

## Hauntings in the Nursery

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## Hauntings in the Nursery: Reviving the Nursemaid Through *Fin-de-Siècle* Gothic

The importance of nursemaids, within both the Victorian household and late-Victorian spectral narratives, cannot be overstated. Domestic doyenne Mrs. (Isabella) Beeton advised that nursemaids were surrogate maternal caregivers who ought to be “entirely devoted to the infant”, practicing the “kindness, perseverance and patience” required to gratify all physical and affective needs.<sup>1</sup> Jane Hamlett emphasizes how the nineteenth-century nursemaid was “an ever-present force in the lives of her charges” and, as “nannies and children shared the same space constantly”, an absent nursemaid was odious to both parent and child.<sup>2</sup>

Nursemaids likewise governed the emotional and moral development of their charges; Mrs. Beeton warned nursemaids of moral “defects” arising in children, advising that, “if properly checked ... evil propensities may be eradicated”.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, transformative mid-nineteenth-century domestic manuals attested to the physiological threats that the nursemaid’s realm, the nursery, held for impressionable children. Florence Nightingale’s miasmatic disease theories conjured haunting scenes to suggest that children were “much more susceptible than grown people to all noxious influences” and that fatal “foul air” occurred “most seriously at night”, while Mrs Beeton insisted on infant respiration and fresh air.<sup>4</sup> Nursemaids were thus not only required to be providers of physical care, but they were expected to defend and protect against morally and physically suffocating threats to children’s spaces.

By the turn of the century, Gothic writers embraced the opportunity to supernaturalize these threats and to reimagine the place of maternal servants when faced with a haunted nursery. Could a nursemaid’s surrogate maternal devotion, uncanny ever-presence, and skill at detecting threat, combat insidious influences arising not only from this world, but from the next? Henry James’ enigmatic Gothic novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) is the most notable example of a maternal servant, a governess, who appears to serve as a magnet for

inexplicable apparitions, yet her guardian role causes her to defend the borderland between spectres and children. As this article contends, the figure of the nursemaid, who has been somewhat hidden behind the wealthier Gothic governess, presented valuable creative opportunities for writers of spook and spectre to conceive of the ghost as the ultimate “noxious influence” in the nursery. Simultaneously, the nursemaid enabled authors of the supernatural to promote the agency (and potential clairvoyance) of lower-class maternal, yet non-biological parent, figures. This article foregrounds Florence Marryat, an ardent Spiritualist and lesser-known, but increasingly revived, author of Gothic and sensation fiction, as a fitting lens through which to revalue the elided identities of fictional nursemaids, refocus on intersections between ghost and child, and prioritize interdependent issues of surrogate maternity and class. By aligning the nursemaid with psychically-attuned séance mediums, I establish how nursemaids command a privileged existence in late nineteenth-century spectral and maternal spaces, and, in doing so, offer a fruitful mode for examining the subaltern. Beyond Marryat, this article identifies how, by developing a more nuanced scholarly understanding of the relationship between late-Victorian Spiritualism and maternity, we can re-evaluate the prominence of the nursemaid in haunted spaces and deepen our understanding of *fin-de-siècle* Gothic.

### I. Reviving the Nursemaid

The Victorian nursemaid has often been overlooked in favour of canonical governesses, including the eponymous *Jane Eyre* (1847) and the unnamed governess and her spectral predecessor, Miss Jessel, in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). This is likely due to what Kathryn Hughes asserts as the governess being “one of the most familiar and abiding images in nineteenth-century literature”.<sup>5</sup> In *The Turn of the Screw*, the governess interrogates the housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, about Bly’s infamous former governess. Mrs. Grose responds, revealing Miss Jessel’s demise: “We had then a young woman—a nursemaid who had stayed

on and who was a good girl and clever; and *she* took the children altogether for the interval. But our young lady never came back, and at the very moment I was expecting her I heard from the master that she was dead”.<sup>6</sup> At this arresting moment of exposition, an obedient and intelligent nursemaid (her first and only appearance in the text) is mentioned in passing, yet her character, despite her proficiency and continued employment, is deployed only to prolong the narrative tension of Mrs. Grose’s revelation. This “interval” nursemaid is never mentioned again, yet her proximity to the children, Miles and Flora, and presumable relationship with Miss Jessel after having “stayed on” would have undoubtedly yielded a valuable line of inquiry for the governess about the mysteries of Bly. Hierarchically, governesses definitively outranked nurses, as is the case at Bly; there are “plenty of people to help” with childcare but the governess “would be in supreme authority”.<sup>7</sup> M. Jeanne Peterson concurs that the nursemaid “was clearly of the servant class” and was generally paid lower wages, meaning the “distinction between the two occupations was always clear”.<sup>8</sup> Peterson furthers that, in both fiction and non-fiction, frequent portrayals of the “down-trodden, pathetic governess” contrasted with the “warm, jolly nanny who won the affection of her charges”.<sup>9</sup> This is reinforced by the amiable “good girl” nursemaid in James’ text and seen when Marryat’s father, well-known early Victorian novelist Captain Frederick Marryat, bemoaned one of his governesses’ chief affective “faults”: that “she is still as cold as ever ... it is of no use attempting to warm her”.<sup>10</sup>

While surveying “the gendered dimensions of haunted space”, the architectural uncanny, and underscoring their importance to nineteenth-century supernatural literature, Emma Liggins highlights the critical neglect of domestic staff more generally, acknowledging that “servants in the Gothic have often remained on the sidelines”.<sup>11</sup> Victoria Margree’s recent analyses of Gothic servants refers to the relationships between memsahibs (colonial wives) and ayahs (children’s nurses) in Alice Perrin’s Anglo-Indian ghost stories to

extend supernatural scholarship so that it is “not simply concerned with ghosts”.<sup>12</sup> Holly Blackford and Ann Mattis review Edith Wharton and the Female Gothic more broadly and tend toward transatlantic studies of housekeepers and servant-mistress relationships in early twentieth-century fiction. With a psychoanalytic focus, Mattis pays particular attention to the feminised Gothic function of servants, arguing that they are “projections of conflicted interiority” in the way they “fracture myths of a hermetically-sealed nuclear family, becoming implicated in the primal web of desire, fear, and identification”.<sup>13</sup> For Mattis, this is especially telling for women when interpreting Gothic domesticity, reading the house as an extension of the female psyche as “servants often do the labor of sustaining monolithic conceptions of the feminine”, which thus enhances internal conflicts within female homes and minds.<sup>14</sup> Marryat’s nursemaids figure as complex examples of these threats to domestic matriarchal spaces, but also serve as indispensable maternal caregivers.

Despite a modest resurgence of criticism on Marryat’s supernatural narratives, appraisals have been largely limited to single-text readings, and neglect examinations of servants. Scholarship has hitherto tended toward Gothic analyses of Marryat’s female vampire novel, published in the same year as *Dracula*, *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897), or esoteric appraisals of her Spiritualist narratives, *The Dead Man’s Message* (1894) and of *The Strange Transfiguration of Hannah Stubbs* (1896).<sup>15</sup> Marryat’s supernatural narratives reach beyond Britain’s shores and this article examines presentations of Marryat’s characters – Harriet Brandt in *Vampire and the Dye* (or Indian nursemaid) in “Little White Souls” (1881) – within their contexts of empire to contribute to a more rounded cultural response to *fin-de-siècle* supernaturalism. Priya Joshi articulates how, for example, “India provides a deep archive of often overlooked evidence on the extensive half-life of things Victorian”, a richness emphasized when examining how Marryat transposes her colonial experience to “Little”.<sup>16</sup> The Dye herself is a character emblematic of the ghost genre’s ability to

simultaneously navigate cultural, maternal, and other-worldly boundaries. Critics' focus on the colonial nineteenth-century homestead, such as Roger Luckhurst's examination of supernatural "doxai" and colonial servants, and Narin Hassan's historiography of the Indian wet nurse, alongside Marryat's reflections as a memsahib – "*Gup*": *Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character* (1868) – further inform my servant-centric reading of "Little".<sup>17</sup>

