

# DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

---

Robert Louis Stevenson

*With an Introductory Essay by*  
Vladimir Nabokov  
*and a New Afterword by*  
Dan Chaon



A SIGNET CLASSIC

# "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"\*

*Vladimir Nabokov*

"Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" was written in bed, at Bournemouth on the English Channel, in 1885 in between hemorrhages from the lungs. It was published in January 1886. Dr. Jekyll is a fat, benevolent physician, not without human frailties, who at times by means of a potion projects himself into, or concentrates or precipitates, an evil person of brutal and animal nature taking the name of Hyde, in which character he leads a patchy criminal life of sorts. For a time he is able to revert to his Jekyll personality—there is a down-to-Hyde drug and a back-to-Jekyll drug—but gradually his better nature weakens and finally the back-to-Jekyll potion fails, and he poisons himself when on the verge of exposure. This is the bald plot of the story.

First of all, if you have the Pocket Books edition I have, you will veil the monstrous, abominable, atro-

\*Editor's note: In 1948 Vladimir Nabokov was appointed Associate Professor of Slavic Literature at Cornell University, where he taught Russian Literature in Translation, and Masters of European Fiction. For the next ten years he introduced undergraduates to the delights of great fiction, including *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, in fifty-minute classroom lectures. In 1980 his notes were collected by Fredson Bowers and published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich as *Lectures on Literature*, from which this essay has been reprinted by permission.

cious, criminal, foul, vile, youth-depraving jacket—or better say straitjacket. You will ignore the fact that ham actors under the direction of pork packers have acted in a parody of the book, which parody was then photographed on a film and showed in places called theaters; it seems to me that to call a movie house a theater is the same as to call an undertaker a mortician.

And now comes my main injunction. Please completely forget, disremember, obliterate, unlearn, consign to oblivion any notion you may have had that "Jekyll and Hyde" is some kind of a mystery story, a detective story, or movie. It is of course quite true that Stevenson's short novel, written in 1885, is one of the ancestors of the modern mystery story. But today's mystery story is the very negation of style, being, at the best, conventional literature. Frankly, I am not one of those college professors who coyly boasts of enjoying detective stories—they are too badly written for my taste and bore me to death. Whereas Stevenson's story is—God bless his pure soul—lame as a detective story. Neither is it a parable nor an allegory, for it would be tasteless as either. It has, however, its own special enchantment if we regard it as a phenomenon of style. It is not only a good "bogey story," as Stevenson exclaimed when awakening from a dream in which he had visualized it much in the same way I suppose as magic cerebration had granted Coleridge the vision of the most famous of unfinished poems. It is also, and more importantly, "a fable that lies nearer to poetry than to ordinary prose fiction."\* and therefore belongs to the same order of art as, for instance, *Madame Bovary* or *Dead Souls*.

\*Nabokov states that critical quotations in this essay are drawn from Stephen Gwynn, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Macmillan, 1939). Ed.

There is a delightful winey taste about this book; in fact, a good deal of old mellow wine is drunk in the story: one recalls the wine that Utterson so comfortably sips. This sparkling and comforting draft is very different from the icy pangs caused by the chameleon liquor, the magic reagent that Jekyll brews in his dusty laboratory. Everything is very appetizingly put. Gabriel John Utterson of Gaunt Street mouths his words most roundly; there is an appetizing tang about the chill morning in London, and there is even a certain richness of tone in the description of the horrible sensations Jekyll undergoes during his *hydizations*. Stevenson had to rely on style very much in order to perform the trick, in order to master the two main difficulties confronting him: (1) to make the magic potion a plausible drug based on a chemist's ingredients and (2) to make Jekyll's evil side before and after the hydization a believable evil.

