Very Remarkable Men:
Villains and Victorian Doubt in Robert Louis Stevenson

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Introduction

Perhaps romantic fiction could exist without villains, but it is hard to imagine how. Villains are an integral part of the romantic universe. Robert Louis Stevenson's villains are no exception; however powerful his style and mythic sensibility may be, his writing needs villains to gain the intensity of romance, just as the villains need the intensified romantic universe to achieve their potential. Long John Silver cannot reach his full power without dark intrigues, buried treasure and Jim's nightmares; Mr. Hyde cannot horrify as profoundly as he does without the shifting mists of nighttime London, and neither of their novels could be as powerful or enduring as they are without their villains.

In Stevenson's work, this symbiotic relationship is stronger than in the romantic fiction of his peers, but it is relatively unexplored. Critics (at least since the 1960s) [1] seem certain that Stevenson's writing is more complex and important than that of his fellow late Victorian romancers, but no one agrees quite how. His writing has been given a wide assortment of mutually exclusive labels. To name a few, critics have described Stevenson's fiction as a literary foreshadow of Freud's psychological theories (especially the Oedipal ones),[2] the language-play of a budding modernist or even postmodernist,[3] a throwback to pre-Victorian virility,[4] and the escapist fables of a modern myth teller.[5] He's been called a critic of patriarchy, a proto-anthropologist, and, of course, a master of style.[6] That these works are romance in a time of realism features only rarely, and

[1] See Fielder and Kiely as examples of the first wave of critics to reevaluate Stevenson
[2] See Veeder and Arata (among many others)
[3] See Sandison
[4] This is part of Reid's larger hypothesis that Stevenson's writing attempts to alleviate the mortifying effects of fin de siècle ennui.
[5] See Dekker.
[6] For these three perspectives, see Veeder, Reid and Chesterton.

usually not positively.[7] This, however, was a crucial decision on Stevenson's part; that he wrote exceptional romance in the age of realism must be worthy of exploration.

I aim to investigate this choice through two of Stevenson's most enduring villains, Long John Silver and Mr. Edward Hyde. I argue that Stevenson's treatment of his villains is the primary difference between his writing and the romance of his peers. Stevenson's villains are complex, compelling, and interesting; they are the most memorable and fascinating characters of their texts. His fiction builds powerful, sublime and highly symbolic mysteries in its villains, but instead of resolving those mysteries and reassuring readers against the dark fears those villains represent, his texts perpetuate the villains' power and validate these anxieties. Chief among them, I argue, is the fear of religious doubt and the empty, materialist world that doubt, if acknowledged and explored, might bring about. Indeed, Stevenson's romances subvert the expectations of his genre and create something like previous romances, but much more complex, unsettling and modern.

This is an argument principally about Stevenson's relationship to his time. The late Victorian era was characterized by accelerating change and the destabilization of traditional beliefs. The previous half-century had been a time torn between two closely related but seemingly paradoxical trends: the positivistic optimism of progress, especially scientific and economic progress, and the rising anxiety caused by these advances. This optimism had its roots in "the idea of progress" – the understanding of history born in the Renaissance and Enlightenment, and carried into the Victorian era by Spenser and Mill

[7] See Dekker's assertion that Stevenson's "theory of fiction is undeniably escapist" (Dekker 164). An exception is Reid, who sees Stevenson's romance as a complex attempt to reinvigorate *fin de siècle* society.

among others (Houghton 29). Science was ascendant; many assumed that a scientific understanding of the world would replace religion and philosophy (Houghton 34). Generally, this was thought a good thing. The days of "physical suffering" and "moral evil" were limited; "the reconstruction of society on a scientific basis' became an assumption of the time" (Houghton 34-5). Rationalism was on the rise, and many assumed the establishment of a scientific Utopia was only a matter of time.

Accelerating scientific positivism, however, brought with it deepening Victorian anxiety and doubt. The world was changing rapidly, and with the rise of a materialist understanding of the world, spiritual and religious thought was under attack. Henry Sidgwick wrote in the 1860s that "freedom is won" from ancient dogma and superstition, but that this freedom brings English society "face to face with atheistic science" (Houghton 67). Biblical criticism, Darwin, geology, sociology and other areas of rationalism drove religion out of many aspects of public life. With the scientific world-view at its back, atheism, though still very rare, was on the rise in numbers of adherents and cultural importance (Read 81-82). Many assumed that atheism was incompatible with morality, and could only lead to the collapse of society, probably by socialist revolution. Social revolution hadn't been a serious worry since 1850, but even in 1871 some reviews of Darwin's *Descent of Man* criticized him for propagating anti-Christian thought "at a moment when the sky of Paris was red with the incendiary flames of the Commune" (Houghton 59).

For my purposes, the most important Victorian anxiety was the most pervasive and difficult to ward off: the fear of religious doubt. This is not fear that atheists are dangerous, but the fear that they might be right – that the rise of scientific materialism

might, by sowing doubt, create an empty and meaningless world (Rubenstein 310). It is the fear that once one gives in to doubt, there will be nothing left to believe in – only a material world entirely devoid of belief. For most of the Victorian era, the Victorians did not despair that there was nothing to believe; rather, their beliefs were (to borrow Mill's phrase) "confused and unsettled" (Houghton 20). As Houghton writes, "most of the time the Victorian mind contained beliefs and not doubts – but the beliefs were shaky" (Houghton 21). Doubt and the fear of doubt certainly existed, however, especially later in the Victorian era. Read agrees; as he writes of Tennyson, "doubt was very much a part of Victorian religion" (Read 79). They grappled constantly with the "fear or suspicion, or simply the vague uneasy feeling, that one was not sure he believed what he believed" (Houghton 21). Not even Queen Victoria was immune from these "flashes of doubtfulness" due to the rise of rationalism, and she was quick to condemn science for its occasional tendency to "explain everything and to disbelieve whatever they cannot prove" (Read 79).

Though this fear was rarely acknowledged, at least publically, one can see the specter of an atheistic world lurking in the sublime Victorian metaphors used to describe their anxieties and the character of the age. First, however, we must define the sublime. The sublime (as distinct from the beautiful) is an old idea, but I will use Edmund Burke's 18th century definition as the positive emotion formed by the "passions of self-preservation," i.e. the feeling one gets when one has narrowly escaped death (Burke 1.18). This, Burke writes, is "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling," and it is created by fear and terror (Burke 1.7, 2.2). To Burke, the sublime is "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger... Whatever is in any sort terrible, or is

conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror" (Burke 1.7). A variety of characteristics add to this feeling. Burke writes that "obscurity seems in general to be necessary," and that what is "dark, uncertain, confused," and "terrible" is "sublime to the last degree" (Burke 2.3). Power is another crucial aspect of the sublime; what is strong is inherently sublime, and what is sublime also has power over others. As Burke writes, "strength, violence, pain and terror, are ideas that rush in upon the mind together" (Burke 2.6). This description gets at perhaps the most fundamental aspect of the sublime: the sublime is what lies beyond human comprehension – the immense, powerful and terrifying things that drift just beyond sight in the shadows, or just beyond understanding in the mind.

Victorian metaphors for the terrifying tendency of their fundamental beliefs to collapse under rationalist pressure are often sublime, which is fitting since these fears are (at their most basic) of a future world just beyond comprehension. Victorians couldn't quite imagine what they feared most. This murky fear is the unexpected offspring of the rising tide of rationalism; turning the light of a materialist worldview on Victorian England only created deeper and darker shadows. One can see this in the sublime language used to describe this doubt; often, Victorians used "dark, uncertain, [and] confused" imagery to characterize their doubtful age (Burke 2.3). James Anthony Froude, for example, wrote of the result of rationalist criticism of religion and traditional thought had on his conception of the world: he describes an "open spiritual ocean," with the "lights all drifting, the compasses all awry, and nothing left to steer by except the stars" (Houghton 66). J.A. Symonds described the "whole fabric of humanity, within and without, rocking and surging in earthquake throes" (Houghton 66). Henry Morley wrote

that English society seemed like a "hurried uneasy mien of people living amid earthquakes…all is doubt, hesitation, and shivering expectancy" (Houghton 66-7). Charles Kingsley's metaphor is equally vivid: he felt as though he was standing "on a cliff which is crumbling…and falling piecemeal into the dark sea" (Houghton 66).

These sublime metaphors indicate the basis for the fear they describe: the murky, not-quite-acknowledged (but highly terrifying) materialist world that "atheistic science" might create. Take, for example, Kingsley's metaphor. To describe the loss of a belief is not necessarily sublime; falling from a cliff, for example might do the trick. Falling from a cliff into an unknown "dark sea," however, indicates something more than just losing a belief. It indicates that to Kingsley, doubting a belief is only the first, less terrifying step. The greater fear is what lies beyond doubt – an unknown, horrifying world where there might be nothing to believe at all. This sublime fear has two components: first, the fear of doubt (i.e. the fear of falling off the cliff into the void of disbelief) and second, the fear of the materialistic/atheistic/limitless world doubt might create (what would happen when one hits the dark sea). Both are sublime because both are horrifying beyond the Victorian imagination. Similarly, an earthquake indicates not just some unsteadiness in Victorian thought, but also the worry that the shaking might be enough to reduce the bastions of Victorian society to rubble. The Victorians, worried by frightening implications of rationalism's erosion of traditional thought, conceived of their fears in sublime terms; they feared both the nothingness of doubt and the unimaginable atheistic world that doubt might create.

