

# *The moneylender as monster: 'The Jew' as transformative influence in Bram Stoker's The Watter's Mou'*

Article

Published Version

Creative Commons: Attribution 4.0 (CC-BY)

Open Access

Renshaw, D. (2024) The moneylender as monster: 'The Jew' as transformative influence in Bram Stoker's The Watter's Mou'. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 58 (1). pp. 107-127. ISSN 1461-7331 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2024.2374125>  
Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/116929/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

To link to this article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2024.2374125>

Publisher: Taylor and Francis

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

[www.reading.ac.uk/centaur](http://www.reading.ac.uk/centaur)

**CentAUR**

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

## The moneylender as monster: 'the Jew' as transformative influence in Bram Stoker's *The Watter's Mou*

Daniel Renshaw

To cite this article: Daniel Renshaw (2024) The moneylender as monster: 'the Jew' as transformative influence in Bram Stoker's *The Watter's Mou*, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 58:1, 107-127, DOI: [10.1080/0031322X.2024.2374125](https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2024.2374125)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2024.2374125>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 24 Jan 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 175



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# The moneylender as monster: ‘the Jew’ as transformative influence in Bram Stoker’s *The Watter’s Mou*

DANIEL RENSHAW 

**ABSTRACT** Renshaw’s article examines antisemitic narratives in 1890s Europe through the lens of Bram Stoker’s obscure Gothic novel *The Watter’s Mou* (1895). It will argue that racist conceptions of ‘the Jew’, in both the popular literature of the time and the political discourse of contemporary European societies, had shifted to present Jews as a transformative element in the societies they lived in. In this analysis Jews would not just exploit these non-Jewish populations but ultimately irrevocably change their character, corrupt the non-Jewish ‘indigenous’ inhabitants and render them ‘Hebraic’. Drawing on Stoker’s fiction, primarily the portrayal of the moneylender Solomon Mendoza, various elements of this emerging characterization will be considered. First, the development of the medieval antisemitic archetype of the Jewish usurer will be discussed; how this was expanded to incorporate contemporary anxieties surrounding capitalism and colonialism; and how ‘the Jew’ was viewed as financially exploiting ‘native’ peoples (including the British proletariat) and thus meriting retributive violence. Second, the nature of interactions between ‘the Jew’ as exogenous force and the ‘indigenous’ non-Jewish society (in this case the fishing communities of Cruden Bay where the novel is set) are considered in more detail: not solely positioned as a process of economic exploitation, but also of moral debasement, in which elements of the local society are complicit with ‘the Jew’s’ schemes and the blurring of identities. Finally, Stoker’s preoccupations in his fiction with ‘race’ and religion will be placed in wider antisemitic narratives of the ‘place’ of Jews in fin de siècle European societies. The fate that the villain meets at the end of the story will be located as part of an epochal struggle, as posited by racist populism, between ‘Jewish’ and ‘non-Jewish’ elites for control at the end of the nineteenth century.

**KEYWORDS** antisemitism, Bram Stoker, Gothic fiction, Jews, moneylending, racism

**HISTORY** received 6 November 2023; accepted 28 May 2024

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Europe’s military, economic and cultural dominance over the rest of the world appeared to be assured. The various European colonial projects were at their territorial apogee, and

Many thanks to Dr Neil Cocks for his very helpful advice on the first draft of this article.

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

even where control was not formal, the primacy of European business and European ideas over non-western societies was assumed.<sup>1</sup> This sense of unchecked, barely contested and permanent power permeated the popular literature of the time. Especially in the British fiction of the fin de siècle, the mastery and ultimate success of the Anglo-Saxon protagonist, whether in tropical climes or in the homeland itself, was a certainty. This rapidly expanding printed material, aimed at a generation of young men and women eager to consume thrilling adventure stories set on the boundaries of empire, played a significant role in cementing this narrative of national and racial supremacy.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the popular fiction of the 1890s also produced a number of formidable antagonists who in one way or another challenged these assumptions. They might ultimately be defeated, and this was almost invariably the case, but it was these counters to an unquestioning British/western/white imperial hegemon that excited the imagination and brought repressed urges to the societal surface, as opposed to the bland and insipid heroes and heroines whom they were arrayed against.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most complex and certainly now the most well-known figure in the body of late Victorian and Edwardian literature dealing with what Stephen D. Arata defined as 'reverse colonization', that is, the purposeful or subliminal transformation and subversion of the imperial dynamic, is Bram Stoker's *Count Dracula*.<sup>4</sup> *Dracula*, published in 1897, is one of the most analysed of all modern novels, and has attracted a good deal of interest from historians over the last thirty years for the insights it provides into the mores and concerns of the society that produced such a work. *Dracula* has been presented as embodying contemporary fears about the consequences of the mass migration of Eastern European Jewish refugees to Britain; Carol Margaret Davison positions the vampire and his designs as the culmination of a century of cultural antisemitic depictions in British Gothic and sensationalist material.<sup>5</sup> *Dracula* is only the most prominent of

- 1 See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (London: Abacus 1994); and Philip D. Curtin, *The World and the West: The European Challenge and the Overseas Response in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002).
- 2 Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1988), 8–10.
- 3 See Ailise Bulfin, *Gothic Invasions: Imperialism, War and Fin-de-Siècle Popular Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 2018).
- 4 Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental tourist: "Dracula" and the anxiety of reverse colonization', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1990, 621–45 (622–3).
- 5 The classic book-length accounts of 'Jewishness', antisemitism and fin de siècle English literature remain Bryan Cheyette's *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations 1875–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993); Carol Margaret Davison's *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2004); Nadia Valman's *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007); and David Glover's *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England: A Cultural History of the 1905 Aliens Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012). See

a number of evil figures created by Stoker who constitute ethnic Others as defined by the society that they threaten. In *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), an example of 'Egyptian Gothic', we are confronted with Queen Tera, an occult and undead femme fatale who presents a sexual as well as racial threat.<sup>6</sup> In Stoker's last piece of fiction to be published in his lifetime, *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911), there is, amidst the general narrative confusion, a Black African antagonist, Oolanga, whose depiction is frankly racist throughout, and whose very presence in an English bucolic setting is framed as something approaching obscene.<sup>7</sup> Both of these texts have received their share of attention from critics and historians, as has an earlier publication, *The Snake's Pass* (1890), which is set in Stoker's own Irish homeland, and involves a Catholic villain, 'Black' Murdoch.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, there is one novel by Stoker—one that presents an external, existential and explicitly racialized threat to a British community—that has attracted almost no attention from either Stoker's biographers, or those academics interested in the relationship between the Gothic and ethnic prejudice, namely *The Watter's Mou'* (1895). Published two years before *Dracula*, and