[Here Nabokov quoted from "I was so far in my reflections . . ." through "mankind, was pure evil," pp. 105–108.]\*

The names Jekyll and Hyde are of Scandinavian origin, and I suspect that Stevenson chose them from the same page of an old book on surnames where I looked them up myself. Hyde comes from the Anglo-Saxon *hyd*, which is the Danish *hide*, "a haven." And Jekyll comes from the Danish name *Jökulle*, which means "an icicle." Not knowing these simple derivations one would be apt to find all kinds of symbolic meanings, especially in Hyde, the most

\*Editor's note: Throughout his lecture, Nabokov quoted extensively from the novel. For this essay, we provide the beginning and the ending passages that he quoted, with the corresponding page numbers from this edition.

obvious being that Hyde is a kind of hiding place for Dr. Jekyll, in whom the jocular doctor and the killer are combined.

Three important points are completely obliterated by the popular notions about this seldom read book:

1. Is Jekyll good? No, he is a composite being, a mixture of good and bad, a preparation consisting of a ninety-nine percent solution of Jekyllite and one percent of Hyde (or *hydatid* from the Greek "water" which in zoology is a tiny pouch within the body of man and other animals, a pouch containing a limpid fluid with larval tapeworms in it—a delightful arrangement, for the little tapeworms at least. Thus in a sense, Mr. Hyde is Dr. Jekyll's parasite—but I must warn that Stevenson knew nothing of this when he chose the name.) Jekyll's morals are poor from the Victorian point of view. He is a hypocritical creature carefully concealing his little sins. He is vindictive, never forgiving Dr. Lanyon with whom he disagrees in scientific matters. He is foolhardy. Hyde is mingled with him, within him. In this mixture of good and bad in Dr. Jekyll, the bad can be separated as Hyde, who is a precipitate of pure evil, a precipitation in the chemical sense since something of the composite Jekyll remains behind to wonder in horror at Hyde while Hyde is in action.

N.A.  
theory

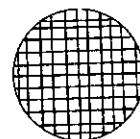
2. Jekyll is not really transformed into Hyde but projects a concentrate of pure evil that becomes Hyde, who is smaller than Jekyll, a big man, to indicate the larger amount of good that Jekyll possesses.

3. There are really three personalities—Jekyll, Hyde,

and a third, the Jekyll residue when Hyde takes over.

The situation may be represented visually.

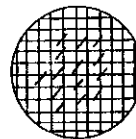
Henry Jekyll  
(large)



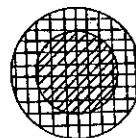
Edward Hyde  
(small)



But if you look closely you see that within this big, luminous, pleasantly tweed Jekyll there are scattered rudiments of evil.



When the magic drug starts to work, a dark concentration of this evil begins forming

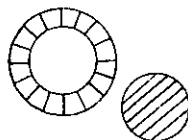


and is projected or ejected as



Still, if you look closely at Hyde, you will notice that above him floats aghast, but dominating, a residue

of Jekyll, a kind of smoke ring, or halo, as if this black concentrated evil had fallen out of the remaining ring of good, but this ring of good still remains: Hyde still wants to change back to Jekyll. This is the significant point.



It follows that Jekyll's transformation implies a concentration of evil that already inhabited him rather than a complete metamorphosis. Jekyll is not pure good, and (Hyde (Jekyll's statement to the contrary) is not pure evil,) for just as parts of unacceptable Hyde dwell within acceptable Jekyll, so over Hyde hovers a halo of Jekyll, horrified at his worser half's iniquity.

The relations of the two are typified by Jekyll's house, which is half Jekyll and half Hyde. As Utterson and his friend Enfield were taking a ramble one Sunday they came to a bystreet in a busy quarter of London which, though small and what is called quiet, drove a thriving trade on weekdays. "Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger.

"Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block

of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the school-boy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or repair their ravages."

This is the door that Enfield points out to Utterson with his cane, which was used by a repugnantly evil man who had deliberately trampled over a running young girl and, being collared by Enfield, had agreed to recompense the child's parents with a hundred pounds. Opening the door with a key, he had returned with ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the remainder signed by Dr. Jekyll, which proves to be valid. Blackmail, thinks Enfield. He continues to Utterson: "It seems scarcely a house. There is no other door, and nobody goes in or out of that one but, once in a great while, the gentleman of my adventure. There are three windows looking on the court on the first floor; none below; the windows are always shut but they're clean. And then there is a chimney which is generally smoking; so somebody must live there. And yet it's not so sure; for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins."

