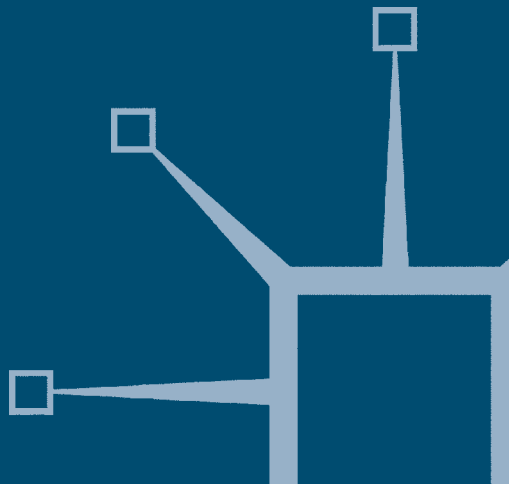# The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles

## Stevenson, Wilde and Wells

Linda Dryden

The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles

*By the same author*

JOSEPH CONRAD AND THE IMPERIAL ROMANCE

# The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles

## Stevenson, Wilde and Wells

Linda Dryden

*Dedicated to the memory of my dear sister,*
*Christine*
*With love*

# Contents

# Foreword

In this engaging and suggestive study, Linda Dryden addresses one of the great puzzles of late nineteenth-century fiction: how could so many kinds of beast exist in the one jungle? A historian focused on the history of modernism might say that in the last two decades of the old century and the first decade of the new, realism and its younger, tougher sibling naturalism dominated the field with a materialist rigour that insisted, as Virginia Woolf would complain, on a plenitude of detail exact to the final button on the final coat. Yet this was also the era of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, both narratives of uncanny doubling, and *She*, an adventure in reincarnation going way beyond the imperial pale; it was the era of ghostly or horrific stories by Machen, Stoker, E. Nesbit, M. P. Shiel, M. R. James and the Benson brothers; it was the era whose best-selling titles were the spiritual sagas of Marie Corelli, and an era well-supplied with speculative fictions – utopias, dystopias and the 'scientific romance'.

Did these literatures of science, weirdness and the day-to-day have anything in common? Writers such as Conrad and Henry James moved back and forth between realism and the uncanny; Kipling and Wells practised both these modes and science fiction too. Linda Dryden writes revealingly on Wells, not least because she sees a similar interplay of modes in Wilde, Stevenson and Machen. Their meeting place was urban Gothic, where horror, split identity, demonic science and the supernatural troubled the sooty landscapes of the realist metropolis.

Starting from the quarrels of the day, social, political, religious and scientific as well as literary, Dryden makes good sense of not only a cultural moment but a process over time. The ghostly, the ghastly and the Gothic had already shadowed the London of Dickens, Collins, Harrison Ainsworth, T. P. Prest and Mrs Riddell, the Paris of Balzac and Hugo, and the Dublin of J. Sheridan Le Fanu, yet the hauntings normally confined themselves to one place, a house, a church, a graveyard, and the revenant or the vampire might just as well have terrified the shires. While often strange, the cities of earlier nineteenth-century fiction are rarely weird; they appear grotesque rather than uncanny. From the 1880s on, however, writers turned entire sections of the metropolitan landscape into areas not just physically dangerous but deformed by metaphysical and moral threat. This sense of urban menace still survives;

Stevenson and Wilde's urban Gothic lives on among our contemporaries in stories, films, club decor, fashion statements, graphic novels, in Gaiman, Miéville, Romero, Salmonson, and many more.

Dryden anatomizes a civilization fearful of regressing toward the brutish or progressing toward the degenerate. The London she so precisely charts is haunted by unruly women, disorderly proletarians, deviants and sinister outsiders. None of these menaces was new to fiction, but the bloodthirsty theorists of sociology, biology and anthropology made their presence more alarming and dislike of them more schematic, more respectable.  Moreover, if the enemy within did not corrupt or kill, one had to dread the enemy without; this period was the heyday of the future war genre so memorably recast by H. G. Wells in *The War of the Worlds*, a genre offering sublime visions of urban panic and collapse thickly tinged with *schadenfreude*. Something, these narratives implied, was rotten at the core of every city.

The ubiquity of threats, however, did not mean that the public spent all its reading time soaked in a pickle of terror. Like popular films, popular novels guide their audiences from fright to reassurance. Without their armour, Wells's Martians are revealed as effete creatures vulnerable to every terrestrial virus; a coalition of stalwart Westerners eradicates Dracula with a timely combination of new technology and old religious totems. One should not underrate the thrill of being scared or the glow of being comforted. Nevertheless, the study of its anxieties tell us a great deal about a culture's atmosphere and artistry. Where would late eighteenth-century Gothic have been without its nasty Roman Catholics? A hundred years later, those cruel monks and nuns had given way to reptilian women, apelike doubles, decadent artists, vampire aristocrats.

At first encounter, the Gothic of a century ago appears to view the world in absolutes, healthy countryside and sickly city, id and superego, mansion and slum, yet its horror is unstable; the poles reverse, good and evil, foreign and domestic, bent and straight, rich and poor collide and merge. Because, more than ever, cities had become meeting and mixing places, they became the sites of terror, bringing the unhomely home. The harder their citizens tried to keep the alien away, the more it could insinuate itself. Linda Dryden has a strange and fascinating story to tell of such insinuations.

Laurence Davies
Dartmouth College

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Permission to reproduce the cover illustration was granted by David Campbell Publishers on behalf of the Everyman Library. I wish to acknowledge their help and to thank Gail Barbour for locating this image.

# Abbreviations

References to primary works are cited parenthetically in the text using the following abbreviations. Texts cited once or only occasionally will be referenced parenthetically with their full title. All texts refer to editions cited in the bibliography.

| | |
|---|---|
| *CSF* | Oscar Wilde, *Complete Short Fiction* |
| *DG* | Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* |
| *DM* | H. G. Wells, *The Island of Dr Moreau* |
| *GGP* | Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan* |
| *HD* | Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* |
| *IBE* | Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays* |
| *IM* | H. G. Wells, *The Invisible Man* |
| *JH* | Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* |
| *MNAN* | Robert Louis Stevenson, *More New Arabian Nights* |
| *MP* | Robert Louis Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits* |
| *MU* | H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* |
| *NAN* | Robert Louis Stevenson, *New Arabian Nights* |
| *NOBEV* | Helen Gardner (ed.), *New Oxford Book of English Verse* |
| *NW* | George Gissing, *The Nether World* |
| *PMG* | *Pall Mall Gazette* |
| *TI* | Arthur Machen, *The Three Impostors* |
| *TM* | H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* |
| *VP* | Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque* |
| *WSW* | H. G. Wells, *When the Sleeper Wakes* |
| *WW* | H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* |
| *YJ* | George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee* |

# 1

# Introduction: the Literary Mood of the *Fin de Siècle*

> And much may be done to change the nature of man himself.
> T. H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*.

The nineteenth-century *fin de siècle* proved a catalyst for a series of concerns that emerged during the 'long nineteenth century'. Loss of religious faith, fears about the effects of the expanding metropolis, increasing political unrest in Europe, the emergence of the 'New Woman', apocalyptic predictions for the future and anxiety about scientific advances found expression in the late nineteenth-century novel. This was a powerful and influential medium where these issues were laid bare and debated, where the real concerns of the late nineteenth century could be dramatized through the lives of fictional protagonists and scrutinized through the acuity of the creative artist. Political, social, moral and scientific debates of the *fin de siècle* provided writers with much of the material out of which to fashion their dynamic narratives, and allowed them to engage creatively with the concerns that were occupying the most influential thinkers of the time and the population at large. Within these debates Karl Beckson argues that cultural trends were 'moving in two simultaneously antithetical directions: declining Victorianism . . . and rising Modernism' (Beckson, xiv), both of which were critical to the direction that the novel was to take over the next century or so.

In the 1890s modernism took its first tentative steps into the world, and the imperial romance of writers like Rider Haggard and boy's adventure stories like those of Henty and Mayne Reid enjoyed spectacular popularity. Simultaneously, a bitter row was brewing over the merits or otherwise of literary realism. Robert Louis Stevenson entered this debate with his famous spat with Henry James over the nature of 'true' art.[1]

Peter Keating maintains that although 'Stevenson acknowledged in his early critical essays that realism and romance were essentially different "technical methods", artistic precedence was given repeatedly to romance, usually by denigrating realism' (Keating, 348). Stevenson's own fiction was very much in the romance genre: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) took the Gothic themes of novels like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Melville's 'Bartleby the Scrivener' (1856) and Dostoyevsky's 'The Double' (1846) and transposed them into a late nineteenth-century scenario that was anything but realistic. A new form of romance fiction was on the rise. Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) was itself heavily influenced by Stevenson's story, containing Gothic themes within an overall narrative of late nineteenth-century romance,[2] and in 1897 that most Gothic of late nineteenth-century horror stories, *Dracula*, appeared, continuing a tradition of vampire horror that endures into the twenty-first century.

By contrast, Conrad arrived upon the scene in 1895 with *Almayer's Folly*, a novel in the realist tradition, and rapidly progressed from his influences rooted in Flaubert and Maupassant to become the modernist writer of *Heart of Darkness* (1898). In the same year as Conrad's first novel, Hardy published what was to be his last major novel, *Jude the Obscure*, which, more than any of his previous works, suggests that Hardy himself was on the brink of literary modernism.[3] Meanwhile George Gissing, Arthur Morrison and George Moore exemplified the brief flourish of naturalist writing that was influenced largely by Zola. In 'Le Roman Experimental' (1880) Zola had set out the principles that he believed defined the naturalist novel. His premise was that 'Determinism governs everything. It is scientific investigation; it is experimental reasoning that combats one by one the hypotheses of the idealists and will replace novels of pure imagination by novels of observation and experiment' (in Becker, 172).[4]

In the midst of this flurry of generic experimentation in fiction, Wells applied scientific themes to the romance: the resulting hybrid was the 'scientific romance', which later became the genre that we know today as science fiction. The final years of the century witnessed a development in Gothic literature that led to the science fiction and horror genres of the twentieth century. Modernism, romance and the 'new', modern Gothic are *fin de siècle* genres that posed a challenge to literary realism, yet still depended for their form and expression on their literary sibling. This is especially crucial to the work of Wells who, in the words of Holbrook Jackson, 'contrived better than any other writer of his time to introduce reality into his novels without jeopardising

romance, to hammer home a theory of morality without delimiting his art' (Jackson, 25). Romance, in the form of narratives like those of Stevenson, Wilde and Wells, thus found new expression, but at the same time maintained its role as a mirror reflecting contemporary concerns.

Gillian Beer, speaking of the romance in general, says that it offers 'a peculiarly precise register of the ideals and terrors of the age':

> The romance is mimetic at a mythic level. It forms itself about the collective subconscious of an age. This does not always make it good literature, or good reading in another age, but it means that it is always suggestive; it can allow us to participate dramatically for a time in the distinctive psychic stresses of alien societies. In this way we also become more conscious of the character of our time.
>
> (Beer, 58)

In *The Picture of  Dorian Gray* (1891) Wilde carries out a similar exploration of the 'collective subconscious' of his age. Defending his novel to the editor of the *Scots Observer* on 9 July 1890, Wilde states: 'Each man sees his own sin in Dorian Gray. What Dorian Gray's sins are no one knows. He who finds them has brought them.'[5] Wilde's novel offers a mirror to the experience, imagination and maybe even the soul of his reader. For Victorian readers those sins would have been quite specific, often related to crime in the metropolis, not least the Ripper murders, as we shall see. But *Dorian Gray* is more than a crime novel, and more than a romance, reflecting as it does some of the moral, psychological and artistic concerns of its age.

Imperial romances, like Haggard's *She* (1887), used the supernatural for sensationalist effect, but Stevenson, Wilde and Wells had altogether more serious intentions.[6] Written between 1886 and 1895, *Jekyll and Hyde, Dorian Gray, The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) are radical critiques of, and responses to, their age. In these texts realism is inadequate for expressing the moral and social schisms that lie at the heart of the novels. At the *fin de siècle* Dorian Gray wistfully longs for the '*fin du globe*' (*DG*, 138), and in doing so anticipates the apocalyptic themes of Conrad's proto-modernist novel, *Heart of Darkness*.[7] Far from the utopian visions and endorsement of 'Victorian' values that characterize the best-selling romances of the day, these 'romances' explore and expose extremes of moral, psychological and social dilemmas. In the mid-century Dickens, Balzac, Flaubert, George Eliot, the earlier realists had done much the

same, but in the angst-ridden *fin de siècle* Stevenson, Wilde and Wells added a supernatural or scientific element to the novel, thus transcending the bounds of realism.

The 'new' grittier realism and its short-lived successor, naturalism, were coming under heavy attack for portraying contemporary life as too sordid and too pessimistic.[8] In *Jekyll and Hyde*, Stevenson largely avoided such criticism because the story was never meant to be read as 'real' and because it could be read as a parable about the evils of moral dissolution.[9] Wilde wrote fairy stories, many of which were published in *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888), and social satires like *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1899),[10] but with *Dorian Gray* he touched a very raw nerve in the Victorian moral consciousness and found that literary prurience was not easily tolerated. Wells was concerned about the condition of factory workers and the metropolitan poor, but he was more dispassionate than George Gissing or Arthur Morrison. Moreover, *The Time Machine* could be read as escapism in a way that Gissing's *Demos* (1886) or Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896) never could.

The *fin de siècle* thus witnessed a mood of conflict and experimentation in literary circles that was an expression of the spirit of the age. The optimism of the earlier century gave way to a pessimistic outlook; for some writers realism meant confronting the bleak social conditions of the poor, and Gothic romance, reflecting this new mood, was often situated in the heart of the modern metropolis. The literary climate in which the works of Stevenson, Wilde and Wells were produced was thus very different from that of the earlier part of the century: naturalism and the 'new' realism were giving way to experiments in narrative techniques, to new ways of presenting the world, ultimately, to new fictional genres, and the works of these writers contributed to these developments.

## Hooligan voices: naturalism and the 'new' realists

In 'The Voice of the Hooligan', in *The Contemporary Review* of 1899, Robert Buchanan objected to Kipling, comparing him to Dickens, George Eliot and Thackeray. Kipling emerged, according to Buchanan, as 'the spoilt child of an utterly brutalised public'. His portrayal of public school youth in *Stalky & Co.* (1899) was 'repulsive and disgusting enough to be true'. Buchanan admired Eliot's middle-class realism and Dickens's humanitarian portrayal of London slum-life, but Kipling's mode of description was 'merely a savage caricature' (Buchanan, 784). What provoked such vitriolic condemnation was not

the fact that *Stalky & Co.* promoted the need for more individualistic types to rule the Empire. Buchanan, a writer of reactionary fiction, objected to the 'new' realism that had been influencing English writers for the past twenty or so years. He averred that 'all writers, great or little, must finally be judged by the same test – that of the truth and beauty, the sanity or the folly, of their representations of our manifold human nature. Mere truth is not sufficient for Art; the truth must be there, but it must be spiritualised and have become beautiful' (Buchanan, 784).[11] In effect, Buchanan was advocating what many have called 'the beautiful lie'.

There was a tension between the pessimism of the modern realist novelists and the essentially positive morality of traditional realism. While George Eliot's vision was not wholly optimistic, underlying her narratives was, as Maurice Larkin says, a 'modus vivendi' that offered some comfort: 'Eliot was primarily concerned with finding a foundation for morality in a determinist world' (Larkin, 89). The new realists of the 1880s and 1890s were far more pessimistic, as George Becker explains:

> Readers must have been stunned by the sudden avalanche of new names with which they were urged to be familiar. It is not surprising that they were wary of conspiracy, especially when the new writers almost always shocked their staid and decorous expectations . . . The immediate reaction of the British was to withdraw behind their own innocuous brand of realism, punishing Frank Vizetelly for publishing Zola in translation and keeping the relatively inoffensive Ibsen beyond the pale until time and George Bernard Shaw came to his rescue.
>
> (Becker, 15)[12]

English realists, like their European counterparts, had largely abandoned the project of creating transcendent beauty out of actual human experience. They tried to depict life 'as it is', or at least as they saw it: hence, Zola's *Germinal* (1885). Roland Stromberg summarizes the new realists' subject matter: 'Realism and subsequently naturalism in literature aimed at describing unflinchingly the horrors of modern civilization as seen in the lives of the poor wretches who labored in mines or factories, of prostitutes, degenerates, and criminals. "We go into the street, the living swarming street, into empty lots as well as proud forests" (Huysmans)' (Stromberg, xv). Life in such novels was a Darwinian struggle for survival; it was sordid, desperate and sometimes seemingly pointless. Frequently, the absence of God meant a world of moral chaos in which the weak

perished and the 'fit' survived by adapting themselves to the uncertain conditions of Victorian Europe. The apparent social stability of the Georgian and Regency eras, pre-industrial revolution Britain, had been forever fractured, and town/country paradigms were unstable. Conscious of these conditions, the certainties of the past no longer held sway for the new realists, and the only guaranteed fact of life was death.

New realism opposed an essentially optimistic literature. As Guy de Maupassant wrote in *Le Gaulois* in July 1882: 'The mania for the lower elements, which is decidedly the vogue, is only an excessively violent reaction against the exaggerated idealism that preceded it.'[13] It had a social conscience that challenged romantic illusions. For Jackson new realism stood in opposition to a variety of literary genres, especially the popular, escapist literature of romance:

> The novel which was guaranteed to tax no brain by thought and to vex no code of morals by revolutionary suggestions, but which by a determined rejection of anything approaching problem or idea, or even psychology, was calculated to produce that drowsy state of mild peacefulness which many people believe to be the end and aim of all good literature.
>
> (Jackson, 220)

The new realists 'began by repudiating any precise desire for either immorality, beauty or even morality.' Looking forward to the literature that was to supersede realism, and naturalism, Jackson avers that 'The modernist was not only frank, he was frankly amoral; his one concern was to get into his work the quality of life, the sense of reality, irrespective of the presence or absence of moral ideas, leaving beauty and immorality to chance' (Jackson, 222). Thus when *Madame Bovary* appeared in 1857 it provoked a storm of protest. Charles de Sainte-Beuve in *Causeries du Lundi* laments: 'The ideal has disappeared; the lyrical spring has dried up. We have turned away from it.'[14] Yearning for the 'beautiful lie', he reproaches Flaubert: 'Why not place in the book one character whose nature is such as to console the reader with the sight of goodness, why not allow him one friend?'[15] Of course, had Flaubert done any such thing his vision in *Madame Bovary* would have been shattered. As Becker says, Flaubert 'felt that contemporary literature was drowning in emotion and gothicism' (Becker, 89). There was an assumed clinical detachment about the new realists, and the later naturalists, which they felt brought a freshness to literature that was, in Zola's words, 'rotten with lyricism'.[16]

Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889) and Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* were typical naturalist narratives. Concerned with the appalling state of the inner cities, Gissing and Morrison associated moral and social decline with metropolitan decay and neglect. John Goode observes that *The Nether World* 'was a valuable document in the cause for reform' because it is 'built around themes which preoccupy the social anxieties of the 1880s' (*NW*, vii). Housing, unemployment and philanthropy were of particular interest, as exemplified by Gissing's emotive descriptions of the inner London poor:

> On all the doorsteps sat little girls, themselves only just out of infancy, nursing or neglecting bald, red-eyed, doughy-limbed abortions in every stage of babyhood, hapless spawn of diseased humanity, born to embitter and brutalise yet further the lot of those who unwillingly gave them life.
>
> (*NW*, 130)

In his description of the appalling conditions in which Pennyloaf Candy exists there is as much of a hint of Zola's *Germinal* as there is of Dickens's London.[17] As Pennyloaf runs 'into the jaws of this black horror with the indifference of habit' (*NW*, 74), we enter the nether world of human existence in late nineteenth-century London, as typified by the Candy household:

> The room contained no article of furniture. In one corner lay some rags, and on the mantle-piece stood a tin teapot, two cups, and a plate. There was no fire, but a few pieces of wood lay near the hearth, and at the bottom of the open cupboard remained a very small supply of coals. A candle made fast in the neck of a bottle was the source of light.
> On the floor was sitting, or lying, an animated object, indescribable; Bob knew it for Mrs. Candy.
>
> (*NW*, 339)

In an attack upon 'The New Naturalism,' in the *Fortnightly Review* in August 1885, W.S. Lilly suggests that naturalism 'eliminates from man all but the ape and the tiger.'[18] For Lilly the purpose of the artist is 'in the midst of the ugly and sordid realities of daily life to present that image of a fairer and better world, the desire of which springs eternal in the human breast.'[19] Yet the actual mood of the *fin de siècle* was anything but optimistic, and the race itself seemed, for some, to be doomed to degenerate to an earlier stage of evolution.

## Degeneracy and the *fin de siècle*

In the popular consciousness, city life was linked to a tendency to degeneration. Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst note that notions of 'developmental progress or degenerative and entropic decline insistently inform discussions of the individual, the city, and the nation-state' (Ledger and Luckhurst, 221). Poverty became closely linked to a criminal mentality and degeneration was perceived to be evidenced by physical deformity and mental illness. The new realists and the naturalists were responding to a spiritual crisis that afflicted many at the time, a crisis that is often referred to as the *malaise* of the late nineteenth century. Janet E. Hogarth, writing in the *Fortnightly Review*, in response to Max Nordau's hugely influential *Degeneration* (1895), asks: 'What is the cause of this strange disease of modern life?' The reason for what Hogarth perceives as a decline in the novel is linked to the prevailing cultural conditions:

> The growth of large towns is in itself an important factor in nerve wear and tear, not to mention the weariness of perpetual travelling, hourly posts, innumerable newspapers, and a veritable plague of modern novels. Our fathers had no time to adjust their nervous system to this vastly increased demand on its resources. 'Fatigue and exhaustion showed themselves in the first generation under the form of acquired hysteria, in the second as hereditary hysteria.' The twilight mood thus produced is a sign of atavism, not progress; in one word it is literary degeneracy.
>
> (Hogarth, 586)

In the years surrounding the publication in Britain of *Degeneration*, 'a compendious onslaught on art and modernity', according to William Greenslade, the word degenerate 'had become a catch-all term of abuse':

> 'Are Our Oarsmen Degenerate?', wondered *The New Review* in 1892, and an 1898 edition of *The National Review* asked 'Is Cricket Degenerating?' Degeneracy allowed fitness, and its double, unfitness, to be spoken of together as a feature of modern life. As the century drew to its close, modern civilisation itself was referred to as a pathological condition – a sickness, immanent and pervasive.
>
> (in Stokes, 38–9)

*Dracula*, published in the wake of this malaise, exemplifies how rapid technological development was occurring amid a general climate of fear of reversion to primitive states of being. Writers of Gothic horror and scientific romance were to explore such fears through sensationalist narratives, but the realists and naturalists saw the primitive as an ever-present aspect of modern civilization.

Using the motif of the 'other', such narratives explored and exploited the perception that humanity, and particularly the urban poor, was reverting to an earlier, primitive type. Greenslade explains how this earlier 'type' was often figured as a double:

> The secret sharer was emblematically figured for a post-Darwinian culture as the beast in man. Fear of the hidden presence of a 'monstrous' and disruptive energy was experienced and articulated as the surrendering to that influence. Age-old hierarchies, which had assumed unquestioned relations of authority and subordination – civilized and brutish, higher and lower, mind and body, reason and instinct – were under pressure as never before. The fear of atavism, of reversion to a lower state, offered the perfect medium for the expression of these worrying questions.

> (Greenslade, 72–3)

Physical and moral atavism is Wells's central premise in *The Island of Dr Moreau*. In *Jekyll and Hyde*, Hyde's troglodytic appearance and merciless violence, 'the ape and the tiger', reproduce the human bestiality that Lilly sees as characteristic of naturalist writing. Hyde begins his existence with the appearance of a primitive human being, possessed of primitive impulses. Stevenson's novel is neither realist nor naturalist: rather it explores the tensions between the optimistic vision that Lilly advocates and the naturalists' pessimistic emphasis on the 'beast within'. In a direct expression of these tensions Jekyll wishes to shed the hedonist primitive in himself so that 'the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path' (*JH*, 56).

Fear of atavism was closely linked to sexuality: physical appetites, unchecked by moral consciousness, were seen as evidence of a primitive self; and one thinks here, for example, of Henry James's short story 'The Beast in the Jungle' (1903), where the hero, Marcher, suppresses his sexuality, fearing for the whole of his life that something terrible will happen to him. Such fictions encode an anxiety about 'otherness', about the possibility of a dual self, where the externally moral individual masks a primitive 'other' within that threatens to

engulf the civilized. These are the concerns of Stevenson and Wells, as Greenslade points out:

> Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) exploits the indeterminate relationship between subject and threatening 'other', by showing how fatally that relationship might be inverted. And a 'scientific' fable, such as Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), explores the sensational possibilities of reversion by annihilating the dividing line separating man and beast through the empowering hubris of vivesection.
>
> (Greenslade, 74)

In *Dorian Gray*, Wilde explores a moral atavism brought on by the release of an unbridled hedonism and an unhealthy desire for all things aesthetic. It was partly for this reason that Wilde became labelled, notably by Nordau, as a 'literary degenerate':

> Degeneration, in its medic-psychological emphasis, offered explanatory, totalising myths which were hostile to the (ironic) claims of the decadent writer. By such diagnoses, 'any cultural manifestation of "exception" comes to be seen as a crisis or a symptom of disease', and this included the exponents of decadence and decadent art, such as Wilde and Beardsley.
>
> (Greenslade, 20)

Degeneracy was linked to decadence, and the 'disease' was perceived to cross social boundaries, offering a threat to the nation as a whole. This in turn led to fears that the 'condition' of degeneracy could be hereditary, and hence the entire human race could be heading toward extinction.

Wells, taking his lead from T. H. Huxley's teachings on evolutionary theory, held a less histrionic, but nevertheless pessimistic, view on the future of humanity. The realists and naturalists were seeking to extend the boundaries of artistic representation to include all of human experience at every level of society, to dissect it with a scientific 'objectivity' and to present it fictionally as a 'slice of life', at once sobering and shocking.[20] In *The Time Machine* Wells brought scientific 'objectivity' to bear on the romance in the form of evolutionary theories, and in doing so warned of a future in which the bleak vision of the naturalists becomes apocalyptic. Because they were purveyors of the fantastic and the speculative, Stevenson and Wells, in particular, responded to the mood of the

time without incurring the opprobrium levelled at the naturalists. *Jekyll and Hyde* deals with psychology and morality in a way that exposes the criminal mind without seeming to condemn society at large. In *The Time Machine* Wells takes circumstances like Pennyloaf Candy's conditions of existence and projects them onto her descendants, the Morlocks, of the year 802,701. This is nowhere near as shocking as Gissing's vision because it allows for, indeed its message seems to promote, the possibility that present social and political action could avert the fictional future of *The Time Machine*. John Lawton believes that Wells is more successful than the realists in getting across the message:

> When the critic Samuel Hynes writes that 'the best representation of [the lower classes] is not . . . realistic: it is Wells's description of the Morlocks, the evolved underworld creatures of *The Time Machine'*, it is a startling tribute to Wells, and a stinging criticism of the failure of realistic fiction at the turn of the century to convey class as an issue.
>
> (*TM*, xl)

Critics, like Buchanan, who were clamouring for a 'spiritualized' and 'beautiful' truth, were seeking in vain for a return to an earlier phase in the development of the novel. The problem for such critics of the new forms of the novel was that the cultural conditions of Britain had changed; if novelists were compelled to create art out of life then the art they created would reflect the life they saw.

## A godless universe

By the late nineteenth century Darwin's theories of evolution and Nietzsche's anti-Christian philosophy had rocked the religious faith of many. The conflict created by loss of religious faith in the late nineteenth century finds full expression in realist and naturalist literature where atheism and agnosticism replace Christianity. Evolutionary theories had transformed the possible explanations of human existence. The struggle for survival became, for many post-Darwinian thinkers, the only answer to the question of the meaning of human existence. Maurice Larkin discusses how evolutionary theory brought about a serious crisis of faith for nineteenth-century moralists because its suffering seemed to 'serve no "moral" purpose other than to perpetuate a material existence which itself had no apparent *raison d'être*.' As a result literature began to 'protest against the moral outrageousness of a creation that belied the gospel virtues' (Larkin, 56).

Without religious faith, it was 'scientific' observation of the physical world that many novelists became concerned with. In the preface to the second edition of *The Story of an African Farm* (1881) Olive Schreiner makes it clear that her purpose is to present the world as she sees it:

> [S]hould one sit down to paint the scenes among which he has grown, he will find that the facts creep in upon him. Those brilliant phases and shapes which the imagination sees in far-off lands are not for him to portray. Sadly he must squeeze the colour from his brush, and dip it into the grey pigments around him. He must paint what lies before him.
>
> (Schreiner, 28)

Late nineteenth-century realists presented the reader with a godless world where the future of the human race depended on progressive approaches to social ills, or lay in socialism. The moral and religious ideals of earlier writers were often rejected in favour of humanism and a commitment to social improvement through education. New realists put their faith in education and in science. Havelock Ellis, a positivist associated with Huxley, saw science as a source of truth and demystification: 'we know that wherever science goes the purifying breath of spring has passed and all things are re-created.'[21] Science, as Darwin had shown, could explain life. Existence was no longer a mystery: it could be defined in terms of evolution, and education could shake individuals out of the blind acceptance of their place in the traditional class-based system.

Mary Eagleton and David Pierce see the optimism of the realists as essentially a belief in individual free will. They argue that 'Choice, free will, the ability of individuals to triumph over circumstances are concepts which are central to the realist world-view' (Eagleton and Pierce, 75). Thus progress could alleviate human suffering. The problem was, however, as John Lucas points out, that by the late 1880s 'it became increasingly apparent that progress didn't guarantee an improvement in the general good.' The brief flourish of naturalism in late nineteenth-century British literature was a response to this disillusionment. As Lucas says, 'Pessimism replaces optimism, ardour gives way to cynicism; realism turns into naturalism' (Fletcher, 138). The novel was responding to cultural change, and as such the very nature of the novel itself was altering. For Raymond Williams in *The English Novel*, the closing years of the nineteenth century marked the end of the Victorian period and a critical moment in the development of the novel:

[I]n the late 1870s, the early 1880s, the Victorian period ended . . . Socially, culturally, economically, politically, a new phase of our history began. It is quite identifiable, from the late 1870s to the war in 1914. And what is there as scattered accumulating evidence, over two decades, reaches a critical point in the 1890s. The last year of Hardy, the year of *Jude the Obscure*, is also the first year of Wells, the year of *The Time Machine* . . . something important and decisive was happening in that period to what can be called the English tradition . . . For the predominant formula at the time he was writing was not only a traditional community – the country-house world of Bladesover [in *Tono Bungay*]. It was also the inherited, the shaping form of the novel.

(Williams, 121)

The rise of the romance in the last quarter of the nineteenth century contributed to that changing novelistic form: new literary genres were being ushered in, genres like science fiction and detective stories that would become dominant cultural forces in the twentieth century.

## Utopian solutions

While new realism and naturalism confronted late-Victorian complacency with bitter recriminations about political and social inequalities, the squalor of working-class lives and the diaspora affecting rural communities, writers of romance, like Haggard, often reacted by using imperial settings as a means of, at best ignoring these conditions, or at worst of defending the status quo. Others, however, used the romance to comment on these unsatisfactory conditions, and thus to offer utopian possibilities for the future course of social and political development. Keating sees utopian and dystopian fictions as establishing 'fabular forms' that 'enabled writers to speculate freely on the possible ramifications of present social and political developments, and settled, virtually at a stroke, the apparent inability of the realist novel to deal convincingly with political issues' (Keating, 356). There thus emerged a spate of utopian fiction that projected a future of pastoral or metropolitan serenity. In *Looking Backward* (1887) Edward Bellamy suggests a solution to contemporary American social ills through technological advance. In *A Crystal Age* (1887) W. H. Hudson confronts socio-sexual problems and presents a dubious utopia peopled by asexual beings: with a now extinct sexuality the society of the future stabilizes and utopia is assured.

Sexuality is one of the themes of Wells's *In the Days of the Comet* (1906): in his future world, after the change wrought by a green vapour, perfect harmony is achieved in sexual union. But Wells is concerned with more than human relationships. In the tradition of utopian fiction, *In the Days of the Comet* begins by lamenting the squalid living conditions of the time and links this to a more general psychological malaise:

> Now, the whole world before the Change was as sick and feverish as that, it was worried and overworked and perplexed by problems that would not get stated simply, that changed and evaded solution, it was in an atmosphere that had corrupted and thickened past breathing; there was no cool thinking in the world at all.
>
> (*Days of the Comet*, 36)

'Cool thinking', in Wells's terms, is scientific thinking, analyses that will provide solutions.

Rider Haggard, otherwise regarded as an imperial apologist, toyed with the promise of utopian existence as an escape from industrial Britain. At the end of *Allan Quatermain* (1887) Sir Henry Curtis envisages for the lost African kingdom of Zu Vendis a return to a bygone Golden Age. Vowing to keep out the rest of the world, Curtis reflects upon the evils of the progression of the late nineteenth century:

> I cannot see that gunpowder, telegraphs, steam, daily newspapers, universal suffrage, &c., &c., have made mankind one whit the happier than they used to be, and I am certain that they have brought many evils in their train. I have no fancy for handing over this beautiful country to be torn and fought for by speculators, tourists, politicians and teachers, whose voice is as the voice of Babel . . . nor will I endow it with the greed, drunkenness, new diseases, gunpowder, and general demoralisation which chiefly mark the progress of civilisation amongst unsophisticated peoples.
>
> (*Allan Quatermain*, 277)

Although Haggard is obviously pronouncing on the effect of imperialism upon subjugated African races, his recalling of a pre-industrial, pastoral age may well be a response to contemporary utopian fiction. The immediate literary history of such ideas is 'provided by Bulwer Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871), Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) and a large number of now largely forgotten novels inspired by evolutionary

theory' (Keating, 357). In *A Modern Utopia* (1905) Wells gives an even more extensive list of fictional utopias in his rationale for allowing himself a 'free hand with all the apparatus of existence that man has, so to speak, made for himself':

> That, indeed, is the cardinal assumption of all Utopian speculation old and new; the Republic and Laws of Plato, and More's Utopia, Howells' implicit Altruria, and Bellamy's future Boston, Comte's great Western Republic, Hertzka's Freeland, Cabet's Icaria, and Campanella's City of the Sun, are built, just as we shall build, upon that, upon the hypothesis of the complete emancipation of a community of men from tradition, from habits, from legal bonds, and that subtler servitude possessions entail.
>
> (*MU*, 19)

Freedom from human social and political history is Wells's precondition for utopia – only then can the ideal human condition be realized. Even so, Wells sounds a cautionary note about making utopia practicable. Human nature, Nature herself must be recognized as largely given:

> I suppose we should follow Morris to his Nowhere, we should make the whole race wise, tolerant, noble, perfect – wave our hands to a splendid anarchy, every man doing as it pleases him, and none pleased to do evil, in a world as good in its essential nature, as ripe and sunny, as the world before the Fall. But that golden age, that perfect world, comes out into the possibilities of space and time. In space and time the pervading Will to Live sustains for evermore a perpetuity of aggressions.
>
> (*MU*, 18)

Wells poses the ideal against the real and concludes that humanity is by nature an aggressive species. It is out of this perception that the violence and Gothic horror of Wells's early scientific romance is born.

## The modern Gothic and literary doubles

In the fictions of writers like Stevenson, Wilde and Wells we can find encoded those anxieties and preoccupations that lead many to speak of the 'malaise' of the *fin de siècle*. Employing the Gothic mode for some of their work, these authors depicted horrors occurring in the heart of the modern metropolis. Taking their lead from the urban Gothic that

emerged in the mid nineteenth-century, Stevenson, Wilde and Wells, among others, fictionally inscribed on the London landscape monstrous transformations, mutilations and dualities that spoke of urban concerns. In the chapters that follow, the focus will be on the use of the Gothic and duality in *fin de siècle* fictions, the real conditions of the London of the time, and how the Gothic and late nineteenth-century anxieties are woven into the tales of duality of Stevenson, Wilde and Wells.

Chapter 2, 'The Modern Gothic', discusses previous Gothic fictional forms to provide a context for subsequent analyses of the Gothic. The modern Gothic is here defined as a form that shifts the geographic location of such horror fiction from the remote landscapes and ancient ruins of earlier forms to the streets and structures of the modern metropolis. In doing so, the modern Gothic signals an acute awareness of the conditions of the actual city at the end of the nineteenth century. It is also preoccupied with tales of duality and doubling: the chapter ends with an overview of the use of duality and doppelgängers in fiction, and how dualism was linked to a sense of identity and the essence of self at the *fin de siècle*. This chapter thus establishes the themes, conventions and theoretical underpinnings of the modern Gothic and literary doubles that will be the basis for much of the ensuing literary analyses.

In the following chapter, 'The City: London, Real and Imagined', the social and cultural history of mid to late nineteenth-century London is examined. The metropolis is presented here as a place of change and transformation, where social deprivation and overcrowded living conditions contributed significantly to literary representations. The city is seen as a schismatic space that contains extremes of wealth and poverty, and where the poor are exploited by the rich, who are in turn deeply concerned by the anonymous and threatening nature of the metropolitan experience. Perceptions of the 'beast within' and Gustave Le Bon's primal 'mob' contributed to a feeling that the city was literally 'out of control'. Actual historical events, such as the Ripper murders, sensitized the reading public to the real horrors that were occurring in late nineteenth-century London. Newspaper reports and opinion columns echoed public concerns, and at the same time fed a public thirst for the macabre and terrifying. As a consequence, writers of the time were inspired to construct narratives that exposed the conditions of the poor or that exploited images of a Gothicized London in their tales of Gothic horror.

In some of their short stories and novels Stevenson, Wilde and Wells employ a modern Gothic mode that speaks of urban terror. Chapters

4, 5 and 6 examine these works in detail, showing how the *fin de siècle* experience of London is encoded in Gothic narratives of duality. Many of the fictions under discussion present conflicting images of the metropolis as a place of pleasure and entertainment, and a place of dark terrors and horrible human transformations. Oppositions like day and night, light and dark, upper worlds and lower worlds, wealth and poverty, beauty and ugliness mark these narratives as tales of Gothic duality. Short stories like 'The Body Snatcher' (1884) and 'Olalla' (1885) demonstrate Stevenson's interest in Gothic narratives; when he shifts his fictions to London in *The Dynamiter* (1885) the threat to the modern metropolitan citizen from malign sources is laid bare, but the treatment is ironic and frequently comic. In *Jekyll and Hyde* darker forces are a play: the threat is seen to come from within the individual as much as from without. Identity and the city are crucial to the imaginative representation of the divided self in *Jekyll and Hyde*, and this is true too of Wilde's *Dorian Gray*. Wilde is most renowned for his socially satirical plays that have themselves themes of duality, but in *Dorian Gray* he created an altogether more sinister and disturbing narrative that drew on traditional Gothic stories, as well as on *Jekyll and Hyde*. Like Hyde, Dorian Gray is a metropolitan monster for whom the city offers up its victims, and, like Hyde, the picture of Dorian Gray is a monstrous double that reveals a hideous inner self.

In the final chapter, '"The Coming Terror": Wells's Outcast London and the Modern Gothic', the Gothic is seen to be allied to an emergent new fictional genre: science fiction. In his tales of terror, Wells is concerned with issues of politics and science and his Gothic mode reflects these preoccupations. Propelling his Traveller to the future of 802,701 in *The Time Machine*, Wells presents the reader with a London that is horrifically divided and preyed upon by Gothic monsters from an underworld of terror and dreadful consumption of human flesh. In *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), Wells removes the Gothic experience to a remote location, but the tale remains very much one of modern life, and the return to London at the end underlines the fact that Moreau's Beast People are not so far removed from the citizens of the modern metropolis. *The Invisible Man* (1897) is another tale of Gothic transformation and unstable identity, and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) reprises the notion of a devastated London whose citizens are consumed by horrifying vampiric monsters. In Wells's imagination the modern Gothic is linked to politics and evolution, and his tales of terrifying mutation are cautionary fables for his age.

*The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles* presents the novels and tales of these writers within the context of their immediate cultural history. The short stories and novels of Stevenson, Wilde and Wells are heavily influenced by the Zeitgeist of the *fin de siècle* and as such have a common historical context. A historicist analysis that focuses largely on late nineteenth-century attitudes towards the city and its inhabitants is one of the central theoretical approaches used in this volume. A fuller understanding of the interconnection between the novels is achieved through the recognition that they are related through the Gothic genre, and through themes of doubling. Duality is more than a psychological condition: it is a factor of late nineteenth-century metropolitan life that can be identified in the physical geography of the city as well as in the individual existence.

The Gothic novels and stories of Stevenson and Wilde and the scientific Gothic novels of Wells have often been discussed together in previous critiques: what distinguishes *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles* from other discussions is the way in which these works are linked through their common cultural history. This volume undertakes a kind of 'cultural archaeology' in order to unearth the actual social and cultural conditions in which this literature was created, and to reveal the conditions that influenced and shaped these narratives. Such an analysis thus demonstrates literature's intrinsic dependence on culture and society, and uncovers how the actual events, anxieties, and social conditions of the *fin de siècle* are encoded in popular literature. Furthermore, a detailed study of the themes of Gothicism and duality in these novels and stories reveals how they were a response to the mood of the age, and how they brought a late nineteenth-century social consciousness to bear on traditional Gothic duality. *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles* draws together a wide range of literary, cultural and social history in order to provide new perspectives from which to view some of the popular literature of Stevenson, Wilde and Wells.

# 2
## The Modern Gothic

> The City is of Night, but not of Sleep;
> There sweet sleep is not for the weary brain;
> The pitiless hours like years and ages creep,
> A night seems termless hell.
>
>    James Thomson, 'The City of Dreadful Night' (1874).

Gothic fiction is often a literature of transformations where identity is unstable and sanity a debatable state of being. The Gothic of the *fin de siècle* itself underwent something of a transformation. Located in the historically remote past or in isolated, wild locations amid the suggestive relics of an ancient past, the traditional Gothic was a fiction about history and about geography.[1] Yet, at the end of the nineteenth century, a new Gothic mode emerged, a modern Gothic, whose narratives focused on the urban present, refracting contemporary concerns through the lens of a literature of terror. As such, Kelly Hurley argues that the '*fin de siècle* Gothic rematerializes as a genre in many ways unrecognizable, transfigured, bespeaking an altered sensibility that resonates more closely with contemporary horrific representations than those generated at the far edge of the Enlightenment' (Hurley, 4). It was a Gothic form that anticipated the twentieth century, and anticipated some of the darker moments that were witnessed as the new century unfolded.

Unstable identity became closely linked in this fiction with the labyrinthine metropolis and its teeming population. Issues of duality – split personalities, physical transformations, mistaken identities, doppelgängers – were found to be manifested in the social, geographical and architectural schisms of the modern city. Further, Darwinian theories effected a philosophical change in the public consciousness that allowed for new interpretations of humanity's history, opening new

channels for Gothic fiction to explore. Building on the traditional mode, the modern Gothic incorporated new perceptions of human history and human nature and transplanted Gothic terror into the heart of the late nineteenth-century metropolis. The mood of anxiety that characterized the *fin de siècle* was thus registered in the fantastic transformations and preternatural terrors of the modern Gothic.

For Julian Wolfreys the multitude of tales of hauntings 'are undeniable aspects of the identity of modernity'. This has to do with the intangible nature of the spectral which equates with the modernist resistance to closure: 'it is a sign of the hauntological disturbance that, because of the various spectral traces, we can never quite end the narrative of modernity.' There is always something left undisclosed, or a sense that not all has been revealed, or is indeed capable of being revealed; and this is symptomatic too of the haunted narrative: 'We cannot with any confidence narrate to ourselves a teleology of the modern, whether we are seeking a narrative beginning or a moment of closure' (Wolfreys, 2). The modern Gothic, rooted as it is in urban anxiety, rarely offers this 'moment of closure'. Even when the Gothic subject has been removed or destroyed, we are left with a sense of a metropolis under threat by forces beyond human comprehension and beyond human control, because the *fin de siècle* city of the modern Gothic is itself a Gothicized space that reflects perceptions of the real city as a place of enduring physical and emotional danger. Such perceptions of the modern world lie at the heart of the modern Gothic.

## The rise of the romance

In the late nineteenth century romance fiction proved enormously popular and saleable. Although it was commonly called 'romance' and had much in common with earlier romantic forms of literature, it diverged considerably from the poetic sensibility that defined the Romantics of the early century. Keating says that although 'the term realism was of relatively recent coinage, its essential meaning had long been understood and used as a standard comparison with romance. The term "romance" itself, however, had an even more complicated lexical history than realism, and complications were to multiply into total confusion as late Victorian critics and novelists set to work on it' (Keating, 344). Imperial romance, Gothic horror, scientific romance, historical romance, boys' adventure stories, tales of the supernatural, even the fledgling detective story, all fitted loosely into what could be described as the 'new romance'.[2] Effectively, by moving away from

realism, literature at the *fin de siècle* began to take off in divergent directions, and new genres of literature, like science fiction and the detective story, began to emerge out of older romance forms.

Gillian Beer states that although it is 'often exclusively associated with medieval literature', the romance has 'antecedents far back beyond twelfth-century Europe': 'The Elizabethans call heavily on Greek romances; the "Western" and science fiction are frequently claimed as modern mutations' (Beer, 4).[3] Although Beer denies that *Jekyll and Hyde* is a 'romance,' her description of the effect of the romance on the reader certainly seems to define the atmosphere of Stevenson's novel:

> It absorbs the reader into experience which is otherwise unattainable. It frees us from our inhibitions and preoccupations by drawing us entirely into its own world – a world which is never fully equivalent to our own although it must remind us of it if we are to understand it at all. It oversteps the limits by which life is normally bounded. The world of romance is ample and inclusive, sustained by its own inherent, often obsessive laws. It is not an entire world; it intensifies and exaggerates certain traits in human behaviour and recreates human figures out of this exaggeration. It excludes some reaches of experience in order to concentrate intently upon certain themes until they take fire and seem to be the flame of life itself.
>
> (Beer, 3)

The exclusion of certain facets of life is the necessary condition of fiction writing. Stevenson himself recognizes the selective process of artistic production when he says that 'the artist has one main and necessary resource which he must, in every case and upon any theory, employ. He must, that is, suppress much and omit more. He must omit what is tedious or irrelevant, and suppress what is tedious and necessary.'[4]

Keating says that for Kenneth Graham, 1887 was the year that the 'new romance' became recognized. This was the year that George Saintsbury, Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang issued 'manifestos on its behalf'.[5] These were the writers, who, 'with the addition of Stevenson, were the major propagandists for romance':[6]

> All of these writers saw romance as serving to deflect attention away from the dangerous unpleasantness of realism, a classification that in this context allowed for no distinction between Zolaesque documentation and Jamesian psychological analysis: both types of realism were seen as equally guilty of fostering introspection, unmanliness

and morbidity, and of favouring a literary method that was mechanical and monotonous.'

<div align="right">(Keating, 345)</div>

Andrew Lang, a champion of Stevenson, was a major proponent of the new romantic fiction. Like 'Kailyard fiction, much of the publicity that surrounded it was skilfully engineered, through Lang' (Keating, 346). Stevenson, with his capacity to entertain coupled with his aestheticism, was a focal figure in this new literature. In his highly public, but friendly, debate with James about the relationship between art and reality, Stevenson set out, in 'A Gossip on Romance' 1882, his objections to the realist novel:

> English people of the present day are apt, I know not why, to look somewhat down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and accents of the curate. It is thought clever to write a novel with no story at all, or at least with a very dull one.
>
> <div align="right">(*MP*, 145)</div>

But, despite his 'more considered critical judgements', Stevenson was instrumental in muddying the definition of 'romance' so that 'whatever specific meaning it might once have had' romance subsequently became 'anything that wasn't realism' (Keating, 348). Indeed Stevenson sees possibilities for incorporating realism into the project of romance: 'True romantic art, again, makes a romance of all things. It reaches into the highest abstraction of the ideal; it does not refuse the most pedestrian realism' (MP, 149). Beer suggests that historical distance can have the effect of transforming realism into romance: '[T]he realistic novels of one age or audience have an uncanny way of becoming 'romances' in another setting . . . This is because the romance depends considerably upon a certain set *distance* in the relationship between its audience and its subject matter . . .' (Beer, 5).

Whoever may have joined their ranks in the interim, at a distance of over one hundred years, the major figures involved with the 'new romance' of the late nineteenth century are clearly identified. The part played by Lang and Stevenson has already been mentioned, but one could add to the list specifically Rider Haggard, Edgar Wallace, John Buchan and Kipling in terms of imperial romance; Arthur Machen's tales and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in terms of Gothic romance; even Conan Doyle's detective stories are influenced by this new type of fiction. Certainly with its glances at *Jekyll and Hyde*, magic picture stories and

other tales of duality, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* features among those works that emerged within this new development in fiction. At the same time, a preoccupation with the possibilities of new technologies and scientific developments meant that the literature that was to become known as science fiction was establishing itself as a distinctive genre. One of the most prominent writers in this field was of course H. G. Wells.

Publishing *The Time Machine* in 1895 Wells began his literary career at a pivotal moment in the history of fiction. Romances, like Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), were proving to be huge popular successes, and Sherlock Holmes had already made his debut. In the mid to late 1890s, with stories like *The Time Machine, The Island of Dr Moreau, The Invisible Man* and *The War of the Worlds*, Wells was helping to establish a scientific basis for a new type of fiction. Scientific and futuristic romance, of course, was nothing new: Mary Shelley had used science and the perils of experimentation as the basis for *Frankenstein*. William Morris had used the themes of time shifts in *A Dream of John Ball* (1888) and *News From Nowhere* (1890). In America, Edward Bellamy had used the possibilities of travelling forward in time as the basis for *Looking Backward* (1888), and in France and Britain Jules Verne was already famous for his tales of the fantastic, like *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864) and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1869). It was in this tradition of the fantastic, futuristic and scientific romance that Wells grounded his early novels. Richard Jefferies's *After London* (1885) had used the theme of a savage future, but it was with Wells that what was to become known as science fiction really began to make an impact.

During his debate with Henry James, Stevenson spoke of the selective nature of the writing process in 'A Humble Remonstrance' (1884). His point that art cannot '"compete with life"' goes some way towards refuting the realists' project. For Stevenson, writing is not about recreating reality, but rather it is about abstraction: 'Man's one method, whether he reasons or creates, is to half-shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality' (*MP*, 159). Half-shutting one's eyes means blotting out the periphery of one's vision, giving greater prominence and clarity to the real object of the gaze. Writing for Stevenson, then, means filtering out the background noise, the interference or the incidentals of life, and focusing upon the object of the writer's vision. As a microscope or a magnifying glass brings out the detail of a small object, so the writer brings out the detail of their purpose. This is particularly pertinent to romance because it can create that romantic 'distance' that Beer speaks of. For Stevenson, reality could 'dazzle' and confuse, but romance could enlighten, and this too was Wells's purpose in his scientific romances.

Romance was thus becoming for some a more serious literary form, as exemplified by Stevenson's success with *Jekyll and Hyde*. It was also becoming a far more complex literary form than had hitherto been the case. If the late nineteenth century saw the decline of the realist novel, it also witnessed the rise of this new romance, a fiction that made many of its exponents well-known and successful authors. The conventions that were used in these new types of fiction were many and varied, including notions of remoteness, terror and the weird and uncanny, notions that are most properly associated with Gothic fiction.

## The Gothic sensibility

Gothic fiction relies on many of the traditions of romance, but historically, as Markman Ellis observes, 'Gothic' refers to the German tribe of Goths, barbarians who 'destroyed classical Roman civilisation and plunged the civilised world into centuries of ignorance and darkness' (Ellis, 22).[7] Chris Baldick points out that the name Goth was 'taken and used to prop up one side of that set of cultural oppositions by which the Renaissance and its heirs defined and claimed possession of European civilization: Northern versus Southern, Gothic versus Graeco-Roman, Dark Ages versus the Age of Enlightenment, medieval versus modern, barbarity versus civility, superstition versus reason' (Baldick, xii). In terms of literature, Gothic came to be associated with the culture of medieval times and the 'Dark Ages' in particular. Gothic had been a byword for barbarism, but in the eighteenth century it was 'revised and transformed':

> The emergence of gothic fiction represents one of the defining moments when an older chivalric past was idealised at the expense of a classical present . . . The past is re-valued and found to be superior to the present, a process that wears a nostalgic aspect. The revision of the meaning of gothic culture in the eighteenth century placed increasing value on the significance of gothic history and culture. There were a number of fields where this medieval gothic culture was still alive to eighteenth-century people, for instance architecture, political theory, religion, literature, and popular customs.
>
> (Ellis, 23)

Gothic fiction found its first exponent in Horace Walpole. His novel *Castle of Otranto* (1764), set in Italy during the Middle Ages, established the themes that many were to follow: Robert Mighall notes that by

referring to it as 'A Gothic Story' Walpole was 'pointing to the fact that it was set in . . . some time between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries' (Mighall, xvi). The Gothic tradition reached its height in the 1790s and the early nineteenth century with works by M. G. Lewis and Charles Maturin, and by William Beckford, author of *Vathek* (1786). With novels like the phenomenally successful *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Ann Radcliffe inspired a host of imitations, as one reviewer scornfully records: 'Since Mrs Radcliffe's justly admired and successful romances, the press has teemed with stories of haunted castles and visionary terrors; the incidents of which are so little diversified, that criticism is at a loss to vary its remarks' (*Critical Review*, 222). Dale Spender argues that Ann Radcliffe helped to establish the Romantic movement: 'She was one of its first and most articulate spokeswomen. She reacted against the separation of intellect and emotion, against the glorification of reason, and she sanely suggested that life was a matter of head and heart.' *The Mysteries of Udolpho* 'suggested that there were mysteries in life' (Spender, 238). In fact, the term 'Gothic' was 'used almost synonymously with "female"' (Spender, 243). *Udolpho* was famously satirized by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* (1818), who was troubled by the whole genre, and reflected the fact that many felt the Gothic novel, loved as it was by young women, to be harmful to young minds.