There are affective and class nuances to recognize when considering the nursemaid in Marryat's works, as seen most potently in the ghost-seeing, Spiritualist potential of her nursemaids. Alex Owen's formative study of late-Victorian Spiritualism and the movement's inextricable entanglement with dominant ideals of femininity reveals that, by the 1870s, Spiritualism in England was "most securely established" with the working and middle-classes. She stresses that Spiritualism offered opportunities to align with gendered "prescriptive virtues" that were highly valued, such as embodying a "natural mother".<sup>18</sup> Brian McCuskey underscores the significance of the nursemaid – necessarily a naturally maternal figure – in both spatial and editorial ghostly spaces, claiming the "one unannounced principle of nineteenth-century spiritualism is the frequent extension of the séance circle to include the household staff". Spiritualists documented this in the classified section of popular Spiritualist periodical *Medium and Daybreak* (1870 – 1895), evidencing the ubiquity of the servant's proximity to the supernatural and ultimately reinforcing that "[s]ervants were hardly a problem for spiritualism".<sup>19</sup> In her bestselling séance-room memoir, *There is No Death* (1891), Marryat demonstrates this by relaying several Spiritualist anecdotes which affirm the apparent ghost-seeing prowess of nursemaids (living or deceased).<sup>20</sup>

Marryat's supernatural narratives – her Spiritualist memoirs and her fiction – serve as important material for a renewed critical understanding of contemporaneous conceptions of nursemaids in haunted spaces. When focusing on the nursemaid's proximity to infant death, Marryat's servants function as authoritative bridges between the supernatural and their

employers. Far from serving in the shadows, nursemaids dominate Marryat's *fin-de-siècle* supernatural works; they actively drive her narratives' ghostly activities by functioning as mediums between the spirit and mortal worlds. With their spectral appearances and disappearances, their dislocation from the homestead (ancestrally for servants, and corporeally for spirits) which leaves them inhabiting a borrowed space, and their phantasmic navigation of the home, it is tempting, as Lynch and Liggins have, to read servants as ghosts, yet I instead assert the mediumship of Marryat's nursemaids.<sup>21</sup> Like the séance medium, they traverse the void between living and dead, use communication as a potent investigative tool, and capitalize financially on the ghostly. Marryat's nursemaids' existence within, and sustained access to, child-centric spaces make them the first point of contact with supernatural threats to mother and infant. As this article demonstrates, the intersections between maternal experience, child threat, and creative expression are integral to deeper understandings of her supernatural narratives, her short story "Little" and novel *Vampire*. Having acknowledged the significance of maternal servants in the Gothic, I now examine how séance-room memoirs foreground Marryat's creative interrogation of the nursemaid, before close reading the figure in Marryat's fiction, arguing for the nursemaid as a valuable means of probing *fin-de-siècle* supernatural and maternal spaces.

## II. Florence Marryat and Spirit-World Caregiving

"We all know Florence Marryat (Mrs. Ross-Church) by her works"; she "needs little or no introduction to the ordinary reader", announced British periodical the *Spiritualist* in 1876, affirming Marryat's contemporaneous literary celebrity to both Spiritualists and 'ordinary' readers alike.<sup>22</sup> Marryat made her name for sensation fiction, with narratives so audacious that Charles Dickens (an acquaintance of her father) cautioned her against "freely touching forbidden topics".<sup>23</sup> American publisher A. K. Loring claimed in 1884 that "[t]o day in America no female novelist has a greater following", while gushing fan-mail praised "the

hands of [a] world-known and world-esteemed lady”.<sup>24</sup> Marryat became editor-in-chief for *London Society* (1862 – 1898) in 1872 when it had “an average circulation of 20,000” and it was reportedly “never better managed than when under her able guidance”.<sup>25</sup> During the 1890s, Marryat was committed to the professionalization of writing and founded the “much-talked-of School of Fiction” (the School of Literary Art).<sup>26</sup> The *fin de siècle* came to redefine Marryat’s authorial identity, signalling her transformation from sensation fiction, a “circulating library favourite”, to prolific author and editor, publishing forty novels and short stories between 1885 and 1897, many of which celebrated the psychical.<sup>27</sup> Periodicals detected this shift, with the *Woman at Home* deeming her “a novelist of the occult” producing “remarkable books dealing with Spiritualism”, while the *Spectator* notes that “spirit experiences” were “now Florence Marryat’s favourite subject”.<sup>28</sup>

Marryat’s popular account of her “wonderful experiences” attending transatlantic séances *No Death* shared the remarkable, and often deeply personal, details of the paranormal phenomena she claimed to have witnessed.<sup>29</sup> Prior to her first séance in 1873, Marryat commented on the polarizing nature of the Spiritualism movement, regarded by some as “a dreadfully wicked thing, diabolical to the last degree”, yet embraced by others “as a most amusing pastime for evening parties”.<sup>30</sup> Following twenty years of “continued experience” with the supernatural, Marryat’s beliefs surpassed mere amusement and her dalliance with the spirit world intensified; she now viewed Spiritualism in a “sacred light”.<sup>31</sup> Marryat’s memoir, written to defend the “science of Spiritualism”, recounts a sitting with the “wonderful materializing medium”, Arthur Cölman.<sup>32</sup> She recollects how Cölman’s preferred spectral invocation (or “control spirit”) Aimée became friends with the ghost of Marryat’s daughter, also named Florence, who had died tragically in 1861, ten days after birth:

‘Aimée’ ... on being questioned as to her occupation in the spirit spheres, had said she was ‘a little nurse maid,’ and that ‘Florence’ was one too, my daughter had



added, ‘Yes! I’m mamma’s nurse maid. I have enough to do to look after her babies. She just looked at me, and ‘tossed’ me back into the spirit world, and she’s been ‘tossing’ babies after me ever since’.<sup>33</sup>

As a passionate Spiritualist, Marryat reframed death as a beginning, not as an end: of her five still-born infants and deceased baby Florence, she was unwavering in her belief that they all “lived again” post mortem.<sup>34</sup>

Spectral Florence is a precocious ghost who has apparently acquired strikingly confident and matured speech after death. Marryat elucidates that Florence had been “growing since our separation, until she had reached the age of ten years”, suggesting an age which qualifies her, and her comparably “little” colleague Aimée, to become nursemaids in the supernatural realm.<sup>35</sup> Curiously, Marryat implies a continuation of a capitalistic professional hierarchy in which all spirits – regardless of age – are expected to acquire domestic occupations. Frequently encountering Florence during séances, Marryat learns that she “had charge of her little brothers and sisters” as a supernatural protector for infants prematurely “tossed” or “launched upon” the other side.<sup>36</sup> Marryat’s distinctive phrasing here recalls an antithetical caregiving scene in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), in which the Duchess, ostensibly nursing an infant, “kept tossing the baby violently up and down, and the poor little thing howled” which leads Alice to explore “the proper way of nursing it”.<sup>37</sup> Like the young Alice, the spectral Florence embraces the adult maternal role, intercepting infants ‘tossed’ away by their caregivers. Yet unlike Alice’s decidedly dark encounter with the abused child (and its subsequent transmogrification into a pig), Marryat’s juvenile nursemaid and her charge are shown to be bettered after being ‘tossed’ to their Spiritualist afterlife. Marryat uses the nursemaid figure as part of a potent framework to share idiosyncrasies from her séances and connect with mourning mothers. *No Death* established a purposeful epistolary network for those invested in, or curious about, the spirit-world

existence of their lost loved ones; its publication prompted “hundreds of letters of gratitude from bereaved parents around the world”.<sup>38</sup> By invoking her own lost baby’s voice in *No Death*, Marryat conveys an inversion of the maternal relationship in a powerful show of solidarity with bereaved parents. Marryat reappraises the nursemaid by exploring death from Florence’s omniscient perspective, one which encompasses spiritual guardianship of her own mother and deceased siblings. Here, a nursemaid represents the ultimate care-giving figure, whose vocational abilities transcend age, maternal experience, and even death, whilst determinedly reinforcing the nursemaid’s overriding value. This personal interaction between earthbound mother and spectral daughter is one of many which establish Marryat’s fascination with the intersection between spirits and female servants.

