

belletristic tradition associated with more conventional critics of the period like George Saintsbury or Edmund Gosse.

The rise of "professional man" in turn coincides with the final consolidation of power during the nineteenth century in the hands of a capitalist bourgeoisie.<sup>62</sup> By definition professionals are middle class (and in this period male); their discourses are among the means by which middle-class life elaborates and extends itself. Certainly, degeneration theory provides an at times startlingly clear instance of this process. Nordau reveals the theory's class-bias when he asserts that, despite degeneracy's rapid spread, "the *bourgeoisie* are sound" (2), an assertion his evidence seems everywhere to contradict. He theoretically locates the problem instead within an exhausted aristocracy and certain sections of a depraved working class. In practice, however, the degenerate label is attached to any aesthetic or political program that Nordau considers disruptive of middle-class ideals: degenerative practices "mean the end of an established order, which for thousands of years has satisfied logic, fettered depravity, and in every art matured something of beauty" (3). Nordau, like many of his brethren, designates all progressive political programs as ideologies of the pathological. Indeed, he suggests, given a certain level of intelligence, degenerate individuals are invariably driven to become either mystical poets or else socialists. Severe cases lead to anarchism or – it comes to the same thing for Nordau – a love for the poetry of Swinburne.

We can easily dismiss or ridicule Nordau, though such responses fail to account for the status his book enjoyed. Despite his desire for that book to be considered a work of science, *Degeneration* is instead an unusually clear articulation of the "common sense" view of degeneration and of its relation to such diverse topics as sexual deviance, national character, class, literary style, interpretation, professionalism, and modernity. The book also reveals how thoroughly entwined degeneration theory was with the collective anxieties of the bourgeoisie in this period. Nordau's arguments were in most cases simply extensions and elaborations of highly "respectable" habits of thought; as Stokes correctly notes, he "seemed at the time to be interestingly extreme rather than woefully eccentric."<sup>63</sup> Nordau is mean-spirited, his conclusions nasty and narrow, but that very nastiness often serves to foreground the fears he tries to ward off. Invocations of degenerative paradigms are invariably tied up with concerns about the decline and fall of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, though degeneration theory is overtly concerned with the Other, it covertly expresses the anxieties of a middle class worried about its own present status and future prospects.

## CHAPTER 2

*The sedulous ape: atavism, professionalism, and  
Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde*

In an early review of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Andrew Lang noted the most striking feature of Robert Louis Stevenson's tale. "His heroes (surely *this* is original) are all successful middle-aged professional men."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, one could hardly miss the novel's foregrounding of the stature enjoyed by "Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., etc."<sup>2</sup> In Lang's view this interest in professional men defined Stevenson's novel at least as much as its portrayal of the grotesque Edward Hyde. If *Jekyll and Hyde* articulates in Gothic fiction's exaggerated tones late-Victorian anxieties concerning degeneration, atavism, and what Cesare Lombroso called "criminal man," it invariably situates those concerns in relation to the practices and discourses of lawyers like Gabriel Utterson, doctors like Henry Jekyll and Hastie Lanyon, or even "well-known men about town" (29) like Richard Enfield. The novel in fact asks us to do more than simply register the all too apparent marks of Edward Hyde's "degeneracy." It compels us also to examine how those marks come to signify in the first place. As Stevenson understood, one thing professional men tend to be good at is close reading. Another is seeing to it that their interpretations have consequences in the real world. *Jekyll and Hyde* proves to be an uncannily self-conscious exploration of the relation between professional interpretation and the construction of criminal deviance. The novel is also a displaced meditation on what Stevenson considered the decline of authorship itself into "professionalism."

## THE ATAVIST AND THE PROFESSIONAL

In Edward Hyde, Stevenson's first readers could easily discern the lineaments of Lombroso's atavistic criminal. In one of degeneration theory's defining moments, Lombroso had "discovered" that criminals were throwbacks to humanity's savage past. While contemplating the skull of

the notorious Italian bandit Vilella, Lombroso suddenly saw history open up before him, illumined as if by lightning.

This was not merely an idea [he wrote many years later], but a revelation. At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal – an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals.<sup>3</sup>

“Thus were explained anatomically,” Lombroso continues, such diverse attributes as the “enormous jaws, high cheek bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, [and] handle-shaped ears” of the criminal, as well as various moral deformities like the propensity for “excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresponsible craving of evil for its own sake.” These features were all signs of a form of primitive existence which normal men and women had transcended but which the criminal was condemned to relive. In his physiognomy as in his psyche, the atavistic criminal bore the traces of humanity’s history and development.<sup>4</sup>

From the first publication of Stevenson’s novel, readers have noted the similarities between Lombroso’s criminal and the atavistic Mr. Hyde.<sup>5</sup> Lombroso’s descriptions of criminal deviance fit snugly with longstanding discourses of class in Great Britain. Lombroso’s work first reached a wide audience in England thanks to Havelock Ellis’s *The Criminal* (1891); the combined influence of Ellis and Lombroso was in part due to the ease with which the new “scientific” categories mapped onto older, more familiar accounts of the urban poor from Mayhew onward. As we saw in Chapter 1, much of the “legitimacy” of degeneration theory derived from the way it reproduced the class ideologies of the bourgeoisie. Equating the criminal with atavism, and both with the lower classes, was a familiar gesture by the 1880s, as was the claim that deviance expressed itself most markedly through physical deformity.<sup>6</sup> Stevenson’s middle-class readers would have had as little trouble deciphering the features of the “abnormal and misbegotten” Hyde, his “body an imprint of deformity and decay,” as Stevenson’s middle-class characters do (78, 84). “God bless me,” exclaims Utterson, “the man seems hardly human. Something troglodytic, shall we say? . . . or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent?” (40). Utterson’s remark, moreover, nicely demonstrates how old and new paradigms can overlap. He at once draws on familiar Christian imagery – Hyde’s foul soul transfiguring its clay continent – and a Lombrosan vocabulary of atavism, with Hyde-as-troglodyte reproducing in his person the infancy of the human species.

