a man in order to escape London with her: "'Miss Lindon is in a man's rags'" (242), Lessingham concludes. Symbolically, her clothing and her hair are conventional signs of femininity, hence the lack of these elements relocates Marjorie in a new gender category—Marjorie does not look either as a man or a woman, but as an unsettling combination of both.

In addition, witnesses report that Marjorie's behavior is similar to that of a mad person. Witnesses describe how she seems to be of "weak intellect" and has difficulty communicating, since she "stared and gaped like lunatic …" when someone spoke to her (Marsh 246). Her apparent incapacity to talk or react to external impulses is primarily due to the mesmerizing effect of the beetle; furthermore, symbolically, her controlled behavior suggests the creature has dispossessed her from autonomy and agency. Consequently, Marjorie's passive personality not only depicts her as the product of oriental influence, but also portrays her as unintelligent and worthless. Through Marjorie, the West defines foreign cultures as irrational, in opposition to an occidental identity characterized by rationality and control. Marjorie's characterization inculcates thoughts about the foreign as intellectually inferior; contact with the foreign automatically causes mental debasement.

**2. Orientalization in Dominant Figures**

Paul Lessingham, the influential politician, does not exhibit physical characteristics related to oriental influences. However, his predominantly phlegmatic

behavior gradually leads to a series of volatile, impulsive actions that worsen as long as he remains close to the monster. Lessingham is, apparently, in capacity to control his attitudes either towards the monster or towards the memories the creature brings to his mind, but the eventual recognition of the creature's presence in London alters his composure. Lessingham gradually exhibits characteristics of assumed oriental origin: he becomes more irascible towards others, especially Atherton, and his behavior becomes more erratic, to the point of drinking alcohol in crucial moments in order to stay calm. For instance, after discovering Atherton left Marjorie alone in the monster's house (and concluding this might have caused the kidnapping), Lessingham tries to asphyxiate Atherton while threatening to kill him if Marjorie is harmed:

> Springing at Sydney like a tiger, [Lessingham] caught him by the throat. 'You—you hound! … If so much as a hair of her head is injured you shall repay it me ten thousandfold!—You mischief-making, intermeddling, jealous fool! He shook Sydney as if he had been a rat—then flung him from him headlong on to the floor. (Marsh 209)

In addition, Lessingham drinks alcoholic beverages to control his nervous moments—more specifically at times of a possible encounter with the beetle. This occurs when he must talk about the beetle (Marsh 141-42) or during the train persecution (261). On both occasions, Lessingham is given brandy, which he drinks profusely in order to keep control of his nerves. Lessingham's behavior serves two functions within the novel—first,

to depict his fear towards the monster and the harm it provoked in the past. Second, his behaviors reflect the results of former contact with and contamination by the entity. Lessingham's volatile personality associates him with the oriental, for these cultures were viewed as irascible, unstable, and even prone to vile behaviors. Lessingham's case is especially important for his position as a leader confers him with a stronger personality, at least outwardly. Losing control is more worrisome in his case. His orientalized image transmits anxieties about the capacity of the external threat to destabilize the most solid elements of the British Victorian culture.

Like Paul Lessingham, Sydney Atherton does not corporalize any effect of oriental contamination. However, he also exhibits an impulsive, volatile personality that, despite its inherent nature, worsens after Atherton has established contact with the monster. Atherton's destructive attitude towards others masks fabricated discourses about the oriental individual as brutal and negatively passionate. As aforementioned, Atherton's speech becomes gradually more insolent, and he also recurs to violence to solve problems or exert power over others. In addition, he displays constant whimsical attitudes. First, as previously mentioned, he calls Mrs. Coleman a "pussy" when she bans him from entering her house, and he uses pejorative epithets such as "beggar" to refer to Holt, revealing his classist, discriminatory nature.

In addition, Atherton is particularly convincing as a public figure, not only because of his scientific knowledge but also because of his charming speech. However,

his discursive capacities also reveal his unstable personality. Just like the monster, Atherton embodies an attractive but unpredictable nature—he becomes an autochthonous form of monstrosity that worsened after he establishes contact with the creature. Besides his speech, Atherton's inclination towards violence rises after he encounters the beetle in his laboratory. Initially, he exhibits an irresponsible, passive-aggressive behavior (as shown in the cat incident in chapter III), but his violent tendencies become more common. For instance, he categorically tells the driver to kill the monster which was spotted near them disguised as a man. He promises the driver the murder will be justified, and even offers him money: "'If that old gent of yours does appear, you have a pop at him—I shall hear that easier than a yell. You can put a bullet through him if you like—I give you my word it won't be murder.' … 'If you shoot him, I'll give you fifty pounds'"(Marsh 223). Atherton's passive-aggressive personality resembles the beetle in his forceful imposition over others, especially when this imposition secures his integrity.

Finally, Atherton's irrational reactions reveal a whimsical attitude towards his particular desires, even vain ones. His obsessive behaviors are coincidental with those of the beetle—caprice defines his actions and decisions. For example, he insists he is in love with Marjorie and affirms she must be his fiancée. Otherwise, he prefers not to have contact with her under any circumstances. Marjorie's rejection provokes Atherton to hate Lessingham to such an extent that he wishes the politician to be dead (Marsh 59). In general terms, Atherton's scientific knowledge is blurred by his emotional inanity. His

magnetic manner, wittiness, and energy become negative or worsen after he establishes contact with the monster. Also, his already difficult personality becomes destructive and incontrollable—specifically, his violence pursues the vindication of his superiority over others. His irrational jealousy reveals internal insecurities and a desire to validate his identity through the undermining of others. Atherton's change, then, is depicted as an echo of the monster and, consequently, of the cultural significance the creature embodies. Atherton exhibits the consequences of the external threat on the commonly assumed phlegmatic British mindset—although smart, Atherton's impulsive behaviors transform him into a problematic individual within his own environment.

Said defined Orientalism as the fabricated discourse of the Other as pure danger. For Said, the oriental is not only unknown, but is imagined in a relationship of power—this means, the oriental will be undermined in order to vindicate views about superiority and oppression. In *The Beetle*, views about the oriental individual depict constructed ideals of superiority, but also reveal that the oriental threat is perceived as unstoppable. The oriental threat, embodied in the beetle, can reach anyone, anywhere, anytime. Its effects are unexpected, varied and, most importantly, destructive. In addition, the oriental other creates a juxtaposition of values which deems the external as hazardous, while the internal becomes productive and positively ideal. The oriental other fragments, divides, and classifies. It worsens conflicts by generating concerns about social, political, or economic change, while dislocating views about identity and control. It deteriorates the

dominant culture. This section, then, emphasizes how in *The Beetle*, characters become symbolically "orientalized" in order to function as visual representations of concerns about British power. Some are punished for their condition, while others suffer constantly (as an exception, Atherton does not correspond with this pattern. However, his behavior is still questionable). The following section will delve into attitudes towards the orientalized monster according to its condition.

**B. Attitudes towards the Acquired Monstrous Condition**

Cortés analyzes how types of monstrosity such as "amenaza esquizoide," "amenaza devoradora," and "amenaza disgregadora," expose the realities of human weaknesses and identities. Specifically, the "amenaza devoradora" refers to the symbolic, threatening value attributed to key parts of the body and their sexual significance. The "Amenaza esquizoide" reveals fears about identity fragmentation and incontrollable forces, and the "amenaza disgregadora" refers to fears about corporality and identity. These threats mirror the preoccupations individuals face as part of a community where difference produces anxieties. The incapacity to control or understand these differences generates a discourse of defense where entities representing the threat are posed in an inferior position, are fragmented, or are eliminated. From a postcolonial point of view, the dynamics of this discourse secures identity superiority not only for the individual but also for the entire community, while perpetuating already existing structures of social and political order. Containing the threat through its_disintegration, isolation, or elimination,

perpetuates homogeneity and preserves fixed forms of identity and cultural manipulation. In addition, the monster's divergent nature locates it in a disadvantaged position. Despite the fact that the monster is inherent to the human condition, its revealing of the uncomfortable truth confers it with an abject quality, provoking reactionary feelings towards the threat that it apparently poses. The monster, in general terms, is inevitably attractive in its resemblance to the individual, but it is also disgusting in its unveiling of the truth about human weaknesses.

In *The Beetle*, monstrous, oriental entities constitute a threat that must be alienated or eliminated in order to maintain social and political order in Victorian Great Britain. Their treatment is based on premises of moral, cultural, and political superiority over the Orient—indeed, disintegration of the monstrous threat works as a strategy of subjugation and minimization, which permits the individual to reinforce the illusion of cultural superiority. Geographic alienation, open discrimination, identity destruction, or direct elimination serve as strategies of control, not only of the monstrous threat, but also of the individual and the community. These strategies perpetuate ideological stability, that is, Victorian values will maintain their superior position in the hierarchy. Monsters are marginalized, isolated, fragmented, or destroyed in order to neutralize their threatening influence. These mechanisms are directed from non-monstrous figures to monstrous ones, and from monsters to other beings that qualify as such.

