

**The Man Alone in British Colonial and Scientific Romance**

**1886-1904**

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My signature certifies that this thesis represents my own original work, the result of my own original research, that I have clearly cited all sources, and that the work contained within has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

Date:

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	4
Abstract	5
<b>1. Introduction: The Man Alone</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. “One of Us”</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Lord Jim: Man Overboard	21
2.2 Kim: Little Friend of all the World	51
<b>3. The Good Doctor?</b>	<b>78</b>
3.1 Nunez: The One Eyed Man	97
3.2 Doctor Moreau: The ‘New Man’ Alone	104
3.3 Doctor Jekyll: Kosmonaut of the Appalling	118
<b>4. Conclusion</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>5. Works Cited</b>	<b>145</b>

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In memory of Joan Gray 1919-2007.

## Abstract

This thesis uses some of the key texts of the ‘romance revival’ of the late nineteenth century to develop a theory of the Man Alone, and to explain its significance in both literary and cultural terms. A historicist approach is used to counter a tendency amongst critics to overlook some of the more commercially successful texts of the period in favour of their less ‘popular’ but more ostensibly ‘artistic’ *fin-de-siecle* or early modernist contemporaries.

The study centred on an analysis of novels by four of the most influential authors of the period – Conrad, Kipling, Stevenson and Wells – as well as a selection of their essays and short stories. This was accompanied by a period of archival research studying the original publication context of the source material, and also contemporary press coverage of some of the issues raised.

It was discovered that the Man Alone fulfilled two functions in romance fiction, notably in examining the destabilisation of traditional assertions of identity that resulted from Britain’s imperial experiences, and also in dramatising the shift from theology to science as the authorising discourse of British society that happened in the wake of the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*.

The Man Alone can thus be argued to be critical to the popular interpretation of the major political and philosophical shifts of late nineteenth century society. The romance revival itself, therefore, should be read as having played a formative role in the emergence of a Modernist literary culture, with Stevenson, Kipling and Wells playing significant roles alongside Conrad in this process.

## 1. Introduction: The Man Alone

Four months after its first publication in April 1719, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was on its fourth edition, having sold over 80,000 copies and caused a publishing sensation. The book was the first popular romance of the Man Alone in the life of the newly formed Kingdom of Great Britain; shipwrecked and seemingly destitute, yet blessed with a self-sufficiency that enabled him to survive and triumph.<sup>1</sup> By 1912 James Joyce was able to identify Crusoe as “the true prototype of the British colonist,” arguing that:

The whole Anglo-Saxon spirit is in Crusoe: the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical, well-balanced religiousness, the calculating taciturnity. (356-7)

This conception of Crusoe serves as a useful opening definition for the figure of the Man Alone which this thesis will seek to identify. The association of masculinity with independence, the social dysfunction of an “unconscious cruelty” and “calculating taciturnity,” and the imperious aspirations of an “efficient intelligence” (recognising no authority higher than itself) all define the terms of the estrangement of this anti-social, but clearly emblematic, facet of British identity.

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<sup>1</sup> The rather less dignified story of Alexander Selkirk, the historical model for Crusoe, who's own four year exile ended with him covered in his own faeces and forming questionable relationships with local wildlife, has easily been supplanted by *Robinson Crusoe* as the defining figure of the shipwrecked Man Alone in British culture. For a full account of Selkirk's adventure see Diana Souhami's *Selkirk's Island: The True and Strange Adventures of the Real Robinson Crusoe*.

From John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) onward, the literary culture of the putative, protestant British state used the Man Alone as a means of testing and validating – and, in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), satirising – its metaphysical identity and the moral authority of its growing political dominance.<sup>2</sup> The biblical archetype for this kind of inquiry was Christ's exile in the wilderness, and the challenge to resist external influences and temptations to retain control over an integral identity is a constant theme of texts featuring the Man Alone figure.

The literary form that drew most extensively from the story of Christ's exile was the medieval romance, in which the questing hero was abstracted from his social context and put through a series of trials to exemplify the community of which he was a part.<sup>3</sup> It is significant, therefore, that the closing decades of the nineteenth century witnessed what was identified as the 'revival of romance,' which can be seen as a reaction against the narratives of social realism that had dominated the middle part of the century.<sup>4</sup> Social realism, with its insistence on the submission of people and events to inescapable economic and political meta-narratives, presented the community as the unit and the meaning of dramatic action, with the liberty of the individual circumscribed by socially experienced sources of authority.

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<sup>2</sup> That Britain, one of the most enduring collective political identities, should express such a yearning for autonomy and unity is, perhaps, unsurprising.

<sup>3</sup> The relationship between the medieval romance and the Man Alone will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.1 in relation to Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*.

<sup>4</sup> The background premise to this thesis, of the importance of the romance in articulating the political and epistemological shifts of the late nineteenth century to a popular audience, owes much to Nicholas Daly's work *Modernism, Romance and the fin de siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture, 1880–1914*.

In this context, no man was alone, and the lived experience of literary characters was of the illusion of personal autonomy in the face of inexorable social processes. The ‘revival of romance,’ on the other hand, seemed to liberate the (re-masculinised) individual; to offer him the chance to determine his relationship with social identities through the expression and experience of his own will – as Cavor puts it, gambolling on the lunar surface in H.G. Wells’s *The First Men in the Moon*, “We are out of Mother Earth’s leading-strings now” (97). Nicholas Daly argues that “the romance offered an alternative to unhealthy foreign realism [and] was also welcomed as putting an end to the rule of the home-grown realism of the domestic novel” (19), and the Man Alone thus re-emerged as expressive of an independent, masculine, British agency.

The period studied by this thesis begins with the publication of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1886 and concludes with Wells’s short story *The Country of the Blind* in 1904.<sup>5</sup> The intervening years encompassed not only the high point in sales terms of the romance revival (Daly 20-24), but also that of British imperialism, the precariousness of which will be discussed in section 2. As well as containing some of the most significant texts of the romance revival, this period was also influenced by the fate and growing legend of a historical model of the Man Alone who serves as a useful introduction to some of the tensions that will be explored.

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<sup>5</sup> Stevenson, alongside H. Rider Haggard, was the most prominent exponent of the romance in the 1880s, and the success of *Jekyll and Hyde* was largely responsible for this. Wells, too, made his name writing scientific romances, before turning his attention to novels and polemics.

**“... my life is not an open book, to you or to any man, least of all to myself.”**

Almost a year to the day before the first publication of *Jekyll and Hyde*, General Charles “Chinese” Gordon was killed by the Mahdist army as it finally captured Khartoum. Gordon was very much the archetype of the Victorian Man Alone: Richard Davenport-Hines claims that “Despite his vanity [Gordon] strove from the 1860s to accomplish that resignation of self which he conceived to be the highest Christian duty” (864), and notes his “total irreverence for age or position, and his supercilious indifference to his official superiors” (865), a description that speaks of a man at war with himself and contemptuous of the claims of others over this struggle.<sup>6</sup>

Davenport-Hines also argues that Gordon achieved, in both life and death, a certain mythic, emblematic status in wider British culture:

The Indian mutiny [...] fostered a cult of the Christian military hero: Chinese Gordon became a totem of this cult in the mid-1860s, and in death came to represent its apotheosis. (865)

Gordon thus embodied the central paradox of being both a Man Alone and also the popular hero; the unorthodox, unpredictable man of genius who came to represent communal aspirations. Dispatched by Gladstone to Khartoum to satisfy public

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<sup>6</sup> The Hollywood version of Gordon’s death, *Khartoum* (1966), seeks to develop this idea through a conversation between Gordon and the man sent to spy on him by Gladstone: “As is well known I regard myself a religious man, yet I belong to no church. I’m an able soldier, but I abhor armies. I could even add that I’ve been introduced to hundreds of women, yet I’ve never married. [...] let me suggest that my life is not an open book, to you or any man, least of all myself.”

clamour for action to save the city,<sup>7</sup> he had arrived to a hero's welcome and died, at least in the popular consciousness, alone at the head of the stairs in the governor's palace, abandoned by his government but true to the ideals and values of his nation.<sup>8</sup>

The impact of Gordon's death, and the circumstances surrounding it, have a significant bearing on the Man Alone of the 'romance revival.' Writing to J.A. Symonds in February 1885, Robert Louis Stevenson spoke of "these dark days of public dishonour," identifying himself amongst those guilty of abandoning Gordon:

No man that I can see, on any side or party, seems to have the least sense of our ineffable shame: the desertion of the garrisons. [...] We believe in nothing, Symonds: you don't, and I don't; and these are two reasons, out of a handful of millions, why England stands before the world dripping with blood and daubed with dishonour. [...] If England has shown (I put it hypothetically) one mark of manly sensibility, they have been shamed into it by the spectacle of Gordon. (Colvin 228-229)

Stevenson associates an absence of faith with "the desertion of the garrisons," and identifies Gordon, an intensely private man, as already fulfilling the role of a spectacle by which the failure of "the Bourgeois" can be measured. Over the next few months Stevenson wrote *Jekyll and Hyde*, a book self-consciously concerned

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<sup>7</sup> Davenport-Hines notes the role of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and its "bumptiously meddlesome" editor W.T. Stead in provoking this clamour (867).

<sup>8</sup> This view owes much to George William Joy's famous painting "Gordon's Last Stand," which romanticised him as the archetypal White Man Alone, holding back the dervish hordes seemingly just by the power of his presence. The scene as imagined by Joy was faithfully recreated in the 1966 film *Khartoum*.

with the failure of faith within atomised, middle-class society, and with the failure of privileged new forms of knowledge to repair the damage.

That he died in a defensive action against overwhelming odds made Gordon all the more heroic and capable of representing arguably the most proudly claimed attribute of the British psyche – from the Armada through the Napoleonic wars to the Battle of Britain – that of indefatigable resistance to conquest. Within the cultural context of the late nineteenth century this can also be understood as the resistance of a kind of defiant individualism to the grubby politics of the modern nation State. Having charted the origins of the term *individualismé* to the French proto-socialist Claude Henri de Saint-Simon, whose disciples used it pejoratively to express “their critique of the Enlightenment's glorification of the individual, their horror of social atomization and anarchy” (47), Steven Lukes goes on to note how individualism evolved very different meanings in England. It quickly became “an epithet for nonconformity in religion, for the sterling qualities of self-reliant Englishmen, especially among the nineteenth-century middle classes” (63), a position of resistance to:

“socialism,” “communism,” and, especially, “collectivism.”  
Thus the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1888 spoke of holding “the scales between individualists and Socialists” and *The Times* in 1896 of “the individualists” holding “their own against the encroachments of the State.” (64)

It is in the context of this cultural debate that the Man Alone will be located and discussed, in the questioning of the nature of the relationship between the individual

and the community, between personal liberty and social responsibility, which became problematic in the wake of the undermining of traditional models by the crises of Empire and the explosive implications of Darwinian theory. The figure of the Man Alone was central to the way in which these tensions were articulated to a popular audience by the authors of colonial and scientific romance, and it is the former that provides the first examples for this study.

## 2. “One of Us”

The discussion that follows will take as its central figure the man who has either jumped from or been left behind by the good ship Empire. By the end of the nineteenth century the colonial romance had constructed Empire as a space in which the Victorian British gentleman could demonstrate his physical and cultural dominance over a series of ethnic, sexual and geographical others.<sup>9</sup> Newspaper accounts of British imperial expeditions in the second half of the nineteenth century helped to popularize this view, with heroes such as Wolseley, Gordon, and Kitchener doing battle with an exotic cast of Dervishes, Zulus and Fuzzy Wuzzies, before returning home to great popular acclaim.<sup>10</sup>

The British Empire, however, was leading something of a double life in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The so called ‘Scramble for Africa’ was well underway, with rival European powers asserting territorial claims over large swathes of the continent and subjecting them to varying degrees of political and military control, in contrast to the more *ad hoc* Imperialism of the first half of the century. New territories were thus being acquired at an unprecedented rate, with men like Cecil Rhodes demonstrating the possibilities for the lone adventurer to acquire both wealth and political influence in the process.

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<sup>9</sup> The work of Robert Ballantyne, H. Rider Haggard and John Buchan provides examples of this, and while it is not the intention of this study to suggest that this is *all* they do, the popularity of these authors owes something to the attractiveness of this image of Empire to their audience.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s coverage of the Second Ashanti War and Kitchener's triumphant return in the early part of 1874.

The rapid expansion of the British Empire was, however, at least partially a recognition of the threat to Britain's global dominance posed by the emergence of other Imperial powers in Europe. A feeling of insecurity about Britain's capacity to maintain its pre-eminence was reflected in the burgeoning genre of Invasion Literature, often seen as starting with George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* in 1871, and continuing up to the eventual outbreak of hostilities in 1914.<sup>11</sup> Britain's long cherished geographical isolation, secure since the defeat of Napoleon, was once again perceived to be under threat, by forces ranging from Germans to Martians. The implied danger to national self-determination underpinning these narratives plays an important part in the development of the figure of the Man Alone, and its relation to the wider political situations of the period.

In India, the cold war of 'The Great Game' between the British and Russian empires played a similar role in engendering a perception of external threats to security. For the colonists, already vastly outnumbered by native Indians and with first hand experience of the events of the 1857 Rebellion, this created a determination that "nothing was to be done which could create an impression of weakness or fallibility" (Chaudhuri 123). A culture of self control and sacrifice was central to this, wherein the ostentatiously enlightened individuality of someone like Warren Hastings (the first Governor General of India from 1773-1786) was superseded by the uncompromising dedication to British interests of Lord Lytton (1876-1880). To be true to oneself became less important than being true to the

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<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion of Invasion Literature and its relationship to the contemporary geo-political situation see chapters 2-4 of I.F. Clarke's *Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984*.

narratives that bound the community together, with individual experience becoming subservient to the need for the co-operative endeavour required to ensure social unity and cohesion. Community became explicitly the expression of restraint, of a denial of self against which the individual was powerless, and the Man Alone, it will be argued, became a valuable means of examining the effects of this kind of repression.

A series of embarrassing reverses for British military interests overseas had simultaneously undermined popular faith in Britain's ability to defend its interests. The Zulu victory at Isandlwana in 1879 was followed by the massacre of General William Hicks force in Sudan in 1883, which eventually resulted in "Chinese" Gordon's death and the loss of Khartoum two years later. British forces did not reoccupy Khartoum until 1898, and during the intervening years there was a palpable feeling that Gordon's death must be avenged before British honour could be restored.<sup>12</sup> The re-capture of Khartoum, however, was immediately followed by the outbreak of the second Boer War in 1899, itself sparked in part by the disastrous Jameson Raid of 1895-96. Early Boer successes, followed by the protracted guerrilla campaign, revealed the British military machine to be incapable of dispatching a smaller, more lightly armed foe.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed account see Michael Asher's comprehensive history of British involvement in Sudan during this period. With reference to the strength of public desire for revenge after Gordon's death, Asher argues that by the time Kitchener was finally dispatched against Khartoum in 1896 "[Lord] Salisbury's government had already been voted out of office once for failing to do anything about it" (298).

<sup>13</sup> Popular feeling about this expressed itself at the ballot box. Having won the 'khaki' election in October 1900 on the back of British victories in Sudan and South Africa, the Conservative government's handling of the conclusion of the war and its perceived failure to effectively deal with

The conflict also brought British forces against fellow white, Anglo-Saxon protestants within the context of an African empire of which the alleged superiority of race was a key component. Perhaps even more unsettling to the idea of a 'natural' British supremacy was the discovery by Sir John Frederick Maurice that only two out of every five men recruited in Britain's cities to fight in the conflict were actually fit for active service.<sup>14</sup> Long-held assumptions about the nature of Britain's Imperial mission, and about its fitness to carry out this task, were suddenly open to question, just as it seemed that the sun would never set on Victoria's Empire.

By the end of the century Britain's political, military, cultural and even physical identities could thus be argued to have been in crisis, even as the British Empire reached the zenith of its expansion. It was into this paradoxical context that the two texts that will be examined in this chapter were published, and which their use of the Man Alone seeks to explore. This discussion will adopt a historicist, rather than postcolonial, interpretive perspective, and while some aspects of postcolonial criticism will be touched on it is not within the remit of this thesis to comprehensively engage with current postcolonial debate. Instead, archival resources will be used to define the contextualising political and cultural framework that the texts were originally published into.

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the Boxer Rebellion in China saw the Liberals under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman sweep to power in February 1906 with a large majority.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Bond notes that "By influential articles in the *Contemporary Review* (January 1902 and January 1903) Maurice publicized the high rejection rate, on medical grounds, of would-be recruits during the South African War."

Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* was originally serialised in *Blackwoods Magazine* from October 1899 to November 1900, and this was closely followed by the serialisation of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* in *McClure's Magazine* from December 1900 to October 1901. Conrad, the son of exiled Polish nationalists, spoke English only as a third language, having learned it while studying for his master mariner's certificate (Karl 184). As a refugee from Russian imperialism who had travelled to the Belgian Congo and witnessed first hand the atrocities that would be documented in the Casement report of 1904, Conrad's experience of Empire was very different from the triumphalism and flag waving of his friend Haggard.<sup>15</sup> This combination of the isolation of the immigrant with a sense of the shocking, naked truths of colonial exploitation finds a voice in *Lord Jim* and, it will be argued, in the unreachable solitude of Jim himself.

Kipling, too, represented something of an outsider, despite his subsequent canonisation as an Imperial apologist. Born in India, Kipling would never see Britain as home in the way that Haggard or Buchan would. Indeed, after the trauma of being sent to Southsea aged six, it was to an Indian home that Kipling returned to ten years later:

[...] I found myself at Bombay where I was born, moving among sights and smells that made me deliver in the vernacular sentences whose meaning I knew not. Other Indian-born boys have told me how the same thing happened to them.

There were yet three or four days' rail to Lahore,

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<sup>15</sup> Haggard was the first man to raise a Union Jack in Transvaal following the annexation of the South African Republic by Britain from Boer control in 1877.

where my people lived. After these, my English years fell away, nor ever, I think, came back in full strength.  
That was a joyous home-coming. (*Something* 39)

His training and experience as a journalist showed Kipling the vulnerability of the British in India; in stories like “Beyond the Pale” and “Thrown Away” from *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888), the dashing young heroes of romance find themselves isolated by their secrets and powerless to save themselves from either the unknowable fastness of India herself or the inexorable wheels of the machinery of Empire. This was the world that Kipling knew, and he remained an Indian exile throughout his latter days on the south coast of England.

The question of home and community will be central to the analysis of both texts. Alan Sandison argues that for both Conrad and Kipling, when faced with the innate “chaos and anarchy” that represent the “true moral reality” of the world, “existence becomes a perpetual struggle between the individual self battling to sustain its integrity, and a deeply hostile universe where man has no natural (or supernatural) ally” (“Introduction” xiii). This discussion will argue that the role of the romance is crucial in articulating this isolation. *Lord Jim*’s position as a romance will be analysed through a comparison with the book’s thematic and formal devices with traditional definitions of medieval romance to establish Jim as the modern version of the lone, questing hero. His quest, however, is doomed to fail, both because of its inherently selfish nature (for absolute self-determination) and also because of his inability to either represent or accept community, to be successfully identified within Matlow’s “one of us.” The relationship between the

hero of the romance and the community they are created to validate became problematic within the late Victorian Imperial context, and the various communities that Jim and Kim reject in the texts will reflect the instability that this engenders in their own identities, over which they attempt to assert exclusive control.

The conflict established between the Man Alone and the community will then be examined in terms of its epistemological implications, between the individual's quest for truth and the community's search for understanding. The character of Stein stands between these two positions, between the 'real' world of communality within modern colonial society and the 'romance' world of the lone adventurer that Jim tries to create in Patusan. The legacies of Jim's imaginative individualism and Stein's collection and categorisation of pre-existing realities (as represented by his butterflies) will be compared in terms of how they impact on this struggle between truth and understanding to provide the determining framework for individual identity within the texts.

The ability of the Man Alone to detach themselves (both physically and psychologically) from the Imperial 'centre' and travel through a variety of different cultural, political and geographical 'margins' will be used to further explore the instability of colonial identities. The kind of freedom to remake the self that is seemingly offered at the margins of empire is shown to be initially empowering within the texts. Once the identity of the Man Alone is admitted to be a dynamic involving multiple perspectives and subjective relationships, however, the idea of

an inherent integrity and meaning located within the colonising identity – so crucial to the British Imperial mission – becomes vulnerable to the threat implied in contingency, of a reliance on others to define the self. Both *Lord Jim* and *Kim*, it will be shown, explore the implications of this contingency to effect a true modernisation of the colonial romance.

## 2.1 Lord Jim: Man Overboard

An anonymous review of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in December 1900, asked of the novel's characters "Is it out of *The Wrecker* that these people have strayed; or is it, perhaps, *The Ebb-Tide*?" (4). The reviewer's identification of *Lord Jim* with Robert Louis Stevenson, whilst perhaps intended as a slight on Conrad's artistic originality, usefully provides us with a contemporary voice locating Conrad's work within the 'revival of romance' of the late nineteenth century, of which Stevenson was the most celebrated figure. For critics at the start of the twenty first century, this voice is highly significant, providing as it does a necessary balance to the scholarship that has been devoted to locating Conrad as a Modernist innovator, and an artist, rather than a peddler of popular romances such as his contemporary and friend H. Rider Haggard.<sup>16</sup>

While Conrad's thematic concerns, narrative techniques and epistemological enquiries associate him with authors that were to follow in the twentieth century, the locations and genres of his output (colonial adventures like *Lord Jim*, spy novels like *The Secret Agent*, and tales of the high seas like *Typhoon*) make it vital to consider his work alongside that of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries whose use of the romance form was fuelling a revolution in publishing.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature* refers, rather dismissively, to the "34 adventure novels that made [Haggard] famous" (244) in its assessment of his work.

<sup>17</sup> Daly highlights the importance of the fact that romance was dominant in sales terms (19) – whatever the opinions of the chattering classes as to their artistic merits Stevenson and Haggard were shifting units. British culture was awash with cheap editions of single volume romances, while the traditional 'triple decker' social realist novel of the Victorian age was on the way out.