By Stevenson's time, doubt and the fear of an atheistic universe without limits had begun to surface. It was no longer possible to deny the erosion of belief, and a

confrontation with a naked atheist world seemed inevitable and not long off. Indeed, the *fin de siècle* period has now become synonymous with the sense of gloom descending over English society. British society was assumed to be in decline; the fear of degeneration and gradual descent into madness haunted the late Victorians (Reid 56-57). While there were many causes, materialist thought was the main suspect. The popular conception of evolution, for example, shifted towards darker sides of the theory like its emphasis on "chance, brutality, suffering," and "extinction and annihilation" (Heyeck 85, Beer 12). Similarly, thermodynamics scared some Victorians in its prediction of the universe's inevitable "heat death" (Read 212). The belief that society was crumbling under the weight of progress and materialism created, among other things, the Decadence movement of *fin de siècle* France, which was a direct reaction to the rising utilitarianism of an increasingly material society (Gillman 82). This faith in decline itself burst into the open in England in the "Yellow Nineties," but in the 1880s, the fear of an empty, atheistic world was increasingly difficult to ignore (Gillman 114).

Literature, of course, reflected many of these debates and anxieties. Parallel to the rational scientific positivism of the time, realism had been the dominant form of literature in the Victorian era. It was a time when Emile Zola could "insist upon [the] fall of the imagination;" in his and other realists' views, writers were "experimental moralists," using literature to help extend scientific control over the passions (Zola 26). "The metaphysical man is dead," Zola proclaimed, and many Victorians would have agreed, albeit with a certain sense of dread (Zola 54). By the later Victorian period, however, reactions to realism were gaining strength (Heyeck 203). Realists were becoming less so; in fact, Henry James's idea of realism shifted with the help of his

correspondence with Stevenson himself (Dekker). Outside of realism, romance (though it had never really died) was beginning a revival with the help of many more readers. Growth in population and literacy rates created millions more readers in the Victorian era, and they often liked romantic fiction (Read 88). Gothic horror stories, mystery novels, science fiction, sensation novels, thrillers and other romantic genres filled with mystery, melodrama and supernatural occurrences were rapidly gaining readers and even critical respect in the late Victorian period.

One reason for this popularity was romance's ability to grapple with the sublime and supernatural, which often evoked Victorian anxieties in literature. Like these fears, these romantic tales were born of the same realist/rationalist surge; the anxiety created by the ascendant materialist worldview illustrated itself in countless terrifying villains and sinister and murky (i.e. sublime) mysteries. This is another example of the surprising relationship between rationalist advances and increasing sublimity; scientific thought creates very unscientific fears. Stevenson's fiction is no exception; sublime depths proliferate, especially within the villains, indicating their symbolic roles as representatives of Victorian anxiety. Indeed, Stevenson's villains are particularly complex and convincing representatives of an empty materialist universe, but this is a difference of degree, not of something essential.

What is fundamentally different, however, is Stevenson's treatment of these villains, especially in his endings. Villains, of course, rarely succeed; few novels (particularly in the Victorian era) are willing to show that crime does, in fact, pay. This ostensibly reassures the reader; the villain fails, normalcy is restored, and the fear the villain represents proves to be not so terrifying or powerful after all. In an odd way,

however, these supposedly reassuring endings do the opposite; the villains are so terrifying that it is somehow unacceptably dangerous to allow them to keep their power through the end of the book. The villains had to lose, or open the door to a set of deeply worrying thoughts. Even in losing, however, these fears aren't vanquished and don't disappear; they are simply shoved back into the sublime depths from which they came, gaining strength like Hyde under Jekyll's self-repression.

Stevenson's villains, however, break this pattern. His villains do lose, but not convincingly and without dispelling the villains' sublime mystery. One reason for this is the remarkable extent to which Stevenson emphasizes their sublimity; one cannot imagine an ending that could convincingly resolve the mysteries of his villains. Stevenson, however, does not even try. We finish *Treasure Island* without a clear picture of Silver's ambitions or even his whereabouts. *The Strange Case Of Jekyll and Hyde* ends with no more clear an idea of Hyde's true nature than it began. Stevenson's villains still seem powerful (and terrifying) even in failure. In each case, the ending of the novel undercuts the significance of the protagonists' victory; the characters remain afraid of the villains, and their victory rings empty and even meaningless. Worrying thoughts remain and prosper after the novel; Stevenson's endings make no attempt to reassure the reader of the ultimate impotency of the villains or the sublime depths they represent. The villains remain an object of fear; so too do the anxieties and doubt they represent.

This break with romance raises crucial questions: why does Stevenson subvert his genre, and what does this subversion suggest about Stevenson's time, and his writing's relationship to that time? There have been many answers to these questions over the sea changes in the critical understanding of Stevenson, and I stand on firm ground when I

suggest that Stevenson's writing anticipates modernism.[8] The question rarely asked, however, is why Stevenson looked forward and not back with his romance. Stevenson's villains provide an answer: Stevenson, though he certainly understood the dangers of materialism and rationalism, also realized the dangers of the fearful and repressive reaction to them. To present sublime fears and then deny them at the end is to repress them and reaffirm their strength and power. What is needed, Stevenson's romance suggests, is more open confrontation with doubt and the world beyond it, however uneasy and unsettling that confrontation may be. Stevenson's villains invite these fears into individual and public consciousness, opening a door from which the skepticism of the 20th century would later emerge.

[8] See Sandison, for example

The Monster of One Thousand Forms
Long John Silver and Victorian Doubt

Long John Silver may be a murderous mutineer entirely devoid of morality, but it is awfully hard not to like him. He draws the admiration of others as inorexably as doubloons draw pirates; in his attractive and horrifying complexity, he fascinates the other characters and the reader. He also fascinates literary critics, but Silver has dodged critical consensus as ably as he avoids the black spot, which is to say very ably indeed. Critical attention to *Treasure Island* is no longer rare –that *Treasure Island* was a more interesting and important work than most of its genre has been long accepted – but work on Long John Silver, one of the most famous and enduring villains ever, remains relatively unsettled.[9] It is clear that Silver represents something different than the run-of-the-mill romantic villain, but it is not at all clear what. I will suggest an unexplored aspect of what makes Silver (and *Treasure Island*) something more than comparable children's romances of the time: his role as a representative of Victorian doubt and the fear of an empty, materialist world.

Silver is powerful and amoral; his conflict with the protagonists defies moral categories, and suggests the inapplicability of moral distinctions on the island. This alone suggests the specter of an amoral universe, but even more unsettling about Silver is what cannot quite be pinned down. There is something ineffably and mysteriously horrifying about Silver. In a novel where surface appearances belie murky, terrifying depths, Silver

[9] Sandison, for example, reads Silver as a villainous father figure whereas Honaker reads him as the story's hero. Others, like Reid, Blackburn, and Gubar, focus their writing on Jim, largely ignoring Silver, but using him respectively as a mirror of Jim's "untamable" anti-authoritativeness, an internal representative of the "limits of human will," and a representative of an exploitative and seductive adult society.

serves as the focus of the novel's sublimity. In his unfinalizability, he evokes the Victorian fear of the unimaginable atheistic world; he represents the profound and sublime fear the Victorians had for a materialist universe of amoral forces. He is more than other romantic villains, and a comparison between Silver and Israel Hands (a stand-in for the typical romantic villain) illustrates just how much more sublime symbolism Stevenson gives Long John.

This comparison reveals another fundamental difference between *Treasure Island* and other romances: the ending.[10] As in Israel Hands' case (or in romantic fiction in general), the reader would expect a climatic final conflict and a full dénouement; the mystery of Silver's motivation would be revealed, and his power would dissipate. He would end the novel a spent force whether dead, repented, captured, or some combination thereof. Traditional Victorian values - patriotism and morality, for example – would triumph reassuringly. In *Treasure Island*, however, only some of these expectations prove to be realized. Silver fails, and he ends the novel in a lower position than he started, with a tiny fraction of the booty he set out to claim. Still, however, he remains alive, free and as mysterious and powerful as ever. In a significant break from the genre, the novel never explains Silver's character or motivation; he remains a closed book to the protagonists and readers when he suddenly disappears from the text. The only reassurance against Silver somehow recapturing the ship is the dwindling number of

[10] Critics are divided on just what, if anything, makes *Treasure Island* different than comparable romances like *Coral Island*. Reid suggests that Silver (as a "complex and alluring" villain) is one important part, but Crawford for his part finds many similarities between the novels (Reid 39).

pages. His persistent power has lead to a remarkable number of sequels based on that very premise, or one similar to it.[11]

Silver's failure rings hollow, and it does not reassure. The sublime fears Silver represent are not dispelled, but legitimized, and the reader is left with an unsettling feeling that the protagonists' victory is not as meaningful as it seems. Doubt creeps in. Unlike a more generic adventure novel, where the protagonists might forget Treasure Island and the pirates entirely, Silver remains a haunting, unshakeable presence in Jim's dreams, a specter of doubt and fear he can never shake. Jim's reaction to this is crucial: instead of forgetting or ignoring this adventure, he sets it down in writing many years later, in the form we read today, i.e., the form that fails to reassure Jim or his readers. This indicates the fundamental point: *Treasure Island'*s violation of the conventions of its genre (specifically by refusing to negate the villains' power and mystery at the end) suggests that such an attempt would be futile; ignoring and explaining away the fear of doubt Silver represents is simply impossible. Long John Silver is too remarkable to negate so easily.

