

Advanced Higer English Dissertation

A Comparative analysis of the literary devices used to explore the central concern of the duality of man in 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr' Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson and 'The Cone Gatherers' by Robin Jenkins.

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As individuals, and human beings, we all experience the effects of the Law of duality; since life began there has always been an opposition between good and evil. In this time, Man has relentlessly persisted in this conflict that we have all struggled to resolve and this fight for control has been explored in many literary works. Through two novels, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, by Robert Louis Stevenson and *The Cone Gatherers*, by Robin Jenkins we can see how this perpetual battle affects each aspect of our life and when unresolved can lead to tragedy. In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* Stevenson creates a duality within one person, then externalises supernatural craving onto another creation. The author highlights the battle between good and evil through Dr Jekyll's desire to explore supernatural powers and to use this as an escape mechanism from the restraints of society. This escape in his movement to Hyde allows him to indulge in the evil that co-exists in Man without the moral restraint from the good in himself that would prevent him. In *The Cone Gatherers* Robin Jenkins analyses Man's evil, and his propensity for war, presenting a conflict away from the battlefields of World War Two; in the serenity of an isolated community we see the duality of man, polarised between the characters of Calum and Duror. In each novel Stevenson and Jenkins both explore the duality of human nature through effective use of similar literary devices: for example each author makes clear the significance of setting in time in place, the importance of character to communicate theme and we also witness parallels in the endings of both novels.

Section 1- Setting

While the novels are set in vastly different eras, nevertheless in each, their location in time and in place is pivotal in the author's exploration of his central ideas. Set in the late

19th century *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* exposes the true social order of the Victorian age, a class bound society with strict expectations and rigid social status. Dr Henry Jekyll, a physician and chemist has a respectable position in Victorian society and with this has certain behaviour expected of him. The repressive nature of society forces Dr Jekyll into hiding away his drives that would be considered unacceptable, sparking a conflict within himself as he accepts the moral standards of his time. These views are reflected in some of the other characters in the novel, and can be seen in their mixed views on Dr Jekyll and his hidden activities:

Pg12 *'But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind'*

Through the use of multiple narrators, we are given different perspectives on the ideas and action of the novel: for example, through the character of Dr Hastie Lanyon and his scrutiny of Dr Jekyll we recognise a general view of Jekyll. Lanyon, a fellow scientist and friend of Jekyll cuts off every tie with the Doctor after finding out about Jekyll's fascination with indulging in the release of "evil" spirits. In contrast to Jekyll, who is a "metaphysical" scientist, Lanyon is a "traditional" scientist- completely uninterested in "the other world". Stevenson sets the novel in a time of great significance for science, in an age when modern medical science was progressing rapidly, in a time when any medical advance seemed possible but through the stark contrast in methods between Jekyll and Lanyon we see the strict boundaries set by society and the control it exerts. In conjunction with the significance of the time in which the novel is staged, the setting in place plays just as much importance in exploring his ideas. Through Stevenson's detailed descriptions of London he establishes a mood of suspense and suggests a foreboding sense of evil that lingers throughout the novel;

'with its muddy ways, and slatternly passages, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed....like a district of some city in a nightmare.'

Stevenson utilises the setting of the streets of London as a device to show the other side of Victorian life and through these series of sinister descriptions he continues the theme of repression. The streets of London represent the idea that something is being hidden, as if something is being repressed - in this case it is the secret of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde but on a wider level, Stevenson implies the hidden depths of our unconscious where dark desires are hidden from us. He creates an air of suspicion and freakish mystery, and it is significant that these are the streets where Hyde roams in the darkness of night. Setting is also used again through Dr Jekyll's house in Soho where even the building reflects the repressive control of society. Hyde has a separate entrance to the house, through a "blistered and distained" door and through Mr Hyde exiting by a backdoor the notion of the hidden nature of the unconscious is again suggested. It is symbolic that Hyde uses the house as a means of hiding, and lives a completely different life from Dr Jekyll, who uses the character of Hyde as his own kind of hiding place to shelter himself from the real world and to explore his own drives. In addition, this distinction between the imposing façade of the front of Jekyll's house and the slum- like back alley where Hyde enters and exists can be seen to mirror the hypocrisy of Victorian society which insisted on strict moral behaviour yet which had dark depths it chose to ignore.

