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OCCULT NETWORKS
AND THE LEGACY
OF THE INDIAN
REBELLION IN BRAM
STOKER'S *DRACULA*

We have all come to know (and strangely love) the bloodsucking vampire from Transylvania. But as a prelude to a statement of argument, I want to point out three features of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published in 1897, which may be less well known. The first is that the novel only begins, in classic Gothic style, in a foreign castle. Much of the plot actually takes place not in Transylvania but in London, where Dracula travels to prey on its inhabitants, threatening to feed on them and also to transform them into beings like himself. As the situation is summed up by Professor Abraham Van Helsing, the leader of the small group of characters whose defense against the vampire occupies the novel, Dracula wants to be the "father or furtherer of a new order of beings."¹ Because in Van Helsing's view Dracula comes to a major English city with the set purpose of controlling the populace and assimilating them into his own identity, Stoker's novel has often been read as a frightening symbolic rendering of British imperialism turned on its head, what Stephen Arata calls "reverse colonization." Arata leans on Dracula's self-identification as a warrior and invader with a long and proud lineage and on the vampire's homeland, in the Carpathian Mountains, as a site a Victorian audience would have associated with centuries of violent foreign imperial conquest. By this

¹ Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897; London: Penguin, 2003), 322. Further page references to this text will be parenthetical.

account, Dracula represents either a guilty projection of Britain's own imperial practices—empire as monstrosity—or, inversely, Britons' anxieties about racial and imperial decline in the last decades of the century, in light of popular theories of degeneration as well as of geopolitical developments such as the scramble for Africa, debates about Irish Home Rule, and General Charles Gordon's death at Khartoum.²

The second fact to highlight is that for a novel about an ages-old vampire, *Dracula* is surprisingly rife with new technologies, communications technologies in particular, such that communicative exchange is essential to Stoker's tale of vampiric aggression and counteraggression. The novel is saturated with modern media: Kodak photography, the phonograph, and the typewriter (all three of which had been invented only within the previous couple of decades), plus shorthand and the electric telegraph. These technologies are firmly aligned with Van Helsing's team; they use them to fight back the vampire, as devices for tracking his movements and conveying this information to one another. Importantly, however, the novel also depicts an alternate, sinister version of their methods in the occult powers of Dracula himself. Like the electric telegraph, the vampire can transmit his thoughts from afar and with impressive speed. This power is closely tied to his proficiency in hypnosis: Dracula subdues each of his victims by entrancing her (and his most significant victims are indeed female) so as to command her, even at a distance, to do his bidding. In the case of the novel's heroine, Mina Harker—the only female in Van Helsing's team of vampire pursuers—Dracula's attack establishes a telepathic line that runs potentially in both directions, allowing him not only to control her psyche but also to read her thoughts and will, a remote information link that is a more preternatural version of the telegraphic data transfers of his foes.³ Essentially Dracula's occult communications and the Londoners' technological ones are in direct conflict with one another: the first is focused on spreading vampirism, the second on eradicating it and defending British personhood.

Third, while we tend to think of Dracula's ethnicity as simply Eastern European, Stoker makes it continuous with the East or "Orient," opposing it to the West. At the novel's outset, when Mina's husband, Jonathan, is travel-

² Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 107–32. Drawing on the fact of Stoker's Irish background, Cannon Schmitt emphasizes the metaphorical value for Anglo-Irish relations; see *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 135–55.

³ On the similarity between technological and vampiric methods in Stoker's novel, see also Jennifer Wicke, "Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and Its Media," *ELH* 59 (1992): 467–93; and Laura Otis, *Networking: Communicating with Bodies and Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 180–219. Here I explore the intense political resonances of the contrast between these methods, especially within an imperial framework.

ing to Dracula's castle, he describes a stark perception of "leaving the West and entering the East" (7). The trains in this part of the world consistently run late, which he takes as a mark of his movement away from the West: "after rushing to the station at 7.30 I had to sit in the carriage more than an hour before we began to move. It seems to me that the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains. What ought they to be in China?" (8). Later, when Jonathan sees some locals on the side of the road, their odd dress leads him again to categorize them ethnically: "They are very picturesque," he writes, "but do not look prepossessing. On the stage they would be set down at once as some old Oriental band of brigands" (9).⁴

In what follows I argue that *Dracula*, as the tale of an anti-British, occultly communicative, and Oriental villain, owes a good part of its power to disturb from associations with the 1857–58 Indian Rebellion, or rather with the lore that had grown up around the Rebellion by the end of the nineteenth century. Following the protracted uprising that began with the mutiny of Indian soldiers, or sepoy, and spread across northern areas of the country, authority over India was transferred from the East India Company to the Crown in a corrective administrative effort to safeguard the region. In a distortion befitting the wild flights of Gothic romance, *Dracula's* paranoid vision of inverted imperialism recalls the event that, more so than any other in the nineteenth century, brought home to the British public the vulnerability of empire.

Although the cultural relevance of the Rebellion may seem doubtful forty years after its occurrence, in fact its imaginative resonance seems to have become more, not less, strong by the time of Stoker's writing. While each of the three decades ensuing right after the event—the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s—saw the publication of only a few novels based on the history of the Rebellion, at least nineteen appeared in the 1890s alone.⁵ For Gautam Chakravarty, this late Victorian explosion of "Mutiny" fiction attests to a period of New Imperialism and to India's particularly troubled status as both Crown jewel and a

⁴ On Dracula's Oriental identity in relation to his "Occidental" reverse colonization of Britain, see Arata, *Fictions of Loss*, 121–26.

⁵ Critics agree on the abundance of Victorian "Mutiny" fictions, especially at the fin de siècle, but disagree on the exact numbers. Nineteen is Gautam Chakravarty's calculation for the 1890s, and his is also the count for the preceding decades; *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5–6. Robert Druce suggests that twenty-one novels appeared between 1893 and 1899 alone; "'And to Think that Henrietta Guise Was in the Hands of Such Human Demons!': Ideologies of the Anglo-Indian Novel from 1859–1957," in *Shades of Empire in Colonial and Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. C. C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 17–34, at 18. Patrick Brantlinger estimates at least fifty total Mutiny novels by 1900, while Christopher Herbert estimates around sixty; see Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 199; and Herbert, *War of No Pity: The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 273.

colonial holding with a profoundly insurgent past.⁶ As Chakravarty further suggests, a significant strand of 1890s Mutiny fictions combines historiography with the romance of the adventure tale. The premise of white righteousness powers stories of heroism, counterinsurgency, and surveillance—all of which approximate core elements in Stoker's narrative of defense against the vampire.

Indeed, Chakravarty could be describing *Dracula* when he notes that the “story of counter-insurgency is garnished richly with demonstrations of racial, religious, national and technological superiority” and “close[s] with reconquest.”⁷ Notably, Stoker's tale of imperiled British identity is, like certain Mutiny novels' thrilling stories of surveillance, a conflict centered on information and information networks: the West's technological prowess is tested against the insidious occult exchanges of the East. In this aspect, *Dracula* is haunted by tales, tied closely to the legacy of the Rebellion, of spiritually exotic communication relays among the Indians, relays that in their efficacy strangely rivaled even the most sophisticated of British technological methods. Significantly, the communicative rivalry *as* an actual rivalry, as opposed to a rout by Western forces, is essential to the novel's fearful suspense. That is, even as *Dracula* conjures ideas of British heroism, it also gently disconcerts them, pushing against the patina of Western superiority by insinuating the unplumbed depths of Eastern mystical powers.