Around the corner from the bystreet there is a square of ancient, handsome houses, somewhat run to seed and cut up into flats and chambers. "One

house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore a great air of wealth and comfort," Utterson was to knock and inquire for his friend, Dr. Jekyll. Utterson knows that the door of the building through which Mr. Hyde had passed is the door to the old dissecting room of the surgeon who had owned the house before Dr. Jekyll bought it and that it is a part of the elegant house fronting on the square. The dissecting room Dr. Jekyll had altered for his chemical experiments, and it was there (we learn much later) that he made his transformations into Mr. Hyde, at which times Hyde lived in that wing.

Just as Jekyll is a mixture of good and bad, so Jekyll's dwelling place is also a mixture, a very neat symbol, a very neat representation of the Jekyll and Hyde relationship. . . . In a bystreet, corresponding to another side of the same block of houses, its geography curiously distorted and concealed by an agglomeration of various buildings and courts in that particular spot, is the mysterious Hyde side door. Thus in the composite Jekyll building with its mellow and grand front hall there are corridors leading to Hyde, to the old surgery theatre, now Jekyll's laboratory, where not so much dissection as chemical experiments were conducted by the doctor. Stevenson musters all possible devices, images, intonation, word patterns, and also false scents, to build up gradually a world in which the strange transformation to be described in Jekyll's own words will have the impact of satisfactory and artistic reality upon the reader—or rather will lead to such a state of mind in which the reader will not ask himself whether this transformation is possible or not. Something of the same sort is managed by Dickens in

*Bleak House* when by a miracle of subtle approach and variegated prose he manages to make real and satisfying the case of the gin-loaded old man who literally catches fire inside and is burnt to the ground.

Stevenson's artistic purpose was to make "a fantastic drama pass in the presence of plain sensible men" in an atmosphere familiar to the readers of Dickens, in the setting of London's bleak fog, of solemn elderly gentlemen drinking old port, of ugly faced houses, of family lawyers and devoted butlers, of anonymous vices thriving somewhere behind the solemn square on which Jekyll lives, and of cold mornings and of hansom cabs. Mr. Utterson, Jekyll's lawyer, is "a decent, reticent, likeable, trustworthy, courageous and crusty gentleman; and what such people can accept as 'real,' the readers are supposed also to accept as real." Utterson's friend Enfield is called "unimpressional," a sturdy young businessman definitely on the dull side (in fact it is this sturdy dullness that brings him and Utterson together). It is this dull Enfield, a man of little imagination and not good at observing things, whom Stevenson selects to tell the beginning of the story. Enfield does not realize that the door on the bystreet which Hyde uses to bring the cheque signed by Jekyll is the door of the laboratory in Jekyll's house. However, Utterson realizes the connection immediately, and the story has started.

Although to Utterson the fanciful was the immodest, Enfield's story leads him, at home, to take from his safe Jekyll's will in his own handwriting (for Utterson had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it) and to read again its provision: "not only that, in the case of the decease of Henry

Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., L.L.D., F.R.S., etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his 'friend and benefactor Howard Hyde,' but that in case of Dr. Jekyll's 'disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months,' the said Edward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes without further delay and freed from any burthen or obligation, beyond the payment of a few small sums to the members of the doctor's household." Utterson had long detested this will, his indignation swelled by his ignorance of Mr. Hyde: "now, by a sudden turn, it was his knowledge [from Enfield's story of the evil small man and the child]. It was already bad enough when the name was but a name of which he could learn no more. It was worse when it began to be clothed upon with detestable attributes; and out of the shifting, insubstantial mists that had so long baffled his eye, there leaped up the sudden, definite presentment of a fiend.