In considering degenerationism as a class discourse, however, we need to look up as well as down. Both Lombroso and Nordau argue that degeneration was as endemic to a decadent aristocracy as to a troglodytic proletariat. And, indeed, Hyde can be read as a figure of leisured dissipation. While his impulsiveness and savagery, his violent temper, and his appearance all mark Hyde as lower class and atavistic, his vices are clearly those of a monied gentleman. This aspect of Hyde’s portrayal has gone largely unnoticed, but for Stevenson’s contemporaries the conflation of upper and lower classes into a single figure of degeneracy would not have seemed unusual. Lombroso’s criminal may have been primitive in appearance, but his moral shortcomings – “excessive idleness, love of orgies, the irresponsible craving of evil” – make him a companion of Jean Floressas des Esseintes and Dorian Gray, not Vilella. Nordau took pains to insist that the degenerate population “consists chiefly of rich educated people” who, with too much time and means at their disposal, succumb to decadence and depravity.<sup>7</sup>

Lombroso and Nordau have in mind not only the titled aristocracy but also a stratum of cultured aesthetes considered dangerously subversive of conventional morality. That Stevenson meant us to place Hyde among their number is suggested by the description of his surprisingly well-appointed Soho rooms, “furnished with luxury and good taste” (49). Hyde’s palate for wine is discriminating, his plate is of silver, his “napery elegant.” Art adorns his walls, while carpets “of many plies and agreeable in colour” cover his floors. This is not a savage’s den but the retreat of a cultivated gentleman. Utterson supposes that Jekyll bought the art for Hyde (49), but Stevenson in a letter went out of his way to say that the lawyer is mistaken. The purchases were Hyde’s alone.<sup>8</sup>

In Edward Hyde, then, Stevenson created a figure who embodies a bourgeois readership’s worst fears about both a marauding and immoral underclass and a dissipated and immoral leisure class.<sup>9</sup> Yet Stevenson also shows how such figures are not so much “recognized” as created by middle-class discourse. He does this by foregrounding the interpretive acts through which his characters situate and define Hyde. Despite the confident assertions of the novel’s professional men that Hyde is “degenerate,” his “stigmata” turn out to be troublingly difficult to specify. In fact, no one can accurately describe him. “He must be deformed somewhere,” asserts Enfield. “He gives a strong feeling of deformity, though I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary-looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir. . . I can’t describe him” (34). Enfield’s puzzled response finds its counterparts in the nearly identical statements

of Utterson (40), Poole (68), and Lanyon (77–78). In Utterson's dream Hyde "had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes" (36–37). "The few who could describe him differed widely," agreeing only that some "unexpressed deformity" lurked in his countenance (50). That last, nearly oxymoronic formulation – "unexpressed deformity" – nicely captures the troubled relation between the "text" of Hyde's body and the interpretive practices used to decipher it. Hyde's stigmata are everywhere asserted and nowhere named. The novel continually turns the question of Hyde back on his interlocutors so that their interpretive procedures become the object of our attention. "There is my explanation," Utterson claims. "It is plain and natural, hangs well together and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms" (66). It is also, we are immediately given to understand, wrong, though its delusions differ only in degree from other "plain and natural" explanations brought forward in the tale.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, what makes *Jekyll and Hyde* compelling is the way it turns the class discourses of atavism and criminality back on the bourgeoisie itself. As Lang recognized, Stevenson's novel is finally more concerned with its middle-class professional "heroes" than it is with the figure of Edward Hyde. Among the story's first readers, F. W. H. Myers felt this aspect acutely, and it prompted him to protest in a remarkable series of letters which suggest that he interpreted Hyde as a figure not of degenerate depravity but of bourgeois "virtue."<sup>11</sup>

Shortly after its publication Myers wrote to Stevenson, whom he did not know, enthusiastically praising *Jekyll and Hyde* but suggesting that certain minor revisions would improve the novel. After noting some infelicities of phrasing and gaps in plotting, Myers came to what he considered the story's "weakest point," the murder of Sir Danvers Carew. Hyde's mauling of Carew's "unresisting body" offended the decorous Myers ("no, not an elderly MP's!"), but his primary objection was that such an act was untrue to Hyde's nature. Because "Jekyll was thoroughly civilized...his degeneration must needs take certain lines only." Hyde should be portrayed as "not a generalized but a specialized fiend," whose cruelty would never take the form Stevenson gave it. At most "Hyde would, I think, have brushed the baronet aside with a curse."

Stevenson's reply was polite, passing over the bulk of Myers's suggestions in silence. He did pause to correct him on one subject, though, that of a painting in Hyde's lodgings. Myers had questioned whether the doctor would have acquired artwork for his alter ego. Stevenson answered that Hyde purchased the painting, not Jekyll. Myers's response was disproportionately vehement. "Would Hyde have bought a picture? I think – and

friends of weight support my view – that such an act would have been altogether unworthy of him." Unworthy? Myers and his weighty friends appear to feel that Hyde's character is being impugned, that his good name must be defended against some implied insult. Asking "what are the motives which would prompt a person in [Hyde's] situation" to buy artwork, Myers suggests three, none of which, he argues, applies to Hyde's case.

1. There are jaded voluptuaries who seek in a special class of art a substitute or reinforcement for the default of primary stimuli. Mr. Hyde's whole career forbids us to insult him by classing him with these men.

2. There are those who wish for elegant surroundings to allure or overawe the minds of certain persons unaccustomed to luxury or splendour. But does not all we know of Hyde teach us that he disdained those modes of adventitious attractions? ...

3. There are those, again, who surround their more concentrated enjoyments with a halo of mixed estheticism...Such, no doubt, was Dr. Jekyll; such, no doubt, he *expected* that Mr. Hyde would be. But was he not deceived? Was there not something unlooked for, something Napoleonic, in Hyde's way of pushing aside the aesthetic as well as the moral superfluities of life? ... We do not imagine the young Napoleon as going to concerts or taking a walk in a garden... I cannot fancy Hyde looking in at picture shops. I cannot think he ever left his rooms, except on business. (17 March 1886)

This is a most unfamiliar Hyde! On the evidence of Myers's letter we would have to pronounce him an upstanding citizen. Myers clearly perceives how easily Stevenson's Hyde could be taken not for a brute but for a dandy. At no point is Myers worried that Hyde might be considered atavistic. Instead, he is concerned that Hyde's reputation not be smeared by association with "jaded voluptuaries" and aesthetes. In attempting to clear him of such charges, Myers presents Jekyll's alter ego as the very image of sobriety and industry, manfully disdainful of the shop window, the art gallery, the concert hall – of anything that might savor of the aesthetic or the frivolous. Myers praises Hyde's simplicity of dress: he is not a fop but a "man aiming only at simple convenience, direct sufficiency." Unconcerned with personal adornment, he is "not anxious to present himself as personally attractive, but [relies] frankly on the cash nexus, and on that decision of character that would startle" those less forceful than himself.

