Gothic Surface, Gothic Depth: The Subject of Secrecy in Stevenson and Wilde

Man is not truly one but two, I say two because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens. — THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

Insincerity . . . is merely a method by which we can multiply our personalities.

Such . . . was Dorian Gray’s opinion. He used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceived the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence. To him man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex, multiform creature . . . — THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

Gothic Humanism

The post-Frankenstein monster emerges at the turn of the century as a creature marked by an essential duality and a potential multiplicity. While we remarked that the monster in Frankenstein is always part of his maker, always also constructing his author, the dialectic between monster and maker is resolved in both Robert Louis Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886) and Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891) as a conflict staged in a single body. If the monster’s monstrosity in Frankenstein depended upon the fragility of his maker’s humanity, the hideous nature of Mr. Hyde can only be known through the failed respectability of Dr. Jekyll, and the decrepitude of Dorian’s portrait is only significant when juxtaposed to his own youthful beauty.

In order to understand why the monster returns as two monsters, it is helpful and necessary to compare Robert Louis Stevenson’s shilling shocker to its twin tale, Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray. The two
novels play out the drama of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by presenting the same history but in very different forms—one is, as Stevenson put it, a “Gothic gnome,”1 stunted, cramped, ugly and designed to shock not soothe; the other is beautiful, artistic, born of aesthetics. In each book Gothic effect depends upon the production of a monstrous double and in each the plot resolves itself into a tidy (if unconvincing) moral resolution. Furthermore, both novels were dubbed “poisonous” by reviewers and were reviled for both their forms and their subject matter.

“Man is not truly one but truly two. . . .” says Dr. Jekyll as he pursues his scientific experimentation. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde uses multiple narrators to tell the story of a man doomed by the chemical reproduction of his double. Dr. Jekyll, we learn, is a man tormented by a sense of the essential duplicity of his being and, indeed, by a sense of “the thorough and primitive duality of man.”2 Jekyll embarks upon what he conceives of as a moral and scientific project, the dissociation of the “polar twins” of the self. Experimenting with various chemical compounds, Jekyll discovers a potion which, when he imbibes it, transforms his body into that of his other self. The other self, Mr. Hyde, enacts Jekyll’s undignified desires and haunts the streets of London, a small and dark, indescribably ugly character. Hyde’s menacing aspect and his violent ways lead him to murder and Jekyll vows never to drink the transformative potion again. The metamorphosis, however, has become spontaneous and Jekyll feels his respectable side succumbing to the evil of his double. The story unfolds through the narratives of Jekyll’s lawyer, John Gabriel Utterson; his friend and colleague, Dr. Lanyon; and finally the last testament of Jekyll himself. The various narratives combine to create a mystery, the mystery surrounding Hyde—who is he, where did he come from, why is he so evil, what is his connection to the good Dr. Jekyll—which can only be solved after Jekyll’s death when Utterson reads the papers he leaves behind.

In Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray, a young man sells his soul to be eternally youthful while a portrait of him grows old in his place. Under the tutelage of Lord Henry Wotton, a cynic and a man of leisure, Dorian learns to take immense pleasure in a superficial life. While his painting takes on the appearance of depth, Dorian remains a perfect surface, a canvas stretched across a soul. Lord Henry appears as a kind of Frankenstein figure in this narrative and he sees Dorian as a live experiment in “natural science”: “To a large extent the lad was his own creation. He had made him premature. That was something.”3 But Dorian
is also Basil Hallward's creation since Basil paints his portrait and thus divides him against himself. When he saw the portrait for the first time, Dorian “drew back and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized himself for the first time” (24). Dorian's desire to be the self he sees in the picture dooms him.

By reading Stevenson’s Gothic gnome alongside Wilde’s “poisonous book,” I hope to read one as an inversion of the other and both as Gothic narratives of a self marked, not by its fear of the other, but by a paranoid terror of involution or the unraveling of a multiformed ego. But this is not a psychological study, not a psychoanalysis of these two dual egos; this is a history of subject formation within the Gothic narrative which examines why and how these narratives seem to insist upon psychological interpretations and why and how such psychological readings already assume the self that is in fact in the process of being constructed within the horror story. In other words, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde creates a self within the self, it constructs a depth to subjectivity, but we are prone to read it as a description of the conflict between man’s inner and outer being. The Picture of Dorian Gray, however, works backwards; it critiques the notion that subjectivity is a deep structure and it demands that we stay “shallow,” that we remain at the surface, that we take surface as truth, that we understand truth as always superficial, and that we cultivate instead an understanding of subjectivity based upon the lie.

Critics have a tendency to read Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in particular as a morality tale about Victorian hypocrisy. Martin Tropp, for example, in Images of Fear, compares the myth of Jack the Ripper and the fiction told by Stevenson in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in terms of the violence produced by a contradiction between outward appearance and inner reality: “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde became a blueprint for speculation about the murders because both events—fictional and factual—conveyed, graphically and undeniably, a sense of the precariousness of a culture caught between outward respectability and secret violence” (24). Hypocrisy, however, the tension between “outward respectability” and “secret violence,” already assumes too much about the shared monstrosity of a Dr. Jekyll and Jack the Ripper. It assumes that the humanity of the subject, for example, is founded upon the three-dimensional form of subjecthood. It assumes that a surface of respectability is antithetical to a hidden violence. But perhaps it is only the modern reader who understands “respectable” to mean “nonviolent”; Stevenson’s story makes the vio-
lent, the criminal, and the destructive continuous with the respectable surface.

