

*from “The Education of Edward Hyde: Stevenson’s
‘Gothic Gnome’ and the Mass Readership of Late-
Victorian England”*

[In the following article, Patrick Brantlinger and Richard Boyle consider *Jekyll and Hyde* as a reflection of Victorian anxieties about the quality of mass-market literature—and about the class of people who read it.]

On 25 January 1886, *The Times of London* reviewed a “sparsely-printed little shilling volume” entitled *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. According to Charles Longman, this review initiated the story’s immense popularity, although the tale was packaged from the start to be a bestseller (Maixner 205). Dr. Thomas Scott recalled Stevenson’s announcement one morning that “I’ve got my shilling shocker.” This, said Scott, was “the period of the shilling shockers,” and at a time before Stevenson’s “success was ensured, when he was in financial difficulties,” his publishers had been “urging him, much against his inclination, to write such a book.”¹ Yet Stevenson had been quite willing to publish earlier stories in popular formats. “The Body Snatcher” had appeared in the 1884 Christmas extra of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, which “advertised it in the streets in a way as horrible as the story itself” (Hammerton² 318).

For Longman’s part, *Jekyll and Hyde* was deliberately formatted as a “shilling shocker” aimed at the 1885 Christmas market, though because completed too late it was withheld from the booksellers until the new year (Swearingen³ 99). For his part, because of “financial fluctuations,” Stevenson had been “racking my brain for a plot of any sort” (“A Chapter on Dreams”). Despite being able to fall back on his father, Stevenson desperately wanted to earn his living as a writer. Producing a “shilling shocker” for Longmans might disagree with his sense of the higher aims of literature, but it agreed with his desire for financial independence and popularity.

1 Rosaline Masson, ed., *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1923), 269. [Unless otherwise indicated, all footnotes to this article are those of the authors.]

2 [J.A. Hammerton, *Stevensoniana: An Anecdotal Life and Appreciation of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1907).]

3 [Roger G. Swearingen, *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1980).]

“The wheels of Byles the Butcher drive exceedingly swiftly,” Stevenson wrote apologetically to F.W.H. Myers. Therefore, “*Jekyll* was conceived, written, re-written, re-re-written, and printed inside ten weeks” (L2, 294). What Stevenson meant by “Byles the Butcher” was perhaps his “initial monetary impulse” (Swearingen 99). The “white-hot haste” with which he produced the story, Stevenson hoped, would help to excuse some of the solecisms Myers detected in it. Paradoxically it could perhaps also explain or excuse its astonishing popular success. Other stories that he labored over and considered more serious might never be bestsellers; but popularity and seriousness seemed antithetical. Despite lavish praise by Myers and others, Stevenson’s own statements about the story tend to be defensively ironic. Instead of a masterpiece that would win the unconditional approval of the most discriminating readers, he had produced a “Gothic gnome,” a “fine bogey tale.” Through the revision prompted by Fanny, he had converted this tale into a “moral allegory,” but the revision had perhaps only given it another source of appeal to the mass readership who, both he and Longmans believed, were the real arbiters of the late-Victorian literary marketplace.

In part because of his deep-rooted ambivalence toward that marketplace, Stevenson responded ambivalently to *Jekyll and Hyde*, at times referring to it as if it were a despised double, or at least the unwanted spawn of the weaker, Hyde-like side of himself, as in the Byles-the-Butcher letter, or in his account of its genesis in “A Chapter on Dreams,” according to which his “Brownies” invented Hyde while his waking or rational self supplied the “morality.” Such ambivalence suggests that *Jekyll and Hyde* can be read, in part, as a kind of gothic version of George Gissing’s *New Grub Street*. It has always been read as an “allegory” about good and evil, about “the war in the members” and the “double nature” of human nature. We intend here to read it also as an unconscious “allegory” about the commercialization of literature and the emergence of a mass consumer society in the late-Victorian period.

