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Monstrous Masculinities from the Macaroni to the Masher: Reading the Gothic 'Gentleman'

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> Come trollops and slatterns
>
> Cock't hats and white aprons
>
> This best our modesty suits
>
> For why should not we
>
> In dress be as free
>
> As Hogs' Norton squires in boots?
>
> (The Beaux and the Dandies: 92)

Citing Kelly Hurley in her 2004 text, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*, Catherine Spooner suggests:

> **EXT** The province of nineteenth-century human sciences was after all very like that of the earlier Gothic novel: the pre-Victorian Gothic provided a space wherein to explore phenomena at the borders of human identity and culture – insanity, criminality, barbarity, sexual perversion – precisely those phenomena which came under the purview of social medicine in later decades. (Spooner 2004: 87)

While Hurley draws a timeline between Romantic Gothic and late Victorian Gothic via scientific and pseudo-scientific means, Spooner augments this by focusing on 'another equally discriminating gaze: that of fashion' (Spooner 2004: 87). Fashion, as she argues finds its apogee in the discourse of the Dandy, a 'monstrous spectacle' who 'seems to reproduce a Jekyll-and-Hyde dualism whereby public self and monstrous self are inextricably linked' (Ibid. p. p. 87). Such a comment deserves to be unpicked as it points to what might be defined as a crisis of masculinity, spanning the nineteenth century, wherein deviant masculinities (such as the Dandy), are coded as effeminate, feminine or freakish in heteronormative discourses. In opposition and stark contrast to these lesser masculinities, the discourse of the gentleman was both a social ethos and a badge of honour based on a Greco-Roman ideal which brooked no blemish, parody or imitation. The gentleman embodied civic humanism, independence and martial attributes as masculine virtues. As Lawrence E. Klein observes:

> **EXT** Civic humanism was preoccupied with the threat of decay and dissolution of the body politic as well as with the conditions for its survival and health. Its view of history was cyclic: states moved from savage to more advanced stages, but following loss of virtue or corruption they would become effeminate, degenerate and decline. Morality was seen as the way to achieve political stability, while moral failures (corruption, effeminacy and selfishness) were seen as threats to the welfare of the state. Civic virtues such as courage, frugality, and military prowess were pitted against such vices as luxury, corruption, cowardice and 'feminine' characteristics (such as softness and sensuousness). (Klein 1989: 593)

The ideal (labelled the Corinthian), based on representations of masculinity in Classical art and literature was determined, particularly in the early nineteenth-century, by status, wealth, and breeding. 'Manliness' was the prerogative of men of standing, 'biologically predisposed

to superiority, hardiness, self-discipline' (Gilmour 1990: 220) while behaviours that were coded as feminine, and effeminate were considered as moral failures and a form of self-degradation and abasement which was incommensurable with English national character. This is summarised in an 1867 tract by Samuel Roberts Wells, who uses a combination of culturally accepted pseudo-sciences including physiognomy, phrenology and anatomy to classify the English gentleman, thus:

> **EXT** The English cranium is large … brain is power; and the more you have of it the better, provided it be in the right place and you have the physical system to sustain it (as the Englishman has).
>
> Physically the Englishman is broadly built, stout, and amply developed throughout. He has a full chest, a good stomach, an active liver, a large heart. His digestion, circulation and nutrition are perfect; and the supply of vitality is always equal to the demand. He is hale, rosy and rotund.
>
> Mentally he is proud, self-sufficient, combative, ambitious, energetic, aggressive, persevering, practical, acquisitive, economical, cautious, secretive, firm, affectionate, benevolent and religious. He is often rough in his manners and bluff in his speech but is at heart kind and tender. (Wells 1867: 399)

This dashing band of brothers was further distinguished by their clothing, which, according to the pamphleteer Charles Tilt, was the outward expression of a gentleman's character. As he writes:

> **EXT** When we speak of excellence in dress we do not mean richness of clothing, nor manifested elaborations. Profusion of ornaments, rings, charms, etc … are in bad taste. Faultless propriety, perfect harmony, and a refined simplicity, -- these are the

charms which always fascinate. … A gentleman will always be tastefully dressed …

avoiding foppery on the one hand and carelessness on the other. (Tilt 1837: 13)

Notably the focus is on an unadorned elegance and refined simplicity which shuns the gaudy, the outré and the ostentatious. Here, clothing and conduct combine to indicate social power, privilege and elite status. In what later became known as 'the great masculine renunciation' nineteenth-century men of the upper ranks sought, as Susan Kingsley Kent observes: 'to demonstrate their public virtue by deploying a modest and sober style. … By adopting a style of "noble simplicity" and denouncing the world of fashion and luxury, gentlemen trumpeted their virtue, asserting their claims to social, moral, and political leadership' (Kent 1999: 62). Luxury, as David Kuchta observes was seen 'as the vice of middle-class upstarts who ambitiously lived above their social station' (Kuchta 1996: 63). The ideal was an 'inconspicuous consumption' and sartorial sobriety. In light of this, the haute couture, torturous toilettes ornamentation and ostentation of Dandies, Macaronis, and Mashers (also known as Swells and Gents) caused an affront to the English gentlemanly classes.

