

## VICTORIAN SCIENCE AND MORALITY IN ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE* (1886)

*Ciência e moralidade vitorianas em O médico e o  
monstro, de Robert Louis Stevenson (1886)*

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes how Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) depicts the relationship between science and morality (secular or religious) in his 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. For this purpose, I analyze the setting choice (London) and some characteristics of late Victorian Gothic fiction that constitute the negative aesthetics of which Stevenson's characters are formed. Then, I analyze how the negative aesthetic juxtaposes with an order that is both scientific and moralist in a cultural context in which the reading public is obsessed with crime. Eventually, I discuss the theories of 19th-century philosophers and scientists, such as Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909), and Francis Galton (1822-1911), in an attempt to understand Stevenson's novella from an allegedly scientific point of view. I conclude that Hyde/Jekyll was "destined" to fail since both late Victorian science and morality were prone to condemn the "unfit".

**KEYWORDS:** Victorian Science; Victorian Morality; Robert Louis Stevenson; Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; Gothic Fiction.

### RESUMO

Este artigo analisa como o escritor escocês Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) retrata a relação entre ciência e moral (secular ou religiosa) em sua novela de 1886, *O médico e o monstro*. Para tanto, analiso a escolha do cenário (Londres) e algumas características da ficção gótica tardo-vitoriana que constituem a estética negativa da qual são formados os personagens de Stevenson. Em seguida, analiso como uma estética negativa se justapõe a uma ordem científica e moralista em um contexto cultural em que o público leitor é obcecado por crimes. Ao final, discuto as teorias de filósofos e cientistas do século XIX, como Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) e Francis Galton (1822-1911), na tentativa de compreender a novela de Stevenson de um ponto de vista supostamente científico. Concluo que Hyde/Jekyll estava "destinado" ao fracasso, já que tanto a ciência quanto a moralidade do final da era vitoriana eram propensas a condenar os "inaptos".

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** ciência vitoriana; moralidade vitoriana; Robert Louis Stevenson; O médico e o monstro; ficção gótica.

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Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) was born to a respectable middle-class family in Edinburgh. As a man of his time, he was interested in science in a way that the main character of his novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a physician whose scientific experimentation (e.g.: the potion he creates and repeatedly drinks off) allows his other self to surface and live a life full of secret pleasures. Curiously, the 1886 novella is not set in Edinburgh, as if the character's *Doppelgänger*<sup>1</sup> seems more suitable to Victorian<sup>2</sup> London. The duality in Stevenson's story does not lie in virtuous Jekyll versus vicious Hyde. Structured in a third-person narrative in most parts of the work, except for Dr. Lanyon's narrative and Dr. Jekyll's confession, the story revolves around scientific aspirations defying the Victorian order, which is concurrently moralist and scientific.

The main characters of the story are Henry Jekyll, the respectable doctor, Gabriel John Utterson, the earnest lawyer, and Edward Hyde, the abominable murderer. Mr. Utterson is the one who takes charge of Jekyll's will but does not know his client's secrets at first. The primary secret is that Jekyll and Hyde share the same body, mind, and soul, even though they have different names and physical appearances, including an apparent dissimilar social and moral conduct. In this regard, both Jekyll and Hyde represent the "negative aesthetics" (cf. Botting) that form Gothic texts. That is, Gothic fiction is concerned with vice: "protagonists are selfish or evil; adventures involve decadence or crime" (Botting, 2014, p. 2). Hyde's evil is the result of Jekyll's selfishness; Jekyll's decadence is the result of Hyde's crimes. In short, "Gothic texts are not good in moral, aesthetic or social terms" (Botting, 2014, p. 2) – neither are the characters.

Unlike the 18th-century Gothic fiction, the story is not set in the Middle Ages. Historical settings are replaced with contemporary ones. What prevails in the novella is the juxtaposition of a negative aesthetic with an order that comprises science and morality (be it religious or secular) in late Victorian London.

Hence this article aims to analyze how this juxtaposition is depicted in the novella. Firstly, I will examine the relationship between the setting and the characters. Then, I will talk about the relationship between the literary genre (Gothic) and the perception of crime at that time. Finally, I will focus on the notions of science, law, and order to better understand the context in which the novella is written and published.

