

STRANGE CASE
OF
DR. JEKYLL AND
MR. HYDE

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



EDITED BY KATHERINE LINEHAN

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

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Robert Louis Stevenson
STRANGE CASE OF
DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE



AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
BACKGROUNDS AND CONTEXTS
PERFORMANCE ADAPTATIONS
CRITICISM

Edited by

KATHERINE LINEHAN
OBERLIN COLLEGE

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Preface

In anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the busiest, kaleidoscopic dance of images, incapable of sleep or of continuous thought.

—Robert Louis Stevenson, “A Gossip on Romance,” 1882

The Jekyll and Hyde legend as we know it from popular culture—movie versions, cartoon spin-offs, psychological tag phrase and all—began with the January 1886 publication of a low-cost little book that took Britain and America by storm. Its author had increasingly been identified by critics as a man to watch. His previous work ranged from essays and travel literature to a wide variety of fiction for adults and several successful books for children. The ten-chapter tale that now appeared under the title *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* struck many reviewers as marking a new level of achievement in its power to provide spellbinding entertainment while intimating a valuable moral. A few dissenters, however, irritated by a suspense plot resolved by the unlikely device of transforming powders, questioned whether Mr. Stevenson might not on this occasion have crossed a line into the opportunistic sensationalism of the crowd-pleasing railway fiction and shilling shockers that his publishing format brought to mind.

The verdict of time suggests that *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* combines enduring breadth of appeal with outstanding literary worth. From Stevenson's day until our own, the tale has never been out of print, and its popularity has been worldwide. More than eighty translations have appeared, in at least thirty different languages. Since its publication, the tale has also generated an ongoing stream of critical commentary and garnered tributes from writers as various as Henry James, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Vladimir Nabokov, John Fowles, Jorge Luis Borges, Stephen King, Joyce Carol Oates, and Italo Calvino. Several of those writers point out an aspect of the story which helps explain its liability to be dismissed as shallowly sensationalistic: the unobtrusiveness with which the tale's stylistic virtuosity and thoughtfulness of conception blend into the dramatic

intensity of the narrative. Stevenson's interest in letting thought and artistry melt inconspicuously into the flow of page-turning excitement in his sensation fiction certainly owes something to market motives, as he himself was always ready to acknowledge. However, the deeper motive is surely the one suggested by my epigraph from "A Gossip on Romance" and borne out by wider acquaintance with Stevenson's writing: his commitment to ensuring his readers just the sort of "absorbing and voluptuous" engagement with a text he deemed necessary to make a work "fit to be called by the name of reading."

The result in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a story of simple-seeming surfaces and uncertain depths, a narrative whose layered complexity makes it at once the most brilliantly accessible and brilliantly recondite of texts. As a horror thriller, the tale sweeps us forcefully along in a build-up of suspense which reaches a partial climax in Utterson's discovery of a dead body and then draws us into a still more gripping spiral of dread through the documents of two dead men. Moreover, as a horror thriller about human duality which shows the relentless supplanting of the most presentable side of self by the most unrepresentable one, the tale exhibits a remarkable ability to hit a nerve and produce a shock of recognition for generation after generation of readers. Yet as an allegory, the tale proves confoundingly difficult to pin down. Is Jekyll's fate a moral warning against abandoning accountability for the appetites of the body? A dire prophecy about the advancing powers of science? A trenchant criticism of Victorian society's repressive standards of virtue and respectability? A symbolic enactment of the loss of self-control that can come with regression, addiction, madness, or sleep? A philosophical provocation to recognize the multiplicity of what passes socially as a unified self? Might Hyde's evil be inflected by Stevenson's unconscious? Is indeterminacy itself the point? Looking closely, we start to see how craftily the text has engineered the tricky depths that lie below its fast-moving surface. Words carry shifting possibilities. Jekyll's narrative reliability in the final chapter is questionable. In what comes as a surprise to readers familiar with sex-filled movie versions of the story, the text turns out always to hover around, never to reveal, the specific pleasures that Jekyll is eager to pursue through the guilt-free anonymity of Hyde.

Stevenson provided only limited commentary about the authorial conception underlying the tale. Explaining the story's origin in his 1888 essay "A Chapter on Dreams," he reports that several scenes in a nightmare gave him the idea of a voluntary change becoming involuntary. He seized upon the idea, he says, as answering both to his immediate need for a marketable plot and his longstanding interest in "that strong sense of man's double being, which must at times

come in upon and overwhelm the mind of every thinking creature." This account can reinforce our appreciation of the tale's hallucinatory vividness of scene and sensation, and can deepen our interest in its treatment of the interchanges of identity linked with sleep and dreaming. However, it hardly interprets the Jekyll-Hyde duality nor the significance of Jekyll's nemesis. Stevenson's references to the tale in letters to friends offer only a few further glimpses of his thinking, most notably about the tale's engagement with the evils of hypocrisy and the perpetual human conflict between the desires of the flesh and those of the spirit.