" 'I thought it was madness,' he said, as he replaced the obnoxious paper in the safe, 'and now I begin to fear it is disgrace.' "

Enfield's story about the accident starts to breed in Utterson's mind when he goes to bed. Enfield had begun: "I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church. . . ." (Enfield was a stolid matter-of-fact young man, but Stevenson, the artist, just could not help lending him that phrase about the streets all lighted up, with the folks asleep, and all as empty as a church.) This phrase starts to

grow and reecho and mirror and remirror itself in dozing Utterson's head: "Mr. Enfield's tale went by before his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures. He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor's; and then these met, and that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled, and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding. The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face."

Utterson determines to search him out; at various hours when he is free, he posts himself by the door, and at last he sees Mr. Hyde. "He was small and very plainly dressed, and the look of him, even at that distance, went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination." (Enfield had remarked: "But there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight.") Utterson accosts him and after some pretexts he asks to see Hyde's face, which Stevenson carefully does not describe. Utterson does tell the reader other things,

however: "Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. . . . O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend."

Utterson goes around to the square, rings the bell, and inquires of Poole the butler whether Dr. Jekyll is in, but Poole reports that he has gone out. Utterson asks whether it is right that Hyde should let himself in by the old dissecting-room door when the doctor is out, but the butler reassures him that Hyde has a key by the doctor's permission and that the servants have all been ordered to obey him. "I do not think I ever met Mr. Hyde?" asked Utterson.

"O, dear no, sir. He never *dines* here," replied the butler. "Indeed we see very little of him on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory."

Utterson suspects blackmail, and determines to help Jekyll if he will be permitted. Shortly the opportunity comes but Jekyll will not be helped. "You do not understand my position," returned the doctor, with a certain incoherency of manner. "I am painfully situated, Utterson; my position is a very strange—a very strange one. It is one of those affairs that cannot be mended by talking." He adds, however, "just to put your good heart at rest, I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr.

Hyde. I give you my hand upon that," and the interview closes with Utterson reluctantly agreeing to Jekyll's plea to see that Hyde gets his rights "when I am no longer here."

The Carew murder is the event that begins to bring the story into focus. A servant girl, romantically given, is musing in the moonlight when she perceives a mild and beautiful old gentleman inquiring the way of a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. "He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted."

The old man had been carrying a letter addressed to Utterson, who is therefore called upon by a police inspector and identifies the body as that of Sir Danvers Carew. He recognizes the remains of the stick as a cane he had presented to Dr. Jekyll many years before, and he offers to lead the officer to Mr. Hyde's address in Soho, one of the worst parts of London. There are some pretty verbal effects, particularly of alliteration, in the paragraph: "It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the



season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr. Utterson beheld a marvelous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths. The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare."

Hyde is not at home, the flat has been ransacked in great disorder, and it is clear that the murderer has fled. That afternoon Utterson calls on Jekyll and is received in the laboratory: "The fire burned in the grate; a lamp was set lighted on the chimney shelf, for even in the houses the fog began to lie thickly; and there, close up to the warmth, sat Dr. Jekyll, looking deadly sick. He did not rise to meet his visitor, but held out a cold hand and bade him welcome in a changed voice." In response to Utterson's question whether Hyde is in concealment there, "'Utterson, I swear to God,' cried the doctor, 'I swear to God I will never set eyes on him again. I bind my honour to you that I am done with him in this world. It is all at an end. And indeed he does not want my help; you do not know him as I do; he is safe, he is quite safe; mark my words, he will never more be heard of.'" He shows Utterson a letter signed "Edward Hyde" which signifies that

his benefactor need not be concerned since he has means of escape on which he places a sure dependence. Under Utterson's questioning, Jekyll admits that it was Hyde who had dictated the terms of the will and Utterson congratulates him on his escape from being murdered himself. "'I have had what is far more to the purpose,' returned the doctor solemnly: 'I have had a lesson—O God, Utterson, what a lesson I have had!' And he covered his face for a moment with his hands." From his chief clerk Utterson learns that the hand of the Hyde letter, though sloping in the opposite direction, is very like that of Jekyll. "'What!' he thought. 'Henry Jekyll forge for a murderer!' And his blood ran cold in his veins."

