



**INFORMATION PLATFORM "CENTER FOR INNOVATIVE THINKING"
UKRAINIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENTIFIC STRATEGIES
EUROPEAN UNION RESEARCH DEPARTMENT
SCIENTIFIC AND PUBLISHING CENTER "PROGRESS"**

OXFORD INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FORUM

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
AND PRACTICAL CONFERENCE**

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Editor

Soloviov O. V.

*M.Sc.Ed., M.P.A., Hon. PhD, Academic Advisor,
Head of the European Union Research Department,
Ukrainian Institute of Scientific Strategies*

The collection of scientific articles is a scientific and practical publication that includes research papers by students, postgraduate students, Candidates and Doctors of Sciences, researchers, and practitioners from Ukraine, Europe, neighboring countries, and beyond. The articles reflect studies of processes and changes in the structure of modern science. This collection is intended for students, postgraduate and doctoral candidates, educators, researchers, practitioners, and all those interested in current trends in the development of modern science.

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Oksana Vasylivna Halchuk

Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University
Kyiv, Ukraine

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPERIMENT AND THE TRAGEDY OF THE
SCIENTIST (BASED ON ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S *STRANGE CASE
OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*)**

Abstract. The article analyzes the anthropological experiment as a key factor in the formation of the scientist's tragedy, based on Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The protagonist, Dr. Jekyll, is interpreted as an artistic embodiment of an anthropological experiment that ultimately leads to the scientist's tragic downfall.

The relevance of the study lies in the growing scholarly interest in the problem of anthropological experimentation in conjunction with the psychological split of the subject, which Stevenson interprets through the lens of moral allegory. These aspects allow the novella to be situated within a broader paradigm of literary texts addressing the problem of scientific responsibility and the critique of the idea of the "neutrality" of science.

The article examines Jekyll as a neo-romantic version of the scientist whose lack of ethical constraints results in the loss of personal integrity and self-destruction. It also analyzes the features of the novella that reflect the transformation of the Romantic tradition, including the reinterpretation of the protagonist type, the shift from Gothic to urban space, the emphasis on internal conflict, and a new understanding of the motif of doubling.

The study concludes that Jekyll represents a model of the modern scientist whose scientific consciousness reflects the crisis of the modern subject and leads to

existential disintegration as an inevitable consequence of the attempt to rationally decompose human nature.

Keywords: robert Louis Stevenson; neo-romanticism; motif of doubling; anthropological experiment; playing God motif; model of the modern scientist

1. Introduction

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) has remained at the center of both readers' and scholars' attention for over a century. While general audiences tend to perceive it primarily as a Gothic work, scholars – particularly psychologists – regard it as valuable material for exploring the problem of split subjectivity. Literary critics, in turn, focus, first, on the synthesis of different genre models (psychological novella, Gothic fiction, and science fiction), and second, on Stevenson's interpretation of the motif of doubling at various levels of the text [see: 1].

However, regardless of the chosen analytical perspective, the symbolic point of convergence of these interpretations is the figure of the protagonist, Dr. Jekyll. The relevance of studying the image of the scientist is determined by the growing interest in the problem of anthropological experimentation alongside the psychological split of the subject, which Stevenson interprets through the lens of moral allegory. These aspects allow *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to be situated within a broader paradigm of texts that address the problem of scientific responsibility and critique the idea of the “neutrality” of science.

To fully grasp the tragic dimension of Dr. Jekyll's character, it is essential to take into account Stevenson's reinterpretation of Romantic artistic traditions, which entails a new understanding of the protagonist. Unlike his adventure-oriented neo-romantic works, Stevenson abandons exotic settings: the events of the novella unfold not in a distant past or faraway lands, but in a real London. At the same time, this space is represented within the coordinates of a modern urban chronotope structured according to the principle of duality. In this sense, London functions as a living organism with a “subconscious,” divided in the same way as the protagonist himself.

The central conflict of the work shifts from a Romantic “cosmic” or external dimension to the inner sphere. Instead of the opposition “man vs. world,” the conflict takes the form of “man vs. the self.” Stevenson also rejects the Romantic model of an idealized “extraordinary hero in extraordinary circumstances.” His protagonist is a respectable bourgeois. At the same time, Jekyll’s neo-romantic challenge lies in his attempt, as a scientist, to challenge both traditional science and moral constraints.

Equally significant is Stevenson’s approach to the fantastic as an organic element of Romantic poetics: he rationalizes the irrational. Whereas in Romanticism evil often has a metaphysical origin, in this novella, it is “released” as a result of a scientific experiment. What initially appears mysterious and uncanny ultimately receives a rational explanation, much like in the stories of Edgar Allan Poe. The influence of the American Romantic is also evident in the motif of investigation carried out by the lawyer Utterson, who seeks to uncover the strange circumstances surrounding the life of his friend and client, Dr. Jekyll.

