

“Dr. Jekyll’s Closet”

[In this influential reading from her book *Sexual Anarchy*, feminist critic Elaine Showalter reads *Jekyll and Hyde* as a narrative of male homosexuality, and then goes on to consider issues of gender in the novella’s real-world parallels and in its twentieth-century adaptations.]

In January 1886, the same month that Robert Louis Stevenson published *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, another strange case of “multiple personality” was introduced to English readers in the pages of *The Journal of Mental Science*. It involved a male hysteric named “Louis V.,” a patient at Rochefort Asylum in France whose case of “morbid disintegration” had fascinated French doctors. Louis V.’s hysterical attacks had begun in adolescence, when he underwent a startling metamorphosis. Having been a “quiet, well-behaved, and obedient” street urchin, he abruptly became “violent, greedy, and quarrelsome,” a heavy drinker, a political radical, and an atheist. So far his “symptoms” might be those of any teenage boy; but what seems to have upset his doctors particularly was that he tried to caress them. The French physicians attributed his condition to a shock he received from being frightened by a viper, and they cured him through hypnosis so effectively that he could not even remember what he had done.¹

Stevenson (called “Louis” by his friends), may well have read the case of Louis V.; it had been written up earlier in the *Archives de Neurologie*, and his wife recalled that he had been “deeply impressed” by a “paper he read in French journal on sub-consciousness” while he was writing *Jekyll and Hyde*.² He was also a friend of Frederic W.H. Myers, who discussed the case for English specialists. But male hysteria was a topic of considerable scientific interest in 1886. Berjon in France published his book, *La grande hystérie chez l’homme*; and in Austria Freud made his debut at the Vienna Medical Society with a controversial paper about male hysteria. While it was recognized in men, hysteria carried the stigma of being a humiliatingly female affliction. Another scholar of male hysteria, Charcot’s disciple Emile Batault, observed that hysterical men in the Sâlpêtrière’s special ward were “timid and fearful men, whose gaze is neither lively nor piercing, but rather, soft,

1 Frederic W.H. Myers, “Multiplex Personality,” *The Nineteenth Century* (November 1886): 648–66. [Unless otherwise indicated, all notes to this article are those of the author.]

2 Mrs. R.L. Stevenson, “Note,” in *Works of Robert Louis Stevenson: Skerryvore Edition* (London: Heinemann, 1924), 4:xvii–xvii.

poetic, and languorous. Coquettish and eccentric, they prefer ribbons and scarves to hard manual labor.”¹ Later this view of the hysterical man as effeminate would be carried into psychoanalytic theory, where the male hysteric is seen as expressing his bisexuality or homosexuality through the language of the body.

Homosexuality was also a topic of considerable scientific and legal interest in 1886. In January, just as Stevenson published his novel, the Labouchère Amendment criminalizing homosexual acts went into effect, and Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* offered some of the first case studies of homosexual men.² By the 1880s, such scholars as Jeffrey Weeks and Richard Dellamora have shown, the Victorian homosexual world had evolved into a secret but active subculture, with its own language, styles, practices, and meeting places. For most middle-class inhabitants of this world, homosexuality represented a double life, in which a respectable daytime world often involving marriage and family, existed alongside a night world of homoeroticism. Indeed, the *fin de siècle* was the golden age of literary and sexual doubles. “Late Victorian duality,” writes Karl Miller in *Doubles*, “may be identified with the dilemmas, for males, of a choice between male and female roles, or of a possible union of such opposites. The Nineties School of Duality framed a dialect and a dialectic, for the love that dared not speak its name—for the vexed question of homosexuality and bisexuality.”³ J.A. Symonds wrote poignantly in his journals of “the dual life ... which had been habitual.”⁴ In Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, leading a double life is called “Bunburying” and represents, as one critic notes, “the ‘posing’ and ‘double lives’ to which homosexuals were accustomed.”⁵

Stevenson was the *fin-de-siècle* laureate of the double life. In an essay on dreams, he described his passionate aim to “find a body, a vehicle for that strong sense of man’s double being” which he had felt as a student in Edinburgh when he dreamed of leading “a double life—one of the day, one of the night.”⁶ The double life of the day and the night is also the double life of the writer, the split between reality and the imagination. Nonetheless, biographers have long hinted that Stevenson’s own double

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- 1 Emile Batault, *Contribution à l'étude de l'hystérie chez l'homme*, (Paris, 1885), author’s translation.
 - 2 See Wayne Koestenbaum, “The Shadow Under the Bed: Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde, and the Labouchère Amendment,” *Critical Matrix* 1 (Spring 1988): 31–55.
 - 3 Miller, *Doubles*, p. 216.
 - 4 Phyllis Grosskurth, ed. *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds: The Secret Homosexual Life of a Leading Nineteenth-Century Man of Letters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 122.
 - 5 Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace*, p. 158.
 - 6 “A Chapter on Dreams,” in *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London, 1922), p. 247.

life was more than the standard round of brothels and nighttime bohemia, and have rattled such skeletons in Stevenson's closet as "homosexuality, impotence, a passionate feeling for his stepson, submission to a wilful and predatory wife."¹ In particular, Stevenson was the object of extraordinary passion on the part of other men. According to Andrew Lang, he "possessed, more than any man I ever met, the power of making other men fall in love with him."² Among the group of friends, both homosexual and heterosexual, in Stevenson's large literary and bohemian circle, "male appreciation of Stevenson was often intensely physical."³

Some of this appreciation and sexual ambiguity is vividly conveyed in the portrait, *Robert Louis Stevenson and His Wife* (1885), by one of the artists in Stevenson's circle who led his own double life, John Singer Sargent ([below]). In the foreground, a slender and anxious-looking Stevenson stares out at the painter, elongated fingers nervously stroking his droopy mustache. On the right, on the very margins of the painting, her body cut off by the picture frame, is the shadowy figure of his wife Fanny reclining on a velvet sofa, wrapped from head to toe in a gilded veil. Between the two is a door in the background wall, opening into a dark closet. For Stevenson himself, the painting was "too eccentric to be exhibited. I am at the one extreme corner; my wife, in this wild dress, and looking like a ghost, is at the extreme other end.... All this is touched in lovely, with that witty touch of Sargent's; but of course, it looks dam queer as a whole." For Sargent, the painting showed Stevenson trapped by domesticity and femininity; it is, he said, "the caged animal lecturing about the foreign specimen in the corner."⁴ In his marriage to Fanny, Stevenson wrote to W.E. Henley, he had come out "as limp as a lady's novel.... the embers of the once gay R.L.S."⁵