Stevenson has set himself a difficult artistic problem, and we wonder very much if he is strong enough to solve it. Let us break it up into the following points:

1. In order to make the fantasy plausible he wishes to have it pass through the minds of matter-of-fact persons, Utterson and Enfield, who even for all their commonplace logic must be affected by something bizarre and nightmarish in Hyde.
2. These two stolid souls must convey to the reader something of the horror of Hyde, but at the same time they, being neither artists nor scientists, unlike Dr. Lanyon, cannot be allowed by the author to notice details.
3. Now if Stevenson makes Enfield and Utterson too commonplace and too plain, they will not be able to express even the vague discomfort Hyde causes them. On the other hand, the reader is curious not only about their reactions but he wishes also to see Hyde's face for himself.

4. But the author himself does not see Hyde's face clearly enough, and could only have it described by Enfield or Utterson in some oblique, imaginative, suggestive way, which, however, would not be a likely manner of expression on the part of these stolid souls.

I suggest that given the situation and the characters, the only way to solve the problem is to have the aspect of Hyde cause in Enfield and Utterson not only a shudder of repulsion but also something else. I suggest that the shock of Hyde's presence brings out the hidden artist in Enfield and the hidden artist in Utterson. Otherwise the bright perceptions that illumine Enfield's story of his journey through the lighted, empty streets before he witnessed Mr. Hyde's assault on the child, and the colorful imaginings of Utterson's dreams after he has heard the story can only be explained by the abrupt intrusion of the author with his own set of artistic values and his own diction and intonation. A curious problem indeed.

There is a further problem. Stevenson gives us the specific, lifelike description of events by humdrum London gentlemen, but contrasting with this are the unspecified, vague, but ominous allusions to pleasures and dreadful vices somewhere behind the scenes. On the one side there is "reality"; on the other, "a nightmare world." If the author really means there to be a sharp contrast between the two, then the story could strike us as a little disappointing. If we are really being told "never mind what the evil was—just believe it was something very bad," then we might feel ourselves cheated and bullied. We could feel cheated by vagueness in the most interesting part of the story just because its setting is so

matter of fact and realistic. The question that must be asked of the work is whether Utterson and the fog and the cabs and the pale butler are more "real" than the weird experiments and unmentionable adventures of Jekyll and Hyde.

Critics such as Stephen Gwynn have noticed a curious flaw in the story's so-called familiar and commonplace setting. "There is a certain characteristic avoidance: the tale, as it develops, might almost be one of a community of monks. Mr. Utterson is a bachelor, so is Jekyll himself, so by all indications is Enfield, the younger man who first brings to Utterson a tale of Hyde's brutalities. So, for that matter, is Jekyll's butler, Poole, whose part in the story is not negligible. Excluding two or three vague servant maids, a conventional hag and a faceless little girl running for a doctor, the gentle sex has no part in the action. It has been suggested that Stevenson, 'working as he did under Victorian restrictions,' and not wishing to bring colours into the story alien to its monkish pattern, consciously refrained from placing a painted feminine mask upon the secret pleasures in which Jekyll indulged."

If, for instance, Stevenson had gone as far as, say, Tolstoy, who was also a Victorian and also did not go very far—but if Stevenson had gone as far as Tolstoy had in depicting the light loves of Oblonski, the French girl, the singer, the little ballerina, etc., it would have been artistically very difficult to have Jekyll-Oblonski exude a Hyde. A certain amiable, jovial, and lighthearted strain running through the pleasures of a gay blade would then have been difficult to reconcile with the medieval rising as a black scarecrow against a livid sky in the guise of Hyde. It

was safer for the artist not to be specific and to leave the pleasures of Jekyll undescribed. But does not this safety, this easy way, does it not denote a certain weakness in the artist? I think it does.

