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Article

“licking the chops of memory”: plotting the social sins of *Jekyll and Hyde*

Abstract: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde is hierarchical in its very title – alphabetically Hyde precedes Jekyll, but Jekyll’s superior education and culture are associated with social status where Hyde’s ‘Mr’ is a courtesy title often hedged in with demonic or animalistic terms. But despite the division insisted on in the title, Jekyll’s wilful complicity in the fate that overtakes him is suggested in a series of clues, ranging from his symbolic association with vivisection to the ostentatious exclusion of a female voice (typically the source of spiritual guidance or inspiration in Victorian fiction). As Hyde engages in an ascending scale of brutal acts, beginning with the assault of a child, the middle class male peer group attempts to exculpate or protect Jekyll from association with this rebarbative and criminal figure. But following the murder of Sir Danvers Carew, the climactic discovery of Hyde’s body provides the final evidence against Jekyll himself – in rejecting the possibility of religious salvation he has deliberately chosen the evil that his final statement presents as the ‘assault’ of an ungovernable temptation.

Keywords: Murder; Jekyll and Hyde; blasphemy

Robert Louis Stevenson’s 1886 *Jekyll and Hyde* both demands and eludes sophisticated critical responses. For Stephen Arata the source of the text’s power to fixate and horrify readers lies in its suggestion ‘not that the professional man is transformed into an atavistic criminal, but that the atavist learns to pass as a gentleman.’ (Arata 1995, p. 240) For Kristen Guest Hyde has little need to ‘pass’ as the gentleman whose unexamined behaviour he simply makes more visible, ‘That gentlemen as a class are implicated in the expressions of economic subjectivity associated with Jekyll and Hyde seems to be the novel’s most anxious focus of wilful not knowing, even as it is also its most prominent open secret’ (Guest 2016, p. 325). In a similar invocation of cultural structures as the dominant mode of representation, Benjamin D. O’Dell sees ‘the red herring of Jekyll’s criminal desires’ as subordinate to ‘the novel’s interest in the production and maintenance of class privilege’ (O’Dell 2012, p. 511). Such readings move past the obvious resonance of Jekyll and Hyde as individual characters, to show the story’s metaphorical use of evil as a distorted mirror held up to the fragile construction of middle class masculinity. But important as these insights are, the interdependence of the central figures remains vital to the reader’s experience of the text; while by definition they are never seen together, the eponymous Jekyll’s somewhat

31 ambiguous achievement is to render it almost impossible to think of him at all without immediately
32 invoking the 'and Hyde' of the book's title.

33 The trope of strategic doubling has impeccable literary antecedents, ranging from the construction of
34 Frankenstein's monster to the useful Jorkins deployed by Spewlow to such notable effect in *David*
35 *Copperfield* (1850). Nor is the Faustian bargain in itself anything new. But *Jekyll and Hyde* unsettles the
36 reader by endlessly deferring or denying the responsibility of Jekyll himself, through the imposition of
37 a frankly ludicrous plot device and a series of heinous acts that the reader almost certainly
38 misremembers as culminating in murder. While these garish features of the story deliberately distract
39 the attention of both reader and other characters, they can be contained within a recognisably realist
40 undercurrent, in which social values are tenuously re-inscribed (albeit in increasingly distorted and
41 nightmarish forms), and the ultimate crime is revealed to be not murder but blasphemy.

42 Each of these crimes is committed by Hyde but derives from the fatal obsession of Jekyll with
43 experiments conducted on his own body. Crucially the preposition 'and' in *Jekyll and Hyde* signals both
44 separation and connection between the two figures, a paradox that lies at the centre of the story. In
45 projecting his most anti-social impulses onto a disavowed version of himself Jekyll apparently provides
46 himself with the perfect alibi for anyone who knows his secret (although it is an incompetent move if
47 he wants to show the police that he was elsewhere during Hyde's rampages). Jekyll offers the reader a
48 puzzle, his grammatically awkward shifts between 'I' and 'he' in his retrospective explanation subtly
49 contradicting his admission that the Hyde persona is 'a part' (Stevenson p. 65) of his own being. This
50 paradox of connected separation inevitably raises the question of how far Jekyll can be held responsible
51 for Hyde's criminal acts, including most damagingly the murder of Sir Danvers Carew. The lack of
52 coherent narration, and the introduction of competing moral perspectives in the series of inset tales or
53 'documents' that end the book, upset any obvious resolution to this question. However Jekyll's
54 apparent indifference to consequences places him in the position of both seducer and seduced,
55 experimenter and victim.