A similar use of setting in time in place is displayed by Jenkins in his exploration of his central ideas. As in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the time period in which *The Cone*

Gatherers is set in a time vital in revealing its central themes. Fixed in the middle of The Second World War we are shown that war cannot be escaped by retreating into the wood, and that there are wars to be found in everyday life. In the novel we see a conflict between good and evil once again, where instead of existing within one individual and then being externalised onto another creation as in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, we are given an example of the duality of man that is more separate and polarised from the start with each character symbolic of one of these forces. This duality is portrayed through two extremes, in the characters of Duror and Calum. We can see how Jenkins vividly creates an image for us through his linear style of language, seeming apparently simple but concealing complexities below the surface:

pg30 *'It was a morning that seemed to beguile the mind with recollections of time of innocence before evil and unhappiness were born.'*

Robin Jenkins uses such diction and choice of detail to clearly create a scenic platform for the story to unfold on. The significance of imagery is also made apparent with reference to one particular image- the tree. Through the tree Jenkins gives life to several important symbols. Through the image of the tree we not only see the resemblance to where Jesus Christ, and in the end Calum, pays the ultimate price of death, but it is also used to represent the destructive force of Duror's hatred:

Pg9 *'the overspreading tree of revulsion within him'*

Through one image Jenkins portrays the productive and destructive forces within nature. The central themes are exposed once again through the significance of setting in time in place. Through Jenkins' emphasis on the time in which the novel is set we see how significant a role the war plays in the novel:

Pg43 ‘ “Something has come between us and the things we love, the things on which our faith depends: flowers and dogs and trees and friends” ’

We are shown through several of the central characters how war has sharpened their perceptions and has made them question their own values and beliefs. Through the character of Duror we see how war has the capacity to change man and how it highlights the nature and the presence of evil. Duror’s inability to participate, and to perform a patriotic role in the war contributes to his sense of frustration so, unable to turn his hatred against the ‘national enemy’, he focuses it exclusively on the innocent character of Calum. Through the character of Lady Runcie-Campbell we also see how the time period is involved in the exploration of Jenkins’ main ideas. As in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, in one sense the novel concerns the place of the individual in the social order, with numerous references to social position throughout. Lady Runcie-Campbell finds herself at the top end of the social hierarchy, with an ‘almost mystical sense of responsibility as a representative of the ruling class’, often finding herself in conflict with this, and her desire to lead a truly Christian life. Paradoxically, Lady Runcie-Campbell represents, to some extent, the Dr Jekyll type figure, torn between desire and the pressure to conform to the ways of society. It is also through the setting in *The Cone Gatherers* that Jenkins creates a sense of duality. On a local scale we see the novel set in the remoteness of the Scottish Highlands, out the way of the immediate path of the War, where Jenkins uses the forest as a representation of the good:

Pg2 ‘Slowly the mottled yellow of the chestnuts, the bronze of beech, the

*saffron of birches, all the magnificent sombre harmonies of decay,
became indistinguishable'*

The goodness of the forest is represented through Jenkins' detailed use of imagery and symbolism. For example in the forest fir cones are gathered for new trees, most of which had been cut down for the 'war effort'; this will lead to rebirth and regeneration, all of these representing goodness and purity, and all resembling the good side of the duality of man. The setting also represents the tough ongoing battle with evil and just as the war is surrounding the calm of the forest, evil is always present within us. The contrast between 'good' and 'evil' through setting is highlighted once again through Lady Runcie-Campbell, presenting parallels with *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Just as Dr Henry Jekyll uses his house to retreat from the repression of society, Lady Runcie-Campbell uses her mansion as an escape from facing the dilemmas of the outside. Lady Runcie-Campbell is torn by what her Christian lifestyle expects of her and what her aristocratic status demands of her. She, herself has her own personal battle and this is essentially what prevents her from rationally dealing with the conflict between Duror and Calum. Setting is also used to show the evil side of the duality through the War once again. Even in this idyllic setting, there is no refuge from the war and what it represents. Their sanctuary is invaded by obsession, conflict and evil:

Pg1 *'More sudden and swifter than hawks, and roaring louder than
waterfalls, aeroplanes had shot down from the sky over the wood'*

Even in the remoteness of the forest, war and evil cannot be escaped; in the peace and tranquillity of the estate there is a disturbance of evil by war, along with the disturbance

of evil in the forest that is Duror. Jenkins' purpose is to show that there is an 'evil' present in all human-beings and that it is always there, undeniably, just as we are constantly reminded of war even in the remote setting of *The Cone Gatherers*.