Long John Silver

Silver's deceptive attractiveness is legendary, so much so that it is easy to forget just how horrifying he is. Silver is a powerful, terrifying, and violently amoral villain, and in the seeming inapplicability of moral judgment to his actions, he evokes the Victorian fear of an amoral universe. Silver kills innocent men; he corrupts honest crewmembers, and most disconcertingly, it is still somehow difficult to condemn him.

[11] Wikipedia lists 12 sequels with titles like *Long John Silver, Silver's Revenge, Silver: Return to Treasure Island*.

Treasure Island, in fact, consistently undermines any moral readings. Take, for example, the changes in the novel's conflict when the *Hispaniola* arrives at the island. The central conflict is briefly protagonists v. pirates, and in Captain Smollett's stout refusal to "strike [his] colors," the novel holds out the expectation of a morally unambiguous conflict. This expectation, however, proves false: after the pirates rush the stockade, the lines of battle shift dramatically towards the amoral. The protagonists seem increasingly irrelevant; Silver's greatest enemy as the leader of the mutineers is not the protagonists – their only leverage is the map – but the entropy causing the pirates to devolve into chaos. Jim's inability to steal the *Hispaniola*, rests on the pirates' incompetence. Not only are the pirates on land too drunk to notice the ship has been stolen, but the guards fail to stop a child from stealing their post because of their own inebriated brawling (99). Similarly, the pirates are too drunk to keep watch to defend against Ben Gunn's nighttime raid, and as their mutiny continually fails to succeed, Silver finds himself forced to rely on persuasion and intimidation rather than discipline to keep himself alive, let alone in an effective leadership position.

Nor do the protagonists enjoy particularly strong moral authority. The squire and doctor, though they criticize seamen and later the pirates for their greed, are just as motivated by money. In one breath, the squire exclaims, referring to pirates, "What were these villains after but money? What do they care for but money?" (24). In the next, after learning of Jim's map, "if we have the clue you talk about…I'll have that treasure if I search a year!" (25). Later, the squire exclaims with "delight": "Livesey…you will give up this wretched practice at once…We'll have favourable winds, a quick passage, and not the least difficulty in finding the spot, and money to eat – to roll in – to play duck and

drake with ever after" (26). These statements echo the sentiment of the pirates though their language indicates the squire's higher social standing.[12] Just as the buccaneers want more money than they know what to do with, so does the squire want enough to skip guineas like stones over water. Admittedly, Trelawney and Livesey do not intend to kill anyone to acquire the treasure, but they do receive the map because of the death of several pirates, including Pew, whose death came at the hooves of the squire's servant, Mr. Dance (21). The squire's reaction to this news reminds one of Silver's cold-bloodedness: "As for riding down that black, atrocious miscreant, I regard it as an act of virtue, like stamping on a cockroach" (24). These similarities suggest questions evocative of the Victorian fear of doubt: what does the victory of one of these groups over the other mean? Does such a victory have any moral significance, or is *Treasure Island* an atheistic conflict of amoral forces?

Silver, however, is the center of the novel's amorality. He kills with abandon and schemes against his employers, but neither the readers nor the other characters are able to fully condemn him, evoking the Victorian fear of a world where morality no longer applies. This world, it seems, might be called Treasure Island; on the island, long after his deceit and violence become all too clear, Long John Silver remains attractive. Immediately after Jim reports the details of the mutineer's conference he heard from the apple barrel, Captain expresses amazement in that the crew showed no signs of mutiny: "But this crew…beats me" (52). Dr. Livesey has an explanation: "Captain…with your permission, that's Silver. A very remarkable man." (52). This is an odd comment in that there is no condemnation to the doctor's tone. Certainly he is not admiring, but in the

[12] Reid makes a similar point, suggesting that the similarities between pirate and protagonist undermine "apparent moral distinctions" (38).

doctor's ironic admission "a very remarkable man" one sees a certain degree of respect for the scale of Silver's plot and the genius by which it was carried out. Silver, after all, is a remarkable man; he, a cook and tavern owner, managed to deceive two members of respectable society, Jim the "noticing lad," as well as an experienced sea captain, using them all as tools in his own plot to reclaim Flint's treasure (53).

Silver's attractiveness makes itself clear in numerous other examples, some even penetrating into Jim's after-the-fact narration. Take for example, Jim's telling of his first encounter with Silver in the Spy-Glass. There is quite a bit of praise for Silver here, of course (Jim hasn't learned of his treachery yet), but Jim slips between framing this praise as the impression of the Jim the boy and the considered judgment of Jim the narrator. Generally, it is quite clear which Jim is speaking: "I watched the cook narrowly. But he was too deep, and too ready, and too clever for me…I would have gone bail for the innocence of Long John Silver" (35). First, in calling Silver "the cook," Jim shows that in this statement he is recording his judgment as a narrator. It would have been odd to refer to a recently met owner of a tavern as a cook, for he has not yet assumed that role. The next sentence shows the clear assessment of Jim the narrator; Jim the boy could not have known that Silver was deceiving him, and so would not have described him as "too deep, too clever, and too ready." (This is also another example of a non-condemnatory, almost admiring appraisal of Silver, especially "too deep"). The final sentence, however, switches to Jim's first impression. The construction "would have" clearly indicates that this enthusiastic endorsement of Silver's innocence belongs only to Jim's impression at the time.

Contrast that description with the following, one page later: “Long John told the story from first to last, with a great deal of spirit and the most perfect truth. ‘That was how it were, now, weren’t it Hawkins?’ he would say, now and again, and I could always bear him entirely out” (36). In the second sentence, it is quite clear that the bearing Silver “entirely out” takes place only in the past. Except, it seems, in the sentence before, which gives no indication that its judgment belongs only in the past: “Long John told the story…with the most perfect truth.” This inaccurate statement indicates the remarkable degree of fluidity between the judgments of the past Jim and narrator Jim. Narrator Jim, it seems, shares some of past Jim’s positive judgments of Silver, when he should know better.

More than any other feature of his attractiveness, Silver’s courage evokes the Victorian fear of an empty universe; we, the reader (who have not even actually met a man like Silver), find ourselves rooting against our own moral judgments. An example of such a moment occurs when Jim finds himself a captive in the pirates’ camp. He praises Silver after delivering a defiant and courageous diatribe against the pirates: “And now, Mr. Silver…I believe you’re the best man here, and if things go the worst, I’ll take it kind of you to let the doctor know the way I took it” (122). Jim seems here to regard Silver as the most likely to fulfill his dying wish. This seems odd given that Silver has shown himself utterly removed from any moral sense. Silver, according to conventional morality at least, is the worst man present. Yet, Jim makes this assertion nonetheless, just as the doctor and Jim the narrator make their almost admiring assertions despite Silver’s utter lack of redemption under conventional moral standards. Crucially, the reader

believes Jim; we admire Silver for his genius for deception, his energy and his personal courage.[13]

The Monster of One Thousand Forms

The aspect of Silver's character that contributes most to his unmatched power as a representative of the anxieties surrounding Victorian doubt, however, is not his amorality, but the sublime mysteriousness that undergirds his horror.[14] Silver's essential murkiness cannot be fully grasped, and therefore is the source of great fear and power.[15] Take, for example, Silver's introduction into the novel. His introduction comes from Billy Bones, who tells Jim to look for "the seafaring man with one leg" (2). This image immediately becomes terrible in Jim's nightmares:

> How that personage haunted my dreams, I need scarcely tell you. On stormy nights, when the wind shook the four corners of the house, and the surf roared along the cove and up the cliffs, I would see him in a thousand forms, with a thousand diabolical expressions. Now the leg would be cut off at the knee, now at the hip; now he was a monstrous kind of a creature who had never had but the one leg, and that in the middle of his body. To see him leap and run and pursue me over hedge and ditch was the worst of nightmares (2-3).

Nightmares, of course are sublime in and of themselves, but this dream is particularly so. It begins with an eerie setting: a "stormy night" with powerful wind and waves in the darkness. In this setting, Silver becomes a monster of "a thousand forms, with a thousand diabolical expressions," a literal transformation of Silver's most terrifying aspect – that

[13] Reid argues Silver's attractiveness comes from his "verve with which he conducts his play-acting" (Reid 39).
[14] Sandison makes a similar point without the term sublime when he says that Stevenson's use of the word horror includes "fascination or even desire as well" (Sandison 74).
[15] Sandison suggests that Silver's power comes from his "total absence of principle" (Sandison 76).

he has so many forms it is impossible to know the 'real' Silver. Silver, after all, has 10 different names in the text, and perhaps none of them are his given name.[16] In the dream, his one identifying feature is his leg, but even this is unfinalizable; it can be amputated in several places, and it can even be a monstrous single leg in the center of his body. Crucially, all of this mystery is terrifying to Jim; the Long John Silver of his dreams pursues him "over hedge and ditch."

The mysteries surrounding Silver never disappear from the text; every revelation into his character raises more questions, questions that are never fully solved. When Jim's image of Silver changes from the monster of his dreams to the "clean and pleasant tempered landlord" he meets at the Spy-Glass, one wonders why this respectable man has scurrilous pirates like Black Dog in his tavern (33). In "What I Heard from the Apple Barrel," this particular mystery finds a solution, but even more questions abound. Surprisingly, Silver begins his speech with a discourse on the value of thrift and sound financial management. He contrasts his approach to that of an ordinary pirate: "Tain't earning now, it's saving does is – you may lay to that" (45). Silver aims to ""set up gentleman in earnest," to be a member of "Parlyment" (46, 48). Nor is this goal entirely ridiculous. Silver continues: "Gentlemen of fortune," he says, "usually trusts little among themselves, and right they are, you may lay to it" (46). "But," he continues, drawing a contrast between pirates normally and pirates under his leadership, "I have a way with me, I have" (46). Silver goes on to describe how Flint's pirates and even Flint himself feared Silver when he was quartermaster, and ends with a promise characteristic

[16] Silver's names include Silver, Long John, John Silver, old John, John, Mr. Silver, Long John Silver, Barbecue, the Sea-Cook, and Captain Silver. Jim, on the other hand, is just Jim (and briefly Cap'n).

of his leadership: "ah, you may be sure of yourself in old John's ship" (46). "You may lay to that" is the constant refrain of these passages; Silver constantly reassures his crew that in him they can trust. This holds up the possibility that Silver can forge his pirates into something that transcends piracy; Silver, perhaps, is a transformative leader, one who (as unlikely as it may seem) could indeed break the societal norms that would keep him in his class.