Thus, Stevenson significantly transforms the ideological and aesthetic foundations of Romanticism, creating a neo-romantic text that emphasizes the psychological dimension of the motif of doubling and integrates it into the broader problematic of modernity – particularly regarding the role of science and the figure of the scientist. It is precisely at this point of transformation that a new type of protagonist emerges: a scientist who not only seeks knowledge but also experimentally intervenes in human nature.

Stevenson was by no means the first writer to turn to the figure of the scientist. Among his major predecessors who offered not a satirical (as Aristophanes in *The Clouds*) or satirical-ironic (as Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver’s Travels* or Voltaire in *Candide*), but a tragic interpretation of this image were Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (*Faust*) and Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*). In both cases, as well as in Stevenson’s work, the figure of the scientist is closely connected with the motif of “playing God.”

This motif may be defined as a narrative centered on a character who imagines himself as a higher being capable of creating other beings and/or controlling them or

the world as a whole (whether real or imagined). When applied to the figure of the scientist, it refers to a subject who appropriates not only the right to knowledge but also the authority to radically transform human nature. In contemporary literary studies, this motif is often associated with the problematics of hubris and the transgression of the limits of human cognition.

In our view, Stevenson's enrichment of the scientist figure through this motif should be understood not only as a continuation of Romantic tradition but also as a reflection of the realities of modernity. First, it is connected to the activation of universal symbolic structures in the period's artistic consciousness. As scholars note, such structures tend to be reactivated "in periods of instability and cultural crisis... any reassessment of values (aesthetic, moral, or political) presupposes a break with previous traditions and an attempt to overturn established norms and rules... sometimes extending even to fundamental, universal categories of human existence" [3, p. 221].

Thus, *fin de siècle* literature, as the product of a crisis-ridden era, becomes a wide field for the reinterpretation of such structures. Various authorial versions of the "playing God" motif, proposed by writers such as Jack London, H. G. Wells, and Rudyard Kipling, testify to its particular relevance in modern literature. Stevenson's novella may be regarded as one of the earliest and most representative neo-romantic elaborations of this motif.

Second, the actualization of the image of the scientist and the related motif of "playing God" in *fin de siècle* literature is shaped not only by cultural crisis but also by the rapid development of science in the Victorian era. Scientific discoveries in fields such as biology, medicine, and chemistry contributed to the idea that human nature could be rationally understood and even modified. In the public consciousness, the scientist emerges as a figure endowed with almost unlimited power over life, which, in turn, raises questions about the limits of scientific intervention and ethical responsibility.

Consequently, science in the Victorian period became a symbol of rational control over nature. In particular, Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory undermines

the notion of the human being as a fixed and complete entity, opening the possibility of its scientific transformation. It is within this context that the motif of “playing God” acquires particular artistic productivity, functioning as a response to a situation in which scientific capabilities outpace ethical reflection. In Stevenson’s work, science in the hands of Dr. Jekyll becomes an instrument for dissolving the boundaries between body and spirit and for disregarding moral constraints.

In Stevenson’s novella, drawing on such genre models as Gothic, sensational, and detective fiction, and inspired in part by the real-life story of the Edinburgh gentleman-criminal William Brodie, the author creates a parable about good and evil within the human being. His protagonist is a scientist for whom human nature becomes the object of laboratory decomposition.

This lends a new dimension to the Romantic interpretation of evil: whereas in Romanticism it typically enters from the external world, in Stevenson’s text it is released from within through the agency of science.

At the center of the narrative is the story of the scientist Dr. Henry Jekyll, who succeeds in isolating his “evil” self – Mr. Edward Hyde, for whom neither goodness, nor justice, nor beauty exists. Over time, however, Jekyll becomes increasingly unable to control himself in the “guise” of Hyde, and the transformation no longer requires the use of the potion. Even when the scientist returns to his original form, his evil essence does not disappear. The only way for Jekyll to rid himself of Hyde is through suicide.

Thus, the novella constructs a topos of the scientist-creator whose experiment results in a “creature” that embodies concentrated evil. This ultimately leads to the defeat and death of the creator himself.

A distinctive feature of Stevenson’s interpretation lies in the motivation behind the scientist’s actions and, consequently, in the nature of the being he produces. In this respect, the novella reveals its connection to the Romantic literary tradition, particularly to the tragic figure of the scientist and his “creation” in *Frankenstein*. In Jekyll’s fatal desire to create another self – one that concentrates the entire negative,

primordial component of his own (and human) nature – one can also discern echoes of the Prague legend of the Golem, later reinterpreted in Shelley’s novel.

Reflecting on the scientist's ethical responsibility to society, Mary Shelley emphasizes, through the figure of Victor Frankenstein, his desire to uncover the secrets of nature to use this knowledge for the benefit of humanity. By contrast, Jekyll is fully aware that he is primarily releasing his own repressed “negative” self: “I must walk my own dark and suffering path, for I have brought upon myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am also the chief of sufferers” [3].

The nature of the beings produced through these experiments also differs significantly. Jekyll’s “creation” is one-dimensional: Hyde is the embodiment of pure evil. In contrast, the creature in Shelley’s novel possesses a sensitive and open soul. He seeks human affection but encounters only fear and rejection. Thus, Shelley’s narrative expresses the danger of assuming the role of a demiurge and highlights the scientist’s awareness of the consequences of his actions.