56 Like his precursor Frankenstein, Jekyll is a scientist, and while he himself is a chemist not a surgeon,
57 there are several intimations that his creation of 'Hyde' should be read in the context of vivisection, a
58 topical but deeply controversial interest to adopt in the 1880s. His house was formerly owned by a
59 surgeon, his creation having been 'caged' duly comes out 'roaring' (Stevenson p. 61), and after the
60 butler affirms that 'when that masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and
61 whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice' (Stevenson p. 39), Hyde is found in the
62 laboratory at his death 'sorely contorted and still twitching' (Stevenson p. 41) like an animal that has
63 been carelessly disposed of after the experiment has ended. Like a number of vivisectioners in fiction of

64 the 1870s and '80s Jekyll is at one point renounced by his peers for his apparently misguided and
65 unregulated obsession with bizarre experiments, the nature of which is not made clear. As Ann
66 Loveridge has recently shown, fictional depictions of the vivisector repeatedly insist on the tropes of
67 secret obsession and quasi-sexual enjoyment derived from the operation itself, as the educated and
68 usually middle class doctor sustains a double life aimed at preserving his social status. Indeed, in a
69 number of these stories the family and friends of the doctor have no idea that he is engaged in
70 vivisection at all.

71 As Loveridge's work shows, fiction including affective portrayals of vivisection 'invites the reader to
72 be either a spectator or coward, and their responsive actions challenge their own morality (Loveridge
73 2017, p. 54) even as it risks producing addictive symptoms in this same reader, who begins with
74 horrified repulsion only to find that increasingly extreme stimuli are required to reproduce the original
75 effect. For similar reasons, Julia Reid has shown that 'For Stevenson, popular literature is particularly
76 dangerous, apt to release potentially contagious desires' (Reid 2006, p. 72). Nor was Stevenson alone in
77 his anxiety about identificatory reading during this period; the desire to emulate, or at least a failure to
78 condemn errant behaviour, had been commonly attributed to female or working class readers for
79 decades (most obviously by opponents of the Newgate novel in the 1830s). Kate Flint has shown that
80 'gender distinction was adopted by many critics as a means of classification, and that attributes
81 commonly associated with women readers ... proved a useful shorthand for judging the literary merits
82 of a work' (Flint 1995, p. 137).

83 *Jekyll and Hyde* seems to obviate this particular problem – as numerous critics have noted, the
84 environment inhabited by Jekyll, Enfield and Lanyon is almost ostentatious in its exclusion of the
85 female voice, normally invoked in Victorian literature for purposes of moral benchmarking if nothing
86 else. In this context, where the minor female characters appear only to be trampled on, scream, or open
87 the occasional door to gentlemen callers, sin initially seems to be entirely socially constructed by a male
88 peer group, and negotiated through a shared upper middle class register. Jekyll's creation of a
89 rebarbative alter ego initially seems to offer a vicarious exploration of the darker side of fin de siècle
90 London, without unduly compromising the moral values of shock and outrage that come with the
91 recognition of this territory. But read in the context of physiological experiments, Jekyll's status is
92 already slightly suspect. And as the moral boundaries between voyeur and victim begin to collapse, an
93 undue identification with the central character risks perpetuating the very duality that the reader is
94 expected to deplore. As for the non-specialist whose attention was compelled by the repeated shocks
95 of vivisection literature (often applied with pictures), the reader of *Jekyll and Hyde* is subjected (or
96 treated) to an escalating series of brutal acts.