---

also the work of Hannah Ewence and Paul E. Nahme on the confluence of 'Jewishness' and the supernatural: Hannah Ewence, 'Representing the alien Jew: blurring the boundaries of difference: *Dracula*, the Empire and "the Jew"', in Tony Kushner and Hannah Ewence (eds), *Whatever Happened to British Jewish Studies?* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell 2012), 213–22; Paul E. Nahme, 'Ghosted: Jewishness and the haunted hegemony of modernity', *Journal of Religion*, vol. 102, no. 2, 2022, 204–36. The academic literature on *Dracula* is vast and ever-expanding, but David Glover and William Hughes have widened the scope to consider Stoker's other fiction and its societal and cultural contexts. As well as Davison's overview of antisemitism and the Gothic, there are a number of books and articles that specifically look at the relationship between the vampire, *Dracula* as text and anti-Jewish racism. See, among others, Jules Zanger, 'A sympathetic vibration: *Dracula* and the Jews', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, vol. 34, no. 1, 1991, 33–44; Judith Halberstam, 'Technologies of monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, 1993, 333–52; and Ken Gelder, *Reading the Vampire* (London and New York: Routledge 1994), 1–23. Hannah Ewence (in 'Representing the alien Jew') argues against an automatic conflation of *Dracula*'s characteristics as presented by Stoker with anti-Jewish racism, stressing Stoker's own outsider status in late Victorian Britain (an Otherness that can perhaps be overstated) and the complexities of how the Count's foreign identity is portrayed in the novel.

6 Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (London: William Heinemann 1903). See also William Hughes, *Beyond Dracula: Bram Stoker's Fiction and Its Cultural Context* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press 2000), 35–53; and Carol A. Senf, 'Invasions real and imagined: Stoker's Gothic narratives', in Catherine Wynne (ed.), *Bram Stoker and the Gothic: Formations to Transformations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), 92–104 (94–6).

7 Bram Stoker, *The Lair of the White Worm* (London: William Rider and Son 1911). See also David Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1996), 98.

8 Bram Stoker, *The Snake's Pass* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington 1891). See also William Hughes, "'For Ireland's good": the reconstruction of rural Ireland in Bram Stoker's "The Snake's Pass"', *Irish Studies Review*, vol. 3, no. 12, 1995, 17–21.

wholly obscured by it, this is a tale of smuggling and doomed love set on the northeastern coast of Scotland; it has largely been dismissed by critics as one of the number of hastily written ‘pot-boilers’ that Stoker produced.<sup>9</sup> The uniform indifference of the subsequent critical and popular response to the novel is largely earned: it is melodramatic, predictable and cloyingly sentimental.

In one respect though, it is worthy of analysis, and this is because of its villain. *The Watter’s Mou’* features as its primary antagonist Solomon Mendoza, a German-Jewish moneylender. Mendoza may at first appear to be a one-dimensional stock caricature, from his stereotypically ‘Jewish’ appearance to his mangled use of the English language. British popular fiction of the 1890s is littered with such characters, and the literature of the period was saturated with anti-Jewish sentiment. As Hannah Ewence writes: ‘Jews were, by dint of their proximity to the [British] motherland, the consummate “other” within the British cultural imagination.’<sup>10</sup> Usually though, with the notable exception of Svengali in George Du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894), these characters played minor roles in the narratives in which they featured. Often—as with the East End Yiddish-speaking landlord in H. G. Wells’s *The Invisible Man* (1897)—the presence of a (migrant) Jew is simply used as a literary device to emphasize the metropolitan and deprived nature of the spatial setting. Sometimes, as is apparent in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), there is a ‘second fiddle’ villain who is Jewish, in this case a theatre manager: unpleasant and with some role to play in driving the plot forward, but still ultimately inconsequential and overshadowed.<sup>11</sup> However, if one explores the relationship described by Stoker between Mendoza and the Scottish community with which he interacts, it becomes apparent that this depiction, rather than simply a racist aside, needs to be repositioned as a key embodiment in popular ‘middle brow’ British fiction of shifting contemporary prejudices concerning Jews and their place in wider European society as the nineteenth century drew to a close.<sup>12</sup> *The*

9 Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker: A Biography of the Author of Dracula* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1996), 233–5.

10 Ewence, ‘Representing the alien Jew’, 222.

11 George Du Maurier, *Trilby* (London: Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. 1894); H. G. Wells, *The Invisible Man* (London: C. Arthur Pearson 1897); Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Ward, Lock, & Co. 1891).

12 In the biographies of Bram Stoker published since the 1960s, *The Watter’s Mou’* is briefly dealt with. Harry Ludlam stresses its overwrought theatricality (Harry Ludlam, *A Biography of Dracula* (London: Quality Book Club 1962), 93–4). Daniel Farson comments mainly on the use of Scots dialect, which he describes as ‘ludicrous’ (Daniel Farson, *The Man Who Wrote Dracula: A Biography of Bram Stoker* (London: Michael Joseph 1975), 94–6). Barbara Belford notes the suitably Gothic ending to the story (Belford, *Bram Stoker*, 235). Paul Murray devotes more space to the text, including some recognition of the antisemitism apparent in it (Paul Murray, *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker* (London: Jonathan Cape 2004), 160–1). David Skal considers the question of whether Stoker could be considered antisemitic, in the context of his employer Henry Irving’s portrayal of Shylock, but without referring to *The Watter’s*

*Watter's Mou'* is also notable for its implicit acknowledgement of the harmful consequences of modernity (tied in, as we shall discuss, with conceptions of 'the Jew'), in contrast to *Dracula*, in which contemporary technology and the modern capitalist system play a key part in the eventual defeat of the Count.

Three interconnected elements of antisemitic discourse apparent in Stoker's depiction of Solomon Mendoza will be considered. First, the economic nature of Mendoza's role in the novel will be discussed. Mendoza uses usury to cement control over his victims, and the lending of money gives him purchase over a number of key protagonists, especially the heroine's father.<sup>13</sup> By the time Stoker was writing, the very old characterization of the moneylender was being adapted to the circumstances of the mass movement westwards of Jewish refugees from the Tsarist empire and Romania, and was combined with new roles associated with 'the Jew' in the popular imagination, including those of workshop 'sweater', 'shady' businessman, stock market speculator and avaricious landlord, all of which located the archaic figure of the Jewish usurer in contemporary societal interactions taking place in the areas in which Jewish migrants had settled.<sup>14</sup> Following on from this, the precise nature of Mendoza's threat to the community that he exploits will be defined: that is, he is not only an economic burden but, on a far more insidious level, he is corrupting both the individuals and the society with which he has contact, making these people 'like himself', and complicit in his transgressions. Third, the 'racial' and religious differences that Stoker stresses between the indigenous population of Cruden Bay and the exogenous Jewish interloper—tied in with ethnic heritage and the relationship between populace, land and labour—will be located in the European-wide populist antisemitic ideas forming in the last third of the nineteenth century. Mendoza's battle with the protagonists of *The Watter's Mou'* gives form to contemporary conceptions of a struggle for mastery in European nations between 'the Jew' and non-Jewish elites, and an evolving antisemitic trope that Jews not only leached off the societies in which they dwelt, but were ultimately transformative, remaking them in their own 'Semitic' image, just as the contemporaneous Gothic genre concerned itself with 'doubling' and monstrous transmutation.<sup>15</sup>

---

*Mou'* (David Skal, *Something in the Blood: The Untold Story of Bram Stoker, the Man Who Wrote Dracula* (New York: Liveright Publishing 2016), 334).

