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Colin Manlove

"Closer than an Eye": The Interconnection of Stevenson's  
*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*



One could say of many works that the more one looked at them the more complex they became, but the remark would have peculiar relevance with R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The basic movement of the narrative is itself towards increasing complexity. At first it seems that Hyde has the pull of a blackmailer on Jekyll, in order to explain his ability to draw a cheque against Jekyll's name to buy off the family of a girl he injures; yet as the narrative proceeds we are to find that the relation of the two is much closer and more problematic than could ever have been imagined.

Here we can start with another aspect of the narrative: the way seemingly unrelated or separate people and incidents are brought together. Throughout the story Jekyll and Hyde are shown to be increasingly involved with one another to the point where they merge: first we have the connection via the cheque, then the fact that the worthy Jekyll has made a will in favour of the repulsive Hyde; then Jekyll's asking the lawyer Utterson to look after Hyde's interests should he, Jekyll, disappear; then Hyde being given a key and free access to Jekyll's house; then the degeneration in Jekyll's appearance and health, the recognition of a similarity between the handwriting of Hyde and of Jekyll, and so on. This is strikingly seen also in the way that the 'blind' house identified early on as the resort of Hyde, is not till

later revealed to be closely linked to the house of Jekyll, of which it in fact forms the laboratory (pp. 4-8, 20-2, 26-8):<sup>1</sup> previously we had no reason to believe other than that Jekyll's house was elsewhere in London; and one character specifies that Jekyll does not live at this blind house, but 'in some square or other' (p. 10). The narrative itself as outlined in the chapter titles on the contents page might be mistaken for a collection of separate short stories rather than a sequence of events: 'Story of the Door'; 'Search for Mr. Hyde'; 'Dr. Jekyll Was Quite at Ease'; 'The Carew Murder Case'; 'Incident of the Letter'; 'Remarkable Incident of Dr. Lanyon'; 'Incident at the Window'; 'The Last Night'; 'Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case'. Indeed the last title reads like a lawyer's summing up, and the whole could be seen as a legal presentation of a case, with apparently separate pieces of evidence brought together to argue a position which only becomes fully evident at the last: we recall that much of the story is told through the lawyer Utterson, and that his concern for most of the time is with investigation into particular evil deeds of Hyde's and their possible relation to Jekyll. Yet it is not as static as that sounds, for all the evidence is not available to Utterson at the start, but comes piecemeal: and he himself is not directed to one particular objective from the outset, but moves from casual interest to vital concern as the narrative proceeds; nor does he ever unearth the full truth for himself, but is told it in Jekyll's last letter. Here again the seemingly random or disconnected come together to make a coherent sequence: the story of the door, accidentally told, links with Hyde and Hyde with Jekyll.

There are two sides to the narrative: the seen and the unseen. On the one hand there are the investigations of Utterson; and on the other is the story of Jekyll's relations with Hyde. The two sides compare almost as conscious and unconscious. In a sense they never meet: Jekyll develops on his own, and his development and no other person determines his fate, while the other characters try by indirections to find directions out and operate more or less in isolation from Jekyll. The narrative seen through Utterson, Enfield, Lanyon and the objective narrator himself is effectively the public world, of society and London itself, where that seen through Jekyll is essentially private. Little is said within Jekyll's narrative of the actual deeds of Hyde when abroad in London, for these are recounted by the public figures: what is at issue is the effect of these deeds on Jekyll. The irony of Jekyll's situation is that his normal public self

is seen as shut away -- as the chapter 'Incident at the Window' conveys -- while for all his name, and fundamentally anti-social self, Hyde inhabits the streets and acts and speaks. The two narratives are related in another way. The narrowing investigations of Utterson and others can be seen as the outside world working in; they end by symbolically breaking down the door to the inner sanctum of Jekyll's house: but in the Jekyll-Hyde narrative the case is rather one of the inside working out, of Hyde, whom Jekyll constantly images as something violent locked with him, breaking out to the point where he engulfs Jekyll. The story thus has a network of oppositions informing and playing through it, which suggests a far tighter bonding between the various aspects of the tale than might at first sight appear.