## LONDON, LONDON

The late 19th century is related to a certain conception of morality traversed by misogyny and class-based prejudices. One of the most notorious criminal cases of the time was the murders accredited to "Jack the Ripper". Between August and November 1888, at least five women, identified as prostitutes, were found mutilated in Whitechapel, an impoverished part of the East End of London. The murderer's identity remains unknown but he apparently had some anatomical knowledge, as the mutilations indicate.

1 "The concept of the existence of a spirit double, an exact but usually invisible replica of every man, bird, or beast, is an ancient and widespread belief" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022).

2 The Victorian era roughly corresponds to the period of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901).

Two years before the Whitechapel murders, the main character of Stevenson's novella had been a doctor whose alter ego was a murderer but whose villainy unveiled the moral corruption among the middle and upper classes. Unlike Ripper, Jekyll's other self does not commit crimes of violence against prostitutes, but against a little girl and an elderly man. Even though the victims' profiles are different, there is one thing that ties them – their apparent fragility – in a way that Mr. Hyde feels encouraged to attack them outdoors. Moreover, the foggy setting seems to favor outdoorsy assaults. Although the little girl manages to escape, the old man is beaten to death.

But what do these fictional crimes have to do with the historical time they occur in? According to Botting (2014, p. 13), by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the growth of cities is associated with poverty and crime. Similarly, familiar gothic monsters, such as vampires, ghosts, and doubles, are associated with psychic and scientific experimentation and include issues of moral, cultural, and sexual degeneration. Given the context, the setting for Jekyll/Hyde's crimes was not Stevenson's Edinburgh. Rather, London was “the locus of cultural decay” from which the threat was most likely to come.

As Glennis Byron (2001, p. 146-147) points out, the “norm” that is threatened is located within the world of the reader and not within a distanced space and time, as it was in earlier Gothic fiction. Thus, a very silent and solitary by-street could co-exist with the city's “low growl”<sup>3</sup> with which the reader was familiar. As a living organism, an animal, London's sounds suggested a hardly disguised ferocity that was about to erupt. In this regard, Irving S. Saposnik (1971, p. 717) compares Edinburgh and London - while Edinburgh had a clear division between Old Town and New Town, London represented “that division-within-essential-unity which is the very meaning of *Jekyll and Hyde*”.

As a result, Stevenson presents London to his reader by depicting its duality in one single place. When Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield are strolling along the streets of London, what stands out in their walk is the concurrent brightness and darkness of the surroundings: “Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest (...)” (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged).

Something similar happens when Stevenson presents Jekyll's house which is also Hyde's. The residence exhibits “two housefronts and two doors” as if each door – “in apparently symmetrical contrast to the other” - was to lead to different houses and owners (Clunas, 1994, p. 177). In fact, the house comprises “its sinister rear entrance through which Hyde passes” and, at the same time, “its handsome front ‘which wore a great air of wealth and comfort’”. That is, the house represents “the two faces of Jekyll contained in one inseparable dwelling”. Besides, Jekyll/Hyde's attachment to the house works as a metaphor for Victorian life and letters, inasmuch as “most of the story's action is physically internalized behind four walls”. In other words, the contrast between the interior and exterior in the story may work as an analogy to Victorian society, in which private and public aspects of life were separate on the surface. “In the exterior, social ambles and foul crimes; in the interior, elegant drawing rooms and secreted laboratories” (Saposnik, 1971, p. 725-726).

In a way, the London of the story seems to be entangled with its inhabitants' mentality insofar as the novella is more male-centered. The main characters of *Jekyll and Hyde* are men who “are representative

3 “It was a fine dry night; frost in the air; the streets as clean as a ballroom floor; the lamps, unshaken, by any wind, drawing a regular pattern of light and shadow. By ten o'clock, when the shops were closed, the by-street was very solitary and, in spite of the low growl of London from all round, very silent” (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged).

