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## DARWIN AND DEVOLUTION IN VICTORIAN DYSTOPIA:STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE AND THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

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### Abstract

In the Victorian Age, many people were apprehended not only by Darwin's theories of evolution, but also the possibilities for a reverse evolution. Thus, Stevenson and Wells build their dystopias on Darwin's evolutionary theories and Victorian fears of devolution. In Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Stevens imagines man's degeneration into savagery as the result of the repressiveness of the Victorian morals that demanded restraint of instinctive urges. He illustrates not only the potential of repressed desires to burst out into ferocity, but also perversity that may result from indulgence in vice behind the mask of sobriety. Similarly, in The War of the Worlds, Wells relates human devolution to the idea of natural selection in human societies. Besides, he anticipates a future in which technology is involved in human evolution, overtaking the functions of certain parts of human body and leaving men deprived of feelings for each other. It is concluded that both of the dystopian novels project the Victorian concerns about the future in relation to the Darwinian theories of evolution and the possibility of devolution.

**Keywords:** *Dystopia, Darwin, Evolution, Devolution, Natural Selection, Victorian Society.*

## VİKTORYA DÖNEMİ DİSTOPİK ROMANLARDA DARWIN VE TERSİNE EVRİM:DR JEKYLL VE MR HYDE'İN TUHAF HİKAYESİ VE DÜNYALAR SAVAŞI

### Özet

Viktorya Dönemi İngilteresi'nde birçok insan sadece Darwin'in evrim teorileri yüzünden değil aynı zamanda tersine evrim ihtimalleri sebebiyle endişeye kapılmıştır. Buna bağlı olarak, Stevenson ve Wells distopyalarını Darwin'in evrim teorileri ve Viktoryenlerin tersine evrim korkuları üzerine inşa ettiler. Dr. Jekyll ve Mr. Hyde'da, Stevenson insanın yabanileşmesini içgüdüsel dürtülerin dizginlenmesini isteyen Viktoryen ahlaki değerlerin baskıcılığının bir sonucu olarak hayal etmektedir. Romanında, sadece bastırılmış arzuların vahşete dönüşmesini değil aynı zamanda ağırbaşlılık maskesi ardında ahlaksızlıktan haz almanın bir sonucu olan sapkınlığı da ortaya koymaktadır. Benzer biçimde, Dünyalar Savaşı'nda Wells insanın yozlaşmasını toplumlardaki doğal seleksiyon fikriyle ilişkilendirmektedir. Wells, ayrıca, insan bedeninin bazı parçalarının fonksiyonunu üstlenerek ve insani duyguları ortadan kaldırarak teknolojinin insan evrimine dahil olduğu bir geleceği tahmin etmektedir. Her iki distopik romanın da, Darwin'in evrim teorileri ve tersine evrim ihtimali ile ilişkili olarak gelecek ile ilgili Viktoryen kaygıları yansıttığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Distopya, Darwin, Evrim, Tersine Evrim, Doğal Seleksiyon, Viktorya Toplumu.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Victorian fin de siècle is a period marked by immense progress and achievements. It was an era of blooming industry, flourishing economy, technological advances and reforms in all spheres. On the other hand, the Victorian era is also regarded as a period of contradictions, in which social movements aiming to improve public morals were accompanied by a class system that obliged many people to live under harsh conditions. The growing prosperity, at some point, was succeeded by uncertainty and apprehension regarding Britain's position in the world. Besides, as Britain's superiority as a global economic power was rivalled by other nations, the Victorian age came to represent an epoch of decline. The confidence in the power of Britain started to be "haunted by fantasies of decay and degeneration" (Ledger & Luckhurst, 2000: viii).

In addition to the economic causes that led to unrest in the British nation, the scientific discoveries and developments too challenged the Victorian worldview and social values, and left many Victorians with questions. One of those developments that affected the Victorian society was undoubtedly the introduction of Darwinian theory. Darwin discussed initially the evolution of plants and animals in his work, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), and then he applied his theories of natural selection specifically to people in *The Descent of Man* (1871). Based on the theories of evolution, the term "Social Darwinism" was coined in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to refer to the idea that like animals and plants, humans too compete with each other for existence, which results ultimately in "the survival of the fittest". Thanks to Darwin's studies, "evolution" became one of the important principles of biological and social sciences, but it also became a subject of many debates and controversies in the Victorian society (Danahay, 2005: 19).