If *Dracula* recalls popular Rebellion stories, this is partly because those stories already met the Gothic genre halfway in their nightmarish detail. Documents both fictional and nonfictional underscored the siege of the British at Cawnpore (Kanpur) and at the Lucknow Residency, with the Cawnpore massacre commanding the most horrified attention. Numerous accounts told of how rebel leader Nana Sahib went back on his assurances of safe river passage to a group of British, ordering their large-scale carnage. Especially chilling was the image of some two hundred women and children imprisoned for days at Cawnpore and finally butchered with swords and axes, and of their numerous dead bodies stuffed into a nearby well. In 1897, the year *Dracula* was published, Hilda Gregg's “The Indian Mutiny in Fiction” in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* attributed some of the recent “flood” of interest in the Mutiny to the dramatic fodder in the “sufferings of women and children[,] which roused England to madness.”⁸ While rebel brutalities were certainly more than matched by the reprisals of the British—who forced Indians to defile themselves religiously by licking the blood of fellow prisoners before

⁶ Chakravarty, *Indian Mutiny*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁸ Hilda Gregg, “The Indian Mutiny in Fiction,” *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 161 (1897): 218, 224.

being hanged or shot them from the mouths of cannons, to take just two of the most vivid examples—it was the tales of Indian deceit and slaughter that, by century's end, had transformed Nana Sahib into a diabolical villain in numerous works of literature⁹ and that constituted the genre of historical novel Robert Druce calls, precisely, “Mutiny Gothic” (another element of which, the sexual violation of British women, I will return to later).

That *Dracula*'s narrative of Oriental barbarity and female predation capitalizes on the late Victorian renaissance in Mutiny literature is insinuated in a couple of curious plot touches. For one thing, while for much of the novel the countervampiric force proceeds in (now) expected ways, fending Dracula off with garlic and staking his minions through the heart, Jonathan Harker is armed throughout with a kukri knife. In the final scene of the novel, it is this weapon (along with an ally's Bowie knife) that finally dispatches the vampire. The kukri knife is a famed weapon of the Gurkhas, an Indian people whose soldiers stayed loyal to British forces during the Rebellion. Thus Jonathan's stab and the victory over Dracula are laden with the memory of that other desperate battle against an upstart anti-British menace on foreign soil.

Another telling moment surfaces in the conversation in which Professor Van Helsing, a student of the occult, seeks to convince his skeptical friend Dr. John Seward that there are things in this world mere science cannot explain. Van Helsing runs through numerous phenomena, from hypnotism and thought reading to 900-year-old Methusaleh and ancient tortoises, and then (in his distinctive Dutch idiom) offers this example: “Can you tell me how the Indian fakir can make himself to die and have been buried, and his grave sealed . . . and then the men come and take away the unbroken seal, and that there lie the Indian fakir, not dead, but that rise up and walk amongst them as before?” (205). Van Helsing's lesson is notable for the way it aligns the supposed magic of the Indian fakir—in Victorian parlance, either a Muslim mendicant or Hindu devotee—with vampiric behavior. For the description of the fakir's death defiance and mystical movements in and out of a sealed grave anticipates by only a few pages Seward's realization that his beloved Lucy Westenra,¹⁰ who seemingly perished and was buried, has really been slipping out nightly from her locked tomb, doing her duty as the latest recruit in the Undead army. Moreover, the novel's mention of the fakir probably had a special meaning in a culture primed on accounts of the Rebellion, since these histories often accentuated this figure, along with other religious ascetics, as a primary agent of sedition. The fakir's wandering, enigmatic ways were supposedly a

⁹ Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 201–4.

¹⁰ The name, together with *Dracula*'s repeated targeting of England through its women, has often been seen as significant to the novel's depiction of an embattled West. See, e.g., Schmitt, *Alien Nation*, 143.

means for spreading dissent among the sepoys and across the Indian populace.¹¹ Political suspicion of Indian holy men continued thenceforward throughout the Raj.¹²

While *Dracula's* nods to Indian culture are significant, I read them as evocative pointers to a certain idea of the Orient, not as exclusive indexes of pinpointed events in India. In other words, my argument is not that *Dracula* directly allegorizes the Rebellion, but rather that Stoker's creation of a blood-thirsty, mysteriously powerful nemesis from the East takes steam from the mythology that had emerged around that event by the fin de siècle.¹³ *Dracula* is a romance—a fantasy—not a historical novel; thus it is not bound to record facts realistically or faithfully. Yet it draws on those facts opportunistically to produce a mood of terror, a mood that works by confirming the image that readers already had about the Orient as a place of British victimization. To call late Victorian readers' memory of the Rebellion a mythology is to recognize how much that memory had taken on the broad outlines and stock characters of Mutiny literature and chronicles. It is also to recognize that, as many scholars have observed, Rebellion discourse was characterized to an unusual degree by rumor and speculation—both during its unfolding among the British and among the Indians, and afterward, about what exactly happened and why. Rebellion lore was itself quasi-fictional in its dependence on anecdote and imagining, and these imaginings were sometimes extravagant and supernaturalist, making India's Victorian past all the more amenable to the fantastic manipulations of a novel like *Dracula*.

Amid a general late Victorian renaissance of interest in the Rebellion, Stoker may have particularly gravitated toward a vision of India as a politically unstable region. Jimmie E. Cain Jr. persuasively reads *Dracula* as influenced by British anti-Russian sentiment that had deepened from the time of the Crimean War and focused around holdings in Central Asia. British Russophobia intensified in 1869 when the Russians set up forts within offensive range of Herat (Afghanistan), viewed as a strategic portal to India. This and other moves toward India in Russia's "Great Game" with Britain stimulated a

¹¹ Salahuddin Malik, *1857: War of Independence or Clash of Civilizations? British Public Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 87, 92, 135–36; Kim A. Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857: Rumours, Conspiracies and the Making of the Indian Uprising* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), 11.

¹² C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 316.

¹³ For many of Stoker's first readers, further, the memory of the Rebellion circulating in the literature of the day would have been reinforced by contemporary developments in India. Soon after *Dracula's* release, war correspondents began reporting on Pathan uprisings at the northwest frontier; these popular press accounts created an intense, nervous interest in the British public. See Glenn R. Wilkinson, "Purple Prose and the Yellow Press: Imagined Spaces and the Military Expedition to Tirah, 1897," in *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, ed. David Finkelstein and Douglas M. Peers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 254–76.

“wave of Russophobic literature” by the 1880s,¹⁴ and an important voice on the issue was the Hungarian professor Arminius Vambéry, alluded to in two passages in *Dracula*, as Van Helsing’s “friend Arminius, of Buda-Pesth University” (256; see also 321). Cain notes that scholars have disputed earlier claims that Vambéry—whom Stoker met and dined with in 1890 when Vambéry visited England, and whom he saw again two years later—supplied Stoker with tales of Vlad the Impaler (and also that Stoker’s vampire is based on that historical figure).¹⁵ But Cain suggests that Vambéry inspired *Dracula* in another way: an Orientalist and frequent traveler to Central Asia, Vambéry waged a vigorous British campaign in the 1880s and 1890s to publicize Russia’s threat to overtake India, and Stoker was one of many who seriously heeded these ideas. Vambéry was widely welcomed when he lectured in England in 1885, and his *The Coming Struggle for India*, published in the same year and advocating an aggressive British policy against Russia, became an immediate best seller. Vambéry leaned on what he saw as Russia’s lack of civilizing influence: if India fell to the Russians, it would inevitably return to the degenerate ways from which a beneficent British government had rescued it. Stoker began *Dracula* the year he met Vambéry, 1890, and resumed work on it in 1892, the year he saw Vambéry give a Russophobic speech Stoker later noted he greatly admired. On these and other bases Cain tracks evidence of *Dracula*’s equivalence with Russian antagonism—including the fact that Castle Dracula lies in an area heavily associated with embattled Russian relations with Turkey and Britain, that the vampire arrives in England on a Russian ship, and that the heroes’ final pursuit maps almost exactly midcentury British military movements advancing and withdrawing from the Crimea.¹⁶

Cain accentuates *Dracula*’s attitude toward Russia, but the logic of his account can be extended: the novel’s Russophobia is complemented by a certain view of India. For Vambéry, India was volatile and, without the right imperial guidance, in grave danger of falling back into savagery. The British had done much, as he claimed, to civilize the region, eliminating Thuggee (the storied murder of travelers in homage to the Hindu goddess of destruction, Kali), and tempering the “hatred and fanaticism of the various sects and creeds,” and stood the best chance of “wip[ing] out the superstitions and vices of decaying Asia.” From the loss of British governance would follow either

¹⁴ Jimmie E. Cain Jr., *Bram Stoker and Russophobia: Evidence of the British Fear of Russia in “Dracula” and “The Lady of the Shroud”* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 79.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend; A Study of Bram Stoker’s Gothic Masterpiece*, rev. ed. (Brighton: Desert Island Books, 1993), 87–98; Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker: A Biography of the Author of “Dracula”* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 260; and Elizabeth Miller, ed., *Bram Stoker’s “Dracula”: A Documentary Journey into Vampire Country and the “Dracula” Phenomenon* (New York: Pegasus, 2009), 212–17.