Tropp, indeed, in an effort to be historical, has precisely transcended history by making historical categories like “respectability” a cause rather than an effect of cultural narratives about Gothic selves. Tropp continues: “Stevenson’s private nightmare and Whitechapel’s public reality were parallel events and together foreshadowed the way the modern world has come to view human possibility. Random, purposeless violence is the ultimate horror of the city in the twentieth century, a horror made possible by urban anonymity and the loss of community” (130). The idea of a foreshadowing and a consequent production of a new horror, of course, constructs a mythical time “before” when there was a community (that is now lost) and a more optimistic view of “human possibility.” I propose that we read one Gothic narrative, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, inside another, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and allow the one to unravel the other precisely so that we may avoid a transhistorical and humanist reading of Gothic. Certainly fictional horror and factual horror are in some kind of dialogue but they are not merely symptoms of the decay and essential monstrosity of humanness. Rather, they are narratives that produce ideological and interpretive strategies for readers to recognize the human and distinguish between human and monster.

*Gothic Gnomes*

Stevenson viewed *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as a “shilling shocker” or “a fine bogey tale” written very quickly to earn money. In an essay on the mass readership of the Victorian period, Patrick Brantlinger and Richard Boyle take Stevenson’s comments to refer to the double bind of the artist torn between writing literary masterpieces and making money. Stevenson, they suggest, struggles with the notion that if his work is widely read then it must be deformed or it must resemble the sensationalist “yellow press” of the day. They write: “Stevenson as popular author shares in the criminal ‘popularity’ or populace-like nature of Hyde. ‘There must be something wrong with me.’ The statement is, in a sense, the formula of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* itself. There is ‘something wrong’ in the story — that is Hyde — and this accounts for its popularity” (274). Bratlinger and Boyle provide a provocative analysis of Stevenson’s conception of his own popularity and they dissect the opposition of
popularity and the literary and the juxtaposition of Gothic and deformity implicit in Stevenson’s disdain of his “Gothic gnome.” What exactly is wrong with Mr. Hyde is not so easily explained, however, since he seems to be wrong in a multitude of ways. Like Frankenstein’s monster, Mr. Hyde is visually repellant but unlike Frankenstein’s monster, his repulsive nature extends beyond his exterior. Hyde is born bad and he is bad through and through; he also represents the evil core of his author, Mr. Jekyll.

Both Stevenson’s book and Hyde are Gothic gnomes in that Hyde is “dwarfish” (18) and “ape-like” (27) and has a “haunting sense of unexpressed deformity” (32); and the novel is very short, a kind of stunted work which, despite the obvious moral overtones, concerns itself with the dark recesses of the city and the self. The novel’s very popularity announces it as nonliterary within a Victorian context and its appeal for a mass audience suggests that it must fail to satisfy the high cultural expectations that critics like Matthew Arnold espoused. 6

Stevenson’s identification of his “shilling shocker” with the monstrous Hyde is reminiscent of an earlier connection made by Mary Shelley between book and monster when she dubbed Frankenstein “my hideous progeny.” We might say, in fact, that the merger of book and monster is a typical Gothic strategy but it is also an identification that is repeated in many histories of the novel which make the Gothic a kind of degenerate cousin to the realist novel. 7 Gothic novels, indeed, play monster to the three-volume masterpiece that represented art or culture in the nineteenth century. 8 Like other Gothic novels, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is not a “masterpiece” but a “monsterpiece” and, ironically, it tells the story of a monster hiding in the master.

Like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and like Frankenstein, a mainstay of The Picture of Dorian Gray is the connection that Wilde makes between art and monstrosity. The obvious metaphor of monstrous textuality in the novel is the picture of Dorian Gray painted by Basil Hallward who is in love with him. Dorian wishes one day that “the face on the canvas bear the burden of his passions and his sins,” that it, instead of him, should grow old. His wish is granted and the portrait becomes a record of his life, his desires, his corruption while he retains the bloom of youth and purity. But there is also another metaphor for corrupt artistic production in this novel—the “poisonous book” that Lord Henry Wotton sends to Dorian, now his protégé.

Even though Wilde made it clear that his story is a morality play
about the intersections of life and art, the public reception of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* still turned the novel into a monster. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was immediately slandered by the press as “poisonous,” as filled with “odors of moral and spiritual putrefaction,” as obsessed with “disgusting sins and abominable crimes.” Wilde responded to such criticism by claiming that, far from being an immoral tale, his book was in fact too moral. He writes in a letter to the editor of *The Daily Chronicle*: “My story is an essay on decorative art. It reacts against the crude brutality of plain realism. It is poisonous if you like, but you cannot deny that it is also perfect. . . .” The “poisonous book” that infects Dorian is supposedly Huysman’s *Against Nature* and it is described in the text as a “yellow book” and as “the strangest novel he had ever read. . . . It was a novel without a plot” (125). The “yellow” novel becomes an obvious metaphor for Wilde’s novel itself but it also becomes an uncanny double for the kind of monstrosity that Gray represents. Like the book, Dorian is “perfect,” he is all form and no content. Dorian is in some sense plotless because his life is not written upon his body but upon his portrait. He is beautiful but all surface and without depth.