I

The various accounts of the genesis of the “fine bogey tale,” including Stevenson’s, are all marked by an ambivalence or doubleness that stems from the fundamental contradiction between the sense of literature as a high calling and the desire for popular fame and fortune. According to Stevenson,

I had long been trying to write a story on [the] strong sense of man’s double being.... Then came one of those financial fluctua-

tions.... For two days I went about racking my brains for a plot of any sort; and on the second night I dreamed the scene at the window, and a scene afterwards split in two, in which Hyde, pursued for some crime, took the powder.... All the rest was made awake, and consciously, although I think I can trace in much of it the manner of my Brownies. The meaning of the tale is therefore mine, and had long pre-existed.... Mine, too, is the setting, mine the characters. All that was given me was the matter of three scenes, and the central idea of a voluntary change becoming involuntary. ["A Chapter on Dreams"]

This division of labor, between his waking self who supplied the "meaning" and his "Brownies" who supplied, through dream, the central "scenes" and "manner" of the story, itself points to "man's double being." Stevenson's account applies the chief message of *Jekyll and Hyde* to the history of its production. As personifications of the mind's dream-life, the Brownies are Stevenson's doubles, creatures hidden inside the waking personality who beg comparison with the "dwarfish" or "gnomelike" Mr. Hyde. Stevenson says that, in the division of labor that produced the tale, he took care "of the morality, worse luck!" because "my Brownies have not a rudiment of what we call a conscience" ("A Chapter on Dreams").

A similar division of labor is evident in the accounts by Fanny Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, except that in these Fanny plays the part of "conscience" or supplier of "meaning." They both indicate that the first draft, itself written in "white-hot haste," was tossed into the fire because of Fanny's reaction to it. Stevenson had apparently written a mere "crawler" or tale of terror, without any more serious intention than to entertain, but Fanny thought that "it was really an allegory."

The morning after her husband had the dream ... he came with a radiant countenance to show his work to his wife, saying it was the best thing he had ever done. She read it and thought it the worst.... At last ... she put her objections to it ... in writing, complaining that he had treated it simply as a story, whereas it was in reality an allegory. After ... seeing the justice of her criticism, with characteristic impulsiveness he immediately burned his first draft and rewrote it from a different point of view.... [Sanchez¹ 118]

It is not altogether apparent what "allegory" and "story" mean, but Osbourne added, "In the first draft Jekyll's nature was bad all through,

1 [Nellie Van de Grift Sanchez, *The Life of Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).]

and the Hyde change was worked only for the sake of a disguise" (65). In other words, the sharp moral antithesis—the struggle between the mostly good, outward self (Jekyll) and the evil, hidden self (Hyde)—was not a feature of the first draft. The "allegorization" that Fanny demanded apparently changed a horror story *tout simple* into one about the warfare between good and evil, giving it a religious or philosophical gloss. Whether or not this transformation has made *Jekyll and Hyde* a better work of art, it probably did make it seem more serious and respectable and may therefore also have helped to attract a broader spectrum of readers than a mere shilling shocker would have. Instead of just a crawler, it became, so to speak, a crawler with a purpose. [...]

The Jekyll/Hyde split between "allegory" and mere "story" is similar to the other, more familiar dichotomies of Stevenson's life and work. There are, for example, the conflicts between bourgeois respectability and bohemianism, engineering and art, and Calvinism and free thought that marked Stevenson's troubled relations with his family. As for his art, his letters and essays reveal his vacillations between "realism" and "romance." In each case, Stevenson affirms the creative energy or vitality of what he simultaneously regards as the less serious or less moral half of the antithesis. Stevenson defines most of his fiction in terms of romance or "the novel of adventure," and therefore criticizes the various realisms as both drab and pseudoscientific. But his defenses of romance often lack conviction. He is aware "English people of the present day are apt ... to look somewhat down on incident [in fiction], and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate" ("A Gossip on Romance"). But he associates romance or the fiction of "incident" with daydream, escape, and childhood rather than with visionary qualities that both transcend and see more deeply into reality than the rational mind. At the end of "A Humble Remonstrance," for example, he calls Scott both "a great romantic" and "an idle child," as if these phrases were synonymous. Perhaps the universal, timeless appeal of "romance" seemed unconsciously problematic to him because of its kinship to that contemporary popular or mass appeal, which he believed he should resist.

[... T]he choice was not between being read and going completely unread but between producing popular or unpopular kinds of writing. Earlier writers and publishers had necessarily aimed their works at smaller, more uniform, more clearly middle- or upper-class readerships. But by the 1880s there had emerged a growing "massification" and yet also diversification of the literary marketplace, rooted in the development of mass literacy from about the 1830s forward. New techniques of mass production, such as the high-speed Hoe press,

coupled with the abolition of the last “taxes on knowledge” by 1855, led to “a new and remarkable phase of general expansion” for popular journalism between mid-century and the 1890s.¹ Together with increasing numbers of readers and leisure for reading, these developments had by the 1880s created the conditions in which “the sale of sensational novels in serial form [might exceed] two million copies a week, with individual titles selling from ten to sixty thousand each.”²

