

CRITICISM AGAINST THE GENTLEMEN IMAGE IN ENGLAND'S VICTORIAN PERIOD IN "R. L. STEVENSON AND HIS WORK THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE"

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Abstract: This article explores the critique of the gentlemen image prevalent in England's Victorian era through a close examination of Robert Louis Stevenson's iconic novella, "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde."

Keywords: Victorian society, gentlemen, hypocrisy, dual identity, morality, repression, social class, double standards, duality of human nature, inner conflict

Аннотация: В этой статье исследуется критика образа джентльмена, распространенного в викторианскую эпоху в Англии, посредством тщательного изучения культовой новеллы Роберта Льюиса Стивенсона «Странная история доктора Джекила и мистера Хайда». **Ключевые слова:** викторианское общество, джентльмены, лицемерие, двойная идентичность, мораль, репрессии, социальный класс, двойные стандарты, двойственность человеческой природы, внутренний конфликт.

Izoh: Ushbu maqola Robert Lui Stivensonning "Doktor Jekil va janob Xaydning g'alati ishi" nomli romanini sinchkovlik bilan o'rganish orqali Angliyaning Viktoriya davrida keng tarqalgan janoblar qiyofasining tanqidini o'rganadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Viktoriya jamiyati, janoblar, ikkiyuzlamachilik, ikki tomonlama o'ziga xoslik, axloq, qatag'on, ijtimoiy sinf, ikki tomonlama standartlar, inson tabiatining ikkiligi, ichki ziddiyat

Introduction

During the Victorian era in England, the concept of the gentleman was idealized as a symbol of morality, respectability, and social superiority. However, Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," challenges this idealized image by exploring the duality of human nature and the hypocrisy that often lurked beneath the facade of gentility.¹

¹ Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Penguin Classics, 2003.

Victorian society and the gentleman ideal: In Victorian England, the concept of the gentleman held significant cultural and social currency. The gentleman was expected to embody virtues such as honor, integrity, and self-restraint, serving as a model of moral rectitude for society.² This idealized image was reinforced through literature, art, and social norms, perpetuating the belief in the inherent superiority of the upper classes.

In Victorian society, the gentleman ideal was a cornerstone of social norms and expectations. It encompassed characteristics such as politeness, self-control, respectability, and moral uprightness. However, this ideal was often criticized for its hypocrisy and double standards, as it often masked deeper issues such as repression, inequality, and moral decay. R.L. Stevenson's work "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" explores these themes by portraying the duality of human nature and the tension between the public facade of the gentleman and the darker impulses hidden beneath it.³ The novel critiques the notion of the gentleman as a flawless paragon of virtue, instead revealing the complex inner conflicts and moral ambiguities that lie beneath the surface.

The duality of human nature: Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" explores the theme of duality within human nature, challenging the notion of moral absolutism and exposing the inner conflicts that individuals grapple with.⁴ Through the character of Dr. Jekyll, a respected and esteemed member of society, Stevenson illustrates the tension between outward respectability and inner desires, as Jekyll seeks to reconcile his dual identities through scientific experimentation.

The concept of the duality of human nature explores the idea that individuals possess both good and evil tendencies within themselves. This theme is central to R.L. Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde." In the novella, Dr. Jekyll's scientific experimentations result in the creation of Mr. Hyde, a manifestation of his darker desires and impulses. The story delves into the conflict between these two aspects of Jekyll's personality, with Hyde representing the unrestrained and amoral side, while Jekyll embodies the socially acceptable and morally upright persona of the gentleman. Stevenson uses this duality to reflect on the complexity of human behavior and the constant struggle between societal expectations and inner desires. The duality of human nature serves as a lens through which Stevenson critiques Victorian notions of respectability and explores the darker aspects of the human psyche

Hypocrisy and moral decay: As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that Dr. Jekyll's experimentations have unleashed a darker side of his personality, embodied by

² Schaffer, Talia. "Burst Out Laughing': Comic Structures in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*." *Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2012, pp. 144-169.