The allegory of artistic production that both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* tell makes the process of narration itself Gothic. While the “poisonous book” in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is offensive because it has no plot, the picture of Dorian is hideous because it has too much plot and these two sources of disgust are both made more hideous by the fact of Dorian’s own perfect beauty. Similarly, the relationship between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is that of a terrible dependency between author and text (and Jekyll is depicted as a junky addicted to his chemical production). Hyde is born of Jekyll and yet, Jekyll’s narrative, the authentic, realist, and conventional tale of a good man’s undoing, is organized by and mandated by Hyde’s tale. In the process of telling, of course, the Gothic and the realist stories become completely entangled and instead of resolving themselves into two different lines of logic, they rise and fall together. Indeed, the narrative trajectories in both novels lead inexorably towards the blending of one identity into the other. Jekyll comments: “All things therefore seemed to point to this; that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and slowly becoming incorporated with my second and worse” (90).

The profound entanglement of identities and genres in both of the novels I am discussing here suggests that textual identities mesh with physical identities and bodies are bound up in souls and perversions are
inextricably wedded to respectability and evil or immoral activity is con-
tinuous with what we call human. The task of each of these novels,
however, is to unwind the messy skein of identities and separate out the
good from the ugly, the bad from the pure, the perverted from the kind,
the sexual from the spiritual, the beautiful from the unhealthy. But as
much as the texts seem to manipulate and stretch their monsters, pulling
them further and further from the jeopardy of “human” identity, the
more the tendency is towards chaos. Monsters, texts, sexualities, and
identities seem, like Hyde, to retract automatically to the “slime of the
pit” (100) and, like Jekyll, they are always in danger of transformation.
For the brief moments that monster does stand apart from human we
catch a glimpse of the construction of identities and we witness the ways
in which Gothic deploys monstrosity to condense negative meaning into
bodies with highly specific sexual, racial, and class codings. This chapter
attempts to read the ghostly apparitions of homosexual, Jew, and
woman when and where they enter and leave the site of monstrosity.

Dress and Disguise

The monster is always a master of disguise and his impermanence
and fleeting sense of reality precisely marks him as monstrous. In Dr.
Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson makes disguise a structural principle as
well as a thematic. He blurs completely the generic specificity that was
supposed to separate the literature of vulgarity from the literature of
“sweetness and light” and indeed, he disguises one as the other (the
Gothic tale is disguised as a moral fable; the moral fable is disguised as a
monster story) but it becomes impossible to decide what or who is
dressed as what or whom. This story, like The Picture of Dorian Gray, is
finally a costume drama.

Some contemporary reviews of Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
call attention to the peculiarity of this novel’s form and content and to
the sense that, like Jekyll/Hyde, the novel itself is somehow in disguise.
Henry James, for example, uses very specifically sartorial metaphors to
describe Stevenson’s writing: “There are writers who present themselves
before the critic with just the right amount of drapery that is necessary
for decency; but Mr Stevenson is not one of those—he makes his ap-
pearance in an amplitude of costume. His costume is part of his charac-
ter... it never occurs to us to ask how he would look without it. Before
all things he is a writer with style.”11 James here makes literary style into a
“costume” that both cloaks the writer and his subject but that also becomes integral to the writer’s identity. Elsewhere Stevenson himself refers to literary form as “so much plastic material.” But note that, in terms of Gothic writing, literary language is described in terms of its “amplitude,” its excess. Gothic seems to denote the clothed word as opposed to the near nakedness of supposed realist writing which hesitates to call attention to its costume.

We might almost say that the grotesque effect of Gothic is achieved through a kind of transvestism, a dressing up that reveals itself as costume. Gothic is a cross-dressing, drag, a performance of textuality, an infinite readability and, indeed, these are themes that are readily accessible within Gothic fiction itself where the tropes of doubling and disguise tend to dominate the narrative. If we apply this Jamesian metaphor of the cross-dressed word to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, we have to situate Jekyll as a man who fits comfortably into his own clothes and is a metaphor for the realist writing that presents itself “with just the right amount of drapery that is necessary for decency.” Hyde, on the other hand, appears at one point in the novel dressed in Jekyll’s clothes and they seem to drown him because they are too big for him. Hyde represents the outrageously dressed up Gothic horror, a monster in lawyer’s clothes. But he is also the costume that Jekyll assumes at times. Jekyll remarks: “I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted professor and to assume, like a thick cloak, that of Edward Hyde” (85). He also refers to Hyde as a form that he “wears” (90).