Late-Victorian critics did much moralizing about the sad state of popular taste, though given the massive increase in reading material of all sorts and in reading as an activity, the complaints sound weak or contradictory. In his 1880 essay “Copyright,” Matthew Arnold lamented the development of “a cheap literature, hideous and ignoble of aspect, like the tawdry novels which flare in the book-shelves of our railway stations, and which seem designed ... for people with a low standard of life.”³ Perhaps the remarkable fact, however, was not that “tawdry novels” existed, but that there were for the first time in history large numbers of people who, though their “standard of life” might be beneath Arnold’s, were able and willing to read them. But the fear of mass literacy was powerful in late-Victorian England. In an 1887 *Edinburgh Review* article on “the literature of the streets,” B.G. Johns asserted that it was “a disgrace to our boasted civilisation” that “a nation like England, which spends millions on the education of her children and boasts of teaching every poor boy and girl to read, should provide for them no fiction but of an infamously worthless kind.”⁴ Johns ranked Stevenson among the writers of “healthful” fiction, but went on to say, “The worst of modern novels are too often among the most popular.” The “garbage of the ‘Penny Dreadfuls’” was, he believed, especially “poisonous” to the newly literate masses. Such “depraved” literature was criminal, Johns thought, both because it dealt with crime and because it directly stimulated “foul aims” and “vicious” behavior.

Framed by these mass cultural trends and anxieties, Stevenson’s resuscitation of older “romance” forms of story telling can be understood as an effort to mediate between an ideal of literature as high art and a desire for mass-market success. The same effort is evident in the work of the other late-Victorian “romancers” such as H. Rider Haggard and H.G. Wells. According to Fredric Jameson:

1 Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), 215.

2 Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 308.

3 Matthew Arnold, “Copyright,” *English Literature and Irish Politics*, ed. R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), 126.

4 [B.G. Johns,] “The Literature of the Streets,” *Edinburgh Review* 165 (1887): 61.

It is in the context of the gradual reification of realism in late capitalism that romance once again comes to be felt as the place of narrative heterogeneity and of freedom from that reality principle to which a now oppressive realistic representation is the hostage. Romance now again seems to offer the possibility of sensing other historical rhythms, and of demonic or Utopian transformations of a real now unshakably set in place....¹

As Jameson also notes, however, the late-Victorian romance that emerged between the breakdown of realism and the rise of modernism tended toward “popular ... or mass culture,” sharing “the commercialized cultural discourse of what, in late capitalism, is often described as a media society” (206). Jameson diagnoses Conrad’s *Lord Jim* as “schizophrenic” because of its unresolved tension between mass cultural “romance” and high cultural “modernism,” and a similar diagnosis, though in terms of “romance” and “realism,” applies to much of Stevenson’s fiction.

[...] *Jekyll and Hyde* can [...] be read as a palimpsest between or beneath whose lines the knowing reader will discern the well-advertised originary dream, the incineration of the first draft, and the subsequent allegorization of the story at Fanny’s behest.

Stevenson’s “Gothic gnome,” in other words, mirrors the story of an exemplary struggling artist, torn between the desire to produce “masterpieces” and the knowledge that popular success lay in the contrary directions of “shilling shocker” and “moral allegory.” For the supposedly indiscriminating mass readership, there was the “crawler” plain and simple, though this was also a palimpsest in which the form of the gothic thriller, as Hirsch and Lawler have shown, was overwritten by the patterns of the detective story and science fiction. For a supposedly more sophisticated sort of reader, there was the moral allegory about good and evil; *Jekyll and Hyde* served as the subject, we are told, for numerous late-Victorian sermons. But for the discriminating elite such as Henry James and Edmund Gosse, there would also be the heroic and self-pitying story of its writer’s struggle against adversity, which included the adversity of having to cater to the cultural mass market of the late-Victorian age.

II

Stevenson’s ambivalence toward his “audience and money” shows up dramatically in a letter he wrote to Gosse in 1886:

1 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), 104.

What the public likes is work (of any kind) a little loosely executed.... I know that good work sometimes hits; but, with my hand on my heart, I think it is by an accident. And I know also that good work must succeed at last; but that is not the doing of the public; they are only shamed into silence or affectation. I do not write for the public; I do write for money, a nobler deity; and most of all for myself, not perhaps any more noble, but both more intelligent and nearer home.