13 See Glover's examination of the (occasionally comedic) stock figure of the Jewish moneylender in Victorian and Edwardian popular culture in Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England*, 91–4, 98, 100.

14 *Ibid.*, 87, 100; Chaim Bermant, *Point of Arrival: A Study of London's East End* (London: Eyre Methuen 1975), 141–2.

15 See H. L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1996).



## Development of concepts of ‘the Jew’ as usurer in antisemitic discourse

*The Watter’s Mou’* is one of Stoker’s two extended pieces of work set in Scotland (the other being *The Mystery of the Sea* from 1902), and constitutes, along with the Irish-based *The Snake’s Pass*, and a number of short stories including ‘Crooken Sands’ (1894), which also takes place by the Scottish coast and involves Jews (peripherally and for comic effect), part of the author’s foray into ‘Celtic gothic’.<sup>16</sup> The heroine and hero of *The Watter’s Mou’* are Maggie MacWhirter and William Barrow. Barrow, referred to as ‘Sailor Willie’, is a young seaman whose main employment is to frustrate smugglers operating off the northeastern coast. Barrow is fairly typical of Stoker’s stock-in-trade of decent, upright and somewhat taciturn heroes. His fiancée, Maggie MacWhirter, the daughter of a fisherman, is also familiar, resembling Stoker’s feminine archetype and ideal, Mina Murray from *Dracula*, in her moral attitude (compromised, as we shall see, by the villain), and in her ultimate self-sacrifice.<sup>17</sup> The plot of the novel revolves around the effect that the presence of Solomon Mendoza and his associates has on the people of Cruden Bay, and thus on the dynamics of the romantic relationship between ‘Sailor Willie’ and Maggie.

The antagonist is introduced to us as ‘Solomon Mendoza of Hamburg and Aberdeen’ and, from the first paragraph, the explicitly economic element of his insidious influence over the community is made apparent.<sup>18</sup> Maggie’s father, a fisherman once prosperous but now in penury, previously owned his own fishing smack, but, as times worsened, was forced to borrow increasingly large sums to keep the vessel active, to the degree that he no longer has control over it. The ultimate threat is that Mendoza will take the boat, and thus the family’s livelihood, away, and this hangs over the MacWhirters throughout the course of the novel. Stoker comments on Mendoza that he ‘had changed in like manner the ownership of a hundred boats’ and that he ‘had the reputation of being as remorseless as he was rich’ (11). From the start then the author makes use of potent antisemitic tropes as he sets out the context and the motivations driving the narrative. It is immediately made apparent that Mendoza is an outsider. His base of operations is Aberdeen, the nearest large population centre to Cruden Bay. But, of course, Mendoza is not actually from Aberdeen, or from anywhere in Scotland. In his initial description his diasporic lack of fixed place and the

16 Bram Stoker, *The Mystery of the Sea* (London: William Heinemann 1902); Bram Stoker, ‘Crooken Sands’, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 1 December 1894. See also Joseph Valente, *Dracula’s Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press 2002).

17 See Rosalind Newman, ‘Invasions and Inversions: Representations of Otherness in the Writings of Bram Stoker’, Ph.D. dissertation, Durham University, 2018.

18 Bram Stoker, *The Watter’s Mou’* (London: A. Constable 1895), 11. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.

ambiguity of his identity ('of Hamburg *and* Aberdeen') is spelt out. As a Jew he is presented by Stoker as transnational, 'cosmopolitan' (a term that was already a pejorative synonym for 'Jewish').<sup>19</sup> Mendoza's status is indeterminate and confused, a key characteristic of 'the Jew' as represented in *fin de siècle* European culture.<sup>20</sup>

The first chapter of *The Watter's Mou'* also positions Mendoza as an embodiment of economic change in the community. MacWhirter can no longer run a profitable business and money is to be made as much by smuggling luxury goods, such as 'tobacco, brandy, rum, silks, laces' into the country as it is through fishing (7). It is not that fishing as a trade is redundant; Stoker stresses that the haul of fish from the North Sea is still plentiful, only that the money to be earned from smuggling is much greater. As well as this, to make a profit fishing now must be a corporate rather than an individual enterprise. Mendoza represents not only exploitation, but relentless modernization, and modernity itself as an imposed phenomenon.

Of course, Mendoza's economic role in *The Watter's Mou'* is not left undefined by Stoker but is very specific. Mendoza is a usurer, and it is through the lending of money and the accrual of unpaid interest on those loans that Mendoza cements control over the population with which, as a diasporic Jewish outsider, he has no links of culture or kinship. The consequences of Mendoza's moneylending for the people of Cruden Bay will be examined below but, for now, it is worth noting that, in conflating Mendoza's moneylending with his Jewishness, Stoker was not only tapping into a primal current of antisemitic discourse that in Western Europe stretched back almost a thousand years, but one that had evolved in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, and was increasingly associated with the exploitation of 'indigenous' populations by 'Jewish' financial interests.<sup>21</sup> The figure of the Jewish victim (historically in England, France and Spain, contemporaneously in Russia, Ukraine, Poland and Romania) thus became melded with a new form of 'the Jew' as oppressor of 'primitive' peoples.<sup>22</sup> The leading British antisemite and proponent of restriction on migration, Arnold White, who viewed the Jews of Russia and Poland as uniquely degraded, posited that Eastern European Jews '[could] only live by exploiting the vices or preying on the weaknesses of others'.<sup>23</sup>

19 See Arnold White, *The Modern Jew* (London: William Heinemann 1899), 199.

20 Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society*, 1–12; Bryan Cheyette and Nadia Valman, 'Introduction', in Cheyette and Valman (eds), *The Image of the Jew in European Liberal Culture, 1789–1914* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell 2004), 1–26 (8–9, 22).

21 For the medieval conflation of usury and bloodsucking, see Davison, *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature*, 34–54.

22 See Sam Johnson, *Pogroms, Peasants, Jews: Britain and Eastern Europe's 'Jewish Question', 1867–1925* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2011), 44–5.