**1. Geographic Alienation**

Said's *Orientalism* states that Orient and Occident are juxtaposed through the construction of an imaginary discourse of separation. In *The Beetle*, this assumption is initially depicted through physical isolation. This mechanism, which is developed in several contexts in the novel, standardizes the individual by separating it from the other in order to vindicate a false sense of superiority. In this way, foreign, oriental cultures assume a passive, subordinate role, in opposition to a British dominant identity. Once monstrous figures are identified, corporalized, and attributed a threatening role, they are physically separated from victims in order to contain, destroy, or eliminate the former, while preserving a false British image of superiority and stability within Victorian Great Britain.

Geographic alienation relocates the monster within physical and symbolic limits governed by Victorian ideological impositions. Specifically, monsters are placed in liminal zones[57]—unsafe or migrant-inhabited zones in the outskirts of London in order to associate them with the dangerous foreign. Also, several contaminated characters make initial eye contact with the beetle through architectural elements that can be considered liminal, such as windows, doors, or gaps. For instance, Robert Holt sees the beetle for the

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[57] *Oxford Dictionary* defines liminality as "relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process," or "occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold" (*Oxford Dictionary.com*). In regards to physical spaces in *The Beetle*, liminal zones become the simultaneous limit between the visible and the invisible—this means, liminal zones also define the limits between cultural or ideological views in the novel.

first time after going into a house through a window that he curiously describes as very convenient, since he is homeless. He imagines the place inside is comfortable: "it must be so warm, so dry!", but after entering the place, he finds out that it is dark and empty (Marsh 10-11). The window transports Holt to an exotic, unknown atmosphere, that is, the monster's vital space. In addition, Sydney Atherton meets the beetle in his laboratory, a space designed for destruction. The beetle meets Atherton by going through the laboratory's main door—the limit between destruction and society. This space is especially important for it works as a symbolic point of struggle between the internal and the external threats represented in Atherton and the beetle. Besides Holt and Atherton, Marjorie also meets the beetle in a liminal space. When she is left alone at the monster's house (a liminal zone in itself), she inspects the rooms and, while doing so, she finds the monster under some blankets whose description corresponds to oriental paraphernalia. Marjorie specifies that "a thin, yellow, wrinkled hand was protruding from amidst the heap of rugs. … The hand was followed by an arm; the arm by a shoulder; the shoulder by a head—and the most awful, hideous, wicked-looking face [she] had ever pictured even in [her] most dreadful dreams. A pair of baleful eyes were glaring up ..." (187-88). In Marjorie's case, not only the house works as a liminal space, but also the rugs create a symbolic limit between the unknown, mysterious oriental, and the occidental. Moreover, the creature hides under those covers in the very same way in which oriental identity is metaphorically disguised under exotic, luring clothing and other objects. The covers offer

both protection and invisibility. Finally, Lessingham also encounters the beetle for the first time in a liminal space, in Cairo, Egypt. He hears a group of women (the priestess is part of this group) singing in a house inside a disreputable zone in the city. The zone where the women and Lessingham are located is liminal for several reasons: first, the house is located within the limits of Cairo, but is still part of the capital of the colonized country. Moreover, the zone is not popular for its imagined dangerous condition. This explains the predominant negativity that characterizes Lessingham's description about the place. In addition, the fact that Lessingham is attacked by the monster inside a colony in conflict (Egypt and Great Britain faced important military and economic tensions during the last part of the nineteenth century) confers Cairo (and the neighborhood) with a complex conceptualization: the place is relatively harmless for the British, but at the same time it represents the foreign threat of reactionary colonies. In general terms, the monster is located within the physical limits of the unknown and the exotic—ideologically, the threat is contained in enclosed spaces only separated by gaps, windows, or doors, or inside physical limits which resemble political and ideological conflicts between the British and dominated territories.

Domestic spaces—more specifically the monster's house—provide another example of the relocation of the threat from the occupied territories to the British metropolis as a symbolic form of ideological separation. The beetle, embodied as a man or a woman, uses the name "Mohamed el Kheir" to rent a house in Hammersmith, in the

East limits of London. The East of the capital was considered a problematic zone during the nineteenth century for it concentrated an important number of foreigners—especially oriental ones, who in several cases belonged to former dominions or militarily protected territories overseas. The house is located in a road that, according to Marjorie, "lead to nothing and nowhere" (Marsh 173). Surrounded by "large spaces of wasteland" (173), the zone is symbolically depicted as opposite to civilization and progress. In this case, the idea of placing the monstrous entity within the limits of London serves different purposes. First, it contains the threat inside the core of the Empire, isolating it but at the same time enabling it to access and surround the center of power and instill fears of contamination. In other words—the threat is trapped inside a significant distance, but is still present. Second, locating the monster in migrant zones confers the monster with a new reputation—that of the dangerous, disgusting outsider who does not fit appropriately in the core of the empire. In the same way, foreigners are imagined within the Victorian mindset as disposable elements; monstrous figures are discarded for they do not correspond with Victorian moral and intellectual standards of superiority. Finally, the monster is located within the limits of the capital in order to exert relative control over it. By situating the entity within the city, but not in its heart, it is possible to juxtapose the foreigner as distant and mysterious, yet omnipresent, to the native, who is trustworthy, open, and understandable. Indeed, the unknown but dangerous foreigner other is confined

within the apparent geographic limits of British control, but not left outside, since this would make it impossible to control it.

Finally, the beetle is oriental—more specifically, Egyptian.[58] Its origin defines the source of the threat: it is undeniably external. Despite Atherton embodying strong similarities with the beetle, his dangerous proceedings do not deem him a threat. This implies that the threat is dangerous only if it is foreign. Symbolically, the foreign nature of the entity transforms it into the source of conflict—vice and destruction are located outside the heart of the empire, liberating the native culture from responsibility regarding cultural, social, economic, or political instability. This, in consequence, will derive in isolation—the monster threat must be enclosed within specific boundaries in order to deter it from provoking more chaos, even if this is not accurate or true.

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[58] Interestingly, Egyptian mythology provides an explanation for the monster's name, "beetle." Archaeologists affirm the beetle was the symbol of renewal and reincarnation—figures representing this insect were habitually inserted in coffins or were part of decorations in Egyptian buildings. Müller affirms that the scarab, called Khepri, was considered a symbolic figure related to the sun-god, for the insect appears early in the morning or late in the day, in the same way the sun is visible on the horizon. As he affirms, "theologians endeavoured to harmonize this idea with the other representations of the sun-god by explaining Khepri as the weaker sun, i.e. as it appears in the morning when the solar egg is formed or, sometimes, in the evening, or even as the sun in embryonic condition beneath the horizon at night, when it traverses the regions of the dead and shines on the lower world" (*Egyptian Mythology* 25).

Symbolically, the monster's name, and its mythological significance, leads to considering its eventual destruction a debatable fact—the beetle can control life and death, as demonstrated in Percy Woodville's recue, but it also might revive or reincarnate if capable of doing so, generating feelings of anxiety about the impossibility to definitively destroy its presence within Victorian society.

**2. Discrimination**

Placing the monstrous threat in geographic delimitation leads to discrimination. Contaminated characters, as well as the monster, are openly discriminated for their condition, even when they do not deserve it. First, although the beetle justifies its behavior by explaining to Atherton that its actions are dominated by revenge over the destruction of its kin (the beetle's sect is apparently destroyed in an explosion where all its members are killed), its presence and behaviors are interpreted as a threat to the status quo. Even if Lessingham, the cause of the beetle's revenge, is an unpopular public figure, attempting to harm him is symbolically taken as an attempt to destroy British identity and power. As the beetle becomes a national threat—an enemy of the British people—it must be discriminated and eliminated. Second, Marjorie, Holt, and Lessingham, although British, also experience discrimination for their acquired monstrous condition. They become other types of threats after establishing contact with the monster and must be detached from mainstream society in order to avoid contaminating or harming others. For instance, Holt is treated like a lower-class citizen, mostly ignored, except for Marjorie, who helps him recover from his near-to-death experience with the monster. His role in the novel is merely instrumental—he is used either by the beetle or by the other men to accomplish specific objectives against each other. The beetle uses him to commit a burglary, and Atherton takes him to the East to find the creature. His final fate, although unfair, is expected—he dies after being hypnotized and discarded by the beetle for a

second time. In addition to Holt, Marjorie also experiences discrimination for several reasons. First, her liberal, feminist positions generate rejection even from her closest acquaintances, including her father. Moreover, the eventual contamination from the monster positions Marjorie as an outsider. After the train wreckage, Marjorie is rescued, but she is unable to speak (Marsh 275). Her inarticulateness deprives her of a voice, making it impossible for her to communicate with others. This presupposes two conditions: Marjorie experiences social separation because of her condition, and she is deprived from the right of reincorporation after the accident. By silencing her, she remains inaccessible and, consequently, her presence is nullified. Symbolically, denying her a voice reinstates patriarchal power over a female subject who initially defies the system.[59]