Those references tend to come as fleeting, often cryptic remarks. In general, Stevenson's attitude seemed to be that, as he put it to one correspondent who asked him to supply a "key" to his allegory: "I conceive I could not make my allegory better, nay, that I could not fail to weaken it if I tried. I have said my say as I was best able; others must look for what was meant." At one level this statement speaks for the wisdom of recognizing that such meaning as the tale may hold speaks for itself best in its textually embodied state, bristling with possibility and charged with the imaginative response generated by the reading experience. At another level, the statement acknowledges that allegory inevitably calls for interpretation; it simply insists that the burden of that interpretation falls on the reader. Stevenson goes on to say: "the allegorist is one, the commentator is another; I conceive they are two parts."

Commentators have indeed taken up the challenge to interpret *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with an energy and breadth of speculation that I have been hard pressed to represent adequately in this Norton Critical Edition. The "Criticism" section in this volume offers five interpretive commentaries, three of them oriented toward the tale's allegorical dimension (Chesterton, Brantlinger, Linehan), two toward its handling of style and narrative technique (Nabokov, Garrett). In the "Backgrounds and Contexts" section, a series of excerpts grouped under the headings of "Literary, Scientific, and Sociohistorical Contexts" aims to stimulate readers' thinking about resonances to be found between the tale and various aspects of Victorian culture. These excerpts, while different in kind from applied criticism, are selected with an eye to demonstrating interpretive possibilities that critics have urged as relevant to understanding the Jekyll-Hyde duality. The "Reception" section gives ample evidence of the immediate religious and moral relevance the tale had for Victorian readers.

A section on "Performance Adaptations" shows, on the other hand, the versatility with which the central plot premise of the tale has been reworked over the ensuing century and more as a vehicle for modern social and psychological concerns. That section offers

an historical overview of stage and film dramatizations of the tale, as well as a closer look at the influential stage version produced by T. R. Sullivan and Richard Mansfield in 1887 and the 1931 film version directed by Rouben Mamoulian, starring Frederic March.

A section on Victorian sensation fiction includes the full text of "Markheim," a Christmas "crawler" that Stevenson wrote a year before composing *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The two tales bear comparison for, among other things, their interest in drawing readers into the haunted consciousness of a murderer who appears an unlikely candidate for the act of brutality he commits.

The "Composition and Production" section includes, besides Stevenson's comments about the tale in letters and "A Chapter on Dreams," his first biographer's summary of the now well-known composition story told by Stevenson's widow and stepson: Stevenson producing a first draft in an amazing three days, burning it in agreement with his wife's suggestion that the allegory needed development, and in another three days producing essentially the tale we know today. Biographer Graham Balfour (Stevenson's cousin) presents the story with the useful reminder that Stevenson in fact put in a good deal of further work on the manuscript over the ensuing weeks.

The "Textual Appendix" in this book allows a glimpse of that further work, drawing on extant manuscript fragments of the tale to illustrate the painstaking care Stevenson took in revising and polishing his writing.

The annotations to the text found in this edition fit the picture of an intensely literary author who carries his knowledge lightly, partly through an affinity for the abstract simplicity of the fable. Topical allusions are virtually nonexistent and only a few actual London place names are mentioned. However, the text frequently features unusual word usages that subtly evoke older meanings or give a fresh twist to a familiar word or phrase. It also contains an abundance of muffled literary echoes, particularly biblical ones, that operate almost subliminally within the narrative. A number of such allusions are newly noted in this edition.

The text of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* used for this Norton Critical Edition is the first British edition, published by Longmans, Green, and Co. on January 9, 1886. This is the only edition which was set directly from Stevenson's manuscript and for which he read page proofs. (The American edition, released in a coordinated arrangement by Charles Scribner's Sons four days earlier, had been set from printed pages sent in advance from Longmans.) A few errors and inconsistencies in spelling and punctuation have been silently corrected and quotation punctuation has been Americanized. Title punctuation has been brought into conformity with standard practice. (In the first edition, the abbreviations "Dr."

and “Mr.” are followed by periods everywhere except on the title page and cover. This edition uses the periods throughout, except when citing works whose titles reproduce the tale’s own first-edition title form.) British spellings and section heading formats have been preserved untouched.

Throughout this book, *Letters* refers to the 1994–95 eight-volume *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, edited by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (Yale University Press). The abbreviation OED refers to the Oxford English Dictionary. Footnote citations of the Bible are from the King James Version.