97 Just as literary treatments of vivisection focus on male doctors and their students, so the novella's
98 strategy of exclusion intensifies the threat of violence through the depiction of scenes in which male
99 figures figure as both transgressors and enforcers of the law. This dilemma is compounded and made
100 visible by the collapse of the metaphorical double, as Jekyll is not simply reflected by, but actually
101 becomes the evil whose agency he is increasingly unable to contain. Reid argues that 'Jekyll's problems
102 ... stem not from his savage instincts *per se*, but from his culturally informed anxiety to deny this
103 biological heritage... Stevenson uses Jekyll's dilemma to exemplify the hypocrisy of a professional class
104 whose idol is reputation, and whose business it is to deny the primitive or animal side of human nature.'
105 (Reid 2006, p. 98) More accurately, Jekyll's tragedy derives from the belief that he can indulge his
106 atavism while maintaining his self control. One of the ironies of the vivisector as presented in fin de
107 siècle fiction is the assumption of an objective, rational authority, furthered by obsessive behaviour
108 (specifically atavistic and brutal assaults on animals incapable of giving what we might now term
109 reasonable consent). As Jekyll's patterns of behaviour become the focus of scrutiny, so the lines between
110 rational masculinity and feminised hysteria begin to break down in similar ways.

111 Both class construction and the negotiation of gender roles are very much up for grabs at the fin de
112 siècle, but Jekyll makes a wild miscalculation in attempting to inhabit his socially secure role of
113 educated gentleman, while also 'slumming' in this second body that both is and is not his own.
114 Whatever the nature of his pre-existing sins, Jekyll himself admits that he has expected to enjoy a literal
115 exchange of social values with the assumption of a different body. But his plan is flawed, insofar as
116 Hyde cannot comfortably operate in the homosocial world of Jekyll, and Jekyll cannot make himself
117 known there as Hyde. As a result both figures are ultimately cut off from the comfortable but carefully
118 regulated male community represented by Utterson and Lanyon, Hyde because of his failure to
119 negotiate the conventions of class interaction, and Jekyll because he cannot relegate his sins to a safely
120 quarantined and youthful 'past' or mediate them through the transforming power of a good woman's
121 forgiveness, as so many fictional protagonists ultimately do.

122 Stephen Arata convincingly argues that Hyde's occupation of 'not a savage's den but the retreat of a
123 cultivated gentleman' (Arata 1995, p. 235) is just one means by which the text creates a deep feeling of
124 unease. But if Hyde is identified as a putative member of the middle class, masculine community, his
125 role in it is to collapse its conventional language and expose some of its contradictions. Crucially the
126 outsider and quite literally parvenu Hyde can decode this register but cannot use it convincingly
127 himself. He asks Utterson directly how he has recognised him and when Utterson prevaricates, accuses
128 him of deviating from honourable practice, 'I did not think you would have lied' (Stevenson p. 15). As
129 David Cannadine puts it, 'The only way of knowing you were a gentleman was to be treated as such'
130 (Cannadine 2000, p. 92). Hyde is able to identify a marker of gentlemanliness in order to taunt his

131 opponent with having deviated from it; notably though when Utterson suggests in turn that this is not
132 the language of gentlemen, Hyde lacks the social equipment to respond in kind, and lapses into
133 inarticulate sound, which he attempts to translate into laughter:

134 'Come,' said Mr Utterson, 'that is not fitting language.'

135 The other snarled aloud into a savage laugh' (Stevenson p. 15).

136 Social validation is not just a marker of character status, but vital to the plot. Hyde's disregard for the
137 child is presented as an essentially animalistic instinct, that justifies his socially marginalised status; but
138 the narrative itself quickly reconstructs the incident as a catalyst for interaction between a male peer
139 group. When Enfield describes the trampling of the child, the focus of his attention is repeatedly
140 distracted from the girl herself, not only by the reaction of the family but also by his seemingly intuitive
141 insight into the responses of his social equal, the doctor. In an uncanny anticipation of the knowledge
142 of each other's actions shared by Jekyll and Hyde, he affirms that 'every time he looked at my prisoner,
143 I saw that Sawbones turn sick and white with the desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just
144 as he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best' (Stevenson p.
145 7).

146 What they do, in an early example of compensation culture, is to extract money from the criminal Hyde.
147 Read one way, the act of substitution gains a moral impetus from the gentlemanly status of Enfield and
148 the doctor. They do not benefit financially themselves and protect the family by their very public
149 intervention from the suspicion of having 'sold' their child, the year after the Criminal Law
150 Amendment Act had raised the age of consent for girls from 13 to 16. But in the context of London's
151 high number of child prostitutes and W. T. Stead's article on 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'
152 published in *The Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885, the whole incident seems suspect to say the least.