Finally, Lessingham faces initial judgment from his political enemies, yet this is not a significant reason to be discriminated; however, his mysterious, obscure past provokes suspicion, despite his progressive political positions. Lessingham hides his past

[59] Regarding silencing of specific characters in the novel, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak mentions in her article "Can the Subaltern Speak'?" that one of the biggest problems of occidental criticism about oppressed groups is the incoherent relation between the discipline and the reality of these groups. Spivak beliefs western criticism about subaltern groups is banal (70), since it presents an inconsistent view of the subaltern and its representation. In accordance with Said, Spivak believes occidental criticism "should attend to this [incoherent representations] ... rather than reintroduce the individual subject through totalizing concepts of power ...(74). For her, the subaltern is silenced through occidental criticism, and the eventual possibility of real understanding between the subaltern and master groups is inexistent. At a literary level, this discrepancy is identifiable in *The Beetle*, since those characters who represent the subaltern voices are marginalized, tortured, or even eliminated. Ignoring or even eliminating their voices nullifies their possible influence within the perpetuation of the status quo in Great Britain.

since, if exposed, this would end his political career, even though he does not represent a real threat for the empire—he is just a reactionary figure. His discrimination is caused by his past, for this marks his present and future, and must force him to convince others that he is a valuable politician, even after the monster kidnapped and abused him. Lessingham, in political terms, is a dissenter and, in ideological terms, has acquired a monstrous condition that brings about only negative consequences. For these reasons, he is unpopular, a fact that is further highlighted when he is harassed by the beetle. Notably, this does not occur to Sydney Atherton, although his behavior depicts him as the most dangerous character in the novel. He is not publicly discriminated, but contaminated characters are openly judgmental towards his moral behavior. Marjorie believes he is emotionally unreliable and even dishonest. She declares he "has confided … the sufferings which he has endured for love of other women—some of them, … decent married women too" (150) and adds that he "prefers, like the bee, to roam from flower to flower" (151). Lessingham even calls him a hound. One reason Atherton does not seem to be affected by the monster relies on his political affiliations, for his positions do not affect the system—on the contrary, his scientific work reinforces the dominant position of Great Britain over other territories. Atherton, then, will not be publicly ostracized or eliminated, since he does not threaten the apparent stability of the Empire, despite being highly volatile and impulsive.

### 3. Identity Destruction

One of the most solid strategies of alienation towards monstrous agents in the novel relates to identity destruction. Monstrous threats in *The Beetle* are subjected to emotional or moral distress that aims at weakening their influence on and interaction with the dominant culture. Holt, Lessingham, and Marjorie are exposed to extreme situations that eventually fragment their identity, while Atherton seems to be protected by his ideological affiliations. Holt's identity fragmentation relies on two main points: sexuality and social class. Holt is depicted as a quasi-invisible element in the British social hierarchy—as a member of the working class, his influence, voice, and value are inexistent. His impossibility to find shelter even in a workhouse confirms his failure to find employment and positions him at the lowest social level. In this respect, Atherton says about Holt that "the stony bloke … got the chuck from the casual ward … poor devil!" (Marsh 211). His apparent uselessness, in terms of economic production, aligns him with the discarded. Consequently, he becomes a vulnerable individual, which facilitates the beetle's coercive actions against him. The beetle's intimidating attitude towards Holt destroys his sense of honesty and self-control—Holt is finally devoid of any form of independent behavior or decision. Regarding sexuality, contact with the monster destroys his views about sexual identity—more specifically, it destroys his own sense of manhood. When the beetle hypnotizes him, he declares he is not a man anymore but a passive form of one: "For the time I was no longer a man; my manhood was merged in

his. I was, in the extremest sense, an example of passive obedience" (17). Lessingham's doubts about his masculinity confirm he is conscious about the situation he faces. By fragmenting his own views of honor and masculinity, Holt's identity is reduced to nothing, thus reinforcing the novel's view about the unemployed as an obstacle for progress in Victorian Great Britain.

Marjorie's identity is also destroyed through recurrent harassment from several characters to deter her from exerting any type of influence over Victorian standards of gender. Initially, Marjorie must not only endure the difficulties of being accepted as Lessingham's fiancée, but also accept she is not taken seriously for her ideological positions. Her particular positions about gender, politics, and social change, plus her associations with Lessingham, isolate her ideologically. For these reasons, she is constantly rebuked by her father and Atherton. In other words, Marjorie is ignored and even minimized to varying degrees. Her determination is a sign of rebelliousness. Besides suffering from this belittling, Marjorie is harassed by the beetle, who alters her mental health and causes others to attribute her ideas to a pathology. When she feels the presence of the beetle for the first time, Marjorie's maid notices she feels badly: "she saw that there was something unusual in my face; an appearance which startled her. 'Why, Miss Marjorie, what's the matter!—You look quite ill!' I felt ill, and worse than ill" (159). Marjorie's initial signs of identity destabilization are depicted as physical symptoms, but they transform into psychological terror, especially when Marjorie begins doubting about

her mental strength. In addition, the beetle's disguising of Marjorie as a low-class man in London also affects her identity—it destroys the last traces of femininity she possesses. Marjorie's wish to become a new woman and to be taken seriously for her position disintegrate, for she is transformed into a disreputable man, as some describe her. Her apparent threatening presence, her strong personality, and her independence are thus neutralized, and Marjorie's credibility is destroyed. The apparent danger that she poses is controlled, and Victorian standards about gender and social hierarchy are left intact.

Lessingham's identity is also fragmented, and although he is attacked twice, he always resists the attempts. First, his exposure to the priestess (who is the monster in its initial shape) constitutes the first attack to his identity—on this occasion his mental health declines after he kills the woman and escapes from the cult. Then, years later, the monster arrives in London and stalks Lessingham in order to take revenge for having destroyed the cult. After Lessingham's recovery from the trauma provoked by the first attack, his mental stability is put at risk again. In both cases, the beetle weakens Lessingham's sense of courage and manhood by generating a feeling of impotence in him. Lessingham feels unable to control himself or to control the monster. Even if the beetle is definitely destroyed after the train persecution, Lessingham does not completely recover from both attacks. Champnell states that,

> [Lessingham] continues to have what seems to be a constitutional disrelish for the subject of beetles, nor can he himself be induced to speak of them. … [Champnell

> believes] there still are moments in which [Lessingham] harks back, with something like physical shrinking, to that awful nightmare of the past, and in which he prays God, that as it is distant from him now so may it be kept far off from him forever. (Marsh 274)

There is not any indication of Lessingham becoming a successful politician; however, he avoids speaking about the past, since he does not possess the capacity to face it. If doing it, he might experience sudden loss of mental control.

Sydney Atherton constitutes an exception regarding identity destruction in the novel. He is particularly immune to the influence of the beetle—although he is exposed to traumatic events, he does not seem to be affected by them. His political affiliations might be the symbolic cause of his apparent immunity, since he is opposed to Lessingham in his ideological views. He does not fear the beetle and even takes it for an "inspired maniac" (Marsh 106). He does not feel empathy for vulnerable individuals like Holt and strongly believes in his scientific knowledge as a vehicle for systematic destruction. Despite his erratic, unreliable personality, Atherton's ego and excessive assurance of his ideological position seem to protect him from foreign influences. In addition, his own threatening behavior positions him at a similar level to the beetle, making his eventual destabilization a useless mechanism of control or elimination. There is not any use in destabilizing Atherton for he is already unstable and his convictions would only worsen his fierce attitude towards foreign threats or attitudes that resemble them. Moreover, Sydney's cold

rationality and unethical attitude align him with British imperialistic attitudes towards science, progress, and irresponsible presence in dominated territories.

