Universidad de Chile
Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades
Departamento de Literatura

Gothicising Late-Victorian London: The Deployment of the Modern Metropolis in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Arthur Machen's 'The Great God Pan' (1894)

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Alumnos/as
Ángel Carvajal Muñoz
Fernanda Flores Díaz
Carlos Muñoz Aros

Profesor Patrocinante Pablo San Martín Varela

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Carlos Muñoz Aros

Índice

Introduction

In the preface to the second edition of his novel *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1765), Horace Walpole put forward the formula for a 'new species of romance', where he attempted to blend the supernaturalism of old romances with depictions of characters who 'think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions' (Walpole 8). This gave rise to a literary tradition that, not up until the twentieth-century, would come to be known as the Gothic genre. Interestingly enough, Walpole just added the term 'Gothic' to the title of his novel because of its fictional setting, as this was located in Italy during the Middle Ages, which for Walpole's contemporaries 'was a long period of barbarity, superstition, and anarchy dimly stretching from the fifth-century AD' (Clery 21). Nevertheless, this setting would inform those of subsequent literary works that adhered to this tradition, as these were traditionally distanced from 'the world of their audience, set back in time and "away" in space' in order to make 'the stories more plausible [...] by the superstitiousness of their settings' (Spencer 200). By the end of the nineteenth-century, however, this traditional Gothic mode took a new shape, since a new and closer geography, that of modern London, emerged as one of the main settings for the development of both terrifying and marvellous stories. This is the topic which motivates the elaboration of the present research: the exploration of how this novel space is deployed in English-speaking Gothic narratives of the late-Victorian period. Thus, our analysis will focus on two seminal literary works of the Gothic of the *fin-de-siècle* which

have as their setting the city of London: Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and Arthur Machen's 'The Great God Pan' (1894). Through this, we intend to contribute with the discussions around the implications of the appearance of this 'Gothicised' modern urban space, as this seems to emphasise a more direct dialogue between the texts and all the historical processes taking place in the context of their contemporary audiences.

By 'modern metropolis', in this case, we refer to the context of the city of Late-Victorian London by the end of the nineteenth-century, which had become one of the world's most important cities in terms of its rapid geographical growth, urban development, and process of industrialisation. As the capital of the British Empire, this had unique advancements which made it be considered as 'modern', such as technological innovations, development of urban planning, communication, and the insertion of motorised transport and gas lighting (Andersson 3). However, the rapid increase of its population, which by 1881 'had soared to 4.5 million, and by 1911 to over 7 million' (Porter 205), emphasised the housing crisis for the poor, as well as the economic gap between the upper and lower classes. This class difference was illustrated in the geographical distinction between the East and West ends of the city, being the former the one inhabited by the poor, and the latter by the wealthy. In fact, the East-End was actually the object of profound stigmatisation, since 'those of the fashionable West-End regarded the East-End as a cesspit of crime, vice, drunkenness, and poverty,

populated by 'savages' who were only one step up the ladder from the beast' (Dryden 48). These middle-class perceptions on class will be actually key for analysing Machen and Stevenson's narratives, since they are constantly transacted in both of these literary works, and characters can be identified as city dwellers belonging to either of these contrasting spaces.

For carrying out this literary analysis, we will be adopting a new historicist methodology, which conceives 'literary texts as cultural products that are rooted in their time and place', and, therefore, tends to establish links between these and other cultural products and discourses from the historical context which is being studied (Parvini 239). In addition, within this historicist frame, it seems also important to explain the relationship between discourse, power, and subjectivity. French philosopher Michel Foucault conceives power not as 'an ensemble of mechanisms of negation, refusal, exclusion', but as the actual production of subjectivities: 'It is likely that it produces right down to individuals themselves. Individuality, individual identity are the products of power' (qtd. in Heyes 159). Therefore, one of the main instances of power is the generation of discourses typifying and delineating identities. For instance, Foucault points up how after the rise of the bourgeoisie there was a 'multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself [...] a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail' (18). Here, several pathological

typifications emerged, such as hysteria and homosexuality, mainly as a way of institutionalising those individuals which were labelled as such. The presence of late-Victorian discourses delineating identities, such as those about class, sexuality, or degeneration, are identified in the context of Machen and Stevenson's works, and even inform the construction of characters.

Concerning late nineteenth-century modern Gothic, Linda Dryden, for instance, states that by 'relocating the scene of horror to the metropolitan streets, the modern Gothic articulates a fear that civilization may not be an evolved form of being, but a superficial veneer beneath which lurks an essential, enduring animal self' (32). Furthermore, by pondering the effects of new scientific epistemologies appearing during the nineteenth-century, such as Darwinian science and Degeneration theory, Kelly Hurley (2004) points up how the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic is obsessed with 'the ruination of traditional constructs of human identity that accompanied the modelling of new ones at the turn of the century' (3). Elaborating on this same issue, Kathleen Spencer (1992) actually affirms that the Urban Gothic of the late-Victorian period attempted 'to reduce anxiety by stabilising certain key distinctions, which seemed, in the last decades of the nineteenth-century, to be eroding: between male and female, natural and unnatural, civilised and degenerate, human and non-human' (203). Though Dryden and Hurley's observations are appropriate, and, as we will see, are aspects which will be reflected in our analysis, a link with the deployment of the city in these texts, especially in Machen,

is minimum. Moreover, we disagree with Spencer's arguments, since we actually believe that these Gothic texts seem to do the opposite. In this manner, by situating their stories in the centre of a late nineteenth-century urban context, Machen and Stevenson's literary works account for a modernisation of the Gothic genre. Thus, both through displaced and supernaturalised forms, we believe the Gothicised depictions of modern London deployed in these narratives seem to transact, exacerbate, or sometimes even question the prevailing anxieties of metropolitan life, chiefly those derived from masculine, middle-class discourses which emphasised the multiple threats to the social hierarchies and integrity of British capitalist civilisation.