153 Nonetheless an attentive reader might infer from later events that Hyde, unlike the young Jekyll, and
154 despite the worldly behaviour of Enfield and the other 'gentlemen' – does not include a particular
155 interest in the pleasures of the flesh among his many sins. Some time after the murder of Sir Danvers,
156 Hyde is approached by a match seller (a fairly transparent code for solicitation), 'Once a woman spoke
157 to him, offering, I think, a box of lights. He smote her in the face, and she fled.' (Stevenson p. 64) To
158 read the encounter with the young girl through a realist lens – in which trampling is what Enfield says
159 it is and not coded rape – raises the bizarre possibility that Hyde is in some sense more 'innocent' than
160 the witnesses who extort money from him. ¹

¹ My thanks to the sixth form of Simon Langton Boys Grammar School, for asking the pertinent question, 'Does it always have to be code for sex?' when I discussed this scene with them. I still maintain that it often is. But they were also right, sometimes it's not.

161 Significantly Enfield registers discomfort that the cheque has been signed by a gentleman who has no
162 obvious connection with the incident, to wit his friend Henry Jekyll. If Hyde is read as an
163 'entrepreneurial creation' with 'the only signs [sic] he needs to pass in this culture, the signature of
164 Henry Jekyll' (Houston 2005, p. 100), the 'identity panic' identified by Gail Turley Houston is as much
165 a response to Jekyll's complicity as it is to Hyde himself. For middle class bystanders to extort money
166 from the child's assailant is one thing, but Jekyll's payment cannot be seen as an innocently
167 philanthropic gesture when he has not been a witness of the incident, who might reasonably be moved
168 by pity for the child, and when the cheque is mediated through a criminal and implicitly contaminating
169 figure. The corollary of entrenched privilege is a collective use of the trope of doubling, in which the
170 privileged status of a masculine middle class is complicated by an unspoken capacity for moral
171 disgrace. It is perhaps for this reason that, as Reid astutely notes, 'The focus is hardly ever on Hyde
172 himself, but rather on his observers, and it is they who become subject to what contemporaries
173 understood as primitive emotions and intuitions.' (Reid 2006, p.101)

174 Jekyll's supposed signing of the cheque brings him under scrutiny as a possible victim of blackmail on
175 the part of the disreputable stranger, who has also evoked a desire for brutal action in the doctor and
176 Lanyon himself. The masculine world these characters inhabit is privileged, but its power is implicitly
177 both justified and assured by the values of self-control and moderation that Jekyll is suspected of having
178 transgressed. Martin Danahay points out that:

179 Perhaps nowhere is the importance of religion and self-regulation more obvious than in Mr.
180 Utterson's Sunday routine, which was "to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity
181 on his reading-desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve,
182 when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed." (Danahay 2013, p. 29)

183 As Danahay points out, these values are apparently incompatible with the unregulated desires
184 admitted by Jekyll, intensifying the discomfort of Hyde as 'quite literally a mirror image of the
185 professional men he meets, drawing out of them a repressed violence that is inappropriate for a
186 gentleman, thus dragging them down the social hierarchy with him' (Danahay 2013, p. 30). In one sense
187 this very violence is also the only fitting response to an encounter with the criminal Hyde. In contrast
188 to Jekyll's guilty complicity, Lanyon's ultimate discovery of the secret literally causes his death.

189 As Jekyll himself implies though, Hyde's crimes are unforgivable because they are public and anti-
190 social, not necessarily because they are vicious. While Jekyll retains a strong sense of culture and is
191 benchmarked accordingly, access to these social markers is never fully available to Hyde, taste in
192 pictures and fine furnishing notwithstanding. In this context it is particularly noteworthy that 'Hyde's
193 most vicious crime occurs against a Wordsworthian backdrop' (Olsen 2016, p. 895), observed by the

194 working class maid who despite her lack of social advantages is herself able to commune with the
195 peaceful evening. Trenton B. Olsen points out that 'Given the scene's introduction, we might think of
196 the apparently similar roadway encounters that occur in Wordsworth's poetry with leech gatherers,
197 discharged soldiers, peddlers, and other passersby. Typically these meetings result in shared sympathy
198 or lessons learned' (Olsen 2016, p. 895-6). Hyde of course will systematically reject any such beneficial
199 exchange, murdering the appropriately Wordsworthian figure of Sir Danvers Carew and destroying
200 the maid's Romantic engagement with the peaceful scene she has been watching.

