

Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

I Plot

Gabriel John Utterson, a lawyer, is on his weekly walk with his relative Richard Enfield, who proceeds to tell him of an encounter he had last night while coming home late at night (it is not known what he is coming home from).

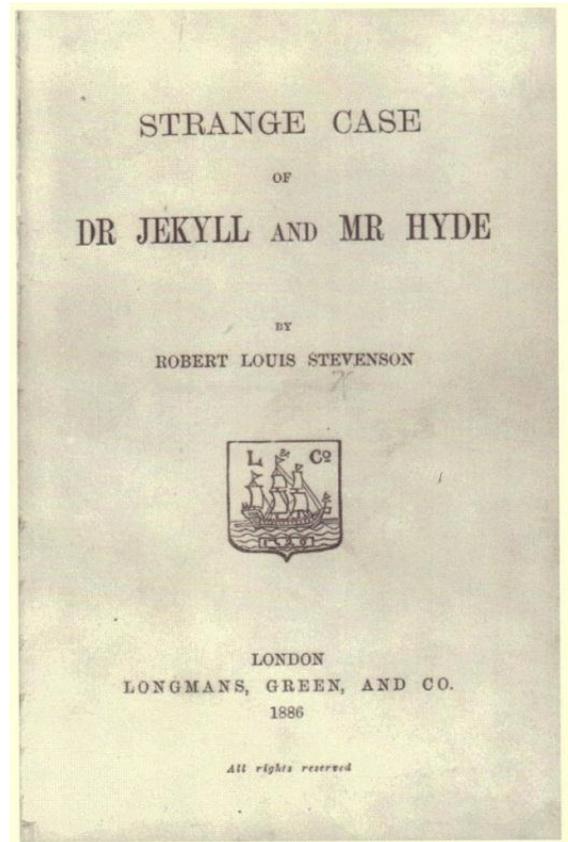
The tale describes a sinister figure named Mr Hyde who tramples a young girl, disappears into a door on the street, and re-emerges to pay off her relatives with a cheque signed by a respectable gentleman for 100 pounds. Because both Utterson and Enfield disapprove of gossip, they agree to speak no further of the matter. It happens, however, that one of Utterson's clients and close friends, Dr Henry Jekyll, has written a will transferring all of his property to this same Mr Hyde. Soon, Utterson begins having dreams in which a faceless figure stalks through a nightmarish version of London. Puzzled, the lawyer visits Jekyll and their mutual friend Dr Hastie Lanyon to try to learn more. Lanyon reports that he no longer sees much of Jekyll, since they had a dispute over the course of Jekyll's research, which Lanyon calls "unscientific balderdash". Curious, Utterson stakes out a building that Hyde visits, which, it turns out, is a filthy shack attached to the back of Jekyll's home.

Encountering Hyde, Utterson is amazed by how ugly the man seems, as if deformed, though Utterson cannot say exactly how this is so. Much to Utterson's surprise, Hyde willingly offers Utterson his address. Jekyll tells Utterson not to concern himself with the matter of Hyde. A year passes uneventfully. One night, a servant girl witnesses Hyde beat a man to death with a heavy cane - MP Sir Danvers Carew, also a client of Utterson. The police contact Utterson, who suspects Hyde of the murder. He leads the officers to Hyde's apartment, feeling a sense of foreboding amid the eerie weather (the morning is dark and wreathed in fog). When they arrive at the apartment, the murderer has vanished, but they find half of the cane (described as being made of a strong wood but broken due to the beating) left behind a door. It is revealed to have been given to Jekyll by Utterson. Shortly thereafter, Utterson again visits Jekyll, who now claims to have ended all relations with Hyde. Jekyll shows Utterson a note, allegedly written to Jekyll by Hyde, apologizing for the trouble he has caused him and saying goodbye. That night, however, Utterson's clerk points out that Hyde's handwriting bears a remarkable similarity to Jekyll's own.

For a few months, Jekyll reverts to his former friendly and sociable manner, as if a weight has been lifted from his shoulders. Later, Jekyll suddenly begins to refuse visitors, and Lanyon dies of shock after receiving information relating to Jekyll. Before his death, Lanyon gives Utterson a letter, with instructions that he not open it until after Jekyll's death or disappearance. Utterson goes out walking with Enfield, and they see Jekyll at a window of his laboratory; the three men begin to converse, but a look of horror comes over Jekyll's face, and he slams the window and disappears. Soon afterward, Jekyll's butler, Mr Poole, visits Utterson in a state of desperation and explains that Jekyll has secluded himself in his laboratory for several weeks, and that now the voice that comes from the room sounds nothing like the doctor's. Utterson and Poole travel to Jekyll's house through empty, windswept, sinister streets; once there, they find the servants huddled together in fear. After arguing for a time, the two of them resolve to break into Jekyll's laboratory.

Inside, they find the body of Hyde, wearing Jekyll's clothes and apparently dead by suicide. They find also a letter from Jekyll to Utterson promising to explain the entire mystery. Utterson takes the document home, where first he reads Lanyon's letter and then Jekyll's. The first reveals that Lanyon's deterioration and eventual death were caused by the shock of seeing Mr Hyde drink a potion and, as a result of doing so, metamorphose into Dr Jekyll. The second letter explains that Jekyll, seeking to separate his good side from his darker impulses, discovered a way to transform himself periodically into a creature free of conscience, this being Mr Hyde. The transformation was incomplete, however, in that it created a second, evil identity, but did not make the first identity purely good. At first, Jekyll reports, he delighted in becoming Hyde and rejoiced in the moral freedom that the creature possessed. Eventually, however, he found that he was turning into Hyde involuntarily in his sleep, even without taking the potion.