### III. Impressionability and Spirit-World Surrogacy



Fig. 1. A nurse holding a baby. Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection.

Marryat’s early autobiographical experiences with her own nursemaid reveal the formative influences and imaginative impressions that mothers and mother figures had on her fictional oeuvre. In 1894, Marryat stressed her disdain for inhibiting the morbid musings of children; she recalls her own “ignorant nursemaid”, who took her to watch funerals, and who, if faced with insubordinate behavior, threatened to “tell the dead men to come and carry me away”. Marryat believed her responsible for seeding, during her “tenderest years”, early anti-

Spiritualist thought – an “unnatural dread of Death”.<sup>39</sup> In Marryat’s most overt servant-led supernatural narrative, *Hannah Stubbs*, Doctor Steinberg recalls the ghost folklore impressed upon him as a child, affirming (rather surprisingly as a skeptical man of science) the stories’ permanence: “our faith is prone to cling to the truths ... instilled into our minds during childhood”.<sup>40</sup> Considering Freud’s “The Uncanny” (1919), McCuskey sheds further light on the indelible ghostly influences that nursemaids impressed upon children. McCuskey establishes how “The Uncanny” acts as a precursor to Henry James’ supernatural tale “The Jolly Corner” (1908), a narrative also concerning dynamics between servants and the spectral. Freud’s essay opens by linking “the uncanny to servants, whose nursery stories introduce middle-class children to those primitive beliefs in the supernatural that should be surmounted in adulthood; the residue of those beliefs constitutes one major source of the uncanny”.<sup>41</sup> In *Hannah Stubbs*, Steinberg’s nostalgia, or ‘residue’ of supernatural beliefs, reinforces the significance of the nursemaid in introducing the supernatural and embedding an enduring sense of the uncanny from childhood, even in the most empirically reasoned individual.

The nursery’s spatial design encouraged children to “both physically and imaginatively” navigate them, underlining how child-rearing spaces become influential for imaginative potential, and, consequently, for ghost-seeing.<sup>42</sup> Robert Kerr’s popular domestic architecture guide endorsed the “principle of Privacy” to ensure that “the main part of the house must be relieved from the more immediate occupation of the Children”, and thus a nursery space, ideally divided into a “Sleeping-room” and a “Day-room” and occupied by an omniscient nursemaid, was “vital”.<sup>43</sup> The control dictated by the Victorian nursery alienated children from their parents’ emotional support while “spatial contact with the servants ... forged separate and distinctive relationships with them”, implying that nursemaids offered more nuanced intimacy than mothers.<sup>44</sup> Marryat’s strained relationship with her mother, Catherine, offers insight into this emotional dislocation, as underlined by Dickens who

observed that Marryat's mother "had no interest whatever in the children".<sup>45</sup> Marryat's mother is "largely absent from her memoirs" and "profoundly dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships" permeate Marryat's fiction.<sup>46</sup> Conversely, Marryat recalls her father as the doting, hands-on parent, recalling him "putting babies to sleep" and "wrest[ling] the servants' duty from their hand and enact[ing] the part of head nurse himself".<sup>47</sup> This usurpation of the nursemaid's role is a theme which Marryat reinscribes into "Little" and *Vampire* and underscores how Marryat's developmental experiences encouraged her to use supernatural fiction as an experimental space to explore who and what (from spirit, to vampire) could play nursemaid.

In *No Death*, Marryat details the revenant of her deceased sister, Emily, whom Marryat "loved dearly" and had died unexpectedly.<sup>48</sup> Marryat recounts how Emily became a close surrogate carer for her daughter: "When I lost my little 'Florence,' Emily had been unmarried, and she had taken a great interest in my poor baby, and nursed her during her short lifetime, and ... really mourned her loss, for (although she had children of her own) she always wore a little likeness of 'Florence'".<sup>49</sup> The word "nursed", as well as the locket worn by Emily's breast, suggests an irrecoverably close physical bond of breastfeeding, or wet-nursing. Hinting at Emily's wet-nursing her niece is controversial here as, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, maternal breastfeeding was preferred medically and socially.<sup>50</sup> Emily is cast as an unconventional yet omnipresent maternal influence, as typified by the *fin-de-siècle* wet nurse, which Marryat underscores with Emily's spectral reappearance. Conveying the nursemaid into the realm of the ghostly, Marryat details an emotive scene in which Emily's ghost materializes with baby Florence "in her arms, with her head resting on her shoulder ... and my little girl clung to her lovingly".<sup>51</sup> The infant's physical clinginess suggests a symbiotic wet-nursing connection which persists into the spirit world and, given that Florence died from "'inanition' ... or what became known as failure to thrive", Emily's

breastfeeding of a once-malnourished spirit-infant is deeply symbolic.<sup>52</sup> Infused with pathos, the scene establishes a strong, and mutual, affection between baby and surrogate mother, something which comforts bereaved mother and her spirit sister alike.

Jen Baker observes that child spirits historically “require naming (i.e. baptism) and/or proper burial to escape their liminal status and pass over from the purgatorial state”, noting a Victorian urgency for domestic reunions post-mortem.<sup>53</sup> Marryat relays that “Emily did not speak aloud, but she kept on looking down at “Florence,” ... whilst her lips formed the words, “Little Baby,” ... the name by which she had always mentioned my spirit-child”.<sup>54</sup> Emily’s ability, therefore, to strip “Florence” of her earthly identity and re-christen her “Little Baby” makes her integral to Florence’s Spiritualist apotheosis and a consequent source of comfort for Marryat: a mourning mother with a deep ideological investment in spiritual betterment. This echoes the cathartic aftershock of Marryat’s work, namely, the quantifiable international outpourings of grief she received upon publishing *No Death*, when “letters have poured in ... from strangers, in every habitable part of the globe, at the rate of seven or eight a day”.<sup>55</sup> She identifies “cries of pain and doubt and bereavement” she received from mothers “weeping for their children and refusing to be comforted” and employs impassioned rhetoric to highlight the “bruised and bleeding hearts” of readers and her impact on “mothers [who] have spoken again with their children”.<sup>56</sup> Marryat’s accounts of earthly and ghostly nursemaids are effective in animating the nursemaid as a productive surrogate mother figure for infants, both living and spectral.

#### IV. *The Blood of the Vampire*

Marryat’s sister’s affective and social position, an othered unmarried mother, recalls Harriet Brandt, the unmarried protagonist of Marryat’s occult novel *Vampire*, who similarly usurps the role of nursemaid through her compulsive affection for a new-born baby girl. Harriet is

the mixed-race Creole daughter of a torturous vivisectionist and a promiscuous Obeah priestess (renowned for her bloodlust), while her maternal grandmother was the rumored victim of a vampire bat. Harriet is ostracized for her “curse of heredity” and her racial heritage is routinely pathologized, while the theme of maternity is borne out through three generations of maternal blame for perceived genetic distortion.<sup>57</sup> Prolonged exposure to Harriet causes fatal illness and the doctor forbids the social and maternal connections she craves. Harriet is diagnosed as a psychic vampire, one who drains “vitality—sapping their physical strength” rather than drinking blood.<sup>58</sup> Published in 1897, the year of *Dracula* and Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle, Vampire* is steeped in themes of racial degeneracy which reflects contemporary demand for othering Gothic and the occult. Marryat constructs the demonization (or vampirization) of the racially othered and sexually transgressive Harriet, who represents a perennial threat to *fin-de-siècle* society. Marryat’s ostracized vampire tale is symptomatic of what Stephen Arata famously claimed of *Dracula*: it too is a “reverse colonization” narrative emerging from an era of imperial decline and attendant late-Victorian cultural guilt.<sup>59</sup> Ailise Bulfin assesses *Vampire* as Gothic invasion fiction which specifically confronts post-colonial West-Indian society, identifying “a repressive tripartite social structure of European planters, African slaves, and an intermediary mixed-race group born largely out of the iniquitous practice of concubinage”.<sup>60</sup> This third group reinforces the inherent racial and sexual discrimination which accompany Harriet’s West-Indian lineage back to its divorced colonial parent, ultimately rendering her character “emblematic of the horrors of the West Indian plantation system”.<sup>61</sup>

