A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction

Mapping History's Nightmares

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CHAPTER FOUR
Atavism: A Darwinian Nightmare

The present chapter resumes the physiological theme of the previous chapter, and explores in more detail how and why the body became the locus of Gothic horror in the last decades of the century, and how the fields of psychiatry, criminology, and sexuality helped determine the focus of Gothic representation. The distinctly 'somatic' aspect of late-Victorian Gothic fiction has recently attracted a lot of attention. This is one area of criticism which is prepared to consider how a specific historical or discursive context shaped horror fiction. As Judith Halberstam observes: 'Monstrosity (and the fear it gives rise to) is historically conditioned rather than a psychological universal.' Her Skin Shows (1995) supports this claim by demonstrating how 'from the late eighteenth century to the nineteenth century, the terrain of Gothic horror shifted from the fear of corrupted aristocracy or clergy, represented by the haunted castle or abbey, to the fear embodied by monstrous bodies. Reading Gothic with nineteenth-century ideologies of race suggests why this shift occurs.' (16). 'Race' is used here in a broad sense and refers to the way bio-medical sciences concerned with the construction of class and national bodies conjured up spectres of degeneration, deviance, and racial diversity, and how these emerged in symbolic form in the horror fiction of the period. Kelly Hurley's The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the 'Fin de Siècle' (1996) describes a similar situation, locating late-Victorian fiction's obsession with what she terms the 'abhuman' within a context of 'general anxiety about the nature of human identity permeating late-Victorian and Edwardian culture, an anxiety generated by scientific discourses, biological and sociomedical, which served to dismantle conventional notions of "the human" as radically as did the Gothic which arose in response to them.'

Such 'contextual' readings of Gothic fiction provide a much-needed antidote to the general universalist tendency of much criticism, and are right to identify the somatic emphasis of late-Victorian Gothic. However, by stressing these departures, continuities have been lost sight of. For as Kelly Hurley remarks, 'While certain broad narrative and thematic continuities link this form to the late eighteenth century and Romantic Gothic novel, the fin-de-siècle Gothic rematerializes as a genre in many ways unrecognizable, transfigured . . . [it manifests] a new set of generic strategies . . . which function maximally to enact the defamiliarization and violent reconstitution of the human subject' (Hurley, 4; my emphasis). As these 'continuities' are not detailed it can only be assumed that they neither contribute to the somatic emphases of the later mode, nor have any relationship with the contexts and sources which explain its obsessions. This perspective is a consequence of an imprecision in defining the term 'Gothic' (which is often little more than a synonym for 'fearful') which characterizes Hurley's study. For example, Hurley suggests that the theories of criminal 'atavism' and 'degeneration' are 'gothic' versions of evolutionism—discourses that emphasized the potential indifferentiation and changeability of the human species (10); and refers to the 'criminal anthropological theory of the atavist, whose body was a compendium of human and not-human morphic traits' as an example of how 'the topics pursued by nineteenth-century science were often as "gothic" as those found within any novel' (20). The latter claim is partly true, as the present chapter will demonstrate. However, as neither indifferentiation and changeability nor morphic traits were conspicuous features of the earlier Gothic fiction (which her study almost entirely ignores), the usefulness of the term here is somewhat limited. Its use is in fact largely restricted to those novels which do appear to be concerned with bodily metamorphosis and are


discussed in her study. As Hurley does not offer a more precise definition of the Gothic, and certainly not one which could cover many of the novels which are not obsessed with the 'abhuman', this argument is ultimately circular.

The present chapter offers an alternative account of the relationship between late-Victorian somatic horror fiction and the scientific developments which encouraged this focus. It will also discuss the 'gothicity' of scientific discourses on criminality, but will do this by identifying those factors of scientific criminology and its central tenet of 'atavism' which can be compared with properties belonging to a pre-existing Gothic fictional tradition. It will attempt to demonstrate precisely why criminal anthropology may be considered a 'gothic' science by establishing its rhetorical and thematic affinities with aspects of the Gothic fictional mode. To do this I will focus on historical representation, exploring how the scope of history, the relationship between the past and the present, and where the historical past itself came to be located, were radically modified after the mid-century, and how this affected and enabled a new Gothic fiction.

**Denying Coevalness**

Critics are right to stress the importance of the body in late nineteenth-century representations of deviance and criminality. This situation has been examined by a number of historians who stress the distinctly 'anthropological' approach to social problems which characterizes a range of discourses including criminology and the psychiatry from which it emerged. To understand why an anthropology of crime was possible, and, more importantly, how this could be useful to Gothic fiction, it is necessary to consider developments within the ethnological and anthropological disciplines which informed these writings.

In the following discussion I will adopt George Stocking's term 'sociocultural evolutionists' to characterize the tradition to which I refer. Stocking's extremely useful study of the emergence and use of evolutionary models in Victorian anthropology stresses how most of the ideas which went to make up 'evolutionary' anthropology were developed independently of Darwin's theory of natural selection. He points to the influence of Spencer's 'Lamarckian' emphasis originating from the early 1830s which proved congenial for writers such as Tylor and McLennan, with their implicitly teleological models of cultural development; Stocking, Victorian Anthropology (London: Collier Macmillan, 1987). See also J. W. Burrow, Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), who uses the term 'social anthropologists' to identify this tradition.
continuous development of higher forms of material and intellectual culture out of more basic and therefore 'primitive' ones.

The evolutionary model which both contributed to and utilized the findings of anthropology after the mid-century, entailed a reorganization of time. As George Stocking puts it, 'Contemporaneity in space was...converted into succession in time by rearranging the cultural forms coexisting in the Victorian present along an axis of assumed structural and ideational archaism.' This approach to the past within the present was formalized in the comparative method, which served as the basis of anthropological thought and practice from the 1870s onwards. This involved a radical reordering of history along anthropological lines. In this method cultural, intellectual, and physical 'development' could transcend traditional modes of representing history. This is clearly seen in the following passage from Tylor's *Primitive Culture (1871)* which explains his methodology:

Surveyed in a broad view, the character and habit of mankind at once display [a] similarity and consistency of phenomena...[This] may be studied with especial fitness in comparing races near the same grade of civilization. Little respect need be had in such comparisons for date in history or for place on the map: the ancient Swiss lake-dweller may be set beside the medieval Aztec, and the Ojibwa of North America beside the Zulu of South Africa.7