¹⁶ Cain, *Bram Stoker and Russophobia*, 121, 134, 146.

brutal Russian tyranny or, if the Indians were left to their own devices, “rapine, bloodshed, and murder.”¹⁷ Especially since Stoker’s family members served at one time or another in India (his brother Richard as a physician, his brother Tom as a civil servant, and his father-in-law as a military officer), it is easy to imagine that *Dracula*’s picture of Eastern Europe would have been multilateral and dynamic, comprehending notions of India’s potential recidivism and its insecurity under British rule, notions already seemingly borne out by the Rebellion.

It is also quite possible that Stoker had India in mind in delineating Dracula’s powers due to its Victorian reputation for occult magic. In attempts to trace Dracula’s origins, critics have often looked to Stoker’s reading and his documented knowledge of folklore. These materials are undoubtedly telling yet do not necessarily account for the ambient culture of Stoker’s time, specifically for how his contemporaries commonly talked about and exoticized the kind of hypnotic abilities Dracula exhibits. Throughout the Victorian period, Britons were fascinated by mesmerism and hypnotism, readily associating them with India. Western mesmerists looked to Asia as a place where latent powers of mental and bodily control through trance had long been understood, particularly by religious figures like fakirs and yogis.¹⁸ Consider again Van Helsing’s allusion to the fakir. James Braid, the Scottish surgeon who first theorized hypnotism, interpreted the fakir’s capacity to survive being buried alive to suspended animation through self-hypnosis.¹⁹ Moreover, India was a special focus of such beliefs: as Peter Lamont and Crispin Bates observe, ideas of Indian “juggling”—magic tricks like levitation and the rope trick, along with other enigmatic feats linked to trance—became essential to Victorians’ “popular image” of the region and a “major influence in shaping the public image of the mystic East.”²⁰

Dracula’s unusual narrative structure—it shifts back and forth from one character’s narrative testimony to another—has often been seen as modeled on the work of novelist Wilkie Collins, not only by modern scholars but also by Stoker’s own reviewers, for instance, this one from the *Glasgow Herald*: “The reader is held with a spell similar to that of Wilkie Collins’s ‘Moonstone,’ and indeed in many ways the form of narrative by diaries and letters

¹⁷ Arminius Vambéry, *The Coming Struggle for India* (London: Cassell, 1885), 180, 197, 203.

¹⁸ On the Indians’ perceived expertise on mesmerism, see Daniel Pick, *Svengali’s Web: The Alien Enchanter in Modern Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 132; and David T. Schmit, “The Mesmerists Inquire about ‘Oriental Mind Powers’: West Meets East in the Search for the Universal Trance,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 46, no. 1 (2010): 1–26.

¹⁹ Peter Lamont and Crispin Bates, “Conjuring Images of India in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *Social History* 32, no. 3 (2007): 308–24, at 314.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, “Conjuring Images,” 311.

and extracts from newspapers neatly fitted into each other recalls Wilkie Collins's style."²¹ Intriguingly, Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) makes Indian occultism a prominent element of the plot. An English estate is set astir when three "strolling conjurers" or "jugglers,"²² really three Brahmins in disguise, are witnessed mesmerizing an English boy in order to bring on a clairvoyant trance that will reveal the whereabouts of the titular sacred gem. In 1799, a prologue explains, the Moonstone was looted by the uncle of the novel's heroine during the British attack on the Indian town of Seringapatam. Forgoing historical exposition, Collins presumes his readers' knowledge of the attack in Seringapatam, capital of Mysore: that it occurred in response to moves by the ruler Tipu Sultan, known as the "Tiger of Mysore," to fight off encroaching British authority and that it ended with Tipu's death. *The Moonstone's* Brahmins have traveled to England to restore the diamond to its rightful place within a Hindu temple, ultimately murdering the Englishman who has it in his possession to achieve this end. Published only about a decade after the Rebellion, *The Moonstone* (1868) arguably incorporates this event—a landmark, like the siege of Seringapatam, in the violent history of British rule in India and of resistance to it—as a "master-narrative" or "open secret, unnamed yet recognizable," as Hyungji Park phrases it.²³ In engaging with Collins's text, then, Stoker was also engaging with that history, together with Victorian views of Indians as a magical and religiously devoted people.

Interestingly, by the end of the century, such views also intersected with concepts of vampirism. India's reputation as a mystic locale became even more ingrained with the late Victorian rise of Theosophy, which sought secret spiritual wisdom from Eastern masters and ancient Eastern lore, particularly of India. In *Isis Unveiled* (1877), founding Theosophist Helena Petrovna Blavatsky not only affirms Indian occultism—from the "jugglers" who submerge their hands in hot coals for long durations to the "wonderful powers of prediction and clairvoyance possessed by certain Brahmans," powers "well known to every European resident of India"²⁴—but also discusses the vampire as a rooted Indian belief and theorizes its possibility through Theosophical concepts of astral projection. "The Hindus believe, as firmly as the Serbians or Hungarians, in vampires," she notes, and while the vampire is "repulsive," the cross-cultural belief in it suggests its validity and the value of understanding

²¹ Quoted in Miller, *Bram Stoker's "Dracula": A Documentary Journey*, 263; see also 265 for other reviews that make the comparison with Collins.

²² Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (1868; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16, 17.

²³ Hungji Park, "'The Story of Our Lives': *The Moonstone* and the Indian Mutiny in *All the Year Round*," in Finkelstein and Peers, *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, 84–109, at 96.

²⁴ H. P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled* (1877; Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1972), 1:446.

it.²⁵ Her own explanation points to the “state of *half-death*” that occurs when a body dies but the “astral soul” has not fully dissociated from it, leaving the soul to roam in search of vital nourishment for its corpse. “These spirits,” she quotes another thinker on the subject, “have been often seen *coming out from the graveyard*: they are known to have clung to their living neighbors, and have sucked their blood.”²⁶ The image of graveyard wandering may remind us of Lucy Westenra in *Dracula*. Similarly, in “The Vampire” (1891), an essay by Theosophical Society’s cofounder Henry Steel Olcott in the *Theosophist*, the following passage prefigures descriptions of Lucy, especially the now famous scene of her staking: “[The victims’] graves and those of the alleged vampires were opened, the fresh and ruddy condition of the corpses of the latter recognized, the spurting of fresh blood from them, and the cries or other signs of momentarily revived physical vitality, when the pointed stake or the executioner’s sword was driven through the heart.”²⁷ Olcott—who at one point reflects on the “yogi or fakir” who “can be resuscitated after inhumation for several weeks”—reiterates Blavatsky’s interpretation of vampirism as astral projection, linking it firmly to hypnotic trance. The corpse lies in a “magnetic stupor” or state of “catalepsy,” while the astral projection roves as a “somnambulating double”—terms that again suggest Lucy, here her trance-like, lethargic/sleepwalking dual state after *Dracula*’s attack.²⁸

Stoker’s social circle included men and women drawn to mystical movements, like Oscar Wilde’s wife, Constance, who was first a Theosophist and later a member of the Golden Dawn, and we know Stoker was invited to at least one meeting of a bibliographical society to discuss occultism.²⁹ However he may have gotten wind of them, it seems evident that Stoker was attuned to the supernatural ideas of his day. He was certainly aware, for instance, of psychical research, the late Victorian scientific investigation of hypnotism, spiritualism, and other preternatural phenomena;³⁰ his working

²⁵ Ibid., 449, 454.

²⁶ Ibid., 452–53; emphasis in original.