23 White, *The Modern Jew*, 12.

Framed in the specific designation of Jews as naturally capitalistic in inclination, the groups exploited by the moneylender/merchant/financier could be, in differing discursive contexts, the British proletariat, European peasants or colonized societies.<sup>24</sup> The activities of Jewish speculators and magnates in South Africa in the 1890s were positioned by elements of the nascent socialist movement, as well as the anti-imperialist economist J. A. Hobson, as being to the detriment of Black African, Boer and Chinese labour.<sup>25</sup> The increasingly popular genre of travel writing, where bold Englishmen and women ventured into foreign parts and then recounted their experiences for entertainment and edification, also played a part in cementing this characterization.<sup>26</sup> Correspondents writing about Eastern European life frequently made reference to the malign nature of 'Jewish' moneylending. One passage on Jewish usury in Hungary from E. C. Johnson's *On the Track of the Crescent* (1885), a text that Stoker had made use of in his preparations for *Dracula*, illustrates this point:

Those who know how pitiless the Jews are when they have the too-confiding peasantry in their clutches can understand the dreadful outbursts of anti-Semitic fury now, alas! so common in Russia, Poland, and Hungary, and the sanguinary vengeance taken on them and theirs by their improvident and exasperated victims, who have got deeper and deeper into their meshes, till the terrible day of reckoning.<sup>27</sup>

The author, referring to the recurring pogroms in Eastern Europe, described those carrying out attacks on Jews as the true victims, and the violence itself as a legitimate response to exploitative economic practices.<sup>28</sup> The same narrative was put forward by British anti-migrant campaigners: namely, that large-scale anti-Jewish communal violence in the east of the continent was provoked by Jewish moneylending.<sup>29</sup> W. H. Wilkins suggested, with regard to conditions in the Pale of Settlement, 'that the system of usury and extortion practised by many of the Russian Jews upon the peasantry has, in a large measure, tended to bring about the present state of things

24 Paul Morris, 'Judaism and capitalism', in Richard H. Roberts (ed.), *Religion and the Transformation of Capitalism: Comparative Approaches* (London and New York: Routledge 2012), 88–120 (88).

25 On 'anti-colonial' antisemitism, see Claire Hirshfield, 'The British left and the "Jewish conspiracy": a case study of modern antisemitism', *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2, 1981, 95–112 (96–7, 108).

26 Hannah Ewence, *The Alien Jew in the British Imagination, 1881–1905: Space, Mobility and Territoriality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2019), 34–5.

27 E. C. Johnson, *On the Track of the Crescent: Erratic Notes from the Piraeus to Pesth* (London: Hurst and Blackett 1885), 202.

28 Irena Grosfeld, Seyhun Orcan Sakalli and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, 'Middleman minorities and ethnic violence: anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire', *Review of Economic Studies*, vol. 87, no. 1, 2020, 289–342 (301).

29 Johnson, *Pogroms, Peasants, Jews*, 62, 191–2.

[that is, anti-Jewish violence]'.<sup>30</sup> Another British writer, Randolph Hodgson, better known for his accounts of hunting and mountaineering, commented on the economic dynamic in Bohemia: 'Where there are Jews there is misery; where there are no Jews there is comparative prosperity. [...] [Jews are] human leeches nourished in very truth on human blood.'<sup>31</sup>

The implication of this narrative on supposed Jewish usury in Russia and other places was not only that Jews essentially merited persecution, but that the next potential 'victims' were the British working class, with a possibly similarly violent reaction to the exploitative outsider.<sup>32</sup> This belief in the purposeful victimization of the borrower through the lending of money was present in the popular vernacular: to 'Jew someone' was to cheat or exploit them, to owe money was to be 'in trouble with the Jews', and grass-roots antisemitic language in areas such as East London positioned 'the Jew' fundamentally as someone to whom you owed something material and who would attempt to take advantage of the situation, whether they occupied the position of moneylender, pawnbroker or landlord.<sup>33</sup> Whether in the Transvaal, the Pale of Settlement or in Stepney, 'the Jew' was thus positioned as an exogenous capitalist force that preyed on and profitted from more vital but economically backward societies, and such is the dynamic in *The Watter's Mou*'.<sup>34</sup> This is how Maggie describes the process of usury that has ruined her father, having initially borrowed money as a way out of semi-starvation occasioned by poor catches and potato blight:

Father could dae nothing [sic], and had to borrow money on the boat to go on with his wark [sic], and the debt grew and grew, till now he only owes her in name, and we never ken when we may be sold up. And the man that has the mortgage isn't like to let us off or gie [sic] time! (39)

Mendoza as moneylender has thus trapped the MacWhirters financially, and effectively subsumed what was once a family trade into his wider business interests, with 'the Jew' in this narrative as aggressor and the 'indigenous' person and community as victim.

30 W. H. Wilkins, *The Alien Invasion* (London: Methuen 1892), 11.

31 Randolph Hodgson, quoted in White, *The Modern Jew*, 70–1.

32 Wilkins, *The Alien Invasion*, 52–3.

33 See William Brustein, *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), 177; and Anne Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields, 1660–2000* (London: Routledge 2005), 204–5.

34 On the transformative role of the 'alien' trader in 'simple agrarian societies', see Walter P. Zenner, 'Middleman minority theories: a critical review', in Helen Fein (ed.), *The Persisting Question: Sociological Perspectives and Social Contexts of Modern Antisemitism* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter 1987), 255–276 (260).

### 'The Jew' as catalyst for societal transformation

However, the lending of money and the nature of compound interest on loans, which delivers both the infrastructure of a business and the individual themselves into the hands of the lender—a dynamic with which Stoker's readers would have been familiar and one replete with antisemitic associations—is merely a precipitate. The significance of Mendoza's character is not that he lends money and is ruthless in collecting interest, but that he uses this process not only to extend his personal control over the community, but to make them complicit in his behaviour. In other words, he brings down (some of) the inhabitants of Cruden Bay to his own moral level: as with Dracula in the vampire novel, they become like him.<sup>35</sup> As Henri Zukier wrote on the role of the Other in the creation of cohesive identities: 'The outsider undermines respect for the group's fundamental values, blurs the moral distinction between in-group and out-group, and subverts the group's "collective consciousness".'<sup>36</sup> This is the threat that Mendoza poses: 'the Jew' as a corrupting force in the society through which they move but to which they do not belong. The Congregationalist East End clergyman G. S. Reaney positioned the negative effects of a Jewish presence in Britain in the following terms:

[...] an influence that increases in force every day, that is fiercely competitive in labour, unsocial, unpatriotic, because it hath no real citizenship amongst us, and altogether antagonistic to our common faith, and unsympathetic towards our highest ideals and noblest aims; an influence which lies upon the life of thousands of the poorest of the poor like a burden, and penetrates that life with forces such as no English Christian can contemplate unmoved.<sup>37</sup>

For Stoker, too, it is a degradation of character, rather than of occupation, that is taking place. David Glover has noted Stoker's fascination both with concepts of degeneration and figures who precipitate or embody degeneration, and, in Mendoza's case, this degenerative influence affects not only individuals, but a whole population.<sup>38</sup> A common theme running through British popular literature from the 1890s up to the First World War was the future 'Hebraized' locale, but this was almost invariably envisaged as occurring in London; Stoker's innovation in this regard was to have 'the Jew'

35 Arata, 'The Occidental tourist', 630, 638.

36 Henri Zukier, 'The essential "Other" and the Jew: from antisemitism to genocide', *Social Research*, vol. 63, no. 4, 1996, 1110–54 (1117–18).

37 G. S. Reaney, 'The moral aspect', in Arnold White (ed.), *The Destitute Alien in Great Britain* (London: Swan Sonnenschein 1892), 71–99 (95–6).