**4. Direct Elimination**

The most categorical attitude towards monstrous behaviors in *The Beetle* is direct, definitive elimination of the characters that embody possible threats, including the beetle itself. Specifically, Holt and the beetle are physically eliminated, while Marjorie and Lessingham remain severely affected. Atherton, as aforementioned, is not harmed for he is already flawed. The particular fate of these characters suggests that depending on the political and ideological affiliations of characters, dominant forms of power will damage or kill them. Marjorie and Lessingham, for instance, embody reactionary personalities. Their differing positions towards political, economic, and social issues turn them into threats that must be eliminated—indeed, the beetle molests the couple with the intention of killing them. Symbolically, their presence generates preoccupations about ideological change, and this explains their tragic destiny in the novel: Marjorie is kidnapped, and then rescued, but her mental health is severely damaged for several years. She is treated as a mentally sick person: "she was for something like three years under medical supervision as a lunatic" (Marsh 273), and relies on writing as a therapy to deal with her experience: "her one relaxation was writing" (275). Lessingham survives the attack, but is exposed to great pressure—his vulnerability emerges, exposing an agitated, weak man, haunted by the past. Both survive, but are profoundly damaged. On the other hand, Holt and the

beetle are literally eliminated. Their lack of value transforms them into disposable elements, for they represent either a threat against stability or a reminder about social fragmentation within Victorian Great Britain. Holt is exhaustively exploited until death—what presupposes his presence is basically tangential. The beetle is specifically regarded as a direct threat which is apparently killed in a train wreck, although no solid evidence about its death is found. According to Champnell, "what became of the creature … what was the purport of his presence here—to this hour these things are puzzles" (274). Although both characters are opposites, they share a common position in relation to social Victorian standards—not only are they disposable elements within British social and economic systems, but their presence instills fears about unrest, dissent, unemployment, and crime. Holt and the beetle pose a risk to the rigid political standards of culture and identity in Great Britain, and this defines their fate—they are eliminated in order to protect a homogeneous Victorian Great Britain from falling into eventual chaos. Finally, Atherton is not significantly affected by the incidents. This suggests that his ideological inclinations in favor of social hierarchy and imperial rule pose him in a superior position—he does not constitute a threat for he is part of the status quo, and consequently will not proceed against already established power structures that consolidate his role. In general terms, direct elimination or severe damage against characters in *The Beetle* will be determined by the necessity to preserve the status quo and, consequently, reinforce identity superiority. In addition, through the eventual damage or elimination of monstrous

entities, the dominant culture keeps the illusion of control over foreign cultures, and deters their apparent influence inside the empire. Political positions will be reinforced through each character's fate and constitute the underlying motivation that generates the course of events in the novel.

**C. Ideological Constructions in *The Beetle***

As mentioned in chapter II, Herra states that monstrosity reveals fears about ethnic and cultural differences within the individual. According to him, the monster embodies these differences and transforms them into negative, destructive influences. In addition, he affirms monstrosity comprises negative influences in order to contain them and avoid cultural mixing or contamination. The culturally rejected or hazardous is trapped inside the monster with the intention of isolating its influence over other cultures, while relocating responsibilities on consequent discrimination and tension between them. The monster becomes the scapegoat, the sacrificial entity through which justice will be done, even in unfair terms. On the other hand, Said's work *Orientalism* delves into the topic of discourse, identity and culture. For Said, the occidental, fabricated discourse of an unknown other (the foreign influence in the novel's context) vindicates a view of superiority over oriental cultures. This discourse not only adapts to the dominant cultures' necessities and fears but also ignores the voice and opinion of orientalized cultures. The

external is silenced and censored—views about identity do not emerge from them, but are provided in a filtered manner.[60]

In this respect, *The Beetle* depicts a particular view of monstrosity as a politically conditioned construction. From a postcolonial point of view, the text emerges from the core of the empire, revealing its dominant role over ideological constructions of foreign (and unknown) cultures. The novel provides a view of social, cultural, and political tensions from the point of view of British dominant discourse, while instilling radical positions about nationalism, discrimination, and violence. More specifically, through monstrous figures, their origin, and their fate, the novel constructs views about the orient

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[60]Regarding ideological constructions embedded in narrative, it is useful to examine Fredric Jameson's positions about fiction and their depiction of social dynamics. In the book *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson affirms texts are inevitably connected to the historical context in which they are produced and interpreted. For him, texts are "bothered" by the historical reality that allows their expression, and history itself is a text which is constantly rewritten through literary production and interpretation. In Jameson's words, "history is a text" (82) which is constantly recoded through its recreation and reception. For Jameson, fiction itself is an aesthetic act of historical interpretation which exhibits an intrinsic relation to its ideological context (79), for the author(s) and the text coexist with several modes of production, "including vestiges and survivals of older modes of production" (95). Jameson states master narratives permeate the text, reflecting forms of collective thinking: "such master narratives have inscribed themselves in the texts as well as in our thinking about them ... narratives ... reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality" (34).

Since texts manifest different representations of the ideological consciousness in which it emerges, Jameson proposes they generate "ideologemes:" "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (76). The "ideologeme" is "a larger class discourse that can be said to be organized around minimal 'units'" (87); in other words, Jameson states literature exposes the "symbolic messages [generated from] the coexistence of various sign systems" (76), along with the "contradiction of the specific messages emitted by the varied sign systems which coexist in a given artistic process as well as in its general social formation" (98-99). Jameson claims reading per se becomes an act of mediation to interpret "the relationship between the text and its social and cultural context" (39), and more modern forms of mediation are basically transcoding activities (40). *The Beetle* is not an exception to this case—the text reveals the complexities of the historical context in which it was created along with its ideological positions and social struggles (for further reference see the article "Metacommentary" from the same author).

as dangerous, irate and unreliable, while revealing, but minimizing, internal threats, generated by imperial weaknesses. The dominant culture filters views about the orient through agents of power presented in the text. These agents shape characters, actions, and events, to convenience, and adjust testimonies in order to favor dominant discourses over subjugated elements. The dominated culture is silenced, or its view about events is opportunistically distorted to reinforce views about the orient as dangerous. In opposition, the dominant culture's influence is vindicated through the banalization of its own vice and dangers.

In general terms, *The Beetle* not only reveals tensions about power struggles in Victorian Great Britain, but also serves indoctrinating functions within its own context. Through constructed views of the foreign other as threatening and chaotic, the internal is liberated from responsibility for the very same reasons it is prone to destructive attitudes. In other words, the text corrupts the external in order to make it responsible for the chaos that arises from the inside. In this way, the tensions provoked by natives are attributed to foreign influences, reinforcing views of internal identity as phlegmatic and ethically correct. In addition, the novel suggests and even minimizes views about internal vice, by juxtaposing them to external danger embodied by monstrous beings. The contradictory nature of British Victorian identity is palpable in the text, but ideologically, these inconsistencies are justified through external influence and its apparent provocations. In *The Beetle*, the foreign, the sexually atypical, the socially distressing, and the politically

or ideologically dissenting, not only expose imperial insecurities about identity fragmentation and consequent loss of power, but also vindicate discriminatory, extreme nationalistic attitudes towards the foreign as a despicable form of identity expression. The aforementioned elements provoke chaos inside the British Empire, revealing contradictions about identity, and generating unfair forms of expurgation from responsibility. In this way, the possibility to contemplate the internal as responsible for imperial loss of power is dismissed. British disgrace is provoked by anything except its own individuals.

**1. The Body as a Form of Symbolic Dominance in *The Beetle***

*The Beetle* reveals ideological positions about external, monstrous influence as an extreme threat against stability. In other words, the external is dangerous and powerful. As already mentioned, the foreign threat is corporalized as monstrous forms and behaviors. However, other representations about the power of the external influence are depicted specifically through the monster's eyes, hands, and hypnotizing capacities. These views disclose ideological notions about the external presence as impossible to define and control. First, the monster's eyes resemble constant observation and inevitable submission. Several characters describe the beetle's eyes as malignant; Lessingham, for example, claims that they "were a devil's …and they had a diabolical effect" (Marsh 196), while Atherton states the monster's eyes had "the mesmeric quality" (66). Also, Holt's first encounter with the beetle leads to forced hypnotism through the monster's gaze, a

resource he calls "the power of the eye" (17), and strangers remember the predominant characteristic of this feature, even though the monster looks like a man or a woman. The beetle's eyes serve symbolic functions about ideological contamination: they remind the internal culture that they are not only being constantly observed, but also are unable to exert control over the effects of this form of surveillance. Besides the monster's eyes, its hands are predominant signs of ideological influence and control. When Lessingham is kidnapped by the priestess, he narrates that the woman used one of her hands to control him. This hand, in his words, had the power to debilitate enemies: "her touch had on me what I can only describe as a magnetic influence. … I felt ... powerless in her grasp as if she held me with bands of steel" (196). Just by using one of her hands, Lessingham reports he felt incapable of exerting any type of action against his abuser. From an ideological standpoint, the priestess's hand represent forms of external control over British identity. The priestess, whose presence represents the oriental force, effortlessly controls Lessingham (Western influence) by dispossessing him from strength and courage. However, the text vindicates its initial position by depicting Lessingham's sudden enraged behavior towards the priestess. When he witnesses the sacrifice of a British maiden in front of him, he strangles the priestess:

> 'It was the cumulative horrors of such a scene which gave me the strength, or the courage, or the madness, I know not which it was, to burst the bonds which bound me … I flung my hands around her throat, … and my pressure grew—*I did* not

stay to think if I was killing them.' (200).