²⁷ H. S. Olcott, “The Vampire” (1891; Theosophical Publishing House Adyar, Madras, 2012), <http://www.theosophical.org/component/content/article/65-olcott/1870-vampire>. Compare: “The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous blood-curdling speech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions . . . the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it” (Stoker, *Dracula*, 230).

²⁸ Olcott, “The Vampire.”

²⁹ Belford, *Bram Stoker: A Biography*, 216–17; Leatherdale, *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend*, 82.

³⁰ Anne Stiles, *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 73–79. John L. Greenway reads Van Helsing as akin to psychical researchers in his acknowledgment of occult possibilities discounted by dominant scientific paradigms; “Seward’s Folly: *Dracula* as a Critique of ‘Normal Science,’” *Stanford Literature Review* 3, no. 2 (1986): 213–30.

papers for *Dracula* in fact feature the character of a psychical researcher.³¹ If he was familiar with Theosophical ideas of vampirism specifically, the link between these and India might have been reinforced by his acquaintance with Sir Richard Burton. In addition to translating the *Arabian Nights* (1885–88)—alluded to at one point in *Dracula* [37])—Burton also published a collection of translated vampire tales from Hindu legend, *Vikram the Vampire* (1870); Stoker later noted that in the 1870s and 1880s he discussed legends and myths with Burton.³²

But perhaps even more important than the question of whether Stoker encountered Indian-inflected ideas of vampirism is the fact that a certain tone attached to Victorian ideas of Indian psychical powers in general and that this tone lent itself to the Gothic. What Peter Lamont and Crispin Bates argue about Indian juggling, David T. Schmit argues about Indian mesmerism: both unsettled conventional ideas of Western supremacy over an undeveloped East, because both left Victorians uncertain about the real nature of the phenomena, opening up the possibility of mysterious Indian capacities that Western thinkers, starting with animal magnetist Franz Anton Mesmer in the late eighteenth century, were only just beginning to fathom. Even the juggler's performance inspired ambivalence, with observers divided about whether his conjuring amounted simply to a cunning sleight of hand or rather to authentic mystical powers. Here lay the seeds of mystery and horror for a novel like *Dracula*. Even before the gloss of vampirism, Indian occultism was potentially frightening in that it implied an unusual Western disadvantage—areas of ken and ability arrayed against the West, in the form of occult acts of will and communication.

Not coincidentally, Mutiny novels' tales of menace against British authority often featured an India suffused with "supernatural acts of magic."³³ This theme no doubt refers back to the trope of the psychically adept Indian, but it was probably also an extrapolation from India's religious exoticism, considered critical to the Rebellion. Victorian politicians and periodical writers debated how pivotal the affair of the Meerut sepoy's new Enfield rifle cartridges—greased with pork and cow fat, and thus forbidden to devout Hindus as well as Muslims to bite off and activate—was to the mutiny, and the mutiny to the overall uprising.³⁴ But there was much consensus about the Indians' incensing resentment of British challenges to their faith.³⁵ In turn, the rebels' "fanaticism" was seen as closely allied with their conspiratorial will. The overall picture was one of Oriental mystery and secrecy involving pre-Rebel-

³¹ Christopher Frayling, "Bram Stoker's Working Papers for *Dracula*," in Miller, *Bram Stoker's "Dracula"*, 173.

³² Leatherdale, *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend*, 82.

³³ Druce, "'And to Think,'" 21.

³⁴ Malik, *1857: War of Independence*, 44–60.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

lion plots of grand proportions. Britons were already predisposed to imagine heathen Indian plots by accounts of the secret society of Kali-worshipping Thugs.³⁶ After the Rebellion, one of the most pervasive and long-standing British interpretations of the uprising traced it back to a Muslim conspiracy, in some versions of the theory aided by reluctant yet increasingly disgruntled and thus malleable Hindus.³⁷ Rebellion explanations also pinpointed possible conspiratorial masterminds, including both Hindus and Muslims, such as Nana Sahib and the Rani of Jhansi, both of whose anger was stoked by the British denial of hereditary rights, and the Maulvi of Faizabad.³⁸

The idea that the Rebellion was a sinister, large-scale jihad, and that the British defense was thus a modern Crusade, colors many Rebellion accounts of chivalric heroism and female distress,³⁹ and *Dracula* correlates with this discursive trend. In fact, the concept of a vast anti-Christian scheme—malign in design and complete with efficient lines of point-to-point transmission—constitutes the drama of Stoker's novel, calls forth the masculine bravery of its characters, and makes this a story of information warfare. After attacking Mina, Dracula taunts his foes by perverting Genesis, calling her "flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful wine-press for a while" (306). Van Helsing's armory includes crucifixes and holy wafers; once Mina is tainted, the mere touch of the wafer burns her forehead. At the same time, her predation invigorates her male allies with Christian gallantry, to "go out as the old knights of the Cross" (341). As Van Helsing tells her, "And oh, Madam Mina, my dear, my dear, may we who love you be there to see, when that red scar, the sign of God's knowledge of what has been, shall pass away and leave your forehead as pure as the heart we know. . . . Till then we bear our Cross, as His Son did in obedience to His will" (316). Dracula's plan to diffuse his demonic "religion" is systematic: he thoroughly researches England's language, culture, geography, and neighborhoods before traveling there; he hires agents to purchase properties for housing his coffins, radiated for convenience throughout London; and he uses English characters, like Mina and the madman Renfield, as means to access and knowledge. These efforts inspire an equally systematic response in Dracula's pursuers, so that the novel's spiritual battle often concerns which side can build the more effective network of people and information.

This battle comes down largely to a competition between Western technology and Oriental subtlety, and in this respect it recalls the Rebellion's own

³⁶ Wagner, *Great Fear of 1857*, 9–10.

³⁷ See especially Malik, *1857: War of Independence*.

³⁸ Wagner, *Great Fear of 1857*, 3–4.

³⁹ See Nancy Paxton, *Writing under the Raj: Gender, Race, and Rape in the British Colonial Imagination, 1830–1947* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Park, "'The Story of Our Lives'"; and Chakravarty, *Indian Mutiny*, 68, 78, and 127–80 passim.

perceived communicative dynamics. The realm of information was a busy and complicated playing field during the Rebellion. On the one side, the British worked assiduously to block Indian movements of bodies and messages, patrolling river passages, intercepting mails, and censoring propaganda in the indigenous press.⁴⁰ But as a means of proactive defense, the most crucial British weapon was the electric telegraph. In fact the telegraph had been defined since the first wires went up in India, just a few years before the Rebellion, by its potential military applications—as opposed to, as was true in England, its commercial uses. When Governor-General Lord Dalhousie was determining wire routes, his main goal was to figure out the most probable areas of local unrest, as well as to enable the speediest transmissions from governing stations in the event of emergency. British telegraph planners thus had insurrection well in mind, and this proved fortunate once the sepoys mutinied. Immediately the telegraph was used to call together troops from all over the region and to keep an eye on the rebels' movements. Additionally, British soldiers used telegraphs in the field, carrying equipment between battlefronts. The rebels themselves well understood this technology as an impediment and repeatedly destroyed lines, which British forces then hastily reconstructed. All in all, the telegraph was so pivotal that many professed that had it existed earlier, Britain would never have lost America.⁴¹ The Rebellion accentuated in other ways, too, how crucial electric telegraphy was to empire, afterward inspiring a fevered mission to lay a successful submarine cable directly linking India to Britain. In 1865 the two were at last connected, and a more workable and completely British-operated cable was established in 1870. By 1908, several British-Indian lines ensured the government's ability for strong tactical communication with the prized region.⁴²

But while the telegraph proved a formidable defense during the Rebellion, the British felt that their foes had possessed their own, more sly communicative advantages based in arcane systems of knowledge. The most sensational rumor to this effect was that the Indians had sent messages to each other by way of native telepathic abilities, sometimes known as the "Hindu Secret Mail."⁴³ As late as 1903, one Richard Kerr was still recalling that the rebels had communicated with one another "in . . . occult ways that were harassing

⁴⁰ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 318–20.