Gothic novels of the eighteenth century were characterized by a preoccupation with the fantastic and the grotesque, the savage and the mysterious; above all they appealed to the emotions rather than the rational. Set in wild and picturesque landscapes amid haunted castles or ruins, early Gothic novels were populated with terrified heroines, often sexually threatened by dark and mysterious forces or by exotic villains. The Gothic novel was lurid and emotionally fraught, a counterpoint to the Enlightenment Age of Reason: it was a fiction of the senses. After Ann Radcliffe's death in 1826, 'an anonymous critic writing in *The New Monthly Magazine*, eulogised her hold over her readers': 'Mrs Radcliffe's best works have continued to excite the girl's first wonder, and to supply the last solace to her grandame's age, thumbed over, begged, borrowed, and thought of as often as ever! To the fancies of her numberless readers, she seems to hold august sway over the springs of terror!'[8] This was a fiction for girls, and as such it was often regarded as pernicious, filling the minds of young women with fantastic tales and a heightened sense of sexual danger. It was these elements of Gothic fiction that prompted one of Austen's central themes in *Northanger Abbey*, urging sense over sensibility, when it came to imagination at least.

Furthermore, these novels were popular with women not just because they reflected female preoccupations, but also because they were easy to both write and read and required no specialist knowledge or education. Catherine Morland, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, reveals the extent of her immersion in *Udolpho* to her friend Isabella Thorpe in unrestrained terms, designed by Austen to reveal what she believed to be the vacuity of the genre:

> 'Yes I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil.'
>
> 'Are you indeed? How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are you not wild to know?'
>
> 'Oh! yes, quite; what can it be? – But do not tell me – I would not be told on any account. I know it must be a skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it.'
>
> (*Northanger Abbey*, 60)

Isabella goes on to list the novels she has lined up for her friend to read: Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), Mrs Parsons' *Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793) and *The Mysterious Warning* (1796), Regina Maria Roche's *Clermont* (1798), Lawrence Flammenberg's *The Necromancer: or the Tale of the Black Forest* (1794), Francis Lathom's *The Midnight Bell* (1798), Mrs Sleath's *The Orphan of the River Rhine* (1798) and the Marquis of Grosse's *Horrid Mysteries* (1796). Catherine, however, requires assurance that they are all 'horrid' before she will read them. Austen's scorn for these 'horrid' tales is due to their lack of serious social comment and their influence on the imagination of the young woman of her age. Nonetheless, Austen did admire *Udolpho*, while at the same time mocking the genre it represented; and the fact that *Northanger Abbey* appeared 25 years after *Udolpho* reveals the enduring influence of Radcliffe's novels in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Despite this huge popularity, the Gothic novel was in decline by the second decade of the nineteenth century. In the first chapter of *Waverley* (1814) Sir Walter Scott feels comfortable in inviting his readers to join him in mocking the stereotypical Gothic tale. In lampooning the characteristic plot devices of the Gothic, Scott gives a fairly accurate list of the tropes of the traditional genre:

> Had I, for example, announced in my frontispiece, 'Waverley, A Tale of Other Days,' must not every novel-reader have anticipated a castle scarce less than that of Udolpho, of which the eastern wing had long

been uninhabited, and the keys either lost or consigned to the care of some aged butler or housekeeper, whose trembling steps, about the middle of the second volume, were doomed to guide the hero, or heroine, to the ruinous precincts? Would not the owl have shrieked and the cricket cried in my very title-page? and could it have been possible for me, with a moderate attention to decorum, to introduce any scene more lively than might be produced by the jocularity of a clownish but faithful valet, or the garrulous narrative of the heroine's fille-de-chambre, when rehearsing the stories of blood and horror which she had heard in the servants' hall?

(*Waverley*, 10)

Yet despite this gentle mockery, Scott could praise Radcliffe, and many argue that he was influenced by her work. Mrs Radcliffe, said Scott, was 'the first to introduce into her prose fictions a beautiful and fanciful tone of natural description and impressive narrative, which had hitherto been exclusively applied to poetry.'[9] And Spender notes how Walter Allen acknowledges Radcliffe's influence on writers like Scott and Byron (Spender, 241).

The Gothic Revival effected a transformation in architectural style during the nineteenth century, after the building in the mid-eighteenth century of Walpole's Gothic folly, Strawberry Hill, and, later, Beckford's decorations for Fonthill Abbey. Haunted houses, monasteries, castles are central to the traditional Gothic sensibility. The antiquated architecture of the haunted space enables the Gothic to be realized and perceived. Wolfreys argues that it is within domestic and familiar spaces that this normally occurs, and that within this unnatural disruption of the every-day that the Gothic haunting resides. This, however, is not the case with eighteenth-century Gothic: only in the mid-nineteenth century do the haunted castles of the traditional Gothic give way to the domestic spaces that Wolfreys speaks of. Thus when Jekyll wakes up as Hyde, this haunting of the domestic space is clearly recognized in the modern Gothic of the late nineteenth-century; and the very presence of Dorian's portrait in the attic of his Grosvenor Square home is another example of a modern Gothic 'haunting' of the familiar, of the Gothic existing within the framework of the known, identifiable domestic space, and by its very presence disrupting the surface equanimity of that space.

Despite the decline of the Gothic novel in the early nineteenth century, Gothic literary conventions were employed throughout the century in a number of literary genres: one thinks in particular of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Wilkie

Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) and of Miss Havisham and Satis House in Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860–1). Picking up on the Gothic themes of terror, the supernatural, sexual threats and historical distance, late nineteenth-century romance writers also used the Gothic in a variety of romance forms. Rider Haggard played with Gothic conventions and imagery in *She* (1887) and *Ayesha* (1905). In keeping with Gothic themes of antiquity and the supernatural, Haggard's heroine Ayesha, the She of the first novel, has lived for two thousand years in a remote part of Africa, ruling by terror. The mysterious dark corridors and hidden chambers of her cave-castle recall the haunted mansions of the earlier Gothic tradition, and the novel relies upon horror and shock, and a sexually charged atmosphere, in a clear Gothic appeal to the senses.

The most famous use of the Gothic in the latter part of the century, however, must be Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. A remote castle haunted by blood-sucking spectres of the dead, an exotic murderous villain threatening innocent English maids, tales of ancient aristocracy, a fear of Eastern European 'otherness', suggestions of mesmerism, hypnotism and the metaphysical, all contribute to the overt Gothicism of the story. Underlying all of this are also implications of a decadent, perverse sexuality on the part of Count Dracula, as Ellis observes: 'the English confine legitimate sexuality to the marital bed and the ideology of love, while Dracula's alien sanguinary desires suggest wilder passion and perverse sexual practices (oral sex, tribadism, homosexuality)' (Ellis, 195). After Lucy Westenra is vampirized, the Count turns his attentions to Mina Harker and 'exposes her to an hyperbolic emotional world, redolent of a terror and sexuality that she plainly cannot name' (Ellis, 197), and she cannot name her terrors because 'unspeakability' is a function of the Gothic mode. There is a homoeroticism surrounding the Count's interest in Jonathan Harker and the male friendships in *Dracula* that hovers below the surface, another 'unspeakable' that has been the subject of much discussion in relation to the novel. The Gothic is infinitely suggestive, and the fact that so much of the horror is left unarticulated, unspeakable, is symptomatic of the genre, because Gothic horror is meant to be beyond human understanding, or when it is sexual, beyond normal human experience.[10]

*Dracula* has an eye very much on contemporary technological developments. The Count is pursued using a variety of new technologies including railways, the Underground, steamships, phonographs, typewriters, telegrams and modern pistols. The threat to the thriving economy of the 'enlightened' Western world, whose centre is assumed to be London, is manifest in the dark, decadent forces of Eastern Europe,

represented by the atavistic form of a declining aristocrat, Count Dracula. He relies on older forms of transport and supernatural forces to penetrate the modern metropolis and enslave its citizens, but is pursued back to his place of origin using a combination of modern transport systems and advanced technology, such as Mina Harker's recording cylinders. Yet as the pursuers track Dracula back to Transylvania, they gradually leave behind them all of their modern technological trappings and ultimately defeat him with the weapons of his own time: knives and crucifixes. As Ellis says: 'Despite the novel's self-conscious celebration of its up-to-the-minute modernity, the supernatural discourses of folklore win out' (Ellis, 198). Yet there is also an element of Christian triumphalism in the Count's defeat by the forces of good: crucifixes and Christian faith are crucial to the vampire hunters' success. In *Dracula* the conventions of the Gothic novel are interwoven with a narrative of modern Britain, at times even dehistoricizing the Gothic by incorporating it within a completely modern metropolitan setting. The very presence of this spectre-like being in modern London speaks of Wolfreys's notion of the haunting of the familiar and the domestic.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Gothic takes on new forms and new themes. In *Jekyll and Hyde*, for example, the sexual threat of the exotic villain is hinted at only through Hyde's unspecified villainies. Wolfreys suggests that as the nineteenth century wore on the Gothic itself became an increasingly diverse form: 'Escaping from the tomb and the castle, the monastery and mansion, the gothic arguably becomes more potentially terrifying because of its ability to manifest itself and variations of itself anywhere' (Wolfreys, 9). *Fin de siècle* London itself becomes a Gothicized space in novels like Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894) where aristocratic young men are preyed upon by the female manifestation of a malign supernatural being, Helen Vaughan. Charles Herbert, who has been horribly corrupted by this female satyr, tells Villiers that London is a place of horrors:

> You, Villiers, you may think you know life, and London, and what goes on day and night in this dreadful city; for all I can say you may have heard the talk of the vilest, but I can tell you you can have no conception of what I know, not in your most fantastic, hideous dreams can you have imagined forth the faintest shadow of what I have heard – and seen. Yes, seen. I have seen the incredible, such horrors that even I myself sometimes stop in the middle of the street and ask whether it is possible for a man to behold such things and live.
>
> (*GGP*, 42)

Herbert's perception of London is mingled with the preternatural sexuality of his wife, Helen Vaughan. Her sexual activities are repellent, and, as Hurley says, 'The contagion of disgust spreads through and overwhelms the text' (Hurley, 49). In an inversion of the traditional eighteenth-century Gothic, the female is the sexual predator, somewhat after the Lady Geraldine in Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816), and of course Helen's sexual proclivities are 'unspeakable'.

   A number of popular writers of the mid-century bring the Gothic to the city: one thinks of G. W. Reynolds and, in translation, of Victor Hugo and Eugene Sue. This modern metropolitan Gothic shifts the scene of terror from the rural landscape to the inner city, and imagines horrible human mutations taking place in the heart of the city. *Jekyll and Hyde* is probably the most famous late nineteenth-century fictional instance of urban transformation into evil, but others, notably Machen, constructed narratives that contributed to the rise of the modern *metropolitan* Gothic. For, as Glen Cavaliero states, 'Machen's stories are set in the aftermath of the Jack the Ripper murders, alluded to in *The Great God Pan*, and they capture most vividly the atmosphere of late Victorian London' (Cavaliero, 73). *The Three Impostors* (1895), while heavily influenced by Stevenson's *The Dynamiter*, also contains scenes that look forward to Dracula. In 'Novel of the White Powder' Francis Leicester's human form dissolves into a hideous slime that is dispatched with the same disgust as the vampirized Lucy Westenra:

> There upon the floor was a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes, and I saw a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up what might have been an arm. The doctor took a step forward, raised the iron bar and struck at the burning points; he drove in the weapon, and struck again and again in the fury of loathing.
>
> (*TI*, 207)

Leicester's transformation from a man 'handsomer than most men' to a writhing mass of repulsive slime takes place in the heart of suburban London (*TI*, 196). He is reduced to a 'living thing' that is the 'symbol and presence of all evil and all hideous corruption' (*TI*, 204). In a typical Gothic transformation, like Jekyll, Leicester mutates from human form to the essence of a thing of evil. '"Thing-ness"', says Hurley, is the 'only way characters can describe that which is not human, undescribable' (Hurley, 29),

and nothing 'illustrates the Thing-ness of matter so admirably as slime' (Hurley, 34). This is reminiscent, too, of an earlier Gothic tale by Poe, 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' (1845), where Valdemar literally '*rotted* away', and in the end lies on the bed, 'a nearly liquid mass of loath-some – of detestable putridity' (Poe, 359). Poe exemplifies the fact that in the mid-nineteenth century the Gothic had relocated the scene of horror to the modern metropolis; hence, Valdemar has resided in 'Harlaem, N.Y. since the year 1839' (Poe, 350–1).

It is Stevenson's use of Gothic themes of transformation and horror that makes *Jekyll and Hyde* such a chilling tale. The supernatural is present in a variety of ways: the potion that brings about Jekyll's transformation; the very presence of Hyde in the novel; the dissecting room-turned laboratory at the back of the house; and the overall atmosphere of secrecy and dark forces that pervade the book, all contribute to its Gothic tropes. Although Hyde is in a sense a man new born, there are suggestions of primitive darker forces dwelling within that provoke a sense of the historical distance of the traditional Gothic novel: Hyde's, and Jekyll's, unspoken 'pleasures', intimate sexual activities and sensuous indulgence. The emotion versus reason opposition of the Gothic is present throughout, not least in the 'irrational' division of an individual into two distinct entities. This is true also of *Dorian Gray*: the indulgence of Dorian's sensuality is central to his depravity. Dorian dabbles in alchemy and immerses himself in Eastern exoticism. The hidden secret at the top of his house, the disfigured portrait, is a Gothic convention, recalling as it does Rochester's secret, Bertha Mason, locked away in the attic of Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre*. Stevenson and Wilde employed the conventions of the Gothic, but for a serious purpose: to explore the limits of morality in the contemporary world, and to expose the dangers of 'unnatural' desire. Wells's novels are less overtly Gothic in atmosphere; yet even so, the horror of the Morlocks and their underground slaughterhouse, the cannibalism of the Martians, the Invisible Man's weird experiment and the biological experimentation of the Frankensteinian Moreau upon his Beast People convey much of the horror of the modern Gothic sensibility.

## The Gothic experience of the metropolis

The modern Gothic is a Gothic of the late nineteenth-century city. Mighall speaks of an Urban Gothic of the mid century and Hurley identifies a *fin de siècle* Gothic.[11] The Urban Gothic 'adapts the "historical" perspective found in the early novels when it implies that the terrors of criminality are

anachronistic anomalies, vestigial stains on the city's modernity' (Mighall, 51), though it must be said that in the modern Gothic, it is sometimes the city itself that creates its Gothic monsters out of the very conditions of modern metropolitan life. Darwinian theories, and studies like Lombroso's investigations into criminal physiognomy, served to remove the historical distance, so that many writers in the late nineteenth-century sought to expose the extant 'beast within'. Sigmund Freud's investigations into human psychology and a more general fascination with the psychic and the paranormal were also a feature of the 1890s.[12]

The modern criminal like Dorian Gray, who chooses to cast off his moral restraint, is no throwback to an earlier form of humanity: he is the modern urban beast. As Hurley observes: 'The motif of human devolution occurs again and again in the *fin de siècle* Gothic, sometimes as a means of literalizing the "beastliness" of which humans are capable, sometimes as a means of demonstrating the cruel randomness of motiveless Nature' (Hurley, 63). Combining the idea of urban settings and historical specificity, a modern Gothic form emerges that does not assume a geographically remote and historically distanced narrative; nor does it always assume remnants of a less evolved past lurking in the modern citizen. Relocating the scene of horror to the metropolitan streets, the modern Gothic articulates a fear that civilization may not be an evolved form of being, but a superficial veneer beneath which lurks an essential, enduring animal self.

Stevenson's story 'Olalla' is an example of the 'beast within' motif, where a vampiric race could not evolve beyond its origins. Her exterior appearance may speak of beauty and 'breeding', but Olalla knows her family's terrible secret. Through careful instruction and prayer, Olalla keeps her 'beast' at bay, but vows to remain childless so as not to perpetuate the family line. This story, set in a remote Catholic Spanish wilderness with atavistic characters, draws heavily on the traditional Gothic mode, but *Jekyll and Hyde* exemplifies the modern Gothic form. Hyde may resemble an atavistic creature, but the reality is that he is the savage side of Jekyll, kept repressed through an imposed external morality. Hyde, it is implied, is not a rare instance of reversion. Rather, through the very fact that he is released from Jekyll's moral conscience, Hyde is an expression of a bestiality that is part of the human condition, and the human dilemma is that the Hyde in each of us must be suppressed. Wells, characteristically, takes these ideas one stage further and suggests that evolution may well imply retrogression. In *The Time Machine* Wells imagines that evolution results in two new forms of humanity, both inferior to their Victorian ancestors. Thus

Wells explores the notion, expressed by Hurley, that 'the evolutionary might be reversible: the human race might ultimately retrogress into a sordid animalism rather than progress towards a telos of intellectual and moral perfection' (Hurley, 56).

In another development on the notions of atavism and primitive instincts, Gustave Le Bon's famous study of crowds, *La Psychologie des Foules* (1895), reprinted 25 times in French between 1895 and 1920, appeared in English translation in 1896 as *The Crowd*. Le Bon postulated that the social elite and intellectuals needed an in-depth understanding of crowd psychology to protect themselves from the debased humanity represented by crowd behaviour. He was concerned about the effect of the masses on society at a time when an old social order seemed to be collapsing: 'While all our ancient beliefs are tottering and disappearing, while the old pillars of society are giving way one by one, the power of the crowd is the only force that nothing menaces, and of which the prestige is continually on the increase. The age we are about to enter will in truth be the ERA OF CROWDS' (Le Bon, xiv–xv).[13] Le Bon's crowd is one whose primal instincts chime with the late nineteenth-century perception of the 'beast within'. Darwinian studies by Henry Maudsley, and later by Cesare Lombroso, were evoked to prove atavistic tendencies in the criminal and in the lower working classes. As Mighall says: 'Primitive ancestry, the far-distant simian past, can be relocated in the modern individual in the midst of civilization; the unkinding of moral insanity, atavism, or degeneration reveals the "premoral", prehistoric past' (Mighall, 145).

In this respect, Le Bon is concerned about the effect on the upper classes of the mass mobilization of the backward-looking working classes:

> The masses are founding syndicates before which the authorities capitulate one after the other; they are also founding labour unions, which in spite of all economic laws tend to regulate the conditions of labour and wages . . . To-day the claims of the masses are becoming more and more sharply defined, and amount to nothing less than a determination to utterly destroy society as it now exists, with a view to making it hark back to that now primitive communism which was the normal condition of all human groups before the dawn of civilisation. Limitations of the hours of labour, the nationalisation of mines, railways, factories, and the soil, the equal distribution of all products, the elimination of all upper classes for the benefit of the popular classes, etc., such are these claims.
>
> (Le Bon, xvi)

This may seem hysterical, yet the book's 16 English editions indicate the power of Le Bon's suggestions. Le Bon was elitist and a racist, stating that blacks had no real intellectual powers. Drawing upon a nineteenth-century notion of women as tending towards the irrational, he ascribed to the crowd a stupidity which he aligned with feminine sensibilities: 'Crowds are everywhere distinguished by feminine characteristics, but Latin crowds are most feminine of all' (Le Bon, 20). Thus, for Le Bon, the crowd displayed the histrionic tendencies that were presumed to equate with female emotion and with Gothic sensibilities. In line with conservative thinkers like Max Nordau, whose *Degeneration* appeared in English translation in 1895, Le Bon is reacting against a perceived degenerate tendency in the Anglo-Saxon race as a whole. *Degeneration* is a polemic against writers, philosophers and composers whom Nordau labels as degenerates under three main terms: mystics, egomaniacs and realists. In 'Tommyrotics', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, June 1895, Hugh Stutfield argues that *Degeneration* 'remains a memorable protest against the foulness and hysteria which deface modern literature, and the waywardness and maudlin sensibility which impair the intellectual "movement" of the latter half of the century' (Stutfield, 834). Le Bon's crowd and Nordau's 'degenerate' intellectuals were perceived as a real threat to the stability of late-Victorian society.

Many of these ideas were symptomatic of an urban anxiety: the modern city was frequently figured as a labyrinth, harbouring mysteries and secrets that were deeply disturbing and spoke of a metropolis in chaos. As such *Jekyll and Hyde* is a Gothic tale that exposes deep divisions in the very fabric of society. The appeal of the Gothic is its ability to repeatedly shock its reader. L. Perry Curtis points out that if, 'as Peter Ackroyd has written, "horror is the true sublime," then during the age of the sublime, writers managed to horrify readers repeatedly by exploiting the destructive forces of both human nature and the supernatural' (Curtis, 74). He goes on to note that the early Victorians' obsession with horror is exemplified by the 'state-orchestrated ritual of execution outside prison walls' (Curtis, 75). No more ghoulish expression of the human thirst for the bizarre and horrific than this kind of voyeurism is needed to demonstrate how the Gothic must have appealed to those early Victorians.

The sanguinary practices of the Victorian laboratory, that fascination with the biology of the human body, so central to Frankenstein's experiments, are present in Jekyll's chemical transformations of himself in the laboratory that used to be a dissecting room, in *The Dynamiter* where

Grierson performs experiments to regain his youth, in Dorian's forcing of Alan Campbell to dissolve Hallward's body, in Moreau's grisly transformations of beasts into semi-human beings and in the gruesome deaths of London's citizens in *The War of the Worlds*. In Machen's *The Great God Pan* Dr Raymond's sparsely furnished laboratory contains a 'stone slab with a drain in one corner' that suggests channels for draining bodily fluids (*GGP*, 18). Raymond believes that by 'a slight lesion in the grey matter, that is all; a trifling rearrangement of certain cells, a microscopical alteration', he can release the mind from its physical restraints (*GGP*, 15). His ward, and later, the mother of Helen Vaughan, Mary, is the subject of his experiment to make a human being literally see the spirit world, the great god Pan. His removal of part of Mary's scalp and the scalpel with which he tampers with her exposed brain are grimly suggestive of Frankenstein's dissection of human bodies and anticipate Moreau's gruesome experiments. Gothic horror thus becomes associated with mutilation and mutation in Victorian narratives through an obsession with the possibilities of science.

In theorizing about the late nineteenth-century taste for horror, and the impact that this had on newspaper reporting of the Ripper murders, Curtis concludes that horrific stories in the press increased as the century wore on, and that the 'Victorians took a morbid interest in the injuries sustained by their unfortunate contemporaries' (Curtis, 77):

> We do know . . . that in the 1880s most London papers were publishing many more clinical details of violent death than they had in the 1840s, and that by the time of the Ripper murders, the penny press had won a huge readership owing to a combination of low prices and bolder and bigger headlines for disasters, upper-class scandals, and domestic murders.
>
> (Curtis, 84)

The horrific mutilations inflicted on the Ripper's victims, the common belief that the murderer himself was a Malay or a Jew, a man with a dark complexion, and his uncanny ability to elude capture contributed exotic Gothic elements to these awful events. The public imagination had been gripped by gruesome murders occurring on the streets of London, and the newspapers took full advantage of the situation. The leader in the *East London Advertiser* on 6 October 1888, entitled 'A THIRST FOR BLOOD', made full use of the public hysteria and the Gothic elements of this real-life tragedy:

> Persuaded that 'some awful . . . freak of nature' had emerged, people were conjuring up occult theories and 'myths of the Dark Ages,' laden with 'ghouls, vampires, bloodsuckers, and all the ghastly array of fables . . . accumulated [over] the centuries.' Heating up the rhetoric, the writer noted how appalling it was to think that some diabolical being was 'stealthily moving about a great city, burning with the thirst for human blood, and endowed with such diabolical astuteness as to . . . gratify his fiendish lust with absolute impunity.'
>
> (Curtis, 160)

The Gothic in everyday life had its fascination, and it seemed to some at least that life was imitating fiction.

The criminal psychologist Lombroso even ascribed vampire-like tendencies to felons. Holding in his hand the skull of a notorious bandit, he claimed that 'hereditary' criminals had 'an irresponsible craving of evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh and drink its blood' (Curtis, 85). In reporting the Ripper murders, newspapers seemed keen to draw on the Gothic nature of the crimes. A leader article in the *Daily Chronicle* on 8 September 1888 conjured up Gothic imagery to describe the type of man who committed the atrocities:

> The rowdy hobbledehoy is developing more and more rapidly into the savage of the slums. He in turn is becoming more and more akin to the monster – half-man, half-brute – who is now prowling round Whitechapel like the 'werewolf' of Gothic fable. But where is this process of hideous evolution to stop? Are the resources of civilisation powerless against it?[14]

Anticipating Wells's Morlocks and Beast People, this leader writer attributes the murders to atavistic tendencies in the population as a whole. Newspaper headlines in general reprised this invocation of the Gothic time and again: 'Horror Upon Horror / Whitechapel is Panic-Stricken at Another Fiendish Crime / A Fourth Victim of the Maniac', the *Star*, 8 September; 'Another Fiendish Murder', *Reynold's*, 9 September; 'Shocking Brutality', *Daily Chronicle*, 10 September.[15]

Apart from their clearly Gothic proportions in terms of horrific gore, the Ripper murders also served to highlight another Gothic tendency: duality. London was seen as a city divided along its East/West axis. The *Star*, notably a paper on the political left, was only one

among many papers to comment on the social divisions that the murders highlighted. On 14 September its leader declared: 'Neighbourhoods go mad like individuals, and while the West is discussing the Whitechapel horrors over its wine, the East is seething with impatience, distrust, horror. What a situation.'[16] The 'situation' even led some to vent their anger in verse. On 23 September, in *Reynold's*, a populist and radical paper, Leonard Wells penned his Gothic interpretation of the events in a poem entitled 'The East End Horror':

> And so, 'mid the brooding darkness, stalks murder with baleful mien:
> Rich man, stay from your folly, gaze on your Frankenstein!
> Do you dream you can keep him ever here in the squalid East?
> Have you fear lest his face may peer 'mid the flowers of your life-long feast?
> Then, in your frenzied trembling, you would draw from your well-loved hoard;
> For those who dare cope with the monster you would offer a rich reward;
> But little you reck, while you fondly deem your pampered life secure,
> Tho' the Horror slinks in the silence thro' the squalid homes of the poor.[17]

Invoking *Frankenstein*, this poet brings into the discussion a duality that becomes a central trope of the Gothic in the late nineteenth century, and he touches upon a metropolitan fear that this bestiality, horrific enough when apparent in the East End, may spread and threaten the lives of the inhabitants of the affluent West End. The Ripper murders thus tapped fears about the nature of the city itself, about its identity, and fuelled perceptions of a Gothicized London. In the press responses to the murders can be detected at least three differing positions: the liberal press desires social reform; the radical press wants to see the social barriers brought down; and the conservative press calls for the barriers to be strengthened.

Wolfreys argues that the 'gothic is always with us,' and certainly with the Victorians. He identifies 'all that black, all that crepe, all that jet and swirling fog' as manifestations of a 'nineteenth-century Englishness', and in doing so introduces the notion of identity into the Gothic, both individual and national: 'These and other phenomena,

such as the statuary found in Victorian cemeteries like Highgate are discernible as being fragments and manifestations of a haunting, and, equally, *haunted*, "gothicized" sensibility.' In positing the Victorians as essentially Gothic in sensibility, Wolfreys conflates the metropolitan with the cultural and elemental in a visual sense that seems to represent Victorian identity as at once knowable and fractured: 'There is a constant return of the gothic as that which marks national identity without being fixable as a paradigmatic definition of that identity' (Wolfreys, 25). In the Victorian concern with identity Wolfreys identifies the acknowledgement of 'an embrace of the uncanny, a more or less direct response on the part of certain Victorian writers to the other within ourselves' (Wolfreys, 26). This double, or doppelgänger, is the recurring trope that writers of Gothic fiction utilized in their exploration of the issue of identity.

## The Gothic and the literature of duality

If the traditional tale of Gothic horror tends to explore and expose our fear of agents outside ourselves and their capacity to harm us, then the fiction of duality usually reverses that anxiety, turning it in upon ourselves to explore our horror at what we may be capable of. Except perhaps in Conrad's 'The Secret Sharer' (1912), it is rare to find a tale of doubles or doubling that does not contain strong elements of Gothic horror and inevitable death. The double is a threat to the integrity of the self, and frequently evidence of a Gothic, supernatural force at large that brings with it death and destruction. Tales of doubling are, more often than not, tales about paradigms of good and evil.

Doubling in narratives can be traced back at least as far as *Genesis*: the fall of Satan is frequently regarded as the story of an evil double, a theme picked up in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). *Frankenstein*, too, can be analysed in terms of literary doubling, where Victor Frankenstein, like God, creates a man 'in his own image'. The monster is often described as Frankenstein's 'other' with a complex duality of his own: a murderous evil is coupled with a child-like innocence in the orphaned monster. In fact, *Frankenstein* offers a useful crossover point between the Gothic novel and the literature of duality, for it is probably the most obvious early nineteenth-century novel that weaves themes of duality into a Gothic context. Maurice Hindle outlines how the story's Gothic credentials are rooted in Mary Shelley's own reading:

Quite apart from the Gothic-influenced novels of her own father and those of Brockden Brown, we know from her Journal that between 1814 and 1816 she read Mrs Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), M. G. Lewis's The Monk (1796) and his romantic tales . . . two of the Rev. Charles Maturin's novels, and William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), to mention only the most famous Gothic storytellers she looked at.

(*Frankenstein*, xxxv–xxxvi)

Another famous early nineteenth-century tale of doubling is James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Hogg's story takes as its central theme the idea of an incarnate evil manifested in the form of a murderous doppelgänger. Poe used the same themes in many of his stories but most noticeably in 'William Wilson' (1839), and Melville had used the doppelgänger motif in 'Bartleby the Scrivener' (1856). Doubles and duality thus have a long and distinguished literary career.

Mario Praz identifies the central theme of the Gothic novel to be 'an anxiety with no possibility of escape' (Praz, 20): the doppelgänger of Gothic fiction reflects this inescapable anxiety through a malevolent 'other' who destabilizes the cohesion of the self. Frankenstein and his creation are joined in a variety of ways: as father and son; as creator and created; and as elements of the same individual. For Hindle it is the fact that the fate of Frankenstein and his creature 'become more and more intertwined, their identities merging as they approach death' that comprises the doppelgänger motif of the story (*Frankenstein*, xxxvii). Frankenstein creates his monster using a perverted science, just as Jekyll creates his own monster, Hyde, and the fates of Jekyll and Hyde are similarly intertwined. In Praz's terms, Jekyll's Gothic dilemma, just like Frankenstein's, is the anxiety from which there is no escape: having created their monsters, Jekyll and Frankenstein are bound to them until death. In the same way, once he has embarked on his hedonistic life, Dorian Gray is bound to the dreadful picture that absorbs and reflects his guilt and corruption, and as with other tales of duality, the only release is death. The symbiotic dependence on each other of Eloi and Morlocks is another version of the fatal duality of humanity taken to its Darwinist extreme.

The literature of duality is, at its most obvious level, a literature about identity, or even lack of identity. When Frankenstein's monster cries, 'Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?' and fails to find an answer, he formulates the questions that lie at the heart of identity (*Frankenstein*, 125). This identity is further

compromised in the literature of duality with the recognition of the self's 'other', as Greenslade observes:

> The doubled or mirrored identity, where subject and 'other' are brought into troubling relationship, proliferated in the literature of the period: we need only think of Holmes and Moriarty, Van Helsing and Dracula, Marlow and Kurtz, Heyst and Jones. And the idea of two identities inhabiting a single subject, Jekyll and Hyde, stands as a commanding figure of the divided self.
>
> (Greenslade, 72)

When Jekyll shakes the 'very fortress of identity' (*JH*, 57) and creates Hyde, he feels a 'leap of welcome' and recognizes that this 'ugly idol' was also himself (*JH*, 58). In this moment the dual identity and the 'divided self' are embraced. Dorian Gray has a morbid fascination with the decaying face that is his own in the fabulous portrait. The Time Traveller looks on his descendants, the Eloi and the Morlocks, with horror and outrage, realizing that these are distant, but still dimly recognizable, human forms. Prendick, having seen the terrible duality wrought by Moreau, is haunted by the thought of an animal identity lurking within the civilized surface of humanity. In each case identity proves to be a more and more problematic issue as the narratives progress. It becomes linked to class and morality, to pleasure and pain, to beauty and ugliness, and to evolution and degeneracy. The doubling evident in Wells's novels brings a new dimension to the literature of duality by injecting it with the new scientific theories of evolution, bringing a cold, scientific logic to the Gothic 'other'.

For Hurley, late nineteenth-century Gothic fiction is infused with a sense of unstable identities:

> In place of a human body stable and integral . . . the *fin de siècle* Gothic offers the spectacle of a body metaphoric and undifferentiated; in place of the possibility of human transcendence, the prospect of an existence circumscribed within the realities of gross corporeality; in place of a unitary and securely bounded human subjectivity, one that is both fragmented and permeable.
>
> (Hurley, 3)

The transformations and doppelgängers of the modern Gothic exemplify this slippage of identity, this fragmentation of the self. Identities merge or are masked; individuals hide dark secrets that speak of another

self; men and women melt into forms other than their known physical selves or into hideous liquescence; animals become parodies of the human and humans become animalistic. Hurley argues that it is the narrative of Darwinian evolution that made possible a 'transfiguration of bodily form': 'species integrity was undone and remade according to the immediate, situational logic of adaptation to the environment. Gothic plotting seized upon this logic . . .' (Hurley, 6). The modern Gothic is a narrative of altered selves and shifting, fluid identities within a metropolis that itself has lost coherence and stability.

Duality, as Karl Miller defines it, 'refers to the double life, which can be treated as a matter of observation and record, and to the fictional double or *doppelgänger*': 'It refers to the clinical phenomenon of multiple identity, and to the cultural phenomenon of a multiple identity which opens itself to the world and to the experience of others, which both enhances and annihilates the self . . .' (Miller, 21–2). To talk about the literature of duality is 'to discuss the literature of solitude', and duality is an essential element of romance in that duality is also about the strange and the different. Duality is a forceful presence in nineteenth-century fiction from Romanticism onwards, linked as it is to the 'hypothesis known to Victorians as the essential duality of man' (Miller, 22). Miller identifies Jean Paul Richter as the inventor of the term *Doppelgänger*, and says that the German writers Goethe, Tieck and Kleist engaged with the idea. It was Hoffmann who identified 'the double with a part of the personality, and from there the 'craze for duality spread from Germany to the rest of Europe' (Miller, 49).

There is a palpable connection between the Gothic, the literature of duality and modernity. At one level this is the modernist preoccupation with the self, and with individual identity: in whatever sense it manifests itself, for Wolfreys 'the comprehension of the gothic is expanded through an understanding of the role gothic effects have to play in the constitution of modern, fragmented subjectivity' (Wolfreys, 13). In this way the Gothic and identity are an integral part of the narrative of duality. If the Gothic narrative is concerned with hauntings of every sort then 'doubling is not simply a rhetorical device but is the figure of haunting *par excellence*' (Wolfreys, 15). To be haunted by another, by a spectre, is uncanny enough, but to be haunted by yourself strikes at the foundations of identity. If Jekyll conceives of identity as a fortress, he conceives of it as something almost impenetrable; thus to dismantle the fortress of identity is to look into the deepest recesses of the psyche, and then to ask Lear's question, 'Who is it that can tell me who I am?'

(*King Lear*, 45). And as Lear knows, 'that way madness lies' (*King Lear*, 108). Fictions of duality, then, remind us of who we know we are, and also of who we do not know we are, or as Wolfreys puts it: 'in the double there is both that which is familiar enough to be disturbing and strange enough to remind us of the otherness that inhabits the self-same' (Wolfreys, 15). To recognize that is to recognize in Jekyll's sense the essential duality of humankind.

Yet doubling or the dual personality were not simply the inventions of fiction writers. *Jekyll and Hyde*, it is often argued, took its inspiration from the real-life activities of Deacon Brodie. Stevenson himself led a well-documented double life as a young man in Edinburgh. His youth itself was divided between the respectable life at Heriot Row and the seedier haunts of Edinburgh's Old Town, vaguely prefiguring Jekyll's double life.[18] By day, Stevenson the respectable law student would pursue his studies with the other gentlemen of Edinburgh University's fraternity; by night he would roam the streets of the Old Town drinking in the taverns where he was recognized by his bohemian appearance and his velvet jacket. The frail son of the respectable Edinburgh family had, like Jekyll, urges that compromised his social position. R. C. Terry points out that Stevenson had rejected the family tradition of maritime engineering, choosing instead a double existence as Edinburgh law student and bohemian intellectual:

> He threw himself into that other life of Edinburgh, its wynds, howffs and harlots. The soubriquet 'Velvet Coat', after his favourite jacket, is said to have been familiar in low-life taverns. 'In the coiled perplexities of youth', with his cousin Bob Stevenson and other free spirits, Baxter, Ferrier, Simpson, he caroused and debated at their tavern club, the LJR (Liberty, Justice, Reverence), formed 'to disregard everything our parents have taught us'. . . but to Thomas Stevenson reading the constitution of the LJR, it was anathema – blasphemy, indeed – and he was deeply grieved that Louis had lost his faith.
>
> (Terry, xv)

Stevenson's law studies, a 'sop to family pride' and 'perfunctory' (Terry, xv) were an assured route to respectability, but he deserted these in favour of the precarious life of a writer and the well-documented nomadic existence that was necessitated by his search for a congenial climate.

It is tempting to assume that the deeper psychological schisms that this life may have entailed are dramatically fictionalized in his story of Henry Jekyll's doomed search for peace of mind. However, despite his

ravaged physique, his contemporaries describe Stevenson as 'wonder-fully whole': 'Consistent throughout these recollections is a man at ease with himself and the world, agreeable, tolerant, boyishly enthusiastic, delightful to be with, a strong-souled individual with a zest for living' (Terry, xvii). If such is the case then Jekyll's fractured personality is less a reflection of Stevenson's own psyche and perhaps more a projection of what conflicts could occur in a less exuberant personality, speculation rather than exaggerated autobiography. Certainly the divided self was a theme that recurred in Stevenson's fiction: *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) explores similar issues, and Scottish romantic fiction itself is characterized by a preoccupation with the notion of the double and duality in the individual: Hogg's *Justified Sinner* is a case in point. The life of the *homo duplex* was thus more than a fictional creation.[19] We can see it also in the lived experiences of Oscar Wilde, a man in a conventional heterosexual marriage who was the lover of young boys. Wilde led his own 'Jekyll and Hyde' existence. It was a public and private duality in which, in the words of Joseph Bristow, he was a 'gay man who paid a terribly high price in being publicly shamed for his physical intimacy enjoyed in private with other males' (in Raby, 196). Both Stevenson and Wilde found that the modern metropolis offered opportunities for a dual existence, and in their fictions they located duality in the heart of a Gothicized metropolis.

## Gothicized spaces: the London labyrinth

London was perceived as a Gothic space in which duality became manifested in that night stalker, Jack the Ripper, a man who for some came to represent the sinister duality of late nineteenth-century metropolitan society. The destabilized identities and predatory doubles of modern Gothic fiction were seen to be symptomatic of the city itself, precisely because that city was out of control. The metropolis offered the ideal circumstances for the fluid identities of fiction, as Hurley recognizes: 'The very swarming disorder of the metropolis might seem instrumental to the paranoid, for that disorder can be used to the advantage of terrorist agents like the Stevensons' dynamiters and Machen's impostors, who continually shift identities and interweave schemes under cover of the anonymity of the city' (Hurley, 165). The London labyrinth was a physical manifestation of the double life that many metropolitan citizens were perceived to be leading, and its dark recesses and narrow passageways were suggestive of lurking horrors. The city could be regarded as a haunted space, and, as Deborah L. Parsons

argues, inhabiting that space meant confronting layers of history: 'Walking in the city is at once an encounter with modernity and with the past, with the new and unknown but also with haunting ghosts' (Parsons, 10). The modern Gothic took those metropolitan conditions and wove them into narratives that represent London as a city of dreadful duality.

If the city was perceived as a labyrinthine hell, its population was seen to reflect that chaos. The rookeries and alleyways of the East End contained the underbelly of London society that was testimony to the human duality of the metropolis. For privileged London society that underbelly was a threatening foreign presence, suggesting a city that manifested its own duality as knowable and unknowable space. It was unknowable because its vast population contained elements of the beast. For Le Bon this animal behaviour was particularly evident in the metropolitan crowd. An individual in a crowd 'is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will': 'Moreover, by the mere fact that he forms part of a crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian – that is, a creature acting by instinct' (Le Bon, 12). In this rather simplistic analysis of crowd psychology, Le Bon proposes a duality in human nature, the savage and the civilized, which Greenslade links to a fear of civil unrest and the effects of socialism: 'for crowd theorists, social revolution was a regression to barbarism; socialism was tarred with the same brush' (Greenslade, 23). The modern Gothic exploited these perceptions to create a literature of urban terror that drew also on a schismatic, Gothicized London. Mighall speaks of an '"anthropological" focus' in the *fin de siècle* Gothic that looked 'outwards to the margins of Empire, and inwards to focus on the domestic "savages" which resided in the very heart of the civilized world, and even in the ancestral memory of the modern civilized subject' (Mighall, 136). Late nineteenth-century Gothic fictions thus widened the traditional focus of the Gothic to incorporate new and disturbing perceptions about an inherent duality in the metropolitan landscape itself.

# 3
# The City: London, Real and Imagined

> Earth has not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty;
> > William Wordsworth,'Composed on Westminster Bridge,
> > September 3,1802'.

Wordsworth's vision of the metropolis in 1802 as 'all bright and glittering in the smokeless air', gives way, by the 1870s, to James Thomson's vision in 'The City of Dreadful Night' (1874) where 'Myriads of habitants are ever sleeping / Or dead, or fled from nameless pestilence!' Thomson's London is one where 'They leave all hope behind who enter there' (*NOBEV*, 503, 738–9). By the 1880s public scandals such as the Ripper murders and W. T. Stead's 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' contributed to a sense of loss of social and moral equilibrium. Advances in technology, such as the railway and the Underground, fuelled the changing social conditions of the nineteenth-century metropolis, changing the face of Wordsworth's 'smokeless' city forever. Such developments altered the way people lived in the city and how its inhabitants used the city, and such developments contributed to the sensibility that informed the fiction of the modern Gothic.

London was, and is, rich in material for the literary imagination. An ever-evolving space, London is always in flux, physically expanding, its buildings renovated or renewed, its communities in continuous evolution. The metropolis can be defined in terms of its physical structures, its architecture and its physical form, but it is equally defined by its citizens. As a physical space, London is a product of human endeavour and of the human need for community and commerce.[1] Yet this city, and probably all cities, is also a symbolic space into which human hopes

and fears can be channelled. As such, London is also a product of the human imagination, of literature and art. Throughout the nineteenth century writers were compelled to construct narratives that dealt with London and its inhabitants. Its physical spaces were important, but so also were its all too evident class divisions. Further, as the scene of so much crime and misery, London was an environment in which narratives could, and did, dramatize the tales of tragedy, triumph and endurance so popular in the nineteenth century. Echoing Stevenson's comments to Henry James about the selective nature of art, Franco Moretti argues that, 'Cities can be very random environments . . . and novels protect their readers from randomness by reducing it' (Moretti, 105). In this way the London of the imagination often distilled, exaggerated, or ignored various aspects of the complex physical and social experience of the city; yet the ghost of the actual, lived, city haunts the pages of nineteenth-century metropolitan narratives leaving unmistakable traces of the real experience and perceptions of the city.

London, possibly more than any other city, preoccupied the late nineteenth-century popular consciousness, in England at least. London was the seat of power, but more crucially, it contained such a huge population that the possibilities it presented to the literary imagination were almost boundless. Murder and violence, dehumanization and atavism, were seen to be characteristic of the London experience and lead to the perception of the city, for some, as a Gothicized space.[2] The reasons for these events and conditions were seen to lie in the very nature of the city.

## The Ripper murders and 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'

In the early nineteenth century London was, according to Deborah Epstein Nord, 'a city in transition', no longer the 'buoyant, bawdy city of Boswell' and not yet the 'menacing labyrinth of Dickens': 'The harsh facts of poverty and urban squalor, slums and homelessness that later troubled and animated the Victorian imagination made themselves felt in the most peripheral and subliminal of ways: they were detected but generally resisted as social problems worthy of attention and action' (Nord, 19). Rapid expansion and overpopulation of the metropolis in the ensuing years, however, contributed to a growing awareness that the nineteenth-century city was not a controlled or controllable environment. In the latter part of the century the fears and social concerns of the nation became focused on its capital.

Late-Victorian London was the location of much modern Gothic fiction, and in reality the metropolis witnessed events on its streets that seemed to suggest that life could be as terrifying as horror and sensation fiction. This perception of a Gothicized London was particularly acute in the wake of the murders attributed to Jack the Ripper in the autumn of 1888. Over a period of two months, five women prostitutes were brutally murdered, four in Whitechapel, just outside the city centre, and one just within the boundary of the City of London. The unknown murderer, who was never caught and has never been identified, was dubbed 'Jack the Ripper', and the area of Whitechapel where four of the killings took place became known as 'the evil quarter of a mile'.[3] 'For the respectable reading public', says Judith Walkowitz, 'Whitechapel provided a stark and sensational backdrop for the Ripper murders: an immoral landscape of light and darkness, a nether region of illicit sex and crime, both exciting and dangerous' (Walkowitz, 193). Surveying the newspaper reportage of the Ripper murders reveals the fact that many editorial writers saw the murders as symptomatic of a more general sense of moral malaise.

Whitechapel housed a large immigrant and itinerant population, and a large community of poor Jews who, in the 1880s, were fleeing the Eastern European pogroms. London had always had a large Jewish population and this was augmented by what Charles Booth, in *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1892), called the 'new comers':

> Here, just outside the old City walls, have always lived the Jews, and here they are now in thousands, both old and established and new comers, seeking their livelihood under conditions which seem to suit them on the middle ground between civilization and barbarism.
>
> (Booth, C., 66)

There were fears of anti-Semitic rioting as a result of the Ripper murders because many believed the Ripper to be Jewish, possibly seeking to eradicate his 'crime' of sexual intercourse with a prostitute. 'The very success of Jewish furniture makers, street dealers, and moneylenders stirred up deep resentment among their gentile customers, and this animus found expression in verbal abuse as well as caricature' (Curtis, 170). By 1887, Tower Hamlets' total population of 909,000 included 45,000 Jews.[4] In the face of public anxiety, the police began to focus their attention on Jewish-looking suspects for the murders, thus heightening tensions in the East End.[5]

The East End was an area in industrial decline on the edge of the City, a vast, overpopulated centre of crime and poverty. For many, it came to symbolize all that was wrong in the metropolis. Chronicling the reality for the East End poor, Arthur Morrison begins *Tales of Mean Streets* (1894) with a chilling description of life there:

> This street is in the East End. There is no need to say in the East End of what. The East End is a vast city, as famous in its way as any the hand of man has made. But who knows the East End? It is down through Cornhill and out beyond Leadenhall Street and Aldgate Pump, one will say: a shocking place, where he once went with a curate; an evil plexus of slums that hide human, creeping things; where filthy men and women live on penn'orths of gin, where collars and clean shirts are decencies unknown, where every citizen wears a black eye, and none ever combs his hair.
>
> (*Mean Streets*, 7–8)

Those in the fashionable West End regarded the East End as a cesspit of crime, vice, drunkenness and poverty, populated by 'savages' who were only one step up the ladder from the beast.[6] Charles Booth described the life of the lowest class of London inhabitants as that of 'savages, with vicissitudes of extreme hardship and occasional excess' (Booth, C., 38). Descriptions of 'savages' in the fiction of Empire by writers like Rider Haggard, and in travelogues from the likes of Richard Burton and Henry Stanley, fuelled a perception of the East End as an urban jungle populated with beasts like Stevenson's Hyde. Thus, for Judith Halberstam, the struggle for mastery between Jekyll and Hyde 'suggests Gobineau's warring races within one body' that is aligned with the 'threat that a wave of immigration in London in the 1880s posed to the concept of national character' (Halberstam, 79). Two years after the Ripper murders, William Booth, in his evangelical *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), found parallels between 'darkest Africa' and the London slums:

> As there is a darkest Africa is there not also a darkest England? Civilisation, which can breed its own barbarisms, does it not also breed its own pygmies? May we not find a parallel at our own doors, and discover within a stone's throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors to those which Stanley has found existing in the great Equatorial forest?
>
> (Booth, W., 11)

Newspaper reports characterized the East End as an alien land, not British, but as barbarous as the untamed colonies. On 8 September 1888 the *Pall Mall Gazette*, reporting on the Ripper murders, drew this unmistakable analogy with colonized North America and invoked Gothic narratives: 'There certainly seems to be a tolerably realistic impersonification of Mr Hyde at large in Whitechapel. The Savage of Civilization whom we are raising by the hundred thousand in our slums is quite as capable of bathing his hands in blood as any Sioux who ever scalped a foe' (*PMG*, no. 7326, 1).[7] These are wild and fantastic allegations against an urban population about whom the majority of London society was relatively ignorant. As the *Daily Telegraph* put it on 2 October 1888, at the height of the Ripper murders: 'The majority of the inhabitants of West and Central London know as much [about the East End] as they do of the Hindoo Kush or the Northern Territory of South Australia.'[8] In fact, crimes of a barbarous nature were not confined to the East End. For example, as early as 1861 comparisons were being made between savage behaviour in the upper classes and the East End slums. After a nasty fight in which an ex-major of the 10th Hussars killed a moneylender in Northumberland Street, the *Morning Chronicle* opined:

> It is in no degraded purlieu, no haunt of pugilists and blacklegs, no slum of Bermondsey, or cellar of Houndsditch, overflowing with fleas and Jews, that the deadly encounter took place, but in the chambers of a gentleman . . . Surely nothing more barbarous ever occurred in the blackest epochs of our social history.[9]

The conflation here of Jews and fleas is a telling one. Machen even turns metropolitan horror into a Gothicized image of London in *The Great God Pan*, where upper-class men commit suicide after liaisons with Helen Vaughan, that feminine incarnation of primal debauchery. The city of the imagination in Stevenson, Wilde, Machen and of course in *Dracula* becomes a Gothic landscape where the wealthy are the prey of the urban monster.

By contrast, the East End was an area where wealthy men came to indulge in nefarious pleasures, notably sexual pleasures. Adjacent to the salubrious residential areas of the city, the East End, and particularly Whitechapel, is the most plausible location for Hyde's nocturnal wanderings, and Dorian Gray's illicit activities:

> Whitechapel's physical proximity and social connection to respectable parts of London proved even more unsettling:

'Unhappily for all of us,' declared *The Times*, 'the Whitechapel murderers and their victims are neighbours of every Londoner.' Although the press tried to stigmatize Whitechapel as a place apart, it also depicted it as a place where many parts of London met: a magnet not only for a 'vast floating population – the waifs and strays of our thoroughfares' – but also for young West End bloods and for scores of respectable 'slummers' who visited and even settled in that area.

(Walkowitz, 195–6)

The fictional London of Jekyll and his evil counterpart, Hyde, and the low-life haunts of Dorian Gray are based on the actual East End of London of the late nineteenth century. *The Time Machine* casts London in a future frame, and extrapolates a fictional divided city out of the actual late-nineteenth-century metropolis.

Walkowitz comments on how Madame Tussaud's waxworks museum uses the Ripper story to create a London street that 'adheres to a certain invention of the Victorian past, expressed through an overworld/underworld structure' (Walkowitz, 4). Such a structure suggests a rift in the physical and social fabric of London, a rift that was often breached by well-to-do men in search of sexual excitement among the 'riff-raff'. The Ripper murders reinforced this perception of the city as split between an upper world of wealth and a lower one of poverty and vice. In 1888 the East End press was outraged by the implications. On 14 September, the *Star's* leader complained: 'Neighbourhoods go mad like individuals, and while the West sits discussing the Whitechapel horrors over its wine, the East is seething with impatience, distrust, horror.'[10] *Reynold's* on 16 September blamed the West End for the conditions in the East End. According to Curtis, it claimed that the 'grandeur of the West End could not exist but for the poverty-stricken degradation of the East End', and 'conjured up an image of Annie Chapman [one of the Ripper's victims] walking the streets of Whitechapel in search of fourpence for a doss while the Duke of Westminster lay on "a bed of down," dreaming about his millions of "unearned" pounds. Only "colossal injustice, fraud, and robbery" could account for the wretched lives led by "unfortunates"' (Curtis, 137).[11]

The gulf between East and West London was further underscored by the implication that the Ripper was a 'West End toff' who enjoyed 'slumming it' in the debauched East End. W. T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* at the time of the murders, was one of the first to invoke Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* as a possible model for the murderer's behaviour. In 'Another Murder – and More to Follow' Stead, alluding to

Stevenson's story, presents the murderer as atavistic and sadistic (*PMG*, no. 7326, 10). Later, in 'Occasional Notes', he suggests the murderer could be a more respectable citizen murdering out of blood-lust: 'the murderer is a victim of erotic mania which often takes the awful shape of an uncontrollable taste for blood' (*PMG*, no. 7328, 4). This idea gripped the popular imagination: from the upper quarters of the city emerged a horribly divided Gothic individual descending on Whitechapel to extract a terrible revenge on its prostitutes. William Fishman records how even the aristocracy came under suspicion: 'Suspicion of evil in high places was currently fed by the nocturnal activities of the young Duke of Clarence; and later, in retrospect, a theory was put forward which detected the Masonic hand behind the murders, perpetrated according to ritual to protect the Duke, and through him the integrity of the monarchy' (Fishman, 219).

The Ripper murders crystallized public fears about the safety of the metropolitan streets, generating a sense that the city was out of control, physically and morally. 'Commentators likened the Ripper story to a "dark labyrinth" where every corner revealed a "new depth of social blackness"; they also superimposed this labyrinthine image on the besieged city itself, represented as incoherent, fragmented, ungovernable,' says Walkowitz (Walkowitz, 196–7). For women the dangers of the street became particularly intensified: some men even set about deliberately frightening women by accosting them on the streets and invoking the Ripper.[12] Some threatened women, then boasted of having committed the Ripper murders.[13] Prostitution became a central issue, with the Ripper sometimes seen as a twisted soul exacting social revenge on the 'fallen woman'. In the end the murders confirmed the public view of the East End as a place of danger, disease and untold horrors that were a scandal to society at large and terrible evidence of the depths to which humans could sink. Once *Jekyll and Hyde* was mentioned in connection with the murders, the issue of duality acquired a more sinister face: the suspicion that this crime was not simply about a geographical divide between the affluent West and the impoverished East bolstered the perception, posited by Stevenson's Jekyll, that 'man was not truly one, but truly two' (*JH*, 55).