The structure of the following dissertation contains three chapters that will explain late-Victorian London as an urban setting for sources of fears and anxieties. The first chapter will focus on how late-Victorian London emerges as an estranged place in Stevenson and Machen's texts, where events of extraordinary nature challenge rational worldviews, and an atmosphere of mystery and danger is exacerbated by strangers and double lives. The second chapter will focus on how a Gothicised London is articulated from the perspectives of different narrative voices, which seem to exacerbate the fears and anxieties of middle-class men. Finally, the third chapter illustrates how Stevenson's Mr Hyde and Machen's Helen Vaughan are literary personifications that aggravate the concerns of the late-Victorian middle-classes over issues related to class and sexuality.

Chapter One: The Modern Metropolitan Gothic

Late-Victorian Gothic literature must be regarded as an important segment of the diverse network of cultural products which shaped the landscape of London in the British imagination of the *fin-de-siècle*. Even though this constituted a familiar and common space where a great part of its inhabitants performed their daily activities; in Machen and Stevenson's Gothic literary texts, the metropolis emerges as an estranged environment, where the feeling of mystery is exacerbated, and extraordinary phenomena interrupts everyday life. Thus, in the Gothic of the late nineteenth-century, the historically distanced or geographically remote settings frequently found in seminal English-speaking works of the genre such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) or Anne Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), where a mediaeval castle or the desolated ruins of an ancient abbey functioned as locations for the development of these stories, were to some extent replaced by that of the densely populated and labyrinthine city of London.

The Collision of Two Models of Reality

Stevenson and Machen depict fictional worlds where the familiar space of the modern metropolis suddenly becomes the stage for the unfolding of both terrifying and gripping events, which by their extraordinary nature challenge the rational worldviews of bourgeois modernity. When considering that London was representative of all the

scientific and technological advancements achieved by British capitalist civilisation, the presence of the city infuses Gothic literature of the *fin-de-siècle* with contemporary paradigms and worldviews. Kathleen Spencer (1987), for instance, states at this time in history 'the awareness of science and the power of the scientific method became relatively widespread in the culture' (92). Thus, in Gothic stories of this period, the reliance on scientific, rational thought as an instrument to apprehend reality is a very common feature among their characters, possibly a view which a great part of actual contemporary readers might have shared. However, those paradigms often undergo a crisis when these characters are faced with extraordinary events that dislocate their worldviews, and it is actually from this convergence between the rational and irrational, the plausible and marvellous, which the emotional effect produced by works like Machen and Stevenson's is both derived and intensified. Kelly Hurley (2002) points up this aspect, and establishes a link between the *fin-de-siècle* Gothic and the Fantastic genre as conceived by Tzvetan Todorov, where the texts depict 'the collision of two models of reality: the incursion of extranormal events, or seemingly extranormal events, into the everyday world' (204). Although previous Gothic works manifest this fantastic feature, as it is the case of Walpole's fictional experiment from which the Gothic genre was born, the presence of a modern urban setting also reduces the distance between readers and the fictional worlds, as those marvels are 'happening here, now, next door, in the ordinary daily world […] As the distance decreases, the sense of the fantastic increases' (Spencer 95). Though we agree with Spencer and Hurley's parallels between

the late-Victorian Gothic and the Fantastic genre, it seems equally important to note that although a contemporary setting increases a sense of familiarity on readers, these extranormal events are still sometimes connected with primitive forces that suddenly emerge in the midst of modernity. Hence, aspects of the traditional Gothic mode, whose semantic field encompasses the 'obsolete, old-fashioned, or outlandish' (Clery 21), are still somehow present in the Gothic works of this period.

In Machen's story, the convergence of these two models of reality is mainly reflected in the presence of an unconventional occult science, or 'transcendental medicine' as Dr Raymond calls it (Machen 9), which both transgresses and puts into question the conventional parameters of rational positivism. In fact, as Raymond himself expresses at the beginning, he had been called 'a quack, and charlatan and impostor' for pursuing those occult studies and experiments that gave birth to the terrifying Helen Vaughan (Machen 9). Even Mr Clarke, 'the gentleman chosen by Dr Raymond to witness the experiment of the god Pan' (Machen 15), shows himself dubious about Raymond's theories, as when he asks him whether these were not in reality just 'a phantasmagoria – a splendid vision, certainly, but a mere vision after all' (Machen 9). Nevertheless, although Clark questions the veracity of Raymond's occult experiments, he still manifests a profound interest for these extraordinary subjects, causing an internal conflict in which two opposite tendencies are confronted:

> [He] was a person in whose character caution and curiosity were oddly mingled; in his sober moments he thought of the unusual and the eccentric with undisguised aversion, and yet, deep in his heart, there was a wide-eyed inquisitiveness with respect to all the more recondite and esoteric elements in the nature of men (Machen 15).