Stevenson's real sexuality is much less the issue in *Jekyll and Hyde*, however, than his sense of the fantasies beneath the surface of daylight

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- 1 Miller, *Doubles*, p. 213. For discussions of Stevenson's homosociality/homosexuality, see William Veeder's brilliant essay, "Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy," in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde after One Hundred Years*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), William Veeder and Gordon Hirsch, eds. especially pp. 159–60; and Wayne Koestenbaum, *Double Talk: The erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 145–51.
 - 2 Andrew Lang, "Recollections of Robert Louis Stevenson," *Adventures Among Books* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), p. 51.
 - 3 Jenni Calder, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Life Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 65.
 - 4 Quoted in Stanley Olson, *John Singer Sargent* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), pp. 115, 114.
 - 5 Malcolm Elwin, *The Strange Case of Robert Louis Stevenson* (London: Macdonald, 1950), p. 198; quoted in Koestenbaum, *Double Talk*, p. 150.



John Singer Sargent, *Robert Louis Stevenson and His Wife*, 1885.

decorum, the shadow of homosexuality that surrounded Clubland and the nearly hysterical terror of revealing forbidden emotions between men that constituted the dark side of patriarchy. In many respects, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a case study of male hysteria, not only that of Henry J., but also of the men in the community around him. It can most persuasively be read as a fable of fin-de-siècle homosexual panic, the discovery and resistance of the homosexual self.¹ In contrast to the way it has been represented in film and popular culture, *Jekyll and Hyde* is a story about communities of men. From the moment of its publication, many critics have remarked on

1 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called the genre to which Stevenson's novel belongs "the paranoid Gothic." According to Sedgwick, "the Gothic novel crystallized for English audiences the terms of a dialectic between male homosexuality and homophobia, in which homophobia appeared thematically in paranoid plots," (*Between Men*, p. 92). Such texts involved doubled male figures, one of whom feels obsessed by or persecuted by the other; and the central image of the unspeakable secret. I am indebted also to Paul Zablocki, and to John Perry's unpublished senior thesis, "Novel as Homotext: A Gay Critical Approach to Narrative," Princeton University, 1987.

the “maleness,” even the monasticism, of the story.¹ The characters are all middle-aged bachelors who have no relationships with women except as servants. Furthermore, they are celibates whose major emotional contacts are with each other and with Henry Jekyll. A female reviewer of the book expressed her surprise that “no woman’s name occurs in the book, no romance is even suggested in it.” Mr. Stevenson, wrote the critic Alice Brown, “is a boy who has no mind to play with girls.”² The romance of Jekyll and Hyde is conveyed instead through men’s names, men’s bodies, and men’s psyches.

Henry Jekyll is in a sense the odd man of fin-de-siècle literature. Unable to pair off with either a woman or another man, Jekyll divides himself, and finds his only mate in his double, Edward Hyde. Jekyll is thus both odd and even, both single and double. “Man is not truly one, but truly two,” he observes, and his need to pursue illicit sexual pleasure and yet to live up to the exacting moral standards of his bleak professional community have committed him to “a profound duplicity of life,” accompanied by “an almost morbid sense of shame.” Coming to acknowledge his unutterable desires, Jekyll longs to separate his mind and his body: “If each, I told myself, could be housed in separable identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable.”

Not only the personality of Jekyll, but everything else about the book seems divided and split; Stevenson wrote two drafts of the novel, the Notebook Draft and the Printer’s Copy; the fragments or “fractions” of the manuscript are scattered among four libraries (two would obviously be more poetically just, but I cannot tell a lie); and Longmans published two Jekyll-and-Hyde-like simultaneous editions, a paperback shilling shocker and a more respectable cloth-bound volume.³ Stevenson alludes obliquely to the composition process in the novel itself when Dr. Lanyon discovers the notebook in which Jekyll has recorded his experiments: “Here and there a brief remark was appended to a date, usually no more than a single word: ‘double’ occurring perhaps six times in a total of several hundred entries; and once very early in the list and followed by several marks of exclamation, ‘total failure!’” Just as Jekyll searches for the proper dose to fight

1 See, for example, the excellent essay by Stephen Heath, “Psychopathia sexualis: Stevenson’s *Strange Case*,” *Critical Quarterly* 28 (1986), p. 28.

2 Julia Wedgwood, *Contemporary Review* 49 (April 1886): 594–95; and Alice Brown, *Study of Stevenson* (Boston: Copeland and Day, 1895); quoted in Koestenbaum, *Double Talk*, p. 145.

3 For the manuscripts and publishing history of the novel, see William Veeder, “The Texts in Question,” and Veeder and Hirsch, eds., “Collated Fragments of the Manuscript Drafts of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*,” in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, pp. 3–58.

decomposition, Stevenson hints at his own frustration in composing the narrative of doubles.

Like the stories hysterical women told Freud, full of gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions, Dr. Jekyll's story is composed of fragments and fractions, told through a series of narratives that the reader must organize into a coherent case history. The central narrator of the story is Gabriel John Utterson, who utters the tale, and eventually inherits Jekyll's estate. More than the others in their social circle, Utterson is a "Jekyll manqué."¹ Like many narrators in late-Victorian fiction, he is a lawyer, a spokesman for the Law of the Father and the social order, and "a lover of the sane and customary sides of life." His demeanor is muted and sober; "scanty and embarrassed in discourse"; "undemonstrative" and "backward in sentiment," austere and self-denying, he spends evenings alone drinking gin "to mortify a taste for vintages," or reading "a volume of some dry divinity"; although he likes the theater he has not "crossed the doors of one for twenty years." He has almost a dread of the fanciful, a fear of the realm of the anarchic imagination.