Victorian types, exemplars of a harsh life best seen in the somber context of their professional and social conduct” (Saposnik, 1971, p. 717-719). The respectable doctor (Henry Jekyll) and the earnest lawyer (Mr. Utterson) can be seen as the embodiment of moral behavior in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century London.

Nonetheless, Jekyll’s respectability only exists on the surface. He may be regarded as a deceptive character who aims “to disguise his experiments under scientific objectivity and his actions under a macabre alter-ego”. For Saposnik, the doctor is “unable to mask his basic selfishness”. Conversely Mr. Utterson, despite his surface harshness, is tolerant and charitable. “As a lawyer, he represents that legality which identifies social behavior as established law, unwritten binding; as a judge, however, he is a combination of justice and mercy” (Saposnik, 1971, p. 719-721).<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Patricia Comitini (2012) argues that Jekyll’s desire for “undignified pleasures” helps to create him as the double to Utterson. In this regard, Hyde is not only the personification of Jekyll’s desire and moral weakness – he is the embodiment of addiction himself.

## CRIME & PUNISHMENT

In the early Victorian era, the penal reform movements succeeded in increasing prosecution and decreasing capital punishment for nearly every felony. As a result, annual criminal statistics indicated that crime was reduced in Britain. By mid-century, however, harsher penalties were gradually replacing milder ones, leading to the reinstatement of corporal punishment in 1863. Christopher S. Casey argues that “the misplaced belief in the inexorable increase of crime - particularly violent crime and murder - was the result of an increased access to tales of crime in all forms of the printed media, especially the periodical press”. That is, even though crime rates were decreasing, mid- and late Victorians believed that crime was on the rise because they were “encountering more crime through their increasing contact with the expanding periodical press” (Casey, 2011, p. 368-370).

Perhaps Casey is overvaluing the relationship between strict laws and misperceptions of criminality based on press coverage of the time. The scholar, however, argues that the readership of *The Times*, whose circulation numbers were impressive back then, was not only the “governing class” but also the working class. Casey then links “the gradual increase in the size of the reading public” with “the obsession with crime - particularly murder – within Victorian print culture”. Consequently, “crime was the best seller” at the time in a way that “novels featuring crime and criminals lined the shelves of booksellers” (Casey, 2011, p. 372-375).

But *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is not only a crime story: it is a Gothic story. Duncan observes that “the term ‘Gothic’ becomes appropriate to Scottish literature only after 1800” when its thematic core embraces “the uncanny recursion of an ancestral identity alienated from modern life” (Duncan, 2001, p. 82). However, what stands out in late Victorian Britain is no longer an identity “alienated from modern life”. Late Victorian characters face “the fears and anxieties attendant upon degeneration” in everyday life since “the discourse of degeneration articulates much the same fears and anxieties as those traditionally found in the Gothic novel” (Byron, 2001, p. 145). Anxieties regarding

4 Stevenson also highlights some contrasting characteristics of other characters in different scenes. The violent scene in which Mr. Hyde ends up murdering Mr. Carew is accompanied by the description of each man. The victim is described as “an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair” and “a very pretty manner of politeness”, whereas the victimizer is described as someone with “an ill-contained impatience” and “ape-like fury” (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged). Jekyll/Hyde’s vices are usually contrasted with other characters’ virtues.

the “identity crisis” related to “the rigid moral codes” as well as “the ever-growing scientific evolution” seem to affect readers inasmuch as they affect Stevenson’s character, Henry Jekyll, who attempts “to transcend the natural laws” and fails miserably (Pereira, 2018, p. 24).

Secondly, we should talk about the defiance of natural laws in an increasingly popular scientific environment. As Julia Reid (2006) points out, Stevenson engaged ambivalently with evolutionary theories and the late Victorian cultural environment, which was marked by an active interaction between scientists and literary figures. For example, his relationship with psychologist James Sully was characterized by mutual intellectual influence. Hence, it is not unlikely that Stevenson may have been acquainted with Sully’s previous ideas and might have had insights for his novella.