Setting one object beside another is the basis of scientific taxonomy, a process which, in this case, is allowed to override traditional historical and geographical concerns. Indeed for Tylor, the ethnologist need show 'little respect' for such criteria. For what this taxonomical approach does is extricate peoples from their immediate or ostensible historical context and allow them to be *rehistoricized* according to the observer's standard of intellectual, cultural, and even physical development. To show 'little respect...for date in history' encourages anachronism: and yet anachronism is fundamental to the comparative method and the evolutionary model which sustains it. It is the premiss that not all cultures have 'progressed' at the same rate that enables the anthropologist to fill in the gaps of the prehistorical record, and thus establish the law of progressive and successive universal development with modern European culture as its goal. The anachronistic is institutionalized within sociocultural evolutionary discourse. According to Johannes Fabian, it is this 'denial of coevalness' that enabled anthropology to make its object. As he explains: 'the object of anthropology could not have gained scientific status until and unless it underwent a double visual fixation, as perceptual image and as illustration of a kind of knowledge. Both types of objectification depend on distance, spatial and temporal. In the fundamental, phenomenalist sense this means that the Other, as object of knowledge, must be separate, distinct, and preferably distant from the knower.8 The way it achieved this distance was 'mostly by manipulating temporal coexistence through the denial of coevalness'. By this he means the persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse' (Fabian, 31). The comparative method, with its emphasis on the classification of cultures or races according to developmental criteria meant that potentially the historical past could be located in the individual. An individual's body, brain, skull, and bone-structure could occupy a distinct historical or even prehistoric space.9 Significantly, Fabian's comments demonstrate the productive aspect of anthropology, that its 'distancing' was not entirely


9 According to Laura Otis, the move to locate the historical past physiologically was widespread within a number of domains and across the range of European cultures in the second half of the nineteenth century. In her excellent study of these ideas—which she terms 'Organic Memory'—she shows how Lamarck's theory of the transmission of acquired characteristics, and Haeckel's 'biogenetic law', had imaginative appeal for biologists, psychiatrists, and novelists during this period. As she observes: 'Organic Memory Theory', 'placed the past in the individual, in the body, in the nervous system; it pulled memory from the domain of the metaphysical into the domain of the physical with the intention of making it knowable'; Otis, *Organic Memory: History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1994), 3.
attributable to either a psychological or visceral repulsion from, or an ideological expulsion of, the 'Other'. This distancing served epistemological as well as ideological purposes, and helps to explain why the Gothic of the late century betrays a pronounced anthropological aspect, as forms of 'distance' serve an important role in Gothic fiction as well as scientific classification.

The 'anthropological' focus of late-Victorian Gothic involved a double movement: outwards to the margins of the Empire, and inwards to focus on the domestic 'savage' which resided in the very heart of the civilized world, and even in the ancestral memory of the modern civilized subject. The growth of Empire and the scramble for Africa (along with the anthropological data this generated) meant that late nineteenth-century horror could provide more exotic terrors for its readers. Thus emerged what Patrick Brantlinger has termed 'Imperial Gothic', a mode which dramatizes civilization's encounter with the primitive—journeying 'to the far reaches of the Empire, where strange gods and "unspeakable rites" still had their millions of devotees'. This genre, to some extent, meant a return of a version of the early Gothic scenario described in the first chapter, where a modern sensibility is identified in an earlier epoch. For when the hero of an Imperial Gothic novel such as Rider Haggard's Holly or Conan Doyle's Malone in The Last World travels in space he travels in time also. The whole environment of the Plain of Kôr in Haggard's She (1886) is 'primitive', it is the English travellers who are out of place and therefore anachronistic. When the narrator Holly anticipates his first encounter with the mysterious Ayesha, he wonders 'Who could be behind [the curtain?]—some naked savage queen, a languishing Oriental beauty, or a nineteenth-century young lady, drinking afternoon tea?'. These speculations evoke an anthropological perspective, ranging cultures chronologically. 'Savage' and Oriental are cultural designations, while the third (somewhat facetious) option reveals that the categories have been 'temporal' all along. What he actually encounters is a strange hybrid of all three—the almost naked Oriental beauty, who has lived for over two thousand years, and yet has an intellect vastly superior to the typical tea-drinking lady of Holly's chauvinistic imagination. Holly's expectations and cultural categories are however significant, and attest to the 'temporal' perspective which evolutionary anthropology provides for Imperial Gothic. As Brian V. Street puts it: 'the discoveries of archaeology and palaeontology, providing man with a larger time span in which the evolution pointed out by Darwin can be shown to have taken place, give the imaginative writer scope for creating worlds where ancient societies and customs are fossilised according to the pattern discovered by anthropologists in contemporary "primitive" societies.'

Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World (1911) takes this situation to its logical extreme, allowing 'modernity', represented by British scientists and explorers, to encounter prehistory in an almost impenetrable region of the Amazonian forest. This develops and extends the Radcliffian historical confrontation, but overcomes the 'problem' of anachronistic projection for a more historiographically aware age. For anachronism is fundamental to the anthropological method such a narrative evokes, while the pterodactyls and ape-men which such space/time travel entails make the barons and monks of the earlier tradition seem positively progressive. Imperial Gothic could also exploit the terrors of what I have termed the 'vestigial' mode of anachronistic confrontation. If the modern could encounter the primeval merely by journeying to one of the few blank spaces left on the map, then the 'primitive' could reverse the process and crop up in the very centre of the civilized world. There are the Egyptian mummies who appear in Paris or collegiate Oxford in Conan Doyle's 'The Ring of Thoth' (1890), and

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'Lot no. 249' (1894), and the threats of ‘reverse colonization’ presented by Haggard’s ‘She’, Richard Marsh’s the ‘Beetle’ (1897), and Bram Stoker’s Count Dracula. The last named effectively stages the conflict of a four-hundred-year-old vampire who is also an atavistic ‘criminal type’ appearing in the heart of London’s Piccadilly.

New models and standards of time, place, and context meant new ways of imagining their disruption, violation, or failure. As ideas of time now had a radically new structure within discourses which relied upon an evolutionary model, then the way these disruptions were perceived was re-imagined according to the new temporal perspective. Consequently those sciences which sought to explain the misfits and problems of society—psychiatry and the scientific ‘criminology’ which emerged at this time—are conspicuous for their adoption of ‘anthropological’ perspectives and reliance upon the epistemological models and modes of temporal distancing outlined above. Hence the significant anthropological and criminological focus of late-Victorian Gothic fiction. Sociocultural evolution and the medico-legal discourses which drew upon it helped to determine the shape of the late-Victorian monster. But the new fiction did not so much abandon as adapt the concerns of the earlier Gothic tradition; its historical and rhetorical specifications were retained but modified according to the new models of historical time, its location and dislocation. The ‘institutionalization’ of anachronism within the scientific sphere enabled a new breed of Gothic fiction, and determined its somatic and physiological character. The Gothic mode continued into the late century because the historical past (now extended, spatialized, and graded) still remained fundamental to a range of discourses which sought to explain and contain it. It is just that where this past was located had been reconfigured. The new Gothic responds to and comments on this reconfiguration. The ‘Criminal Anthropology’ to which Stoker refers in his 1897 novel, explained how primitives could survive from or regress to a long distant ancestral past, constituting, as the famous Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso put it, ‘true savages in the midst of our brilliant European civilization’.

To explain this reversion psychiatrists and criminologists focused on the body of the deviant subject. Physiology became the index to the ancestral or racial past, the place to locate anachronistic vestiges of a long-buried antiquity. The somatic Gothic of the last years of the century conforms to this pattern. Pre-eminent among this tradition is Stevenson’s Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886), which depicts what David Punter refers to as ‘an urban version of “going native”’. How the late nineteenth century represented the savage within the civilized, thus encouraging Gothic fiction to provide various urban versions of ‘going native’ will now be explained.