The evolutionary theories were unsettling to the Victorians because a great number of them were devout, church-going, Bible-reading Christians (Anderson, 2011: 1). Hence, the story of creation in the *Book of Genesis* was believed to explain how and why the Earth and its inhabitants came into existence. On the other hand, this new explanation proposed by the evolutionary theories shook the core of the Victorian belief system. Besides, it posed a threat to the Victorian moral values because it meant to dissolve "the boundary between the human and the animal" (Danahay, 2005: 19), and promoted the naturalness of the bestial urges in humans which were strictly sought to be suppressed by the moral codes of the Victorian society.

Another aspect of Social Darwinism that frightened the Victorians was the possibility of a reverse process; that is to say "devolution" or "degeneration". Whereas Victorians strived for the sake of progress, and distinguished themselves as being superior and civilised compared to the primitive humans, E. Ray Lankester argued, "organisms could de-evolve into simpler, less complex forms" (Danahay, 2005: 20). Although Lankester restricted his arguments to the realm of biology, they were ultimately applied to human nature as well, and the Victorians' anxieties about their future were furthered. In this article, I will discuss the forces proposed by Robert Louis Stevenson and H.G. Wells that might lead mankind to devolution in respectively *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The War of the Worlds*.

## 2. THE DEGENERATION OF DR JEKYLL INTO MR HYDE IN DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE

As a counterpart to Lankester's theories of devolution in biology, Cesare Lombroso, an Italian doctor and a criminologist, developed a hypothesis in order to explain the origins of criminal behaviour in humans. He argued in *Criminal Man* (1876) that criminal behaviour had a biological basis, observing that criminals, apes and savages shared particular physical and behavioural traits. Therefore, Lombroso concluded that criminals were more primitive than other human beings, and they represented "a throwback to an earlier, more violent period in human development" (Danahay: 2005, 20). In the Victorian England, theories of degenerate were prevalent and used in a political sense, too. For instance, political opponents could be denounced as being degenerates, or they could be used as a vehicle to reinforce the authority of the middle and upper classes in the society, asserting that "the lower classes were a degenerate form of life, lower on the evolutionary scale than the upper classes" (21). That is to say, those belonging to the working classes were considered to be more primitive and inclined to commit crimes than the members of the upper classes. Robert Louis Stevenson, in his novella, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, evokes the theories of evolution and devolution, and reflects on the forces that pave the way to devolution.

In the novella, Stevenson exposes the fundamental dichotomy which existed at the heart of Victorian man; that between *"outward respectability and inward lust"* (Hammond, 1984: 125). Dr Jekyll, who recognizes the eternal human struggle between violent passions and morality, believes that the solution to this conflict lays in *"the separation of those elements"* (Luckhurst & Stevenson, 2006: 53). Therefore, he launches a scientific experiment, and as the consequence of which, he succeeds to release his "dark" side to the world in the figure of Mr Hyde. In accordance with the evolutionary theories, Mr Hyde embodies the qualities of a primitive human both in his appearance and behaviours. Dennis O'Neil in his article titled "Early Transitional Humans" observes that the immediate ancestors of human beings and the early transitional humans were shorter and lighter than modern men (Anderson, 2011: 2). Besides, the ancestors of modern men had further physical distinctions in the skull and facial features. Dennis illustrates that they had physical characteristics that might be considered as deformed when compared to those of modern humans such as larger face, jaw and teeth (2). In Stevenson's novella, many characters comment on the abnormality of Mr Hyde's physical appearance that bears obvious similarities to those of the early humans. Mr Richard Enfield, for example, can barely compare him to a human. He refers to Mr Hyde with such phrases as *"not like a man"*, *"like some damned Juggernaut"*, *"really like Satan"* (Luckhurst & Stevenson, 2006: 7). Furthermore, he explicitly states that he feels something is definitely wrong with his appearance even though he cannot name it:

[...] something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment. (9)

Mr Richard Enfield's account of Mr Hyde's appearance indicates that it is not a particular shape or size of a part of his body that arouses feelings of ugliness in beholders, but his distinct unevolved formation despite his great resemblance to the modern man. It is his unfamiliar looks notwithstanding possessing orderly parts of a human being that creates the difficulty of describing him. Similarly, Mr Utterson too gets *"an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation"* in Mr Hyde's looks, and observes that *"the man seems hardly human"* (Luckhurst & Stevenson, 2006: 15-6). His description of Mr Hyde as something *"troglydytic"* suggests that he perceives some facial features in him that can be related only to a being that is primitive and less evolved than a modern man. Furthermore, his *"light footsteps"* and *"dwarfish"* stature denote the similarity with the outward aspect of primitive humans (14-5).

On the other hand, Dr Jekyll expresses that even though his new figure is *"less robust"* and *"less developed"*, being Mr Hyde feels *"younger, lighter and happier in body"* because the weariness of a life of constant *"effort, virtue, and control"* is relieved (Luckhurst & Stevenson, 2006: 54-5). The bonds of social expectations and obligations that oppress Dr Jekyll are loosened. *"The freedom of the soul"* fills Mr Hyde with energy and exultation. With the power of new sensations that pervade his being, Mr Hyde is merely refreshed and revitalized. Dr Jekyll admits that the pleasures that Mr Hyde sought were *"undignified"* (57). Once he tasted the indulges that were unfamiliar to Dr Jekyll, he states that Mr Hyde's desires took a course towards monstrosity;

When I would come back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centred on self; drinking pleasures with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone. (57)

The fact that Mr Jekyll enjoys liberty in his disguise, keeping his respectable status untainted might be tolerated by contemporary readers, but his urges to make others suffer cannot hold one back from wondering about the causes that might lead the *"evil side"* of Dr Jekyll to be so evil. The theories of evolution and devolution, however, unveil this mystery. Darwin reasons that if human beings had a direct kinship with beasts, the passions that are considered to be peculiar to animals would have to be a part of human nature as much as of animal nature (Geduld, 1983: 8). This assertion comes as a complete opposition to the Victorian notion that there is a clear distinction between humans and animals. The Victorians believed that animals, through their very nature, acted out of their instinctual drives and desires whereas humans were distinguished from animals by the superiority

of their mental development that enabled them to administer control over their behaviour (Butler, 2006: 2). Therefore, the Victorian moral codes expected civilised members of the society to repress their passions to avoid degenerating into savagery. Stevenson, however, illustrates in his novella the dangers of denying the bestial desires in humans and the repressiveness of the Victorian morality that might ultimately degenerate the society into what they feared they would.

Despite knowing that Mr Hyde's disposition is wicked, *"tenfold more wicked"* and he exercises brutality recklessly as in the case of trampling over a little girl's body at the very beginning of the story, Dr Jekyll does not bring an end to the life of Mr Hyde (Luckhurst & Stevenson, 2006: 54). Instead, he protects him and makes *"haste, where it was possible, to undo the evil done by Hyde"* (57). It is because Dr Jekyll considers the mask of Mr Hyde as the only way that may provide him with an opportunity to live out the socially forbidden desires. It is only after he realises that he starts to feel more like Mr Hyde and that he is slowly losing hold of his *"original and better self"* that he decides to choose between his two lives (59). The fact that he begins to wake up in the morning as Mr Hyde although he goes to bed as Dr Jekyll reveals the process in which Dr Jekyll starts to degenerate into Mr Hyde. After some internal debate, Dr Jekyll prefers to go back to his original life and bid a farewell to *"the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping pulses and secret pleasures"* (60). However, the Victorian concept of free will proves to be ineffectual because two months after his decision, Dr Jekyll starts feeling that his repressed passions were seeking an outlet to be released. Despite his resolution, he cannot restrain himself from drinking the potion *"in an hour of moral weakness"*. Since his desires were repressed for so long, the aggression of Mr Hyde proves to be more violent than ever, which ends up with the murder of Sir Danvers Carew. Only after the death of his poor victim that Mr Jekyll feels remorse for his actions in the guise of Mr Hyde, and decides to redeem his crimes in the future. Since he does not trust in the power of free will any longer, he locks the back door of the laboratory and grounds the key under his heel (61). Once again Dr Jekyll is forced by the environmental pressures to suppress his passions and lead a solemn life because Mr Hyde is now a criminal who is looked for everywhere by the police and destined to face the scaffold.