Writing is characterized very specifically as disguise in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Handwriting, at several points in the narrative, is held up as a witness to identity. In one scene Utterson’s head clerk, “a great student and critic of handwriting” (38), is given an opportunity to compare Dr. Jekyll’s handwriting with that of his “minion,” Mr. Hyde. Guest comes quickly to the conclusion that “there’s a rather singular resemblance; the two hands are in many points identical: only differently sloped” (39). Here autographs and signatures become the inscriptions of a dual identity and one is assumed to be a forgery of the other. But of course, both identities and neither of them are forged; each one depends upon the hidden presence of the other and each must perform and inscribe the doubleness and instability of the identity they share. Moving back and forth between these two tales, one of Dr. Jekyll and one of Mr. Hyde, the text alternates between the two differently sloped handwritings as one tale constantly disguises or writes over the other. Jekyll’s tragic tale of
decline is underwritten by Hyde's sensational story of murder and mayhem. Hyde's struggle to liberate himself from the repressive force of the doctor is overcome by Jekyll's attempt to return to the cozy nest of professional camaraderie represented by his friends Utterson and Lanyon. The realist story of a good doctor striving for knowledge is shot through with the Gothic tale of sexual outrage and physical violence. Never one without the other.

In case the cross-dressing performance that Gothic represents (Gothic as a perverse costume that the realist story is dressed up in) seems obscure, let us return to James's analysis of Stevenson's style. Having drawn the analogy between style and costume, he goes one step further: “Mr. Stevenson delights in a style, and his has nothing accidental or diffident; it is eminently conscious of its responsibilities and meets them with a kind of gallantry — as if language were a pretty woman, and a person who proposes to handle it had of necessity be something of a Don Juan” (141). The significant aspect of this passage, of course, lies in James's characterization of language as a “pretty woman,” as feminine, as ornamentation that treads that thin line between pretty and garish. An “amplitude of costume” in such an analogy suggests a dangerous proximity both to prostitution (dressed to sell perhaps, keeping in mind that Stevenson wrote *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* hoping to make some money from its sales) but also to a grotesque transvestism. James continues his analysis of the writer as a Don Juan in relation to the seductive allure of “pretty” literary language:

> The bravery of gesture is a noticeable part of his nature, it is rather odd that at the same time a striking feature of that nature should be an absence of care for things feminine. His books are for the most part books without women, and it is not women who fall most in love with them. But Mr. Stevenson does not need, as we might say, a petticoat to inflame him: a happy collocation of words will serve the purpose. (141)

Again, this is a curiously inflected passage in which James wants to claim the romantic proclivities of a Don Juan for Stevenson while noting that women seem to neither interest nor be interested in him. What serves as his love object in this passage is language itself, and a language moreover which is characterized by femininity and which can therefore allow the author to “achieve his best effects without the aid of the ladies.”

I will claim here that Gothic, the “amplitude of costume” and the
feminine guise which is worn by an author, plays homosexual to the healthy and appropriately garbed heterosexuality of realism. Gothic is the debased and degenerate cousin who calls too much attention to himself by an outrageous and almost campy performance of all of the tricks of the literary trade. Gender and genre here, and genre and sexuality, slide into each other as plasticity of form comes to define gender, genre, and sexual identity. But, as I will show in my discussion of the cross-dressing Gothic-homo performances of Jekyll, Hyde, and Dorian Gray, Gothic reveals the ideological stakes of a bourgeois realism—namely, there is no one generic form that resembles “life” and another debased form that deviates from the natural order of things. There are only less or more fantastic costumes, less or more Gothic interpretations of reality. As Arthur Symons said of Stevenson, “He was never really himself except when he was in some fantastic disguise.” The fantastic disguises in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and The Picture of Dorian Gray are precisely what make each character “really himself.”

Disguise in The Picture of Dorian Gray is a little more complicated but it just as obviously becomes a trope for homoerotic desire. We need to read dress and disguise in this novel against the backdrop of decadence. Oscar Wilde, of course, is considered to be one of the main representatives of the decadent movement in England and the protagonists of The Picture of Dorian Gray embody the kinds of attitudes and demeanors that were popularly associated with decadence and dandyism. Some scholars, like Regenia Gagnier, link dandyism to “high Society” and the aristocracy. But Richard Dellamora, in Masculine Desire, claims that the dandy has been misidentified or “misplaced”: “Although some aristocrats were dandies, the ‘dandy’ as a popular phenomenon is middle-class. . . . Dandyism was associated with middle-class uppity-ism . . . dandyism also reflects a loss of balance between the dual imperatives of leisure and work incumbent upon Victorian gentlemen. The dandy is too relaxed, too visible, consumes to excess while producing little or nothing.” The dandy is also, as Dellamora makes clear, too feminine. He unites, then, the threat of idleness and a delinquent femininity in a male form that is marked by its desire to be noticed.

