OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

# *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

## *and Other Tales*

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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# INTRODUCTION

[*Readers who do not wish to learn details of the plot may prefer to treat the Introduction as an Epilogue*]

What happens when a literary text becomes a modern myth, the names of its characters shorthand terms traded in the wider culture? The endless retellings in theatre, film, and television, the constant stream of rewritings and updatings, all take us further away from the original until it lies forgotten under the rubble of its imitators. *Jekyll and Hyde* immediately evokes chemistry sets and bubbling potions, werewolves and damsels in distress, Fredric March or Spencer Tracy acting histrionically, or the sensational tabloid story of the bland inoffensive neighbour unmasked as the latest serial killer. Everyone knows the story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and what it is supposed to symbolize. But if you have never read Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* try to forget everything you think you know, and start again with this deeply peculiar, perplexing, and backwards-told novella.

## *Robert Louis Stevenson*

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94) was the literary star of his generation, one of the first writers to be turned into an international 'personality' by the vastly expanded popular press of the late nineteenth century. He was lauded across the world: the absent lodestone of literary London, but mobbed by crowds in America and Australia in the last decade of his life. He was an alluring yet enigmatic figure, perpetually described by his contemporaries in contradictory terms. He was a lifelong invalid (with a pulmonary disease that never received a definitive diagnosis) and was dependent on his parents well into his thirties, yet he also travelled ceaselessly to the extremes of the world, eventually dying in 1894 as the revered patriarch of a plantation on the Pacific island of Samoa. He was regarded as an innovative literary stylist who also produced boys' adventures, pirate romances, horror stories, children's poetry, and some truly terrible plays. He was an atheist obsessed with religious questions; a

workaholic who wrote 'In Praise of Idlers'; a Tory who despised moralism and lived as a bohemian artist. Later critics have declared him the last Victorian or the first Modernist. As his friend Henry James put it, he was but 'linked dualities', 'a drenched yachtsman haunted with "style," a shameless Bohemian haunted with duty, and a victim at once of the personal hunger and instinct for adventure and of the critical, constructive, sedentary view of it'.[1]

Stevenson first became known as an essayist in the late 1870s, writing for the leading journals of the day in a concise, poised style that abandoned the bombast of Thomas Carlyle or John Ruskin. He was connected to an impressive network of London literary heavyweights such as the editor Leslie Stephen (Virginia Woolf's father), the editor, poet, and his playwriting collaborator W. E. Henley, the scholars Edmund Gosse and Sidney Colvin, and the American émigré theorist of the 'art of the novel', Henry James. Andrew Lang, a critic who nurtured Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling to their fame, recalled unblushingly that Stevenson 'possessed, more than any man I ever met, the power of making other men fall in love with him'.[2] These men constantly implored Stevenson to produce the literary masterpiece that would secure his name. Instead, somewhat perversely, and more than occasionally railing against this pressure, Stevenson experimented with a bewildering variety of forms, from the travel narrative to the traditional seasonal ghost story. His first success came in the early 1880s, with the boys' adventure, *Treasure Island*, written initially as a family entertainment for his young stepson, serialized and then published in book form in 1883. It was to signal, for Andrew Lang, the start of a 'romance revival', a revitalizing riposte to the character studies of the so-called analytic novel that was associated with George Eliot and Henry James. Stevenson was to add his own essays to this debate (such as 'A Gossip on Romance', included in this edition). It was on the basis of this revival that some of the most famous writers of the late Victorian era found their form: Conan Doyle, H. G. Wells, Rider Haggard. Stevenson's second work to find public favour was *A Child's Garden of Verses* in

[1] Henry James, 'The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson' (review, 1900), in *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism*, ed. Janet Adam Smith (London, 1948), 257.

[2] Andrew Lang, cited Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London, 2005), 213.

1885, a delightful evocation of childhood perspective and emotion, told in simple rousing stanzas.

The early reviews of *Jekyll and Hyde*, which appeared in early January 1886, just missing the Christmas market, were justifiably uncertain about how to treat Stevenson's latest work, since it came from a literary star and yet was marketed as a lowly and despised 'shilling shocker', 'a class of literature', *Academy* commented, 'familiarity with which has bred in the minds of most readers a certain measure of contempt'.[3] Stevenson veered constantly between high literary ambition and writing in commercial forms for market rates, and many of his critics were confused about where to place each work. Stevenson was himself unsure at times, and frequently misjudged things. *Prince Otto*, a novel on which he spent five years to secure his reputation as a 'serious' novelist, was not well received; *Jekyll and Hyde*, dreamt up, written, rewritten, and published all in under ten weeks, became his masterpiece. It was also a commercial success, selling 40,000 copies in England in six months, and innumerable tens of thousands of pirated copies in America, where the book was a popular sensation. This confusion over incompatible forms of high and low literary value was not unusual in the late Victorian era, as authors as diverse as Oscar Wilde, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Joseph Conrad sought to negotiate the new commercial forms and the increasing professionalization of literature (including newfangled things like literary agents and limited international copyright). The distinction of high and low literature, as we understand them in the modern sense, was still emergent, so that this was a moment when a lowly Gothic romance might conjoin unexpectedly with a species of psychological realism to produce a *Jekyll and Hyde*. But when these distinctions did harden in the twentieth century, Stevenson's eclectic body of work was to suffer badly.

Indeed, rarely has a reputation declined so steadily after death. Stevenson's wife, Fanny, and talentless stepson Lloyd Osbourne (with whom Stevenson collaborated on a number of later novels) benefited from the syndicate of publishers who put out no fewer than five collected editions of his work between 1894 and 1924 (when the copyright elapsed), raking in thousands of pounds yet slowly destroying Stevenson's achievement by issuing every last scrap of

[3] James Ashcroft Noble, review, *Academy*, 23 Jan. 1886, reprinted in Paul Maixner, *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London, 1981), 203.