However, the requisite repression of Mr Hyde is not without consequences because as might be expected, the forbidden desires that are *"so long indulged, so recently chained down, begin to growl for licence"* again (Luckhurst & Stevenson, 2006: 62). Jekyll's case illustrates that the obligation of suppressing bestial urges does not make them disappear. When they are not released in any way, they start to become more violent and consume the consciousness. Therefore, despite Dr Jekyll's all efforts to keep Mr Hyde suppressed, he always returns and prevails over Dr Jekyll at the moments of his moral weaknesses, which eventually transforms Dr Jekyll into *"a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind"* (64-5). Dr Jekyll recognizes that the only way to end Mr Hyde and his crimes is to commit suicide. As Hammond (1984) states, *"He [Dr Jekyll] is not faced with a simple choice between good and evil; he is compelled to accept that either both exist or neither"* (125).

### **3. THE DEGENERATION OF MR HYDE INTO DR JEKYLL IN DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE**

Apart from the claim that the Victorian moral codes that enforce the suppression of bestial desires might actually lead to degeneration, Stevenson argues against the common tendency in the Victorian society to associate criminality with the members of lower classes and regard them as degenerates (Arata, 1996: 34). In accordance with the arguments of Lombroso and Nordau who assert, *"devolution was as endemic to a decadent aristocracy as to a troglodytic proletariat"*, Arata states,

And, indeed, Hyde can be read as a figure of leisured dissipation. While his impulsiveness and savagery, his violent temper, and his appearance all mark Hyde as lower class and atavistic, his vices are clearly those of a monied gentleman. (35)

According to Arata, Stevenson's novella illustrates not only the social and psychological pressures leading Dr Jekyll to turn into Mr Hyde, but also a reverse transformation in which Mr Hyde becomes the embodiment of the repressions which Dr Jekyll desires to escape from. He suggests that the prime source of the tale is *"not that the professional man is transformed into an atavistic criminal, but that the atavist learns to pass as a gentleman"* (39). He asserts that whereas the transitions between Jekyll and Hyde are clear-cut at the beginning, later the

distinction between the two personalities melts away, which gives us the impression that Jekyll and Hyde are not different characters anymore. He insists that both Jekyll and Hyde indulge in committing vices. The difference between the two lies in their manners; Hyde enjoys them “*openly and vulgarly, Jekyll discretely and with an eye to maintaining his good name*” (40).

At the very beginning of the story, Mr Hyde is introduced to the code of “gentlemanliness” when he tramples over the body of the little girl and is collared by Mr Enfield. His brutality and recklessness enrage the child’s family, the doctor and Mr Enfield. They burn with a desire to kill him, but since killing is out of the question, they do “*the next best thing*” that is to threaten him to “*make such a scandal [...] as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other.*” (Luckhurst &, 2006: 7) However, they eventually demand money to keep themselves silent about the incident, and teach Mr Hyde the high importance of a good reputation. Besides, Mr Hyde learns from this incident that a gentleman can sin as long as his name is preserved untainted (Arata, 1996: 40). Mr Enfield points out this upper class manner when he compares asking a question to rolling a stone down a hill (41). He says,

You sit quietly on the top of a hill; and away the stone goes, starting others; and presently some bland old bird (the last you would have thought of) is knocked on the head in his own back garden and the family have to change their name. (Luckhurst & Stevenson, 2006: 8-9)

Mr Enfield implicitly admits that indulging vices behind the appearance of “gentlemanliness” is a common practice among the upper classes. However, since they have the means of preserving their name clean, they escape from being condemned to be degenerated. Although it is usually the members of the lower classes that are the target of assaults of depravity, Stevenson conveys the idea that, as Nordau elucidates, it is chiefly rich and educated people who build up the degenerate population (Arata, 1996: 35). In the case of Mr Hyde, being treated as a gentleman and introduced to the manners of the bourgeois society, he is encouraged to indulge in vices more and more until he cannot control his lust and behaviours.