We might dismiss Myers's reading as eccentric, especially given the absence of any irony in his references to Hyde's "business," freedom from personal vanity, or reliance on the cash nexus (blackmail and prostitution

appear to be the primary drags on his resources). Yet Myers's admittedly exaggerated response illuminates an important aspect of Stevenson's novel. Edward Hyde may not be an image of the *upright* bourgeois male, but he is decidedly an image of the bourgeois male. While Hyde can be read as the embodiment of the degenerate prole, the decadent aristocrat, or the dissipated aesthete, it is also the case that his violence is largely directed *at* those same classes. Of the three acts of violence we see Hyde commit, two – his trampling of the little girl and his striking of the prostitute – involve lower-class women. Hyde's third victim is the novel's only titled character, Sir Danvers Carew. That Hyde shares Myers's disdain for aesthetes is made plainer in Stevenson's manuscript draft of the novel. There, Hyde murders not Sir Danvers but a character who appears to be a caricature of the aesthetic stereotype, the "anoemically pale" Mr. Lemsome. Constantly "shielding a pair of suffering eyes under blue spectacles," Lemsome is considered by the respectable Utterson as both "a bad fellow" and "an incurable cad."<sup>12</sup> The substitution of Carew for Lemsome suggests that the two characters were connected in Stevenson's mind, just as for Nordau aesthetes like Oscar Wilde are grouped with troubling aristocrats like Lord Byron as disruptive of middle-class mores.

Mr. Hyde thus acts not just as a magnet for middle-class fears of various "Others" but also as an agent of vengeance. He is the scourge of (a bourgeois) God, punishing those who threaten patriarchal code and custom. Indeed, the noun used most often in the story to describe Hyde is not "monster" or "villain" but – "gentleman." This novel portrays a world peopled almost exclusively by middle-class professional men, yet instead of attacking Hyde, these gentlemen more often close ranks around him.<sup>13</sup> Enfield's "Story of the Door," though it begins with Hyde trampling a little girl until she is left "screaming on the ground" (31), concludes with Enfield, the doctor, and the girl's father breakfasting with Hyde in his chambers (32). Recognizing him as one of their own, the men literally encircle Hyde to protect him from harm. "And all the time...we were keeping the women off him as best we could, for they were as wild as harpies. I never saw a circle of such hateful faces; and there was the man in the middle,...frightened too, I could see that" (32). The homosocial bonding that occurs in this scene is only intensified by its overt misogyny. Though both he and the doctor profess to feel a profound loathing for Hyde, Enfield refers to him with the politeness due a social equal, consistently calling him "my gentleman" or "my man." Indeed, Enfield derives vicarious pleasure from watching Hyde maul the girl.<sup>14</sup> Though he could easily have prevented their collision, Enfield allows them to run into one

another "naturally enough" (31). Neglecting to intervene until Hyde has finished his assault, Enfield describes the incident with some relish, nonchalantly admitting to Utterson that the beating "sounds nothing to hear" (31). (Though he goes on to say that it "was hellish to see," that does not unring the bell.) That Hyde acts out the aggressions of timid bourgeois gentlemen is emphasized once again in the beating of Sir Danvers. That gesture of "insensate cruelty" is performed with a cane "of some rare and very tough and heavy wood" (47), which was originally in the possession of Gabriel Utterson. The stick breaks in two, and Stevenson takes care to let us know that both halves make their way back into the lawyer's hands after the murder (47, 49).

It is Edward Hyde's covert affinities with professional men that prompted Myers to describe him as a kind of bourgeois Napoleon. Myers recognized that Stevenson had created a figure whose rage is the rage of a threatened patriarchy. It is only a seeming paradox to say that Hyde is most like himself when he behaves like a gentleman. Yet to leave matters here would do an injustice to the complexity of Stevenson's vision, an injustice Myers himself is guilty of. While *Jekyll and Hyde* is a compelling expression of middle-class anger directed at various forms of the Other, the novel also turns that anger back on the burgesses themselves, Stevenson included.

It does this in part by taking as one of its themes the education of a gentleman, in this case Mr. Hyde. Most critical accounts of the novel have with good reason focussed on the social and psychological pressures that lead Jekyll to become Hyde. Yet Stevenson is also concerned with the reverse transformation. That is, the novel details the pressures which move Hyde closer to Jekyll.<sup>15</sup> It is one thing to say that Hyde acts out the aggressive fantasies of repressed Victorian men, another altogether to say that he comes eventually to embody the very repressions Jekyll struggles to throw off. Yet this is in fact a prime source of horror in the tale: not that the professional man is transformed into an atavistic criminal, but that the atavist learns to pass as a gentleman. Hyde unquestionably develops over the course of the novel, which is to say he becomes more like the "respectable" Jekyll, which in turn is to say he "degenerates." Degeneration becomes a function not of lower-class depravity or aristocratic dissipation but of middle-class "virtue."

Needless to say, Mr. Hyde's education into gentlemanliness exacts a considerable cost. The Hyde who ends his life weeping and crying for mercy (69) is not the same man whose original "raging energies" and "love of life" Jekyll found "wonderful" (95–96). By the time he is confined to the doctor's laboratory, Hyde is no longer Jekyll's opposite but his mirror

image. Where earlier the transitions between Jekyll and Hyde were clean and sharp (and painful), later the two personalities develop a mutual fluidity. By the end the doctor's body metamorphoses continually from Jekyll to Hyde and back again, as if to indicate that we need no longer distinguish between them.