The ‘survival’ of primitive cultural forms into the chronological present is the basis of the comparative method. However, it was also recognized that phenomena ‘belonging’ to earlier stages of development could persist within advanced cultures, and that these could also be explained anthropologically by analogy to primitive peoples. This emphasis, which is central to Tylor’s ‘Doctrine of Survivals’, is a logical consequence of the evolutionary ethnologist’s approach to culture and history. For if existing ‘primitives’ provided historians with petrified relics of prehistoric life, the corollary of this was that the ‘prehistoric’ could reflect back upon the historical period and even on civilized culture itself, which could be reinterpreted according to ethnological models. What was deemed unprogressive, uncivilized,
or merely antithetical to modern (hegemonic) interests or values was potentially a target for such identifications. As Tylor explains: 'Survival in Culture, placing all along the course of advancing civilization way-marks full of meaning to those who can decipher their signs, even now sets up in our midst primeval monuments of barbaric thought and life' (Tylor, i. 19). For Tylor, anthropology could assist history by sketching in an 'hypothetical primitive condition' of humankind, and also decipher the primeval 'in our midst' (i. 9). It served 'to expose the remains of crude old culture . . . and to mark these out for destruction'. For Tylor, anthropology, 'active at once in aiding progress and in removing hindrance . . . is essentially a reformer's science' (ii. 410).

One of the 'primeval monuments' which anthropology discovered was criminality, or more precisely the criminal. According to Tylor: 'a Londoner who should attempt to lead the atrocious life which the real savage may lead with impunity and even respect, should be a criminal only allowed to fulfil his savage models during his short intervals out of gaol' (i. 27). This statement performs an hypothetical extrication and regrading of different peoples. 'Development' here transcends immediate spatial and temporal context, but enforces its importance for classifying individuals according to behaviour. What is significant about Tylor's comments is the way they perform an hypothetical extrication of an individual rather than a tribe or race; moreover, the individual in this case is 'a Londoner' who merely acts like a savage. Tylor's observations imagine a problem of contextual and taxonomic disruption, using 'a Londoner' who is evoked initially as a standard of civilization and thus antithetical to 'a savage'. This Londoner who rejects the values enforced by those who eventually imprison him is reclassified as a 'criminal' by means of an anthropological designation—a 'savage'. The mediatory noun 'savage' allows a Londoner, whose actions are compared with the models of this generic type, to be reclassified as another type defined by law—a criminal. Although it is the legal code which enforces this classification of the aberrant Londoner, it is performed with the aid of anthropology to reclassify individuals who disrupt contextual, taxonomical, and therefore, according to the developmental logic, temporal standards. If Stevenson's Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde depicts a civilized Londoner 'going native', Tylor's observations anticipate this problem, and supply an hypothetical and largely metaphorical solution—an anthropology of the criminal—the criminal as generic 'type'. However, what was hypothetical in Tylor's anthropology was becoming concrete and systematic in psychiatry.

Both Tylor's hypothesis and Stevenson's plot are realized in Daniel Tuke's discussion of a case of 'moral insanity' in the Journal of Mental Science of 1885:

Such a man as this is a reversion to an old savage type, and is born by accident in the wrong century. He would have had sufficient scope for his bloodthirsty propensities, and been in harmony with his environment, in a barbaric age, or at the present day in certain parts of Africa, but he cannot be tolerated now as a member of a civilized society. But what is to be done with this man who, from no fault of his own, is born in the 19th instead of a long-past century? Are we to punish him for his involuntary anachronism?

Tuke's observations provide a clear example of how an anthropological perspective can be applied according to Tylor's Model. Their potential for Gothic fiction according to the criteria employed in this study should also be evident. Tuke's morally insane individual is a contextual anomaly, out of 'harmony' with his environment. Contextual and environmental propriety has been a central concern of a number of discourses examined in

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17 John Lubbock comes to a similar conclusion when he states that, 'In fact, our criminal population are mere savages, and most of their crimes are but injudicious and desperate attempts to act as savages in the midst, and at the expense, of a civilised community', Lubbock, Pre-Historic Times; As Illustrated by Ancient Remains and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages (London: Williams & Norgate, 1865), 489. Similarly, Havelock-Ellis at the end of the century observed that 'the criminal often acts like a savage who has wandered into a foreign environment—[and that] it is scarcely necessary to remark that a savage in his own proper environment is not an anti-social being', The Criminal (1890: 1901 edn.), cited in Wiener, Reconstructing the Criminal, 355.

this study. Both the earliest Gothic novels, and the Urban Gothic fictions of Reynolds and Dickens were concerned with appropriate environments. The latter examples, and the 'factual' representations of Gothic London supplied by Thomas Beames and Henry Mayhew, compare with Tuke's perspective because they are also concerned with disharmony—the rookeries were contextual anomalies, out of place in modern mercantile, industrial, and clock-time-regulated London. Their representation entailed a double formation, both spatial and temporal, which compares with Tuke's taxonomical emphasis. The rookery as contextual anomaly was isolated spatially (its labyrinthine impenetrability and darkness ensured this), and temporally, its 'antiquity' was stressed to further distance that which was proximate. This 'distance' corresponded to the dictates of both scientific and Gothic discourse, which helps explain the parity between 'sociological' and fictional representation discussed earlier. Tuke's taxonomical perspective performs a similar function, but this time with an individual rather than with a place, class, or tribe. Like St Giles's next to Bloomsbury, or 'Thieving Lane' in Westminster, the morally insane individual is constituted as a contextual anomaly. This is signalled by Tuke's reference to 'certain parts of Africa' where such an individual would be 'in harmony'. This comparison reflects back upon and explains his contextual disruption, and classifies him anthropologically and developmentally. Taxonomy allows this de-contextualization and re-historicization to be accomplished according to the criteria of the comparative method—'a barbaric age' or 'the present day in certain parts of Africa'. The alienist who adopts anthropological models need not even suggest that certain parts of London persist in barbarism; taxonomy frees the individual from his context and allows him to be re-historicized in person. For Tuke such an individual is a reversion to a primitive type, an individual anachronism that can be studied scientifically.

Evolutionary 'reversion' provides a scientific explanation for the involuntary anachronism of the modern criminal; it is involuntary because it is biological. Tuke suggests that the morally insane individual acts in an anti-social, and therefore 'uncivilized', manner because he literally regresses or reverts to an earlier ancestral stage of development. Such explanations for biological or anthropological 'regressions' in Europeans had been developing in psychiatric discourse since the mid-century. In Britain this trend is exemplified by what has been termed 'psychiatric Darwinism', with writers such as Henry Maudsley, Daniel Tuke, and George Savage employing an evolutionary framework to explain the importance of biological and hereditary factors in 'manufacturing' deviant or criminal individuals. In 1862 Maudsley used the 'infantile mind of barbarous people' to reflect on the 'fearful degeneration, to which, from arrest or perversion of development' the human type is subject. As he observes: 'in the degeneration of the highest intelligence there would appear to be a reversion to the lower form of human intelligence, or even sometimes to the type of animal mental development.' Synthesizing Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, and Morel, Maudsley developed these ideas in the 1860s, providing his first full statement on the idea of 'reversion' in his Body and Mind in 1870. Here he observes that there is, truly a brute brain within the man; and when the latter stops short of its characteristic development as human—when it remains at or below

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the level of an orang's brain, it may be presumed that it will manifest its most primitive functions, and no higher functions. . . some very strong facts and arguments in support of Mr. Darwin's views might be drawn from the field of morbid psychology. We may, without much difficulty, trace savagery in civilization, as we can trace animalism in savagery. . . .