#### **4. THE DEGENERATIVE ASPECT OF NATURAL SELECTION IN *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS***

In *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson speculates on the likelihood of devolution as the result of the oppressive Victorian moral codes that aim to control the primitive human desires, and comes to the conclusion that suppressing animalistic urges through morality is not an effective way of solving the problem. Similarly, H.G. Wells deals with the idea of devolution in *The War of the Worlds*. He is primarily concerned with the adverse impact of the idea of “the survival of the fittest” in human societies and the threat of developing technology to mankind. However, the problem he puts forth is not left without a solution. He asserts that human intelligence and his capacity as a cooperating member of the society may save humanity from decay and enable progress.

Wells’ views of evolution are highly influenced by the thoughts of T.H. Huxley, who divides evolutionary process into two categories; the “cosmic process” and the “ethical process”. Huxley’s cosmic process is the process of evolution by natural selection that determines the survival of some plants and animals while promoting the extinction of the other species in the competition. On the other hand, the ethical process is a human phenomenon that is capable of influencing the cosmic process (Partington, 2002: 2). Huxley states that the humans are also subject to the cosmic process. Just as animals do, they multiply and compete for the means of support. Consequently, the struggle for existence eliminates those who are “*less fitted to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their existence*” (Luckhurst & Stevenson, 2006: 238). However, he associates the cosmic process in societies with rudimentary civilisations. According to him, social progress would be possible only if the cosmic process were substituted by the ethical process which demands self-restraint in place of ruthless self-assertion, and requires one to help the fellow members of a society, rather than treading down the weaker. Huxley explains, “*its influence is directed not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive*” (239). He asserts that the idea of competition for perfection would lead only to chaos and decline when applied to human societies, and it would not provide profits for anyone, except for a small group of fittest survivors. Therefore, he believes that the struggle for existence in societies must be restricted through law and morals.

Like Huxley, Wells too regards the cosmic process in Nature as a hostile force that has to be controlled (Reed 31). He indicates that without the influence of the ethical process, man is a beast who is driven by his urges, and needs to compete with others for his survival. On the other hand, the “artificial man” that is the product of the ethical process is capable of eliminating suffering and extinction from human life, being an adherent of disciplined civilisation. In *The War of the Worlds*, Wells demonstrates how humanity is dragged into a chaos when they are obliged to compete with a superior species and when their actions are motivated by the idea of “the survival of the fittest”.

In the opening chapter, Wells positions human beings in an animal realm where they are “scrutinized and studied” by the intellectually and technologically superior beings, the Martians, just as a man observes with a microscope “the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water” (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 7). He explains that since the planet Mars has become inhabitable for the Martians, they have had to look for another planet to settle down in order to survive. Having observed that it is crowded with inferior animals, the Martians have begun the invasion of the Earth as it is the only way of escaping from their destruction. Regarding humans as what humans compare monkeys to themselves, the Martians start to exert their advanced powers ruthlessly over men. Since they are on the verge of extinction, the Martians attack the earthlings being driven by the thoughts of struggle for existence and disregarding the future of other species. The narrator illustrates the destructive impact of the stronger over the weak, referring to the extinction of certain animal species such as the bison and the dodo, and also the extinction of the inferior human races caused by the European immigrants (9), and emphasizes the gravity of the danger that humans encounter. In the face of a superior species that is utterly deprived of morality and compassion, men’s control over the cosmic process is significantly broken, and subsequently, they find themselves compelled to struggle for survival not only with the Martians, but also within their own species.

The ferocity of the cosmic process is observed as soon as the Martians perceive humans approaching to them with a white flag. Even though humans intend to make a peaceful contact with them, the Martians do not seek to build relations with the species that are inferior to them, and therefore they start immediately the extermination of humankind shooting dead anyone within their reach with their advanced technological powers. Over the course of the Martian attack, humans combat with each other in order to survive just as animals do in their realm of life that is subject to the cosmic process. As “natural selection” determines the fittest competitors in the cosmic process, humans’ struggle with each other results in the death of primarily the physically weakest of them which are narrated to be “two women and a little boy” (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 30). The depravity of moral principles, which regulate the civilized human life, at this brief time of struggle for survival demonstrates that humans can be as savage as animals when they are in need of protecting themselves against the threats to their existence.