Prostitution was of more general concern during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Before the Ripper murders W. T. Stead had conducted his own dual life when, using the techniques of the New Journalism, he investigated and determined to expose East End child prostitution. 'Buying' a young girl through the agency of a procuress, Stead set out to prove the ease with which a child could be acquired for

sex. He scandalized London when, in 1885, he published 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, detailing his exploits as an investigative journalist.[14] 'The Maiden Tribute' famously exposed how members of the upper classes regularly 'bought' child virgins for sexual enjoyment. Even before the Ripper murders, this scandal had sensitized the population to the possibility that 'toffs' were involved in nefarious activities in the East End. The dual nature of the city had never been more clearly exemplified as in this graphic illustration of the exploitation of the poor by the privileged rich.[15] Stead wanted to highlight this exploitation: 'I am not without hope that there may be some check placed upon this vast tribute of maidens, unwitting or unwilling, which is nightly levied in London by the vices of the rich upon the necessities of the poor' (*PMG*, no. 6336, 2).

Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, written between September and October 1885, appeared in the wake of this sensational event. Although Stevenson distanced himself from overt sexual themes in the novella, it is fair to speculate that Hyde's nocturnal forays and Jekyll's illicit pleasures were, in part, associated with the corruption of children exposed by Stead in July of the same year. Similarly, by later linking the Ripper with the Jekyll and Hyde existence in the popular consciousness, Stead himself drew close parallels with the actual events on the London streets and the fictional metropolis of Stevenson. In this way the imagined city and the real city merged into each other and were mutually influential. What was happening on the streets of the real city became dramatized through the fictional narratives of the imagined city, and later events like the Ripper murders became associated in the popular consciousness with Stevenson's earlier Gothic narrative.

## The real London: social conditions

In 1889 Charles Booth published the first volume of his mammoth work, *Life and Labour of the People*.[16] Defining social classes alphabetically from H as the upper middle class down to A, the lowest class of occasional labourers, loafers and semi-criminals, Booth attempted a categorization of the London population on a huge scale. Roy Porter explains the impact of his investigation:

> Booth's work differed from earlier shock-horror accounts by offering, on the basis of ample data, an exact social profile and classification of poverty, developing the notion of the 'line of poverty.' For the first time ever, social statistics and social description of Londoners rich

and poor were spelt out in great detail with some semblance of scientific accuracy.

<div align="right">(Porter, 276)</div>

Booth's colour-coded maps of London added a physical, geographical dimension to social divisions in the city that could be perceived at a glance. Concentrations of poor are marked around the dock areas and the rookeries of the inner city. The wealthy gathered in the fashionable West End, appropriately coloured gold. The divides on Booth's map are striking: he speculated that this geographic split was the result of the migration of the better off from the city centre into the leafier suburbs springing up in London's environs.[17]

By the time of Booth's investigation London was a vast metropolis. Conrad's narrator, Marlow, in *Heart of Darkness* (1898) describes it as 'the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth' (*HD*, 7). In Gissing's *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894) Nancy Lord and her companion, Luckworth Crewe, climb the Monument to get a panoramic view of the city, and stand side by side, 'mute before the vision of London's immensity' (*YJ*, 104). 'Figures speak for themselves,' says Porter: 'In 1800 London's population had been around a million. By 1881 it had soared to 4.5 million, and by 1911 to over 7 million. In 1800 around one in ten inhabitants of England and Wales dwelt in the metropolis; by 1900 it was a breathtaking one in five' (Porter, 205). Such rapid expansion inevitably resulted in a crisis in housing for the poor. New homes for the bourgeoisie and upper classes far exceeded demand, while the poor, often ousted from their homes to make way for new developments, found themselves forced into ever more cramped and unsavory locations or onto the streets.[18] Porter notes a growing perception of a city marked by 'inner rottenness' and that there was a 'terror of the "great unwashed" living amidst urban blight' (Porter, 174). In *Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1885) Andrew Mearns offered this emotional description of the human rookeries of inner London:

> To get to them you have to penetrate courts reeking with poisonous and malodorous gases arising from accumulations of sewage and refuse scattered in all directions and often flowing beneath your feet; courts, many of them which the sun never penetrates, which are never visited by a breath of fresh air, and which rarely know the virtues of a drop of cleansing water. You have to ascend rotten staircases, which threaten to give way beneath every step, and which, in some cases, have already broken down, leaving gaps that imperil the

limbs and lives of the unwary. You have to grope your way along dark and filthy passages swarming with vermin. Then, if you are not driven back by the intolerable stench, you may gain admittance to the dens in which these thousands of beings who belong, as much as you, to the race for whom Christ died, herd together.

(Mearns, 58)

By contrast the middle and upper classes were moving to the suburbs that were swallowing up the countryside. Modern housing in areas like Ealing and Chiswick sprang up at a prodigious pace, but even here the standards of construction varied enormously. Mary Woodruff, in *Year of Jubilee*, chooses a six-roomed house with 'a little strip of garden in the rear' that is located below the hill at Harrow. The house was built 'not long ago, yet at a time when small houses were constructed with some regard for soundness and durability' (*YJ*, 401). The Peachys live in the pretentious de Crespigny Park in Camberwell that is 'pleasant to the eye that finds pleasure in suburban London' (*YJ*, 1). By contrast the Morgans live on a new estate that had once been part of an old country estate:

London, devourer of rural limits, of a sudden made hideous encroachment upon the old estate, now held by a speculative builder; of many streets to be constructed, three or four had already come into being, and others were mapped out, in mud and inchoate masonry, athwart the ravaged field. Great elms, the pride of generations passed away, fell before the axe, or were left standing in mournful isolation to please a speculative architect; bits of wayside hedge still shivered in fog and wind, amid hoardings variegated with placards and scaffolding black against the sky. The very earth had lost its wholesome odour; trampled into mire, fouled with builder's refuse and the noisome drift from adjacent streets, it sent forth under sooty rain, a smell of corruption, of all the town's uncleanliness.

(*YJ*, 218)

Mrs Morgan chooses this abode for its middle-class address: 'Merton Avenue, Something-or-other Park'. Yet the rent reduces the Morgans to penury, and Gissing savagely details the effects of jerry-building in the scramble for outer London. The walls quickly turn mouldy: 'Plaster fell from the ceilings; paper peeled away down the staircase; stuccoed portions of the front began to crack and moulder . . . From cellar floor to chimney-pot, no square inch of honest or trustworthy workmanship'

(*YJ*, 219). For the well-off, middle-class accommodation was filling up the countryside, but in the rush to capitalize on a growing desire for genteel suburban homes, jerry-building became rife.

The mushrooming population of the suburbs created another demand: transport into the city. Movement to and from London was facilitated by the advent of the railway. Horse-drawn omnibuses first appeared in 1829, and in 1832 the Stage Carriages Act meant that transport into the heart of the city was assured.[19] By 1875 London's horse-drawn tram system stretched as far as Clapham and Blackheath in the south, to Finsbury Park and Stamford Hill in the north: 'Trams flourished; by 1898 there were 147 miles of lines, served by 1,451 trams with 14,000 horses' (Porter, 227). Railway transport was similarly expanding: by 1895 the London map was crisscrossed with commuter railway lines. The growth of the railways also assisted the trade in child prostitution: Stead details how one procuress in the Mile End Road acquired a young girl from Horsham, a market town in Sussex newly accessible by rail (*PMG*, no. 6336, 4).

The effect of railway expansion was, on the one hand, to make thousands of Londoners homeless as their dwellings were demolished to make way for the trains; on the other hand, many suburbs became overpopulated, and in some cases inclined towards slums. The *Building News* in 1890 complained:

> We find suburbs, once delightful retreats for the busy man, fast losing their . . . reputation. Putney, Fulham, Richmond, Kew in the West, Hampstead, Highgate, Hornsey, Finsbury in the north; Clapham, Brixton, Dulwich in the south, are already being irretrievably spoiled . . . while every acre of land is allowed to be crowded with 50 to 60 houses . . . the higher class suburbs being brought down to the level of the poorer districts.[20]

This horizontal spread of London had its counterpart in a vertical development. The expanding commuter population required speedy and efficient transport into and through the city. The streets were jamming with carriages and horse-drawn trams. Samuel Barmby, one of Nancy Lord's suitors, claims, with pompous gravity that, placed end to end, the line of London cabs would stretch for forty miles (*YJ*, 58). Thus the advent of the first Underground line, the Metropolitan Railway from Paddington to Farringdon, in 1863 heralded a new era in London's transportation history: 'Costs were kept down by a "cut and cover" construction. Instead of tunnelling, a trench was cut, the line was inserted and arched over, and the road was replaced. The initial Marylebone

Road route meant that little housing had to be demolished' (Porter, 313). Later, a deep-boring method allowed the Underground to spread throughout the city.

However, the earliest Underground trains were steam powered, creating an unhealthy atmosphere in the stations as well as being unusable in the deeper 'tubes'. At Kings Cross Jessica Morgan and Samuel Barmby descend to the underground platform 'in black fumes that poisoned the palate with sulphur':

> This way and that sped the demon engines, whirling lighted waggons full of people. Shrill whistles, the hiss and roar of steam, the bang, clap, bang of carriage-doors, the clatter of feet on wood and stone – all echoed and reverberated from a huge cloudy vault above them. High and low, on every available yard of wall, advertisements clamoured to the eye . . . A battle-ground of advertisements, fitly chosen amid subterranean din and reek; a symbol to the gaze of that relentless warfare which ceases not, night and day, in the world above.
>
> (*YJ*, 309)

Gissing's concern is the gaudy ubiquity of advertising, but his description of a steam-powered London Underground makes uniquely valuable social history. *In the Year of Jubilee* describes events in 1887 when the Underground was still serviced by steam trains. It was also the year after *Jekyll and Hyde*, and one year prior to the Ripper murders. Electrification of the Underground came in 1890 following the introduction of electric trains in the United States in 1888, resulting in a cleaner and healthier environment for passengers.

Late nineteenth-century London was thus a place of massive technological development and massive growth. It was also a city divided along class lines, a division exacerbated by the huge gulf between rich and poor. This gulf became especially pronounced through the geography of the city with large populations of poor congregating in the East End, and a growing population of bourgeoisie emigrating to newly constructed suburban estates to escape the squalor and overcrowding of central London. With such large numbers living in often atrocious conditions in the city, barely able to feed and clothe themselves, vice and crime inevitably proliferated in the poorest districts, while the suburbs remained relatively peaceful and crime-free. It is these conditions that form part of the imaginative impetus for the London tales of Gothic duality of Stevenson, Wilde and Wells: London's transport systems, usually cabs, offer Stevenson's and Wilde's heroes access to their nocturnal

haunts; Wells sweeps away the railway systems and jerry-built housing in *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*. Class divisions in a threatening, overpopulated city help to create the Gothicized metropolis of these writers, a fictionalized city based on the actual experience of late nineteenth-century London.

## The city, the *flâneur* and the crowd

Imperialist discourse frequently refers to places such as Africa as feminized landscapes that are explored by the male, in a clear mirroring of sexual curiosity. The nineteenth-century city, too, can be regarded in this light. Walkowitz notes how in his responses to London, Henry James was celebrating the 'traditional prerogatives of the privileged urban spectator to act, in Baudelaire's phrase, as *flâneur*, to stroll across the divided spaces of the metropolis, whether it was London, Paris, or New York, to experience the city as a whole' (Walkowitz, 16).[21] Parsons notes that the *Encyclopaedia Larousse* defines the *flâneur* as 'a figure who loiters in the city, shopping and watching the crowd' (Parsons, 17). Although *flâneurie* is generally perceived as a male activity, women also enjoyed strolling in the metropolis. After the birth of her child Nancy Lord 'went about London, and enjoyed it': 'A day or two of roaming at large gave her an appetite for activity' (*YJ*, 276). On these occasions men do not accost her, but pestering was a risk for a woman on her own in the metropolis, and for this reason *flânerie* was regarded as a male occupation. Only in exceptional circumstances would 'respectable women' be seen casually on the city streets. One such circumstance was the wake of the Ripper murders when the city became a spectacle for men and women alike. Curtis notes that on 1 October 1888, the day after the 'double murder' of Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes, a reporter for the *Evening News* recorded how he 'had been struck by the "terror and amazement" etched on so many faces, as well as the sight of West End gentlemen rubbing shoulders with "the grimy denizens" of the slums, and "daintily dressed ladies" elbowing their way through knots of their "less favoured sisters"' (Curtis, 146).

The notion of *flânerie* necessarily implies a sense of ownership of the city by the male. As Peter Barto says, 'The *flâneur* will be preoccupied by phenomena that other people – rushing about their business – are likely to miss' (Barto, 10). *Flânerie* relied on the leisure to roam at will to take in the sights and atmosphere of the city, a luxury not easily afforded to women, or working-class men. In *The Three Impostors*, Mr Dyson is the *flâneur* par excellence: 'His observation of mankind,

the traffic, and the shop windows tickled his faculties with an exquisite bouquet; he looked serious, as one looks on whom charges of weight and moment are laid; and he was attentive in his glances to right and left, for fear lest he should miss some circumstance of more acute significance' (*TI*, 112). Although it could result in published work like that of Boswell or George Sims's *How the Poor Live* (1883), *flâneurie* was primarily for pleasure. For Walter Benjamin the *flâneur* regards the city as his own personal space: 'To the *flâneur* the shiny signs of business are at least as good as a wall ornament or oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebook; newstands are his libraries' (Benjamin, 37). Thus Villiers in *The Great God Pan* 'prided himself as a practised explorer of such obscure mazes and byways of London life, and in this unprofitable pursuit he displayed an assiduity which was worthy of more serious employment' (*GGP*, 40).

The object of the gaze could frequently be a woman. As Walkowitz states: 'No figure was more equivocal, yet more crucial to the structured public landscape of the male *flâneur*, than the woman in public':

> The public symbol of female vice, the prostitute, established a stark contrast to the domesticated feminine virtue as well as to male bourgeois identity: she was the embodiment of the corporeal smells and animal passions that the rational bourgeois male had repudiated and that the virtuous woman, the spiritualized 'angel in the house', had suppressed. She was also a logo of the divided city itself.
>
> (Walkowitz, 21)

Dorian Gray and Henry Wotton are *flâneurs*, so too are Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde. These fictional *flâneurs* perambulate the city seeking pleasures to satisfy their leisured boredom and their taste for illicit excitement. Most likely their *flânerie* is not passive: those undisclosed secret pursuits of Jekyll probably involved prostitution; and Wotton is a self-confessed womanizer. Dorian Gray's years as a leisured young man lend themselves exactly to the life of a *flâneur*. Indeed, even Wells's Time Traveller wandering the future London landscape is a *flâneur* of a wholly new order. In Stevenson's and Wilde's fictional incarnations, particularly in the case of Hyde, the *flâneur* is not the benign presence identified by James; rather he is a threatening and dangerous presence, not simply an observer, but a participant in crime, vice and probably the harassment and abuse of women, as when Hyde slaps a match-girl on the street.

The sights, sounds and smells of the city that the *flâneur* experienced would also include the city crowds. The crowd, or the mob, was frequently used in late nineteenth-century fiction to demonstrate the threat posed by the mobilization of the working class. In *The Old Order Changes* (1886), W. H. Mallock's hero, Carew, watches aghast from an upper-storey window as a proletarian mob riots. In *Demos* (1886) Gissing displays a similar revulsion towards the working class, who are whipped into a state of vulgar envy and resentment against the upper classes, who represent the beauty, intelligence and refinement made possible through breeding and education. By contrast the lower classes emerge as an undisciplined mass motivated by instinct, not much better than the beasts from which they have evolved and easy prey for the manipulative political agitators. As Keating says, in reading *The Crowd*, Gissing 'would have recognised similar views to those which he himself had expressed in *Demos* and *The Nether World*' (Keating, 317). Ten years before Le Bon's theories were available, the perception of the mob as a dangerous beast was already current and active in the literary imagination. *In the Year of Jubilee* offers a detailed description of the London mob on Jubilee Day:

> At junctions, pickets of police directed progress; the slowly advancing masses wheeled to left or right at word of command, carelessly obedient. But for an occasional bellow of hilarious blackguardism, or for a song uplifted by strident voices, or a cheer at some flaring symbol that pleased the passers, there was little noise; only a thud, thud of footfalls numberless, and the low, unvarying sound that suggested some huge beast purring to itself in stupid contentment.
>
> (*YJ*, 68)

This is a crowd that in its collective mentality, and animal instincts, is in perfect accord with what Le Bon's *The Crowd* was later to argue.

When the fictional *flâneur* meets the fictional mob an interesting encounter takes place. In *Jekyll and Hyde*, having mown down a child, Hyde, the nocturnal *flâneur*, is surrounded by a group of women 'wild as harpies'; Enfield had never seen 'a circle of such hateful faces' (*JH*, 8). This is literally Le Bon's feminized mob; it is only the 'rational' doctor and Enfield who seem to keep Hyde from being torn apart by these women. Prendick in *The Island of Dr Moreau* encounters a similarly frightening, bloodthirsty mob in the form of Moreau's marauding Beast People. Plagued by his recurring nightmares of these creatures, Prendick sees in the London crowd horrifying versions of the Beast People:

> I would go out into the streets to fight my delusion, and prowling
> women would mew after me, furtive craving men glance jealously at
> me, weary pale workers go coughing by me, with tired eyes and eager
> paces like wounded deer dripping blood, old people, bent and dull,
> pass murmuring to themselves, and all unheeding a ragged tail of
> gibing children.

<div align="right">(<em>DM</em>, 186–7)</div>

Written a year after Le Bon's book appeared in translation, this passage,
and Wells's vision in general in *The Island of Dr Moreau*, may have been
in some part influenced by *The Crowd*. Le Bon argues that the crowd
mentality is atavistic: 'Moreover, by the mere fact that he forms part of
an organised crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civil-
isation. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is
a barbarian – that is, a creature acting on instinct' (Le Bon, 12). This of
course brings to mind those other evolutionary throwbacks from Wells's
imagination, the Morlocks, and their encounters with that futuristic
*flâneur*, the Time Traveller. The Morlocks' instinct is survival, and sur-
vival for them entails that most barbaric of practices, cannibalism.

The crowd, as described by Le Bon, is a metropolitan crowd, inhabit-
ing and terrorizing the European city, and in particular the upper classes
of those cites. A stark divide is thus envisioned between the rational and
the instinctive. The *flâneur*, on the other hand, is the watcher, the
voyeur who sees both sides of the city. For the *flâneur* the city is pleas-
urable because of its contrasts and extremes of experiences. He may
encounter the mob, as do Hyde and the Time Traveller, but that is part
of the excitement of *flâneurie*. In terms of gender, the *flâneur* is, by his
very presence, evidence of the 'otherness' of woman. Because, in terms
of the male watcher, she is there to be gazed at, the woman constitutes
female sexual 'otherness' in the city, and the *flâneur* represents the male
possession of the spaces she inhabits. However, particularly in the last
twenty or so years of the nineteenth century, women began to contest
the metropolitan conditions of their existence and began to appropriate
the city streets for themselves. As such they attracted the attentions
of the *flâneur* and developed methods for dealing with him, as we
shall see.

Women came to recognize the political force of that crowd that Le Bon
was so fearful of. The Bryant & May match girls went on strike in 1888 for
better pay and conditions. After Annie Besant had publicized their plight
'between one and two hundred match girls "flocked down" to Fleet Street
to the office of the Link, provoking considerable "excitement" ':

A delegation of 'three sturdy respectable women' entered the *Link* offices 'and told their story. The foreman had tried to pressure the girls to sign a paper repudiating Besant's assertions; the girls refused to sign – 'You had spoke up for us and we weren't going back on you.' When one girl identified as a ringleader was fired, her workmates put down their tools, and the action spread to 1,400 more. An offer was made to take back the girl, 'but the spirit of revolt against cruel oppression had been aroused, and they declared they would not go in 'without their pennies.'

<div align="right">(Walkowitz, 78)</div>

Women were discovering the power of the crowd, and as Le Bon had feared, were fighting against the old order of upper-class dominance.

## Women and the metropolis

As the nineteenth century progressed women experienced greater and greater freedom to move about the metropolis. The arrival of the department store liberated women to shop without the need for chaperoning. Middle-class women had previously despatched their servants to the local greengrocer's or butcher's shops and had been visited in their parlours by seamstresses and milliners: the advent of the department store began to change all that by adding a new social dimension to women's lives. The first department store in England arrived in Bayswater in 1863. Called Whiteley's, it rapidly expanded from a modest base in drapery to include all of a household's weekly needs under one roof. Enticing women shoppers with plush surroundings, discreet assistants and comfortable spaces to drink tea or relax, the department store transformed the necessity to shop into something akin to pleasure; it became a palace of consumption. The installation of public lavatories, provision of cheap public transport and the burgeoning teahouses and restaurants in the city all contributed towards coaxing women out of their homes and into the city. London and its public places became populated with single women who also wanted to sample the freedom of the city. Nancy Lord is frequently seen alone in the metropolis, eating and using public transport: 'Feeling hungry, she entered a restaurant, and dined . . . She would return to Camberwell by train from Ludgate Hill.' Nancy had just previously been idly wandering down Fleet Street 'with observation of shop-windows' (*YJ*, 188).

Women on omnibuses or riding bicycles became a common feature of the urban landscape, leading to tensions about respectable pursuits for

women. As a result, Walkowitz observes, women came to be involved in 'debates and cultural exchanges around dangerous sexualities':

> In the two decades prior to the Ripper murders, female reformers had actively engaged in public discussions of sexual danger. Through the feminist politics of prostitution, middle-class women inserted themselves into the public discussion of sex to an unprecedented extent, using access to new public spaces and to new journalistic practices to speak out against men's double lives, their sexual diseases, and their complicity in a system of vices that flourished in the undergrowth of respectable society.
>
> (Walkowitz, 6)

Women, however, and particularly middle-class women, were increasingly claiming independence from the restrictive role placed upon them during the first half of the century. Traditionally the *flâneur* had possessed the city: his prerogative was to wander the streets as voyeur and pleasure seeker, and often chronicler of his experiences as we see in *The Three Impostors*. Nord quotes Charles Lamb's figuring of London as female, as a nursing mother nourishing the male with her sights, sounds and smells, and adds: 'Whether whore or suckling mother, the city as female provides for masculine desires and breeds "the Londoner", who never gets his fill of urban pleasures' (Nord, 37). Thus woman physically tended to male desire in the form of prostitute, and spiritually nurtured him in the guise of the feminized city. In either case the woman is subordinate and exists for the purpose of male gratification. In the 1880s that was to change, and the *flâneur* found that he no longer commanded the privileged position of urban spectator: other classes, and women in particular, were claiming the streets and the public spaces of the city for themselves.

Women were on the streets not only as prostitutes, but also as legitimate inhabitants of the city going about their business, whether it be saving souls or cycling to work. As the population increased, the metropolis witnessed immense social changes that included means of moving about the city, and access, particularly for women, to its public spaces and buildings. Such mobility and access affected women as much as they did men. While George Eliot earlier in the century had used her fiction to highlight and bemoan the restrictions placed on women in such novels as *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Middlemarch* (1871–2), towards the end of the century novelists began to mirror the changing circumstances of the actual world, so that we have heroines out on the streets of London. Marian Yule in

Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891) and Ella Hepworth Dixon's Mary Erle in *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894) are notable examples of fictional hero-ines valiantly pursuing the careers of their real-life counterparts.

Such liberations, however, were not without their dangers. Walkowitz notes that the presence in the West End of prostitutes, female shoppers, 'girls in business' and male civil servants 'provoked territorial tensions and hostile social acts on the part of men towards women' (Walkowitz, 50). Street harassment was the consequence. 'Gents' on the street were known to accost young women assuming them to be prostitutes, and girls in particular had to develop strategies for avoiding the male gaze and deflecting unwanted advances while preserving their independence and respectability. The newly liberated female was invading the space that had been the preserve of the *flâneur*, and as a result the *flâneur* became, in many cases, a male 'pest'. During the Jubilee celebrations two men accost Nancy Lord. One 'thrust himself to a place beside her' and scrutinizes her 'with much freedom', until 'at a certain remark which he permitted himself, Nancy felt it time to shake him off'. Another man puts his arm round her waist, and in an intoxicated voice begins singing 'Queen of my Heart':

> 'I think you had better leave me alone,' said Nancy, looking him severely in the face.
>   'Well if you really think so,' – he seemed struck by her manner of speech, – 'of  course I will: but I'd much rather not.'
>   'I might find it necessary to speak to a policeman at the next corner.'
>   'Oh, in that case.' – He raised his hat, and fell aside.
>
> <div align="right">(<em>YJ</em>, 69)</div>

After the Ripper murders the attentions of some men became much more sinister. Although he takes issue with Walkowitz's assertion that 'gentlemen' were harassing and physically harming women after the murders, Curtis catalogues a variety of incidents involving drunks reported in the press:

> One such verbal offender, George Payne, boasted aloud that he had slain six women in Whitechapel and was looking for a seventh victim. Another culprit was an intoxicated tailor in Holborn, by the name of August Nochild, who tried to strangle a prostitute and then bragged that he had done the Whitechapel murders. Other Ripper impersonators included a man who terrified a woman in George Yard by laughing aloud, a sailor named James Henderson who threatened

to 'rip up' an unfortunate and then struck her head with his cane, a knife-carrying Irish tramp, Thomas Murphy, whom the police arrested near Kings Cross for 'behaving suspiciously,' and several nameless drunks who 'confessed' to being the killer and wound up in court . . . The *Daily Chronicle* (Oct. 9) reported cases of men impersonating Jack in Stepney, Croydon, Jarrow, and Glasgow.[22]

(Curtis, 261)

Although none of these incidents resulted in serious physical harm, they highlight a disturbing misogynist tendency unleashed by the Ripper's activities, and it was women on the streets who drew this sort of attention.

As Stead's exposé of child prostitution in the East End proved, the mid-Victorian ideal of saintly motherhood, as laid down by Ruskin among others, was far removed from the realities of life for the working-class poor.[23] In procuring the girl Lily from her 'drunken mother' and 'indifferent' father for five pounds, Stead effectively revealed the ideal of Victorian male honour to be a sham.[24] The chivalric English middle-class gentleman was no more or less moral than his working-class counterpart, and in many cases the 'gentleman' was in fact a scoundrel. Indeed, what Stead revealed was that it was the upper and middle classes that were primarily engaged in 'buying' virginal girls for sexual gratification, men like Jekyll. As a consequence the boundaries between the classes were transgressed, and the Victorian middle-class ideals of male behaviour towards women were undermined by the activities of men in the real world. The class divisions of the city, its social duality, were not as clear-cut as had been presumed. Implicated in Stead's story also was the mother's acquiescence. This, too, was a shock and a scandal to respectable Britain. The revelation of corruption and abuse on the part of 'respectable' gentlemen, aided and abetted by the parents, especially the mothers, of these children shook English moral complacency to its foundations.

The sentimental novel of the mid-nineteenth century had bolstered the ideal of woman as wife and mother. *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856), Mrs Craik's enormously successful story of romanticized family life, clearly promotes the ideal of womanhood in the wife of the hero, Ursula Halifax: 'For that priceless blessing, for the comfort of being *his* comfort, for the sweetness of bringing up children in the fear of God and in the honour of their father – she, true wife and mother as she was, would not have exchanged the wealth of the whole world' (*John Halifax*, 278). This is a far cry from the 'drunken' mother who, according to Stead, sold her child into prostitution in the full knowledge of the 'indifferent' father.

Similar behaviour on the part of mothers is suggested also in literature. Sibyl Vane's mother in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is more than happy to accept fifty pounds advance from the theatre owner, Mr Isaacs, who employs Sibyl as an actress. Dimly suggested in the novel is the possibility that Isaacs himself had designs on Sibyl. Although she appears to disapprove of Sibyl's liaison with Dorian, Mrs Vane is willing to be convinced by pecuniary considerations: 'However, as I said before, if he is rich . . .' (*DG*, 52). Having conceived her own children out of wedlock, Mrs Vane has few illusions about the lot of women of her own class.

Judith Rowbotham points out that 'the "highest" ambition for a good girl of any social class was shown as being to become a good wife and mother' (Rowbotham, 12). However, there was a dilemma for working-class women. They were not often 'wives' for long after they became mothers. Paid work was essential, as Gissing's poverty-stricken heroines demonstrate. The 'ideal' and the actual experience rarely coincide. Sibyl Vane was a working London girl, but her profession was a disreputable one, and her mother's assurances to James that she will watch out for Sibyl are undermined by her approval of Sibyl's acting. No doubt, had Sibyl married Dorian her acting career would have been at an end, and she would have tried to be the 'good wife and mother'; but, as the novel clearly demonstrates a working life prior to marriage was essential for girls of Sibyl's class. Even after marriage paid work may have been necessary if Sibyl had married a man of small income. David Rubinstein argues that unlike the middle class 'New Women', working-class women had little say in the conditions of their existence: 'Exploited by their husbands, by their employers, by society at large, most working-class women were in no position to rebel against social injustice' (Rubinstein, xiv).[25]

The situation of women in the metropolis was changing: marriage was no longer the only option for middle-class women.[26] Institutions, like the Salvation Army, were providing women with opportunities to channel their energies into charitable activities. Stead's exposure of the corruption of innocent girls in 'The Maiden Tribute' highlighted the plight of the poor and helpless in the East End. Female writers like Ella Hepworth Dixon and Olive Schreiner were making impassioned pleas through their literature for a new perspective on the lot of women. Changes to the law in 1869 and 1888 gave women some voting rights and The Married Women's Property Act of 1882 gave women the right to their own property within marriage. In the light of such activity, Henry Wotton's pronouncement on women in *Dorian Gray* seems to spring from an earlier age: 'My dear boy, no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it

charmingly. Women represent the triumph of matter over mind, just as men represent the triumph of mind over morals' (*DG*, 42). In the context of the Whitechapel murders and 'The Maiden Tribute' Wotton's words have a hollow and ominous ring that speaks of an increasingly untenable attitude towards women as the century drew to a close.

## The physical and social geography of the metropolis

The city is a Janus-faced entity: if there is a slum, there is also a clean row of Georgian terraces; if there are labyrinthine alleyways, then there are also wide avenues; the cold squalor of a slum dweller's single room finds its counterpart in the warm firesides of the urban rich; and if the poor are provided with low taverns and eating houses, then the wealthy frequent high-class clubs and hotels. These are the conditions of *Jekyll and Hyde*, conditions that define the dual nature of the city that parallels the duality in Jekyll/Hyde. Class in this sense is defined by location, by geography, in Charles Booth's terms, by colour-coded maps of London. Moretti recognizes that the geography of a city plays a pivotal role in the progression of the urban narrative. For Moretti maps 'bring to light the *internal* logic of narrative: the semiotic domain around which a plot coalesces and self-organizes' (Moretti, 5). Thus the geography of the city becomes an integral part of a novel's structure.

Movement within these spaces further defines class. For Wilde the upper-class drawing rooms and country houses visited by Dorian Gray are the domain of the leisured rich. Only obsequious servants or tradesmen are allowed brief entry, reflecting the rigid social order of late nineteenth-century England. When James Vane trespasses into this territory with murderous intent he is inadvertently shot – the just deserts of a 'low-life' interloper. The doors to the 'upper world' remained firmly closed to such people. But the arrogant, well-to-do man about town opens any door he wishes. Thus Dorian haunts the dockside and opium dens of London's East End with impunity; he is a familiar sight in such places. Passage across the class boundaries of physical space is not hindered if money accompanies you. The pleasures of the poor are equally available to the rich, but not vice versa. The *flâneur* is a bourgeois or upper-class male for the very reason that he has access to most areas of the city, and, as we have seen, his presence in the East End of London is to do with his pleasure-seeking in the lower strata of society.

By contrast *Jekyll and Hyde* reverses the normal social conventions about who inhabits spaces. Enfield may have Dorian's freedom of the city, but for Jekyll freedom poses serious problems. Jekyll adopts the

persona of Hyde, not because he is barred entry into the 'netherworld' but because he fears being found out. Hyde, however, breaches convention. To the disapproval of Jekyll's servants, Hyde has the run of the doctor's home. Although never defined as working class, Hyde's appearance is sufficiently 'other' to associate him with the lower strata of society, while Jekyll's social status is never in doubt. In Wells's future London a series of reversals take place. The Eloi live in the decayed palaces and mansions of London. The Morlocks, having taken over underground London, treat the upper world as their factory farm. In a grim reversal of 'The Maiden Tribute', the Morlocks' forays into this upper world are to satisfy their lust, not for sexual gratification, but for human flesh. The Eloi, in a grotesque kind of reverse parody of the abused and innocent working-class girls of the East End of the nineteenth century are dragged away from their home and cannibalized. The Traveller watches the social conditions of London in 802,701 with the same curiosity as his nineteenth-century counterpart absorbed the sights of a previous London.

The geography of space in London is critical to duality in the modern Gothic. As a physical environment, divided along its East/West axis, the city mirrors the dreadful duality of some of its inhabitants, and provides apt locations for these dual individuals. Dorian's double existence as the aristocrat of Grosvenor Place and the debauched opium smoker of the London Docks exemplifies how the geographical divide underpins, and enables, the divided self. Hyde probably derives his 'pleasures' from the various 'entertainments' offered by the underworld of the East End, but Jekyll remains in the wealth and opulent architecture of the upper classes in the West. Wells makes the divisions even more explicit in *Time Machine* with an upper world of leisured Eloi and a lower one of industrial Morlocks. Here the Morlocks, like nocturnal criminals, only foray into the upper world under cover of night to 'steal' the Eloi. Stevenson's native Edinburgh, with its Old and New Towns and its various levels is an extant example of the divisions of the city. The dimensions of the city, its open spaces and darker recesses, its airy drawing rooms and foul-smelling dens, provides the literary imaginary with the physical geography on which to map its narratives of Gothic duality.

Moretti argues that geography is 'not an inert container, is not a box where cultural history "happens", but an active force, that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth. Making the connection between geography and literature explicit, then – mapping it: because a map is precisely that, a connection made visible – will allow us to see some of the significant relationships that have so far escaped us' (Moretti, 3). The relationship between the physical spaces in late nineteenth-century

fictional London and the characters that inhabit that space is thus crucial because the character of the city has a critical part to play, not just as a setting for the novel, but for its inner logic.

## The city of the imagination

Victorian writers found London a fertile location for their narratives. It contained seething masses that seemed, in Le Bon's sense, threatening in their proliferation, but it also contained fragile human spirits who struggled against the odds to survive and find a qualified happiness. For realist novelists like Dickens, London provided the raw material from which to construct narratives of human triumph in the face of adversity. Underlying the comic portrayal of London's working classes was a genuine desire to foreground the dire social ills of the metropolis, but in doing so, Dickens also became *the* writer of Victorian London, and his imaginative portrayal of that city has become a stereotype, even a cliché.

Dickens's imagination ranges across the familiar place names of London, peopling it with villains, heroes and heroines, comic and tragic figures, ne'er-do-wells and entrepreneurs: the range of humanity that constitutes a metropolitan community. For Pip in *Great Expectations* (1860–1) London seems to offer an escape from the perceived social poverty of his life with Joe Gargery, but in the end it is not location that limits Pip's expectations but his own prejudices. The fairy tale of Dick Whittington where London's streets are paved with gold is revealed through Dickens to be a dangerous myth. In Dickens's London wealth resides in the dust heaps of *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–5), or is dissipated in the courts of Chancery of *Bleak House* (1852–3) and *Little Dorrit* (1855–7). His London is a place of contradictions and reversals, replete with idealized promises and broken dreams. Victorian London for Dickens, and for many writers, is more than the sum of its parts: it is a symbolic space that, in the literary imagination, becomes the repository of the hopes and disillusionment, the triumphs and disasters, of a host of literary characters. Dickens's London has its light and dark spaces. This is most evident in *Our Mutual Friend* where the narrative ranges from the Thames-side scavenging of Gaffer Hexam to the Boffins's wealth-producing dust heaps and to the Veneerings's superficial world of elegance and riches. Richard Lehan says that throughout the novel 'we are between two worlds': '*Our Mutual Friend* is Dickens's most serious and severe indictment of the commercial city with its vast differences between the very rich and the very poor, with its population living off offal and death. Dickens here connects the end product of the

commercial city with waste and death . . .' (Lehan, 45–6). Between the worlds of the Veneerings and Gaffer Hexam lies that of the genteel poor, the Wilfers. These are the 'ordinary' folk of London, largely invisible, but as vital to the city's continued economic growth as its stockbrokers and businessmen. Dickens's narratives thus span the class structure of London, highlighting the extreme ends of London life and finding in the midst of terrible poverty and suffering a redeeming humanity, often where one least expects it. Yet even so, for Dickens the commercial impetus of the city was damaging to humanity, as Lehan points out: 'While Defoe welcomed the city as offering a new way of life to a new class of people, Dickens saw how this process had become so materialistic that it hardened the heart and diminished compassion, altering our sense of human scale, our sense of community' (Lehan, 4).

Publishing his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), ten years after Dickens died, Gissing was influenced by the naturalist movement on the continent, and found scant humour in the lives of the London poor. For Gissing the industrial revolution had done little to alleviate the lives of the working class; if anything it had only served to further shackle them to unbearable living and working conditions. In this Gissing is in accord with Colin Wilson, whom Curtis describes as the 'grand master of Ripper speculation': 'For Wilson, the murders were a logical result of industrialization, which had ushered in a "new type of man" – isolated in a fiercely competitive world. The more alienated he felt, the greater his anger and sexual hunger – like the archetypal mother-hater obsessed with wombs' (Curtis, 257). Gissing's workers are 'factory fodder' like Zola's miners in *Germinal* (1885), and prefiguring their atavistic evolution in Wells's Morlocks. Speaking of Wells as a naturalist writer, thus associating him with Zola and Gissing, Lehan notes that literary modernism 'derives mainly from a biological model, in which human life is grounded upon animality' (Lehan, 51). This necessarily reminds us that the Morlocks are more animal than human, that they are the distant progeny of an underclass that spent their waking lives in dark, damp factories. In both Wells and Gissing the barbaric conditions in which the Victorian factory workers toiled results in morally and physically stunted beings. The link between environment and human development is thus established in the nineteenth-century novel. Nordau linked the condition of the late nineteenth-century city to his theories of hereditary degeneration, as Greenslade explains:

> Here in the late nineteenth-century city was a territory of immanent
> breakdown, where the contours of that territory and the map which

> described it were conflated. Symptoms of the city 'condition', such as neurasthenia and hysteria, have been inherited, and so have become determinants of the 'condition' from which they have been bred. Both symptoms are observable states of disorder and of generalized symptoms of the prevailing urban condition.
>
> (Greenslade, 18)

Speaking of the development of the nineteenth-century city, Lehan argues that as the city 'became more materialistic it engendered a hostility in the literary imagination – a hostility that went hand in hand with a distrust of Enlightenment values' (Lehan, 5). The complacency that Nord speaks of as characterizing early nineteenth-century attitudes to the city gives way to metropolitan narratives of despair and death. We find this type of hostility, and even anger, in Gissing's *Demos* (1886), and London fares little better in Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896) and *Tales of Mean Streets*. At the beginning of Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) London is 'a great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained' (*Study in Scarlet*, 10). This mirrors a real anxiety about the city as threatening and in moral decline. Such perceptions were heightened by actual events such as the Ripper murders and Stead's exposé. The 'dregs' of society congregated in the poorer districts of London like Whitechapel, or like Stevenson's Herrick in *The Ebb-Tide* (1894), who ended up marooned on a beach in some backwater of the Empire 'a skulker from life's battle and his own immediate duty' (*The Ebb-Tide*, 9).[27]

Burton Pike sees this anxiety expressed in the late nineteenth-century novel as a breakdown in community cohesion: 'The word-city was presented more and more as an irritable nervous energy, and its inhabitants came to seem more prowlers than citizens' (Pike, 72). James Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night' expresses an acute sense of isolation that is suggestive of a Gothicized city, where 'the image of the city was coming to stand for solitude rather than community; neither Heaven nor Hell, but Limbo': 'It is an extreme manifestation of the pessimism found in Matthew Arnold and Hardy and in the combination of aesthetic luxury and angst in the London of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the various adventures of Sherlock Holmes' (Pike, 86–8). This is a Gothic city that emerges as a response to the shocking divisions and scandalous tales of murders and vice jumping off the newspaper pages.[28] For this reason London is frequently Gothicized in the literature of the time. Machen's London is a place for the delight of the *flâneur*, but also a landscape of horror, as Dyson recognizes: '"It is all more strange than I fancied . . . It is queer enough what I saw; a man is sauntering along a quiet, sober,

everyday London street, a street of grey houses and blank walls, and there, for a moment, a veil seems drawn aside, and the very fume of the pit steams up through the flagstones, the ground glows, red-hot beneath his feet, and he seems to hear the hiss of the infernal caldron"' (*TI*, 110). Another character, Wilkins, tells Dyson of an 'incarnate fiend', an 'awful being' that 'stalks through the streets, a being before whom the sunlight itself should blacken' (*TI*, 130).

The nineteenth-century metropolis in literature, particularly London, can be an alienating environment where the individual experiences a Gothic life-in-death, prefiguring Eliot's 'unreal city' in *The Waste Land* (1922). When Jenny Wren in *Our Mutual Friend* sits on the roof calling to Riah to 'come up and be dead' Pike sees parallels of entombment down at street level and the release of 'life after death' at the roof level above the city (Pike, 62–5). A schismatic vision of the city emerges, broadening the division between rich and poor. As Barto points out: 'Far-reaching as its influence may be, the nineteenth-century metropolis is anything but unified: the physical division between the affluent and the impoverished becomes broader than ever' (Barto, 3). For Pike, 'anonymity was replacing sociability, and quick money speculation was replacing values of long duration': 'The idea that the city represented a stable community over a long period also faded; the instability of the outer world as seen by a solipsistic character or narrator reflected an increasing disorientation of the time sense as well as the space sense' (Pike, 72). It is a city in flux, capable of Gothic transformations. Narratives, like Walter Besant's *Children of Gibeon* (1886), suggested ways forward for the poor through middle- and upper-class philanthropy, but the works that stand out as exploring a social conscience are the despairing narratives of Gissing and Morrison. Late nineteenth-century literary London in these narratives responded to a mood of pessimism and social fragmentation that lent itself to images of the Gothicized metropolis.

Social fragmentation appears in *Jekyll and Hyde* through the individual as a divided self. Social distinctions are evident as Jekyll, the one-time *flâneur*, realizing his increasingly precarious social position, retreats into his home and profession and releases the doppelgänger *flâneur*, Hyde, on to the London streets. *Jekyll and Hyde* presumes a clear social division that mirrors the actual social experience of London. Like the 'gentlemen' exposed by Stead, Jekyll, in the guise of Hyde, descends into London's nether world to taste its forbidden delights. Given Jekyll's account of himself prior to the emergence of his alter ego, it seems that Jekyll himself took pleasure in those 'delights'. In his 'Statement' he

reveals how he 'laid aside restraint and plunged in shame', and of how he 'concealed' his 'pleasures' (*JH*, 55). When the Stead controversy reached the House of Commons the involvement of the upper classes in child prostitution became evident, as Walkowitz explains:

> During parliamentary debates, old rakes like Cavendish Bentinck treated prostitution as a necessary and inevitable evil, while others objected to curtailing male sexual prerogatives to protect girls who, they claimed, were already defiled by their sordid and vicious environment. One member of the House of Lords acknowledged that 'very few of their Lordships . . . had not when young men, been guilty of immorality. He hoped they would pause before passing a clause within the range of which their sons might come.'
>
> (Walkowitz, 103–4)

Jekyll's double life had its foundation in reality.

Oscar Wilde is even more specific about his hero's double life in London. Dorian would often return home 'from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends.' Those absences are explained, in part, a moment later when we hear that Dorian would lie sleepless 'in the sordid room of the little ill-famed tavern near the Docks, which, under an assumed name, and in disguise, it was his habit to frequent.' Dorian had 'mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them' (*DG*, 99–100). One of those hungers is opium, but prostitution, most probably, was another. Like Jekyll/Hyde before him, Dorian Gray's dissolution is tied to the social and geographic divisions of the metropolis, and the East End, the Docks, is the symbolic, and actual, location of sin and vice. Wells concentrates on the social divisions evident in London and applies a starker geographic split caused through human evolution in *The Time Machine*. The Morlocks, descendants of the labouring classes, find a natural home in the abandoned Underground tunnels. The classes from whom the *flâneur* springs enjoy the upper world of sunshine and physical freedom. But Wells adds an even more political edge to his narrative of a future divided London. The fictional tale of a future London split in two, just like its inhabitants, is inspired by Wells's knowledge of the real political and social divisions of his own time.

In the discussion of these novels, and others, that follows we will see in more detail how the real city is imaginatively figured in terms of a Gothic duality. The actual London of the late nineteenth century found fictional expression in a variety of ways in these novels. The duality of

the city itself thus becomes part of the larger project of Gothicism in each of these novels. Wordsworth's vision on Westminster Bridge of a fair and majestic city is an early nineteenth-century vision of a preindustrial metropolis that had not yet become the imperial power of the later century. When Clara Luxmore in Stevenson's *The Dynamiter* declares that '"the very houses seem asleep, and all that mighty heart is lying still,"' Wordsworth's vision is tempered with the urgency and threat of Stevenson's tale (*MNAN*, 20). In the *fin de siècle* consciousness the romantic view of the city was giving way to a darker vision of a metropolis in which you would be more likely to find, in James Thomson's words, 'Perchance one mourner to a thousand dead / So there; worn faces that look deaf and blind / like tragic masks of stone' (*NOBEV*, 738–9).

# 4

## 'City of Dreadful Night': Stevenson's Gothic London

> I will give you the task of the literary man in a phrase. He has got to do simply this – to invent a wonderful story, and to tell it in a wonderful manner.
>
> Arthur Machen, *The Three Impostors*

Reflecting back on the nineteenth century in 1927, J. B. Priestley felt that there was 'nothing Victorian about the way in which Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94) tells a story' (Priestley, 117). In the closing years of the twentieth century some find in *Jekyll and Hyde* a relevance to the darkest moment in recent European history. Invoking Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Frank McLynn argues that *Jekyll and Hyde* is concerned with 'the kind of darkness in the heart of human beings that would produce the death camps of the twentieth century'. It is thus more than a tale of 'diabolic possession as in Hogg's *Confession* or "Thrawn Janet"', and ultimately for McLynn *Jekyll and Hyde* deals a 'devastating blow to Victorian optimism' (McLynn, 265). In fact, when we come to the later tales, 'The Beach of Falesà' and *The Ebb-Tide*, there is something very modernist about Stevenson's vision and narrative form, something more akin to the early Conrad than to the writers of nineteenth-century boys' adventure fiction with whom he is usually associated.

William Veeder locates *Jekyll and Hyde* within the angst-ridden literary world of the late nineteenth century, but suggests that Stevenson was pointing the way to new types of literary expression:

> Stevenson's novella expresses the malaise of late-Victorian Britain. Stevenson shares the belief of his apparently more representative colleagues – Gissing, Moore, James, Hardy – that Mrs. Grundy and

Mr. Mudie must be extirpated and that British fiction must become an adult representation of adult realities.

<div align="right">(Veeder and Hirsch, 116)</div>

The fragmentation of personality that occurs in *Jekyll and Hyde* suggests that Stevenson was a writer on the brink of modernism.

*Jekyll and Hyde* appeared in the same year as Rider Haggard's runaway success *King Solomon's Mines*, which was itself famously written as an attempt to rival *Treasure Island*.[1] Marie Corelli published her first romantic melodrama, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, in 1886. Along with Ouida, Hall Caine and a host of boy's adventure story writers like R. M. Ballantyne, G. A. Henty and W. H. G. Kingston, Stevenson's fiction found an appreciative readership due to the public thirst for 'new' romances and for the modern Gothic. Increased literacy in the reading public was seen by some to account for this burgeoning taste for 'light' literature. John Carey notes how Bernard Shaw, for example, blamed his failure to find a publisher for his first novel, *Immaturity*, on a radical change in the reading public:

'The Education Act of 1871', he explained, 'was producing readers who had never before bought books, nor would have read them if they had.' Publishers were finding that people wanted not George Eliot nor the 'excessively literary' Bernard Shaw, but adventure stories like Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. In this situation, Shaw concludes, 'I, as a belated intellectual, went under completely'.

<div align="right">(Carey, 6)[2]</div>

*Jekyll and Hyde* was a huge overnight success, but Graham Balfour, Stevenson's first biographer, speculates that its success was 'probably due rather to the moral instincts of the public than to any conscious perception of the merits of its art.'[3] Even Conrad suffered as a result of Stevenson's popularity when he was compared unfavourably with Stevenson and Kipling.[4]

Stevenson was concerned with more than writing the adventure fiction that made him famous: he probed the conditions of art, as exemplified by 'A Humble Remonstrance' (1884).[5] Taking issue with James, Stevenson argues that 'no art does "compete with life"':

Man's one method, whether he reasons or creates, is to half-shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality. The arts, like arithmetic and geometry, turn away their eyes from the gross, coloured

and mobile nature at our feet, and regard instead a certain figmentary abstraction.

<div align="right">(*MP*, 159)</div>

This is a sophisticated and penetrating observation on the selective nature of narrative composition. By engaging in debate of this type, Stevenson and James marked a pivotal moment in the history of literary criticism. Statements like this proved that Stevenson's purpose moved beyond mere entertainment. Thus *Jekyll and Hyde* transcends the sensational Gothic horror genre to become the darkly prophetic tale that McLynn recognizes. At the same time the story builds on themes of Gothicism and duality that are to be found in many of Stevenson's other writings, such as 'Olalla', 'The Body Snatcher' and *The Dynamiter*.

## Immorality and insanity: atavism and the criminal

The first print run of *Jekyll and Hyde* sold over 40,000 copies. It was 'read by those who never read fiction, it was quoted in pulpits, and made the subject of leading articles in religious newspapers' (Daiches, 68). This was a Gothic horror story that dramatized the perceived threat to the nation posed by the 'malaise' that seemed to typify the *fin de siècle*, that of degeneracy and the fear of reversion to a primitive 'other'. Miller compares the novel to Wells's *Island of Dr Moreau*:

> In another fable of the time, Wells's Dr Moreau uses surgery on beasts in order to 'burn out' the animal in them. Such attempts are the backward looks of advanced writers. The superstitions of such writers are a feature of the romantic tradition, where hellfire casts a sunset glow – as on the burning, blushing sensorium of the early nineteenth century – and there is talk of pain and punishment and purification.
> <div align="right">(Miller, 211–12)</div>

The 'burning, blushing sensorium' was also a feature of the later century that was shocked by the naturalists' exposure of bestial behaviour in the heart of the metropolis. The fear of the 'beast within' was the late nineteenth century's fear of itself. Degeneracy could lead to atavism, which must be purged in order that the race evolves beyond its animal instincts. With such themes, *Jekyll and Hyde* transcends the light playfulness of *New Arabian Nights* (1882) and *The Dynamiter*, bringing into sharper relief the moral concerns of the *fin de siècle*.

In 'The Body Snatcher' and 'Olalla', Stevenson had begun to explore the darker Gothic themes of sinister duality and atavism that were to find fuller expression in *Jekyll and Hyde*. Based on the exploits of Burke and Hare, and Robert Knox, 'The Body Snatcher' is an early tale of criminal duality and haunting whose themes anticipate *Jekyll and Hyde*.[6] 'Olalla' is a Gothic tale centring on a vampiric family, who, in their atavism, look forward to Dracula. Olalla's description of her family's decline also prefigures the bestial Hyde. Felipe's 'dusky hue' and 'hairyness' (*JH*, 98) signal, like Hyde's 'troglodytic' appearance, a reversion to an earlier form of humanity.[7] When she says that 'Man has risen; if he has sprung from the brutes, he can descend again to the same level', Olalla gives voice to current theories of atavism (*JH*, 127). For Mighall: 'Physiology became the index to the ancestral or racial past, the place to locate anachronistic vestiges of a long-buried antiquity' (Mighall, 139). Olalla's belief in atavism echoes this emerging fear of race degeneracy, expanded upon later by Le Bon: 'The substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals is one of the principal characteristics of the present age' (Le Bon, v). Le Bon warned of the degenerate nature of crowd behaviour, declaring that 'an individual in a crowd resembles primitive beings' (Le Bon, 33).

In 1886 *Jekyll and Hyde* concentrated on individual duality; by 1895 Le Bon attributed the bestial behaviour exhibited by Olalla's family and by Hyde to entire groups of people. In a reversal of the Jekyll/Hyde split, Le Bon suggested that crowds could perform an atavistic synthesis of personalities: 'From the moment they form part of a crowd the learned man and the ignoramus are equally incapable of observation' (Le Bon, 23). In *The Dynamiter* one of the three main protagonists, Somerset, threatens Zero, the urban terrorist, with the mob, evoking in the latter a fear that prefigures Le Bon's point: 'The brutal mob, the savage passions . . . Somerset, for God's sake, a public house!' (*MNAN*, 294). By the 1890s this horror of the mob had become hysteria. Le Bon's fear that 'all our ancient beliefs are tottering and disappearing, while the old pillars of society are giving way one by one' (Le Bon, xiv–xv) is prefigured in the downfall of that professional 'pillar of society', Jekyll, and earlier in Olalla's family, who were once rulers of their province, but whose bodies became 'the bones and flesh of brutes, and their mind was as the mind of flies' (*JH*, 128). Dividing Jekyll into his 'good' and 'evil' selves, Stevenson gave fictional form to an emerging crisis of the late-nineteenth century: the perception that the race itself was succumbing to degenerative tendencies that threatened the very fabric of society.