38 David Glover, 'Bram Stoker and the crisis of the liberal subject', *New Literary History*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1992, 983–1002 (986–7); Cheyette and Valman, 'Introduction', 13–14.

transform a non-urbanized area without any wider Jewish community, native or migrant, present. In Cruden Bay, Solomon Mendoza is Jewry.<sup>39</sup>

This process of corruption/seduction is apparent in Mendoza's first appearance in the novel, at a gathering preceding a wedding. This is how Mendoza is described by Stoker as he and a confederate come into the public house: 'Just then two people entered the room, one of them, James Cruickshank of the Kilmarnock Arms, who was showing the way to the other, an elderly man with a bald head, keen eyes, a ragged grey beard, a hooked nose and an evil smile' (29). Mendoza then gives gifts to the bride and groom, which Stoker has him describe in 'stage-Jewish' phonetics: 'For you, mein frient Keith, this cheque, which one week you cash [*sic*], and for you, my tear [*sic*] Miss Alice, these so bright necklace, which you will wear, and which will sell if you so choose' (29–30). In fact, these 'wedding presents' are bribes that Mendoza is offering to their parents to cement his control over the community and draw the local fishermen into a smuggling ring. In doing so, Mendoza is not only furthering his own business interests in a dishonest manner, but is purposefully debasing, with the acquiescence of the parents of the bride and groom, a Christian ceremony.

The exchange between Maggie and Sailor Willie after the wedding festivities, in which she tries to convince her lover to turn a blind eye to her father's illegal activities (a proposition he rejects), is also indicative of Mendoza's corrupting role and the perversion of the dynamics of their romantic relationship. Mendoza is not presented as a sexual threat by Stoker and, in this respect, he differs from other contemporary representations of 'the Jew' in popular fiction, such as Du Maurier's Svengali; at no point in the story, for example, does Mendoza make an advance on Maggie.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, in this part of the novel, Mendoza's pernicious influence is reminiscent of that of the arch-seducer Dracula, who declared to his enemies: 'Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine—my creatures, to do my bidding, and to be my jackals when I want to feed.'<sup>41</sup> As Daniel Pick comments on the nature of antisemitic discourse presenting 'the (sexualised) Jew': 'In such visions, the Jews seek not so much racial separation as a complete penetration and possession of others.'<sup>42</sup> This is indeed what Mendoza desires, although shorn of libidinous intent. The

39 Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society*, 6; Ewence, *The Alien Jew in the British Imagination*, 15–16, 112, 137–8.

40 Daniel Pick, *Svengali's Web: The Alien Enchanter in Modern Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2000), 95; Neil R. Davison, "'The Jew' as homme/femme-fatale: Jewish (art)ifice, "Trilby", and Dreyfus', *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2/3, 2002, 73–111 (75).

41 Bram Stoker, *Dracula* [1897] (London: Penguin 1994), 365. See also Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (London: Routledge 1991), 107.

42 Pick, *Svengali's Web*, 199–200; see also Franco Moretti, 'The dialectic of fear', *New Left Review*, vol. 1/136, November–December 1982, 67–85 (68), in which Dracula is characterized as embodying 'the desire for possession over that of enjoyment'.

absence of an explicit sexual threat in *The Watter's Mou'* is itself sexually transgressive; Mendoza replaces sexual congress with his own lust for money. In this part of the book the wedding ritual is undermined, the celebrants are made complicit and the moral character of Maggie is called into question because of Mendoza's expanding power over the people of Cruden Bay.

For Maggie this is a temporary lapse. Sailor Willie's rectitude brings her to her senses, and the two of them commit to working to undo Mendoza's influence over her father. However, there are others in the community who, like the character of Renfield in *Dracula*, become willing tools of the 'ethnic Other', and who aid the Jewish moneylender's schemes in return for financial remuneration. Some of Mendoza's agents are described as 'seemingly foreigners', but others are locals born in the area (90). Having learned that the authorities are aware of an intended effort to smuggle contraband into Buchan, Maggie attempts to warn her father, and dissuade him from taking part. MacWhirter's reply sums up the new socioeconomic reality in Cruden Bay: 'I'm no' the maister here the noo. Mendoza has me in his grip, an' his men rule here!' (91). The father and daughter are then physically intimidated by a gang, the leader of whom makes clear the power dynamic at play: 'When Mendoza bought this man he bought all—unless there be traitors in his house' (91). This statement forms an obvious precursor to Count Dracula's 'possession' of Jonathan Harker in his Transylvanian castle, where the vampire declares: 'This man belongs to me!'<sup>43</sup> Mendoza does not just control the physical tools of MacWhirter's trade, but MacWhirter himself, and his dependants, a fact acknowledged by the Scottish fisherman. However, Maggie's appeal is successful; despite dire threats from Mendoza's men, the smuggled cargo is thrown overboard.

There are two fears in respect to 'Jewish influence' apparent here, and they operate in tandem. The first is supplantation; the second the blurring and undermining of identity. MacWhirter's exclamation to his daughter that 'I'm no' the maister here the noo' was a sentiment that was frequently expressed in more or less these same terms in various treatises written in the last two decades of the century. Jews seemed to be more visible, and more confident, in British public life, then ever before. Jewish politicians, both Liberal and Conservative, had attained some electoral success, winning constituencies that usually, although not always, had large Jewish populations living within them.<sup>44</sup> If the immigrants, with their strange language and exotic apparel, gained the most attention, in upper-middle-class life, the emergence of an Anglo-Jewish bourgeoisie that was commercially successful and culturally assimilated into the wider society was also noted.<sup>45</sup> This could be

43 Stoker, *Dracula*, 53.

44 Marc Brodie, *Politics of the Poor: The East End of London, 1885–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2004), 186–8.

45 David Feldman, 'Was modernity good for the Jews?', in Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds), *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1998), 171–87 (172–3).

viewed as a positive phenomenon, a sign of integration that was contrasted with the obvious and continuing 'difference' of the migrant proletariat.<sup>46</sup> It also fed into new forms of what could be described as 'country house' antisemitism, based around snobbery; the figure of the British Jewish 'arriviste', who had money but not taste or breeding, emerged in popular literature at this time.<sup>47</sup> For some, however, this new Jewish involvement at Westminster and in fashionable society was more sinister in nature. Arnold White, although at points praising upper-class English Jews and comparing them favourably with migrants, wrote of the creation of an 'Anglo-Jewish imperium' within the British Empire, forged by this new domestic Jewish elite, and dedicated to advancing 'Jewish interests' at home and abroad.<sup>48</sup> For White and his colleagues this was a zero-sum game; if Jews were allowed into the highest stratum they would dominate it and, by extension, the rest of the country, to the detriment of 'Anglo-Saxon' Gentiles.<sup>49</sup>

However, more dangerous than supplantation for those worried about the changing role of 'the Jew' was the possible melding and blurring of Jewish and Gentile identity and, through this, the assumption of a 'Jewish' character by the wider society. Through assimilation, ultimately involving inter-marriage with Jews or those of Jewish descent, British racial stock would be diluted and, through this in turn, the nation's moral character would be adversely affected.<sup>50</sup> This process was viewed as having already begun. A similar narrative was advanced on the European continent. The peril lay in intrinsic racial 'Jewishness', and that danger increased rather than dissipated with assimilation.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, in an article on contemporary forms of European antisemitism published in *The Nineteenth Century and After* in 1896, Emil Reich stressed that the 'New' (that is, assimilated) Jew was viewed by the antisemite as a greater threat than the 'old Orthodox Jew' separated by faith and institutional prejudice from the society around them.<sup>52</sup> It should

46 Sara Abosch-Jacobson, *'We are not only English Jews, we are Jewish Englishmen': The Making of an Anglo-Jewish Identity, 1840–1880* (Boston: Academic Studies Press 2019), 121.