As a well-educated, bourgeois man, Clarke's inclination towards the unusual and eccentric seems to be in deep tension with the social pressure to maintain an external façade as an 'advocate of the commonplace' (Machen 30), mainly as a way of preserving his social status and affluence. Therefore, the only consolation for Clarke are his 'old Japanese bureau' and the large manuscript volume entitled 'Memoirs to prove the Existence of the Devil' (Machen 16): exotic commodities composing the 'phantasmagoria' of the bourgeois 'interior', which, as Walter Benjamin affirms, the private individual 'needs to sustain his illusions' (38). Furthermore, the paradoxical effect attached to those supernatural forces underlying the material world, and symbolised under the figure of the god Pan, can be related to what Mark Fisher coins as *the weird*; an aesthetic category involving a 'fascination for the outside, for that which lies beyond standard perception, cognition and experience', as well as a deep sense of 'wrongness' that invalidates the categories we have to make sense of the world (8-15). For instance, Raymond describes how during the course of his occult studies, he saw before him 'the unutterable, the unthinkable gulf that yawns profound between two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit' (Machen 11). Thus, these metaphysical forces which are beyond human comprehension act as a source of both

fascination and fear for characters and readers alike, since the sole thing we know is that these are fatal, as 'no human eyes could look on such a vision with impunity', without wholly apprehending their true nature (Machen 53). In spite of this, it is not a coincidence that these timeless forces are then embodied in the enigmatic Helen Vaughan, a supernaturalised figure which penetrates into West London and, as we will see in the following chapters, transacts, and aggravates many of the concerns of late-Victorian bourgeois society.

Stevenson's novella also depicts this convergence and state of tension through the practices of an unconventional type of science which disarticulates the parameters of rational, scientific thought. In Dr Jekyll's full statement of the case, for example, he states how the direction of his scientific studies 'led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental' (Stevenson 52). Moreover, these scientific interests are also perceived as irrational and inappropriate from the perspectives of the other middle-class men in the story, as it is the case of Dr Lanyon, who says that Jekyll had become 'too fanciful for him' because of 'such unscientific balderdash' (Stevenson 12). However, though Lanyon explicitly declares his rejection towards Jekyll's scientific endeavours, it is still his 'own growing curiosity' the one that prompts him to witness the transformation of Hyde and Jekyll's body, an event whose striking impact makes his life be shaken 'to its roots' (Stevenson 50). Thus, Jekyll's studies and experiments also act as a source of fear and attraction because of the way they destabilise rational perceptions about human

nature, as they reveal 'the thorough and primitive duality of man'; that is, how humans 'will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens' (Stevenson 53). Nevertheless, while Machen's story explores the supernatural through a cosmic or metaphysical terror with elements of the weird, Stevenson seems to locate this fear in the human psyche itself. Stephen Arata (2010), for instance, states that Stevenson's Gothic works are 'primarily psychological dramas rather than explorations of the supernatural or the paranormal', where they 'highlight the sense of uncanniness and self-alienation that result naturally, as it were, from the operations of our psyches' (55). Arata's considerations seem highly appropriate, especially if we also consider how this fixation on exploring the conundrums of the human psyche could also account for a middle-class unrest over the risks this situation could pose for the integrity of society. Jekyll is indeed a bourgeois man who through a profound self-scrutiny is able to recognise and elaborate a set of theories and experiments in order to separate those subversive desires which, as he says, 'I found hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high' (Stevenson 52). As we will elaborate further on this research, Hyde, thus, works as a displaced representation embodying all those subversive and primitive instincts that though posed a threat to civilisation, were not located outside of it, but actually within.

A City of Double Lives

The city also emerges in these Gothic texts as a hardly decipherable space of deceiving dualities, as it seemed that due to its rapid demographic growth everyone has become a stranger, whose seemingly customary lives might be just a mask covering the worst vices and most nefarious acts. For example, Spencer (1987) states that 'living in such an unimaginably large city as London had become means that by definition one lives surrounded by strangers, by people who do not know or care about you and whose private lives are mysteries'. Thus, urban Gothic texts constantly reinforce this message: 'surface appearances cannot be trusted' (92-95). Furthermore, Linda Dryden also emphasises how this aspect is projected in the labyrinthine landscape of London, as this constituted 'a physical manifestation of the double life that many metropolitan citizens were perceived to be leading, and its dark recesses and narrow passageways were suggestive of lurking horrors' (43). Dryden and Spencer considerations seem quite appropriate if we apply them to the analysis of Machen and Stevenson's narratives, where characters have double, even multiple, lives in order to conceal their terrible, shameful acts from the gaze of society. In this manner, these literary texts exacerbate an image of the British metropolis as an obscure place where many dangers could be threatening the safety and integrity of the city dwellers in unexpected places, especially that of middle-class men, which seem to be the main targets of urban monsters such as Mr Hyde and Helen Vaughan.

Helen, for instance, adopts several identities (Miss Raymond, Mrs. Herbert, Mrs Beaumont) in order to blend in and penetrate the wealthy circles of West London. Stephan Karschay, for instance, affirms that '[the] villainess confounds the few who actually get a glimpse of her by her extraordinary beauty and an ambivalent and elusive sense of Otherness' (98-9). Although Helen's appearance is indeed one of paradoxical beauty, which seems to be simultaneously seductive and terrifying, as when Austin mentions that everyone who saw Mrs Herbert at the police court after the Paul Street incident 'said she was the most beautiful woman and the most repulsive they had ever set eyes on' (Machen 26); she can actually blend in with the bourgeoisie because she acts as a kind of *con artist*, who takes on fake identities in order to deceive people. She actually adopts that of an upper-class woman, as when she comes back from South America as Mrs Beaumont, 'a very wealthy woman' whose house had become 'one of the pleasantest of the season', and that 'some of the best people have taken her up' (Machen 34). Subsequently, when Villiers goes to Queer Street and it is discovered that Mrs Beaumont was also 'Mrs Herbert of Paul Street, [and] Helen Vaughan of earlier adventures', Austin feels astonished, since he had seen this woman 'in the ordinary adventure of London society, talking and laughing, and sipping chocolate in a commonplace drawing room, with commonplace people' (Machen 44). Therefore, Machen's fatal villainess is a personification of London's obscure dualities, as she moves from one end of the city to the other, masking her dreadful acts behind a façade

of ordinary life, and, thus, reinforcing the warning that surface appearances cannot be trusted.