Similarly, the fierce struggle for survival among humans is observed when the Martians exhibit their capability of moving and destructing all the beings around them by means of the tripod-like engines. As related by the brother of the narrator, people are forced to seek desperately ways of flying away from the Martians. Some move away in trains and boats, some in carts and others on foot, however, not without much struggle. They rush away in thick multitudes, and fight with one another to get into trains or to embark on boats (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 92-3). They trample over each other in order to make way for themselves on the roads covered with floats of humans. Some men even attack some young ladies to seize their pony, and leave them to perish while saving their own lives (94).

In the midst of such a chaos created by the slaughters of the powerful Martians and the desperate struggle of the frightened people who are inclined to act on impulse, the narrator emphasizes the necessity of availing of intelligence and adapting oneself to the changing circumstances for survival. He describes that at the sight of approaching Martians across the meadows stretching towards Chertsey, the crowd near the river becomes horror-struck, and feels an urge to escape, combating with each other in which a man recklessly sends the narrator “a blow from the corner of his burden” and a woman thrusts at him with her hand and rushes past him (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 62). However, the narrator states that he was “not too terrified for thought”. Thanks to his ability of maintaining sanity and rationality under such circumstances, instead of letting himself be drifted along with the rush of people, he comes up with the idea of getting under the water as a defence against the weapons of

the Martians. Wells demonstrates that the idea of “the survival of the fittest” leads only to chaos when applied to human life, and leads the weaker to succumb to death. On the other hand, intelligence provides humans with the strength of counteracting against threats that are posed to their existence, and also gives an opportunity of survival to those who are weaker in physical strength. He sees the possibility of social progress lying in the successful adaptation to the changing conditions, and anticipating swiftly what is to be done under the pressures of the forces beyond men’s control (Reed, 1982: 95).

##### **5. EVALUATION OF HUMAN RESPONSES TO THE CONFLICT WITH ANOTHER SPECIES IN *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS***

Wells speculates that human progress might be interrupted by various forces, and believes that it is men’s dexterity in handling with the threats that will lead them to either decay or salvation. In *The War of the Worlds*, he evaluates the benefits and dangers of the possible reactions against an unexpected threat through the minds of four important characters; the Curate, the narrator’s brother, the Artilleryman and the narrator. The narrator describes the Curate as a coward and selfish hysteric who regards the Martian invasion as a divine intervention of God, and who is unable to think any helpful way of improving their situation. The narrator reports that “*Practically he had already sunk to the level of an animal*” who is deprived of “*reason and forethought*” (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 134). According to McConnell (1981), the Curate’s response to the Martian threat is the most natural one (138). His behaviours are directed by urges. His lack of self-restraint and inability of acting in cooperation with the narrator when they try to rescue themselves from the imprisonment in the ruined house takes him eventually to death. Wells shows it clearly that in the case of a threat a bestial attitude based on instincts is the least effectual one (139).

In contrast to the selfishness of the Curate who is concerned only with his own survival, the venture of the narrator’s brother to fight with the robbers in order to assist the young ladies exhibit both his bravery and his moral sense. According to McConnell (1981), the attitude of the narrator’s brother is “*a kind of immediate, unreflective common decency in the face of disaster*” (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 140). However, he states that his attitude is still “*one of the most admirable and most important of human survival mechanism*” (140).