⁴¹ On the telegraph during the Rebellion, see Saroj Ghose, "Commercial Needs and Military Necessities: The Telegraph in India," in *Technology and the Raj: Western Technology and Technical Transfers to India, 1700–1947*, ed. Roy MacLeod and Deepak Kumar (New Delhi: Sage, 1995), 153–76.

⁴² Daniel Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 99–105.

⁴³ Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 158–59.

to the military authorities,” but whose “secret” nature was never fully “discovered.”⁴⁴ Kerr’s anecdote occurs in the context of his introduction to his popular manual on wireless telegraphy (first patented in England in 1896). For him as for many during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the comparison between technological and occult communications was inescapable.⁴⁵ As Kerr went on to observe, “It would seem that the Oriental methods of signalling without wires must rest entirely on a highly trained mental effort. . . . It is quite possible that the Orientals give more attention to this kind of mental training.”⁴⁶

One way to view such stories of telepathy is to see them as Britons’ supernaturalistic elaboration on the intimate, ominous Indian bazaar talk associated with the Rebellion, or perhaps on the pre-Rebellion circulation of chapattis.⁴⁷ For a period in 1857, Indian peasants were observed to be passing these native flat breads from village to village; each recipient would make a few more, which were then divided and passed along to other recipients, in an exponentially growing process. While some British authorities interpreted the chapatti hand-off as an Indian ritual of warding off disease stemming from a recent cholera epidemic, it remained largely obscure, and once the Rebellion began, it was interpreted retrospectively as part of the conspiratorial insurrectionist plot.⁴⁸ According to one official at Agra, the chapattis traveled with awesome, one might almost say magical, quickness, as fast as 200 miles in twenty-four hours, twice the rate of mail runners.⁴⁹ In his recollections of the Rebellion,

⁴⁴ Richard Kerr, *Wireless Telegraphy, Popularly Explained* (London: Seeley, 1903), 2.

⁴⁵ Many recent studies have focused on these perceived parallels and overlaps between technological and paranormal (spiritualistic, mesmeric, and telepathic) communications. See, for example, Richard Noakes, “‘Instruments to Lay Hold of Spirits’: Technologizing the Bodies of Victorian Spiritualism,” in *Bodies/Machines*, ed. Iwan Rhys Morus (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 125–63, and “Telegraphy Is an Occult Art: Cromwell Fleetwood Varley and the Diffusion of Electricity to the Other World,” *British Journal of the History of Science* 32 (1999): 421–59; Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking, 1880–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Luckhurst, *Invention of Telepathy*; and Jill Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies, 1859–1919* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

⁴⁶ Kerr, *Wireless Telegraphy*, 6.

⁴⁷ For this view of the telepathic reports, see Luckhurst, *Invention of Telepathy*, 159 n. 43.

⁴⁸ Wagner, *Great Fear of 1857*, 62–69.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8, 63. Aaron Worth also notes the sense of Rebellion-era battle of networks between the British telegraph in opposition to the chapatti circulation and other enigmatically quick transmissions (Aaron Worth, “All India Becoming Tranquil: Wiring the Raj,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 9, no. 1 [2008], at pars. 16–18, http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v009/9.1worth.html). For him, the telegraph became a primary symbol of British linguistic and subjective mastery, whereas the Indians and their communications were represented as prelinguistic materiality that helped to constitute imperial subjectivity as such. This argument risks underestimating, though, the Gothic implications of the Rebellion’s perceived communications battle and of the states of British unknowing it entailed.

Kerr recalls the legend about bread carrying secret messages alongside his theories of Oriental mental signaling.⁵⁰ The conveyance of the chapatti, or of some other conspiratorial medium such as goatskin fragments, likewise became a common feature of the plot of the Mutiny novel.⁵¹

In this context, the mention of the fakir in *Dracula* is even more freighted than first appears. Put the legends of the Hindu Secret Mail and the chapattis together with the image of the fakir as itinerant insurgent, and one sees how significant the idea of occult (both hidden and vaguely mystical) circulations and transmissions was to the perceptions of the Oriental that arose out of the Rebellion. The discourse around the event is in fact preoccupied with the idea of the occult network. We may be tempted to say that this is simply another confirmation of British racist stereotypes: writers on the Rebellion could not help but envision India as a site of primitive, irrational forms of exchange, in implicit contrast with the modern ways of the West, as exemplified, for instance, in the electric telegraph. Certainly up through the Edwardian period, British popular discourse leaned on the notion of Indian technological backwardness and used this as a rationale for Western intervention.⁵² But as Roger Luckhurst notes about the rumors of Indian telepathy, these likely worked not to undergird a master discourse of Western control but in just the opposite way, as signs of epistemic limitation: they were “paranoid” inventions born of administrators’ incomplete knowledge of the communities and information patterns of an imperial outpost.⁵³ Luckhurst takes his cue from C. A. Bayly, for whom Said-ian theories of Orientalism cannot account for midcentury Anglo-Indians’ real ignorance of indigenous life, an ignorance that sometimes bred imaginings of secret societies and communications, especially at critical points like the Rebellion.⁵⁴ We are back to the conception of Eastern occultism as Western lack: as a mysterious reserve of wisdom that puts Britain at an exceptional disadvantage.

The British associated the sudden 1857 uprising itself with a significant lack of information.⁵⁵ Conversely, they felt that Indians generally possessed the power to communicate in ways that were, as the Victorian Rebellion historian John Kaye expressed it, “almost electric.”⁵⁶ For all the eventual effective-

⁵⁰ Kerr, *Wireless Telegraphy*, 2.

⁵¹ Druce, ““And to Think,”” 21–22.

⁵² A. Martin Wainright, “Representing the Technology of the Raj in Britain’s Periodical Press,” in Finkelstein and Peers, *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, 185–209.

⁵³ Luckhurst, *Invention of Telepathy*, 159. As he argues more broadly, supernatural accounts from Britain’s colonial outposts were not easily dismissed as superstition, but rather more susceptible to Victorian belief than those from the imperial center (148–80).

⁵⁴ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 6–7, 142–43, 167–68, 396–70.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁵⁶ Kaye quoted in Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 315.

ness of the telegraph, initial British relays were intermittent, and at first officials possessed just enough intelligence to begin to stem further rebellious activity.⁵⁷ Throughout the conflict, they relied on information gleaned from the Indians themselves, from spies and newsletters.⁵⁸ Late Victorian Mutiny literature picks up on the central, apprehensive role of intelligence and message exchange. But remarkably, while some novels reflect an out-of-touch Anglo-Indian administration, some, emphasizing adventure, create imperial information protagonists. In a noteworthy transformation of historical events, the counterinsurgent informant is cast not as Indian, but as Anglo-Indian: he or she has the ability to travel disguised as Indian, or in some other manner to infiltrate and know the rebel world. In this way these Mutiny fictions rewrite the Rebellion so as to fantastically remedy actual British intelligence deficiencies.⁵⁹

It was within this late Victorian zeitgeist shaped by a collective memory of a vigorous conflict between Eastern and Western realms of information that *Dracula* emerged. In effect, the Mutiny shadows *Dracula* as the historical event that “proves” the Orient’s fantastic mental communicative powers and their very real consequences: their role in mounting a challenge to British imperial dominance. Even in its form or style, Stoker’s novel inspires comparison with Rebellion accounts. Its opening several chapters, composed of Jonathan Harker’s diary—beginning en route to Dracula’s castle and containing notes on the dress, food, and mannerisms of local culture—may well have reminded readers of the travelogue style of numerous midcentury memoirs of the revolt, a style that would go on to permeate British novelistic representations of India.⁶⁰ Like many memoirs and retrospective diaries of the Rebellion, too, Jonathan’s travel narrative tells a gripping first-person story of captivity and escape, as he frees himself from Dracula’s castle.⁶¹

But *Dracula*’s form is even more important for the way it reveals the novel’s extreme investment in information and in depicting warring orders of information. The various narrative pieces—all linked together, dated, and arranged in chronological order—are careful records derived from a range of voices and media: Jonathan’s diary, his wife Mina’s diary (both originally composed in shorthand), Dr. John Seward’s diary (originally recorded on a phonograph), memoranda by Lucy and Van Helsing, and other sundry telegrams, letters, and newspaper clippings. These have been deliberately collected as a corpus of anything and everything Van Helsing’s team know about Dracula. That is, the records we as Stoker’s audience read have all been read

⁵⁷ Ibid., 318.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 323, 325–29.