At this point, Jekyll resolved to cease becoming Hyde. One night, however, the urge gripped him too strongly, and after the transformation he immediately rushed out and violently killed Sir Danvers Carew. Horrified, Jekyll tried more adamantly to stop the transformations, and for a time he proved successful by engaging in philanthropic work.



At a park, he considers how good a person he has become as a result of his deeds (in comparison to others), believing himself redeemed. However, before he completes his line of thought, he looks down at his hands and realizes that he has suddenly once again become Mr Hyde. This was the first time that an involuntary metamorphosis had happened in waking hours. Far from his laboratory and hunted by the police as a murderer, Hyde needed Lanyon's help to get his potions and become Jekyll again; when he undertook the transformation in Lanyon's presence, the shock of the sight instigated Lanyon's deterioration and death. Meanwhile, Jekyll returned to his home, only to find himself ever more helpless and trapped as the transformations increased in frequency and necessitated even larger doses of potion in order to reverse themselves. It was the onset of one of these spontaneous metamorphoses that caused Jekyll to slam his laboratory window shut in the middle of his conversation with Enfield and Utterson.

Eventually, the potion began to run out, and Jekyll was unable to find a necessary ingredient to make more. Ironically, Jekyll learns that this most necessary ingredient was in the first instance of his experiments, sullied. Subsequent supplies are pure and thus lacking the quality that makes the potion successful for his experiments. His ability to change back from Hyde into Jekyll slowly vanished. Jekyll writes that even as he composes his letter he knows that he will soon become Hyde permanently, and he wonders if Hyde will face execution for his crimes or choose to kill himself. Jekyll notes that, in either case, the end of his letter marks the end of the life of Dr Jekyll. He ends the letter saying "This is the end of Dr Jekyll. Goodbye... Good..." . With these words, both the document and the novel come to a close.

II • **Analysis**

This story represents a concept in Western culture, that of the inner conflict of humanity's sense of good and evil. In particular the novella has been interpreted as an examination of the duality of human nature (that good and evil exists in all), and that the failure to accept this tension (to accept the evil or shadow side) results in the evil being projected onto others. Paradoxically in this argument, evil is actually committed in an effort to extinguish the perceived evil. In Freudian Theory the thoughts and desires banished to the unconscious mind motivate the behavior of the conscious mind. If someone banishes all evil to the unconscious mind in an attempt to be wholly and completely good, it can result in the development of a Mr Hyde-type aspect to that person's character. This failure to accept the tension of duality is related to Christian theology, where Satan's fall from Heaven is due to his refusal to accept that he is a created being (that he has a dual nature) and is not God. This is why in Christianity, pride (to consider oneself as without sin or without evil) is the greatest sin, as it is the precursor to evil itself; it also explains the Christian concept of evil hiding in the light. The novella has also been noted as "one of the best guidebooks of the Victorian era" because of its piercing description of the fundamental dichotomy of the 19th century "outward respectability and inward lust," as this period had a tendency for social hypocrisy.

The duality in the novella has led to a variety of different interpretations. These include readings which see the work as being a Victorian morality tale of unleashed sexual depravity, or an allegory for the necessarily double life of the Victorian homosexual. A common interpretation sees the novella's duality as representative of Scotland and the Scottish character. On this reading the duality represents the national and linguistic dualities inherent in Scotland's relationship with the wider Britain and the English language respectively, and also the repressive effects of the Calvinistic church on the Scottish character.

III • **Dr Henry Jekyll / Edward Hyde**

The dual title character is a doctor who has covered up a secret life full of cruel deeds. He feels as if he is constantly battling within himself between what is good and what is evil, and is pushing away people dear to him. After drinking a potion of his own creation, Jekyll is transformed into the smaller, younger, cruel, remorseless, evil Edward Hyde, representing the hidden side of Dr Jekyll's nature brought to the fore. Dr Jekyll has many friends and has a friendly personality, but as Mr Hyde, he becomes mysterious, violent, and secretive. As time goes by, Mr Hyde grows in power. After taking the potion repetitively, he no longer relies upon it to unleash his inner demon i.e. his alter ego. Eventually, Mr Hyde grows so strong that Dr Jekyll becomes reliant on the potion to remain himself.

Stevenson never says exactly what Hyde takes pleasure in on his nightly forays, saying generally that it is something of an evil and lustful nature; thus it is in the context of the times, abhorrent to Victorian religious morality. Hyde may have simply been reveling in activities that were not appropriate to a man of Jekyll's stature, such as engaging with prostitutes or burglary, or perhaps merely walking the dark streets of London all night and sleeping during the day. However, it is Hyde's violent activities that seem to give him the most thrill, driving him to attack and murder Sir Danvers Carew without reason, making him a hunted outlaw throughout England.

Realizing he will soon be Hyde forever, Jekyll leaves behind a testament; pointing out that while Jekyll often felt like a charlatan, Hyde felt like a "genuine man" years younger and far more energetic than his more "sociable" self. He also states in his final confession that although Hyde knew people recoiled from him, he did not care.

(from www.wikipedia.org)