juvenilia, unfinished sketch, and first draft of poetry. Early editions were edited by literary allies like Colvin and Gosse—both quietly suppressed texts, and Colvin even rewrote passages. Later, Gosse would complain of the exhausted scrapbooks of the 'Vailima' edition that 'The Dead should be protected from their own carelessness.'[4] Meanwhile, volumes of letters were produced, prompting the obsessively secretive Henry James to worry (privately, of course) 'whether Louis's work itself doesn't *pay* somewhat for the so complete exhibition of the man and the life . . . The achieved legend and history that has *him* for subject, has made so to speak, light of *their* subjects, of their claim to represent him.'[5] This was an acute comment to make to Stevenson's first biographer and cousin, Gerald Balfour, for the general response to the book was to mock savagely the sanctification of the author. Henley, who had broken with Stevenson over his choice of wife, famously rejected the portrait of 'this Seraph in chocolate, this barley-sugared effigy of a man'. Henley's memory of his collaborator was, significantly, divided: 'there were two Stevensons,' he said, and he preferred the rambunctious Edinburgh bachelor called Lewis (not yet Frenchified to Louis) rather than the internationally trademarked 'R. L. S.'[6] By 1914, the critical judgement of Frank Swinnerton was merciless. Stevenson was a lazy, immature writer: 'with all his writing he took the road of least resistance, the road of limited horizons; because with all his desire for romance . . . he was by physical delicacy made intellectually timid and spiritually cautious.'[7] Stevenson had therefore become the victim of the posthumous management of his literary persona, and the moderns buried him. Even Stevenson's superb rendition of the mythology of the double in *Jekyll and Hyde* had escaped its textual origins and entered the general collective imagination, but in doing so it was often crudely stripped of its nuances and perplexities. We now have to work quite hard to read the original in a proper set of contexts.

[4] Edmund Gosse, cited by Andrew Nash, 'The Collected Editions of Robert Louis Stevenson', in Andrew Nash (ed.), *The Culture of Collected Editions* (London, 2003), 111–27.

[5] Letter, Henry James to Graham Balfour (15 Nov. 1901), *Letters of Henry James* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), iv. 213.

[6] W. E. Henley, 'R. L. S.', *Pall Mall Magazine* (Dec. 1901), repr. in R. C. Terry (ed.), *Robert Louis Stevenson: Interviews and Recollections* (Iowa City, 1996), 194 and 192.

[7] Frank Swinnerton, *R. L. Stevenson: A Critical Study* (London, 1914), 205.

## Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

The origin of mythic figures usually resides in some misty prehistory. The origins of *Jekyll and Hyde* are themselves suitably murky. In the summer of 1885, Stevenson moved to Bournemouth, where his father had brought a house for his invalid son. Stevenson was often bedridden, taking morphine for pain, but also writing feverishly hard on the usual gamut of half-realized projects. Stevenson would later tell the story to journalists in 1887 and again in 'A Chapter on Dreams' that he was struggling to complete a tale about a double life, called 'The Travelling Companion', and had fallen into a feverish sleep: 'All I dreamed about Dr Jekyll,' he told the *Critic* interviewer, 'was that one man was being pressed into a cabinet, when he swallowed a drug and changed into another being. I awoke and said at once that I had found the missing link for which I had been looking so long, and before I again went to sleep almost every detail of the story, as it stands, was clear to me.'[8] With the shape of the story sketched out, he set to writing it in a frenzy. Lloyd Osbourne, the stepson who left unreliable memoirs, claimed that the novella was completed in three days, as if Stevenson had been in the white heat of Romantic inspiration. Fanny Stevenson also insisted on an active role in its composition. Gerald Balfour's biography placed Fanny as the first reader of the tale: she was harsh. 'I wrote pages of criticism pointing out that he had here a great moral allegory that the dream was obscuring.' If this sounds like a suspiciously retrospective reading, her view that the problem lay in the fact that 'Jekyll's nature was bad all through, and the Hyde change was worked only for the sake of disguise' sounds extremely plausible.[9] It was exactly the weakness of Stevenson's play, *Deacon Brodie: A Double Life*, that had failed once again on the London stage in July 1884. Whatever the nature of his wife's criticism, Stevenson's response was histrionic: he threw the whole manuscript on the fire and started again. He was to compose *Jekyll and Hyde* as we now have it probably over the next six weeks. It was produced so

[8] Stevenson interview, *Critic* (10 Sept. 1887), cited in J. A. Hammond (ed.), *Stevensoniana: An Anecdotal Life and Appreciation of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh, 1907), 85.

[9] Fanny Stevenson, cited Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Life* (London, 2005), 296.

fast—rushing for the Christmas market—that the final revisions were done in the margins of the proof copies.

The origin of the novella is therefore marked by strange splittings and doublings. *Jekyll and Hyde* has a shadow twin, consigned to the fire. There is that earlier version, 'The Travelling Companion', also lost to one of Stevenson's bonfires. These lost versions have tempted all sorts of speculation about just what Fanny felt the need to silence or revise. The existence of three fragments of the narrative in notebooks, with suggestively variant phrases, particularly of Dr Jekyll's 'Full Statement of the Case', has given further fuel to these speculations, making the text a stranger to itself through the kind of exorbitant interpretations critics have pursued. And behind all this is the kernel derived from a dream, making the book a product of an uneasy collaboration between the waking and the dreaming self, with neither quite in control of the final version. After all this, it is really no surprise that Longmans decided to issue two editions of the book on the same day, a cheap shilling edition and a slightly more well-heeled version, as if wanting to echo the strange double act of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

There is something very dreamlike about reading *Jekyll and Hyde*. It echoes with the half-remembered sonorous language of the Old Testament, bubbling up from Stevenson's fierce religious upbringing. Descriptions have a hallucinatory quality, where solitary men roam ugly streets that take on menacing attributes, evoked by inexplicable events or sudden eruptions of violence. Doubles proliferate everywhere: Jekyll and Hyde are discussed by Utterson and Enfield, Utterson and Lanyon, Poole and Utterson, dessicated men caught in joyless meetings, terrified by something they cannot utter. Dream logic allows people to change their aspect, to transform their very being. Perhaps the strangest thing is the way the story is structured: it starts out like a detective fiction but like a dream it gets distracted, seems to veer off course, and transmogrifies into something far more Gothic and unnerving. Rationally, we might expect a 'case' to be solved, or perhaps to be cured: we don't expect to be left in this unresolved metaphysical confusion.

In fact, the structure is the most ingeniously designed element of the book. It tells the story backwards, so that we work our way towards the confession of Dr Jekyll, which is revealed last. There are at least three narrators: Utterson, the nervous lawyer who plays

detective to rescue Jekyll's reputation; Hastie Lanyon, the bluff materialist medic who is at first appalled by Jekyll's mystical turn and finally shocked to death by it; and Jekyll's own account. Yet there are several other interpolated narrators, too: the novella opens with Enfield's weirdly inconsequential story of the door, and the murder of Sir Danvers Carew is filtered through the newspaper reports of a maid's eyewitness account, itself told as if through the conventions of romantic fiction. The narrative moves from the outer edges of the secret to its final revelation. It unfolds like a sequence of Russian dolls nested inside each other. This is often literally the case: when Utterson opens a sealed envelope from his friend Lanyon, 'within there was another enclosure likewise sealed'. Again, when Utterson is called to Jekyll's house on the fateful last night, he finds another envelope with 'several enclosures'. Utterson cannot read this without racing home to read Lanyon's letter first: there is a constant sense of deferral, as if to get the dolls lined up in the right order.