The idea of criminal 'types' who exhibited an insane morality contributed to this fear of racial degeneracy and informed Nordau's theories about degeneration and Lombroso's investigations into the criminal personality. Acceptable morality was associated with physical and mental health: criminals were regarded as morally 'insane', and it was believed that this 'insanity' could be encoded in physical deformity. Lombroso posited the widely influential theory of a criminal type who could be distinguished from the ordinary, 'normal' human being. His *L'uomo Deliquente* was published in 1875, and his theories concerning the physical characteristics of criminality became widespread.[8] Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, Lombroso's daughter, speaks of how criminals 'strongly resemble primitive races' because of their 'numerous anomalies in the face, skeleton, and various psychic and sensitive functions' (Lombroso-Ferrero, 5). For Lombroso, the criminal was physically abnormal, like Hyde, whose appearance suggests to Enfield 'a strong feeling of deformity' (*JH*, 10), and the resemblance to 'primitive races' is echoed in Hyde's 'troglodytic' appearance (*JH*, 16). Lombroso's theories were so well-known that Stephen Arata can claim with confidence that in Hyde 'Stevenson's first readers could easily discern the lineaments of Cesare Lombroso's atavistic criminal' (Arata, 233). Commenting on Lombroso's 'recognition' in the criminal of 'enormous jaws, high cheekbones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, [and] handle-shaped ears', and of the psychological atavism of 'the irresponsible craving of evil for its own sake', Arata avers that in 'his physiognomy as in his psyche, the criminal bore the traces of humanity's history and development' (Arata, 234).

Characteristics of the criminal type were associated in the late-Victorian mind with the lower classes, but *Jekyll and Hyde* problematizes that notion. Arata comments that the pathologists of the time 'routinely argued that degeneration was as endemic to a decadent aristocracy as to a troglodytic proletariat.' While his savage behaviour and appearance 'mark Hyde as lower class and atavistic, his vices are clearly those of a monied gentleman', and Hyde, in his 'moral shortcomings' thus has more in common with Dorian Gray than with Lombroso's criminal subject, Vilella. The susceptibility of the upper classes to moral decay was the theme of *Degeneration*: 'Nordau took pains to insist that the degenerate population "consists chiefly of rich educated people" who, with too much time and means at their disposal, succumb to decadence and depravity' (Arata, 235). Mr Malthus in 'The Suicide Club' is an example of just such a person: 'Florizel thought he had never seen a man more naturally hideous, nor one more ravaged by disease

and ruinous excitements' (*NAN*, 19), and Madam Mendizabal in *The Dynamiter* is 'marred by self-indulgence', 'stamped with the most cruel passions, her eye burning with the greed of evil' (*MNAN*, 221). Jekyll recognizes the evil physically manifested in Hyde: 'Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides . . . had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay' (*JH*, 58). The notion of decay, too, resonates with suggestions of reversion.

Containing within himself the criminal and the moral self, Jekyll practises self-deception on a grand scale. While he realizes that 'a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature' (*JH*, 55), Jekyll claims that he is not a hypocrite because, when pursuing his moral career and his immoral activities, he was in 'dead earnest'. Yet this makes him a double hypocrite: each self refuses to acknowledge the influence of the other. Further, Jekyll states his belief in the multifaceted nature of humankind: 'I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens' (*JH*, 56). Lamenting the necessity of a double life Jekyll muses that it is the 'curse of mankind that these incongruous fagots were thus bound together – that in the agonized womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling' (*JH*, 56). Such reasoning undermines Lombroso's theories about a discrete criminal class. Hyde, and the members of the Suicide Club in *New Arabian Nights*, who draw lots to see who of their number will be murdered and who will commit the killing, are ciphers for metropolitan anxiety about moral dissipation. The threat is a dual one, emanating from above as much as from below, and the Suicide Club with its middle- and upper-class membership is a reminder that crime is not confined to the East End poor.[9]

The established view of what constituted morality was under threat, even in decline, leading some to regard the criminal as morally insane. In 1890 G. D. Stanley, writing for the *Lutheran Quarterly*, defined moral insanity:

> The morally insane are unnatural in their thoughts and conduct. They have their own standard of right and wrong, and it is generally at variance with that which the community ordinarily accepts. They will lie, steal and even kill if their perverted natures so dictate. They are profane or obscene; are quarrelsome or cruel; are indolent and often become spendthrifts or drunkards. They are often extremely shrewd and even logical, and are capable of schemes, intrigues, and

diabolical villainies. They are incapable of comprehending or doing right, because by organic defect or morbid mental deficiency they are powerless to do otherwise.[10]

Of the murder of Carew, Jekyll pronounces, 'I declare, at least, before God, no man morally sane could have been guilty of that crime upon so pitiful a provocation' (*JH*, 64). The impulse to murder is 'the spirit of hell', and he likens his state to a 'delirium'. His 'insanity' is underscored by the pleasure Hyde/Jekyll derives from murder: 'I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow.' He flees the scene 'in the same divided ecstasy of mind, gloating on [his] crime, light-headedly devising others in the future' (*JH*, 64). Having read Jekyll's letter, Lanyon states, 'I made sure my colleague was insane' (*JH*, 49). Deciding to help Jekyll, Lanyon equips himself with an old revolver convinced that he was 'dealing with a case of cerebral disease' (*JH*, 51). Lanyon had, after all, decided years before that Jekyll had begun to go 'wrong in mind'. Hyde's behaviour and appearance mark him out as strange: 'there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature' (*JH*, 52). Jekyll himself sees the chief characteristics of his alter ego, as being a 'complete moral insensibility and insensate readiness to evil' (*JH*, 64).[11]

In murdering Carew, Hyde, with his 'moral insensibility', behaves like a mob of one. For Le Bon the primitive instinct to kill is a primary motivation:

> The passion, so widespread, for the chase and the acts of ferocity of crowds proceed from one and the same source. A crowd which slowly slaughters a defenceless victim displays a very cowardly ferocity; but for the philosopher this ferocity is very closely related to that of the huntsmen who gather in dozens for the pleasure of taking part in the pursuit and killing of a luckless stag by their hounds.
>
> (Le Bon, 41–2)

Because Jekyll has isolated his moral sensibilities, Hyde has no check on his instincts behaving like Le Bon's crowd, 'the slave of the impulses which it receives' (Le Bon, 17). The Suicide Club is presided over by an insane individual, the very thought of whom makes Florizel's heart grow 'sick' within him (*NAN*, 28). This President is a man who can sympathize with the twisted 'poetry' of Malthus's soul (*NAN*, 30).

Policing the moral health of the nation in the late nineteenth century was linked to fears that civilized behaviour meant suppressing an essential primitive self. Rider Haggard has Allan Quatermain declare in 1887:

'It is a depressing conclusion, but in all essentials the savage and the child of civilisation are identical':

> [S]upposing for the sake of argument that we divide our identities into twenty parts, nineteen savage and one civilised, we must look to the nineteen savage portions, if we would really understand ourselves, and not to the twentieth, which, though so significant in reality, is spread all over the other nineteen, making them appear quite different from what they really are, as the blacking does a boot, or the veneer a table.
>
> (*Allan Quatermain*, 10–11)

Jekyll releases Hyde from that veneer of civilization, unleashing instinctive behaviour. For Le Bon the individual finds a latent brutal strength in a crowd: 'These sentiments are atavistic residuum of the instincts of the primitive man, which the fear of punishment obliges the isolated and responsible individual to curb' (Le Bon, 34). In his stories of Gothic duality, Stevenson explores the effects of removing moral restraint from the individual and exposes the 'beast within'. He taps metropolitan concerns about how Lombroso's 'theory of atavism rephrases in scientific terms what a number of writers had earlier suggested – that criminality belongs to the past' (Mighall, 144).

## Metropolitan and imperial anxiety

W. T. Stead was not alone in suggesting a Jekyll and Hyde parallel in the Ripper murders. Fishman quotes the *East London Advertiser's* invocation of Hyde in its predications of more atrocities to come: 'On 8 September the *Advertiser* again warned that "the murderous lunatic, who issues forth at night like another Hyde to prey upon the defenceless unfortunate class" would attack again, and that "three successful murders will have the effect of whetting his appetite further"' (Fishman, 210). Curtis notes how, in the wake of Annie Chapman's murder at the hands of the Ripper, the *Globe*, on 8 September 1888, invoked Stevenson's story: 'Life – or rather death – was imitating art, because the "obscene Hyde" took no more "intense delight in murder for murder's sake" than did the Whitechapel assassin' (Curtis, 127). The connection, whipped up by the press, between the Ripper murders and *Jekyll and Hyde* curtailed Richard Mansfield's famous staging of the story, 'because Hyde's behavior came too close for comfort to the Ripper's reign of terror': 'Audiences emerging from the theater in

September occasionally heard newsboys in the Strand crying "Another 'Orrible Murder," and rumours soon connected Mansfield to the crime' (Curtis, 78).

After the first Ripper murder the *Advertiser* gave voice to public fears:

> The circumstances of this awful tragedy are not only surrounded with the deepest mystery, but there is also a feeling of insecurity to think that in a great city like London, the streets of which are continually patrolled by police, a woman can be foully and horribly killed almost next to the citizens peacefully sleeping in their beds, without a trace or clue being left of the villain who did the deed.[12]

Brackenbury, in 'The Suicide Club', is thrilled by his perambulations about London 'surrounded by the mystery of four million lives', but he recognizes the city's duality and danger as he 'looked into face after face, and saw them each intent upon some unknown interest, criminal or kindly' (*NAN*, 67). Clara Luxmore, in the guise of Asenath, in *The Dynamiter* affects terror at London's vast night-time silence: 'But at this hour, in this appalling silence, and among all these staring windows, I am lost in terrors – oh lost in them!' (*MNAN*, 18). Hyde's nocturnal criminality echoes public insecurity engendered by the expanding city even before the awful events in Whitechapel in the summer and autumn of 1888, and the Bryant & May match girls strike pressed home the point that the proletariat was a constant presence on the city's streets.

It is highly likely that Jekyll/Hyde's activities included sexual exploits. Prostitution, possibly child prostitution, is among the possible vices that Jekyll/Hyde indulged in during his nightly forays into the nether world of London. 'The Maiden Tribute' appeared in 1885, and Henley had forwarded the instalments to Stevenson. Stead's trial was taking place as Stevenson was writing *Jekyll and Hyde*: the coincidences are too compelling to ignore. Hyde's trampling of the child in the dead of night has suggestive undertones of the abuse of children perpetrated by the 'gentlemen' of the city. Witnessing this savagery, Enfield is coming back 'from some place at the end of the world' (*JH*, 7), suggesting the East End and linking him with Hyde in vice. The outcry caused by 'The Maiden Tribute' seems to have been infused into Stevenson's story of a male double life. Walkowitz believes that Stead's example caused some writers to locate 'sexual danger in the dark corners and subterranean spaces of the London Labyrinth' (Walkowitz, 122). In this sense degeneracy and moral insanity were highlighted in a distinctly sexual way, and linked to the East End's teeming population.

Mass population was seen to entail mass moral and spiritual corruption, conditions that Nordau had exploited. In some quarters this led to a desire for selective breeding and even extermination to preserve the physical and spiritual 'health' of the nation.[13] Such fears reach beyond the perceived dangers of the metropolitan thoroughfares. *Jekyll and Hyde* was written at a time when the Empire had reached its zenith and representatives of Britain were in controlling positions throughout the colonized lands. If the British were to maintain their hold on the colonies and perpetuate the 'myth' of their racial superiority, the population at large must prove this 'superiority' through physical and mental health. James Walvin details how 'global pre-eminence was to be found in the personal and collective qualities of [Britian's] people. If Britain was the world's leading power, it was because her people were superior' (Mangan and Walvin, 251). Public schools provided the 'right' sort of training for a 'fit' English imperial officer, a point Thomas Hughes hammered home in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857); it was from these academies that the imperial officers were recruited, not the streets and byways of the metropolises. Imperial service meant more than subduing the native inhabitants of the Empire: it meant being a representative of the foremost imperial power. Those representatives were required to be perfect specimens of Anglo-Saxon manhood, physically, mentally and morally.[14]

Fissures were being noticed in the foundations of the Empire and leading imperial commentators were worried that 'racial degeneracy' would further threaten the Empire and destabilize a perceived social equilibrium at home. In 1879 Henry Maudsley argued that morality and civilization were inextricably linked:

> Good moral feeling is to be looked upon as an essential part of a sound and rightly developed character in the present state of human evolution in civilized lands; its acquisition is the condition of development in the progress of *humanization*. Whoever is destitute of it is to that extent a defective being; he marks the beginning of race degeneracy . . .[15]

Hyde's bestial nature, repulsive appearance and violent history mark him out as a racial degenerate. He comes, not from another inferior race, but is English, and an essential part of the gentleman Jekyll. Stevenson turns the racial argument back upon itself and locates degeneracy in the heart of respectable England.

The Empire itself provided some with the evidence to argue for racial purity and vigilance about degeneracy. The 'darker' races were widely

regarded as further down the evolutionary ladder. Africans were treated as barely, if at all, human, as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* exemplifies so shockingly. These classifications of other races lead to hysterical conclusions about the London population itself:

> Such racial ideas offered serviceable metaphors for the 'otherness' of the threatening classes: 'a race of whom we know nothing, whose lives are of a quite different complexion from ours', wrote the *Saturday Review* of the Bethnal Green poor in 1864. These metaphors helped to organise the zones of respectability and of foreign 'otherness' within the metropolis itself.
>
> (Greenslade, 22)

The East End became 'Africanized' in the popular imagination, and the Ripper reportage helped to concretize that sense of the 'otherness' of the poorer parts of East London, an image which the East End press tried to play down.[16] When Enfield speaks of having come from 'some place at the end of the world' (*JH*, 7), allusions to the far-flung corners of the Empire are discernable.[17] It is not unreasonable to conjecture that this allusion is to a place characterized by an 'otherness' borne of the largely non-British community of the East End. Hyde, therefore, comes to represent more than the metropolitan criminal mentality and sexual predator; his deformed physical presence comes to stand for the imagined threats to European civilization. If Hyde is indeed part of Jekyll then Victorian fears of racial degeneration become even more real because Hyde reveals the potential atavistic nature present in each of us. A Victorian belief in the essential 'soundness' of the British race becomes, as a result, seriously undermined by the possibility of a suppressed Mr Hyde skulking in each individual. The problem of degeneracy, by implication, spreads to the population at large.

Stevenson himself seems to have had a more complex theory than the popular opinion on morality could encompass; for him it is more a question of innate human nature. In the spring of 1886 he wrote to J. A. Symons:

> Fundamental errors in human nature of two sorts stand on the sky-line of all this modern world of aspirations. First, that it is happiness that men want; and second, that happiness consists of anything but an external harmony. Men do not want, and I do not think they would accept, happiness; what they live for is rivalry, effort, success – the elements our friends wish to eliminate. And, on the other hand,

happiness is a question of morality – or of immorality, there is no difference – and conviction?

<div align="right">(Colvin, 20–1)</div>

Stevenson implies that happiness lies equally in morality and immorality. Young Fettes in 'The Body Snatcher' further emphasizes Stevenson's equivocation about morality for, 'Cold, light, and selfish in the last resort, he had that modicum of prudence, miscalled morality, which keeps a man from inconvenient drunkenness or punishable theft.' Fettes' dual existence looks forward to that of Jekyll: 'For his day of work he indemnified himself by nights of roaring blackguardly enjoyment; and, when that balance had been struck, the organ that he called his conscience declared itself content' (*JH*, 79). Jekyll's aspirations to happiness are similarly twofold, hinging on a yearning, like Conrad's Kurtz, for the 'gratification of his various lusts' (*HD*, 57), and an ambition to be a moral man walking 'steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure' (*JH*, 56). Happiness and pleasure are thus to be found in what the world regards as the 'moral' pursuit of reputation and 'good' deeds; equally, happiness resides in a 'certain impatient gaiety of disposition' that leads Jekyll to the depravity of his identity as Hyde. The conflict between these two urges to 'happiness' leads Jekyll to conceal his 'irregularities' 'with an almost morbid sense of shame' (*JH*, 55).

Gentlemen's clubs and dinner parties characterize the circles that Jekyll moves in, and his concerns for reputation hinge upon the fear of discovery by his well-off peers:

If each, I told myself, could but be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil.

<div align="right">(*JH*, 56)</div>

Jekyll desires liberation from the constraints of Victorian moral opprobrium, seeking the release of 'moral insanity' without losing the heady delight of social acceptance and professional reputation. But happiness, as Stevenson implies, cannot be as glibly defined as Jekyll seems to believe. The ensuing tragedy is the result of Jekyll's attempts to achieve that polarity of the self suggested by the possibility of separating his moral being from an unmediated evil frame of mind.

## Hyde-ing in the city

In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams argues that the city is an unknowable space, as opposed to the knowable urban communities.[18] Like William Cowper, Williams recognizes that the divide between town and country is not simply a matter of geography: it depends on individual experience and, more crucially, on a sense of community. *Jekyll and Hyde* dwells upon the geography of the late-Victorian city in ways that highlight a duality in the city itself. Discussing *Jekyll and Hyde* in the context of Jack the Ripper, Stephen Heath comments on how Stevenson's 'imbrication of the male sexual, the criminal, the medical, the terror at night in the London streets' is 'an available reality for the contemporary imagination' (Heath, 106), and this chimes too with the perception of the metropolis in *The Dynamiter*.

By the 1880s London had become, for many writers, a place of fear and darkness, a labyrinthine hell, as vividly figured in Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night' where 'The street-lamps burn amidst the baleful glooms / Amidst the soundless solitudes immense / Of rangèd mansions dark and still as tombs.' Thomson imagines how the masses of the city wander or sit 'foredone and desolately ponder / Through sleepless hours with heavy drooping head' (*NOBEV*, 738). Zero, the eponymous dynamiter of Stevenson's novel, seeks to destroy the metropolis for political ends. '"Here,"' he says, '"you behold this field of city, rich, crowded, laughing with the spoil of continents; but soon, how soon, to be laid low!"' It will be a day of retribution for the greed of Empire: '"Blaze!" he cried, "blaze, derided city! Fall, flatulent monarchy, fall like Dagon!"' (*MNAN*, 203). Zero is quite mad, but his hatred of the metropolis reflects contemporary perceptions of the European city, and London in particular, as a modern day Babylon; and, as Hurley says: 'That these dynamiters are essentially comic bumblers should not obviate the fact that the threat of urban terrorism was perceived a very real one at the *fin de siècle*' (Hurley, 165).

McLynn argues that Stevenson's short story 'Markheim' (1887), still unfinished during the writing of *Jekyll and Hyde*, is 'in some ways a cameo version of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) which appeared in English translation in the 1880s: 'RLS remarked to Symonds that it was "easily the greatest book I have read in ten years"' (McLynn, 247). 'Markheim' allows a kind of confessional redemption for its hero that carries echoes of *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov's dual existence as respectable student and pathological killer haunting the streets of the seedier parts of St Petersburg also finds parallels in *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Hyde's callous, apparently motiveless murder of Carew echoes the violence of Raskolnikov's crime, and his relishing of the brutality of the act implies the same loss of moral equilibrium. Perverse logic leads Raskolnikov to murder and robbery, and to his dual life: Jekyll's foaming potion leads to the doppelgänger Hyde and the murder of Carew. Both characters slip into the anonymous crowds of the city while their crimes strike fear and disbelief into the population. Raskolnikov and Jekyll suffer the terrible psychological consequences of their violent crimes; but while Raskolnikov finds redemption in Christianity, Stevenson offers no salvation for Jekyll's soul: his one escape is death.

Fiction and reality merged when Stead invoked *Jekyll and Hyde* as a model for the 'Ripper murders'. The vastness and anonymity of the city helped to mask the Ripper's identity, a cover that Jekyll relishes:

> I was the first that could thus plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into the sea of liberty. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it – I did not even exist!
>
> (*JH*, 60)

To the rational mind Hyde could not exist because Jekyll did exist, and yet 'The Maiden Tribute' had effectively proven that men leading double lives were, in reality, prowling the city streets. Hyde becomes, partly, a product of the metropolitan imagination and the metropolitan experience. Enfield even finds it hard to describe him to Utterson. Despite a strong sense of deformity, Enfield can 'name nothing out of the way', so that Hyde appears, initially, to blend in with the faceless London crowd. Similarly, Hyde's entrance to Jekyll's house where the 'buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins' (*JH*, 9) speaks of the unidentified lives of the masses melting into one another.

The division of self in *Jekyll and Hyde* is linked to the social and physical aspects of the city. Hyde is a result of its social fragmentation: he is the *flâneur*, but as manifested in Hyde, the *flâneur* becomes a sinister and threatening city phenomenon. He is probably one of the 'male pests' who harassed women on the metropolitan streets. He becomes strongly linked with the city in Utterson's mind: once he has heard Enfield's tale he would suffer sleepless nights, 'aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city' (*JH*, 13), and then imagine over and over again the trampling of the child and the shadowy figure of Hyde beside Jekyll's bed:

> The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamp-lighted city, and at every corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes . . .
>
> (*JH*, 13)

If he could only see Hyde's face Utterson believes that 'the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away' (*JH*, 13).

Urban tensions, created by this sense of loss of restraint and discipline, become focused in the deviant type, the criminal. The city breeds its own deviant types, like Hyde. In Utterson's imagination, therefore, Hyde embodies the nocturnal threat of Victorian London; it is little wonder that he became so closely linked in the public imagination with that other nocturnal criminal, Jack the Ripper. Stead's 'Maiden Tribute' is also called to mind: Utterson's nightmare involves the abuse of a child at every street corner, one of the signs of the deviant 'other'. When Jekyll decides to lay aside his alchemy, and with it Hyde, it seems as if his dreadful alter ego has disappeared into thin air: 'From the time he had left the house in Soho on the morning of the murder, he was simply blotted out' (*JH*, 31). The sprawling metropolis, which breeds criminals, also has the capacity to conceal them from view, as if providing sanctuary to the criminals it creates.

The physical city has a multiple personality as Mrs Luxmore in *The Dynamiter* recognizes when she recounts how she took to 'that great bazaar of dangerous and smiling chances, the pavement of the city' (*MNAN*, 114). By day the streets around Jekyll's house bustle with commerce and traffic, a knowable community in Williams's sense. An atmosphere of gaiety and invitation pervades the by-street where the shop fronts stood 'like rows of smiling saleswomen'. Even on Sundays, with the shops closed, the thoroughfare 'with its freshly-painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger' (*JH*, 6). Human presence in the city can be reassuring, as well as threatening: a friendly face is the counterpoint to Le Bon's murderous crowds. Utterson recognizes the comforting presence of others in his fears for Jekyll: 'I feel as if the presence of a friend might do him good' (*JH*, 35), but when Utterson and Enfield see Jekyll's 'expression of such abject terror and

despair as froze the blood' (*JH*, 36), they cannot speak until 'they had come into a neighbouring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life' (*JH*, 36). The 'labyrinth of the south-west' of London has an eerie silence in *The Dynamiter*. For Challoner, 'the grave is not more silent than this city of sleep': 'Here in broad day, the streets are secret as in the blackest night of January, and in the midst of some four million sleepers, solitary as the woods of Yucatan' (*MNAN*, 14).

At night the city can assume an even more Gothic atmosphere. The strange and the supernatural, and often the criminal, occur under cover of night. When Utterson first confronts Hyde it is ten o'clock in the evening, all the shops are closed, and the by-street that houses Jekyll's old dissecting-room is 'very solitary, and in spite of the low growl of London from all around, very silent' (*JH*, 14). 'Domestic sounds' emanate from the surrounding houses, but the atmosphere on the street is one of quiet emptiness. The heightened sensibility of Gothic narratives is invoked by the echoing of Hyde's footsteps as he arrives on the scene. Hyde's demeanour compounds the Gothicism: his appearance 'went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination' (*JH*, 14). He shrinks back, hisses and snarls 'with a savage laugh', like a cornered animal, dangerous and unpredictable, with something of the uncanny that links him to the villain of Gothic literature (*JH*, 14). Mighall argues that rather than rejecting modernity or industrialism, the urban Gothic 'adapts the "historical" perspective found in the early novels'. Its invocation of atavism in the modern city 'defines its status as Gothic' (Mighall, 51).

The murder of Sir Danvers Carew is witnessed by a maidservant at eleven o'clock at night when 'a fog rolled over the city in the small hours', but 'the early part of the night was cloudless, and the lane, which the maid's window overlooked, was brilliantly lit by the full moon' (*JH*, 21).[19] Nocturnal prowlers like Hyde are commonly the stuff of Gothic fiction: Frankenstein's monster spurns daylight; Dracula is, physically, a creature of the night who cannot risk exposure on the thronged sunlit streets. Night is the domain of the 'other', camouflaging identity and criminal activity. At night the Gothic 'monster' penetrates 'safe' domestic environments. The monster kills Elizabeth in Frankenstein's own bedchamber; Dracula vampirizes women in their bedrooms; Utterson imagines the urban 'monster' Hyde as summoning Jekyll from his own bed. Hyde precipitates Lanyon's death in his own parlour, and may well have murdered Carew in the street outside Jekyll's house. At the very centre of his home, Jekyll meets death at the hands of Hyde. Metropolitan anxiety about criminal activity goes to the heart

of the domestic sphere in the modern Gothic, where the urban monster leaves the streets of low-life London to attack citizens in or near their own homes.

As Fishman observes, the nocturnal East London streets were notorious for violence:

> Nocturnal predators were on the prowl, ready to pounce on some naïve victim who ventured out alone. A German innocent, John Kolisky, was strolling along the Commercial Road at 4.30 a.m., the morning of 12 February [1888]. He was followed silently by a William Ryan, who suddenly seized him by the throat, struck him a violent blow in the eye, and with the aid of an accomplice, cut his pockets and extracted all his money (£4 14s).
>
> (Fishman, 194)

Such robberies led to public calls for a rapid installation of street lighting in the East End to deter criminal activity, but such measures were only increased in the wake of the Ripper murders.[20] Throughout the events of 1888, there were calls for the installation of lighting in the East End. The *Star*, on 1 October, even invoked the threat to the British Empire:

> Above all, let us impress the moral of this awful business on the consciences and the fears of the West End. The cry of the East End is for light – the electric light to flash into the dark corners of its streets and alleys, the magic light of sympathy and hope to flash into the dark corners of wrecked and marred lives. Unless these and other things come, Whitechapel will smash the Empire, and the best thing that can happen to us is for some purified Republic of the West to step in and look after these fragments.[21]

Light, daylight, moonlight or artificial light is the enemy of the evildoer. The young Mrs Luxmore, a fugitive from the law, recognizes the danger in *The Dynamiter*: 'It was already late at night . . . and there were few abroad besides policemen. These, on my present mission, I had wit enough to know for enemies; and whenever I perceived their moving lanterns, I made haste to turn aside and choose another thoroughfare' (*MNAN*, 114). Lamplight illuminates Hyde's trampling of the child, moonlight his murder of Carew. Visiting Lanyon to collect the powders, Hyde fears discovery when a policeman approaches with his bull's-eye open. Hyde shuns the day, and Jekyll recognizes danger by daylight:

when he awakens as Hyde it is in the yellow light of a mid-morning London.[22] His most terrifying moment comes when, sitting on a bench in Regent's Park in full daylight, he realizes he has transformed into Hyde: 'A moment before I had been safe of all men's respect, wealthy, beloved – the cloth laying for me in the dining-room at home; and now I was the common quarry of mankind, hunted, houseless, a known murderer, thrall to the gallows' (*JH*, 66). For Jekyll the streets pose no threat; for Hyde the streets that were the location of his nocturnal wanderings are now fraught with terror.

Street lighting began to be introduced in London from the 1680s: 'In 1694 the Convex Lights Company contracted for the City, and in 1704 the Conic Lights Company for Westminster' (Porter, 126). Before that, as Stevenson, himself noted in 'A Plea for Gas Lamps' in 1881, night time pedestrians carried their own form of lighting:

> But sun, moon, and stars abstracted or concealed, the night-faring inhabitant had to fall back – we speak on the authority of old prints – upon stable lanthorns two storeys in height. Many holes, drilled in the conical turret-roof of this vagabond Pharos, let up spouts of dazzlement into the bearer's eyes; and as he paced forth in the ghostly darkness, carrying his own sun by a ring about his finger, day and night swung to and fro and up and down about his footsteps. Blackness haunted his path; he was beleaguered by goblins as he went; and curfew being struck, he found no light but that he travelled in throughout the township.
>
> (*VP*, 189)

By the early nineteenth century gas lighting abounded: 'The spread of gas lighting made the streets safer by night. Pall Mall had been illuminated as early as 1807; by 1841, it was claimed, 'the metropolis now burns gas in every square, street, alley, lane, passage, and court', and thereby 'half the work of the prevention of crime was accomplished' (Porter, 300). But this illumination did not extend into the East End even in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Amid the general disapproval of Police Commissioner Warren's handling of the Ripper murders, there were numerous calls for increased lighting in the dark courts and alleyways of Whitechapel. After the first two murders, the editorial writer for the *Daily Telegraph* on 1 September even 'urged the police to install "the latest scientific appliances" – namely side-street telephone boxes like those used by the New York City police to improve communications' (Curtis, 119).

The city lamps engendered that sense of security that Stevenson recorded in his own poem 'The Lamplighter': 'But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do, / O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with you! / For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door, / And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more' (*Child's Garden of Verses*, 40). The cheerful lilt of the verse echoes the leavening effect of lamplight itself for the young poet.[23] These were gas lamps, not the sickly sodium lights of the sprawling suburbs that Betjeman was later to deplore. In 'A Plea for Gas Lamps', Stevenson himself had objected to the installation of electric lighting in the cities. Paris, he objected, was now lit by 'a new sort of urban star' that 'now shines out nightly, horrible, unearthly, obnoxious to the human eye; a lamp for a nightmare!' (*VP*, 192).

In the London of *Jekyll and Hyde* Stevenson uses street lighting for a variety of effects. In the 'dismal quarter of Soho' where Hyde lives, the atmosphere is so gloomy that the lamps seem never to have been extinguished, suggesting Stevenson is still referring to the older gas lighting. The overall effect is of 'a district of some city in a nightmare' (*JH*, 23), recalling Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night'. Lamplight here only compounds the nightmarish quality and danger of the place. However, when Enfield encounters Hyde it is in the uncomfortably empty lamplit spaces of London at dead of night, and the lamps serve to heighten the sense of isolation and fear:

> I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep – street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession, and all as empty as a church – till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman.
>
> (*JH*, 7)

This type of illumination seems precisely that to which Stevenson objects. In 'A Plea for Gas Lamps' he deplores the imminent installation of electric lighting in London: 'A sedate electrician somewhere in a back office touches a spring – and behold! From one end to another of the city, from east to west, from the Alexandra to the Crystal Palace, there is light!' The 'monstrous city', as he calls London, 'flashes into vision.' Prefiguring Hyde's crimes, Stevenson claims that such a 'light as this should shine only on murders and public crime, or along the corridors of lunatic asylums, a horror to heighten horror' (*VP*, 192).

Soho remains in a perpetual state of murky twilight, its inhabitants more like spectres than solid forms; Hyde's crimes in the more open spaces of the city are viewed as under a spotlight, where law-abiding citizens look on, appalled at such brutality in their neighbourhood. The point is that in Soho, criminal activity is tolerated and flourishes; it is in the nature of place, as reflected in the swirling mists that obscure and envelop vice and crime. Hyde belongs here, among the degenerate population who will ask no questions or turn a blind eye to his activities. On entering the 'upper' world of the well-to-do, the mists roll away, city spaces are floodlit and the light shines on his violence, 'a horror to heighten horror'. His crimes, the trampling of the child and the murder of Carew, occur under the lamplight designed to reduce crime, or enable its detection. The fact that such illumination does not deter Hyde's brutality is even more sinister: like Le Bon's crowd, Hyde acts on instinct when he tramples or murders, and his consciousness of personal danger only kicks in after the deed.

The London of *Jekyll and Hyde*, even during the day, is a Janus-faced metropolis. In contrast to the more salubrious district of Jekyll's home, Hyde haunts the dark spaces of the city and the seedy locales of Soho where vaguely criminal activities are suggested and prostitution is offered. At nine in the morning it wears the aspect of dusk:

> It was by this time about nine o'clock in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr Utterson beheld a marvellous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and there would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreathes. The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been rekindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare.
>
> (*JH*, 23)

The location of Hyde's abode is seemingly a living hell surrounded by gin palaces, 'a low French eating-house', ragged children and 'many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to

have a morning glass' (*JH*, 23).[24] Gin palaces abounded in the East End: Fishman notes that in 1899 there were 48 drinking places along one mile of the Whitechapel Road, and these were 'so strategically placed as to provide "the working man with breakfast on his journey to work and with refreshments on his journey home"' (Fishman, 303). As Stevenson shows in *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Dynamiter*, drunken forms littering the streets were an everyday occurrence. Fishman records the removal of a drunken woman who was strapped to a police hand ambulance 'and carried away shrieking and cursing; a dehumanised thing, as morally insensate as the beasts that perish, and far less clean' (Fishman, 191).[25]

Ackroyd describes *Jekyll and Hyde* as the greatest novel of London fog in which 'the fable of changing identities and secret lives takes place within the medium of the city's 'shifting insubstantial mists'. The isolation that the fog engenders is for Ackroyd 'the condition of living in London – to be "cut off", isolated, a single mote in the swirl of fog and smoke. To be alone among the confusion is perhaps the single most piercing emotion of any stranger in the city.' Ackroyd mentions how Elizabeth Barrett Browning spoke of the fog blurring the cityscape, 'as if a sponge had wiped out London.' Fear of invisibility prompted radical techniques to counteract the effect of the fog: 'That is precisely why architects decided to clothe buildings in bright red brick and shining terracotta so that they would remain visible; the features of nineteenth-century building, which may seem vulgar or gaudy, were attempts to stabilise the identity and legibility of the city' (Ackroyd, 435). The physical city then, according to Ackroyd, has an identity crisis of its own. *Jekyll and Hyde* dramatizes the very essence of late nineteenth-century city life: its duality is figured in the discrete personalities of Jekyll/Hyde, its shifting and merging identities figured in Jekyll's increasing inability to stabilize his own identity.

The view of London, as a place of ominous darkness is characteristic of modernist fiction. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's London wears a similar aspect: 'The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into the mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and greatest, town on earth' (*HD*, 7). At the end of the novel London retains its ominous atmosphere: 'The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky – seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness' (*HD*, 76). As Cedric Watts notes, Conrad's description of London as a 'monstrous town' reminds 'us that London can be termed monstrous not only because of its immensity but also because it may appear unnatural, voracious, actively

oppressive' (in Moore, 18).[26] Thus in *The Dynamiter* Challoner finds that morning in the city can be an unnervingly Gothic experience: 'Street after street looked down upon his solitary figure, house after house echoed upon his passage with a ghostly jar, shop after shop displayed its shuttered front and its commercial legend; and meanwhile he steered his course . . . through this encampment of diurnal sleepers, lonely as a ship' (*MNAN*, 14).

This is not a perception of London that is confined to Stevenson's imagination or Conrad's modernist sensitivity: it is a persistent portrayal of the city that emerges in numerous fictional representations, and particularly in the modern Gothic. For example, we recall Prendick, in Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau*, haunted by those London inhabitants who prowl and mew, eerily recalling Moreau's Beast People. Here the metropolis is metaphorically a jungle, populated by predatory beings, like Le Bon's crowds, that act not on reason but on instinct. When Hyde blindly tramples the child or gleefully thrashes Carew to death he behaves in a manner more animal than human; his rapacity is that of a metropolitan beast.

A complex image of the city thus begins to emerge. For Watts, it is the 'striking contrasts' that London can accommodate within a few square miles that makes it so 'enabling' for writers: 'Soho and Buckingham Palace; sordid squalor and majestic opulence; working-class tenements and the Houses of Parliament; downtrodden masses and the centre of imperial power' (in Moore, 27). These are the contrasts contained within the metropolis that Stevenson exploits in his Gothic tales: Jekyll's respectable home and Lanyon's comfortable fireside are in direct opposition to Hyde's Soho residence; the characters in *The Dynamiter* and 'The Suicide Club' encounter a city that is both festive and threatening. Hyde does not belong in Jekyll's district; hence his surreptitious entry to the house by the back door. The novel never mentions Jekyll having been in Soho. The servants admitting visitors to the two homes further strengthen this dichotomy: Hyde's obsequious landlady with her 'evil face, smoothed by hypocrisy' fits her seedy surroundings, and has none of the discretion of Jekyll's or Lanyon's butlers. Introduced to Inspector Newcomen of Scotland Yard, a 'flash of odious joy appeared on the woman's face: '"Ah!" said she, "he is in trouble! What has he done?"' (*JH*, 24). Poole's priorities are to protect his master; this woman seems actively to seek Hyde's apprehension. Loyalty, human compassion, decency: all symptoms of civilized human existence are absent in the underworld of Soho.

Its London setting and social concerns identify *Jekyll and Hyde* as a novel about the late nineteenth-century metropolis. Unimaginably populous and prominent in the popular consciousness, London is a more appropriate location for this Gothic horror than Stevenson's native Edinburgh.[27] London was, and remains, representative of the metropolitan experience. A city as vast as this lends itself to the suggestiveness and impressionism in the artistic sense that Stevenson implies in 'A Humble Remonstrance', allowing the artist to 'shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality' and to 'regard instead a certain figmentary abstraction'. London offered Stevenson's artistic imagination freer reign than the more closely defined and easily recognized social and physical character of Edinburgh.[28] In *The Dynamiter* Somerset describes Rupert Street as the 'strategic centre of the universe' where he is 'in earshot of the most continuous chink of money on the surface of the globe', indicating London's imperial and financial might (*MNAN*, 7). *The Dynamiter* is a metropolitan novel in which the capital is a place of gaiety and adventure, of laughter and of tragedy, but underlying it all is the darkly comic figure of Zero, who at any moment could effect a terrible destruction. In Stevenson's modern Gothic tales, in the heart of Britain, the centre of the Empire, lurk the dangerous impulses, destabilizing influences and social fissures that are implied in Jekyll's metamorphosis into Hyde.

## Sex, crime and the city

The complex duality of *Jekyll and Hyde* is woven into the names of the characters, as Heath notes: 'Hyde is not just the hidden but also the hide of the beast that he is' (Heath, 103). The beast that preys on the innocent was the very type of urban creature exposed by 'The Maiden Tribute'. Both Jekyll and Hyde are *flâneurs*, bourgeois men enjoying the sights, sounds and pleasures of the city, and 'preoccupied by phenomena that other people – rushing about their business – are likely to miss' (Barto, 10). With no need to earn a living, the city is Hyde's playground. What Jekyll's predicament reveals, however, is that the *flâneur* may be no ordinary, harmless citizen: he can harbour the beast that preys on young girls, tramples them, or worse. This *flâneur* is violent towards the urban female: 'Once a woman spoke to him, offering, I think, a box of lights. He smote her in the face, and she fled' (*JH*, 67). This woman is, no doubt, a prostitute; the violence Hyde metes out would have been a common occurrence for a 'girl in business', and the Ripper murders themselves are evidence of the extremes of violence suffered by streetwalkers in the capital.[29]

It was not only prostitutes who suffered violence on the streets: women in general were wary of London's nocturnal thoroughfares. In *The Dynamiter*, taking up lodgings on the Euston Road, the young Mrs Luxmore feels threatened: 'A few miserable women still walked the pavement; here and there were young fellows returning drunk, or ruffians of the lowest class lurking in the mouths of alleys' (*MNAN*, 114). 'Male Pests' were not harmless *flâneurs*; they were a real threat to female safety. Fishman describes how gangs of young men prowled the Bow Road on Sundays 'molesting passers-by, especially young women on their way to Sunday Service' (Fishman, 185). Olive Schreiner revealed in a letter to the *Standard* and the *Daily News* in 1887 that she had been accosted by a police officer.[30] After 'The Maiden Tribute', Stead encouraged correspondence on the matter in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which revealed that women were frightened and outraged at being regarded as legitimate targets for male attention:

> Stead, characteristically, allowed 'vicious men' to respond in 'What the Male Pests have to Say for Themselves.' These male correspondents defended their own practice of 'following after and speaking to respectable women', insisting that a woman who goes about the 'haunts of men' in a 'tailor-made dress' (whose tight-fit, according to one private letter circulating at the time, simply accentuated the 'false bottoms and stays – and other erotic adornments', that women wore to 'excite the male sex') should not feel 'insulted' if approached by a stranger.
>
> (Walkowitz, 129)

Mrs Luxmore demonstrates her courage by daring to accost a man on the street for help, but, aware of her vulnerability, makes it very clear that she is not offering sexual favours: '"Sir," I interrupted, "let there be no mistake. I ask you as a gentleman, to serve me, but I offer no reward"' (*MNAN*, 115). If Hyde's activities are 'monstrous', he would have regarded pestering women in the street as an innocuous pleasure, perhaps even a male right. Since, in the wake of 'The Maiden Tribute', Members of Parliament had defended the practice of child prostitution, such attitudes, though odious, were hardly surprising. Frederic W. H. Myers's letters to Stevenson imply that Hyde's activities up to the murder of Carew were regarded by some as the legitimate pursuits of a 'gentleman' in the city. Myers even compares Hyde favourably with Napoleon, but so misguided are Myers' remarks that Stevenson, for the main part, ignored them.[31] Hyde's behaviour toward women on the

street is thus coterminous with the standards of many urban males of the late nineteenth century. Trampling the child causes outrage, but no assault charge is mentioned: the bourgeois compensate for their crimes against the poor with a hefty banker's cheque. After trampling the child, Hyde's crimes become more violent.[32] This point is reinforced by Jekyll himself, who avers that the 'pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified; I would scarce use a harder term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde, they soon began to turn towards the monstrous' (*JH*, 60).

Sexual harassment of women could account for some of Hyde's activities, but compelling arguments for homosexual activity by critics like Elaine Showalter and Wayne Koestenbaum cannot be ignored. Both Showalter and Koestenbaum cite Stevenson's own ambiguous sexual identity. Koestenbaum mentions the close relationship between Stevenson and his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, as evidence of possible repressed homosexual desire, and Showalter indicates that Andrew Lang noted Stevenson's ability to make 'other men fall in love with him. Among a group of friends, both homosexual and heterosexual, in Stevenson's large literary and bohemian circle, "male appreciation of Stevenson was often intensely physical"' (Showalter, 107). Alan Sandison suggests that in 1885 'Stevenson could not but have been aware of the intense debate that went on about sexual morality, sometimes very publicly.' In August 1885 a rally in Hyde Park had witnessed one speaker 'holding forth on the theme that "our public men shall be pure", the sort of demand that Jekyll would have us believe drove him to create Hyde':

> Shortly after this rally, the Criminal Laws Amendment Act was passed dealing with, *inter alia*, prostitution, the age of consent and male homosexual behaviour. It was on to this measure that the notorious Labouchère Amendment was grafted, bringing within the law *all* forms of male homosexual activity whether conducted in public or in private. Such a context as this furore provides, makes the reticence and furtiveness of Utterson and his circle seem even more suggestive.
> (Sandison, 253)

Showalter also points out that Krafft-Ebbing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* 'offered some of the first case studies of homosexual men':

> By the 1880s, such scholars as Jeffrey Weeks and Richard Dellamora have shown, the Victorian homosexual world had evolved into a secret but active subculture, with its own language, styles, practices,

and meeting places. For most middle-class inhabitants of this world, homosexuality represented a double life, in which a respectable day-time world, often involving marriage and family, existed alongside a night world of homoeroticism.

(Showalter, 106)

Some of the language used in Jekyll and Hyde conforms to this homo-sexual subcultural usage: terms like 'queer', and 'fag', argues Koestenbaum, were not yet homosexual in meaning, but Stevenson propelled them 'toward that destination' (Koestenbaum, 149). Koestenbaum even specu-lates that early readers of the story 'might have assumed – confronting Jekyll's "strange preference" for Hyde, an unexplained "intimacy" – that the two men were lovers' (Koestenbaum, 151).

Showalter observes that *Jekyll and Hyde* is about a community of men who tend toward 'monasticism': it can be read as a 'fable of fin-de-siècle homosexual panic' (Showalter, 107). That panic is expressed in the male community's concern for Jekyll. Read in this way, Jekyll's activ-ities as Hyde pose a threat to the entire homosexual community of the novel. Utterson, the 'last good influence in the lives of down-going men' (*JH*, 5), is most anxious about Jekyll's reputation. Koestenbaum connects 'going downward' with 'moral decline and fellatio', and con-cludes that 'the social trajectory of downfall implies a reputation ruined by homosexuality' (Koestenbaum, 147). A queer reading of the story suggests that Utterson makes it his business to ensure that this does not happen to Jekyll. Taking this point further, Hyde may be the physical manifestation of Jekyll's homosexuality. When he declares that 'man is not truly one, but truly two', and upon seeing himself as Hyde, declares, 'This, too, was myself', Jekyll may be recognizing his own inherent sexual ambiguity.

*Jekyll and Hyde* is a novel about repression, and in this context that repression is sexual. Just as any potential homosexual inferences are repressed in the narrative, only to be teased out by the vigilant critic, so Jekyll's urges are repressed, only fully unleashed with the birth of Hyde. Koestenbaum says that the novel 'defines queerness as the horror that comes from not being able to explain away an uncanny doubleness' (Koestenbaum, 147). In Jekyll's 'doubleness' is the conflict between his outward heterosexual self and his repressed homosexual self; but if Hyde is an expression of Jekyll's homosexuality, it is an aspect of himself that Jekyll disapproves of, and fears. As he says, 'had I risked the exper-iment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations . . . I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend.' Hyde, 'alone in the ranks of

mankind, was pure evil' (*JH*, 59). Jekyll, at least, regards his doppel-gänger as the embodiment of an evil that is, in the normal course of events, repressed by his better self. Whether a homosexual evil or a more general evil, what Jekyll unleashes onto the streets of London, in the form of Hyde, is a hedonistic energy that turns murderous. It is part of the genius of the story that its suggestiveness allows for multiple readings of the nature of Jekyll/Hyde's crimes:

> The sense of nausea inspired by Mr. Hyde . . . can be traced to a variety of sexual meanings: a horror of femininity, of which hateful identity Hyde's body bears traces; anxiety about the potential violence and pathology of heterosexual masculinity, which Hyde's behaviour throws into relief; or ambivalence about the 'love that dare not speak its name', the unspeakable possibility of male homosexuality raised by the mysterious intimacy between Jekyll and Hyde.
>
> (Hurley, 150)

*Jekyll and Hyde* presents us with a fraternity of bachelors and a fragmented social world, heightened by the sense that even the male friendships that exist are tentative. The friendship between Utterson and Enfield is unaccountable: 'It was reported by those who encountered them in their Sunday walks, that they said nothing, looked singularly dull, and would hail with obvious relief the appearance of a friend' (*JH*, 6). Showalter speculates that 'because his own life is so involved with repression and fantasy, Utterson becomes "enslaved" to the mystery of Hyde', and begins to have 'rape fantasies of a faceless figure who opens the door to the room where Jekyll lies sleeping, pulls back the curtains of the bed, and forces Jekyll to rise and do his bidding' (Showalter, 110). These images of 'forced penetration through locked doors into private cabinets, rooms and closets permeate Utterson's narrative', argues Showalter, suggesting homoerotic fantasy. Certainly this is the stuff of the feminine Gothic, of Jane Eyre's nightmares and real experiences. Here it is an example of what Showalter terms the 'Gay Gothic'. Behind the closed doors of the metropolis lurks the 'other', the 'closet homosexual'. In *The Dynamiter* Challoner reflects Utterson's sober habits: he is naturally chivalrous but 'averse from amorous adventures' (*MNAN*, 18). His reticence to help the obviously attractive 'Miss Fonblanque' suggests at the very least sexual abstention.

Further weight is afforded to queer readings by the fact that the novel is concerned with a community of men in a metropolitan setting, and like *Jekyll and Hyde*, 'The Suicide Club' centres on a community of men

who show little interest in women. The 'monasticism' of the life of the male characters in *Jekyll and Hyde* lends an edgy, unnerving quality to the tale that speaks of the Gothic, in contrast to the lighter touches of 'The Suicide Club'. London is a teeming metropolis, yet in *Jekyll and Hyde* it is a city where the men, at least, are very much in isolation. Jekyll, Utterson and Lanyon are usually seen alone in their houses, by the fireside, a symbolic substitute for human warmth. Arata details how the various gentlemen of *Jekyll and Hyde* share a fireside glass of wine or how Utterson habitually sits on a Sunday 'close by the fire, a volume of dry divinity on his reading desk'; but, says Arata, 'it is one of Stevenson's triumphs that he transforms the hearth – that too-familiar image of cosy Victorian domesticity – into a symbol of these men's isolation and repression' (Arata, 243). Jenni Calder attributes the sinister tone of the story to the isolation of its main characters. One of 'its most striking effects' is the 'juxtaposition of these cool, rather arid characters, isolated and emotionally uncommitted, with the extreme horror and disgust which Hyde and all that is associated with him engenders' (Calder, 12).

Women are never sought as companions in the novel, or if they are it is as the sexual partners of Jekyll/Hyde that are only implied in the narrative. As marginalized presences female characters assume only the subordinate roles of servants, prostitutes or hysterical mothers:[33] the harridans who harangue Hyde after trampling the child; the slatternly Soho drunks; the match-girl whom he strikes; Hyde's vindictive housekeeper; the romantic swooning maid who witnesses Carew's murder; and Jekyll's hysterical housemaid and cook. In each case the woman is either threatening or a negative and ineffectual presence in a crisis. Interestingly, at a time when women were breaking the bounds of the domestic sphere and claiming the metropolitan streets for their own activities, *Jekyll and Hyde* presents a London that shows little sign of female emancipation. As Showalter says, 'The romance of *Jekyll and Hyde* is conveyed instead through men's names, men's bodies, and men's psyches' (Showalter, 108). The absence of women is symptomatic of the fragmentation of personality in the novel: pushing women to the edges of the narrative creates a schismatic city, unnatural and unreal, a skewed vision of reality because the feminine perspective is absent. Relying on exclusively masculine values and masculine anxieties, *Jekyll and Hyde* presents a community whose identity is unstable. The desperate attempts by Utterson to protect Jekyll from Hyde represent insecurity at the heart of this fraternity. Because no authoritative female voice is audible the sense of paranoia becomes overwhelming. The nervous,

pale and fragile image of Stevenson in Singer Sargent's famous painting, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and His Wife' (1885), captures exactly the sense of unstable male identity in *Jekyll and Hyde*; the shadowy, insubstantial and Gothic image of Fanny mirrors the position of women in much of Stevenson's work.

   The marginalization of women in Stevenson's writing did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries, as Koestenbaum explains:

> Andrew Lang felt that Stevenson did himself 'most justice in novels without a heroine', and Henry James, who applauded his friend for giving the world the 'romance of boyhood', observed that Stevenson's 'books are for the most part books without women, and it is not women who fall most in love with them. But Mr. Stevenson does not need, we may say, a petticoat to inflame him.'
>
> <div align="right">(Koestenbaum, 145)</div>

*Jekyll and Hyde*, however, is not a boy's story; it is a tale of Gothic horror that deals with adult realities and adult anxieties. *The Dynamiter*, in lighter mode, features women as playful presences flitting across the metropolitan landscape, but *Jekyll and Hyde* is a novel about London as a male domain, unmediated by any feminine perspective. The *flâneur*, the 'male pest', the lonely bachelor and the murderous ruffian are the most visible presences. Male ascendancy in this sense defamiliarizes the city streets, making them threatening and ominous. Daylight may bring some respite from terror, yet there still exists the possibility of Jekyll instantaneously transforming into Hyde in a city park or at his own window. At night terror reigns and a London harbouring a Mr Hyde truly is Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night'.

## The spatial dimensions of duality

In the Singer Sargent painting Stevenson and Fanny are separated by a sombre doorway that seems to lead into a dark space that Stevenson identified as the hallway of his Bournemouth house. A nervous Stevenson is separated from his spectral-looking wife by this dimly defined recess. Sargent's painting implies that the doorway leads to a space that is dark and secretive, the artist's mind; and this space sets up a barrier between the artist and his closest companion, who seems to dwindle and shrink beside the enormous possibilities of that space. *Jekyll and Hyde* is a story about doors and the secrets they conceal and reveal. Doors, buildings and the city landscape itself accentuate the

divisions of the novel in terms of space and place, just as Sargent's painting symbolically suggests a barrier between the artist and his wife. Similar spatial divisions are evident in 'The Suicide Club' when 'the young man with the cream tarts' takes Florizel and Geraldine to the dark court which leads to the Suicide Club and warns them: '"Reflect well before you take another step; and if your hearts say no – here are the crossroads"' (*NAN*, 13).

Alex Clunas observes that '*Jekyll and Hyde* begins with two housefronts and two doors, both of which initially are read with a presumption of iso-morphic, thematizable space, whereby one might move from the external signs to a characterization of the life within' (Clunas, 176). In contrast to Hyde's seedy residence, Jekyll's house seems to be the epitome of sartorial elegance, the other side of city habitation. And so it would seem, with its hall that Utterson 'was wont to speak of . . . as the pleasantest room in London' (*JH*, 16–17). Jekyll's house, set in a 'square of ancient, handsome houses', appears to have nothing in common with Hyde's downtrodden establishment. Until, that is, we find that the houses of Jekyll's street are now 'for the most part decayed from their high estate, and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map engravers, architects, shady lawyers, and the agents of obscure enterprises' (*JH*, 16). It is thus that Jekyll's complicity in Hyde's disreputable character is suggested. The once-elegant and polished neighbourhood has gradually declined from its previous respectability. It is an early indication that all is not as morally sound as it appears behind the elegant façade of Jekyll's home, or even behind the doctor's own comely exterior.

Around the corner 'a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable':

> It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.
>
> (*JH*, 6)

This is the old dissecting room, located at the back of Jekyll's home, the hidden entrance by which Hyde gains access, housing the cabinet where

Jekyll practises his diabolic alchemy. The house imitates its master by concealing a dark secret. The room is a grisly reminder of the infamous influences on Stevenson's story, the grave robbers Burke and Hare. The geographical proximity of the two buildings most closely associated with Jekyll blurs the dividing line between respectability and immorality.