47 Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876–1939* (London and New York: Routledge 2016), 110–11; Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656–2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2002), 163–4.

48 Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society*, 25–6.

49 Sam Johnson, "'A veritable Janus at the gates of Jewry": British Jews and Mr Arnold White', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2013, 41–68 (62–3).

50 For Du Maurier's counter to this in *Trilby*, where he argues that partial Jewish ancestry was beneficial for the continued virility of British racial stock, see Pick, *Svengali's Web*, 24; and Davison, "'The Jew" as homme/femme-fatale', 89. On the development of the use of the term 'antisemite' and its racialized meaning in Britain, see also Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England*, 81–3.

51 See Zukier, 'The essential "Other" and the Jew', 1143; and Johnson, *Pogroms, Peasants, Jews*, 183.

52 Emil Reich 'The Jew-baiting on the continent', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. 40, no. 235, 1896, 422–8, 433–4.



be noted that Mendoza, unlike Count Dracula, never attempts to 'pass' or present himself as a 'native' of the area in which he operates (although presented by Stoker as 'of Aberdeen' for ironic effect); his use of intermediaries to achieve his aims negates this necessity. However, his employment of locals in his schemes itself functions to blur the lines between 'Jewish' and 'non-Jewish' forms of identity, and so irrevocably alter the character of the local area.

### **'Race', 'land' and religion**

Mendoza is presented as both an ethnic and a religious outsider. Stoker makes Mendoza's role as a racial threat to the Cruden Bay community explicit by stressing the heritage of his heroine, and her connection with the land where she was born. For Stoker 'race' and character were inextricably tied together, as the following passage makes clear:

[Maggie] was getting more inspired by the sound and elemental fury around her. There was in her blood, as in the blood of all the hardy children of the northern seas, some strain of those sturdy Berserkers who knew no fear, and rode the very tempest on its wings with supreme bravery. Such natures rise with the occasion, and now, when the call had come, Maggie's brave nature answered it. (73–4)

The reference to 'Berserkers' reflects contemporary discourse about what that much-discussed 'British' racial identity actually constituted.<sup>53</sup> Over the course of the nineteenth century, the emerging discipline of anthropology intertwined with so-called 'racial science' to stimulate widespread debate on what 'stock' exactly this imperial nation was drawing upon.<sup>54</sup> For some, this could be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon and, more problematically, the Celtic past.<sup>55</sup> But other settlers who possessed 'vigour' (a vital if intangible quality for Victorian writers who concerned themselves with such things) were co-opted into this narrative, especially the Vikings. The Norsemen embodied many elements of character esteemed in the contemporary society: strength, maritime prowess, a supposed simplicity of lifestyle and outlook, and of course their northern European racial location.<sup>56</sup> Implicitly, Maggie's Nordic antecedents are framed against Mendoza's Jewish heritage and conflated with moral qualities: her honesty against his mendaciousness,

53 Murray, *From the Shadow of Dracula*, 161.

54 See Edward Beasley, 'Introduction: reinventing racism', in Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (New York and London: Routledge 2010), 1–23.

55 Hughes, *Beyond Dracula*, 58–9, 92–3.

56 See Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer 2002).

her self-sacrifice against his selfish desire for profit at the expense of others. That Jewish moneylending and a general inclination towards capitalist enterprise were ethnic traits was advanced by Arnold White, who wrote that 'the mild spirit of Christian forbearance has promoted the undue economic predominance of a more powerful and intolerant race'.<sup>57</sup> British strength, derived from its Saxon and Viking antecedents, had been weakened by a misguided tolerance (allowing among other things the admittance of refugees), whilst 'the Jew' might appear weak, but could draw on the continued fibre of a combative Hebrew ancestry, and so threaten, in Stephen Arata's words, 'the biological and political annihilation of the weaker race by the stronger'.<sup>58</sup>

Stoker was interested in blood and heritage. But he was also concerned with a primal, sometimes mystical, connection between people and land (or sea). The inhabitants of Cruden Bay are tied to the North Sea, they reside next to it, traverse it and make their daily living from it. This is manifestly a relationship that Mendoza does not have. He has no bond to the sea, and he makes his living not by drawing on the local natural resources, but by making money from money. Jews in Europe had historically been viewed as a transient people, on the move, and not working the soil in any capacity. With the addition of the role of capitalist to the anti-Jewish discursive mix, this characterization was developed so as to assert that Jews were incapable of practical material accomplishment.<sup>59</sup> Whether this was blamed on a natural instinct for profit, or a supposed lack of robust physical constitution varied but, in either case, 'the Jew' in antisemitic discourse did not belong to the land; rather, they inhabited the untethered world of modern capitalist enterprise.<sup>60</sup> Here, through mysterious means, it seemed that money was generated simply by the possession, loan and investment of money itself. No crops were grown, no trees felled, no fish caught, yet profit was accrued. Referring to Britain, Wilkins claimed: 'No one in England ever comes across a Jewish farmer, or a Jewish agricultural labourer.'<sup>61</sup> E. C. Johnson, having described the extent of Jewish moneylending in Hungary, wrote that: 'They have [...] never added one grain to the food supply of men, or done any physical work or handicraft labour. As a nation they have never excelled in, or shown a taste for architecture, sculpture, or painting; nor do they seem to have scientific minds.'<sup>62</sup>

In France and Central Europe, among those pioneers of the new racial anti-semitism, this attachment to the land, or lack of attachment, became a key distinguishing feature posited as existing between 'Jews' and 'Aryans', but more generally it fed into the belief in an 'exogenous Jew' who corrupted

57 White, *The Modern Jew*, xiv.

58 Arata, 'The Occidental tourist', 630.

59 Grosfeld, Sakalli and Zhuravskaya, 'Middleman minorities and ethnic violence', 290, 299.

60 Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society*, 112–13.