Tracy Seeley discusses the impact of modernism on the traditional themes of the romance – “aspirations to the ideal... the search for happy endings” (497) – asking how the knowledge of striving to attain the impossible informs “modern” romances. If the goal of the romantic quest is revealed as (and acknowledged by the romantic to be) unattainable, what does that say about both the journey and the traveller? How does this knowledge, whether explicit or implied, that the quest can end only in failure inform both the protagonist’s and our own perceptions of its value and meaning?

The most resonant historical representation of the failure of the romantic quest within a colonial context during the late nineteenth century was the image of Gordon’s last stand in Khartoum. Where once British heroes were Wellington and Clive, men for whom victory was everything and who were loved for the glory that this brought to their nation, by the end of the nineteenth century we see the emergence of a different figure; one whose adventures carry none of the sully, complicating political consequences of victory but whose exploits are amenable to having certain values embodied within them. There had always been martyrs for the flag, but their deaths had become synonymous with their greatest triumphs (Wolfe at Quebec, Nelson at Trafalgar) and had come to be seen as proof of the magnitude and meaning of their achievement. Gordon’s death in January 1885, however, while still carrying with it associations of the heroic defiance of the individual when faced with overwhelming opposition, was also seen as reflecting a wider failure of the British state to relieve him, despite Kitchener’s best efforts.

Gordon's reputation as a man apart, as a maverick and a thorn in the side of Gladstone's administration became enshrined in the failure of that administration to save him; it was as if his death proved the fundamental division between the lone man of principle and the state as a bureaucratic, corporate entity unwilling to defend the rights and actions of the individual. Gordon's death was seen as a stain on the nation's conscience, representing not the clear cut image of heroism resolved but instead becoming a worrying symbol of British failure and of the vulnerability of the individual members of the world's most powerful nation.

### **Sir Jim**

Jim's death in Conrad's *Lord Jim* also lacks the ability to clarify or resolve except, of course, in Jim's own head. Marlow has already shown us its aftermath before allowing the deed itself to be played out – the embittered Jewel in a rapidly ageing Stein's house, betrayed and rejected by Jim in favour of a “pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct” (Conrad, *Lord Jim* 246) – and if Jim's last “proud and unflinching glance” (246) suggests that he believes the deed heroic, there is no indication that any other characters in the text share this conviction. Jim's fatal attraction to such idealised standards of behaviour, however far from them his own conduct sometimes places him, can be traced back to a fateful “course of light holiday romance” (8) in his youth, after which he decided on a career at sea.

The role of the Ideal in Romance is crucial, but in the work of Conrad modernity exposes its own grubby, and yet ultimately inescapable imperfections to thwart its achievement. Seeley states that *Lord Jim* explores:

human aspiration not simply to the ideal, but to the admittedly impossible. It examines and insists on the delusiveness of ideals, and on recognizing the delusion, and yet it also promotes those ideals as both important and necessary. (497)

The romance separates man from his community in order that he can return to it through the performance of a quest that will exemplify the dominant ideals of that community. If the modernist romance will assert that this quest can only end in failure (indeed, must necessarily end in failure) then the “man” must remain alone, for he cannot earn his return to the fold – Marlow’s oral narrative of Jim ends with the words “I lost him...” (199). Simultaneously, however, the community is shown to be not what it had imagined itself to be, for if its ideals are impossible or unattainable then what is the source of the shared experience that binds it together, unless it be one of failure and isolation?

Seen from another perspective this question of return or exile can be posed in terms of the individual’s process of becoming self aware once separated from his community to play out the romance. Separated from the mass hallucination that is the community’s perception of its own identity, the modern Man Alone grows to know himself through his limitations and failures, through the distance between

what he thinks he should be and what he recognises he is.<sup>18</sup> The great transformative quest of the romance, of Gawain's search for and submission to the Green Knight's axe, remakes the 'I' of the Man Alone but fails to modify the collective identity from which he originated, which now seems smaller, less fully realised than that of the prodigal. In light of this failure, the hero's return to the group has changed from being the assertion of a shared identity, the meaning and power of which have been experienced and performed by a representative individual who is "one of us" (30), and has instead become a surrender, a betrayal of a more selfish yet somehow fuller realisation of identity that the quest has engendered.

Alan Markman, with reference to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, helps to define the particular facet of the hero of the romance which Conrad develops in *Lord Jim* to illustrate this tension between the romantic and the community they leave behind:

Midway between the epic hero and the modern hero lies the romance hero. Where we find both the character and the actions of the epic hero known in advance, where we find both the character and actions of the modern hero unknown in advance, we find the character of the romance hero is known in advance but his actions and behaviour are not. My guess is that the romance hero exists to show us the way. We know who the hero is and what he is like, but we do not know what he will do. ... The romance condition seems to be very much like this: we construct the very best man to represent ideal human behaviour; we ask, then,

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<sup>18</sup> The proliferation of Utopian novels towards the end of the nineteenth century, such as Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* (1888), and William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890) reflects this interest with the exile and return of the individual from their community. Re-imagining society requires the fresh perspective that exile offers.

what could such a man do if he were to be placed in the most trying, the strangest positions; we provide the unnatural incidents of romance to test the hero, because only the unknown can constitute a valid test and, at the same time, generate the universal appeal of the mysterious, the remote. (582)

Whether or not Jim represents “the very best man” is open to question, but he is certainly not the worst, and Conrad is careful to locate him within the world of his readership, the middle class English professional of the early twentieth century. Jim’s origins in a parsonage with “flower beds, and fir-trees, with an orchard at the back” that “had stood there for centuries” (8) place him firmly within a traditional English idyll, and his entry into the “mercantile marine” allies him with the great progressive, civilising mission of Empire, fully certificated and in possession of “Ability” (7). “Powerfully built” with a “deep, loud” voice and “spotlessly neat”(7) Jim is set up as an example of the competent, self assured, physically fit young white man of good stock upon whom the Empire depended.

Jim is thus described on the novel’s opening page in terms that make him the natural candidate to be sent out, alone, into the “unknown” to validate the ideals of the community that has spawned him, matching Markman’s assertion that in the romance “We know who the hero is and what he is like...” That the second part of Markman’s description – “...but we do not know what he will do” – is also true is emphasised by the air of mystery that Marlow creates around the circumstances of Jim’s fall, the way that his narrative circles like a vulture over the carcass of Jim’s disgrace on the *Patna* before finally descending to feed. Ursula Lord argues that:

On the surface there should be nothing mysterious about Jim. Marlow creates the mystery to prevent or delay the necessity of coming face to face with the collapse or destruction of shared beliefs that are at the root of the community to which he adheres. The radical individualism that Jim claims for himself – and that Marlow grants him – threatens the notion of cultural solidarity, an ideal to which Marlow is loyal. Paradoxically, it is only by granting Jim this claim to exceptional status that Marlow can preserve the illusion of the solidarity of the majority. (181)

Jim's candidacy as the exemplary hero of this romance would seem to be undermined by the "radical individualism" that Lord ascribes him, which puts him so far outside the "cultural solidarity" that he would need to represent. Lord's qualification, however, that it is exactly Jim's exceptional status within his narrative that provides Marlow with the opportunity to create a communal identity in opposition, supports the idea of Jim's isolation as being that of the hero of romance, a necessary tool for the creation and authentication of community. By striving to achieve and assert his individualism, Jim is ultimately only able to prove the instability of such an identity, leaving fidelity to communal and social modes of being as the only tenable course. As the French Lieutenant concludes, "Man is born a coward... But habit – habit – necessity – do you see? – the eyes of others – voilà" (90).

Seeley argues that "Jim's ... quest for ideal selfhood" fails because Jim is unable "to acknowledge his goal's impossibility" (497). To be a 'successful' romantic in modernism is to continue to aspire to transcendent goals, but to learn to embrace failure, to accept it as a fundamental part of your identity as a human being

in a way that Jim never can: I fail therefore I am.<sup>19</sup> This resonates with the role attributed to masochism within Victorian culture by John Kucich, who sees it as a means by which marginalised identities can challenge traditional authorities and sees in this an expression of a particular critique of imperialism.<sup>20</sup> Within this argument it is not the coloniser's domination of the colonised that defines the moment of colonial contact; rather it is the colonised's submission, the acceptance of their subjugation (and, by extension, their failure) that is its true meaning, the key to its moral framework and definition of centre and margin. This division of interpretations within the dialogue of colonial contact echoes Homi Bhabha's description of:

the splitting of colonial discourse so that two attitudes towards external reality persist; one takes reality into consideration while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates 'reality' as mimicry. (91)

It could be argued that the first attitude described represents modernism or modernity within the terms of this discussion – the concern with the mechanics of the world as reality and the appreciation of the fallibility of subjectivity – while the second attitude carries in it the seeds of something much more romantic, the driving force of desire, the appropriation and presentation of alternative realities as mimicry (which will be discussed below more fully in relation to Kipling's *Kim*) such as

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<sup>19</sup> The inscription chosen for the memorial to Scott's polar party, who failed to be the first to the pole and to return from the journey, was "To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield" from Tennyson's *Ulysses*. That the striving was of itself enough to confer hero status on Scott, whose Last Message to the Public accepted that the party had failed to overcome the risks that all knew were involved, is illustrative of this kind of sensibility.

<sup>20</sup> This discussion can be found in John Kucich "Melancholy Magic: Masochism, Stevenson, Anti-Imperialism."

Jim's dying belief in his fulfilment of the code of conduct Marlow refers to as "the fellowship of the craft."

This division is also present at a structural level within the romance. Markman describes how "[i]n the romance an imaginary boundary is established between the 'real' world and the 'romance' world, the principal action usually taking place inside the romance world" (583). In the context of *Lord Jim*, this boundary is physically represented by the beach between the world of Marlow, Brierley and the *Patna* and the altogether more romantic world of Patusan up river in which Jim desires to rearticulate the 'real' world of his failure within a narrative of his ultimate vindication.<sup>21</sup>

### **Stein: Man at the Edge**

Perhaps more significantly, in this romance of narration and failure, this boundary is also given a human form, that of Stein. With both a successful, modern trading empire and fully realised romantic past Stein is able to straddle both worlds and act as a bridge between them, providing Jim with his second chance – the futility of which is pre-figured by the fact that it is already his third chance after the training ship incident and events on the *Patna*. Marlow's description of the strange limbo of Stein's house, where the brief lives of butterflies have been artificially

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<sup>21</sup> Jim, therefore, is guilty of the kind of colonialism that Chinua Achebe famously attributed to Conrad, of turning real geographical and cultural spaces into mere backdrops for transplanted euro-centric narratives. The consequences of this for Jim, however, suggest that Conrad may be less implicated than Achebe suggests.

elongated into a perpetual stasis, and where the host's inspirations are undermined by "the light [which] had destroyed the assurance which had inspired him in the distant shadows"(129), strengthens this sense of Stein existing between two worlds, as does the pivotal location in the book given to this encounter.

Stein's "intrepidity of spirit and physical courage," unlike Jim's compulsively self-conscious visions of his own heroic valour and bravery, has not isolated him because "like a natural function of the body ...[it was] completely unconscious of itself" (122). That Stein had also once been in danger of the kind of obsessive individualism of Jim, or Willems in *An Outcast of The Islands*, is, however, laid bare by the trader himself. In describing his satisfaction at defeating the attempt on his life and capture of his prize specimen Stein remembers how:

'On that day I had nothing to desire; I had greatly annoyed my principal enemy; I was young, strong; I had friendship; I had the love...of woman, a child I had, to make my heart very full – and even what I had once dreamed in my sleep had come into my hand too!' (127)

Because Marlow has already told his audience how the first part of Stein's life ended, we allow him to savour the memory of this moment of apparent omnipotence, knowing as we do that it was an illusion. This passage is crucial in establishing the superficial attractiveness of Jim's chosen path of isolation where the only possible function of other people is to confirm the innate superiority of the individual at the centre – in one sentence of reminiscence Stein uses the word "I" seven times.

The story of Stein's youthful adventures is narrated by Marlow, but immediately afterwards Stein is allowed to describe what has come to be its defining moment, the capture of a rare species of butterfly, from the perspective of his current situation as an ageing entomologist. The other meaning of this life, of his comradeship with the young prince, his marriage to the princess and the fathering of a child, had been utterly destroyed by the external, uncontrollable agency of "some infectious disease" (125), and what is left is the butterfly, a specimen of the most fleeting of lives. Like Jim the world has ripped one dream out from under him. Unlike Jim he has adapted, has learned to accept his inability to determine his destiny and dreamed a new dream.

To illustrate this inability of the individual to control his fate or the identity that he will claim, immediately after Stein's recollection of how he stood triumphant and untouchable after surviving the assassination attempt, he lights a match:

'Friend, wife, child,' he said slowly, gazing at the small flame – 'phoo!' The match was blown out. He sighed and turned again to the glass case. The frail and beautiful wings [of the butterfly] quivered faintly, as if his breath had for an instant called back to life that gorgeous object of his dreams. (127)

For all of Stein's self imposed exile in his large house outside town, he has learned what Jim will not, that ultimately man is powerless to resist the forces at play in the world on his own. That he may be equally powerless within the kind of communal

identity exemplified by Marlow and his circle of listeners is never denied, but the alternative to this collective fidelity is presented as a narcissistic pessimism, rooted in disrespect for the experiences of others.

Conrad was to write “What one feels so hopelessly barren in declared pessimism is its arrogance” (*Notes* 8) and this is expressed in the contrast between the figures of Stein and Jim, especially in our final glimpses of them. The arrogance and pride of Jim’s final “unflinching glance” (246) is in stark contrast to the fact that “Stein has aged greatly of late” (246) while he supports Jewel and Tamb’ Itam in his house, fulfilling the responsibilities that Jim has, finally, shirked. Stein’s final utterance, given in the last sentence of the text and so allowed to condition our response to Jim’s death “that he is ‘preparing to leave all this, preparing to leave,..’ while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies” (246). This is characteristic of the man who still aspires to the ideal, yet has learned that life must be lived in the imperfections of the here and now, in dialogue with and in the company of others.

### **Truth or Understanding?**

*Lord Jim*, Seeley suggests, contains three levels of romance: Jim’s quest for ideal selfhood, Marlow’s quest to redeem Jim through narrative, and Conrad’s quest for unambiguous closure:

In all three narratives, recognising impossibility matters as much to Conrad as the ideals themselves. And in every case,

necessary disillusionment is mediated by community, that ideal organic entity that becomes a last defence against nihilism and isolation. While for Conrad, scepticism has eroded possibilities for absolute truth and certain knowledge, community creates the ground for consensual understanding. In community, Conrad can yet hope for meaningful identity and action, and for storytelling that is more than textuality alone. (497)

*Lord Jim*, then, articulates an epistemological conflict between the community and the Man Alone. The community seeks meaning in “consensual understanding,” in dialogue between subjectivities: the Man Alone, especially in the romance, is on a quest for “absolute truth and certain knowledge” that will admit only a single viewpoint because its meaning is unified and indivisible, only capable of one interpretation which the Man Alone will provide by approaching it through the purifying fire of solitude. With the absolute there can be no discussion, but where there are multiple perspectives there is the potential for space between interpretations that the absolute cannot tolerate and *Lord Jim* contains so many perspectives of Jim that the possibility of a unified, single identity is repeatedly defeated. The Man Alone, in rejecting community, seeks integrity (a unified sense of self); or, to put it in Lacanian terms, strives for an identity that is not determined primarily through identification, through the misrecognition of himself in others.

This disjunction between individual and communal conceptions of existence is inherent in the word identity itself. Whilst on one hand identity can be defined as “absolute or essential sameness; oneness... the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else” (“Identity,” def. 1a), on the other it can be

used to express the condition of being the same as something else – in algebraic terms “[t]he equality of two expressions for all values of the literal quantities” (def. 4a). The Latin root of the word, *idem*, means ‘same’, and the possibility of an ‘individual’ identity would seem to be conditioned by the pre-existence of the Lacanian Other, even if it is one that is ‘the same’ – to be the same as yourself or to be the same as someone else, that is the question. The algebraic definition can be developed further, with an identical equation being one which remains true no matter what the individual values of the literal quantities.<sup>22</sup> In this definition an identity can exist in the presence of the internal variation of its constituent elements, regardless of the absolute, individual values so long as they continue to respect and represent fundamental structural relationships.

Identity as an equation, able to resolve different inputs into a pre-determined outcome, serves well as a model for Marlow’s treatment of this theme in *Lord Jim*. For Marlow, identity reveals itself in relationships; “We exist only in so far as we hang together” (135), “[h]e existed for me, and after all it is only through me that he exists for you.” (136). Jim’s argument, expressed in Marlow’s hotel room as the tale of the *Patna* unfolds, challenges this view in that it challenges the assumption of the meaningful nature of relationships that exist in the world. In describing the disorienting feeling of the lurch of the *Patna* under his feet (believing it to be fatally holed) just prior to his jump Jim asks:

What would you do if you felt now – this minute – the  
house here move, just move a little under your chair? Leap!

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<sup>22</sup> Trigonometric identities are often cited as a good example of this concept.

By heavens! You would take one spring from where you sit  
and land in that clump of bushes yonder. (67)

Jim's imaginative individualism allows him to make this kind of comparison, to imagine the consequences of a faith in relationships that are shown to be contingent and arbitrary. For Jim there must be one cardinal, immutable point of reference that has an absolute identity, his sense of his own heroic self, before the rest of the world can be admitted into existence. Without this point, shattered by his terror on the *Patna*, he cannot conceive of any determining meaning in the world and is unable to resist the fundamental disorientation that this causes, leaping from the ship.

Marlow doesn't agree with him, stating that he "was being bullied now," but in the moment after the question is posed he bothers to estimate the distance between his seat and the bushes Jim has pointed out: "He exaggerated. I would have landed short by several feet – and that's the only thing of which I am fairly certain" (67). The relative positions of the chair and the bushes provide Marlow with the only meaning of which he is "fairly certain" (an unprecedented assertion of fact from Marlow), but for Jim this distance is subservient to the demands of the narrative of his own existence.

In discussing the impact of his father's letter on Jim, Lord articulates this division between Jim's perception of human identity from the exposed position of the Man Alone, and that of his family, comfortable and secure in the parsonage

which “had stood there for centuries” (8), seemingly immune to the processes of change:

Jim’s family’s circumscribed life of unchallenged and “undisturbed rectitude” has allowed them the luxury of unblurred value judgements and rules of social conduct that exclude the alienation and moral conflicts, such as the efficacy of future success to redeem past failure, with which Jim has struggled.(184)

Jim’s family have never and will never be exposed in the way that Jim is: for Conrad the sailor, the land (and especially an idealised green and pleasant England) can be constructed as a place of unchanging certainties, a place to represent static spatial and epistemological relationships. The sea, on the other hand, is a space on which people are adrift, where relative positions are constantly changing at the hands of forces over which one has no control, and nowhere is this clearer than on the *Patna*.

Lulled into a false sense of security by the *Patna*’s easy progress under benign conditions, the white crew are suddenly jolted out of their complacency and bickering by the impact of the boat on a submerged hazard:

What has happened? ... Had the earth been checked in her course? They could not understand; and suddenly the calm sea, the sky without a cloud, appeared formidably insecure in their immobility, as if poised on the brow of yawning destruction. (21)

At sea the fundamental instability of external conditions is the one constant: “formidably insecure in their immobility,” the sky and waves threaten destruction even when their outward appearance is tranquil. In this context the ship can be read as a metaphor for the kind of collective identity that Marlow attributes to the “fellowship of the craft” (79), a communal endeavour with a responsibility on each member of the group “to be vigilant at all times if his vessel is to travel safely from port to port” (Hope 517). As Marlow puts it, “When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you; that world that made you, restrained you, took care of you”(75), and the image of the ship as an agreed area of restraint, as a limiting factor on individual action that nevertheless offers the identity of a shared fate and destination perhaps offers the clearest explanation of why Jim ultimately has to jump. The collision with the submerged wreck at a moment when the captain and engineer are busy arguing, putting personal and individual concerns above their responsibility to the ship, is a clear failure of the kind of vigilance required, but the fact that the ship itself does not sink suggests that for Conrad the model of identity is not fatally undermined by such failures, rather it is reinforced as the only viable solution to Stein’s question of “how to be” (128).

The non-sinking of the *Patna* is an event which makes a significant contribution to *Lord Jim*’s treatment of the Man Alone versus the community, the struggle between “the vanity of effort, [and]...the stupid brutality of crowds” (56). Holed below the water line, adrift on a sea that is threatened by a squall with a single, rotten bulkhead being all that stands between continued existence and

inundation, the *Patna* is every bit as insecure and at the mercy of external forces as Jim's perception of the kind of communion offered by Marlow. And yet the bulkhead holds, even though there is absolutely no reason why it should be able to. For the pilgrims on the ship, heading for Mecca and united in their faith, maybe the reason for this is clear. Marlow, who lacks such a religious faith, seeks refuge in an aphorism couched in the collective experience of his profession, "it's extraordinary what strains old iron will stand sometimes" (53).

Jim, however, denies the capacity of any external source of comprehension to condition the authority of his own perception: "I tell you it bulged" (54). Marlow describes the imaginative consequences of this for Jim, how "the bulging rust eaten plates that kept back the ocean, fatally must give way, all at once like an undermined dam, and let in a sudden and overwhelming flood" (55). Jim's rejection of the flawed bulkhead of community leaves him with no protection against the "overwhelming flood" of oblivion and non-being that waits for him in a world where his perception of himself is not reflected and validated in those around him, while his almost nihilistic assertions of the meaninglessness of established social relationships – the battered "old iron" of Marlow's faith – prevent any kind of reconciliation with a shared identity able to accommodate him.

Jim's journey from the parsonage to Doramin's pistols is littered with possible communities that he rejects and at the root of each rejection is the image of the *Patna's* bulkhead. Excluded through his deeds (putting him outside Marlow's

“fellowship of the craft”), through his race (in Patusan), and through his sense of his own value (Gentleman Brown’s appeal to his white brother withers on the vine), Jim seems to revel in his status as a Man Alone. Staggering in horror through the pilgrims on board the *Patna*, the physical community that is his responsibility, Jim finds himself amongst the white crew, busily trying to free a lifeboat to effect their own escape. When he recounts to Marlow how he watched the frantic efforts of his shipmates to bludgeon the lifeboat free of its fastenings:

He wanted me to know he had kept his distance; that there was nothing in common between him and these men – who had the hammer. ...He was as far as he could get from them – the whole breadth of the ship.(65)

This distance is as contingent and ambivalent as most parts of Marlow’s narrative, for it is both absolute and yet, at the same time, amounts at most to a few dozen feet. The isolation that Jim claims from the community of these men is not spatial, a point made by the shrinking of this distance still further through the depiction of Jim at one end of the lifeboat and his colleagues at the other, and to the outsider it might seem that there really was no distance – after all, Jim jumps too. To Jim, though, the gap is real and it exists through the force of his own will, through the strength of his storytelling. Jim will not let his identity be in any way defined, dependent on or compromised by his proximity to the other members of the crew, his association with them is merely superficial and meaningless. He may have jumped with them but he will not accept that he can have been a shared motivation, but when Marlow presses him for his own, exceptional reasons Jim is unable to articulate any.

