

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Throughout Western literature, writers have created characters who act as perfect foils to each other with dramatically observable differences. Each pairing has a stronger and weaker in the combination, and usually one outlives the other. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the pairing exists in one body, and yet the struggle is heightened because both aspects of the identity are equal in strength. Ultimately, Stevenson emphasizes it is Jekyll who holds the power of life or death over Hyde. Hyde's "love of life is wonderful," but Hyde is also aware of Jekyll's "power to cut him off by suicide (Stevenson 101)." It is the awareness of each for the other which confirms that neither can exist alone.

According to Albert Camus in his [Essay](#) "The Myth of Sisyphus," "the sight of human pride is unequalled (Bowie 47)." It is Jekyll's pride in his secret existence of sensuality and "love of life" which postpones the self-destructive tendency. However, as soon as Hyde begins to appear without Jekyll's physical act of drinking the elixir, Jekyll can no longer allow the "brute that slept within" to emerge on his own (Stevenson 102." Both Jekyll and Hyde are ultimately aware of each other, and interact through necessity. To each, the other's freedom must be checked in order to stay "alive," and yet Jekyll finally spies freedom, but only through suicide. In the end, it is Hyde who triumphs, as it is in his guise that the body is discovered.

Hyde is Jekyll without restraint, and the man Jekyll wants to be in the light of day. Jekyll's close friend and attorney Utterson regards Hyde with "disgust, loathing and fear," and yet cannot put a name on the precise reason for the vehemence of his feelings (Stevenson 18)." Utterson considers Hyde may have a hold on Jekyll in the form of "the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace (Stevenson 20)." Yet there is nothing concealed between Jekyll and Hyde. It is "memory alone...tis to be considered...as the source of personal identity

Marietta 2

(Bowie 351)." Jekyll records that "[his] two natures had memory in common (Stevenson 90)." The disgust Utterson feels may actually stem from the ability he has, when looking at Hyde's face, to see the countenance of his friend Jekyll, and subconsciously make the connection between the two even before he witnesses the material transformation.

In "Sisyphus," Camus declares "a man defines himself by his make believe as well as by his sincere impulses (Bowie 46)." Hyde gives an "impression of deformity without any namable malformation (Stevenson 18)." Weariness, according to Camus, "awakens consciousness and provokes what follows (Bowie 46)." Once Hyde has been released, Jekyll discovers that he cannot control when he emerges. Eventually, Jekyll repeatedly sleeps and awakens as Hyde. Here, Jekyll's consciousness of himself becomes obsolete as soon as he realizes he is Hyde. He is not conscious of the transformation taking place, only that it has, and as Hyde, consciousness is replaced by pure sensation. It is the act of losing himself in the sensuality of being Hyde that Jekyll disappears, and it is this disappearance that Jekyll fears will trigger the end of "communication" between his two Selves. It is only when Hyde writes to Doctor Lanyon in the guise of Jekyll that he thinks beyond his sensual self, and that "need and distress...forced [him] to communicate (Bowie 315)."

Jekyll discovers the elixir, but in definite terms confesses that "the drug had no discriminating actions; it was neither diabolical nor divine (Stevenson 84)." It is the man who lets loose the primordial self, and not the concoction. Regardless of the physical manifestations of the release of Jekyll's other authentic self, the elixir also brings about a spiritual transformation. Camus states, "where lucidity dominates, the scale of values becomes useless (Bowie 48)." Hyde is younger, quicker, and possesses a sensuality and sexuality which frightens observers at the same time it titillates Jekyll. He gloats in the "liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping impulses and secret pleasures" he experiences as Hyde (Stevenson 91)." In the end, during his most intense struggles of which Self to show the world, Jekyll weighs his options and admits that to "cast his lot with jekyll, was to die to those appetites which I had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper. To cast it in with Hyde was to die to a thousand

Marietta 3

interests and aspirations, and to become at a blow and forever, despised and friendless (Stevenson 91)." His final decision to outwardly remain Jekyll is resolved by the knowledge that "while Jekyll would suffer smartingly in the fires of abstinence, Hyde would be not even conscious of all that he had lost (Stevenson 91)."

At the onset of Jekyll's "illness," Utterson struggles with even allowing Hyde a face, let alone an identity. He is only a shadow that "glide[s] stealthily through sleeping houses...and at every street corner, crushes a child and leaves her screaming (Stevenson 14)." Jerome Charyn, in his critique "Who Is Hyde?" asserts that, "Hyde is too forceful a character, too complex, to be imprisoned inside a crude case of split personalities (105)." Jekyll tries to fit Hyde into a complete definition of his "other self" and feels sure his life will be simplified should "the separation of these two elements [good and evil] be...housed in separate identities (Stevenson 80)." Additionally, there is intent in Utterson's scrutinizing

of Hyde's face, as if the scrutiny will help solve the abnormality of Jekyll's erratic behavior. Utterson reads Jekyll's will, which leaves all to Hyde, and while convinced that "the respected physician Doctor Jekyll should choose Mr. Hyde as the sole heir to his estate...was madness...upon placing the will in the safe, felt puzzlement turn to fear that disgrace was instead the motivator (Mighall 189)." Again as the observer, Utterson places the blame of the situation on Hyde, and resigns his old friend Jekyll to the abyss.

In addition to Utterson's concern at Hyde's "impression of deformity," Jekyll's other close friend Dr. Lanyon is likewise fascinated by Hyde's face and body, taking a physician's interest in the "unspeakable aspect of the man (Mighall 190)." Stevenson's concentration on Hyde's deformities emphasizes the "observable differences" between Jekyll and Hyde, and thus increases the shock Lanyon eventually receives. Lanyon's real-life medical contemporaries investigation the "Jack the Ripper" murders in London of 1888 concluded that "the wild beast...is slumbering in us all. It is not necessary always to invoke insanity to explain its awakening (Mighall 194)." Perhaps Jekyll is at his sanest as Hyde? Lanyon eventually witnesses the transformation of "degenerate into doctor," and never recovers. For Lanyon, it is the witnessing of the "abnormal, the degenerate and the hysterical within the body of the respectable bourgeois,

Marietta 4

who has impeccable origins, life, fortune and status" which kills him (Mighall 192)." Ultimately, it is Hyde who is found when the laboratory door is forced, and while it is Jekyll who possesses the courage to commit suicide, it is Hyde who outlives Jekyll. The battle between Jekyll's "two selves" has played out, and both would consider themselves victor (Mighall 190)."

Marietta 5

Works Cited