Stevenson's Dr Jekyll also stands for this duality of metropolitan life, as he explicitly states it in his narration: 'Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life' (Stevenson 52). We can see how Jekyll's double life is a result of a social pressure, as he had to live according to middle-class values in order to preserve his status among London society, something which those concealed pleasures he hid 'with an almost morbid sense of shame' evidently made impossible (Stevenson 52). In contrast to Machen's Helen Vaughan, whose double (or multiple) life is apparently just a strategy for penetrating into the wealthy West-End, Jekyll's duality is actually a literary form that stands not only for the contradictions of the human psyche, as we already discussed, but it also transacts the contradictions at the core of London's bourgeois late-Victorian society. Thus, while Machen's text exacerbates the anxieties projected on the dangers posed by external forces or agents, Stevenson questions that fear fixed on the outside by showing the fearful contradictions inside the civilised metropolis, which produce monsters such as Hyde.

Chapter Two: Narrative Voices and the Imagined London

An analysis of what Gerard Genette calls the 'narrative instance', which comprises the interaction of the multiple voices participating in the enunciation or production of narrative discourses, seems relevant for exploring how the Gothicised metropolis is projected in the structural features of Machen and Stevenson's narratives as well. Genette affirms that, in fiction, the narrative instance is never reduced to the writing process, since the narrator is also a fictional role, even when authors themselves decide to assume it (271). Thus, in order to analyse this narrative instance, Genette suggests an examination of the complex network of relationships among the different narrative acts, characters, and spatiotemporal conditions which determine the narration of a literary work (272). As we will argue in this chapter, the Gothicised London deployed in Stevenson and Machen's literary works is mainly the one articulated from the assemblage of multiple narrative voices delineating a hazardous and mysterious image of it. These narrators are both inside and outside these stories ('intradiegetic' and 'extradiegetic' levels), and are conditioned by the context of a fictional, but still historically informed, late-Victorian London. Hence, by adding this structural analysis to the historicist study of these literary texts, we will be able to show how the portrayals of London deployed in the narrations also transact and sometimes exacerbate the anxieties of the fin-de-siècle urban context, especially those of the masculine, middle-class populations.

The Middle-Class Urban Spectator

Narratives of urban exploration by the *fin-de-siècle* usually portrayed an imagined late-Victorian London populated by unexpected dangers and mysteries. These were not only found in fiction, but also in sensationalist newspaper exposés such as William Thompson Stead's 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' (1885), or surveys of London poverty like Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1889). Here, the chief urban spectator devising these narratives was the male bourgeois stroller or –in Charles Baudelaire's words– *flâneur*, who immersed himself into the swelling crowds of the metropolis with a 'sense of ownership', while taking in 'the sights and atmosphere of the city' (Dryden 57). Nevertheless, as Judith Walkowitz points out, whereas in the early-Victorian period these urban spectators 'had experienced the streets of London as a playground for the upper classes', like Pierce Egan's characters; 'engaged urban investigators of the mid- and late-Victorian era roamed the city with a more earnest (if still voyeuristic) intent to explain and resolve social problems', as it was the case of Stead's exposé denouncing sex work and child abuse, and Booth's research on the lives of London's working classes (Walkowitz 18). However, although 'capable through reason, and its "science" of establishing a reliable and universal knowledge of "man" and his world', these male late-Victorian urban spectators were also prone to indulge in fanciful thoughts, as they sometimes 'transformed the city into a landscape of strangers and secrets' (Walkowitz 16). Therefore, these narratives of urban exploration did not necessarily offer an objective,

impartial account of what was actually happening in London by the end of the nineteenth-century. Instead, since these emanated from a specific middle-class, masculine subjectivity endowed with its own values, they usually conveyed biassed views concerning the issues they addressed, most of the time exaggerating facts and infusing them with elements to elicit fanciful thoughts and mystery, akin to those produced by Gothic fiction. Machen and Stevenson's narrators are informed by the figure of this middle-class urban spectator from the *fin-de-siècle*, since they seem to Gothicise the landscape of London not exclusively as a mode of emphasising the atmosphere of danger and gripping suspense, but also of projecting and fanning the fears over the dangers threatening the integrity and safety of the middle-classes.

Villiers' narrations within Machen's story account for his 'flânerie' or tendency to stroll the city for pleasure and personal interest. As a matter of fact, he is described by the main extradiegetic narrator as a 'practised explorer of such obscure mazes and byways of London life', searching with curiosity for 'those mysterious incidents and persons with which the streets of London teem in every quarter and at every hour' (Machen 21). Moreover, in his strolls, Villiers also tends to Gothicise London's landscape by projecting on it the feelings elicited by those primal, fatal forces that have invaded the West-End in the form of Helen Vaughan: the responsible of the fall and death of many wealthy men. For instance, when Villiers had already got engrossed in the mystery of Helen, determined to investigate, and retrace all her steps to find the truth, he

narrates to Austin how, during the night of Mr Sidney Crashaw's suicide, he had seen this man by chance leaving Mrs Beaumont's house:

> The fancy took me to walk home instead of taking a hansom [...] I turned to Ashley Street, which, you know, is on my way. It was quieter than ever there, and the lamps were fewer, altogether it looked as dark and gloomy as a forest in winter [...] I do not know when he died; I suppose in an hour, or perhaps two, but when I passed down Ashley Street and heard the closing door, that man no longer belonged to this world; it was a devil's face that I looked upon (Machen 42-3).