Metaphorically, Lessingham defeats the oriental, external force which steals his sense of courage and identity and not only recovers his dignity as a British individual, but also vindicates the dominant position of British rule over oriental cultures. Finally, the use of the mouth is pivotal to understand the contaminating character attributed to the monster. The beetle uses the mouth to transmit either life or death, as depicted in its rescuing of Percy and in the attacks towards Holt and Lessingham. In the first case, the beetle saves Percy Woodville from death by breathing into his open mouth—Percy wakes up from his intoxication (Atherton accidentally gasses him with poison), and does not remember the prior events that provoked his situation. Symbolically, the creature represents a powerful position through the rescuing of Percy; however, the creature can also use its power to inflict harm on others. When the beetle attacks both Holt and Lessingham, the creature uses the mouth to control them—both men affirm they feel dominated by the creature when it kisses them. Although both men report how repulsive the sensation of the kiss is, they cannot deter the creature from doing it. In Holt's case, the creature attempts to get into his body through the mouth; in Lessingham's case, the creature expresses its desire to keep him as a sexual slave through kissing. In general terms, the use of the mouth not only demonstrates that the beetle can exert its dominant powers over others, but also depicts how sexualized this power is. Through the mouth, the creature controls and

contaminates, transforming its victims into weak, passive forms of identity and cultural subjugation.

**2. Sexuality and Crime as Foreign Threats**

Sexually uncommon behaviors and crime are also related to ideological constructions about the danger of foreign influence. In general terms, *The Beetle* instills preoccupations about the New Woman, the homosexual, or the criminal, as potential threats against the stability of British identity. These figures are connected to the oriental, and consequently, to external influence. As an ideological mechanism of protection, characters that reveal social injustice regarding gender roles, sexuality, or poverty, are converted into moral monsters that deserve punishment or destruction through identity fragmentation. These characters are portrayed as unstable beings or are mesmerized in order to make them lose control of their own will. Marjorie and Holt, for example, represent social minorities in Great Britain—Marjorie advocates for equal gender rights, and Holt embodies the abandoned working class. Their condition and the different forms of conflict they might generate provoke the emergence of symbolic forms of punishment—Holt dies, while Marjorie remains mentally devastated. These forms of punishment allude to ideological mechanisms of defense of British tradition and identity—the status quo is preserved through the punishment of these elements. In addition, these characters' potential threat is distorted by transforming them into mad individuals whose voice is silenced or questioned. Marjorie's representation of female

advancement is veiled under the cover of mental illness, while Holt's unfortunate working and economic conditions are vindicated by forcing him to take part in unusual sexual and criminal activities. In other words, their influence is neutralized by transforming both characters into insignificant examples of social injustice. In other words, the text punishes these characters, depicting their actions as provocations. This means that Marjorie becomes a silent, mad woman, who needs treatment for several years, while Holt is transformed into a puppet, utilized either by the monster or its enemies in several events in the narration. It is useful to mention that Lessingham shares some characteristics with these characters; however, he resists punishment, which safeguards his reputation from being deeply affected in the aftermath of the events. In general terms, Holt and Marjorie's ideological role in the novel and their value in revealing of social injustice and change, are reduced to pathological or vicious behaviors. In this way, their contribution is presented as harmful, consequently perpetuating the hegemonic ideology and tradition in Victorian Great Britain.

**3. Dissenting Behaviors and Ideology**

*The Beetle*'s most solid ideological position relies on the role of dissenting behaviors within a rigid imperial system. The novel illustrates social tensions in Victorian Great Britain regarding political affiliations and power struggles; this reveals the conflict between internal and external forces and the contradictions of questionable forms of power within the empire. Ideologically, *The Beetle* suggests that dissent is extremely

harmful and consequently divides characters into two distinguishable groups—dissenters and traditionalists. Symbolically, these characters reproduce the historical and political tensions and national issues from which the novel is created and interpreted, and perpetuate ideological views about political alignment and its consequences. In other words, dissenting individuals are not only assigned monstrous conditions but are exposed to great suffering in order to reinforce their negative symbolism. In the novel, violence against these characters is ideologically justified—their affiliation with dissenting ideological positions has led to their degradation.

In *The Beetle*, Marjorie and Lessingham are depicted as rebels, while Atherton embodies traditionalist positions. Holt and the beetle constitute other forms of ideology—the first one represents the ignored working class, while the beetle depicts external influences against nationalism. As dissenting individuals, Marjorie and Lessingham face tragic situations, while Atherton is relatively out of risk. Their specific fate in the text is directly associated with their ideological views and the eventual risk these views might represent for the stability of British imperial power in the nineteenth century. Marjorie's kidnapping and Lessingham's persecution, constitute discursive views about traditionalism and identity in Victorian Great Britain. On the other hand, Atherton's apparent immunity to the beetle's attacks relies on his political views—Atherton, like the beetle, is an extremist in his views, and this provides him with a power similar to the one the beetle displays. However, the beetle is eliminated for its extremist views against the

empire and symbolic threat against political dominance over other cultures, while Atherton's views, although extremist, favor the perpetuation of British power. Finally, Holt is eliminated for his unfortunate condition—he reveals that the British empire does not benefit everyone, but indeed invisibilizes the lower classes. Holt must be eliminated in order to conceal (or at least banalize) the contradictions of imperial power. In general terms, *The Beetle* not only exposes ideological differences and imperial identity in Victorian Great Britain, but also perpetuates dominant views about traditionalism and identity through its characters, their behaviors, and their fate. The text suggests that anti-nationalistic behaviors will fragment the empire, debilitating the already solid, but illusory self-construction of the Victorian individual as superior, while solving this problem through the elimination of characters that embody these behaviors and their significance. In this way, the text protects the ideological bases that influence it, while censoring licentious Victorian behaviors which constitute a potential threat against British power and identity.

Expanding on the topic of character construction and ideology in the novel, *The Beetle* figuratively marginalizes dissenting characters in order to minimize their influence on the Victorian, imperial mindset.[61] This is done not only through detailed descriptions about their appearance or behaviors, but also through the questioning of their morals or

[61] Regarding marginalized characters and their incapacity to express themselves in the novel, see Spivak's views on the subaltern in the article "Can the Subaltern Speak?." According to Spivak, occidental criticism ignores or even undermines the subaltern. *The Beetle* works as a literary example of this position.

values. The effect of this construction reinforces views about external influences as degenerating, while national values remain unquestioned. Holt's criminal behaviors and victimization through forced rape, Marjorie's coerced transvestism, Lessingham's excessive drinking and tendency to hysterical reactions, or Atherton's erratic violence, define their role in the text: they corporalize the effects of internal and external threats and identity, and for this reason they must be ostracized. However, the text minimizes the effects of internal threats in order to focus on the external as the predominant source of instability within Victorian Great Britain. Indeed, specific events in the text constitute a mechanism of isolation against dissenting or problematic characters and their questionable values. Marjorie's kidnapping, ideologically provoked by her views on gender, transforms her into a passive, silent woman; Lessingham's political influences are put at risk when he fails to give an important speech at parliament; and Holt is assassinated after being used as a criminal. These characters' symbolic neutralization deters their influence, avoiding discursive contamination inside the imperial system. Atherton, once again, is immune to this mechanism for his presence does not represent any form of threat against the establishment. He is an advocate of tradition, and tradition ultimately saves him. However, this does not mean that Atherton deserves salvation—as aforementioned, he emerges as a form of internal threat; he embodies forms of danger generated by arrogance, ignorance, and innate violence. His political authoritative position provides him with an advantage, for he is liberated from responsibility, and

consequently of any form of punishment. His native condition minimizes the effects of his destructive behavior and questionable values; in other words, he is considered to be an odd man by some, but not a potential threat for stability. This confirms how the text overlooks the potential effect of destructive, internal forces and their revelation of ideological vice within the heart of the British empire. Internal signs of instability are perceived as an anomalous coincidence, while external elements are defined as the cause of possible decadence of the empire.