The sense of a shared community with the *Patna*'s crew haunts Jim, and drives him further into the isolation of his egotism to insist on his separation from the dirty, cowardly mass that lies huddled together hiding from the sun under the sail in the lifeboat, while he masochistically lets the sun raise blisters on his neck. The promising position with Marlow's friend at the sawmill (and his acceptance into a new community of ex-pats and tennis clubs) is thrown away because of the arrival of an accomplice from the *Patna*, who has the affront to claim an affinity with Jim, to remind him that they are (and were) "in the same boat." His days at Egstrom and Blake's are ended by overhearing a customer's assertion that he could not bear to be in the same room as one of the *Patna*'s crew, a reminder to Jim of how the wider world refuses to accept the separation he insists upon between himself and the others.

After his decision on the *Patna* to escape in company Jim never again accepts an identity that will not be his and his alone: twice he submits to justice unaccompanied (at the enquiry and in front of Doramin), despite the possibility of flight offered to him first by Brierley and then by Jewel, hoping to preserve their own ideas about the nature of their relationship to a wider community. Community is anathema to Jim after the *Patna* because it will not submit to his need to control his own integrity as an independent entity that exists and that has meaning in and of itself. Community becomes the horror that one's deeds and existence – even when one is a hero of romance – may be determined by a narrative over which one has no

influence. Once Brown has corrupted the meaning of Jim's position in Patusan submission to Doramin's pistols represents the only opportunity for Jim to re-establish control over his own story, his final letter remains unwritten, the pen rejected. To continue to exist after Brown's actions have revealed Jim's word and authority to be relative would mean accepting that his selfhood is subservient to the ability of such a degraded figure to identify Jim within the context of his own experience, his own community.

Ultimately it seems that it is only Marlow who Jim can't shake off, and this leads to a consideration of who is the "us" that Marlow insists connects himself, Jim and his audience. On a grammatical level, it is the original communal identity, the first person pronoun that describes plurality, an identification with the Other within the terms of a shared experience. 'Us,' though, is also a means of denial, a separation from the various 'them' identities with which we populate the world. The narrative's privileged reader, Marlow tells us, has openly declared that "'giving up your life for *them*' (them meaning all of mankind with skins brown, yellow, or black in colour) 'was like selling your soul to a brute'" (201). Whether or not Jim's actions in Patusan represent an act of dedication to the cause of the native peoples is irrelevant in this context – when he mediates in a family dispute involving the possession of cooking pots Jim puts himself beyond the pale of the white supremacist views of this kind of 'privileged' reader. The 'us' that Marlow includes himself and Jim inside is one of witnesses turned actors, storytellers who become

characters: the modern self, breaking the fourth wall and becoming self-consciously involved in the processes of narration.

Conrad puts so many layers between the reader and Jim in *Lord Jim* that the act of narration is explicitly highlighted as an artificial process. Lord identifies Marlow as the chief agent of this by arguing that “Marlow repeatedly insists that the language of facts and the realm of artistic narrative intermingle, their boundaries blurred by the essential deceptiveness of both” (183). It is worth remembering that Marlow’s status as the narrator of Jim and his story is rendered somewhat problematic by the fact that Marlow first appears in the book through an act of perception on Jim’s part rather than the other way round:

Jim’s eyes, wandering in the intervals of his answers, rested upon a white man who sat apart from the others, with his face worn and clouded, but with quiet eyes that glanced straight, interested and clear. ...He met the eyes of the white man. The glance directed at him was not the fascinated stare of the others. It was an act of intelligent volition. ...He had come across that man before – in the street perhaps. He was positive he had never spoken to him. ...That man there seemed to be aware of his hopeless difficulty. Jim looked at him, then turned away resolutely, as after a final parting. (24)

That it is Jim who first seems to articulate some sort of identification between himself and Marlow – “he had come across that man before” – is interesting, as is the description of Marlow as being a “man who sat apart from the others.” It is that separation that Jim paradoxically perceives as being the source of the momentary bond between himself and Marlow, and the fact that this first encounter is

characterised as “a final parting” emphasises the fractured nature of the relationship between the two figures. The frame narrator, having introduced the pair, then allows Marlow to take over the narrative, and it is through Marlow that Jim is given the opportunity to speak outside of the limitations of his court room testimony, to become a narrator within his own story.

It is no coincidence that the setting for this act of simultaneous identification and dislocation is a courtroom where Jim is effectively on trial, for the narrative is fundamentally concerned with constructions of an indivisible truth and the relative nature of the authority of facts that simultaneously exist in multiple subjectivities – “as if facts could explain anything” (22). Lord summarises the way in which this debate is played out in *Lord Jim*:

Truth, inasmuch as it is attainable at all, is a communal project involving, apparently paradoxically, multiple versions and perspectives. There is no single, ultimate, ontologically real and eternal truth; no stable, absolute system of values that render possible the formulation of a valid judgement of another. [...] The fragmented and often conflicting versions of truth offered by the many witnesses that Marlow parades through his narrative attest to the ultimately private, sealed nature of each individual’s reality, and simultaneously to the impossibility of reconstructing a version of the truth that is other than communal and composite. (147)

That the text is full of witnesses has already been alluded to, and Lord’s description of the paradoxical desire of using “sealed” personal experience to create a “composite” truth echoes the moment of identification and separation experienced by Jim (the epitome of a closed individual experience) when encountering Marlow

(and the “fellowship” he represents) in the courtroom. The witnesses in the text (Jim, the French lieutenant, Chester, Brown, Marlow himself) are united in the narration of Jim’s life – the kind of arbitrary community from which Jim runs time and again – as the sources from which the master narrative, the ‘truth’, must necessarily be constructed. Yet each of them has access to only a fragment of that truth, and each fragment is ultimately separate and born of individual and unique experience, pieces of entirely different jigsaws that may contain elements of the same picture but do not fit together. It is from this ill fitting jigsaw that the court (and, by extension, the community it represents) will draw both its authority and its judgements and pass sentence on the Man Alone in the dock.

The novel ostensibly concerns itself with putting Jim on trial, finding the ‘truth’ of the events on board the Patna and of Jim’s final defeat in Patusan. Jim’s experiences of the kind of examinations that he is subjected to (in the court, in Doramin’s compound but also, most significantly, in Marlow’s narrative) require us to turn the tables and examine the processes of justice that the community believes it has a right to exact on the individual subject. Brierley’s presence as one of the expert jurors strengthens this call to reverse the judgement process. Lord points out that Brierley “represents absolute fidelity to group solidarity” (158) through his complete and unfailing embodiment of the virtues of the merchant seaman, which explains why he cannot continue to exist in the same world as Jim and the enigma of his conduct that challenges the ‘truth’ of those virtues.

Marlow, clearly, is more flexible. Jim's conduct does not threaten Marlow's existence because Marlow himself has a much more fluid (though no less essential) relationship with his professional community. We can, perhaps, see Brierley as an assertion of "the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct" (33) which Marlow identifies as "the one great secret of the craft" (31), an expression of the absolute association between actions and their meanings, between signs and their signification that comes from defining his identity purely in terms of an external, collective aspiration to an idealised model of the individual.

As Lord notes, however, "Adherence to a code of behaviour is more important to Brierley than fidelity to the idea underlying the code" (159), as his offer to help Jim disappear demonstrates. For Marlow, though, the attachment is based on "the *fellowship* of the craft" (my italics), it is in the society of his fellows, acknowledging their human weaknesses and failings yet still identifying with a shared belief in a negotiated (and, therefore, negotiable) set of principles to guide them that Marlow finds the hope of solidarity. Brierley's suicide, the moment at which he himself goes overboard, is the logical extension of his position: for Brierley Jim is inescapably guilty, yet if one member of his community can be guilty then, by association, all members can and, it would seem, are. Brierley concludes that ultimately the judgement on all of them will be the same, so why wait for the inevitable punishment?

In the Patusan section of the book, questions of authority and its provenance are re-enacted as Jim tries to re-assert the power of his individual identity as the source and arbiter of the meaning of his life. For the people of Patusan it is Jim's unknowability, his difference from the world of their experience in which they locate his authority, but Gentleman Brown knows his type, recognises him, understands him and from this understanding comes the power to undermine him. In the Bugis council's acceptance of Jim's strategy because "they believed Tuan Jim" Jim finds the "testimony to that faithfulness which made him in his own eyes equal to the impeccable men who never fall out of the ranks" (233). This is the moment of Jim's redemption in his own eyes: people openly declare that they will put their lives in his hands because they have faith in him - but faith, it can be argued, exists in the absence of knowledge, of empirical reality. On the *Patna* the frame narrator described this same process, how "the pilgrims surrendered to the white men... trusting the power of their unbelief" (15) and the betrayal of that trust by the crew's actions can, Jim believes, be supplanted as the defining moment of his life by this new affirmation.

For Marlow too this event carries significance, and has the power to change his perception and image of Jim:

From the moment the sheer truthfulness of his last three years of life carries the day against the ignorance, the fear, and the anger of men, he appears no longer to me as I saw him last - a white speck catching all the dim light left upon a sombre coast and the darkened sea - but greater and more pitiful in the loneliness of his soul, that remains even for her who loved him best a cruel and insoluble mystery. (233)

Something about the idea of Jim being accepted on his own terms as a symbol of truth, as a figure that inspires faith in the Bugis, causes Marlow to perceive only the “pitiful...loneliness” of someone who has finally succeeded in detaching himself from the rest of humanity, even the person “who loved him best” - although if this title is to be given to those for whom Jim “remains [...] a cruel and insoluble mystery” then Marlow himself is surely a contender.

What follows this union between the Man Alone’s vision of himself and its reflection in those around him shows how impossible it is for Jim’s romance to end in such a way in a modernist novel. The story plays out to its bloody conclusion despite the significance of this moment in Jim’s quest for his ‘true’ self. Having denied community’s ability to assign him an identity he doesn’t recognise, Jim is seduced by the possibility of external recognition of his self image that community now offers him, allowing himself to believe that there is an absolute correlation between his will and the external world. Brown, ever the Gentleman, violently disabuses him of this notion: we may try and control our stories but we are not their authors, not in *Lord Jim* anyway.

Marlow makes this explicit repeatedly when he talks of the impossibility of uttering a final word or proclamation: we don’t determine which is to be the final chapter, which is to be the defining moment of our lives because essentially our lives are stories told by other people. Marlow’s position of the teller of Jim’s story

is itself repeatedly challenged by the text; by the first four chapters being narrated by someone else, by his own narrative being contained within that of an external perspective, by the fact that the end of his storytelling epic on the veranda isn't the end of the story, and by his reliance on Gentleman Brown and on Jewel to add the supplementary chapters. The audience of Jim's story is itself non-definitive within the book – for all but one of his listeners on the veranda Jim's story ends with Jim triumphant (if untried) on the beach as Marlow sails back to the world. Beginnings and endings lose their ability to determine the shape of the tale in the face of this shifting and inconsistent audience that accompanies it along its way.

For all of *Lord Jim*'s insistence that the individual cannot exist outside of a faith and commitment to some kind of communal experience, the community of *Lord Jim* also fails to define the meaning of his life. By returning to the contention that the need to acknowledge and be reconciled to failure is a central theme of *Lord Jim*, this problem can be illuminated with reference to Alan Sandison's discussion of Rudyard Kipling, where he states that:

Half way between Marx and Sartre [Kipling] reveals the great human paradox that man can only exist in society which he alone can create out of his own precious store of selfhood: thus every contribution to society is an erosion of the self which it is designed to identify and protect. (1967 104)

This paradox is very much in evidence in *Lord Jim*, and the character of Jim shows the danger of refusing to engage with it by refusing to surrender any part of that selfhood that constitutes his integrity as a Man Alone. Jim's rejection of community

is a rejection of the uncertainties inherent in recognising that self determination is an impossibility, that identity must be a discussion rather than an assertion, and that sometimes that discussion will be an argument that you will lose.

It is no coincidence that Jim finds his delusion of self fulfilment on dry land after the jump over the Rajah's stockade rather than on the sea after his jump from the *Patna*. Dry land is where his family home can stand unchanged for centuries, whereas the sea offers no security – everything is constantly in flux. Jim's retreat into the interior is a search for refuge from the constant negotiations and sudden realignments of Marlow's craft in an illusion of the predictability and constancy of an agricultural mode of existence – he even dreams of starting a plantation. It is no surprise that when Brown arrives on the scene to destroy Jim's illusions it is via the river that connects Patusan to the sea. In recounting his contact with Conrad as both a man and an author H.G. Wells wrote:

His deepest theme is the simple terror of strange places, of the jungle, of night, of the incalculable sea; as a mariner his life was surely a perpetual anxiety about miscalculations, about the hidden structural vices of his ship, about shifting cargo and untrustworthy men; he laid bare with an air of discovery what most adventurers, travellers and sailors habitually suppress. (*Experiments* 615)

Wells identifies the pervading anxiety in Conrad's work: at sea nothing is static, nothing can be relied on not to turn out to be other than has been supposed, including your own location. In this context we can see how Jim's decision to choose fidelity to the course that leads him to Doramin's compound is an assertion

of a static view of the nature of identity where meaning can be unchanging and incorruptible, rooted in the soil. Jim's failure as "one of us" is his inability to come to terms with the methodology on which Marlow, Conrad and all mariners most relied when adrift on the ever changing sea: dead reckoning. Jim asserts that there is meaning inherent in his character that determines his position, but for Marlow navigation is a question of noting where you've come from, estimating your speed and using your last known heading to do the best you can. With the crumbling of the authority of great teleological narrative of religion, the modern self, *Lord Jim* suggests, must chart its course to the best of its ability, based on the knowledge that it is, inescapably, lost.

## 2.2 Kim: Little Friend of all the World

Cecil Eby paints a picture of the emergence of the young Rudyard Kipling as a literary Man Alone in the world of late Victorian literature. Eby argues that Kipling's work:

spoke with unfamiliar tones and accents, the voice was gruff and aggressive like that of a barbarian only recently over the wall. It was wholly at odds with the drowsy equivocation of English psychological fiction and with the weary falsettos of the art-for-art's-sake crowd. (149)

This perception of Kipling as an outsider “only recently over the wall” is useful to this discussion. It encourages us to think of him as the messenger returning from the frontier, gate-crashing the garden party of *fin-de-siecle* artistry to reveal the systemised brutality of the Imperial project. That organized violence and the exploitation of the weak by the strong underpinned the economic system that kept Oscar Wilde in silk breeches and Woolf in the room of her own would, understandably, not have been a particularly palatable reminder to the admirers of either.

Eby notes how literary and canonical taste makers, such as Wilde, reacted against “our best authority on the second rate” (152) and comments on the absence of “English men of letters” (177) from Kipling's funeral in 1936. The point of emphasising this estrangement between Kipling and the literary world around him is to counter the view that grew up after his support for the First World War that he

was a mere apologist for the establishment; that his writing, while technically proficient is in no way thematically challenging or radical.<sup>23</sup> This discussion will argue that *Kim*, through its examination of the possibilities and politics of estrangement in its itinerant protagonist, is very much concerned with challenging Victorian views of the integrity and nature of identity within colonial relationships. The seemingly utopian models of colonised and coloniser that *Kim* offers invite criticism of the presuppositions and prejudices that the text ostensibly supports, and the relationship between Kim as a Man Alone and the text's alternative versions of community are an integral part of this process.

So “Who is Kim-Kim-Kim?” (Kipling, *Kim* 185). The text itself wastes no time in confusing the issue, stating that “Kim was English[, t]hough he was burned black as any native” (1), before revealing that he's actually an orphan of Irish parents, brought up in a Punjabi city by a half caste woman of dubious propriety, has never been to England and speaks English only as a second language. Gail Low, in her analysis of *Kim*, chooses not to engage with this problematic description of Kim as English, suggesting that she is happy to accept it as a synonym for a white coloniser identity able to contain and equate different national identities. This seems a little strange given the particular history of the colonial relationship between England and Ireland which, 60 years after the independence of India and Pakistan,

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<sup>23</sup> Kipling's reputation does, however, seem to be currently undergoing something of a rehabilitation at the start of the twenty first century, although the authors of this are careful to acknowledge existing attitudes towards him. The most recent edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (2006) concludes that while Kipling was still definitely “Capable, on occasion, of constructing offensive stereotypes, [he] at other times demonstrates a remarkably detailed and intelligent interest in Indian culture” (1793). Chris Snodgrass, too, concedes that “Although he usually seemed to glorify the British Empire unselfconsciously, Kipling also problematized those imperialist sensibilities with wry irony and scepticism” (334).

is still ongoing (although it does, perhaps, support Stein's belief expressed in *Lord Jim* that, when seen from Malaysia, the difference between being from north or south of the Tweed doesn't seem all that great).

In the two decades preceding the publication of *Kim*, Anglo-Irish relations had been one of the primary concerns of British politics, from the Phoenix Park murders of 1882 to Gladstone's two failed attempts to pass a Home Rule Bill through Parliament in 1886 and 1894. By arguing that "the narrator insists on the truth of Kim's racial identity [his whiteness] behind all native masks that the young bazaar spy may choose to adopt" and that "authorial intervention with regard to the question of racial ancestry is deliberate and sustained throughout the text," (Low 212-3) Low dismisses the ambiguity that the narrator has introduced on the very first page about the nature of Kim's identity:

Though he was burned black as any native; though he spoke the vernacular by preference, and his mother-tongue in a clipped uncertain sing-song; though he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar; Kim was white – a poor white of the very poorest. (1)

This passage seems to be setting up a vindication of the supremacy of Kim's 'English' heritage by using the word "though" before comparisons with "native[s]" and "the vernacular", and yet the seeming coup de grace – "Kim was white" – is instantly undermined by further qualification. It seems unlikely that we are still being asked to accept the supremacy of "a poor white of the very poorest" over the native Indians. Instead, the reader is challenged to acknowledge the class and ethnic

divisions and internal hierarchy of ‘white’ before being introduced to the caste and racial complexity of India.<sup>24</sup>

### “Poor Whites”

The phrase “poor white” itself would have had a very specific meaning for Kipling and his readers at the dawn of the twentieth century. On the 1st of September 1874 the *Pall Mall Gazette* published a leading article entitled “The Poor Whites of India.” Whilst ostensibly a piece about the lack of educational opportunities that existed for the children of mixed British and Indian parentage, the real tone of the article is a sensationalist exposé of the degradations endured by this ethnically problematic group. It quotes extensively from the Archdeacon of Calcutta, who bemoans the existence of:

A very considerable number of lower class Europeans, living in a scarcely conceivable state of misery and degradation. [...] They live in bazaars and side streets, in huts, and with a degree of comfort and decency inferior to the lowest classes of the natives. Their children play with the native children and pick up their vices, without afterwards learning their virtues of industry and sobriety. They go to no school and receive no education at home. Happily, the circumstances of their life are not favourable to its long continuance... (786)

If Kipling’s use of the term “poor white” hadn’t already suggested a connection between his novel and the theme of the article, then his description of Kim’s

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<sup>24</sup> For further discussion of the complexity of the role of the Irish in British India see Radhika Mohanram’s “Dermographia: How the Irish Became White in India.”

upbringing, of living in the bazaar, playing with the native children and learning their “vices” would certainly make the point, so it is worth taking some time over what it is that the Gazette is saying about problematic white identities in India.

Throughout the article the word “European” is used as a synonym for white, reflecting the existence of the descendants of Portuguese and French, as well as British, settlers and traders. Whilst this can, perhaps, be viewed as an attempt to spread the blame for the “poor whites” situation and assert that it is not Britain alone that is responsible, it also, at surface level, seems to support Low’s contention that ‘white’ in this context is a unified and homogenous identity. The author, however, describes how:

In the single city of Calcutta, the number of arrests of Europeans for vagrancy amounted to 963 in 1871, and the evil has increased so rapidly as to require one stringent Act after another, and to call forth a still sharper law during the present year. The lower classes of half-castes in India lead the life of pariah dogs, skulking on the outskirts between the native and European communities, and branded as noxious animal by both. (785)

This process of legislation within the colonial society, of the white officials passing laws against the failure of other, ‘diluted’ white identities, is emblematic of a desire to deny communion to the visible signs of European weakness and failure. It was an attempt to provide a legal justification for the ostracism of “poor whites” from white society as a whole, delineating a clear division within Low’s homogenous white identity. The argument would have run that a person who was a vagrant under the terms of the 1874 Act was a criminal and, therefore, not representative of the

white community as a whole. This ‘fact’ would have superseded the individual in question’s problematic claim to be recognised as a “European” within the wider ethnic hierarchy upon which the discourse of colonial authority and political control rested. To be white is thus not just a question of ethnicity, but is also, within the terms of the legislative class, an expression of an identity validated by its position within a culture of meritocracy.

The failure of a growing number of whites to satisfy the requirements of this meritocracy had, according to the article, resulted in:

A vast, miserable population of Europeans and half-castes [...] growing up in that country unable to earn their bread, ignorant of the rudiments of their religion, a scandal to the white colour, and with the sole career before them of the House of Correction and the gaol. (786)

That the existence of such a scandalizing population (unable even to provide itself with the basics of food and shelter) would have been embarrassing to the colonial government seems certain, primarily because of its visibility to Indian identities over whom a racial superiority was being asserted. Kim is unmistakably described within the discourse of this ostracism, and as such “the truth of his racial identity” sets him apart from the politically dominant white mainstream, rather than asserting his unity with it.