61 Wilkins, *The Alien Invasion*, 37.

62 Johnson, *On the Track of the Crescent*, 202–3.

and changed the societies with which they had contact.<sup>63</sup> The 'land' (or sea) 'belonged' in perpetuity to the indigenous people but was 'owned' in terms of the physical infrastructure that enabled one to profit from the environment by 'the Jew' through usury and the evolution of a detached capitalist economy.<sup>64</sup> Arnold White suggested that the re-establishment of a Jewish relationship with 'the land' would quell antisemitism and benefit Jews themselves morally and physically; crucially though, for White, this reconnection would not take place in Britain, but in some other part of the world.<sup>65</sup>

Solomon Mendoza's very presence in Cruden Bay is incongruous. William Hughes describes 'the Jew' in Stoker's fiction as 'an impostor [*sic*] within the community', and Mendoza certainly fulfils this role.<sup>66</sup> In the scene in which Mendoza is introduced, at the party preceding the wedding, Stoker (as he does throughout the novel) uses a phonetic Scots dialect when the locals are speaking which is immediately distinguishable from Mendoza's mangled 'German-English', the latter redolent of contemporary 'humorous' renderings of a 'Yiddish' accent in the British popular press.<sup>67</sup> The belief that moneylenders in Britain were aliens with no ties to the populations they exploited was advanced in the periodic House of Commons Select Committees investigating usury. At one meeting Sir George Lewis, who stressed his own Jewish heritage, claimed: 'Men come over here from Poland and Jerusalem and other places and carry out their usurious practices, and I can assure you they are loathed by the Jewish community.'<sup>68</sup> Mendoza is the only character in *The Watter's Mou'* whose physical features are described in detail, and they emphasize what antisemites presented as a 'typical' 'Jewish' appearance.<sup>69</sup>

Mendoza shares this lack of 'belonging' with some of Stoker's other villains. Dracula of course stands as an archetypal outsider in the late Victorian England in which he settles. Mendoza's 'hard, cruel, white face' as described by Stoker is certainly reminiscent of the physiognomy of the Count (40). Even more explicit is the case of Oolanga in *The Lair of the White Worm*, who finds himself almost universally despised and feared in a profoundly unwelcoming rural Midlands.<sup>70</sup> Here it is worth acknowledging the nuances of Stoker's Othering of Mendoza, as compared to the presentation of this racialized outsider in the author's later body of work. At no point is Mendoza referred to

63 Léon Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism: Volume Four, Suicidal Europe, 1870–1933*, trans. from the French by George Klin (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1985), 41, 44; Brustein, *Roots of Hatred*, 210; Johnson, *Pogroms, Peasants, Jews*, 197–9, 200–1.

64 Morris, 'Judaism and capitalism', 102.

65 White, *The Modern Jew*, 20–2; see also Ewence, *The Alien Jew in the British Imagination*, 8, 51–3.

66 Hughes, *Beyond Dracula*, 63.

67 Johnson, *Pogroms, Peasants, Jews*, 186–7.

68 'The moneylending inquiry', *Reynold's Newspaper*, 13 March 1898.

69 Halberstam, 'Technologies of monstrosity', 337–8.

70 Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals*, 98, 151.

*explicitly* in the text as Jewish. Stoker understands that readers will immediately identify him as a Jew, and the weight of antisemitic characterizations that he employs ensures this. But the term 'the Jew' as a pejorative noun is never employed. This can be compared with Dickens's references to Fagin, with Du Maurier's Svengali and with a host of other nineteenth-century antisemitic grotesques, where the term 'Jew' is descriptively used throughout instead of the character's name.<sup>71</sup> With Oolanga, by contrast, Stoker refers to him frequently using racial epithets, as well as spending much time on his repulsive physical appearance and his moral failings, both explicitly linked by the author to the blackness of his skin.<sup>72</sup>

However, in relation to other 'monsters' created by Bram Stoker, Mendoza most resembles 'Black' Murdoch, a 'gombeen man' or moneylender who is the primary antagonist in *The Snake's Pass*.<sup>73</sup> Paul Murray describes Mendoza as the 'lineal descendant of Murdoch'.<sup>74</sup> In certain respects, Murdoch fulfils a similar role in the plot of *The Snake's Pass* to that which Mendoza plays in *The Watter's Mou'*. He aggressively pursues his debtors, takes over the physical infrastructure of their property (in this case farmland) and is a disruptive force in the wider community. Murdoch, like Mendoza, would 'take the blood out of yer body if he could sell it or use it anyhow'.<sup>75</sup> However, there are crucial differences in how the characters are presented, their agendas and their relationships with the people around them. Murdoch is a moneylender, but his motivation for taking over the particular piece of land on which the plot of *The Snake's Pass* pivots is quite specific; he wishes to excavate a legendary treasure buried underneath. Mendoza, by contrast, is a force of impersonal capitalist enterprise: he has no particular motivation for the persecution of the MacWhirter family beyond the accumulation of wealth.<sup>76</sup> Murdoch is certainly not Jewish; it is made clear that he is Catholic in faith, and Stoker renders his speech the same as his neighbours: a stereotypical rural Irish brogue. Murdoch is tied to the community he operates within. He is from this part of Ireland. It is commented on that, with his wealth, earned through usury, he could move to Galway or Dublin, but chooses not to. He has a strong connection to the land, and is ultimately subsumed by it, drowning in the bogland at the end of the book. Mendoza of course has no such connection; he is completely exogenous. He embodies Hilaire Belloc's post-First World War characterization of Jews as maintaining 'through some general biological or social

71 Harry Stone, 'Dickens and the Jews', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1959, 223–53 (234, 245, 251–2).

72 Newman, 'Invasions and Inversions', 60, 71, 234.

73 Hughes, "'For Ireland's good'".

74 Murray, *From the Shadow of Dracula*, 161.

75 Stoker, *The Snake's Pass*, 28.

76 See Moretti's comments on *Dracula* as capitalist and the pursuit of monopoly in Moretti, 'The dialectic of fear', 74–5.

law' an 'unfailing differentiation between themselves and the society through which they ceaselessly move'.<sup>77</sup>

It is worth briefly considering how Stoker concludes his novel, and the insights its final pages give us into the threat that Mendoza poses. Maggie drowns attempting to intercept and warn her father; Sailor Willie commits suicide at the end of the story, and their bodies are washed up on to the shore together, in a final, suitably Gothic embrace. However, Mendoza, despite the harm he has done, meets no such dramatic fate. Ultimately, he is dealt with legally, after arrest by the local authorities. There is no bloody and extrajudicial punishment meted out to the moneylender, no slashing of throat and stabbing of body as experienced by Count Dracula. Mendoza is presumably removed from Cruden Bay, to face trial in Aberdeen. Whether the effects of Mendoza's usury can be undone is left ambiguous by Stoker. Here is the conversation between Sailor Willie and the local aristocratic landowner, the Earl of Erroll, after the disappearance of Maggie and the seizing of Mendoza. Willie begins by stating the futility of his lover's death: "'All in vain! She lost and her father ruined, his character gone as well as all his means of livelihood, and all in vain. God might be juster than to let such a death as hers be in vain!'" The Earl, in reply, stresses the redemptive nature of Maggie's sacrifice:

'No, not in vain!' the Earl answered, solemnly. 'Such a deed as hers is never wrought in vain. God sees and hears, and His hand is strong and sure. Many a man in Buchan for many a year to come will lead an honester [*sic*] life for what she has done; and many a woman will try to learn her lesson in patience and self-devotion. God does not in vain put such thoughts into the minds of His people, or in their hearts the noble bravery to carry them out.' (150-1)

The Earl assures the sailor that the moral character of Maggie's father will not be impugned. At this late stage, Stoker introduces another element into the Othering of Mendoza. Maggie's death is portrayed as Christ-like in its willingness to absolve and purify others through unwarranted suffering. God, in other words, has been working through Maggie to save the people of Cruden Bay. It is apparent that Mendoza is not one of 'His [God's] people' as defined by his opponents and is in opposition not only to the coast-guard but also to the Christian faith. To the antisemitic tropes that this article has examined are added in the final few paragraphs the core element of the prejudice of the medieval anti-Judaic past, that Jews stood outside the circle of the faithful, and a Christian religion that had relinquished its own 'Jewish' character.<sup>78</sup> The Jews, as represented by Mendoza, had been, but were no

77 Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews* (London: Constable 1922), 8-9.