In what follows I examine the ways in which the 'gentleman's' body was viewed as emblematic and constitutive of heterosexual, national masculine values, and how any transgression from these values rendered the transgressor as deviant, perverse, monstrous or less than a man. As Barbara Creed suggests: 'The male body … is represented as monstrous only when it assumes characteristics that are associated with the female body; his monstrosity is defined by the characteristics that make him not male' (Creed 1993: 118). In common with scholars such as Creed, Elaine Showalter, John Tosh and Michael Roper I argue that encounters with fear shaped the way 'degenerate' or deviant masculinity was constructed in the nineteenth century, looking at how writers during the period capitalised on fear and paradigmatic notions of monstrosity to represent masculinity and masculine anxieties in gothic texts.

Beginning with a brief examination of heteronormativity and degenerate masculinities at the start of the century, I move on to non-literary texts, such as dictionaries of slang, to examine dialogues of the male body from the excessively masculine sporting Corinthian of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, (latterly the Muscular Christian), to the decadent Dandy of the fin de siècle, as grotesque and derivative parodies of the English gentleman. Referring to two iconic Fin de Siècle novels: Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), I discuss the redefinition and degeneration of the gentlemanly ideal during the nineteenth century and suggest that, irrespective of the relative levels of masculinity or machismo displayed by the central characters in these novels, the monstrous protagonists are incapable of living up to an ideal model of virility (with its cultural associations of bravery, courage and morality) which constituted gentlemanly conduct.

Queering the Pitch

One year before Robert Louis Stevenson published *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886, the Criminal Law Amendment Act included a clause introduced by Henry Labouchère which legislated against gross indecency' between men, whether in 'public or private'. Prior to this, sodomy laws (although capital) were difficult to enforce as penetrative sex had to be proven. The Labouchère Amendment, as it came to be known, signalled 'a marked shift in the codes of manliness' during the latter half of the nineteenth century' (Roper and Tosh 1991: 3), and in what was permissible within codified definitions of masculinity. As the century drew to a close, masculinities became multiple, sexual preferences became pathologized and male homosexuality, along with being criminalised, was labelled deviant by Sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis. This resulted in what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

describes as 'Homosexual Panic' in *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1986). Unsurprisingly, the gothic literature of the period, focused as it was on the deviant, the uncanny, and the perverse, made connections between monstrous and threatening homoerotic desires. As Harry Benshoff suggests, these fin de siècle works were 'even more explicit than their [Gothic] predecessors regarding the conflation of the monstrous with some form of queer sexuality' (Benshoff 1997: 19). Simultaneously the effete and death-obsessed Decadents with their pallor, delicacy, and dandified dress were seen as a threatening affront to English manliness.

The illicit and illegal practices associated with male homosexuality combined with the social anxieties it provoked in the late Victorian period rendered the subject 'gothic' and 'queer', in the sense that: 'to be queer, when taken outside of the sexual connotations of that term, is to be different' (Hughes and Smith 2009: 3). Continuing in this thread Hughes and Smith argue: 'to be queer is to be different, yet it is also unavoidably associated with the non-queer, the normative which, though it implicitly represses through the mechanisms of conformist culture, may yet serve as a catalyst for liberation' (Ibid. p. 3). The two states exist in reciprocal tension' (Ibid. p. 3), much like the reciprocal tension between the philanthropic idealist, Dr Henry Jekyll, and his troglodytic, monstrous alter-ego, Edward Hyde.

The Grotesque Gent

Edward Hyde is an enigma. He cannot be identified by his corporeality or appearance. As Stevenson has Gabriel Utterson recall:

> **EXT** He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance, something displeasing; something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked and yet I scarcely know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a

strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He is an extraordinary looking man and yet I can really name nothing out of the way… And it's not for want of memory, for I declare I can see him this moment. (Stevenson [1886] 1999: 7)

As Richard Dury points out 'of the socially condemned activities that Hyde is associated with, veiled allusions to homosexuality are particularly frequent. They are also appropriate since this hidden vice was often referred to indirectly as "unspeakable" (so resembling the indescribable Hyde)' (Dury 2004: xxx). These hidden vices and the all-male cast of gentlemanly flaneurs, along with Hyde's unspecified nocturnal routines, lead critics such as Dury and Elaine Showalter to suggest that Hyde is a metaphor for sexual and homosexual repression and that the novella 'can most persuasively be read as a fable of fin-de-siècle homosexual panic, the discovery and resistance of the homosexual self' (Showalter 1991: 107).