This is illustrated in the description by Utterson's friend Enfield of the bustling London by-street with its one strange building:

The street was small and what is called quiet, but it drove a thriving trade on the week-days. The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed, and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their gains in coquetry; so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger.

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a

generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages. (pp. 3-5)

The streets of shops looks outward to a public; it is concerned with putting on a fine front and drawing people in. The building that juts forward has only an unopened door, no windows, and neither bell nor knocker on the door: its preoccupation is with exclusion, its ruinous appearance an indication that it would invite no one. Yet it is part of the street, even if it is not integrated with it but thrusts its way forward. Both the street and the house are personified: the street drives a thriving trade, the shop fronts invite 'like rows of smiling saleswomen' and veil their more florid charms on Sundays; while the 'sinister block of building' (which 'sinister' may be the left hand to the street's right, and certainly is 'on the left hand going east'), 'thrust[s] forth its gable on the street', has 'a blind forehead of discoloured wall' and bears 'the marks of negligence in every feature'. It is not too much of a leap to see the shops as suggestive of the respectable, ambitious, civil area of mind -- in short, all that Jekyll is to seem to be, if on a higher class level -- and this bare block of building (with its 'blind forehead') in its midst as the intrusive and unfathomable unconscious area of that same mind. Enfield goes on to say of this building that whether anyone lives there is obscure, "for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins" (p. 11). The street and the building together seem almost to form a composite whole, the one, by the extremity of its cheer and vitality, seeming almost to beget the other -- variety spawning uniformity, care neglect, light darkness.

And that last duality reminds us of the two recorded instances of Hyde's evil. Each involves his meeting by night, alone, with an innocent -- in the first instance, a child, which he tramples on as if it is not there, and in the second, at the opposite end of life, and yet also child-like, a good old man, Sir. Danvers Carew, M.P., member of the establishment, whom he also tramples. The fact that each act involves a meeting is in itself significant: it is as though Hyde conjoins momentarily with the other half of the larger whole from which he comes. But for the story the most significant aspect of these meetings, particularly the second, is the way that the innocence is described in such a way as to suggest that somehow evil is generated out of its very existence:

A maid servant living alone in a house not far from the river, had gone upstairs to bed about eleven. Although a fog rolled over the city in the small hours, the early part of the night was cloudless, and the lane, which the maid's window overlooked, was brilliantly lit by the full moon. It seems she was romantically given, for she sat down upon her box, which stood immediately under the window, and fell into a dream of musing. Never (she used to say, with streaming tears, when she narrated that experience) never had she felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world. And as she so sat she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair drawing near along the lane; and advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first she paid less attention. When they had come within speech (which was just under the maid's eyes) the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. It did not seem as if the subject of his address were of great importance; indeed, from his pointing, it sometimes appeared as if he were only inquiring his way; but the moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self-content. Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognize in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot, and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted. (pp. 35-7)

The girl had never felt more at peace that evening, never felt more kindly of the world: as she so thinks, the good old man appears, and simultaneously the smaller man, to whom she pays less attention. Stevenson liked melodrama, true: how better to produce this than by the contrast of the pleasant thoughts with the horrors that ensue, the physical destruction of the old man by the other. Yet the insistence on the observation of the scene by a mind, and by a mind in a state of near-holiness, followed at once by the appearance of the old gentleman and the other, suggests a causal relation. Projections of mind are the basis of the whole story, in the sense that Hyde is a portion of the soul given concrete existence. At the same time the very existence of the good old man seems to generate the other, its opposite; and certainly, at a more evident level, provokes Hyde's extremest evil. It might conceivably be said that the whole scene is a projection of the maid's mind; but the main point here is that innocence, whether in the form of her thoughts or in the appearance of the old man, begets its opposite.