The dandy, of course, is a Gothic monster in the context of Oscar Wilde’s narrative about the beautiful Dorian Gray. Like the monstrosity of Frankenstein’s creature or of Hyde, the horror exerted by the dandy is multipurpose and primarily visual. He represents too much and too little, excess and paucity; the dandy represents the parasitical aristocrat
and the upwardly mobile bourgeois. He obviously also represents the homosexual male. Wilde characterizes Dorian's dandyism in terms of his fashion sense: "Fashion, by which what is really fantastic becomes for a moment universal, and dandyism, which in its own way, is an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of beauty, had, of course, their fascination for him" (129). His "fashion" sense, his charm, his foppery make Dorian a monster because they allow him to seduce men and women alike with his appearance of perfect purity. Vampirelike, Dorian lives upon the desire he consumes from his lovers and he revels in the contrast between his own beauty and "the evil and aging face on the canvas" (128). As his body becomes more and more a fashion plate, a place to hang costumes, so the canvas devolves more and more into sin and corruption.

Dorian’s affair with Sibyl Vane reveals the real stakes that Wilde's narrative has in costume and disguise. Early on in the story, Dorian falls in love with a young actress. When he first sees her, Sibyl is playing Juliet, another time she is Rosalind "wandering through the forest of Arden, disguised as a pretty boy in hose and doublet and dainty cap" (51). Dorian desires the girl obviously for her performances, and particularly for her transvestite performances, and he asks Lord Henry ironically, "Harry! why didn’t you tell me that the only thing worth loving is an actress?" (51). Sibyl’s appeal for Dorian lies completely in her ability to be all the “great heroines of the world in one” and never simply Sibyl Vane. She is even able to be some of the “pretty boys” of the world. But when she reveals herself to be just plain Sibyl Vane, Dorian feels that she has “killed my love” (86). “You,” she says, “taught me what reality really is. Tonight, for the first time, I saw through the hollowness, the sham, the silliness of the empty pageant in which I had always played” (86). And it is precisely when the boundaries between the spheres of art and life are too clearly drawn that desire, for Dorian, disappears.

For Dorian, and one presumes for Wilde, the surface is all that identity consists of. As Wilde quips in his preface: “Those who go beneath the surface do so at their own peril.” Going beneath the surface is certainly perilous in the context of the novel where Sibyl Vane and Basil both die because they attempt to break through superficialities and arrive at something “real.” Sibyl, of course, thinks that theater masks life and Basil believes that art idealizes life. Each one attempts to move decisively from one realm of meaning to the other, from illusion to reality, but each discovers that the penalty for making too neat a distinc-
tion between art and life is death. When he learns of Sibyl’s death, Dorian says: “How extraordinarily dramatic life is! If I had read all this in a book, Harry, I think I would have wept over it. Somehow now that it has actually happened, and to me, it seems far too wonderful for tears” (98). Dorian, like Harry, never mistakes life for reality; he recognizes that life is more dramatic than theater and he is rewarded with longevity.

In both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, disguise becomes equivalent to self in a way that confuses the model of subjectivity that each author maps. While at first the model of a monster hiding behind a respectable or aesthetically pleasing front seems to produce a deep, structured subjectivity, in each the hidden self subverts the notion of an authentic self and makes subjectivity a surface effect. The important difference between disguise or illusion in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* lies perhaps in their conceptions of what lies beneath the costume. In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it is obvious that Hyde is precisely the base costume, the foundation, for Jekyll. When Jekyll chemically produces Hyde, he peels back a layer of respectability and exposes what lay hidden (I’ll return to the pun on “hide” later). But Dorian’s relation to his portrait is a variation upon a surface and depth model; the portrait is all surface but it gives the illusion of depth once it has begun to record the rotting of Dorian’s soul. Furthermore, as Jeff Nunokawa points out, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, “the expression of homosexual desire cancels, rather than clarifies, the definition of the character through whom it is conducted” (313). The friction of surfaces, in other words, in this text is as likely to erase self as it is to construct another one. Each novel produces a form of Gothic subjectivity, that is to say, each text presents the ego as “multi-formed,” as either a series of shifting surfaces or a volume of buried depths. The relation between surface and depth in Wilde’s novel is produced as a sexual relation.

*Secrets, Sex, and Surfaces*

The profound ugliness of Mr. Hyde is perhaps matched only by the exquisite and perfect beauty of Dorian Gray, a youth who “was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair” (15). But both Hyde and Gray represent a similar threat, the sexual menace of perverse desire and the epistemological menace of unstable identities. Extreme beauty and extreme ugliness are thus both linked to sexual perversity and specifically to homosexual
proclivities but they are also framed as disguises for unspeakable crimes. In terms of Mr. Hyde, perversity has dragged his physical form down to its most base constituents and in Dorian Gray homosexuality announces itself as pure beauty unsullied by moral or ethical consideration.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and particularly in the subplot of the romance between Dorian and Sibyl Vane, Wilde associates homosexuality with illusion and heterosexuality with reality. So, for example, Dorian rejects Sibyl when he discovers his own preference for illusion and artifice over reality. She, however, would abandon her acting career for the love of a man. Basil, too, loved illusion and the secret of his painting of Dorian is that “I am afraid I have shown in it the secret of my soul” (4). He guards his soul and his painting, refusing to show either in public, and he comments, “I have grown to love secrecy. It seems to be the one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvelous” (4). Lord Henry obviously cares nothing for reality. He makes everything into an act. “Being natural,” he quips, “is simply a pose” (5).