The fate of characters in the novel illustrate ideological positions on mechanisms of perpetuation of power. In *The Beetle,* ethical positions about dissent in Victorian Great Britain, which reveal self-constructed views about imperial decadence and honor, permeate the text. In the novel, the dissenting are silenced, isolated, demonized, or destroyed, thus reinforcing ignorant attitudes and prejudice towards the external. In this way, the external is depicted as a strong, hazardous force which attempts to destroy one of the, apparently, finest forms of western civilization—the British empire. The British mindset of superiority reaches the most solid structures of the empire to influence general action towards the external and its representations, consequently adjudicating complete responsibility about decline to external influences, while categorically denying particular involvement in the process. In other words, attitudes towards the external, potential threat, reveal not only a solid repudiation of the weaknesses of the empire, but also a strong rejection towards the external as a fabricated cause of instability.

In *The Beetle*, dissenters do not have a solid voice; their opinion is discarded, and any possibilities to be incorporated into the rigid Victorian culture are nonexistent. Destroying dissenters secures political dominance not only inside the core of the empire but in its territories overseas, ultimately dissipating fears and insecurities about the role of British culture in the construction of new forms of civilization. The British will maintain their self-constructed messianic image and will find a mode to justify their imperialistic mission. The novel reinforces this view through the depiction of systematic forms of punishment and discrimination over dissenting characters. For instance, the beetle's plans of vengeance against Lessingham affect the latter's reputation as a public figure, since Lessingham's past is unknown—Mr. Lindon affirms he doesn't want Marjorie Lindon to marry a man "who's hot up through a trap, simply because nothing is known about him" (Marsh 119). The threat also causes Holt's death, and affects Marjorie, but as usual, it does not disturb Atherton, for his traditionalist views protect him. The punishment of dissenters not only reinforces the previously mentioned ideological positions about the external, but also homogenizes the ideal standards of identity in trend during the British nineteenth century. Punishment and destruction of the disobedient regulate social and political structures by identifying and demonizing elements in favor of social or political change.

In addition, the idea of punishment as a "deserved reward" contextualizes characters' fate as the product of their own provocation. Punishment and destruction are

not performed gratuitously—characters provide ample reasons to attract disgrace, such as immaturity or excessive curiosity. For instance, Marjorie's insistence on going to the beetle's house, or Lessingham's adolescent inexperience, put them in contact with the beetle, causing their misfortunes. Once characters and their rebellious condition (provoked by themselves) is controlled, the end of its influence serves purifying functions and helps to stabilize cultural and political rule in the empire. British identity concentrates on the present, leaving its violent past behind and ignoring the possible future consequences of systematic repression over subjugated territories. At the same time, responsibilities regarding political chaos are located in the already contained external threat (the dissenting in the novel), blaming their fabricated violent, wild image as the cause of such conflicts.

The exception to this assumption is presented in Sydney Atherton. Although he depicts very similar characteristics to the beetle, since both are violent, rancorous, and manipulative, Atherton overcomes the tragedy provoked by the monster (and in part, by himself, since he exposed Marjorie to the creature), by marrying Dora Grayling. Atherton, then, becomes one of the richest men in Great Britain. This confirms that Atherton's irresponsible and even dangerous actions do not entitle him to be punished, but on the contrary, he is rewarded with even more power. His traditional stance, plus his scientific knowledge, confer him with a special position and, consequently, with symbolic forms of immunity. When he marries Dora Grayling he does not lose his privileged position—

instead, he gains economic power. In this way, Atherton becomes the epitome of the perpetuation of power within the empire, securing the stability of the already established system.

**4. Causes of Imperial Decadence**

The last and most important ideological view developed through the novel concerns the causes of imperial decadence. In *The Beetle*, British insecurities about identity and ignorance about external cultures locate the causes of imperial decadence on external sources, never on self-provoked actions or attitudes. The novel provides numerous examples of fabricated discourses about the oriental influence as the cause of several forms of disgrace. Characters' immaturity or inexperience are not considered self-provoked causes of conflict. For instance, Atherton's behavior is habitually justified for he is believed to be controlled more by his British values than his own feelings of violence. When Lessingham suspects Atherton is partially responsible for Marjorie's kidnapping (he exposed her to the monster), Champnell responds that Atherton is reliable after all:

> 'I know Atherton well. In his not infrequent moments of excitement, he is apt to use strong language, but it goes no further. I believe him to be the last person in the world to do anyone an intentional injustice, under any circumstances whatever.' (Marsh 207)

In other words, Champnell prioritizes Atherton's Victorian image over his impetuous behavior, minimizing the effect of Atherton's actions. The fact that Atherton is British and probably an earnest man, reduces the possibility of concluding that he might provoke conflicts through his influence, converting the internal threat into a minor cause of conflict. On the other hand, external manifestations of identity, even if not necessarily influential, are assigned a negative reputation and blamed for imperial chaos. The text reveals a fictional view of the orient as an extreme danger against the presupposed dominance of the British empire, and the veracity of this discursive fabrication is never confirmed. For instance, Champnell narrates the story of Lessingham's experience in Egypt according to the press (250). Specifically, Champnell's elucidation provides a reference to fictional views about oriental cultures as spiritually mysterious and sectarian, in which individuals' lives are conducted by superstition. In addition, Lessingham explains how two missionaries who saved him in the desert died under strange circumstances: "Mrs Clements was dead, drowned during an excursion he the Nile, and her husband had departed on a missionary expedition into Central Africa, from which he never returned" (201). The text suggests the death of both missionaries was an act of revenge provoked by the cult the monster belongs to—the children of Isis. In both cases, the text does not provide verifiable information about the nature of these actions—they are filtered by their narrators in order to minimize the negative characteristics of the internal while assigning responsibility to the external.

In addition, the view of a threatening quality in foreign influence exposes blatant discrimination against the non-British through generalizations about the other. The external, despite its origin or variety, is placed under one group—the non-British. This classification not only exposes ignorant views about other forms of culture and identity, but also generates the emergence of anxieties about those manifestations, especially because the British do not possess real knowledge about them. General ignorance leads not only to fear but also imaginary ways of understanding, and even politicizing, the foreign influence. Insecurities about identity also provoke categorical denial of the internal as a cause of conflict—if the external is negative, this must be the cause of decadence. The internal-external juxtaposition in the novel reinforces discriminatory views about natives and non-natives, demonizing foreign forms of violence, while justifying similar internal manifestations.

The views already presented confirm that *The Beetle* not only is created under specific historical conditions that define its ideological tendencies, but also perpetuates those views through symbolic constructions of the imperial conflict and its constraints. The novel, as a narrative artifact, constructs an allegorical view of Victorian Great Britain and its own image in relation to the world. *The Beetle*, more than a sensationalist novel, is a "socially symbolic act," as Fredric Jameson states in the title of his book *Political Unconscious*. The text reveals and shapes, thus facilitating the comprehension of the preoccupations that pervaded Victorian Great Britain's imperial system. The text, along

with the historical background from which it emerged instills ideas about the causes of imperial anxieties and their attitudes against external elements within Great Britain.

**D. Ideological Construction of the Threatening Other in *The Beetle:* About its Causes and Effects**

As already claimed in chapter II, Said argues that the discursive construction of the oriental as a negative influence is generated from inner curiosity about the unknown culture. Ignorance about foreign influences and their manifestations of identity generates contradictory feelings that oscillate between fascination and repudiation. These attitudes become a negative discursive structure when they emerge within a tense social context. In other words, negative, false discursive views about the external reflect the complications of the internal in terms of identity definition. On the other hand, Herra insists that the monster is generated from specific conditions such as the recognition of an unbearable reality, rejection to this reality, or from the necessity to create a cultural artifact that can replace the real (see Chapter II). This means that the monster is not only the cultural construction of the repressed manifestations of identity within specific cultures, but also the product of secret interest in them. Particularly, *The Beetle* combines the assumptions already presented, showcasing that a discursive construction of the monster and external identity reveal interest in the unknown, but the incapacity of the individual to understand its presence and function demonizes its image. More specifically, *The Beetle* depicts fabricated views about external identities and paranoid perceptions of the unknown,

which are then conveniently blamed as the cause of imperial decadence. The idea of converting the negative or unknown into a monster is not new; however, the causes that provoke this phenomenon in Victorian Great Britain are particular—they respond to the historical circumstances in which the novel was written and interpreted. At the same time, the ideological construction of the threatening other in *The Beetle* responds to an intrinsic interest in the unexplored and exotic and the necessity to contain its apparent danger. *The Beetle* reveals a relation between the construction of the threatening other and feelings of culpability, fear, or ignorance, which in fact disguise an inner desire for the remote culture. Also, the threatening other is the product of a necessity to purge British nationalism and its weaknesses.