And this of course has bearing on the whole story. If innocence and corruption go so together, who is free?<sup>2</sup> (It is a question also asked by Hawthorne, Melville, James and Conrad.) Jekyll poses the question in his discovery 'that man is not truly one, but truly two' (p. 108). In him 'with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, [were] severed . . . those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature' (p. 107). Seen this way, Jekyll is simply an extrapolation of the nature of all men. And he locates the origin of his Hyde personality in an excessive love of life (pp. 112, 127, 137-8): extreme vitality begets a creature of death. Utterson the lawyer, like Banquo in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, is aware of 'the cursed thoughts that nature/Gives way to in repose', and of his own potential for wrong:<sup>3</sup> he broods 'awhile on his own past, groping in all the corners of memory, lest by chance some Jack-in-the-Box of an old iniquity should leap to light there. His past was fairly blameless; few men could read the rolls of their life with less apprehension; yet he was humbled to the dust by the many ill things he had done' (p. 29). Utterson's imagination is 'enslaved' by Hyde: he dreams repeatedly of the image of Hyde treading down the little girl like a Juggernaut, and becomes obsessed by the desire to behold the as yet unknown features of Hyde; 'by all lights and at all hours of solitude or concourse' he posts himself by the haunt of Hyde to satisfy this wish, saying, "If he be Mr. Hyde . . . I shall be Mr. Seek" (p. 21). His

knowledge of Hyde's legal connection with Jekyll is given an air of strangeness by the manner of presentation: he is walking with Enfield before we have heard anything of Jekyll or of Hyde, and Enfield describes Hyde's violence to the girl; then Utterson reveals that he knows something of Hyde already, more indeed than Enfield himself. It is Utterson's stick which in the hands of Hyde strikes down Sir Danvers Carew. It is Utterson who in the end is made the beneficiary of Jekyll's will in place of Hyde.

If these facts raise question, there are other, and related, issues. Why is it that people have difficulty in recollecting Hyde's appearance? Why is it that all people who meet Hyde are peculiarly repelled by him? When Enfield beholds Hyde after the incident with the child,

there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight. So had the child's family, which was only natural. But the doctor's case was what struck me. He was the usual cut and dry apothecary, of no particular age and colour, with a strong Edinburgh accent, and about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us: every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turned sick and white with the desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just as he knew what was in mine . . . . (p. 7)

Again, when Utterson has seen Hyde, he is left 'the picture of disquietude':

Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. 'There must be something else,' said the perplexed gentleman. 'There *is* something more, if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell? or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through and transfigures, its clay continent? The last, I think; for O my poor old Harry

Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend' (pp. 25-6)

Here the matter is reduced to purely moral terms: Hyde excites loathing because he is evil, or satanic. The same is seen with Dr. Lanyon, who registers a more physical reaction to 'the odd, subjective disturbance cause by his [Hyde's] neighbourhood': 'At the time, I set it down to some idiosyncratic, personal distaste, and merely wondered at the acuteness of the symptoms; but I have since had reason to believe the cause to lie much deeper in the nature of man, and to turn on some nobler hinge than the principle of hatred' (p. 99). But suppose what all these different individuals are violently responding to and refusing is the Hyde in themselves?<sup>4</sup> Jekyll suggests as much when he says that the 'visible misgiving of the flesh' that he observes in people when confronted with Hyde is in his opinion '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' (p. 114). And indeed Jekyll himself is an instructive case on the subject: for in Hyde he sees all the energy and lust for life in man that is tied down by restraint, the respectability of the normal social self (p. 117); yet he comes to try to disown Hyde as though he were an alien, an evil being wholly disconnected from himself (pp. 137-9).