As for the response of the Artilleryman, his thoughts are motivated by the idea of the survival of the fittest. He regards “*the war*” between the Martians and the Earthlings as a competition between the two species for survival, and makes an analogy with the one between men and ants (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 152). He suggests a vision of future for human beings in which they live in drains, “*cellars, vaults, stores, from which bolting passages may be made to the drains*” (157) like rats and strengthen their knowledge and power till they can reach a level where they are able to combat with the Martians. Therefore, he says that they should form a band of “*able-bodied, clean-minded*” men and women, and furthers,

No lackadaisical ladies – no blasted rolling eyes. We can’t have any weak or silly. Life is real again, and the useless and cumbersome and mischievous have to die. They ought to die. They ought to be willing to die. (157)

He finds the solution for the survival of the human race in raising up strong and intelligent generations while promoting the extinction of the weak. Despite his thoughts sound inspiring at first, he proves to be incompetent to carry out his plans being lazy and more interested in enjoying the activities that he condemns in his words. On the other hand, the narrator emphasises the importance of “*a sanity of the fully self-conscious intellectual*” for the salvation of mankind (McConnell, 1981: 141). After having discovered that the Martians died from bacteria to which their immune systems were not prepared, he states that “*For so it had come about, as indeed I and many men might have foreseen had not terror and disaster blinded our minds*” (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 168). The narrator makes it clear that to maintain sanity in the face of danger, to try to understand the course of the events and to interpret them rationally will be the most effectual way of overcoming the obstacles encountered in the process of human progress (McConnell, 1981: 141).

##### **6. THE SPECULATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF MANKIND IN *THE WAR OF THE WORLDS***

In addition to the idea of the survival of the fittest that inevitably degenerates humans to savagery when applied to human societies, in *The War of the Worlds*, H. G. Wells expresses his concerns regarding the swiftly

developing technology. At the very beginning of the novel, the narrator points out that the Martians are not savages. On the contrary, they are intellectually so developed that they have realised the danger which their planet is in, and they have been able to create complex machines that enable them to journey towards sunward, and kill other beings expeditiously on a large scale. The narrator even states that the Martians might be actually descending from human-like beings that evolved into their current state in the process of time (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 127). To strengthen his assumption, he refers to the publication of a writer who speculated, long before the arrival of the Martians, an evolutionary future for human beings in which he stated,

The perfection of mechanical appliances must ultimately supersede limbs; the perfection of chemical devices, digestion; that such organs as hair, external nose, teeth, ears, and chin were no longer essential parts of the human being, and that the tendency of natural selection would lie in the direction of their steady diminution through the coming ages. The brain alone remained a cardinal necessity. (127)

It is rather striking that the description of the Martians given by the narrator when he is imprisoned in a house near a Martian settlement shows parallels to the speculated future for human evolution. He observes from *“the ruined house”* that the Martians do not have nostrils and they have a *“single tight tympanic surface”* as an ear that they probably do not make use of it much because the narrator assumes that the Martians communicate *“without any physical intermediation”* (Parrinder & Wells, 2005: 129). Similarly, even though they have two bunches of eight tentacles around their mouth area for hands, they are depended on the crab-like handling machines for their movements. As for feeding, the narrator observes that they inject the blood of other creatures into their veins by the help of a little pipette. Therefore, they do not have entrails. Finally, the narrator draws the attention to the fact that the Martians are *“heads – merely heads”* (125). He comes to the judgement that being previously human-like creatures, the Martians must have suppressed their bestial traits by means of intelligence, and consequently their brains gradually developed more and more whereas other parts of their bodies became less effectual. Since they became dominated largely by their intelligence, their capability of feeling emotions ceased to exist.

As McConnell (1981) notes, Wells do not relate only a tale of *“the clash of two alien species”* in his novel, but also he reasons about the probable development of human beings in the technological age (130-1). It is undeniable that technological inventions make our lives easier. However, it is also likely that they might *“overadapt the species to the point of extinction”*, leading mankind to a state in which humans cease to be *“recognizably human”* (134-5). Like the Martians, humans might also end up with the disassociation of intelligence from passions in their evolution, and initiate the extermination of other species being separated from *“the natural life of the planet [Earth]”* (136). Wells contemplates that as the idea of the survival of the fittest might lower mankind to the savagery of animal realm, the rapidly developing technology might also degenerate humans into monstrous creatures who do not feel compassion for any other beings, and who might not be different from animals in ruthlessness.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The Victorian fin de siècle, which was an age of contradictions marked by immense progress and also decadence, witnessed great scientific discoveries and developments that posed a threat to the Victorian worldview and values. One of those developments that affected the Victorian society was undoubtedly Darwin’s evolutionary theory, which was later adapted to human society under the term *“Social Darwinism”*. The evolutionary theories not only provided a new explanation for the creation of the world against the Biblical accounts, but also shook the long-held belief in the supremacy of mankind over other beings, dissolving the assumed boundary between the human and the animal. Accordingly, the bestial urges came to be recognized as natural in human nature, and their role in determining human relationships as inevitable.