**1. Causes**

Regarding culpability, the construction of the monster in *The Beetle* emerges from Victorian feelings of guilt about morals and ethics that must be relocated in external elements in order to expurgate or justify responsibilities. Monstrous forms are transformed into the cause of immoral or unethical actions which, in several cases, are justified as actions of defense or inexperience. For instance, the monster's attack on Lessingham is described as an act of revenge, while the causes that provoke the attack (Lessingham's killing of the priestess) are considered an act of defense, despite Lessignham's recognition of his action as an act of rage. Lessingham's killing of the priestess is described as the product of sudden violent emotion over the priestess;

however, the monster's act of revenge is not justified in the same way. Violent actions perpetrated by the monster work as a contrasting mechanism which figuratively minimizes the effects of violence executed by the British individual. This mechanism creates a contrast between the internal and the external, aligning the internal with the good and victimizing its role in its relationship with the external. The external, then, becomes the cause of the emergence of "unprovoked" violence and is conferred the role of provocateur. In this way, culpability is deposited in the foreign influence, liberating the autochthonous from responsibilities about its own destructive behaviors.

Fear constitutes another cause of the creation of the threatening monster—specifically, the novel develops the alien as an indefinable, and consequently, uncontrollable entity, that must be feared. The incapacity to conceptualize and classify the unknown immediately turns the entity into a monstrous threat that deserves being destroyed. For example, Marjorie describes how the attack of the monster provokes "a sort of blank horror" in her, and causes a "paroxysm of fear" that she cannot control (Marsh 159-60). Marjorie is unable to define the type of presence which harasses her, but concludes that the entity is indefinable—she calls it "the Unknown-with a capital U!"(Marsh 176). She emphasizes the feelings of terror that the entity generates on her. Alongside Marjorie, other characters also describe how the monster's influence is somehow inexplicable, which provokes more intense feelings of anxiety and terror on them. Holt and Marjorie report the entity paralyzes them, while Lessingham loses his

sense of mental control. As Champnell states during the train persecution, "[Lessingham] was nearer to a state of complete mental and moral collapse" (Marsh 247). Atherton, on the other hand, is not affected, presumably, for his resemblance to the creature. In general terms, the characters of the novel are unable to conclude what type of entity they deal with, and this manifestation of impotence anguishes them. Although they make an effort to maintain control, their impotence not only exposes their weaknesses, but also reveals the complications of containing the threat. If they cannot understand the type of threat that is harassing them, they cannot control it, and the impossibility to control the menace affects their image as a dominant culture. Fear, in this case, becomes a symptom of ignorance and impotence that demands the direct destruction of a presupposed harmful, external threat.

Ignorance not only is another cause of the creation of the monstrous threat, but is, in part, the origin of the other causes presented. Within the Victorian context, new inventions such as the telegraph, or the distribution of mass media information in remote areas of Great Britain, facilitated the quick spread of information; however, this information was ideologically filtered or incomplete. Subjective views on national identity and foreign influences reached most of the population, and consequently biased, or even constructed, false concepts about the external other as dangerous. Distorted knowledge about the real causes of political and social crises unfairly blame foreign factors. Characters in the novel do not reason about the origin or characteristics of the

monster, but instead draw conclusions about its nature by associating it to the oriental. For example, Mrs. Coleman, the owner of the house where the monster lives, reports that the creature looks like an Arabian because of his clothing. She states the man "kept a thing over his head all the time," referring to a burnoose. When Atherton tries to verify the information, she responds that she does not really know about the piece of clothing:

> 'How am I to know what the thing's called? … All I know that them Arab blokes what was at Earl's Court used to walk about in them all over the place—sometimes they wore them over their heads, and sometimes they didn't. … [T]his here old gent what I've been telling you was a Arab bloke—when he gets off his knees to sneak away from the window, I could see that he had his cloak thing, what was over his head, wrapped all around him.' (Marsh 218)

Only Lessingham possesses the capacity to reflect on the possible origin of the monster, but this is defined by his previous experience with the entity. The definition of the oriental as a threat not only reveals ignorant views on the causes of imperial crisis, but also exposes juxtapositions between positive and negative cultures created within the Victorian mindset. In this context, the internal is good, and consequently, the external is negative. Finally, the novel does not clearly elucidate the origin of the danger (it suggests the monster is part of a sect that worships the goddess Isis), but it offers superstitious explanations for it, reinforcing ignorant views about the alien and its origins.

Finally, desire[62] constitutes the last cause involved in the construction of the threatening other in *The Beetle*, and it is observable in all the characters that have contact with the monster, including the creature itself. Desire provokes characters to fight the feared presence in very specific ways which will ultimately affect their own physical integrity and their identity. For instance, Atherton's attitude towards the beetle generates strong interest in discovering the techniques the creature uses to make magic. For Atherton, the beetle's apparent knowledge of chemistry is intriguing, for he wants to know about the nature and characteristics of the activities the beetle performs in front of him in the laboratory. Although the beetle offers Atherton help in order to destroy Lessingham, Atherton rejects this proposal, apparently, for ethical reasons, or because of disbelief in the creature. However, he maintains interest in the entity and its powers and decides to look for him. On the other hand, Lessingham externalizes desire in two different ways, both shaped by the context in which he finds the beetle. In his younger years, sexual interest makes him feel attracted to the priestess, while fear about the beetle

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[62] In basic terms, Desire is the sense of longing for a person, thing, or situation (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*), and is commonly associated to erotic activities. However, Desire should not be merely defined as sexual appetite (*Learners Dictionary).* For Jacques Lacan, Desire refers to several aspects of the human condition and is influenced by social structures and the linguistic system (or symbolic order). In this sense, Dino Felluga supports Lacan's views by claiming that "our desire is never properly our own, but is created through fantasies that are caught up in cultural ideologies rather than material sexuality" ("On Desire"). Lacan believes that the fact Desire is not constructed over real notions but on idealizations causes the individual to desire what the Other desires, since doing it conducts to recognition from the Other. In other words, Lacan claims Desire "is for the thing that we suppose the Other desires, which is to say, the thing that the Other lacks" (*lacanonline.com*).

killing Marjorie becomes his motivation in later years. In both cases, Lessingham's procedures are motivated by a necessity to either possess the creature, or to destroy it. Finally, Marjorie and Holt also act towards the entity with specific intentions; but these are indirect: Holt's contact with the creature is defined by his need to find shelter, while Marjorie encounters the creature motivated by curiosity. In all of the cases, characters' actions are defined by inner desires, regardless of whether these are sexual, psychological, or intellectual. Their approximation to the entity allows them to fulfill those desires and maintain control over the creature and its influence.

The aforementioned aspects presented in *The Beetle* should not be considered pure fictional strategies which justify characters' attitudes towards the monstrous threat. The motivations depicted in the text expose the preponderant Victorian mentality about power and identity in the nineteenth century. The causes that provoke monstrous forms to be perceived as a threat are the product of social and historical tensions which permeate artistic production, including literature, in the nineteenth century, and which still today generate important effects in society. These effects reemerge in moments of social, economic, and political distress, with the intention of perpetuating the hierarchy that defines social dynamics. While the loss of economic, political, and military dominance provoked the construction of a foreign, evil other, in nineteenth-century Great Britain, fears about immigration and fundamentalism generate similar reactions in the twentieth century.

## 2. The Threatening Other Today

The discursive construction of external elements within the Victorian mindset seems to revive nowadays in bigger proportions—occident lives in a constant state of fear about an unknown orient. Media manipulation, the rise of political movements of fundamentalist nature, or fear of immigration and unemployment, are a few examples of the conditions that define the conflictive context in which the threatening other reemerges in this century. Like the Victorians, contemporary societies construct the foreign other based on manufactured or manipulated views of difference, and convert the foreigner into a menace able to destroy the privileged countries' economy, identity, and religion. At the same time, in a responsive fashion, these societies externalize preferences for new political figures of disreputable ethics, but strong opposition to cultural openness.

For instance, political conflicts in Middle Eastern countries (presumably generated by conflicts of military and economic interest between the occident and the orient), have provoked massive immigration to Europe and America. Inhabitants from countries in conflict move through Eastern Europe or South America in order to reach more stable countries such as The United States or nations in Northern Europe, for example. Unfortunately, media manipulation, based predominantly on ignorant views or political bias about oriental countries, have created negative views about Middle-Eastern orientals, categorizing them as terrorists and rapists, just to name a few labels. Although it is true that paramilitary movements have cooperated to complicate military conflicts in these

countries, generalizations about the nature of their inhabitants are mere speculations. However, these generalizations are reflected in mass media and entertainment production, such as sensationalist news about crimes committed by "Muslim terrorists" or "talibans," or the creation of fictional, parody characters such as "Achmed the Terrorist," a dead suicide bomber of disreputable intelligence. Incidentally, and unfortunately, "Achmed the Terrorist" is highly popular in the United States.