Eve Sedgwick has made homosexuality an integral feature of Gothic horror. She calls attention to the paranoid Gothic as a genre fraught with tension between “normal” relations between men and perverse sexual relations between men. In Gothic, slippage occurs between these two already unstable categories and the monster, or the agent of fear, becomes easily recognizable as queer: “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.” Sedgwick points out that many of the early Gothic Romance authors were linked in one way or another to some homosexual scandal (Lewis was openly homosexual, Beckford was driven out of England for homosexual philandering, Walpole was linked to homosexual attachments). Homosexuality, still according to Sedgwick, becomes equivalent to the unspeakable in Gothic Romance and, we might add, by the end of the century, secret and unlawful desires are euphemisms for homosexuality. The secret and sexuality are forever linked, of course, by the 1890s legislations against homosexual activity and, as we will see, by the 1890s medicalization of sexuality.

Homoerotic bonds between men, indeed, animate both novels and propel them towards the discovery of secret selves. Jekyll keeps a secret self locked away, a self that is defiled because it has “forbidden desires.” Male sexuality in both stories represents mirrored and narcissistic effect which, as we see also in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is both homoerotic
and paranoid — paranoid because of the panic unleashed by the recog-
nition of desire between men. Both novels are populated mostly by men
who meet secretly, dine together, spend hours together. The opening
scene of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* depicts Enfield and Utterson on one of
their Sunday walks: “[T]he two men put the greatest store by these
excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set
aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business that
they might enjoy them uninterrupted” (2). Homosexuality haunts both
*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. If Jekyll and Hyde
are cross-dressing monsters slipping in and out of each other’s clothes,
Dorian Gray is the monster who never changes. His distilled beauty is
the hallmark of his perversity, however, and the secret to his beauty
becomes his sexual secret. The outrage that Gothic novels produce has
everything to do with telling secrets. Again, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
thematizes this preoccupation — it is about secrets but it hesitates to
actually tell anything. We do not learn, for example, the exact nature of
Dorian’s various crimes or the reasons for his friend Chambers’s death or
Henry Wotton’s sister’s death; we only know that Wilde has caused
them. The hidden self of Dorian Gray is indeed a sexual self, a decadent
self, a self too much preoccupied with art, representation, and beauty
rather than life, experience, the common lot.

Furthermore, a set of behaviors that earlier in the century had char-
acterized the corruption of the aristocracy (Mr. Fairlie in Wilkie Collins’s
*The Woman in White*, for example) — effeminacy, sensuality, love of art,
uselessness, idle leisured existence — now came to stereotype homo-
sexual behavior. While aristocrats were denigrated as parasites upon the
middle-class capitalists — they produced nothing and did nothing “use-
ful” — homosexuals were seen as nonproductive, fruitless, given over to
the reproduction of art not life. The queer dandyism that Wilde ex-
emplified, furthermore, emphasized the artificial over the real, art over
life, and connected aestheticism to self-advertisement and an essential
male femininity.17

Dorian Gray is singled out first by Basil Hallward and then by Lord
Henry Wotton as the perfect object for artistic and aesthetic contempla-
tion. Basil’s desire for Dorian is immediately annexed to secrecy. He
attempts, in the novel’s opening scene, to keep Dorian Gray’s name from
Henry. In order for something to be desired in this novel, it must also be
forbidden and silenced. Basil immediately connects the painting of Dor-
ian Gray to “the secret of my own soul” and fears that he must not show
it because he will reveal his soul. It is not until much later that he tells Dorian his “secret”: “But I know that as I worked at it, every flake and film of colour seemed to me to reveal my secret. I grew afraid that others would know of my idolatry. I felt, Dorian, that I had told too much, that I had put too much of myself into it” (114). Basil’s secret is his love for Dorian as art object, his love for beauty, and his love for male beauty in particular. While Basil’s secret, then, is his desire for Dorian, Dorian’s secret is his own portrait. Desire, in this narrative, one might say, is the secret that art tells and that the subject conceals.

Secrecy, in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, is irrevocably annexed to the persona of Mr. Hyde. Hyde’s name and his desire to roam the streets at night mark him as one who must always move under cover. Jekyll, also, is perceived as under cover or masked, however, when his servants spot Hyde in Jekyll’s clothes. Poole, Dr. Jekyll’s manservant, calls upon Utterson and asks him to come and intervene between Jekyll and his mysterious laboratory work. Poole tells Utterson that he thinks someone other than Jekyll resides in the laboratory and he tells of his fright upon seeing this person emerge. But, asks Utterson, how do you know it was not Jekyll? Poole replies: “Sir, if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face? If that was my master, why did he cry out like a rat, and run from me? I have served him long enough. . . . My master . . . is a tall, fine build of a man, and this was more of a dwarf” (56). Later Poole adds, “There was something queer about that gentleman . . . that masked thing like a monkey” (58). Jekyll/Hyde’s desire to stay in hiding, his appearance as if masked, announces an essential connection between secrecy and sexuality, conspiracy and perverse activity. Furthermore, Poole’s inability to identify the “thing” in the laboratory as other than “not-Jekyll” suggests that Hyde cannot be classified, he has no place in the order and history of things.