This structure of the secret is repeated in the peculiar architecture of Jekyll's house. The town house on the respectable square backs onto an enclosed courtyard that contains an outbuilding: Denman's old laboratory. Within this there is the cabinet where Jekyll conducts his fateful experiments. Lanyon is given permission to break through these doors: he has the further task of breaking open a locked drawer in his desk to bring away Jekyll's chemicals. Utterson and Poole use an axe to break down the cabinet, only to find a body and sealed enclosures within sealed enclosures that contain the final truth. Stevenson undoubtedly borrowed this idea of texts within texts from the kinds of sensation fiction written by Wilkie Collins in the 1860s, melodramatic tales of the detection of extreme crimes unfolded across interlocking manuscripts. He also repeatedly invoked the *Arabian Night Entertainments*, that Arabic matrix of interconnected stories ostensibly told by Scheherazade to save herself from death—Stevenson had published his own *New Arabian Nights* and *An Island Night's Entertainments*.

The point of these nested stories is to situate Jekyll's final, impossible revelation in the world of the possible, a trick of embedding the supernatural in the everyday often used by late Victorian Gothic fictions. Yet for all this carefully constructed architecture of stories, *Jekyll and Hyde* does not end with a resounding resolution of the mystery. Indeed, the book finishes with an utterly puzzling sentence:

'Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end.' This is, as Mark Currie has pointed out, not only an impossible attempt 'to narrate the end of narration', it also splits between first and third person, leaving one radically uncertain about who in the end is writing these words, for who is the 'I' in this utterance?[10] As the 'full statement' accelerates towards its doom, and the shuttle of identity between Jekyll and Hyde becomes more chaotic and uncontrolled, there are increasingly elaborate contortions like this, which cancel themselves out ('He, I say—I cannot say I'). These undermine any confidence in the confessional identity. Without any return to Utterson, to the scene in the cabinet, the book finishes with a troublesome metaphysical conundrum. It is more than possible to turn Stevenson's economical Gothic tale into a vertiginous, self-referential thing, as being about 'nothing other than the problems of narration'.[11] This is true, yet it is also possible to work to contextualize the book, and this at least can give a better grasp on how to situate the enduring enigma of those final pages.

## *The Psychology of the Double*

'I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two.' Jekyll's statement tells us at last the secret which is usually the first and only thing known about the book: that Hyde is Jekyll's alter ego, his second self, his supernaturally generated evil twin. This confession only belatedly situates *Jekyll and Hyde* in a long tradition of texts featuring unnerving doublings and pairings. Indeed, the double had been a repeated theme in the Romantic movement and in Gothic fiction from their emergence in the late eighteenth century across Britain, Europe, and America. It was a particular obsession of the German Romantics: Goethe explored strange elective affinities and wrote about encountering his own double; Kleist, influenced by contemporary psychology, wrote plays like *Penthesilea* about alternating personalities; the great Gothic writer E. T. A. Hoffmann generated story after disordered

[10] Mark Currie, 'True Lies: Unreliable Identities in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*', *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Basingstoke, 1998), 124.

[11] Currie, 'True Lies', 122.

story about doubling. This theme would continue as an obsession for writers long into the nineteenth century: the 1840s produced both Edgar Allan Poe's 'William Wilson' and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double*. Stevenson's generation also produced another memorable cluster: *Jekyll and Hyde*, Guy de Maupassant's 'The Horla', Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Joseph Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer' or *Heart of Darkness*, and Henry James's 'The Jolly Corner'. The strange figure of the double, Karl Miller claims, 'stands at the start of that cultivation of uncertainty by which the literature of the modern world has come to be distinguished'.[12] Another way of saying this might be to suggest that the literature of the double became one of the privileged ways of exploring the mysteries of the modern self, a subjectivity marked less by rationality, order, and coherence than by dream, nightmare, and psychical multiplicity. From the Romantic era, the opening up of the vast interiors of the self seems to have made us strangers to ourselves: the double is the emblem of this self-estrangement.

The literature of the double has always existed in a symbiotic relation with psychology. The Romantics were fascinated by the weird phenomena associated with Mesmerism. In the 1780s, Franz Anton Mesmer claimed that he could cure patients in physical and mental distress by putting them into trance states and exerting an influence over them that he called 'animal magnetism'. Mesmerist and patient were found to be in an uncanny 'rapport' that was soon associated with the supernatural: patient and Mesmerist could read each other's minds; they could be psychically connected across vast distances. The twinning or pairing of minds was a consequence of treatment; soon, the figure of the evil Mesmerist entrancing and enslaving defenceless men and women entered into popular demonology and survived down to figures like Count Dracula or the Svengali of George du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*. Although Mesmerism was discredited by numerous scientific bodies, it remained a quasi-scientific pursuit into the 1840s. It was taken up by English Romantics like Percy Shelley, and later Charles Dickens was an enthusiastic advocate and practitioner of the Mesmeric cure. Mesmer's claims of actual transfer of 'magnetic fluid' between people may have been wrong, but Mesmerism is now held to

[12] Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (Oxford, 1985), p. viii.

anticipate findings associated with hypnotism, which first began to be given proper scientific legitimacy in the 1880s, just as Stevenson was writing.[13]

The late nineteenth-century group of texts featuring doubles has often been associated with the rise of psychoanalysis, a term coined by Sigmund Freud in 1896. This is unsurprising, given that Freud was steeped in German Romantic literature, and unusually used literary texts in evidential ways to support his theories of mind. He wrote extensively on Dostoevsky, and in his essay 'The Uncanny' (1919) Freud analysed Hoffmann's hallucinatory tale of doubling, 'The Sandman'. Freud's interest in this tradition was the insistent way in which the double appears first as a seductive, delightful companion, only to turn against its original and pursue a devilish persecution, frequently ending in death. This is the pattern of *Jekyll and Hyde*; something like Dostoevsky's *The Double* is shrilly hysterical from the start about persecution. Freud's ideas were reliant on his colleague Otto Rank, who published an essay on 'Der Doppelgänger' in 1914. Rank suggested the double was a psychic splitting of the self, initially projected as a kind of insurance against the fear of death, but that soon turned into a punitive emblem of that very death. 'So it happened', Rank argued, 'that the double, who personifies narcissistic self-love, becomes an unequivocal rival in sexual love; or else, originally created as a wish-defence against a dreaded eternal destruction, he reappears in superstition as a messenger of death.'[14] Freud was able to relate these ideas to his view of paranoia (where suppressed ideas are externalized, only to return as threats and persecutions), thus providing a sophisticated framework for reading the double.