Many people helped with this book, and I am glad to be able to offer thanks where thanks are due. An Oberlin faculty research group, consisting of Sandra Zagarell, Paula Richman, Laurie McMillin, and Wendy Kozol, patiently and thoughtfully reviewed draft materials. My textual annotations owe a debt both to past editors of the text on whose work I build (Jenni Calder, Emma Letley, Richard Dury, Barry Qualls and Susan Wolfson, Leonard Wolf, and Martin Danahay), and to Oberlin colleagues Robert Longworth and Tom Van Nortwick, who helped me track down several previously unrecognized literary allusions. Former students Rumaan Alam and Alex Bernstein provided useful research assistance. Numerous friends and relatives served in their time-honored way as sustainers; numerous librarians and curators in theirs as wizardly information retrievers. Several people in the latter category went well beyond the call of duty, most notably Chris Quist of the Monterey Stevenson House, Mike Delahant of the Saranac Lake Robert Louis Stevenson Memorial Cottage, David Shayt of the Smithsonian Museum of American History, and Judy Throm of the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Norton editor Carol Bemis gave prompt, shrewd advice from beginning to end. I have a particularly deep debt of gratitude, finally, to Stevenson scholars Barry Menikoff, Richard Dury, and above all, Roger Swearingen and Ernest Mehew. In response to all of my questions, they gave generously and invaluable of their expertise—not least out of an enthusiasm, which I share, for enhancing modern readers’ appreciation of the pleasures of an acquaintance with Robert Louis Stevenson.

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The Text of
STRANGE CASE OF DR.
JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE



Regents Park,
scene of Jekyll's
involuntary
transformation

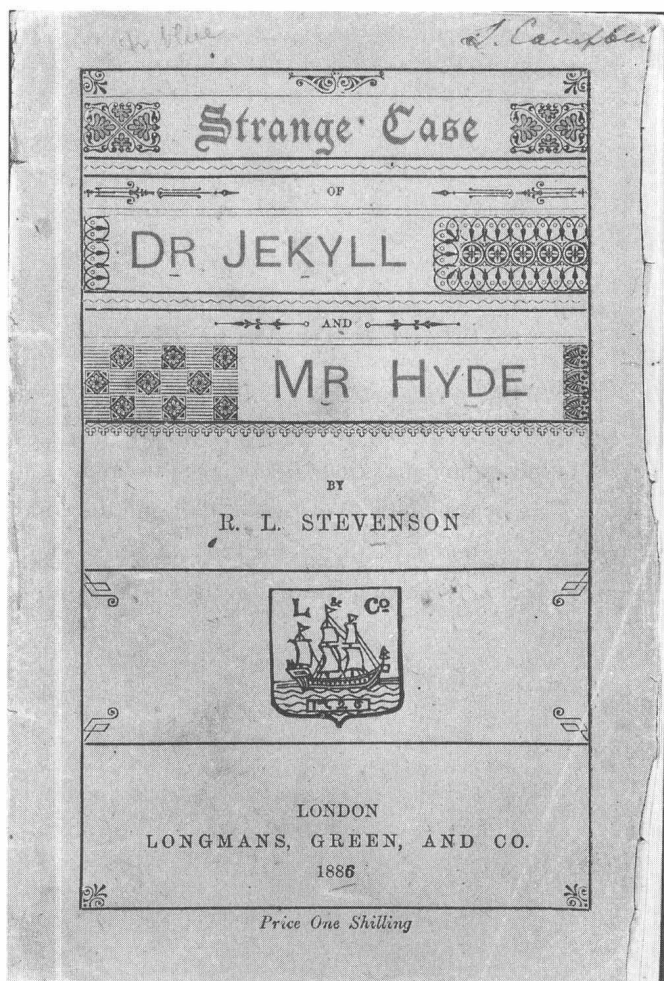
Cavendish Square,
site of Dr. Lanyon's
house

Soho District, site
of Hyde's
apartment

Map: "Sketch Plan
of London," 1885
Black's Road and
Railway Guide to
England and Wales
(north central
portion)



Detail from "Sketch Plan of London," 1885 edition of *Black's Road and Railway Guide to England and Wales* by Adam and Charles Black. Courtesy of the University of Chicago Library.



Cover, first British paper-covered edition, January, 1886. (Note the publisher's pen-and-ink alteration of the date, from 1885 to 1886.) Though subsequent editions have often inserted the word "The" before "Strange" in titling this work, Stevenson in fact wrote the title out for his publisher exactly as it appears here, presumably wanting its abruptness to heighten the sense of strangeness surrounding his "strange case." Courtesy of the Harry Elkins Widener Collection, Houghton Library of the Harvard College Library. HEW 10.10.21.

TO
KATHARINE DE MATTOS.¹

It's ill to loose the bands that God decreed to bind;²
Still will we be the children of the heather and the wind.
Far away from home, O it's still for you and me
That the broom is blowing bonnie³ in the north countrie.

1. A favorite cousin of Stevenson's. The poem here appearing under her name was adapted by Stevenson from a longer poem he had written her several months earlier celebrating their shared Scottish background.
2. Stevenson's original version of this line read, "We cannae break the bonds that God decreed to bind." As revised here, the line may be intended to echo the verses in Job in which God, rebuking Job's presumption in questioning Him, asks "Canst thou . . . loose the bands of Orion?" and "who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?" (Job 38:31 and 39:5).
3. I.e., that the Scotch broom (a flowering bush) is blooming handsomely.

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