Silver's label "gentleman of fortune" indicates his basic tension: is he a pirate, a gentleman, or something more than either? The answer, however, is anything but clear.[17] How much of this is true? How much is deception? How genuine is his respectable landlord act? His flattery and bold claims (e.g. that "Flint his own self was feared of me") remind one of Silver's original deception of Jim, but his thrift might be genuine. The only part of Silver's speech that has any verification is that he saved most of his money; Squire Trelawney reports the existence of Silver's savings account in his letter to Dr. Livesey (31). Even this, however, might have been fabricated; Silver, after all, deceived the squire, as did Blandly, the man who sold him the *Hispaniola*. Silver defies easy explanation. He is both pirate and thrifty landlord, transformative leader and deceptive, selfish demagogue. This chapter reveals Silver's plan, yet in the process is makes him even more mysterious. Indeed, Silver remains essentially unknowable, and the best description, it seems, is the first: a monster of "one thousand forms" (3).

These mysteries only intensify as the novel continues. Jim accidentally stumbles into the pirates' camp in the stockade and witnesses another of Silver's speeches. Silver begins by offering Jim a nugget of information about the protagonists, ostensibly as part

[17] Sandison seems to think the answer is quite clear: "no one believes" Silver's argument in favor of thrift and respectable society is even slightly plausible or genuine (77).

of a choice of whether to join the pirates or die. This is an odd moment; Silver could have simply said "join or die," or (as Tom Morgan and the other pirates want), just killed him. This, understandably, confuses Jim. He asks to know "what's what" about the situation between the protagonists and the pirates, and an anonymous pirate responds in a statement that one seems to point to the ineffability of the sublime: "Wot's wot?' repeated one of the buccaneers, in a deep growl. 'Ah, he'd be a lucky one as knowed that!" (120). Jim responds with a strident, bold speech, claiming responsibility for all of the pirates' misfortunes, which causes Silver to lay his life and reputation on defending Jim's life.

This, at the time, is utterly incomprehensible to Jim, the pirates, and the reader; what on earth is Silver's plan? As the pirates go off to confer among themselves, Silver solves this mystery ("I'm in the squire's side now"), but, again, raises a host of questions (120). Is Silver, in fact, on the squire's side? Why does he not just find the ship and the protagonists and force them to give up the treasure? Silver says his goal in switching sides is to save his life, but is this true? Does he still plan to steal the treasure? More broadly, the basic tension between pirate and gentleman is unresolved here; a pirate would simply kill Jim and the protagonists, and then find the treasure, wherever it may be. Silver, evidently, is more than just a pirate, but one cannot seriously take this changing of sides as a moral redemption and a newfound dedication to justice and propriety. Who is Long John Silver? What motivates him? These are the essential questions of *Treasure Island*,[18] and they remain out of the characters and readers' ability to grasp; they are,

[18] Hart makes a similar point: "the only true suspense [in the novel] is the problem of knowing John Silver" (Hart 156). Others, like Reid, suggest other centers such as Jim's growth or "the idea of romance" (Reid 37).

therefore, sublime. In this sublime unfinalizability, they evoke the fears of an amoral universe, and *Treasure Island* becomes more than the conflict between pirates and gentlemen. Rather, it becomes a metaphysical battleground between doubt, fear, and the possibility of a reassuring, rationalist conclusion.

Israel Hands and other romantic villains

This sublime aspect of Silver's character puts him a step above other romantic villains, as a comparison will indicate. The novel fortunately provides just such a comparison: Israel Hands. The subplot of Jim's conflict with Israel Hands, in fact, shows what *Treasure Island* might be like without Long John Silver, throwing Silver's remarkable qualities into sharp relief, and indicating Silver's much greater complexity and symbolic weight.

The conflict between Jim and Israel Hands begins with Jim's recapture of the *Hispaniola*. Hands is drunk and wounded, but Jim revives him, and they strike a deal to sail the ship back to land. The conventional tone of the conflict is set early, when Jim strikes the black flag of piracy: "God save the king,' said I, waving my cap; 'and there's an end to Captain Silver!" (107). Israel's reaction is equally formulaic; he follows Jim's orders with a wooden "odd smile," one with a "grain of derision" and "a shadow of treachery" hardly disguised within it. This, of course, contrasts with Silver's subtlety of deception, but it also contrasts with the indefinable aspect of Silver's motivation. There are no doubts that Hands' act is an insincere ploy to kill Jim; Silver's act is at least half true. His nature remains beyond understanding.

As the conflict continues, Jim and Israel's relationship settles into a profoundly conventional mold. There are direct correspondences to earlier works like Ballantyne's *Coral Island*, in which Ralph Rover (the boy protagonist) lectures Bloody Bill the pirate on moral subjects just before his death, leading him to repent of his evil life. Jim lectures Hands on his moral failings ("if I was you…I would go to my prayers like a Christian man"). Hand's responses to Jim's moral lectures are highly pedestrian rejections of morality: "I never seen good come o' goodness yet. Him as strikes first is my fancy; dead men don't bite; them's my views – amen, so be it" (111). Besides completely revealing Hand's plan to kill Jim, Hands' statement is a far cry from Silver's complexity. There is no ambiguity about Hands, and if Jim were sharper, he might realize that. Hands' only mystery is when he will turn on Jim; this is the only question that motivates the plot. As soon as he does, there is a struggle, and their conflict must end. Just before the ship approaches land, Hands makes his move. The conflict will soon end, but there is time for a brief scuffle, a trite one liner ("Dead men don't bite, you know,' I added, with a chuckle") and Hands' last trick (throwing a knife) (113). It is all over in two pages, and the reader breaths a sigh of relief that the rest of *Treasure Island* is more complex. Indeed, comparing Jim's conflict with Israel Hands, with its clear battle sides and obvious moral implications, reveals just how ambiguous and amoral Silver's conflict with the protagonists is.

Hands, however, is only a simple pirate and a minor character. A more fair comparison for Silver and *Treasure Island* is *The Black Arrow: A Tale of Two Roses*. This novel, serialized in 1883, but not published until 1888, was Stevenson's next children's novel after *Treasure Island.* Many aspects of the novels are similar; both have

boy protagonists and violent and deceptive villains. Sir Daniel Brackley (the villain) is personally courageous, deceptive (especially to Dick, the protagonist), and, like Silver, he has a penchant for switching between the sides of a conflict. These similarities, however, are only superficial; Long John Silver power as a representative of Victorian fear is much greater than Brackley's.

Take, for example, the villain's mysteries. Brackley has a big secret (that he killed Dick's father) through the first half of the novel; the reader realizes the truth very early. The only mystery is why it takes Dick so long to catch on, for once he realizes the truth, the action of novel becomes only interesting historically. From that moment, Brackley's downfall is assured; he is a spent force – just another villain who will inevitably die at the end. Silver, on the other hand, has an essential mystery, not just a piece of information that can be learned; for Silver, mystery is ingrained into his character. The lack of such a mystery, perhaps, is why *The Black Arrow* remains so (generally) unappreciated among Stevenson's work. It is no more complex than Jim's conflict with Israel Hands, but it lacks the brevity of that encounter (and has the stilted language of the Middle Ages). Again, as with Jim and Hands, the moral implications are obvious, and right and wrong is clearly defined. The protagonists' conflict with Silver, on the other hand, becomes continually more complex; neither side is obviously right or wrong, and the conflict seems between the protagonists and an unknowable, mysterious and sublime force.

"*The same bland, polite, obsequious seaman"*

It is not hard to imagine how to resolve a conflict with Israel Hands, Sir Brackley or Bloody Bill. It is hard to imagine how to make those stories interesting, but writing a

convincing and satisfying ending seems fairly straightforward. One expects of an adventure story that the villain will be in some way mysterious, terrifying and powerful, but not too powerful, for in the end, the villain must find his mystery illuminated, his terror dispelled and his power negated. Israel Hands, for example, is mysterious in that it is not clear exactly what his plan is or when he will strike, terrifying in that he is a violent pirate, and powerful because his terms of engagement with Jim allow him to decide when to break the fiction of his subservience. He has the villain's agency in that the protagonists, by their acceptance of the rules, must react to the villain's transgressions, not the other way around. The conflict is resolved when he attacks Jim and reveals his true nature. Their brief fight ends his life and his power. Similarly, Sir Brackley is mysterious, terrifying and powerful, but as soon as his secret becomes known, he loses the villain's agency. His death is only a matter of time, and when it comes, the idea that he or Israel Hands still represents something terrifying is simply absurd. They are dead, and there is no mystery about them. This is the standard romantic ending, and its effect is to reassure the reader against the fears the villains evoke.