Hyde is the disappearance of Jekyll. Twice in his correspondence Jekyll refers to the event of his “death or disappearance.” The first reference to this occurrence comes in Jekyll’s will. He writes: “[I]n case of Dr. Jekyll’s ‘disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months’ the said Edward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll’s shoes without further delay” (10–11). The second reference is written upon Lanyon’s last testament addressed to Utterson and not to be opened “until the death or disappearance of Dr. H. Jekyll” (44). On this occasion Utterson remarks, “Here again were the idea of disappearance and the name of Henry Jekyll bracketed” (44). The
“bracketing” of Jekyll and disappearance makes Hyde a kind of surface effect, an appearance that marks the loss of Jekyll. Although Hyde hides within Jekyll, Jekyll is hidden behind the mask of Hyde and the difference is crucial to the staking out of their particular identities. Hyde is an eruption which disfigures and disappears Jekyll and Jekyll is the reposition of order which silences and muffles Hyde, pushing him back into, supposedly, the dark recesses of the self. Hyde is hidden but also hides, his secrecy and need for refuge suggest a criminality that inheres to his lack of place. Jekyll, since he is a place, since he has a place, has depth and interiority, the depth of self, the interiority of conscience, and both are flattened by the appearance of Hyde, of what should have remained hidden.

Having and hiding a secret self, then, ensures Jekyll’s downfall. As much as the secrecy of hiding Hyde has to do with a Victorian conception of self and identity, it has everything to do with sexuality. In an essay that links Stevenson’s novel to the “new sexology” in the nineteenth century and to the history of perversion, Stephen Heath writes: “Hyde is not just the hidden but also the hide of the beast that he is. The ‘animal,’ indeed, is Stevenson’s cover, what he hides in to write his story: we all have the animal in us (the phylogenetic paradigm) but the animal is a representation of the male sexual which is pathological (perversions, lust-murder).”¹⁸ The animal, Stevenson’s cover, according to Heath, unites race—“the phylogenetic paradigm”—with sexuality to explain the threat Hyde poses to Jekyll’s body and to bourgeois cultural authority. Unleashing Hyde, Jekyll unlocks the beast of male sexuality and allows it to wreak havoc upon the streets and upon his own body. The apelike Hyde combines perversion with a lust for murder, he allies sex with violence, and he produces within his own person a form and shape for deviant sexuality.

In calling the “animal” a cover for Stevenson, then, Heath refers to the difficulty of representing perversion. Linking *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, published in the same year, Heath shows that the problem in both works was not defining perversion but representing it. Stevenson, he claims, uses the animal image, therefore, to represent perverse sexuality in terms of a primitive and atavistic desire that reduces man once more to the status of animal. But, as I suggested earlier, representation is also a means of producing otherness as sexual otherness. Indeed, Sander Gilman has claimed that “perversion is the basic quality ascribed to the sexuality of the Other.”¹⁹
We can link the perverse sexuality of the other with the medicalization of sexuality as described by Michel Foucault. Figuring power and pleasure as a dynamic spiral, a relationship between surveillance and perversion, Foucault understands the medicalization of sex as both a restraint on sexuality and a production of perverse sexualities. Hyde's relation to Jekyll, in fact, depicts very nicely the spiral of power and pleasure identified by Foucault within the medicalization of sex. If Jekyll represents power, bourgeois power, Hyde represents the pleasure denied and yet produced by the bourgeois subject. Hyde is repressed, hidden, and yet he springs forth from the very body, the very desires of the respectable Jekyll. By conjuring Hyde up from the mysterious recesses of his own desires, Jekyll forges a relation to his own "perversity" — a sexuality that is onanistic, homoerotic, and sadistic — that imposes perversion upon a set of behaviors that he systematically disassociates from himself. Cursing himself for his secret desires, Jekyll turns to science to find the way to both pleasure and power, indulgence and repression. The doubled subject split between desire and respectability identifies power as the ability to be "radically both."

In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault writes:

"Since sexuality was a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it — as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom — in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behavior. The power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, caressing them with its eyes, intensifying areas, electrifying surfaces, dramatizing troubled moments. It wrapped the sexual body in its embrace." (44)

Hyde embodies sexuality as perversion and degeneration. Jekyll creates Hyde by drinking the right mixture of chemicals after experimenting long and hard in his medical laboratory. Hyde, quite obviously, then, is a product of medicine, a side effect of chemical experimentation. We can figure Jekyll as the power of medicine which precisely set about "contacting bodies," "intensifying areas," "electrifying surfaces," and "dramatizing troubled moments." He is also, of course, the agent that "wrapped the sexual body in its embrace." For Foucault medicine produces perversion in exactly the process that Jekyll uses to produce Hyde. Jekyll chemically creates a perverse body and then he spends the rest of his life trying to repress it and discipline it.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, perversion is produced precisely as a
secret; but in this text it is not a chemical substance that allows it to surface, it is artistic method. The malleability of the portrait of Dorian, its ability to shift and change, allows it to record the secrecy of vice upon its painted surface. Basil Hallward warns Dorian: “Sin is a thing that writes itself across a man’s face. It cannot be concealed. People talk of secret vices. There are no such things. If a wretched man has a vice, it shows itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, and moulding of his hands even” (149–50). Here the secrecy of sin and its revelation is a textual event that takes place upon the body. The body that has sin written upon it of course is a monstrous body and a textual body; it is also a body that has been written. The textual event of monstrosity becomes here another chapter in what Foucault calls “the history of sexuality” and the monster records the place and time that the perverse enters discourse.