In his 1865 article “The Aesthetics of Human Character”, Sully stated that many moral excellencies, such as sympathy, excited the impulse of affection and added that “this effect lends much of their peculiar charm to the beautiful examples of virtue” (Sully, 1865, p. 510). But Jekyll’s double, Edward Hyde, is precisely known for his lack of moral quality. Even though he does not exhibit any malformation, he gives an impression of deformity because his physical appearance reflects his inner self. Accordingly, Hyde does not excite the impulse of affection but the impulse of repugnance. The scene in which Jekyll’s lawyer, Mr. Utterson, meets Hyde demonstrates how he feels before the criminal.

Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing, and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged).

Hyde’s aesthetic effects on Mr. Utterson are thus a consequence of his inner self, which is, in turn, an aspect of Gothic fiction - the negative aesthetics. “Ill-formed, obscure, ugly, gloomy and utterly antipathetic to effects of love, admiration or gentle delight” (Botting, 2014, p. 2). These negative features refer to the effects of Gothic texts on the readers but could also be applied to Jekyll’s *Doppelgänger*. They are both the exact opposite of Sully’s assertions regarding the aesthetics of human character in general.

Either way, the detestable Hyde is not only Jekyll’s creature - it is Jekyll’s other self. Consequently, Hyde’s murders are Jekyll’s as well. Even though execution became private in Britain in 1868, it would only end 101 years later. That is, capital punishment would go beyond the Victorian era. Nevertheless, in Stevenson’s novella, the gallows are not the ultimate punishment for Jekyll but his “horror of being Hyde”. Jekyll’s words express the horror and fear that his creature incarnates: “(...) I became, in my own person, a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind, and solely occupied by one thought: the horror of my other self” (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged).

In other words, Stevenson’s novella is not only a crime story. It is a story in which scientific knowledge defies moral issues, producing monstrosities whose fear is worse than the fear of capital punishment.

## LAW & ORDER

In the wake of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), a group of respectable British scientific naturalists, such as botanist Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker and biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, constituted a scientific elite that enthusiastically supported Darwin’s theories and contested the

theologians' cultural authority. Science being continually widespread in the late 19th century, other public and private life realms in Britain were thus seen through the scientific lenses of the time. Although some allegedly scientific theories are highly questionable today, they were very popular back then, such as Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism (1864), Cesare Lombroso's criminal anthropology (1876), and Francis Galton's eugenic theories (1883).

Social Darwinism seems to have affected how Victorian society dealt with the other. Based on Morse Peckham's questions, American historian James Allen Rogers (1972, p. 268) argues that, although Darwin's main concern was to describe a biological process and not a social philosophy, "it was the manner in which he said it that led those, who were looking for scientific support for opinions already held, to infer that he meant what they already believed". It was the time when British philosophers were prone to see human beings as subject to the laws of natural selection (as animals are in nature).

As a result, humans considered unfit for society were most likely to be overcome in the "struggle for existence". In this regard, Herbert Spencer's "survival of the fittest"<sup>5</sup> would not only include biological but social evolution. In his 1884 work *The Men Versus the State*, Spencer cites "Mr. Darwin" whose "process of natural selection" allegedly provided "a vast amount of evidence" that strengthened the philosopher's previous position (Spencer, 1960, p. 110). That is, even before Darwin's theory of evolution, Spencer had already seen society from the perspective of the "worst fitted" versus the "best fitted". For example, in his 1851 work *Social Statistics*, the philosopher criticized the sympathy of men for each other that could originate "an interference forbidden by the law of equal freedom". He argued that "instead of diminishing suffering, [this sympathy] eventually increases it. It favors the multiplication of those worst fitted for existence, and, by consequence, hinders the multiplication of those best fitted for existence - leaving, as it does, less room for them" (Spencer, 1960, p. 109).