First of all, this Victorian reticence prompts the modern reader to grope for conclusions that perhaps Stevenson never intended to be groped for. For instance, Hyde is called Jekyll's protege and his benefactor, but one may be puzzled by the implication of another epithet attached to Hyde, that of Henry Jekyll's favorite, which sounds almost like *minion*. The all-male pattern that Gwynn has mentioned may suggest by a twist of thought that Jekyll's secret adventures were homosexual practices so common in London behind the Victorian veil. Utterson's first supposition is that Hyde blackmails the good doctor—and it is hard to imagine what special grounds for blackmailing would there have been in a bachelor's consorting with ladies of light morals. Or do Utterson and Enfield suspect that Hyde is Jekyll's illegitimate son? "Paying for the capers of his youth" is what Enfield suggests. But the difference in age as implied by the difference in their appearance does not seem to be quite sufficient for Hyde to be Jekyll's son. Moreover, in his will Jekyll calls Hyde his "friend and benefactor," a curious choice of words perhaps bitterly ironic but hardly referring to a son.

In any case, the good reader cannot be quite satisfied with the mist surrounding Jekyll's adventures. And this is especially irritating since Hyde's adventures, likewise anonymous, are supposed to be monstrous exaggerations of Jekyll's wayward whims. Now the only thing that we do guess about Hyde's pleasures is that they are sadistic—he enjoys the infliction of pain. "What Stevenson desired to convey in

the person of Hyde was the presence of evil wholly divorced from good. Of all wrongs in the world Stevenson most hated cruelty; and the inhuman brute whom he imagines is shown not in his beastly lusts, whatever they specifically were, but in his savage indifference" to the human beings whom he hurts and kills.

In his essay "A Gossip on Romance" Stevenson has this to say about narrative structure: "The right kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; the right kind of thing should follow; and . . . all the circumstances in a tale answer one another like notes in music. The threads of a story come from time to time together and make a picture in the web; the characters fall from time to time into some attitude to each other or to nature, which stamps the story home like an illustration. Crusoe recoiling from the footprint [*Emma smiling under her iridescent sunshade; Anna reading the shop signs along the road to her death*], these are the culminating moments in the legend, and each has been printed on the mind's eye for ever. Other things we may forget; . . . we may forget the author's comment, although perhaps it was ingenious and true; but these epoch-making scenes which put the last mark of [artistic] truth upon a story and fill up, at one blow, our capacity for [artistic] pleasure, we so adopt into the very bosom of our mind that neither time nor tide can efface or weaken the impression. This, then, is [the highest,] the plastic part of literature: to embody character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye."

"Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," as a phrase, has entered the language for just the reason of its epoch-

making scene, the impression of which cannot be effaced. The scene is, of course, the narrative of Jekyll's transformation into Mr. Hyde which, curiously, has the more impact in that it comes as the explanation contained in two letters after the chronological narrative has come to an end, when Utterson—alerted by Poole that it is someone other than the doctor who for days has immured himself in the laboratory—breaks down the door and finds Hyde in Jekyll's too-large clothes, dead on the floor and with the reek of the cyanide capsule he has just crushed in his teeth. The brief narrative passage between Hyde's murder of Sir Danvers and this discovery merely prepares for the explanation. Time passed but Hyde had disappeared. Jekyll seemed his old self and on the eighth of January gave a small dinner party attended by Utterson and his now reconciled friend, Dr. Lanyon. But four days later Jekyll was not at home to Utterson although they have been seeing each other daily for over two months. On the sixth day when he was refused admission he called on Dr. Lanyon for advice only to find a man with death written on his face, who refused to hear the name of Jekyll. After taking to his bed Dr. Lanyon dies within a week, and Utterson receives a letter in the doctor's hand marked not to be opened before the death or disappearance of Henry Jekyll. A day or two later, Utterson is taking a walk with Enfield, who once again enters the story, and in passing the court on the bystreet they turn in and converse briefly with an ill-looking Jekyll sitting in the window of his laboratory, an interview that ends when "the smile was struck out of [Jekyll's] face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They

saw it but for a glimpse for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word."

It is not long after that episode that Poole comes to see Mr. Utterson and the action is taken that leads to the forced entry. "'Utterson,' said the voice, 'for God's sake, have mercy!'

"'Ah, that's not Jekyll's voice—it's Hyde's!' cried Utterson. 'Down with the door, Poole!'