Yet like Jekyll, Utterson also has an unconventional side to keep down; indeed, his self-mortification seems like an effort to stay within the boundaries of masculine propriety. Utterson's fantasies take the form of vicarious identification with the high spirits and bad fortune of "down-going men," for whom he is often the last respectable friend. "I incline to Cain's heresy," he is wont to say; "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way." Utterson, too, has a particular male friend, the younger "man about town" Richard Enfield, whom he sees every Sunday for an excursion that is the "chief jewel of every week," although "it was a nut to crack for many, what these two could see in each other." In another scene, he shares an intimate evening with his clerk Mr. Guest, his own confidant; at least "there was no man from whom he kept fewer secrets." Perhaps because his own life is so involved with repression and fantasy, Utterson becomes "enslaved" to the mystery of Hyde: "If he be Mr. Hyde ... I shall be Mr. Seek." He begins to haunt the "by street" near Jekyll's house and to have rape fantasies of a faceless figure who opens the door to the room where Jekyll lies sleeping, pulls back the curtains of the bed, and forces Jekyll to rise and do his bidding.

Fin-de-siècle images of forced penetration through locked doors into private cabinets, rooms and closets permeate Utterson's narrative; as Stephen Heath notes, "the organising image for this narrative is the breaking down of doors, learning the secret behind them."² The

1 James Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 236.

2 Heath, "Psychopathia sexualis," p. 95.

narrators of Jekyll's secret attempt to open up the mystery of another man, not by understanding or secret sharing, but by force. "Make a clean breast of this [to me] in confidence," Utterson pleads with Jekyll, who rebuffs him: "it isn't what you fancy; it is not so bad as that." Jekyll cannot open his heart or his breast even to his dearest male friends. Thus they must spy on him to enter his mind, to get to the bottom of his secrets. The first chapter is called "The Story of the Door," and while Hyde, as the text repeatedly draws to our attention, has a key to Jekyll's house, Utterson makes violent entries, finally breaking down the door to Jekyll's private closet with an axe, as if into what Jekyll calls "the very fortress of identity."

One of the secrets behind these doors is that Jekyll has a mirror in his cabinet, a discovery almost as shocking to Utterson and the butler Poole as the existence of Hyde. "This glass has seen some queer doings," Poole exclaims in the manuscript (changed to "strange things" in the text).¹ The mirror testifies not only to Jekyll's scandalously unmanly narcissism, but also to the sense of the mask and the Other that has made the mirror an obsessive symbol in homosexual literature. Behind Jekyll's red baize door, Utterson sees his own mirrored face, the image of the painfully repressed desires that the cane and the axe cannot wholly shatter and destroy.

The agitation and anxiety felt by the bachelor friends of Jekyll's circle reflects their mutual, if tacit and unspoken, understanding of Jekyll's "strange preference" for Edward Hyde. Utterson, Enfield, and Lanyon initially think that Jekyll is keeping Hyde. What they see is that their rich friend Harry Jekyll has willed his very considerable estate to a loutish younger man, who comes and goes as he pleases, has expensive paintings and other gifts from Jekyll in his Soho apartment, gives orders to the servants, and cashes large checks Jekyll has signed. However unsuitable, this young man is Jekyll's "favorite," a term that, as Vladimir Nabokov noted in his lecture on the novel, "sounds almost like *minion*."² Even when Hyde is suspected of a crime, Jekyll attempts to shield him, and begs Utterson to protect him: "I do sincerely take a great, a very great interest in that young man."

Jekyll's apparent infatuation with Hyde reflects the late-nineteenth-century upper-middle-class eroticization of working-class men as the ideal homosexual objects. "The moving across the class barrier," Weeks points out, "on the one hand the search for 'rough trade,' and on the other the reconciling effect of sex across class lines, was an

1 Veeder and Hirsch, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, p. 55.

2 Vladimir Nabokov, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," in *Lectures on Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), p. 194.

important and recurrent theme in the homosexual world.”¹ Edward Carpenter dreamed of being loved by “the thick-thighed hot coarse-fleshed young bricklayer with the strap round his waist,” while E.M. Forster fantasized about “a strong young man of the working-class.”² Furthermore, prostitution was “an indispensable part of the male homosexual life ... with participants beginning usually in their mid-teens and generally leaving the trade by their mid-twenties.” The “kept boy” was as common as the rough trade picked up on the streets; when he is “accosted” by the “aged and beautiful” M.P., Sir Danvers Carew, late at night in the dark streets by the river and beats him to death, Hyde both strikes at a father figure and suggests a male prostitute mugging a client on the docks.

Furthermore, Enfield calls Jekyll’s abode “Blackmail House” on “Queer Street” and speculates that Jekyll is “an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth.” While Enfield explicitly does not want to pursue these implications—“the more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask”—the butler Poole has also noted “something queer” about Hyde. As a number of scholars have noted, the homosexual significance of “queer” had entered English slang by 1900.³ “‘Odd,’ ‘queer,’ ‘dark,’ ‘fit,’ ‘nervous,’” notes Karl Miller, “these are the bricks which had built the house of the double.”⁴ For contemporary readers of Stevenson’s novel, moreover, the term “blackmail” would have immediately suggested homosexual liaisons. Originating in sixteenth-century Scotland, it was generally associated with accusations of buggery.⁵ Furthermore, the vision of blackmail as the penalty for homosexual sin was intensified by the Labouchère Amendment. While homosexual men had long been vulnerable to blackmail, the new law, as Edward Carpenter noted, “opened wider than ever before the door to a real, most serious social evil and crime—that of blackmailing.”⁶ Popularly known as the “Blackmailer’s Charter,” the Labouchère Amendment put closeted homosexual men like Wilde and J.A. Symonds at particular risk. It made a major contribution to that “blackmailability” that Sedgwick sees as a crucial component of the “leverage of homophobia.”⁷

1 Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society*, p. 113.

2 Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society*, p. 113.

3 See Veeder, “Children of the Night,” in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, p. 159.

4 Miller, *Doubles*, p. 241.

5 Alexander Welsh, *George Eliot and Blackmail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 9.

6 Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p. 79; quoted in Weeks, *Coming Out*, p. 21.

7 Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 88.