How does one become a gentleman? If born into a good family, by imitating one's father. That Jekyll and Hyde stand in a father-son relationship is suggested by Jekyll himself (89) as well as by Utterson (37, 41-42), who suspects that Hyde is the doctor's illegitimate offspring. After "gentleman," the words used most often to describe Hyde are "little" and "young."<sup>16</sup> The idea that Hyde is being groomed, as Utterson says, "to step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes" (35), is reinforced by the doctor's will naming him sole heir, as well as by the lawyer's description of this "small gentleman" (46) as Jekyll's "*protégé*" (37). Indeed, when Jekyll assures Utterson that "I do sincerely take a great, a very great interest in that young man" (44) he sounds like a mentor sheltering a promising disciple.

If Hyde is to assume his mentor-father's position, he must be indoctrinated in the codes of his class. As Jekyll repeatedly insists, Hyde indulges no vices that Jekyll himself did not enjoy. What differs is the manner in which they enjoy them: Hyde openly and vulgarly, Jekyll discretely and with an eye to maintaining his good name. As Hyde learns from his encounter with Enfield, gentlemen may sin so long as appearances are preserved. Having collared Hyde after his trampling of the little girl, Enfield and the doctor are "sick...with the desire to kill him" (thus replicating Hyde's own homicidal rage), but "killing being out of the question" they do "the next best": they threaten to "make such a scandal...as should make his name stink" (31-32). They extort money as the price of their silence, in the process teaching Hyde the value of a good reputation. "No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene," Hyde acknowledges. "Name your figure" (32). When Enfield winds up his narration of this incident by telling Utterson that "my man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with" (33) he seems to be describing not a violent criminal but a man who cannot be trusted to respect club rules.

A commitment to protecting the good names of oneself and one's colleagues binds professional men together. Utterson, remarkably unconcerned with the fates of Hyde's victims, directs all his energies toward shielding Jekyll from "the cancer of some concealed disgrace" (41). Sir Danvers' death awakens fears that the doctor's "good name...[will] be sucked down in the eddy of the scandal" (53). After the murder Jekyll himself admits, "I was thinking of my own character, which this hateful busi-

ness has rather exposed" (52). As Enfield's actions indicate, blackmail is an acceptable way to prevent such exposure. Utterson mistakenly believes that Hyde is blackmailing Jekyll, but rather than going to the police he hits on the happier and more gentlemanly idea of blackmailing Hyde in turn (42). By far the most potent weapon these men possess, however, is silence. Closing ranks, they protect their own by stifling the spread not of crime or sin but of indecorous talk.<sup>17</sup> In turn, the commitment to silence ultimately extends to self-censorship, a pledge not to know. Utterson's motto - "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way" (29) - finds its counterpart in Enfield's unvarying rule of thumb: "The more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask" (33). ("A very good rule, too," Utterson agrees.) Enfield explicitly equates knowledge with scandal when he says that asking a question is like rolling a stone down a hill: "presently some bland old bird...is knocked on the head...and the family have to change their name" (33). Knowledge's harm is suffered most acutely by Dr. Lanyon, whose Christian name of Hastie nicely indicates his fatal character flaw. Warned by Hyde that it is always wiser not to know, Lanyon nevertheless succumbs to that "greed of curiosity" (79) which leads directly deathward.

By means of Mr. Hyde, Jekyll seeks of course to slough off these same burdens of respectability, reticence, decorum, self-censorship - of gentlemanliness - and "spring headlong into the sea of liberty" (86). In tracing the arc of Hyde's brief career, however, Stevenson shows how quickly he becomes simply one of the boys. Over the last half of the novel Stevenson links Hyde, through a series of verbal echoes and structural rhymes, to various bourgeois "virtues" and practices. Not only do we discover Hyde beginning to exercise remarkable self-control - that most middle-class of virtues and seemingly the furthest from his nature - but we hear him speaking confidently in Jekyll's tones to Lanyon concerning the benefits of science and the sanctity of "the seal of *our* profession" (80; my emphasis).<sup>18</sup>

The kind of structural rhyming I refer to is most noticeable during Hyde's death-scene, when Utterson and Poole, having violently burst in the door of the rooms above Jekyll's laboratory, are startled by what they find.

The besiegers, appalled by their own riot and the stillness that had succeeded, stood back a little and peered in. There lay the cabinet before their eyes in the quiet lamplight, a good fire glowing and chattering on the hearth, the kettle singing its strain, a drawer or two open, papers neatly set forth on the business table, and nearer the fire, the things laid out for tea; the quietest room, you would have said, and except for the glazed presses full of chemicals, the most commonplace that night in London. (69-70)

We are apt to share their bewilderment at first, since this is the last tableau we might expect Stevenson to offer us at this juncture in the story.<sup>19</sup> Yet it has been carefully prepared for. The novel is full of similar domestic tableaux, invariably occupied by solitary gentlemen. When they are not walking or dining, it seems, these men sit at their hearths, usually alone. It is Utterson's "custom of a Sunday...to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity on his reading-desk" (35). When the lawyer visits Lanyon, he finds the doctor sitting alone over his wine after dinner (36). Later he finds Jekyll in nearly the same position (51). Utterson shares a friendly fireside bottle of wine with Mr. Guest, though their conversation leaves him singularly unhappy (54-55). It is one of Stevenson's triumphs that he transforms the hearth – that too-familiar image of cozy Victorian domesticity – into a symbol of these men's isolation and repression. In turn, the most notable thing about the scene Utterson and Poole stumble upon is that it is empty of life. The lamplight soothes, the kettle sings, the chairs beckon – but no one is home. Recognizing this, we recognize too the subtle irony of calling it "the most commonplace" sight to be seen in London.