The original “Poor Whites” article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* was reprinted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September in *The Times*, which also ran an editorial on the subject. Over

the course of the following week *The Times* also printed a selection of related correspondence, which was itself the subject of an article in *Macmillan's Magazine* the following month.<sup>25</sup> The term “poor white” can thus be seen to have accumulated a certain amount of cultural significance in defining a kind of failed, ostracized colonial identity during Kipling’s formative years, a significance that it would seem unwise to overlook.<sup>26</sup>

Low identifies that “there are repetitive references to Kim’s ‘white blood’, a ‘white man’s horror of snakes’ and a ‘European lust for flesh-meat’, even when, to all intents and purposes, the character would know very little of such European fears and customs.” (213), but fails to add that this is only half the story. For every instance where this is true there is a corresponding description of when Kim “fell back, Oriental fashion, on time and chance” (*Kim* 106), “Native fashion...curled himself up... and went to sleep” or “squatted as only the natives can, - in spite of the abominable clinging trousers” (101). What is interesting about the use of “white” or “European” as against “native” or “Oriental” is how Kipling uses them to emphasise Kim’s estrangement from whichever community he happens to be in: it is when Kim is in the company of the lama or amongst the Indians on the Great Trunk Road that we get references to his ‘whiteness,’ and when amongst whites it is

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<sup>25</sup> The letters can be found in copies of *The Times* from September 4<sup>th</sup> (5), 9<sup>th</sup> (6) and 10<sup>th</sup> (11) 1874. The article in *Macmillan's* referred to is Sir Alexander Arbuthnott’s “The Poor Whites of India: A Few Words Regarding Them.” *Macmillan's Magazine* 30 (1874): 554-58.

<sup>26</sup> In *Something of Myself*, Kipling describes how, as a child of seven or eight, he had discovered that “‘reading’ was not ‘the Cat lay on the Mat,’ but a means to everything that would make me happy. So I read all that came within my reach” (7).

his 'nativeness' that is described. Racial epithets are thus associated with the dislocation of Kim, serving to assert his role as a Man Alone.

Low, in her belief in a truth present in Kim's racial identity, seems not to acknowledge the narrator's knowing, ironic tone and irony plays a central role in *Kim*, whose entire existence seems based on his ability to say one thing while meaning another, and to appear as one thing while being another. Sandison's reading of Kipling would support this view of the ironic humour present in the narrative voice of Kim. He argues that:

The British work in India was a huge, macabre joke which Kipling and a few – but only a few – of his creations saw. The principal character, inert, but possessed of an awesome authority, is India herself. Seen thus the Briton in India becomes inconspicuously small and his labours puny and futile. (1967, 82)

This perception of the futility of individual endeavour within Imperial India is not one that is often associated with Kipling, and the authority of "India herself" over the narrative and characters of *Kim* strikes a further parallel with *Lord Jim*. India in its diversity, its enormity and its allure can be read as the "destructive element" in which Kim's identity is repeatedly immersed. The result of these immersions (that so thrill and fascinate Kim) is precisely the instability and problematic relationship with a clearly defined sense of self that are expressed in Kim's refrain "Who is Kim?" In trying to answer this question Kim takes Stein's advice, but every immersion poses more questions than answers as Kim is exposed to further possible

identities and subject positions while simultaneously increasing his need and desire for the integrity that is required to be an active agent within his own life.<sup>27</sup>

For the Victorian British mind the self proclaimed affinity between the British and Roman Empires (so dramatically realised by Lutyens in the marble construction of New Delhi), whilst providing the moral framework of the civilising mission of the ‘white man’s burden’ also had another story to tell. The publication of Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776 to 1788) had systematically detailed the fallibility and degeneracy of Empire and how eventually it becomes a victim of the excesses of its own success. What remains after an Empire passes is the cultural and geographical space that was there before it arrived, and the intense struggle for meaning and identity during the period of Imperial control will ultimately be rendered meaningless by the ineluctable movement of the Enlightenment model of history. This is the “macabre joke” and source of the irony within *Kim* that renders the labours of the isolated individual “puny and futile,” whatever their value and meaning within the *mis-en-scene* of the text.

Kim is isolated, then, not only by the unique circumstances of his birth and upbringing but also by the broader historical context of the British (and Irish) presence within India. Wherever he is and whoever he is with, Kim is constantly

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<sup>27</sup> The contrast between the increasingly frantic dynamism of this struggle and the inert presence of India and its “awesome authority” is the buzzing of a fly around the elephant in the room of colonial discourse: India was there before the British arrived and would still be there after they had gone.

referred to in terms of his otherness: to be a “Little Friend of all the World” means refusing to commit to any identity, any one community in particular and that is why “ ‘I am alone – all alone,’ [Kim] thought. ‘In all India is no-one so alone as I’”(185). This moment of recognition, which is central to the development of Kim, coming as it does at the start of Kim’s career as an independent agent of the secret service, resonates throughout Kipling’s work.

Sandison argues that the contention that “Man is alone...is the core of Kipling’s artistic vision” (1967, 103), developing this theme further to add that the “dynamic which motivates Kipling’s work” is “an acute awareness of man’s essential isolation and an agonized consciousness of the razor’s edge on which he must balance to sustain his moment of existence”(112). This “razor’s edge” can be read as the division between self and non-self, and in *Kim* it takes the form of the multitude of subject positions that Kim is constantly playing with and moving through, as if to stay still would be to lose his balance. Kim has internalised his non-selves, his others, to the point where there is no ‘original’ or integral Kim, but only a wheel with a different identity at the end of each spoke which Kim is able to spin at will. This echoes the Wheel of Life which the lama is able to draw and expound on: the cycle of reincarnation as presented by the Buddhist lama can be seen as a model for the many identities passed through by Kim. Just as the lama seeks to free himself from his wheel through uniting with the universal spirit, so Kim is left at the end of the novel with the decision to take another spin in the Great Game or to accept an identity that he has now proved he can be.

### The Boy Alone

Kim's status as a Boy Alone, combining his physical immaturity with the unique circumstances of his upbringing, is central to this ability to play and makes it easier for him – within the terms of Kipling's narrative – to 'degenerate' and inhabit the more 'primitive' native identities that operate within the text. Kim stands as a challenge to the idea of difference – not just between white and non-white but also between the innumerable subdivisions within each. He can be both English and Irish, the guttersnipe son of a drunken private or a public school educated trainee Sahib; and can also inhabit Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist identities, cursing like a low caste beggar, assuming the attire of a prince or undertaking a religious quest. The narrative supports the right of someone like Kim to cross barriers and take his identity from his context safe in the knowledge that there is, in fact, *no-one* like Kim.

As he approaches manhood, however, beset by facial hair and the approaches of the Woman of Shamlegh, the text presents him with a moment of decision. As a boy, identity is a game that can be played: Kim is separated from consequence, he is protected (and emboldened) by his naivety and by his lack of familial or wider responsibilities with no-one to look out for but himself. As a man, though, his choices have consequences that seem to be mutually exclusive because they are about deciding where his loyalties lie, the ultimate test of the 'white' colonial. Kim has either to choose the world of Lurgan and Creighton and be a

Sahib spy (a new Sir Richard Burton), or to become a holy man, and therefore render himself as non-threatening to the established power structure (as is the lama). In effect, the “Little Friend of all the World” is being asked to choose his enemies.

Were he to choose to remain in one of the native identities (or to use his abilities for the services of a foreign power or his own hedonistic pleasure) he would represent a challenge to the superiority of the Anglo-Indian identity of the Sahib. By suggesting that being a Sahib is not preferable to a native identity, that it doesn't offer more in the way of opportunity or satisfaction, Kim would compromise the communal creed of the Sahibs outlined by Christopher Hawes, namely that “British society in India depended essentially on the acceptance by the ruled of an ‘inherent’ superiority in their rulers” (76). As a boy, Kim could play with this notion and still be contained within the Anglo-Indian establishment of Creighton and Lurgan, even as he infuriated and appalled less enlightened members of British society, such as Mr. Bennett or the drummer boy. He could also subvert the lama's quest and lie to him to provide cover for his spying mission, while simultaneously fulfilling the role and obligations of the chela from a genuine sense of filial love. Bearing the lama down from the foothills of the Himalayas, however, Kim's dawning manhood realises that it can't support this kind of duality, “I love thee ... and it is all too late. ... I was a child. ... Oh why was I not a man! ...’

Overborne by strain, fatigue, and the weight beyond his years, Kim broke down and sobbed at the lama's feet” (271). The question of “Who is Kim-Kim-Kim?” can no longer be left unanswered.

What Kim learns on his return to the Plains, to the scene of his boyhood adventures, is thus that he can no longer be the servant of two masters, even though the book has seen him move through various father/son and master/servant relationships with Ali, Creighton, Lurgan and the lama (the book starts at the moment Kim commits himself to his first prolonged spell of service). Even though the lama is presented as consistently misinterpreting Kim's activities, the duality of the oft repeated question "Was there ever such a chela as this?" suggests an understanding of 'Kim' as the location of his quest, of the struggle between the spiritual and political worlds. Spirituality serves as a mediator in the text as people ask the lama to intercede; to bring sons to marriages, cure children, provide amulets for protection and so on, and an aura of neutrality, of disconnectedness, is crucial to be effective in this role. Kim is offered a choice of mediating positions through the isolation of his dual apprenticeships: it is his precisely his refusal to be defined by the communities he associates with and to transgress their boundaries that allows him to mediate between them.

Kim's ability to thus mediate the affects of 'benevolent' colonial rule by supporting the work of Creighton against the priest-striking incompetents of Russia, is, therefore, inextricably linked to his performance as the chela, the healer of sick infants and a holy man's crutch. When the lama, on the descent from the Himalayas, once more speaks of having to remember that Kim is a Sahib Kim's response does

not fit well with Low's assertion that the one irreducible feature of his identity is racial:

“Thou hast said there is neither black nor white. Why plague me with this talk, Holy One? Let me rub the other foot. It vexes me. I am *not* a Sahib. I am thy *chela*, and my head is heavy on my shoulders.” (270)

The reason for this heaviness is the cause of Kim's breakdown, the insupportable burden of serving two masters. The idea that there is no difference between black and white is still presented as being something that Kim has heard the lama say, rather than something that Kim himself asserts, but this is followed by the white man requesting to massage the other foot of his non-white master, to subvert the racial hierarchy that many critics accuse Kipling of celebrating.

Such a juxtaposition is typical of Kipling's technical ability and his wider concern with the role of work and service in providing an answer to the question posed by Stein in *Lord Jim* of “how to be” in a world where man is isolated and alone and where, as Sandison has argued, the creation of community necessitates the gradual surrender of selfhood that such a community is supposed to protect. By inserting a more profound resonance into the everyday and mundane business of a chela's duties to his master Kipling seeks to bridge the gap between metaphysical solitude and the tangible world that the individual can affect through the performance of his responsibilities to others. This offers a vision of work and service within a greater, collective identity that can rescue the Man Alone from the insubstantial and non-determinant existence of the perennial itinerant, giving Kim

the confidence and assurance of self to differentiate between the identities of Sahib and chela. The image of the lama's feet is also interesting: having raised the issue of the difference (or lack thereof) between black and white the passage then introduces the feet as representative of two things which are, essentially, the same and part of a unity of design and purpose and yet also simultaneously opposites.

The question of which allegiance is strongest in *Kim* shapes the narrative in its concluding chapters. When the lama asks Kim if he has ever thought of leaving him:

Kim thought of the oilskin packet and the books in the food-bag. If some one duly authorized would only take delivery of them the Great Game might play itself for aught he then cared. ... 'No,' he said almost sternly. 'I am not a dog or a snake to bite when I have learned to love.'  
(271)

This paean to one kind of service (even at the expense of another) is laced with a venom that perhaps evokes the great untold story within *Kim* of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 (notwithstanding the Rassaldar Major's brief allusion to it). The question of where loyalty is owed is a recurring theme within the text, and when "someone duly authorized" does "take delivery" of the oilskin packet that Kim carries it is not Creighton or Lurgan, Kim's white Sahib masters, but the Bengali babu that Kim at first so readily dismissed as being unfit for the Great Game.

This passing of the burden of the stolen documents is a moment rich with interpretive possibilities. Does it represent the babu's inferiority to Kim through the

delegation of the task once the real work has been done? This view would support a reading of the relationship between Kim and R.17 as exemplifying the often observed truism that the British were only able to rule India as a result of the complicity of native Indians in the functioning and operation of the Imperial state. Or does this moment, coming as it does after Kim's recovery from his physical and emotional breakdown, suggest that the babu is a safer pair of hands than the young 'Sahib' whose priorities are in flux? It was the babu, after all, who engineered the theft of the documents in the first place. Kim's involvement in their delivery to Creighton is bookended by the babu's, and it is the babu who sees the job through to its conclusion. This reading implies that within the operation of The Ethnological Survey department the actions of white agents can be shaped by Indians, even when one has passed examinations that should lead to command over the natives. How we interpret this moment is clearly linked to our view of the role of the Babu in the text, and it is worth taking some time to consider his own status as an alternative Man Alone.

### **R.17: The Indo-Anglian Babu**

The character of Hurree Chander Mookerjee (or Hurree Babu as he is more frequently referred to as) can be read as an interpretation of the Man Alone within the context of the colonized population, and as such is a useful counterpoint to the figure of Kim within this discussion. The meaning of the term 'babu' changed over the course of the nineteenth century, from being understood as a direct Hindi

equivalent of 'Esquire' in the early 1800s to signifying an ornate but superficial and somehow distasteful Anglicization by the time of *Kim*'s publication ("Babu," def. 1a), with 'babudom' becoming associated with the Indian National Congress since its inception in 1885.<sup>28</sup>

Edward Said, however, regards the babu as merely a "small practical device" (37) used by Kipling to represent the internalization of Imperial authority by Indian subjects of the Raj, but this does not adequately explain the importance of the character to the text's discussion of the operation and structure of that authority, or to its investigation of identity as a question of performance. Parama Roy, in her study, describes the babu as:

a character in whom very specific cultural meanings are vested. He himself is well aware of them, and even as he is the typical Bengali, verbose, cowardly, superstitious, he also knows how to play the boastful Bengali or the malcontent babu to perfection. (84)

By confirming the appearance of the stereotype amongst strangers the babu makes himself unproblematic, knowable, unthreatening, just as the Chevalier Burke does amongst the pirates in Stevenson's *The Master of Ballantrae* through the 'Oirishness' of his Crowding Pat routine. By choosing to submit to the stereotype identity through which others can know him, the babu shows how the stereotype

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<sup>28</sup> The inaugural meeting of the INC was held in Bombay in December 1885 and was instigated by a Scottish civil servant, Allan Hume, with the permission of the then Viceroy, the Irish Lord Dufferin. Sir William Wedderburn and Alfred Webb were among the first 10 presidents of the INC between 1885-1894. Pattabhi Sitaramayya discusses the role of the British in the formation of the INC in the first chapter of his *History of the Indian National Congress*.

becomes not only mimicry in a Bhabhian sense but also a deception and a place to hide, a source of security and refuge.

Once again it is possible to see how submission and other masochistic traits become empowering within colonial fiction. As Hurree Babu feigns drunkenness to gull the Russian and French agents in order to orchestrate the theft of their documents:

he became thickly treasonous, and spoke in terms of sweeping indecency of a government which had forced upon him a white man's education and neglected to supply him with a white man's salary. [...] Never was so unfortunate a product of English rule in India more unhappily thrust upon aliens. (237)

The Russian agent's assessment of Hurree Babu after being taken in by this display is instructive: "He represents *in petto* India in transition – the monstrous hybridism of East and West. ...He has lost his own country and has not acquired any other. But he has a most complete hatred of his conquerors" (237). This description of the babu could belong to a postcolonial critique of the character, and Kipling puts it in the mouth of an eminently gullible agent of the enemy, a man willing to accept surface reality if it accords with his own preconceived opinions of how things are. The babu's power comes from his knowledge of these preconceptions – suggesting an intellectual superiority that is able to effectively analyse and outmanoeuvre his opponents – and his willingness to submit himself to them for his own ends.

The babu's effectiveness is repeatedly emphasised in the text; examples include Kim's amazement that such a grotesque and seemingly unwieldy figure could actually fool him via a disguise; his reliance on the babu's gift of the box of powders and potions to heal the Jat's son and to disguise E23; and the babu's own successful manipulation of the Russian and French agents. It is this effectiveness that gives the babu status within the overriding narrative of the British secret service, which forces whites within this service to treat him with respect even as he relies on a public performance as a servile malcontent to facilitate his efficacy.<sup>29</sup>

The babu, however, will never acquire the letters FRS after his name, despite the strength of effort he puts into his ethnographic research into the supernatural. In his desire for this badge of acceptance, and the impossibility of it ever happening, the text presents the babu's ability to cross boundaries as less potent than Kim's, despite his great proficiency in his work as an agent. The mimic man, whilst adept at playing the stereotype, is still trapped by the political 'truth' that it springs from, that of the inferiority of the Bengali to the white man within the racial hierarchy of the British Raj. Kim's skin can acquire colour for the purposes of disguise, but Hurree's cannot be bleached to effect an inverse transition. The inference within the sociological framework of Kipling's text is that a white identity is a space on which can be inscribed the signs of another, but any other colour

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<sup>29</sup> The perception of man as standing or falling on his own merits, through the quality of and his application to his work echoes in G.K. Chesterton's observation of Kipling quoted by Eby, that "He admires England because she is strong, not because she is English" (170). What gives England its integrity and its authority to command respect for Kipling is not its rolling hills or its score on the green-and-pleasant-land scale, but the fact that it preaches and exercises strength in its relations with other national identities: England works hard, harder than other nations, and, as a result, is strong in comparison.

carries an irremovable indicator of its origin that prevents it from acquiring the knowledge and experience necessary to govern the vast diversity of India (and by extension the Empire as a whole). However hard Hurree works for the Sahibs he can never, despite his all his skill, research and his degree, *be* a Sahib.

### **Beyond The Pale**

The only way, therefore, that brown, black or yellow people can become white (and, therefore, potentially Sahibs) is through miscegenation, which Kim, despite inhabiting the libidinous opportunities of India, is very keen to avoid. In Kipling's story "Beyond the Pale" from *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888), however, the young romantic hero Trejago, who knew that "for all practical purposes, the old Arabian Nights are good guides" (127), does cross this line.<sup>30</sup> To facilitate this relationship, the young white man disguises himself in the *boorka* of a Muslim woman and penetrates the barred window of an Indian's house, seemingly displaying once again the power of the imperial identity to transgress the cultural and social boundaries it creates with impunity.

The story opens with the statement that "A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed" (127), yet as the tragedy unfolds it is the Indian community that is shown reacting most strongly against the threat of miscegenation. Durga Charan, the man in whose house Bisesa is kept, mutilates her

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<sup>30</sup> The consequences of this are far more severe for his Indian lover, Bisesa, than they are for him: she has her hands cut off while he receives a stab in the groin as a result of which "he limped slightly [...] for the rest of his days" (132).

and attacks Trejago, whereas the consequences within British society seem to be restricted to the fact that Trejago can never reveal his secret if he wants to remain “a decent sort of man” (132) and has to lie about the source of his injury. The violence of Durga Charan’s reaction highlights the prejudice that the Anglo-Indian reader would bring to the story, that it is they who have the most to lose by and fear from mixed race relationships. That a native, ‘inferior’ identity should resist such contact so forcefully and with impunity (Trejago doesn’t even know where the front of his house is and so cannot retaliate even if he wanted to) suggests that the story carries with it a more complicated warning than might at first appear.

If the Anglo-Indian (in this instance the white Englishman brought up in India) is being presented as the acceptable model for creating the perfect imperialist within *Kim*, then the threat posed to both communities by the physical union of Anglo and Indian appears larger by its absence from the text. Kim’s ability to change his costume, his colour, his speech, his mannerisms and his professed religious allegiance are presented as a means by which racial and cultural boundaries can be crossed on an individual basis for political ends without fundamentally destabilising the dominant power hierarchy of British India, or the jealously guarded integrity of racial identities. Kim’s obvious delight in being able to inhabit positions within all the different communities can be read as affording them all a level of respect, and also as asserting their essential community with each other. The fact that they are all able to accommodate the “Little Friend of all the World” suggests enough commonality to make peaceful and co-operative

coexistence possible, in so far as those communities accept the ‘friendship’ of the British state and do not attempt to exceed the boundaries of their own position.

This narrative of racial harmony under the benevolent umbrella of the *Pax Britannica* is made problematic, however, by the very real social stigma against mixed race relationships, and the isolation and exclusion imposed upon their issue. Within the real world of late Victorian British India the cultural and legislative prejudice against the poor whites of the bazaar prevent Kipling’s ideal imperialist from becoming anything other than an exception to an obsessively promulgated rule. To argue, therefore, that *Kim* was supportive of the politically and socially segregated reality of British rule in India is to ignore the pronounced divergence between the potential for recognition and co-operation in the India of *Kim* and the reality being experienced by Kipling’s contemporaries.

Nowhere is this more marked than in the excluded status of the “Poor White” community, of whom Kim is perhaps the most famous representative. In his discussion of the Eurasian, mixed race community of British India, Hawes remarks on their “marginality [...] to the great affairs of colonial government,” being “the Cinderellas of British Society, [and] are nowadays but a footnote to the historical account of British India” (vi). What links Kim (who, despite his Indian upbringing is not the product of a mixed race relationship) with the exclusion of the Eurasian community is Hawes’ reference to “the historically most obscure and inarticulate – the poorest among Eurasians – the children of British soldiers” (vii). While the

mixed race offspring of British civil servants and higher ranking members of the military were often able to achieve a degree of financial security and social prominence in India, they were vastly outnumbered by the illegitimate, mixed race children of “‘poor whites’ – the military rank and file” (ix). The “Poor Whites” article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* discussed earlier details the fate of many of these people, and it was very much not that of an ‘ideal’ colonising identity that seems to be available to Kim.