Let us tell each other sad stories of the bestiality of the beast whom we feed. What he likes is the newspaper; and to me the press is the mouth of a sewer, where lying is professed as from an university chair, and everything prurient, and ignoble, and essentially dull, finds its abode and pulpit. I do not like mankind; but men, and not all of these—and fewer women. As for respecting the race, and, above all, that fatuous rabble of burgesses called “the public,” God save me from such irreligion!—that way lies disgrace and dishonour. *There must be something wrong in me, or I would not be popular.* [L2, 281; our italics]

The contempt that Stevenson here expresses toward “the public” and his own popularity is similar to that expressed by Gissing in *New Grub Street*. Both believed that the commercial exploitation of a new, qualitatively inferior mass readership with “a low standard of life” was undermining serious literature. For both, an ideal of high culture was opposed to a social reality dominated by “journalism” or “the press” and by the transformation of art into a mere “trade.”

Stevenson’s ambivalence toward his own popular success implies that there must be “something wrong in” any story successful with “the public.” Obviously there is “something wrong in” *Jekyll and Hyde* and that is Hyde himself, whose physique and criminal propensities make him virtually a stereotype of “the populace,” if not of “that fatuous rabble of burgesses called ‘the public.’” Though not straight from “the mouth of a sewer,” Hyde belongs to the slums of “darkest London.” When not at home with or within Jekyll, he lives in the “blackguardly surroundings” of Soho (48¹), where Utterson travels with Inspector Newcomen as through “a district of some city in a nightmare”:

As the cab drew up before the address indicated, the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin palace, a low French eating-house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers and

1 [Page references to *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* refer to the text edited by Jenni Calder (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979).]

twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass.... [48]

The literature of Soho is even cheaper than its food. But this “dismal quarter” with its “muddy ways, and slatternly passengers” (48) is not illiterate; it is as appropriate a haunt for “penny numbers” as for Hyde, and also for other members of the “dangerous classes,” who fifty years earlier would probably not have been readers.

Though such biased class language does not occur in the story, the idea that there were “dangerous” or “criminal classes” was a powerful one from the mid-Victorian period forward.¹ Universal education and literacy were not eradicating crime, as some early reformers had hoped. In 1876, Cesare Lombroso had published his influential study of the hereditary nature of crime and “moral insanity,” arguing that much criminal activity could be explained in terms of physical and mental “atavism.” Lombroso also argued that, “contrary to general belief, the influence of education on crime is very slight.”² His chief work was not translated into English until 1911, but Lombroso’s basic ideas had gained currency by the 1880s through social scientists and evolutionary psychologists such as Stevenson’s friend James Sully (Block³ 463).

Hyde himself is, of course, an atavistic creature, whose “dwarfish ... ape-like” appearance reflects the stereotype of the Irish hooligan. As Perry Curtis describes the stereotype, “Paddy” was “childish, emotionally unstable, ignorant ... primitive ... dirty, vengeful, and violent.”⁴ He was also allegedly “ape-like” and often stunted in growth or “dwarfish.” Curtis quotes a letter by Charles Kingsley describing “white chimpanzees” in Ireland, and in 1845 James Anthony Froude found much of that country’s population “more like tribes of squalid apes than human beings” (Curtis 84, 85). The threat of Fenianism and the Irish Home rule controversy, which was to split the Liberal party

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- 1 Honoré Fregier may have been the first person to use the phrase *dangerous classes*; his *Des classes dangereuses de la population dans les grandes villes* appeared in 1840. The phrase was current in English by the 1850s, along with *criminal classes*, *predatory classes*, and some others. See Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 371–400.
 - 2 Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man* (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1972), 149.
 - 3 [Ed Block, Jr., “James Sully, Evolutionist Psychology, and Late Victorian Gothic Fiction,” *Victorian Studies* 25 (1982): 443–67.]
 - 4 L.P. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, Conn.: Bridgeport University Press, 1968), 53.

in 1886, form the political background of *The Dynamiter* (1884) and help to explain Hyde's stereotypic traits. Though originally belonging to Utterson, the "heavy cane" with which Hyde "clubs" Sir Danvers Carew might easily have been a shillelagh, and the brutal murder of an M.P. must have caused many readers to recall the 1882 Phoenix Park murders in Dublin. The theme of the increasingly dangerous "Irish Frankenstein," often employed by English caricaturists, has both Celtic and gothic overtones, which Stevenson's depiction of Hyde also mirrors[....]

