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# English Literature in Transition 1880–1920

Volume 61

Number 1

2018



Juliana Horatia Ewing  
Rudyard Kipling's "Aunt Judy" 1884

# English Literature in Transition 1880–1920

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*English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*

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ISSN 0013–8339

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*Juliana Horatia Ewing*  
Rudyard Kipling's Aunt Judy

1884

# The Insurgent Invasion of Anti-Colonial Idols in Late-Victorian Literature: Richard Marsh and F. Anstey

SHUHITA BHATTACHARJEE  
Presidency University Kolkata, India

There “*is something evil in that accursed image....*”<sup>1</sup> Voiced by Ronald Champion, the scene in *A Fallen Idol* is marked by giddy frisson and grim terror as late-nineteenth-century London watches the appearance of the idol transfixed. This fascination with the presence of the Indian (Oriental) idol in Victorian London is a mysterious literary cornucopia that manifests variously in end-of-the-century fiction, perhaps most rivetingly in Richard Marsh’s *The Goddess: A Demon* (1900) and F. Anstey’s *A Fallen Idol* (1886). This article focuses on the cultural tensions unleashed in these novels hailing from the century’s last two decades through the central dramatic trope of the invasive colonial idol portrayed as an insurgent agent of disruption and murder. These idols, primarily Hindoo in Marsh and Jain in Anstey, are overdetermined in their association with Buddhism, Theosophy, and Spiritualism. What is critically determinative of the tensions around these idols is the symbolic relationship between them and the anxieties about anti-colonial insurgency prevalent in the imperial metropolis at this time.

Both texts, evidently products of the colonial guilt-anxiety complex that the British occupation of India generated in the popular imagination, represent in the figure of the idols the English fears of Indian anti-colonial insurgency that registered a landmark around 1857 but most strongly characterised the last two decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> This discussion investigates the uncanny threat of the lifeless<sup>3</sup> yet life-like colonial object that the idols signify to the obviously thrilled readership of this subgenre and then analyses at length the specifically machine/automaton-like nature of this object in Marsh—a

feature that echoes several narratives and amplifies the suggestions of insidious colonial insurgence. Besides suggesting the late-nineteenth-century English fears of an angry wave of Indian anti-colonial insurgency, the idols also come to embody the Western tensions surrounding industrialization<sup>4</sup> and colonialism that were reaching their peak in the English readerly imagination of the 1880s and 1890s.

### **Pagan Idols in Britain**

The general apprehension surrounding the presence of pagan idols in Britain (which range from the classical or Graeco-Roman to the colonial/"oriental" idols) is an intriguing cultural nodule that surfaces in the literature from the last two decades of the century.<sup>5</sup> A brief look at this landscape, with only a few examples from earlier in the century and only one from after, will best lay out the context for Marsh and Anstey's works. To begin with, the results of the idol's invasion into England are more hilarious than tragic in the case of the classical statue of Venus which is accidentally brought to life (and which pursues a recently engaged English hairdresser) in Anstey's *The Tinted Venus* (1898).<sup>6</sup> The anxiety becomes more pronounced in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) where Sue Bridehead displays guilt about purchasing and displaying pagan idols ("plaster statuettes, some of them bronzed," representing "divinities of a very different character from those the girl was accustomed to see portrayed"), especially because of their foreignness to Christianity and to English life (they awaken in her "an oddly foreign and contrasting set of ideas by comparison" with the "church towers of the city" of Christminster). Moreover, the idols grow in their threatening potential as soon as they acquire the character of collectible possessions (they "seemed so very large now that they were in her possession"), and Sue, "trembl[ing] at her enterprise," covers the statues (not wrapped by the seller and therefore "so very naked") in leaves as she enters "with her heathen load into the most Christian city in the country," spending a contemplative wakeful night at home staring at the "divinities" after "unrob[ing]" them in secret.<sup>7</sup>

Manifest here is unease surrounding the perceived alienness of the idols, anxiety about their presence, and guilt regarding their possession. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The Burden of Nineveh" (1856) had expressed the tensions underlying the conversion of pagan idols into British collectibles earlier in the century. The poem speaks of the transfor-

mation of the “Bull-god,” a deity from an ancient Nineveh civilization into a relic and an object of art in the British Museum where, placed in a room full of artefacts from other civilizations, the worshipped bull-idol is reduced to an item of display alongside these other objects (“they and their gods and thou/ All relics here together”). Not only this, the pagan idol is both culturally appropriated in England and also threatens to usurp Englishness itself through cultural counter-invasion.<sup>8</sup> Tennyson’s “The Palace of Art” (1833), also early in the century, had embodied similar tensions. He enshrines the “throne of Indian Cama” (Camdeo, the Hindu God of love and sexuality) as a collectible in the pleasure-palace, juxtaposing it somewhat covertly with the sexually violent story of “sweet Europa” (the myth of Europa and the bull where Zeus rapes Europa in the guise of the bull).<sup>9</sup> In the case of contemporary colonial Oriental idols (such as Hindu idols), the atmosphere had been intensified to one of grim criminality.

But this is taken to a remarkably intensified pitch in the last two decades of the century, a salient example of which is to be found in Victoria Cross’s “Theodora: A Fragment” (1895),<sup>10</sup> where the tense workings of an implicitly illicit courtship between the socially transgressive New Woman, Theodora, and the sexually charged, nearly wanton Ray is played out through the drama of two Hindu idols. The idols appear as collectibles from the colonies. The Hindu “monkey-god” is removed from female viewership by two men because of its indecent sartorial aspects, and the remaining idols that include the Hindu equivalent of Venus (or the Greek Aphrodite) and Shiva are considered “senseless little blocks of brass.” The Hindu Venus is for the narrator-collector a “small, unutterably hideous, squat female figure, with the face of a monkey, and two closed wings of a dragon on its shoulders.”<sup>11</sup> What is important is the general atmosphere of animalism, guilt, suspicion, and disorder surrounding these pagan idols. In “The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker” (1896), Fergusson Hume presents us with a pagan idol from New Zealand which forms the central clue in a gruesome murder of a wife by a husband, exposing insidious crime but only through its uncanny presence.<sup>12</sup> An attempt to violate the colonial idols, however, leads to the grimmest and most terrifying consequences. Famously, though a little earlier in the century, Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868) had shown the rapacious English theft of a diamond from the head of the



Hindu Moon-God at Somnath, and its transport to England, leading to the horrific outbreak of crime in the heart of the empire.

While all these texts portray the frightening incursion of Indian (pagan) idols into England, much of the same threatening mystery can be witnessed in numerous tales, from the last two decades of the nineteenth-century or even a little later, that are located in India and that therefore do not relate to this article directly, such as Rudyard Kipling's "The Mark of the Beast" (1890), Flora Annie Steel's "The Blue-Throated God" (1897), and J. Milton Hayes's poem, "The Green Eye of the Yellow God" (1911).<sup>13</sup> Kipling's cautionary final lines from this tale confesses the impossibility of managing the enigma of these idols because "it is well-known to every right-minded man that the gods of the heathen are stone and brass, and any attempt to deal with them otherwise is justly condemned [in the West]."<sup>14</sup> This premonition that these objects cannot be tolerated in the imperial metropolis and the fear of the vengeance they embody is related to the imperialist anxiety surrounding these insurgent objects which wreak murderous havoc on England in Marsh and Anstey. The idols in both novels are shown to have a history of self-propelled violence in India.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, both idols uncannily come alive by themselves after being transported to England and while in the possession of Englishmen (Edwin Lawrence and Ronald Champion), recalling Kipling's cautionary note and signalling the imperial dynamics that are seen to trigger wrathful vengeance towards the metropolis. Discussing this kind of direct connection between the invasive supernatural colonial commodities from the East and the metropolitan fears of anti-colonial insurgencies, Rogert Luckhurst writes about the mummy curse tales of the late-Victorian Gothic that helped to "condense and displace and even invert grander geopolitical acts of imperial revenge."<sup>16</sup> Such is perhaps the cultural landscape of strategic axiogenic literary writing and popular reading into which Marsh's *The Goddess: A Demon* and Anstey's *A Fallen Idol* are inscribed, not to forget Marsh's *Joss: A Reversion* (1901), a work which narrates the conversion of an Englishman into a vindictive and murderous Oriental (Chinese) idol. Undoubtedly catering to an eager English audience enjoying these thrilling tales, these works constitute an end-of-the-century literalization and monstrosification of Indian anti-colonial insurgent possibilities in the form of colonial idols—an attempt at Western narrative containment of colonial threats that ultimately goes woefully awry.