Villiers hyperbolizes his account of this unexpected encounter by setting an atmosphere of suspense and horror, as when he conveys the baffling impact of Crashaw's ghastly countenance, emphasising his state of complete doom, surely a consequence of beholding Helen's true form. This terrifying atmosphere is also emphasised when he compares Ashley Street with a dark and gloomy forest in winter, mainly as a way of exacerbating the dangerous environment of the metropolis, as well as a way of conveying the remoteness and outlandish nature of those primal forces embodied by Helen, whose connection with that wild nature is a key element of her character, as when it is said that as a child 'her rambles in the forest' were 'her amusement' (Machen 17).

Stevenson's extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrators also delineate a Gothicised landscape of the metropolis, which emerges mainly from the perspectives of the middle-class men in the story and their strolls through London. For instance, Mr Utterson is said

to meet every Sunday with his distant kinsman Richard Enfield to have a walk: 'the two men put the greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted' (Stevenson 5-6). Interestingly enough, it is from this important customary activity that the strange story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde starts to unfold: as they pass by 'a certain sinister block of building', which 'bore in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence', Enfield evokes that 'very odd story' which introduces the character of Hyde (Stevenson 6). Analogous to Villiers' unexpected encounter with Crashaw, Enfield happened to witness by mere chance how Hyde violently trampled over a little girl, as he 'was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning', and 'got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman' (Stevenson 6-7). However, while Machen's narrators depict a terrifying urban landscape infused with images evoking those strange and supernatural forces of an external wilderness, Stevenson's narration portrays a decayed city, where the sense of insecurity seems to be that posed by criminality and other signs of degeneration. Therefore, this indicates how Stevenson's text exacerbates the fears over the dangers emerging from within civilisation, the monsters produced by the very metropolis; whereas Machen's puts the focus on an external threat that invades and contaminates the upper neighbourhoods of London.

New Journalism and Narratives of Danger

The prominent role that the press had in articulating narratives of danger during the late-Victorian period also seems to inform the deployment of a Gothicised London in Machen and Stevenson's texts. Cristopher Casey points up how all the scientific and technological advancements achieved by the end of the nineteenth-century made possible the expansion of the press, and gave rise to what was known as 'New Journalism', which posed a 'shift away from primarily parliamentary or political news in daily and weekly periodicals to more popular and often sensational content', such as the constant reporting of crimes (372-3). This sensationalist press usually entailed mass hysteria among Londoners, since they tended to believe that crime rates increased based on the importance given to them by newspapers, as it happened with Jack the Ripper and the Whitechapel murders in the East-End. Though the real identity of this serial killer was never discovered, the compelling stories around his persona were many, and some of them transacted many of the concerns of the period. As Walkowitz affirms, 'these perceptions shaped the Ripper murders into a story of class conflict and exploitation and into a cautionary tale for women, a warning that the city was a dangerous place when they transgressed the narrow boundary of home and hearth to enter public space' (Walkowitz 3). For instance, the *Star* newspaper, in September of 1888, published a report that 'blamed "women of evil life" for bringing the murders on themselves, though it warned elsewhere that "no woman is safe while this ghoul's abroad"' (qtd. in Walkowitz 218). Hence, this type of press not only helped to increase mass hysteria, but

also to convey through this kind of narratives the impression that the Ripper's crimes were a punishment for the sexual behaviour of his victims. Thus, reinforcing, in this case, the stigma impressed on certain city dwellers that subverted bourgeois morals and sexual ethics. The discourse of this sensationalist New Journalism can be identified in both Stevenson and Machen's narrations, where the news reports on the alarming events taking place in London not only contribute with the deployment of a Gothicised London populated by dangers, but with the aggravation of the anxieties of the metropolitan context.

'The Carew Murder Case' chapter, in Stevenson's novella, mirrors these sensationalist renderings of crimes, where the extradiegetic narrator reporting the statement of a female witness fans an imperial anxiety over the threat posed by savage criminals, who seem to target members of London's civilised middle-classes. Dryden, for instance, states that Hyde 'comes to represent more than the metropolitan criminal mentality and sexual predator; his deformed physical presence comes to stand for the imagined threats to European civilization' (84). Dryden's considerations seem partially appropriate, since we believe that it is less Hyde's deformed physicality than the manner his behaviour is perceived what stands for this imperial anxiety. The witness presented in the report of Sir Danvers Carew's murder, an event 'rendered all the more notable by the high position of the victim' (Stevenson 20), is a maid servant whose reported testimony portrays two drastically opposite pictures of the victim and the victimiser.

While the maid describes Carew as being physically 'beautiful', and having a face that 'seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition', Hyde is characterised as a 'madman', with his 'ill-contained impatience' and 'ape-like fury' (Stevenson 20). Hyde's description, rather than focusing on his physical traits, except from the fact that he is a 'small gentleman' (Stevenson 20), fixes mainly on his behaviour, which, in contrast to Carew's, is deemed as utterly uncivilised, as we can appreciate in the adjectives that are used. Thus, the maid's reported account exacerbates this imperial anxiety over an imagined London that was becoming populated by criminals like Hyde, who posed a threat for highly-deemed people like Carew, an upper-class individual representative of a European nation which identifies with that old-world civilisation.