Porter points out that by the 1870s the rich could not expect to live 'within a mile or two of Piccadilly'. 'From Belgravia to Bloomsbury, there was hardly a classy enclave that did not have a colony of the lumpenproletariat just a stone's throw away':

> 'Behind the mansion there is generally a stable', it was pointed out, 'and near the stable there is generally a maze of close streets, containing a small greengrocer's, a small dairy's, a quiet coachman's public house, and a number of houses let out in tenements. These houses shelter a large number of painters, bricklayers, carpenters, and similar labourers, with their families, and many laundresses and charwomen.'
>
> (Porter, 237)

In this respect, Stevenson's depiction of London is accurate and sensitive to the conditions of the time. The 'built environment of Victorian London', says Porter, 'grew not because of any government planning but because of the mysteries of the market: population growth, change in transport technology, and profitable building speculation' (Porter, 237–8). Jekyll's house, adjacent to the dwellings of 'all sorts and conditions of men', is thus a typical West London home of the time, and this makes his murky secret all the more sinister: how many more Hydes are skulking behind seemingly respectable house fronts? Stead's revelation of corruption in the heart of respectable London goes some way to answering that question. Jekyll/Hyde is not just the manifestation of an individual crisis of identity; it is an emblem of the schismatic metropolis itself.

The Soho apartment and the elegant townhouse define the two sides of Jekyll's dual career as doctor and dissipated hedonist. Keeping the two personalities and the two worlds they inhabit separate, however, is a near impossibility. The division between dissipation and respectability is nowhere near as complete as it seems, as the state and environment of Jekyll's house testifies. With Carew dead and the hunt on for Hyde, the separate spheres of Jekyll's double life become merged: the independence of Soho and a life of sinister *flânerie* are no longer tenable. When Jekyll grinds the key to the door underfoot in the by-street he

symbolically locks himself in prison and 'throws away the key'. The personalities of Jekyll and Hyde can no longer be kept discrete: housed in the same body are two distinct personalities that must now dwell within the same bricks and mortar. Ultimately Jekyll's experiment, like Frankenstein's, goes tragically wrong. The battle for dominance as Jekyll and Hyde fade in and out of each other can only take place in Gothic isolation.

Initially the laboratory offers safety for Hyde: 'Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second or two to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready; and, whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror' (*JH*, 60). When Hyde becomes a fugitive criminal that escape to the laboratory becomes a tortured journey: open access to the street is no longer available and Hyde, like a hunted animal, seeks confined spaces. Instead of the stroll of the *flâneur*, he resorts to cabs; and even there seems to shrink like a caged beast, as when driving to Lanyon's he 'set forth in the corner of a closed cab.' Skulking in a hotel waiting for darkness, he 'sat all day over the fire in the private room, gnawing his nails' (*JH*, 67). On the street he no longer displays the nonchalance of his earlier strolls: 'He walked fast, hunted by his fears, chattering to himself, skulking through the less frequented thoroughfares' (*JH*, 67). The city that he embraced, and that once cloaked him in anonymity, now threatens exposure. Hyde recognizes that the laboratory is his 'last earthly refuge' (*JH*, 70). As he grew in strength, Hyde battled for release from the 'fortress' of Jekyll's identity (*JH*, 57). After months of abstinence Jekyll senses that Hyde is 'struggling after freedom'. The late-Victorian perception of the 'beast within' is evoked: 'My devil had long been caged, he came out roaring' (*JH*, 64). But, after the murder of Carew, Jekyll is now 'confined to the better part of [his] existence', and himself conflates the city and the body when he states: 'Jekyll was now my city of refuge' (*JH*, 65).

Hyde, having broken free of his 'prison house', is now a hunted animal, seeking a bricks and mortar prison-sanctuary. Jekyll desires freedom from the shackles of respectability that may include conventional sex, sobriety, a drug-free existence and abstention from any form of dissipation. That freedom is figured in the desire to break out of the house that is a symbol of constrained respectability. On the first night of his transformation into Hyde, Jekyll says with a degree of smugness, 'the inmates of my house were locked in the most rigorous hours of slumber' as if they were caged prisoners (*JH*, 58). The novel associates Hyde with ease of movement, as more a part of the city than his host,

Jekyll. His Soho apartment is in the hub of the city's activity; Jekyll's home is literally the 'fortress' that guards his respectability. The pressures to maintain social standing are akin in *Jekyll and Hyde* to a kind of agoraphobia.[34] Hyde during his period of freedom is physically *of* the city: its open spaces seem to excite his will-to-freedom even when locked inside Jekyll. In Regent's Park Jekyll is acutely aware of Hyde within: 'I sat in the sun on a bench; the animal within me licking the chops of memory; the spiritual side a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet moved to begin' (*JH*, 66). His transformation into Hyde seems to be caused, in part, by the exhilaration of being in the open city: on this occasion the city itself seems to bring Hyde into being, as if inviting the *flâneur* to partake of its pleasures. By contrast Jekyll is confined to the structures of the city, its houses and clubs, its closed spaces; only within the solid structures of respectable London does Jekyll feel safe.

It is appropriate, as well as necessary, that as Jekyll becomes overwhelmed by his alter ego he retreats into the laboratory more frequently, finally locking himself in, never to emerge again. Jekyll is trapped in the house, and trapped by the ever-strengthening persona of Hyde. Thus the house becomes a metaphor for his condition: as Hyde is barred from the outside world, so Jekyll is barred from his own domestic space, reduced to impatiently pacing the floor of his laboratory in despair. In a final ironic twist, the building containing the cabinet is a curious reversal of the deceptive façade of Jekyll's home. Contained within its seedy exterior is the mezzanine to which Jekyll/Hyde has retreated:

> There lay the cabinet before their eyes in the quiet lamplight, a good fire glowing and chattering on the hearth, the kettle singing its thin strain, a drawer or two open, papers neatly set forth on the business table, and nearer the fire, the things laid out for tea; the quietest room, you would have said, and, but for the glazed presses full of chemicals, the most commonplace that night in London.
>
> (*JH*, 44)

The story now works like a reverse telescope. The early narrative roams the streets of London. From Soho to Jekyll's home, to Lanyon's house in Cavendish Square, the breadth and variety of late nineteenth-century London is suggested. Conversations take place in cosy drawing rooms and gentlemen's clubs. But as Hyde's murderous career is uncovered the story narrows in focus and setting as it follows Jekyll's retreat from

the pleasant hallway of his home into the deeper recesses of the house, recesses that mirror the deeper and darker recesses of his disturbed mind. It is a long way from the respectable entrance to the house as Clunas observes: 'At the heart of Jekyll's house, beyond the threshold, along the passage, across the court, through the old operating theatre, and up the stairs, is the cabinet – the laboratory for his experiments in "transcendental medicine" and also a symbolically charged place, like a temple or the set for a pyschodrama' (Clunas, 179). The sense of alienation is stressed as Utterson and Poole wait silently outside the room: 'London hummed solemnly all around; but nearer at hand, the stillness was only broken by the sound of a footfall moving to and fro along the cabinet floor' (*JH*, 43).

But more is happening here: the hum of London at this point echoes the 'low growl' of the city earlier in the novel when Utterson confronts Hyde. These sounds, as much as the sights, locate the novel as metropolitan, as set within a humming, teeming city. Ackroyd writes of the sounds of London from the earliest times as being a 'token of its energy and of its power' (Ackroyd, 71):

> This sense of disturbing, almost transcendental, sound was essentially a discovery of the nineteenth century when London represented the great urban myth of the world. Its noise became an aspect of its mightiness, and horror; it became numinous. In 1857 Charles Manby Smith, in the paradoxically entitled *The Little World of London*, described it as 'that indefinable boom of distant but ever-present sound which tells that London is up and doing, and which will swell into a deafening roar as the day grows older [and] now rises faintly but continuously upon the ear.'
>
> (Ackroyd, 75)

Jekyll/Hyde is now cut off from this vibrant, complex life. The power and energy of the metropolis, the illicit pleasures that Jekyll, and Hyde, had enjoyed are suggested in this distant humming of the city; but now the distant hum can only be a cruel reminder of all that Jekyll/Hyde has forfeited. The silence, punctuated only by haunted pacing footsteps, in the laboratory is the silence of Gothic isolation and despair.

Swinging the axe to smash down the door that separates Jekyll/Hyde from the outside world, Poole mirrors the violence to the self simultaneously taking place within the room. In a further figurative use of doorways in the novel, smashing down the door symbolizes the final fracturing of the fortifications erected by Jekyll to prevent detection.

It is also the last doorway entered by Hyde. It is a further irony that the two men who were the most active in trying to protect Jekyll are in fact, by breaking into his sanctuary, the agents of his exposure. The room offers a further enigma: with its cheery fire and well laid out papers and tea things, the room is 'the most commonplace that night in London', except, that is, for the contorted body lying, still twitching, on the floor. The adjacent positions of the ordinary and the extraordinary here are again testimony to the competing forces contained within Henry Jekyll, and speak of the uncanny that characterizes the Gothic. The room speaks of Jekyll's respectability; the physical manifestation of his diabolical other, Hyde, is prostrate on the floor.

## Stevenson, Machen and the modern Gothic

In *Jekyll and Hyde*, and to a lesser extent in 'The Body Snatcher', 'Olalla', 'The Suicide Club' and *The Dynamiter*, Stevenson presents identity as fluid and unstable: the body snatchers, Fettes and Mcfarlane, adopt a nonchalant air to conceal their murderous secret; beneath Olalla's maidenly exterior lurks a grisly vampiric heritage; the guises adopted by Clara Luxmore and her romantic Gothic fictions of her origins suggest a crisis of identity; Florizel is transformed from noble prince to avenging angel and to cigar store proprietor; and Jekyll literally splits himself into two distinct entities. The *New Arabian Nights* series are whimsical entertainments, after their namesake, but containing also some of the dark Gothic overtones of 'The Body Snatcher', 'Olalla', or *Jekyll and Hyde*. Jekyll's transformation is prefigured in Dr Grierson's attempts to recapture his youth in Clara's Luxmore's story 'The Destroying Angel'. Like Jekyll, Grierson's drugs are illusive. '"A difficulty unforeseen – the impossibility of obtaining a certain drug in its full purity"' forced him to return to London (*MNAN*, 69). In desiring to be 'restored to the first energy of youth', in imagining himself 'purified, invigorated, renewed, restamped in the original image', Grierson anticipates Jekyll's intentions (*MNAN*, 69). Like Jekyll, Grierson sets up a 'laboratory in the back part of the house, where he toiled day and night at his elixir' (*MNAN*, 72), and 'Asenath' imagines him 'hideously restored, like a vampire in a legend' (*MNAN*, 73). In presenting a Gothicized London, Stevenson's stories are symptomatic of a modern Gothic where the terrors of wild landscapes and ancient buildings are transported, like Poe's 'The Murders on the Rue Morgue' (1841), into the modern urban environment. Stevenson's *flâneurs*, Hyde, Enfield, Florizel, Challoner, Somerset and Desborough, walk the metropolitan streets in search of adventure.

Gothic London in Stevenson's imagination is a place where men per-
form ritualistic killings, as in the murder of Malthus, where identity is
rarely fixed and where strange transformations take place. This is a
London of duality, a city that can be reassuringly replete with colour
and gaiety, and terrifyingly dark and dangerous.

   Years after Stevenson's modern Gothic tales Machen published *The
Great God Pan* and *The Three Impostors*. More explicit about Gothic
violence than Stevenson, Machen wrote physically disturbing horror
stories. Thus for Mighall, *Pan* 'figures the infernal through the appara-
tus of sexuality', and 'frames the diabolical with the erotic' (Mighall,
206, 207). Like Stevenson, Machen envisioned a modern, urban Gothic
that dramatizes violence on the streets of the city, and imagines awful
events, often of an erotic nature, occurring behind the banal façades of
the city's architecture. Heavily indebted to Stevenson for their form and
subject matter, Machen's stories are set in a London that is replete with
demons and manifestations of a primal and voracious evil. 'Novel of the
White Powder' is unmistakably modelled on *Jekyll and Hyde*, and in the
episodic narrative structure of his stories, Machen clearly aped
Stevenson. In *The Dynamiter*, Prince Florizel is reincarnated as the cul-
tured Mr T. Goodall, the owner of the Cigar Divan where Somerset,
Desborough and Challoner embark on their adventures. Machen has his
protagonists in *The Three Impostors*, Dyson and Phillipps, begin their
weird adventures in 'a small tobacco-shop' owned by 'a middle-aged
man of singular civility', who is clearly based on Goodall (*TI*, 105).
Stevenson's stories had inspired Machen to emulate his modern Gothic
themes and atmosphere, and when he has Dyson declare to Phillipps
that the 'task of the literary man' is 'to invent a wonderful story, and
to tell it in a wonderful manner' perhaps he had Stevenson in mind
(*TI*, 105). Whether or not this was an acknowledgement of Machen's
debt, the enduring success of Stevenson, and of his most famous story
of the modern Gothic, *Jekyll and Hyde*, testifies to the fact that
Stevenson was a literary man who invented wonderful stories and told
them in a 'wonderful manner.' Machen's emulation is further proof of
the power of Stevenson's literary achievements in the modern Gothic.

# 5
# Oscar Wilde: Gothic Ironies and Terrible Dualities

> A horror one dare not express.
>
> Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan*.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Oscar Wilde wrote a tale that synthesized Gothic conventions like the magic picture, duality and physical mutability. In some of his later stories he added a comic irony to the Gothic mode that he had explored in *Dorian Gray*, and thus lampooned the traditions he had used to such effect in the novel. Wolfreys argues that the 'gothic is to be found everywhere . . . but never as itself, never in the same form twice' (Wolfreys, 11). Wilde's Gothic satires prove Wolfreys's point about the adaptability of Gothic narratives, and allow Wilde to bring his own distinctive style of social satire to bear on the Gothic in 'The Canterville Ghost' (1891) and 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' (1891). Underlying these comic tales of the supernatural are the concerns with morality and behaviour that are central to the more sombre *Dorian Gray*.

## Wilde, social satire and the Gothic

'The Canterville Ghost' is a comic tale of haunting: an American family, the Otises, buy Canterville Chase, the ancient home of the Cantervilles, which has been haunted for centuries by Sir Simon Canterville. Satirizing the traditional ghost story, Wilde inverts Gothic assumptions so that it is the ghost who becomes the victim, and those he haunts are seen as the aggressors. Thus, realizing they are being haunted, the Otis family rationalize their perceptions of the supernatural:[1]

The whole family were now quite interested; Mr. Otis began to suspect that he had been too dogmatic in his denial of the existence of

ghosts, Mrs. Otis expressed her intention of joining the Psychical Society, and Washington prepared a long letter to Messrs. Myers and Podmore on the subject of the Permanence of Sanguineous Stains when connected with Crime. That night all doubts about the objective existence of phantasmata were removed for ever.

(*CSF*, 210)[2]

The ghost himself sees haunting as a solemn duty 'to appear in the corridor once a week, and to gibber from the large oriel window on the first and third Wednesdays in every month, and he did not see how he could honourably escape from his obligations' (*CSF*, 219). Invoking Johann Heinrich Fuseli's famous picture, *The Nightmare* (1827), the ghost decides to teach the Otis twins a lesson: 'The first thing to be done was, of course, to sit upon their chests, so as to produce the stifling sensation of nightmare' (*CSF*, 216). The story is replete with such lampooning of the ghost story, using all its traditional tropes and themes, but rendering them comic rather than horrific. Thus, when the ghost first appears, his 'eyes were as red as burning coals; long grey hair fell over his shoulders in matted coils; his garments, which were of antique cut, were soiled and ragged, and from his wrists and ankles hung heavy manacles and rusty gyves' (*CSF*, 211). But in response to this seeming horror, Mr Otis simply offers the ghost a bottle of Tammanay Rising Sun Lubricator. The ghost story is thus used as a means of satirizing what Wilde saw as a lack of imagination and a bourgeois materialism on the part of the Americans. The point of the story is, according to Ian Small, 'that criminal behaviour is produced by society's lack of moral imagination and sympathy' (*CSF*, xx).

In 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' Wilde again subverts traditional modes, this time detective fiction and Gothic horror, and implicitly criticizes the values of his own age. Lord Arthur Savile is due to marry his sweetheart, Sibyl Merton, but postpones the wedding after he is told by a palm reader, Septimus Podgers, that he will commit a murder. Believing that to marry Sibyl 'with the doom of murder hanging over his head, would be a betrayal like that of Judas,' Savile decides to commit the perfect murder and thus get the problem out of the way before he embarks on wedlock (*CSF*, 180). The story comically charts his failed attempts at murdering his relatives until he finally manages to drown Podgers. Savile justifies murder on the grounds that it was his gentlemanly duty to fulfil his destiny as a murderer before he married, thus averting the shame that would accrue to his wife. As Small notes, in this tale the reader's focus is not on 'the triumph of good over evil', as in the traditional morality tale, but 'rather on the kind of society where murder is justified

on the grounds of right conduct' (*CSF*, xviii–xix). If we recall how in the House of Lords child prostitution was treated as a 'rite of passage' for young aristocrats and how Lord Bentinck defended the issue, a sense of the social absurdities that Wilde was lampooning becomes obvious.[3]

His intentions of social satire not withstanding, Wilde skilfully crafted his ironic Gothic tales to ape the traditional mode. Thus, as the Otis family enter the driveway to Canterville Chase, 'the sky became suddenly overcast with clouds, a curious stillness seemed to hold the atmosphere, a great flight of rooks passed silently over their heads' (*CSF*, 208). The house is tended by a black-garbed housekeeper who knows its ghostly secret, and when the ghost is confronted by Mr Otis's bottle of Lubricator he 'fled down the corridor, uttering low groans, and emitting a ghastly green light.' He is utterly deflated in his attempts to frighten the family, and 'hastily adopting the Fourth Dimension of Space as a means of escape, he vanished through the wainscoting' (*CSF*, 211). Wilde turns traditional horror into burlesque by endowing his ghost with emotions and mischievous, rather than evil, intent: 'He was to make his way quietly to Washington Otis's room, gibber at him from the foot of the bed, and stab himself three times in the throat to the sound of slow music.' Mrs Otis was to be subjected to a 'clammy hand' on her forehead while 'he hissed into her husband's ear the awful secrets of the charnel-house.' Because he was fond of Virginia Otis, she would merely hear a few 'hollow groans from the wardrobe' or 'if that failed to wake her, he might grabble at the counterpane with palsy-twitching fingers' (*CSF*, 215–16). Endowing his ghost with a psychological dimension, Wilde demystifies the Gothic encounter.

If 'The Canterville Ghost' mimics traditional Gothic narratives, 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' is a tale of the modern Gothic with a comic twist. Its setting in the metropolis, and Savile's melodramatic flight round London recall *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and anticipate Machen's tales of London horrors. Having heard Podgers's prediction that he will become a murderer, Savile, 'with a 'face blanched with terror, and eyes wild with grief', rushes from Bentinck House:

> The night was bitter cold, and the gas-lamps round the square flared and flickered in the keen wind; but his hands were hot with fever, and his forehead burned like fire. On and on he went, almost with the gait of a drunken man. A policeman looked curiously at him as he passed, and a beggar, who slouched from an archway to ask for alms, grew frightened, seeing misery greater than his own.
>
> (*CSF*, 176–7)

For the subject of the modern Gothic, encounters on the familiar London streets can be the stuff of nightmares. Thus even in Wilde's comic Gothic mode, Oxford Street leads to 'narrow, shameful alleys', women 'with painted faces mocked at' Savile, and from 'a dark courtyard came a sound of oaths and blows, followed by shrill screams, and, huddled upon a damp doorstep, he saw the crook-backed forms of poverty and eld' (*CSF*, 177).[4] Reflecting Gothic perceptions, London is figured as a disorienting maze: Savile 'had a dim memory of wandering through a labyrinth of sordid houses, of being lost in a giant web of sombre streets' (*CSF*, 178). In his paranoia, Savile reads London anew and Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night' becomes a city of dreadful dawn: 'A London free from the sin of night and the smoke of day, a pallid, ghost-like city, a desolate town of tombs!' (*CSF*, 179). This is the schismatic city of the modern Gothic, where night and day, wealth and poverty, morality and vice, define the two faces of the modern metropolis, and gentlemen prowl the streets with evil intent.

Savile becomes a comic terrorist, somewhat after Stevenson's Zero. When his scheme to poison an elderly aunt fails, he turns to dynamite. As in *Jekyll and Hyde*, it is imagined that the seedier haunts of Soho offer refuge to social outcasts and public enemies. In this case Herr Winckelkopf, a 'famous conspirator', is found in one of its obscure and dingy parts, housed in suspicious lodgings. Winckelkopf supplies Savile with an explosive clock, which like Zero's faulty devices, emits only a puff of smoke. Like the other foreigners and immigrants, strangers with swarthy complexions, of Gothic fiction, Winckelkopf, with his Jewish-sounding name, and his terrorist connections is stereotyped as the oily villain. He is, according to Lady Windermere, 'a most dreadful conspirator', and a 'man who had blown up ever so many people, and always wore a coat of mail' (*CSF*, 169). Wilde lampoons the pretensions of the rich in inviting such people to dinner, and like Stevenson in *The Dynamiters*, satirizes the current preoccupation with urban terrorism; hence, Winckelkopf comes across as a rather ironic terrorist.

Many of Wilde's short stories are fairy tales or stories written for his own children: they are often whimsical morality tales with a typical Wildean twist. 'The Canterville Ghost' and 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' differ from the bulk of Wilde's short fiction in terms of the way he weaves Gothic themes into comic tales. Prior to the publication of these comic tales, Wilde had written a more sustained Gothic narrative in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In this, Wilde's only novel, horror and duality spring from the desire for eternal life, narcissism and a hedonistic

yearning that result in dreadful suicide, murder and a horrible transformation in death. For, as Botting observes:

> While science disclosed grand unifying powers, horror was another mode of cultural reunification, a response to the sexual figures that threaten society . . . In this loosening of moral, aesthetic and sexual codes associated with *fin de siècle* decadence, the spectre of homosexuality, as narcissistic, sensually indulgent and unnaturally perverse, constituted a form of deviance that signalled the irruption of regressive patterns of behaviour.
>
> (Botting, 138)

In *Dorian Gray*, the deviant in society exhibiting regressive tendencies is not a monster whose degeneracy is figured in his repulsiveness, as in Hyde, but rather a monster whose deviancy is caused by his extreme narcissism, a decadent Gothic subject whose beauty is the wellspring of horror.

## Decadence and the Gothic: Dorian Gray

*Dorian Gray* is infused with the decadence associated with works like those of Gautier, Baudelaire, Algernon Swinburne, Edward Dowson and Walter Pater. A concern with artificiality characterized the Decadent movement, as expressed in Wilde's ostentatious preference for dyed green carnations over natural flowers. For many, the Decadent movement was encapsulated in Joris-Karl Huysmans's novel *A Rebours* (1884), whose hero, Des Esseintes, is a recluse who surrounds himself with beautiful, artificially enhanced objects.[5] This novel is most frequently cited as the inspiration for the 'poisonous' yellow-covered volume that had such an influence on Dorian Gray. It is now understood that Dorian's 'bible' is largely imaginary, inspired by a variety of sources, including *A Rebours*.[6]

A pursuit of the aesthetic is the key to Dorian's dissolution. Gazing at his own likeness, like a nineteenth-century Narcissus, Dorian is doomed the moment he declares his aesthetic yearnings: 'If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that – for that – I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!' (*DG*, 26). From there on the trajectory of Dorian's life describes a decadent descent into the most appalling narcissism. William Buckler identifies Wilde's concern with the aesthetic in the novel as a response to the literature of realism:

'The linking of strangeness to beauty and of fantasy to intellectual refinement in an atmosphere oddly poignant and human shows that, for Mallarmé at any rate, Wilde had fully succeeded in his attempt to create a work of "romantic art" as a deliberate aesthetic reaction "against the brutality of plain realism"' (Buckler, 144).[7] Wilde, however, was drawing on a host of other literary conventions in *Dorian Gray*: Kerry Powell has shown that the 'magic picture' was a frequent device of the Gothic novel of the late 1700s.[8] In fact as early as 1764 Walpole employed the 'magic picture' in *The Castle of Otranto*.[9] *Dorian Gray*'s Gothic heritage is established by Wilde's use of this convention: 'That Dorian should cloak his picture with a satin coverlet, and hide it away, encase it in a gilded frame, regard it with fascination, view it as some-how alive – all these accessories have precedent enough in the novels of Walpole, Radcliffe, and Wilde's kinsman Maturin' (Powell, 148). Placing *Dorian Gray* in its contemporary literary scene, Powell says that by the close of the 1880s stories featuring magic pictures had swollen to the proportions of a 'deluge' (Powell, 151).[10]

   *Dorian Gray* is also inspired by any number of doppelgänger tales. Yet, with its aesthetic concerns, and contemporary London setting, *Dorian Gray* reveals Wilde's awareness of the anxieties that beset many *fin de siècle* writers, including the new realists and the naturalists. Regenia Gagnier suggests that the novel is a cultural signifier reflecting the market society of the *fin de siècle*:

> Situating *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the scandal it provoked in a crisis of images of dandies, gentlemen and women, and situating Wilde in the context of late-Victorian social institutions of journalism, advertising, public schools, homosexual communities, criminology, etiquette, theatre and prisons, sheds light not only on Wilde's paradoxical style but also on the circulation and consumption of knowledge in market society, in which knowledge is never pure of its packaging, the message never separable from the medium.
>
> (In Raby, 27)

Within an overall Gothic narrative, the London of the 1890s is a significant presence in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The geographical divisions of the city, the social and class concerns of the *fin de siècle*, the *flâneur* and the sexual predator, are all evident in Wilde's tale of moral corruption and the magic picture. The Decadents' quest for beauty in all things is opposed by the sordid reality of life in the poorer parts of *fin de siècle* London. As Punter says, '*Dorian Gray* encourages no faith in artifice,

either artifice in others or the self-artifice which is supposed to be the crux of decadence' (Punter, 7). Employing the Gothic mode in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde reveals the shallowness of an aestheticism that fails to recognize the need for a human conscience.

## Scandals and serializations

Serialization of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* began in *Lippincott's Magazine*, vol. 46, no. 271, in July 1890. Much shorter than the subsequent published novel, this version, while being critically well received in America, caused such moral outrage in England that Ward, Lock & Co. were forced to withdraw any remaining copies of the magazine.[11] The reading public took offence at the corruption and suggestions of homosexuality inherent in the story. A report by the London correspondent of the *New York Times*, 29 June 1890, had this to say:

> It must have excited vastly more interest here than in America simply because since last year's exposure of what are euphemistically styled West End scandals, Englishmen have been abnormally sensitive to the faintest suggestion of pruriency in the direction of friendships. Very likely this bestial suspicion did not cross the mind of one American reader out of ten thousand, but here the whole town leaped at it with avidity, and one moral journal called for the intervention of the Public Prosecutor.
>
> (*DG*, 329)

The 'West End scandals' referred to are not connected with the 'Maiden Tribute' but are rather another example of English aristocratic vice, also known as the 'Cleveland Street affair'. These scandals amounted almost to a 'Victorian Watergate' in which telegraph boys were 'procured for a gay brothel at 19 Cleveland Street that catered to swells and aristocrats' (*DG*, 330). The affair involved Lord Arthur Somerset, from the Prince of Wales's household, and possibly Prince Albert Victor, eldest son of the Prince of Wales and second in line to the throne.[12]

   Prior to the 'Cleveland Street affair', Wilde had provoked antagonism with the publication of 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.', in which the old theory that Shakespeare dedicated his sonnets to a young boy actor in his company is given fictional form. Shakespeare's supposed lover, Willie Hughes, is a precursor to Dorian Gray with his 'golden hair, his tender flower-like grace, his dreamy deep-sunken eyes, his delicate mobile limbs, and his white lily hands'. But, the assertion that this fictional

youth was Shakespeare's lover goes beyond anything overtly stated in the final version of *Dorian Gray*. When the narrator avers, 'Yes; who else but he could have been the master-mistress of Shakespeare's passion,' a homoerotic desire is clearly inferred (*CSF*, 69). *The Picture of Dorian Gray* served as salt on the already open wound, and Wilde experienced a barrage of criticism in the press. The *Daily Chronicle* for 30 June 1890 was vitriolic:

> It is a tale spawned from the leprous literature of the French *Décadents* – a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction – a gloating study of the mental and physical corruption of a fresh, fair and golden youth, which might be horrible and fascinating but for its effeminate frivolity, its studied insincerity, its theatrical cynicism, its tawdry mysticism, its flippant philosophisings, and the contaminating trail of garish vulgarity which is over all Mr Wilde's elaborate Wardour Street æstheticism and obtrusively cheap scholarship.

> (*DG*, 342–3)

Wilde had touched a very public nerve; Merlin Holland avers that 'Victorian London simply squirmed with discomfort', and 'Constance was said to have remarked: "Since Oscar wrote, no one will speak to us"' (Holland, 137).

As with *Jekyll and Hyde*, public anxieties found expression in literature, and public scandals became closely associated with fictional characters and their actions. The *Lippincott's* version had to be revised. Wilde subsequently added six chapters, removing many of the overt homoerotic suggestions of the original manuscripts, suppressing the 'too obvious' moral, elaborating on the Sibyl Vane story, and introducing James Vane as an ineffectual agent for revenge. Yet some less obvious allusions remain. Beckson points out that while John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis were attempting to offer a 'scientifically enlightened view of homosexuality . . . other writers had been publishing paeans to male beauty.' Among these Beckson includes Wilde, who 'by employing the characteristic device of a Greek name for Dorian Gray, suggests the novel's intent, and Lord Henry Wotton emphasises the Uranian subtext by alluding to him as "a young Adonis" and "a Narcissus"' (Beckson, 208). Nevertheless, despite these allusions, Wilde's alterations resulted in a more muted outcry amid greater critical acclaim.

## Morality and sexuality: *Dorian Gray* and *Jekyll and Hyde*

The milieu of *Dorian Gray* is overtly one of corrupt and corrupting individuals. Once Sibyl Vane is removed there is not one character that elicits the reader's sympathies: even Basil Hallward comes across as weak and moralizing. The novel reveals immorality on a large scale among the upper echelons of London society. Wotton has corrupted Dorian, and Dorian in turn has corrupted numerous souls across the city. Vice and corruption in *Dorian Gray* are not confined to the principal character: they are seen as endemic in high-society London. This, then, is an altogether more troubling picture of late nineteenth-century London society than Stevenson leaves us with. On one level, Stevenson deals with the individual psyche; from the outset, Wilde suggests a more ubiquitous disease. Thus, for Cavaliero, the book's 'background is that atmosphere of combined guilt, fear, and defiant speech and behaviour which exemplified the homosexual consciousness in late nineteenth-century Britain' (Cavaliero, 70).

   Isobel Murray provides 'evidence that Wilde found *Jekyll and Hyde* suggestive in . . . that it inspired some of the very different themes of his own work, especially but not exclusively "The Fisherman and his Soul" and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*' (Murray, 312). Jerusha McCormack points out that although contemporary reviewers were quick to spot the allusions to Stevenson's text, they also found influences in Poe, Balzac, Bulwer-Lytton and Disraeli:

> As every new 'source' confirms, it is the book's very lack of originality that is the secret of its power. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde has tapped a root of Western folklore so deep and ubiquitous that the story itself has escaped the literary and returned to its origins in the oral tradition. Almost everyone knows the plot of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; very few have read it. The tale flourishes as modern myth while the book itself lies rotting in the attic.
>
> (In Raby, 111)

For McCormack the story is split between the oral and the literary, and thus it 'explores the faultline, that, in itself, defines the modern' (Raby, 111). Modernity entails all sorts of blurring of boundaries that in themselves suggest duality: *Dorian Gray* blurs the boundaries between identities, between the physical Dorian and his painted representation, between Dorian and Wotton with his vicarious pleasure in Dorian's career, and between Dorian and Basil Hallward, the unwitting creator of

his alter-image. Finally, Wilde himself pointed to the merging of the personalities into that of their creator when he famously declared that Wotton was what the world thought him to be, Dorian what he wanted to be, and Basil what he believed himself to be. As Neil Cornwell says, 'Wilde has intensified in *Dorian Gray* the nineteenth-century obsession with the double into ever more intricate combinations and shapes' (Cornwell, 106).

Murray suggests that in *Dorian Gray* Wilde echoes *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and, 'at the same time he has a very different story to tell, a story that is central to his own theories of art, life, egotism and individualism, and very different in its essence from Stevenson's grim sermon about an evil that seems gratifyingly horrible and untempting to all but the unfortunate Henry Jekyll' (Murray, 316). Punter goes further and argues that, in effect, *Dorian Gray* has no heroes, and the 'fire, the primitive barbaric energy of the Gothic hero are absent' (Punter, 9). But the point here is that Dorian is not the hero of a traditional Gothic narrative. Rather, he is another example of how the modern Gothic shifts its concerns to the activities of the metropolitan citizen.

Hyde is an exponent of the urban street crime: his activities are of the city. The drawing rooms and men's clubs of the novel are ostensibly home to morally upright individuals: society's self-righteous. Only when one probes more deeply does the hollowness of these lives and the fragility of their morality become clear. Wilde cuts across these divides and offers us a counter vision to the upper class as a paradigm for moral rectitude. The salons and drawing rooms of *Dorian Gray* admit the dilettante Wotton, who roams the early part of the novel with a snake-like invidiousness, breathing poison into Dorian's ear and filling the drawing room conversations with his own pernicious philosophy. The divide between good and evil is not clear-cut in this novel and the possibility of corruption exists at all levels of society. After all, it is Dorian himself who 'with a wild gesture of despair' declares to Hallward, 'Each of us has Heaven and Hell in him, Basil' (*DG*, 122).

Duality is a theme that recurs in various forms in Wilde: in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893), the heroine says to her husband: 'There is the same world for all of us, and good and evil, sin and innocence, go through it hand in hand' (*IBE*, 63).[13] In *An Ideal Husband* (1899), when Lady Chiltern realizes her husband's scandalous secret, she too accuses him of a deceptive duality: 'Oh! what a mask you have been wearing all these years! A horrible painted mask!' (*IBE*, 230). Cecily Cardew in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1899) teases Algernon by inverting the traditional perception of the double life: 'I hope you have not been leading a double life,

pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time' (*IBE*, 320). The plays are social satire; in *Dorian Gray*, as in *Jekyll and Hyde*, duality has an altogether darker purpose, as Halberstam explains:

> In Wilde's novel the other self is an outer rather than an inner self, it is hidelike, all surface, a canvas; but unlike Stevenson's Hyde, the portrait exists apart from Dorian Gray . . . while science separated Jekyll from Hyde and seemed to produce a repressed self from a surface self, here art serves to separate Dorian from his hideous other spatially.
>
> (Halberstam, 70)

At his trial, 'the *Lippincott's* version of *Dorian Gray* was used as evidence of Wilde's corrupting influence on the nation's youth and on Queensberry's son in particular' (*DG*, ix). While Wilde identified elements of himself in the three main characters of the book, the prosecution implied that Hallward's question to Dorian, '"Why is your friendship so fatal to young men?"' carried suggestions of vice (*DG*, 117). Wilde parried the question, responding that although the novel 'described Dorian Gray as a man of very corrupt influence . . . there was no statement as to the nature of his influence' (Pearson, 159). Wilde became as reviled a figure as his fictional creation, Dorian. Pearson notes that 'we learn from Sherard that "a lady who belongs to the highest English nobility" wrote to him that "the ordinary run of English society *hated* Oscar"' (Pearson, 295). The working classes were less restrained and revealed the bitterness of the class divide in late-Victorian Britain. Pearson offers some anecdotal evidence of the vilification of Wilde by the ordinary public:

> For the lower classes it was a sort of 'Roman holiday'. What they believed to be an aristocrat had been flung to the legal lions; bawdy jokes were bandied about in the streets; and any man who had long hair or wore an eye-glass or dressed too well or spoke in a refined manner or carried a noticeable bunch of flowers was liable to have 'Oscar' yelled at him and to attract the unwelcome attention of every loafer and passer-by in the vicinity.
>
> (Pearson, 194–5)

*The Crowd* appeared in Britain in the same year, and if Pearson's account is to be believed Le Bon's study may have contained elements of truth.

Unlike the fraternity of *Jekyll and Hyde* whose purpose is to shield Jekyll and preserve his reputation, the fraternity of *Dorian Gray* are, for the most part, self-seeking individuals. In the case of Wotton, even a vicarious pleasure seems to be derived from Dorian's love affair with Sibyl Vane. Dorian is, in a sense, Wotton's 'double', the Hyde-like character through whom Wotton can, like Jekyll, live the experiences denied to an older man. When Wotton muses that to 'a large extent the lad was his own creation' and concludes that it 'was delightful to watch him' (*DG*, 49) we are reminded of Jekyll's 'leap of welcome' at the sight of Hyde in the mirror, and his acknowledgement that, 'This, too, was myself' (*JH*, 58). Wotton gains the same kind of perverse pleasure from Dorian's infamous career as Jekyll initially does from that of his 'creation': talking to Dorian 'was like playing upon an exquisite violin. He answered to every touch and thrill of the bow . . . There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence' (*DG*, 33); and there is something extremely sensual in that analogy too. It is Wotton's intention to 'dominate' Dorian: 'He would make that wonderful spirit his own. There was something fascinating in this son of Love and Death' (*DG*, 34).[14]

The social milieu of *Dorian Gray* is more overtly subversive of Victorian society than *Jekyll and Hyde*, but holding a mirror up to the world of upper-class corruption was probably not a good idea in the wake of the 'Cleveland Street affair'. As Lawler explains: 'the affair had provided the press with stories of scandals in high places and degradations in low ones for about five months, carrying into March 1890, sixty days before the *Lippincott's Dorian Gray* appeared on the newsstands' (*DG*, 330). It was not just the sexual prudery of Victorian society that was offended: 'Other related charges against the morality of the story mentioned Wilde's treatment of vice and crime, the poisonous atmosphere of sin and corruption that Wilde builds up so suggestively' (*DG*, 331). 'The Maiden Tribute', the Ripper murders and now the 'Cleveland Street affair' were incontrovertible proof that immorality and vice lay at the heart of London society. Concerns for the 'moral health' of the nation had never been more acute. In the midst of this anxiety to publish a story portraying corruption in upper-class circles may have seemed audacious. Certainly some, like this reviewer for the *Scots Observer* on 5 July 1890, thought so:

> Mr Oscar Wilde has again been writing stuff that were better unwritten; and while 'The Picture of Dorian Gray,' which he contributes to *Lippincott's*, is ingenious, interesting, full of cleverness, and plainly

the work of a man of letters, it is false art – for its interest is medico-legal; it is false to human nature – for its hero is a devil; it is false to morality – for it is not made sufficiently clear that the writer does not prefer a course of unnatural iniquity to a life of cleanliness, health, and sanity. The story – which deals with matters only fitted for the Criminal Investigation Department or a hearing *in camera* – is discreditable alike to author and editor.

(*DG*, 346)

Such hysterical reactions assume Wilde to be an advocate for Mephistopheles, but, for Joyce Carol Oates, 'Wilde's great theme is the Fall – the fall of innocence and its consequences' (Oates, 13). Despite the outrage of early reviewers, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is in fact a deeply moral book.

Dorian's moral decline is precipitated by his adoption of Wotton's 'new hedonism'. Lawler sees this 'new hedonism' as an 'aesthetic refinement of the old with a dash of modern science, selectively interpreted to reinforce the acquisition of new sensations.' In Dorian's hands this philosophy is a kind of 'new antinomianism': 'Dorian sees himself absolved by the portrait from the effects of a life of self-indulgence. His sins are too obvious, but his error was to try to realize an aesthetic ideal in his life and thus to make life into an art form of self-gratification' (*DG*, 23 n. 6). The object of Wotton's 'new' hedonism is 'the experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be . . . it was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment' (*DG*, 101). Rachel Bowlby compares this to the 'Conclusion' of Pater's *The Renaissance*. As with Wilde, 'the argument is against a puritanical deferral of gratification, the fruit rather than the experience, and celebrates in its place the "curiously testing" experiential-experimental openness to what is "new" in the form of "opinions" and "impressions"' (Bowlby, 154). This is an extreme reaction against a Victorian repression of the sensual. Henry Jekyll found Victorian 'respectability' too constraining of his inner passions and sought his own release through his vicarious enjoyment of Hyde's activities. To Jekyll/Hyde's pursuit of pleasure for self-gratification Wilde adds an aesthetic dimension in Wotton's 'new' hedonism. Ultimately the selfishness of such a way of life is destructive of others and of the self. Yet the progress towards self-destruction is often exhilarating, and it is this exhilaration that motivates Jekyll and Dorian. Only in his final moments does Dorian realize that the portrait had 'been like conscience to him' (*DG*, 169); near the end, Jekyll

replaces his delight in Hyde's activities with 'the horror of my other self' (*JH*, 68). As Halberstam says, both novels use the Gothic monster as a warning:

> The Gothic monster is precisely a disciplinary sign, a warning of what might happen if the body is imprisoned by its desires or if the subject is unable to discipline him- or herself fully and successfully. The failure to self-discipline, as exemplified by both Dr. Jekyll and Dorian Gray, results in social death, outlaw and outcast status, and ultimately physical demise.
>
> (Halberstam, 72)

Miller comments that *Dorian Gray* is filled with transgressions 'of the Stevensonian kind, especially, where pleasure and cruelty go together'. The 'hard look' that the portrait acquires emphasizes the fact that 'Wilde wanted Dorian's misdeeds to be regarded as such; he did not want to be read as saying curtly or coarsely that people should have a good time' (Miller, 228). Indeed as Miller points out, it is the duality of the book that allowed it to be quoted both by the prosecution and by the defence at Wilde's trial.[15] Earlier Victorian 'potboilers' were often sensational crime stories, but closure was generally characterized by an ignominious death for the villainous and a happy ensuing life for the righteous. Mary Braddon addresses her audience at the end of *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) with these consoling words: 'I hope no one will take objection to my story because the end of it leaves the good people all happy and at peace' (*Lady Audley's Secret*, 475). Braddon was herself 'attacked for corrupting young minds by making crime and violence attractive', but Stevenson, in fact, was counted among her admirers (Drabble, 125).

    *Lady Audley's Secret* was written in the mid-century, a time of much greater national confidence when questions about the 'moral health' of the population, evidence of corruption throughout society, were not the general order of the day. At the *fin de siècle* Wilde's text was in tune with the cultural and social climate, even though many of his critics did not like what he said. The narrative of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* prowls late-nineteenth century London with a cynicism that is at variance with much of the earlier sensational romance. Richard Ellman goes so far as to claim that after *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 'Victorian literature had a different look' (Ellman, 314). Like *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Dorian Gray* is more than a tale of diabolic duality in an individual: it exposes the social divisions and self-delusions inherent in late-Victorian society.

## Sibyl and Dorian: when two worlds meet

As with *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* uses the geography of late nineteenth-century London to figuratively underpin the thematic dualism of the text. The places and spaces of London map the preoccupations of the psyche. Thus Dorian's philosophy of hedonism finds expression in his gorgeous surroundings and sartorial trappings; his darker vices are mirrored in the opium dens and back streets of London's Docklands and etched on his portrait. The London landscape thus emphasizes the extremes of experience available to his protagonist.

Dorian finds Sibyl Vane in one of London's many popular theatres, the antithesis to the elegant haunts of Piccadilly and Berkeley Square that he frequents with Wotton. Gazing at the innumerable faces in the Piccadilly streets excites in Dorian 'a mad curiosity'. He felt that there was 'an exquisite poison in the air', and he had a 'passion for sensations':

> I don't know what I expected, but I went out and wandered eastward, soon losing my way in a labyrinth of grimy streets and black, grass-less squares. About half-past eight I passed by an absurd little theatre, with great flaring gas-jets and gaudy playbills. A hideous Jew, in the most amazing waistcoat I ever beheld in my life, was standing at the entrance, smoking a vile cigar.
>
> <div align="right">(<em>DG</em>, 42)</div>

Here Wilde conjures up the reality of London's poorer districts, where the '"penny gaffs" were the primary attraction – cheap theatre for the poorest of the poor', as Fishman notes:[16]

> Mackay noticed a cluster along the Whitechapel Road transforming the foggy gloom of the side streets into pockets of bright lights and gaiety. Most 'gaffs' consisted of a bare, shabby downstairs room with an improvised stage, the entrance door opening on to the street. Here could be seen
>
>> The medicine man with his wizard oil which cures all ills – no matter how taken, internally or externally – as well as the shooting stand, whose waving kerosene oil flames make the gaslights unnecessary.
>>
>> <div align="right">(Fishman, 320)</div>

Dorian's eastbound journey leads him to the Holborn Royal Theatre, which according to the Inquest report on Sibyl's death was her place of work.[17]

Isaacs's theatre seems to fall somewhere between the 'penny gaffs' described by Mackay and the elegant theatres of the West End. Finding himself in a 'horrid little private box, with a vulgar drop-scene' Dorian registers his disgust:

> I looked out from behind the curtain, and surveyed the house. It was a tawdry affair, all Cupids and cornucopias, like a third-rate wedding cake. The gallery and the pit were fairly full, but the two rows of dingy stalls were quite empty, and there was hardly a person in what I suppose they call the dress-circle. Women went about with oranges and ginger-beer, and there was a terrible consumption of nuts going on.
>
> (*DG*, 43)

Dorian emphasizes the 'otherness' of this place when he avers that the play, *Romeo and Juliet*, was 'good enough for us, Harry', though he feels annoyance at 'the idea of seeing Shakespeare done in such a wretched hole of a place' (*DG*, 44). It is a shabby venue where 'young bloods' come to amuse themselves:

> The heat was terribly oppressive, and the huge sunlight flamed like a monstrous dahlia with petals of yellow fire. The youths in the gallery had taken off their coats and waistcoats and hung them over the side. They talked to each other across the theatre, and shared their oranges with the tawdry girls who sat beside them. Some women were laughing in the pit. Their voices were horribly shrill and discordant. The sound of popping corks came from the bar.
>
> (*DG*, 66)

The audience are 'common, rough people, with their coarse faces and brutal gestures', signalling Dorian's perceived superiority to his surroundings, and possibly revealing Wilde's inherent snobbery.[18] The 'otherness' of these people is emphasized when Dorian declares that Sibyl's acting 'spiritualizes them, and one feels that they are of the same flesh and blood as one's self'. The gulf between the upper classes and the poor is emphasized further when Wotton responds with, 'The same flesh and blood as one's self! Oh, I hope not!' (*DG*, 66). There is none of Charles Booth's compassion for London's poor here.

Dorian expresses sentiments close to those of Jekyll when he outlines to Wotton his reasons for wandering eastward:

> I had a passion for sensations . . . Well, one evening about seven o'clock, I determined to go out in search of some adventure. I felt that this grey, monstrous London of ours, with its myriads of people, its sordid sinners, and its splendid sins, as you once phrased it, must have something in store for me. I fancied a thousand things. The mere danger gave me a sense of delight.
>
> (*DG*, 42)

Jekyll and Dorian seek the pleasures of sin in the full awareness of the immorality of their desires. Of course, these two are not alone in seeking out London's less salubrious locales as the scene of excitement and sensation: Fishman states that the 'romantic illusions of East End "low-class" life attracted the permanent involvement of a number of off-beat upper-class eccentrics, who essayed to go "native"' (Fishman, 186). Wilde and Stevenson project onto their fictional upper-class 'heroes' the actual desires fuelled by the existence of the poorer districts of London.[19] Duality is highlighted by the attitudes of these fictional *flâneurs*, who regard themselves as morally and intellectually superior to the class of people among whom they seek their entertainment. *Dorian Gray* takes as its theme the duality of the individual, who finds his pleasures through the inherent duality of the society in which he lives. The polarization of the class divide into East and West London provides the geographic underpinning of the premise of duality: illicit pleasures are located in the East; social elegance in the West.

Dorian's description of the rowdy 'young bloods' in Isaacs's theatre, flirting with the 'tawdry' girls, is redolent of the London that Wilde knew well. The 'popping corks' in the bar, suggesting champagne, lends a sense of celebration to the scene, and a frisson of sexual excitement hovers beneath the surface of his image of these young 'swells' sharing oranges with the girls seated beside them. It is a highly charged atmosphere in which the classes come together with the promise of illicit sex, under the guise of watching Shakespeare. In fact the Hoxton/Holborn location of Isaacs's theatre posits a kind of social watershed where the classes meet on the edges of two very divergent communities. It is seemingly Dorian's first foray into the underworld of London that will later be the location of much of his debauchery.

Sibyl calls Dorian her 'Prince Charming' and she is his 'Cinderella', but the chasm between her world and her lover's is made painfully clear when Sibyl and James notice Dorian in Hyde Park: 'Suddenly she caught a glimpse of golden hair and laughing lips, and in an open carriage with two ladies Dorian drove past.' Then the carriage speeds away: 'at that

moment the Duke of Berwick's four-in-hand came between, and when it had left the space clear, the carriage had swept out of the Park' (*DG*, 57). She is deluded in believing in Dorian: James, altogether more worldly, has a 'strong sense of the danger of Sibyl's position' (*DG*, 55). If Dorian takes advantage of Sibyl, she may end up like one of her less fortunate sisters cited by Fishman: 'Harkness tells of a family whose only income is derived from their daughter's wages of sin. Once a clean-living girl, she had become one of the "unfortunates" through dire necessity' (Fishman, 122). Such real-life tragedies remind us of the potential future awaiting Sibyl without her 'Prince Charming'.

The poverty of Sibyl's background is symbolized by the single arm-chair gracing her mother's 'dingy sitting-room'. Mrs Vane, an actress herself, is a faded, tired-looking woman' with 'coarse powder' daubed on her cheeks (*DG*, 51–2), and it seems probable that Isaacs has paid Mrs Vane in exchange for sexual favours: 'Mr. Isaacs has advanced us fifty pounds to pay off our debts, and to get a proper outfit for James. You must not forget that, Sibyl. Fifty pounds is a very large sum. Mr. Isaacs has been most considerate.' But Sibyl's declaration that she hates the way he talks to her and that he is not a gentleman also implies that Isaacs has designs on her. Mrs Vane's querulous response, 'I don't know how we could manage without him,' invites speculation that she is willing, like the mothers exposed in 'The Maiden Tribute', to exchange her daughter's chastity for Isaacs's money (*DG*, 51). Indeed, Mrs Vane, characterized by Wilde as 'Wisdom', is a manipulative person, and when she learns of Dorian's wealth she speaks to Sibyl of entrapment or possibly blackmail: 'Then Wisdom altered its method and spoke of espial and discovery. This young man might be rich. If so, marriage should be thought of. Against the shell of her ear broke the waves of worldly cunning. The arrows of craft shot by her. She saw the thin lips moving, and smiled' (*DG*, 52).

James may be coarse and uneducated, but he has a sense of honour lacking in the mother. Aware of Sibyl's vulnerability at the hands of predatory 'gentlemen', James urges caution: '"Watch over Sibyl, mother," he cried, "watch over her."' Her mother, however, reveals her own dubious past in defending Sibyl's relationship with Dorian: 'You are speaking of things you don't understand, James. In the profession we are accustomed to receive a great deal of most gratifying attention. I myself used to receive many bouquets at one time. That was when acting was really understood' (*DG*, 54). In 1888, even after 'The Maiden Tribute', '*Justice* revealed that child prostitution was currently rife, the victims "bartered for gold, the agents alone being punished, when

the police choose to discover them, whilst the names of their purchasers are suppressed." There was perpetual demand for the "services" of poor women and children by wealthy young bloods from the West End' (Fishman, 123). Given this situation for poor women, Mrs Vane's eagerness to marry Sibyl off to Dorian takes on an altogether more understandable air: when she avers that 'Of course, if this gentleman is wealthy, there is no reason why she should not contract an alliance with him' (*DG*, 54), her main consideration is ensuring a secure future for her daughter. A few pages later we learn that James is illegitimate, the result of the union of his mother and a married 'gentleman'.

Mrs Vane's home on the Euston Road is 'shabby', and the lifestyle grubby: through the 'rumble of omnibuses, and the clatter of street-cabs' James sits down to a 'meagre meal' while the flies crawl over 'the stained cloth' (*DG*, 58). The Euston Road was, at that time, partly due to the railway terminals, a district of sleaze. Lawler notes that it was characterized by 'flophouses, pawnshops, second-hand dealers, brothels, and cheap theatres' (*DG*, 54). Men like Dorian might 'slum it' in London's poor communities and dally with young girls like Sibyl, but they rarely married them. Yet, some such 'gentlemen' found East End life preferable to their moneyed existence, as Fishman reports: 'Not only the criminal, but that curious déclassé figure, the gentleman "slummer", was a frequent inhabitant. Initially drawn to the East End for his first experience of cheap and easy sex, and to savour the colour and vibrancy of the pub and the music hall, he stayed, permanently hooked' (Fishman, 28). This, in a sense, is Jekyll's dilemma: he is 'hooked' on these illicit pleasures, but cannot 'go native'. Dorian Gray, of course, is too much of an aesthete to look for such an existence on a permanent basis. James, a true child of the slums, thinks he recognizes in Dorian a sexual predator. 'This young dandy who was making love to her could mean her no good' (*DG*, 55), he warns. When he impresses on Sibyl the fact that Dorian wants to 'enslave her' (*DG*, 57) there is an unmistakable allusion to the sexual 'enslavement' that many attractive poor girls experienced.

Wotton is more pragmatic than either Dorian or Hallward, and hints that Sibyl may have tricked Dorian into a marriage proposal. The classes are divided by suspicion: a suspicion on the part of the poor that they will be enslaved, and the fear of the upper classes that they will be duped by the 'grasping' poor. The Gothic of the *fin de siècle* is evident in this class divide where the aristocrat is figured as a bloodsucking vampire: effectively, Dorian feeds off Sibyl's beauty and innocence until he grows tired of her and discards her. After he breaks off their engagement,

Dorian wanders through districts that seem to be London's East End or that recall the Soho of *Jekyll and Hyde*:

> He remembered wandering through dimly-lit streets, past gaunt black-shadowed archways and evil-looking houses. Women with hoarse voices and harsh laughter had called after him. Drunkards had reeled by cursing, and chattering to themselves like monstrous apes. He had seen grotesque children huddled upon door-steps, and heard shrieks and oaths from gloomy courts.
>
> (*DG*, 71)

Here is a Gothicized London where the poor are Le Bon's bestial, indistinguishable mob. By contrast, Dorian's Grosvenor Square home with its 'oak-panelled hall of entrance' and its octagonal bed-chamber, that, in his 'new-born feeling for luxury', Dorian had 'decorated for himself, and hung with some curious Renaissance tapestries that had been discovered stored in a disused attic at Selby Royal', speaks of another world (*DG*, 72).[20] Halberstam detects a duality in *Dorian Gray* in that 'Wilde associates homosexuality with illusion and heterosexuality with reality': 'So, for example, Dorian rejects Sibyl when he discovers his own preference for illusion and artifice over reality' (Halberstam, 65). His immersion in the artifice of decor and aesthetics emphasizes his distance from the actual world of struggle and genuine feeling that Sibyl endures. Dorian's milieu is that of the upper classes, like that of Lady Markby in *An Ideal Husband*, who sees herself as a race apart from the lower classes who make 'painful observations through the windows of the carriage': 'The fact is that our Society is terribly overpopulated. Really, someone should arrange a proper scheme of assisted emigration. It would do a great deal of good' (*IBE*, 223). Duality for Wilde is thus bound up with social divisions.