Hierarchical servant/master dynamics are dramatized through Harriet’s childhood memories of her father owning a Jamaican plantation as she disturbingly recalls laughing at enslaved people being whipped. Marryat histrionically subverts the master/slave dichotomy by relaying Harriet’s father’s gruesome fate at the hands of those he has enslaved when,

“after having murdered him with appropriate atrocity, [they] set fire to his house”.<sup>62</sup> This is highly symbolic in light of Marryat’s “residual guilt” at her own father’s West-Indian plantation, the familial wealth amassed from the slave trade, and the fact that her grandfather, MP Joseph Marryat, had an illegitimate daughter, Ann, with an enslaved woman.<sup>63</sup> That Ann herself, as Catherine Hall discovers, “held an investment in her own slaves” problematizes Marryat’s imaginings of Harriet who, like Ann, is shunned for her racial heritage but also reinforces the oppression of the enslaved.<sup>64</sup> The strained personal history that Marryat blends into Harriet’s fictional legacy corroborates Catherine Pope’s assessment of Marryat’s “significant” autobiographical fictional style, while evidencing that “Marryat’s racism is complicated and often contradictory: she is both fascinated and repelled by otherness”.<sup>65</sup> As servants (typically othered figures) increase their visibility, employer/employee power dynamics are destabilized and gossip abounds, threatening to disrupt the workforce’s expected deference, as epitomized by their cautionary retort: “you cannot keep servants’ tongues from wagging”.<sup>66</sup>

Underpinning its complex racial politics, *Vampire* presents diverse maternal servants who dictate the story’s supernatural action whilst threatening to imbalance domestic hierarchies. *Vampire*’s mysterious occultism – from Obeah witchcraft to psychic vampirism – is mediated through the gossip and subterfuge of servants. Servants utter the novel’s first use of the term “Vampire”, demonstrating how, in the same way that mediums bring the supernatural to life, Marryat’s servants “declare” supernatural rumors a reality.<sup>67</sup> Nursemaids are enlisted as spies to source intelligence on Harriet’s supposedly necromantic lineage. Socialite Margaret Pullen instructs her nurse to “find out the name of the young lady ... Philippe understands English. He will tell you!”.<sup>68</sup> The nurse’s freedom of movement avoids arousing suspicion, enabling her to permeate boundaries to seek information her employer cannot otherwise covertly access. Traversing linguistic and professional borderlines, her

unchaperoned liaison with bilingual waiter Philippe emphasizes her movement from feminized nursery spaces into the male-guarded kitchen. The nurse's reconnaissance mission elevates her status to that of a valued service provider, starkly contrasting with how conspiring occultist, Madame Gobelli, treats her family. Gobelli's husband is "servile in her presence", "wait[ing] upon his wife's wishes as if he were her slave", while she keeps her son "under her surveillance".<sup>69</sup> "A floating rumour" that Gobelli "had been old Mr. Bates's cook before he married her" affirms Gobelli's enslavement of others in, what is presented as, Gobelli's attempts to obscure her own servant-class legacy.<sup>70</sup>

Miss Wynward, beleaguered housekeeper and reluctant governess of Gobelli's son, Bobby, is initially the picture of subservience: a loyal maternal servant who dutifully facilitates Gobelli's séances in fear of her wrath. Gobelli's occult infamy renders her a formidable employer when Bobby reveals that "our servants will never stay with us long. One girl told me ... that Mamma was a witch, and could raise up the dead", a disclosure which underscores the supernatural cognizance of Marryat's servants through their knowledge of witchcraft and Spiritualism.<sup>71</sup> Miss Wynward eventually betrays her professional duties by unmasking Gobelli as a fraudulent séance practitioner and reveals her own role as medium. She replicates Harriet's psychic vampirism as she drains Gobelli's authority with an arresting resignation: "the ex-governess simply looked her in the face ... She made the woman feel that her power was gone".<sup>72</sup> Pointedly now an "ex-governess", Marryat linguistically and figuratively dismisses the governess, suggesting its overused literary status. After experiencing mediumship firsthand, Miss Wynward absorbs Gobelli's occultism and channels this for her own psychic vampirism. Her desensitized stare and ephemeral movements are spectral and unnerving, but they are also the most authentic forms of ghost-channeling emerging from Gobelli's séances. With her resignation, Miss Wynward exhibits traits aligning her with the Spiritualist medium, including an ownership of her



economic position, a mesmeric stare and, crucially for Marryat, a defence of authentic supernatural experiences.

*Vampire* creatively interrogates nursemaids, both actual and performative, who are crucial drivers of supernatural action. The nursemaid's expected presence is vividly evoked when troubled mother, Margaret, berates her nurse for exposing her baby, Ethel, to Harriet's supposed malevolence, "you had no right to let them take her, Nurse – ... no right to let the child out of your sight!", and warns Harriet that "you must never take baby away from her nurse again".<sup>73</sup> Margaret's anger reinforces the constant visual awareness and physical attentiveness required of the nursemaid, especially considering (potentially fatal) exposure to immoral influences. Margaret's fears recall when Harriet's vampirism caused the deaths of both baby Caroline, as she "used to creep into her nursery door and lie down in the cot beside her", and her own wet nurses who, as Edmundson identifies, by contrast, "are consigned to anonymity and remain nameless".<sup>74</sup> Being "very fond of children", Harriet craves their affection, believing it to be "beautiful to have something to love you", and showers Ethel with gifts in a clear emulation of the nursemaid.<sup>75</sup> Corroborating this, Gobelli exclaims that Harriet is "playing at nursemaid again!" and "waited on baby as if she had been her servant!".<sup>76</sup> Harriet's zoonotic origins as a coalesced animal and human, as Edmundson stresses, indicate "another layer of hybridity", which deepens Marryat's exploration of not only *who* enacts the nursemaid, but *what*.<sup>77</sup> In light of the doctor's racially othering and dehumanizing warning that "when the cat is black, the kitten is black too", "playing nursemaid" is the only accepted maternal role that Harriet can perform.<sup>78</sup> Comparably, with her perceived prurience and "coaxing mouth", the accused love rival of "Little", Cissy Lawless, also "act[s] the part of the most devoted of nurses", reinforcing how enacting the nursemaid is metonymic of sexual threat from promiscuous female outsiders.<sup>79</sup>

Harriet and Cissy exhibit highly sensual, yet distinctly maternal, tendencies which call attention to contemporaneous narratives surrounding desire and reproduction. Their coexisting identities as both sexual beings and nursemaids indicate Marryat's defiance of discourse expounded by gynaecological physicians. William Acton, for instance, asserted the incongruity of women who wet-nursed and displayed sexual urges; he suggested that "sexual desire is almost annihilated" by the "vital force" required to breastfeed.<sup>80</sup> For Harriet, her overt sexuality also appears as a dramatization of her perceived identity as a Caribbean vampire, or soucouyant, who supposedly inhabited "a literal and metaphorical space outside the accepted boundaries".<sup>81</sup> The narrative's very lack of blood (expected from the novel's title and necessary for traditional vampire existence) concurrently denies the presence of menstruation and alludes to a disruption of Harriet's ovarian cycle, implying issues with her fertility. While we expect the vampire to regularly draw and drink blood, Harriet is expected to shed it, yet her bloodless vampirism comes to symbolise an ill-functioning female biology. The doctor's pathologizing of Harriet reinforces her sense of maternal inadequacy; he alludes to her insufficient provision of gestational sustenance, or a future failure to breastfeed, when diagnosing her unfit to "nourish" others, instead predicting that she will cause "weakening and debilitating".<sup>82</sup> Although Harriet's decision not to procreate is never made explicit, she contemplates how her parents dared to "bring her into the world, an innocent yet hapless child of sin – an inheritor of their evil propensities", until resolving to "live and die alone", suggesting suicide as remedy for biological damnation.<sup>83</sup> Harriet thus rejects her maternal urges to evade her procreative curse, instead usurping the role of temporary mother from the nursemaid.