Nevertheless, *Jekyll and Hyde* is totally lacking in explicit political themes. The allegorization prompted by Fanny apparently did not lead to any elaboration of its social content. Hyde is an emanation of Jekyll's "transcendental medicine" or of Stevenson's nightmare, rather than of either a social class system that spawned criminality or an imperial domination that had shackled Ireland for centuries. Whatever the "moral" of the story—and at first there was none—it has to do with good versus evil in the abstract, not with the politics or even the police of late-Victorian society. The novella's anachronistic style and ahistoricism help it to seem timeless and universal, while also obscuring the literary sleight of hand that sneaks Hyde into the heart of the respectable bourgeoisie. Jekyll's metamorphosis is a matter of certain unbelievable "powders," not of politics nor even of science. But the mass cultural format of the first edition promised topical reality enough to the "populace"—the same readers who would have responded to the newsboys whom Utterson hears "crying themselves hoarse along the footways: 'Special edition. Shocking murder of an M.P.'" (53).

Stevenson as popular author shares in the criminal "popularity" or populace-like nature of Hyde. "There must be something wrong in me, or I would not be popular." The statement is, in a sense, the formula of *Jekyll and Hyde* itself. There is "something wrong in" the story—that is, Hyde—and this accounts for its popularity. Further, the story was "wrong" not only because Hyde was "in" it but because the germ of it was still the "crawler" that perhaps did nothing more than pander to the low tastes of "that fatuous rabble ... the public," whereas Fanny told him it was "wrong"; it needed to be rendered morally acceptable, even though allegorization did not necessarily move it closer to the sort of masterpiece by which Stevenson longed to gain recognition. It was "wrong" also because it was immediately and immensely popular; more than anything else he had written, *Jekyll and Hyde* brought Stevenson fame and fortune. Hyde was thus both a chief cause of his creator's popular success and an ironic, albeit unconscious image of that popularity—the "ape-like," atavistic image of "the people."

Despite his degenerate nature, Hyde retains one of Jekyll's upper-class traits. Though his hands are smaller, more gnarled, yet stronger than Jekyll's, Hyde's handwriting is identical to Jekyll's; it must therefore be disguised by slanting it differently. "When, by sloping my own hand backwards, I had supplied my double with a signature," says Jekyll, "I thought I sat beyond the reach of fate" (87). One might say that this is the only education Hyde needs, because despite his "ape-like," "deformed" physique and personality, he is completely literate. When Jekyll transforms into Hyde while dozing on a bench in Regent's Park, Hyde's ability to write in Jekyll's hand is what rescues him from discovery and capture by the police. "Then I remembered that of my original character, one part remained to me: *I could write my own hand*; and once I had conceived that kindling spark, the way that I must follow became lighted up from end to end" (93; our italics). The passage strongly suggests that the *only* thing that does not change through Jekyll's metamorphosis is the ability to write in Jekyll's hand, though *what* gets written changes dramatically.

Hyde's slanted handwriting proves a poor disguise. Utterson shows the "murderer's autograph" to his head clerk, Guest, who compares it with Jekyll's handwriting and declares, "There's a rather singular resemblance; the two hands are in many points identical; only differently sloped" (55). Further, more often than not the disguise is dropped, as in the Regent's Park episode or in the privacy of Jekyll's laboratory. On these occasions, Hyde writes like Jekyll. And he also makes use of Jekyll's library. In Jekyll's quarters, Hyde apparently entertains himself by reading whatever is available. Given Jekyll's sober, upper-class tastes, however, such reading material is far removed from penny numbers or shilling shockers. "There were several books on a shelf; one lay beside the tea things open, and Utterson was amazed to find it a copy of a pious work for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem, annotated, *in his own hand*, with startling blasphemies" (71; our italics). [...]

[...] In his narration, Jekyll says, "I next drew up that will to which you [Utterson] so much objected" (86), but the "I" is ambiguous in this context. Because they share the same handwriting, it is impossible to know whether Jekyll or Hyde authored the will. Utterson cannot know, since he "had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it." Similarly, Utterson can't tell whether Jekyll and Hyde wrote the check for ninety pounds to recompense the trampled girl and her family, though no doubt Hyde was its author because he obtains it so quickly. Enfield thought it might prove to be "a forgery," but on the contrary "the cheque was genuine" (32). The ambiguous, perhaps double authorship of several pieces of writing within the text mirror its double nature as "story" and "allegory," shilling shocker and tale with a "conscience," at once criminal and morally improving.