> **EXT** The Victorian homosexual world had evolved into a secret but active subculture, with its own language, styles, practices, and meeting places. For most middle-class inhabitants of this world, homosexuality represented a double life, in which a respectable daytime world often involving marriage and family, existed alongside a night world of homoeroticism. (Ibid. p. 106)

Thus, Hyde can be viewed as a physical manifestation of Jekyll's double life - his homosexuality. It is a plausible argument, prefaced on the notion that Hyde does not exist as a separate entity to Jekyll, but rather as a hidden self; a necessity during a time when 'deviance from sexual norms was identified as both a symptom and a cause of social degeneration, so that by posing a challenge to traditional gender roles, liminal subjects like

the homosexual … were seen as causes of social unrest and potential threats to national health' (Hurley 2002: 199).

If, as some scholars have suggested, Hyde represents unrepressed homosexual desire, Jekyll can be seen as a hypocrite, hiding behind respectable, gentlemanly façade, but hiding desires that are largely unacknowledged, unidentified, and unacceptable. This is suggested in the full statement wherein he writes 'it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life' (Stevenson [1886] 2004: 58). Such duplicity is particularly interesting in relation to Jekyll's admission that:

> when I wore the semblance of Edward Hyde, none could come near to me at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh. This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil. (Ibid. p. 51)

It is evident then, that Jekyll has an awareness and a consciousness of his other self that is quite deliberate: he puts on a semblance. Elsewhere it is noted that Jekyll and Hyde's handwriting is 'almost identical' and bears a 'singular resemblance' (Ibid. p. 28). Despite this, the figure of Hyde is degenerate: physically inelegant, ugly (though indescribable) and degraded in his habits. A gentleman, to paraphrase Elizabeth Foyster, was measured by the prized attributes of controlled emotions and taciturnity (traits that can, for the most part be associated with Henry Jekyll). As Foyster suggests: 'for those who aspired to be regarded as gentlemen, angry behaviour was to be avoided at all costs' (Foyster 1999: 62). If we follow this argument, Hyde's homicidal rage debars him from the gentlemanly fraternity. Doubtless, he is conventionally masculine. He has the machismo of the pugilistic bruiser, but his roaring

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defiance, lack of restraint and decorum are the opposite of what was defined as gentlemanly fortitude. In the language of the Fancy (the Boxing fraternity), he is a mug-miller – a churlish, bare-knuckle brawler – who is free of self-restraint in all things and consorts, for the most part with low company in scandalous settings. He is unequivocally not a gentleman. He is a post-Darwinian, barbaric and atavistic nightmare compared to the polite, decent and distinguished gentleman that Jekyll presents himself to be.

Yet, some scholars argue that Jekyll and Hyde have more that unites them than that which divides them. For example, while Jekyll resides in an affluent West End residence, furnished with costly cabinets of oak, Hyde lives in Soho, in what Stephen Arata describes as 'surprisingly well-appointed rooms', 'furnished with luxury and good taste' (Arata 2004: 35). Arata also notes, 'Hyde's palate for wine is discriminating, his plate is of silver, his napery elegant, Art adorns his walls" while "carpets of many plies and agreeable in colour" covers his floor. This is not a savage's den, but the retreat of a cultivated gentleman' (Ibid. p. 35). While there is no doubt that Hyde is far from destitute, he is equally far from being a cultivated gentleman according to nineteenth century definitions. He is violent, irresponsible, and decayed in morals. His world revolves around uncontrolled hedonism, more in keeping with the received image of the Decadents than the demonstrably brave and neo-chivalric Victorian gentleman as espoused in self-help manuals such as Samuel Smiles' *Self Help: With Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance* (1859). Undoubtedly, he has strength and physical prowess, but it appears he is devoid of the conventional qualities of reason, logic and rationality, and his implied masturbatory tendencies suggest what the Sexologists defined as a degenerate psychopathology. Notably also, he is without that basic requisite of honour pretended by the English gentleman in that he uses weapons to belabour and kill his opponents. Not only is this dishonourable, this behaviour was also considered 'terribly un-British' as the English gentleman was expected to fight fist to fist, (without weapons), a point

of honour which the *Annals of Sporting and Fancy* (1823) colourfully describe thus: 'John Bull manfully enters the lists and uses those weapons only which nature has given him, and with which indeed he seems gifted in a manner superior to all the world.' (*The Annals of Sporting and Fancy Gazette* 3 (1823): 11–12.). The use of weapons was considered a caddish behaviour was usually associated with foreigners. For example, in a popular song much chanted during the Peninsular War (1807 – 14), the propensity of the French to use pistols was roundly mocked. As for Mediterranean peoples:

> Italians stab their friends behind,
>
> In darkest shades of night;
>
> But Britons they are bold and kind,
>
> And box their friends by light. (A Boxing We Will Go: published in: *Sporting Magazine* 38 (1811): 294)

Britons are thus associated with courtesy, fair-mindedness and magnanimity, compared to the undignified slyness and savagery of non-Britons. Fisticuffs was a serious business in the discourse of the gentleman and was governed by The Broughton Ruleswhich included: 'that no person is to hit his adversary when he is down, or seize him by the ham, the breeches, or any part below the waist; a man on his knees to be reckoned down' (Gee,1998: 14). Trampling on elderly men and children was such low, caddish and ungentlemanly behaviour that it simply didn't appear in the pamphlets relating to the Fancy.

Hyde, then, despite his Herculean strength is not a gentleman (at least by British standards). Indeed, in his appearance, his dress and his behaviours, he could be described as a 'gent' or sham swell: a counterfeit gentleman in his appropriation and emulation of gentility. The term, as Peter Bailey points out 'carried an early suggestion of the bogus … denoting a class of pickpockets who dressed in style to escape detection as they mingled with their

fashionable victims' (Bailey 1998: 109). The gent, (as opposed to the gentleman) was viewed as a disreputable, vulgar fraud who frequented less salubrious establishments and aped the manners and mien of the gentleman. Theirs was a 'spurious gentility' (109) according to Bailey, and because of this inauthenticity they were mercilessly mocked as upstarts and phonies. For example, Albert Smith's *Natural History of the Gent* (1847) lampoons them as an offensive body of blackguards. His suggestion is to establish a 'Court of Propriety' at which Gents can be convicted of misdemeanours against *comme il faut'*, (Smith 1847: 103). After their extinction (which is devoutly to be wished), their effigies would be displayed along with ibises, *scarabaei* and taxidermy specimens at the Egyptian room of the British Museum' (Ibid. p. 104).

While the purpose is no doubt satirical, *The Natural History of the Gent*, and similar publications highlight how Victorian cultural elites represented the lower middle class as risible, dangerous (as in the case of Edward Hyde), vulgar and pitiable. These were the people who flocked to buy Shilling Shockers, Penny Dreadfuls and Gothic Gnomes, such as Stevenson's novella. Devoid of authenticity, the Gent was considered a dangerous and disruptive influence by cultural and economic elites. An exemplar of the masses, the gent ignited class-based concerns about infecting his cultural betters (authentic, aristocratic gentlemen) with his passion for frivolous and debauched pursuits such as music hall, consorting with prostitutes, smoking, clandestine drinking and frequenting gaming houses and haunts of ill repute. The real danger was in his ability to ape the aristocracy without the character, breeding or intelligence with which they prided themselves. A crucible of anxieties the gent, with the assistance of skilful tailoring could look the part, but beneath his surface lustre he was a dangerous moral contaminant, much like Edward Hyde.

The Homme Com Il faut,

As stated earlier, the idea of what constituted a gentleman had long predated the publication of Stevenson's novella, and definitions of the same appeared in popular dictionaries and conduct manuals. For example, in 1823, John Badcock (pseudonymously known as John Bee) defined 'the Gentleman' in his *Slang: A Dictionary of the Turf, the Ring, the Chase the Pit or Bon-ton*:

> **EXT** <u>Gentleman</u>: gamblers denominate themselves Gent. if not Esq. even when detected and had up; but the bills of indictment dub them labourers, every man, yea, labourers at the treadmill. Tailors are the most blameable of all tradesfolk; 'tis they who transform blackguards into gentlemen. Gentleman – he only is one, and 'a real gentleman' who spends his money upon those who bestow the distinction upon him; otherwise he must be so undeniably such a one, that none think of questioning the issue; none can be understood a true English gentleman by us who has not stored his mind with English lore, spells every word rightly, and is capable of forming a sane off-hand judgement upon every subject that may come upon the carpet. (See Swell, Tulip, Corinthian) (Badcock 1823: 87)

Badcock's definition is illuminating not only because of the scorn it pores on those (such as Hyde) who ape 'the gentleman' (who are defined as blackguards) but for the fact tailors, 'the most blameable of all tradesfolk' are culpable of disguising the lowly classes as gentlemen by dressing them in gentlemanly attire. What it makes clear is what a gentleman is not: a gambler or one of the lower orders or working classes, despite the near alchemical skills of the tradesman tailor. Paradoxically, as we shall see, a gambler cannot be a gentleman, thought a gentleman can be a gambler, providing it is done in the correct establishments and undertaken in a 'manly' way. What a gentleman is, according to

Badcock, is one who is suitably educated in 'Englishness', and has genteel accomplishments such as grammatical skills and rhetorical *sprezzatura*, which allow him to converse on any subject, in any circumstance and in any setting.