### Marsh's *The Goddess* & Anstey's *A Fallen Idol*

Marsh's *The Goddess: A Demon* shows the invasion of London by a destructive Indian idol of an ancient "Hindoo Goddess."<sup>17</sup> The novel begins when the detective-narrator, Ferguson, imagines being near his friend Edwin Lawrence's room, hearing animalistic noises coming from the inside, and seeing a "creature" in a long robe butchering someone who he supposes to be Lawrence. Just as he recovers from this imaginative experience—portrayed as being on the cusp of dream and reality—a woman (Bessie, a famous actor) enters his room, dazed about her identity or location, and wrapped in the same blood-stained cloak that Ferguson had seen on the "creature." The "imagined" murder of Edwin is confirmed by legal discovery and Ferguson tries to save Bessie (whom he considers innocent) from police allegations of murder by flouting British law. At the end, one learns that it was in fact Edwin's brother, Philip Lawrence, who had been murdered by Edwin. The more interesting discovery, however, is that the heinous act had been committed in Edwin's presence, through what seems to be the physical mediation of Bessie (who happened to be present), both of them entirely under the influence of a demoniacal Indian idol—a goddess-statue that then proceeds to butcher Edwin himself at the end of the novel when he surrenders himself to it. In the reassuringly final scenes of the novel the goddess-statue is dismembered by the legal authorities and is revealed to be a contrivance manufactured in an Allahabad workshop, used to orchestrate human sacrifices in the honour of the gods at an Indian temple, and subsequently purchased and transported to England by Edwin.

Anstey's *A Fallen Idol* reiterates the theme of colonial religious disruption, telling the story of the disgruntled idol of a Jain tirthankar (deified Jain teachers supposed to teach followers the path to liberation/moksha) that is denigrated by Indians in the seventeenth century (when temples and idols were destroyed and disappeared from record with the "fall of Seringapatam and the annexation of Mysore by Great Britain," a reference reminiscent of the opening developments in *The Moonstone*<sup>18</sup>). The idol subsequently makes its way into nineteenth-century London to one of its "[un]assimilated" parts, and into the private possession of Ronald Campion, the struggling painter, when his sweetheart, Sybil Elsworth, gifts it to him as a token of her love.<sup>19</sup> In

this foreign land, Ronald becomes the object of the evil idol's vindictive attacks such as when he paints the idol into his projected masterpiece, a portrait of Sibyl. The vengeful idol's maleficent influence distorts Sibyl's image into unrecognizable ugliness that shocks the London audience. Ronald is advised to save London from the complete mayhem by returning the idol to India and setting up a temple for its appeasement. However, the idol itself explodes in a cataclysmic flash of lightning for which event the reader is offered several uncertain supernatural explanations by Nebelson, the disciple of a Theosophical mahatma from the East. Order is finally restored after the idol is purged from Victorian London following this dreadful colonial religious maelstrom.

Historically speaking, the few but prominent collectors of idols around the time of these novels included some British missionaries, as well as James Forbes (who erected a temple for the "Hindoo idols" in his own English garden back home), and the famous Charles Stuart. All of the anecdotes surrounding these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collections were marked by some degree of native discontent or outrage. Richard Davies explains that an epistemic/cultural shift was involved in the spatial transport of the Indian religious idols to Britain as lifeless things/collectibles.<sup>20</sup> Crucially, it is in the form of these commodities that the idols begin to pose the anti-colonial insurgency anxieties towards the century's end. Deaglán Ó Donghaile explores the political shocks of the terror attacks on England between 1880 and 1915 and their reflection in literature. Also pertinent is the work of Alex Tickell who examines "narratives of terror, terrorism and anti-colonial insurgency in the literature and journalism of colonial India between 1830 and 1947," and especially the widely circulating body of rumoured "atrocious narratives" around 1857 that constructed the idea of Indian terrorism or insurgency (and helped legitimise British state violence in suppressing the same). All of these narratives became (even despite being "disproved and dismissed") a "vital component in colonialism's collective consciousness and formed a prurient 'public mythology' of the Mutiny in the numerous memoirs, plays and novels devoted to the conflict," "retain[ing] their sensational cultural currency in popular colonial histories, Mutiny-fictions and dramas well into the 1880s and 90s."<sup>21</sup>

In this context, the idols appear in the heart of London as potential insurgent agents in the aftermath of the violent British suppression of the 1857 Indian atrocities and the subsequent threat of terrorism in the metropolitan heartland, distilling these acute fears towards the end of the century. As insurgent presences in the very heart of London, the idols may even be seen to serve as the literary precursors to the already anticipated Indian terrorist insurgencies that followed in the first decade of the twentieth century, such as Madan Lal Dhingra's 1909 assassination of Curzon Wylie in London and the subsequent British reaction towards the 'India House' in the north London suburb of Highgate.<sup>22</sup> Among various factors, the fear of violent insurgencies may also have escalated in the late nineteenth century surrounding another famous anti-imperialist terrorist campaign, that is, the "Fenian dynamite campaign" (from 1881 to 1885, intended to further the Irish Republican cause), in which "Irish revolutionaries ... set out to destroy the British Empire from within by bombing political and symbolic targets across a number of cities." Ó Donghaile remarks that the "explosion of dynamite bombs on the streets of British cities like London, Glasgow and Liverpool was made even more 'audible' by newspaper reports" which were, in turn, "repeated by popular novelists who appropriated the news and recycled it as popular fiction" (such as in the "late nineteenth-century dynamite novel" used by imperialists and anti-imperialists alike for their very different agendas).<sup>23</sup> Besides this widespread fear of insurgency crucial to the late-century context of the novels, it is also remarkable that the Fenian bombs operated by clockwork mechanism, an uncanny similarity they share with Marsh's goddess. Not only the continuing tensions surrounding post-1857 India, but the general terror-ridden colonial experience towards the end of the nineteenth century, defined by the anticipatory fears and the often real presence of anti-colonial insurgencies, or even the sensationally stirring Irish bombing campaigns, all contributed to an atmosphere fraught with political and social fears of cultural counter-invasion in the 1880s and 90s.

Needless to say, the idols visibly commit such insurgent violence in Marsh and Anstey. In the former, the goddess takes complete control of Bessie so that, doused in a "dream"-like state, she becomes the "creature" that "with its whole force ... assail[s]" Philip Lawrence, and after Philip falls "headlong to the floor," this creature "stooping, rain[s] on

to his motionless body, a hail of blows, making all the time ... [a] horrid, gasping noise." Later, bringing the novel to a climactic pitch, when Edwin surrenders to this "Goddess of the Scarlet Hands," we are told that the idol sprouting knives all over its body, "gripped Lawrence with its steel-clad hands, with a grip from which there was no escaping" and "pressed him again and again, twirling him round and round ... so that the weapons pierced and hacked [him] back and front," finally piercing him "through and through" with "[a] sharp-pointed blade, more than eighteen inches long, which proceeded from its stomach."<sup>24</sup> Though on a slightly less gory pitch than in Marsh, Anstey presents a similarly malicious and disruptive idol. This idol makes Bales (the servant who shows dislike towards it) fall off the steps, crushes Mrs. Staniland's dog to death, and attempts to destroy Ronald's lifelong expectations of becoming an acclaimed painter (with his "two Academy pictures" and "his portrait of Sybil Elsworth"), inheriting a legacy, and marrying Sibyl.<sup>25</sup> It is in the form of these insurgent criminals that the colonial idols acquire their full monstrous villainy, leaving Englishmen like Ferguson despairingly lamenting the plight of the idol's victims like Edwin: "We could do nothing for him."<sup>26</sup>