There is thus a tendency in the story to suggest the interrelation of the various characters with Hyde, through the very discontinuities sought by the characters and apparently practised by the narrative. The insistence on disconnection and alien-ness makes us, particularly in a story about man's two selves, look also for links and nearnesses. We start with one quaint pair, the respectable lawyer Utterson with his friend Enfield: we end with an extreme version of their division in Jekyll and Hyde. The whole landscape of the story, with its city streets, darkness and fog, can be seen as images of a journey into the interior: certainly the narrative moves progressively inwards from the streets into the buildings -- the trampling of the child is seen by Enfield while out walking, the killing of the old man is witnessed from a house, Drs. Lanyon and Jekyll die in their houses. What we have here could be said to be something like the journey in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The procedure of the story suggests that Hyde can lie at the end of a journey into the respectable self -- the self not just of Jekyll but of Utterson or of Lanyon.

Jekyll's is an extreme case: it is what we can come to in the last analysis; and this seems to be why we only come to a full statement of that case as the last item in this narrative.

What are we to make of the concluding 'full statement' by Jekyll? One problem is the importance of Jekyll's scientific knowledge and his discovery of the identity-changing drug. Jekyll begins his statement with no mention of this drug or of any researches. First, he tells us that the two selves, the Jekyll and the Hyde, were already considerably divided in himself before his scientific experiments cast any 'side light' on his condition.<sup>5</sup> It is a curious rehearsal:

I was born in the year 18- to a large fortune, endowed besides with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future. And indeed the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. (p. 106)

From this one would suppose a merely inconvenient ebullience of temperament such as might be imagined fairly common in men who wish to be respectable. Yet even here things have shifted. In the first sentence, he was endowed with many excellencies and was fond of the respect of the wise and the good: so far there seems nothing amiss in this. But by the second sentence this has become more dubious, 'my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public': now he is more of a mask, greedy of respect while not necessarily deserving of it. And simultaneously the other side of him is to shift throughout the whole long paragraph which the above passage opens, from 'a profound duplicity of life', to 'irregularities', 'faults', 'plunged in shame' (p. 107). In a sense what we witness here is an enactment of the widening gulf in Jekyll himself; as he speaks, what were peccadilloes turn to sins and what was the respectable display of one's talents becomes a craving for praise. But in part this is exactly the case in his life itself. He has allowed his wilder spirit some outlet, but having done so is the more

coldly determined to be respectable: he has split himself, because the more he gives his energies vent the more strongly they tug against his impulse towards public acceptance and renown, and therefore the stronger *that* impulse becomes until he digs a trench in himself and has to live two lives, each of which fights for dominance in him.

The drug Jekyll discovers is thus only an alleviation of a situation which he himself has created through numbers of voluntary acts: it allows him to put in concrete form the duality he has begotten in himself, and in so doing to remove the pain. By so separating the two he is able to let the darker side go its own way, convinced that its deeds will not affect him. And thus further separated, the dark side does become darker. Put in the order that we have here, with Jekyll first furthering the split in himself, the drug is a mere catalyst permitting him to carry the process to the limit: it is, almost, reducible to a mechanism for allowing the full expression of his nature. To this extent the drug itself is quite unimportant: and this is seen again at the end of the story, when Jekyll finds it increasingly difficult to escape from the form of Hyde. He blames the chemicals he scours London for, convinced that it was an undiscoverable impurity in the original salts that facilitated his transformations, and dies feeling that the mere exhaustion of a chemical has finally fixed him to the being of Hyde. But in the same way that throughout the story Jekyll's acceptable ambition turns to a mask of worthiness, so his belief that Hyde is the sole repository of his evil gradually becomes mistaken. When he begins to find himself transformed involuntarily as it seems, to Hyde, we realize that it is not the habitual use of the chemicals but the habitual decision to use them which has led to this. In other words, Jekyll becomes more and more of a sham until he *is* Hyde.<sup>6</sup> The man who began by letting Hyde out ends by having to let him in. The drug's part in the whole business might be put in the same way that Mephistophilis in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* puts it: Mephistophilis dismisses the doctor's magical powers in calling him up, 'That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*'; Faustus is told that it was his apostasy, not his skill, that called the devil forth.<sup>7</sup> Je-kyll, 'I kill', self-killer, thus seems an apt description of the protagonist here.<sup>8</sup>