Among the many recommendations by which Myers hoped to help Stevenson turn a near-masterpiece into the genuine article, one concerned the improbability of Hyde's retention of Jekyll's handwriting. "I think you miss a point for want of familiarity with recent psycho-physical discussions," Myers told Stevenson. "Handwriting in cases of double personality ... *is not* and *cannot be* the same in the two personalities. Hyde's writing might look like Jekyll's done *with the left hand*, or done when partly drunk, or ill: that is the kind of resemblance there might be. Your imagination can make a good point of this" (Maixner¹ 215). But through the motif of identical calligraphy, Stevenson makes a deeper, much more complex point about cultural authority. Though their values are several worlds or at least social classes apart, Jekyll and Hyde share the same ability to express those values, and they do so even in the same "hand" or with the same "signature." Though Jekyll, like all mad scientists, menaces society through his overcultivated, overambitious intellect, Hyde menaces society not just by his criminal violence but by his ability to write checks and letters, draw up wills, and pen blasphemies in books of theology. Further, though he does not write his confessions (he leaves that up to Jekyll), let alone a culturally blasphemous "shilling shocker," Hyde is nevertheless the hero or antihero of such a "shocker"—one that was, perhaps, purely "evil" until "allegorized." And this "shilling shocker," bearing "Satan's signature" (40) as its central image (Utterson reads that "signature" in Hyde's face), helped to establish Stevenson's literary celebrity and success story. As the Brownies (Stevenson claimed) were the authors of the originary nightmare, so the uncannily literate Edward Hyde was in an important way the author of the Stevenson romance.

When Utterson and Inspector Newcomen enter Hyde's Soho residence, they discover something quite different from its "blackguardly surroundings." The rooms Hyde uses are "furnished with luxury and good taste." They are evidently the rooms of an epicure, who takes pleasure in art. "A closet was filled with wine; the plate was of silver, the napery elegant; a good picture hung upon the walls, a gift (as Utterson supposed) from Henry Jekyll, who was much of a connoisseur; and the carpets were of many plies and agreeable in colour" (49). Perhaps Hyde retains more of Jekyll's traits than just his handwriting. Or is the evidence of epicureanism pure Hyde, whereas Jekyll, like Utterson, adheres to a routine of abstinence and "dry divinity"? Whatever the case, the Soho flat is not some Fagin's roost in the underworld slums but a setting implying sensual enjoyment, perhaps libertinism, of an apparently upper-class sort. Further, there is more evidence of

1 [Paul Maixner, ed., *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).]

Hyde's reading in the apartment—unless it is Jekyll's reading—or perhaps it is evidence of his/his writing. The rooms, says Utterson, appeared to have been “recently and hurriedly ransacked,” while on “the hearth there lay a pile of grey ashes, as though many papers had been burned” (49). [...]

Whatever the burned papers may represent within the context of the story, within the context of the Stevenson romance the associations between art and the furnishings of the Soho apartment and between Hyde's destruction of manuscripts and Stevenson's incineration of his unallegorized first draft point to the buried theme of cultural authority. If Hyde shares Jekyll's handwriting, he also shares Stevenson's. He is the shadowy, demonic double of the artist, bent on complete bohemian or artistic license and also on the desecration of art, for whom the ultimate “temptation” is to write or to live stories all “wrong”—“blasphemies,” “forgeries,” stories of and about pure evil, though perhaps “allegorized” to make them seem respectable—calculated only to thrill the ignorant masses into granting them a meretricious “popularity.” Such stories could be purchased as penny numbers in Soho, or from newsboys hawking papers on the streets, or from Longmans as shilling shockers, or perhaps even transmuted into sermons about the duality of human nature. Their heroes and readers alike might be Edward Hydes, and so might their authors, who would write and sign themselves with “Satan's signature.” “This was the shocking thing,” Jekyll declares, “that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices” (95). His distress echoes Stevenson's in regard to “the bestiality of the beast whom we feed. What he likes is the newspaper; and to me the press is the mouth of a sewer, where lying is professed as from a university chair” (L2, 281).

Hyde's writing produces lies or half-lies, forged checks that are genuine, and “blasphemies” in Jekyll's “own hand,” scrawled in revered texts. Within the larger context of the Stevenson romance, Hyde lurks in a shadowy borderland between a criminal literature of the slums—penny numbers, shilling shockers—and the moral allegory that Fanny urged her husband to write, while the authentic “masterpiece” that Stevenson dreamed of writing hovered outside his range like a mirage. What renders Hyde especially menacing in these cultural terms, however, has perhaps less to do with the Stevenson romance than with the politics of literacy. Hyde's ability to write in Jekyll's “hand” when all of Jekyll's other virtuous, upper-class attributes have vanished renders him dangerous in a more insidious way than his violence. [...]

(1988)