Tracing the primitive within civilization has been the concern of a number of writers encountered in this chapter. Here it is placed on a firm scientific footing and referable to the facts of evolutionary morphological development, being locatable in the body or brain of the individual. Maudsley's comments come close to articulating a version of the concept of 'atavism' (another term for Tuke's 'reversion') most famously applied by the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso. Indeed, Maudsley is described by David Garland as 'Lombrosian before Lombroso'. The significance of Lombroso's ideas for present purposes is the way they offer the fullest and most sensational synthesis of the 'psychiatric Darwinist' approach to criminality. Lombroso's theory of atavism rephrases in scientific terms what a number of writers had earlier suggested—that criminality belongs to the past. However, instead of looking in the rookeries to find an historical explanation for modern criminality, the criminologist turns to the body and brain of the deviant individual. The individual mind arrested...
those hierarchical and taxonomic structures effected through the establishment of evolutionary models of cultural and physical development. As seen above, the model of evolutionary progress with the modern middle-class male as its summit and goal was dependent upon the 'primitiveness' of savage peoples. Similarly Jekyll discovers that Jekyll's need Hydes. Or, to put it another way, Jekyll can only remain 'respect[able], wealthy, beloved' on account of the existence of Mr Hyde, the embodiment of his 'lower' nature. It is Jekyll's desire to 'carry [his] head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public' (81) that encourages him to conceive these divisions between respectability and moral lowness, and attempt to make them concrete by giving them a somatic form. Hyde therefore originates as an idea in Jekyll's class-conditioned consciousness. Before Hyde's actual embodiment he represents the summation of all that Jekyll wishes to disavow within himself. Hyde is therefore the consequence of Jekyll's internalization of the hierarchical model of development which relied on 'peoples' to represent various stages of development: 'If each [half], I said to myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go its way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this


extraneous evil.' (82). Jekyll quite literally internalizes the prevalent morality of his class. And yet there was a precedent for this in the evolutionary writings on the development of morals and mind, and the psychiatric representations of their dysfunctions. The term 'upward path' signifies, as well as the theological path of righteousness and the notion of social betterment, a biological and evolutionary inflection. 'Excelsior' was also inscribed on the banner of popular social Darwinism.

As a man of science Jekyll not only internalizes the morality of his class, he internalizes its scientific models of hierarchy and deviance, the bestial and the primitive. Henry Maudsley's Remarks on Crime and Criminals associated the 'more primitive' human passions with the pre-moral activities of animals and primitive peoples. These peoples represent and embody these passions. The 'unkinding' of moral insanity or degeneration exposes these earlier historical/evolutionary strata, and allows the European to be taxonomized as a criminal or deviant who reproduces in his person (somatically or behaviourally) the savage and the bestial. Jekyll's potion enacts this process. Maudsley refers to the process of degeneracy which enables this reclassification of the modern subject as a 'stripping off' of the moral sense; similarly when Jekyll swallows his potion he 'strip[s] off' 'genial respectability . . . and spring[s] headlong into a sea of liberty' (86). When Jekyll effects this dissociation of his two halves he externalizes these hierarchical structures and produces Jekyll's class antithesis—a stereotype of atavistic criminality: 'Even as good shone on the countenance of [Jekyll], evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other . . . and had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay' (84).

The anthropological 'lowness' of Mr Hyde is the inevitable product of Jekyll's externalization of hierarchical structures according to the specifications of psychiatry and criminology. As a 'savage within civilization his form corresponds to that of a simian criminal type. Despite the ultimate unrepresentability of

Hyde, a number of epithets do emerge from the descriptive fog which envelops him. Hyde is ‘dwarfish’, ‘pale’ and ‘deformed’. Dwarfism and other deformities denoted degeneracy as deviations from the normal type of development. Hyde’s dwarfism represents his arrested moral development figured in somatic terms. As Jekyll reasons:

The evil side of my nature, to which I now transferred the stamping efficacy, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter, and younger than Henry Jekyll. (84)

Jekyll imagines a material relationship between moral and physical development. Hyde is dwarfish because his moral nature is arrested or completely absent. He is therefore physically degenerate (the title of Albert Wilson’s 1910 book on degeneracy was Unfinished Man), because he is morally underdeveloped. Hyde is literally, or at least initially, an ‘unfinished man’.

Hyde combines a number of atavistic characteristics, comparable to those supposedly found in the ‘lower’ or ‘primitive’ races, prehistoric humans, or the lower animals. He is described as ‘ape-like’ (47, 96), and ‘troglodytic’ (40), and hirsute. Furthermore, his uncontrollable violence is also represented in terms analogous to those used by criminologists. Hyde’s murder of Sir Danvers Carew—with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot, and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway' (47)—compares with Lombroso’s famous characterization of the typical criminal. For him the criminal (who betrays the somatic attributes found in ‘savages and apes’) ‘desire[s] not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh

and drink its blood’. With his dwarfishness, deformity, ape-like fury, hirsute and troglodytic aspects, Mr Hyde stands as the antithesis of the ideal of beauty as embodied in Henry Jekyll, who is a ‘tall, fine build of a man’ (66–7), with hands that are ‘professional in shape and size . . . large, firm, white and comely’ (88).

Stevenson’s tale also brings the Urban Gothic up to date. It was argued in Chapter 2 that what encouraged a ‘Gothicization’ of the capital was an emphasis in a range of discourses on specific and circumscribed districts of criminality. The rookeries preserved the abuses of the past. After the mid-century, following the eradication of some of the most notorious slums, this exclusively environmental or topographical understanding of metropolitan criminality was gradually superseded by a focus on individuals and principally on their bodies. A key document in this process is the first volume of Henry Mayhew’s London Labour and the London Poor (1851). Its opening passage does not refer to Londoners at all, but considers such ‘Wandering Tribes’ as the Fingoes, Sonquas, and the Bedouins. According to Mayhew, these nomadic peoples are marked by a number of common features including ‘repugnance to regular and continuing labour’ and by their ‘passion for stupefying herbs and roots’ and ‘libidinous dances’. Having developed this picture of ‘Wandering Tribes in General’, he moves to the ‘Wandering Tribes of this Country’. Mayhew does not associate these outcasts with specific locales; quite the contrary, it is the itinerant character of these ‘tribes’ which encourages him to employ an ethnological model, and to support these analogies with recourse to comparative anatomy. Adapting the observations of the famous ethnologist and physician James Cowles Prichard, he finds in the nomadic urban poor ‘a greater development of the animal than of the intellectual or moral nature of man [being] distinguished for their high

of Jekyll's adventures as 'an ordinary secret sinner' (92), having abandoned his use of Hyde as an alibi. At this moment Hyde is all but forgotten. The Jekyll who sits in the park that clear January morning is assured of the integrity of his bourgeois identity:

After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbour; and I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active good will with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vainglorious thought, a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering... . I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy. (92)

A revolution in Jekyll's physiological 'polity' is enacted in this public space. This usurpation or insurrection is envisaged in terms of class specifications. Thus 'active good will' is replaced by 'a contempt for obligation'; his clothes (distinct markers of class) no longer fit him; and his 'professional' and 'comely' hand is replaced by the 'corded and hairy' hand of his Other. This hand is laid upon the body of its erstwhile master. In the 'polity' of Jekyll's self the wandering 'primitives' refuse to remain in their place.