In his original draft of the manuscript, Stevenson was more explicit about the sexual practices that had driven Jekyll to a double life. Jekyll has become “from an early age ... the slave of certain appetites,” vices which are “at once criminal in the sight of the law and abhorrent in themselves. They cut me off from the sympathy of those whom I otherwise respected.”¹ While these passages were omitted in the published version, Stevenson retained the sense of abhorrence and dread that surrounds Hyde. The metaphors associated with Hyde are those of abnormality, criminality, disease, contagion, and death. The reaction of the male characters to Hyde is uniformly that of “disgust, loathing, and fear,” suggestive of the almost hysterical homophobia of the late nineteenth century. In the most famous code word of Victorian homosexuality, they find something *unspeakable* about Hyde “that gave the man a turn,” something “surprising and revolting.” Indeed, the language surrounding Hyde is almost uniformly negative, although when Jekyll first takes the drug, he feels “younger, lighter, happier in body.” Hyde is represented as apelike, pale, and inexpressibly deformed, echoing the imagery of syphilitic afflictions in nineteenth-century medical texts, and Utterson speculates that Jekyll may have contracted a disease from Hyde, “one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer,” for which he is seeking the drug as an antidote. Meditating on Jekyll’s possible youthful crime, Utterson fears “the cancer of some concealed disgrace; punishment coming, *pede claudo*.” Along with the imagery of disease and retribution, the Latin phrase (literally “on halting foot”) suggests a bilingual pun on “pederasty.”

The male homosexual body is also represented in the narrative in a series of images suggestive of anality and anal intercourse. Hyde travels in the “chocolate-brown fog” that beats about the “back-end of the evening”; while the streets he traverses are invariably “muddy” and “dark,” Jekyll’s house, with its two entrances, is the most vivid representation of the male body. Hyde always enters it through the blistered back door, which, in Stevenson’s words, is “equipped with neither bell nor knocker” and which bears the “marks of prolonged and sordid negligence.”

Finally, the suicide which ends Jekyll’s narrative is the only form of narrative closure thought appropriate to the Gay Gothic, where the protagonist’s death is both martyrdom and retribution. To learn Jekyll-Hyde’s secret leads to death; it destroys Dr. Lanyon, for example, as later, Dorian Gray also causes the suicides of a number of young men and then kills himself. While Jekyll tries to convince himself that his desire is merely an addiction, a bad habit that he can overcome when-

1 Veeder, “Collated Fragments,” pp. 34–35.

ever he wants, he gradually comes to understand that Hyde is indeed part of him. In a final spasm of homophobic guilt, Jekyll slays his other “hated personality.” Death is the only solution to the “illness” of homosexuality. As A.E. Housman would write in *A Shropshire Lad*:

Shot? so quick, so clean an ending?
Oh that was right, lad, that was brave:
Yours was not an ill for mending,
'Twas best to take it to the grave.

Jekyll is a “self-destroyer,” Utterson concludes, not only because he has killed himself, but because it is self-destructive to violate the sexual codes of one’s society.¹

In the multiplication of narrative viewpoints that makes up the story, however, one voice is missing: that of Hyde himself. We never hear his account of the events, his memories of his strange birth, his pleasure and fear. Hyde’s story would disturb the sexual economy of the text, the sense of panic at having liberated an uncontrollable desire. Hyde’s hysterical narrative comes to us in two ways: in the representation of his feminine behavior, and in the body language of hysterical discourse. As William Veeder points out, “despite all his ‘masculine’ traits of preternatural strength and animal agility, Hyde is prey to what the nineteenth century associated primarily with women.”² He is seen “wrestling against the approaches of hysteria,” and heard “weeping like a woman.” Hyde’s reality breaks through Jekyll’s body in the shape of his hand, the timbre of his voice, and the quality of his gait.

In representing the effects of splitting upon the male body, Stevenson drew upon the advanced medical science of his day. In the 1860s, the French neuroanatomist Paul Broca had first established the concept of the double brain and of left cerebral dominance. Observing that language disorders resulted from left-brain injuries, he hypothesized that the left frontal brain lobes, which controlled the right side of the body, were the seat of the intellectual and motor skills. Thus the left brain was more important than the right and virtually defined the distinction between the animal and the human. The right frontal brain lobes, which controlled the left side of the body, were subordinate; they were the seat of lesser, non-verbal traits. Individuals in whom the right hemisphere predominated had to be low on the human evolutionary scale. In describing or imagining the operations of the double brain,

1 Thanks to Paul Zablocki and Gary Sunshine, students in my course on the *fin de siècle*, for their comments on “homotextuality” and suicide.

2 Veeder, “Children of the Night,” p. 149. Thanks to Phil Pearson.

European scientists were influenced by their cultural assumptions about duality, including gender, race and class. They characterized one side of the brain and body as masculine, rational, civilized, European, and highly evolved, and the other as feminine, irrational, primitive, and backward. Many scientists argued that the intellectual inferiority and social subordination of women and blacks could be attributed to their weak left brains. Furthermore, when mental disturbances occurred, as one physician noted in 1887, there must be a terrible struggle “between the left personality and the right personality, or in other more familiar terms, between the good and the bad side.”¹

These ideas about the brain were strongly related to late-nineteenth-century ideas about handedness, since handedness was usually inversely related to brain dominance; and considerable effort was made to get left-handed children to change. Freud’s close friend Wilhelm Fliess, however, argued that all human beings were bisexual, with the dominant side of the brain representing the dominant gender, and the other the repressed gender. Thus Fliess believed that normal, heterosexual people would be right-handed, while “effeminate men and masculine women are entirely or partly left-handed.”²

The imagery of hands is conspicuous in the text of *Jekyll and Hyde* and has also been dramatically put to use in the various film versions, where Hyde’s hands seem almost to have a life of their own. It draws upon ideas of the double brain and hand, as well as upon other social and sexual meanings. As a child, Jekyll recalls, he had “walked with my father’s hand,” suggesting that he had taken on the bodily symbols of the “right”—or proper—hand of patriarchal respectability and constraint. Hyde seems to be the sinister left hand of Jekyll, the hand of the rebellious and immoral son. Suddenly Jekyll discovers that he cannot control the metamorphosis; he wakes up to find that his own hand, the hand of the father, the “large, firm, white and comely” hand of the successful professional, has turned into the “lean, corded, knuckly,” and hairy hand of Hyde. The implied phallic image here also suggests the difference between the properly socialized sexual desires of the dominant society and the twisted, sadistic, and animal desires of the other side. Jekyll’s “hand” also means his handwriting and signature, which Hyde can forge, although his own writing looks like Jekyll’s with a different slant. As Frederic W.H. Myers wrote to Stevenson, “Hyde’s writing might look like Jekyll’s, done *with the left hand*.”³

1 Anne Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 170.

2 Harrington, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain*, p. 94.

3 Paul Maixner, *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 215.

Finally, the image draws upon the Victorian homosexual trope of the left hand of illicit sexuality. Jekyll tells Lanyon that in the days of their Damon and Pythias friendship, he would have sacrificed “my left hand to help you.” In his secret memoirs, Symonds, too, uses the figure of the useless hand “clenched in the grip of an unconquerable love” to express his double life and the sublimation of his homosexual desires.¹