Section 2 - Character

This dichotomy between good and evil introduced in the setting of each novel is explored and developed through characterisation, most specifically through Dr Jekyll and Calum. It is interesting that whereas Jenkins shows the duality in man through separation into two separate characters, Stevenson initially presents a single character before isolating the darker side of the Man in one malevolent creature, Mr Hyde. In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Stevenson uses the one body of Dr Jekyll to host his two main protagonists and through this symbolises a duality. Stevenson uses the character of Hyde to represent the evil found in all people with Jekyll using Hyde as a means of expressing his evil impulses. Stevenson creates the character of Dr Jekyll as a man with an air of mystery- even his closest friends do not have a clear picture of him. However, we do find out about his fascination with the different facets of the human personality and his desire to explore them:

Pg58 *'it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance, I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine.'*

Stevenson shows Jekyll's comfort with taking on the form of Mr Hyde to express his evil side freely without the restraints of society. Since Jekyll's youth he had been interested in supernaturalism, confessing to many youthful indiscretions which he enjoyed but had to be careful to keep them secret. Morally constricted, Jekyll found it

hard to reconcile some of these baser urges and suppressed them. However, the fascination he had with the theory that man had a 'good' and an 'evil' side remained. He takes on a God-like role in his creation of Hyde and creates a whole new person who he can use to release his evil expressions - Mr Edward Hyde is 'the beast in the man' and is used by Stevenson to explore his main ideas. We see clearly through imagery, and the perspectives of several of the other characters, the evil persona of Mr Hyde, as an example through Mr Utterson describing him as:

Pg21 '*Hissing like a cornered snake*'

and Mr Poole accusing him as being:

Pg52 '*like a rat*'

Mr Hyde's evil status is enhanced with the frequent references to his devil-like qualities, for example when Enfield describes him as 'like Satan' and as having 'Satan's signature upon his face'. When Hyde starts to appear without volition, Jekyll's fears engulf him and he recognises that he is slowly losing hold of his "original and better self". We soon see how, given free rein, the evil side of our nature develops rapidly. Hyde's malice and decadence are sex-related and sadistic and quickly expand in violence till ultimately they end in murder:

'that child of hell had nothing human; nothing lived in him but fear and hatred'

However this is the complete opposite to Jekyll whose aim, as a doctor, is to save life. He decides to stop taking the potion when he realises what Hyde has done, but we truly see how their lives are inter-dependant when Jekyll keeps the clothes of Hyde, showing

that his repentance is questionable and his resolution is in doubt. Jekyll realises the power that Hyde has over him and is aware of the need to control him, initiating his fear of the gallows, should anything happen to Hyde.

The use of characterisation is mirrored once again in *The Cone Gatherers* where this time Jenkins creates a duality between two separate characters and stages a conflict between good and the urges of evil. It is through the character of Calum that Jenkins expresses the symbolism that is central to the novel. Calum is used as the representation of goodness but also as an allegory for a Christ-like figure, loving of nature and living his life with purity and innocence:

Pg54 *'In the tree here was Calum's happiness. Here were his friends the finches, safe from the hawk scouting above.'*

Calum symbolises the Christ-like figure, and displays this through his love for nature and hatred of violence. Even though he is hunchbacked and retarded, Calum still marvels in everything around him acting with the innocence and wonder of a child. Calum's proximity to and identification with nature does, however, draw attention to 'the terrifying mystery, why creatures he loved should kill one another'. This mind set expressed by Calum symbolises that of God, with whose creation of the world came destruction of one man by another. Just as a duality like this is paralleled in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Calum is a complete representation of immaculate innocence where Jekyll is fighting a battle between his own good and evil. It is in Calum's death on a tree that we ultimately see the most religious symbol of the whole novel. Just as Christ did, Calum, a man of purity and innocence dies for no wrong doing of his own and as in the case of Dr Jekyll is engulfed by evil, paying the ultimate price

in the end. But where Jekyll's punishment is brought by his own hand, Calum has done nothing to deserve his fate. The character of Duror is a prime example of Jenkins' overall pessimistic attitude as an author: Duror is the representation of evil and at an allegorical level, the devil. We see Duror's darkened and destructive side immediately as he obsesses over Calum:

Pg9 *'Duror the gamekeeper, in an icy sweat of hatred, with his gun aimed all the time at the feeble-minded hunchback grovelling over the rabbit.'*

Yet even with his character firmly established and his penetrating hatred of the protagonists in the novel, we still sympathise with Duror in the beginning. At the start of the novel we have access to some of Duror's thoughts that cause us to sympathise with his life circumstances; he has a terminally ill wife and faces problems with his mother-in-law and it is clear even now that he finds physical deformity- as in his obese wife- abhorrent. However, Duror acts as the symbol of evil in the novel and we soon lose all access to his thoughts and therefore become detached from his character, condemning him as the evil in his disturbed character grows more and more apparent. 'Dur', meaning hard, is reflected in his character with a merciless hatred for Calum and an urge to kill that can never truly be explained. Therefore, Duror's pursuit of Calum can only be partly understood, and one of the haunting qualities of this novel is the element of mystery that exists similarly in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, as to what motivates Dr Jekyll and in this case Duror to such extreme actions. The duality takes on a similar religious form as it does in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* with the evil side of the conflict containing devil-like connotations. With

echoes of the Bible, Duror tries to convince Lady-Runcie Campbell of Calum's false wrong doings, just as the devil turned people against Christ before his death. Duror is consumed by obsession and hatred for goodness, but in the end this acts as his downfall. Duror also represents the struggling evil that similarly struck Dr Jekyll; however, unlike Jekyll, Duror shows no attempt to regain any goodness. Jekyll has a moment of recognition, when he realises the control that his evil has over him and he attempts to reconcile this whereas Duror's obsession has taken him over and he feels no remorse or sense of repentance for the evil he has committed -showing his character in its true light.