Kim’s quest for community is comparable, therefore, to the quest of the Eurasian identity in British India, and is driven by the same sense of dislocation from the parent societies that have created him. Hawes writes that:

If ever a community could have wished for its own corporate dissolution [...] it would have been the Eurasians of nineteenth century India. [...] If a sense of ‘belonging’ is accepted as an essential attribute of a true community, the predicament of Eurasians was that they sought to belong to the British community rather than to one another. The emergence of a Eurasian ‘community’ as such in British India was occasioned by the establishment by British policy and opinion of occupational, social, racial and political boundaries within which Eurasians were to be confined.  
(74)

The community that has been home to Kim before the action of the novel starts, the dizzying multiplicity of the bazaar, remains the location of Kim’s sense of belonging throughout the text. What compels Kim to leave this world (and to come face to face with the extent of his dislocation from it), however, is the result of his racial heritage, namely the amulet and the dream bequeathed to him by his father

that form the basis of his quest. Kim's search for the "Red Bull on the green field who shall help me" (16) brings him into contact with a world that will try and teach him that his 'true' identity is opposed to the one he has derived from his own experiences, and, furthermore, is directly involved in the political and social control and delineation of that experience. While Kim is able to recognise and dismiss the narrow-mindedness of Mr. Bennett and his own contemporaries within the Sahib educational system, he is still unable to resist the compulsion to realise the meaning of his quest, and gets drawn deeper into the white world of his origin as a consequence.

This desire to belong to a community that is defining the terms of your exclusion is a recurring theme for the characters of *Kim*, from the babu's exclusion from the Royal Society to Kim's rival in the house of Lurgan Sahib. That it was also the lived experience of the "poor white" in India is shown by a letter in *The Times* from the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1874, written in response to the Pall Mall Gazette article, that details from first hand the experience of East Indians trying to satisfy the internalised constraints imposed upon them by British society:<sup>31</sup>

It will doubtless surprise you when I say that in Madras the East Indian population may be divided into three classes – first, those who are supposed to be living in a comparative degree of comfort and affluence; second, those who are

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<sup>31</sup> Hawes records that in 1827 an organised attempt was made by people of mixed British and Indian descent to petition the government in Madras to discontinue the use of the term 'half-caste' in legislative documents. He notes that the petitioners conceded a certain variance amongst themselves over a replacement, with "Eurasian," "Anglo-Asian," "Indo-Briton," "East Indian," "Asiatick Briton" and "Anglo-Indian" all having their adherents (89). It was Eurasian that eventually prevailed, until it was officially replaced by 'Anglo-Indian' in 1911, with the latter having previously been reserved for the use of British residents in India.

merely keeping up an outward show of respectability and who just manage to live from hand to mouth; and third, those who are eking out an existence in squalor and indigence. (“A Poor White” 11)

This description of the middle third, desperately seeking to portray an image of European respectability in the hope that it will open up European society to them, is made tragic by the reaction of British society to this kind of affectation. Hawes argues that outward signs of correspondence between the two communities, such as:

Language, dress and social behaviour emphasised the close cultural relation of Eurasian to Briton. But to the British of the day, differences were more important than similarities in determining the Eurasian position within their society. The most obvious sign to all of Eurasian difference was the colour of their skin. (76)

Crossing boundaries genetically, therefore, reveals the fundamental contingency of racial divisions and the political structures erected on them in British India. Kim, it can be argued, is allowed to play at being Indian so that he can enjoy all the exotic delights of ‘going native’ without having to go native for his delights, and thereby maintain the integrity of his genetic identity against the threat of miscegenation.

Conversely, however, Kim’s existence as a man apart, between communities, is a symbol of the potential for the future combination of the Anglo and the Indian. Kipling’s poem “Recessional,” written in 1897 for Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, can be read as signalling his belief in the essential transience of Imperial domination, and in Providence as the only arbiter of what will be left behind. The poem presents a cyclical view of history, from its invocation to the “God of our fathers, known of

old,” (line 1) to the association of “all our pomp” with “Nineveh and Tyre” (15-16), suggesting the inevitable fall of British dominion over its empire. Faith in “the reeking tube and iron shard” (26) is attributed to the heathen: military dominance is a false god, and the refrain of “Lest we forget – lest we forget!” (6) serves to reinforce the idea of a wheel capable of turning full circle.

This view of the impermanence of Empire suggests that the energy and effort, the triumphs and failures of the Great Game as depicted in *Kim* are all essentially futile when considered against the Great Wheel of human history and experience. Sandison draws our attention to the image of the wheel that recurs throughout the book and its appearance in relation to Kim’s breakdown on his return from the hills (1987, xix). Fittingly for Kipling, the first English author to own a motor car, this illness is figured in terms of its effect on the wider machine: Kim becomes a spanner in the works, “a cog-wheel unconnected with any machinery, just like the idle cog-wheel of a cheap Beheea sugar-crusher laid by in a corner” (282). This is the natural conclusion of his career as a Boy Alone, to end up disconnected from the machine of which he had imagined himself an integral part, his isolated motion becoming futile through its lack of meaningful interaction with an encompassing social mechanism.

After the Sahiba has nursed him back to health however, Kim is able to assert:

‘I am Kim. I am Kim. And what is Kim?’ His soul repeated it again and again.

He did not want to cry, - had never felt less like crying in his life, - but of a sudden easy, stupid tears trickled down his nose, and with an almost audible click he felt the wheels of his being lock up anew on the world without.  
(282)

That at this crucial moment of decision Kim’s body and his will act independently of each other is suggestive of the conflict that has animated him. The nature of his choice, though, is shown by which mechanism his cog-wheel reconnects to. As he lies down upon the “good clean dust – no new herbage that, living, is half way to death already, but the hopeful dust that holds the seed of all life” he reconnects to an image of Mother Earth, to the possibility of his own renewal and rebirth. Despite the competing claims of the fathers that the text offers him, it is to a mother that Kim finally commits himself, “his head lay powerless upon her breast, and his open hands surrendered to her strength” (283). For the orphan Kim, as a Boy Alone in the confusion of Imperial identities, the strongest yearning for community is identified not with the lama’s quest for spiritual enlightenment or with Creighton’s quest for temporal dominance, but with the family represented by the community of India herself, within which all else becomes possible.

### 3. The Good Doctor?

Doctor: ...My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight.  
I think, but dare not speak.  
Gentlewoman: Good night, good doctor. (*Exeunt*).

*Macbeth*, 5.1.42-44

In England at the turn of the seventeenth century “I think, but dare not speak” remained the mantra of the doctor, drawing his own conclusions but lacking the social authority to express them. This impotence is central to his status as a “good doctor,” a title granted to him by the Gentlewoman not because he has affected a cure for Lady Macbeth, but because he has articulated his own inadequacy and subservience to God’s will and power - “More needs she the divine than the physician” (5.1.38). The “good doctor” poses no threat to existing epistemological hierarchies and respects social conventions even when they are not reconcilable with the implications of his knowledge.

The punishment for a doctor who refused such a submissive posture was explored by Shakespeare’s contemporary Christopher Marlowe in *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, first published in 1604, in which Man’s thirst for knowledge and dominion were depicted as the engine of his damnation.<sup>32</sup> Faustus’s refusal to accept the boundaries that God had placed on the capacity and agency of man stemmed from a fundamental challenge to the logic of God’s design:

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<sup>32</sup> Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) offered an early nineteenth century perspective on this theme, and a longer version of this thesis would have explored the influence of this text on the study period.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and  
 there's no truth in us. Why, then, belike we must sin, and so  
 consequently die:  
 Ay, we must die an everlasting death.  
 What doctrine call you this, Che sera, sera,  
 What will be, shall be? Divinity, adieu!

*The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, 1.1.42-45

Faustus argues that if man is capable of sin and is to be punished for sinning, then surely the fault lies with his Creator. He articulates a right to analyse what he sees of creation in critical terms, and once the quality of God's law has been challenged in this way it becomes possible for Faustus to ask why it should be seen as the determining authority of human experience. If this law is not innate (that is, if it can be broken) then a man's mind is free to establish its own epistemology rather than accept a pre-ordained position of inadequacy and submission to an omnipotent other.

The publication of Francis Bacon's *Essays* in 1597 and *The Proficience and Advancement of Learning* in 1605 reflected this alternative perspective, and the systematic investigation of observable phenomenon advocated by Bacon would develop through the foundation of the Royal Society in 1660 and over the course of the Enlightenment to provide the nineteenth century man of science with just such an alternative framework of authority. The motto adopted by the Royal Society of London in 1663 was "Nullius in Verba" ("On the words of no one"), and this rejection of (unsupported) authority is highly relevant to the development of the figure of the doctor in romance fiction of the late nineteenth century as a Man

Alone, contemptuous of the intellectual and metaphysical assumptions of wider society.

The modern conception of a doctor as a member of a professional body is a nineteenth century one, stemming from the foundation of the British Medical Association in 1832, the stated aims of which were the “Maintenance of the Honour and Respectability of the Profession” (Bartrip 5).<sup>33</sup> The industrial revolution placed a premium on the acquisition and application of all forms of material knowledge, and in its wake came a host of such bodies dedicated to the advancement of learning.<sup>34</sup> The Royal Society itself underwent important changes during this period, perhaps the most significant of which was in 1847 when the criteria for election to a Fellowship were changed. From this date only the merit of an applicant’s scientific work was taken into account, ending the practice of admitting wealthy amateurs that might act as patrons, and instead instilling a culture of professionalism.<sup>35</sup>

The first recorded use of the word “scientist” was in the *Quarterly Review* in 1834, reporting on an attempt by the British Association for the Advancement of Science to find a “name by which we can designate the students of the knowledge of the material world collectively”. Having dismissed “philosophers” and “savans”:

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<sup>33</sup> The meaning of a medical practitioner comes only sixth in the OED’s list of definitions, despite its current predominance in modern usage. Previously it had been applied to teachers, to those who were particularly skilled in a specific field or who had attained the highest qualification bestowed by a university in theology, law or philosophy (“Doctor.”).

<sup>34</sup> These included the Royal Society of Medicine in 1805, the Royal Geographical Society in 1830 and the Royal Astronomical Society in 1831.

<sup>35</sup> For further discussion of this transformation see Mary Gleason *The Royal Society of London: Years of Reform, 1827-1847*.

some ingenious gentleman proposed that, by analogy with *artist*, they might form *scientist*, and added that there could be no scruple in making free with this termination when we have such words as *sciolist*, *economist*, and *atheist*—but this was not generally palatable. (“Scientist.”)

Despite this initial unpalatability the term soon gained popularity and a wider acceptance, but as early as 1840 Blackwoods Magazine introduced the first schism between its constituent elements of art and science by arguing that “Leonardo was mentally a seeker after truth—a scientist; Coreggio was an assertor of truth—an artist” (“Scientist”). This distinction is crucial to our conception of the scientist in the Victorian age. On the one hand it was a period of compulsive observation and categorisation, of voyages seeking geographical, botanical and anthropological discovery. On the other it was the age of the great Engineers, artists in iron and steel, asserting the fundamental truths of gravity and the tensile strength of materials. But while Isambard Kingdom Brunel was feted for his understanding and application of the truths of the material universe, Charles Darwin’s use of equally ‘scientific’ methods to seek new answers to the question of life’s origins received a much more divided reception.

The famous debate on Darwin’s *On The Origin of Species* on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1860 at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, only 26 years after their creation of the scientist, saw Thomas Huxley engaging with Bishop Samuel Wilberforce over the right of the scientist to think, and to dare to speak. J.R. Lucas argues that this confrontation revealed that:

the pretension of the Church to dictate to scientists the conclusions they were allowed to reach were, for good and all, decisively defeated, the autonomy of science was established in Britain and the Eastern world, the claim of plain unvarnished truth on men's allegiance was vindicated, however unwelcome its implications for human vanity might be, and the flood tide of Victorian faith in all its fulsomeness was turned to an ebb, [...] Even churchmen concede that it was a disastrous defeat. (313)

From Lucas's vantage point of the late twentieth century it is perhaps understandable to present the outcome in such clear terms, but as the nineteenth century waned the controversy continued to rage.<sup>36</sup> During the 1880s and 1890s this debate about Darwin's ideas, and about the implications of scientific endeavour for social organisation, continued in the pages of the burgeoning magazine market in the form of both scientific discourse and also the romance revival in fiction, fuelled by authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson and H.G. Wells.

The following discussion will seek to explain the evolution of the character of the lone scientist, a figure moving irrevocably beyond the protective umbrella of the traditional epistemological framework provided to society by the church. Stevenson and Wells suggest that a profound sense of unease accompanied public fascination with the advances offered by professional science, and they utilised this to popularise the figure of the Scientist Alone, who's intellectual and moral autonomy was at once both attractive and appalling. Their work will be examined alongside the first three chapters of *Genesis*, which outline creation and man's

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<sup>36</sup> Writing in 1896, Andrew Dickson White detailed both the catholic and protestant churches' attempts to set up "sacro-scientific organizations" to challenge Darwin on his own ground, the "Academia" and "Victoria Institute" respectively (72).

expulsion from Eden, to contextualise the cultural and sociological crisis sparked by Darwin which saw the scientist reborn as the minister of the new faith in the twentieth century.

**“Awful Solitude”**

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground,  
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man  
became a living soul.

Genesis 2:7

Man is descended from a hairy, tailed quadruped, probably  
arboreal in its habits.

Charles Darwin

At face value, this assertion of a new, scientifically derived genesis for mankind would seem to be the beginning of a new period in human consciousness, characterized by an acknowledgement of man's fundamental isolation from the cosmic processes which have formed him. Natural selection – chance – replaces the expression of an omnipotent will as the generative cause of mankind's existence, and man's assumed dominion over the world has its metaphysical authority removed. For the man of science the implications of Darwin's theory held the key to a new ontological order, wherein nothing that could not be directly perceived and empirically demonstrated need be admitted.

Thomas Henry Huxley, the progenitor of the term agnostic, wrote that "[n]ot far from the invention of fire... we must rank the invention of *doubt*" (viii). Doubt, and the social and religious liberty to explore it, was, perhaps, the defining legacy

of the Enlightenment and constituted an irrevocable shift in the balance of power between God and Man. The Lord's Prayer asks for us to be delivered from temptation, yet the origin of the word temptation is the Latin *temptare*, "to handle, touch, feel, try the strength of, put to the test, try, attempt" ("Tempt") – the empirical, scientific method of the investigation of observable phenomena, the transformation of doubt into scientific fact.

The perception, however, that before *On the Origin of Species* Genesis was perceived as the last word and literal truth of the origin of the world within Judaeo-Christian culture is flawed. Within the nineteenth century scientific community Charles Lyell's *The Principles of Geology*, published in 1830, had already challenged the chronology of the world derived from scripture by James Usher in his work *Annalium pars posterior* of 1654, in which he dated the earth's creation to, rather precisely, the night before the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 4004 BC.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps more fundamentally, however, some of Christianity's most celebrated authors had already sought to understand the significance of Genesis in a variety of ways. St Augustine, despite the title of his work *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, prefigures the conflict between faith and science and seems to suggest that this confrontation requires the 'literal' meaning of Genesis to extend beyond what is merely written:

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<sup>37</sup> Alan Ford points out that this date "was, inevitably, challenged by subsequent scholars who disputed details of his interpretation, but the idea that the world was created roughly 4000 years before Christ became fixed in popular consciousness in the English-speaking world largely thanks to Ussher's labours."

Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of this world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds to as being certain from reason and experience. Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn. The shame is not so much that an ignorant individual is derided, but that people outside the household of the faith think our sacred writers held such opinions, and, to the great loss of those for whose salvation we toil, the writers of our Scripture are criticized and rejected as unlearned men. (42)

For as notable a worthy as St. Augustine to warn that demonstrable knowledge gained from “reason and experience” places the Christian in danger of “scorn” for “ignorance” as early as the fourth century suggests that the real significance of *On the Origin of Species* was that it exacerbated existing fears within Christian theology about the challenge to religious authority posed by man’s increasing experience and understanding of the material world. The Old Testament God’s willingness to manifest himself in answer to challenges (such as the encounter between Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18) had been replaced by Christ’s insistence that “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:7), the meaning of ‘tempt’ here again being to test or challenge. In nineteenth century, post-Enlightenment Britain *Origin* became the standard around which those whose scientific experience had lead them to challenge biblical authority could gather, a bridgehead in their struggle to fully emancipate scientific enquiry.

The nineteenth century's questioning of Biblical versions of the descent of man, and the accompanying destabilisation of ontologies founded on them, are reflected in H.G. Wells's vision of life at the dawn of the twentieth century. In his essay "The Contemporary Novel," Wells identifies the difference between:

the novel of the past and what I may call the modern novel. [...] It lies in the fact that formerly there was a feeling of certitude about moral values and standards of conduct that is altogether absent today. It wasn't so much that men were agreed upon these things – about these things there have always been enormous divergences of opinion – as that men were emphatic, cocksure, and unteachable about whatever they did happen to believe to a degree that no longer obtains. This is the Balfourian age, and even religion seeks to establish itself on doubt. (*Englishman* 159)

The transformation that Wells notes, from an age of "cocksure, and unteachable" faith in whatever beliefs were to hand to a process of doubt, involves a transformation in the individual subject from a passive observer of the material reality of the world to an active agent in its processes.

The potential consequences of such a transformation, of an understanding and assumed mastery over these processes, are a constant theme of his early scientific romances, and the challenge to socially established realities posed by evolutionary theory is present in all of them. Steven Best and Douglas Kellner argue that:

Wells delivered what Isaac Asimov called "The Science-Fiction Breakthrough" by portraying the extreme

discontinuities with the past that science and technology were producing. [...] Wells had studied science with Thomas Huxley and this research gave him a tragic vision of evolution as full of conflict and violence, mutations, and extinctions of species, and catastrophic breaks and ruptures in history that could bring about historical regression. [...] He thus anticipated what we call the “fifth discontinuity,” a dramatic decentering of the human, as envisaged the end of human sovereignty over nature and other beings. (3)

That this “decentering of the human” was concurrent with a growing awareness of the new possibilities for human action that science was providing is a paradox that owes much to the changing perceptions of an omniscient and omnipotent God within British culture. On the one hand, the implied defeat of Bishops in scientific, rational debates such as that between Huxley and Wilberforce opened up the possibility that man’s activities could no longer be limited by an absolute, divine authority; that if Science had but the courage of its convictions then it could go wherever, and do whatever, it pleased. On the other hand, however, the removal of the religious narrative that guaranteed man’s privileged position in the world, that underwrote and justified his dominion over all life on the planet, made him instantly and profoundly vulnerable to the discoveries he was making.

For Wells, surveying the rapid expansion of industrialism and surrounded by evidence of man’s mastery of his physical environment, the thought remained that “these are the days of man’s triumph. The awful solitude of such a position is almost beyond the imagination” (“On Extinction” 623). He identified, just as Robert Louis Stevenson had, that “nowadays the pride of man denies in vain his kinship

with the original dust. He stands no longer like a thing apart” (“Pulvis et Umbra” 512). Evolutionary theory had robbed humanity of the myth of its specially chosen and selected form and destiny, and as evolutionary product mankind lacked any claim to permanence or to the secrets of creation. In an article entitled “Zoological Retrogression” in 1891, following a discussion of the “fitful and uncertain” development of life on Earth, Wells concludes that there is:

no guarantee in scientific knowledge of man’s permanence or permanent ascendancy. ... [I]t may be that [...] Nature is, in suspected obscurity, equipping some now humble creature with wider possibilities of appetite, endurance, or destruction, to rise in the fullness of time and sweep homo away into the darkness from which his universe arose. (253)

Man, Wells would argue in graphic detail in *The War of The Worlds* (1898), could at any moment be ousted from his possession of pre-eminence as a result of processes he was powerless to either prevent or observe. To usurp God, therefore, was to be alone, to be unprotected against the excesses of human weakness, to the apparently insignificant, and to the vagaries of the driving engine of natural selection – of chance.

### **The Evolution of Evolution**

Before considering the effect of evolutionary theory on philosophical and literary discourse it is useful to be aware that the term ‘evolution’ has itself evolved, especially during the nineteenth century. Peter Bowler describes the gradual

substitution of the word ‘transmutation’ by ‘evolution’ as a popular term for Darwin’s theory in the early 1870s, adding that “Darwin still made little use of the term in the bulk of his writings, but this did not prevent even the non-scientific press from recognizing that his theory was being increasingly referred to as the ‘theory of evolution’” (110). Prior to Darwin, ‘evolution’ was most commonly used in the science of embryology, and was understood in this context as a process of development along a pre-determined path towards the ‘true’ form of the specific creature, with no concept of adaptation via interaction between the organism and environmental conditions.

This understanding of ‘evolution’ as a progression towards a fixed level of complexity was compatible with the theologically approved model of the species as separate and permanent. Two years prior to the publication of *On The Origin of Species*, however, Herbert Spencer had published his own essay “Progress: Its Law and Cause” which introduced an alternate vision of evolution, wherein:

the series of changes gone through during the development of a seed into a tree, or an ovum into an animal, constitute an advance from homogeneity of structure to heterogeneity of structure. In its primary stage, every germ consists of a substance that is uniform throughout, both in texture and chemical composition. The first step is the appearance of a difference between two parts of this substance; or, as the phenomenon is called in physiological language, a differentiation. Each of these differentiated divisions presently begins itself to exhibit some contrast of parts: and by and by these secondary differentiations become as definite as the original one. (2-3)

Regenia Gagnier argues that, for Spencer, the originator of the term ‘survival of the fittest,’ “all Progress is progress toward individuation” (317). In this passage we can see how Spencer identifies “differentiation,” the possibility of contrast present in division from the uniformity of the “primary stage” of existence, as the precondition for the increase in complexity necessary for an organism to develop. Within this, however, there is no sense of predestination: the individual element of difference is a free agent despite its origins in a homogenous structure.

H.G. Wells had complained in 1895 that in contemporary romances it “often seems to be tacitly assumed that a living thing is at the utmost nothing more than the complete realization of its birth possibilities, and so heredity becomes confused with theological predestination” (“Limits” 89-90). His complaint was that the dramatic nexus between individual free will, human evolution and chance was being ignored by popular authors in favour of a less unsettling (and potentially more marketable) view of evolution as a redefined version of the divine plan.<sup>38</sup> Bowler notes “the dissatisfaction of many [nineteenth century] writers with natural selection, a dissatisfaction which led them to emphasize the idea of a predesigned evolutionary process” (109), and this dissatisfaction stemmed from the role attributed to chance in the evolutionary model of human identity. Spencer can thus be seen as the point at which the two distinct senses of the word evolution briefly coalesced, where the process of natural selection was seen as an agent of a master more acceptable to rational thought than mere chance. The role of an individuating

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<sup>38</sup> Wells, by contrast, described *The Time Machine* as “a glimpse of the future that ran counter to the placid assumption [...] that evolution was a pro-human force making things better and better for Mankind” (*Scientific Romances* ix).

factor in developing the homogenous to the heterogeneous is at the heart of the significance of the Man Alone in scientific romance.