Stevenson's tale therefore depicts the disruption of various structures and hierarchies designed to place bodies, topographically, taxonomically, and chronologically. Hyde refuses to remain in the place designated for him by the doctor who imagined him, and upon whose subordination he is dependent to enforce his own social eminence. Hyde's usurpation of Jekyll's 'political' body, imagines the empowerment of the savage within civilization, the creature defined by various sciences is uncaged and comes out 'roaring' (92). From Mayhew's 'anthropological' analogies to Jekyll's revolution in his 'political' body, the concern has been with the movement of bodies, across the city or across the boundaries of civilization (imagined geographically and physiologically). As remarked above, these concerns centre around notions of contextual propriety—where bodies should be placed. A Londoner who acts like a savage is a criminal, a criminal in London 'is' a savage. The city (civility and civilization) and the criminal are figured in opposition. The bodies of Lombroso's or Tuke's criminals belong to other places or other times. Hyde belongs, if anywhere, in the imagination of Jekyll, not in Jekyll's own clothes in broad daylight in Regent's Park. Discourses on the criminal body therefore provided the somatic reconfiguration of the notion of the rookery as contextual anomaly.

Strange Survivals

With such concepts as atavism, reversion, and survival, evolutionary, ethnological, and criminological discourses helped to demarcate a new territory for Gothic representation, with the body providing a site for ancestral return. Whilst it has been suggested that appropriate location still played a part in staging this return as Gothic scenario, by establishing the modernity of the context into which the atavistic past intrudes, the taxonomical focus on 'development' as a measure of contemporaneity meant that as an individual could 'embody' the past, then atavism could potentially crop up anywhere. In some fictions this meant a return to more traditional Gothic locales, while still retaining an emphasis on the body as the focus for horrific returns. The novels of Arthur Machen from the 1890s perhaps best illustrate this tendency. Parts of The Great God Pan (1894) and 'The Novel of the Black Seal' from The Three Imposters (1895), take place in isolated rural districts (wildest Wales), providing appropriate settings for the morphological

33 It could be argued that vampirism only became 'Gothic' in the Victorian period. The vampires of folklore lacked the anachronistic status of belonging to another century which Rymer introduced with Varney the Vampire in 1845 (Varney is 200 years old in 1845). The vampires of folklore usually only lasted a few weeks, or at the most months, before the villagers put them to rest (Polidori's Lord Ruthven, whilst aristocratic, is also folkloric in only exceeding his natural span by a short, albeit unspecified, time.) Both Le Fanu's Carmilla and Stoker's Dracula follow Rymer in enjoying an undead existence that spans generations. Stoker combines this with a post-Darwinian emphasis that dovetails the count's anachronistic status with the suggestion that he is also a biological 'atavism'. This will be discussed more fully in ch. 6.
cheek-bones and protruding jaws', and remarks how the 'rudest tribes of men' are generally distinguished by their 'prognath[oid]' form of head (3, 1). Mayhew's efforts can be seen as an early attempt to establish a new criterion for 'placing' criminality, for situating it in society and in history. 'Wandering' criminals render the strictly topographical or 'environmental' approach discussed in Chapter 2 somewhat redundant. Comparative anatomy provides an alternative. Mayhew compensates for the fact that the wandering tribes of Britain refuse to be fixed geographically by stressing the distinct physical traits which marked them off from their more provident neighbours. His anthropological method—classifying the wanderers and settlers by their types of head—

attempts to 'fix' somatically that which refused to be placed topographically.

Similar concerns are represented in Stevenson's tale, where the topographical and the somatic mirror and comment on each other. A topography of the body and the body politic is mapped out on the geography of the city.32 Jekyll's denials are embodied in the anthropologically 'low' Mr Hyde, the atavistic figure who is placed in a low district of the city. As with Mayhew, therefore, physiology enforces and mirrors topographical localization. However, Stevenson's text represents this process in reverse. When Jekyll lamented his divided nature he wished that each side of him could be 'housed in separate identities' (82); with his potion he achieves this, 'housing' his lower element in a low district of the city, Soho (close on St Giles's and Seven Dials). The discourse of urban exploration is evoked in the narrative when Utterson, accompanied by a police officer, goes in pursuit of Hyde into this 'district of some city in a nightmare' (48). When this district is described the stereotypes of urban investigation are reproduced.

32 According to Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, physiological and topographical differences can be seen as homologous at this time. As they observe, the 'hierarchy of the body' and of low bodies, is 'transceded through the hierarchy of the city': 'The vertical axis of the body's top and bottom is transcended through the vertical axis of the city and the sewer and through the horizontal axis of the suburb and the slum or of the East and the West End'. 145. By this they mean that 'lowness in class terms is associated within the bourgeois imaginary with the 'lower' passions, with that which the body rejects and denies. Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London: Methuen, 1986), 145.

Its darkened alleyways, ragged children, gin-sodden mothers, and foreign immigrants give Jekyll's atavistic alibi an appropriate dwelling place. Here the bodily and the topographical once more mirror and reinforce each other. For Soho's relation to respectable London resembles Hyde's relation to his more upright twin Dr Jekyll. Surrounded by the higher districts of Mayfair and Pall Mall, Soho's relation to respectable London is therefore a topographical replication of the Hyde within the Jekyll. When Jekyll effects his dissociation, he reproduces the imaginary mapping of his internal divisions. Placing the anthropologically 'low' body of Hyde, in the lower district of the city.

Ultimately, however, Stevenson's Strange Case is a case of transgression—topographical, physiological, and socio-political. It depicts the horror that ensues when the divisions which Jekyll constructs are unsustainable. The narrative suggests a disruption enacted in terms of class and urban geography. Part of the horror with which Jekyll's circle regards Hyde is owing to his lack of deference and his not knowing his place. His 'place' is of course Soho; but Hyde also has a key to Jekyll's back door and is allowed to roam his house at liberty. As Utterson asserts: 'Things cannot continue as they are. It turns me quite cold to think of this creature stealing like a thief to Harry's bedside' (42). If the geography of the city is transgressed by the movements of Hyde (entering the back door of Jekyll's house), so the geography of the body is violated by Jekyll's lower element ' usurping' the offices of [Jekyll's] life (95). Hyde's usurpation of Jekyll through his bid for dominance is a form of revolution in the (political) body, a triumph for the lower orders of his being. That Jekyll imagines his body 'topographically' is suggested when he 'hazard[s] the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens' (82). Thus he not only internalizes the stereotypes and structures of development and dysfunction, but enacts in somatic terms the scenario of transgression and insurrection. In this modern Frankensteinian tale, the doctor can no longer control his creation.