Section 3- Ending

Through the ending of each novel, the novelists convey a pessimistic view as there seems to be no resolution, with each novel ending in the death of the protagonist. Similarly, both deaths are significant in the context of the battle between good and evil. In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Jekyll cannot break free from the controlling influence of Hyde, and faces retribution for over-reaching in his exploration of the human personality:

Pg63 '*I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling for freedom*'.

Dr Jekyll knows exactly what he is doing, and why he is doing it, though he cannot know how it will turn out. He took pleasure in taking the form of the notorious Hyde, who was now a rigid part of his being but it is when Hyde starts to appear involuntarily that Jekyll becomes a frightened recluse, trying desperately to control Hyde. Evil had been taking over Dr. Jekyll from the start of his experimentation until the tragic end

where evil wins its victory. The control that Hyde has over Jekyll is a punishment for his cravings, allowing the darker side of man's nature to gain dominance instead of being kept in balance:

'I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name.'

The realisation of his hopeless situation is when we first begin to see the punishment of the protagonist. Jekyll succeeds only in separating out Hyde while he himself remains a mix of good and evil. The evil in Hyde turns out to be so much stronger than the good in Dr. Jekyll and, once set free, evil wins all. Dr. Jekyll knew that Hyde was part of his soul so when suicide was committed, it did not matter whether it is Dr. Jekyll or Hyde who kills himself because both contain Hyde. Both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde contain evil, and Dr. Jekyll ultimately learned he could not destroy Hyde without also destroying himself.

In *The Cone Gatherers*, the death of the protagonist is similar in that evil triumphs over good, however with Jenkins polarising the conflict from the beginning we see differences in that the act of death is sacrificial. Through other characters in the novel, Jenkins highlights the Christian virtue and the overriding battle between good and evil:

Pg77 *'I find no fault in them'*

Mr Tullock and Lady Runcie-Campbell take on the character of Pontius Pilate from the Bible: the Roman who was indecisive over sending Jesus to be crucified. Just as Pilate defended Christ, Mr Tullock defends the cone-gatherers in front of Lady Runcie-Campbell, in a scene that closely resembles the trial of Jesus Christ. Through his omniscient narration, Jenkins draws attention to the skill of his storytelling, by pacing out the drama and management of suspense. In the beginning of the novel the

uncertainty of Duror's mental state and anticipation of the outcome of the story is strongly implied through the use of such a narrator.

Pg9 '*But now the wood was invaded and defiled; its cleansing and reviving virtues were gone.*'

A similar air of suspense and mystery is found in *The Strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and is used to create a constant sense of tension between two forces. In the end, the obsessive hatred of Duror is the force that drives him to do what he does to Calum. Like the death of Jekyll and Hyde, in *The Cone Gatherers* there is an end to two opposing forces but through the death of two separate bodies. Duror has become a demonic, unrecognisable figure, that has embodied extreme evil and destructiveness. Just as in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, evil comes out triumphant over good and, similar to the manner in which Dr Jekyll and Hyde perished together, Duror and Calum do so as well- it is the nature of evil to strike itself down just to see the good being defeated. This overbearing sense of religious allegory reaches its pinnacle in the moments leading up to and in the moment of Calum's death. When Calum is crucified it is an allegory of the life of Christ, dying to save mankind, thereby destroying the forces of evil in Duror, and providing hope and salvation for the future.

In both *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Cone Gatherers*, Stevenson and Jenkins share a pessimistic attitude in the outcome of each of the novels. Through the death of the protagonists we not only see the consequences of the duality of man but also mankind's fallen nature. Stevenson shows the anguish of humanity's compliance with the Law of duality and the realisation that must be faced – that in our unconscious there are good and evil powers that we cannot control, and Jenkins

presents a pessimistic analysis of man's nature and illustrates to us that the natural triumph of Good over Evil belongs in the realm of children's fairy tales rather than the world that we inhabit.

Footnotes

- Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Penguin classics Pg 12
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Penguin classics Pg 26
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Penguin classics Pg 58
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- Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Penguin classics Pg 63
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- Robin Jenkins, *The Cone Gatherers*, Longman Pg 43
- Robin Jenkins, *The Cone Gatherers*, Longman Pg 2
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