Prior to the publication of *The Time Machine* in 1895, H.G. Wells's main source of income was scientific journalism and literary criticism.<sup>39</sup> While critics have pointed out that the majority of his scientific romances have a pessimistic, cautionary tone, much of his journalistic output extolled the virtues of new discoveries and methods of examination, seeing in them the potential for a conscious effort to improve the human condition. One such piece, "Ancient Experiments in Co-operation" saw Wells addressing the dangerously nihilistic implications of Darwinian theory, of the ceaseless individual struggle for survival represented by natural selection.

The essay lists a series of co-operative endeavours in the animal kingdom, from termites to coral polyps, where "colonial organisms" are formed through the division of labour amongst individual units of life, concluding that "these numerous creatures, each equivalent to an ordinary animal, have foregone the struggle, and merged themselves into a higher unity" (420). Wells extrapolates the argument to describe how the higher animals, among them man, "are, in fact, colonies of imperfectly-separated amoeboid cells" and not individual entities as may at first be perceived:

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<sup>39</sup> For a detailed discussion of this period in Wells's career see Patrick Parrinder and Robert M. Philmus eds. *H.G. Wells: Early Writings in Science and Science Fiction*.

Here, then, we realise that a thing essentially different from competition, the co-operative union of individuals to form higher unities, underlies the whole living creation as it appears to our unaided eyes. How complete that union is let our sense of individuality testify” (421).

Writing almost a century later, Tuomi *et al.* summarised this duality present in the individuality of multi cellular organisms:

Individuals can be characterized from two different angles. First, they can be viewed as genetically coherent units which maximise their own genetic contribution to future generations. [...] Secondly, individuals can be understood as structurally and functionally organized units able to maintain and replicate themselves. (369)

This dichotomy in the conception of the individual, between an identity as a “genetically coherent” single being, or as a composite of individualities contained within an organized unity, is very much present in Victorian philosophy. John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* (1859) and Herbert Spencer’s *The Man Versus The State* (1884) are examples of works where the tensions between these visions, between a man as an individual being and Man as a society of beings, are examined in terms of the responsibilities of the single cell to the wider organism, and vice versa.<sup>40</sup>

The rights of the individual to liberty of thought and action against the restrictions required for the functioning of a modern society are very much involved in the isolation of pioneering scientists such as doctors Moreau and Jekyll, and this will be examined in further detail below, but it is worth noting how in both cases

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<sup>40</sup> This tension is also at the centre of the debate between Capitalism and Communism that originates during this period, wherein the unit of political identity was at stake.

the scientist's primary challenge is to the concept of biological integrity. As twenty first century readers, despite living in a culture where the DNA of different species can be crossed and intermixed for a variety of medical and commercial reasons, it remains possible to appreciate the integrity still attached to the specific identities of life in the nineteenth century, and to view the iconoclastic actions of Moreau as the shocking violation of natural law that they would have represented to readers of 1896. The persistent Victorian belief in the relationship between the evolution of life and the idea of a predestined path along which it would unfold, reflects a reluctance to let go of the idea of inviolable biological integrity of the individual species, and also of the belief in the existence of a teleological framework within which human relationships had some kind of deeper, spiritual meaning. For all his later pronouncements on the excellence of his blasphemy, Wells had to negotiate this division carefully in order not to alienate the readership that he had built up and on which his fledgling career depended.

The converse view, that by conscious manipulation of observable phenomena new forms of life and sentience could be created, combines an empiricist perception of biological identity with the beginnings of what would come to be seen as existentialism, of man as being thrown into the world, of the biological fact of his existence preceding his essence. Human society's consciousness of the processes of evolution introduced the possibility of man's biological development becoming determined by the extent of the intellectual development of his social identity. Within this conception the meaning of man's existence was something that

needed to be determined after the event, and for Wells an understanding of the dual experience of human evolution was intimately connected with the construction of such meaning:

in civilised man we have (1) an inherited factor, the natural man, who is the product of natural selection, the culminating ape, and a type of animal more obstinately unchangeable than any other living creature; and (2) an acquired factor, the artificial man, the highly plastic creature of tradition, suggestion, and reasoned thought. In the artificial man we have all that makes the comforts and securities of civilisation a possibility. [...] And in this view, what we call Morality becomes the padding of suggested emotional habits necessary to keep the round Palaeolithic savage in the square hold of the civilised state. And Sin is the conflict of the two factors -- as I have tried to convey in my *Island of Dr. Moreau*. (“Human Evolution” 594)

Wells description of man as “obstinately unchangeable” is in relation to the slowness of human reproduction compared to creatures such as rabbits or even bacteria, which slows down to a crawl the pace of physical evolution by natural and sexual selection. The capacity of man to pass on the experiences of his life, however, creates the opportunity for the individual to become the agent of evolutionary change within the “artificial” aspect of the process that Wells identifies, and this is significant to the development of the scientific Man Alone.

By splitting evolution into two distinct branches, Wells is able to imagine a world wherein the biological anonymity of the individual in the face of the genetic development of the race as a whole is balanced, if not exceeded, by the possibility

for the individual genius to impact on the evolution of man as a cultural, social being. Bowler outlines this by arguing that:

genetically speaking, the individual as such is of no great evolutionary importance unless he be the bearer of a mutant gene, and even then the importance of the mutation may not manifest itself in the population as a whole for generations. In cultural evolution, on the other hand, the individual would seem to hold a position of great importance. (118)

Within the Darwinian model of evolution it is the individual that undergoes the mutation that may determine the future form of the species, but the individual is neither conscious of this role nor recognised for it. Biological mutation is thus ontologically unremarkable. Distinction, and a meaningful individual identity that can be consciously experienced as it is expressed, lies in the Spencerian differentiation of *intellectual* mutation.

The individual man of genius, such as Copernicus or Galileo, is the model for this kind of evolutionary Man Alone, refusing the authority of tradition and accepting instead that of their own developing consciousness of the universe. For the man of superior intellect, social or sexual isolation are not limiting factors in relation to his evolutionary legacy. Indeed, mere physical procreation, which cannot guarantee to transfer the essence of his genius, becomes sublimated to his unique knowledge, the source of his individuated identity. Within this masculinised model

of biological development the products of the intellect give one more evolutionary status than the products of the loins.

Investigation of the scientific Man Alone, then, will involve a consideration of the conflicts that are present between the pursuit and application of radical forms of knowledge, and the established metaphysical and authoritative conventions required by society. The legacy of Darwinian theory in this context was that there were no 'truths' that could not and should not be challenged by empirical knowledge, no matter what the implications for existing philosophical or political structures. Alfred Borello sums up the impact of this on Wells as an author:

Fundamentally Wells's philosophy and creative work suggest that man's essential problem, in the light of the fact that one day he will cease to be, is the discovery of his own individuality. ...The desire for individuality grows even more important as the species increases in number and tends to drown the individual in a solution the fundamental component of which is the low common denominator of conformity. (55)

For the man of science in late Victorian romance, "the low common denominator of conformity" was anathema, a betrayal of the revealed truth as profound as that of St. Peter's denial of Christ. The dramatic freedom of the romance form and its demand for the exceptional would pitch him further and further from the established comforts and compromises of human society, towards the vast, and the microscopic, isolations of the unknown.

### 3.1 Nunez: The One Eyed Man

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:2 – 8

Whether or not one accepts Genesis as a literal representation of the creation of the world, one section of the above passage at least requires a figurative interpretation. After Adam and Eve have eaten the apple the Bible tells us that “the eyes of both of them were opened,” and unless we are ready to accept that prior to this point their eyes were closed and they were incapable of sight, this opening of the eyes is clearly to be associated with the new level of perception that eating from the tree of knowledge has given them, in contrast to the lack of sight or blindness of their prior obedience to God’s word. The origin of the association of knowledge with light and illumination in Judaeo-Christian culture is perhaps to be found in this moment, prior to which Eden was the Country of the Blind, where conformity

ensured that the world's extent was known, where convention and respect for hierarchies enabled the blind to exist without realising their blindness. With eyes open they realise they are naked, and the first creative act of man is to make clothes to cover this, to place an obscuring, concealing layer between themselves as individuals and the rest of creation. Then they try and hide themselves from God, making this physical separation a symbol of their consciousness now defined in terms of disobedience and revolt.

God's own first command had been "Let there be light", and the relationship between knowledge, illumination and sight was one that fascinated H.G. Wells in both his scientific journalism and romances. In an article called "The Rediscovery of the Unique" published in 1891, four years before the publication of *The Time Machine* and his arrival as a novelist, he argued that:

Science is a match that man has just got alight. He thought he was in a room – in moments of devotion, a temple – and that his light would be reflected from and display walls inscribed with wonderful secrets and pillars carved with philosophical systems wrought into harmony. It is a curious sensation, now that the preliminary splutter is over and the flame burns up clear, to see his hands lit and just a glimpse of himself and the patch he stands on visible, and around him, in place of all that human comfort and beauty he anticipated – darkness still. (111)

In his short story *The Country of the Blind* (1904), Wells explores this paradox of the light revealing only more darkness, and the association of blindness with social conformity that cannot accept the challenge of individual perception. Nunez, the sighted Man Alone cast into an isolated community where congenital blindness has

persisted so long that even the memory of sight has been lost, believes that his sensory advantage will inevitably lead to him assuming a superior role in this disabled community. As the story progresses, however, it is his own sight that is revealed as the disability within the wider community, who regard his talk of vision and the outside world as evidence of madness and mental weakness.

Because they deny the medium of his superior knowledge, because their entire physical and philosophical community is structured around its irrelevance, the blind are able to dominate and contain Nunez as an individual with potentially revolutionary knowledge. Even his attempts to physically dominate those he increasingly sees as his captors are doomed to a petty insignificance and ultimate failure, representing as they do the deeper failure of his attempts to assert an intellectual superiority based on his greater knowledge of the world.<sup>41</sup> Because his claims are unverifiable within the ontological framework of the blind, they have no substance, no meaning and cease to be 'true' because they are the assertions of one man in the face of the disbelief of a community. This conflict of truths is crystallised in Nunez's first contact with the blind:

“Where does he come from, brother Pedro?” asked one.  
“Down out of the rocks.”  
“Over the mountains I come,” said Nunez, “out of the country beyond there – where men can see. From near Bogotá, where there are a hundred thousands of people, and where the city passes out of sight.”  
“Sight?” muttered Pedro. “Sight?”

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<sup>41</sup> One of the illustrations that accompanied the original publication of “The Country of the Blind” in *The Strand* shows Nunez standing alone clutching a spade limply at his waist while a crowd of the blind press down on him, arms outstretched (410).

“He comes,” said the second blind man, “out of the rocks.”  
(Wells, *Short Stories* 199)

It is the presence of this “second blind man” that settles the issue – it is no longer one man’s word against another but a conflict between the received opinion and, ultimately, the faith of a community against the iconoclastic individualism of a Copernican revolution.

The course of Nunez’s time amongst the blind follows a pattern consistent with this reading of the lone discoverer of truth struggling against the sanctified ignorance of the majority. From an initial desire to use his superior knowledge to prove the old proverb that “In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King” (198) Nunez is pushed further and further towards either total exclusion from the community (symbolised by his temporary flight beyond the wall that marks its physical boundary) or acceptance of its version of reality at the expense of his own, with the implied risk to his sanity that this carries with it. Eventually the question has become not whether the blind will accept Nunez’s version of the truth, but rather whether Nunez himself can persist in his belief: ““You don’t understand,’ he cried in a voice that was meant to be great and resolute, and which broke. ‘You are blind and I can see. Leave me alone!’” (209). This plea to be left alone, to be allowed the social and intellectual liberty to maintain his individual faith in his knowledge despite its deviation from accepted forms, is what, conversely, makes Nunez a sympathetic character. For all the hollowness of his initial half-hearted megalomania, in his utter isolation and oppression by a society too brittle to tolerate

the introduction of new ideas or challenges to its established authorities, Nunez becomes “one of us.”

For devotees of John Stuart Mill, whose work *On Liberty* was published in the same year as *On The Origin of Species*, the implications of Nunez’s position would have been immediately clear, for Mill had argued that:

there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose [...] its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them. (91)

For Nunez, as for Jekyll and Moreau, it is the perceived “tyranny of the prevailing opinion” that drives the need for isolation and solitude in order to be faithful to the uniqueness of their revelation, for exclusion from prying eyes and small opinions based on the large, unquestionable narratives of authority that bind society together.

The reason for this is contained within Nunez’s encounter with the “elders who sat in darkness in the Country of the Blind [who] would believe and understand nothing whatever he told them” (202). The eldest blind man gives Nunez a Genesis style account of the creation of their valley, complete with a hierarchy of beasts and the existence of angels, before arguing that due to his existence outside this narrative “Nunez must have been specially created to learn and serve the wisdom [the blind] had acquired” (203). Instead of the destruction of the blind’s belief system Nunez perceives himself to be, he is to become its

vindication through his conversion from a heretical deviancy.<sup>42</sup> Nunez's vision makes him conscious of and vulnerable in the dark, where the nocturnal community of the blind feel most comfortable, and it fundamentally divides him from philosophical (and, therefore, social and political) enfranchisement within a body of people who he can only perceive as being deficient, inferior to his own capabilities. The challenge Nunez faces is to maintain this belief in the truthfulness of his *individual* experience and capabilities in the face of the power that ignorance gives to the society that denies them.

Nunez eventually decides to risk almost certain death rather than to submit to a surgical procedure to have his eyes, which the blind decide are the root of his madness, removed. This decision is heroic within the wider implications of the story in that he has fallen in love and is offered a comfortable life if he will submit to the operation, yet ultimately Nunez asserts the integrity of his metaphysical identity in isolation of the world he finds himself in, choosing the 'truth' of his memory and of his aesthetic appreciation of the world as he sees it over the 'truth' of the social constructs that enable the blind to live harmoniously as a community. It is a choice that costs him his life, but it remains his life to lose, and as he lies dying, exposed on a mountainside, the universe offers him the consolation of a beauty that his eyes alone can perceive:

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<sup>42</sup> The fear that this engenders in Nunez is expressed by Wiltshire in Stevenson's *The Beach at Falesá*: "They say it scares a man to be alone. No such thing. [...] What scares him worst is to be right in the midst of a crowd, and have no guess at what they're driving at." (*South Sea Tales* 15)

The mountain summits around him were things of light and fire, and the little details of the rocks near at hand were drenched with subtle beauty – a vein of green mineral piercing the grey, the flash of crystal faces here and there, a minute, minutely beautiful orange lichen close beside his face. (219)

Nunez's sight, his enhanced perception of the beauty and reality of the material world is too high a price to pay, even for the delights waiting for him with Medina-Saroté who, despite her attractiveness, remains the daughter of his master and a product of the system that made him a slave. She holds the possibility of a community in Nunez's own image, a family of his own, but one which, we assume, would be condemned to the same physical and spiritual blindness that affected the original settlers.

Nunez's seemingly subconscious rejection of this generational community again draws an association between the pursuit and defence of individual knowledge and the sterility and creative failure of the male scientist, so graphically illustrated in *Frankenstein*. He goes off, alone, in pursuit of the glories of his vision, whatever the dangers inherent in his rejection of the comforts and consolations of society, and the story closes with a depiction of his isolation as "he lay peacefully contented under the cold stars" (219). The coldness of the stars suggests that of the grave, where Nunez's solitude will be eternally preserved.

### 3.2 Doctor Moreau: The 'New Man' Alone

This pursuit of knowledge by the individual in the face of the ignorance and disapproval of the many has become a popular trope of the 'mad scientist' figure in popular fiction, reflecting a wider cultural unease about to what ends scientific research is undertaken and who will control its results.<sup>43</sup> If the origins of this kind of unease reach back to Faust or even further, its current form owes much to the work of Stevenson and Wells at the end of the nineteenth century. In Wells' essay on "Doctors" he complained that:

Our general public is still too stupid to understand the need and value of sustained investigations in any branch of knowledge at all. [...] It imagines discoveries are a sort of inspiration that comes when Professors are running for trains. It seems incapable of imagining how enormous are the untried possibilities of research. (*Englishman* 238)

This frustration is also at the root of Doctor Moreau's isolation on Noble's Isle, having been hounded out of London following the public uproar that resulted from the escape of one of his early subjects. Moreau, however, refuses to amend his methods or aims, deciding instead that it is his community that must be rejected to satisfy the demands of his research.

Moreau's commitment to this research takes the form of an obsession, which he outlines to Prendick in the chapter entitled "Doctor Moreau Explains All":

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<sup>43</sup> For further discussion on this point see Christopher Tourney's "The Moral Character of Mad Scientists: A Cultural Critique of Science."

I asked a question, devised some method of getting an answer, and got – a fresh question. [...] You cannot imagine what this means to an investigator, what an intellectual passion grows upon him. You cannot imagine the strange colourless delight of these intellectual desires. [...] I wanted – it was the only thing I wanted – to find out the extreme limit of plasticity in a living shape. (75)

What characterises this obsession is its exclusivity: “it was the *only* thing I wanted” (my italics). Moreau is not interested in what other people think of his work, he is not interested in other people even knowing about his work, and the contemptuous repetition of “you cannot imagine” articulates his belief that he has placed himself beyond the understanding of other people. Prendick, it should be remembered, had “spent some years at the Royal College of Science, and had done some research in biology under Huxley” (29), so is by no means a stranger to “the overmastering spell of research” (34) under which Moreau has fallen.

As Margaret Attwood points out, however, Prendick is not a Doctor. He is a “private gentleman” who has studied “not out of necessity but out of dilettantish boredom” (xv); exactly the kind of wealthy amateur, then, that the Royal Society changed their admission criteria to keep out.<sup>44</sup> Prendick’s observation that as Moreau “was unmarried [he] had indeed nothing but his own interests to consider” (34) is indicative of the association being drawn between dedication to scientific research and social isolation, the rejection of the baggage of relationships and social

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<sup>44</sup> Attwood’s suggestion that Prendick’s name has an echo of ‘prentice’ is interesting in this context in that Moreau as the dedicated, middle class professional is clearly usurping the authority traditional vested in the upper class, amateur enquirer, who lacks the passion and vigour to make the most of their opportunities and engage with the new world made possible by the scientific revolutions of the nineteenth century. The ‘master’ becomes the servant of the professional scientist.

interaction that will hinder the great work at hand. The scientific researcher must thus exclude society, he must become the Man Alone in order to secure the personal and intellectual freedom to be true to the demands of his work. The implication that the new scientific knowledge, on which the rapid technological advancement of Victorian society was based, was the province of the Man Alone in this way goes some way to explaining the ongoing importance of the figure to the scientific romance.

Doctor Moreau is by no means portrayed as a role model for scientists, but in his passion for the possibilities of research Wells allows him the nobility of a flaw that he himself associated with. In *The Happy Turning*, written in 1945, a year before his death, Wells argued that:

every new realisation, every fresh discovery, has for those who make it, a quality of beauty, transitory indeed but otherwise as clear and pure as that enduring Beauty we cherish for ever, an ephemeral beauty for one man or for a group of mortals, sufficient to make a life's devotion to the service of truth worth while. (49)

The nineteenth century deconstruction of biblical certainties that Wells, with his many excellent blasphemies, had been so keen to celebrate, seems to demand that the scientific mind must seek to establish its own understanding of reality through the discovery of the “enduring Beauty” of scientific truth.<sup>45</sup> Wells argues that the novelty of experience available to the individual researcher in the dissecting room

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<sup>45</sup> Writing the year before his death, with a certain amount of pride, he remarked that “blasphemy may frighten unemancipated minds, but it is unbecoming that human beings should be governed by fear. From first to last I have invented a considerable amount of excellent blasphemy” (*The Happy Turning* 6).

or laboratory is as valid a source of beauty as the culturally agreed artistic traditions of Classical antiquity, reflecting the status of the scientific Man Alone to determine the value of his own experience.<sup>46</sup>

The model presented by the obsessive research of Moreau, however, which seeks to isolate one particular question over which to know everything – to usurp “the extreme limit” of omnipotence – is one that within the context of the novel leads ultimately to death and the destruction and loss of a lifetime’s work. Likewise with the deaths of Dr. Jekyll and Griffin (the eponymous *Invisible Man* of Wells’s 1897 romance), their work dies with them, the “eternal Beauty” of their discoveries lasting only as long as their own violently shortened lives.<sup>47</sup> What their research shares, and what makes it so ephemeral in the absence of its source, is a selfishness of intent and an absence of wider social value.

Whether it be the Captain Nemo like disdain for his fellow man expressed by Doctor Moreau, the secret life that Jekyll wishes to conceal, or Griffin’s dreams of power and status, the characteristic trait of the endeavours of these lone scientists is a complete contempt for wider socially beneficial applications for their work. Prendick’s view that, because of the amount of pain to the subject that is involved, “The only thing that could excuse vivisection to me would be some application – ”

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<sup>46</sup> The absolute association of truth and beauty has, of course, a distinguished literary tradition, perhaps most famously encapsulated in “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1819) by John Keats.

<sup>47</sup> While the secrets of Griffin’s research are preserved in the books Marvel conceals, the identity of their possessor and the cipher they are written in suggest that secrets they will remain. Jekyll’s ‘truth’ hinges on the unknown impurity of an exhausted batch of a particular salt, an impermanence that eventually costs him his life.

(73) is cut off and rejected by Moreau, who replies that “A mind truly open to what science has to teach must see that it is a little thing” (74). The scientific Man Alone is not motivated by a desire to enhance the experience or possibilities of lives other than his own, and has moved from a position of an observer and sharer of the truths present in the natural world (such as Nunez) to an asserter of their own rights to act, to turn knowledge and opinion into a physicality of which they are the determining and sole agent.

This fundamental rejection of social responsibility provides the counterbalance to Mill’s argument about the rights of the individual in the face of “the tyranny of prevailing opinion,” for he also stressed that “No-one pretends that actions should be as free as opinions” (131). Indeed, Mill makes the point that “All that makes existence valuable to anyone, depends on the enforcement of restraints upon the actions of other people” (91), and once the right of society to restrain action has been rejected by this new breed of scientists-as-chemists, their work is stripped of enduring value and perishes along with them.