Sibyl belongs to the 'rabble'; thus her gruesome suicide is regarded as no more than a threat to Dorian's reputation, as Wotton explains: 'There will have to be an inquest, of course, and you must not be mixed up in it. Things like that make a man fashionable in Paris. But in London people are so prejudiced' (*DG*, 78). Real-life precedents for Wotton's fears for Dorian abounded, of course: the 'Cleveland Street scandal'; 'The Maiden Tribute'; and the anxiety of the aristocracy after the Ripper murders, particularly surrounding the young Duke of Clarence. Theories suggesting the involvement of Masons in a cover-up of royal activities prove Wotton's concerns. When he says, 'Yes; it is very tragic, of course, but you must not get yourself mixed up in it,' Wotton

displays the callous arrogance of his breeding and exposes class divisions. Dorian compounds this feeling of distance from Sibyl's death when he says, 'And yet I must admit that this thing that has happened does not affect me as it should. It seems to me to be simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded' (*DG*, 80). In Halberstam's sense of reality and artifice, Dorian embraces the illusion of drama and refuses the world of genuine feeling. The narrative of Sibyl and her tragic death is critical in establishing the detachment that Dorian cultivates throughout the remainder of the story.

Despite Dorian's glorification of the circumstances, such gruesome suicides were by no means rare occurrences among London's poor. Fishman details numerous attempted, and successful, suicides in the East End in the year 1888, often women abused by husbands or who found themselves in such dire poverty that they were unable to continue.[21] Encouraged by Wotton to forget Sibyl, Dorian muses over the fact that he has 'murdered' her:

> Yet the roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden. And to-night I am to dine with you, and then go on to the Opera, and sup somewhere, I suppose, afterwards. How extraordinarily dramatic life is! If I had read all this in a book, Harry, I think I should have wept over it. Somehow, now that it has happened actually, and to me, it seems far too wonderful for tears.
>
> (*DG*, 78–9)

Wilde's modern Gothic presents an opposition between the beauty of the natural world and the ugliness of terror. Thus Savile has similar feelings of distance the morning after Podgers's prediction: 'Never had life seemed lovelier to him, never had things of evil seemed more remote' (*CSF*, 179). Dorian comes to the conclusion that Sibyl 'had no right to kill herself. It was selfish of her.' Relegating Sibyl's existence to the abstraction of a drama, he is unable to 'feel this tragedy as much as [he] ought to' (*DG*, 79), and promptly agrees to accompany Wotton to see Adelina Patti at the Opera.[22]

Dorian's careless treatment of Sibyl, and the easy manner in which he dismisses her from his mind, transferring his guilt onto her 'selfishness', is symptomatic of the attitude of wealthy Londoners toward their impoverished brothers and sisters. The Ripper murders caused many to criticize the complacency of the West End, and the murders were seen

by some as evidence of the neglect that the East End had suffered over the decades. Among those who joined in the chorus of voices calling for recognition of the need for reform in the area was Sir John Tenniel, whose cartoon of anthropomorphized crime, 'The Nemesis of Neglect', appeared in *Punch* on 29 September 1888 with this accompanying verse:

> There floats a phantom on the slum's foul air,
> Shaping, to eyes which have the gift of seeing,
> Into the spectre of that loathly lair,
> Face it – for vain is fleeing!
> Red-handed, ruthless, furtive, unerect,
> 'Tis murderous crime – the nemesis of neglect![23]

London's poor were 'out of sight and out of mind' for some of the population of the West End and the wealthier districts of the capital, and the Ripper murders seemed to be the inevitable consequences of such neglect. Dorian's treatment of Sibyl is symptomatic of such arrogance. Her death is but another grim reminder of a city divided.

## Crime and conscience: Dorian Gray's portrait

Dorian takes full advantage of the privileges of his class, which also involve forays into the murkier districts of the East End, while the picture grimly records the depraved trajectory of his career. At first there is just a 'touch of cruelty in the mouth' (*DG*, 72), but as Dorian realizes the full import of the portrait's 'magic', he plans a future of unfettered pleasure: 'Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins – he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame: that was all' (*DG*, 83). Just as Jekyll practises his diabolical alchemy in the secrecy of the dissecting room at the extremities of his house, Dorian secretes the tell-tale portrait in a forgotten attic that, according to the housekeeper, Leaf, 'hasn't been opened for nearly five years' (*DG*, 92). Halberstam deciphers the connection between rooms and their owners in *Dorian Gray* and *Jekyll and Hyde* as evidence of suppressed desires: 'The rooms become closets but they also represent the relation between self and other as the relation between house and inhabitant – Hyde lives in Jekyll, the portrait lives in Dorian's home. The small closeted spaces also seem to represent on some level the unconscious, a dark space into which forbidden desires are repressed' (Halberstam, 70). In both cases the modern Gothic monster, or the representation of the modern Gothic monster, hides, in

Wolfreys' sense, in the domestic space, threatening always to disrupt the surface appearance of normality by its discovery.

Invoking the Gothic tropes of ancient rites, secrecy and the occult, Dorian wraps the picture in a seventeenth-century purple satin coverlet that had been found by his grandfather in a Convent near Bologna:

> Yes that would serve to wrap the dreadful thing in. It had perhaps served often as a pall for the dead. Now it was to hide something that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself – something that would breed horrors and yet would never die. What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty, and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would always be alive.
>
> (*DG*, 92–3)

Dorian thinks of the picture as a 'thing' in Hurley's sense of the 'Thing-ness' of the Gothic, because its corruption renders it un-describable in human terms. Yet it is alive, corrupt and indestructible, a physical manifestation of evil like Hyde, Francis Leicester and M. Valdemar.

As a physical manifestation of Dorian's corrupting soul, the picture is the device that establishes duality in the novel, and brings Gothic elements to the tale, highlighting social concerns through Gothic romance.[24] In another tale centring on a picture, 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.', Wilde muses on the nature of art and its capacity to reveal the soul, and outlines his philosophy of art:

> Art, even the art of fullest scope and widest vision, can never really show us the external world. All that it shows us is our own soul, the one world of which we have any real cognizance. And the soul itself, the soul of each one of us, is to each one of us a mystery. It hides in the dark and broods, and consciousness cannot tell us of its workings. Consciousness, indeed, is quite inadequate to explain the contents of personality. It is Art, and Art only, that reveals us to ourselves.[25]

The capacity of art to reveal the soul takes tangible form in Hallward's portrait of Dorian Gray. Art reveals Dorian to himself: 'His own soul was looking out at him from the canvas and calling him to judgment' (*DG*, 93). What he sees is so damning, so revealing of his corruption, that Dorian keeps it locked away in the attic, much as Rochester hides his

'shame', Bertha Mason. Robert Keefe observes that 'only art, through its ability to objectify inner experience, projecting it into the external world where each man can find his own reflection on its surface, can serve as communication between the encapsulated lives of Wilde's world' (Keefe, 67). It was initially Dorian's wish simply to retain his youth, but he failed to recognize the awful consequences of such a desire: it gives him a sense of immortality, and thus of impunity. Eventually, Dorian begins to enjoy his dual existence. Dorian recognizes this picture as his conscience, as if he had transferred the moral part of himself into the painting, which in turn mirrors back at him his moral corruption. Behind the convulsed, blood-stained visage of the portrait lies Dorian's grieving and corrupted moral soul.

With an irony not lost on Dorian, it is in his own childhood play-room, and later the place of study in his youth, that the picture is to be secreted. Thus Dorian corrupts the purity of his younger self with the decaying avatar of his adult soul:

> How well he remembered it all! Every moment of his lonely child-hood came back to him as he looked around. He recalled the stain-less purity of his boyish life, and it seemed horrible to him that it was here the fatal portrait was to be hidden away. How little he had thought, in those dead days, of all that was in store for him!
>
> (*DG*, 95)

The secret locked in a forgotten room or attic is a Gothic convention that Wilde now uses to expose the pain of growing up, of aging and of self-recognition. Locking the door and pocketing the key, Dorian fol-lows in the footsteps of his literary predecessor Jekyll by hiding his guilty secret, especially from the prying eyes of servants. The double life of the aristocrat is fictionally figured in the secret behind the closed door.

Confined, static, in its gilt frame the picture of Dorian Gray is another victim of its owner's excesses. It is not a party to Dorian's crimes – it is never at the scene – but its corrupted aspect bears grue-some testimony to Dorian's evil. Like Jekyll, the picture is the passive onlooker but always affected by the actions of its counterpart. Jekyll too is physically altered by his counterpart's activities: he becomes 'a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind' (*JH*, 68), and when he takes his last look at himself in the mirror he remarks on 'how sadly altered' his face has become (*JH*, 70). As Jekyll declines physically, Hyde grows in strength and vigor: he

seems to get younger and grow in stature the more he pursues his corrupt life. Similarly the three-dimensional Dorian retains his youth and vigour while his counterpart withers and festers. The Gothic's preoccupation with gross physicality and mutability is predicated upon the existence of a transcendent evil in the modern world, an evil that is manifest in corrupt bodies like Jekyll and Hyde, and in the transference of corruption from Dorian Gray to his picture. When he glibly quips that sin 'is the only real colour-element left in modern life' (*DG*, 28) Wotton outlines the philosophy by which Dorian will live the remainder of his life.

Dorian's friends present him with the two most influential and destructive forces in his life: Hallward's picture and Wotton's yellow-covered book. He becomes obsessed with Wotton's gift: 'For years, Dorian Gray could not free himself from the influence of this book' (*DG*, 98). Similarly, he is so obsessed with the picture that he 'could not endure to be long out of England': 'He hated to be separated from the picture that was such a part of his life, and was also afraid that during his absence someone might gain access to the room, in spite of the elaborate bars that he had caused to be placed on the doors' (*DG*, 109–10). The doppelgänger picture and the poisonous book bind Dorian Gray into a Gothic isolation and paranoia. Dorian's proximity to the picture is also motivated by the Jekyll-like delight he takes in its corruption:

> Often, on returning home from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends, or thought that they were so, he himself would creep upstairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure.
>
> (*DG*, 99)

The picture is both a perverse pleasure and a dreaded responsibility; coupled with his hedonistic desires, it propels Dorian towards evil. As Botting says, the picture as 'an inverted image is, like the mirror, bound up with the responsibility of individualised good and evil as well as homosexuality' (Botting, 142). It is the unifying image of the novel.

## Art, murder and alchemy: Gothic agendas

Hallward's painting inspires in Dorian an unhealthy self-love and obses-
sion with the effects of his own beauty: 'Once, in boyish mockery of
Narcissus, he had kissed, or feigned to kiss, those painted lips that now
smiled so cruelly at him.' At first Dorian loves his own image for its
beauty, but he grows to love it also for its evidence of his corruption: 'He
wondered, and hoped that some day he would see the change taking
place before his very eyes, shuddering as he hoped it' (*DG*, 83). This self-
conscious malevolence is a Gothic tendency toward the weird and
uncanny. Dorian's obsession with the painting takes him beyond the
normal bounds of human experience, and his perversity is such that
he is not only preoccupied with physical appearance, but also with the
evidence of his own moral decline: 'For there would be real pleasure in
watching it. He would be able to follow his mind into its secret places.
This portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had
revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul'
(*DG*, 84).

   In fact the painting creates in Dorian the dual emotions of pride and
self-loathing. Having avoided gazing on the image for weeks, he would
indulge his desires in Blue Gate Fields, near Limehouse and the London
Dock:[26]

> On his return he would sit in front of the picture, sometimes
> loathing it and himself, but filled, at other times, with that pride of
> individualism that is half the fascination of sin, and smiling, with
> secret pleasure, at the misshapen shadow that had to bear the burden
> that should have been his own.
>
> (*DG*, 109)

Hallward had painted the portrait out of love, and Dorian turns that
representation of adoration into an evil, corrupted image. Even the pos-
sibility of meeting Hallward on the fog-bound London streets fills
Dorian with a 'strange sense of fear' (*DG*, 115). His fear is primal, the
fear of the hunted animal, because Dorian has become the monster of
the modern Gothic at loose on the foggy streets of London. Dorian's
meeting with Hallward is forever masked by the fog. The feeling of
impending disaster is heightened by Dorian's petulant declaration:
'I am tired of being myself. I should like to be somebody else' (*DG*, 116).
A subtle reference to the defaced picture festering in the attic, this
yearning for duality indicates the dangerous state of Dorian's mind and

augurs violence to come. The unstable identities and questionable sanities of the modern Gothic are figured in the interplay between Dorian and his picture and his obsessive tendencies.

Playing Lanyon to Dorian's Jekyll, Hallward recounts the dreadful reputation that his friend has acquired over the years until Dorian finally decides to show him the awful picture. To Hallward's exclamation 'This is the face of a satyr,' Dorian replies, 'It is the face of my soul.' Hallward avers that the picture has the 'eyes of a devil', and Dorian reveals his own Gothic duality with his 'Heaven and Hell' analogy (*DG*, 122). Dorian and the picture seem to conspire in Hallward's murder: for Dorian the 'uncontrollable feeling of hatred' he conceives for Hallward seems to have been suggested 'by the image on the canvas'. Dorian has become a Gothic monster and his feeling that the suggestion of murder was 'whispered into his ear by those grinning lips' on the canvas is a delusion: the picture is Dorian Gray, and like Jekyll/Hyde, they are inseparable (*DG*, 123). The 'beast within' is evident in the 'mad passions of a hunted animal', his wild glances and the frenzy of the attack on Hallward.

As in *Jekyll and Hyde*, the closed doors of London houses can conceal terrible secrets. Gothic tales of the late nineteenth century use large London houses much as the traditional Gothic had used ancient, rambling castles. In *Dracula* Seward voices the fear of what is lurking in the metropolis when he realizes that Dracula's London home could be the very next house to his own (*Dracula*, 225). Count Dracula purchases houses in Mile End, Bermondsey and Piccadilly, threatening to extend his vampiric empire into the heart of London. Echoing the cobwebbed, dusty houses of other Gothic narratives, Dorian's attic room is 'covered in dust' and inhabited by mice, there are holes in the carpet, and the place smells of mildew (*DG*, 120–1). Like Jekyll's dissecting room, this is a place of dreadful secrets, of murder and of diabolical alchemy. The vampiric fascination and horror of blood in the modern Gothic is established in the murder: 'There was a stifled groan, and the horrible sound of some one choking with blood.' The steady 'drip, drip on the threadbare carpet' is Hallward's lifeblood draining away:

> The thing was still seated in the chair, straining over the table with bowed head, and humped back, and long fantastic arms. Had it not been for the red jagged tear in the neck, and the clotted black pool that was slowly widening on the table, one would have said that the man was simply asleep.
>
> (*DG*, 123)

Dorian murders Hallward as a policeman is 'going his rounds and flashing the long beam of his lantern on the doors of the silent houses' (*DG*, 123). Outside Dorian's house the familiar sights and sounds of midnight London abound:

> The crimson spot of a prowling hansom gleamed at the corner, and then vanished. A woman in a fluttering shawl was creeping slowly along the railings, staggering as she went. Now and then she stopped, and peered back. Once she began to sing in a hoarse voice. The policeman strolled over and said something to her. She stumbled away, laughing. A bitter blast blew across the Square. The gas-lamps flickered, and became blue, and the leafless trees shook their black iron branches to and fro.
>
> (*DG*, 123–4)

Such metropolitan scenes are typical of the modern Gothic, emphasizing a sordid nocturnal London that compounds the sense of a Gothic experience, making the gory scenes inside Dorian's home, happening beneath the sinister gaze of the picture of the murderer, appear all the more gruesome. No longer a human being, Hallward's corpse is a 'thing', another Gothic 'unspeakable'. Its presence in Dorian's attic is the stuff of nightmares: 'Such hideous things were for the darkness, not for the day.' Dorian views his other crimes with pride: 'But this was not one of them. It was a thing to be driven out of the mind, to be drugged with poppies, to be strangled lest it might strangle oneself' (*DG*, 126). Dorian loses himself in the Decadent luxuriousness of a volume of Gautier's *Émaux et Camées*, reciting the lines 'Devant une façade rose, / Sur le marbre d'un escalier' like a mantra to chase away guilt and fear.

At this point Dorian compounds murder with blackmail: Alan Campbell is to reduce Hallward's body and belongings to 'a handful of ashes' that Dorian can 'scatter in the air' (*DG*, 131). As Curtis argues, the Victorians were fascinated with the grotesque, and this fascination increased as the nineteenth century wore on: 'No strangers to physical pain and emotional suffering, the Victorians took a morbid interest in the injuries sustained by their unfortunate contemporaries. Indeed, some "seemed almost to revel in a good disaster." Graphic gore attracted readers of all ages and both sexes' (Curtis, 76–7). The interest in biological science and anatomical dissection is exploited as Dorian tries to persuade Campbell to dissolve the body:

> You go to hospitals and dead-houses, and the horrors that you do there don't affect you. If in some hideous dissecting room or fetid laboratory you found this man lying on a leaden table with red gutters scooped out in it for the blood to flow through, you would simply look upon him as an admirable subject. You would not turn a hair.
>
> (*DG*, 131)

Combining a Victorian fascination with science and anatomy and a public thirst for gory murder, and recalling Jekyll's chemical experiments on the body, in the murder of Hallward and the disposal of his corpse Wilde creates a particularly contemporary Gothic horror.

Reminiscent of the drawer full of weird and unrecognizable chemicals in glass vials that Lanyon retrieves from Jekyll's laboratory, Campbell orders the delivery of a 'large mahogany chest of chemicals, with a long coil of steel and platinum wire and two rather curiously-shaped iron clamps' (*DG*, 133). Something weird and uncanny is afoot, involving chemical science and anatomical transformation beyond the normal experience. The detail of the equipment and Campbell's grim but efficient approach to his task leave the imagination dwelling on the grisly dissection of Hallward's body and the chemical dissolving of flesh and bone. When Campbell has completed his work, Dorian returns to the attic: 'There was a horrible smell of nitric acid in the room. But the thing that had been sitting at the table was gone' (*DG*, 135).[27] With the murder of Hallward, Dorian's career takes a more sinister turn and he begins to 'feel keenly the terrible pleasure of a double life' (*DG*, 135). That same evening, at Lady Narborough's, Dorian begins to long for his own death: 'I wish it were *fin du globe*,' said Dorian, with a sigh. 'Life is a great disappointment' (*DG*, 138).

## Reputation, death and the city

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a metropolitan novel: with its narrative ranging from fashionable Grosvenor Square to the grimy Euston Road and eastwards to the London Docks, it depicts a metropolis of multiple personalities, offering access to the city's opulent aristocratic drawing rooms, the grimy kitchens of its poor and the ugly filth of its opium dens. Dorian, a grandson of Lord Kelso, is well-acquainted with London's aristocracy. Wotton's uncle, Lord Fermor, lives in the Albany, the former home of the second son of George III, the Duke of York, and

an exclusive address to the present day.[28] Dorian, himself, owns a house in Grosvenor Square, decorated in costly fabrics and with lavish taste. Littering the novel with references to well-known London streets and landmarks – Jermyn Street, the West End, The Bristol, Hyde Park, St James Street, Mayfair – Wilde seems to revel in his knowledge of the geography of London, as does Machen in *The Great God Pan*. As Lawler says: 'Even with a contemporary map of London in hand, one can follow Dorian's movement around town, with Wilde as our unfailing guide to late Victorian interiors.' Hallward's studio, says Lawler, was probably modelled on the studio of Charles Ricketts, which had formerly belonged to Whistler, and this is 'our first clue that *Dorian Gray* is a romance of place as well as of personality' (*DG*, 432).

Edouard Rodoti speaks of Wilde's 'sophisticated and knowing descriptions of high society', and Philippe Jullian points out that the 'scene and the style was that of the Society in which for the last ten years Oscar had been entertained in the evenings.' Wilde, says Jullian, 'is very much at home and opens all the doors, displays the treasures and the floral decorations, and from time to time actually allows the reader a glimpse behind the scenes' (in *DG*, 369, 407). In these locations we find Dorian and/or Wotton engaged in witty conversations and scurrilous gossip with ladies and duchesses, eating, drinking and smoking elegant cigarettes. It is like the world of Jekyll, but with more women present, and with a heightened sense of the elegance and costliness of the surroundings: it is a decadent world of the senses, and a world only for the rich, like those scenes of upper-class repartee in Wilde's comic plays.

The duality of the city is expressed through the activities of Dorian Gray. Like Jekyll/Hyde, he leads a double life that allows him access to these upper echelons of society and permits him to descend to the lowest levels of human habitation in the city. Dorian's movement about the metropolis is the subject of shocked gossip: 'It was rumoured that he had been seen brawling with foreign sailors in a low den in the distant parts of Whitechapel, and that he consorted with thieves and coiners and knew the mysteries of their trade' (*DG*, 110). Such gossip was ruinous to reputation, as Wilde himself was to find, for the press was notorious for leaping on upper-class scandals. Despite his permanent youth, Dorian's activities cause serious damage to his reputation:

> He was very nearly blackballed at a West End club of which his birth and social position fully entitled him to become a member, and it was said on one occasion, when he was brought by a friend into the

smoking room of the Churchill, the Duke of Berwick and another gentleman got up in a marked manner and went out.

<div align="right">(<em>DG</em>, 110)</div>

On the evening of his murder, Hallward outlines the rumours of Dorian's infamy. 'People talk sometimes of secret vices,' he says, and then asks, 'Why is it that so many gentlemen in London will neither go to your house nor invite you to theirs?' Hallward lists a catalogue of young men with ruined reputations, or who committed suicide (*DG*, 117). Dorian's corruption influences men and women alike:

> When you met Lady Gwendolen, not a breath of scandal had ever touched her. Is there a single decent woman in London now who would drive with her in the Park? Why, even her children are not allowed to live with her. Then there are other stories – stories that you have been seen creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens in London. Are they true? Can they be true? When I first heard them, I laughed. I hear them now, and they make me shudder. What about your country house, and the life that is led there? Dorian, you don't know what is said about you.

<div align="right">(<em>DG</em>, 118)</div>

Scandal and gossip abound, yet the truth is that Dorian Gray exceeds even the stories that are circulating around his reputation, for in his skulking about the seedy haunts of the city, and in his awful murder of Hallward, he has become a Gothic monster. Dorian is regarded with suspicion by many; yet his 'great wealth was a certain element of security.' Wilde takes the opportunity to cast a critical eye over the hypocrisies of the wealthy when he avers that, 'Society, civilized society at least, is never very ready to believe anything to the detriment of those who are born rich and fascinating. It feels instinctively that manners are of more importance than morals,' a point he was to make clear in 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' (*DG*, 111).[29] It is only when the scandals hit the newspapers, as in the 'Maiden Tribute' or the 'Cleveland Street affair', that public outrage becomes palpable. Even so, the cover-up conspiracy theory concerning royalty and the Ripper murders is evidence of some truth in Wilde's epigram.

Like Hyde, Dorian finds his pleasures in the East End of London, but unlike Stevenson, Wilde is more specific about Dorian's indulgences. For one thing, Dorian is an opium smoker, evidenced by the waxy

green paste that he secretes away in a cabinet in his library. Determining to indulge his habit elsewhere Dorian seeks out a cab, but the driver at first declines to take him. '"It's too far for me," he muttered', clearly unwilling to venture down to the Docks where the opium dens were situated (*DG*, 142). But Dorian bribes him with an extra sovereign. Roditi objects to Wilde's 'naive' description of the East End and the Docks and their inhabitants, yet Wilde's descriptions are not so far removed from those of Gissing. Looking out from his hansom cab, Dorian sees the grim reality of the East End: 'A cold rain began to fall, and the blurred street-lamps looked ghastly in the dripping mist. The public-houses were just closing, and dim men and women were clustering in broken groups round their doors. From some of the bars came the sound of horrible laughter. In others, drunkards brawled and screamed' (*DG*, 142). Here the 'moon hung low in the sky like a yellow skull' (*DG*, 142), recalling the Gothicized London of *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Travelling further into the slums of the East End urban neglect becomes more evident: 'The gas-lamps grew fewer, and the streets more narrow and gloomy. Once the man lost his way, and had to drive back half a mile. A steam rose from the horse as it splashed up the puddles. The side-windows of the hansom were clogged with a grey-flannel mist' (*DG*, 142). As Dorian's opium craving grows the journey seems 'interminable, and the streets like the black web of some sprawling spider' (*DG*, 143). These are the familiar perceptions of London as in Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night'. The unlit and filthy alleys of Whitechapel during the Ripper murders are evoked, and we are reminded of the call for more street-lighting in the wake of those atrocities. This is an East End that was shortly to be illuminated. At the time of writing *Dorian Gray*, work was already under way to improve the conditions that caused Dorian's driver to lose his way. Bills had recently been passed to improve the lighting in places like Whitechapel, and Fishman notes that by the end of 1888 'street lighting had been extended in both the Mile End and Limehouse districts' (Fishman, 224), both of which are named as Dorian's haunts.

Dorian, like so many other 'young bloods' of the time, seeks gratification of his pleasures among the low life and addicts of the London Docks district. This is an eerie world of 'strange bottle-shaped kilns with their orange fan-like tongues of fire', of barking dogs, where 'fantastic shadows were silhouetted against some lamp-lit blind', while the figures within 'moved like monstrous marionettes, and made gestures like living things'. Dorian's nightmarish journey through the Docks is like a

trip through Hell. The 'horse stumbled in a rut, then swerved aside, and broke into a gallop,' women yell from open doors and men run after the hansom: 'The driver beat at them with his whip.' These are souls in the torment of Hades, where light is orange or red with the glare of the fires of Dante's Inferno. Grotesque shapes like the 'jagged chimneystacks of houses' and the 'Wreaths of white mist' that 'clung like ghostly sails to the yards' evoke the threatening atmosphere of the modern Gothic city (*DG*, 143). Like the underground domain of Wells's Morlocks, darkness is punctuated by garish flame that speaks of unnatural life.

In this earthly Hell, Dorian's mood becomes ever more perverse:

> From cell to cell of his brain crept the one thought; and the wild desire to live, most terrible of all man's appetites, quickened into force each trembling nerve and fibre. Ugliness that had once been hateful to him because it made things real, became dear to him now for that very reason. Ugliness was the one reality. The coarse brawl, the loathsome den, the crude violence of disordered life, the very vileness of thief and outcast, were more vivid, in their intense actuality of impression, than all the gracious shapes of Art, the dreamy shadows of Song.
>
> (*DG*, 143)

In this passage Dorian's aestheticism takes on a perverse quality in which the sordid is more real than beauty. It is a mood that Lawler says is 'often celebrated and lamented in poets like Baudelaire and Rimbaud and among the English Decadents' (*DG*, 143 n. 2). In the Preface to *Dorian Gray*, Wilde underscores the paradox of nineteenth-century responses to conflicting visions of the world:

> The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing His own face in a glass.
>> The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.
>
> (*DG*, 3)

This is more than an epigrammatic conceit: here Wilde hints at those social problems, evident in the East End, that the wealthy were often so assiduous to avoid. Roditi speaks of Wilde's 'naïvely romantic descriptions of low life' that 'are full of pathetic echoes of the melodrama of earlier decades', citing De Quincey, James Thomson and Dickens. Ultimately it is Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* (1862) and

Eugene Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–3) that for Roditi 'contributed much to Wilde's romantic vision of London's nocturnal underworld'. Roditi finds these descriptions unconvincing, and an odd contrast to 'Wilde's infinitely more sophisticated and knowing descriptions of high society' (*DG*, 369). Yet Wilde's style remains consistent throughout, and the contrast between the dual worlds of London is a pivotal moment at this point in the novel, sharpening the sense of duality, whereby Dorian's picture can be read as a reflection of the grimy underbelly of the metropolis and his seemingly unspoilt exterior as the façade of high society behind which lurk corruption and vice.

Roditi seems to want Wilde to conform to realism when he complains of his overemphasis on art and aesthetics and the 'vague number of duchesses and other characters, doomed to vanish almost immediately after their first appearance': 'Between these two worlds, no decent or comfortable middle class, no quiet family life, no dormitory sections in Wilde's vision of the big city' (*DG*, 369). That is exactly Wilde's point: this is a city of duality, and the duchesses of high society loom large and vanish as an expression of the ephemeral nature of the trivial life of gossip and society that they pursue. Dorian's existence is one of extremes, emphasized by the extremes of experience in the East End and the West End. Leafy suburbia would be superfluous to the Gothic exposition of Dorian's career.

Indeed, the details of the opium den and the behaviour of its clients seem to be drawn from life:

> In one corner with his head buried in his arms, a sailor sprawled over a table, and by the tawdrily-painted bar that ran across one complete side stood two haggard women mocking an old man who was brushing the sleeves of his coat with an expression of disgust. 'He thinks he's got red ants on him,' laughed one of them, as Dorian passed by. The man looked at her in terror, and began to whimper.
>
> (*DG*, 144)

This is hardly a romanticized image. Reflecting the itinerant nature of the Docks area with its random population of seamen from the four corners of the globe, Wilde includes some Malays, 'crouching by a little charcoal stove playing with bone counters, and showing their white teeth as they chattered' (*DG*, 144). Malays featured frequently in the list of non-Anglo-Saxon suspected perpetrators of the Ripper murders. They were certainly not uncommon in the East End: 'The *Times* (Oct. 6

[1888]) reported on an English sailor with the "peculiar" name of Dodge who had encountered a Malay cook in a Poplar music hall. The cook had told him that he had been robbed by a prostitute and that if he did not find her and recover his money, "he would murder and mutilate every Whitechapel woman he met"' (Curtis, 244).[30] In an early short story, 'Through a Window', H. G. Wells features a Malay who was 'Running amuck with a krees' as described by Mrs Green, the housekeeper to Wells's protagonist, Bailey: 'One of those black creatures down at the Fitzgibbon's had gone mad, and was running about with a big knife, stabbing people. He had killed a groom, and stabbed the under-butler, and almost cut the arm off a boating gentleman.'[31] We know from Conrad's sea stories that Malays were employed as seamen on British ships. Wilde's inclusion of Malays thus adds authenticity to the scene, and Malays were commonly associated with opium, as in De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822). Moreover, Eastern Gothicism is implied in this mention of exotic 'others'.

Like those 'young bloods' and 'swells' discussed by Walkowitz and Fishman, Adrian Singleton, another of Dorian's 'victims', has chosen opium and the Docks as his escape from society: '"Darlington is not going to do anything. My brother has paid the bill at last. George doesn't speak to me either . . . I don't care," he added, with a sigh. "As long as one has this stuff, one doesn't want friends"' (*DG*, 144): 'Dorian winced, and looked around at the grotesque things that lay in such fantastic postures on the ragged mattresses. The twisted limbs, the gaping mouths, the staring lustreless eyes, fascinated him. He knew in what strange heavens they were suffering, and what dull hells were teaching them the secret of some new joy' (*DG*, 144–5). These are like souls in some earthly Limbo, destined for Hell. Having alluded many times to Dorian's double life, Wilde shows us the results of his perfidy in the form of Singleton, and offers a glimpse of the 'pleasures' that Dorian seeks.

In London's notorious Docks Dorian Gray almost meets his would-be nemesis, James Vane. Murder, garrotting, robbery and prostitution were common here. As Fishman says, in the late nineteenth century 'crime was a hereditary way of life' for many families. By 1888 the 'East End was defined as an area plagued with all the sophisticated techniques to deprive illegally the more affluent of their surpluses' (Fishman, 177–8). It comes as no surprise therefore that Dorian 'felt himself suddenly seized from behind' and a 'brutal hand round his throat' in a dim archway (*DG*, 146). Revenge, not robbery, though, is the motivation for this attack. Vane is dissuaded from dispatching Dorian on the spot by the paradox of his youthful face, but more of

Dorian's past is revealed when the slatternly woman from the opium den reveals Dorian's identity: 'Why, man, it's nigh on eighteen years since Prince Charming made me what I am' (*DG*, 148). This may well have been the fate of Sibyl Vane, had she lived, and tales of what became of actual young women from the East End, seduced or prostituted by London's aristocracy, come vividly to mind. Dorian's callousness, too, is revealed through the fact that he had casually adopted the dead Sibyl's nickname for him.

## Conclusion: crime and consequence

Immersed in his passion for illicit pleasures, Dorian has lost what moral conscience he may have possessed. In tones that anticipate Le Bon and Lombroso, Wilde outlines Dorian's loss of controlling will:

> There are moments, psychologists tell us, when the passion for sin, or for what the world calls sin, so dominates a nature, that every fibre of the body, as every cell of the brain, seems to be instinct with fearful impulses. Men and women at such moments lose the freedom of their will. They move to their terrible end as automatons move.
>
> (*DG*, 146)

Dorian Gray, 'Callous, concentrated on evil, with stained mind, and soul hungry for rebellion', has, like Dr Jekyll, let out the beast that lurked within, with disastrous consequences for himself and many who knew him. When he realizes that it is James Vane who has been accidentally killed during a shooting party, Dorian cries, not out of horror for a life lost, but because he knew 'he knew he was safe' (*DG*, 159).

   The finale of the story finds Dorian in a strange mood of repentance: '"Culture and corruption," echoed Dorian. "I have known something of both. It seems terrible to me now that they should ever be found together. For I have a new ideal, Harry. I am going to alter. I think I have altered"' (*DG*, 160). Like Jekyll, Dorian resolves to reform and renounce his debauched existence. What Dorian does not realize is that his alteration is irreversible: the modern Gothic monster is in essence evil. Dorian Gray is innately self-obsessed; musing on his crimes he exonerates himself from blame: 'Nor, indeed, was it the death of Basil Hallward that weighed most upon his mind. It was the living death of his own soul that troubled him.' Even his resolve not to corrupt Hetty Merton is born out of his determination to reverse the decay of the fatal picture:

'Perhaps if his life became pure, he would be able to expel every sign of evil passion from the face' (*DG*, 168). Instead the portrait reveals cunning eyes and the mouth of a hypocrite.

Dorian's macabre death recalls Jekyll/Hyde's own end, shocking and ignominious. Both men lock themselves in their secret chambers that are forced open by their own servants. In death both Dorian and Jekyll reveal the corruption of their souls. Speaking of the Gothic as being concerned with the foundations of identity, Wolfreys argues that 'the comprehension of the gothic is expanded through an understanding of the role gothic effects have to play in the constitution of modern, fragmented subjectivity' (Wolfreys, 13). Dorian's fragmented subjectivity is revealed through the coexistence of his corrupted body and the restored painting, Jekyll's through the disappearance of his familiar self and its replacement by the body of Hyde. Duality and the Gothic become expressed through the physical manifestation of the degenerate souls of both men. Horror such as Dorian inflicts upon himself and the metropolis is the stuff of modern Gothic fiction.

At the end of *The Great God Pan* Clark confronts Raymond with the corruption of his young ward Mary, and Raymond acknowledges what he has unleashed:

> What I said Mary would see she saw, but I forgot that no human eyes can look on such a sight with impunity. And I forgot, as I have just said, that when the house of life is thus thrown open, there may enter in that for which we have no name, and human flesh may become the veil of a horror one dare not express.
>
> (*GGP*, 104)

*The Great God Pan* deals with a duality of surface and depth: a superficial beauty masking a horrific inner sexual appetite. For many Victorians it brought to the fore a shocking revelation of their own times. The sexual corruption of innocence, 'The Maiden Tribute', evil stalking the streets of the metropolis, the Ripper murders and the involvement of high society in sexual prurience, 'the Cleveland Street affair', were the realities of *fin de siècle* London that many preferred not to be revisited in fiction. If the naturalist novel was objectionable because it forced social realities on a complacent public, then Wilde and Machen were even more outrageous because, audaciously, they brought delicate sexual issues before a hyper-sensitive audience. In *Dorian Gray* human flesh truly does become an inexpressible Gothic 'horror'.

# 6
## 'The Coming Terror': Wells's Outcast London and the Modern Gothic

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> T. S. Eliot, 'Burnt Norton' (*Four Quartets*, 13)

The year 1895 was a watershed for a number of literary careers: in April Conrad appeared on the scene with *Almayer's Folly*; by May Oscar Wilde's career was all but over; and in the same month appeared the book version of H. G. Wells's first significant literary publication, *The Time Machine*. Following public reaction to *Jude the Obscure* in November of that year, Hardy was to abandon novel-writing in favour of poetry. The literary scene was changing: Stevenson had died in Samoa in 1894, and Henry James sensed that a new mood was affecting literary circles. Complaining to William Dean Howells in 1895 that a 'new generation, that I know not, and mainly prize not, has taken universal possession,' James saw that the British novel was at a turning point (Anesko, 298). He was, according to Frank Swinnerton, 'in the midst of literary movements with which he had, and could have, no sympathy' (Swinnerton, 45).[1] This was also the year of significant non-literary publications: *Degeneration* and *The Crowd* appeared in Britain capturing the public mood of anxiety, and a growing interest in psychological investigation and psychic phenomena.

James was an admirer of some of the new novelists emerging on the literary scene, notably Conrad, Wells and Ford Madox Ford, but his sense of the changing climate was not misplaced.[2] Amid the flurry of new genres Wells gained respect with his scientific romance *The Time Machine*,

and took the *fin de siècle* Gothic a stage further by subjecting it to a scientific scrutiny. W. E. Henley serialized the 'The Time Traveller's Story' in the *National Observer* in 1894, then commissioned a revised version for the *New Review*. The 1895 Heinemann story, entitled *The Time Machine: An Invention,* was dedicated to Henley.[3] Thus began in earnest a fertile literary career that saw the publication of over 150 titles of fiction and non-fiction. Such a prodigious output renders it impossible to do justice to Wells's oeuvre here; but a sense of Wells's response to his contemporary world in the late nineteenth century is possible through a selection of scientific tales, notably *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr Moreau, The Invisible Man* and *War of the Worlds,* and with glances at *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899). In these tales Wells consciously brings new perspectives to bear on human experience, pushing the boundaries of late-nineteenth century romance into the scientific arena.

On 1 December 1895 Wells was interviewed in the *Weekly Sun Literary Supplement*, just as he was about to publish *Moreau*. The interview reveals Wells's awareness of the direction his fiction was taking. '"It is singular enough," he says, "how fiction is widening its territory. It has become a mouthpiece for science, philosophy and art."' Then, perhaps thinking of James and the 'society novel', he outlines the potential for further exploration of the human condition through new narrative perspectives:

> The world may have been often enough described. The intricacies of human conduct may even approach exhaustion. But the modern fanciful method takes the novelist to a new point of view. Stand aside but a little space from the ordinary line of observation, and the relative position of all things changes. There is a new proportion established. You have the world under a totally different aspect. There is profit as well as novelty in the change of view. That is, in some small way, what I aim at in my books.[4]

Some of Wells's futuristic tales shift the narrative perspective from the present to offer 'a totally different aspect', and the 'profit' of such a perspective lies in Wells's use of a futuristic vision to explore contemporary conditions. Just as Stevenson had created Gothic horror from the division of the individual into a Jekyll and a Hyde, in *The Time Machine* Wells imagined, not a weird alchemy, but the possibilities of biological science and social evolution to divide the race itself into two distinct entities. Richard Hauer Costa points out that although Wells's first novel was not widely reviewed, those reviews that did appear were

favourable: 'One anonymous reviewer called it the most bizarre of fantasies since Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and lauded Wells for producing that rarity, a new thing under the sun' (Costa, 15).

Botting acknowledges that Wells's visions of horror in his scientific romances owe a debt to earlier forms of Gothic fiction: 'In science fiction horror finds even more numerous and varied objects and sources. Its origins, however, are linked to texts like *Frankenstein*, one of the Romantic works that impressed the writer most influential in the science fictional reformulation of Gothic strategies, H. G. Wells' (Botting, 162). Wells's modern Gothic imagines monsters emerging, not from the world of nightmares and the supernatural as in Machen, but from the very conditions of the modern social and political world, and from the future of that world. The Morlocks send into the upper world of the Eloi the resounding thuds of their machinery that, for Fernando Porta, is a message 'coming from the "heart of darkness" of the future – the Wellsian interpretation of the instinctual, primitive aspects of human existence which in 1899 would also inspire Wells's friend, Joseph Conrad' (Porta, 14). Many of Wells's tales added the Gothic themes that were to distinguish his work from the scientific romance that had gone before, heralding the birth of modern science fiction.

## Victorian visions of the future

In the nineteenth century Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and Hudson's *A Crystal Age* helped revive the genre of utopian fiction by locating utopia in the distant future, while Jefferies, *After London* prefigured Wells's more cautionary visions of the future. Darko Suvin notes how Wells collected 'all the main influences of earlier writings – from Lucian and Swift to Kepler and Verne, from folktale, Plato, Bellamy, and Morris to Mary Shelley and the English, French, and American subculture of planetary and subterranean voyages, future wars, the like – and transformed them in his own image, whereupon they entered the treasury of subsequent science fiction' (in Suvin and Philmus, 28). It was, however, William Morris's *News from Nowhere* that had the most immediate influence on *The Time Machine*.[5] In *News from Nowhere* a dream transports Guest from 'dingy Hammersmith' into a future where socialist revolution has transformed English society into a community of artisans living in a pastoral and artistic idyll. Contrasting Morris's Nowhere with Jefferies' futuristic London, Carole Silver observes that where Jefferies' world is the 'feudal, hierarchical tyranny' of medieval England, Morris 'evokes the other side of the medieval world, the

communal, egalitarian spirit of the peasants and guildsmen of the later Middle Ages' (Silver, 144).

In *The Time Machine* Wells contests Morris's utopian future. Chapter Five is called 'In the Golden Age', but Patrick Parrinder notes:

> In Wells's vision, the 'possibilities of space and time' are not unlimited. In space and time what appears to be a Morrisonian utopia can only be fatally flawed; no earthly paradise of this sort is possible. The words Eloi and Morlocks signify angels and devils, and the two races, the products of natural selection, are held together in a predatory and symbiotic relationship – a 'perpetuity of aggressions' without which neither could flourish.
>
> (*Shadows of the Future*, 43)

For Morris and Wells, it is through London, the centre of the Victorian world, that a potential future is most accurately predicted. Parrinder points to the similarities in the settings: 'Morris's pastoral, idyllic society is centred on Hammersmith, while the society of the Eloi is centred on Richmond; both are placed in a verdant parkland by the river Thames.' The abandoned museum of *The Time Machine*, the Palace of Green Porcelain near Banstead, is probably the Crystal Palace. Yet the Traveller's assumptions about the political formation of the future when he arrives in the 803rd century are a misinterpretation: no communist or social revolution has prevailed. In Wells's vision the industrial revolution culminates in a polarization of humanity in which one species literally feeds off the other.

Wells and Morris pointed the way forward through political change. For E. P. Thompson in presenting a picture of 'how we might live', Morris offers, in *News From Nowhere*, a criticism of 'how we live' (Thompson, 694). 'How we might live' is also Wells's theme, but in place of Morris's Arcadian future, Wells has an apocalyptic vision that is a direct rebuttal of Morris. For Gillian Beer, 'Morris's offer of escape was not simply an indulgence. It was an act of cleansing. He did not forget the life of his times: he sought to change its values' (Beer, 67). Futuristic novels frequently critique the present, offering positive ways forward or warning of dire consequences if humanity does not embrace change. In *News From Nowhere*, utopia becomes, as John Goode says, 'not so much a picture of enacted values as a reversal of the rejected values of modern life' (in Lucas, 227). In the case of Wells, what at first glance appears a utopia somewhat after Morris's ideal reveals on closer inspection a dystopia more along the lines of *After London*.

In a reflection of *fin de siècle* anxiety about the destiny of the planet and the human race, the Time Traveller witnesses a horrific future where the race has reached its evolutionary pinnacle and is in decline. The '*fin du globe*' that Dorian Gray yearns for is realized when the Traveller witnesses the planet's death throes:

> Then like a red-hot bow in the sky appeared the edge of the sun. I got off my machine to recover myself. I felt giddy and incapable of facing the return journey. As I stood sick and confused I saw again the moving thing upon the shoal – there was no mistake now that it was a moving thing, the size of a football perhaps, or, it may be, bigger, and tentacles trailed down from it; it seemed black against the weltering blood-red water, and it was hopping fitfully about. Then I felt I was fainting. But a terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I clambered upon the saddle.
>
> (*TM*, 76)

The end of the world reveals the ultimate end of life on the planet, and the monstrous life form weakly hopping on the shores of the doomed planet is no doubt the ultimate evolved form of the Eloi and Morlocks, of the Traveller himself. As Frank McConnell says: 'What Wells manages to do in *The Time Machine* is to articulate, for the first time, and distinctively for his age, a vision of the abyss of geological time' (McConnell, 82). He also imagines the abyss into which the human race may fall, as Hurley observes: '*The Time Machine* is a text in thrall to the compelling vision of human entropy, much like degeneration theory' (Hurley, 81). Yet in Wells, entropy extends beyond the human condition to affect the whole universe.

This vision of the world's end is influenced by T. H. Huxley. In *Evolution and Ethics* (1893) Huxley expresses his belief that after millennia of the earth evolving 'the summit will be reached and the downward route will be commenced': 'The most daring imagination will hardly venture upon the suggestion that the power and intelligence of man can ever arrest the procession of the great year' (Huxley, 36). Transporting his reader forward to the end of human time itself, Wells, reflecting the mood of the age, is no optimist; and the fact that the end of the world is witnessed from the heart of London, which in the 803rd century is a shore at the ends of the earth, signifies the central role of that metropolis in the late nineteenth-century imagination.

## Politics and evolution

*The Time Machine* skips past the pinnacle of human achievement witnessing on the way 'huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams.' This 'great and splendid architecture' is 'more massive than any buildings' of the Traveller's own time, indicating vast progress (*TM*, 17). Passing through London's future incarnations, he sees only the glorious and architecturally magnificent upper world. While the workers below are evolving into Morlocks, those living in the 'faint and fair' buildings of the distant future are mentally atrophying. In fact, the flickering future city that the Traveller witnesses could be the London of *When the Sleeper Wakes*. Graham, the eponymous sleeper, sees the London of 2099 as a 'vast city structure which had replaced the miscellaneous houses, streets and open spaces of Victorian London' (*WSW*, 176):

> His first impression was of overwhelming architecture. The place into which he looked was an aisle of Titanic buildings, curving spaciously in either direction. Overhead mighty cantilevers sprang together across the huge width of the place, and a tracery of translucent material shut out the sky. Gigantic globes of cool white light shamed the pale sunbeams that filtered down through the girders and wires. Here and there a gossamer suspension bridge dotted with foot passengers flung across the chasm and the air was webbed with slender cables. A cliff of edifice hung above him . . . and the opposite façade was grey and dim and broken by great archings, circular perforations, balconies, buttresses, turret projections, myriads of vast windows, and an intricate scheme of architectural relief.
>
> (*WSW*, 154)[6]

In 802,701 these magnificent structures are reduced to 'a great heap of granite, bound together by masses of aluminium, a vast labyrinth of precipitous walls and crumbled heaps' (*TM*, 25).

The expanding suburbs of the late nineteenth century have been swept away: 'Apparently the single house, and possibly even the household, had vanished. Here and there among the greenery were palace-like buildings, but the house and the cottage, which form such characteristic features of our own English landscape, had disappeared' (*TM*, 25–6). The geographical and architectural features of the future are determined by capitalist economics. Exploring the London of 2099, Graham discovers the living and working conditions that determine the fate of the London inhabitants of 802,701. As Greenslade

observes, for the late Victorians the 'predatory Morlocks are never far from view':

> 'Nearly half a million fresh-bodied units . . . arrive in our great Babylon every year. They settle down, marry, and for a time stay the degenerative process by the infusion of healthy life . . . two or three generations of London life see them out and as extinct as the dodo itself.' This was the *Illustrated London News* in June 1889. From the late 1870s the city was depicted as a 'vortex', a whirlpool', which remorselessly sucked in the 'fresh-bodied' from the country, using up their 'infusion of healthy life', and inducing in them progressive and inevitable deterioration.
>
> (Greenslade, 41)

In the subterranean city of 2099, Graham sees a humanity weakened by lack of muscular activity, and muses that the 'burly labourers of the old Victorian times had followed the dray horse and all such living force producers, to extinction: the place of his costly muscles was taken by some dexterous machine' (*WSW*, 282). Such perceptions of the effects of city life on the labouring classes were not confined to Wells's imagination. In 1895, T. Clifford Allbutt, a medical practitioner in Leeds, published 'Nervous Diseases and Modern Life' in which he found 'some ground' for the 'assertion that dwelling exclusively in large cities is tending to dwindle and impoverish the bodily health of the wage-earners, or permanently resident, class' (Allbutt, 219). Reflecting notions about the decline in physical robustness of the metropolitan labourer, Wells's limp, insipid Morlocks, probably descendants of the subterranean workers of *When the Sleeper Wakes*, are a 'dull white' possessed of 'strange large greyish-red eyes' and with 'flaxen hair' on their heads and down their backs, and long forearms that droop almost to the ground (*TM*, 41). For Hurley the *fin de siècle* Gothic is concerned with the 'liminality and fluctuability of the white body' (Hurley, 80), and here the white body has become grotesque: the Traveller describes the Morlock as a 'human spider' and 'this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing' (*TM*, 42). Their bleached appearance and large eyes lead him to conclude that they are a subterranean species. Further speculation reveals the truth:

> There is a tendency to utilize underground space for the less orna-mental purposes of civilization; there is the Metropolitan Railway in London, for instance, there are new electric railways, there are

subways, there are underground workrooms and restaurants, and they increase and multiply. Evidently, I thought, this tendency has increased till Industry had gradually lost its birthright in the sky. I mean that it had gone deeper and deeper into larger and ever larger underground factories, spending a still-increasing amount of time therein, till, in the end – ! Even now, does not an East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?

(*TM*, 43–4)

After centuries of living and working in conditions described by Mayhew in the mid-nineteenth century, and by Mearns, Booth and others in the late nineteenth century, London's poor reverse the paradigm of power in their favour; after centuries of political and social idleness, those who once held sway over the sweatshop workers and downtrodden labourers now sustain, with their own flesh, the class that they had abused. Wells's allusion to the East End would not have been lost on his contemporary audience. The Stead exposé, Mearns's *Outcast London* and Booth's *London Poor* deeply affected the public consciousness and sensitized many to the plight of the working classes. Where Wells differs from the social commentators and novelists of his time is in dramatizing an apocalyptic future based on the evidence of contemporary social and political injustice. For Wells the inevitable outcome of such inequality is a catastrophic reversal of roles between master and worker. Further, in place of a sexually predatory upper-class brotherhood debauching poor working-class girls, Wells imagines the heirs to the hungry proletariat devouring those who were once their masters. In carrying off Weena, it could be argued that the degenerate workers of the future exact a terrible revenge for the rape of the children of their ancestors.

In fact, subterranean London had been a feature of the city's character for centuries. Ackroyd comments on how an eighteenth-century German traveller noted that 'one third of the inhabitants of London live underground': 'We may date this inclination to the Bronze Age, when underground tunnels were built a little to the west of where the Greenwich Observatory is now situated. (It has been suggested that the wells or pits which ventilate them were themselves early forms of stellar observation . . . )' (Ackroyd, 564).[7] For centuries the cellars and basements of the older buildings housed the city's poor. Indeed, Ackroyd observes that there is 'a London under the ground, comprising great vaults and passageways, sewers and tunnels, pipes and corridors, issuing

into one another' (Ackroyd, 562). The Artilleryman, in *War of the Worlds*, anticipates the Morlocks in his design to use underground London as a base from which to attack the Martians: 'The main drains are big enough and airy enough for anyone. Then there's cellars, vaults, stores, from which bolting passages may be made to the drains. And the railway tunnels and subways' (*WW*, 150).

In *When the Sleeper Wakes* the subterranean workers provide their masters above with everything from food and clothing to ornaments and *cloisonné* tiles. In an oblique reference to the pallid Morlocks, the *cloisonné* workers have 'lips and nostrils a livid white, due to a disease caused by a peculiar purple enamel that chanced to be much in fashion' (*WSW*, 283). Even in 2099 the aesthetic demands of the decadent over-lords were causing the workers to suffer and physically decline. Wells taunts his 'gentle reader' with comparisons to the dreadful conditions of nineteenth-century workers and grimly details a future that proceeds from that Victorian present:

> That walk left on Graham's mind a maze of memories, fluctuating pictures of swathed halls, and crowded vaults seen through clouds of dust, of intricate machines, the racing threads of looms, the heavy beat of stamping machinery, the roar and rattle of belt and armature, of ill-lit subterranean aisles of sleeping places, illimitable vistas of pin-point lights. And here the smell of tanning, and here the reek of a brewery and here, unprecedented reeks. And every-where were pillars and cross archings of such a massiveness as Graham had never before seen, thick Titans of greasy, shiny brick-work crushed beneath the vast weight of that complex city world, even as the anaemic millions were crushed by its complexity. And everywhere were pale features, lean limbs, disfigurement and degradation.
>
> (*WSW*, 284)

The schismatic city of Wells's own era is evoked in the labyrinthine subterranean sweatshops of the future and the grandiose architecture of the upper world. While the workers of 2099 toil below like their nineteenth-century counterparts in the East End, the 'Prominent People' above, heirs to the nineteenth-century upper classes and factory bosses, enjoy a leisured, refined life built on their sweat and toil. Technology in *When the Sleeper Wakes* benefits the overlords, but enslaves the workers. In the end, as John Huntington says, the novel evinces 'a deep ambivalence about the liberating possibilities of

technology' (Partington, 144). Ultimately, in the year 802,701 the descendants of these oppressed workers, the Morlocks, having adapted to their underground habitat, no longer want, but clearly 'at some time in the Long-Ago of human decay the Morlocks' food had run short. Possibly they had lived on rats and such-like vermin' (*TM*, 55). The Traveller reaches his most appalling conclusion based on that premise: 'These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon – probably saw to the breeding of' (*TM*, 56).