201 Tellingly however the text offers no assurance that Jekyll himself values nature in the way that the
202 servant does, any more than does Hyde. While E. D. Cohen argues that Jekyll's assumption of a dual
203 existence in his youth 'is explicitly *not* to be articulated as a moral failure' (Cohen 2004, p. 192), being
204 rather the 'unique alternative' (Arata 1995, p. 192) to the bourgeois male's failure of coherence, we
205 actually have only Jekyll's own word for it that he was 'in no sense a hypocrite' (Stevenson, p. 52).
206 Notably his own account (that he terms this narrative a 'statement of the case' rather than a confession
207 in itself suggests a degree of arrogance) displays a moral relativism that depends more on gendered
208 convention than philosophical argument.

209 As he explains, 'when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my
210 position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would
211 even have blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from high views that I had set before me,
212 I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame' (Stevenson, p. 53). Grace Moore rightly
213 notes Jekyll's narcissism, and his responsibility for losing particular friendships as a result of his
214 scientific obsession, 'a view that Jekyll endorses incessantly in his own narrative by frequently berating
215 his own egotism and ambition' (Moore 2004, p. 154), qualities often associated with high levels of
216 intelligence. But his (presumably sexual) peccadilloes are admitted apparently for the sake of
217 showcasing his own supposedly 'morbid' feeling of guilt – this level of hypocrisy is only surpassed by
218 Dorian Gray's renunciation of the country girl a few years later, a staged sacrifice of pleasure that serves
219 only to advance the corruption of his reflective portrait. These desires are apparently transformed as
220 Jekyll grows older into a dubiously secret obsession with scientific experiment.

221 Jekyll does achieve a limited self-awareness, ironically enough through a commitment to his complex
222 relationship with Hyde. But as Hyde becomes increasingly dominant Jekyll ruminates:

223 I now felt I had to choose. My two natures had memory in common, but all other faculties were
224 most unequally shared between them. Jekyll (who was composite) now with the most sensitive
225 apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in the pleasures and adventures
226 of Hyde; but Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll' (Stevenson p. 59)

227 The gentleman partakes in imagination in the destructive behaviour of the outcast, because his social
228 self is composite and not – as it is so easy to forget - ‘pure’ in intention. The very creation of the Hyde
229 persona is evidence of Jekyll’s deliberate engagement with evil, and after his temporary reform he
230 admits that:

231 My devil had long been caged, he came out roaring. ... I had voluntarily stripped myself of all
232 those balancing instincts, by which even the worst of us continues to walk with some degree
233 of steadiness among temptations; and in my case, to be tempted, however slightly, was to fall.’
234 (Stevenson p. 61)

235 This admission interlocks with the religious language used throughout the story to define Hyde – on
236 the night when the child is trampled the streets are ‘as empty as a church’ (Stevenson p. 7); Utterson
237 laments at one point, ‘O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan’s signature upon a face, it is on
238 that of your new friend.’ (Stevenson p. 16); Hyde himself tempts Lanyon rather oddly with the promise
239 that ‘our sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of a Satan.’ (Stevenson p. 51). But
240 notwithstanding his belated acknowledgement of guilt, Jekyll has consciously chosen a life of evil
241 rather than succumbing to the sophistries of a tempter, and the narrative accordingly offers a condign
242 judgement of his sin.

243 The wording of Jekyll’s final statement implicitly invites the reader to seek out mitigating factors, and
244 this abrogation of full responsibility depends on the apparent invasion of his body by Hyde. Jekyll uses
245 a series of passive verbs to frame his otherwise stark admission of having ‘voluntarily stripped himself’
246 of self-regulating instincts: phrases such as ‘to be tempted’ and ‘I was still cursed with my duality of
247 purpose’ introduce a subtle suggestiveness, as if he had been the victim of possibly diabolical
248 temptation on the part of his tormentor. However the real temptation proves to be Jekyll’s own pride,
249 with his transformation into Hyde providing the means of its execution, ‘the animal within me licking
250 the chops of memory; the spiritual side a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet
251 moved to begin.’ (Stevenson p. 62) The deliberate plan to fall is not quite articulated here, but in popular
252 speech the licking of chops is associated with anticipation at least as much as with the memory of a
253 satisfied appetite.