When Jekyll loses complete control over Hyde it takes place in a public arena, Regent's Park, when Jekyll is at his most complacent and self-congratulatory. It occurs on the morning after one
reversions and atavistic returns which these works stage. With Machen the geographic and the somatic are associatively linked, mirroring each other on a number of levels. The following passage comes from the opening chapter of *The Great God Pan*, where Dr Raymond, a practitioner in 'transcendental medicine' explains to one of the tale's principal narrators how he has discovered the significance of 'a certain group of nerve-cells in the brain': 'the great truth burst upon me, and I saw, mapped out in lines of light, a whole world, a sphere unknown; continents and islands, and great oceans in which no ship had sailed' (27). By means of basic surgery—a trifling rearrangement of certain cells—Raymond proposes to span 'the unknowable gulf that yawns profound between two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit' (Machen, 26, 27). Raymond's rhetoric recalls the rationale of 'Imperial Gothic' romance. In 1894 Rider Haggard delivered an elegy for the genre he had made his own when he lamented that 'Soon the ancient mystery of Africa will have vanished', and wondered where 'the romance writers of future generations [will] find a safe and secret place, unknown to the pestilent accuracy of the geographer, in which to lay their plots'. As if in answer to this question Machen's pioneering physician stakes a claim in the neurological/psychological borderlands, that dark repository of secrets that Sigmund Freud, self-styled conquistador of the mind would soon claim to have penetrated. As Raymond more prosaically puts it: 'that group [of nerve-cells] is, as it were, land to let, a mere wasteland for fanciful theories' (27). Indeed. Therefore, whilst the Imperial Gothic romancer would turn to the lost worlds found in the few remaining blank spaces on the map to stage scenes of ancient rites and prehistoric survivals, in Machen's work it is the brain and body of the experimental subject that allows the primeval to gain entrance into the modern world. The experiment works, and Mary (his subject) comes face to face with the Great God Pan. The experience turns her into a 'hopeless idiot' (31), and she dies after giving birth to Helen, the product of this unholy conception whose diabolical activities the novel attempts to narrate.

The 'veil of horror' (87) that is human flesh is lifted again in 'The Novel of the Black Seal' which Machen published the following year. This tale resembles *Pan* in a number of points. It also narrates the amoral investigations of a scientific searcher after forbidden knowledge, intercourse between the human and the demonic, and scenes of repulsive bodily metamorphosis. The Faustian figure in this tale is Professor Gregg, an eminent ethnologist who employs similar terms to Raymond to characterize his researches: 'man is the secret which I am about to explore, and before I can discover him I must cross over weltering seas indeed, and oceans and the mists of many thousand years.' Gregg is an ethnologist, and therefore the object of his study is 'race', which he understands according to a logic of evolutionary development and savage survival. He uses standard ethnological methods to establish the 'irrefragable fact, as certain as a demonstration in mathematics', of the existence of fairies. Therefore, whilst he was loath to receive any one specific instance of modern spiritualism as containing even a grain of the genuine... [yet he] thought it possible that the theory of reversion might explain many things which seem wholly inexplicable... a race which had fallen out of the grand march of evolution might have retained, as a survival, certain powers which would be to us wholly miraculous... what if the obscure and horrible race of the hills still survived, still remained haunting wild places and barren hills, and now and then repeating the evil of Gothic legend, unchanged and unchangeable as the Turanian Shelta, or the Basques of Spain. (75-6)

Here Machen adds an occult dimension to the rationale of established ethnological practice—that certain races, occupying remote regions, constitute survivals from primitive times, and had 'fallen out of the grand march of evolution'. He thus brings 'Gothic legend' up to date. To give this hypothesis a degree of plausibility Machen stresses the remoteness and unanniness of the Black Mountains region where this race supposedly reside. Here is prime Gothic territory: with 'barren and savage hills, and ragged common-land, a territory all strange and unvisited, and

more unknown to Englishmen than the very heart of Africa' (56). Machen is true to form in using geographical isolation to explain anachronistic survival: 'an olden land of mystery and dread, and as if all was long ago and forgotten by the living outside' (72).

However, as Gregg's recourse to the notion of 'reversion' suggests, Machen combines this traditional geographical emphasis with a highly contemporary use of physiology and pseudo-science to explain and represent atavistic returns. Significantly, Gregg's medium for penetrating the 'mists of many thousand years' (51) is the body of a young idiot boy who is subject to 'fits'. Epilepsy was of interest to criminologists like Lombroso, who attempted, as he did with so many abnormal phenomena, to find a significant link between this condition and criminality. The link he perceived was of course atavism. Epilepsy was also of interest to those who studied the varieties of religious experience. The following comments from Sabine Baring-Gould's *Strange Survivals and Superstitions* (1892) come close to Professor Gregg's approach to the supernatural:

Among the primitive races which at this day represent the earliest phases of psychological development, the savage man has a vague apprehension of the existence of the spiritual world...

Madness, epilepsy, catalepsy, hysteria, in fact all nervous maladies are at present little understood by science, and among rude nations, where there is no science, are not understood at all, and are regarded with superstitious terror. The violence of the patient, the fancies that possess him, his incoherent cries, the distortion of his body, the alteration of his features, all seem to point out that... such a person is... possessed.37

Like Gregg, Gould attempts to use science to account for unknown and mystical experiences. Here nerves replace demons and the mystic becomes a 'patient'. Machen's narrative compounds the mystical and biological meanings epilepsy was compelled to carry. The epileptic subject is Jervase Cradock, whose

mother was raped by one of the strange 'race', and whose fits confirm for the Professor the authenticity of his strange origins: his face [was] all swollen and blackened to a hideous mask of humanity... and an inconceivable babble of sounds [were] bursting and rattling and hissing from his lips. He seemed to pour forth an infamous jargon, with words, or what seemed words, that must have belonged to a tongue dead since untold ages, and buried beneath Nilotic mud, or in the inmost recesses of the Mexican forest... 'Surely this is the very speech of hell'. (63–4)

It is through Jervase, and during one of his fits, that Gregg witnesses confirmation of his theory of biological reversion. Thus whilst his researches move into esoteric regions and are phrased in terms of evil and hell, the climax of the narrative is more zoological than metaphysical. As Gregg reasons, the protrusion of a 'slimy, wavering tentacle' with perfect manual dexterity from the body of Jervase, although 'horrible, almost beyond the power of human conception and the most fearful fantasy' was nonetheless 'nothing really supernatural' (82, 83). It was, moreover, sufficiently 'in harmony with the very latest scientific theories', to convince the narrator's staunchly rational but extremely gullible interlocutor of the truth of 'protoplasmic reversion' and to consider penning a monograph on the subject (84, 85). Therefore, whilst not one word of the 'Novel' is actually true, and whilst the author's tongue is firmly in his cheek, his works show how the idea of atavistic reversion and the principles of ethnology could be exploited for sensational Gothic effects.39