Silver represents the opposite problem; there is more than enough murky, horrible mystery and attractive admiration in him to guarantee a compelling and interesting character, but these attributes make a satisfying ending much more challenging. I argue that Silver is the first of Stevenson's villains for whom a standard villain-negation ending is impossible; he is too complex, too powerful, and too sublime. No ending could fully explain the mystery Stevenson endows him with; therefore, the fears he evokes must to some extent survive the end of the novel. There can be little reassurance here even if

Stevenson attempted to comfort the reader; Silver's sublimity must legitimize the fears it represents.

Treasure Island, in fact, does not try to dispel Silver's mysteries; the ending actually reinforces them. Therefore, his sublime power remains intact, and the fear of an atheistic world finds legitimization, not reassurance. The reader, however, does not know this yet, and Stevenson engages with the expectations of his genre to create the anticipation of a revelation into Silver's character. The reader still hopes for a dramatic, climatic fall as his power dissipates and his sublimity ebbs away. The sense of anticipation is palpable; the chapter "In the Enemy's Camp ends "And he [Silver] took another swallow of the brandy, shaking his great fair head like a man who looks forward to the worst" (125). Soon, the worst comes – the black spot, which Silver dodges artfully. This display of deception and seeming wizardry – Silver produces the treasure map without any explanation – overwhelms the pirates and even Jim. Jim lays awake, thinking of Israel Hands and his own danger, but more than either, he writes, he dwells on the "remarkable game" Silver has begun to save his life from the "dark perils around him (129).

The treasure hunt approaches, and the reader senses an impending climax. This, after all, is *Treasure Island;* we have been waiting for the treasure to make an appearance for more than 100 pages. Perhaps it is still possible that a revelation into Silver's character approaches, but it seems increasingly unlikely. The mystery is only increasing. As the pirates follow the map, Silver's power is still very much intact; Jim writes, "he had never shown himself so much cunning as he did then" (135). As the pirates approach the treasure, the novel presents the possibility (albeit a small one) of supernatural

occurrences, specifically, Flint's voice reappearing singing his "only song" Fifteen Men (140). Even Silver seems frightened. Jim writes, "I could hear his teeth rattle in his head, but he had not yet surrendered" (140). This moment is more comedy than anything else in *Treasure Island*, but considering *Jekyll and Hyde* where supernatural occurrences are very real indeed, this is an interesting moment of foreshadowing.

The pirates then realize the treasure had been "found and rifled," and Silver's command collapses. This, or the several pages that follow, is when one might expect some speech or humiliation or symbolic death that might reveal Silver's true nature, but no such moment comes. He surrenders the protagonists, and seamlessly disguises himself once again. He seems to "regard himself once more as quite a privileged and friendly dependent," the "same bland, polite, obsequious seaman of the voyage out" (149, 147). Silver has failed, but his inner nature remains a mystery, and as soon as they reach South America, his whereabouts become one as well. The latter seems symbolic for the former, and since his mystery remains intact, his power does too. Ben Gunn remains "terribly afraid" of Silver, and the novel ends with an unsettling emblem of his power. Jim writes, "Oxen and wainropes would not bring me back to that accursed island; and the worst dreams that ever I have are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts, or start upright in bed, with the sharp voice of Captain Flint [Silver's ever-present parrot] still ringing in my ears: "Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!" (151). Jim has left Treasure Island and Silver behind, but Silver's presence haunts him in his dreams.[19]

This, obviously, is not a reassuring ending, and the tale of Jim's "dark and bloody sojourn" on the island is not an ordinary adventure novel (150). It is much darker, its

[19] Reid agrees that Silver haunts Jim, but sees this moment as a sign of Jim's new "disillusioned maturity" (41).

villain much more complex and powerful, and its ending much more unnerving. Interestingly, Jim's reaction to this experience is to write it down, not in the familiar form of the adventure novel, but in the ambiguous, unsettling form he does. Jim might well have shaped the story along more conventional lines; often, he shows the reader that the *Coral Island* model is in his mind.[20] For example, he writes of his daydreams before the voyage:

> I approached that island in my fancy, from every possible direction; I explored every acre of its surface; I climbed a thousand times to that tall hill they call the Spy-Glass, and from the top enjoyed the most wonderful and changing prospects. Sometimes the isle was thick with savages, with whom we fought; sometimes full of dangerous animals that hunted us… (29).

His experience, his retelling and his dreams after the voyage violate this genre entirely. This suggests that the idealized, reassuring adventures of children's fiction have failed Jim, both in leading him to this traumatic experience and in documenting it, and so he turns to something darker, less moral, and more sublime. His villain, unlike Israel Hands, is not so easily defeated; the fears he represents are not so easily neutralized. Indeed, what *Treasure Island* indicates over all else is the power of doubt; at every turn, the novel asks the reader to evaluate the significance, morally or otherwise of the protagonists' victory. Did they succeed? Was it worth it? Jim's answer, it seems, is no, and in his account of the experience, we see an urge to provide his readers with a better form that the adventure novels he had. Jim provides a form that acknowledges the terrible power of doubt; perhaps, his readers might be more skeptical of the value of supposedly reassuring endings – which, like denial of doubt, only reinforce the power of the fears

[20] Reid makes a similar point, but points the novel's critique of adventure stories towards Britain's "imperial mission," not Victorian doubt (Reid 41).

they deny. Perhaps *Treasure Island* might help Jim's readers be more skeptical of the positivistic optimism that both denies the admittance of doubtful fears and creates them.

Treasure Island's uncomfortable, ambiguous ending to its powerful, admirable and sublime villain, ultimately allows the fear of religious doubt and the atheistic world it might produce an opening into the conscious mind. In allowing Silver to survive the novel with his power more or less intact, Stevenson provides a symbol for fears that could not be so easily dispelled; reflecting the increasing openness of his time, he legitimizes the hidden doubts of a generation of Victorian children and adults. The *fin de siècle*, the turn of the century, and World War One would later fully illuminate these doubts and fears, but this process begins with Long John Silver.

A Prodigy to Stagger the Unbelief of Satan
Hyde and Victorian Doubt

Though no one finds Mr. Hyde even slightly attractive, not everyone agrees that he is a villain. Hyde's villainy was generally accepted well into the 1960s,[21] when the reading of the novel as a moral allegory began to fall into unpopularity, but today literary criticism consistently undermines the significance of Hyde's villainy. Since the vast majority of critics either understand the novel psychologically,[22] as social criticism,[23] or some combination of both,[24] Hyde is no longer a terrifying and violent villain, but the product of a poorly designed society, or an illusion born of a misunderstanding of psychological principles. Hyde isn't really dangerous; Jekyll just needs therapy. There are some other takes on the novella, like those who tie it to scientific developments of the period, such as thermodynamics,[25] or Alan Sandison, who reads *Jekyll and Hyde* as an early modernist text with its propensity for unanswerable questions and incomplete perspectives,[26] but the only approaches to consider Hyde as a villain are investigations of the novella's genre.[27] Generally, however, Hyde's importance is limited to his role as a

[21] Fiedler, for example, called *JH* an allegory, but nonetheless argued it was a great work of literature.
[22] See Heath and Hogle among many others. Heath in particular links *JH* to Freud and Krafft-Ebing.
[23] See Arata for an analysis of how *JH* links "gentlemanliness and bourgeois virtue to various forms of depravity" (Arata 195).
[24] Veeder's thesis that *JH* criticizes "late-Victorian social organization" for its "unresolved pre-oedipal and oedipal emotions" is an example of an argument that spans both camps (Veeder 103).
[25] See MacDuffie
[26] Another aspect of Sandison's modernist reading is psychological as well, suggesting that troubled father/son relationships find modern psychological rendering in much of Stevenson's fiction.
[27] See Lawler for an analysis of *JH* as gothic science fiction and Hirsch for a reading of the novella as gothic detective fiction. See Reid and Bratlinger and Boyle for treatments of the novella as exclusively gothic fiction.

"gothic gnome;"[28] there have not been any investigations of how Hyde functions as romantic villain in general.

I argue that this exclusively gothic understanding of the novella's genre is only part of the story; it limits the significance of Stevenson's choice to frame the novel as he does. Following those critics of the past who refused to consider any of Stevenson's works except *Jekyll and Hyde*, many critics separate the novella and Stevenson's other works, putting the novella in a gothic box that allows little comparison with his other (not at all gothic) work.[29] The novella does engage with gothic tropes, but understood as a romance like *Treasure Island*, one immediately sees the novella's communication with the expectations of romance in general, and like *Treasure Island*, its violation of those expectations. As in *Treasure Island*, a villain represents a sublime mystery to the protagonists, a mystery that proves unsolved even in the end, leaving Hyde and the fears he evokes with undiminished power.

Jekyll and Hyde, however, approaches Victorian doubt and the atheistic world it might create from an entirely different direction than *Treasure Island*. Hyde's role as a villain functions very differently than Silver's. Specifically, the novella uses a distinctly sublime stage with a symbolic treatment of light and dark to establish Hyde's role as a representative of the amoral universe and heighten Hyde's mystery and power chapter by chapter to an almost absurd degree. This process culminates in the second to last chapter of the novella, Dr. Lanyon's narrative, presenting a vision of Hyde as a horrible, horrifying, and highly mysterious sign of a materialist world to come. As in *Treasure*

[28] The phrase is Stevenson's own; it comes from a letter to W.H. Low dated 2 January 1886, and though it refers to the novella, it has been used generally to describe Hyde.
[29] See Reid's investigation of how Stevenson's interest in ideas of psychological degeneracy made their way into gothic form in *JH*.