In Stevenson's novella, the "best fitted" prevails as the representative Victorian type. Lawyers and doctors are supposed to embody the respectability, earnestness, and honesty that Victorian society morally claims. As Matthew Gibson (2013, p. 182-184) observes, the bourgeois philanthropist that both Utterson and Jekyll represent "follow a secular model of morality", whose determination is "not to enquire beyond the front doors of respectable houses, testimony to their morally pallid natures and obsession with exterior and reputation". Their "good deeds" are likely to be the result of secular sympathy (in a Utilitarian<sup>6</sup> sense), rather than religious. Stevenson's underlying criticism may have had a religious connotation, as Gibson believes, or a Spencerian one, for indiscriminate sympathy interferes with the natural and social order, favoring the "worst fitted". Either way, the "good deeds" are hardly mentioned in the novella. They are mostly implicit in the characteristics that qualify Stevenson's bourgeois characters.

5 Some authors state that the expression was coined in *The Principles of Biology* (1864) and was influenced by Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory (1859). On the contrary, James A. Rogers (1972, p. 266) states that Spencer used the phrase as early as 1852. Actually, a similar (Malthusian) idea, and not the phrase itself, was retrieved in the 1852 article "A Theory of Population Deduced from the General Law of Animal Fertility". Back then, Spencer believed that the "constant increase of people beyond the means of subsistence" required "an increasing demand for skill" and intelligence in order to improve "the modes of producing food". Consequently, all men were supposed to "subject themselves more or less to the discipline described; they either may or may not advance under it; but, in the nature of things, only those who *do* advance under it eventually survive" (Spencer, 1852, p. 32-34, italics original).

6 Utilitarianism is "held to be the view that the morally right action is the action that produces the most good". That is, "one ought to maximize the overall good" by considering "the good of others as well as one's own good". In a way, "the theory is a form of consequentialism: the right action is understood entirely in terms of consequences produced" (Driver, 2022).

Nonetheless, it is not unlikely that the characters may have been embedded in a Christian morality in which the purity of religion juxtaposes with “the corruption of Hyde’s ‘hellish’ evil”. Perhaps rather than a social Darwinist reading of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it would be suitable to read it from a theological perspective, given that “religion and horror are interconnected”. That is, “the elements that Hobbes characterized as ‘the natural seed[s] of religion’ - awe, terror, fear, and mystery - are some of the very same elements that horror traffics in as well” (Goodman, 2022, p. 140-143).

As a matter of fact, both readings can complement rather than exclude one another. As the Victorian order concurrently comprised scientific thought and religious belief, it is possible to read *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in both ways. In doing so, we can see that although the novella is set in London, “its moral atmosphere is that of Scotland” (Goodman, 2022, p. 152). Stevenson himself was raised in a Presbyterian environment, but was not an “orthodox, either in ethics or in religion” (Chesteron; Nicoll, 1906, p. 25). Rather, “his frank confession of religious doubt led to a painful rift with his orthodox family and disaffection with a stiflingly religious Edinburgh culture (...)” (Reid, 2006, p. 60). Either way, given its context, the struggle between good and evil does not only embrace moral issues (whether religious or not) but also scientific ambitions in the novella. It is worth, thus, looking at other “scientific” theories that arose at that time and were highly connected to social Darwinism, such as criminal anthropology.

Criminal anthropology may be defined as “the Natural History of the Criminal because it embraces his organic and psychic constitution and social life, just as anthropology does in the case of normal human beings and different races” (Lombroso; Lombroso-Ferrero, 1911, p. 5).<sup>7</sup> By studying the morphology of the offenders, seen outside of the so-called “normality”, Lombroso argues that people who were “born criminals” exhibit biological traits closer to those of a more primitive stage of evolution (atavistic features). In blaming physiognomy for some people’s criminal behavior, the Italian psychiatrist seems to have twisted Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Even though Lombroso (1876, p. 32) suggested that the features of a murderer were “motionless, cold, glassy stares, bloodshot eyes, and a big hawk-like nose”,<sup>8</sup> those features are not mentioned in Stevenson’s novella. Maybe because Lombroso focused his research on Italian offenders, disregarding the English and Scottish. Or maybe because Stevenson may have not been a reader of Lombroso’s works. It is not unlikely, though, that the Scottish writer may have read (or heard of) the works of Scottish prison physician James Bruce Thomson.