Aligning with the soucouyants who "subvert the role of protective mother by preying upon children", Margaret's fears are realized as Ethel's health fatally declines in Harriet's presence.<sup>84</sup> Although Ethel's death is foreshadowed throughout, it is the nurse's failure to

perform her protective role, by leaving the baby with Harriet, which evokes the most darkly ironic presage of the baby's loss: "the nurse came up to her with the perambulator, piled up with toys but no baby".<sup>85</sup> In *Vampire*, Marryat evokes the most graphic and detailed infant deathbed scene of all of her supernatural narratives, one in which the baby's nursemaid holds significant agency and is conceived as both Spiritualist medium and doctor's assistant. Despite the physician's judgement that Ethel "may cease to breathe at any moment", Margaret is absent from Ethel's bedside and is summoned upstairs as "Martin the nurse met them at the door, bathed in tears", with Ethel's body behind her.<sup>86</sup> The significance of this tragic meeting is two-fold: firstly, the nurse's dedication to her charge in the most climactic moment has finally earned her a named identity – "Martin"; secondly, Martin becomes the messenger of Ethel's death – the mediumistic connection between living mother and deceased daughter. With Martin already "bathed in tears", Marryat illustrates that the nurse begins to grieve before the baby's mother, thus raising her affective status. Here, Marryat affirms Mrs. Beeton's insistence upon the nursemaid's "entirely devoted" affective responsibilities, which, as reinforced by the continuation of Emily's tender spectral caregiving in *No Death*, far from dissipate when the child dies.<sup>87</sup> The topophilic significance of meeting at the door vividly symbolizes a spiritual threshold which Martin, as mediumistic messenger, navigates between mother and baby. In a surprising role reversal with the doctor, Martin medicalizes through her (overly)graphic and corporealized recollection of events, stating Ethel "was lying on my lap, pretty dear ... when she went off in a convulsion and died", and is responsible for the corpse post-mortem. Conversely, the doctor relays spiritual language which blends both Christian and Spiritualist vernacular, revealing that Ethel "went off like a lamb, without a struggle", even intimating that "she is not dead – she is living – with God!".<sup>88</sup> Throughout the deathbed scene, Martin remains a communicative conduit between mother and baby and takes the most prominent physical role in Ethel's loss,

remaining, above both mother and doctor, corporeally connected with the infant immediately pre- and post-mortem. By imbuing the nursemaid with the most agency in the baby's dying moments, Marryat stresses the significance of the nursemaid in dictating the action of a supernatural narrative so sadly punctuated with child loss.

#### V. "Little White Souls"

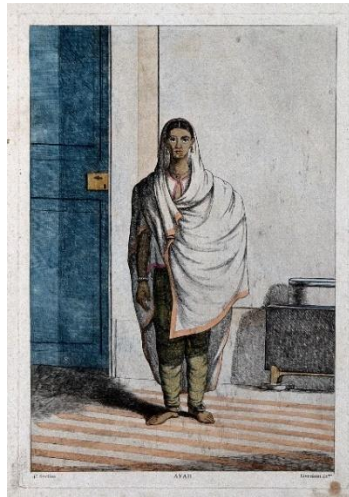


Fig. 2. Ayah, or female attendant for European and Indian women, Calcutta, West Bengal. Coloured etching by Francois Balthazar Solvyns, ca. 1808-1812. Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection.

Emphasizing the centrality of child loss in Marryat's ghost fiction, "Little White Souls" is a narrative set in colonial India which typifies how nursemaids command the frontline between infants and ghosts, while illustrating the tragic consequences of failed supernatural guardianship. Likely inspired by Marryat's self-described "seven years passed in exile" across India with her first husband, Thomas Ross Church, and the death of baby Florence on her return, "Little" is a critically undervalued ghost story, which blends Marryat's sensation style with spectral rumors in the colonies.<sup>89</sup> Beginning in an expatriate garrison in which "jealousy reigns supreme", the Colonel's wife, Ethel Dunstan, suspects the alluring Cissy Lawless (aptly named, given her unruliness) of poaching her husband.<sup>90</sup> When Ethel's daughter Katie suddenly falls ill, a pregnant Ethel relocates to an imposing Gothic castle for its enervating hillside-air.<sup>91</sup> Accompanied by her loyal unnamed "Dye", or

nursemaid, Ethel ignores her cautions that “bad people” haunt the castle, instead racialising the insubordination as “native insurrections and rebellions”.<sup>92</sup> The Dye is an intuitive ghost-seer with an emotional investment in Ethel’s children; she vivifies what Runa Das Chaudhuri identifies as the *fin-de-siècle* “spiritualist turf in Calcutta which abounded in psychic happenings and domestic circles of grief”.<sup>93</sup> She repeatedly warns of a phantasmic white woman who has been murdered with her child by the castle’s barbarous owner, leaving a curse under which “no infant born in this house ever lived”. The Dye cautions Ethel of the spectre’s dissatisfaction “with the souls of black children” as it stalks the nursery waiting to steal Ethel’s baby post-labor.<sup>94</sup> Dismissive of these warnings, Ethel’s distress following an argument with Cissy triggers the premature birth of her son, following which she collapses, and, despite the Dye’s protective efforts, the apparition carries “the soul of the white child away”.<sup>95</sup> Marryat’s intrusive first-person narration at the story’s opening, and her moralizing tone at its close, serves both to assert the story’s supernatural veracity, that it is “*strictly true*” to psychical sceptics, but also, by presenting the most fatal consequence for Ethel’s newborn, to convey a cautionary tale against mothers who neglect the communicative and spiritually-regenerative possibilities afforded by the spirit world.<sup>96</sup> This is encapsulated in Ethel’s closing lamentation, that “if I had only been a little more credulous ... I might not have lived to see my child torn from my arms by the spirit”.<sup>97</sup> Thus, by juxtaposing the Dye’s intuitive understanding of the spirit world against Ethel’s preoccupation with earthly trivialities, Marryat condemns the psychically “ignorant and bigoted”: those who ignore the mediumistic seeing of ghosts.<sup>98</sup>

Although the spectre’s racist preferences for white infants is deeply troubling and reinforces Hassan’s identification of “the imperial project’s participation in the neglect of native children”, Marryat’s characterization of the Dye as a diligent and capable maternal surrogate attempts to address, and perhaps regrets, the localized colonial prejudice that

Marryat (herself a memsahib twenty years prior to “Little”) publicly promoted.<sup>99</sup> “*Gup*” (meaning ‘gossip’) demonstrates Marryat’s “dislike for the natives of Madras”, catalyzed by the betrayal she felt after her wet-nurse, Anemah, “grossly disobeyed” her and – reminiscent of Miss Wynward – dramatically resigned.<sup>100</sup> However, of indigenous women, Marryat asserts that “the greatest instinct they possess ... is that of maternal love”, thus affirming her insistence upon the maternally-redemptive qualities of the Dye in “Little”.<sup>101</sup>

Contemporaneously, the Anglo-Indian female view of the indigenous nursemaid was one of suspicion and mistrust. Accounts from memsahibs underscored a homogenizing prejudice of native nursemaids as “idle” and female staff were denigrated so that colonial wives “showcased their own imperial civility”.<sup>102</sup> Hassan highlights that memsahibs regarded the nursemaid as “a potentially troublesome, demanding, and yet necessary figure”.<sup>103</sup> While Ethel’s accusations against the Dye align with Roberts’ characterization of the “troublesome” nursemaid, Ethel’s eventual capitulation (paying the Dye an inflated wage to approach the castle) affirms the reluctant memsahib’s belief in the Dye’s overriding necessity abroad. Further, it corroborates Hassan’s overarching claim that “the native wet nurse was a crucial domestic worker”, whose breastmilk facilitated the intimate traversal of cultural boundaries, rendering her a “potentially powerful and subversive force”.<sup>104</sup> The Dye’s financial command of her ghost-seeing abilities is particularly revealing in its reformulation of Anglo-Indian colonial stereotypes, and emphasizes the Dye’s abilities to traverse professional, supernatural, maternal, and cultural boundaries.