We next discover that the lifeless Hyde's "contorted and still twitching" body lay "right in the midst" of this scene (70). On the one hand, it is a fit setting for Hyde's last agony and suicide. The terrors suffered by Hyde during his final days arise in part from his surroundings: the very symbols of bourgeois respectability that he exists to repudiate do him in. On the other hand, he seems to feel bizarrely at home in these surroundings. If for instance we ask who set the table for tea on this final night, the answer has to be Hyde and not Jekyll, since Utterson and Poole, prior to breaking in the door, agree that they have heard only Hyde's voice and Hyde's "patient" footsteps from within the room that evening (69). (Poole insists that his master "was made away with eight days ago" [65].) Beside the tea things is "a copy of a pious work for which Jekyll had...expressed a great esteem, annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies" (71). We may be tempted to think that Hyde is responsible for those annotations, but that is not what the sentence says.<sup>20</sup> These are not fussy or pedantic quibbles, but rather indicate how carefully Stevenson has blurred the boundary between the two identities. It is Jekyll who is now blasphemous and who violently berates the man at Maw's (66), Hyde who sets a quiet tea table and cries to heaven for mercy.<sup>21</sup> On adjacent tables Utterson and Poole discover two cups, one containing the white salt used in Jekyll's potion, the other containing the white sugar used in Hyde's tea (71). Both are magic elixirs: the first transforms a gentleman into a savage while the second

performs the reverse operation. Having found his place by the hearth, Mr. Hyde knows what posture to assume: "Thenceforward, he sat all day over the fire in the private room, gnawing his nails; there he dined, sitting alone with his fears" (94). If this sounds more like Utterson or Lanyon than the Hyde we first met, it is meant to. Bitter, lonely, frightened, nervous, chewing his nails (we recall that Utterson bites his finger when agitated [65]), and contemplating violence: Edward Hyde is now a gentleman.

#### THE SEDULOUS APE

*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is an angry book, its venom directed against what Stevenson contemptuously referred to as that "fatuous rabble of burgesses called the public."<sup>22</sup> The novel turns the discourses centering on degeneration, atavism, and criminality back on the professional classes that produced them, linking gentlemanliness and bourgeois virtue to various forms of depravity. At the same time the novel plumbs deep pools of patriarchal anxiety about its continued viability. Indeed, *Jekyll and Hyde* can be read as a meditation on the pathology of late-Victorian masculinity. Jekyll's case is "strange," Stevenson suggests, only in the sense that it is so common among men of the doctor's standing and beliefs.

Yet if *Jekyll and Hyde* is a consummate critique of the professional men who formed the bulk of its readership, the novel was also self-consciously written to please, which it did. In no respect is Stevenson more of his age than in the tortuous acts of self-definition and self-positioning that allowed him at once to dismiss and to court the fatuous rabble.<sup>23</sup> Ironically, the publication of *Jekyll and Hyde* marked the emergence of Robert Louis Stevenson as a "professional" author in the narrow sense of being able, for the first time, to support himself solely by means of his trade. No longer a coterie writer relying on his father for financial help, Stevenson now enjoyed a popular acclaim that would last until his death. He professed to find such acclaim distressing, a mark of artistic failure and an indication that he had become, in his stepson's words, "the 'burgess' of his former jeers."<sup>24</sup> "I am now a salaried party," Stevenson wrote to William Archer after the success of *Jekyll and Hyde* led to a lucrative commission from an American magazine. "I am a *bourgeois* now; I am to write a weekly paper for *Scribners*, at a scale of payment which makes my teeth ache for shame and diffidence...I am like to be...publicly hanged at the social revolution."<sup>25</sup> "There must be something wrong in me," he confided to Edmund Gosse, "or I would not be popular."<sup>26</sup>

Stevenson's critique of professional discourses in *Jekyll and Hyde* turns out also to be a displaced critique of his own profession. The 1880s and 90s, like the 1830s and 40s, constitute a key moment in the professionalization of authorship over the course of the nineteenth century. The founding of The Society of Authors, the revision of international copyright laws, the widespread adoption of the full royalty system, and the appearance of full-time professional literary agents like A. P. Watt and William Morris Colles were only the most visible among many signs of this process.<sup>27</sup> In the early stages of his career Stevenson took little interest in (and little care of) his finances. Like many writers, he usually sold his copyrights for a lump payment instead of negotiating for royalties. Moreover, as Peter Keating points out, even when Stevenson did not sell his books outright, as in the case of *Treasure Island*, he *thought* he had.<sup>28</sup>

After 1884, following the founding of The Society of Authors and the vigorous consciousness-raising campaign led by its first president, Walter Besant, such financial naiveté was no longer possible. Yet Stevenson still ambivalently resisted the idea that imaginative writing constituted a professional discourse. His resistance was based on two factors. First, he saw professionalism as inseparable from the middle classes, that fatuous rabble he preferred to jest at rather than join. Second, he associated professional writing with a functionalist "realism" which he in theory opposed. As we saw in Chapter 1, it was precisely this kind of realist prose that was invariably held up as the norm against which "deviant" writing was measured. Nordau linked traditional notions of mimesis – "every word... connotes a concrete presentation or a concept" – both with "healthy" art and with his own critical writing. This linkage was made not just by pathologists but also by many of those who, like Besant, were most interested in professionalizing the author's trade. With realism designated as the language of professionals, Stevenson in opposition turned to what he (often vaguely) called "style" as the mark of the truly imaginative writer.

Thus, for Stevenson, to be professional was to be bourgeois, and to be bourgeois was to embrace the very blindnesses, evasions, and immoralities delineated in *Jekyll and Hyde*. Indeed, the salient biographical fact to recall here is that the novel was composed during Stevenson's three-year "imprisonment" at Skerryvore, the Bournemouth house purchased by Thomas Stevenson for his son and daughter-in-law.<sup>29</sup> This was a period of personal crisis and transition for the writer. Prior to it were years of self-styled bohemianism, fashionable dabblings in socialism, and occasionally self-indulgent nose-thumbings at "the fathers," his own included. Until he took possession of Skerryvore, Stevenson had never had a permanent

address. In his letters he repeatedly refers to his occupancy of the house as a capitulation to bourgeois convention, a "revolt into respectability."<sup>30</sup> To Gosse he complained: "I am now a beastly householder," and when Archer came to visit he found his friend ensconced in the heart of "British Philistinism."<sup>31</sup> Stevenson's always-fragile health was never worse than during these years, nor were his always-difficult relations with Thomas ever pricklier. When Thomas died in mid-1887 Stevenson immediately fled house and country, not returning to England during the seven remaining years of his life.