254 The most honest and therefore redemptive part of his statement is the far more disturbing admission
255 that he is not guilty only as Hyde but also as himself. Even here he twice invokes the idea of temptation
256 rather than choice, and reminds his readers that it is ‘ordinary’ to be a ‘secret sinner’:

257 as the first edge of my penitence wore off, the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently
258 chained down, began to growl for license. Not that I dreamed of resuscitating Hyde; the bare

259 idea of that would startle me to frenzy: no, it was in my own person, that I was once more
260 tempted to trifle with my conscience; and it was as an ordinary secret sinner that I at last fell
261 before the assaults of temptation.' (Stevenson p. 62)

262 This discourse of temptation displaces Hyde only to reposition Jekyll as a victim, one who initially
263 resists before he finally 'falls' in the face of the temptation that 'assaults' rather than allures him.

264 This confession retrospectively frames the three main crimes committed in the story (the trampling of
265 the child, the murder of Sir Danvers Carew and the blasphemous defacement of the book). Roger
266 Luckhurst notes that 'the strangest thing is the way the story is structured: it starts out like a detective
267 fiction but like a dream it gets distracted, seems to veer off course, and transmogrifies into something
268 far more Gothic and unnerving', finally leaving the reader with 'unresolved and metaphysical
269 confusion.' (Introduction pp. xii) In the sequence of events that combine to produce this impression of
270 disconcerting instability, the assault on the child is remarkable for the relatively cursory way in which
271 it is narrated. Attention is repeatedly deflected from the child to Hyde himself and the hypnotic effect
272 he seems to have on Enfield and the crowd. The reader is told that 'the man trampled calmly over the
273 child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see.'
274 (Stevenson p. 7) A few lines later Enfield reports the gathering of a crowd 'about the screaming child'
275 and a few lines after this he confirms that she 'was not much the worse' (Stevenson p. 7). Between these
276 details he is more concerned with describing Hyde, 'like some damned Juggernaut', and the way in
277 which he is captured, 'perfectly cool... but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on
278 me like running.' (Stevenson p. 7)

279 As one might expect, the murder is described in more detail, as is the appearance of the antagonists.
280 The gentlemanly Sir Danvers 'took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle
281 hurt', in response to which Hyde 'clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he
282 was trampling his victim under foot' (Stevenson p. 20). The odd structure identified by Luckhurst is
283 significant in its strategy of destabilising the reader; for the most serious crime of the novella to be
284 placed roughly a third of the way through, means that despite its element of Gothic terror, it can
285 provide neither the catalyst nor the climax of the story, diminishing its impact considerably.

286 It is after the murder that Hyde apparently disappears and Jekyll resumes his masculine friendships,
287 successfully covering his tracks while temporarily renouncing the evil deeds of Hyde. It is after a
288 misleading interval that he mysteriously quarrels with Lanyon, next writing to Utterson that 'You must
289 suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot
290 name.' (Stevenson p. 30) It later transpires that Hyde has revealed his secret to Lanyon after sending
291 him to retrieve the chemical powder from his house, warning him:

292 As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the
293 sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the
294 soul. Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to
295 fame and power shall be laid open to you, here, in this room, upon the instant. (Stevenson p.
296 50)

297 Hyde's attempted bribe includes fame and power but implicitly also wealth – only if Lanyon leaves
298 without witnessing the transformation will he be 'neither richer nor wiser'. By implication Lanyon's
299 superior moral fibre enables him to witness the effect of the drug without being tempted to use it for
300 his own ends. Hyde's Mephistophelian role here reinforces both Lanyon's essential goodness (despite
301 his culpable curiosity) and the choice that has initially been open to Jekyll. Apparently succumbing to
302 temptation when he stays to witness the transformation, Lanyon ultimately dies rather than profiting
303 from the knowledge of such evil.