Darwin’s ideas had a substantial influence on all kinds of Victorian novel from fantasies to realist novels. This can be understood from the abundance of allusions to evolution as reproduction and the survival of the fittest. Many Victorian writers, such as George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, shunned from idealisation, and gave dispassionate observation of their subjects who found themselves compelled to struggle for existence in a natural world of chance events and conflicting impulses, like the random variations determining the future of evolution

within the Darwinian biology. Robert Louise Stevenson and H. G. Wells, however, took the Darwinian fiction in a completely different direction. In their works, respectively *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The War of the Worlds*, Stevenson and Wells draw on Darwin's evolutionary theories in order to express their distrust in science and technology as a means of progress, and to speculate about the future of humanity that involves the possibility of devolution. Foregrounding Darwin's disturbing revelation of humanity's kinship with animals, both authors unmask the bestial aspects of mankind, which lead their subjects to degenerate into ferocity. Besides, in contrast to the Victorian notion of progress, both authors imagine scientific and technological developments as contributing to the process of devolution. Thus, they both reflect on the forces that might lead humanity to evolution in reverse.

In his novella, Stevenson questions the notion of free will, and speculates on the failure of modern science in dealing with the Victorian dichotomy between the social expectations and the inward bestial desires. The Victorians believed that humans were distinguished from animals thanks to their superior mental development and free will. Therefore, they expected civilised men to restrain their bestial urges in order to avoid from degenerating into savagery. In the case of Dr Jekyll, however, the notion of free will is proven to be ineffectual. Stevenson argues that the bestial instincts are an inborn part of human nature, and therefore, their fulfilment is essential to the healthy state of being. Any denial of what is natural in human beings, as the Victorian morals demanded, results in stronger instinctive cravings, and promotes instinctive behaviour like in animals. Accordingly, Stevenson illustrates in the novella that the more Dr Jekyll suppresses his bestial passions, the more violent his desires become. As free will fails in bringing urges under control, Stevenson doubts that science could provide better solution to the problem. Mr Hyde, the product of modern science embodying Dr Jekyll's primitive nature, is ruled by instincts only. However, indulgence in pleasure without a sense of limit causes him to become entangled in savagery deeper and deeper. He concludes that a complete denial of instinctive needs or seeking to satisfy them without restraints is likely to lead humans to evolve backward.

In *The War of the Worlds*, H.G. Wells treats the idea of devolution in similar way. Being influenced by the thoughts of T. H. Huxley on Social Darwinism, he imagines mankind being taken over by the bestial urge to compete with each other. With the arrival of the Martians, humans lose their supreme position in ecology, and they are placed in a new situation where like animals, they have to act on urges in order to survive. In the novel, we are shown mankind being driven into struggle to exist at the expense of others as in the realm of animals. Wells illustrates the inevitability of human devolution into savagery when they are compelled to compete with each other for survival. He argues that mankind may avoid degeneration as long as they can control the cosmic process of evolution determined by the natural selection. In order to prevent devolution, Wells emphasizes the need for a successful adaptation to changing conditions, and also an ability of swiftly anticipating what is to be done under the pressure of the forces beyond man's control. Apart from elaborating on the idea of "the survival of the fittest" in human societies, Wells envisions that the constantly developing technology too might lead mankind to devolution. As the narrator speculates that the Martians might have been human-like creatures before they were so advanced in technology which might have overtaken the functions of the parts of their bodies, except their heads, Wells indicates to the possibility of a similar evolutionary future for humans in which technological devices overadapt humans to the point where they become deprived of feelings of compassion for other beings or different human races, and motivated by the idea of "the survival of the fittest".

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