### **The Idols as Things: Passive Objects & Cunning Criminals**

Both in Marsh and in Anstey, it is at a basic level the essential lifeless thing-hood of the idols that is strongly foregrounded. In Marsh's novel, Ferguson is preoccupied with the goddess-statue's construction: "I could not make out of what substance it was compounded; certainly neither of wood nor stone."<sup>27</sup> In Anstey, the narrator similarly notes about the idol: "It was made of a dingy mottled kind of alabaster with a sparkle here and there under the smooth surface, the robes were faintly indicated by a dull red lacquer."<sup>28</sup> The goddess "represented a woman squatting on her haunches"<sup>29</sup> while the Jain idol is a tirthankar "represented squatting cross-legged with great fan-like hands on its knees." Moreover, it is the status of these idols as Eastern collectibles that is repeatedly emphasized.<sup>30</sup> The object-ness of the idol is further inscribed in Anstey when Ronald labels it an "*ex-idol*," disqualifying it from the status of an idol altogether, and rendering it a kind of malfunctioning object.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Marsh's goddess is reduced to the status of a curio, and we are told that Edwin "purchased such a plaything" for "an enormous sum" at Allahabad, where it was "probably

from the workshop of a native who was suspected of the manufacture of contrivances.” However, these idols are astir with life and resonant with the supernatural despite their alleged ugly inertness. Marsh’s idol proves to have a clear “semblance of actual life,” exerting her will over Edwin and leading him to murder and be murdered in turn.<sup>32</sup> Pittard notes how a “frequent trope of Marsh’s fiction ... [is its] focus on physical objects and their status as either evidence of crime or alternatively of the supernatural.”<sup>33</sup> Voicing this anxiety surrounding objects, and describing the series of accidents triggered by the idol in Ronald’s studio, the narrator in *Anstey* observes the potential of evil objects: “Most of us have had short experiences of this kind, when inanimate objects seem inspired by a perverted ingenuity of malice.”<sup>34</sup> Ruled as they are by such insidious evil, we can understand the uncontrollable charge of these Indian idol-objects to be a reflection of the anxieties surrounding the large pool of colonial commodities that produced mercenary and cultural tensions in Britain by capturing the domestic market and imagination.<sup>35</sup> Elaine Freedgood tells us about how “the Victorian novel describes, catalogs, quantifies, and in general showers us with things,”<sup>36</sup> and Suzanne Daly studies “magazine journalism and domestic novels of the mid-Victorian period” to attend to the way “Englishness [was] shored up by a particular brand of commodity fetishism that turn[ed] goods produced in British India into emblems of English identity.”<sup>37</sup> While in Daly the Indian objects of mid-Victorian literature serve as vehicles through which “India is ... woven deeply into the texture of English domesticity,” in these late-century novels the Indian idols burst through the seams of any such self-contained Englishness, emerging as specifically un-English, as criminally Indian.<sup>38</sup> In Marsh, for example, the Indian goddess-object is ferociously disavowed for its foreign evil and renounced for its associations with Edwin (who associates with the dregs of society, is criminally suspect and socially low, and thus marked by his class as un-English). The idol in *Anstey* similarly disturbs the artistic sophistication and middle-class sobriety of the London art gallery, provoking as it does a ghastly painting in the hands of Ronald that triggers an appalled response on the part of the viewers.

At its core, then, both Marsh and *Anstey* encapsulate the destructive power and invasive criminality of the Indian idol-objects. Partha Mitter traces the cultural reception/representation of Indian gods in

the West, showing us how the nineteenth-century perceived them as monstrous. And Ian Jenkins reveals the transitional space of the end of the century when Indian idols were beginning to shift from their lowly image towards respectable recognition.<sup>39</sup> As such, the idol-objects in our novels occupy precisely this somewhat transitional atmosphere towards the end of the nineteenth century, caught between Victorian tradition and emerging challenges, between a lowly deprecation of Indian art/sculpture (idols) and a developing appreciation of its powerful though foreign context.

One of the obvious suggestions floated by the novels is that they narratively reduce and contain the insurgent threat of colonial power that is represented by the idols by embodying them in the form of mere lifeless objects. In Anstey, the ferociousness of the idol is sought to be controlled when Ronald describes how it has been “reduced” to a “mere chattel” or a “curiosity.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Mrs. Staniland (Sibyl’s aunt) compares this British collectible (“new acquisition”) to the likes of a specimen collected for Western scientific investigation—a “pickled snake” in a “bottle.”<sup>41</sup> However, despite these attempts to reduce the idols to mere unthreatening objects, as the trope of the object might initially suggest, the idol-objects in both Marsh and Anstey powerfully and paradoxically resist any kind of narrative and legal control precisely because of their thing-like and therefore unpredictably self-propelled nature that defies burial in the pages of history. Undeniably, ancientness is crucial to the essence and value of these colonial Indian idols. The goddess figurine is introduced as an ancient “Hindoo goddess” and the tirthankar’s idol hails from old times when it was “a reality to generations.”<sup>42</sup> The interesting thing about the idols in Marsh and Anstey is that though hailing from the distant temporal, even civilizational past, these inert things activate their own malicious wilfulness and act at the present moment in time with no external intervention.<sup>43</sup> The importance of this signification becomes evident if we take account of Van der Veer’s observation that the most important of the colonial binaries (West-East binaries such as “oppositions between modern and traditional, secular and religious, progressive and reactionary”) “on which nationalist discourse depends” and “which the historiography of Britain and India” not only adopts now but also adopted in the nineteenth century is the one in which India is “imagined to be the land of eternal religion, and Britain the land of modern secularity.” In such an imagination “In-



dia appears to exist outside history, whereas Britain is understood as the agent of history,” the “sign of the nation-state,” and the symbol of modernity.<sup>44</sup> Thus, while in this scheme of things colonial discourse buried the colony into an irretrievable primitive past, the Indian idol-objects here enter London and defy this kind of ahistorical archiving. The idols destabilize the ahistorical ancient vagueness associated with the colonies (and with religion). The idol-object emerges as inanimate and yet fully functional, alive in the present, a participant in the modern historical reality of the West and not dismissible as irrelevantly hoary. It also transports and plants the colony (and colonial religion) itself in the current historical moment of the West—and in a form (that of an imported commodity) that poses a direct challenge to the contemporary British claims of global industrial/commercial supremacy. This colonial idol-object bafflingly combines the alien force of colonial religiosity and the workings of a “modern” mass-produced device (the goddess is a “network of ... springs” working by “clockwork machinery”<sup>45</sup>) and in several ways therefore threatens British confidence, attacks English technological superiority, and defies western control. As noted earlier, the idols share their capacity for sudden violence, as in Marsh’s goddess-idol’s clockwork mechanism associated with the Fenian time bombs of the 1880s (also known as “peccant engines” or “infernal machines” and discussed by Melchiori in great detail<sup>46</sup>). Looking back one can see that acknowledged “as violent statements of anti-imperialism” the bombs would have corresponded with the idols in the contemporary popular imagination. For one, the ambiguity of apparent inertness and murderous self-propulsion is something the idols in both novels have in common with the Fenian time bombs.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, their comparison brings into focus the contrariness of ancientness and technology,<sup>48</sup> an apparent polarity that the goddess-statue is able to fuse by combining the ancientness of the cultural Other and the technological advancement that was generally associated with the modern west and with the contemporary anti-colonial “political violence” (the Fenian bombs).<sup>49</sup> Erupting in this fatal form, a characteristic uniquely of these decades, the idols therefore pose both a technological and a cultural challenge for the imperial metropolis.