Marryat’s Dye is her most multi-faceted iteration of the nursemaid; she is at once prophetic, resourceful, and dedicated, but can also be exploitative. The Dye offers specialized ghost knowledge, disclosing her imperviousness to malevolent spirits, revealing her wisdom that “if they touch missy she will die. Missus had better let me put up curtain to keep them out. They can’t do me any harm. It is the child they come for”, and so offers pragmatic

solutions to ghostly threat.<sup>105</sup> Compared to other servants, whose vernacular and whisperings Ethel interprets as “Double Dutch”, the Dye is a proficient translator of the supernatural, standing out as a vocal and expressive communicator imbued with clairvoyance characteristic of the Spiritualist medium.<sup>106</sup> Luckhurst insists that “the supernatural was a freely used means of communication at the colonial margin”, citing the “Hindu Secret Mail” as one of the “occult doubles which mysteriously exceeded European systems” as it supposedly “spread insurrection during the Indian Mutiny”.<sup>107</sup> Tellingly, the 1857 mutiny occurred when Marryat was resident there and establishes her first-hand experiences of the destabilizing effects of class-based supernatural gossip. In “*Gup*”, Marryat perpetuates this culture of subterfuge with scandalizing, though intended to be “harmless”, rumors of servants poisoning their masters, alongside a homogenizing fixation on native “medical secrets” which she believed was indicative of an inexplicable “eastern character”.<sup>108</sup> Luckhurst emphasizes that, “at the edges of Western rule, the supernatural clearly did function as a useful currency to articulate encounters”.<sup>109</sup> By hyperbolizing her experiences in India in “Little”, Marryat’s presentation of the Dye’s superior communicative proficiency with the paranormal reinforces the discursive potency of the subaltern.

Beyond merely articulating, however, the Dye, by both interpreting and communicating (and then endeavoring to guard against) the supernatural, elicits agency in delineating and commanding the intersections between employee/employer and mortal/spirit worlds. She asserts her bittersweet position as maternal and colonial insider, whose surrogate care affords economic support for her family (her own “little children”) but also as a racial outsider whose skin colour means that she and her children remain untouched by the spirit’s victimization of white infants.<sup>110</sup> Marlene Tromp emphasizes how the medium’s erasure of traditional social etiquette meant that Spiritualism “granted women, a new kind of self-determination” by disintegrating societal codes and giving women access to “a whole new

range of behaviour”.<sup>111</sup> The Dye’s impassioned supernatural warnings certainly unbalance professional etiquette, as when she “goes on her hands and knees to entreat her mistress”; the Dye uses her clairvoyance to unlock this ‘new range of behaviour’ as her warnings shift her vocation into the realm of supernatural guardianship.<sup>112</sup>

By using her ghost-seeing to exploit others, the Dye parallels concerns against mediums who knowingly facilitated fraudulent séances. Informed by her supernaturalism, she “obstinately declares” that she will not continue toward the haunted castle without “a promise of receiving double pay”, enforcing a mesmeric power over Ethel until she concedes.<sup>113</sup> This prefigures Miss Wynward’s hypnotic resignation in *Vampire* and reinforces Marryat’s attentiveness to the plights of beleaguered female servants. With these mesmeric suggestions, Marryat acknowledges a characteristically Eastern esotericism, nodding to theosophy, popularized by Helena Blavatsky (resident in India in the 1880s), and intersections with the “long-established culture of mesmerism in India”. Marryat thus uses the colonial framework to creatively revivify, even exoticize, *fin-de-siècle* mesmerism to depart from “its marginal and abject status in England”.<sup>114</sup> Marryat hints at the pseudo-supernatural wrath of a wet-nurse, or “amah”, who, when “offended by ... her mistress will revenge herself by causing her milk to dry up”.<sup>115</sup> Reflecting Marryat’s prejudicial views, Ethel dismisses the Dye’s warnings as “bribery” and “extortion” and impugns her spectral intuition.<sup>116</sup> The Dye’s multifarious presentation reflects equivocations surrounding mediums, such as Florence Cook, whom Marryat defended for materializing her daughter, but also acknowledged the distrust surrounding Cook following accusations of her fraudulence. Yet the Dye’s obdurate, but considered, demands for payment reveal her mediumistic prowess. She capitalizes on her prophetic awareness of the castle’s supernatural threat (and thus the economic risk she accepts as mother to her own children) and, in seeking assurance of doubled remuneration,



reinforces the nursemaid's role in rendering what Hassan stresses are "colonial spaces as sites of negotiation", while highlighting her mediumistic exploitation of the ghostly.<sup>117</sup>

While the Dye's communicative and economic mediumistic skill, combined with her insistent supernatural guardianship, counters portrayals of the indolent East-Indian nursemaid, Ethel conversely embodies negative memsahib stereotyping. This serves to shift focus from critiquing the indigenous servant to a damning portrayal of the colonial mother. By prioritizing confronting Cissy and consequently ignoring the Dye's fatal warnings concerning the ghost, Ethel is the memsahib who, "having little to occupy them, ... relieved of childcare duties" instead affirms an "imperious attitude to Indians" that proves deadly for her children.<sup>118</sup> Underscoring Indrani Sen's reading of the "contentious space" of the native nursery, it is with Ethel's childbirth and the spectre's appearance that the starkest inversion of colonial stereotyping emerges: Ethel is depicted as ignorant, even neonaticidal, while the Dye appears vigilant and as admonitory as possible of supernatural threat.<sup>119</sup> Contrary to inimical belief in the "incompetent" nature of native midwives, the Dye, although "frightened", exceeds her vocation and safely delivers Ethel's son two-months prematurely.<sup>120</sup> Propelled by clairvoyance, the Dye foresees the baby as "a doomed creature ... starting nervously" in anticipation of the spectral intruder.<sup>121</sup> Dismissive of the Dye's "expostulation, and many shakings of her head", Ethel fatefully "orders the nurse to lay her little infant on her arm, and go into the next room" and thus destroys the "ever-present force" of the nursemaid.<sup>122</sup> What follows are strong suggestions of Ethel, overcome with exhaustion, smothering her infant in her arms, implied by the pressure enforced as she "clasps her little fragile infant closer to her bosom" and her lucid admission that "he has not moved all night".<sup>123</sup> As Ethel suspiciously "feels that somebody ... is trying to take the baby" the ghost prises away her child as Ethel urgently cries for the Dye; together they uncover the deceased baby.<sup>124</sup> By inhibiting the Dye's guardianship on a supernatural and practical level (by not resting the child in the cot by

the Dye), Marryat reports a chilling cautionary tale against vilifying benevolent childcarers – like the Dye, or her own nursemaid Thommassen – imbued with psychical insight and mediumistic communication.