Seemingly, it appears that in the first instance clothes maketh the man, as the visible marker of the gentleman is his luxurious, though not ostentatious toggery. Clothes do not maketh the gentleman, though, as the 'well-dressed prig' or the 'seedy sordid knave' REF? (both apt desciptions of Edward Hyde) are excluded from the gentlemanly mode These egregious, tailor-aided charlatans lack the noble bearing and gentrified education along with the requisite grammatical and oratorical skills which mark the gentlemanly orders. Equally they have 'no souls' which hinders them from appreciating the sports of the Turf and the Ring – manly pursuits which the pro- boxing lobby argued were synonymous with patriotism and a sense of essential Englishness.

In terms of physical appearance, according to Badcock, the *Homme com il faut*, or 'man as he ought to be': 'must have 32 teeth, thick curly hair, and calves six inches diameter each. Around both ankles, placed across should measure the same' (Badcock 1823: 111). Supposing that the gentleman was as 'a man ought to be' he should be strong, aesthetically pleasing, and symmetrical in form, virile, vigorous and agile. Moreover, as Revathi Krishnaswamy points out, the 'manly' form of the superlative English gentleman marked him as part of an élite fraternity which was based, in part on the exclusion of those less physically endowed, and, therefore, less gentlemanly and indubitably less 'English': 'the ideal appearance of the English male (the tall, strong, clean-cut English man) specifically excluded those who were stunted, narrow-chested, excitable, easily wearied, or inefficient – qualities associated with women, the lower classes, Jews, Papists, Spaniards, the French, and colored peoples' (Krishnaswamy 2002: 292). If this list demarcates what an English gentleman was not, we can define, by opposition what he was supposed to be: an upper class, barrel-chested,

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well-nourished, mentally and physically robust, white male with boundless stamina, and, if Badcock is to be believed, all of his teeth and thick curly hair. Notably, all of these attributes are lacking in the characters of Edward Hyde and Dorian Gray for reasons of class, race and gender. Hyde is too churlish, Dracula too foreign and Dorian too Hellenistically effeminate to aspire to the lofty ideal of the English gentlemanly classes.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the English gentleman was a Teutonic ideal composed of latter-day-chivalry, neo-Spartan virility and active physicality; attributes which can be sharply distinguished from the disinterested languor and fastidious sartorial elegance of the Dandies and their eighteenth-century counterparts: the flamboyantly attired and elaborately bewigged 'Macaroni Club'; thus, named for their taste for foreign foods and fashions. In the wake of what the psychologist J. C. Flugel later described as 'the Great Masculine Renunciation', REF? and the concomitant move towards inconspicuous consumption, the Macaroni, attired in unpatriotic, continental garb came to symbolise the luxurious profligacy of the ancien régime aristocrat. According to James Laver in his *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*: 'They wore very thin shoes with enormous buckles made of gold, silver, pinchbeck or steel and set with real or imitation stones. They affected very large buttons on their coats. Their hats were extremely small, but their wigs were designed high on the head, prodigiously curled' (Lavar 2002: 139). Defined thus in the 1911 text, *The Beaux and the Dandies*, The Macaronis represented a deviant and grotesque form of masculinity that could be defined as Gothic in its excess:

> **EXT** The Macaronis, in fact went to the extreme in femininity, giving most of their attention to ribbons, laces and fashions – sitting amongst the ladies simpering, mincing, sniffing at scent bottles. They made a cult of inane frivolity and regarded a curl awry as of more importance than a life in jeopardy. They carried muffs or fans … Long canes hung with silver or gold tassels were essential to their equipment, as also

gilt scent bottles, dainty gloves and jewelled spying glasses, sometimes set at the top of a cane, through which to ogle women – the ogling being of a distinctly bold and forward character. Their conversation was of embroidered waistcoats, worked stockings, patterns from abroad, described with an accompaniment of French phrases and mincing oaths; and their love making was as unhealthy are the rest of their actions and habits. (*The Beaux and the Dandies* 1911:178-9)

As Michele Cohen argues, these flamboyant and extravagant togs and coiffures came to represent a 'dilemma of masculinity' (Cohen 2005: 567) in the late eighteenth century indicating, as Rauser suggests an 'embrace of artifice, decadence, and the pursuit of pleasure' (Rauser 2004:103). This made them the subject of repeated lampoons and satires, and resulted in them becoming the recipients of soubriquets such as Rump Riders, Rubsters and Dancing Girls.