304 But it is not Hyde's capacity for murderous rage that governs the horrifying outcome of the story. On
305 breaking in to Jekyll's study Utterson finds 'a copy of a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times
306 expressed a great esteem, annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies.' (Stevenson p. 42)
307 Arata points out that 'Generations of readers have assumed that Hyde is responsible for those
308 annotations, but that is not what the sentence says', a distinction that highlights 'how carefully
309 Stevenson has blurred the boundary between the two identities.' (Arata 1995, p. 243) The ambiguity
310 surrounding this defacement of the book is crucial because in the scale of crimes committed by Hyde it
311 is presented as more shocking than either the trampling of the child or the murder of Sir Danvers
312 Carew. When Hyde's body is discovered on the floor 'Utterson knew that he was looking on the body
313 of a self-destroyer' (Stevenson p. 41), making him criminal both under the law and according to
314 Christian teaching of the time. But this act is governed by the deliberate rejection of proffered
315 redemption that precedes it, the traces of which in the book so horrify Utterson. (Stevenson p. 42)

316 The boundaries between murder and suicide (or self-murder) are often ambiguous in nineteenth
317 century fiction, and a number of novels explore the boundary between the two. In sensation and later
318 crime fiction this may involve what one might term the 'disposable character suicide' favoured by
319 Wilkie Collins (in the 1866 *Armadale* Lydia Gwilt saves one Allan Armadale when she finds that she is
320 about to kill the wrong one, and makes amends by taking her own life instead; in *The Moonstone* (1868)
321 Rosanna Spearman kills herself for love of the socially superior Franklin Blake, but her grieving friend
322 insists that the indifferent Franklin has in essence murdered her). Ellen Wood is an early adopter of
323 the 'murder disguised as suicide' trope in *Roland Yorke* (1869). Six years after Stevenson's *Jekyll and*
324 *Hyde*, Mary Cholmondeley's *Diana Tempest* raises a still more subtle question in the failed suicide of

325 Colonel Tempest, who shoots himself in a fit of remorse, having initially colluded in a series of murder
326 attempts – Colonel Tempest is thankful to have survived, but is still in a weakened condition when he
327 receives news that his son really has been murdered, and dies of the shock.

328 In *Jekyll and Hyde* itself Lanyon too presumably dies of shock in the days after hearing Hyde's
329 explanation, an outcome that implicates the latter even as it suggests a self-willed death. An honourable
330 gentleman, unlike Jekyll the story suggests, literally cannot or will not live with the knowledge he has
331 acquired. Meanwhile Jekyll's final confession records that Hyde's 'hatred of the gallows drove him
332 continually to commit temporary suicide' (Stevenson p. 65) in subordinating himself to the control of
333 Jekyll himself. In the final scene Jekyll declares himself unable to sustain his own form and so he
334 abrogates all responsibility for his inevitable end, wondering 'Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will
335 he find the courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless, this is my true
336 hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. (Stevenson p. 66) This substitution
337 of one body for another reaches its apogee when as predicted, Hyde and not Jekyll destroys himself,
338 murdering his creator in the process.

339 This final withdrawal reinforces the weight of the blasphemous annotations imposed on Jekyll's book.
340 Regardless of Stevenson's – or the reader's – own religious views, this act of desecration signals a wilful
341 denial of moral as well as divine authority. Finally cut off from the chance of repentance, Jekyll has
342 never seemed fully convinced in any case that he stands in needs of forgiveness. Physically effaced by
343 his death as Hyde, his last written words both continue and obscure the denial of moral accountability
344 that has been a feature of his behaviour throughout. It is as Jekyll that he writes the confession shared
345 with the reader, but in considering the two alternatives of suicide or execution he leaves the final choice
346 to Hyde.

347 The breakdown of Lanyon and finally of Jekyll himself, gestures towards a fin de siècle morbidity that
348 cannot be contained by the gendered discourses of masculine self-control traditionally set in opposition
349 to female instability and nervousness. As Loveridge has shown, 'The fear that vivisection would
350 transfer from non-humans to humans was a major concern for the late-Victorians' (Loveridge 2017, p.
351 14); Jekyll's apparent disappearance signals to the reader that the process of experiment, persisted in
352 until it has become irresistible to the addict, is finally irreversible. In relinquishing control over the very
353 body on which he has secretly experimented, Jekyll also loses 'control over what is ostensibly his own
354 story' (Goh 1999, p. 165). Ironically the scientific knowledge that has initially provided him with not
355 one but two overdetermined bodies with which to assert his masculinity, ends by staging a breakdown
356 of narrative authority that aligns him with outcast figures such as the monomaniac and the fallen
357 woman.

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