⁵⁹ Chakravarty, *Indian Mutiny*, 136–46, 156–69.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 127–36; Druce, ““And to Think,”” 20.

⁶¹ See Chakravarty, *Indian Mutiny*, 128, on the frequency of the captivity narratives in Rebellion writings.

by the characters themselves: at a certain point in the plot, they decide to pool their information, type it up, collate it, and study it in order to strategize against their foe. In its very structure, then, *Dracula* announces the premise that stealthy Eastern malevolence must be combated through meticulous, almost obsessive intelligence gathering. The protagonists' document collection, like the revisionist spy histories in the Rebellion fictions, seeks to preclude information fissures, portraying resistance to Oriental imperilment as the possibility of complete knowledge.

Yet Stoker's novel also subtly suggests the unrealistic nature of this project in light of the elusive character of the Orient. In fact, the obsession of the vampire pursuers' intelligence operations already implies the massive power their enemy himself possesses in the field of information and communicative networking. This brings me to one of the things I find particularly intriguing about *Dracula*: that Jonathan's comment about the slow trains in the East ends up being something of a red herring. The novel does not follow through with a simple binaristic mapping of the world that sees the West as technologically and scientifically progressive and the East as mired in crude practices and systems of belief. Or more precisely, while much of the plot does confirm such a binary—there is great symbolic significance, after all, not only in those slow Eastern trains but in the Western communication technologies that populate the novel—simultaneously it assumes that the Orient harbors true, alternative forms of knowledge and communication, in relation to which Occidentals themselves sometimes occupy positions of ignorance and powerlessness. It was just such a proposition that numerous Rebellion accounts had kept within the public consciousness. *Dracula* profits by this consciousness, sustaining horror by intertwining its protagonists' acts of information-system heroism with intimations of their relative information-system weakness.

This unresolved dialectic becomes most obvious when we focus on Mina Harker. As an aside, it bears noting that as the only female member in Van Helsing's band, Mina is already a main focus of *Dracula's* inheritance of Mutiny mythology, in that her character brings together its threads of occultism and feminine distress; the novel weaves these into a thoroughly Gothic picture. A key rumor spawned by the Rebellion was that countless European women and girls were raped and tortured by Indian men, and these reports became the cynosure of ideas of the rebels' barbarity. Although soon denied by Victorian chroniclers, this idea of widespread violation became a common subtext in novels on India, and the Indian rapist of English women a newly prominent discursive figure.⁶² In *Dracula* that figure becomes even more ter-

⁶² Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 65, 87. See also Paxton, *Writing under the Raj*, especially 109–36.

rifying in being tinged with the Oriental's presumed mesmeric talents. The vampire's trance targeting of British women—Mina as well as Lucy—recalls the Mutiny rape narrative: physical violation is rewritten as psychical violation.⁶³ The echo is all the more resonant given the obviously sexual nature of Dracula's predation (his hypnotic luring of Lucy out of her bedroom to meet him nightly for bouts of bloodsucking is just one example of this eroticism). In a highly sentimentalized scene, Mina, her eyes glistening "with the devotion of a martyr" (309), vows to kill herself or to urge her allies to kill her should she begin to prey vampirically on others and thus to fulfill her trajectory toward defilement—the state of being "Unclean! Unclean!" in the eyes of God (316). Even this moment suggests the gendered patterns of endangered virtue in Mutiny narratives, namely, the character of the white woman who courts suicide or death rather than surrender to the erotic attentions of her Indian captors.⁶⁴

But Mina is also central to *Dracula* in another way: as the most information and media savvy of her group. Her first encounter with Van Helsing highlights her knowledge of state-of-the-art inscriptive methods when she hands him two copies of her own diary—first the original in shorthand, then a typed one. Having transcribed Jonathan's diary as well, Mina later has the bright idea of transcribing all the group's diaries and correspondence for the purposes of their pursuit. By her standard, not even Dr. Seward's most private, heartsick reflections about his beloved Lucy can be excluded from the record because "it is a part of the terrible story . . . because in the struggle which we have before us to rid the earth of this terrible monster we must have all the knowledge and all the help which we can get" (237). Soon Mina is working frenetically with her husband to sew "together in chronological order every scrap of evidence" (240). Ultimately she becomes the group's master secretary, responsible for turning all shorthand, phonographic, telegraphic, and other records into typescript and also for generating multiple copies for distri-

⁶³ In fact this type of villain-victim dynamic—in which an Oriental master of mind control entrances a young, nubile white woman, who thus becomes a mental slave in an exchange often entailing sexual innuendo—was a recurrent one in Gothic stories of the 1880s and 1890s. I would propose that the rise of Gothic plots of Oriental psychical violation itself owes its popularity to the late Victorian legacy of Rebellion rape: such stories flourished in a culture familiar with dramatic tales of shameful Indian malevolence. Some relevant novels here are Marie Corelli's *The Soul of Lilith* (1892), George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894), and Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897). *Kalee's Shrine* (1886) by Grant Allen and May Cotes focuses on India specifically: the villain is the Hindu goddess Kali, whom the novel closely associates with Thuggee. In the twist on the paradigm in Stuart Cumberland's *A Fatal Affinity* (1889), young women are serially murdered on their twenty-first birthdays by an initiate into the Hindu dark arts who attacks in astral form. For more on the entranced or "automatic" woman in such fictions, see Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium*, 61–98.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*, 70–73, on the legend, popular despite challenge by Victorian and later histories, of Miss Wheeler's self-sacrifice.

bution. When they travel to Transylvania in the last stages of the hunt, she actually brings along her machine in order to “enter everything up to the moment.” “I feel so grateful to the man who invented the ‘Traveller’s’ typewriter,” she notes; “I should have felt quite astray doing the work if I had to write with a pen” (372).

If the vampire hunters are a technological army, Mina is their main organizer and word processor. But then this makes it all the more appalling that she eventually gets folded into Dracula’s own operations network. This ensues as a result of the vampire’s painstaking manipulation of communicative possibilities and nodal access points. In as clever a use of enemy resources as the rebel “conspiracy” leaders’ infiltration of the British army, Dracula has employed Western lawyers to create a physical network around London, buying up houses in which to “scatter” fifty coffins, his “ghastly refuges” brought over from Transylvania to serve as home bases (278). Once situated at Carfax, the old manor next to Dr. Seward’s private insane asylum, Dracula makes a disciple of one of the lunatics there, Renfield. Because this patient’s “zoophagous” mania drives him to consume lives higher and higher up the food chain (80), he is the perfect fanatic for Dracula’s purposes. “The blood is the life! The blood is the life!” he exclaims, distorting the Bible as heinously as Dracula himself (152). Unable to enter a household without being invited in, Dracula vampirically seduces Renfield to gain entrance to the asylum and access to Mina, who is staying there during the hunt. “Fall down and worship me!” the Count commands, to which Renfield—lured by his hypnotic sway and the promise of legions of animals to feed upon—responds, “Come in, Lord and Master!” (298).

Once preyed upon, Mina becomes a problematic breach in her group’s intelligence strategy, for Dracula’s assault establishes a treacherous through-line between his psyche and hers. While she is able to continue working diligently for his foes, some unconscious part of her—the part susceptible to trance—remains in contact with him, potentially informing him of all she knows about attempts to destroy him. The situation is serious enough that her allies try for a while to keep her uninformed. Even Mina herself sees this necessity, pleading with her husband, “Promise me that you will not tell me anything of the plans formed for the campaign against the Count. Not by word or, inference, or implication” (346). There is something especially significant in the fact that the very center of the group’s intelligence operations ends up compromised by Dracula. Mina’s position within two competing information systems simultaneously is a testament to the pure furtiveness of the Oriental, his ability to lodge himself squarely in the midst of and in spite of the most sophisticated cultural forms. No Western command center can be invulnerable under such circumstances.