Some men, like Symonds and Wilde, may have read the book as a signing to the male community. “Viewed as an allegory,” Symonds wrote to Stevenson, “it touches upon one too closely. Most of us at some epoch of our lives have been upon the verge of developing a Mr. Hyde.”² Wilde included an anecdote in “The Decay of Lying” about “a friend of mine, called Mr. Hyde” who finds himself eerily reliving the events in Stevenson’s story. But most Victorian and modern readers ignored such messages or evaded them. While there have been over seventy films and television versions of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, for example, not one tells the story as Stevenson wrote it—that is, as a story about men. All of the versions add women to the story and either eliminate the homoerotic elements or suggest them indirectly through imagery and structural elements. When Stevenson’s friends Andrew Lang and Rider Haggard claimed to have written a version of the story in their collaborative novel *The World’s Desire*, they thought the most improbable part was when “the hero having gone to bed with Mrs. Jekyll wakes up with Mrs. Hyde.”³ Thomas Sullivan’s 1887 stage adaptation of the story, starring the American actor Richard Masefield, invented a good girl wooed by Jekyll. Hollywood expanded upon this by giving Hyde a “bad” girl—a barmaid or a woman of the lower classes—although she is never a wholly unsympathetic character.

The John Barrymore film in 1920 created an amalgamation of Stevenson’s story and Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The high-minded and idealistic Jekyll is in love with the girlish Millicent, the daughter of a Wildean Sir George Carew. But the rakish Carew taunts Jekyll with his innocence, and, in lines taken from Lord Henry Wotton in Wilde’s text, urges him to taste temptation. Carew takes Jekyll to a music hall and introduces him to “Miss Gina,” an exotic Italian dancer. Lust then becomes Jekyll’s motive for the experiment, and his

1 See Christopher Craft, “‘Descend and Touch and Enter’: Tennyson’s Strange Manner of Address,” *Genders* 1 (Spring 1988): 91–92.

2 J.A. Symonds to Stevenson, 3 March 1886, in *Letters of J.A. Symonds*, eds. Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), pp. 120–21.

3 Quoted in Jenni Calder, *Robert Louis Stevenson*, p. 118.

Hyde embarks on a career of debauchery that first leads him to destroy Gina, then takes him to opium dens and brothels, and ends with his vengeful murder of the tempter Carew. Here most explicitly, the “gentlemen,” in their silk hats and capes, move easily from the drawing rooms of Mayfair to the alleys of Soho and the East End, while the women’s positions are fixed. Millicent and Miss Gina never meet; and we cannot imagine that Millicent would trade places with the dance-hall girl. By grafting the Wilde plot onto the story of Jekyll and Hyde, moreover, the film suggests the seduction of Jekyll by Carew and constructs the triangle of father, daughter, and suitor as the bisexual rivalry of father and daughter for Jekyll’s love. Jekyll kills himself by drinking poison, since at the deeper level of the film he is implicated in the unspeakable.

But in films where the homoerotic has been completely suppressed, Jekyll does not have to commit suicide. The question of Jekyll’s motives was given a more Freudian cast in the 1941 MGM version directed by Victor Fleming and starring Spencer Tracy, Lana Turner, and Ingrid Bergman. Turner plays Beatrix Emery, Jekyll’s innocent, upper-class, blond fiancée, while Ingrid Bergman plays Ivy, the barmaid. When Bea’s father breaks off their engagement because of Jekyll’s blasphemous experiments and takes his daughter away for a trip to the Continent, Jekyll’s bottled-up sexual frustration, as well as the absence of the father and fiancée, causes Hyde to emerge and drives him toward Ivy. In a decade when Hollywood was fascinated by psychoanalysis, Jekyll’s fantasies are represented in heavy-handed Freudian dream-sequences, in which Jekyll becomes a champagne bottle popping its cork and then drives and lashes Bea and Ivy like a team of horses.

Jekyll’s sexuality is improper both within the bounds of patriarchal Victorian society and within the bounds of American values of the 1940s. Male sexuality is clearly limited to the spheres of either marriage or prostitution. Jekyll’s profession itself is ambiguous in its sexuality. At their first meeting, he saves Ivy from a rapist and then examines her for injuries; since she does not know he is a doctor, the scene is full of double entendre. But the point is that “Jekyll has adopted a professional ethic by which available flesh is divested (as it were) of its erotic potential.”¹ Yet Bea and Ivy are not simply “good” and “bad” women; Bea also feels desire for Jekyll, while Ivy feels love; and their moral complexity (complicated by the offscreen media identities of Turner and Bergman) deconstructs the simple dualism of Jekyll and Hyde as well. Moreover, the daylight Victorian world of patriarchy, in which Bea is an accepted object of exchange between her father and

1 I am indebted for this observation to Daniel Jaeger-Mendelsohn in the Classics Department at Princeton.

Jekyll, corresponds to the nighttime world in which Hyde is a sexual sadist who buys and then tyrannizes a working-class woman, whom he keeps imprisoned and finally kills. Women are property in either case. What is particularly interesting is that Hyde never goes after the virginal “good” woman; his sexuality is clearly seen as bad and thus must be taken to low haunts and lower-class women.

In this film, then, the complex problems of male identity and male sexuality are translated into stereotypical problems of women, and the bisexual elements the text attributes to its male protagonists are made the exclusive property of the female characters. The Oedipal relationship in which Bea is a substitute for her dead mother and subject to her father’s incestuous jealousy substitutes for the text’s hints that Jekyll is in rebellion against his own father and the Fathers of society. Ivy, rather than Hyde, is represented as an emotional hysteric. The film even makes Jekyll a kindly psychiatrist, whom Ivy visits by day in search of treatment for *her* nervous illness caused by his visits as Hyde by night. (In Reuben Mamoulian’s 1931 film version of the story, with Frederic March, Jekyll voices a keen interest in psychoanalysis.) In short, the *women* are sick rather than the uncontrollably mutating Jekyll, who is seen as only the guiltless victim of his altruistic scientific ambitions. Since his desires are acceptably heterosexual, Jekyll feels no guilt and does not commit suicide; he is arrested by Lanyon and the police and taken into custody as he mutates into Hyde while insisting “I’m Henry Jekyll. I’ve done nothing.”