We move on now to the overtly machine-like nature of the devious idol in Marsh, where besides being thing-like, the goddess displays the attributes of an automaton. This aspect of the goddess figurine turns



out to be an intensification of the usual opaque will, undecipherable maliciousness, and uncontrollable evil that have so far been seen as the characteristics of the thing-like idols in both novels. In exploring this machine-like nature of the idol and the uncannily life-like qualities that it implies, we get closer to unravelling the multiple anxieties of late-century anti-colonial insurgency that underlie this encounter of the modern west with the invasive colonial artefacts.

### **The Idol as Automaton: History of Subversion & Forms of Fear**

The most cursory look would reveal that the figuration of the pagan (Oriental/Indian) idol in relation to the machine is a significant trait in the context of the wider cultural discourse of the nineteenth century though this remains a field needing deeper study. While the passing examples here are from across the century, the more remarkable manifestations surface in the last two decades. Most readily, *The Moonstone* (1868) suggests that the Indian idol through its diamond induces machine-like behaviour in the English characters that come under its sway implicitly (if not by precise factual links). Colonel Herncastle who steals the moonstone from the colonial idol and carries it to England is described as “a walking engine of destruction, loaded with powder and shot, and likely to go off .... at a moment’s notice.” Rosanna, mysteriously acting under a web of secrets connected to the gem (which however she has not stolen), is likened to a “creature moved by machinery.”<sup>50</sup> This connection of the colonial idol and the mechanical is further borne out, for example, in the characterization of the ‘divine’ juggernaut as villainous (Mr. Hyde, for example, is described as “some damned juggernaut”)<sup>51</sup> in nineteenth-century discourse. These descriptions of the juggernaut are revealing in the way they turn the portrayal of the religious parade of devotees drawing the sacred chariot of Lord Jagannath at the Jagannath temple (Puri, India) into a scene in which “devotees were said to be crushed under the wheels,” a scene of potential chaos and death wrought by a machine.<sup>52</sup> Such characterisations, which “represented for evangelical Englishmen the ultimate horror of Hinduism,” stressed the mechanical aspect of this disaster and of the idol itself. Common perceptions of the evil of idolatry combined with fears of the potent machine (an object of great awe and trepidation for the heavily industrialised and mechanised Britain) in several of these portrayals in Carlyle, who

speaks of the absence of a benevolent deity and the indifference of fate in the modern times in terms of this comparison.<sup>53</sup> In the 1831 work “Characteristics,” Carlyle writes that “the sum of man’s misery is even this, that he feels himself crushed under the Juggernaut wheels, and knows that Juggernaut is no divinity, but a dead mechanical idol.”<sup>54</sup> Not only is this a denigration of the evil of idolatry itself, it is a devaluation of a pagan (colonial Indian) deity in terms that are reminiscent of the power and brutality of the machine—something that was very much a reality for the technologically dominant West (and something that was interestingly itself seen as hastening the decline of religion in contemporary “crisis of faith” narratives). Making such connections in several nineteenth-century portrayals, the mechanical spectacle of the new railways was compared to a brutal juggernaut. In these cases, the denunciation of colonial idolatry and Western mechanization merge, emitting fears of destruction, and implicitly setting up a comparison of evil might between the two cultures of the East and the West.<sup>55</sup> It is this comparison that becomes explicitly violent as we reach the end of the century in H. G. Wells’s “The Lord of the Dynamos” (1894),<sup>56</sup> where the Englishman, Holroyd, challengingly draws the British dynamo’s (murderous) power into comparison with that of pagan gods during a conversation with his Oriental subordinate, Azuma-zi (portrayed variously as “negroid,” “black,” “asiatic”), asking him: “where’s your ‘eathen idol to match ‘im?” Contextually, Kipling’s tale of the mysterious Hindu idol mentioned earlier begins with the “native proverb”: “Your Gods and my Gods—do you or I know which are the stronger?”<sup>57</sup> Separated by only a few years, a similar antagonistic binary is pitched in Marsh’s *Joss: A Reversion* (1901), where the Oriental idol (“the Great Joss”) is compared unfavourably with English gods and exposed as a falsity. The narrator (Max Lander, the ship’s captain) retorts to Benjamin Batters’ claim of being the ‘the greatest god’ that oriental island had ever known: “Tastes differ. I like my gods to be built on other lines.” To this even Batters nods assent saying: “And I’m sick of being a god—sick of it.... Cure your josses, is what I say—damn’em!... I’m an Englishman, that’s what I am—an Englishman, British born and British bred.”<sup>58</sup> Of course, in Wells, it is Azuma-zi who invests the large machine (that is, the dynamo set up to operate the railways) with religious powers, calling it “the Lord of the Dynamos” and elevating it over the pagan idols by declaring that it was: “Greater and calmer even than the Bud-

dhas he had seen at Rangoon, and yet not motionless, but living!”<sup>59</sup> Clearly, the venerable life-like quality of this Western idol stems from its mechanical stirrings, something that the Indian idol appropriates in Marsh. The episode ends with Azuma-zi offering his detestable boss, Holroyd, as sacrifice to this machine-idol and then martyring himself the same way. Transitioning from this machine-idol to the idol-machine in Marsh, we see it operating in the same cultural space—visibly intensified by the end of the century—that was populated by these strangely overlapping violent tensions surrounding the insurgent colonial idols and western machines.

In Marsh, we learn that the goddess figurine was a machine, more particularly an “automaton” (automatons signifying a complex category of mechanical life), distinct from ordinary objects in that when active/activated “[e]very part [of it] seemed to be in motion at once.”<sup>60</sup> An attempt to control the machine surfaces when the enigma that the goddess represents is ruthlessly dismantled by subjecting it to a typical thoroughgoing medico-legal dissection by the custodians of British law” The “thing ... [is] torn to pieces; its anatomy laid bare,” revealing “a light steel frame, shaped to resemble a human body” with “innumerable eyelet-holes” through each of which “the point of a blade was always peeping,” blades that as soon “as the clockwork was set in motion” leaped from their “appointed place, and continued leaping, ceaselessly, to and fro, till the machinery ran down.”<sup>61</sup>

The automaton begins to emerge as a figure in nineteenth-century Britain and ends up representing a whole body of anxieties especially in several late-Victorian texts.<sup>62</sup> Significant novels featuring automatons, and especially female automatons, in fact, have a remarkable example much earlier in the nineteenth century in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “The Sandman” (1817) which featured likely “the first mechanical woman in literature—[a] clockwork female automaton” (much like the Goddess in Marsh). However, it is the last two decades that feature the most remarkable leaps in this representation—Villiers de L’Isle-Adam’s *L’Eve future* (*Tomorrow’s Eve*) (1886), Jules Verne’s *Le Château des Carpathes* (1892), and most significantly Ernest Edward Kellett’s “The New Frankenstein” (1900), expurgated and abridged later as “The Lady Automaton.”<sup>63</sup> Marsh’s goddess-automaton clearly features at this culminating point of the trajectory with its head containing “an

arrangement somewhat on the lines of a phonograph . . . [from which] proceeded the sound resembling a woman's gentle laughter."<sup>64</sup> Common to both "The Lady Automaton" and the idol-automaton in Marsh is the manner in which they seem to subvert British rationalistic confidence through their undecipherable smiles. Unlike in the case of the phonographic female of the short story, the reader does not hear the goddess in Marsh talk, though Edwin refers to the conversations she has had with him. However, much like the lady automaton's "fatal monotonous, fascinating smile" with its aura of mystery,<sup>65</sup> the goddess-automaton's voice becomes synonymous with its undecipherable laughter ("not the least eerie part of its horrible performance") that baffles the English, disturbing their western modes of rational comprehension, unsettling their confidence, and embodying their fears of insurgent Otherness.<sup>66</sup>