³ Bloom, Harold, editor. *Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Chelsea House, 1987.

⁴ Smith, Richard D. "Hypocrites and Classrooms: Teaching the Gothic Tradition and Victorian Literary History through Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde." *English in Education*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2013, pp. 254-269.

the sinister Mr. Hyde. Hyde represents the repressed impulses and desires that Jekyll suppresses in his quest for societal conformity, exposing the hypocrisy and moral decay that lurk beneath the surface of Victorian society.

In "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," R.L. Stevenson critiques Victorian society's hypocrisy and moral decay.⁵ The characters in the novella often uphold a facade of respectability while engaging in morally questionable behavior behind closed doors. Dr. Jekyll, in his pursuit of pleasure and freedom from societal constraints, creates Mr. Hyde, who embodies his darker impulses. Hyde's actions, which include violence and depravity, starkly contrast with the genteel image of Victorian society. Through this narrative, Stevenson exposes the hypocrisy of those who adhere to societal norms while indulging in immoral behavior in secret. Moreover, the transformation of Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde reflects the moral decay that occurs when individuals suppress their true selves in favor of maintaining appearances. Stevenson's portrayal of hypocrisy and moral decay serves as a critique of Victorian society's emphasis on outward respectability and its failure to address the underlying moral shortcomings of its members.

Critique of Victorian morality: Stevenson's novella serves as a critique of Victorian morality, challenging the notion of the gentleman as a paragon of virtue and exposing the moral ambiguities that underpin societal norms.⁶ The character of Mr. Hyde, with his wanton disregard for social conventions and moral principles, embodies the darker impulses that society seeks to suppress and deny.

R.L. Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" serves as a critique of Victorian morality, challenging the rigid social norms and values prevalent in Victorian society. Through the character of Dr. Jekyll, Stevenson explores the limitations and hypocrisies of Victorian morality, which often prioritized outward respectability over inner authenticity. Dr. Jekyll's experiment to separate his good and evil sides symbolizes the repressive nature of Victorian society, where individuals were expected to conform to strict moral codes.⁷

The novella highlights the consequences of suppressing one's true nature in the pursuit of maintaining a respectable facade. Dr. Jekyll's transformation into Mr. Hyde and the subsequent havoc wreaked by Hyde reveal the dangers of denying or repressing one's darker impulses. Stevenson suggests that the repression of such impulses ultimately leads to moral decay and psychological turmoil.

⁵ Kaplan, Laurie F. "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and the Fiction of the Scottish Reformation." **Studies in Scottish Literature**, vol. 29, no. 1, 1994, pp. 117-134.

⁶ Thompson, Sarah. "Victorian Morality and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*." **The Explicator**, vol. 61, no. 2, 2003, pp. 100-103.

⁷ Buzard, James. "'The Victorian Two-step' and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*." **ELH**, vol. 54, no. 3, 1987, pp. 609-626.

The fall of the gentleman: Through the tragic downfall of Dr. Jekyll and the revelation of his dual nature, Stevenson deconstructs the myth of the gentleman, exposing the fragility of social hierarchies and the inherent flaws of human character. The novella serves as a cautionary tale against the dangers of repressing one's true nature in pursuit of societal acceptance, highlighting the consequences of denying the complexities of human existence.

Conclusion

In "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," Robert Louis Stevenson offers a powerful critique of the gentleman image in Victorian England, challenging the idealized notions of morality, respectability, and social superiority that pervaded society.⁸ Through the characters of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson exposes the hypocrisy and moral contradictions that underpin Victorian society, ultimately dismantling the myth of the gentleman and revealing the complexities of human nature. As a timeless work of literature, Stevenson's novella continues to resonate with readers, prompting reflection on the nature of identity, morality, and societal norms.

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⁸ Allen, Richard. "The Duality of Human Nature in Victorian Literature." **The Victorian Newsletter**, vol. 98, 2000, pp. 26-30.