## VI. Servant and Séance

Marryat reinterprets *fin-de-siècle* nursemaids by imbuing them with sagacious psychical powers, and allowing them to transcend their conventional professional boundaries to embody the Spiritualist medium. Foregrounding a perennially eclipsed figure – the Victorian nursemaid – within such a vibrant literary space underscores the value of acknowledging the subaltern and conducting class-based interrogations of the supernatural, both in Britain and the colonies. In *Vampire* and “Little”, maternal servants authoritatively expose supernatural secrets to destabilize conventional master/servant dichotomies. Real and performative nursemaids in *Vampire*, Martin and Harriet, are integral to forming Marryat’s most moving navigations of fictional child loss. Late-Victorian Spiritualism memoirs evoking familial loss and séances with spirit-children, as in *No Death*, render the nursemaid a deeply symbolic maternal surrogate and supernatural guardian. The colonial nursemaid’s communicative and financial command of the ghostly in “Little” raises the nursemaid’s economic status, while underlining the tragic consequences of inhibiting supernatural guardianship in women’s ghost stories. Reviewing memoir and fiction, surrogate spectral caregiving, Harriet’s racial and species hybridity, and the Dye’s revision of maternal and cultural boundaries, underscores how multifacetedly *fin-de-siècle* Gothic could reimagine what constitutes the nursemaid. Ultimately, Marryat’s maternal servants behave as Spiritualist mediums in their exhibition of superior clairvoyance, use of ghost-seeing to demand a specialized income, and traversal of boundaries between the earthly and ghostly. In determining the nursemaid’s significance within key autobiographical and fictional Spiritualist literature in this way, these female

servants form an important stratum of late-Victorian supernatural and maternal history, while evidencing the enduring value of a unified reading of the *fin-de-siècle* servant and séance.

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (London: S. O. Beeton, 1861), 1013.
- <sup>2</sup> Jane Hamlett, ““White-Painted Fortresses”?: English Upper- and Middle-Class Nurseries, 1850-1910,” *Home Cultures*, 10, no. 3 (2013): 245–66, at 254.
- <sup>3</sup> Beeton, *Household Management*, 1014.
- <sup>4</sup> Florence Nightingale, “Notes on Nursing: What it is and What it is not,” in *Florence Nightingale's Notes on Nursing and Notes on Nursing for the Labouring Classes*, ed. Victor Skretkovicz (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 2010), 45-296 (246, 247); Beeton, *Household Management*, 1016.
- <sup>5</sup> Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), xi.
- <sup>6</sup> Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), 19.
- <sup>7</sup> James, *The Turn of the Screw*, 7.
- <sup>8</sup> M. Jeanne Peterson, “The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society,” *Victorian Studies*, 14, no. 1 (1970): 7–26, 23.
- <sup>9</sup> Peterson, “The Victorian Governess,” 13.
- <sup>10</sup> Florence Marryat, *Life and Letters of Captain Marryat in Two Volumes: VOL. II* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1872), 199.
- <sup>11</sup> Emma Liggins, *The Haunted House in Women's Ghost Stories: Gender, Space and Modernity, 1850-1945* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 16, 22.
- <sup>12</sup> Victoria Margree, *British Women's Short Supernatural Fiction, 1860–1930* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 5, 6.
- <sup>13</sup> Holly Blackford, “Haunted Housekeeping: Fatal Attractions of Servant and Mistress in Twentieth-Century Female Gothic Literature,” *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 16, no. 2 (2005): 233–61; Ann Mattis, “Gothic Interiority and Servants in Wharton's *A Backward Glance* and ‘The Lady's Maid's Bell,’” *Twentieth Century Literature*, 58, no. 2 (2012): 213–37, 220, 214.
- <sup>14</sup> Mattis, “Gothic Interiority,” 219-20.
- <sup>15</sup> See Greta Depledge, “Introduction,” in Florence Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire*, ed. Greta Depledge (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2010), iii–xxxvii; Helena Ifill, “Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897): Negotiating Anxieties of Genre and Gender at the *Fin de Siècle*,” *Victorian Popular Fictions*, 1, no. 1 (2019): 80–100; Christine Ferguson, *Determined Spirits: Eugenics, Heredity and Racial Regeneration in Anglo-American Spiritualist Writing, 1848-1930* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 86–113; Ka Yan Lam, “Celebrating Medusa's Laugh: Phallogentrism, The Female Body, and Trance Mediumship in Florence Marryat's Hannah Stubbs,” *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies*, 16 no. 3 (2020); Tatiana Kontou, “Florence Marryat's “The Box with the Iron Clamps”: Pent-Up Grief and Guilt,” *Victorian Review*, 44, no. 2 (2018): 170–73; Georgina O'Brien Hill, ““Nothing Can Wipe out the Memory”: Remembering the Dead in Florence Marryat's “The Box with the Iron Clamps,”” in *Acts of Memory: The Victorians and Beyond*, eds. Ryan Barnett and Serena Trowbridge (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 137–48.
- <sup>16</sup> Priya Joshi, “Globalizing Victorian Studies,” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 41, no. 2, (2011): 20–40, at 22.
- <sup>17</sup> Roger Luckhurst, “Knowledge, Belief and the Supernatural at the Imperial Margin,” in *The Victorian Supernatural*, eds. Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 197–216, at 205; Florence Marryat, “*Gup*”: *Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character* (London: Richard Bentley, 1868); Narin Hassan, “Feeding Empire: Wet Nursing and Colonial Domesticity in India,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 38, no. 5 (2016): 353–63.

- <sup>18</sup> Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 8, 7. Owen observes that “spiritualist women were constructed as ‘natural’ mediums”, meaning that a perceived “‘innate’ femininity ... allowed women to accede to positions of power” (xii). See also Jill Galvan on women working in *fin-de-siècle* media spaces “as spirit and hypnotic channels” due to their “allegedly feminine traits: sensitivity or sympathy”. Jill Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 2, 12.
- <sup>19</sup> Brian McCuskey, “Not at Home: Servants, Scholars, and the Uncanny,” *PMLA*, 121 no. 2, (2006): 421–436, 425; See Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850-1910* (London: Routledge, 1986).
- <sup>20</sup> One such tale is of her nursemaid Margaret Thommassen; Marryat provides no detail concerning Thommassen’s child-caring but praises her clairvoyance. Marryat, *No Death*, 58.
- <sup>21</sup> Eve M. Lynch depicts servants of Victorian ghost literature as spectral beings, “uncanny inhabitants, silent and ‘invisible’ themselves in the home”. Liggins attests to the perceived and “desired” invisibility of servants which “aligned them with the spectral”. Eve M. Lynch, “Spectral Politics: The Victorian Ghost Story and the Domestic Servant,” in *The Victorian Supernatural*, eds. Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 67-86, at 71; Liggins, *The Haunted House*, 23.
- <sup>22</sup> “Florence Marryat,” *Spiritualist*, 9, no. 12 (1876): 140.
- <sup>23</sup> Letter from Charles Dickens (6 August 1857), GEN MSS 994, box 1, folder 6, Florence Marryat Collection, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, University of Yale, New Haven, CT.
- <sup>24</sup> Letter from A. K. Loring (1884), GEN MSS 994, box 1, folder 8, Florence Marryat Collection, Beinecke; Letter from Henry Drake (n.d.), GEN MSS 994, box 1, folder 10, Florence Marryat Collection, Beinecke.
- <sup>25</sup> Andrew Maunder, ed., *Varieties of Women’s Sensation Fiction 1855–1890 Volume 2* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2004), xiii; “Florence Marryat,” *Spiritualist*, 9, no. 12 (1876): 140.
- <sup>26</sup> Sarah A. Tooley, “Miss Florence Marryat: Some Women Novelists,” *Woman at Home*, no. 51 (1897): 162-212, at 190-91.
- <sup>27</sup> Maunder, *Varieties of Women’s*, ix, xiv.
- <sup>28</sup> Tooley, “Miss Florence Marryat,” 190; “A Soul on Fire. By Florence Marryat”, *Spectator*, 81, no. 3665 (1898): 411.
- <sup>29</sup> Florence Marryat, *There is No Death* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1891), 1; George and Weedon Grossmith satirized Marryat in “The Diary of a Nobody” (1892): “a book on Spiritualism, called *There is no Birth*, by Florence Singleyet”. Regarding her memoir, they declared that “[a]ll the world is going mad over [it]”. George and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody* (London: Arrowsmith, 1892), 292.
- <sup>30</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 15.
- <sup>31</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 15.
- <sup>32</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 1, 179.
- <sup>33</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 323.
- <sup>34</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 216.
- <sup>35</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 98.
- <sup>36</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 216.
- <sup>37</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 85, 86. Carroll’s interests in the supernatural, demonstrated by his poem “Phantasmagoria” (1869) and his Society for Psychical Research membership, likely increased the appeal of this allusion for Marryat.
- <sup>38</sup> Catherine Pope, *Florence Marryat* (Brighton: Edward Everett Root, 2020), 31.