In understanding this goddess-machine's automatism, the aspect of the nineteenth-century backdrop that needs to be focused on is that of the increasingly influential "conscious automaton theory" which dealt with the problem of machine-like humans and human-like machines, studied against which the machine-like nature of the magical Indian Goddess-object in Marsh proves most revealing.<sup>67</sup> It is to this theory we find a direct reference in Anstey where Nebelson confesses in broken English to Ronald that one common explanation for the idol's actions is the mechanistic explanation (though he declares that he would not "confine" himself to it): "There are people who would tell you in my blace that it was a case simply of *ungonscious cerebration*."<sup>68</sup> This new psycho-physiological theory of the "conscious automaton" grew increasingly prominent in the mid and late nineteenth century.<sup>69</sup> As Thomas Huxley, one of its foremost proponents, explained: "all states of consciousness in ... [animals as well as humans] are immediately caused by molecular changes of the brain-substance," *not by volition (or will)*, and also that, by the same logic, "state[s] of consciousness" are not "the cause of change in the motion of the matter of the organism."<sup>70</sup> Therefore, according to William James (in *Principles of Psychology*), "[w]e are conscious automata," all our "states of consciousness" being the products of "molecular changes in the brain" ("manufactured by the mechanism of the body") and being in turn incapable of producing a physical change in the body because (as another proponent, Clifford, explained) the "only thing which influences *matter* is the position of surrounding *matter* or the motion of surrounding *matter*." James,

who later criticised the theory, explained that it postulated “a neural machinery that offers a living counterpart for every shading, however fine, of the history of its owner’s mind.”<sup>71</sup> This crucial notion of “nonde-liberate thought” or “unconscious cerebration”—the idea “that human/animal behaviour is essentially automatic and that consciousness, although present, is not the cause of human/animal action”—registers in Marsh and manifests in two primary directions. On the one hand was the anxiety over the “intelligent machine” (the human-like machine) and on the other were “‘pervasive’ fears of human automatism” (the machine-like human).<sup>72</sup> Marsh’s novel reflects both these models and their accompanying fears.

To begin with is the fear of the life-like machine, which specifically seems to be a fear of the machine’s ability to think and therefore its quality of volition in the novels.<sup>73</sup> Arthur Moore, the scientist shown to be a rival to Edison in Kellett’s “The Lady Automaton” designs his female automaton (“the most beautiful girl ... a creature with fair hair, bright eyes, and a doll-like childishness of expression”) in such a way that his friend, the narrator (a self-confessed “materialist”), suspects that Moore “had put so much of himself into his automaton that he had positively begun to regard her as a *real living being*, in whose veins flowed his own blood, in whose nostrils was his own breath.” Consequently, at the thought of this practically life-like automaton, the narrator admits, despite being a “man of science,” that “the brain is more than a mere machine.”<sup>74</sup> The apparently mechanical goddess in Marsh also seems to display some qualities of a living intelligent thinking being, possessed with a demonic spirit and a malignant will. Edwin says of it: “You see how alive she is? She only needs a touch to fill her with impassioned frenzy.” Ferguson notes its life-like quality (“a curious suggestion of life”) and Edwin captures the covert wilfulness of this human-like machine: “She might have feared she was forgotten; felt herself slighted. No; that’s not her way ... she reminded me that she was there.”<sup>75</sup> The goddess displays her full murderous agency when she inserts herself between Philip and Edwin to protect the latter and ends up hacking Philip to death. When Edwin all-knowingly surrenders himself to the idol (bellowing “Take me, for I am yours, O thou Goddess of the Scarlet Hands”), Ferguson, witnessing the brutal carnage (when the goddess reduces Edwin to a “writhing, gibbering puppet” till “its lust for blood was glutted”), remarks of the Goddess: “It was

difficult to believe that it was not alive.”<sup>76</sup> And though the idol in Anstey is not overtly a machine made of springs or clockwork device, yet this malicious automatically functioning destructive idol metaphorically gestures towards exactly this same fear—that of the evil self-propelled (machine-like) living object. So Campion looks thunderstruck as the narrator describes what he sees: “The idol was *alive*—[In] its smooth yellowish face, the eyelids slowly went up and ... returned his gaze with a steady malevolence ... and the thing broke out anew into a resounding bellow ... the idol was roused.”<sup>77</sup> Evidently, in all of this is a suggestion of the inherent subversion that the idol represents. Also located in the last decades of the century, the life-like female automaton in Kellett is a disrupter of social norms, on a much smaller scale. She is designed as a superlative doll-like coquette to mock and critique the doll-like pretences women are forced to carry out in contemporary patriarchal society. It is precisely this inherent subversiveness of the life-like automaton that is taken to an extreme in Marsh and Anstey when the idols terrorise, unsettle, hack, and skewer the English. The Indian idol represents for the West the violent rebelliousness of the colony and the force of colonial religion—both of which had become glaringly obvious in the closing decades. Now it becomes terrifyingly alive, self-propelled and evil, capable of extending its insurgent murderous sway over English modernity as a life-like machine.

The other kind of anxiety that stemmed from the notion of conscious automatons was the fear of the machine-like human. Both the novels present the fear of humans rendered machine-like under the controlling force of the magical insurgent idol from the colonies. Besides Bessie who likely kills Philip Lawrence in a “dream”-like state under the goddess’s influence,<sup>78</sup> the one who best represents this prototype best is Edwin Lawrence. Incapacitated by the uncontrollable idol, he seems to exhibit a series of mechanized or preprogrammed behaviours and a complete absence of will (or even consciousness). Edwin admits to the complete control that the idol exercises over him by confessing that “she holds me, body, soul, and spirit, with chains which never shall be broken.” He explains it as a state of inescapable physical constriction (“There’s a hand upon my heart, a grip upon my throat, a weight upon my head; they make it hard to breathe.... I’m really, and actually, in the service of another”) and says of his status as a mere medium: “It was

from her the inspiration came. She named the stakes, framed the rules, started the game, watched the play—and with both eyes she’s watched it ever since.” As Edwin says of himself, he “play[ed] the part of Echo,” and Ferguson observes of him that “[h]e spoke as men do in fevers.”<sup>79</sup> Just as before, Anstey’s work also resounds with the fears expressed by Marsh—in this case the fear of the mechanised human. The tirthankar’s devious idol is shown to be capable of reducing Ronald to a feverish, frenzied, near-mechanical phase when he comes completely under its influence and paints the idol into his artistic rendering of Sibyl: “He painted on for two days, denying himself to everyone, scarcely allowing himself time for meals, so strongly did his subject appeal to his imagination.”<sup>80</sup> Significantly, Ronald also exhibits the British shame associated with the helpless near-mechanical surrender to a fear of idols—and therefore to the reality and power of their colonial and supernatural excess. We learn that the “average healthy-minded young Englishman will not go over to fetish-worship<sup>81</sup> without a struggle” and Ronald felt his own “degradation,” was “disgusted with his own superstition,” and “was afraid ... to be alone in the studio with the idol.”<sup>82</sup> In directing attention towards such mechanized humans trapped under their spell, the colonial idols force a reflection on the nineteenth-century apprehensions surrounding the “modern” automatized (mechanised) human behaviour that accompanied western industrialization. They also channel attention towards the contemporary fears that accompanied colonialism—fears of a disappearing personal morality. Caricaturing, demonizing, and critiquing the post-industrial mechanisation of human action and the colonial routinization of exploitative behaviour, the insurgent colonial idol in these novels emerges as a deeply potent icon that invades the metropolitan heart and condenses crucial contemporary politico-cultural anxieties. These fears relating to unethical industrialisation and colonialism, then, constitute the most insidious threat that is embodied by these insurgent idols.

Challenging the transmogrification of the colonial presence (and colonial religion) into lifeless collectibles, these end-of-the-century literary idols manifest their presence through uncontainable mayhem, setting up a dramatic spectacle that is hard to ignore, a physical stranglehold that is impossible to loosen. Commenting on the ethical and cultural fears of the modern West, and reinstating a formidable religious presence at the time of perceived religious decline and colonial exploitation,



the insurgent statues compel their contemporary audience into moral introspection at the exact time when the close of the century was forcing these cultural trepidations to their acutest. Embodying these tensions, the novels embed the power of the invasive idol, of the insurgent colonial presence in general, and of a deeper introspective ethicality ultimately—all of this coming at the time of the *fin-de-siècle*'s ruthless cultural strides into 'progress.'