Island, Stevenson invests too much sublimity in Hyde to make a solution to his mystery possible, but the ending of *Jekyll and Hyde* (Jekyll's "Full Statement of the Case") fails especially dramatically, leaving unsettling questions of Victorian doubt resounding in the silence at the end of the novel. Like *Treasure Island*, this ending raises uncomfortable questions that evoke Victorian doubt, reflecting the increasing openness of Stevenson's time. The questions are similar, but *Jekyll and Hyde* raises them to a much greater intensity and urgency.

Hyde

It's possible to believe that *Jekyll and Hyde* is a realist novella for just about four pages. When Enfield asks Utterson if he has ever remarked upon "that door," he presents an immediately recognizable trope of romantic fiction: a mystery surrounding a villain (4).[30] In this case, the mystery cannot be separated from the villain; Hyde serves as the nexus of the puzzling aspects of the novella. Hyde's very nature draws the curiosity of others, controlling the plot and indicating his special power in the text. This is a similar role to Long John Silver, but the basis of Hyde's power is quite different than Silver's attractive mysteriousness; Hyde's power stems from his repulsiveness.[31] When it comes to Stevenson's villains, repulsiveness and attractiveness are two sides of the same mysterious coin. Indeed, every character who meets Hyde remarks on this feature, and

[30] Sandison notes this opening as well, suggesting that the closed door immediately suggests to the reader that the door will, as the story progresses, eventually be opened.
[31] Many critics have tied Hyde's repulsiveness (and his physical appearance) to ideas of degeneracy, racism, and phrenology since the original publication of the novella. See Arata and Reid as examples of recent readings along these lines.

finds their curiosity piqued, allowing Hyde to control their actions through his mystery. Enfield is the first to note the special power of Hyde's repulsiveness:

> I had taken a loathing to my gentleman [Hyde] at first sight. So had the child's family, which was only natural. But the doctor's case was what struck me…He was the usual cut-and-dry apothecary…about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us: every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turned sick and white with the desire to kill him (4).

Hyde's repulsiveness is evidently capable of transforming others, inciting violent emotions in a character who is normally "about as emotional as a bagpipe" (4). People are not easily changed; Hyde's offensiveness is evidently powerful. When Utterson first encounters Hyde, he ponders this same feeling, and its lack of obvious source. Hyde, the narrator writes, is "pale," "dwarfish," with a "displeasing smile" an "impression of deformity" and a "broken voice," but "not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him" (14). This inability to understand Hyde's essential character or the source of the feeing he creates is distinctly sublime; it reminds one of Froude's fear of falling into the sea hidden in darkness at the bottom of the cliff.

The feeling of disgust is mysterious and powerful. As we have seen, it has no obvious source; it fills ordinary people with dread (a volatile mix of "disgust, loathing and fear" in Utterson's case), and it drives characters to act far outside of their normal limits. In fact, Hyde's repulsiveness creates not just the urge to kill in normally complacent characters like the "cut and dry apothecary" but also deep curiosity suggestive of the sublime. He sparks the curiosity of both Enfield and Utterson, and when Utterson finally meets Hyde, the strange repulsion he feels leads him to search for

its source. “There must be something else,” Utterson thinks to himself, and so begins his investigation (6). Soon, he finds himself awake in bed, his imagination “engaged, or rather enslaved” in picturing Enfield’s tale and the mystery of Hyde’s identity (11). In a passage reminiscent of Jim’s initial dreams of Silver, the face he imagines is a highly sublime mystery; the Hyde of his imagination has “no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes,” leaving Utterson with “a singularly strong, almost an inordinate curiosity uncover the mystery of Hyde’s identity” (11,12).

This is the basis of Hyde’s power; his repulsion, like Silver’s attraction, influences other characters to investigate him, driving along the plot of the novella. Indeed, there would be no novella but for Hyde’s influence on Utterson. Both Enfield and Utterson claim to reflexively avoid digging too deeply into such mysteries. As Enfield states, “the more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask” (6).[32] Following Burke’s definition of man as essentially curious, neither, however, follows this creed. Like the “cut-and-dry apothecary,” they are in the thrall of Hyde’s power; the feeling of repulsion he creates drives them to investigate, even as Utterson’s investigation leads him increasingly into danger and terror (4). Enfield, for example, immediately after giving this axiom, continues, “but,” he says, “I have studied the place for myself” (6). Utterson, too, in one breath reaffirms Enfield’s rule, and in the next ignores it: “but for all that,” he says, “there’s one point I want to ask” (6).

Despite his curiosity, Utterson’s investigation goes poorly; illustrating the paradoxical tendency of materialist thought to create murky fears and Hyde’s role as a

[32] A number of critics, Arata and Sandison chief among them, have linked this sense of discretion to the self-protective world of these professional men who will cover up horrible crimes to protect their good names.

representative of an amoral universe. Utterson only creates more mysteries in its attempt to solve them.[33] His first encounter with Hyde raises a host of questions about the meaning of the feeling of horror Hyde creates; his conversation with Jekyll turns up nothing, and his investigation of the Carew murder only turns up baffling parallels between Jekyll and Hyde, namely the decoration of Hyde's apartment and Jekyll's walking stick. Utterson is no closer to uncovering the nature of their relationship; one might argue he is even further away in that none of his original questions have been answered, and a host of new questions have been added on. Indeed, the relationship between rationalism and sublime mystery is clear: rationalism, though it aims to illuminate and dispel sublimity, only creates more.

The paradoxical relationship between Hyde's mystery and Utterson's investigation finds symbolic treatment in the relationship between light and dark in the novella's descriptive passages. This is one of *Jekyll and Hyde*'s most important features; these passages mark the gradual increase in Hyde's sublimity and mysterious power throughout the novella. Enfield provides the first such passage. Just before Hyde's first appearance, Enfield describes London at "three o'clock of a black winter morning" (4). There is, he says, "literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, all the folks asleep, street after street – all lighted up as if for a procession, and all as empty as a church" (4).[34] Lamps are human attempts to light the darkness, and as such have a long history as symbols for triumphant rationalism mastering various forces of darkness.

[33] Sandison also notes that the mystery of the novella continually increases, though he ties this feature of the text to Stevenson's modern literary techniques.
[34] Sandison links this, and other descriptive passages, to Malcolm Bradbury's concept of the "unreal city" in modernist literature, suggesting Conrad's treatment of London in *The Secret Agent* as a descendent (225-226).

These lamps, however, only light themselves; there is plenty of darkness left for villains like Hyde to lurk. Symbolically, this description evokes the normal Victorian relationship between rationalism and the murky fear of what rationalist doubt might create. The countless lights stand for the earnest attempt to hold these fears at bay, but in doing so intensify the darkness surrounding them. These streetlights are the streetlights of reassuring Victorian rationalism; they remind the reader of propriety and respectability – the safe and normal parts of life. Enfield, however, is still afraid; he soon enters that "state of mind in when a man listens and listens and begins to long for a policeman" (4). As it turns out, this fear is entirely justified; Hyde soon appears from these very dark areas, representing the emergence of both a figurative and literal horror from the sublime depths.

The narrator gives a similar description before Utterson encounters Hyde: "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" (12). The "regular pattern" reminds the reader of Utterson's regular habit of reading "some dry divinity" before going to sleep (9). It suggests a stronger repression of horrifying doubt than Enfield's description, perhaps reflecting Utterson's respectability compared to Enfield the "well-known man about town" (2-3). When Utterson finds Hyde, the narration takes a turn for the sublime; the descriptive passages become more murky and mysterious. After meeting Hyde, Utterson calls on Dr. Jekyll; his house, which normally gives off an air "of wealth and comfort," is now "plunged in darkness" (14). The hall, normally "the pleasantest room in London," now gives Utterson a "shudder in his blood," and Utterson sees "a menace in the flickering of the firelight on the polished cabinets and the uneasy

starting of the shadow on the roof" (15). Evidently, the sublimity of the novel has increased despite Utterson's attempts to solve the mystery presented by Hyde; rationalist investigation, in an attempt to reduce mystery, only makes Hyde more dark and terrifying. Rationalism is beginning to yield what it has sown.

Building Expectations

This relationship between rationalist and sublimity (and the corresponding relationship between light and darkness in the novella's descriptions) intensify throughout the novel, ascribing greater and greater sublimity to Hyde. Take, for example, the description of London as Utterson heads into Soho to investigate the death of Sir Danvers Carew:

> A great chocolate-covered pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing the embattled vapors; so that…Mr. Utterson beheld a marvelous number of degrees of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and there would be a glow of 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 wreaths. 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 kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare (23).

In this passage we have both aspects of rationalism's two-faced relationship with sublime fear; light both combats and creates obscurity and darkness. The "great chocolate-covered pall" is an agent of obscurity, but without the wind and the sunlight, it would not create the confusing and mysterious "marvelous degrees of twilight." These degrees suggest, in their combinations of light and dark, a variety of violent and ghastly sets of imagery. There is the "back-end of evening, the "lurid brown" of "some strange

conflagration," and a "haggard shaft of daylight," which seems to be both a victim and a cause of the horrible images. The lamps, too, both "combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness" and form a part of the lawyer's nightmarish vision of the city.

This scene, of course, occurs immediately after Hyde murders Sir Danvers Carew, and indicates a correspondence between the uptick of the sublimity of the passage and Hyde's increasingly violent power.[35] As Hyde grows more powerful and horrible, so do the descriptive passages suggest deepening sublimity and dwindling light. Hyde's mystery is becoming so large as to overwhelm the text. Symbolically, these intertwined threads evoke the late Victorian sense that these doubts increasingly approached a climax; rationalism's accelerating progress creates an escalating sense of panic and fear.