It is not just that Dracula establishes a network right under British noses but also that, finally, his communicative tactics seem swifter, craftier, and

more expedient than his foes'. "When my brain says 'Come!' to you, you shall cross land or sea to do my bidding" (307), he boasts when he attacks Mina. His messages are immediate, as well as inescapably effectual, which she well realizes: "I know that when the Count wills me I must go. I know that if he tells me to come in secret, I must come by wile; by any device to hoodwink—even Jonathan" (347–48). By contrast, his enemies are forced to rely on methods involving a potentially ruinous lag between word and deed, volition and action. This limitation is emphasized in the last stages of the pursuit when Dracula flees to his homeland. Based on their intelligence, Van Helsing's team, certain Dracula's ship will land at Varna, makes plans to beat him there while monitoring his journey's progress via regular telegrams from their own agents. But long after their arrival at Varna, one of these dispatches staggers them by informing them that Dracula, who has tricked them, has landed at a different port. What's more, having managed to probe Mina's mind, the vampire has known their own location for days. In this face-off between telegraphy and telepathy, the former makes a pretty dilatory showing.

Notably, too, all those modern technologies Dracula's foes use for record keeping become much less operable once the group is on the move and also once Dracula tightens his vise on Mina's psyche. Seward, having left his bulky machine back in England, nevertheless feels hampered by its absence: "How I miss my phonograph! To write diary with a pen is irksome to me" (356). Although Mina tugs along a "Traveller's typewriter," she seems (un-surprisingly) to have dispensed with it by the time she and Van Helsing are racing along in a horse-drawn carriage. Even her shorthand fails her for a time, due to Dracula's remote but powerful entrancement. "She sleeps and sleeps and sleeps!" Van Helsing laments. "She make no entry into her little diary, she who write so faithful at every pause. . . . as Madam Mina write not in her stenography, I must, in my cumbrous old fashion, that so each of us may not go unrecorded" (386). Seward's and Van Helsing's grumblings about the discomforts of ordinary handwriting, like Mina's homage to the man behind the Traveller's typewriter, suggest the group's overdependence on technological invention for beating the vampire, given the impracticability of these apparatus in the eleventh hour. How reliable or impressive can these technologies really be if they are of no help when Dracula's pursuers need them most, in the heat of the chase?

These cumulative technological deficiencies point in turn to a practical ideological obstacle for the West's defenders: their manifest overconfidence in science's ability to tamp down the Eastern threat. Even Van Helsing—who is well versed in occult folklore and grows frustrated by his friend Dr. Seward's dubious attitude about events defying institutional science—falls back at times on the idea of the superior forces of Western empiricism. Like numerous Rebellion accounts maintaining that Indians were a childish people unfit

for complex mental effort, yet also granting them the ability to engender a mass conspiracy,⁶⁵ Van Helsing's talk is full of contradictory claims of Dracula's great cleverness and of his taxonomically verifiable "child-brain." And like a Victorian readership that alternated between, on the one hand, perceptions of Indians as primitive and superstitious and, on the other hand, credited legends of Hindu entrancement and the Secret Mail, *Dracula's* protagonists toggle awkwardly between validating the limits set by scientific knowledge and allowing for a more capacious sphere of unexpected magical events. The note of disdain in Mina's comment about the Roumanians who, entirely appropriately, it would seem, cross themselves when they see her scarred forehead—"They are *very, very* superstitious" (384)—emphasizes the epistemological muddle that characterizes her allies' procedure.⁶⁶

In this way the novel strains against itself. And from this strain arise its hints that, finally, Western scientific knowledge is no match for the Orient's amazingly supple information networks. When in the hunt's later stages Van Helsing's team are scrounging to relocate Dracula's trail, Mina, their information maven, proposes that Van Helsing hypnotize her: since she and Dracula are unconsciously connected, entrancing her should reveal his whereabouts. The group's hypnotism of Mina is superficially similar to Dracula's, amounting to a form of telepathy. Yet in an important difference, it is clearly ratified by Western science through the novel's earlier mention of neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, whose hypnotic practices on hysterics at Paris's Salpêtrière hospital drew international attention in the late Victorian period. The skeptical Seward dismisses most weird phenomena, yet he respects Charcot's discoveries. "I suppose now," Van Helsing asks him, "you do not believe in corporeal transference. No? Nor in [spirit] materialization. No? Nor in astral bodies? No? Nor in the reading of thought? No? Nor in hypnotism"—but here Seward interrupts him: "Charcot has proved that pretty well" (204). However, if contemporary medicine underwrites Van Helsing's hypnotic "passes," this method is also quite laborious, congruent with the cautious, behindhand nature of Western science in such matters. The effort to entrance Mina makes Van Helsing actually sweat. Jonathan can see "his forehead . . . covered with great beads of perspiration" (332). It also entails a barrage of questions: "Where are you now?" "What do you see?" "What do you hear?" "What else do you hear?" "What are you doing?" (332–33). This stands in marked contrast to Dracula's imperious, lightning-quick command of "Come!" which brings Mina across sea or land.

Further, once the Count has discovered his adversaries' location at Varna, their hypnotic results become less fluid and data rich, apparently because he

⁶⁵ Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 203, 222.

⁶⁶ For more on the novel's push-and-pull between conventional science and alternative knowledge paradigms, see Greenway, "Seward's Folly."

has strategically blocked his connection with Mina. Van Helsing infers this strategy but also gleefully reasserts Dracula's child-brain and declares he cannot pull it off: "his child-mind only saw so far. . . . He think, too, that as he cut himself off from knowing your [Mina's] mind, there can be no knowledge of him to you; there is where he fail! That terrible baptism of blood which he give you make you free to go to him in spirit, as you have as yet done" (364). As the narrative very soon plays out, though, and in another testament to the group's overconfidence, their hypnotic yield is considerably diminished after Dracula's interference. Successive attempts to put Mina under take increasingly "longer" and require even "more strenuous effort" (366), much to the group's "despair" (367), and Van Helsing must positively hound her before she begins to answer. "Go on; Go on! Speak, I command you!" he hectors, "agonized" by the whole experience (368).

The fact that in a last-ditch effort Dracula's pursuers take a page from his own playbook, resorting to psychical influence, underscores the gaps in their own information network. Importantly, it is also reminiscent of the coming together of Western and Eastern intelligence methods in two Mutiny novels published shortly before *Dracula*. George Henty's *Rujub the Juggler* (1893) features many common elements of Rebellion accounts: a two-faced, machinating Nana Sahib; hidden Indian networks of communication, including circulating chappatis and fakirs "whispering tales" to rile up the sepoy;⁶⁷ and a heroine who chooses dramatic self-sacrifice, in this case rubbing acid on her face to destroy her alluring beauty, rather than give up her honor in an Indian prison. Like Mina's holy-wafer scar, sign of her threatened impurity, Isobel's facial disfigurement fades once she is safely out of the heathen's grip. Isobel is rescued in standard chivalric fashion by the protagonist Bathurst, but this is part of a long struggle to prove his bravery given his unmanly nervous reaction to loud noises. Bathurst's quest for masculinity is set against the novel's motif of tigers and tiger hunting, a popular sport among Anglo-Indians and clearly the novel's metaphor for Britons' overcoming of beastly Indian rebels.⁶⁸ Bathurst's first redeeming act of manhood occurs when, in a chance

⁶⁷ George A. Henty, *Rujub the Juggler* (1893; repr., Chicago: Donohue, 1910), 4.