"Poole swung the axe over his shoulder; the blow shook the building, and the red baize door leaped against the lock and hinges. A dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet. Up went the axe again, and again the panels crashed and the frame bounded; four times the blow fell; but the wood was tough and the fittings were of excellent workmanship; and it was not until the fifth, that the lock burst and the wreck of the door fell inwards on the carpet."

At first Utterson thinks that Hyde has killed Jekyll and hidden the body, but a search is fruitless. However, he finds a note from Jekyll on the desk asking him to read Dr. Lanyon's letter and then, if he is still curious, to read the enclosed confession, which Utterson sees is contained in a bulky sealed packet. The narrative proper ends as Utterson, back in his office, breaks the seals and starts to read. The interlocking explanation contained in the narrative-within-a-narrative of the two letters concludes the story.

Briefly, Dr. Lanyon's letter describes how he received an urgent registered letter from Jekyll requesting him to go to the laboratory, to remove a certain drawer containing various chemicals, and to give it to a messenger who would arrive at midnight. He

secures the drawer (Poole had also had a registered letter) and returning to his house examines the contents:

[Here Nabokov quoted excerpts from "... when I opened one of the wrappers . . . through "upon the table," pp. 97-100. In this passage, Lanyon has retrieved the potion, and Hyde, as messenger, has come to get the potion he so desperately needs. Hyde mixes the potion in front of Lanyon.]

Lanyon is invited to withdraw, or to remain if he is curious so long as what transpires will be kept secret "under the seal of our profession." Lanyon says. " 'It is well,' replied my visitor. 'Lanyon, you remember your vows: . . . And now, you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors—behold!'

[Here Nabokov continued, quoting from "He put the glass . . ." through "murderer of Carew," pp. 101-102.]

Dr. Lanyon's letter leaves quite enough suspense to be filled in by "Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case" which Utterson then reads, bringing the story to a close. Jekyll recounts how his youthful pleasures, which he concealed, hardened into a profound duplicity of life. "It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was, and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature." His scientific studies led wholly towards the mystic

and the transcendental and drew him steadily toward the truth "that man is not truly one, but truly two." And even before the course of his scientific experiments had "begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots were thus bound together—that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continually struggling. How, then, were they dissociated."

We then have the vivid description of his discovery of the potion and, in testing it, the emergence of Mr. Hyde who, "alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil." "I lingered but a moment at the mirror: the second and conclusive experiment had yet to be attempted; it yet remained to be seen if I had lost my identity beyond redemption and must flee before daylight from a house that was no longer mine; and hurrying back to my cabinet, I once more prepared and drank the cup, once more suffered the pangs of dissolution, and came to myself once more with the character, the stature and the face of Henry Jekyll."

For a time all is well. "I was the first that could plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off

these lendings and spring headlong into the sea of liberty. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it—I did not even exist! Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second or two to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready; and whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror; and there in his stead, quietly at home, trimming the midnight lamp in his study, a man who could afford to laugh at suspicion, would be Henry-Jekyll." The pleasures Jekyll experiences as Mr. Hyde, while his own conscience slumbered, are passed over without detail except that what in Jekyll had been "undignified; I would scarce use a harder term," in the person of Hyde "began to turn toward the monstrous. . . . This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone." Hyde's sadism is thus established.

Then things begin to go wrong. It becomes harder and harder to return to Jekyll from the person of Hyde. Sometimes a double dose of the elixir is required, and once at the risk of life, a triple dose. On one occasion there was total failure. Then one morning Jekyll woke up in his own bed in the house on the square and lazily began to examine the illusion that somehow he was in Hyde's house in Soho.

[Here Nabokov quoted from "I was still so engaged . . ." through "I had awakened Edward Hyde," p. 112.]

He manages to make his way to the laboratory and to restore his Jekyll shape, but the shock of the unconscious transformation goes deep, and he determines to forsake his double existence. "Yes, I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes [*observe the alliteration in this passage*]; and bade a resolute farewell to the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping impulses and secret pleasures, that I had enjoyed in the disguise of Hyde."

