

Article

'Licking the Chops of Memory': Plotting the Social Sins of *Jekyll and Hyde*

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

The trope of strategic doubling has impeccable literary antecedents, ranging from the construction of Frankenstein's monster to the useful Jorkins deployed by Spenslow to such notable effect in *David Copperfield* (1850). Nor is the Faustian bargain in itself anything new. But *Jekyll and Hyde* unsettles the reader by endlessly deferring or denying the responsibility of Jekyll through the imposition of a frankly ludicrous plot device and a series of heinous acts that the reader almost certainly misremembers as culminating in murder. While these garish features of the story deliberately distract the attention of both the reader and the other characters, they can be contained within a recognisably realist

undercurrent in which social values are tenuously re-inscribed (albeit in increasingly distorted and nightmarish forms), and the ultimate crime is revealed to be not murder but blasphemy.

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

Like his precursor Frankenstein, Jekyll is a scientist—and while he himself is a chemist, not a surgeon—there are several intimations that his creation of 'Hyde' should be read in the context of vivisection, a topical but deeply controversial interest to adopt in the 1880s. His house was formerly owned by a surgeon, his creation having been 'caged' duly comes out 'roaring' (Stevenson p. 61), and after the butler affirms that 'when that masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice' (Stevenson p. 39), Hyde is found in the laboratory at his death 'sorely contorted and still twitching' (Stevenson p. 41) like an animal that has been carelessly disposed of after the experiment has ended. Like a number of vivisectors in the fiction of the 1870s and 1880s, Jekyll is at one point renounced by his peers for his apparently misguided and unregulated obsession with bizarre experiments, the nature of which is not made clear. As Ann Loveridge has recently shown, fictional depictions of the vivisector repeatedly insist on the tropes of secret obsession and quasi-sexual enjoyment derived from the operation itself, as the educated and usually middle-class doctor sustains a double life aimed at preserving his social status. Indeed, in a number of these stories, the family and friends of the doctor have no idea that he is engaged in vivisection at all.

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

Jekyll and Hyde seems to obviate this particular problem. As numerous critics have noted, the environment inhabited by Jekyll, Enfield, and Lanyon is almost ostentatious in its exclusion of the female voice, normally invoked in Victorian literature for purposes of moral benchmarking, if nothing else. In this context, where the minor female characters appear only to be trampled on, to scream, or to open the occasional door to gentlemen callers, sin initially seems to be entirely socially constructed by a male peer group and negotiated through a shared upper middle-class register. Jekyll's creation of a rebarbative alter ego initially seems to offer a vicarious exploration of the darker side of fin de

siècle London, without unduly compromising the moral values of shock and outrage that come with the recognition of this territory. But read in the context of physiological experiments, Jekyll's status is already slightly suspect. And as the moral boundaries between voyeur and victim begin to collapse, an undue identification with the central character risks perpetuating the very duality that the reader is expected to deplore. As for the non-specialist whose attention was compelled by the repeated shocks of vivisection literature (often applied with pictures), the reader of *Jekyll and Hyde* is subjected (or treated) to an escalating series of brutal acts.

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

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

Stephen Arata convincingly argues that Hyde's occupation of 'not a savage's den but the retreat of a cultivated gentleman' (Arata 1995, p. 235) is just one means by which the text creates a deep feeling of unease. But if Hyde is identified as a putative member of the middle-class, masculine community, his role in it is to collapse its conventional language and expose some of its contradictions. Crucially, the outsider and—quite literally—parvenu Hyde can decode this register but cannot use it convincingly. He asks Utterson directly how he has recognised him and when Utterson prevaricates, Hyde accuses him of deviating from honourable practice, 'I did not think you would have lied' (Stevenson p. 15). As David Cannadine puts it, 'the only way of knowing you were a gentleman was to be treated as such' (Cannadine 2000, p. 92). Hyde is able to identify a marker of gentlemanliness in order to taunt his opponent with having deviated from it. Notably though, when Utterson suggests in turn that this is not the language of gentlemen, Hyde lacks the social equipment to respond in kind, and lapses into inarticulate sound, which he attempts to translate into laughter:

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

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

Social validation is not just a marker of character status, but vital to the plot. Hyde's disregard for the child is presented as an essentially animalistic instinct that justifies his socially marginalised status, but the narrative itself quickly reconstructs the incident as a catalyst for the interaction within

a male peer group. When Enfield describes the trampling of the child, the focus of his attention is repeatedly distracted from the girl, not only by the reaction of the family but also by his seemingly intuitive insight into the responses of his social equal, the doctor. In an uncanny anticipation of the knowledge of each other's actions shared by Jekyll and Hyde, he affirms that 'every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turn sick and white with the desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just as he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best' (Stevenson p. 7).

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

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

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

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

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

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 is not.

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

As Jekyll himself implies though, Hyde’s crimes are unforgivable because they are public and anti-social, not necessarily because they are vicious. While Jekyll retains a strong sense of culture and is benchmarked accordingly, access to these social markers is never fully available to Hyde, notwithstanding a taste in pictures and fine furnishing. In this context, it is particularly noteworthy that ‘Hyde’s most vicious crime occurs against a Wordsworthian backdrop’ (Olsen 2016, p. 895), observed by the working class maid who, despite her lack of social advantages, is able to commune with the peaceful evening. Trenton B. Olsen points out that ‘given the scene’s introduction, we might think of the apparently similar roadway encounters that occur in Wordsworth’s poetry with leech gatherers, discharged soldiers, peddlers, and other passersby. Typically these meetings result in shared sympathy or lessons learned’ (Olsen 2016, pp. 895–96). Hyde, of course, will systematically reject any such beneficial exchange, murdering the appropriately Wordsworthian figure of Sir Danvers Carew and destroying the maid’s Romantic engagement with the peaceful scene she has been watching.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

as the first edge of my penitence wore off, the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for license. Not that I dreamed of resuscitating Hyde; the bare idea of that would startle me to frenzy: no, it was in my own person, that I was once more tempted to trifle with my conscience; and it was as an ordinary secret sinner that I at last fell before the assaults of temptation'. (Stevenson p. 62).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The boundaries between murder and suicide (or self-murder) are often ambiguous in nineteenth-century fiction, and a number of novels explore the boundary between the two. In sensation fiction, and later in crime fiction, this may involve what one might term the ‘disposable character suicide’ favoured by Wilkie Collins (in the 1866 *Armadale* Lydia Gwilt saves one Allan Armadale when she finds that she is about to kill the wrong one, and makes amends by taking her own life instead; in *The Moonstone* (1868), Rosanna Spearman kills herself for love of the socially superior Franklin Blake, but her grieving friend insists that the indifferent Franklin has, in essence, murdered her). Ellen Wood is an early adopter of the ‘murder disguised as suicide’ trope in *Roland Yorke* (1869). Six years after Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde*, Mary Cholmondeley’s *Diana Tempest* raises a still more subtle question in the failed suicide of Colonel Tempest, who shoots himself in a fit of remorse, having initially colluded in a series of murder attempts. Colonel Tempest is thankful to have survived but is still in a weakened condition when he receives news that his son really has been murdered, and dies from the shock.

In *Jekyll and Hyde*, Lanyon too presumably dies of shock in the days after hearing Hyde’s explanation, an outcome that implicates the latter even as it suggests a self-willed death. An honourable

gentleman—unlike Jekyll, the story suggests—literally cannot or will not live with the knowledge he has acquired. Meanwhile, Jekyll's final confession records that Hyde's 'hatred of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide' (Stevenson p. 65) in subordinating himself to the control of Jekyll himself. In the final scene, Jekyll declares himself unable to sustain his own form and so he abrogates all responsibility for his inevitable end, wondering 'will Hyde die upon the scaffold? Or will he find the courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless, this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself' (Stevenson p. 66). This substitution of one body for another reaches its apogee when, as predicted, Hyde—not Jekyll—destroys himself, murdering his creator in the process.

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

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

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