## Notes

1. F. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1886), 243.
2. The surfacing of the Indian idols in these novels acquires meaning in the context of the long Indian colonial trajectory of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—an age that was marked by metropolitan guilt, anxieties, and fears centred not only around the 1857 War of Independence but also the spate of devastating famines throughout the country that followed in the 1860s and 1870s, the Bubonic Plague of Bombay and the Indian Famine (1897–1901), the rise of Indian political opposition (most threateningly in the form of the Indian National Congress), the heated controversies over exploitative colonial legislation, and the communal conflicts fuelled by state strategy. Especially significant, however, are the 1880s and 1890s, with the backdrop of the Fenian bombings in these decades and the anticipation of Indian insurgents that followed in the early twentieth century. These two decades are thus the period from which both my central novels and most of my peripheral texts hail.
3. In understanding the charge carried by the idol-objects in these novels, I must also make a brief nod here to “thing theory” and “museum studies” in general, and the recent materialist turn of Victorian studies in particular, though I do not examine these fields in detail. Crucial works in this field include Bill Brown's *Things*, Thomas Richards's *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, Sandra Dudley's *Museum Materialities*, Bill Brown's *A Sense of Things*, and Rodney Harrison, Sarah Byrne, Anne Clarke, eds., *Reassembling the Collection*. Also, works like Karen Jacobs, Chantal Knowles, Chris Wingfield, eds., *Trophies, Relics and Curios?: Missionary Heritage from Africa and the Pacific* concentrate on religious objects, and Elaine Freedgood and Suzanne Daly examine colonial commodities in works that I refer to later in the article.
4. Though this is not the analytical direction that I pursue, surfacing at the time that they do, the idols' essential thing-hood can be seen (in a Marxist context) as indicative of dehumanization and reification in an industrialized alienated society. As such they bring to the fore the frightening spectacle of objectification.
5. I will not elaborate here on the well-known historical reality of the Western (Protestant) opposition to idolatry, something that was (and is) variously manifested not only down the ages but also between the different Christian denominations. What particularly concerns us here as general background is the way this manifested in the modern colonial period against colonial religions. This has been discussed well by Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Imagined Hinduism: British Protestant Missionary Constructions of Hinduism, 1793–1900* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), who deals with the “basic missionary presuppositions” (1739–1850) against idolatrous Hinduism (24–33).
6. F. Anstey, *The Tinted Venus* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1898).
7. Sue is also the figure that suggests an irreverent, critical, and scholarly approach to the Bible by saying to Jude that she could “make ... [him] a *new* New Testament,” italics mine. Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2000), 80–81, 130.
8. The “Bull-god” is now culturally appropriated by modern-day London so that it acquires a lease of life with a distinctly English lineage suggesting an erasure of its ancient history as a religious object from Nineveh and a secularization of its identity as an English object of art



("So may he stand again.... a relic now/ of London, not of Nineveh"). However, Rossetti cites also the alternative possibility, where the future inheritors of the English land, discovering the pagan "Bull-god," may imagine it (rather than the English Christian faith) to represent the religion of these current times (future generations "finding in this desert place/ This form, shall hold us for some race/ That walked not in Christ's lowly ways, / But bowed its pride and vowed its praise/ Unto the God of Nineveh"). Thus, fears of cultural usurpation had already been etched in the cultural landscape. See Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "The Burden of Nineveh," in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Collected Poetry and Prose*, Jerome McGann, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 88–93.

9. Alfred Tennyson, "Palace of Art," in *Alfred Tennyson: The Major Works*, Adam Roberts, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 35.

10. Victoria Cross, "Theodora: A Fragment," in *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*, Elaine Showalter, ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 6–37.

11. *Ibid.*, 28.

12. Fergusson Wright Hume, "The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker," in *The Dwarf's Chamber and Other Stories* (London: Ward, Lock & Bowden, Ltd, 1896), 249–80.

13. We see the enigma that is represented in Steel's "The Blue-Throated God," for instance, by Sambo—the hunter-worshipper who is suggestively Shiva or the "big idol over at the temple" come alive and who can perform miraculous tasks. This magical power is a characteristic anxiety surrounding the presence not only of idols but also of (suggestively supernatural) colonial commodities in England, reflected, for example, in W. W. Jacobs's "Monkey's Paw," where a charmed monkey's paw from India that has "a spell put on it by an old fakir" defies all laws of nature ("beyond any human and rational experience") to bring irrevocable and inhuman tragedy upon one who makes three wishes on it (causing the death of the Whites's son in order to bring the Whites the money they wished for). The presence of colonial idols, in particular, is marked by violence and "vengeance." In Hayes's poem we learn that "Twas the 'Vengeance of the Little Yellow God'" that leaves Mad Carew dead with an "ugly knife" when he dares to pluck the "green eye of the little Yellow God" ("of Khatmandu") for his inamorata, in Steel's "The Blue-Throated God" the Englishman (Bannerman) dies while we see reflected in Sambo the awe-inspiring mysticism of Shiva's idol, and in Kipling's story Fleeete (an Englishman) is reduced to a wolf-like beast when he is "bewitched" by the "Silver Man for polluting the image of Hanuman" (and can be restored to English male civility only through the leper's intervention). Flora Annie Steel, "The Blue-Throated God," in the *Permanent Way: And Other Stories* (London: Heinemann, 1898), 109–28; Rudyard Kipling, *The Mark of the Beast and Other Horror Tales* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2011), 70–80; W. W. Jacobs, "Monkey's Paw," in *The Monkey's Paw and Other Tales of Mystery and the Macabre*, Gary Hoppenstand, comp. (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 2007), 17–30.

14. Kipling, *The Mark of the Beast and Other Horror Tales*, 80.

15. The Indian goddess in Marsh is discovered to have been a contrivance originally displayed and used in an Indian temple for sacrificial purposes (that is, it would slaughter people for human sacrifices made in the honour of the god) in keeping with its grotesque potential. The Jain idol in Anstey is similarly known to have been active in all its vindictiveness in seventeenth-century India.

16. Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 158. Mummy curse tales were works in which murderous Egyptian mummies—presented as "vengeful objects in private collections and public museums" and made famous by Algernon Blackwood, Rider Haggard, Sax Rohmer, Bram Stoker, and even Richard Marsh—were seen to rampage in the heart of England (Luckhurst, 158). One such example that dramatized the fear of the murderous Eastern commodity was Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249" (1849). Arthur Conan Doyle, "Lot No. 249," in *Late Victorian Gothic Tales*, Roger Luckhurst, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 109–40).

17. Richard Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon* (London: F. V. White & Co., 1900), 289.

18. Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1999), 33.

19. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 34.

20. Davies summarizes: Indian religious images “were removed from their homelands as curiosities, souvenirs, or art objects, transported abroad to be sold or presented as gifts, maintained in private collections or placed on display in public institutions, and viewed by Western audiences as variously bizarre, curious, heathenish, picturesque, spiritual, or beautiful.” Richard Davies, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 145.

21. Deaglán Ó Donghaile, *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 2; Alex Tickell, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature, 1830–1947* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 72. This sensational history is discussed in, among others: Adrian S. Wisnicki, *Conspiracy, Revolution, and Terrorism from Victorian Fiction to the Modern Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Deaglán Ó Donghaile, *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Barbara Arnett Melchiori, *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Shane Kenna, *War in the Shadows* (Sallins, Co. Kildare: Merrion, 2014); K R M Short, *The Dynamite War: Irish-American Bombers in Victorian Britain* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979).

22. Tickell, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Indian-English Literature, 1830–1947*, 135–40.

23. Ó Donghaile, *Blasted Literature*, 3.

24. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 11, 6–7, 291–92.

25. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 89.

26. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 292.

27. *Ibid.*, 290.

28. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 64–65.

29. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 289.

30. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 65. In Anstey, Sibyl purchases the idol from “a little bric-a-brac shop near Oxford Street” and narrates the interesting tale of it being “dug up by ... Captain Somebody,” and its survival through a shipwreck when it “floated safely to land” in England (60–61). Ronald speaks of the idol’s eastern origin and its object-like inertness deflatingly: It “was a household god literally enough, being nothing more nor less than an extremely ugly oriental idol” (64).

31. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 77; emphasis added.

32. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 290, 294.

33. Christopher Pittard, “‘The Unknown—with a capital U!’ Richard Marsh and Victorian Popular Fiction,” *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, 27.1 (2009), 102.

34. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 175.

35. This is obliquely expressed in Marsh’s *Joss: A Reversion* where, not the Englishman-turned-idol (Benjamin Batters/ Joss) himself, but his avaricious plunder of goods (offerings by natives or “curios”) of great commercial value from a Chinese temple lies at the centre of the novel and the imbalance it sets in motion in the very heart of London. *The Joss: A Reversion* (London: F. V. White & Co., 1901), 251.

36. Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1.

37. Suzanne Daly, *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 10, 6. Though Daly shows how these Indian imports ultimately “give the lie to the novels’ invocation of a static and conquered India,” her work reminds us frequently of the way these “English novelists helped to domesticate and contain the idea of India by writing Indian imports into the novels as indispensable accoutrements of middle-class English life” (11, 7).

38. *Ibid.*, 5.

39. Mitter shows that by the late medieval period, “classical monsters and gods, Biblical demons and Indian gods were all indiscriminately lumped together with congenital malformations under the all-embracing class of monsters,” and that *this* was the view that “influenced nineteenth-century [western] criticisms of Indian gods as . . . monstrous” (10,8). Pal-Lapinski notes part of the same cultural prejudice, explaining that the early nineteenth century was a period marked by an aversion to Indian temple nudes in particular. Jenkins explains more particularly the change that took place towards the end of the century by studying the views about Indian gods that were reflected in the British Museum’s acquisition/arrangement of sculpture across the nineteenth-century. According to Jenkins, while the early nineteenth century was marked by an aversion to eastern sculpture/idols (founded on beliefs of its civilizational inferiority), the end of the century witnessed a transition to respectable recognition. Jenkins notes that the British Museum was “sluggish in its response to a generally acknowledged need” of acquiring the “sculpture of the oriental Indian cultures” and by the end of the nineteenth century this had been remedied (beginning with the 1879 transfer of, among others, sculpture from ancient Buddhist sites such as the Amaravati stupa) (211). Thus, religious sculpture was indeed being acquired and India was beginning to emerge as important—developments which finally took full effect in the twentieth century (11). Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). Piya Pal-Lapinski, *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction and Culture* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2004). Ian Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes: In the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum, 1800–1939* (London: British Museum Press, 1992).

40. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 77–78.

41. *Ibid.*, 76.

42. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 289; Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 78. One may take quick note of Hardy’s *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), where Stephen Smith writes from India to his fiancée, Elfride, that one day he “bought some small native idols to send home to [her] as curiosities, but afterwards finding they had been cast in England, *made to look old*, and shipped over, [he] threw them away in disgust.” *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1995), 160, emphasis added.

43. As I noted earlier, both idols are shown to have had a history of self-propelled vindictive violence in India. We find in Marsh conjectures of the goddess’s violent performances in the Indian temple, and in Anstey descriptions of the Jain idol’s jealous malice towards the worship of other Indian idols. After a period of relative quiet, their murderousness is self-activated once they are transported to England and they come into the possession of Englishmen (Edwin Lawrence and Ronald Campion). Their vindictive malice towards their English owners in particular, and the imperial metropolis in general, unsettles the colonial hierarchy and dramatizes the fears of anti-colonial insurgency that lie at the heart of the novels.

44. Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

45. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 293.

46. Barbara Arnett Melchiori, *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

47. Ó Donghaile, *Blasted Literature*, 2, 3. Ó Donghaile explains that the Fenian bombs were also known as infernal machines because they were “both deadly and inorganic” (alive while apparently inert), that is, “the bomb’s capacity to frighten lay in its potential to bring the normally inert substance of high explosives into lethal being and to shatter not just physical matter but also the very nervous system of its political target” (3).

48. Ó Donghaile informs us that there was a new “carefully guarded” exhibit to be seen in 1894 in the Crime Museum of New Scotland Yard (or the “Black Museum”) where every “dynamite relic” from the Fenian campaign of the 1880s was put on display, meant to instruct the “Metropolitan Police in the latest developments in subversive activity” such as the “delicate and elaborate ‘clockwork pattern’ of the time bomb” (1, 2). As the *Strand Magazine* reporting on them made clear, these bombs were “very special artefacts” precisely because “they were not relics from antiquity” like the “ancient objects held in the British Museum, such as the contents of its popular and rapidly expanding Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities”

but the “actual weapons’ that had just been invented and put to deadly use on English soil by the Fenians” (objects which were “far more contemporary, if absolutely forbidden, ‘mementoes’ [with] ... a more thrilling immediacy”) (2).

49. Ó Donghaile, *Blasted Literature*, 1.

50. Collins, *The Moonstone*, 86, 208.

51. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7.

52. Metcalf notes that a missionary writes in 1828 of the unparalleled nature of this car festival in the world where “within so small a compass” one witnesses “such complicated scenes of misery, cruelty, and vice.” Thomas R. Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India: Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), III: 174.

53. *Ibid.*, 174.

54. Thomas Carlyle, “Characteristics,” in *The Modern British Essayists: Thomas Carlyle* (Philadelphia: A. Hart, Carey & Hart, 1852), V: 305.

55. Secord notes that the language of sensation was “most consistently applied to the explosive growth of the railway network” where the railways “were compared to an alien ‘juggernaut,’ which turned the normally reserved English into blind worshippers of an all-conquering mechanical idol.” James A. Secord, *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 6. This can be seen in the iconic *Punch* illustration called “The Railway Juggernaut of 1845” which depicts a “steam engine, running without any rails and piloted by a demon not at the controls, plough[ing] into a worshipping crowd whose most zealous members throw themselves in its path.” “The Railway Juggernaut of 1845,” *Punch*, 26 July 1845, 47. Fyfe explains that in this cartoon “*Punch* satirizes the idolatry of ‘railway mania’ and clarifies what the ‘juggernaut’ looks like in early Victorian England”—“*Punch* makes the 1840s financial bubble of railway speculation tantamount to religious mania, showing investors seduced by what was sure to crash—and crush them as well.” See Paul Fyfe, *By Accident or Design: Writing the Victorian Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 211–12.

56. H. G. Wells, “The Lord of the Dynamos,” in *Selected Stories of H. G. Wells* (New York: Random House, 2004), 203–11. Minsoo Kang shows that the “living machines” of the mid and late nineteenth century began to be associated with monstrous power and often ambivalently evil force. See Minsoo Kang, *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), xi.

57. Kipling, *The Mark of the Beast and Other Horror Tales*, 70.

58. Marsh, *Joss: A Reversion*, 250.

59. Wells, “The Lord of the Dynamos,” 205.

60. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 6. The idol is strangely reminiscent of Marsh’s eponymous Joss, the machine-like Englishman-turned-oriental-idol, who moved on wheels and who was surrounded by “monster”-like mechanical objects whose “arms began to move, their heads to waggle, their mouths to open and shut” all at the same time (248). We can understand the challenge launched by the mechanical idol by contextualizing it also against the tradition of the genre of anti-science fiction—a genre characteristic of the late nineteenth century (popularised by writers like Cutcliffe Hyne) and defined by its antithetical stand to the philosophy of progress—in which a created machine wreaks havoc on the creator. The idols can be seen as participating in an anti-colonial critique of western notions of ‘progress’—notions that were founded on the hierarchy of the rational over the supernatural, the technological and scientific west over the primitive and spiritual east.