Stevenson articulates a similar idea in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. As in Shelley’s work, Jekyll ultimately rejects his creation by destroying it. However, in Jekyll’s case, this act entails self-destruction.

Stevenson’s position thus resonates with that articulated by Mary Shelley, who depicts the modern individual as one “educated in the spirit of Enlightenment ideas but morally unprepared to take responsibility for their actions, thereby suffering themselves and causing suffering to others” [2, p. 214].

At the same time, the motif of doubling – an essential component of the novella’s system of motifs – unfolds in a distinctive way. On the one hand, it becomes more ramified: Jekyll and Hyde; the topos of real London and that of a shadowy, uncanny London; the respectable quarters of Dr Jekyll and the Soho of Mr Hyde. These antinomies reinforce the idea of the duality of Jekyll’s soul.

This duality is also reflected in the nature of his experiment, which seeks to transform human nature – from an integral unity of positive and negative elements – into an object of laboratory decomposition. In this sense, the experiment is also

social: it offers a law-abiding citizen an opportunity to experience life beyond the constraints of the law and social norms, to transgress the moral values of civilized society. At the same time, it expresses a desire, pushed to the extreme, to free oneself from the restrictions and double standards of Victorian morality.

Jekyll's "experiment" with human nature and spirit may thus be understood as a scientific enactment of the "playing God" motif. Unlike earlier authors who explored the duality of human nature, Stevenson externalizes inner contradictions: Jekyll transforms into the monstrous murderer Hyde not only physically, but also through a simultaneous transformation of the soul.

Accordingly, the motif of doubling is complemented by the motif of the mask, where Hyde functions as Jekyll's "mask"— or, in the terminology of Carl Jung, his "shadow." Jekyll's attempt to divide human nature into separate components ultimately fails: in Hyde, evil becomes emancipated and radicalized. Thus, Hyde emerges as a model of split modern subjectivity.

In the confession letter left by Jekyll – already "defeated" by Hyde – the reader can trace the main stages of his degradation: from the euphoria of discovery, generated by the sense of scientific triumph and liberation from moral constraints, to the loss of control over his own creation, and finally to a state of existential fear, when Hyde ceases to be an instrument and becomes a subject. From that point onward, it is no longer the scientist who uses evil as material for his "laboratory decomposition," but evil that uses him.

On the other hand, despite its structural complexity, the motif of doubling is ultimately pushed to the periphery of Stevenson's text, giving way to moral and philosophical questions – namely, whether good or evil prevails in human nature, and whether a person can choose between them.

Through the story of Dr. Jekyll, Stevenson gradually develops the idea of the human soul as a repository of both good and evil, portraying a figure who outwardly conforms to social norms but inwardly lives in tension between opposing forces. According to the logic of mythological thinking, such a condition makes it impossible

to avoid either side. This idea is symbolically embodied in the spatial locus of Jekyll's house, which combines external respectability with internal ambiguity [3].

Thus, unlike Mary Shelley, Stevenson narrows the cognitive and potentially noble aims of the scientist to a subjective desire. His "creation" becomes a one-dimensional, negative reflection of that part of the self which, in Stevenson's view, constitutes an inherent element of every human being.

Consequently, both the image of the scientist and the result of his experiment in Stevenson's novella bear the imprint of the tragic worldview characteristic of the turn of the twentieth century. Unlike earlier models of the demiurgic impulse, in this text evil is not introduced into the world but revealed as an immanent component of human nature.

It is also noteworthy that not only Stevenson but H. G. Wells employs the "playing God" motif as a symbolic link between the Romantic exploration of the duality of the world and the artistic representation of the duality of human personality. In both authors, the individual, empowered by scientific knowledge, seeks to assume the role of the Creator. At the same time, both emphasize the scientist's responsibility to humanity, whose ambitions must be balanced by moral and spiritual principles.

In Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, this motif acquires an additional dimension: the novel may be interpreted not only as a "theological grotesque," but also as a dystopian narrative, in which the death of the creator-demiurge signals the collapse of his attempt to construct an obedient and subjugated community of human-animal hybrids.

Thus, Jekyll's experiment can be interpreted as one of the variations of the modern "playing God" motif. However, whereas in classical texts of this kind the scientist creates new life, Jekyll attempts to create a different version of the human being by releasing its inner dark essence. In Stevenson's work, this motif acquires a distinctly anthropological dimension: the object of experimentation is not the external world, but human nature itself.

Jekyll's tragedy lies not in the violation of a prohibition, but in the discovery of something within the human being that cannot be controlled. In this transformation, the image of the scientist itself is reconfigured: he does not create a new world but destroys the integrity of the human self. In doing so, Stevenson demonstrates that human nature cannot withstand rational experimental decomposition.

Therefore, the tragic ending of the novella – Jekyll's self-destruction – appears inevitable, as the protagonist undergoes existential disintegration in the context of the crisis of the modern subject.

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