Psychoanalytic readings of *Jekyll and Hyde* have been a large part of the critical writing on the novel. Since Jekyll confesses that everyday restrictions of respectable society have prompted him to 'a profound duplicity', sexual repression is another obvious interpretative route. That Hyde's murderous violence is directed at the elderly patriarch Sir Danvers Carew, and that he shocks Lanyon to death

[13] For a history of Mesmerism in the nineteenth century, see Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven, 1994). For its impact on English literary culture in the early Victorian period, see Fred Kaplan, *Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction* (Princeton, 1975).

[14] Otto Rank, *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*, trans. Harry Tucker (London, 1989), 86.

and taunts Jekyll with his blasphemies and casual criminality, has also generated much speculation that Hyde is an emblem of a kind of Oedipal rage towards repressive father figures. Some are even tempted to read Stevenson's own repressed rage against the puritanical Thomas Stevenson here, too, with rage against fathers the abiding theme of his fiction.[15] *Jekyll and Hyde* therefore also involves a portrait of a band of elderly brothers trying to shore up their power against the affronts of the impudent Hyde, who becomes a monstrous embodiment of the crisis of patriarchy. Psychoanalysis has therefore clearly been a productive field of interpretation.[16]

Yet if we want to read Stevenson's double in a more accurately historical relation to psychology, we need to displace Freud and look to the moment just prior to the emergence of psychoanalysis, when a host of competing psychologies were assessing new evidences of the strange ability of the human mind to split and fragment. The 1870s and 1880s heralded the era of new kinds of dynamic psychology, and Stevenson's work did not merely *reflect* these developments, but actually helped *constitute* them.

In England, mental disorder was understood by Victorian 'alienists' through a strictly biological framework. Mental health was the continuous exercise of the will to produce psychological unity. Insanity was a disaggregation of the delicate apparatus of mind, and regarded as a decline from the pinnacle of civilized man. The mentally ill were, in effect, biological degenerates, moving lower down the evolutionary ladder with every symptom presented. On the continent, however, a new psychology was emerging that was fascinated by the extraordinary *potentials* exhibited in hysteria and other mental disorders. In 1876, Dr Eugène Azam published his sensational case history of Félida X, a patient who would spontaneously shift personality from her sullen and dysfunctional 'ordinary' self and into a secondary state that was more socially oriented and demurely feminine. The two states of consciousness did not appear to share the same memory or to be conscious of each other. Over the course of

[15] See, for instance, Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism: A Future Feeling* (Basingstoke, 1996).

[16] The most helpful essays in this field are Stephen Heath, 'Psychopathia Sexualis: Stevenson's Strange Case', *Critical Quarterly*, 28 (1986) and Jerrold E. Hogle, 'The Struggle for a Dichotomy: Abjection in Jekyll and his Interpreters', in William Veeder and Gordon Hirsch (eds.), *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde after One Hundred Years* (Chicago, 1988).

fifteen years, Azam watched this secondary state become the predominant persona. This not only damaged the precious idea that mental health equated to an indissoluble unity of mind, it also wrecked any distinction of 'normal' and 'pathological' states, because Félida's secondary state was an improvement on her so-called ordinary self. Two years later, the pre-eminent neurologist of France, Jean-Martin Charcot, turned his attention to hysteria and to the alternating personalities that could be induced by hypnotism. Charcot's clinic at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris became a famous salon, his Tuesday lectures demonstrating the strange and sensational alternations produced by hypnosis on his stable of female hysterics (the gender politics of these demonstrations has been much discussed by feminist historians). In 1885, French doctors reported on another sensational case, a boy called Louis who had exhibited as many as five separate personalities, each with their own separate memory chains. Louis could jump between different mental ages or between states of abject hysteria, cunning criminality, and apparently normal boyhood at the appropriate trigger. As many as twenty leading European psychologists experimented on him and the cultural historian Ian Hacking has proclaimed Louis Vivet the world's first 'multiple personality'.[17] By 1890, the technical term *dédoublement* or 'double consciousness' had become standard psychological terminology.[18]

Once again, like the Mesmerists a hundred years before, these experiments soon became linked to strange supernatural effects. People in trance appeared to have submerged selves with heightened memory and extraordinary powers of perception. These abilities shaded into the occult: many psychologists believed they had proved that entranced people exhibited telepathic powers; others saw little difference between 'artificial somnambulism' (trance) and the spiritualist mediums who would fall into altered states to channel the voices of the dead. Soon, doubles were reinterpretable in the language of the new psychology but also in the jargon of psychical research, a new discipline founded in England in 1882, which

[17] Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, 1995).

[18] Alfred Binet, *On Double Consciousness* (1890), reissued in the series Significant Contributions to the History of Psychology 1750–1920 (Washington, DC, 1972).

theorized that doubles, phantasms, and ghosts might all be forms of projected psychic energy.

This context is important for Stevenson because his work became wrapped up in the ongoing theorizations of psychic splitting. It was not just that 'Jekyll and Hyde' became shorthand for multiple personality (as, for example, in Morton Prince's book-length case history, *The Dissociation of a Personality*, published in 1905). It was more that Stevenson provided a parallel case linking the mysterious fount of artistic genius to these new mental theories. The origins of *Jekyll and Hyde* in a dream became a source of fascination for many. He claimed that the story 'Olalla' had the same origins, and that several dream inspirations still remained to be turned into fictions. Stevenson wrote up these reflections in a slightly different way in the essay 'A Chapter on Dreams'. This spoke of a psyche populated by submerged Brownies, benign sprites that worked up literary raw materials in his subconscious mind as he slept. This essay was in turn incorporated into one of the most significant psychological theories produced in England at the end of the century: Frederic Myers's huge synthesis of psychological evidence and case histories, 'The Subliminal Consciousness', published in parts between 1891 and 1895. For Myers, Stevenson evidenced the profound creative possibilities of those mental capacities that existed below the threshold (therefore sub-liminal), beyond the narrow constraints of the conscious mind. Artistic genius lived on such flashes of insight produced by 'subliminal uprush'. In fact, Myers had written to Stevenson in February 1886, immediately after reading *Jekyll and Hyde*, in order to offer Stevenson a number of corrections to bring the novel into line with the latest psychological theories. This exchange flowered into an extensive reading of the novel, and Myers probably sent Stevenson his essay detailing the cases of Félida X and Louis V (which was likely to be the source of Fanny Stevenson's belief that *Jekyll and Hyde* had been partly inspired by 'a paper he had read in a French scientific journal on subconsciousness').[19] In 1892 Stevenson wrote again to Myers to pass on some more instances of psychic splitting during fever: the whole letter was included in the capacious pages of Myers's 'Subliminal Consciousness'.