Thomson’s 1870 article “The Psychology of Criminals”, published in the *Journal of Mental Science*, focused on criminals from Scotland, England, and Ireland. His article is mentioned in Lombroso’s *L’Uomo Delinquente*, in which it is possible to compare the average height of the offenders. At that time, a man who was 1.69 m tall was much taller than most Italians (it was the case of offenders from Veneto), whereas Scottish criminals were about 1.73m tall, followed by the Irish (1.72m) and the English (1.71m) (Lombroso, 1876, p. 18).

<sup>7</sup> Lombroso’s daughter Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, married to historian Guglielmo Ferrero, summarizes her father’s work in criminal anthropology by defining it to American readers at the beginning of the 20th century.

<sup>8</sup> “Gli omicidi abituali hanno lo sguardo vitreo, freddo, immobile, qualche volta sanguigno e iniettato; il naso spesso, aquilino, o meglio grifagno, sempre voluminoso (...)” (Lombroso, 1876, p. 32).

In this regard, when Hyde was born, his alter ego, Dr. Jekyll, felt deadly nauseous and was traversed by “a horror of the spirit”. The hour of Hyde’s birth and Jekyll’s “death” was accompanied by something strange, new, and sweet, according to Jekyll’s sensations. Actually, he was not Henry Jekyll anymore. The moment he looked upon the glass, he realized that Edward Hyde’s appearance was different from the doctor’s for the newborn was “much smaller, slighter, and younger” than his “twin”. At the same time, his body exhibited “an imprint of deformity and decay”, causing a sort of repugnance to others – or rather “a visible misgiving of the flesh” – for he was “pure evil” (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged). But what may catch one’s attention is that Stevenson preferred to depict his offender as a man of small stature. Why? Maybe because he was a newborn, despite being an adult. Or maybe because, as a “child of Hell” (as Jekyll refers to Hyde), “nothing lived in him but fear and hatred” (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged).

Hyde was born a criminal as the outcome of a scientific experiment. Jekyll, in turn, was aware of the birth risks - the potion he drank off was the kind of drug that could potentially control “the very fortress of identity” and lead him to death. Thus, Hyde is not “the antithetical evil to Jekyll’s good nor is he evil at all. His cruelty derives from his association with Jekyll, not from any inherent motivation toward destruction” (Saposnik, 1971, p. 727). Jekyll’s own words reinforce Saposnik’s arguments: “I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both (...)” (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged).

In his confession, Jekyll seems to regret his scientific experiment, for Hyde’s depravities were Jekyll’s as well. “When I would come back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous” (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged). In this regard, Gibson (2013, p. 186) argues that Jekyll’s attempt at separating the pleasurable from the unpleasurable is itself “the ultimate Utilitarian doctrine: not only does it promote pleasure and the good, but it makes man himself capable of seeking only the good (...)”.

Gibson, however, does not distinguish utilitarianism from egoism and seems to ignore Classical Utilitarians, such as Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Although those Utilitarians identified the good with pleasure, they believed that one ought to consider the good of others and not only one’s own good, in a way that the right action ought to take the consequences it produces into consideration. Perhaps what moved Jekyll and similar characters had something to do with a question posed by Goodman (2022, p. 142): “How can they be expected to find pleasure in a Calvinist, soteriologically predetermined, Deuteronomic environment when the strict Scottish Presbyterianism of their environs (...) appear to be conspiring together to prevent any possible peaceable resolution?”.

In a way, Jekyll defies not only God but also Francis Galton’s<sup>9</sup> eugenic theories, as presented in *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (1883). The character does not seek to improve the human race, for he does not seek to better those elements that might be the result of hereditary degeneration. Unlike Galton, he is not concerned with improving the innate moral and intellectual faculties of human beings, which were allegedly bound up with the physical ones. His concern was with his own “good pleasure”. As a result, Jekyll’s creature exhibits both physical and moral degeneration.

9 According to Giulio Battaglini, Galton’s eugenics was “the object of increasing interest among sociologists and jurists” beyond Britain. In his 1914 article “Eugenics and the Criminal Law”, he debated over the demand for measures “to hinder the reproduction of those offenders who constitute[d] deleterious racial elements” (Battaglini, 1914, p. 12).