A particularly interesting film version of Stevenson’s story is *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (Hammer Studios, 1971). Here the motive is the classic one of the male scientist trying to find the female secrets of creating life. Searching for a means to prolong life, the woman-hating Dr. Jekyll uses the morgue as the source of female reproductive organs for his elixir. When he takes the potion, he becomes a beautiful woman, his own female double, and ecstatically explores his new breasts. Soon the female personality is taking over, first overwhelming the professional Jekyll with a sudden and irresistible desire to shop, but quickly becoming a murderous rival for the single body. In order to prevent her from taking over, Jekyll has to kill women to keep up his supply of the potion. In a nice twist on the idea of the secret identity, he gets his female persona to become Jack the Ripper, since the police are not looking for a woman. Finally, as he runs from the police after a killing, Jekyll is tripped on a rooftop. In a clever version of the text’s transformation scene, Jekyll helplessly becomes Sister Hyde; the camera cuts “to a close-up of those strong, hairy hands; we watch them elongate and become hairless.”¹ As the weaker sex, Sister Hyde cannot hold on

1 Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures*, p. 256.

and drops into the hands of the police. The film's mingling of themes of duality and bisexuality, science and religion, is a closer reading of Stevenson's story than the more celebrated Hollywood versions.

With Jekyll and Hyde in mind, we think of the late nineteenth century as the age of split personalities who solve their social and sexual problems by neatly separating mind and body, good and evil, upstairs and downstairs. But is the divided self of the fin-de-siècle narrative everybody's fantasy? Can women as well as men have double lives? Can there be a woman in Dr. Jekyll's closet?

We could certainly not rewrite Stevenson's novel as the story of Dr. Jekyll's sister, Dr. Henrietta Jekyll (M.D., Zurich 1880), even if she were born, like her brother, with an "impatient gaiety of disposition" that left her "discontented" and unfulfilled. While Victorian gentlemen had the prerogative of moving freely through the zones of the city, Victorian ladies were not permitted to cross urban, class, and sexual boundaries, let alone have access to a nighttime world of bars, clubs, brothels, and illicit sexuality as an alternative to their public life of decorum and restraint. In the 1880s, a "lady was simply not supposed to be seen aimlessly wandering the streets in the evening or eating alone."¹ As Virginia Woolf wrote about the 1880s in her novel *The Pargiters* (later, *The Years*), young women could not visit friends, walk in the park, or go to the theater unaccompanied; "To be seen alone in Piccadilly was equivalent to walking up Abercorn Terrace in a dressing gown carrying a sponge."² Indeed, at the universities, women students were not permitted to attend lectures at the men's colleges unchaperoned, and even visits from brothers were carefully supervised.³

Nor would an Edie Hyde have fared much better. In 1886, the year that Stevenson wrote his story, Eleanor Marx protested that the effects of Victorian sexual repression were far worse for unmarried women of all social classes than for men. "Society provides [for men] the means of gratifying the sex instinct. In the eyes of that same society an unmarried woman who acts after the fashion habitual to her unmarried brothers and the men who dance with her at balls or work with her in the shop, is a pariah."⁴ A working-class Edie Hyde wandering around the docks alone in the early hours of morning would have been taken for a prostitute or killed by Jack the Ripper.

1 Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 297.

2 Virginia Woolf, *The Pargiters*, ed. Mitchell Leaska (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 37.

3 Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p. 146.

4 Marx and Aveling, *The Woman Question*, p. 9.

Furthermore, a lesbian double life for women was not part of cultural mythology in the 1880s. While, as Jeffrey Weeks has explained, “by the end of the nineteenth century a recognizably ‘modern’ male homosexual identity was beginning to emerge, ... it would be another generation before female homosexuality reached a corresponding level of articulacy. The lesbian identity was much less clearly defined, and the lesbian subculture was minimal in comparison with the male and even more overwhelmingly upper class or literary.”¹ In 1920, Vita Sackville-West described herself as a “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality,” torn between her love for her husband and her “perverted lesbian” attachment to women;² but in 1921, English legislators refused to include women in the Labouchère Amendment because lesbianism was too deeply disturbing even to forbid: “To adopt a clause of this kind,” one MP proclaimed, “would harm by introducing into the minds of perfectly innocent people the most revolting thoughts.”³

But the impossibility of actualized double lives for women did not mean that women were not as divided by fantasies, longings, and unrealized desires as men. Women as well as men were “truly two,” as the celebrated Boston physician Morton Prince eloquently explained when he wrote at the turn of the century about the repressed sexuality of women:

“The multiform sides of a woman’s nature differ from man’s only in form and their conventional expressions. The contrasting sides, however, of the gentler sex are much less conspicuous to the world than men’s and are more easily overlooked. In women, as every woman knows—but few men—one or more sides of the character are by the necessity of social customs camouflaged. From childhood she is taught by the conventions of society, by the social taboo, to restrain and repress, often even from herself, many impulses and cravings which are born within her, as well as many thoughts and sentiments which she has acquired by experience, by contact with the world and therefore by riper knowledge. The repression under the social codes of these, the natural expressions of a part of her personality had belied nature which has been confined for centuries in a case hung with opaque curtains, like unto the spiritualistic dark cabinets. But within her social cabinet, all sorts of orgies of human nature have been seething.”⁴

1 Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society*, p. 115.

2 Nigel Nicholson, *Portrait of a Marriage* (London: Athenaeum, 1973), p. 35.

3 *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 1921, vol. 145, p. 1805.

4 Morton Prince, *Psychotherapy and Multiple Personality: Selected Essays*, ed. Nathan G. Hale, Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 195.

Moreover, as the new science of psychoanalysis was demonstrating, transgressive desires in women seem to have led to guilt, inner conflict, and neurotic self-punishment, rather than to fantasies or realities of criminal acting out. In "Civilised Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness," Freud named neurosis as the opposite of what he called "perversion." While neurotics, according to Freud, negatively repress their instincts, leading to nervous illness and hysteria, perverts more energetically put their desires into practice. These differences, furthermore, are gendered. As Freud concludes, "the discovery that perversions and neuroses stand in the relation of positive and negative is often unmistakably confirmed by observations made on the members of one generation of a family. Quite frequently a brother is a sexual pervert, while his sister, who, being a woman, possesses a weaker sexual instinct, is a neurotic whose symptoms express the same inclinations as the perversions of her more sexually active brother. And correspondingly, in many families, the men are healthy, but from a social point of view immoral to an undesirable degree, while the women are high-minded and over-refined, but severely neurotic." According to Freud's theory, we cannot recast Jekyll and Hyde with female protagonists, because a female Dr. Jekyll with a repressed Sister Hyde is more likely to be agoraphobic than to be picking up (or beating up) men in the street. The brother acting out his instincts in East London will be Jack the Ripper, while his sister will be Jill the Weeper, home with her migraines, depressions, and breakdowns.