It is important to know something about the new psychology of

[19] Fanny Stevenson, cited Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London, 2005), 300.

the 1880s in order to get to grips not just with *Jekyll and Hyde* but also with Stevenson's other works, and with the way in which some of his contemporaries regarded his genius. This is why this edition includes both 'Olalla' and 'Markheim' (where the double is a benign rather than monstrous intrusion), as well as the essay 'A Chapter on Dreams'. There was a huge amount of contemporaneous writing on the psychology of the double, including work by Henry Maudsley and W. T. Stead, sampled in the appendices to this edition. Stead, one of the leading journalists of his day, also praised Stevenson's novel highly: 'What the public does not yet realize', Stead wrote in the wake of Stevenson's death, 'is that the story is more than an allegory. It is a setting forth in the form of an imaginary tale a foreshadowing of the most startling scientific discovery which will probably be fully established early in the twentieth century, viz., that the disintegration of personality is not merely possible but is of constant occurrence.'[20]

This material from psychology does not determine the final reading of the book, however. It situates the book at the juncture of various competing conceptions of subjectivity, but there is no single version to which it conforms. It is an artistic artefact, riven with ambiguity, not the psychological tract some of its readers wanted. Indeed, another context central to Stevenson's conception of the double remains untouched by this material: Scotland. Although set in London, it was the Edinburgh of his childhood and callow youth that Stevenson described as 'pre-eminently Gothic' and fatally divided: 'Half a capital and half a country town, the whole city leads a double existence; it has long trances of the one and flashes of the other . . . it is half alive and half a monumental marble.'[21] Probably the single most important literary precursor for *Jekyll and Hyde* was James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, published in Edinburgh in 1824. Hogg's novel initially focuses on the persecution and murder of a man by his outcast brother. Yet the murderer's confession itself reveals another double and another devilish persecution. Robert Wringham is accused of an escalating series of heinous crimes that he ascribes to Gil-Martin, an intimate friend

[20] W. T. Stead, 'Robert Louis Stevenson: The Man of Dreams', *Borderland*, 2 (Jan. 1895), 17.

[21] Stevenson, 'Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes' (1879), in *The Lantern-Bearer and Other Essays* (London, 1988), 89.

who begins to take over his life, his physical likeness, and eventually his mind. In terms echoed by Jekyll's confession, Wringham agonizes that 'I was a being incomprehensible to myself. Either I had a second self . . . or else my body was at times possessed by a spirit over which it had no control.'[22] The significant element of Hogg's novel is that it sees the double as the product of the peculiarly Scottish twist given to the beliefs of the Protestant Calvinist sect. Calvinism, in the version carried to Scotland in the sixteenth century by John Knox, held that God's covenant of grace was extended only to those who were chosen, and that salvation was predestined for this Elect. Election to the covenant was confirmed by elders and clergy of the church, who conducted searching examinations of professed believers. It was a legalistic procedure, but also one that prompted 'an intense preoccupation with the subjective'.[23] In Hogg's novel, because Wringham is cast out as an illegitimate son of a pastor, he agonizes for years over his spiritual status. The moment he is assigned grace his double appears, arguing that any act is permissible, however monstrous, now that he is a 'justified' man.

Stevenson wrote extensively about the fearsome Calvinist instruction he was given as a child, mainly from his nanny and nurse, Alison Cunningham, but also from his parents. He suffered repeated nightmares of hellfire and damnation and warred with his father, who reacted in exorbitant ways to his son's loss of faith. This upbringing no doubt led to Stevenson's delicious embrace of the double life as an Edinburgh student, the respectful son by day, the bohemian womanizer in slum brothels by night. Stevenson was also fascinated from childhood with the eighteenth-century Edinburgh figure Deacon Brodie, who had led a double life, a civic man of virtue who secretly ran a criminal gang that terrorized Edinburgh. With Henley, Stevenson laboured for years over various versions of their play, *Deacon Brodie, or the Double Life*. The only virtue in reading the laboured script now is to realize that the narrative structure of *Jekyll and Hyde* marks a huge advance. The Gothic form further allowed Stevenson to connect to a long tradition of the Scottish Gothic that overlaid religious anxiety with the psychic splitting that was the metaphorical transcription of colonial occupation, since Scotland

[22] James Hogg, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. John Carey (Oxford, 1969), 183.

[23] M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh, 1985), 183.

was 'a place where a foreign body was violently installed in the very heart of the country'.[24]

The strictures of the Shorter Catechism, Stevenson later said, provoked inevitable counter-reaction: 'you generally take to drink; your youth, as far as I can find out, is a time of louder war against society . . . than if you had been born, for instance, in England.'[25] This religious view nevertheless left a strong mark on his incomplete essay, 'Lay Morals', written in 1878 and which anticipated some of Jekyll's formulations: 'It follows that man is twofold at least; that he is not a rounded and autonomous empire; but that in the same body with him there dwell other powers, tributary but independent.' He would suggest, however, that puritanical restriction, the injunction to 'starve my appetites', would lead to dangerous disaggregation. 'We shall not live alternately with our opposing tendencies in continual see-saw of passion and disgust,' he said: 'The soul demands unity of purpose, not the dismemberment of man.'[26] The lesson Jekyll takes from his own early double life appears to be the diametric opposite of this, as he seeks to amplify rather than resolve duality. Nevertheless, Stevenson responded to one complaint that the ethics of *Jekyll and Hyde* were enigmatic by apologizing for 'the old Scotch Presbyterian preoccupation about these problems; itself morbid.' Sounding distinctly modern, he confessed, 'Ethics are my veiled mistress; I love them, but know not what they are.'[27] Despite this, Stevenson's contemporaries, certainly from the pulpits, quickly adopted *Jekyll and Hyde* as an allegory of sin and temptation. This was because, as one attempt to reappropriate Stevenson for religious orthodoxy suggested, the book 'was a modern echo of St. Paul's words to the Romans, in which the apostle describes himself as leading the double life of unwilling sin and unfulfilled desire for holiness'.[28] Although the reading of the book as a religious allegory is often dismissed as simplistic, the peculiarly Scottish twist on

[24] David Punter, 'Scottish and Irish Gothic', in Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge, 2002), 110.

[25] Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters*, cited David Daiches, 'Stevenson and Scotland', in Jenni Calder (ed.), *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1981), 21.