In the end, despite Jekyll's intention to house good and evil in separate identities so that he could live a life "relieved of all that was unbearable", he realizes that evil was taking control of both identities.<sup>10</sup> From this perspective, if he wants to regain control over Hyde, he must threaten to cut him(self) off by suicide. And he does so.

In other words, the physically and morally degraded Hyde/Jekyll is defeated by Victorian morality (both religious and secular), in which Jekyll's death represents the ultimate struggle with evil – be it devilish (in a religious sense) or egoistic (in a secular sense). But he is defeated by Victorian philosophical and scientific assumptions as well. Had the doctor not prepared and drunk the split-identity potion back then, he would have been the fittest in the survival of the fittest, according to Spencer's theory. By defying the role he was supposed to play – the severe rigidity a man of his status was supposed to follow –, he defies both "human" and "natural" laws, which means defying the Victorian order.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

*"God bless me, the man seems hardly human!"*

(Mr. Utterson thinks aloud of Mr. Hyde)

In a scene, Mr. Utterson says that if he could read "Satan's signature upon a face", it was on that of Hyde (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged). Hyde's physical appearance was a mirror of his inner self indeed. He could not escape his own repugnance and deceive the bourgeoisie to which both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Utterson belonged. He thus embodied the negative aesthetic that constitutes Gothic fiction: abhorrence, ugliness, disgust, and fear. Jekyll, in turn, could easily deceive others under the respectable mask of his occupation and status. In order to represent this duality, London was the most suitable setting for the juxtaposition of ferocity and quietness. It was most likely that "the dismal quarter of Soho" in its similarity to "a district of some city in a nightmare" (Stevenson, 1886, unpagged) was the perfect setting for a crime. Hence, the setting seemed to meet the audience's expectations since the increasing Victorian readership was obsessed with crime, especially murder.

*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a Gothic novella. It deals with emotional issues (fear, anxiety, horror) that were part of the world of Stevenson's characters as well as the world of his contemporary readers. Jekyll's double was not his invisible replica. Hyde was as visible as the evil he was born from. But he was the result of Jekyll's scientific attempts to separate good from evil and house each in different identities. Both identities, however, shared the same body and soul. Both of them were morally degraded, for Hyde's crimes were Jekyll's as well.

Morality in late Victorian Britain was traversed by religious issues in which Christian good deeds were replaced with devilish criminality. To be regarded as devilish, it was not mandatory to appeal to anti-Christian symbols. The extreme feeling of horror that someone like Hyde could awaken – in all his foul temper, distasteful appearance, and unhidden capability of murder – was devilish in itself. Morality was also traversed by secular (and ethical) issues in which the pursuit of the overall good

<sup>10</sup> In this regard, Daniel Goodman (2022, p. 155) makes a comparison between Stevenson's novella and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) by evoking the biblical characters of Jacob and Esau. He states that Wilde's novel "can also be read as a story about the evils that befall a character who fails to integrate his shadow and who lets his 'Hyde' – his appetitive soul, his inner 'Esau' – overcome his rational soul (his 'Jekyll,' or his Jacob)".

was replaced with egoic pleasures that disregarded the good of others. Jekyll's wishes could only be fulfilled under Hyde's disguise, for his pursuit of undignified pleasures did not match the honorable position he held at the time. In this regard, scientific knowledge in the novella was not a way to better humanity but to defy the Victorian order.

Science at the time can be seen ambivalently from today's perspective. On the one hand, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was culturally and scientifically revolutionary. On the other hand, other social and criminal theories, which allegedly had roots in his studies, are highly questionable today. Rather, Cesare Lombroso's criminal anthropology and Francis Galton's eugenics seem closer to Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism. The born criminals (cf. Lombroso) and those under hereditary degeneration (cf. Galton) were most likely to be overcome in the survival of the fittest (cf. Spencer). From this perspective, Hyde/Jekyll was "destined" to fail. That is, both late Victorian science and morality were prone to condemn the unfit.

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