The centrality of theories of atavism in the late nineteenth century meant that the Gothic trope of the ancestral portrait was

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given a new lease of life. Herbert Spencer’s remarks on the subject of ‘atavism’ from 1864 that ‘In the picture-galleries of old families ... are seen types of feature that are still, from time to time, repeated in members of these families’,\(^4\) underwent elaborate embellishment, and by the 1880s had become something of a set piece in both physiological and fictional discourse. In Robert Louis Stevenson’s short story ‘Ollala’ (1885), an ancestral gallery in the home of a degenerate but proud Spanish family provides the narrator with ‘a parable of family life’.\(^4\) The moral overtones of the word ‘parable’ are appropriate, as one particular portrait is used for a (eugenic) sermon preached by Ollala, a member of this family with whom the narrator has rashly fallen in love. The text of this sermon is the familiar one of renunciation, which is propounded with a biological determinism worthy of Samuel Butler:

She who sat for it died ages ago; and she did evil in her life. But, look again: there is my hand to the least line, there are my eyes and my hair. What is mine, then, and what am I? ... Others, ages dead, have wooed other men with my eyes; other men have heard the pleading of the same voice that now sounds in your ears. ... The hands of the dead are in my bosom; they move me, they pluck me, they guide me ... Is it me you love, friend? or the race that made me? (210)

When the family taint turns out to be a form of vampirism, one does well to take such scruples seriously (215).

Writers of Gothic tales were not alone in finding the conceit of the ancestral portrait useful for expounding physiological lore. When J. F. Nisbet discussed the principle of ‘Throwing Back’ in 1889 he observed how ‘Every Good quality and every defect that may have existed in any of our forefathers since the reign of Queen Elizabeth is liable to be revived in ourselves. ... The recurrence of physical character after the lapse of centuries is attested by portraits, but moral character of a normal kind ... can scarcely be traced beyond the third generation.’⁴² Henry Maudsley developed this idea to imply that the physical recognition made possible by ancestral portraits can also assist moral recognition. As he asserts: ‘Now and then a person may detect in his own face in the looking-glass a momentary flash of expression of the sort which he will find formal in the portrait of an ancestor ... Beneath every face are the latent faces of ancestors, beneath every character their characters.’⁴³ In both cases, ancestral return is traced through physical recognition, with ancestral portraits providing the focal point for this understanding. Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890/1) includes a scene which dramatizes the ideas Nisbet and Maudsley expound. Chapter 11 of the 1891 edition tells how Dorian experiences a similar moment of recognition when he strolls through the ancestral portrait gallery of his country house. Here he contemplates the face of Philip Herbert, one of the debauchees whose blood flowed in his veins. Pausing before this portrait the narrator wonders whether it was ‘young Herbert’s life that he sometimes led? Had some strange poisonous germ crept from body to body till it had reached his own?’⁴⁴ Dorian appears to acquiesce; for him: ‘man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose very flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead’ (157). These tainted germs are significant. For when Dorian considers their influence he wonders whether it was ‘some dim sense of that ruined grace [Herbert’s physiological legacy] that had made him so suddenly ... give utterance, in Basil Hallwood’s studio, to the mad prayer that had so changed his life?’ (158). This implies that Dorian’s tainted inheritance motivates the action upon which the narrative turns.


Wilde's tale appears to supernaturalize but also 'literalize' the ideas expressed by Spencer, Nisbet, and Maudsley. For, with the transformation of the portrait into a spectacle of degeneracy and moral putrefaction, Dorian's own portrait is providing physical testimony to the degenerate legacy which Dorian himself inherits. It provides a grotesque elaboration of Maudsley's idea that 'beneath every face are the latent faces of ancestors, beneath every character their characters' (Maudsley, 48). Wilde's Gothicization of pathological representation in *Dorian Gray* is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

What is however (after Hawthorne) the most significant use of a family portrait as an index to ancestral return plays a key role in the most famous return of the fin de siècle. This trope provides the decisive moment in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). For Holmes's great comeback Doyle constructs a narrative in which atavism, ancestry, and cursed inheritance play a major if not defining part in plot formation. As with the curse narratives discussed in the previous chapter, Doyle's tale does not overtly attempt to conflate supernatural and pathological versions of this mechanism. Indeed, according to the newspaper report, 'the prosaic finding of the coroner . . . finally put an end to the romantic stories which have been whispered in connection with the affair' (17). Dr Mortimer, who is himself an expert in comparative anatomy, atavism, and pathological reversion, nonetheless regards legends about curses and clinical facts about coronary disease incompatible, and therefore he leaves certain details out of his report. He fails to mention the footprints of a gigantic hound by the body of the dead baronet. As he explains: 'My motive for withholding [these details] from the coroner's inquiry is that a man of science shrinks from placing himself in the public position of seeming to endorse a popular superstition' (17). For Mortimer atavism is one thing, an ancestral curse quite another.

And yet whilst the narrative fails to encourage an overt conflation of a pathological discourse on hereditary disease and a supernatural legend of cursed lineage, it does include examples of atavism and ancestral return that are imaginatively and thematically linked with the legend of the Hound. There are in fact two 'cases' of atavism featured in this novel. For much of the narrative (at least while it remains a mystery), the uncanny associations which cluster around the isolated moors and its legendary past—'like some fantastic landscape in a dream' (54)—are deflected onto the figure of Seldon, the Notting Hill murderer, "According to the Medical Directory which Watson consults, Mortimer has produced the following essays and publications: "Is Disease a Reversion?" "Some Freaks of Atavism" . . . "Do We Progress?" (6). According to William Greenslade, these references function to 'underwrite the plausibility of the narrator's extensive use of degeneracionist and evolutionary discourse', Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel, 1880–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 100.

 validate his own rational methods. He now finds the case 'of extraordinary interest, and one which present[s] immense opportunities to the scientific expert' (22).

One of the ways this demystification is achieved is by reference to criminological and biological theories of atavism, and ancestral return. However, unlike the curse narratives discussed in the previous chapter, Doyle's tale does not overtly attempt to conflate supernatural and pathological versions of this mechanism. Indeed, according to the newspaper report, 'the prosaic finding of the coroner . . . finally put an end to the romantic stories which have been whispered in connection with the affair' (17). Dr Mortimer, who is himself an expert in comparative anatomy, atavism, and pathological reversion, nonetheless regards legends about curses and clinical facts about coronary disease incompatible, and therefore he leaves certain details out of his report. He fails to mention the footprints of a gigantic hound by the body of the dead baronet. As he explains: 'My motive for withholding [these details] from the coroner's inquiry is that a man of science shrinks from placing himself in the public position of seeming to endorse a popular superstition' (17). For Mortimer atavism is one thing, an ancestral curse quite another.