For two months Jekyll persists in this resolution, although he does not give up his house in Soho or Hyde's smaller clothing that lies ready in his laboratory. Then he weakens. "My devil had been long caged, he came out roaring. I was conscious, even when I took the draught of a more unbridled, a more furious propensity to ill." In this furious mood he murders Sir Danvers Carew, stirred to rage by the old man's civilities. After his transports of glee as he mauls the body, a cold thrill of terror disperses the mists.

[Here Nabokov quoted from "I saw my life to be forfeit. . ." through "clasped his hands to God," p. 116.]

With a sense of joy Jekyll sees that his problem is solved and that he dare never again assume the form of the wanted murderer Hyde. For several months he lives a life of exemplary good works, but he was still cursed with duality of purpose and "the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for license." In his own person, for he can never again risk Hyde, he begins to pursue his secret vices. This brief excursion into evil finally destroyed the balance of his

soul. One day, sitting in Regent's Park, "a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering. These passed away, and left me faint; and then as in its turn faintness subsided, I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knees was corded and hairy. I was once more Edward Hyde. A moment before I had been safe of all men's respect, wealthy, beloved—the cloth laying for me in the dining-room at home; and now I was the common quarry of mankind, hunted, houseless, a known murderer, thrall to the gallows." As Hyde he cannot return to his house, and so he is forced into the expedient of calling on Dr. Lanyon's help, described in the doctor's letter.

The end now comes with rapidity. The very next morning, crossing the court of his own house, he is again seized by the vertigo of change and it took a double dose to restore him to himself. Six hours later the pangs returned and he had to drink the potion once more. From that time on he was never safe and it required the constant stimulation of the drug to enable him to keep the shape of Jekyll. (It was at one of these moments that Enfield and Utterson conversed with him at the window on the court, a meeting abruptly terminated by the onset of a transformation.) "At all hours of the day and night, I would be taken with the premonitory shudder; above all, if I slept, or even dozed for a moment in my chair, it was always as Hyde that I awakened.

[Here Nabokov continued, quoting from "Under the strain of this . . ." through "heart to pity him," pp. 122-23.]

The last calamity falls when the provision of the special salt for his potion begins to run low; when he sends for a fresh order the first change of color occurred but not the second, and no transformation took place. Poole had testified to Utterson of the desperate search for another supply.

[Here Nabokov quoted from "All this last week . . ." through "returned Poole," pp. 83-84.]

Convinced at last that his first supply was impure, that it was the unknown impurity which gave efficacy to the draught, and that he can never renew his supply, Jekyll begins to write the confession and a week later is finishing it under the influence of the last of the old powders. "This, then, is the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts or see his own face (now how sadly altered!) in the glass." He hastens to conclude lest Hyde suddenly take over and tear the papers to shreds. "Half an hour from now, when I shall again and forever reindue that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shuddering and weeping in my chair, or continue, with the most strained and fearstruck ecstasy of listening, to pace up and down this room (my last earthly refuge) and give ear to every sound of menace. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will he find 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. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end."

I would like to say a few words about Stevenson's last moments. As you know by now, I am not one to

go heavily for the human interest stuff when speaking of books. Human interest is not in my line, as Vronski used to say. But books have their destiny, according to the Latin tag, and sometimes the destinies of authors follow those of their books. There is old Tolstoy in 1910 abandoning his family to wander away and die in a station master's room to the rumble of passing trains that had killed Anna Karenin. And there is something in Stevenson's death in 1894 on Samoa, imitating in a curious way the wine theme and the transformation theme of his fantasy. He went down to the cellar to fetch a bottle of his favorite burgundy, uncorked it in the kitchen, and suddenly cried out to his wife: what's the matter with me, what is this strangeness, has my face changed?—and fell on the floor. A blood vessel had burst in his brain and it was all over in a couple of hours.

What, has my face changed? There is a curious thematical link between this last episode in Stevenson's life and the fateful transformations in his most wonderful book.