A second issue that arises with Jekyll's 'full statement' is precisely who is talking, and whether we should credit him. As he writes, he is on the verge of losing the last shred of his Jekyll-ness and becoming Hyde wholly and

irrevocably, a Hyde that Jekyll himself has created. He wanted to be free of the war in his nature; then he chose to permit Hyde to exercise his energies in increasingly vicious courses while escaping the guilt and the punishment as Jekyll: 'Henry Jekyll stood at times aghast before the acts of Edward Hyde; but the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde after all, and Hyde alone that was guilty . . . . And thus his conscience slumbered' (pp. 118-9). The later status of Jekyll's repentance after Hyde's murder of Sir Danvers Carew is also rendered questionable: Hyde returns gloating over the crime to prepare the draught that will transform him back to Jekyll and safety:

Hyde had a song upon his lips as he compounded the draught, and as he drank it, pledged the dead man. The pangs of transformation had not done tearing him, before Henry Jekyll, with streaming tears of gratitude and remorse, had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God. (p. 128)

The first reaction undercuts the second. The close juxtaposition of the two in such extreme form shows how illusory is Jekyll's belief that he and Hyde are quite separate. Indeed he has just previously been speaking in the first person as Hyde: 'With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow'; 'my love of life [was] screwed to the topmost peg'; 'I set out . . . gloating on my crime' (pp. 127-8). Yet even at the end Jekyll still makes a last desperate lunge: 'This is my true hour of death and what is to follow concerns another than myself' (p. 141).

In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) there is a similar use of an apparatus to divide self morally from self, and there we know that Dorian's beauty is a fraud, as the picture's increasing ugliness measures his moral decline. Both stories show that there is really no escape from the self, though the self may change.<sup>9</sup> In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, this comes over particularly in such passages as the following, written within one page of the end:

I became, in my own person, a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind, and solely occupied by one thought: the horror of my other self. But when I slept, or when the virtue of the medicine wore off, I would leap almost without

transition (for the pangs of transformation grew daily less marked) into the possession of a fancy brimming with images of terror, a soul boiling with causeless hatreds, and a body that seemed not strong enough to contain the raging energies of life. The powers of Hyde seemed to have grown with the sickliness of Jekyll. And certainly the hate that now divided them was equal on each side. With Jekyll, it was thing of vital instinct. He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. And this again, that the insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidence of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life. (pp. 137-8)

How can he speak of 'I', here or elsewhere, as though 'I' were a pure, respectable Jekyll, and not the double in one skin that it is?<sup>10</sup> -- for when he is Hyde, he is Hyde simple, but when he is Jekyll he is, as he tells us, a mixture of the two (p. 116), and a mixture in which Jekyll has played a steadily decreasing part. Thus it is that there is the shift here from speaking of himself as 'I' to speaking of himself as 'Jekyll', as though he could separate that part from himself: he is no longer able to grasp what he is. So too the passage seesaws between 'the sickliness of a Jekyll' and a Jekyll who has a 'vital instinct'. The passage then proceeds to a remarkable attempt of Jekyll's to dissociate himself from Hyde even while his language admits that he is implicated with him. First he says that Hyde is possessed of 'the raging energies of life' and 'the energy of life', but then he says that Hyde 'usurp[s] the offices of life' and that he is not an expression of life but of death, 'the slime of the pit . . . the amorphous dust . . . what was dead and had no shape'. Granted that Hyde is destructive: but is it not Jekyll who is the more dead? -- quiet, respectable Jekyll, who lets himself loose to murder others while salving

his conscience, Jekyll, who translates all his energies into an external form and lets them out and who has thereby given up half at least of what he is? Jekyll wishes to separate himself from Hyde by calling him a horror, but even as he does so he is forced unconsciously to acknowledge that this thing of darkness is his own. Hyde is a horror, yet Hyde is knit to him closer than a wife or an eye. He tries to suggest that it is Hyde who has forced this ghastly contiguity, but the imagery conveys a bonding with himself which the succeeding picture of the caging of a beast in his flesh would deny; and similarly he speaks of Hyde 'struggling to be born', which suggests something begotten of Jekyll, and then counters with the notion of death and of Hyde having made a victim of Jekyll, 'prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life'.