⁶⁸ A sporting effort to rid some villages of a murderous tiger or "man-eater" preoccupies much of the first part of the novel, and Nana Sahib and the rebels are compared to tigers (329, 379). Mysore's Tipu Sultan and other displaced Indian rulers had used tigers as icons of their power. By the end of the nineteenth century, the sport of tiger hunting, with its intricate machinery of white hunters and Indian servants and guides, had become a concentrated exercise of Anglo-Indian hierarchical authority, "symboliz[ing] the triumph of culture over nature and of the colonist over the colonized"; William K. Storey, "Big Cats and Imperialism: Lion and Tiger Hunting in Kenya and Northern India, 1898–1930," *Journal of World History* 2, no. 2 (1991): 149. See also Joseph Sramek, "'Face Him Like a Briton': Tiger Hunting, Imperialism, and British Masculinity in Colonial India, 1800–1875," *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 4 (2006): 659–80. It is probably more than coincidence that Mina compares Dracula, once he leaves England, to a tiger who "leaves the village from which he has been hunted" and that Van Helsing tells her, "your simile of the tiger is good. . . .

jungle encounter, he whips to death a tiger attacking a girl, incurring the immense gratitude of her father, the itinerant juggler Rujub. Once the mutiny breaks out, Rujub repays his debt to Bathurst by aiding him in tracking rebel activity and—in a scene that strikingly anticipates Van Helsing's hypnosis of Mina—by entrancing his daughter so that she becomes a psychical conduit for keeping tabs on and communicating with the imprisoned Isobel.⁶⁹

Henty's novel imagines a reconciliation between the Rebellion's culturally opposed forms of information expertise. Bathurst is a civil servant who travels among villages to interview locals and research documents; after the mutiny, he turns these observational and data-sifting skills to gathering news about the rebels, eventually exploiting his close familiarity with Indian culture to travel among them in disguise. But when he incorporates Rujub into his news-gathering mission, he does so believing that the juggler's abilities are not only authentic—not mere conjuring trickery—but also beyond his Western sphere of knowledge. Rujub's powers are "entirely unaccountable by any laws with which we are acquainted," Bathurst says; his trusted friend Dr. Wade agrees: "I can quite believe that there are many natural laws of which at present we are entirely ignorant. I believe the knowledge of them at one time existed, but has been entirely lost, at any rate among Western peoples."⁷⁰ Rujub himself affirms his powers to be increasingly rare "secrets of the ancient" world.⁷¹ Although he becomes a tool in antirebel endeavors, this development does not translate, for either Bathurst or Dr. Wade as the voice of medical authority, into scientific mastery over the mystic East.

However, a more complicated, tense meeting of Western and Eastern networks occurs in Flora Annie Steel's popular *On the Face of the Waters* (1896). This Mutiny novel depicts British skepticism about Indian magic, even as—almost contradictorily—it deepens the sense of Oriental mystery and conflates it with the menace of the unknowable. Jim Douglas is a spy for the British authorities who ends up in Delhi while the rebels hold the city and stays to protect the novel's heroine from their clutches. One of his information and rescue allies is an Indian named Tiddu, yet the alliance is colored throughout with the suggestion of potential treachery, due to both Tiddu's base mercenary motives and his preternatural cunning. On their first meeting, Douglas is astonished to watch Tiddu transform himself with a mere twist of a cloth

Your man-eater, as they of India call the tiger who has once tasted blood of the human, care no more for the other prey, but prowl unceasing till he get him. This that we hunt from our village is a tiger, too, a man-eater, and he never cease to prowl" (341).

⁶⁹ Worth also remarks the similarity of this plot development to *Dracula*'s ("All India Becoming Tranquil," n. 12).

⁷⁰ Henty, *Rujub the Juggler*, 132.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 336.

into a demure woman with a “furtive, modest eye.”⁷² Like Dracula, who can become a bat, a wolf, or mist at will, Tiddu is a shape-shifter: he is part of a group of itinerant performers called the “Many-Faced Tribe.”⁷³ Likewise his acting companion assumes the figure of a mendicant poring over his beads. Knowing the value of “forgetting Western prejudices occasionally in dealing with the East,” Douglas pays Tiddu to teach him this extraordinary art of disguise for espionage purposes,⁷⁴ yet he resists Tiddu’s claim that this art comes down to entrancing others to see what one wants them to see. In what could almost be a rehearsal of the scene in *Dracula* wherein Seward refuses to believe in oddities unapproved by scientific men like Charcot, Douglas snickers and thinks, “Animal magnetism and mesmerism were one thing: this was another,” and then mocks Tiddu for his pretensions to resemble James Esdaile, the Scottish surgeon who experimented with mesmeric anesthesia in India in the 1840s.⁷⁵ Douglas goes on to use Tiddu’s techniques to listen to street conversations in the dress of a mendicant and other guises but remains incredulous of any mystical foundation. He is at most confused or irritated by Tiddu’s bizarre feats, as when the wily player seems almost to read Douglas’s thoughts, or when he asserts he has “willed [Douglas] to see” a “yellow fakir” in the road who exchanges some secret “word” with a passing trooper and then is gone as suddenly as he appeared.⁷⁶ Multiple times, Steel incorporates the mendicant or fakir as Rebellion icon of occult knowledge and circulation, but she also leaves uncertain the nature of this occultism. Does the obstinacy of Western prejudice blind Douglas to its profundity? Is it merely chicanery, or something more?

By contrast *Dracula* does away with such ambiguities, confronting Western rationalism with literal Oriental magic—but in a way far less peaceable than in *Rujub the Juggler*. The sort of tension evident in *On the Face of the Waters* is ratcheted up in Stoker’s novel: trance techniques exceed, and therefore undermine, Western systems of knowledge, and the fakir becomes a double of the monstrous vampire. *Dracula* reprocesses the stories born out of the Rebellion—not programmatically or in order to represent that event in history, but rather as a means to fuel this novel’s own Gothic paradigm, and because those stories had simply become inextricable from public imaginings of the East, Dracula’s birthplace, in post-Rebellion culture (and indeed were

⁷² Flora Annie Steel, *On the Face of the Waters* (1896; New York: Macmillan, 1897), 70.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* On Esdaile’s mesmerism in the context of indigenous healing arts, see Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 187–212.

⁷⁶ Steel, *On the Face of the Waters*, 177–78.

freshly potent in the late nineteenth century). Stoker's novel horrifically consolidates Victorians' worst conceptions of what the Oriental was capable of: the rapacious victimization of women; the establishment of slippery, malevolent communications; and systematic violence against the Occident, driven by a deep animus against Christianity. All these traits are neatly encapsulated in Dracula's hypnotic enchantment, with its capacity to penetrate, rally, and target with expert ferocity.

Yet while *Dracula's* absorption of Indian Rebellion lore is adventitious, it nonetheless reflects back meaningfully on that lore by exposing elements that may be muted in straightforward Mutiny discourse. In other words, the movement from historiography or historical novel to the Gothic, a genre meant to produce uneasiness, registers Victorians' more apprehensive conceptions of the Orient, as particularly inflected by British-Indian relations and as tied to late Victorian uncertainties about the strength of the empire. This claim presumes that despite its frequent heroic narratives of reconquering fractious natives, Rebellion discourse was never in fact one-dimensionally triumphalist. As Christopher Herbert has recently shown, for example, Rebellion histories and other mid-Victorian documents are subtly riven with suggestions of Britons' own administrative and moral failings in India, especially concerning their retributive atrocities.⁷⁷ In the case of *Dracula*, the narrative of British victory over the Orient is vexed in another way, through an emphasis on the Occident's practical informational weaknesses relative to the mysterious other, weaknesses improbable and unnerving for such a modern nation. By literalizing the occult, the novel brings out and amplifies the paradoxes lurking within traditional Rebellion narratives—between fantasies of heroism on the one hand and dogged rumors of intelligence and communicative vulnerabilities on the other. Steel's Jim Douglas may get away with sneering at Tiddu's surreptitiousness; Van Helsing and his team sneer at first but must eventually confront the nearly overwhelming power of their foe. It is a power so effective that the vampire pursuers know they cannot win without replicating it, although their own hypnotism proceeds with decidedly mixed results. Perhaps this is the true meaning of that final slash of Jonathan's kukri knife on Dracula's throat. In physical combat as in the realm of information, some of the best weapons lie—surprisingly, problematically—within the Orient itself.

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⁷⁷ For Herbert, the Victorians' traumatic self-horror at their retributions generated its own kind of Gothic, proliferating the figure of the devilish alter ego.