A crucial part of these building expectations occurs in the fourth to last chapter "The Incident at the Window." The chapter is an important one; though it is one of the shortest, it came to Stevenson in a dream before the rest of the novella (A Chapter on Dreams 167).[36] It is also utterly inexplicable to the reader who doesn't already know the plot of the novel. In it, Utterson and Enfield see Jekyll's face suddenly transfixed with "abject terror and despair" through the window of his home. Jekyll suddenly slams down the window without explanation (36). Similarly puzzling is Utterson and Enfield's reaction. They walk in silence for a time, and then, "pale" and with "horror in their eyes," Utterson makes a cryptic remark: "God forgive us! God forgive us!" (36). The overall effect is mystifying, and knowing that the end of the novella approaches, one assumes the

[35] Veeder notes that the Hyde's original victim in an earlier manuscript is a young man named Lensome, not the clear symbol of Victorian respectability, Sir Danvers Carew (109).

[36] Reid also argues for the importance of this scene in interpreting the novella as a whole.

incident is highly significant. The scene seems important and demands an explanation, but no answer will come until one has read the following chapters.

Accordingly, hope for a realistic explanation of Hyde and Jekyll must be high coming into the dramatically titled chapter "The Last Night." This, after all, is what readers had come to expect from romantic fiction; mysteries are presented, villains terrify, and then both find explanation and negation. The novel engages with these expectations of romance to create the feverish anticipation of a climatic revelation into Hyde's nature. The description of this particular London evening matches the expectant mood in its remarkable degree of sublimity:

> It was a wild, cold, seasonable night of March, with a pale moon, lying on her back as though the wind had tilted her, and a flying wrack of the most diaphanous and lawny texture. The wind made talking difficult, and flecked the blood into the face…struggle as he might, there was borne in upon his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity. The square when they got there was all full of wind and dust, and the thin trees in the garden were lashing themselves along the railing (38).

This description has an unnervingly suspenseful quality to it. The source of light, like Utterson, is upended, off-balance, and as reactive to the wind as the lights of Soho were to the incoming fog. Here, as in "The Murder of Sir Danvers Carew," Utterson once again reacts to Hyde. It is dark, and there is an obscuring atmospheric condition, although in this case, it is not thick, but "diaphanous and lawny," suggesting a fragile tension. As in previous passages, there are hints of violence – in this case, in the flecks of blood on Utterson and Poole's faces and the self-lashing trees that foreshadow Hyde's imminent suicide. Suspense is the overall feeling of this passage; it conveys the "crushing anticipation of calamity." The passage hints towards an impending confrontation, suggesting that Utterson may finally encounter the truth about Hyde. The

reader hopes that Utterson will grapple with the sublime depths and shine a reassuring light into the murky fear Hyde evokes. At this point, however, it is already hard to imagine a satisfying conclusion to Hyde's mystery; the intensity of the sublimity invested in him seems far too high to negate fully.

When Utterson arrives at Jekyll's home, the expectation only builds, and the sublimity does as well. The final descriptive passage before Utterson and Poole break down the door heightens the mysterious mood to a nearly absurd degree:

> The scud had banked over the moon, and it was now quite dark. The wind, which only broke in puffs and draughts into that deep well of building, tossed the light of the candle to and fro about their steps…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 (44).

This passage sends shivers down the spine. The light is even lower than in the first; the light that there is flickers "to and fro" at the mercy of the wind. Utterson and Poole have descended into "that deep well of building," suggesting a literal descent into the depths. Most chilling, however, are the footsteps; the horror beneath is close enough to hear, so close, in fact, that this sound consumes all the other sounds of a great city. The footfall moves "to and fro" like the candle, suggesting a direct connection between Hyde and the sublimity of the atmosphere, and in the dark stillness, one can almost feel Utterson and Poole's heartbeats pound along with it.

These passages indicate the remarkable extent of Stevenson's investment in the escalating sublimity of the text. There can be no easy solution to a mystery such as this; Stevenson has set its intensity far too high. Perhaps there can be no explanation at all; possibly, any attempt to give a realistic and reassuring explanation of Hyde's mystery is doomed to failure. In any case, Stevenson once again doubles down on mystery:

Utterson and Poole break down the door to find Hyde dead in a pleasant, ordinary room. The sense of anti-climax is almost overwhelming. This ("but for the glazed presses filled with chemicals") is the "quietest," "most commonplace" room "that night in London" (45). There is "quiet lamplight," "a good fire burning and chattering on the hearth," a kettle "signing its thin strain," neatly organized papers and a prepared tea set (45). Hyde lies dead on the floor, but there is nothing to suggest anything supernatural or sublime. It is easy to imagine how this scene might have been a dramatic and definitive ending for the novel; for example, Utterson and Poole might have found Hyde transforming into Jekyll. All is revealed in the final minutes of Hyde's life, and the reader ends the story satisfied that Hyde has been vanquished and his mystery has been explained. Instead, however, Hyde dies out of sight, and in an oddly pleasant room, with no indication of what he represents or what his death means, or any hint of where Dr. Jekyll is. The reader's worry that no realistic explanation is coming intensifies; one senses with a feeling of discomfort that the fear of an empty materialist world Hyde evokes might not have any softening or reassurance.

Dr. Lanyon's Narrative.

Jekyll and Hyde, however, has two chapters left, and while they answer many questions, they muddy the water more than elucidate the nature of Hyde.[37] Before these chapters, however, there is a crucial (and often ignored) narrative shift. The third person narrator, having remained close to Utterson's perspective throughout the novella, moves even closer, folding into Utterson's perspective entirely. The final line of "The Last

[37] Sandison links the enduring mystery of the text to the modern concept that "no story ever does get fully told" (Sandison 219).

Night" frames this shift: "Utterson…trudged back to his office to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained" (48). Therefore, Lanyon and Jekyll's statements come to the reader through Utterson; we read them along with him, seemingly inhabiting a tiny spot in his eye where we can see the statements, but not Utterson's reaction to them. I will return to this crucial shift in narration, but suffice to say for now that giving no hint of Utterson's reaction makes the reader wonder what it might be all the more.

In any case, Dr. Lanyon's statement finally illuminates the most basic mystery of the text: that Hyde and Jekyll are the same man. This fact, however, only increases Hyde's sublimity; it makes his mystery explicitly supernatural. Dr. Lanyon's narrative, in some ways, serves as a version of the novella in miniature; like the novella, it begins with a mystery and ends with more mystery and terror. The statement begins with a strange registered letter in a desperate tone from Henry Jekyll. Lanyon wonders at the letter, but resolves to follow its instructions. Soon, Hyde appears, and, like the other characters, Lanyon finds himself under the influence of his repulsiveness. In Lanyon's words, "I was struck…with the odd, subjective disturbance caused by his neighborhood. This bore some resemblance to incipient rigor, and was accompanied by a marked sinking of the pulse" (52). This feeling, as it had in all the other characters, sparks "disgustful curiosity;" Lanyon, in other words, finds himself drawn against his nature into the fanciful and terrifying just as Utterson and Enfield had (52).

Hyde prepares the potion, but before he drinks it, he and Lanyon engage in a conversation highly symbolic of the relationship between Victorian materialism and sublime fear of a spiritually empty world. This passage also serves as a point of

reference between gothic romance and the novella, filling a role analogous to Jim's conflict with Israel Hands in *Treasure Island*. Hyde begins with a dramatic monologue: "And now,' he says, 'to settle what remains" (54). Hyde continues, giving a Lanyon a choice to observe Hyde imbibe the potion:

> …Has the greed of curiosity too much command of you? Think before you answer, for it shall be done as you decide. As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you, here, in this room, upon the instant; and your sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan (54).

Here Hyde employs a gothic trope: the temptation (and, of course, doom) of transcending nature. In his Mephistophelean language, Hyde sets up an expectation that the knowledge he is about to impart is amazingly powerful, but mortally and spiritually dangerous; this, the reader thinks, is the moment of Lanyon's corruption. Since Lanyon is not a main character, the reader applies this incident to Jekyll; perhaps, the reader imagines, this is how to interpret Jekyll's strange behavior – as the signs of a fall into temptation. Perhaps Jekyll, like Faust (who was an immensely influential gothic archetype), overreached, and so found himself in the thrall of the demonic Hyde as punishment for his sins.

The novella sets up this gothic expectation only to violate it; like *Treasure Island*, *Jekyll and Hyde* subverts the expectations of romance, engaging with those expectations to heighten the contrast. This becomes clear as soon as Hyde drinks the potion:

> …His face suddenly became black, and the features seemed to melt and alter – and the next moment I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raise to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror. "Oh god!" I screamed, and "O god!" again and again; for there before my eyes – pale and shaken, and half fainting, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death – there stood Henry Jekyll! (65).

Lanyon should be even more upset than he is; where is the "new province of knowledge" or "avenues to fame and power"? In Hyde's transformation, he only finds sublime mystery and terror powerful enough to kill him. The Mephistophelean expectations are shattered; while this transformation opens one new realm of knowledge to Lanyon – that Hyde and Jekyll are one – this knowledge doesn't lead to fame or power, only unnerving questions. How is this possible? Is it true? Is it some illusion? What does it mean?