The whole passage is shot through with these dualities. Hyde is 'co-heir with him [Jekyll] to death', he shares in that which separates; and 'these links of community' cause 'the most poignant part of his [Jekyll's] distress': that which is inorganic, formless slime of the pit speaks, takes form, and acts. Why is he so horrified by the last? We cannot write it off simply as moral horror at created evil. Looked at in one way, it is equally horror at having given birth. For what else is the origin of a child if it is not in slime, amorphous dust and shapelessness? What else does that voiceless slime eventually do but take form and speak and be a man? And is that not what Jekyll has become? Is he not the product of this process? And is it not he, with his respectability almost eaten away by Hyde, who is himself now more slimy and shapeless than Hyde's origins? -- indeed, is it not the case that where Hyde has moved out of his slimy origins, Jekyll is moving back to them, moving back at least to that very nonentity, that absence of being, which he feigns to find abhorrent in Hyde alone?<sup>11</sup> The power of that syntax and phraseology -- '[that] the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life' -- suggests that Jekyll himself feels himself being drawn back into that vortex of non-being: the cries and voices and gesticulations seem to refer not only to Hyde's growth but to Jekyll's decomposition.

But of course it is not that Jekyll will die: the horror beyond all is that, blame the chemicals as he may, he has become Hyde, and even while he paints him as a monster, the rest of his imagery shows this last desperate attempt to

distance himself being worn away also. And outside all this is the sense that Jekyll, even before his 'liberation' of Hyde, was a walking death: that it was the Hyde in him that had all the life, and that to have that energy of life is to be directly opposed to all the civility and public worth that Jekyll tries to retain. In other words, in the final resort, the 'devil', if we call him that, has the best tunes. Goodness, innocence, the child, the old man, the outrage of the respectable, the values of society, all become in this last analysis mere skins over a void: and the truth of life is a savage exultation and glee, a bursting flame of the soul which may involve a passion or a death, but which has nothing to do with social codes. Jekyll has chosen to give both sides of his nature their head: he wants to be a valued worker on behalf of mankind as much as he wants to be free of moral constraints (pp. 106-7). But the fact is that, for all this apparent equality of disposition, it is the night-side of his nature that wins: the story, ending as it does with the engulfing of Jekyll by Hyde, suggests that the 'evil' is more real, more there. Significantly, it is from a sense of himself as a ghost that Jekyll begins the researches that are to release Hyde: 'I began to perceive more deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired' (pp. 109-10).

The vision of this gloom-surrounded story seems almost Manichaeian. Nothing else Stevenson wrote has quite this darkness of vision. In 'The Bottle Imp' or 'Markheim' a degree of 'goodness' wins through in the end; even in 'Thrawn Janet', though the minister is driven mad by his experience of the devil's actions in his life, he is not himself the agent of these actions. As Stevenson wrote to J.A. Symonds, 'Jekyll is a dreadful thing, I own; but the only thing I feel dreadful about is that damned old business of the war in the members. This time it came out; I hope it will stay in, in future.'<sup>12</sup> The 'war in the members' Stevenson chose to see here in moral terms, with Hyde as evil: yet he has Jekyll himself claim that the form he gave to this other side of himself need not have been the evil one of Hyde at all (p. 115). In seeing the division in moral terms, Stevenson is of course a man of his time. Such a duality would be put in potentially other terms by James in *The Turn of the Screw* or Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, where we attend to the way the narrators may pervert or project the 'unacceptable' things they see. Viewed in this light, Jekyll refuses the very sorts of connectiveness on which the entire story is founded:

he divides things, making one black and the other white; he tries to cast off part of himself, only to find it devour him.