78 See Jacob Katz, 'Anti-Semitism through the ages', in Fein (ed.), *The Persisting Question*, 46-57 (47, 52); and Deborah Epstein Nord, 'Dickens's "Jewish Question": pariah capitalism and the way out', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2011, 27-45 (31-4).

longer, 'God's people'.<sup>79</sup> Mendoza's corruptive influence is thus spiritual as well as economic, the former as transformative as the latter, and the two are in fact gelled in the form of 'the Jew'.

### 'The Jew' and intra-elite struggle at the fin de siècle

Mendoza is defeated, at the cost of the lives of the hero and heroine, and the late appearance of the local landowner suggests that some sort of pre-Mendoza societal status quo has returned. That the Earl, like the people of Cruden Bay, has a primal connection with the area of which he is master, is made clear by Stoker. This is the *legitimate* ruling class, tied to the people by blood and a history of mutual obligation, and it reasserts itself at the end of the novel, whilst the British legal system proves robust enough to deal with Mendoza and his associates. Precedent and tradition are seemingly triumphant over unprincipled capitalist ethics, as represented by the Jewish interloper. But is this really the case? The moral degradation that Mendoza causes in Cruden Bay and the complicity of some of the locals with his schemes cannot be reversed, even if MacWhirter's good name is ultimately restored.

How does the plot of *The Watter's Mou'* reflect the evolution of anti-Jewish prejudice in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century? By the time Stoker was writing, the long-term belief that Jews practised a peculiarly harmful form of usury became tied in with insistent doubts about the morality and intentions of modern capitalism and, to a degree, colonialism. Parallel to this, antisemitic discourse shifted from Jews being viewed as a marginalized and in some areas of Europe explicitly ghettoized 'alien' minority to being the influencers of local and national government.<sup>80</sup> In the Middle Ages, Jews in England had been under the 'protection' of the monarch, and there were similar arrangements in other parts of Europe.<sup>81</sup> For antisemites in the late nineteenth century, Jews, following emancipation, had insinuated themselves into this highest stratum. In other words, in racist discourse the dynamic had altered from Jews being the tools of local elites (including by practising moneylending) to, via an intermediary stage (the presence of 'court Jews'), local elites being the tools of 'the Jew'.<sup>82</sup> Mendoza is

79 Zukier, 'The essential "Other" and the Jew', 1134–5; Brustein, *Roots of Hate*, 50; Michele Battini, *Socialism of Fools: Capitalism and Modern Antisemitism* (New York: Columbia University Press 2011), 17, 23.

80 Shmuel Almog, *Nationalism and Antisemitism in Modern Europe* (Oxford: Pergamon Press 1990), 33–4, 52.

81 See Robert Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press 1997), 110–23; and Robert Chazan, *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010), 145.

82 Zenner, 'Middleman minority theories', 263, 267; Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (New York and Oxford: Oxford

simultaneously the proto-capitalist/'pariah capitalist' of the past, the Shylock-like medieval stereotype of the moneylender, *and* the harbinger of twentieth-century business ethics, the 'little Jew' as local usurer *and* the 'big Jew' as transnational financier. As Zygmunt Bauman has demonstrated, 'the Jew' had jettisoned their early-modern 'place' in European society and had come instead to embody a profound and disquieting ambiguity.<sup>83</sup>

As an extension of this conception of shifting power dynamics, 'the Jew' was framed as being involved in a struggle for mastery across Europe with other elements of an establishment that had recently been seen as including Jews.<sup>84</sup> In this racist narrative, the newly emerging component of the power structure might not be made up of Jews in its entirety, but might have adopted 'Jewish' measures and morality, like Mendoza's local enforcers in Cruden Bay, and had thus become 'Jewish' in character.<sup>85</sup> In a period when European identities were defined by an increasingly prevalent hyper-nationalism (and concurrently with a move towards male suffrage and populist politics in some states), this 'Jewish' elite was positioned as cosmopolitan and transnational, whilst their opponents were rooted in and contained within national boundaries and definitions.<sup>86</sup> This 'Jewish' transnationalism was itself both archaic and novel: it predated the emergence of the European nation-state and, in its capitalist form, seemed to threaten to usurp it. 'The Jew' represented both enforced modernity and a still potent past bound up in the religious imagery of the blood libel and deicide.

Between these two sources of power, the 'natural' elite and the Jewish inter-loper, contemporary racist writers predicted an eventual epochal struggle, on a spiritual as well as temporal plane, as takes place between the heroes and villains of *The Watter's Mou'*.<sup>87</sup> Jews had emerged from the ghetto in Central Europe (or from political disenfranchisement in Britain) and, in this developing antisemitic discourse, must be either returned there, or forced out of the continent itself in large numbers, as the alternative to their permanent cementing of control over the wider society.<sup>88</sup> *The Watter's Mou'* is a 'middle-brow' cultural output that reflects the belief that the presence of 'the Jew' in their liberated form in any non-Jewish milieu constituted an existential exogenous threat, that 'the Jew' was simultaneously part of a malignly intentioned and oppressive political-economic establishment and a

---

University Press 2005), 71, 77; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Penguin 2017), 13–16, 20–1, 24.

83 Zygmunt Bauman, 'Allosemitism: premodern, modern, postmodern', in Cheyette and Marcus (eds), *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*, 143–56 (147, 151–3).

84 Katz, 'Antisemitism through the ages', in Fein (ed.), *The Persisting Question*, 49–50, 54.


85 Davison, *Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature*, 105, 137–8.

86 Almog, *Nationalism and Antisemitism in Modern Europe*, 66–70; see Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 36.

87 Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism*, 93–5.

88 Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England*, 81, 86; Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism*, 64.

disruptive and subversive racialized Other, who, like Solomon Mendoza in Cruden Bay, would not only exploit the indigenous society, but ultimately transform it.

**Daniel Renshaw** teaches modern British and European history at the University of Reading. His research focuses on conceptions of migration, identity and prejudice in the modern period. He has published two monographs: *Socialism and the Diasporic 'Other'* (Liverpool University Press 2018) and *The Discourse of Repatriation* (Routledge 2021). He is currently carrying out research for a book looking at British church attitudes towards migration and minority identity from 1900 to 1985. He is also examining manifestations of ethnic prejudice and radical-right politics in British Gothic and science fiction of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Email: d.g.renshaw@reading.ac.uk  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7311-5018>