[26] Stevenson, 'Lay Morals' (1878), *Lay Morals and Other Ethical Papers*, vol. xxii, Skerryvore Edition of *Complete Works* (London, 1925), 180, 184, 185.

[27] Stevenson, letter to Edward Purcell (27 Feb. 1887), *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, vol. v (New Haven, 1994–8), 212–13.

[28] James Kelman, *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh, 1903), 220–1.

puritanism undoubtedly played an important role in generating the dynamic of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

For all these psychological and religious readings of the double, however, it must be recalled that one of Stevenson's narrative innovations is to delay the knowledge that Jekyll and Hyde are the same person until the penultimate chapter, Lanyon's broken and horrified report. Nearly every adaptation since T. R. Sullivan's stage play opened in Boston in 1887 (moving on to New York and London) has abandoned this innovation and betrayed the secret in an early transformation scene, fixing the cultural cliché of Jekyll downing a potion and contorting into the monstrous Hyde. This has erased much of the ambiguity and frisson of reading the book for the first time. For its first readers, uncluttered by expectation, the structure of delay would have prompted a host of speculations over the exact nature of the relationship between the respectable doctor and the low-life who has the run of his house and has been named his heir. In important ways, then, the unease of the book comes not just from the supernaturalism of the double but from the ambiguity of this mysterious relationship. To understand all the resonances of *Jekyll and Hyde*, readers need to see it as more than just an instance of the Gothic tradition of doubling: it also helps to know something about London in the 1880s.

## *Wider Contexts: Crime, Sex, Class, and Urbanism in the 1880s*

In the opening chapter of *Jekyll and Hyde* Enfield recounts the uneasy story of Hyde's nocturnal journey, the stamping on a child, his near lynching by a crowd, and his escape by paying off the parents with a handsome cheque drawn in the name of Henry Jekyll. Why does Utterson receive this story with such alarm? It is not Hyde's acts that trouble him, but the unnatural relation further revealed between the eminent doctor and the obnoxious back-door visitor. Enfield's story in fact triggers a whole set of overlapping anxieties that were occupying London opinion in the mid-1880s.

Enfield confidently judges the meaning of the events he has related to his gloomy kinsman: 'Black mail, I suppose; an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth. Black Mail House is what I call that place with the door, in consequence.' The extent of the blackmailing of middle- and upper-class men by

working-class gangs had been revealed in 1885 by Michael Davitt, an Irish revolutionary who had been imprisoned by the British state and become a prison reformer. Davitt's *Leaves from a Prison Diary* opened with a categorization of the criminal classes, and described blackmailers as 'the most infamous of criminals'. The basic trick was 'the bounce', by which gullible men were entrapped in compromising positions, usually lured by women and accused by men playing the affronted husband. 'The number of aged and highly respectable men in wealthy and professional circles who are under this punishment, in London alone, would astonish society if it could be ascertained,' Davitt reported.[29] Hyde may be one of this despised category of men, but he is also blackmailed himself by Enfield to cover up his violence towards the girl. Perhaps then he is more of a perpetrator than a mere blackmailer. Readers have long been puzzled by this incident: the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote to Robert Bridges: 'The trampling scene is perhaps a convention: he was thinking of something unsuitable for fiction.'[30] Hopkins is as oblique as the text at this point: what might it hide? For audiences in early 1886, at least two possibilities were likely to have been in mind.

In July 1885 the *Pall Mall Gazette*, under the campaigning editorship of W. T. Stead, published a sensational exposé of child prostitution in London, ending with the editor arranging for the purchase of three young virgin girls in a London brothel. 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' achieved its immediate aims: Stead wanted to raise the age of consent (for girls) from 13 to 16, reviving a proposal that had recently been dropped from government legislation. Stead showed the power of the press, and the Establishment responded by prosecuting the editor for the illegal procuring of a child and he was given a prison sentence. The exposé and the subsequent trial took place in the summer and autumn of 1885, when Stevenson was composing *Jekyll and Hyde*. 'The Maiden Tribute' fully anticipated the novel in the way it invoked a Gothic, hellish London (indeed, Judith Walkowitz has examined how Stead's reportage incorporates aspects of melodrama and Gothic). 'The maw of the London

[29] Michael Davitt, *Leaves from a Prison Diary* (London, 1885), 131. Davitt was later to be savagely parodied by Joseph Conrad in his portrait of anarchist-revolutionaries in London, *The Secret Agent* (1907).

[30] Gerard Manley Hopkins, letter (28 Oct. 1886), *Selected Letters*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford, 1990), 243.

minotaur is insatiable,' Stead thundered, 'and none that go into the secret recesses of his lair return again.'[31] The report focused its disgust not just on those who procured girls, but the medical doctors who were paid to examine girls to ensure their virginity. This venom against doctors had also been the target of an early feminist success: the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, which had allowed authorities in certain areas of the city to enforce medical examination of any woman suspected of being a prostitute and therefore a disease risk. Stead and his fellow evangelists (such as his friend Josephine Butler) spoke with outrage at this violation of womanhood, and insisted on the need to contain male desire instead. As he trawled the streets and brothels of London, moving from Oxford Circus to the Mile End Road in the East End, Stead reported rumours of a monstrous libertine who 'may be said to be an absolute incarnation of brutal lust . . . Here in London, moving about clad as respectably in broad cloth and fine linen as any bishop, with no foul shape or semblance of brute beast to mark him off from the rest of his fellows, is Dr ——.'

The trampled girl on a back street described provocatively by Stevenson as containing 'shop fronts . . . with an air of invitations, like rows of smiling saleswomen' might speak to this fevered context of imperilled girls and lusting libertines. Yet the brilliance of the novel is to poise itself ambiguously between multiple possibilities. Hopkins's gnomic comment about hidden codes in the book takes on a different aspect now we know that Hopkins was writing passionately about his love of men and the male body (as a Jesuit priest, this was largely redirected through religious language). 'Black Mail House' might have invoked something very different for Hopkins and other male readers. As Michael Davitt reported, the lowest of the low blackmail tricks was called 'the Common Bounce', where young men are trained 'to follow such men—always, alas! old men—as they believe to be "game," and endeavour to entice them to some out-of-the-way place, where the scoundrel who is watching pounces on the victim, and, under threat of giving him into custody upon the most abominable of all charges, obtains a sum of money.'[32] Angus

[31] 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* from 4 July 1885 onwards. Citations come from the twopenny complete text issued separately on 10 July.

[32] Davitt, *Leaves from a Prison Diary*, 132.