61. *Ibid.*, 293.

62. It is useful to note the historical context of the manufacture and circulation of automata in the west, placed against which the emergence of this idol-automaton becomes significant. Pinkus writes that automatons had a long history in the west, originating in the ancient times and continuing through the middle ages, the seventeenth century, and finally

“reach[ing] the peak of its popularity in the eighteenth century” (86). Coleman and Fraser note that in the eighteenth century “attempts to understand life by reproducing it mechanically resulted in life-like automata” (“with the invention of the first biomechanical automata”) (5,1). However, they explain by referring to authors like Blake, Carlyle, Arnold, and Dickens that “it is in the nineteenth century that the relationship between the human and the machine under post-industrial capitalism becomes a pervasive force” (5). Pinkus sums up the major philosophical shift that took place at this time by showing that, “beginning around the nineteenth century,” there was “a cultural shift ... from the automaton as moving sculpture (animation of the inanimate) to the lifeless humanoid (inanimation of the animate)”—i.e. from older idea of the automaton (“based on a notion of seeming self-propulsion”) with its “representational value” to the post-industrial age when what exists is mere machinery (that is only “pure, productive machine” sans any “representational value”) (87–88). Karen Pinkus, “Automata,” *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, Helene E. Roberts, ed. (London: Routledge, 2013); Deidre Coleman and Hilary Fraser, eds. *Minds, Bodies, Machines, 1770–1930* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

63. John Picker, “My Fair Lady Automaton,” *ZAA: Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*. 63.1 (2015), 92, 90–92. The idea of the female automaton took this significant step in literature, partly under the influence of the (failed) Edisonian efforts to make a female phonograph (“a working talking doll”) around 1888. Similar female automatons performing phonographic functions (and “literalizing the connection] between sound recording and robotic femininity”) were “amplified by contemporary authors” in works such as these. “The Lady Automaton” is “perhaps the earliest explicit English appropriation of Villiers’s novel—and Edison’s doll—in its recycling of the figure of the phonographic female” (90–92).

64. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 293.

65. Ernest Edward Kellert. “The Lady Automaton,” in *Science Fiction by the Rivals of H. G. Wells*, Alan K. Russell, ed. (Seaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1979), 349–64.

66. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 294. Edwin sums up the frightening confusion at the goddess’s evidently murderous laughter thus: “[S]he relished her humorous conception more than I have. The qualities which go to the complete enjoyment of the jokes she plays, I lack. The laughter she compels has characteristics which I do not find altogether to my taste.” (263). Similarly, in Anstey, the destructive idol is presented as always wearing an evil smile, incomprehensible to its audience, and suggestive of cruel mockery (such as when the sight of it suggested to Ronald that Sibyl had gifted it to him not out of love but out of “some fantastic spirit of mockery”). We learn that it has an “inscrutable smile on its calm countenance” full of “smug and sleepy self-satisfaction—as if it were being reverently tickled by an unseen attendant” (similar to Marsh’s goddess-idol whose face, even after its destruction, bears “a smile, born of repletion”) (65). Nebelson, a disciple of an eastern Theosophical mahatma, explains to Ronald further in his usual broken English that the idol is an “elemental” who is wreaking havoc on Ronald because he has a “curious blayfulness.” To this Ronald says disparagingly: “If that is an elemental’s notion of fun, I can’t follow him” (176). The laughter of the idol is marked by a complete indifference towards the Englishman’s suffering, a malicious preference for his fawning attendance, and a complacent and incomprehensible enjoyment of exploitation. It is therefore this very incomprehensible opaque will of the lifeless idol-automaton and its thing-like, automated (mechanical), unpredictable maliciousness that defies Western rational comprehension or logical interpretation, causing it to definitively slip out of western control. As Ronald splutters in desperation, to the apparently lifeless ‘image’ in a “hoarse whisper”: “What do you want?... Only tell me that. Whatever you are—be *reasonable*.” (199, emphasis added). Clearly, the invasive automaton-like idols of the late nineteenth century begin to embody these tensions relating to irrationality, mechanical emptiness, evil self-propulsion, and the absence of human agency, challenging British rationalistic confidence and feeding terrors of colonial insurgency.

67. Ketabgian deals with the same Victorian hybrid overlap of the ‘human’ and the ‘machine’ that the novels evoke and that I study when I focus on the theory of the “conscious automaton.” Ketabgian studies Victorian literature “uncover[ing] forms of feeling and community that combine the vital and the mechanical, the human and the nonhuman, in strikingly productive ways,” and arguing that these texts show how “workers and machines are compulsively cou-

pled and uncoupled, dissected and rejoined, to yield new, hybrid forms of human community” (1, 11–13). Tamara Ketabgian, *The Lives of Machines: The Industrial Imaginary in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

68. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 180–81; emphasis added.

69. Forlini explains that although controversial, this theory of epiphenomenalism (then more frequently called the “automaton theory”) “was (for a time) ‘explicitly affirmed to be the only one which a really scientific man can ... hold,’ because of its reliance on the unshakeable ‘universal laws of mechanics’” (201). Key proponents included Huxley, Spalding, Hodgson, Clifford, and Maudsley. Stefania Forlini, “The Difference an Object Makes: Conscious Automaton Theory and the Decadent Cult of Artifice,” in *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture*, ed. Katharina Boehm (London: Palgrave, 2012).

70. Thomas Henry Huxley, “On the Hypothesis that Animals Are Automata, and Its History,” in *Collected Essays, The Works of Thomas Henry Huxley* (New York: Macmillan, 1894–1895), I: 240; emphasis added. 199–250. Originally published in *Fortnightly Review*, 95 (1874), 555–80.

71. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890), 131, emphasis added; 128. James explains (in *The Principles of Psychology*, 1890): “The sense-organs would awaken the brain-cells ... and then the last brain-vibration would discharge downward into the motor tracts. But this would be a quite autonomous chain of occurrences, and whatever mind went with it would be there only as an ‘epiphenomenon,’ an inert spectator” (129). Another useful essay by James was “Are We Automata?” in *Essays in Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). Originally published in *Mind*, 4 (1879), 1–22.

72. Forlini, “The Difference an Object Makes: Conscious Automaton Theory and the Decadent Cult of Artifice,” 201, 200. Anna Neill explains how the state of unconscious cerebration or automaton-like behaviour (beyond the control of the will) was associated in this theory with the lower states of mental functioning while the higher states were considered to lie in the willed state of mind. The automaton-like Indian idol itself, therefore, becomes symbolically associated with the lower and irrational realms of human functioning. Anna Neill, *Primitive Minds: Evolution and Spiritual Experience in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013).

73. The barebones of this life-like mechanicality is also to be seen in Marsh’s Joss who, we are told, “seemed immobile; yet there was that about it which suggested life” (*Joss: A Reverision*, 246). Pinkus notes that the figure of the automaton as such has culturally been figured in artworks as a kind of object that is distinct from any other kind of machine (such as a “robot”) precisely because of this distinctive (albeit ‘apparent’) ability to think i.e. because of its ability to operate “without human muscular intervention” (marked by “the explicit absence of a controlling human figure”) (85).

74. Kellett, “The Lady Automaton,” 349–64, emphasis added.

75. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 289–90, 278.

76. *Ibid.*, 291–93.

77. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 269–70; emphasis added.

78. Marsh, *The Goddess: A Demon*, 11, 116.

79. *Ibid.*, 281, 245, 242–43.

80. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 96.

81. Logan explains how at the time civilizational ‘unculture’ was equated to fetishism (an anthropomorphic worship of an object, seen as related to idolatry). Peter Melville Logan, *Victorian Fetishism: Intellectuals and Primitives* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009).

82. Anstey, *A Fallen Idol*, 198, 199, 200.