The construction of a threatening other in contemporary times also affects migrants' routines and lifestyles. Rising reports of violence against immigrants, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States, demonstrate a general sense of fear and hate towards foreigners. Media and political manipulation is partially responsible for this tendency, since citizens of these countries are constantly bombarded with biased information about migrants as a cause of economic and social crisis. In addition, legislation in occidental countries has forced migrants to drastically adapt to new cultures by making changes in ordinary activities which do not constitute any significant harm for occidental cultures. For instance, European legislation in countries like France forces Muslim women to stop wearing their hijab in public places. Also in France, reports about forcing women to stop wearing burkinis in beaches were considered an act of control not only over their bodies, but also over these women's decision to wear Muslim-related clothing.

Right-wing political movements have strengthened in the last years as a response against massive immigration in Europe and the United States. Neofascism is unexpectedly reemerging in countries such as Greece (with the political party "Golden Dawn"), and extremist groups such as Ku Klux Klan are gaining new momentum in the United States, a fact that was blatantly confirmed when this group supported Donald Trump as its official candidate for the presidency of the United States. Far-right politicians such as Marie Le Pen, in France, or Donald Trump, in the United States, are gradually becoming more popular among the working classes, especially for their views on immigration and deportations. Trump, unexpectedly, has just been elected president of the United States on November 8, an unprecedented event which has provoked diverse reactions, most of them related to preoccupation, around the world. Finally, around 50% of British citizens voted in a referendum to complete the "Brexit," a reduced form of the term "British Exit," in which the United Kingdom abandoned the European Union. This separation has immediately affected British economy in a significant way; however, analysts believe that the most important reason why Brexit was voted for is related to immigration. With Brexit, British legislation towards migrants is less tolerant, and an important quantity of migrant workers in The United Kingdom will be forced to leave the country. As expected, Brexit has provoked violent reactions in Great Britain, with immigrants being attacked or even killed in the streets. Reports of verbal attacks have

become more common, and public demonstrations of hostility towards foreigners (even when they are residents or naturalized citizens) are rising.

The aforementioned situations mirror an occidental society full of frustration about massive immigration whose contact with filtered, ideologically altered information, has affected their views on foreigners. However, some of the most significant acts of violence in occidental countries have not been perpetrated by foreigners, but by nationals. In Norway, on July 22, 2011, Anders Breivik, a Norwegian right-wing sympathizer, killed more than 70 people and justified his terrorist act by declaring that he acted in defense of his country, and against multiculturalism. In Nice, France, on July 14, 2016, Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel killed 85 people and harmed 303 by running over the multitude with a truck during a parade. Contrary to initial beliefs, Mohamed was not an illegal immigrant, but was a resident in the country. Moreover, in South Carolina, United States, Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old white supremacist, killed 9 black people on June 17, 2015. Roof perpetrated the killings in hopes of inciting a race war in The United States. These events demonstrate that the threat is not necessarily external, but internal—it is the product of self-bred fears about the unknown, and lack of interest in discovering the truth about the other and their real identity.

The conflicts presented in *The Beetle* are the consequence of historical and ideological struggles which are revealed and perpetuated through the text. The reality of social conflict and its consequences permeate the text, turning it into a symbolic window

to its historical context. However, it is important to note that the conflicts externalized in the novel are not necessarily transitory—the reality of fear about an unknown other is timeless. The rising of new extreme manifestations about immigrants and foreigners reveals how the individual has not overcome primitive fears about the other as the unknown—instead, the internal individual exteriorizes ignorance and fear through demonizing the foreigner. In this way, the apparent threat the foreigner poses is immediately neutralized. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is recurrent—it reappears in times of social crisis. In addition, the creation of the foreigner as a monstrous entity is the product of recognition, but at the same time of denial, of the negative side of the human condition. The individual will use the monster to deal with vice, evil, and repudiated degradation that it perceives in itself. In other words, the monster is the scapegoat which will always receive the worst end of the bargain. However, its presence is absolutely necessary, for it is the reminder of the real condition of human beings—that of constant contradiction and internal struggle.

# Conclusions

This analysis is divided into four chapters, each with its own specific functions. Chapter I revises the economic, political, and social contexts in which *The Beetle* was produced and initially interpreted. This chapter focuses on Great Britain's economic crisis and its social complexities, as well as on military conflicts with Egypt. In addition, chapter I explores nineteenth-century Great Britain's literary milieus, specifically Gothic and Sensationalist literature and their themes. Finally, this chapter includes a section that confirms the scarcity of academic studies about the novel, while providing general information about the text and its author. Chapter II delves into theoretical and conceptual considerations applied to the novel. These positions focus on Imperialism, Colonialism, Orientalism, and Monstrosity; all these conceptual contributions facilitate the interpretation of the novel and its most important themes. Chapter III explores the monstrous condition in the novel through the analysis of different forms of monstrosity such as the combination, psychological, and symbolic monsters, focusing on diverse mechanisms of transmission of the monstrous condition—specifically sexual contact, mesmerism, and licentious behaviors. The aspects studied in Chapter III expose the complex relationship between power, identity, and imperialistic dominance in nineteenth-century Great Britain. Finally, Chapter IV explores the influence of the monstrous threat as a foreign element within the British culture. Indeed, this chapter reviews the consequences of monstrous contamination, emergent attitudes towards the monstrous

condition, the ideological constructions that result from these attitudes, and the causes that provoke those constructions. In general terms, this analysis studies the conditions that allow the comprehension of the conflicts which permeate literary production in Victorian Great Britain, especially the ideological view of monstrosity as a reflection of the anxieties of imperial Great Britain in the nineteenth century.

This analysis confirms that the foreign other not only is feared because of ignorance, but its negative presence is corporalized through monstrous forms in order to reinforce its threatening image in opposition to a British view of illusory perfection. In addition, this analysis reveals the source of apparent threats within a country are not necessarily external, but are produced by false perceptions of national perfection and productivity. In other words, the novel exposes how illusory views of the foreign other will align it with the negative, while inner forms of destruction and anti-nationalism are minimized or even denied. The source of chaos, then, never emerges from the inside, but from the outside. This allows the British to reject responsibility for the imminent decadence of the empire.

In addition, this analysis reveals that *The Beetle* can definitely be read as an ideological exercise on identity and nationalism. Specifically, unconventional positions about gender, social class, or sexuality are portrayed as destabilizing elements within a rigid Victorian system in which unusual features are punished for their apparent threat to mainstream identity and nationalism. In *The Beetle*, the New Woman, the unemployed, or

the sodomite (in Victorian terms) are identified potential threats for stability and dominance. Dissenting in any of its forms, or loss of economic (or class) stability will immediately transform the individual into a discardable element which must be eliminated in order to protect British power and identity. On the other hand, the novel reinforces views about phlegmatic behaviors and traditionalism as epitomes of British nationalism. The novel suggests that emotions are negative if these constitute some form of harm for the Victorian status quo. Of course, this view reveals a strong contradiction in terms of values and behavior within the Victorian mindset—Victorians live under constraints of double morals and appearances. Their apparent strength and messianic mission is an illusion of superiority. The British Imperial nineteenth-century mentality is constructed over contradictory views about dominance which in reality hide fears and ignorance about the foreign other. Sadly, this reality is not pertinent only to the nineteenth-century context; today, these views are not only prevalent but on the rise in Great Britain's manifestations of identity and nationhood.

Finally, it is pertinent to mention other important topics developed in the novel which deserve significant, further explorations but cannot be addressed in this study. For instance, it is recommendable to study the text from the point of view of Fredric Jameson's concepts on the Metacommentary—the analysis of hermeneutics applied to literary analysis, and the Ideologeme—the construction of embedded ideological structures exposed in artistic, mediatic, and literary production. In addition, it is prudent

to generate a more detailed analysis of characters presented in the novel, such as Atherton, and his approximations to the imperial, internal monster, or Marjorie, and her role as the silent, discursive element presented in the text, by using Spivak's view of the subaltern voices in criticism. Moreover, the novel offers vast information for the investigation of physical space and its ideological significance, especially within the context of imperial power and identity, liminality, and surveillance, through the issue of spatial division. In addition, the novel provides pertinent evidence about the importance of speech and its reflecting of the dynamics of power and identity in Victorian Great Britain. Finally, the novel exposes several examples of psychiatric conditions such as conversion disorder (or conversion hysteria), their correct (or incorrect) identification and treatment, and views about these conditions in the nineteenth-century context. These are only a few of the topics advisable for other researchers to pursue in further studies. This study, as well as potential investigations on Richard Marsh's novel, prove the same hypothesis—*The Beetle*, once more popular, than *Dracula*, deserves a second look (and many more) since it is a rich text that can be approached from several angles of study.

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