The biographical context throws some light on the motivations underlying *Jekyll and Hyde*. Writing it was in part an expression of self-loathing for what Stevenson perceived as his betrayal of former ideals.<sup>32</sup> Yet, as his letters and essays indicate, Stevenson was also intensely engaged at this time with the question of what it meant to be a professional author. For him, the normative definition of professionalism came, as it did for most writers of the period, from Besant, whose lecture "The Art of Fiction," delivered in April 1884 to the Royal Institution, prompted lengthy replies first from Henry James and then from Stevenson. Besant, having recently helped organize The Society of Authors, was explicitly interested in redefining fiction-writing as a profession analogous to the law, medicine, certain sciences, and other of the arts. If the "fine arts" like painting or sculpture enjoy a status denied to writers, he contends in the lecture, that is because they are organized into culturally sanctioned professional institutions. Besant correctly perceived that the painter who was permitted to append "R.A." to his name was accorded a respect no novelist could win.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the essay, however, Besant's implicit model for the fiction-writer is not the painter or sculptor but the professional scientist.<sup>34</sup> Wedded to the twin gods of positivism and empiricism, the Besantian novelist recognizes that fiction is "of this world, wholly of this world" and therefore seeks to reproduce the surfaces of life exactly as he finds them. Like the scientist too, the novelist reports his findings in a "transparent" prose, one that refuses to call attention to itself as writing. For Besant such transparency is the mark of professional writing in all disciplines. It at once vouches for the truth of the information conveyed while also ensuring that the professional's "products" will find the widest possible market. In the view of his detractors, however, Besant had succeeded primarily in degrading fiction-writing from a sacrament into a trade. He urges novelists to look after their self-interest by considering their products first as marketable commodities and only secondarily as art. For many writers Besant's position was scandalous, akin to the mercenary views confessed

by Anthony Trollope in his recently published autobiography (1882).<sup>35</sup> James eloquently objected to Besant's rules for successful novel-writing, rules which Besant offered as analogs to the procedural protocols that governed professional activity in other disciplines but which James considered as forming a risible do-it-yourself manual.<sup>36</sup>

In their replies James and Stevenson self-consciously distance themselves from Besant's professional author. They reject his implicit claim that the novel's function is to reproduce middle-class ideology by means of a facile mimesis. Both men were uncomfortable with the idea that the interests of the professional author ought to be at one with what Stevenson refers to elsewhere as "that well-known character, the general reader."<sup>37</sup> Of the two men, Stevenson took the more radical position by embracing a non-functional "style" as a kind of anti-mimesis. He argues that literature has nothing to do with reproducing reality but "pursues instead an independent and creative aim." Fiction, "like arithmetic and geometry" (two sciences, significantly, whose practitioners were not considered professionals in the nineteenth century), looks away from "the gross, coloured, and mobile nature at our feet, and regard[s] instead a certain figmentary abstraction." The novel in particular lives "by its immeasurable difference from life."<sup>38</sup> That difference is achieved only through a painstaking attention to what Stevenson terms the "technical elements of style." According to him, this craft so long to learn, unlike Besant's easily mastered rules, is precisely what separates true writers from the general public, making the former unpopular with all but the blessed few who cultivate "the gift of reading."<sup>39</sup> Affirming that "the subject makes but a trifling part of any piece of literature" and that "the motive and end of any art whatever is to make a pattern" and not to reproduce "life," Stevenson situates himself in opposition to dominant notions of realism, and thus also in opposition to the model of professional authorship proposed by Besant.<sup>40</sup>

It can be argued that, in rejecting Besant, Stevenson simply embraces a different model of professionalism, one that would become increasingly familiar in the modernist period. Certainly, in his hauteur regarding the reading public, as well as in his commitment to the values of craft, of style, of culture and taste, Stevenson participates in that reshaping of authorial self-presentation that Jonathan Freedman has identified most notably in James, Pater, and Wilde. As Freedman suggests, rejecting the middle-class marketplace could be a highly marketable strategy, just as distancing oneself from both the Besantian professional and the general reader could be a way of asserting one's own more authentic professionalism.<sup>41</sup>

Yet while James, Pater, and Wilde – all consummate modernist profes-

sionals by Freedman's standards – have been assimilated into the modernist canon, Stevenson has not. There are doubtless many reasons for this exclusion, but one has to do with Stevenson's conspicuously split allegiances, his dual commitment to aestheticism and "style" on the one hand and to what George Saintsbury called "the pure romance of adventure" on the other.<sup>42</sup> A feuilletonist who wrote pirate stories, Stevenson combined a Paterian attention to the intricacies of style and form with blood-and-thunder celebrations of male adventure. While aestheticism in turn became a key component of much Modernist writing, adventure did not. Stevenson's champions in the twentieth century have almost always been those who, like Proust and Nabokov, recognize in him a fellow dandy. Critical considerations of his adventure stories have, by contrast, tended to thrust him firmly back into the nineteenth century. I will take up the late-Victorian "male romance" more fully in Chapter 4; here I note only that the male romance was itself a rejection of both realism and professionalism. Unlike aestheticism, however, it rejected them in the name of a reimagined male bourgeois identity. It was thus a form of critique – occluded, self-interested, contradictory – arising from within the patriarchy itself. Stevenson's simultaneous embrace of aestheticism and adventure thus possesses a certain coherence, yet it was also the source of significant incoherences. Like Oscar Wilde, Stevenson cultivated a style both aesthetic and personal that carried within it an implicit critique of conventional middle-class mores. Yet like Andrew Lang, Rider Haggard, Arthur Conan Doyle, and other votaries of the male romance, Stevenson used the conventions of "adventure" (and again, those conventions could be said to structure both his work and, especially after the move to Vailima, his life) in an attempt to reshape his male middle-class readership and ultimately to affirm his ties to them.