One such squib from George Alexander Stevens in his 1765 'Celebrated Lecture on Heads' suggested: grammarians are at a loss whether to rank them with the masculine or feminine, and therefore put them down as the Doubtful Gender.' (Stevens 1765: 4). Later, a 1772 song entitled 'The Macaroni: a New Song' characterised the ambiguous sexuality of the figure thus: 'His taper waist, so strait and long,/ His spindle shanks, like pitchfork prong, / To what sex does the thing belong? /'Tis call'd a Macaroni.' REF Thus, the Macaroni is mocked, not only as the antithesis of manliness but also beyond codification and barely male, and, as a result of his foreign-induced, modish effeminacy, an unnatural, monstrous and degenerate sodomite. Shape shifters and supposed sexual deviants, Macaronis, like vampires embody an ambiguity and unknowability which makes them threatening conduit for social anxieties surrounding normative notions of masculinity. It is precisely the fact that they are unclassifiable which makes them troubling, paradoxical, fundamentally grotesque and monstrous figures. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen points out, monsters evoke anxiety precisely

because they refuse to 'participate in the classificatory "order of things" ... they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration". (Cohen DATE: 6). In short, their transformative and performative bodies mark them as boundary crossing, ontologically liminal beings who resist definition in a society which depends on absolutes and binarisms. As Peter K. Garrett writes, 'This nightmare of a world where all transcendental support or guarantees of the intrinsic have disappeared may be the deepest terror of the nineteenth century Gothic, but it is also confronted by persistent reminders of dialogical possibilities that resist such reduction' (Garret : 27).

Besides their grotesquely outré fashions Macaronis were beset with accusations that they engaged in 'feminine vices' such as slander, gossip and frivolity. Added to this, as a sub-culture they were known to frequent Molly Houses and cross-dress as women during dancing and sexual intercourse (Edwards 45 - 46; Mackie 116 -17; Senelick 50 - 1)NEED DATES. In a period such as the fin de siècle which, at least on the surface, lauded 'Muscular Christianity' –'an aggressive, robust, and activist masculinity [designed] – to create brave, true, and Christian men' (Mosse DATE: 49), it is unsurprising that these practices were pathologised and comprehended in terms of disease and degeneracy, and these feminised men with dubious libertine morals and embrangled gender identities were seen as both a national and a moral threat to British masculinity. As Valerie Steele points out, in the post-revolutionary period: 'modish male attire in England came to be associated with 'tyranny, political and moral corruption, and a "degenerate exotic effeminacy"' of the aristocracy, while plainer and soberer dress became increasingly associated with bourgeois notions of 'liberty, patriotism, virtue, enterprise, and manliness' (Steele DATE: 52–53).

As the Tory-cum-radical William Cobbett counselled in 1829: 'Let your dress be as cheap as may be without shabbiness, for no-one with sense in skull will love or respect you

on account of your fine or costly clothes'REF. In these more sober and stoic times, the Macaroni came to be seen as the epitome of luxury and effeminacy in a country in which an elegant disinterest in fashion was being lauded in aristocrats and the emergent middle-classes alike. An arriviste, inauthentic social parvenu who haunted elegant assembly rooms and masquerade balls, the jigging, ambling and lisping macaroni in his modish continental fashions and powdered toupée, was considered a potential contaminant to British manliness and thus was satirised, caricatured and generally derided as effeminate or perverse. By the end of the nineteenth century, during a time when there was, as Elaine Showalter describes as, 'the crisis in masculinity' of the British fin de siècle (Showalter DATE: 17) the Macaroni, and latterly the dandy were viewed in one of two ways: risible, or more often, grotesque, threatening and irredeemably Gothic, as is evident in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray.

Diabolical Dandies

As Catherine Spooner notes 'For the Victorian public, artificiality was the dandies' greatest crime' (Spooner 2004: 94) because it blurred the distinction between the middle classes and thereby upset the moral order. Dandies were all about the surface, projecting an exterior that was lazy, equanimous and self-indulgent, and these were qualities not associated with manly virtue.