For Alfred Borello this schism between the scientific mind, isolated by its obsession, and the wider social world of human interaction within agreed moral norms lies at the heart of Moreau’s hubris. He argues that Moreau “views himself, by virtue of his expertise and imaginative boldness, as superior to other men and therefore exempt from the normal canons of judgement” (31). But it is not just in conceptual terms that Moreau experiences this feeling of superiority; it is also in the

efficacy of his will as experienced in the physical world of his island. Moreau is representative of the end of the age of butterfly collectors and geographical explorers, of men like Stein from *Lord Jim*. 'True' science is no longer to be the preserve of the librarian, cataloguing and archiving, passive in the face of a material world which possesses an integrity that can be modified (as hinted at in the work Darwin did on the effect of selective breeding on the domestication of creatures such as pigeons) but never violated. It is instead to be a field of action, of daring and original innovation which, in the absence of the Divine protector of the world as it is, will remake the world as it should be.

The absence, however, of a transcendent source of meaning ensures that there can be no agreement of what constitutes how the world should be – instead of one authorised version suddenly there is an evolutionary struggle of competing visions, where survival of the fittest also requires the elimination of the least fit. Elana Gomel compares Moreau with Josef Mengele, with the fascist idea of the New Man and the “longing for a new corporeality” (394) to be achieved through a “murderous self fashioning” (397), and while it is not within the immediate remit of this discussion to pursue the relationship between the Man Alone and the New Man, the historical moment of opportunity for the man of science to assume cultural and political control through the assertion of a new biological model is clearly predicted by Wells in the figure of Moreau. By undertaking the biological restructuring of the community of his island Moreau places himself irrevocably outside the society that

created him, to the extent that even the physical and natural fact of his death needs to be interpreted in mythic terms by Prendick.<sup>48</sup>

This separation of the scientist from society is one that is usually accompanied by a great deal of pain. Following Dr. Jekyll's first taste of the potion that will lead him to Hyde "The most racking pains succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death" (*Jekyll and Hyde* 54). As Griffin recounts the night he became the Invisible Man to Dr. Kemp he recalls that "I had not expected the suffering. A night of racking anguish, sickness and fainting. I set my teeth, though my skin was presently afire, all my body afire; but I lay there like grim death" (100). Doctor Moreau's work is also characterised by the "House of Pain" that his laboratory has become, and all of these instances point to the trauma of the break in community, of the rebirth of the scientific self as a Man Alone.

Time and again in scientific romances we see this transformative quality of pain: from Jekyll to Hyde, from visible to invisible, from beast to Man. Pain can remake the "I" of subjective experience: to be the subject of pain is to be present in an utterly individual experience. Alfred Borello writes of Moreau that "Pain, he realises, is the avenue to any perfection of mankind. [... It is] the element which defines that individuality for which he seeks" (56). This capacity of pain to define,

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<sup>48</sup> Perhaps there is an echo here in the cult of the preservation of the corpses of totalitarian leaders, such as Lenin and Mao, where the death of the founding father is re-interpreted as his elevation to an elevated and incorruptible symbolic status.

to characterise and identify recurs again and again in representations of the Man Alone.<sup>49</sup>

Writing in the journal *Science and Art* in 1894 in an essay entitled “The Province of Pain,” Wells constructs a hierarchy of the capacity for suffering. He argues that in a dog, possessing “a fairly well-developed moral and intellectual rule” there must be a “keen sense of pain”, but in animals less mentally advanced physical sensation becomes more acute and yet “less enduring” (59). This implies that for sensation to become pain it must be involved in a process of learning, of remembrance – it must be connected with an end, and that end is the protection of the individual. For Wells, pain becomes the marker of a capacity for intellectual, sentient experience, as “one is forced to conclude that the quality of pain becomes affixed to an impression, not in the nerves that conduct, but in the brain that receives it” (58), a brain that relies on pain to preserve its individual physical existence and, therefore, its metaphysical integrity.

The absence of anaesthetics of any kind from Moreau’s laboratory (apart, perhaps, from Montgomery’s brandy) was commented on from the very first reviews of the text in 1896.<sup>50</sup> Having criticised Wells for seemingly ignoring the

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<sup>49</sup> The use of scenes of torture in *1984* and *Casino Royale*, for example, are central to the construction of their hero’s isolated status, highlighting the vulnerability of being beyond the protection of community.

<sup>50</sup> The use of general anaesthetics, such as nitrous oxide, diethyl ether and chloroform, in surgical procedures had developed rapidly following their introduction in the mid nineteenth century, and would have been familiar to a man of Moreau’s capabilities. For a more detailed account of this development see Chauncey D. Leake “The Historical Development of Surgical Anaesthesia.”

fact that prolonged surgical operations would require the use of anaesthetic on practical grounds, Chalmers Mitchell, in his review of *Moreau* continues:

Equally wrong is the semi-psychological suggestion that pain could be a humanizing agency. It may be that the conscious subjection to pain for a purpose has a desirable mental effect; pain in itself, and above all continuous pain inflicted on a struggling, protesting creature, would produce only madness and death. (369)

Gomel, too, questions Moreau's refusal to anaesthetise his subjects, interpreting it as evidence of ulterior motives in conducting his vivisection. She argues that despite the ostensible scientific motivation of:

elevating animals to humanity, [...] it quickly becomes clear that the pain of surgery, rather than the resulting modifications, is what interests him most. While anaesthesia is already available, Moreau never uses it; it is a wonder any of his experimental subjects survive at all. (401)

This wilful rejection of anaesthesia is clearly central to Moreau's project of man-making, and is deserving of an explanation.

Moreau equates pain with fire, and describes how "Each time I dip a living creature into the bath of burning pain, I say: this time I will burn out all the animal, this time I will make a rational creature of my own" (78). He envisages that the transition from animal to man must re-create the trauma of human birth, the transformative process that frees the foetus from the comfort of its former symbiotic existence and gives it an individual human identity. Victorian attitudes about the

relationship between the embryo and the concept of evolution have already been discussed, and what announces man's arrival at the pinnacle of evolutionary development is exactly this experience of pain and trauma at the moment of birth. If, as Wells believed, pain is truly and fundamentally the product of a sentient brain rather than a short lived neurological response then this, perhaps, is the most crucial stage of the beast folk's transformation. The House of Pain thus becomes the basis of the society, civilisation and moral code that they construct through its role as a symbol of the punishment for the beast men's original sin, the artificiality of their identity. Pain, and, more importantly, the *fear* of pain, underlies everything that Moreau is trying to achieve.

The Bible relates that as punishment for her transgression, God tells Eve "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Genesis 3:16), and the ravine that the beast men eventually find their way to (once their imperfections have displeased their creator) is clearly symbolic of an attempt to return to the womb, having found no comfort or identity in the world outside. Only one of the beast folk, M'Ling, achieves the ultimate individual distinction of a name, and it is he who is able to live amongst the humans, albeit as a slave. The rest remain Hyena-Swine, Horse-Rhinoceros and Vixen-Bear, defined by the non-compatibility of the plurality of their constituent identities, and condemned by this to never achieve individual integrity once the fear of Moreau and the pain that he brings has been removed. For Borello, the meaning of this is clear: "to live as a rational being is to live in pain. Like some early existentialist

[Wells] proclaims the doctrine that ease and comfort is non-existence on this plane” (59).

Nowhere does Wells display this “existentialist [...] doctrine” more clearly than in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, yet for Moreau himself pain is more of an evolutionary curiosity than a determining reality. Wells had asked whether man may “not so grow morally and intellectually as to get at last beyond the need for corporal chastisement, and foresight take the place of pain, as science ousts instinct” (“Province of Pain” 59), and the scientist is the definition of the consciousness in which “science ousts instinct”. When Prendick challenges Moreau to justify “inflicting all this pain” (74) Moreau’s response is the party trick of stabbing himself in the thigh to demonstrate to Prendick that not all flesh, and not all vivisection (the cutting of live tissue), generates pain. This is an important part of his argument that, in evolutionary terms, “pain gets needless” (74), and is also illustrative of the fact that, for Moreau, “it is just this question of pain that parts us” (73):

This store men and women set on pleasure and pain,  
Prendick, is the mark of the beast upon them, the mark of  
the beast from which they came. Pain! Pain and pleasure –  
they are for us, only so long as wriggle in the dust.... (74-5)

Moreau has clearly left such concerns behind him: from the isolation of his scientific understanding he is invulnerable to the empathy that, at first glance, Prendick cannot help but experience due to the suffering of the puma in the House of Pain. Yet for all his apparent abhorrence with Moreau’s philosophy, Prendick’s

attitude to the puma's suffering is shown to be much less altruistic than he perhaps imagines it to be. After the terror of his pursuit through the forest and along the beach by the Leopard Man Prendick recounts how "with a positive effect of relief, came the pitiful moaning of the puma, the sound that had originally driven me out to explore this mysterious island. [...] It seemed to me a voice was calling me." (47) Although this "voice" turns out to be Montgomery this is not revealed until the next chapter and the inference is clear.

Before he sets off Prendick is a (dissatisfied) member of the de facto community of white men on the island. The forms of British colonial society are present, but the explicitness of the exploitation of the weak by the strong offends his liberal sensibilities, and he takes to the jungle to escape the painful evidence of this (rather than challenge the source). Once isolated physically by the environment and his ignorance of it, and socially by his rejection and repulsion of the beast folk he encounters (the alternative or savage society) Prendick's sensibilities are exposed as having no moral force or authority. Following the realisation of himself as an animal being, as prey to the pursuing Leopard Man, the screams of the puma represent a world in which he has status and, therefore, safety.

That this is an edifice built on the naked exploitation and manipulation of 'inferior' beings occurring under the knife in the House of Pain is no longer relevant to Prendick. The terror of his pursuit shows how fear of physical attack, of pain *of his own*, produces a drive towards community, and this drive is less about

morality than it is about preserving his own physical integrity, even at the expense of pain *in others*. The mark of the beast that Moreau refers to this is this irrational urge to flee from one physical sensation towards another, and Prendick's morality, his disgust at Moreau's experiments, is a lesser consideration. Winston Smith's scream of "Do it to her!" in Room 101 is representative of this fundamental aspect of how the individual's perception and experience of pain can determine the meaning of their relationships with others and dictate their social identity.

For Moreau, pain is for the lesser forms of life, his lack of sympathy indicating his own belief in his separation from identities that can be determined by mere physical sensation. Best and Kellner, however, argue that:

Although [Moreau] has perfected the art of scientific detachment, of separation of fact from value, indifferent to the pain he inflicts on his victims, he imagines himself as a benefactor who is trying to improve the evolution of species. (6-7)

That Moreau ultimately believes his work is for the benefit of anyone other than himself is open to question, but the question of the location of his work's significance is interesting. Unlike Jekyll or Griffin, Moreau does not experiment on himself, he does not take his own physical identity as the testing ground of his investigations, and yet by trying to redefine the agency of human existence Moreau does end up transforming his metaphysical identity. The existence of the beast men, the product of his experimentation, transforms Moreau, in his own mind at least, into a god – a divine "benefactor ... of [his] species."

Draper, however, in his discussion of the Wellsian worldview, argues that “any independence from the material world humanity may have achieved does not open the way to transcendence, but to a painful and irreconcilable tension between the actual and the ideal” (39). Applied to Moreau and his self proclaimed independence from the world of animal sensation and impulse Draper’s comment contextualises the presence of pain within a wider metaphysical process of failure, of the failure to reconcile the “actual and ideal” so graphically described by Moreau in his description of the beast men’s innate bestiality, despite his best efforts to burn it out of them. Ultimately, Moreau dies alone, having failed in the actual attempt to re-make life in his own, idealised image. The paradox of his solitary quest for the creation of community ends in his death and the disintegration of his body by fire, an ironic parody of his transformation into a new, supra-corporeal identity. Having abstracted himself from society, the Moreau renders himself fundamentally insubstantial, and finally vanishes in a puff of smoke.

### 3.3 Doctor Jekyll: Kosmonaut of the Appalling

Of the kosmos in the last resort science reports many doubtful things and all of them appalling. There seems no substance to this solid globe on which we stamp: nothing but symbols and ratios. [...] Consideration does not dwell upon this view; that way madness lies; science carries us into zones of speculation, where there is no habitable city for the mind of man. (Stevenson, "Pulvis et Umbra" 509)

The popular perception of Robert Louis Stevenson as the arch romantic, chasing his dreams of health and adventure across the globe, seems eminently compatible with this appalled assessment of science. As with many aspects of the legend of RLS there is, however, another story to tell about 'Tusitala's' relationship with the scientific world. Stevenson, after all, had been a student of engineering, and also a prize winning researcher. Oleana Turnbull points out that by 1873 Stevenson:

had read a paper entitled 'On a New Form of Intermittent Light for Lighthouses' at a meeting of the Royal Society in Edinburgh that won him a silver medal, another paper 'On the Thermal Influence of Forests' again at the Royal Society, and one on 'Local Conditions Influencing Climate' at a meeting of the Scottish Meteorological Society. (228)<sup>51</sup>

Clearly Stevenson had a keen interest in scientific enquiry while a student. During his years as a contributor to publications such as *Scribner's* and *The Cornhill Magazine* his work sat alongside scientific papers for the general reader, and critics

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<sup>51</sup> During his time as a student in Edinburgh's Old Town Stevenson was a member of the Speculative Society from 1869-73 and rose to being the secretary of the Edinburgh Psychological Society in 1873 (Dury 2006 239), which suggests a certain fascination with the newer scientific disciplines that were emerging in late Victorian Britain.

have investigated possible links between *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with various concurrent essays and papers that he may well have read.<sup>52</sup>

By the mid 1880s, however, his voice became more critical. As his career as a writer developed, and as medical science continued to provide him with no relief from his own poor health it is, perhaps, possible to identify in Stevenson someone who was beginning to resent the exalted position of science in the modern age.<sup>53</sup> Stevenson's lifelong experience of doctors, their fees and their failures to provide him with good health would have informed his perception of their role both in society and in the intellectual culture of the time.

His frustrations with the limitations of scientific knowledge to effectively define the world expressed themselves in his non-fiction writing, as well in his stories. In his essay on "Gentlemen" for *Scribner's Magazine* in May 1888, Stevenson wrote that:

More and more, as our knowledge widens, we have to reply to those who ask for a definition: 'I can't give you that, but I will tell you a story.' We cannot say what a thing will be, nor what it ought to be; but we can say what it has been, and how it came to be what it is: History instead of Definition. (639)

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<sup>52</sup> See Richard Dury's "Crossing the Bounds of a Single Identity: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and a Paper in a French Scientific Journal."

<sup>53</sup> During 1885, the year in which *Jekyll and Hyde* was written, Stevenson's health was affected by a lung haemorrhage that recurred three times before the end of August (Dury 2004 xix).

That the widening of knowledge is accompanied by an increasing inability to define the world is the central paradox of scientific progress: the more we know, the more we know that we don't know.

What grated most for Stevenson was the arrogance of the scientist who refused to acknowledge that this paradox underlay everything that he did, and who rejected the humility that this should engender in favour of a claim to be the all knowing benefactor of his kind. Turnbull argues that this frustration is at its most acute in *Jekyll and Hyde*, where:

Stevenson's anger is directed at doctors and scientists in particular, and he subsequently goes out of his way in a succession of works to confront and examine the "monstrous spectre" of humanity raised by contemporary science. [...] in Stevenson's view, science frequently had to make unpleasant compromises, was often contradictory in its findings, and did not provide all – or even many – answers to the problems of existence. (230-1)

That the "problems of existence" may not be located in the "symbols and ratios" of astrophysics or the froth and bubble of chemical interaction is at once both a reactionary and revolutionary statement within the context of the late nineteenth century. Reactionary in that it echoes some of the arguments of the theologians still trying to reclaim their authority in the wake of the emergence of evolutionary theory, and revolutionary in that it sought to challenge the new metaphysical certainties about the origins and purposes of life that men like Francis Galton and

his fellow eugenicist Alexander Graham Bell were busily erecting on the ruins of traditional religious belief.<sup>54</sup>

This kind of philosophical and political interpretation and application of scientific theories, which sought to appropriate the scientific authority of their foundation as a basis for establishing their metaphysical truth, was exactly the kind of arrogance that Stevenson attacked. Turnbull states that:

Like many of his contemporaries, Stevenson did not so much object to scientific theories of evolution, and particularly Darwinian theories, as to the increasingly dogmatic way in which they were put forward as the new orthodoxy. (231)

Stevenson thus identified in the scientist the potential for a new, modern hypocrisy: the tearing down of religious orthodoxy only to be replaced by a scientific version seemed like no 'progress' at all.

### **The Self-Experimenter**

The double standard of the late Victorian scientist can thus be added to the long list of other doubles that critics have discussed in the Jekyll-Hyde persona, and the cause of the quarrel between Lanyon and Jekyll (and their reactions to it) are

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<sup>54</sup> The eugenicist movement effectively sought to derive answers to ontological and metaphysical questions from observations based on the physical, material world. It was a rejection of an individualised understanding of identity towards the elevation of the type as the true arbiter and expression of existence, and became a pervasive cultural and scientific movement of the early twentieth century. For an overview of the relationship between the eugenics movement and politics during this period see Michael Freedman's "Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity."

illustrative of this. Lanyon rejects Jekyll's methods and motivations, preferring instead the comfort of a scientific world only ever as big as when he entered it: Jekyll believes in the constant pushing back of the boundaries of individual knowledge, with wider ethical and societal considerations secondary to this cause. Lanyon's statement that "I sometimes think if we knew all, we should be more glad to get away" (29) is antithetical to the reckless self experimentation of Jekyll and his desire for the knowledge secreted in the uniqueness of personal experience.

Lanyon's position as the text's 'other' doctor, however, is more than just another doubling of Jekyll, for through his disintegration that follows his witnessing the Hyde-Jekyll transformation, we see the destructive consequences for the wider community that results from Jekyll's work. Lanyon and Jekyll are superficially united by their profession, by the oaths and the common education that define them within the social setting of late Victorian London, but these shared experiences afford Lanyon neither protection against Jekyll's individualism nor any kind of faculty to bring Jekyll back into the body of the community that created him. Likewise the text's opening narrator remarks that Utterson was "the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down going men" (5), with the implication that he is either incapable or disinclined to actually save them. Lanyon, too, lacks this ability to express a meaningful community that can include Jekyll, despite the seemingly more communally responsible interpretation of the role of doctor that he offers.

The nature of the failure in the relationship between Lanyon and Jekyll is something that concerns Utterson, as it suggests that the community of independent professionals that defines his world may not be strong enough to afford them the protection against the various threats critics have located within the figure of Hyde.<sup>55</sup> Utterson asks Lanyon whether or not, despite their differences, he and Jekyll “had a bond of common interest.” Without specifying the precise nature of this bond, Lanyon answers:

‘We had, [...] But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake’s sake as they say, I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash,’ added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple, ‘would have estranged Damon and Pythias.’ (12)

Utterson’s response is relief that “‘They have only differed on some point of science’ [...]; and being a man of no scientific passions [...] he even added: ‘It is nothing worse than that!’” (12). Jekyll’s own view of the situation, however, is somewhat more acute. Jekyll qualifies a remark to Utterson about the lawyer’s reaction to his will by referring to “‘that hide-bound pedant Lanyon, [and] what he called my scientific heresies’” (18). Here again we have the association between science and faith, expressed in terms of heresy, and Jekyll can’t resist a further repetition of the phrase “‘hide-bound pedant [...]; an ignorant, blatant pedant’” (18), just in case we missed it the first time. That Hyde should be so clearly referred to

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<sup>55</sup> Jane Rago describes how “Critics have read Hyde as a figure of perverse violence and male sexuality, as the illicit pleasures of homoeroticism, as a frightful blurring of gender roles linked to the New Woman, as the degenerate, as an Irish Frankenstein’s monster, as an embodiment of the horror of addiction, and as the atavistic criminal who “passes” as a gentleman.” (275)

within the context of the quarrel between Lanyon and Jekyll is illustrative of Jekyll's view of his own superiority over smaller, less fully developed identities that he perceives as lacking the capacity to see as far as he can. The egotistic, competitive nature of scientific relationships is thus revealed as being antithetical to the creation of the kind of self-denying, empathetic community that Utterson has so much invested in.

That Jekyll's response to his own desires and lusts is a chemical, scientific one, rather than an attempt to come to terms with the disparate elements of his own nature is characteristic of a breed of men that Stevenson would have encountered in late Victorian society. Nicholas Rankin, having emphasised the associations of Edinburgh's Old Town with the body-snatching underbelly of scientific research, a topic that Stevenson had turned into a memorably dark short story, goes on to describe how:

Edinburgh doctors also experimented on themselves. Professor Sir Robert Christison once swallowed a calabar bean from toxicological curiosity and only avoided death by using his shaving water as an emetic. Professor Sir James Young Simpson handed out tumblers of chloral at his home until he and his guests were insensible on the floor. (55)

The relationship between the Simpson and Stevenson families is also detailed by Rankin: Sir James' son Walter was to become Stevenson's "travelling companion [...] up to and including the canoe trip of *An Inland Voyage* in 1876" (55), with the implication that Stevenson himself would have been familiar with the model of the

“self-experimenter” doctor when creating Jekyll. That this knowledge should have come through the experience of a dependent of one of these figures is also of interest here, highlighting as it does the selfishness of the act of self-experimentation, a recklessness unchecked by the competing claims of others upon the scientific identity.

The scientific obsessions of these men lead them to acts of extreme selfishness, of the rejection of wider responsibilities in the pursuit of not only knowledge, but also of the eminence and regard that such knowledge would bring to them. Henry Jekyll, let us not forget, was an “M.D., D.C.L., L.L.D., F.R.S., &c” (8), a doctor of Medicine, of Civil Laws, of Law and, as a Fellow of the Royal Society, also a pioneering research scientist. These letters after his name give him status within the professional society of the text, yet at the same time it is a status that is problematised by his failure to deal with the social consequences it bequeaths. They tell us nothing about who or what Henry Jekyll is, only about what he has been: “History instead of Definition.”

The professional and scientific world of qualifications that is inhabited by Lanyon, Jekyll and Utterson thus functions to conceal, rather than reveal, truth. The truth is locked away in sealed envelopes placed in safes to be opened only by specific people at specific times, after any chance for others to act upon it or condition it has passed. Knowledge, the end point and goal of scientific study, is thus the preserve of an ordained few - it is religion with different titles.