In *The Soul of a Bishop* (1917) the workers themselves speak of a division in humanity caused by an idle, uninterested management and a pugnacious workforce determined to survive: 'We've got to fight it out. *They* say we're their slaves forever . . . We say, *No!* . . . We'll do without you . . . We're pressing for all we can get, and when we've got all that we'll take breath and press for more. We're the Morlocks. Coming up' (*Soul of a Bishop*, 32). There is a sense in the Morlocks, too, of Le Bon's unruly mob, and the upper- and middle-class perception of the working-class threat to social and national stability. Like Le Bon's mob, the Morlocks are indistinguishable from each other, seemingly without gender, and driven by the animal urge to kill and feed. They remind us of Le Bon's assertion that the individual in a crowd 'descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization' and that 'in a crowd, he is a barbarian – that is, a creature acting by instinct' (Le Bon, 12).[8] These 'barbarians' were, in the popular imagination, the result of degeneration, as Greenslade explains: 'Here were tracts of new degenerate energies, menageries of sub-races of men and women. Down in the darkness, the struggle for life was producing new species of mankind which signaled an all too successful adaptation' (Greenslade, 38–9). 'As with degeneration theory,' argues Hurley, 'mental decay here finds embodiment in the physical alteration of the human species – the weakened, diminished frame, and the loss of sexual characteristics, which, Krafft-Ebbing argued, distinguished the adult human from children and the human species from lower species of animal life' (Hurley, 83). In suggesting the Morlocks' destructive capacity, Wells was reflecting the mood of the time, a mood that Le Bon, too, was influencing: 'In consequence of the purely destructive nature of their power crowds act like those microbes which hasten the dissolution of the enfeebled or dead bodies. When the structure of a civilization is rotten, it is always the masses that bring about its downfall' (Le Bon, xviii). *The Time Machine* demonstrates only too horrifically how a rotten society can be hastened to its destruction by the actions of its citizens.

The Eloi are, according to Hurley, representative of contemporary theories about human classifications: 'The Eloi display all those characteristics said to typify savages, women, and children: egotism, simplicity, a love of self-adornment, indolence, short attention span, lack of intellectual curiosity, imitativeness, and inability to think abstractly or creatively' (Hurley, 83). Their ancestors may be the elite Londoners of *When the Sleeper Wakes*, 'Prominent People' obsessed with image, beauty and fashion. The decline in the race's 'virility' is indicated by the fact that 'women were in a great majority'. Manners and dress are paramount in the London of 2099: 'the attainment of an appropriate set of gestures was part of every rich person's education' (*WSW*, 231). This is a parody of the mannered society of Wells's own time, but ominous symptoms of the Eloi's intellectual frailty are in evidence: education is made 'attractive', and if 'it does not attract then – we let it go.' Elementary schools are made 'pleasant for the little children. They will have to work so soon. Just a few principles – obedience – industry.' The overriding principle is that knowledge and understanding only lead to 'trouble and discontent' (*WSW*, 233). As the Eloi may be descendants of these 'Prominent People', so the Morlock could have evolved from the repressed, under-educated worker of 2099. The Eloi's androgyny also suggests the ambivalence of the Gothic about sexuality: such sexual ambiguity is seen as resulting from the decadent aristocracy of the traditional Gothic.

In 'Zoological Retrogression' (1891) Wells set out the evolutionary theory that was to find fictional form in his scientific romances. Speaking of how the optimistic view that the world progresses for the better must be tempered by 'geological record' and 'the studies of the phylogenic embryologist', Wells posits his pessimistic theory: 'The toneless glare of optimistic evolution would then be softened by a shadow; the monotonous reiteration of "Excelsior" by people who did not climb would cease; the too sweet harmony of the spheres would be enhanced by a discord, this evolutionary antithesis – degradation' ('Zoological Retrogression', 246).[9] Wells is following a line of thought laid out by Edwin Ray Lankester in 1880 in *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism*, where 'Elaboration' is the process by which the organisms that adapt to more complex conditions of life progress up the evolutionary ladder. 'Degeneration' is the process of adapting to less complex conditions, the result of which is 'such as to leave the whole animal in a lower condition, that is fitted to less complex action and reaction in regard to its surroundings, than was the ancestral form with which we are comparing it . . .' (Lankester, 32). Anticipating the Eloi, Lankester speculates

that the human race may degenerate to the intellectual equivalent of 'Barnacles or Ascidians': 'It is possible for us – just as the Ascidian throws away its tail and its eye and sinks into a quiescent state of inferiority – to reject the good gift of reason with which every child is born, and to degenerate into a contented life of material enjoyment accompanied by ignorance and superstition' (Lankester, 60–1).[10] For Wells, this biological degradation may be the combined results of human evolution and human political and social inertia: *The Time Machine* dramatizes the effects of such neglect.

Wells extrapolates the conditions of London in the 1890s into a future world in which the lower classes are little more than animals, sustaining a nightmarish subterranean industrial world. The geography of the city also signals a future of unique and horrifying duality; it is a city that literally has its upper and its lower worlds, a vertically divided metropolis reflecting the terrible division in humanity that has been wrought through evolution. But, as the Traveller soon realizes, the result of evolution is closely linked to the organization of labour. As Porta aptly puts it, *The Time Machine* 'might well be defined as a sombre, admonitory fable whereby Queen Victoria's subjects were told about the terrible fate of their own age' (Porta, 10).

## Future London and the modern Gothic

Social analysts and journalists had highlighted the inequalities and abuses of the late nineteenth century in documentary-style publications designed to shock the public into recognition of the need for change. In his fiction Wells used shock tactics of a different order to awaken public consciousness. In the Gothic imagination of the late nineteenth century, London is haunted by ghosts of its recent history, by Jack the Ripper and countless murders on the metropolitan streets, by sexual scandal, by immigrant populations and by social and political unrest. In his desire to alert the reading public to the need for reform Wells used Gothic representations of the city and its inhabitants in *The Time Machine*, and thus 'Humanity is left in question by the nightmare vision of other and future worlds . . . ' (Botting, 162).

Humanity of the future resembles 'angels and devils' in a Gothic dependence of cosseted victim and voracious prey. In Machen and Stoker, and to some extent implicit in Stevenson and Wilde, depraved and unnatural sexuality defines London's modern Gothicism. The modern Gothic of Wells assumes a London transformed by time and social history into a seeming paradise beneath which lurk deadly secret

chambers harbouring grisly evidence of human dissection and consumption beyond imagining; the horrors of the voracious *sexual* Gothic of other late-Victorian writers prompts the horrors of unnatural appetites in Wells's work. The damp, pallid Morlocks with their lust for meat conjure up the terrors of earlier Gothic forms by invoking night-time horrors, torture and viscous appetites. London's lower levels house these monsters that, like Hyde, prowl the city in search of satisfaction of an inhuman lust. In the modern Gothic of Wells, sexual tension is replaced by Darwinian concepts of survival and adaptability. The post-Darwinian generation recognized their distant relations with the animal kingdom, and Wells played on this realization by populating the underworld of his future London in *The Time Machine* with monstrous beings that are more animal than human, the dimly recognizable factory and sweatshop workers of his own time.

Wells gave the city a future form in which to explore Gothic possibilities, but in doing so he also highlighted the state of the city of his own time and Darwinian evolutionary theories. The Traveller's descent into the Morlocks' caverns is a descent into a subterranean London that had endured through the centuries and whose purpose is now far removed from its previous incarnations. The 'throb-and-hum' of the machinery below recalls the machines of industrial Britain and the vast engines of *When the Sleeper Wakes*, still serving those above but for a very different end (*TM*, 48). For Jonathan Bignell Wells's 'vision of the future counters the Victorian myth of progress, and explores the interdependence of workers and masters' (Bignell, 35). For Wells, what seemed to be progress in his own time was actually progress towards apocalypse rather than the Morrisonian utopia that the Traveller first imagines.

Like nocturnal creatures, the Morlocks flee a match-flame 'incontinently, vanishing into the gutters and tunnels, from which their eyes glared' at the Traveller in the 'strangest fashion' as if they were sewer rats (*TM*, 48). In this underground abattoir the Traveller struggles to decode his surroundings:

> Great shapes like big machines rose out of the dimness, and cast grotesque black shadows, in which dim spectral Morlocks sheltered from the glare. The place, by the bye, was very stuffy and oppressive, and the faint halitus of freshly-shed blood was in the air. Some way down the central vista was a little table of white metal, laid with what seemed a meal. The Morlocks at any rate were carnivorous! Even at that time, I remember wondering what large animal could have survived to furnish the red joint I saw. It was all very indistinct: the heavy

> smell, the big unmeaning shapes, the obscene figures lurking in the
> shadows, and only waiting for the darkness to come at me again!
>
> (*TM*, 48–9)

The suggestiveness of that 'red joint' is almost unbearable, prefiguring
Dracula's sanguinary designs on the London population and the
Martians' grisly consumption of human blood in *War of the Worlds*.
Leaving the reader to imagine terrible slaughter, this is 'unspeakable'
Gothic horror at its most macabre. The labyrinthine darkness,
unhealthy stench and clamouring humanity also invokes Mearns's 'out-
cast London', and we are reminded that the cannibalistic Morlocks are
descended from the poor souls crammed into East London squalor.

The slicing up of the human body invokes, too, the awful mutilations
the Ripper inflicted on London streetwalkers. The Victorians' 'morbid
interest' in newspaper reports of gory murder, and the sensational press
headlines invoking Gothic apparitions and bloodthirsty monsters
throughout the period of the Ripper murders and beyond, testify to a
public desire for horror. Wells was only too aware of the impact that his
scene of slaughtered Eloi would have on this Victorian public, fasci-
nated as they were with the macabre events of everyday London.
Reversing the perception of the Ripper as a 'toff' descending to the East
End to sate his blood-lust on 'unfortunates', the Morlocks are the
unfortunate workers who scale their ventilation shafts to mutilate and
cannibalize the erstwhile 'toffs'. The horrors of the modern Gothic are
rarely far removed from the horrors happening on the streets of *fin de
siècle* London and in the fictional horrors of dissection and mutilation
alluded to in *Jekyll and Hyde* and performed in *The Island of Dr Moreau*
and *Dorian Gray*, and the dreadful torture of Joseph Walters in *The Three
Impostors* and implied through Raymond's stone slab and slicing of
Mary's skull in *The Great God Pan*.

A Gothic sense of peril and pursuit in dark passageways becomes
claustrophobic in *The Time Machine* as the Traveller wards off the
bloodthirsty Morlocks with an ineffectual match. Reaching the foot
of a ventilation shaft, he lies down, 'for the throb of the great pump
below made [him] giddy', and, climbing out of this nightmarish
underworld, he feels a 'deadly nausea': 'Several times my head swam,
and I felt all the sensations of falling' (*TM*, 50). Here the Traveller
experiences the psychological pressure and physical threat of the
traditional Gothic. The Morlocks evoke night terrors, so the Traveller
resolves to secure a safe sleeping-place: 'With that refuge as a base,
I could face this strange world with some of that confidence I had lost

in realizing to what creatures night by night I lay exposed. I felt I could never sleep again until my bed was secure from them. I shuddered with horror to think how they must already have examined me' (*TM*, 52). Physical sensations and revulsion conjure a Gothic sense of vulnerability and a dread of night horrors. In Wolfreys's sense of the domestic space as the location for hauntings, London in 802,701 is a transformed, but still recognizable, space where Eloi play by day and ghostly-white Morlocks haunt by night. Penetrating the deceptive idyll of the Eloi, these distantly human creatures prowl the upper spaces of future London like the spectres of a distant humanity, disrupting the seeming equanimity of the Eloi's domesticated landscape.[11]

Gothic horror in *The Time Machine* reaches a climax when the Traveller, lost on open ground in the dark, is stalked by marauding Morlocks: 'Then I seemed to know of a pattering about me. I pushed on grimly. The pattering grew more distinct, and then I caught the same queer sounds and voices I had heard in the Underworld. There were evidently several of the Morlocks, and they were closing in upon me' (*TM*, 64). Soft little hands creep over his coat and back and touch his neck; as he sets fire to the wood it 'seemed full of the stir and murmur of a great company!' (*TM*, 65). Blind Morlocks, lit by the blazing forest 'blundering hither and thither against each other in their bewilderment' evoke sensations of dumb animal terror (*TM*, 67). The Traveller relishes his violence against these creatures, reminding us of the Traveller's own animal heritage. At daybreak the Traveller leaves 'the remnant of these damned souls', concluding that Weena was consumed by the conflagration (*TM*, 68). This grotesque destruction of some distant humanity, this macabre and pitiless violence, anticipates the gruesome climax of *The Island of Dr Moreau*.

Deracinated as he is, the Traveller resembles his nineteenth-century counterparts who sought visual pleasure in the cities of Europe, except in this journey he is the only one of his race to witness the wonders and awful sights of the future. Throwing himself forward to the twilight of the earth, the Traveller leaves behind the human struggle for survival and finds himself in a drama of cosmic proportions as he witnesses the sun's death throes. Like Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym or Lionel Verney in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), the Traveller is thrust into a world beyond human imagining, in Gothic isolation and despair. He is forever damaged by his experiences and his malaise takes the form of an inability to come to terms with his own time, and so he is doomed, to wander through time until the end of his days.

Parrinder points to Wells's Gothic inheritance, suggesting that the Traveller is a 'descendant of the Romantic hero, and especially Mary Shelley's tormented scientist Frankenstein.' Like Prometheus, he steals fire, the matches, from the temple of the gods, the Palace of Green Porcelain, 'one of the huge buildings left over from former ages which give the impression that the earth has been inhabited by a race of gods or giants.' Finally, the Traveller 'fails to return, condemned, perhaps, to perpetual time-travelling as Prometheus was condemned to perpetual torture' (Parrinder, in *The Wellsian*, 20–1). The mythic tones of such an analysis, ringing with allusions to Frankenstein's agonized pursuit of the monster, serve to underpin *The Time Machine*'s Gothic credentials.

In *The Time Machine* physical London-of-the future mirrors the evolutionary decline and split of its citizens. The subtropical splendour of future London turns the metropolis into a playground for an irresponsible humanity. The upper world of meadows, exotic vegetation, neglected culture and crumbling architecture implies the decadent leisure of those who benefit from the Morlocks' toil. The claustrophobic, foul-smelling caverns underground, throbbing and humming with the vibrations and din of unspecified monstrous machinery, are the underbelly of the metropolis. Here the factories and hovels of nineteenth-century metropolitan labourers are conflated with the London Underground in a nightmarish vision of human evolution. The law of the jungle prevails and nature is seen as truly 'red in tooth and claw' through the Morlocks' carnivorous appetites. Furthermore, the late-Victorian perception of the city as a labyrinthine jungle, alienating and threatening, finds full expression in the Morlocks' underground world where the horror and oppressive atmosphere of the Gothic prevail. As Michael Foot aptly puts it, part of the reason for *The Time Machine*'s phenomenal success is the fact that it touched the 'Nietzschean chord in the spirit of the age: the mood which rejected absolutely Victorian triumphalism, the still prevalent view that the England of that time deserved to spread its empire wider and wider. The prophesies of *The Time Machine* stripped bare these illusions' (Foot, 31).

For Porta, 'The future is just another convention in order to tell what cannot be told in the present' (Porta, 16). Yet this is not quite the case: many, like Booth, Stead and Mearns, were writing material that documented the present in disturbing detail; in literature Zola had long been exhorting the reading public to wake up to the appalling condition of the working classes, and in Britain naturalists, like George Moore, Gissing and Arthur Morrison, were writing grim tales about the reality on the streets of London. Wells was responding to the anxious and pessimistic mood of

the *fin de siècle*. In a variety of ways, late Victorians wrote about the present social malaise in attempts to awaken the public consciousness to the horrors of working-class life, particularly in the East End. Rather than using traditional realism, or the emergent naturalist genre, Wells took a 'totally different perspective', using and subverting utopian traditions of futuristic narratives, and injecting a Gothic horror into his tales in an attempt to show that our future is inevitably shaped by our present.

## Gothic transformations: *The Island of Dr Moreau*

*The Island of Dr Moreau* offers a counterpoint to the central premise of *The Time Machine*. By turning animals into humans, Moreau reverses the evolutionary process that created Eloi and Morlocks. Huxley provides the starting point for Wells's imagination when, in *Evolution and Ethics*, he says: 'And much may be done to change the nature of man himself. The intelligence which has converted the brother of the wolf into the faithful guardian of the flock ought to be able to do something towards curbing the instincts of savagery in civilized men' (Huxley, 36–7). Applying this logic to the animal kingdom in *Moreau*, Wells effectively explores the possibilities of Huxley's thesis. Moreau's Beast People are parodies of humanity, grotesque doppelgängers, whose carnivorous appetites equate with the Morlocks' cannibalism. These people-who-were-beasts live a darkly comic travesty of human existence; in this lies the Gothic imagination of the book. The horror that the Beast People arouse creates for Hurley the 'sense of metaphysical estrangement Todorov describes as the crucial element of the fantastic' (Hurley, 18), and the fantastic is the subject matter of the Gothic.

The desire to kill and consume one's fellow beasts can also be a human trait. In the opening pages of the novel Prendick's fellow castaways propose cannibalism: 'The water ended on the fourth day, and we were already thinking strange things, and saying them with our eyes; but it was, I think, on the sixth before Helmar gave voice to the thing we all had in mind' (*DM*, 13). Montgomery saves Prendick's life with 'some scarlet stuff, iced', that tasted like blood, and some boiled mutton that excites Prendick by its 'appetizing' smell (*DM*, 16, 18). From here on, the novel strips away the civilized veneer of humanity to reveal ugly primal instincts. As Greenslade puts it: 'Moreau's island is partly a microcosm, partly a polemical distortion: its terrifying effect derives from Well's handling of conventional adventure-story techniques, but more from the sense of vertigo with which we apprehend the relation between the beast-men and ourselves' (Greenslade, 15). This apprehension is

dimly present when Prendick contemplates M'Ling, Montgomery's 'sidekick': 'I had never beheld such a repulsive and extraordinary face before, and yet, – if the contradiction is credible – I experienced at the same time an odd feeling that in some way I *had* already encountered exactly the features and gestures that now amazed me' (*DM*, 21). What Prendick recognizes, as Parrinder observes, is 'what the nineteenth century called the Mark of the Beast' (*Shadows of the Future*, 59); Prendick realizes much later that what offends him about these people is the 'irresistible suggestion of a hog, a swinish taint, the unmistakable mark of the beast.'[12]

The Island of Dr Moreau is a more sustained Gothic narrative than *The Time Machine* because from the very outset it presages horror and maintains a relentless Gothic tension. The 'reddish luminosity' of M'Ling's eyes and his 'stark inhumanity' penetrate Prendick's 'adult thoughts and feelings' and for a moment 'the forgotten horrors of childhood' come back to his mind (*DM*, 30–1). As Parrinder puts it, Wells's 'narrators experience the *frisson* of meeting them [animals] on level terms and, as a result, seeing their own bestial nature mirrored in the other. Thus the Time Traveller's first contact with a Morlock is marked by a disturbing eye-contact' (*Shadows of the Future*, 59). Hurley sees Prendick's response to the Beast People as emblematic of the imperial gaze: 'The text first invites us to characterize Pendick's disgust as the natural response of a white man to odd "natives," who are not right to begin with; thus one can account for their *unheimlich* quality, the familiarity that is yet strangeness' (Hurley, 105). Even before he reaches the island Prendick is caught in a nervous apprehension of the unspecified that speaks of the Gothic experience: 'That night I had some very unpleasant dreams. The waning moon rose late. Its light struck a ghostly faint white beam across my cabin, and made an ominous shape on the planking by my bunk. Then the staghounds woke, and began howling and baying, so that I dreamt fitfully, and scarcely slept until the approach of dawn' (*DM*, 31).

In the modern Gothic, physical transformation from human to some bestial other is a central trope. The most obvious instance is *Jekyll and Hyde*, but we see variations in *Dracula*, and in *Dorian Gray*, and its reverse in *Dr Moreau*. Numerous instances appear in the writings of Arthur Machen: the terrible essence of evil that engulfs Francis Leicester and the death throes of Helen Vaughan. Trapped into suicide, Helen at first 'melts' like Jekyll: 'The skin, and the flesh, and the muscles, and the bones, and the firm structure of the human body that I had thought to be unchangeable, and permanent as adamant,

began to melt and dissolve.' She seems to 'waver from sex to sex', and then Dr Matheson watches her 'body descend to the beasts whence it ascended, and that which was on the heights go down to the depths, even to the abyss of all being' (*GGP*, 98). This is a supernatural mutation of form; what Moreau effects is a ghastly surgery that transforms the beast into a human facsimile. But the central issue of the human monster is the same, as McConnell observes: 'From *Frankenstein* through *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to *The Island of Dr Moreau*, the monster poses a single bothersome question: how awful can a man become and still be a part of the human community?' (McConnell, 115). It is a question of identity, and in *Moreau* identity is neither fixed nor stable, but fluctuates between the human and the animal. This lack of distinction from the beast is evident in all the characters in the book, for even the most apparently human characters display animal tendencies, from the desire to eat flesh and blood to the overwhelming urge to slaughter.

The most gruesome scene of torture in *Moreau* involves the puma. Prendick is driven out of the compound by the animal's cries of pain, but later the 'sobs and gasps of anguish' become unmistakable: 'It was no brute this time. It was a human being in torment!' The transformation from beast to human is a grisly business. Through an open window, Prendick sees 'something bound painfully upon a framework, scarred, red, and bandaged' (*DM*, 72). In the Gothic tradition, like Jekyll's laboratory and Dorian Gray's dreadful picture, the horrors of Moreau's surgery are behind a locked door, glimpsed, like the transforming Jekyll, only briefly through a window. When she escapes Moreau's torture chamber the puma's suffering is appalling:

> I heard a sharp cry behind me, a fall, and, turning, saw an awful face rushing upon me, not human, not animal, but hellish brown, seamed with red branching scars, red drops starting out upon it, and the lidless eyes ablaze. I flung my arm up to defend myself from the blow that flung me headlong with a broken forearm, and the great monster, swathed in lint and with red-stained bandages fluttering about it, leapt over me and passed.
>
> (*DM*, 140)

This passage is shot through with a Frankensteinian sense of fleshly horror, and develops another Gothic theme in *Moreau*: incarceration. But more than this, the ghastly torture of a feminine subject, a once beautiful and graceful female form, carries undertones of misogyny and,

perhaps, sexual perversion. While the other creatures on the island are faintly comic or physically threatening, this creature is tragic; a deep nerve of human sympathy is touched by her plight.

Michael Foot states that a 'whole argument was proceeding in that England of his time, thanks to Darwin and others, about the nature of human cruelty. Wells's *Dr Moreau* examined it with a new comprehension of man's origins and man's history' (Foot, 36). Haynes astutely points out that the 'almost arbitrary succession of beasts which passes through Moreau's hands re-enacts the idea of the evolutionary process as nature's giant experiment wherein much "material" must, necessarily, be lost for the sake of a few "successes"' (Haynes, in *The Wellsian*, 15). Moreau's cruelty springs from the fact that he 'had never troubled about the ethics of the matter' (*DM*, 107), which for McConnell means that in his 'calm, dispassionate, and mad way, Moreau manages to reduce the idea of suffering – and, more importantly, of human sympathy – to a cosmic irrelevance' (McConnell, 91). In this way Wells throws into relief the 'the problems which Darwinian theory raised, not only for religious orthodoxy but, equally, for humanist beliefs in the essential nobility and goodness of Man, problems which nineteenth-century science with its essentially optimistic philosophy had chosen to ignore' (Haynes, in *The Wellsian*, 16). And this reminds us that the mood of the *fin de siècle* was one of challenging and undermining the essential optimism of earlier in the century.

Moreau, a *fin de siècle* Frankenstein, has the benefit of Darwinian theory to validate and inform his grotesque experiments, but in the end he suffers Frankenstein's fate, killed by his own creation in a re-enactment of the Gothic dilemma. Drawing parallels with the Time Traveller's paradox that the future resembles the past, Haynes argues that 'the more Moreau attempts to overcome the limitations of the human condition, the more he uncovers those limitations: the more he determines to humanise his beasts, the more he demonstrates the bestiality of man and his own inhumanity' (Haynes, in *The Wellsian*, 18). Moreau's experiments reveal the underlying assumption of the modern Gothic that a bestial duality lies in the heart of humanity. This novel is for Hurley just one of many *fin de siècle* Gothic texts that accomplish 'the utter ruination of the human subject': 'The human body in all its gross materiality is fully on display here: the decomposing bodies of the sailors, the hybridized bodies of the hungry beast people, the abject body of Prendick, which responds to it all with a "spasm of disgust." No human body retains specificity; all have long since become Things' (Hurley, 113).

## London horrors: Moreau, the media and the metropolis

Evoking the sensational headlines of the Victorian press, Moreau's career had been a media scandal. Headlines accompanying the Ripper murders are evoked as Prendick remembers newspaper reports: '"The Moreau Horrors." The phrase drifted loose in my mind for a moment, and then I saw it in red lettering on a little buff-coloured pamphlet, that to read made one shiver and creep.' Moreau had been practising revolutionary medicine, publishing 'astonishing facts in connection with the transfusion of blood, and, in addition, was known to be doing valuable work on morbid growths' (*DM*, 49). But press exposure, in the style of Stead's investigative journalism, lead to Moreau's experiments becoming public: 'A journalist obtained access to his laboratory in the capacity of laboratory assistant, with the deliberate intention of making sensational exposures; and by the help of a shocking accident – if it was an accident – his gruesome pamphlet became notorious. On the day of its publication, a wretched dog, flayed and otherwise mutilated, escaped from Moreau's house' (*DM*, 49–50). Wells emphasizes the power of the press to sway the national mood: it was 'in the silly season', and a 'prominent editor', clearly looking for sensational copy to boost sales, 'appealed to the conscience of the nation' (*DM*, 50).[13] Unnatural fictional events occurring in the domestic spaces of the metropolis speak of a Victorian fascination with the macabre and the sanguinary. Wells's reference to the national press underscores how London was Gothicized in the popular imagination.[14] In *The Great God Pan* as news of the West End suicides spreads, the 'noise rose from the eastward and swelled down Piccadilly, drawing nearer and nearer, a very torrent of sound; surging up streets usually quiet, and making every window a frame for a face, curious or excited.' The newspaper headline reads likes Ripper reportage, or Moreau's scandal: '"The West End Horrors; Another Awful Suicide; Full details!"' (*GGP*, 77). Austin, a friend of Villiers, 'put down the paper in mute horror' and vows his intention to leave London: 'it is a city of nightmares' (*GGP*, 78).

The beast within Helen Vaughan terrifies London; in *Moreau* the beast within emphasizes a Gothic duality in the population at large. Prendick, once returned to the metropolis, is unable to shake off the terror of the island. He goes 'in fear': 'I see faces keen and bright, others dull or dangerous, others unsteady, insincere; none have the calm authority of a reasonable soul. I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale.' Theories, like those of Le Bon, on crowd

mentality are barely disguised in such perceptions. Wells injects into the modern Gothic the reality of city life that the naturalists were at such pains to stress. The city/country divide is clearly in Wells's mind when he has Prendick declare, 'For that reason I live near the broad free down-land, and can escape thither when this shadow is over my soul' (*DM*, 186). For Prendick, London is a Gothic location by its nature as a populous metropolis: 'When I lived in London the horror was wellnigh insupportable. I could not get away from men; their voices came through windows; locked doors were flimsy safeguards' (*DM*, 186). That fear of what the city harbours, so understated in *Jekyll and Hyde*, becomes, in the *fin de siècle* Gothic of Wells, an articulated terror.

In a terrible parody of Moreau's God-like status among the flock of Beast People, Prendick imagines a London preacher 'gibbering Big Thinks even as the Ape Man had done.'[15] Readers in a library seem like 'patient creatures waiting for prey.' Overcrowded London provokes in Prendick a kind of agoraphobia, like that of Jekyll: 'Particularly nauseous were the blank expressionless faces of people in trains and omnibuses; they seemed no more my fellow-creatures than dead bodies would be, so that I did not dare to travel unless I was assured of being alone' (*DM*, 187). Isolation and fear of fellow creatures are symptomatic of the Gothic state of being: the house-bound Jekyll, Dorian Gray's aesthetic reclusiveness, the Time Traveller's lonely wanderings through time and now Prendick's fear of crowded spaces figure a modern Gothic hero cut off from the everyday world. Often, the experience of London itself is the cause of paranoia: crowded Underground trains evoke for Prendick the mindless mob of Beast People. The isolated vulnerability of the traditional Gothic becomes, in the modern Gothic, symptomatic of the metropolitan experience.

Despite its setting on a remote Pacific island, London is never far from view in *The Island of Dr Moreau*. Montgomery is obsessed with news from the city and questions Prendick closely about Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street. London's music halls and University College are familiar locations: 'He talked to me of London in a tone of half-painful reminiscence, asking all kinds of questions about changes that had taken place. He spoke like a man who had loved his life there, and had been suddenly and irrevocably cut off from it' (*DM*, 28). Yet Montgomery's memories are not all positive: '"I'm damned," said he, "if this place is not as bad as Gower Street – with its cats"' (*DM*, 70). Wells clearly intended this to infer that Moreau's island had much in common with London, a point that is pressed home when Prendick spurns the London streets: his reclusiveness and fear of crowds mirrors

his isolation on the island and his fear of the Beast People. London is thus closely linked with Moreau's island and its exiled inhabitants. Montgomery has a 'sneaking kindness for some of these metamorphosed brutes, a vicious sympathy with some of their ways' (*DM*, 120), and, as Haynes points out, we 'should not miss the serious puns involved in the words "kindness" and "sympathy" because, in Prendick's view, Montgomery's empathy with the Beast Folk stems from his own reversion, through drink, to their state' (Haynes, in *The Wellsian*, 19). Montgomery, the quintessential Londoner, is revealed as a beast himself, and thus by implication the population of the metropolis contains the seeds of reversion within itself, for as Prendick says, 'I felt that for Montgomery there was no help; that he was in truth half akin to these Beast Folk, unfitted for human kindred' (*DM*, 156).[16]

As night descends on this parody of human society, a criminal fraternity surfaces, mimicking the nocturnal activities of their human counterparts. Hurley remarks that for Lombroso the body was 'a transparency of the intellect, emotions, and moral nature of the subject it contained' (Hurley, 93). Certain physical characteristics of the Beast People reflect these criminal types: 'Their deformities include some of the stigmata Lombroso identified as prevalent among atavists: '"prognathous" face, "malformed" ears and noses, sloping forehead, shifty eyes and furtive manner, twisted and disproportionate limbs and torso, hunched posture, clumsy misshapen hands and fingers, and lack of "tactile sensibility"' (Hurley, 103). Montgomery tells Prendick that the 'Law' 'became oddly weakened about nightfall; that then the animal was at its strongest; a spirit of adventure sprang up in them at dusk; they would dare things they never seemed to dream about by day' (*DM*, 116). Murder, robbery, garrotting – these are the criminal activities of the nocturnal city, and Moreau's Beast People's animal nature infers a similar night-time criminality. Prostitution, too, is hinted at in the 'Fox-Bear Woman's vulpine, shifty face'. This face is 'strangely human in its speculative cunning', and East End vice is suggested when Prendick imagines he had met her before 'in some city by-way'. His encounters with the females are a Gothic interpretation of London prostitutes: in 'some narrow pathway, glancing with a transitory daring into the eyes of some lithe, white-swathed female figure', he would 'suddenly see (with a spasmodic revulsion) that they had slit-like pupils, or, glancing down, note the curving nail with which she held her shapeless wrap about her' (*DM*, 121). Even the children of the Beast People suffer the fate of many of their East End counterparts, for they 'generally died',

and the dehumanizing effect of slum-life is mirrored in the fact that there was 'no evidence of the inheritance of the acquired human characteristics' (*DM*, 117). If they live, they are subjected to Moreau's 'civilizing' baptismal torture, a grim parody, perhaps, of schooling.

London and its inhabitants are thus at the forefront of Wells's mind in this novel. The dual impulses towards savagery and towards civilization are exposed in Moreau's experiments on the poor animals he tortures into humanity. Prendick's yearning to return to some 'sweet and whole-some intercourse of men' is, as Haynes points out, a self-delusion:

> What we see happening here is Prendick's desperate determination to make sense of his situation by dividing the human species into two rigidly separated sub-groups – the Beast People and his own 'fellow-creatures.' The latter category must be as different as possible from the Beast People for clearly the thing Prendick least wants to recognise is any similarity between himself and the animal nature so apparent in the Beast People.
>
> (Haynes, in *The Wellsian*, 20)

The point is that just as Hyde is an integral part of Jekyll's nature, so the animal nature of the Beast People that so repulses Prendick is also an integral part of human nature. By creating humans out of beasts, Moreau simply emphasizses the fact that humans are in essence beasts themselves. Selfishness, a bestial instinct for survival and the irrepress-ible instincts to feed and keep warm are some of the qualities that ally us with the animal kingdom, and *The Island of Dr Moreau* strips back the civilized veneer of the human to reveal the essential savage beast beneath.

## A London terror: *The Invisible Man*

In *The Time Machine* and *Moreau* London is figured as temporally or geo-graphically remote, but in some of his science fiction stories, Wells made the *fin de siècle* metropolis the focal point of unnatural horror. The modern Gothic, taking the metropolis as its *mise en scène*, builds on the emotional, psychological and sexual emphases of earlier Gothic forms by incorporating into its preoccupations the urban anxieties of the *fin de siècle*. In *The Invisible Man* and *The War of the Worlds* we find the mob and the terrorist haunting metropolitan thoroughfares that become the scene of Gothic encounters, Gothic alienation and Gothic horror.

The invisible man, Griffin, is a chemically altered human being at loose on the metropolitan streets, another example of the modern Gothic's preoccupation with the unstable identity of the modern individual. In this tale of egotism, greed for power and isolation, Wells explores how the individual can experience extreme alienation in the heart of the city, an alienation that leads to mindless acts of violence born out of fear, frustration and arrogance. Like Conrad's Professor, an anarchist wired to explode at any moment in *The Secret Agent* (1907), and the dynamiters of Stevenson's novel, Griffin is a late nineteenth-century terrorist. At first his naked footprints excite amazement, but that amazement turns to mob hysteria at the end of the novel when his terrorizing career is fully recognized.[17] McConnell observes that in this novel we find 'one of the earliest of those descriptions of mass confusion, mob panic, which for many readers came to characterize Wells' (McConnell, 113). In *The Invisible Man* and *The War of the Worlds*, that mass hysteria is engendered by the appearance on the metropolitan streets of something unimaginably terrifying. The modern Gothic is signalled in Wells here because of what John Batchelor describes as 'verifiable particularities' placed in direct relationship with 'terrifying imaginings' (Batchelor, 23). In these two novels it is the very normality of the everyday that makes outlandish apparitions so horrifying and thus tending towards the Gothic.

Griffin, a deranged scientist in the mode of Frankenstein, Jekyll and Moreau, is obsessed with the power of transformative science. As Jekyll's strange alchemy releases a terrifyingly immoral double, Griffin's mutation into invisibility unleashes a psychotic egotism that turns murderous. Speaking of Wells's heroes in general, Suvin says that 'the prime character in his science fiction is the scientist-adventurer as searcher for the New, disregarding common sense and received opinion' (Suvin and Philmus, 20). In his disregard for sense and wisdom Griffin becomes a monster. Leaving a trail of theft, arson and murder behind him, he prowls the streets of London like a ghost:

> My idea was to procure clothing to make myself a muffled but acceptable figure, to get money, and then to recover my books and parcels where they awaited me, take a lodging somewhere and elaborate plans for the complete realization of the advantages my invisibility gave me (as I still imagined) over my fellow-men.
>
> (*IM*, 78)[18]

Michael Coren exactly pinpoints Wells's purpose here when he observes that '*The Invisible Man* shows man exploiting miraculous gifts without

ethical reference' (Coren, 57).[19] Jekyll, a man who also effectively makes himself invisible, at least had a sense of the moral dimensions of his dilemma, however selfish his desires; Dorian Gray seeks pleasure and hedonistic self-indulgence; Griffin acts out of pure egotism. For McConnell, 'Griffin is the most political and, perhaps, still the most contemporary of these grandchildren of Faust. His sacrifice is for power' (McConnell, 117).

J. R. Hammond sees the story as an allegory in which is demonstrated the 'truism that without social morality men are less than human: that power without moral control is dangerous and irresponsible' (Hammond, 90). All the modern Gothic tales we have seen so far demonstrate this truism in one form or another: the modern Gothic monster is frequently born out of a disdain for contemporary morality and becomes, as a result, a dangerous outcast. Wells implies that part of Griffin's moral detachment is due to the condition of modern life, but the root of his immorality lies in his immense selfishness: he steals from his father, and, after his father's suicide, returns home:

> I remember walking back to the empty home, through the place that had once been a village and was now patched and tinkered by the jerry builders into the ugly likeness of a town. Every way the roads ran out at last into the desecrated fields and ended in rubble heaps and rank wet weeds. I remember myself as a gaunt black figure, going along the slippery, shiny pavement, and the strange sense of detachment I felt from the squalid respectability, the sordid commercialism of the place.
>
> (*IM*, 67)

For Griffin, this world of 'sordid commercialism' is a 'desolate place';[20] only in his lodgings, surrounded by his experiments does he feel 'the recovery of reality' (*IM*, 67). Like those other agoraphobic heroes of the modern Gothic, Jekyll, Dorian Gray, Moreau and Prendick, Griffin embraces isolation, because in his distorted psyche only the weird and uncanny pertains to truth; the real world seems alien and hostile. Characteristic of the modern Gothic is this tension between the weird and the commonplace in which the everyday activities of the metropolis alienate the obsessive hero. The commonplace becomes defamiliarized and threatening because the hero's strange mutations are the manifestations of an uncontrolled evil. Griffin's father's world is thus one of 'inanity', and the girl from his childhood is 'a very ordinary person' (*IM*, 67). As 'other', the hero at the centre of the modern Gothic

feels more real, more important, than the faceless crowds of the late-Victorian metropolis. Griffin's rage is directed against this world in which he feels he does not belong. Never is he excused for this detachment, but his alienation is clearly allied to the malaise of the *fin de siècle* that caused disaffection in so many, and in this respect Griffin resembles the modern, deracinated heroes of Conrad: Almayer, Willems, even Kurtz. Griffin's attempts at terrorism, and his arson in the heart of the city, can be read as attempts to destroy the offensive environment, a desire that is realized in *The War of the Worlds*.

Costa argues that in his 'first three scientific romances Wells sees humans as stripped of their distinctly human qualities, just as Griffin is stripped of clothing to maintain transparency' (Costa, 21). Griffin's lack of humanity springs from his condition as the modern alienated citizen, for, as Batchelor says, his 'will to power is the product of early conditioning: he was a "shabby, poverty-struck, hemmed-in demonstrator, teaching fools in a provincial college"' (Batchelor, 22). Emphasizing his otherness, and his unique perspective, Griffin views his situation as like that of a sighted man 'with padded feet and noiseless clothes, in a city of the blind', and, in his hatred of the world, he has a 'wild impulse' to play tricks on the London population (*IM*, 74). The violence Griffin directs at London and its citizens is born out of a petulant arrogance and a deep-seated anger against a world in which he is a freak even before he becomes invisible. As he reminds Kemp, Griffin was 'almost an albino': he had a 'pink and white face and red eyes' (*IM*, 56). As a man with no colour, Griffin is substance without depth, his methods scientific without morality. Duality in *The Invisible Man* stems from oppositions: between Griffin, an enraged and amoral experimenter in the uncanny, and Kemp, the rational, ethical scientist, and between the transparent, alienated Griffin and a world of colour, depth and everyday normality. Kemp, the epitome of respectable science, is Griffin's other, the double that the Gothic monster always seeks to destroy. Kemp represents the normality of which Griffin cannot be a part. *The Invisible Man* features a duality that is central to Wells's visions of the fantastic, and part of his technique in many of his scientific romances is this placing of the uncanny in the context of the everyday.

Like the dynamiter Zero and like the plotters of *The Three Impostors*, Griffin is a terrorist, out of place in the 'normal' city landscape, but he is also a Gothic monster in the sense of the Gothic subject's fragmented identity, and a body that is prone to metamorphosis and fluctuability. Wells's description of the mutating body, of its inner matter, its veins and its bones, is symptomatic of the modern Gothic's concern with

perishable and transforming flesh. In his final moments, like so many Gothic transformations in death – Dorian Gray, Helen Vaughan, Francis Leicester – the invisible man becomes grotesquely altered: 'It was like the slow spreading of a poison. First came the little white nerves, a hazy grey sketch of a limb, then the glassy bones and intricate arteries, then the flesh and skin, first a faint fogginess, and then growing rapidly dense and opaque.' Such details recall the description of the cat on which he first experimented: '"The bones and sinews and the fat were the last to go, and the tips of the coloured hairs. And, as I say, the back part of the eye, tough iridescent stuff it is, wouldn't go at all"' (*IM*, 69). These transformations are examples of the Gothic 'Thing-ness', but a thing-ness that in Griffin is all too gruesomely human. In death he is a crumpled and pathetic naked figure, and the crowd's shame and horror is articulated in the cry, '"For Gawd's sake, cover that face!"' (*IM*, 108). Griffin's eyes that were like 'garnets' suggest a soul burning in torture, like Francis Leicester's 'two burning points like eyes'. The terrible corruption of human flesh – Hyde, Dorian Gray, the Morlocks, Machen's characters, Lucy Westenra, Griffin – defines much of the horror of the modern Gothic where London and its environs is the location of any number of mutations and blood-chilling horrors.

Parrinder points out that the story is 'steeped in the topography and social circumstances of the rural Home Counties' (*Shadows of the Future*, 67). As with *The War of the Worlds,* London and its environs are the location of extreme experiences shot through with strains of the Gothic. For Parrinder, Wells's fictional devastation of his birthplace and homeland reflects a sense of disillusionment with England as he saw it:

> Wells's deliberate cosmopolitanism and his proclamation of world citizenship remain important and worthwhile ideals, but his deeper affinity is with the New World spirit, even though he himself was never tempted to emigrate. The destruction which many emigrants must have wished on the homelands they were leaving is enacted in *The Time Machine, The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds* . . .
>
> (*Shadows of the Future,* 94)[21]

What is more, Wells's intention, as stated in his interview in the *Weekly Sun Literary Supplement*, to look at the world through new eyes is fully achieved in *The Invisible Man*. Foot says that Wells did not enjoy being likened to Jules Verne, Edgar Allan Poe or Dickens, 'when one of his primary aims was to look with fresh scientific eyes, Swiftian eyes at the world all around him, and especially *his* London which he wanted

to hear *his* Socialist message' (Foot, 35). In Griffin, Wells brings a wholly new perspective to bear on London, but one that is as adrenalin-pumping as the Gothic fictions that preceded it.

The novel presents the metropolis from the point of view of an unseen fugitive/invader. Having cruelly injured a cabman and in danger of detection in the throng, Griffin takes to the gutter of Great Portland Street: 'forthwith the shaft of a crawling hansom dug me forcibly under the shoulder blade, reminding me that I was already bruised severely. I staggered out of the way of the cab, avoided a perambulator by a convulsive movement, and found myself behind the hansom' (*IM*, 75). London appears to have assumed an active aggression of its own towards its Gothic invader, an aggression that fuels Griffin's paranoia. In other Gothic narratives the gross, mutated physicality of the monster instils terror; here terror lies in Griffin's very lack of physical substance, in his ghostliness:[22] 'At the cost of bowling over one young fellow I got through, and in another moment I was rushing headlong round the circuit of Russell Square, with six or seven astonished people following my footmarks' (*IM*, 76). Running naked in a circuit from Great Portland Street, through Oxford Street, Tottenham Court Road, Russell Square, Bloomsbury Square, Tavistock Square and Montagu Street, Griffin is a weird invader. A small crowd of Londoners gawp at a drying footprint which Griffin says is 'as isolated and incomprehensible to them as Crusoe's solitary discovery' (*IM*, 77). Like Friday, Griffin is 'other', his lack of colour equating with Friday's density of colour; but unlike the noble savage, Griffin turns malevolent.

The same London district that Griffin circuits in his invisible naked-ness is the scene of a strange encounter in *The Three Impostors*. Dyson, bent on *flâneurie*, 'went out and wandered rather aimlessly about the streets': 'my head was full of my tale, and I didn't much notice where I was going. I got into those quiet places to the north of Oxford Street as you go west, the genteel residential neighbourhood of stucco and prosperity' (*TI*, 107). He strolls along, 'enjoying the stillness', in the area of Tottenham Court Road:

> I was wondering at the strange peace and dimness there, where it must be close to some roaring main artery of London life, when sud-denly I heard the noise of dashing feet tearing along the pavement at full speed, and from a narrow passage, a mews or something of that kind, a man was discharged as a catapult under my very nose, and rushed past me, flinging something from him as he ran.
>
> (*TI*, 108)

Indecipherable encounters, uncanny events, random meetings with troubled or persecuted individuals are commonplace in modern Gothic novels like *The Invisible Man* and *The Three Impostors*. The London streets prowled by lascivious men in search of child sex, by a gruesomely murderous Jack the Ripper and by countless vagrants, drunks and criminals could be conceived of as the scene of Gothic encounters in the late-nineteenth century because of the unknowable, often frightening, nature of the vast city. 'The Maiden Tribute' had emphasized the dual existence of the corrupt male citizen, the Ripper murders had proven the existence of terrors in the city, and late-Victorian Gothic fiction built on these horrors in new and extraordinary narratives that assumed a Gothicized London.

Escaping the labyrinth of London, with its dangers of detection, Griffin begins a reign of terror in the Home Counties. 'The Wicksteed Murder', his motiveless atrocity, bears the hallmarks of Hyde's murder of Sir Danvers Carew, right down to the girl who witnesses the murder:

> Everything points to a desperate struggle, – the trampled ground, the numerous wounds Mr. Wicksteed received, his splintered walking-stick; but why the attack was made – save in a murderous frenzy – it is impossible to imagine. Indeed the theory of madness is almost unavoidable. Mr. Wicksteed was a man of forty-five or forty-six, steward to Lord Burdock, of inoffensive habits and appearance, the very last person in the world to provoke such a terrible antagonist.
>
> (*IM*, 95)

Griffin 'broke his arm, felled him, and smashed his head to a jelly' (*IM*, 96). His subsequent plan for domination comes from the fevered brain of a would-be Gothic super-villain, but the scene of his purported overthrow of the established order, Port Burdock, defines the pathetic futility of his plan. A tired, naked, half-starved invisible fugitive threatens 'terror':

> This announces the first day of the Terror. Port Burdock is no longer under the Queen, tell your Colonel of Police, and the rest of them; it is under me – the Terror! This is day one of year one of the new epoch, – the Epoch of the Invisible Man. I am the Invisible Man the First. To begin with the rule will be easy. The first day there will be one execution for the sake of example, – a man named Kemp. Death starts for him today . . . The game begins. Death starts. Help him not, my people, lest Death fall upon you also.
>
> (*IM*, 97–8)

The childish vindictiveness and the 'prosaic detail "*2d. to pay*"' on the envelope containing this announcement underline the absurdity of Griffin's plan (*IM*, 98). His intention to launch his tyranny from a sleepy port on the south coast of England echoes Dracula's landing stage at Whitby, but Griffin is only a man enraged, not a supernatural being capable of transforming others into an army of living dead. His plan for control through invisibility ends in disaster because the invisibility he believed would release him from the inanity of the everyday only reveals to him his dependence on the banal necessities of human existence.

As Griffin is slaughtered at the hands of the vengeful mob we are reminded of Le Bon's crowds 'that have furnished the torrents of blood requisite for the triumph of every belief' (Le Bon, 18). This mob will only be sated by Griffin's blood: 'Down went the heap of struggling men again and rolled over. There was, I'm afraid, some savage kicking. Then suddenly a wild scream of "Mercy! Mercy!" that died down swiftly to a sound like choking' (*IM*, 107). It is a pathetic end for a would-be tyrant. But as Costa says:

> Griffin's undoing, like Moreau's, stems from a megalomania that has convinced him that his discovery will endow him with unlimited power. Bernard Bergonzi is correct in stressing that, since Griffin's invisibility stands for Wells's apprehension of the possibilities of science, Griffin's fate must be seen as a rebuke to the pretensions of science and, perhaps, the end of the young Wells's own identification with a romanticized species of scientist-magician, one that is notably apparent in the characterization of the Time Traveller.
>
> (Costa, 20)

Bergonzi's point about Wells's sceptical view of the possibilities of science is sustained by the terrors that Wells imagines scientific experimentation, and technological advance, could entail. The allying of science with horror in Well's early work marks the birth of a new literary genre: science fiction.

## 'No one would have believed': *The War of the Worlds*

In *The War of the Worlds* London is all but destroyed by the ruthless efficiency of Martian invaders and their almost impregnable machines. With its scenes of ghastly carnage, the novel presents the metropolis as

a Gothicized landscape terrorized by creatures of fleshly repulsiveness. The widespread terror of invasion that this novel dramatizes touched a nerve in the late-Victorian consciousness. Sir George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) is widely credited with popularizing the wave of invasion fiction that emerged in the late nineteenth century. As Keating observes, 'interest in fiction that prophesied the nature of future warfare and showed Britain over-run by, or successfully resisting, invading foreign forces, was a direct product of the changing balance of power in Europe.' Wells 'took an imaginative leap' by making the enemy, not a terrestrial state, but a Martian imperial army (Keating, 359). David Y. Hughes speaks of *Worlds* as a 'work that is largely an allegory of the conquest of a primitive society by technologically sophisticated colonists with no respect for native values or machines' (in Suvin and Philmus, 61).

The critical perspective of the novel as one that deplores imperialism and its worst excesses, destruction and loss of human life, echoes the mood of the *fin de siècle*. *Dracula* is the most obvious modern Gothic narrative to raise the spectre of invasion, but other writers of the fantastic also play with this notion. In Rider Haggard's *She*, the 2,000 year old Ayesha intends to kill Queen Victoria and rule over Britain, causing one of the heroes, Holly, to shudder at the prospect: 'In the end, I had little doubt, she would assume absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth . . . it must be at the cost of a terrible sacrifice of life' (*She*, 249–50). Postcolonial readings of *Worlds* can interpret Wells's irony as being thrust back on imperial Britain to urge a self-reflexive critique of the subjugation of native peoples of the Empire: Britons themselves as invaders of Africa, for example. After all, the end of the nineteenth century saw serious doubts being raised about the 'conquest of the earth,' which in Conrad's terms meant mostly 'the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves' (*Heart of Darkness*, 10). Foot says that the 'idea of the book had come, as HG later explained, in a conversation with his brother Frank, when they had talked of "the discovery of Tasmania by the Europeans – a very frightful disaster for the native Tasmanians!"' (Foot, 38).

Wells adds a British imperial context to the story when he has the Artilleryman declare: 'And they've made their footing good, and crippled the greatest power in the world' (*WW*, 146). The terror unleashed by these imperial invaders, the deadly gas canisters, is designed to annihilate opposition and subjugate surviving humanity to the Martian Empire:

> These canisters smashed on striking the ground – they did not explode – and incontinently disengaged an enormous volume of a heavy inky vapour, coiling and pouring upwards in a huge and ebony cumulus cloud, a gaseous hill that sank and spread itself slowly over the surrounding country. And the touch of that vapour, the inhaling of its pungent wisps, was death to all that breathes.
>
> (*WW*, 81)

This gas hovers in banks and sinks in dust to the earth; at night it is 'nothing but a silent mass of impenetrable vapour hiding its dead' (*WW*, 83). The familiar, sometimes deadly, smog of Victorian London, a frequent device in Gothic obfuscation, is suggested in the Martians' death gas. Like some apocalyptic visitation, the Martians lay waste swathes of London and its surroundings with their gas and infect the waters with a red weed, symbolizing the rivers of blood they leave in their wake.

Wells's imperialists in *Worlds* are frightful Gothic monsters, alien vampires. The narrator declares that those 'who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine the strange horror of their appearance':

> The peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedge-like lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles, the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere . . . above all, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes – culminating in an effect akin to nausea. There was something fungoid in the oily brown skin, something in the clumsy deliberation of their tedious movements unspeakably terrible. Even at this first encounter, the first glimpse, I was overcome with disgust and dread.
>
> (*WW*, 19–20).

The fact that these monsters are 'unspeakably terrible' reminds us that the unspeakable is a feature of the Gothic. Their gross physicality, like humans but not like humans, allies them to the Beast People who also hover between the human and the animal. McConnell interprets them as 'ourselves, mutated beyond sympathy, though not beyond recognition' (McConnell, 130). Though, if this is true, they are perhaps not mutations but a higher evolved form of the race that has lost all sense of its humanity. The Martians of *Worlds* are the literary doubles of Wells's terrorized Londoners, horrible counterparts who threaten like Dracula to destroy their civilization and drain their lifeblood away.

The Martian is a new type of Gothic monster, but one whose inspiration comes from earlier Gothic forms, as Botting observes: 'At the end of the nineteenth century familiar Gothic figures – the double and the vampire – re-emerged in new shapes, with a different intensity and anxious investment as objects of terror and horror' (Botting, 135). The horrific suggestion that these voracious beings are futuristic doppelgängers with vampiric appetites bears out Botting's point that terrifying new forms of the Gothic monster were emerging, expressing fears and anxieties that were symptomatic of the mood of the *fin de siècle*. Theirs are grotesque Gothic bodies, whose viscosity and fungal appearance is repellent. The slimy body is suggestive of degenerative tendencies in their evolutionary pattern, somewhat after the monstrous crab encountered by the Time Traveller whose 'evil eyes were wriggling on their stalks': 'its mouth was all alive with appetite, and its vast ungainly claws, smeared with algal slime, were descending upon me' (*TM*, 74). These future beings evolved into monstrous forms illustrate Batchelor's point that '*The War of the Worlds* begins as a parody of British Imperialism but ends as a celebration, if one may so express it, of Wells's first and leading scientific interest: the theory of evolution' (Batchelor, 27). If, as Huxley said, 'much may be done to change the nature of man himself,' then these creatures are representative of a late nineteenth-century anxiety about the future.