The passage of the suicides in 'The Great God Pan' also incorporates the narrations of the press for the deployment of a Gothicised London. However, the amount of information concerning this series of male suicides occurring in the West-End is almost inexistent, as opposed to what happens in Stevenson's work, where Hyde is recognised as the murderer of Carew. When the suicide of Lord Argentine is reported, the details are little and the reasons for him to commit suicide are unaccountable, as 'no motive can be assigned for the act' (Machen 37). After four more gentlemen end up dying in the same circumstances, the situation starts causing alarm among Londoners, 'for not even the mere ferocity which did duty as an explanation of the crimes at East-

End [Whitechapel], could be of service in the West' (Machen 38). The only reasonable explanation that the press attributes is the spread of an epidemic of 'acute suicidal mania', which causes collective hysteria among Londoners, especially among the upper-classes, as it seemed that 'there was a horror in the air, and men looked at one another's faces when they met, each wondering whether the other was to be the victim of a fifth nameless tragedy' (Machen 38). Interestingly enough, while Stevenson's narration depicts a violent but still ordinary crime, Machen's conveys a London besieged by alarming deaths without any rational explanation. This could actually be attributed to how Helen and the forces of the god Pan act as sources of a fear linked to the weird, since they are out of the reach of human comprehension and are actually fatal. Concerning this epidemic of suicides provoked by Helen, Gabriel Lovatt states that this is actually involves a transmission of 'an esoteric and potentially fatal knowledge passed from body to body' (Lovatt 28). Lovatt's argument seems really appropriate, and we could even say that the notion of this contagious fatal knowledge, which obliterates the life of the one who comes to possess it, informs the Gothicised London deployed not only by the narrations of the press, but also throughout the entire narrative, which only offers us a glimpse of the atrocities committed by Helen Vaughan, without letting us peer into that abyss where the forces of Pan dwell.

Chapter Three: Gothicised Entities in the Urban Space

Kelly Hurley (2004) characterises the Gothic literary genre as a highly productive and speculative artistic form, 'whose cultural work is the invention of new representational strategies by which to imagine human (or not-so-human) realities' (6). Therefore, by analysing how writers like Machen and Stevenson imagined in their stories a variety of dangerous Gothicised entities, we could also shed light on how human identities, in all their multifaceted complexities, were thought and problematised during the late-Victorian period. In this chapter, we will observe how both Stevenson's Mr Hyde and Machen's Helen Vaughan are personifications that manage different sources of concern for late-Victorian society, primarily those for the middle-classes over issues such as class and sexuality. Thus, these characters act as displaced or supernaturalised forms that not only exacerbate fears over class contamination or transgressive sexual behaviour, but sometimes they also question those representations which the middle-classes project on that threatening, subversive Other, as it is the case of Stevenson's Hyde.

Class and Degeneration

Theories of degeneration played a crucial role in the shaping of discourses and perceptions about class in the context of late-Victorian London, especially with regard to the feeling of alarm around the issue of casual poverty and its contagious degenerative

effects. Hurley states that the nineteenth-century epistemological innovations posed by Darwinian science, which offered a non-telic narrative of human evolution 'governed by natural processes that worked in no particular direction and towards no particular end', provoked the emergence of degeneration discourses describing the regressive and 'cumulative effects of social contamination, which could launch a nation into a downward spiral into barbarity and chaos' (10). For instance, as the housing crisis increased by the 1880s, many city dwellers were now being pushed to live in the same spaces inhabited by the 'casual poor' or 'residuum', who were mostly beggars, vagrants, and 'clever' paupers, generally pictured as coarse, brutish, drunken, and immoral: 'through years of neglect and complacency they had become an ominous threat to civilisation' (Jones 349-50). This posed a danger, especially from the point of view of the dominant middle-classes, as now more people were being exposed to an urban environment whose contaminating influence would eventually prompt the degeneration of an entire nation. In a report of the Mansion House Committee organised to address the perceived atmosphere of general distress in London during 1885, the residuum was seen as the main cause of the situation: 'This class is a dead weight on the labour market, and interferes with the opportunities of the better classes of more willing and worthy labourers, upon whom moreover, its contagious influence has a wide and degrading effect' (qtd. in Jones 354). Here, we can discern this sense of fear and anxiety among late Victorian citizens over the proliferation of these casual poor and their degenerate habits, which were deemed both as a regression in the evolutionary ladder

and a threat to the civilised capitalist *ethos*. Furthermore, as London evidently became progressively vaster and overpopulated, these contagious degenerate modes of life were not exclusively situated in the East-End slums, but could now also penetrate into other neighbourhoods and influence the citizens belonging to the social classes above.

Stevenson's Hyde could be read as a literary personification which, at first, seems to exacerbate middle-class anxieties over the degenerative effects of casual poverty. When Enfield and Utterson comment on the story of the door and discover a connection between the respected Dr Henry Jekyll and the loathsome Mr Hyde, both men are utterly disturbed by the possibility that these two opposing characters could hold any kind of relationship: 'Yes, it's a bad story. For my man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with, a really damnable man; and the person that drew the cheque is the very pink of the proprieties' (Stevenson 8). Hence, the only explanation these two bourgeois men can attribute to this unusual bond is that Jekyll was probably being blackmailed by Hyde: 'an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth' (Stevenson 8). The presumption that Hyde is negatively influencing Jekyll through criminal activity reveals the social prejudices and discourses fuelling this upper-class fear of social contamination and degeneration. Utterson is actually so disturbed by these two men's relationship that, in his dreams, he imagines Jekyll sleeping in 'a room in a rich house', and suddenly 'there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given' (Stevenson 13). This haunting anxiety derives from this class