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the ‘commutation of [whose] death sentence had been due to some doubts as to his complete sanity, so atrocious was his conduct’ (56). Seldon’s legal definition as a lunatic criminal is endorsed by Watson’s emphasizing his atavistic nature: ‘Over the rocks, in the crevice of which the candle burned, there was thrust out an evil yellow face, a terrible animal face, all seamed and scored with vile passions. Foul with mire, with a bristling beard, and hung with matted hair, it might well have belonged to one of those old savages who dwelt in the burrows on the hillsides’ (97). His crimes may have taken place in West London, his legal status may be defined by modern medico-legal science, but Seldon belongs on the moors. The primal and atavistic nature of this criminal is further endorsed by his association with the Hound. Both convict and canine are described in similar terms. Like Seldon, the dog has a ‘dark form and savage face’ (151); while the ‘poor devil of a convict’ is referred to as ‘half animal and half-demon’ (157, 136), a fair description of the Hound both of legend and local report. Before its unmasking by Holmes, the Hound as a supernatural agent is also ‘atavistic’, a survival from the criminal past of the Baskerville family. By imaginatively associating Seldon with the Hound in this way, the text reinforces the idea of the violent criminal being an anachronistic intrusion into the modern world. More at home in the prehistoric landscape of the moors, his outrages on the streets of modern London are as disruptive and terrifying as if the wicked earl himself or his spectral nemesis really did revisit the modern world. It is fitting therefore that it should be the Hound who brings about Seldon’s demise, mistaking him for Sir Henry. Watson’s comments on this circumstance, although ‘modern’ in their appeal to public security, can be read as a fulfillment of the old legend and its retributory decrees: ‘The tragedy was still black enough, but this man at least deserved death by the laws of this country’ (131). The supernatural legend, deriving from the past and serving the ends of retribution and ‘Holy Writ’ on the sins of the fathers (14), serves its purpose notwithstanding the fact that the hound is actually material. But in so doing it partly overrides or eradicates the modern psychiatric discourse which prevented Seldon’s execution precisely

because he was atavistic, and like the old legend a thing of the past. As Daniel Tuke phrased it, ‘what is to be done with this man who, from no fault of his own, is born in the 19th instead of a long-past century? Are we to punish him for his involuntary anachronism?’ By implicitly answering Tuke’s question in terms dictated by the ‘old-world’ legend, Doyle’s narrative appears to separate the material discourse on criminal atavism, and the supernatural logic of the legend, while actually allowing the latter a greater legitimacy than the former. The retributory logic of the Old Testament and its legendary application conquers modern medico-legal procedures even as it serves the interests of modern society.

As it turns out the Hound itself is not supernatural, deriving not from the bowels of hell but a pet shop on the Fulham Road, and is the very material agent of the man who calls himself Stapleton. Stapleton stage-manages a revisitation of the legend to exploit Sir Charles’s superstitious and coronary weaknesses. The hound is merely the catalyst, inducing the heart attack that had been prepared by Sir Charles’s nervous subscription to the superstitious rumours. According to Holmes, he ‘fell dead at the end of the alley from heart disease and terror’ (161). This covert confederacy between the supernatural and the pathological in seeming to fulfill the edicts of the curse, thus producing a ‘case’ for Holmes to investigate/demystify, is complicated further by the revelation that Stapleton is actually a Baskerville, and that through these criminal machinations he is reverting to ancestral type. Rodger, like his father after whom he is named, inherits ‘the old masterful Baskerville strain’ (23). In true Gothic style this moment of revelation is enabled by means of an ancestral portrait. When Holmes sees the portrait of ‘the cause of all the mischief, the Wicked Sir Hugo, who started the Hound of the Baskervilles’, he finds that ‘the face of Stapleton [springs] out of the canvas’ (139). This covert tribute to the prototype of the haunted portrait from Otranto (where Alfonso literally steps out of the portrait) is immediately incorporated into Holmes’s

materialist epistemology, and is interpreted according to the logic of reversion. For Holmes this is "an intriguing instance of a throwback, which appears to be both physical and spiritual. A study of family portraits is enough to convert a man to the doctrine of reincarnation. The fellow is a Baskerville—that is evident" (139-40). The introduction of a 'mystical' dimension by Holmes's rather flippan reference to Eastern religion does not alter the materialist significance of this recognition. Indeed, this suggestion is followed by a statement that renders unambiguous the terms in which Holmes understands this example of atavism. Holmes, the trained 'criminal investigator' finds in this instance of reversion the essential 'missing lin[k]' in his investigative 'net'; swearing that 'before to-morrow night he will be fluttering in our net as helpless as one of his own butterflies. A pin, a cork, and a card, and we add him to the Baker Street collection!' (139, 140).

The metaphor drawn from natural history, coupled with the echo from evolutionary ethnography, casts Holmes as an English Lombroso, as keen as Dr Mortimer to collect interesting 'freaks of atavism' (6). This hereditary 'missing link' provides a motive for Stapleton's plotting, and the hunter becomes the hunted.

The 'nets' of the chapter's title ('Fixing the Nets') turn out to be those of hereditary determinism. For as Oscar Wilde's Gilbert had observed in 1891: "the scientific principle of Heredity ... has shown us that we are never less free than when we try to act. It has hemmed us round with the nets of the hunter, and written upon the wall the prophecy of our doom. We may not watch it, for it is within us. We may not see it, save in a mirror that mirrors the soul." Dorian Gray has such a mirror in his own portrait, which 'would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul' (84). The portrait of Sir Hugo serves a similar function, for it, like Dorian's own, bears testimony to how the 'soul' is fashioned by material forces and hereditary laws. Thus between Stevenson, Wilde, and Doyle and numerous physiological writers the ancestral portrait trope is brought up to date.

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that although the Gothic of the late nineteenth century turned to the body and its monstrous mutations to evoke fictional horror, it did not entirely reject all of the strategies, concerns, and devices of the earlier tradition. There is continuity as well as diversity; as this tendency to represent somatic and anthropological horror was encouraged or enabled by historiographical developments in the anthropological and scientific discourses upon which these fictions drew. But how are we to understand these correspondences between such apparently antithetical or even mutually exclusive modes of writing as science and horror fiction?

So far, the method of this study has been to establish various historical 'contexts' for the themes and obsessions of a developing Gothic fictional tradition. It has been implied that at some level historical 'reality' and fiction interact, and that aspects of one discourse, be it ecclesiastical history, travelogue, sociology, medicine, psychiatry, anthropology, or criminology, leave their traces on Gothic fiction. Rejecting the view that the Gothic draws on universal fears that find their coherence or source in the human 'unconscious', it has been suggested that fictional representation is shaped by historical circumstances. But exactly how is fiction shaped by fact? And more importantly, what is the relationship between what is often a literature of terror and such 'rational' discourses as science, sociology or history? If the Gothic responds to the process of history to what extent can its rhetoric of the fearful be said to 'reflect' ideas originating in or comparable with rational discourses? The next two chapters will address these questions, continuing to focus on the late-Victorian 'somatic' Gothic, which appears to rely on various socio-medical sciences for its representations.

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