The manly gentleman displayed his virility and virtue through membership of exclusive Gentleman's clubs, gaming houses and coteries wherein young sporting minded bucks ate, drank, debauched and often wagered considerable amounts of money on the outcome of a bout, the turn of a card or the tumble of a dice. Such men epitomized a new masculine ideal, based on the medieval concept of chivalry which had been revived in the late

eighteenth-century to replace the refinement and politeness of the early eighteenth century notion of manliness which was defined in 1837 as: strong, robust, courageous, with the courage, dignity, fortitude of, or belonging to a man. This was a manliness based on the knightly virtues of service and duty, on a sense of 'espirit de corps' and on the conventionally male attributes of competitiveness, combativeness, bravery, sporting accomplishment, and honour. Manly men subdued the passions, or projected them into sporting activities. If he yielded to what was known as the acceptable vices of gambling, drinking and debauchery

(activities which, paradoxically carried connotations of manliness), the manly man would not do it to excess, as this, it was thought enfeebled the character. The manly man would be a

model of strength, courage and firmness while eschewing the conventionally feminine attributes of vanity and shallowness associated with an interest in fashionable attire and beauty products. As the Earl of Chesterfield remarked in 1807, some men: 'poise themselves in such a dainty way, and paint and powder themselves to such an extent, that it induces us to believe that they are but Women in Men's clothing' (1807: 30). To engage in such activities resulted in imprecation of effeminacy being levied at the perpetrator via biting satires and grotesque caricatures. An 1818 cartoon by George Cruikshank entitled 'Dandies Dressing', for example shows a 'dandy' undertaking his extravagant toilette including the application shoulder pads and stays along with false calves to feign a well-turned leg. 'D –n it' says one lisping young blade, contorted by the size of his cravat, 'I really believe I must take off my cravat or I shall never get my trowsers on' (in Jerrold, 1911: 2).

The dandies emerged around 1815, flaunting their superficiality and supercilious sang froid in their promenades and daily fashion parades in Hyde Park (after which, it is worth noting, Edward Hyde is named) wherein they consorted with the nobility with whom they had ingratiated themselves. Emulating the aristocracy in matters of taste and lifestyle, the Dandies elevated luxury, taste and connoisseurship to a fine art. First and foremost, as

Thomas Carlyle argues in *Sartor Restartus*: 'the dandy is a clothes wearing Man; a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes …where others dress to live, he lives to dress' (Ibid. p. 10). Like Dorian Gray, the dandy is a walking work of art and, as Felski points out, he can be perceived in aestheticist doctrine as quite useless, exalting appearance over essence, decoration over function, he voices a protest against prevailing bourgeois values that associate masculinity with rationality, industry, utility and thrift" (Felski 1991: 1096). This posturing reflects also the philosophy and personal style of Walter Pater, which consisted of flamboyant, attention seeking behaviour which was designed to create an aura of fascination and mystery. Wilde, also was a mannered Aesthete who sported flowing locks, frock coats and stockings, in keeping with Victorian depictions of dandies and homosexuals. This New Hedonism, as Pater defined it is evident in Wilde's characterisation of the eponymous protagonist *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Indeed, under the influence of Lord Henry, Dorian becomes a symbol of the aesthetic propagated by Pater and Wilde:

> **EXT** New Hedonism that was to recreate life and to save it from that harsh uncomely puritanism that is having, in our own day, its curious revival. It was to have its service of the intellect, certainly, yet it was never to accept any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mode of passionate experience. Its aim, indeed, was to be experience itself, and not the fruits of experience, sweet or bitter as they might be. Of the asceticism that deadens the senses, as of the vulgar profligacy that dulls them, it was to know nothing. But it was to teach man to concentrate himself upon the moments of a life that is itself but a moment. (Wilde [1890]: 104-105)

By defying the moral, and embracing the sensual and hedonistic in all aspects of his life Dorian 'assumes the office of art' (Ibid. p. 48) before he is ready for it, and with fatal effect.

Comment [JP5]: An example or two might be useful here

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a complex and multivalent and multi-layered text which has been read as a manifesto for Aestheticism and Decadence which champions the precedence of art; a social satire which attacks Victorian social hypocrisy; a reinterpretation of classical myth, and a psychobiography of Oscar Wilde as a transgressive, Dionysian rebel. Without doubt the Paterian myth of heedless hedonism features in the text along with questions regarding the moral and/or social function of art, liberally interspersed in the unforgettable witty aphorisms of the effete Lord Henry who lives to and for desire. Undoubtedly, as Sedgwick has argued, the novel is suffused with over-determined homosexual codes (such as opium smoking, same sex relationships and erotic art), which challenge and supplant Victorian patriarchal values such as heteronormativity, propriety, and order. Perhaps, then it is an allusive meditation on the love that dare not speak its name, or perhaps an ironic rendering of a moral message on the transience of beauty and/or pleasure. All of these themes make for plausible readings which are easily supported by the text. The gothic multiplication of contrary narratives and meanings is echoed by the trope of the poisoned book which poisons Dorian. The narrative I want to pursue to conclude this paper though is Dorian as Dandy.