A hint can be seen in a word Lanyon borrows from Hyde's speech, "prodigy," here meaning a portent or a prophetic sign. In this case, it is a horrifying prophesy; Lanyon has seen a glimpse, not of powerful "transcendental medicine," but of his worst, previously unimaginable, fears realized: that rationalist science (to Lanyon, the opposite of fanciful superstition and spirituality) has created an embodiment of the merger between the sublime fear and materialist optimism (55). This is a vision of a universe where science creates the supernatural – a world in which the light of rationalism does not alleviate suffering or illuminate the truth, but only creates darker shadows of sublime fear. Hyde's transformation signifies to Lanyon not only that this fear can find its way even into his well-lit scientific world, but that Lanyon, a scientist of the "most narrow and material views," who has removed all uncomfortable non-materialism from his life, even "fanciful" Dr. Jekyll, has some culpability in science's failure (55, 10). As Hyde says moments before the transformation, "what follows is under the seal of our profession" (55).

Despite encountering a vision of this horrifying, atheistic world, Lanyon cannot wrap his mind around it; this future universe remains essentially sublime: "I saw what I

saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet, now when that sight has faded from my eyes, I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer" (55). Lanyon, in other words, has no idea what the portent means; he cannot describe it, except to say it is horrifying. This, of course, evokes the Victorians' conceptions of the purely materialist world; they couldn't imagine it, but they knew even the possibility of such a world was terrifying. In Lanyon's case, it is no longer a possibility, and as a man who lives opposed to the fanciful, his encounter with Hyde is too terrifying to survive; he dies soon afterward, the "deadliest terror" close with him. Dr. Lanyon's narrative ends, and Hyde's evocation of Victorian doubt and the materialist world without limits it might create remains as powerful as ever.

This is an important moment to consider the novella's shift in narration just before this chapter. Since we read this statement at the same moment Utterson does, this shift invites the reader to imagine, for a moment, Utterson's feelings as he reads Lanyon's statement. Likely, he comes to realize that he has had a similar encounter with the transformation – "The Incident at the Window." Indeed, at this point between Lanyon and Jekyll's statements, the reader (like Utterson) reevaluates this chapter. Generally, Utterson's exclamation of "God forgive us!" is understood as an expression of Victorian society's culpability in Jekyll's death; here, many say, Utterson expresses guilt at the strain put on Jekyll by strict Victorian standards of behavior. Never mind that non-judgmental Utterson, "the last reputable acquaintance of down-going men," is the least guilty of any member of society for Jekyll's death, and never mind that the narrator's description of Utterson and Enfield seems less guilty than utterly terrified. Indeed, both in the "answering terror in their eyes" and in the repeated "God forgive us!" one sees

similarities to Lanyon's reaction to the transformation. Like Lanyon, Utterson and Enfield did not understand what they saw, but like Hyde's repulsiveness, this only renders the effect more pronounced. Indeed, one might say "God forgive us" when feeling guilty; alternatively, one might say it when the future of the world or oneself seems in jeopardy. There is even a parallel between Utterson's "God forgive us!" and Lanyon's "O God!;" evidently, they saw the same portent of a horrifying, empty world to come, a world where Jekyll and Hyde, rationalist scientist and embodiment of sublime horror and atheistic fear, can be one.

Dr. Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case

Utterson, having reflected on this moment, then turns to read Dr. Jekyll's statement. Having realized the similarities between what he and Lanyon saw, Utterson is likely in some agitation or fear; he, like the reader, demands an explanation, an interpretation of what these strange events means. Jekyll's statement gives one, but close reading of his narrative shows Jekyll's statement to be anything but "full" and far from convincing. Jekyll presents his story as a moral allegory – a cautionary tale of the danger of giving into temptation. Jekyll commits a sin and falls like so many before him "before the assaults of temptation" (67). This "brief condescension to my evil," Jekyll writes, "finally destroyed the balance of my soul" (67). He writes this tale down to warn others, "I mean but to point out the warnings and the successive steps with which my chastisement approached" (62). This moral reading reminds the reader of Hyde's Mephistophelean framing of his transformation (they are, after all, the same man).

It seems unlikely that Utterson would find this reading convincing. First, Lanyon's statement and its violation of Hyde's Mephistophelean expectations has already warned him that this moral reading of the story fails to account for Hyde's horror as a representative of Victorian fear. Second, Jekyll's moral reading falls apart under his statement's many contradictions. His assumption of the "primitive duality of man," for example, stands on shaky ground at best; he and Hyde have identical handwriting, taste in home furnishings, and though Jekyll claims that he "cannot say I" to refer to Hyde, he does several times in his statement, even in truly horrifying moments like the murder of Sir Danvers Carew (62, 67). Indeed, Jekyll uses the first person to describe several moments in which he is Hyde: "I had soon dressed," "I mauled the unresisting body," and "I arranged my clothes as best I could" (63, 65, 68). Third, many add Stevenson's own comments to this criticism of Jekyll's statement, for in a letter Stevenson writes explicitly that he never intended a moral reading of the novella.[38] Critical consensus agrees that however convincing Jekyll's reading of his experiences was to contemporary readers,[39] it was not intended to be, and nor is it to critics today.

Let us return to Utterson at his desk. The novella demands that we wonder at his reaction to these texts, but gives us no glimpse into what this reaction might be. There is only silence to answer our curiosity, and in this way we are like Utterson; he finishes the statements, presumably as unsatisfied, horrified, and lacking in reassurance as the reader.

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[38] See Stevenson's letter to John Paul Bocock dated November 1887. In it, Stevenson famously wrote "there is no harm whatsoever – in what prurient fools call immorality…the harm was in Jekyll, because he was a hypocrite – not because he was fond of women; he says so himself, but people are so full of folly and inverted lust, that they can think of nothing but sexuality" (70).

[39] The moral allegory reading was, in fact, the dominant reading of the novel upon its release. Each of the selected reviews in the Copely edition of the novel, for example, describes the novella as an allegory or a parable.

Just as our unsettling feelings echo in the silence at the end of the novel, Utterson has only the silence of the night around him. Perhaps he dies like Lanyon, having also encountered a portent of the horrible atheistic world to come; this outcome is at least possible, if highly pessimistic. This may be is the reason *Jekyll and Hyde,* unlike *Treasure Island*, has a third person narrator. Jim finds himself compelled to write his story, perhaps as a way of expiating the doubts and fears the encounter with Silver created in him; perhaps Utterson is dead, or otherwise unable to accomplish even this modest step towards confronting the atheistic universe Hyde evokes. A more optimistic reading would suggest that tolerant Utterson, unlike narrow-minded Lanyon, finds a way to live with the doubts and fears Hyde evokes. Utterson might be able to confront openly these fears and thereby defeat them, rather than squirreling them away in the shadows of his mind and thereby increasing their horror.

Compared to *Treasure Island*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* develops a much more direct confrontation with the Victorian fear of an empty, atheistic world. The sublimity of the mood is more intense; the setting is closer to home; the characters much more realistic. More importantly, the villain's mystery is even more unsolvable; Hyde is far too sublime and mysterious a character to find any convincing realistic explanation. Most significant is the ending; whereas *Treasure Island* uses Jim's recurring dreams and choices in writing the novel to frame readers' encounter with questions of Victorian doubt and fear of a materialist universe, *Jekyll and Hyde* gives only the silence of Utterson's office. There is nothing to limit the readers' fear; whereas we know Jim survives his encounter with Silver, there is no such reassurance for Utterson.

Jekyll and Hyde, therefore, takes *Treasure Island*'s encounter with Victorian doubt a step further, opening the door to the skeptical 20th century just a bit wider.

Conclusion

After his death and the massive changes that would rock British society after the turn of the century, Robert Louis Stevenson's literary reputation took a precipitous fall[40]. In the eyes of many after the First World War, Stevenson was too imperialistic, too moralistic, and too repressed – all in all, too Victorian to be taken seriously. I argue that this turn of fate is quite tragic; Stevenson was buried under the avalanche of modernism that he helped to create. There were few writers as popular as Stevenson at his peak and few books as influential as *Treasure Island* and especially *Jekyll and Hyde*; it is hard to believe, whatever the contemporary reviews said, that more than a few readers, perhaps having finished the novella like Utterson in the middle of the night, found themselves admitting doubts they had never allowed themselves to think before. Perhaps some English boys acknowledged for the first time cracks in their patriotic world views; perhaps some of *Jekyll and Hyde*'s readers, unlike Lanyon, discovered that their most horrifying fears and doubts were a little easier to bear than they had thought. If these readers then went and wrote a review, those doubts certainly didn't surface, but perhaps in some small way Stevenson's romance prepared these readers for a future when doubts would burst into the public sphere.

As in a Stevensonian ending, many important questions remain unresolved. Chief among them, I believe, is this: are Stevenson's romances and their enduringly powerful villains a pessimistic reflection of a society unable to face its doubts, or does it offer some positive way forward? One might certainly assert the former; how many of Stevenson's characters end their texts both alive and untraumatized? Still, to me at least,

[40] See Fiedler and Kiely for discussions of the collapse in Stevenson's literary reputation

Stevenson seems a too genuinely optimistic and positive person to have written off the society he found himself separated from, and so I argue his romance, in leaving unresolved questions for the reader, presents itself as part of the solution – as a step towards a more open confrontation with doubt. Perhaps Stevenson's villains are not as terrible as they seem; perhaps a society unable to face its doubts needs a truly horrifying, sublime and enduring villain to help them confront their fears. There is a need for more work in this area, but this, I argue, is the basic purpose of Stevenson's late-Victorian romances and his remarkable villains: they, in their sublime mystery and power, allow for a more open confrontation with Victorian doubt than previously possible.

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