That Stevenson felt this split in his allegiances with special acuteness while writing *Jekyll and Hyde* is suggested by his account of the story's genesis offered in "A Chapter on Dreams" (1892). In this essay Stevenson writes that *Jekyll and Hyde*, like many of his tales, originated in a dream which he simply transcribed and elaborated. Indeed "I am sometimes tempted to suppose... [that] the whole of my published fiction... [is] the single-handed product of some Brownie, some Familiar, some unseen collaborator, whom I keep locked in a back garret" of the mind "while I get all the praise."<sup>43</sup> Stevenson's conscious self – "what I call I, my conscience ego, the denizen of the pineal gland" – is left merely to bring some order to the Brownies' ideas and then to "dress the whole in the best words and sentences that I can find and make" (xvi, 187). For post-Freudian readers this



account of creativity's sources in the unconscious will sound familiar. Like Freud, Stevenson is deeply indebted to Romantic paradigms of the artist: "A Chapter on Dreams" in effect reimagines Shelley's Cave of Prometheus in proto-psychoanalytic language. Like Freud, too, Stevenson distinguishes between dream and waking world in terms of a series of productive contrasts: energy and order, licentiousness and morality ("my Brownies have not a rudiment of what we call a conscience" [xvi, 188]), spontaneity and craft, and so on. It seems especially appropriate that Edward Hyde should spring from a dream, since like the Brownies he is so easily identified with the raging energies of the id.

Yet Stevenson's unconscious is distinctly un-Freudian in one respect, for it has developed what can only be called a business sense. Over the years, Stevenson writes, he has come to dream only *marketable* stories, for the denizen of the pineal gland has no use for any other. Where once the Brownies told tales that, though powerful, were "almost formless" (xvi, 178), now "they have plainly learned...to build the scheme of a considerate story and to arrange emotion in progressive order" (xvi, 186–87). They now "dream in sequence" and "tell...a story piece by piece, like a serial" (xvi, 187). This new-found restraint arises not from any intrinsic love of aesthetic form but because the Brownies "have an eye to the bankbook" and "share in [Stevenson's] financial worries" (xvi, 186). "When the bank begins to send letters and the butcher to linger at the back gate...at once the little people begin to stir themselves" (xvi, 183).<sup>44</sup>

Despite its comic tone, the essay's point is a radical one: in what Stevenson called "the days of professional literature"<sup>45</sup> even the ostensibly unbridled play of the unconscious has come to be determined by the exigencies of the pocketbook. Stevenson has become a professional author whether he would or no. In "A Chapter on Dreams" the creative unconscious is not, as it sometimes was for the Romantics or for Freud, a place elsewhere, freed from the disabling pressures of history. Instead it is decisively shaped by those pressures. To survive, an author must not only write to order but also dream to order. So well trained have the Brownies become, the essay ironically concludes, that they have begun to fantasize potentially marketable stories in styles entirely unlike Stevenson's own. "Who would have supposed that a Brownie of mine should invent a tale for Mr. Howells?" (xvi, 189). In learning to write like William Dean Howells, that champion of sturdy realist prose, the Brownies demonstrate that they know better than Stevenson himself what goes down best with the reading public. Increasingly dissevered from any individual ego, the Brownies place themselves in willing bondage to the demands of the marketplace.

Stevenson, thought by the world to be the "author" of his tales, is only an amanuensis – "I hold the pen...and I do the sitting at the table...and when all is done, I make up the manuscript and pay for the registration" (xvi, 187–88) – transcribing tales he can claim no credit for, since they come not from some deep authentic self but from the culture itself. If Stevenson succeeds in giving his middle-class readers what they want, the essay concludes, that is because they have manufactured his stories for him.<sup>46</sup> "A Chapter on Dreams" is in essence an elegy for Romantic paradigms of creativity. The Romantic visionary genius has become the Besantian purveyor of goods, a kind of literary shopkeeper.

"A Chapter on Dreams" also gives further weight to the claim that *Jekyll and Hyde* traces the gradual taming of Edward Hyde into a parody of bourgeois respectability. Like Hyde, the Brownies find that lawlessness and licentiousness simply do not pay, and that they must adjust accordingly. As in the novel, Stevenson concludes that there is no place elsewhere, no human activity not already saturated with ideology. The creative unconscious is shown to be wholly acculturated: not in opposition to bourgeois morality but unavoidably pledging fealty to it.<sup>47</sup> In a striking and bitter letter to Gosse, Stevenson called this servicing of the public a form of prostitution. "We are whores," he wrote, "some of us pretty whores, some of us not: whores of the mind, selling to the public the amusements of our fire-side as the whore sells the pleasures of her bed."<sup>48</sup> His further point is that under modern conditions whoredom is the writer's only option. In another letter he returned to this same metaphor: "like prostitutes" professional authors "live by a pleasure. We should be paid if we give the pleasure we pretend to give; but why should we be honoured?"<sup>49</sup>

What begins to emerge is a cluster of veiled equivalences, with threads linking Stevenson, his creative Brownies, Edward Hyde, and the prostitute-writer within a larger web comprising middle-class ideology, commerce, and the ethics of professionalism. *Jekyll and Hyde*, I would argue, is in part a symbolic working through of these linkages. We recall for instance that bourgeois commerce is implicitly associated with whoring in Stevenson's description of the "thriving" commercial street which Jekyll's house backs on to, its "florid charms," "freshly painted shutters," and "well polished brasses" giving luster to goods displayed "in coquetry; so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation" (30). The doctor's house fronts on to "a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate" and given over to vaguely disreputable trades, "shady lawyers, and the agents of obscure enterprises": the once-fine homes are "let in flats and chambers to

all sorts and conditions of men" (40). Readers who hear in this last passage a covert reference to Besant's popular 1882 novel, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, might speculate that Stevenson is indirectly including professional authorship among the shady and obscure trades of modern life. Even without the specific connection to Besant, we note that Jekyll's house is surrounded front and back by the trappings of bourgeois life, a life described in terms of the seedy, the disreputable, the garish, the decayed. Such linkages – commerce and prostitution, prostitution and authorship, authorship and professionalism, professionalism and bourgeois ideology, and so on – suggest that we might usefully approach *Jekyll and Hyde* as an indirect attempt by Stevenson to size up his situation as a professional writer at the close of the nineteenth century.