McLaren's study, *Sexual Blackmail*, suggests that blackmail was inextricably associated from the late eighteenth century onwards with that 'most abominable' crime—the charge of sodomy. An additional consequence of Stead's campaign to revise the age of consent for girls was that the bill, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, also had a late clause added to it by the radical MP Henry Labouchère. This outlawed 'acts of gross indecency' between men, and was the law invoked to prosecute Oscar Wilde in 1895. One might abruptly ask: is Hyde, then, Jekyll's bit of rough? Is this why Enfield and Utterson agree never to speak of the incident, and why this elderly band of bachelor men are so concerned for Jekyll's reputation? Is this why Utterson sweats over his own unnamed desires, feverishly imagining Hyde stealing to Jekyll's bedroom at night?

There has been a substantial body of 'Queer Theory' criticism that has consistently identified *Jekyll and Hyde* as an exemplary text that demonstrates how the Gothic theme of the double works through what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls 'homosexual panic', where the desire of men for men is a possible meaning at once invited but also brutally suppressed by a text.[33] The structure of delayed revelation now takes on a different motivation: the half-uttered fears of Jekyll's friends over his relationship with Hyde allow the possibility of sexual dissidence to emerge, and the belated supernatural explanation silences those illicit speculations. It also gives a completely different interpretation to Stevenson's reputation amongst his fellow male writers, that 'power of making other men fall in love with him,' as Andrew Lang put it. In sequences that read impossibly camply now, Henry James's praise for Stevenson was that 'His books are for the most part without women, and it is not women who most fall in love with them. But Mr Stevenson does not need, as we may say, a petticoat to inflame him.'[34] Whilst James's sexuality has remained opaque (although his life was full of homoerotic friendships), Stevenson also had a friend in John Addington Symonds who was an ardent campaigner for the legal recognition of homosexuality. His response to *Jekyll and Hyde* was frank and horrified, and worth quoting at length:

[33] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York, 1985).

[34] James, 'Robert Louis Stevenson', in *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson*, 127.

It is indeed a dreadful book, most dreadful because of a certain moral callousness, a want of sympathy, a shutting out of hope . . . The fact is, that, viewed as an allegory, it touches one too closely. Most of us at some epoch in our lives have been upon the verge of developing a Mr Hyde. Physical and biological Science on a hundred lines is reducing individual freedom to zero, and weakening the sense of responsibility. I doubt whether the artist should lend his genius to this grim argument. Your Dr Jekyll seems to me capable of loosening the last threads of self-control in one who should read it while wavering between his better and coarse self.[35]

Symonds's point is a general one, that Stevenson risks a biological determinism that extinguishes any chance of moral decision or voluntary exercise of will. This view emerges, though, from Symonds's attempts to resist the belief of doctors and sexologists that homosexuality was a monstrous, degenerate state of being. For Symonds, Stevenson's Gothic story had risked putting art at the service of scientific determinism. There was perhaps an echo of this, too, in the jokey comments of that more notorious homosexual of the late Victorian era, Oscar Wilde. Wilde complained in 'The Decay of Lying' about a general rise of a modern vice, 'a morbid and unhealthy faculty of truth-telling'. His example? 'Even Mr Robert Louis Stevenson, that delightful master of delicate and fanciful prose, is tainted with this modern vice. . . . The transformation of Dr Jekyll reads dangerously like an experiment out of the *Lancet*.'[36] The language of pathology hovers near this brittle inversion of fantasy and morbid psychology.

Symonds offered a private response: the most significant thing about the posthumous history of *Jekyll and Hyde* in its myriad adaptations is that nearly every one, from 1887 onwards, invents central women characters absent from the original. Jekyll is commonly engaged to be married, in that transitional state of manhood—often to Agnes Carew, daughter of the MP killed in Hyde's murderous rage. In one way this merely places the tale more easily within melodramatic structures of stage and film, but it can also be regarded as an attempt to heterosexualize the novel—to do the work of filling out

[35] Letter, John Addington Symonds to Stevenson (3 Mar. 1886), *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Herbert M. Schueller, 3 vols. (Detroit, 1969), iii. 120–1.

[36] Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London, 1986), 973.

the unnerving gaps and silences of the book with an acceptable, even rather mundane, array of sins.

Whilst some shadings beyond the homosocial and into the homosexual are possibly discernible in *Jekyll and Hyde*, more recent research in late nineteenth-century history of sexuality has rather cast doubt on the more confident assertions of the queer readings of the book proposed by Wayne Koestenbaum, Elaine Showalter, and others. H. G. Cocks has shown that the Labouchère Amendment produced little comment or change in behaviour and did not substantially change the law or produce any notable increase in prosecutions after 1885. There was no sudden upsurge of 'homosexual panic'. Homosexuality was not the great 'unnamed' crime, but was 'named openly, publicly and repeatedly' throughout the nineteenth century in the criminal courts.[37] Perhaps the risk is that these readings impose a modern obsession with sexuality as the hidden truth of every self and every text. Victorians thought somewhat differently; and not all secrets, after all, are sexual. In 1887, Stevenson's sense of sheer disappointment that Hyde has already come to be regarded as 'a mere voluptuary' is palpable: 'There is no harm in a voluptuary,' he wrote, 'no harm whatever—in what prurient fools call "immorality." ' Hyde, he claimed, was 'no more sexual than another,' and dismissed as impoverished 'this poor wish to have a woman, that they make such a cry about'.[38] Although Stevenson can never be fully in control of the meanings of his work (not least because of those toiling Brownies in his subliminal consciousness), such comments do invite us to go back to the drawing-board, and think again, one last time, about any other possible meanings of his protean double.

One of the most influential aspects of *Jekyll and Hyde* is the fevered way in which it imagines London. It is a hallucinatory place, never clearly navigable, the streets even in daylight 'like a district of some city in a nightmare'. The singular location of Jekyll's house is also weird: an imposing town house in a West End square that seems to have a back door that leads directly into a disreputable, lower-class area of the kind usually associated with slums of the East End. This physical split reinforces the division of personality: London becomes

[37] H. G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2003), 4. This is supported by the findings of Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality 1885–1914* (Cambridge, 2003).