Hyde's 'troglodytic' appearance, Olalla's vampiric inheritance, Dorian Gray's festering picture, Helen Vaughan's primal sexuality, Francis Leicester's reduction to the slimy essence of evil, all are instances of the modern Gothic's concern with atavism, retrogression and 'the beast within'. The late-Victorian consciousness of the origins of the human species in the slimes of the primordial jungle found expression in such human mutations, as Botting suggests: 'The ghostly returns of the past in the 1890s are both fearful and exciting incursions of barbarity and, more significantly, the irruptions of primitive and archaic forces deeply rooted in the human mind' (Botting, 136). Wells's tales assume, not a primitive residue, but an inexorable cycle of development and decline through an undeniable process of evolution. Thus the Martians are a technologically advanced species, but their once human bodies have evolved into monstrous forms, and any moral conscience they may have possessed has been superseded by the need for technological efficiency. They are indeed a new breed of Gothic monster in whose creation Wells captured the mood of the age and moved his Gothic imagination closer to the nascent genre of science fiction.

While Wells was often regarded as an exponent of scientific fantasy, he nevertheless employed techniques that were symptomatic of Gothic fiction. *Dracula* was published in the same year as *War of the Worlds*, thus the narrator's brother's sighting of a bat flickering by and vanishing in the wake of the invaders' advance on London is a particularly prescient moment. Later, as the Martians prepare to feed, the narrator describes a Gothic vision from his hideout:

> The twilight had now come, the stars were little and faint, but the pit was illuminated by the flickering green fire that came from the aluminium making. The whole picture was a flickering scheme of green gleams and shifting rusty black shadows, strangely trying to the eyes. Over and through it all went the bats, heeding it not at all. The sprawling Martians were no longer to be seen, the mound of blue-green powder had risen to cover them from sight, and a Fighting Machine, with its legs contracted, crumpled and abbreviated, stood across the corner of the pit.
>
> (*WW*, 127)

The unnatural green light speaking of sickly corruption, the bats and the cold, mechanical machines establish a chilling atmosphere for the horror to come. The Martians' feeding is made all the more gruesome by the normality of the victim, a 'stout, ruddy, middle-aged man, well-dressed'. The full impact of the terrible blight wrought upon the everyday world is stressed by the fact that three days previously the man 'must have been walking the world, a man of considerable consequence', and the destruction of human hopes and aspirations, of human vanity, is figured in this man's 'staring eyes and the gleams of light on his studs and watch-chain'. He vanishes behind the mound and 'then began a terrible shrieking and a sustained and cheerful hooting from the Martians . . . ' (*WW*, 128). The class divides of late nineteenth-century London are eradicated in this scene of slaughter, where status has no meaning. In a pre-Martian world governed by money and class, the plump respectability of the victim would have been a source of pride and social standing; now perhaps, it is his evident healthiness that whets the Martians' appetites.[23]

A Gothic juxtaposition of the familiar with the horrific is again evident. By tailing off the narrator's description, Wells implies that 'unspeakability' of the Gothic. The narrator himself acknowledges the unutterable nature of the Martians' feeding process: 'But, squeamish as I may seem, I cannot bring myself to describe what I could not endure even to continue

watching' (*WW*, 119). The Martians are vampiric creatures, in Botting's sense: no longer possessed of a digestive system they 'took the fresh living blood of other creatures, and *injected* it into their own veins . . . blood obtained from a still living animal, in most cases from a human being, was run directly by means of a pipette into the recipient canal' (*WW*, 119). In their appetites, these Martians are as grisly as the cannibalistic Morlocks. Monsters of the modern Gothic are fleshly creatures who indulge their appetites in intimate ways, sexually as in Helen Vaughan, with a violence that speaks of bloodlust as in Hyde, Dorian Gray or the Beast People, or as a primal instinct as in the Morlocks and Dracula. The frailty of flesh and the horror of violent death at the hands of a grotesquely human monster are central to the modern Gothic. Here in *Worlds* the Martians are 'absolutely without sex' (*WW*, 120); their detachment, their gleaming cages for their human prey and their technological feeding methods add a cold, scientific edge to Gothic horror. They arrive from another planet, but these unearthly monsters are a deadly warning, like the Morlocks, of the transformative power of a technology linked to human evolution: time and science have enabled the Martians to evolve into grotesque predators. As Hammond argues, Wells's emphasis is on 'a salutary warning against the complacency of optimism and an insistence that scientific progress without human sympathy is negative and ultimately self-destructive' (Hammond, 94).

The Martians lay London to waste, tearing up the great technological advance of the nineteenth century that had changed the face of Britain: the railways. The day after the Martian landing the narrator finds the noise of a train running to Woking a 'familiar reassuring note' (*WW*, 35). The normal functioning of Victorian transport systems, Henderson's telegraph to London that 'was judged to be a canard' (*WW*, 32), and the frequent references to newspaper headlines establish in the novel the accepted everyday communication technologies of *fin de siècle* Britain. Over five chapters Wells cites the familiar landmarks of the southern Home Counties area of Woking and its technological arteries into the metropolis.[24] By Chapter Six the Martians' destruction begins, and the technological and architectural infrastructure of the London area is blasted away in seemingly random acts of violent war. The trains carrying fleeing citizens are stopped in their tracks: 'I perceived this was a wrecked train, the forepart smashed and on fire, the hinder carriages still upon the rails' (*WW*, 48). Woking station and its environs are reduced to a 'heap of fiery ruins' (*WW*, 50). Anticipating the real war to come the narrator reflects that 'never before in the history of warfare had destruction been so indiscriminate and so

universal' (*WW*, 51). The effects of this demolition are horrifying, and small reminders of the now destroyed domestic existence are strewn about, evidence of the panic of flight:

> In the road lay a group of three charred bodies close together, struck dead by the Heat-Ray; and here and there were things that the people had dropped – a clock, a slipper, a silver spoon, and the like poor valuable. At the corner turning up towards the post-office a little cart, filled with boxes and furniture, and horseless, heeled over on a broken wheel. A cash box had been hastily smashed open, and thrown under the debris.
>
> (*WW*, 52–3).

The narrator hears that 'a savage struggle occurred for places in the special trains at Weybridge' (*WW*, 56). As the narrative shifts to London, the narrator's brother witnesses an exodus from the capital that reveals the animal within, and Le Bon's mob behaviour. As Hammond observes, Wells was 'one of the earliest writers to describe mass panic in the face of universal disaster' (Hammond, 91). Even at two on Monday morning, 'people were fighting savagely for standing-room in the carriages': 'By three people were being trampled and crushed even in Bishopsgate Street; a couple of hundred yards or more from Liverpool Street Station revolvers were fired, people stabbed, and the policemen who had been sent to direct the traffic, exhausted and infuriated, were breaking the heads of the people they were called out to protect' (*WW*, 85). In the mêlée of the flight from London 'East End factory girls' mingle with the cream of London society, and even the Lord Chief Justice has to beg for water. Hysteria is provoked by Gothic situations, and *The War of the Worlds* provides vivid details of a Gothic irrationality and panic. Like Le Bon's individual in the crowd, people 'merged their individuality' (*WW*, 91) in their desperate flight; the crowd 'had no character of its own' (*WW*, 91). Individuals in the face of terrible death and destruction lose their minds and their civilized veneer, like the curate who becomes a 'creature of violent impulses' and is 'robbed of reason or forethought' (*WW*, 128).

Gothic duality in *The War of the Worlds* is figured through oppositions: the peaceful domestic world of normal Woking opposed by the apocalyptic vision of a destroyed London satellite town; the sleepy, carefree Sunday morning London opposed by the violence and savagery of the mass attempt at exodus; the tranquil recognizable countryside

opposed by the hordes streaming out of the metropolis littering the country lanes with their fallen goods; and finally by the smooth running technologically advanced city of London reduced to a deserted shell by the oncoming Martian invasion. The Artilleryman describes with disdain the average man's lot before the invasion:

> They just used to skedaddle off to work – I've seen hundreds of 'em, bit of breakfast in hand, running wild and shining to catch their little season-ticket train, for fear they'd get dismissed if they didn't; working at businesses they were afraid to take the trouble to understand; skedaddling back for fear they wouldn't be in time for dinner, keeping in doors after dinner for fear of the backstreets; and sleeping with the wives they married, not because they wanted them, but because they had a bit of money that would make for safety in their one little miserable skedaddle through the world. Lives insured and a bit invested for fear of accidents.
>
> (*WW*, 148–9)

The Artilleryman's comments are the sneers of a soldier aimed at a middle England that he sees as small-minded and bound to a pointless petit-bourgeois existence. Yet, in the end, as Batchelor says, 'Wells is firmly, and reassuringly, on the side of normative human values': 'The artilleryman is shown up as an idle windbag, all talk and no action, and his pre-fascist rhetoric gives way, during his evening drinking and playing cards with the narrator, to a reflective style.' Ultimately, 'he lapses into a weak, ruminative and engaging sensuality,' and his plans for the future are revealed as the ravings of a lunatic (Batchelor, 29).

*The War of the Worlds* is an apocalyptic novel that imagines wholesale massacre before the Martians succumb to the diseases that halt their trail of destruction. The metropolis is destroyed, but in its ruination it still reveals a sordid life of drunkenness and greed. Wine-shops had been looted and a jeweller's plundered: 'Farther on was a tattered woman in a heap on a doorstep; the hand that hung over her knee was gashed and bled down her rusty brown dress, and a smashed magnum of champagne formed a pool across the pavement. She seemed asleep, but she was dead' (*WW*, 157). This is a London of a horror never before imagined: the carcasses of dead monsters bleed down their death machines; a dog with a 'piece of putrescent red meat in its jaws' runs through the street; scraps of 'gnawed gristle of the Martian that the dogs had left' are littered about the streets (*WW*, 159); and out of the hood of a Martian machine 'hung lank shreds of brown at which the hungry

birds pecked and tore' (*WW*, 160). The city itself has become a haunted Gothic landscape:

> London gazed about me spectrally. The windows in the white houses were like the eye-sockets of skulls. About me my imagination found a thousand noiseless enemies moving. Terror seized me, a horror of my temerity. In front of me the road became pitchy black as though it were tarred, and I saw a contorted shape lying across the pathway. I could not bring myself to go on.
>
> (*WW*, 160)

But this is a city that will rise up again: 'Even that day the healing would begin' (*WW*, 163). Having imaginatively destroyed London, Wells offers hope for the future, and the first sign of a returning civilization is, appropriately enough, a discarded newspaper, the *Daily Mail*, with a 'grotesque scheme of advertisement stereo on the back page' (*WW*, 166). The commercial world is returning.

In the serialized version of the story Wells ends his novel with the narrator's reunion with his wife. The book version acquires an Epilogue which allows for some reflection at a distance on the horror of the Martian attack. In the end, though, like Prendick, the narrator of *The War of the Worlds* is forever haunted by the terror that he has endured: 'Of a night I see the black powder darkening the silent streets, and the contorted bodies shrouded in that layer; they rise upon me tattered and dog-bitten. They gibber and grow fiercer, paler, uglier, mad distortions of humanity at last, and I awake, cold and wretched, in the darkness of the night' (*WW*, 171). The city has become, in the narrator's mind, a city of ghosts and haunted souls. Visiting Fleet Street and the Strand, he sees the London population as 'but the ghosts of the past, haunting the streets that I have seen silent and wretched, going to and fro, phantasms in a dead city, the mockery of life in a galvanized body' (*WW*, 171–2). James Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night' is never far from view, and one is reminded of the spiritual void that T. S. Eliot will see in the London of the not so distant future.

# Epilogue: Gothic Futures

*The War of the Worlds* concludes with the defeat of the Martians by the forces of nature: 'slain by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared' (*WW*, 240). Unique in its time, *The War of the Worlds* extended the scope of the Gothic imagination beyond earthly bounds and opened up the possibilities of alien creatures and space travel that were to become the staple subject matter of science fiction. For Botting, Wells's imaginative leap is a pivotal moment in the history of the Gothic mode:

> In the identification of terror and horror as forces encroaching on the present from the future rather than the past, Wells inaugurates an important departure that renders many of the uncanny devices of Gothic fiction obsolete: while the irruption of terror from the past served as a way to evoke emotions that reconstituted human values, the future only presents a dark, unknown space from which horrors are visited.
>
> (Botting, 163)

With this temporal shift, Wells helped to establish a new territory for the Gothic to explore, but this was not his sole concern. Where Stevenson and Wilde use Gothic tropes and themes of duality in modes that highlight contemporary concerns with morality and the metropolis, Wells employs the same tropes and themes as shock tactics designed to jolt his readers out of a mood of complacency. Mighall states that the 'Gothic cannot be an essence, for what is Gothicized constantly changes. This depends on how each culture chooses to represent itself, and where it locates progress and its necessary antithesis' (Mighall, 186). Progress and atavism for Stevenson, and for Wilde, entail a moral and

psychological probing of the self allied to the conditions of contemporary city life. Progress for Wells is tied to political and social issues that are intrinsically linked to scientific concerns with biology and technology. Wells's scientific romances belong in the same *fin de siècle* category of modern Gothic fiction that Stevenson, Wilde and others had developed, but at the same time his modern Gothic, his metropolitan fictions of terror, are as much to do with the future as they are with the present and the past.

In *Four Quartets* (1944) T. S. Eliot muses that 'Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past' (*Four Quartets*, 23). The modern Gothic's evocation of the primitive beast stalking in the midst of the modern metropolis illustrates Eliot's point with grim horror, but with Wells's futuristic visions of the evolution of the human species Eliot's conflation of past, present and future is graphically illustrated. The future is dependent upon the past, and hence dependent upon the present. Wells presents the contemporary world as one that is always in a state of mutability. His visions of the future and of alien invaders stress the point that the present is as transitory as the past, and the human body is as prone to change and destruction as the physical world in which it dwells. But more than this, Wells's scientific fiction suggests that the seeds of destruction and decline are visibly present in his own time. His visions of a destroyed or terrorized London, his people-that-are-beasts, are warnings against the complacent optimism of mid-Victorian Britain, and warnings against complacent, even utopian assumptions about the possibilities of science. The Woking population of *War of the Worlds* is exterminated by a Martian invading force that regards humanity as little better than a plague of rabbits fit only for farming and consumption. As Batchelor says, 'It is a mark of late-Victorian confidence that these people assume that the creatures in the cylinder will be friendly and recognisably *human* . . .' (Batchelor, 24). Their naive curiosity cannot prepare them for the coming terror.

In *The Time Machine* the city becomes a deeply flawed paradise inhabited by dull-witted and amoral creatures and cursed by its hellish subterranean doppelgängers. In Stevenson and Wilde London is terrorized by human monsters, but the landscape itself is never transformed. Stevenson's dynamiters may threaten to blow up a metropolis that they perceive to be a modern Babylon, but their efforts are ineffectual. It is left to Wells to supply the apocalyptic vision of a city in ruins that Stevenson's Zero yearns for. Before Wells, Richard Jefferies imagines an apocalyptic future in *After London* where the metropolis has decayed

into a fetid swamp: 'For all the rottenness of a thousand years and of many hundred millions of human beings is there festering under the stagnant water, which has sunk down into and penetrated the earth, and floated up to the surface the contents of the buried cloac' (*After London*, 37–8). On the inconclusive ending of that book John Fowles remarks that there 'are no happy ends in time, or evolution. The journey can never be an arrival, only an onwardness' (*After London*, xx). This too is Wells's point, hence the open endedness of his tales of evolution and horror. Jefferies' nightmare vision of an extinct London now covered in a lethal 'greenish/yellow oil' that was 'the very essence of corruption' anticipates the apocalyptic visions of the city that we find in Wells (*After London*, 206). The corrupt, diseased city is the focus of much attention in the modern Gothic: from Stevenson's dimly suggested East End haunts in *Jekyll and Hyde*, through Wilde's depictions of Dorian Gray's excesses in the opium dens of the Docks, to Wells's descriptions of a destroyed metropolis or one that is populated by beings that seem more beast than human, images of disease, decay and moral dissolution abound in the genre.

The modern Gothic is concerned, as is the traditional mode, with monstrous apparitions, but Halberstam points out that 'from the late eighteenth century to the nineteenth century, the terrain of Gothic horror shifted from the fear of corrupted aristocracy or clergy, represented by the haunted castle or abbey, to the fear embodied by monstrous bodies' (Halberstam, 6). The modern Gothic concentrates those monstrosities in the metropolis, in the heart of the British Empire. The fear of the close proximity of the unspeakable with the everyday thus becomes a modern terror, and this too establishes the role of the double in the modern Gothic mode. The labyrinthine city of the modern Gothic imagination is, in part, responsible for the creation of the monsters that roam its streets – they spring out of its rookeries and opium dens, and they descend from the lofty heights of its aristocratic mansions to terrify a helpless public. The imaginations that conjured up these monsters were inspired, as we have seen, by the actual atrocities committed on the streets of the *fin de siècle* city. The modern Gothic and the literature of duality in Stevenson, Wilde and Wells are more than fictional fantasies. At the *fin de siècle* Gothic representations of duality and horror are expressions of metropolitan anxieties springing from the lived experiences of the late-Victorian public.

At the end of the nineteenth century the modern Gothic focuses its attention on monstrous apparitions in the city. The city itself is figured as monstrous in its geographical and social divisions. The duality

that some of its citizens exhibit is also manifest in the oppositions of light and dark, atmospheres of airiness and stifling oppression, gaiety and danger, mundane domesticity and unspeakable horror. The metropolis thus becomes the repository of the present anxieties and fears for the future that came to dominate the *fin de siècle* Zeitgeist. James Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night' articulated a perception of the city that finds expression also in the grim narratives of the realists and naturalists. The modern Gothic adds horror to that perception and thus anticipates T. S. Eliot's 'unreal city' of *The Wasteland*. Modernism was to take the anxieties and scepticism of the 1890s into new literary territory in the new century. Eliot, along with Conrad, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, found that the early twentieth century required different voices and innovative narrative techniques in order to express the more sombre mood of the time, as Beckson explains:

> As late Victorians, they carried the emotional and spiritual baggage of the perplexing *fin de siècle* with them into the more turbulent twentieth century, when cultural transformations, adumbrated earlier, resulted in literature and art that embodied private visions and developed enigmatic forms for a new age.
>
> (Beckson, 379)

Yet, despite this new literary movement, older literary forms endured and continue to flourish. The Gothic is, as Wolfreys argues, infinitely adaptable, and it found in the modern world ample horrors on which to build. The two World Wars of the twentieth century witnessed the terrors that Wells had anticipated, and proved the truth of some of Conrad's bleakest perceptions in *Heart of Darkness*. Space travel and technological developments opened up new frontiers for the literary imagination to go to work on. Throughout the century Gothic narratives found expression in exciting new cultural forms like the cinema and comic books, and its influence can even be felt in popular music, fashion and design. In one sense, the Gothic morphed into a wholly new form, science fiction, and provided the new century with one of its most prolific and profitable genres.

In the twenty-first century the Gothic continues its metamorphosis. As new technologies increasingly dominate the cultural landscape, the Gothic offers atmospheric and suggestive possibilities: cyborgs, alien monsters, horrible clones and menacing machinery are just some of the ways in which the Gothic has been evoked in computer games, graphic

novels, animation and the computerized landscapes of film and television. All the while the Gothic's earlier incarnations remain as the inspiration for new narratives of horror. The modern Gothic fictions of Stevenson, Wilde and Wells take their place alongside earlier and subsequent Gothic narratives as fictions that speak not only of their own time, but of Gothic futures to come.

# Notes

## Chapter 1   Introduction: the Literacy Mood of the *Fin de Siècle*

1  Sparked by Walter Besant's article, 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), James wrote his own defence of realism in 'The Art of Fiction' (1884). Stevenson responded good-naturedly with 'A Gossip on Romance' and 'A Humble Remonstrance' (1884). Earlier, in 1883, Stevenson had put the case for romance in an article for 'The Art Magazine' entitled 'A Note on Realism.'

2  *Dorian Gray* first appeared in serialized form in *Lippincotts Magazine* in 1890.

3  Of course this did not turn out to be his last novel: *The Well-beloved* was serialized in 1892 and published in book form by Osgood, McIlvaine on 16 March 1897.

4  For a discussion of the faultlines in Zola's theory see, for example, Stromberg, p. xvii. Becker's *Documents of Modern Literary Realism* reprints a comprehensive collection of realist criticism and commentaries that provide a useful overview of realist fiction in the nineteenth century.

5  *Selected Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p. 82.

6  For further discussion of the imperial romance genre see Andrea White, *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition: Constructing and Deconstructing the Imperial Subject* (1993), and Linda Dryden, *Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Romance* (2000).

7  All references to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are from the Norton Critical Edition, ed. Donald L. Lawler.

8  I use the term 'new' realists in order to distinguish the realist writers of the late century from other realist writers. As most critics agree, realism or an attempt at representation of actual life has always been present in art. See, for example, Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (1937).

9  Wilde's novel, however, was heavily criticized for immoral and decadent themes. See for example *Letters* p. 81, note 2.

10  *The Importance of Being Earnest* was actually first staged at the St James's Theatre in February 1895.

11  Buchanan's novel *The New Abelard* (1884) was a highly romanticized text on the tragedy which ensues from religious doubt. In the book he describes Zola as 'a dirty, muddy, gutter-searching pessimist, who translates the "anarchy" of the ancients into the bestial argot of the Quartiers Latin' (*The New Abelard*, 202).

12  It must be said, however, that Vizetelly's main consideration in publishing Zola's works was not necessarily one of artistic conscience; there was a strong financial incentive in such a venture. See Keating, pp. 244–50, for more discussion of the Vizetelly trial. Vizetelly was a victim of the National Vigilance Association that set about the task of 'protecting' public morals at a time when the 'health' of the nation was a burning issue. The Association was particularly concerned with shielding the young from what it regarded as

'pernicious' literature. *The Methodist Times* responded to the Vizetelly trial by declaring: 'Zolaism is a disease. It is a study of the putrid' (Becker, 381).

13  Reprinted in Becker,   p.248, from Maupassant 'Les Bas Fonds', *Oeuvres Complètes Illustrée*, 15, p. 73 (Librairie de France, 1934–38, pp. 73–5).

14  Reprinted in Becker, p. 100, from de Sainte-Beuve, 'Madame Bovary par Gustave Flaubert', *Causeries de Lundi*, pp. 346–63 (Monday, 4 May 1857, Paris: Garnier Frères, n.d.).

15  Reprinted in Becker, p. 102, as above.

16  Reprinted in Becker, p. 192, from Zola, 'Le Roman Expérimental', *Le Roman expérimental* (Paris, 1880).

17  See Jacob Korg, *George Gissing, A Critical Biography*. John Goode, writing on Gissing in *Tradition and Tolerance in Nineteenth Century Fiction*, says the conditions in which Gissing found his dead alcoholic wife, Nell, 'seem to have been the direct motivation of [his] last and best major work on the working classes' (Howard, Lucas and Goode, p. 210). Goode is referring to *The Nether World*.

18  Reprinted in Becker, p. 289, from Lilly, 'The New Naturalism', *Fortnightly Review*, 38 (1 August 1885, pp. 240–56).

19  Reprinted in Becker, p. 290, as above. Furthermore, the form of the novel itself was undergoing a transformation: the traditional three-decker novel favoured by the publishing houses was giving way to the shorter one-volume novel. See Keating, pp. 9–56, for more discussion of the decline of the three-decker and the pecuniary concerns of authors and publishers.

20  The realists' claims to present life 'as it is' has of course been much debated and many critics have pointed to the impossibility of recreating reality, not least because of the virtual impossibility of defining what reality is. J. P. Stern, in his study *On Realism*, makes the important point that 'Realism is as compatible with selection as is any other mode of experience (of which literature is a part)' (Stern, 67). Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel*, also argues that formal realism is only a convention not necessarily more authentic than any other genre of writing.

21  Quoted in Greenslade, p. 26.

## Chapter 2    The Modern Gothic

1  See Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, for more discussion of the significance of the historical and geographical in the traditional Gothic.

2  See Keating, 'A Woven Tapestry of Interests', in *The Haunted Study*, pp. 330–68, for a detailed discussion of these new literary forms.

3  For a full discussion of the history of the genre see Gillian Beer, *The Romance*.

4  Stevenson, 'A Note on Realism', p. 27.

5  See George Saintsbury, 'The Present State of the Novel', *Fortnightly Review*, xlii, 1887, pp. 410–17; Andrew Lang, 'Realism and Romance', *Contemporary Review*, lii, 1887, pp. 683–93, and H. Rider Haggard, 'About Fiction', *Contemporary Review*, li, 1887, pp. 173–80.

6  It is important to mention here too Marie Corelli, whose *A Romance of Two Worlds* appeared in 1886. Much neglected until recent years, Corelli was a bestselling author in her day, and her romances indicate that the genre was not the sole province of male writers. Oscar Wilde was an admirer of her work.

7 Of course this perception of the Goths as 'barbarians' is probably no longer tenable.

8 Quoted in Ellis, p. 48.

9 In Spender p. 241, quoted from Anne Elwood, *Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England* (1843), vol. II, p. 165.

10 For example, Hurley observes that 'to assert that something is too horrible to be spoken of is the privileged utterance of the Gothic . . .' (Hurley, 48).

11 In Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, and Hurley, *The Gothic Body*.

12 For example, the Society for Psychical Research had been established in 1882 and was influenced by Frederic Myers and Henry Sidgwick. Freud was a 'corresponding member who contributed to its journal in 1912' (Ledger and Luckhurst, 269).

13 This appears to have strong resonances of Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'The Man of the Crowd', which, as Deborah L. Parsons says, has along with Baudelaire's work become a 'meta-text for the discussion of *flâneurie*' (Parsons, 19).

14 Quoted in Curtis, p. 128. It is probable that the term 'hobbledehoy' is a hidden Irish reference linked to the immigration issue and to the 'alien' question.

15 All reprinted in Curtis, p. 122.

16 Reprinted in Curtis, p. 133.

17 Reprinted in Curtis, p. 138. Notably this verse seems to use the motif of the aristocratic bloodsucker and registers a humanitarian concern for the poor of the East End.

18 Such comments are tantalizingly close to some of Conrad's musings on human nature and morality. Conrad too is often regarded as having a division in his nature, being both a Polish patriot and an aspiring English gentleman.

19 Miller says that '*Homo duplex* was the invention of Buffon and the French eighteenth century, (Miller, 123).

## Chapter 3   The City: London, Real and Imagined

1 Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (2000), figures London itself as a body:

The byways of the city resemble thin veins and its parks are like lungs. In the mist and rain of an urban autumn, the shining stones and cobbles of the older thoroughfares look as if they are bleeding.

(Ackroyd, 1)

2 Of course many writers, including those under discussion here, also saw the city as a place of joyous excitement and exhilarating experiences, but the purpose of this volume is to explore the alternative to that vision.

3 For a full and informative discussion of the murders and their aftermath see Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, pp. 191–228.

4 See Curtis, p. 33.

5 Curtis argues, for example, that perceptions of Oriental otherness included Jews: 'Convinced that no true Englishman could commit such savage

crimes – if only because the culprit killed far too swiftly, viciously, and silently for an ordinary phlegmatic Englishman – ethnocentric readers were quick to construct a Jewish "monster" or a culprit who belonged to some other "inferior race"' (Curtis, 41).

6  The *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, on 25 September 1888, in jocular mode, 'proposed sending a "Mission to the Anthropoid Apes" that would be made up of kindly missionaries and serious scientists who would teach them how to climb up the evolutionary ladder toward the "long-lost Missing Link"' (Curtis, p. 134).

7  Curtis comments that this writer may well be W. T. Stead himself.

8  Quoted in Curtis, p. 35.

9  Quoted in Altick, p. 118.

10 Quoted in Curtis, p. 133.

11 'Unfortunates' was the euphemism used for prostitutes.

12 See Walkowitz, pp. 219–22.

13 See Curtis, p. 261 for further evidence of these culprits.

14 Stead's actions here changed the face of journalism: the 'new journalism' based on investigation and first-hand experience was born. The title 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' was inspired by the myth that the Athenians were forced to sacrifice seven youths and seven maidens to the Minotaur of Crete. In 'The Maiden Tribute' Stead draws the analogy with the sacrifice of London's virgin children:

This very night in London, and every night, year in and year out, not seven maidens only, but many times seven, selected almost as much by chance as those who in the Athenian market-place drew lots as to which should be flung into the Cretan labyrinth, will be offered up as the Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon.

(*PMG,* no. 6336, 2)

15 A full account of 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' and its aftermath is provided by Walkowitz in *City of Dreadful Delight*, pp. 8–134. The text of some of Stead's articles is reprinted in Ledger and Luckhurst, pp. 32–8

16 The second volume was printed in 1891, and the two volumes were reissued between 1892 and 1902. It is the first of the latter volumes that is referred to in this discussion.

17 Boris Ford suggests that it 'had become fashionable during the 1880s to try to share as well as to look at "the dim strange other world of East London".' He cites Canon Barnett, the founder of Toynbee Hall as 'not alone in pointing to the difficulties':

What will save East London, asked one of our University visitors of his master. The destruction of West London, was the answer, and insofar as he meant the abolition of the space which divides rich and poor, the answer was right. Not until the habits of the rich are changed, and they are again content to breathe the same air and walk the same streets as the poor will East London be saved.

(In Ford, 25)

Ford comments that Booth did not talk of 'saving them', suggesting he was more interested in statistics than souls, although Booth too was connected with Toynbee Hall.

Arnold Toynbee established Toynbee Hall, the Whitechapel Library and the Whitechapel Art Gallery, and thus according to Porter 'turned guilt into institutions'. Toynbee, a young idealist, had recognized in the 1870s the divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and articulated his middle-class guilt to working men in the East End: 'We – the middle classes, I mean, not merely the rich – we have neglected you . . . instead of justice we have offered you charity, and instead of sympathy we have offered you hard and unreal advice' (in Porter, 304). Porter comments that movements like Toynbee Hall 'show the paradoxes of late-Victorian London, a world of two cities in which the poor were described as degenerate while being sentimentalized as cockneys' (Porter, 304). Booth's mapping of the economic and social conditions of the lives of London's poor was an expression of that growing social concern, and the will to do something about the conditions in which these people existed.

18  See Porter, '"The Contagion of Numbers": The Building of the Victorian Capital', in *London: A Social History*, pp. 205–38, for a detailed discussion of the development of London during the nineteenth century.
19  See Porter, pp. 225–34 for a history of the transportation system in London.
20  Quoted in Porter, p. 233.
21  Deborah L. Parsons, however, makes the point that 'The term *flâneur* was formally recognized at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Wilson notes a French pamphlet from 1806, detailing a day in the life of a *flâneur* . . .' (Parsons, 17).
22  James Henderson's attack on the woman with his cane is reminiscent of how Hyde murders Carew.
23  Yet some enduring perceptions of womanhood remained. The image of the medieval knight and lady persisted throughout the nineteenth century, albeit increasingly remote and idealistic, as Mark Girouard has outlined in *Return to Camelot*. This image was specially constructed from certain nineteenth-century ideals, and was by no means an accurate reflection of the conditions under which women existed. Nineteenth-century perceptions of the ideal male–female relationship were imaginatively recreated in the chivalric code. It was the knight's duty to defend and to protect women: the woman's duty was to be pure, virtuous and obey her husband. In 1865, perhaps aware that his views were no longer viable, Ruskin addressed women laying down their maidenly duty as he saw it:

> And whether consciously or not, you must be, in many a heart enthroned: there is no putting by that crown; queens you must always be; queens to your lovers; queens to your husbands and your sons; queens of higher mystery to the world beyond, which bows itself, and will forever bow, before the myrtle crown and the stainless sceptre of womanhood.
>
> (Ruskin, 148–9)

The man is 'always to be the wiser'; he is the 'thinker, the ruler, the superior in knowledge and discretion, as in power' (Ruskin, 112). 'The first and necessary

impulse of every true knight and knightly heart', said Ruskin, 'is this of blind service to its lady; . . . in this rapturous obedience to the single love of his youth, in the sanctification of all man's strength, and the continuance of all his purposes' (Ruskin, 113–14). Ruskin regards the woman as the traditional adjunct to the male, with little purpose outside of the role as wife and mother. Yet this certainly was the perception of women's role, in the middle and upper classes at least, which accounts in part for the anxiety about women's new-found freedom to move about the city.

24  It must be noted, however, that Stead's version of events was contested by the parents of the girl, and that Stead himself ended up in prison charged with abduction and indecent assault.

25  Despite that, Walkowitz details the successful action of the Bryant & May match girls in 1888. See Walkowitz, pp. 77–80 for more discussion.

26  Novelists and playwrights, nevertheless, aware of the changing role of women, began to depict their heroines in strikingly new situations. Professional, and increasingly working-class, women began to be portrayed in the workplace. Rowbotham suggests some reasons for the acceptability of female characters being presented in situations traditionally dominated by males. She points to how the 1851 census revealed a surplus of women in the population:

> At the same time, economic factors meant that for many families the burdens of maintaining unproductive, surplus women in a household was a great strain on the domestic budget, particularly as the likelihood of lifelong spinsterhood had become greater for middle-class daughters. Equally, a growing number of women were actively protesting against the limitations of the traditional role assigned to them.
>
> (Rowbotham, 33)

27  Stranding dissolute characters in an imperial backwater was also a narrative strategy used by Conrad in his early novels. One thinks in particular of Almayer in *Almayer's Folly* (1895), and Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896). See Linda Dryden, *Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Romance* for more discussion of this aspect of Conrad's early Malay fiction.

28  Interestingly, Sherlock Holmes made his literary debut in *A Study in Scarlet* in 1887, just a year before the Ripper murders took place.

## Chapter 4    'City of Dreadful Night': Stevenson's Gothic London

1  Haggard's brother had challenged him to write a story that was as good as *Treasure Island* and thus his first best-seller, *King Solomon's Mines* was conceived and written in six weeks. See Morton Cohen, *Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard*, p. 4, for more discussion.

2  As John Carey says, Shaw was of course joking, but he was quite right in recognizing that this new and intensely popular genre of fiction was on the rise.

3  Bradford and Mehew, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson August 1887–September 1890*, p. 2.

4  See Norman Sherry, *Conrad: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 69–70, for comparisons of Conrad and Stevenson.

5  Stevenson's rejoinder to James's 'The Art of Fiction' and Walter Besant's article of the same name caused 'The Master' to take note of Stevenson and lead to an enduring friendship and mutual respect. See Stephen Arata, 'The Sedulous Ape: Atavism, Professionalism, and Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*', pp. 246–7, for a fuller discussion of the debate between the three authors.

6  See Robert Mighall (ed.), *The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde and Other Tales of Terror*, pp. 168–9, for a full discussion of the influences for the story.

7  All references to 'The Body Snatcher' and 'Olalla' are from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and other Tales of Terror*, cited as *JH* in the text.

8  Arata notes that Lombroso's work became widely known in England due to Havelock Ellis's *The Criminal* (1891). In literary circles, Zola and Wells were familiar with Lombroso. Conrad makes references to Lombroso in *The Secret Agent* (1907).

9  Arata argues that 'Degeneration becomes a function not of lower-class depravity or aristocratic dissipation but of middle-class "virtue."' See Arata pp. 239–40 for a fuller discussion of this argument.

10  Quoted in Rosner, p. 28.

11  Mighall discusses the issue of atavism and 'moral insanity' at length in *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction*, p. 130–45.

12  Quoted in Fishman, p. 210.

13  See in particular, John Carey, 'George Gissing and the Ineducable Masses', in *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, pp. 93–117, for more discussion of Gissing's response to the population of London.

14  J. A. Mangan and James Walvin explore training for Empire extensively in *Manliness and Morality*, as does Mangan in *Athleticism and the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* and *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*.

15  Quoted in Rosner, p. 28.

16  See Curtis, p. 35 and p. 120.

17  Critics have commented on Stevenson's odd turn of phrase here, 'somewhere at the end of the world', since the expression is normally 'at the ends of the earth'. It may be, however, that he was unconsciously recalling his Edinburgh days and the public house 'The World's End', which is still in existence just inside the old city gates, a district that was once renowned as disreputable.

18  See Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 165.

19  It is not clear whether this maid belongs to Jekyll's household, but when she recognizes Hyde as someone who 'had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike', it is tempting to draw the connection. That being the case, Carew would have been murdered right outside Jekyll's own house.

20  Fishman records that the 'Whitechapel Board of Works were debating the extension of gas lamps into the dimly-lit alleys and culs-de-sac of Spitalfields on the eve of the Ripper's first attack!' (Fishman, 209).

21  Quoted in Curtis, p. 263.

22  This remarkable transformation recalls the way in which Ligeia inhabits the body of the dead Lady Rowena in Edgar Allen Poe's story 'Ligeia' (1838).

23   The situation of the house on Heriot Row could have inspired Stevenson in his description of the murder of Carew. The upper floors of the house look down onto the street lit by the lamp outside of No. 17. Of course, the lamp referred to in Stevenson's poem is the one that still exists in front of 17 Heriot Row in Edinburgh, the Stevenson abode from 1857.

24   The morning tipple is, of course, gin, colloquially called 'Mothers' Ruin', but in the 1880s it was known as 'blue ruin' or 'jacky'.

25   Drunkenness was a consequence of poverty, not always the cause of it, as William Booth acknowledged: 'Let us never forget that the temptation to drink is strongest when want is sharpest and misery the most acute. A well-fed man is not driven to drink by the craving that torments the hungry; and the comfortable do not crave for the boon of forgetfulness. Gin is the only Lethe of the miserable' (Booth, W., 48).

26   It is worth noting that Conrad was living in Stoke Newington from 1880 to 1886, the year of the publication of *Jekyll and Hyde*. See Robert Hampson in Gene Moore (ed.), *Conrad's Cities*, p. 172, and Norman Sherry, *Conrad's Western World*, p. 328.

27   It is now a critical commonplace to recognize in the London of *Jekyll and Hyde* aspects of Stevenson's Edinburgh and his Edinburgh experiences. Gavin Wallace outlines the Edinburgh setting of the novel thus:

> Its disturbing vision of late nineteenth century urban anonymity owes far more to Stevenson's sensitivity to the duality inscribed upon the fabric of Edinburgh than to his knowledge of the streets of London: the setting is Edinburgh, stone for stone. Today, crossing the road from Stevenson's birthplace, 8 Howard Place, one comes to the unassuming Inverleith Terrace Lane, clearly the setting for the murder of Carew, with the high windows looming on the right through which the crime is witnessed.
>
> (Wallace, in Bradbury, ed., 153)

Threaded through the story is the uniqueness of Edinburgh, and Stevenson's own nocturnal visits to the Old Town where he came to be known as 'Velvet Coat'. Edinburgh's New Town with its elegant rows of Georgian town houses and the Old Town with its medieval tenements and narrow lanes and alleyways were the scene of Stevenson's own 'Jekyll and Hyde' existence. Elaine Showalter regards Stevenson as 'the fin-de-siècle laureate of the double life' (Showalter, 106). Wallace speaks of Stevenson's fascination with the opportunities for experiencing the 'low life' offered by the Old Town with its Grassmarket and the graveyards of Greyfriars Kirk where he 'doggedly followed the antiquarian footsteps of Scott, or chased the reckless spirit of Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns in riotous dissipation' (Wallace, 142). But, as Wallace notes, the rectitude that his parents' home symbolized 'was never far away, offering a veneer of respectability and comfort – a bolthole for the young Mr Hyde' (Wallace, 142).

28   Dubbed 'Auld Reekie', his native Edinburgh was not congenial to Stevenson's health: he famously called its climate 'pernicious'. Although he loved the city, Stevenson was constantly in search of the cleaner air and open spaces that seemed to keep his illness at bay. Stevenson stresses this point in 'The Manse' when he likens his own quest for a healthy climate to

that of his grandfather, Louis Balfour: 'He sought health in his youth in the Isle of Wight, and I have sought it in both hemispheres; but whereas he found it and kept it, I am still on the quest' (*MP*, 65).

29  See Walkowitz and Nord for more discussion of prostitution and violence in nineteenth-century London.

30  See Walkowitz, p. 69.

31  See Arata, pp. 236–8, for a discussion of Stevenson's correspondence with Myers.

32  I say 'crimes' here because Veeder argues convincingly that Hyde/Jekyll also wilfully murders Lanyon. See Veeder and Hirsch (eds), *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde After One Hundred Years*, pp. 129–31. Veeder comments on how Hyde seems to have wandered London for ten years without incident, but I would argue that Jekyll's 'statement' indicates that Hyde was involved in nefarious deeds throughout that time and that Enfield's witnessing of the trampling of the child was a coincidence that caused him to be linked to Jekyll by common acquaintances. Had Enfield not known Utterson the first public revelation of Hyde's depravity would have been the Carew murder. Jekyll's 'statement' makes no mention of the trampling, suggesting that it may have been a neg-ligible event in the course of Hyde's activities. Veeder's chapter in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde After One Hundred Years*, 'Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy', is a detailed study of Oedipal themes and homosexual anxieties in the novella.

33  It would be interesting to speculate how much the presence of Clara Luxmore in *The Dynamiter* is due to the influence of Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson on the writing of the story.

34  Although I have elsewhere refrained from comparing Stevenson's own situation to that of his fictional characters it is worth considering how much his confinement to his bed in his childhood may have influenced this particular aspect of the novel.

## Chapter 5  Oscar Wilde: Gothic Ironies and Terrible Dualities

1  All references to 'The Canterville Ghost', 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime', and 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.' are from Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Short Fiction*, unless otherwise indicated.

2  Washington's letter is a reference to the Society for Psychical Research which was founded in 1882. The reference to Myers is to Frederick Myers, who had corresponded with Stevenson over *Jekyll and Hyde*.

3  The fact that Lord Arthur's first encounter with Podgers occurs at Bentinck House adds a tantalizing irony to this suggestion.

4  'Eld' is an archaic term for age.

5  The Decadents concerned themselves with the relationship between art and life. For Karl Beckson decadence 'emerged as the dark side of Romanticism in its flaunting of forbidden experiences, and it insisted on the superiority of artifice to nature' (Beckson, 33). Beckson further argues that the paradox of the Decadent writers' rejection of the 'liberal theology of the Church of England' in favour of Roman Catholicism can in part be explained by the

'crisis over faith that intensified with Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and by the consequent need for ancient, universal authority' (Beckson, 49). Culturally, the Decadent movement was concerned with physical beauty in humans as well as in the physical world around them. For Wilde, beauty was almost a religion in itself, as the biblical tone of his Preface to *Dorian Gray* seems to indicate: 'Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope. They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only beauty' (*DG*, 3). Elaborating on Wilde's point, Beckson relates aestheticism to cultural conditions, and ultimately to Modernism: 'For those not of the elect, namely the uneducated and uncultured in Victorian society, there could be no hope; they were doomed to the ugliness of the industrial age and the mediocrity of their own narrow minds. Such was the mythology of Aestheticism, which became central to Modernism' (Beckson, 50).

6   See *Dorian Gray*, p. 96, note 9, for more discussion of this issue. Merlin Holland, among others, also suggests Pater's *Studies in the History of Renaissance* (1873), stating that there are 'echoes of Dorian Gray's total surrender to the poisoned perfection of the novel' (Holland, 47).

7   Mallarmé, deeply impressed by *Dorian Gray*, had written to Wilde in the most appreciative of terms.

8   See Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde Revalued*, pp. 187–8, for a full list of 'analogues, parallels and sources' for *Dorian Gray*.

9   Powell points out that in *Melmoth the Wanderer* 'the picture depicts a man who has bargained his soul to Satan and, like Dorian Gray, lives in perpetual youth until he ages shockingly just at the moment of death' (Powell, 148).

10   Beckson lists some of the popular 'magic picture' novels of the 1880s that may have influenced Wilde: *The Picture's Secret, The Portrait and the Ghost, The Veiled Picture, His Other Self* and *The Tragic Muse*.

11   This version of the story was over fifty thousand words long. Ward, Lock & Co. bound the British edition of *Lippincott's*. See *Dorian Gray*, pp. x, n. 1, for more discussion of the publishing history of the text.

12   Interestingly, W. T. Stead was at the time editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a newspaper that did much to whip up the hysteria surrounding Wilde's novel.

13   All references to Wilde's plays are from *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays*.

14   Wotton's reference to this 'son of Love and Death' in fact refers to Dorian's parentage and the tragedy of his mother's marriage. Wotton is responding to the romantic nature of Dorian's history, and as such perceives Dorian as if he were some fictional romantic hero to be manipulated by his 'author', Wotton.

15   This, in fact, returns us to McCormack's contention that the book is peculiarly modern in that it crosses boundaries between the oral and the written.

16   Of course the theatre in Wilde's text is not a 'penny gaff', but is not far removed from such status, and the disgust in the description of the place indicates that Wilde may not have made much distinction himself.

17   Yet the journey of one and a half hours would probably have landed him in Hoxton. Holborn had some poorer quarters, but Hoxton, Shoreditch and Whitechapel were the centres for entertainment of this sort. David C. Rose

makes the point that Wilde himself lived in 'Salisbury Street, Strand, which cannot be more than fifteen minutes walk from any part of Holborn that one might wish to reach.' This highlights a discrepancy in Wilde's description of the location of Isaacs's theatre that is not easily resolved. One answer may be that, not renowned for accuracy, Wilde conflated images of the East End with his more local Holborn for artistic effect. Rose also informs me that the Holborn Royal Theatre at that time was the Royal Holborn Empire, where Vesta Tilley had been performing since 1878. Rose also notes that 'This theatre, which was reconstructed in 1887, was at 242–5 High Holborn, and was known as the Royal Holborn Theatre of Varieties from 1892 to 1906, when it was remodelled by Frank Matcham. It was then called the Holborn Empire until it was bombed in 1941 and eventually demolished in 1961. It should not be confused with the Holborn Theatre at 85 High Holborn' (Rose, David C., unpublished research, personal correspondence, 2001).

18   The description of Isaacs's theatre is somewhat confusing. Clearly the cupids, cornucopias and the existence of a dress circle indicate that some effort had gone into the decor and provision in the theatre. Certainly it is not exactly a 'penny gaff'. Yet Dorian's reaction to the place is so haughty that the impression the reader gets is of one of the lowest types of theatre available. No doubt Wilde's own prejudices inform this description.

19   I have suggested that it was primarily men who 'descended' into these poorer districts, but it should be noted that women too found entertainment in these areas. Fishman notes how the Hon. Lady Beauchamp brought a party of 'ladies and gentlemen' to a lodging house in the East End, known as the 'Globe Chambers', for an evening of entertainment among the working classes. See Fishman, p. 29.

20   Porter notes that Grosvenor Square is London's largest square at six acres in extent, and when it was constructed in 1737 the Duchess of Kendal, George I's mistress, was among its earliest inhabitants: 'Alongside was Grosvenor Street, "a spacious well built street, inhabited chiefly by People of Distinction"; about a third of its residents were titled' (Porter, 109).

21   See Fishman, pp. 203–4 for more details.

22   Patti (1843–1919) was a legendary opera singer who, according to Rose, commanded a fee of $1000 per performance on her 1882 American tour (private correspondence).

23   Quoted in Curtis, p. 270.

24   Beckson lists a number of 'now-forgotten' magic picture novels of the 1880s such as *The Picture's Secret, The Portrait and the Ghost, The Veiled Picture* and *His Other Self*, and goes on to note how in Henry James's *The Tragic Muse* (1889/90) the 'idle aesthete Gabriel Nash, having sat only once for his portrait, vanishes from the novel as his portrait magically fades, suggesting a lack of substance in both sitter and picture' (Beckson, 47).

25   From 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, p. 1194.

26   Presumably Dorian is visiting the opium dens of this area, as mentioned later in the narrative.

27   Pearson notes that Wilde had modelled Campbell on Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell whom he once met in the Café Royal. Many years later, after his imprisonment, Wilde encountered Chalmers Mitchell outside a café in Paris and Mitchell wondered if Wilde remembered him: 'Of course I remember

you. We talked and talked, and I asked you how to get rid of the body. I used you in *Dorian Gray*, but I don't think you would be easy to blackmail' (Pearson, 355).

28  See *Dorian Gray*, p. 29.

29  Lawler notes that this is a favourite epigram of Wilde's 'which also appears in "The Critic as Artist" and once again in *Lady Windermere's Fan*' (*DG*, 111, n. 2).

30  Curtis notes how 'Asiatics' featured frequently in the papers as possible murderers because of their 'temperament': 'A correspondent named "Nemo" relied on his many years in India to inform readers of the *Times* (Oct. 4) that the murderer was "a Malay, or other low-class Asiatic" because the mutilations were all inflicted according to "peculiarly Eastern methods" designed "to express insult, hatred, and contempt." Perhaps a prostitute had robbed this man of all his savings, or she had so "greatly injured" him that he felt the need to exact revenge on her entire class' (Curtis, 244).

31  In *The Red Room and Other Stories*, p. 8. Wells uses the term 'krees' for the short-handled Malay knife, but probably this is a misunderstanding on Wells' part. Conrad, who knew the Malay Archipelago well, uses the term 'kriss', and Hugh Clifford, who had been an administrator in the region for many years and wrote many short stories about Malaysia, spells it 'kris'.

## Chapter 6    'The Coming Terror': Well's Outcast London and the Modern Gothic

1  Leon Edel notes in fact that Wells was at the St James Theatre in January 1895 to review James's *Guy Domville* for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Bernard Shaw, Arnold Bennett and James himself were all there for the opening night of James's play. See Edel, pp. 415–17.

2  James's disgruntlement was probably also a reaction to his own lack of success on the London stage and the emergence of the 'New Dramatists'.

3  Lovat Dickson avers that the 'germ of the book had, in fact, appeared in an essay in the *Pall Mall Gazette* which took its point from Ruskin's remark that if an angel were to appear on earth, somebody would be sure to shoot it' (Dickson, 65).

4  Reprinted in *The Wellsian*, 20, 1997, p. 6. This, as David C. Smith notes in his article, is a very rare interview: 'The interview is located in what may be the first formal literary supplement ever issued. It is a rare piece. I have seen only two copies of this issue' (*Wellsian*, 20, 1997, 3).

5  See, in particular, Jan Hollm, '*The Time Machine* and the Ecotopian Tradition', *The Wellsian*, no. 22, 1999, pp. 47–53, for a fuller account of Wells's response to Morris.

6  All references to *When the Sleeper Wakes* are from *H. G. Wells: The Science Fiction*, Vol. 2.

7  Many cite the ventilation shafts of Uppark as the inspiration for those in *The Time Machine*, but those of London itself could well have contributed to Wells's vision of the London of 802,701.

8  Some critics attack Wells for making the Morlocks unsympathetic creatures, while reserving some affection, albeit supercilious, for the Eloi. But *The Time*

*Machine* is a hard-hitting critique of worker/master relations in the late nineteenth century and as such Wells is critical of both upper class and working class. It could be argued that in dehumanizing the Morlocks as he does, Wells is putting his case most forcibly, and impressing on the reader the barbarous result of the working conditions of his time. In the same way that criticism of Conrad's depiction of the African in *Heart of Darkness* has been parried by the counter claim that it is the imperialists' barbarizing of the African that is under attack, Wells could be justified in suggesting that contemporary practices would lead to a barbarizing of the working class.

 9  'Excelsior' means 'higher'.

10  Ledger and Luckhurst explain that these are a 'Sub-class of marine organisms–the most common being the sea squirt' (Ledger and Luckhurst, 5).

11  Yet the Eloi themselves are a degenerate species and their 'ownership' of that space is contingent on their use to the Morlocks. Nevertheless, the reader's sympathies through the agency of the Traveller's greater preference in the narrative lies with the Eloi, and thus the Morlocks are perceived as interlopers.

12  Parrinder says that 'Wells would have known Henry James's novella "The Beast in the Jungle", in which the metaphorical "beast" signifies a mental, not physical, challenge to the protagonist's obsessive masculine will-power' (*Shadows of the Future*, 61).

13  The 'silly season' refers to the summer months in Britain when Parliament is in recess and the country is generally on holiday so that news is scarce.

14  Although it is never stated, Moreau's experiments clearly take place in London, and it is in London that he meets Montgomery.

15  Hurley makes the point that for Wells 'religion is only an artificial device by which society attempts to keep savage human nature in check, and that civilization is full of such artifices' (Hurley, 10).

16  Hurley argues that Montgomery is an oblique reference to Oscar Wilde. Yet it would seem more likely that his blond hair and drooping lip coupled with his tendency to 'go native' ally Montgomery more closely with Conrad's Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), a book Wells certainly had read and whose themes of imperial isolation and moral depravity are close to Wells's themes in *Moreau*.

17  McConnell makes this connection in *The Science Fiction of H. G. Wells* and it is an interesting insight. He suggests that Conrad, a close friend of Wells, may well have been inspired by *The Invisible Man* (McConnell, 115).

18  All references to *The Invisible Man* are from *Best Science Fiction Stories of H. G. Wells*. (Dover: New York, 1966), pp. 1–110.

19  This, of course, is exactly the opposite of what happens in 'The Man Who Could Work Miracles'. Having tried to use his powers for the good of his fellow human beings, Fotheringay realizes the devastating effect of his experiments and returns the world to its former state and renounces his gift.

20  Although we are never told the location of this place, it is likely one of those villages or towns on the outskirts of London being rapidly engulfed by the expanding metropolis.

21  Parrinder devotes a chapter to Wells's 'globetrotting novels'. See *Shadows of the Future*, 'New Worlds for Old: the Prophet at Large', pp. 80–95.

22  It is worth noting in passing that Wells himself wrote ghost stories, for example 'The Red Room' (1896).

23  The Artilleryman is only too aware of the fate of humanity when he says, 'And I don't mean to be caught, either, and tamed and fattened and bred like a thundering ox' (*WW*, 148), and later as he describes the 'tame ones' who 'will go like all tame beasts; in a few generations they'll be big, beautiful, rich-blooded, stupid – rubbish!' (*WW*, 150). In this too his vision of future humanity recalls the Eloi and their purpose as fodder for the Morlocks.

24  For a thorough description of the Woking that Wells knew see Iain Wakeford, 'Wells, Woking and *The War of the Worlds', The Wellsian*, no. 14, 1991 pp. 18–28.

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