Yet medical literature of the *fin de siècle* reveals that observed clinical cases of multiple personality were predominantly female and that in life rather than art, hysterical self-fragmentation was more likely to be a feminine than a masculine response to social pressures. Putting Stevenson's "strange case" in the contexts of late-Victorian sexual culture and contrasting it to medical narratives of the period which described strange cases of *female* split personality reveals both some of the dualistic fantasies of the *fin de siècle* and the ways that they were constructed in terms of gender, sexuality, homophobia, and patriarchy.

Dr. Morton Prince of Boston was the leading American medical expert on multiple personality at the *fin de siècle* and treated two of the most famous female cases, "Miss Beauchamp" and "B.C.A." in the 1890s. The "multiple personalities" of Miss Beauchamp and B.C.A. were all too clearly facets of female repression and rebellion, attempts to live by a different set of values and norms, particularly those having to do with women's restrictive roles. While Victorian men could get through the week on a mere two personalities, Victorian women seemed to need at least three. In the United States especially, duality

always seemed insufficient to accommodate the competitive and contradictory ambitions of an expanding nation and to cope with the conflicts in women's roles that were a major factor in the American phenomenon of multiple personality.

But despite their parallels to Stevenson's strange case, these female cases were much less adventurous than Jekyll and Hyde. "Miss Beauchamp" was really Clara Norton Fowler, a twenty-five-year-old "bibliophile," who was "never so happy as when allowed to delve amongst books." In 1898 she came to Prince with neurasthenic symptoms, which he traced to a traumatic shock at the age of eighteen: a male voyeur had spied on her through a window, and "she saw his excited manner and heard his voice between the peals of thunder."¹ Under hypnosis, she developed three personalities, which he called BII, BIII, and BIV, and thought of as the Saint, the Woman, and the Devil. While BII was anxious, rigid, and neurotic, BIII (who first called herself "She," after Rider Haggard's heroine, but then chose the name "Sally Beauchamp"), was vivacious, high-spirited, and amoral. Sally was also openly and passionately enamored of Dr. Prince: "I love you always, you know *always*, but best when you are strong and splendid, when you are tired and people are not nice to you ... " she wrote to him. "Please forgive me again ... and let me stay with you. *Please, please please.*" Prince's daughter recalled that when Sally "was too obstreperous, odors of ether would emerge from the office," as he attempted to "subjugate this mischievous nature." These multiple personalities were created during the therapy, and on the whole did not appear outside of it. Despite Sally's wishes, Prince would not allow her to become the dominant personality. She went "back to where she came from," "imprisoned" and "squeezed" into the body of a unified "Miss Beauchamp," and after her treatment with Prince, she attended Radcliffe College and married another prominent Boston neurologist. Her story was turned into a Broadway play by David Belasco, *The Case of Becky*, in which the neurologist, renamed "Dr. Emerson," declares, "Dorothy is Dr. Jekyll; Becky, her other self, is Mr. Hyde."

The case of B.C.A. is even more compelling and more like the story of Jekyll and Hyde. At Dr. Prince's request, Nellie Bean, or "B.C.A." wrote a fascinating study called "My Life as a Dissociated Personality" (1909), which has two narrative sections, one written by the Hyde personality, "B," and the other by the cured personality, "C," looking back on her experience. "A" was a forty-year-old widow in 1898 when she first came to Prince suffering from depression, insomnia, headaches, and odd behaviors. "A" was morbid, helpless, prudish, and terrified of living without a man. Like Fowler, she was intellectual, lit-

1 Prince, *Psychotherapy and Multiple Personality*, p. 151.

erary, and frustrated by the pressures towards domestic submission enjoined by her society. One of her symptoms was the emergence of another self, “B,” who was daring and independent. B had named herself “Bertha Amory” after the feminist heroine of a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. She wore white instead of widow’s weeds, enjoyed “fun and a gay time,” smoked, danced, and flirted with men, and allowed one Mr. Hopkins to kiss her. B was alarmed by A’s anxiety and by her schemes to remarry: “Why, if she got married I would be married too I suppose, and I won’t. I *can’t*.” She thought that A should sell her house instead, and use the money to start a new life. Among B’s interests was the field of psychology, towards which she felt “full of enthusiasm.” Like Hyde, B felt youthfully liberated from A: “As B, I was light-hearted and happy and life seemed good to me; I wanted to live; my pulses beat fuller, my blood ran warmer through my veins than it ever had done before. I seemed more alive ... I felt much younger, and looked so, for the lines of care, anxiety, sorrow and fatigue had faded from my face ... I neglected my family and friends shamefully ... my tastes, ideals and points of view were completely changed.” Furthermore, B felt no guilt over her new behavior: “The only emotion that I remember to have experienced is one of pleasure and happiness. I know nothing of remorse, reproach, and despair.”

Prince called B “a psychological impossibility,” and his goal in the therapy was to get rid of her. B, for her part, was bewildered by Prince’s preference for the strait-laced and neurotic A: “I cannot see why Dr. Prince would rather have that emotional, hysterical set than to have me! It passes comprehension.” In notes left on tables and dressers, B pleaded with A not to tell Dr. Prince everything she was doing, and finally planned to run away: “There are lots of things in the world to do and I am going to do some of them if I have half a chance.” As Prince constructed a sober compromise figure, C, under hypnosis, B became increasingly alarmed. She begged Prince to let her be the dominant personality: “I am afraid I am going to be a woman just like A & C. I don’t want to, Dr. Prince ... I want to be just what I have always been—just ‘B,’ free as the wind, no body, no soul, no heart. I don’t want to love people because if one loves one must suffer—that is what it means to be a woman—to love and suffer.”