Experimentation on the self within this world will, therefore, never reveal any meaningful truths due to the lack of a social context in which they can be realised.

Jekyll, as a representative of the self-experimenting, isolated scientist, demands the autonomy to control both the conduct of his research and also the interpretation of his results, fearing the threat of contingency on the 'truths' of his results that would be posed by the arbitration of external, communal sources of authority. This, in turn, is representative of an inherent insecurity in the self-experimenter in the face of the competing reflections of their identity offered by their community, an insecurity that comes to express itself as contempt. When Utterson and Poole break into Jekyll's cabinet they discover the cheval glass that he had installed. Where Jekyll had seen Hyde, the visible assertion of the truth of his knowledge, Utterson and Poole see "the fire sparkling in a hundred repetitions along the glazed front of the presses, and their own pale and fearful countenances" (42). That the mirror can display reflections of its own reflections in the glass of the press underlies this lack of control over the status of the reflected image, and the "fearful countenances" of Utterson and Poole that stare out along side them suggest an acknowledgement of the instability that accounted for the "self-destroyer" (40) at their feet.

### **The Vulnerability of Individual Epistemology**

The vulnerability of the self-experimenter's new forms of scientific knowledge, and the new metaphysical authority that they profess, are shown by

their inability to contain their own consequences or answer their own questions. As Utterson arrives at Jekyll's house for the final assault on the locked door of his laboratory he is greeted by the cook's cry of "Bless God!" (35), and the letter that Jekyll sends to the chemist in pursuit of the elusive batch of salt that ends with the plea "'For God's sake [...] find me some of the old'"(37). As Poole relates the sighting of the "monkey" that had seemingly done away with Jekyll he ends his testimony with the admission that, "'O, I know it's not evidence Mr Utterson; I'm book learned for that; but a man has his feelings, and I give you my bible-word it was Mr. Hyde!'" (39). Even Utterson is forced into an "Amen" by his confrontation with the unknown world of Jekyll's secrets; evidence of the "greater Patriarch" (Sandison, 1996 246) reasserting His authority over the parvenu world of middle class professionals.

An epistemology based on scientific and legal knowledge is thus insufficient, rejected in the moment of crisis in favour of the older, more traditional (and, therefore, communally derived) authority of religion. Poole's assertion of a truth that can't be proved independently by evidence, only by an instinctive feeling whose only weight comes from being sworn on the Bible, is indicative of the failure of the new knowledge to supplant the old, to provide a framework of shared meaning within which the exigency of life can be interpreted.

The philosopher John Dewey, in his essay "The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy," explored the processes of epistemology in the wake of evolutionary

theory, evaluating the function of the evidence of individual human sense perception in the age of Science:

Genuinely to know is to grasp a permanent end that realizes itself through changes, holding them thereby within the metes and bounds of fixed truth. Completely to know is to relate all special forms to their one single end and good: pure contemplative intelligence. Since, however, the scene of nature which directly confronts us is in change, nature as directly and practically experienced does not satisfy the conditions of knowledge. Human experience is in flux, and hence the instrumentalities of sense perception and of inference based upon observation are condemned in advance. Science is compelled to aim at realities lying beyond the processes of nature, and to carry on its search for these realities by means of rational forms transcending ordinary modes of perception and inference. (307)

If we accept the nature of human experience as being “in flux,” of being subject to a state of constant evolutionary change, then empirical models of knowledge are destabilised by the mutability of the subjectivity of the individual undergoing that experience. For the individual to interpret their own sensory experience as knowledge of a “fixed truth” is thus a dangerously volatile foundation for a claim of epistemological independence.

In the case of Dr. Jekyll, this sense of volatility is a terrifying and increasingly inescapable condition of his knowledge of the existence of Hyde. The “war among [his] members,” between the developed and the latent aspects of his identity, is of such ferocity that nowhere is there a unified sense of self capable of determining the meaning of the physical sensations that he experiences. Nowhere is

this more dramatically expressed than in Jekyll's account of the murder of Carew.

Jekyll describes how:

with a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed, that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by the cold thrill of terror. A mist dispersed; I saw my life to be forfeit; and fled from the scene of these excesses, at once glorying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated, my love of life screwed to the topmost peg.  
(61)

This passage, with its vocabulary of sensation, demonstrates how isolated and weak Jekyll's position has become. The "I" who mauls the body, who experiences both "delight" and "terror," and at once both glories and trembles is Jekyll; the same Jekyll who had earlier claimed that "it was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty" (57). That the "physical insensibility" (60) of the drunkard should thus have been associated with the dangers that Jekyll perceives to himself from his Hyde persona is central to our understanding of the vulnerability of Jekyll's individual epistemology, which is founded on the self-conception of the modern man of science as capable of determining the meaning of physical phenomena and sensation. Through his rejection of any external agency in forming or influencing his knowledge of both the world and his status and identity within it, Jekyll is left in a state of disintegration, lacking any fixed point on which to re-assert a coherent "I."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Saposnik concludes that Jekyll "is so enmeshed in his self-woven net of duplicity that he cannot identify the two entities whose separation he hopes to achieve" (724).

Jekyll's knowledge thus acts to seclude him from society, it places a barrier between himself and his fellow men in the form of Hyde, a second skin thick enough to resist the hooks of social entanglement. After the murder of Carew and the suppression of Hyde:

a new life began for Dr Jekyll. He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and whilst he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion. (28)

By rejecting the fruits of his scientific knowledge, Jekyll is able to return to society from his enforced "seclusion," and this is accompanied by a return to religion. That he should previously have been noted for charities, for practical, humanist responses to the problems of the world is consistent with his position as a man of science, as an interventionist in the processes of life. His renunciation of Hyde, however, breaks this connection, and instead of being an autonomous benefactor Jekyll assumes the role of supplicant, submissive to a higher authority whose judgement and work he ceases to question. By publicly prostrating himself before the symbol of a higher authority, Jekyll attempts to free himself of the temptations of his individuality, as if his acceptance of a power acknowledged and supported by the faith of a wider community can provide him with a level of self control that his individual epistemology cannot.

Jekyll's legacy, both scientific and ontological, is summed up early in his "Full Statement of the Case." Describing the "partial discovery" on which his life has been "shipwrecked" he concludes:

that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard a guess that man will ultimately be known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens. (52-53)

Jekyll's belief that "others will follow" his work speaks of the growing sense of the ineluctable progress of scientific knowledge and its applications: that the consequences of Jekyll's work should have brought forth violence and ended in 'failure' is, for the scientific enquirer, no reason that the work itself should be dismissed or rejected. The work takes on a life and a status independent of that of its author; and the morality (or otherwise) of Jekyll has, for those that will follow, no bearing on the quality or usefulness of his research.<sup>57</sup>

That the "multifarious, incongruous" denizens of the polity of man should also be "independent" in Jekyll's eyes suggests the model of man's individuality as being the expression of a co-operative collective of cellular organisms, rather than as a genetically (or, in this case, metaphysically) coherent entity defined by its singular integrity. His own fate, however, reveals his failure to forge a coherent identity out of this kind of multiplicity. Ultimately, his experiment in co-authorship,

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<sup>57</sup> This argument remains active in the scientific community today, with continuing debate over the ethics of using results obtained by Nazi researchers from experiments carried out on prisoners in concentration camps. For further discussion of this topic see Kristina Moe's "Should the Nazi Research Data be Cited?"

in metaphysical devolution ends in all out war amongst his members in a struggle for primacy and the right to claim the unity and irreducibility of “I.” The fact that the body found by Utterson retains the form of Hyde (rather, than in the various film versions, reverting to Jekyll), suggests that the self-experimenter’s final discovery is his own dissolution.

### **The Made Man Alone**

*On the Origin of Species* and *The Principles of Geology* had done much to effect the questioning of the relationship between the creation and the purpose of existence, but science had also begun to examine the mechanisms responsible for the causal relationship between biological and ontological identity. Gregor Mendel’s paper “Experiments in Plant Hybridization,” often seen as the starting point of the science of genetics, was originally published in 1866, yet met with criticism rather than support, and apathy more than either. It was not until the early twentieth century that the rediscovery of Mendel’s work into the biological mechanisms that drive the principles of heredity was recognised as the breakthrough that evolutionists had been looking for since the days of Darwin’s pangenesis hypothesis.<sup>58</sup> Particularly crucial to Mendel’s work was his observation of the existence and function of ‘dominant’ and ‘recessive’ genes, which explained how organisms were able to pass on characteristics that they themselves do not outwardly display.

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<sup>58</sup> See William Bateson’s *Mendel's Principles of Heredity, a Defense*.

There is a common tendency amongst critics of *Jekyll and Hyde* to discuss Hyde in terms of Victorian theories of atavism.<sup>59</sup> The concept of a latent identity present within the modern self, capable of expressing itself independently of any control afforded by social conditioning unites the atavistic and recessive implications of Hyde, and is echoed by Jekyll's belief that:

This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centred on self; [...] It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty. (57)

By attempting to absolve his civilised, professional self from the actions of Hyde, Jekyll asserts his vulnerability to, and his distance from, his alter ego. Yet who is it that creates Hyde as an individualist on whose self "every act and thought [are] centred on?" As the generative, pre-existing identity, Jekyll casts himself in the role of the dominant power in the "polity" of his being, yet this very domination and ability to determine the nature of Hyde makes Jekyll inescapably responsible for the consequences of Hyde's actions, as dominant and recessive are fundamentally unable to divide, relying on each other for the determining relationship of their existence.

The Man Alone, following the genetic model, is thus fundamentally a composite being, within which competing elements create the terms of their unity within an ever dynamic struggle that must remain unresolved. Resolution and the

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<sup>59</sup> This is defined as "Resemblance to grand-parents or more remote ancestors rather than to parents" ("Atavism," def. a), or "Recurrence of the disease or constitutional symptoms of an ancestor after the intermission of one or more generations" (def. b).

end of the struggle, when it arrives physically for Jekyll and Hyde, means death. For Utterson, and for the reader, however, it means the final disintegration of the Jekyll-Hyde persona into an unknowability that marks its complete alienation from the social world that spawned it.

That the co-existence of these two identities has come to be culturally characterised in terms of a struggle between the dominant and the recessive (and that these positions eventually come to be reversed) is shown by the way in which successive theatrical and cinematic interpretations of the story have come to make a fetish of the moment of transformation.<sup>60</sup> So central has this scene become that it occurs always towards the start of the production, despite the fact that in the novella the co-identity of Jekyll and Hyde is not fully revealed until Dr. Lanyon's narrative two thirds of the way through the text, and after the dead body of Hyde has been discovered by Utterson and Poole locked inside Jekyll's laboratory.

All of these instances are characterised by the violence and the trauma of the transformation, of the sense of conflict and struggle between the competing natures of Jekyll-Hyde. In his discussion of the 1996 film version of H.G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, David Kirby and Laura Gaither agree that:

For those who are genetically engineered [...] the search for identity takes on a whole new meaning as they come to grip with the fact that other humans *chose* to create their

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<sup>60</sup> Indeed, it is the physical transformation of Jekyll into Hyde that has become the defining visual image of these productions, such as the famous double exposed photograph of Richard Mansfield from the 1887 stage version, John Barrymore's extending fingers in the 1920 silent version and Frederic Marsh's Oscar winning transformation in 1931.

specific genome without their consent. Engineered people must contend with the imposition of their creator's expectations. In addition [...] those engineered before birth are put in the position of being "creations" whose equality with their creators is called into question. Also [...] an engineered person may decide that an inequality does exist, but that the engineered person's superior genome demands that he or she inhabits a privileged status in society. In fact, engineered people must contend with the possibility that their genomic changes may render them as separate from the human species. (264)

If we apply the image of the engineered identity to Hyde then we raise some fundamental questions about the status of the Jekyll-Hyde persona in terms of its relationship to the wider world of late Victorian society. Jekyll's assertion that Hyde "alone in the human race was pure evil" is qualified by the fact that if it is true, then it is Jekyll himself who determined that this should be the case. Hyde's identity can thus be read as an expression of Jekyll's psychopathic nature. The first recorded use of the word "psychopath" listed in the OED comes from the *Pall Mall Gazette* in January 1885, the year before the publication of *Jekyll and Hyde*. The article quotes a M. Balinsky's observation that "Beside his own person and his own interests, nothing is sacred to the psychopath" ("Psychopath"), and in Jekyll's obsession with protecting his reputation from the truth of his nocturnal activities that unleashes Hyde we can see the psychopath's contempt for the restrictions on self imposed by society.<sup>61</sup> From Utterson's perspective, Jekyll's behaviour becomes markedly more psychopathic as his dependence on the drug (and on Hyde)

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<sup>61</sup> The definition of "psychopathy" contains much to remind us of Hyde; "markedly impulsive, egocentric, irresponsible, and antisocial behaviour, and an inability to form normal relationships with others, sometimes accompanied by aggressiveness or charm and manifested at all levels of intelligence" ("Psychopathy," def. 1).

increases, and his commitment to the society of his friends becomes ever more disrupted.

For Hyde as an engineered identity, however, the relationship between intent and consent becomes central. To what extent Hyde asked to be born has an impact on how we view the location and terms of wider responsibility for his actions. After the first consumption of the potion Jekyll describes how “I stole through the corridors, a stranger in my own house; and coming to my room, I saw for the first time the appearance of Edward Hyde” (55). The name Edward Hyde appears fully formed and unexplained in the text, no attempt is made by Jekyll to explain either its derivation or significance. By treating the name in this way, by seeming to leave it unchallenged and inviolable, Jekyll again tries to assert the fundamental separation between his two identities, and yet this is anything but clear cut. In search of a mirror, Jekyll, in *his* “Statement of the Case,” tells us that “I determined, flushed as I was with hope and triumph, to venture in my new shape as far as to my bedroom” (54-5). At this point there is no discrepancy between the post-potion persona and the “I” of Henry Jekyll; it is only when confronted with the image of his new shape that Jekyll creates the name of Edward Hyde. Even then, Jekyll is still able to claim that “This, too, was myself” (55), though perhaps the pun on ‘two’ should not be overlooked.

Hyde is thrown into being, his name and adult identity fully formed and designed to do evil. What he is patently not, at least at first, is an autonomous

identity: he is summoned by Jekyll's hand mixing the potion and banished by Jekyll's will asserting itself over his body. In the first flush of liberty that Jekyll experiences as Hyde the two identities are united also in their world view, they revel in their dual existence because they are focussed on the same goal, the satisfaction of the desires that caused Hyde to be created in the first place. In this first phase of the relationship, Hyde, like Adam, knows no sense of dislocation from the source of his identity, his *raison d'être* is clear and is valued by his creator, he is in every way fit-for-purpose. As a created identity, Hyde is able to articulate and fulfill the purpose of his creation, and this separates him fundamentally from the society he finds himself in, wherein metaphysical uncertainty and the hypocrisy of polite society are the dominant experiences.

The realisation of an engineered identity is thus a threat to its creator – by expressing a capacity to learn and to act independently of the authority of its maker it challenges the basis of that authority and its own subjugation to it. The gradual beginnings of enmity between Jekyll and Hyde come as Hyde's perfection (within the terms of his creation) increases. Hyde bristles against Jekyll's professions of regret and horror at his actions, and begins to conceive of himself as superior through the purity and the lack of hypocrisy in his own identity.<sup>62</sup> Hyde's acts of rebellion stem from a sense of contempt for the duplicitous ambitions of Jekyll, for the vulnerability that his social pretensions engender in him and from which Hyde

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<sup>62</sup> This sense of the created identity assuming superiority over its creator becomes a powerful trope in science fiction, as is the fear amongst the creator's community that somehow their own position will be jeopardised by his work. Examples that spring to mind include Roy Baty in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), and HAL in Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

himself is not entirely immune – witness the payment to the trampled girl’s family. The engineered identity of Hyde regards itself as more legitimate in that it a more fully realised expression of the terms of his creation; he can mix the potion with “a song on his lips” after the murder of Carew, while seconds later Jekyll “had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God” (61) in an image of supplication, of powerlessness.

This growing sense of a fuller, more potently realised identity within Hyde is also shown in the changing dynamic of the transformation. Whereas at first Jekyll is able to liken the process to being “like a schoolboy, strip[ping] off these lendings and spring[ing] headlong into the sea of liberty” (56) represented by Hyde, by the time of the murder of Carew it is Hyde who is using the transformation to his advantage – “Jekyll was now my city of refuge” (61). Illustrative of this shift in the balance of power is Jekyll’s decision, after the murder of Carew has outlawed Hyde, to indulge his pleasures in his own guise, to once more go walking in the garden he created Hyde to inhabit. Hyde’s response is devastating: by effecting the transformation unbidden by Jekyll on the bench in Regent’s Park in Broad daylight, Hyde breaks through and demands recognition as master in Jekyll’s world, as from this point the potion is required to sustain Jekyll rather than summon Hyde.

The eventual usurpation of the Man Alone by the product of his isolation is a theme familiar from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, but its relevance to the cultural context of the late nineteenth century is even more pronounced. As the man of

science asserted his claim over the authority of knowledge within society, he took the place previously held by God, and for all Stevenson's reservations about the role of organised religion he presents the new, scientific orthodoxy as fundamentally neither better nor essentially different in its aims. The continued isolation of the control of knowledge in the hands of men separated from the community they profess to serve means that all Jekyll can bequeath, in the form of Hyde, is tyranny in a new guise. The secretive and inconclusive way in which the narrative ends suggests that for all the seemingly cataclysmic implications of Hyde's *coup d'état*, fundamentally nothing in wider society has changed, and the triumph of the scientific Man Alone over the social limitations of his own identity has been as illusive as Jim's 'victory' in Patusan.

## 4. Conclusion

It has been the intention of this thesis to demonstrate the existence and significance of the figure of the Man Alone within the romance revival of the late nineteenth century. The popularity of these works suggests a need amongst their audience for an identification with a lone, autonomous hero, perhaps because of the increasingly crowded and regulated society that Britain was becoming. For the authors studied, however, the Man Alone became a device for critiquing such desires for autonomy and unilateralism of personal action born out of the perceived disempowerment of the individual within industrial modernity. The seemingly inevitable final disintegration of the Man Alone in the texts studied demonstrates the consequences of ultimately failing to engage with social reality, of an individual refusing to forge a community, however artificial and restrictive of personal liberty that process may be.

That man was alone, isolated from God by the scientific advances of the age, and from traditional sources of community by the political, social and geographical upheavals of the industrial, imperial age was not disputed. The question of “how to be” in the face of this conclusion, however, was one that the authors studied engaged with through their exploration of the causes and consequences of isolation in the Man Alone. The craving for “fellowship” of the imperial exile, coupled with the perils outlined for the scientist who disconnected themselves from the social consequences of their work, suggest that despite the apparent opposition of the

romance to the social realist tradition, community was still being defined as the location for the responsibility of personal actions in the weakening of the narrative of Divine judgement, in the “awful solitude” of “man’s triumph.”

In a thesis of this length it has not been possible to fully explore the development and diversity of this figure, but by establishing its key role in hugely commercially successful colonial and scientific romances it has been possible to establish its importance within popular culture. The location of this mass readership were the rapidly expanding cities of Victorian Britain, a location that can be read as both the expression and the experience of the new isolations of the period, and for this thesis to engage more completely with the domestic political implications of the drive towards (imperfect) communities being articulated, and the role of the law and of legislation in this process, the next area for further study would be how the heart of the empire internalised the Man Alone of the periphery.

Victorian London was at once both world famous as the centre of the Empire while simultaneously being an unknowable labyrinth of vice, corruption and danger. In this environment the Man Alone became a figure separated by their possession of superior knowledge and capacity, in the form of the detective. By bridging the gap between the civilised and the degenerate worlds of the city the detective placed himself outside both communities – a master of disguises to match Kim – and becomes an urban explorer, telling stories of a frontier rarely visited,

where a man of ability acts independently of the restraints of civil society in defence of his own moral code.

Through its concentration of knowledge and resources the city creates the possibility for a new kind of power, and the sense of fear engendered by the city's divided identity creates a need for an unseen figure, the criminal mastermind, who controls the confusion of city life. The civilised façade of modern society came to be perceived as a mask for the actions of powerful individuals locked in epic struggles, such as that between Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty.

The creation of criminal mastermind from the dichotomy of isolation and overcrowding experienced in the city also leads to its politicisation as representative of the threat posed by exterior forces. In an Imperial context this led to the sensationalism of the "Yellow Peril" and Sax Rohmer's Dr. Fu Manchu, and the fear that the centre was under attack from its exposure to liminal identities. The individual mastermind at the apex of a vast network, fanatically dedicated to the overthrow of civilised society became a powerful reality in twentieth century culture, and its seeds were sown in this period.

Underneath the mastermind, however, existed the individual agents of foreign threat, living secretly amongst the community they ultimately sought to destroy. Espionage, terrorism and political activism also became the subjects of popular fiction, such as Stevenson's *The Dynamiter* and Conrad's *The Secret Agent*,

fuelled by the coverage of anarchist bombers and Irish nationalists in the popular press. The secret agent thus became a new kind of Man Alone leading a double life amongst his enemies. The mutability of individual identities within wider political contexts and conflicts was established by this figure, and the isolation and anonymity offered by the modern city were central to his emergence. Existing critical work linking the divided consciousness of the city to the emergence of psychoanalytical theory through the work of Freud and Jung would be used to develop the idea of the separation of conscious, communally validated characteristics from the concealed truth of individual identity: the exile of man from his own essence.

The importance of the Man Alone can thus be summarised by use of a particularly Victorian metaphor. Through its role in dramatising and making accessible to a mass readership a means to interpret the significant cultural shifts occurring in philosophical and political conceptions of personal responsibility and the role of community, the Man Alone served as the governor on the steam engine of Victorian ontology, providing a safety valve to resolve some of the revolutionary pressures building up in the post-Darwin, industrial world. That such a figure should be summoned at the high point of British influence in the world is suggestive of a confidence within British society to engage with what would become the major struggles of the twentieth century, as modern, industrial nation states wrestled with very different models of the relationship of personal liberty to collective, social responsibility. That the Man Alone's quest to resolve these

tensions may have ended in failure does nothing to diminish its significance, or that of the role of his authors in preparing Britain for what lay ahead.

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