awareness and fear about the contaminating effects of casual poverty, since Hyde is thought to be a criminal poor who is contaminating the wealthy West-End by coercing one of his inhabitants to take away economic power, and perhaps even political power. Furthermore, when Utterson finally meets Hyde, allusions to class and degeneration become more explicit, since he gives the lawyer an 'impression of deformity without any nameable malformation', provoking unexplained feelings of 'disgust, loathing, and fear', which even lead Utterson to question his humanity: 'God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? (Stevenson 15-6). Since Hyde's physical appearance is not outwardly monstrous as such, this abstract sense of deformity that Utterson underscores is one of character or personality, a view which could be to some extent prompted by certain contemporary discourses that link Hyde's behaviour to a lower social class or state of being. Furthermore, what is also interesting is the use of the adjective *troglodytic*, a word that during the late Victorian period acquired other figurative uses that went beyond its original meaning alluding to prehistoric tribes. Now, this adjective was also used to refer to a 'dweller in a hovel or slum; a person of a degraded type like the prehistoric or savage cave-dwellers', as in some texts by social scientist Robert Spencer, a major influence on Stevenson (Luckhurst 186). Thus, we can appreciate how Hyde's characterisation is infused with an aggravated sense of danger that is projected on him by the middle-class men in the story, as well as filled with discourses that establish a connection between degeneration and individuals belonging to a lower social strata within the city, probably located in the stigmatised East-End.

Machen's Helen Vaughan is a character which also fans the middle-class fear of contamination posed by the lower classes, since she could be identified as a poor rural immigrant who manages to invade the city and take advantage of the men inhabiting the upper circles of West London. As the daughter of Mary, a destitute woman, she can be said to come from a lower-class background. Indeed, Mary's state of economic destitution is what authorises Raymond to perform the experiment of the god Pan on her: 'I rescued her from the gutter, and from almost certain starvation, when she was a child; I think her life is mine, to use as I see fit' (Machen 12). This denotes an economic relationship of power where Mary is practically Raymond's property, since her financial disadvantage works as a justification for the possession of her body for scientific experimentation. However, when Helen is born and becomes an adult, she is able to subvert this dynamic of power, as she becomes a kind of *femme fatale* who moves to London and preys on the wealthy men there, prompting their complete descent into misery and disgrace. For instance, Charles Herbert, one of Helen's victims, tells his friend Villiers how after marrying her she 'corrupted' his 'soul' and eradicated his savings, leaving him 'a ruined man, in body and soul' (Machen 22-3). This means that Helen not only led Herbert to a state of economic destitution, but also to one of utter moral degradation; thus, suggesting the contaminating and degenerative influence of a class outsider like Helen. This middle-class fear of social contamination is actually confirmed and reinforced when Villiers discovers that Helen used to live in a

disreputable place when she arrived in London, which he refers to as 'Queer Street' (Machen 44). In fact, this was a slang expression referring to 'a state of financial embarrassment', and here Villiers apparently uses it, by extension, to refer to 'a particular seedy locale and its underworldly denizens', most likely located in the East-End (Worth 356). Therefore, Machen's heinous Helen Vaughan is a character who aggravates this middle-class fear over the contaminating and degenerative influence posed by the infamous lower-classes, especially the one projected in foreign immigrants coming from outside London.

As we already mentioned, though Stevenson's Hyde at first seems to aggravate the upper-class anxieties over social contamination, when it is revealed that Hyde is in fact Jekyll's double, all the discourses and conceptions of class and degeneration that had been projected on him are put into question. Hyde does not come from a lower social class located outside the wealthy West-End, just as the middle-class male citizens in the story probably assumed it was. He actually emerges from within their same social background, as he is the embodiment of that 'impatient gaiety of disposition' contradicting Jekyll's bourgeois values (Stevenson 52). Thus, the fact that all those degenerate features are actually those of a respected bourgeois man as Jekyll demonstrates how all those middle-class discourses about social contamination are not in reality stable and easily discernible. Stephen Arata (1995), for instance, states that though Stevenson's Hyde 'embodies a bourgeois readership's worst fears', what makes

this literary work so compelling is how 'it turns class discourses of atavism and criminality back on the bourgeoisie itself' (235-6). Arata's reading is actually quite accurate because Hyde's image, throughout the entire novella, is almost completely articulated from the perspectives of middle-class male citizens, who constantly apply discourses of class and degeneration to judge his behaviour and actions. In Dr Lanyon's narrative, for instance, the man states that Hyde's appearance bore 'the old, subjective disturbance caused by his neighbourhood' (Stevenson 48), probably referring to the dismal quarter in Soho where Hyde was supposed to live. However, when Lanyon discovers the truth about Hyde's identity, this assumption is undermined because he actually proceeds from his very same neighbourhood and social strata. Therefore, while Helen, as a supernaturalised representation, fans the middle-class anxieties over a social contamination posed by a foreign threat, Hyde at the end turns out to be a displaced representation of decadent bourgeoisie, as those degenerate behaviours are actually inside them; thus, questioning those anxieties that are often projected on an external Otherness.