In his *New Physiognomy* published in 1867, Samuel Roberts Wells described the Dandy thus:

> **EXT** Gentlemen express their characters in displaying their equipage. The best minds – those which are free from eccentricity – display the best taste in dressing in such a way as not to attract particular attention. Vulgar minds – or those not cultivated – pile on the gew-gaws; cheap jew-ellery, frills, flounces and wriggle themselves through the dirty streets. (Wells 1867:33)

The vulgar wriggling gait, here described, sees its apex, according to Wells in the effete flouncing of the Exquisite, who: apes the 'attitudes of the ballroom and the stage': 'his brain is small; his mind narrow; his features pinched up and the whole miserably mean and contracted' (Ibid. p. 315). Furthermore, as Wells suggests: 'his walk is simply Miss Nancyish' ... and he himself 'a bundle of egotism, vanity, deceit and pride; vulgar, pompous and bad'(Ibid. p. 315). Gentlemanliness, by stark comparison according to Wells can be seen 'in the walk of a tall, healthy, well-built perpendicular man both dignity and firmness may be seen'(Ibid. p. 317). Yet, as Ellen Moer's points out, 'To the question--What is a gentleman? the dandy made the most frivolous answer conceivable. He was a gentleman –it was a visible fact--by virtue of a "certain something," a "je-ne-sais-quoi" which could not be defined –or denied' (Moers 1959: 17).

To the question – is Dorian Gray a dandy, the answer is a resounding yes – quintessentially so. Androgynous, elusive, sartorially flamboyant with an exacting toilette and hedonistic disposition, Dorian, though dissipated and deviant exudes savoir vivre. Like his creator, Dorian's raison d'etre is art for art's sake and the pursuit of beauty in every aspect of life. There is a crucial moment of aesthetic self-knowledge which the main character experiences in front of his artistic likeness which the painter has just finished. For the first time, Dorian sees himself as a dandy: a living work of art.

> **EXT** Dorian made no answer, but passed listlessly in front of his picture, and turned towards it. When he saw it he drew back, and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognised himself for the first time. He stood there motionless and in wonder, dimly conscious that Hallward was speaking to him, but not catching the meaning of his words. The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before. (Wilde [1890] 2011:20)

Here there is a lingering Narcissistic joy, and a Paterian passion for beauty that is a precondition for art. But, the story moves on from this to paint a disturbing picture of descent into dissolute living while the lifeless picture absorbs all the ugliness that should adhere to the living man. The storyline panders to the Victorian equation of physical beauty with goodness, and it seems that the story is an extended refutation of this underlying moral assumption. Dorian is a self-fashioning peacock of startlingly beautiful and decorative appearance. This is made evident when Lord Henry Wotton first sets eyes on him:

> **EXT** Lord Henry looked at him. Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candour of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world. No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him. He was made to be worshipped. (Wilde [1890] 2011: 90)

To risk a pun, Dorian is a picture of pastoral innocence in his rosy-cheeked, youthful beauty, but underneath this exterior lies a terrible, supernatural and dangerous secret. He is as corrupt as he is seductive: a lethal and, as it transpires fatal combination for those who fall prey to his charms. Having lived the credo of dandyism in his superficial sensation seeking, façade and masquerade, Dorian is forced into the troubling terrain of his moral ugliness, and the macabre realisation that he is all form and no content. Indeed, like Hyde and Dracula he is a pretence; a grotesque parody of a noble idea, sans mobility or standards: a monster.

To conclude, in the words of Hughes and Smith: 'Gothic has, in a sense, always been queer' (Hughes and Smith 2009: 1) As a genre it is elusive, self-conscious and camp, dangerous, morally pernicious and haunted by the spectres of bad taste and popular culture. In much the same way as the Dandy, the Macaroni and the Masher, it is a conduit for

anxieties about death, decay, degeneration, sexuality, status and nation. Within its pages, boundaries break and moribund notions of manliness become porous, resulting in monstrous masculinities fraught with anxiety. In showing masculinity to be mutable, these 'deviant', inassimilable fictional men in flux imperil classificatory certainties, bludgeoning the concept of the English gentleman to death in an East End Street; sucking its lifeblood, each time the notion is reprised, and vampire-like, corrupting it with monstrous otherness. In this way, the concept of heteronormativity falters and the dandy, the unclassifiable symbol of decadent manhood, turns a well-shod heel, and with impeccable timing, insouciance and *je-ne-sais* qua, bows out nonchalantly, dressed to the nines.

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