The novel in fact turns out to be obsessively concerned with writing of various kinds: wills, letters, chemical formulae, bank drafts, "full statements," and the like. Like "A Chapter on Dreams," *Jekyll and Hyde* worries over the question of authenticity. Just as in the essay Stevenson feared that his writing originated not in some genuine self but in a market-driven unconscious, so in the novel he continually links writing with forgery and other kinds of "inauthentic" production. Enfield first discovers Hyde's identity when he reads his name written on a cheque that Enfield "had every reason to believe... was a forgery." That in fact "the cheque was genuine" only convinces Enfield that the deception runs deeper than he had imagined (32). Hyde was known even earlier to Utterson through Jekyll's will, which the lawyer considers an affront to "the sane and customary sides of life" (35) and whose irregularities he "never approved of" (43). Even before he makes his first appearance in the present of the novel, then, Hyde is associated with writing that is at once "professional" – bank drafts and legal testaments – and yet also somehow irregular and thus troubling. In both instances, moreover, Hyde stands to benefit financially, just as in "A Chapter on Dreams" Stevenson says his own "irregular" writings proved to be the most lucrative.

Jekyll too is implicated in the production of questionable writing. Utterson, after hearing Mr. Guest's analysis of Jekyll's letters, is driven to conclude that the doctor has begun to "forge for a murderer" (55). We also recall that Jekyll's downfall results from the "impurity" of his original chemical formulae, and that it is precisely out of that impurity that Hyde originally springs (96).<sup>50</sup> We cannot finally separate Jekyll's writing from Hyde's, however, since a central conceit of the story is that they write identical hands. "Of my original character," the doctor notes, "one part remained to me: I could write my own hand" (93). Hyde can sign Jekyll's

cheques and Jekyll can write Hyde's letters because their "characters" (in both senses of that word) are the same. Ever vigilant, F. W. H. Myers objected to this conceit, saying that it showed a "want of familiarity" on Stevenson's part "with recent psycho-physical discussions" concerning the individuality of handwriting.<sup>51</sup> Once again fingering a pressure point in the novel, Myers argued that no two hands could be identical, since each individual's unique and authentic character is reproduced via the characters on the page. In a parallel vein, both Rider Haggard and E. T. Cook took exception to Jekyll's will, claiming that the law would never recognize such a document because it could not be securely attributed to Jekyll himself.<sup>52</sup>

*Jekyll and Hyde* of course takes as its explicit theme the possibility that the self is not unique and inviolable. Yet Myers, Haggard, and Cook seem relatively untroubled by the novel's "revelation" that two distinct subjectivities inhabit the same "self." All three men instead attest to the anxiety that arises from the suspicion that writing itself might be entangled in this same indeterminacy. As their appeals to science and the law further suggest, vast realms of social discourse operate on the assumption that writing and selfhood are interchangeable. Yet it is precisely this faith that both "A Chapter on Dreams" and *Jekyll and Hyde* undermine. In this context it is worth noting that Stevenson himself has often been criticized for not being sufficiently "present" in his own writings. In 1927, at the nadir of Stevenson's reputation, Leonard Woolf dismissed him as having "no style of his own." His writing is "false," Woolf contended; at best he was a mimic, "a good imitator."<sup>53</sup> The "no style" argument is common in Stevenson criticism, and interestingly finds its complement in the equally common claim that Stevenson is merely a stylist. During his lifetime both William Archer and George Moore criticized Stevenson for being all style and no substance.<sup>54</sup> What links these seemingly contradictory assessments is their shared suspicion that there may be no "self" visible in Stevenson's writing, no discernible subjectivity expressed there. Rather than style being the man, it seems that in Stevenson's case style – whether his own or borrowed – replaces the man. Stevenson occasionally critiqued himself along these same lines, claiming that as a writer he was merely "a sedulous ape" who did no more than mimic the styles of the writers who came before him.<sup>55</sup> This self-characterization links Stevenson back to Edward Hyde, himself a "sedulous ape" who learns to his great cost how to mimic his "betters."

Given this context, we can readily agree with Ronald Thomas's claim that *Jekyll and Hyde* enacts the modernist "disappearance of the author." Thomas notes, for instance, how often in the story writing is tied to vanish-

ing.<sup>56</sup> “When this shall fall into your hands,” Jekyll predicts in his last letter to Utterson, “I shall have disappeared” (72). Earlier, the lawyer’s apprehensions concerning Jekyll’s will centered on the provision that it come into effect upon the doctor’s “disappearance or unexplained absence” (35). Hastie Lanyon likewise pens his narrative (also “not to be opened until the death or disappearance of Dr. Henry Jekyll” [58]) knowing that it will not be read until after his decease. It is thus only fitting that the novel concludes by foregrounding this link between the act of writing and the death of selfhood: “as I lay down my pen,” reads the book’s final sentence, “I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end” (97).

That last sentence points the problem with particular sharpness, since it leaves unclear to whom “I” refers. Though the document is labelled “Henry Jekyll’s Full Statement of the Case,” within the statement the first person shifts referents with notorious frequency. The final few paragraphs contain sentences in which “I” means Jekyll, sentences in which “I” means Hyde, and sentences in which both Jekyll and Hyde are referred to in the third person, leaving an authorial “I” unattached to any self. The oft-cited confession of ontological anxiety – “He, I say – I cannot say, I” (84) – is in one sense misleading, since the “Full Statement” says “I” all the time. We merely do not always know who “I” is. Like the conscious self posited in “A Chapter on Dreams,” the “I” of the “Full Statement” holds the pen and sits at the desk yet cannot unequivocally claim to be author of the document.

This dissociation of writing from selfhood is especially conspicuous in what is after all meant to be an autobiographical narrative. When Jekyll begins his confession in properly Victorian fashion (“I was born in the year 18— to a large fortune, endowed besides with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry,” and so on [81]), we might expect him to at last write himself into the kind of coherence ostensibly promised by the autobiographical form.<sup>57</sup> What he finds instead is a self increasingly fragmented and estranged from “his” own writing. “Think of it – I did not even exist!” (86).

*Jekyll and Hyde* covertly enacts, then, a crisis in realist writing alongside its more overt thematizing of a crisis in bourgeois subjectivity. That these crises find expression in a story “about” criminal degeneracy should not surprise us, since traditional humanist notions of both realism and identity were deeply embedded in the normative categories deployed by degenerationists. *Jekyll and Hyde* self-consciously dismantles those categories, though it does not offer any to replace them, since Stevenson too felt himself estranged both from his “professional” self and from his

writing. It is easy to see his subsequent flight to Samoa as a finally futile attempt to reclaim the possibility of pure Romantic expression. The irony, of course, is that exile made him more popular than ever with the middle-class reading public in Britain.