Transgressive Female Sexuality

During the nineteenth-century, both extramarital and non-reproductive female sexuality became a medical, political, and cultural issue in London, prompting a series of reforms in order to regulate practices such as those related to sex work. The

Contagious Disease Acts, dating from the 1960s until the 1980s, was a legislation introduced to control the spread of venereal diseases among men in garrison towns and ports, and established that 'women could be apprehended in public purely on suspicion of being unregistered or diseased prostitutes' (Howell 377). However, according to Judith Walkowitz (1980), 'the practical medical goals that underlay the C.D. Acts were in fact fused with, and at the same time undermined by, a set of moral and ideological assumptions' (3). Since medical examination was only imposed on sex workers and not on their clients, it was evident that the implementation of these acts reinforced the double standard morality of late-Victorian sexual ethics. While the utility of sex work for satisfying male urges was justified, for male 'sexual drive was natural and not to be denied', women were penalised for engaging in the same activities, since it was believed that they had no 'innate enjoyment of sex', or that such sexual drives were 'confined to the unrespectable class of female prostitutes' (Howell 376). For example, *The Lancet* (1888), a nineteenth century medical journal, regarded sex workers on the streets and the keeping of brothels as the 'worst features of the social evil', since it was believed that they were the main cause for the spreading of venereal diseases (1446). This overall concern actually accounts for the social stigma imprinted on any form of female sexuality that transgressed the boundaries of the domestic space, as these had to be controlled and disciplined by the state. Thus, for the bourgeoisie, this 'social underworld' was a source of fear and anxiety, since individuals like sex workers were

pictured as the 'conduit of infection to respectable society', and a threat to middle-class values and worldviews (Walkowitz 4).

Mark De Cicco affirms that as a child of the occult, Helen 'becomes a queer force of non-normative sexuality' that 'undermines the normative structure of late-Victorian society' (16). De Cicco's considerations seems really accurate, and we could even say that Helen not only represents this force of non-normative sexuality, but actually works as supernaturalised form which exacerbates and allays with the general middle-class unrest over transgressive expressions of sexuality, as her character is charged of sexual undertones suggesting practices that are perceived as immoral and dangerous by Machen's fictional late-Victorian society. At first, her multiple associations with several upper-class men seem to indicate a level of promiscuity, like when Austin says how Mrs Beaumont invited 'several men' to his house for those night revels which were 'uncommonly jovial' (Machen 34). In addition, her portrayal as Pan's priestess, a deity usually associated with 'a considerable sexual energy' (Grimal 325), is also linked to symbols pointing up the presence of a dangerous, even evil sexuality. For instance, when Villiers sees at Austin's house the drawings of the Bacchic orgies involved in the pagan rites of 'Walpurgis Night' depicted by Meyrick, there appeared 'the figures of Fauns and Satyrs and Ægipans danced before his eyes […] a world before which the human soul seemed to shrink back and shudder' (Machen 38). Thus, Helen's close association with these images reinforce the idea that she is the incarnation of a

demonic and fatal sexual force preying on the middle-class men who had fallen into her trap. This is actually confirmed when Villiers, assuming that Mrs Beaumont's 'record was not of the cleanest', and that 'at some previous time she must have moved in circles not quite refined as her present ones', goes to Queer Street and speaks to a woman described as 'no great Puritan', probably indicating that she was a sex worker (Machen 44-5). Furthermore, after this visit to this disreputable neighbourhood, he also confirms that Meyrick's 'designs were not drawn from imagination', emphasising the reality of Helen's atrocious behaviour (Machen 45). Thus, we can see how Helen's character is constructed from the accumulation of images that aggravate the fear over a transgressive female sexuality, going even further through the portrayal of a woman whose behaviour borders on the diabolical and profane.

Conclusion

Arthur Machen and Robert Louis Stevenson's late-Victorian narratives thus account for a modernisation of the Gothic traditional mode, which, by changing the sceneries commonly found in seminal texts of the genre, emphasise the deployment of a London of marvels and unexpected dangers. There, the practices of unconventional types of science challenging rational worldviews end up unleashing monsters like Hyde and Helen, who manage to infiltrate into the city and prey on wealthy men by having double lives. Moreover, the narrative voices also contribute to the deployment of a Gothicised city, where the gaze of middle-class strollers and the sensationalist reports of the press delineate different atmospheres and landscapes of London. While Machen's narrators underscore the image of a London invaded by supernatural forces which elicit feelings associated with the weird, Stevenson's narrative voices present a decayed city besieged by savage criminals. Finally, Machen and Stevenson's Gothicised characters are personifications which transact discourses related to an upper-class fear of social contamination, and transgressive forms of female sexuality. On one hand, Helen is portrayed as foreign outsider with a questionable reputation, who targets middle-class men in order to take advantage of them, as well as being the embodiment of supernatural forces associated with an evil and profane sexuality. On the other hand, Hyde appears as a figure in which the bourgeois men in the story project different discourses and prejudices about the lower classes; however, when it is discovered that he is actually Jekyll's double, all those discourses projected on the Other are undermined. Therefore,

all these aspects demonstrate the way these literary works engage in a dialogue with the anxieties of the Late-Victorian middle-classes, especially those of men, by transacting, exacerbating, or even questioning them.

Although we believe our dissertation had strong arguments and ideas in general, the restricted extension of this research prevented us from providing a more extensive and enriched dialogue between primary sources, and other discourses and cultural products of the late-Victorian period. Moreover, an idea that we wanted to develop, but we were not able to do so, was the one around the presence of this 'decayed bourgeoisie' in Stevenson's literary work, which could be linked to the notion of late-Victorian Decadence. Finally, as a way of projecting this dissertation for the elaboration of future research, it would be interesting to explore the reason why a Welsh and, even more so, a Scottish author decided to locate their stories of terror at the heart of the British Empire. During the course of our research seminar, the majority of the stories we read were set outside England: Austria, in the case of Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla'; Italy, in *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole; or the Middle-East, in William Beckford's *Vathek*. In these, the focus is put outside the British Empire, and these nations are the place of tyrants and many atrocities. However, Stevenson and Machen decide to set the gaze on London, which now has become the epicentre of many horrors.

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