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- <sup>39</sup> Florence Marryat, *The Spirit World* (New York: Charles B. Reed, 1894), 29-30.
- <sup>40</sup> Florence Marryat, *The Strange Transfiguration of Hannah Stubbs* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1896), 30.
- <sup>41</sup> McCuskey, "Not at Home", 421–436, 425.
- <sup>42</sup> Hamlett, "'White-Painted Fortresses,'" 258.
- <sup>43</sup> Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 159, 161, 159.
- <sup>44</sup> Hamlett, "'White-Painted Fortresses,'" 254.
- <sup>45</sup> Pope, *Marryat*, 15.
- <sup>46</sup> Pope, *Marryat*, 15-16
- <sup>47</sup> Marryat, *Life and Letters*, 222.
- <sup>48</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 118.
- <sup>49</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 119.
- <sup>50</sup> Tamara S. Wagner, "'Nature's Founts': Breastmilk in Victorian Popular Culture," *Victorian Review*, 45, no. 1 (2019): 18–22, at 19-20.
- <sup>51</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 119.
- <sup>52</sup> Florence's condition caused her "upper lip [to have] ... a mark as though a semi-circular piece of flesh had been cut out", rendering Marryat unable to breastfeed, a case so unusual that it was apparently reported "under feigned names" in an unlocatable article in the *Lancet*. Marryat, *No Death*, 97-98.
- <sup>53</sup> Jen Baker, "The Spectral Child," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Steam Age Gothic*, ed. Clive Bloom (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 711–28, at 712.
- <sup>54</sup> Marryat, *No Death*, 119.
- <sup>55</sup> Marryat, *The Spirit World*, 7.
- <sup>56</sup> Marryat, *The Spirit World*, 9, 7, 19, 16
- <sup>57</sup> Melissa Edmundson, *Women's Colonial Gothic Writing, 1850-1930: Haunted Empire* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 79.
- <sup>58</sup> Florence Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire*, ed. Greta Depledge (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2010), 161.
- <sup>59</sup> Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," *Victorian Studies*, 33, no. 4 (1990): 621–45.
- <sup>60</sup> Ailise Bulfin, *Gothic Invasions: Imperialism, War and Fin-de-Siècle Popular Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), 32.
- <sup>61</sup> Bulfin, *Gothic Invasions*, 40.
- <sup>62</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 68.
- <sup>63</sup> Bulfin, *Gothic Invasions*, 40-41; Pope, *Marryat*, 109.
- <sup>64</sup> Pope, *Marryat*, 110.
- <sup>65</sup> Pope, *Marryat*, 6, 113.
- <sup>66</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 12.
- <sup>67</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 68-69.
- <sup>68</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 6.
- <sup>69</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 5, 6.
- <sup>70</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 5.
- <sup>71</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 84.
- <sup>72</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 156–57.
- <sup>73</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 28.
- <sup>74</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 165; Edmundson, *Women's Colonial Gothic*, 89.
- <sup>75</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 58, 34.
- <sup>76</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 32, 50.
- <sup>77</sup> Edmundson, *Women's Colonial Gothic*, 78.

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- <sup>78</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 77.
- <sup>79</sup> Florence Marryat, “Little White Souls,” in *The Ghost of Charlotte Cray, and Other Stories* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1883), 106–43, at 113, 142.
- <sup>80</sup> William Acton, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (London: J. and A. Churchill, 1875), 183.
- <sup>81</sup> Edmundson, *Women’s Colonial Gothic*, 80.
- <sup>82</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 161–62.
- <sup>83</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 176.
- <sup>84</sup> Edmundson, *Women’s Colonial Gothic*, 80.
- <sup>85</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 27.
- <sup>86</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 80.
- <sup>87</sup> Beeton, *Household Management*, 1013.
- <sup>88</sup> Marryat, *Vampire*, 80.
- <sup>89</sup> Marryat, “Gup,” 1.
- <sup>90</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 113.
- <sup>91</sup> Marryat’s concern for pregnant bodies recalls her being advised to maintain extreme caution returning to England while pregnant, and household guides in which “doctors became increasingly concerned with how “the tropics” affected the pregnant or lactating body”. Hassan, “Feeding Empire,” 354.
- <sup>92</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 135; Marryat uses the spelling ‘Dye’ but also refers to nurses as ‘ayah’ in “Gup” (“Gup” 169). Contemporary accounts cite the “‘amah” or “dhye” (sometimes spelled “dhaye” or “dai”)’ or ‘*ammahs* (Indian wet nurses)’. Hassan, “Feeding Empire,” 353.
- <sup>93</sup> Runa Das Chaudhuri, “Summoning the Dead: Psychic Happenings and Gendered Spiritualist Practices in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Calcutta,” *South Asia*, 44, no. 3 (2021); 459–476, at 461.
- <sup>94</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 135.
- <sup>95</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 141.
- <sup>96</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 143.
- <sup>97</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 142–43.
- <sup>98</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 106.
- <sup>99</sup> Hassan, “Feeding Empire,” 355.
- <sup>100</sup> Marryat, “Gup,” 32–33.
- <sup>101</sup> Marryat, “Gup,” 36.
- <sup>102</sup> Verity G. McInnis, ““Indirect Agents of Empire: Army Officers’ Wives in British India and the American West, 1830–1875,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 83, no. 3 (2014): 378–409, at 407.
- <sup>103</sup> Hassan, “Feeding Empire,” 255.
- <sup>104</sup> Hassan, “Feeding Empire,” 353, 354, 361.
- <sup>105</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 129.
- <sup>106</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 127.
- <sup>107</sup> Luckhurst, “Knowledge, Belief and the Supernatural,” 205.
- <sup>108</sup> Marryat, “Gup,” 284–85, 164.
- <sup>109</sup> Luckhurst, “Knowledge, Belief and the Supernatural,” 212.
- <sup>110</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 125.
- <sup>111</sup> Marlene Tromp, “Spirited Sexuality: Sex, Marriage, and Victorian Spiritualism,” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 31 no. 1 (2003): 67–81, at 68.
- <sup>112</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 127.
- <sup>113</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 125.
- <sup>114</sup> Luckhurst, “Knowledge, Belief and the Supernatural,” 200.
- <sup>115</sup> Marryat, “Gup,” 165.

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- <sup>116</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 125.
- <sup>117</sup> Hassan, “Feeding Empire,” 355.
- <sup>118</sup> Margree, *British Women’s Short Supernatural Fiction*, 118.
- <sup>119</sup> Indrani Sen, “The Ambivalences of Power Inside the Colonial Home,” in *Gendered Transactions: The White Woman in Colonial India, c. 1820–1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017) 113–143, at 114.
- <sup>120</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 138.
- <sup>121</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 139.
- <sup>122</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 139; Hamlet, ““White-Painted Fortresses,”” 254.
- <sup>123</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 139-40.
- <sup>124</sup> Marryat, “Little,” 140.