But the wild, Brontëish B, with her longings for exploration and freedom, her lack of guilt, and her independence from men, could not survive in Prince’s Boston at the turn of the century. In his terms, she was indeed a monster who had to die. Under hypnotic treatment, Prince finally managed to suppress both the A and B personalities, and the C personality took over. As C, Mrs. Bean spent the remaining years of her life as Prince’s devoted research assistant and typist. She did not remarry. It seems a convenient resolution for Prince and a

prosaic fate for the rebellious B, who had pleaded not to be cured into feminine “normalcy.”

It’s fantastic, she said.

Since becoming a single I’ve really

Gotten into myself.

(Sandra Gilbert, “Singles”)

Even in the late twentieth century, the age of the single, the story of Jekyll and Hyde does not seem to have lost its appeal. In 1989–1990, Michael Caine, Anthony Perkins, Everett Quinton, and Robert Goulet all appeared in adaptations. And fascination with fin-de-siècle male doubling persists especially in the work of collaborative artists such as Gilbert and George, McDermott and McGough, and the Starn Twins. David McDermott and Peter McGough, particularly, produce work that alludes to fin-de-siècle homosexual themes, such as *Queer—1885*, or *Green Carnations—1887*.¹ On the screen, the Jekyll-Hyde story has become the dark-side film (*Something Wild*, *After Hours*), in which an innocent or upright young man meets a femme fatale who takes him to the dark side of himself: a violent, sadistic, and sexually perverse man. The most successful of these films, David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* (1986), uses Isabella Rossellini in a striking homage to her mother, Ingrid Bergman, while Dennis Hopper is a psychopathic version of Spencer Tracy’s sadistic Hyde.

Can we imagine a female Dr. Jekyll today? Susan Sontag’s short story *Doctor Jekyll* (1978) is a clever postmodernist version set in contemporary Manhattan. Jekyll is a successful surgeon, Hyde a delinquent addict. Hyde finally persuades Jekyll to try some violence in his own right, and Jekyll goes to prison for the attempted murder of Hyde. But Sontag does not attempt to imagine the story from a woman’s perspective. Similarly, Joyce Carol Oates, in the series of novels about twins and doubling she published under the pseudonym “Rosamond Smith” projects the heroine’s split psyche onto twinned or doubled male characters.² And Fay Weldon, in *Lives and Loves of a She-Devil*, has a Hyde heroine who makes herself over into a beautiful Jekyll.

The Scottish novelist Emma Tennant, however, has written a brilliant feminist version of Stevenson’s novel called *Two Women of London: The Strange Case of Ms. Jekyll and Mrs. Hyde* (1989). Tennant has sug-

1 Roberta Smith, “Singular Artists Who Work in the First Person Plural,” *New York Times*, Sunday, 10 May 1987. Thanks to Wayne Koestenbaum for this reference.

2 See Rosamond Smith, *Lives of the Twins* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), and *Soul/Mate* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989).

gested that the double story is particularly meaningful both for women and for Scottish writers who invented it and who grew up within a bilingual and double culture; her earlier novel, *The Bad Sister*, also deals with the theme of the split female psyche.¹ Set in the Notting Hill district of London, *Two Women of London* incorporates the true story of a modern Ripper, the Notting Hill Rapist, with a reimagining of the double theme. The beautiful and fashionable art dealer Eliza Jekyll is really the aging welfare mother Mrs. Hyde, abandoned with her three children by her husband and first tranquilized and then transmogrified by drugs. When she reverts to being Mrs. Hyde, Eliza Jekyll becomes a feminist avenger, murdering the rapist and also the man who has abandoned her. In Eliza Jekyll's statement of the case—in Tennant's modernized version of Stevenson's multiple narrative, a message on her answering machine—she explains: "I am as I am: I was brought up to believe in happiness and my parents and school teachers gave me nothing but love and encouragement. I had no idea of the reality of life, of the pain and suffering which once was considered an integral part of it."

There could obviously be an American version of Tennant's novel, but the American urban narrative that suggests itself to me is far more violent. Henrietta Jekyll, a distinguished woman scientist in her mid-fifties, unmarried, admired by all the other single and successful career women in her social circle, longs for another identity, another body, in which to live out her repressed desires. She takes a potion and is transformed into a young, tough, sexy, streetwise babe with a lot of makeup, tight leather clothes, and no inhibitions. So far, so good. But then the story pulls up short. Where does Edie Hyde go once she's all dressed up? To look for Mr. Goodbar? To walk in Central Park? To the porn shops and sex shows in Times Square? All these roles are dangerous and victimizing for women, rather than empowering as they might be for men. Henrietta Jekyll would soon become a rape or homicide statistic, a gory headline in the *Daily News*, or a lurid cover story in *People* magazine.

The Jekyll-Hyde story, however, has taken a weird realistic turn in the United States where, in the last few decades, there has been an epidemic among women of what is now called Multiple Personality Disorder, or MPD. In the MPD Movement, according to Nicholas Humphrey and Daniel Dennett, "women outnumber men by at least four to one, and there is reason to believe that the vast majority—perhaps 95 percent—have been sexually or physically abused as chil-

1 Sue Roe and Emma Tennant, "Women Talking About Writing," in *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory*, ed. Moira Monteith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

dren.”¹ The theory is that the sexually abused child shuts off a part of itself in denial, which then undergoes further splittings. (From this point of view, we might speculate that Jekyll’s problem was that he had been abused by a relative, teacher, or servant.) The “host” personality thus generates several “alters,” and the number of alters is increasing. While the fin-de-siècle fiction of doubles involves two personalities, and the modern medical literature on split personality, as in the symbolically named *Three Faces of Eve* (1957), usually involves three personae, the median number of alters for patients described in the current medical literature is eleven. We might say that as the roles demanded of American women increase, female personalities do as well: by 1975, for example, when her identity became public, “Eve”’s selves had “multiplied like rabbits,” reaching a grand total of twenty-two and beating “Sybil”’s previous record of sixteen.²

Furthermore, some of these selves are now masculine; in order for the Jekyll-Hyde fantasy of liberation to be fully imagined for a woman, Henrietta Jekyll has to turn into a man. In a fin-de-siècle post-feminist America where there is so much from which to dissociate oneself, women are going to need both a Sister and a Mister Hyde.

(1992)

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- 1 Humphrey and Dennett, “Speaking for Ourselves: An Assessment of Multiple Personality Disorder,” *Raritan* 9 (Summer 1989): 68.
 - 2 See Michael G. Kenny, *The Passion of Ansel Bourne: Multiple Personality in American Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986), pp. 161–82.