The idea behind the story is thus mirrored in its style: what appeared to be separated is shown to be more intimately joined than could ever have been supposed. Each isolated episode, event and figure, apparently so scattered, comes together in the final design. Hyde and Jekyll, who seemed independent of one another, come to fuse, mirroring the futility of Jekyll's own attempt to divorce his two selves. As the narrative proceeds, we get nearer and nearer to Jekyll, just as does Hyde. We move from the streets where Hyde was shut out to the interiors where he comes in. And all the divided details of the story move from the 'centrifugal' to the 'centripetal', closing in towards the final vortex of Jekyll's simultaneous self-revelation and loss of self. At the same time, placed at the end, Jekyll's full statement of the case becomes an extreme analysis of the 'respectability' of many of the separate characters of the story. Stevenson once referred to his story as a 'Gothic gnome':<sup>13</sup> he meant the term 'Gothic' in relation to its atmosphere, but it could equally be applied to its architecture, a mass of rambling and seemingly ill-assorted details ultimately resolving themselves into a unity beyond supposition. 'Style', Stevenson elsewhere wrote, meaning the expression of idea in form, 'is the invariable mark of any master':<sup>14</sup> the mark of such mastery is certainly present in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

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#### NOTES

1. References in the text are to Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (London, 1886).
2. See also Ian Campbell, *Notes on Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Harlow and Beirut, 1981), p. 38.
3. Much in the story is reminiscent of *Macbeth* -- the murder of a good old man, the attempt to divide oneself from one's own evil ('To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself'), the idea of clothes hanging loose, as on 'a dwarfish thief', on the evil man. See also Julia Briggs, *Night Visitors: The*

*Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London, 1977), pp. 67-8.

4. See also Barbara L. Berman, 'The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' in Frank N. Magill, ed., *Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature*, 5 vols. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1983), V, 1836-7.

5. See also Katherine M. Morsberger, 'The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde', in Frank N. Magill, ed., *Survey of Science Fiction Literature*, 5 Vols. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1979), IV, 2187.

6. There is an analogy to this in C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* (London, 1946), which may owe something to Stevenson's work, where a man has so long hidden his true feelings behind the posturings of a tragic actor mask that he finally loses himself altogether (pp. 67-8).

7. See also Campbell, p. 34, for comparison with *Dr. Faustus*. Campbell rightly remarks that 'The parallel . . . is one which could be pursued with advantage.' For instance, Faustus and Jekyll, who are both scientists, chose not knowledge but gratification of lusts; Jekyll feels himself bound to Hyde, as Faustus to Mephistophilis, by a 'bargain' (p. 124); both feel increasingly trapped by their choices, with time closing in; both end locked in a room with their friends outside. There is scope for saying that Stevenson owed a real, if unconscious, debt to Marlowe's play.

8. Several critics have made this punning translation before -- see e.g. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London, 1981), p. 114; and Andrew Jefford, 'Dr. Jekyll and Professor Nabokov: Reading a Reading', in Andrew Noble, ed. *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London, 1983), pp. 68-9. Jefford's essay, incidentally, portrays several hidden motifs within the story serving to bind its separate parts -- particularly of wine versus the 'magic potion', warm sociable interiors versus cold lonely exteriors.

9. On Wilde's probable debt to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, see Isobel Murray, 'Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Oscar Wilde,' *Durham University Journal*, LXXIX (June 1987), 315-9.

10. See also Morsberger, p. 2188.

11. In Arthur Machen's *The Great God Pan* (1894), which imitates *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, is also found a devolutionary progress to the primal slime seen as the origin of life; on this see Briggs, p. 72, and Jackson, pp. 116-18.

12. Letter of Spring 1886 in *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Sidney Colvin, 4 vols. (London, 1911), II, 274.

13. Letter of Jan. 2, 1886 to W.H. Low, *Letters*, II, 263.

14. Stevenson, 'A Note on Realism' (1884), repr. in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London, 1907), V, 262.