[38] Letter, Stevenson to John Paul Bocock (mid-Nov. 1887), *Letters*, vi. 56.

a psychic topography. This was to have a major influence on the late Victorian Gothic: Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, Arthur Machen's Helen Vaughan, and Bram Stoker's Count Dracula all bring the primitive, marginal, and monstrous into the civilized imperial metropolis. But what the evident class difference between Jekyll and Hyde also picks up on is the urban crisis that beset London in the mid-1880s. Stead's exposé of London prostitution followed in the wake of two important studies of extreme poverty in London published in 1883, Andrew Mearns's *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* and George Sims's *How the Poor Live.* Without some kind of social amelioration of poverty, these and other writers predicted major social unrest, particularly as newly enfranchised working-class men were imbibing the new radical politics of anarchism, socialism, and Marxism. Less than a month after *Jekyll and Hyde* was published, a political meeting about unemployment in Trafalgar Square erupted into violence, the rioters attacking the gentleman's clubs of Pall Mall and St James's. In early February 1886, the West End, shrouded in fog for days, was gripped with panicky rumours that gangs of roughs were marching on the centre from the slums of Bethnal Green in the East and Southwark in the South. This panic petered out, but in November 1887 Trafalgar Square was again the site of a major riot, in which the police killed a demonstrator in their violent suppression of a meeting of the tiny Social Democratic Federation. 'Bloody Sunday', as it became known, became the focus of renewed political and trade union agitation.[39]

*Jekyll and Hyde* became linked to this anxiety about violent class war through another famous London event at this time. Richard Mansfield's celebrated performances as both Jekyll and Hyde in the stage play of the book finally transferred from America to London, opening in late July 1888 at the Lyceum Theatre. Days later, the first murder of a prostitute in Whitechapel began an autumn in which the five killings by 'Jack the Ripper' gripped the London population. Very soon, journalists made the link: 'There certainly seems to be a tolerably realistic impersonification of Mr Hyde at large in Whitechapel,' the *Pall Mall Gazette* commented, adding: 'The Savage of Civilisation whom we are raising by the hundred thousand

[39] The classic account of these events remains Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Harmondsworth, 1984), 281–314.

in our slums is quite as capable of bathing his hands in blood as any Sioux who ever scalped a foe.'[40] The associations with the stage version of *Jekyll and Hyde* were so strong that Mansfield decided to withdraw the production in the midst of the murders in October 1888, with some suggesting that Mansfield himself had become a suspect in the crimes, so convincing was his stage transformation into the murderous Hyde. This is a bizarre conjunction, not least because Stevenson's work always showed an obsession with the popular tradition of gruesome penny paper reports on famous murderers and their hangings. Stevenson borrowed all the details for 'The Body Snatcher' from Edinburgh's popular memory of the crimes of Burke and Hare in the 1820s, men who murdered fifteen times to supply the private anatomy schools that had grown up around the university. The unsolved 'Ripper' crimes have produced endless speculation about possible murderers, but the two favoured at the time showed how the crime was situated in London's class tensions. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* comment suggests, one was to see the crime as the product of the feral slums, the ritualistic elements of the crime pointing to the large Jewish immigrant population of Whitechapel (Jews were widely believed to sacrifice Christian babies, after all). The other version relied on the conventions of melodrama: the crimes were perpetrated by some crazed surgeon or aristocrat intent on punishing working-class prostitutes. Doctors became distrusted figures in the East End at this time.[41]

*Jekyll and Hyde* was an instantly available metaphor for these crimes because the book took some of its energy from London's violent class wars. The language in which Hyde is portrayed in the book—'apelike' and 'troglodytic'—owes something to the description of the degenerate urban poor, 'a stunted, puny race' in the words of one contemporary.[42] Indeed, a whole critical industry around the late Victorian Gothic has promised that the discourse of urban degeneration is the determining framework through which to

[40] *Pall Mall Gazette* (8 Sept. 1888), cited in L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Jack the Ripper and the London Press* (New Haven, 2001), 126.

[41] See Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester, 2004).

[42] James Cantlie, *Degeneration amongst Londoners* (London, 1885), 39.

read the text, and this is worth pursuing.[43] Stevenson was certainly familiar with the discourse of racial degeneration, as evidenced by the didactic conclusion of 'Olalla', a story which he composed in the same winter as *Jekyll and Hyde*. However, this again risks ignoring the protean way in which the text escapes reductive decoding. It is improbable that Hyde can be solely reduced to the demonic figure of middle-class panic, because the bohemian Stevenson despised this class of professionals. He portrays them in Utterson and his joyless friends as 'dry, dull and dead-alive', as he put it of office-bound professionals in his essay 'The Education of an Engineer'.[44] It is Jekyll he identifies as the monstrous hypocrite, not Hyde. Some of his first readers in fact strongly admired Hyde. Frederic Myers's detailed commentary on the character of Hyde defends him against 'jaded voluptuaries' like Jekyll: 'Mr Hyde's whole career forbids us to insult him by classing him with these men,' he rather surprisingly commented.[45] Andrew Lang probably agreed, given his view of the primal energies of the romance: 'Not for nothing did Nature leave us all savages under our white skins.'[46] Hyde in this instance might act as the emblem of the lowly vitality of popular literature against the frigid civilities of the novel.

Edwin Eigner complained as early as 1966 that *Jekyll and Hyde* had been 'allegorised almost out of existence' by the huge quantity of commentary it had generated.[47] This has multiplied many times over since literary scholars afforded value to the Gothic genre and revived their interest in Stevenson's career. This introduction may have felt overwhelming, given the multiplicity of readings it has thrown out. But this also carries its own lesson. The Gothic is not rational but is

[43] The best of these are Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder c.1848–c.1918* (Cambridge, 1989) and Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford, 1999), as well Mighall's Penguin edition of *Jekyll and Hyde* (Harmondsworth, 2002).

[44] Stevenson, 'The Education of an Engineer' (1888), in R. L. Stevenson, *The Lantern-Bearers and Other Essays*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (London, 1988), 257–8, at p. 256.

[45] Frederic Myers, 'Further Meditations on the Character of the Late Mr Hyde', in Maixner, *Critical Heritage*, 220.

[46] Andrew Lang, 'Realism and Romance' (1888), in Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds.), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c.1880–1900* (Oxford, 2000), 102.

[47] Edwin M. Eigner, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Romantic Tradition* (Princeton, 1966), 148.

frenzied, disordered, and dreamlike. Dreams, Freud suggested, worked principally by condensation (compressing many elements into one) and displacement (repressed thoughts taking on disguised forms). A dream was like a rebus or picture-puzzle, and, because of this, Freud warned 'it is never in fact possible to be sure that a dream has been completely interpreted'.[48] The most enduring Gothic texts have a similar dynamic of condensation and displacement. The lure is always to seek the final, authoritative interpretation of such texts. The better reader is the one who enters the dream-logic of the Gothic knowing its capacities to twist and turn and to elicit then collapse or invert meanings. A text like *Jekyll and Hyde* is over-determined by multiple and often contradictory elements: its final meaning will always be running ahead of us, ducking round the corner like Mr Hyde, forever just out of reach.

[48] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Penguin Freud Library 4 (Harmondsworth: 1976), 381.