How is the doubling of Jekyll and Hyde different from or similar to the doubling of Dorian Gray and his picture? And how or why do we read doubling as a sign of buried sexuality in both stories? In both novels another self is produced through experimentation and that self takes over the original. In Wilde’s novel the other self is an outer rather than an inner self, it is hidelike, all surface, a canvas; but unlike Stevenson's Hyde, the portrait exists apart from Dorian Gray. As we noted, while science separated Jekyll from Hyde and seemed to produce a repressed self from a surface self, here art serves to separate Dorian from his hideous other spatially.

Like Hyde, the portrait is defined by its need to be confined, enveloped, hidden. Dorian, indeed, keeps it almost perpetually under wraps and finally stores it away in an attic or closet — the portrait is “monstrous and loathsome,” a thing to be “hidden away in a locked room” (121). Like Hyde, the portrait must be housed somewhere secret — Hyde lives in a small apartment in the back alley behind Jekyll’s respectable mansion, the portrait is banished to an attic room. The rooms become closets but they also represent the relation between self and other as the relation between house and inhabitant — Hyde lives in Jekyll, the portrait lives in Dorian’s home. The small closeted spaces also seem to represent on some level the unconscious, a dark space into which forbidden desires are repressed.

Jekyll describes Hyde as “knit closer to him than a wife” (101) and envisions the opposition between himself and his double in terms of the animal versus the spiritual. The relation between the two characters, then, is made explicitly sexual, a parody of both the maternal (Jekyll
carries Hyde within him) and the marital relation ("knit closer to him than a wife") and it is explained as a primitive condition of the self. The (male) individual, in other words, carries within himself the germ of a primitive and animalistic sexuality which must be repressed for fear of endangering the very moral fabric of civilization; hence, as Foucault suggests, one had to try to detect sexuality "as a lesion, a dysfunction, a symptom—in the depths of the organism or on the surface of the skin...

But the sexuality that animates the bond between Jekyll and his double and between Gray and his painting is not amorphously perverse. It is, as we have noted, specifically homoerotic. Secret selves, in Gothic, denote sexual secrets, secrets of the closet more often than not. Certainly in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the Gothic monstrosity of Dorian and definitely of Mr. Hyde have everything to do with the sexual secrets that they represent. We cannot therefore explain the monstrosity of a Hyde or a Dorian Gray by saying that they embody sexual secrets, rather we must say that each figure creates secrecy as the precondition for sexual perversity.

Many studies of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* comment upon the device of doubling as a way of representing Hyde as the return of the repressed that disrupts the unity of the self. For example, Gordon Hirsch, in "Frankenstein, Detective Fiction and Jekyll and Hyde," writes: "The novel’s terror, then, comes from the fear of losing control over the parts of the self, from losing any sense of a coherent personal identity..." But of course, this definition of the self as unified proceeds from the specter of its incoherence and not the other way around. Similarly, William Veeder’s essay in the same volume, “Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy,” makes male doubles a precondition for patriarchy. However, he explains male doubling or homoerotic desires in terms of “unresolved oedipal complexes” and therefore produces a psychological cause for material effects. I am arguing that, in fact, psychological explanations for human behavior are effects rather than causes of patriarchy. Gothic narratives, in fact, create subjects who produce pathological versions of themselves through extreme self-examinations and they produce, therefore, the sense that individual psyches cause material oppressions. In fact, the monster, as the subject’s double, represents not simply that which is buried in the self, rather the monster is evidence of the production of multiformed egos. Indeed, it is only the evidence of one self buried in the other that makes the subject human.

The construction of the doubled subject, one trapped inside the
other, is detailed in *Discipline and Punish* by Michel Foucault. Foucault links the emergence of modern subjectivity to the disappearance of torture, public hangings, and all manner of public displays of punishment in the nineteenth century. Such a transformation, he claims, is related to “great institutional transformations” rather than simply indicating the process by which disciplinary measures become “humanized.” As public displays subside in the eighteenth century, he claims, “punishment becomes the most hidden part of the penal process” and minds rather than simply bodies become the object of social control: “Physical pain, the pain of the body itself, is no longer the constitutive element of the penalty. From being an art of unbearable sensations punishment has become an economy of suspended rights” (11). The hangman or executioner is then replaced by what Foucault calls “a whole army of technicians: warders, doctors, chaplains, psychiatrists, psychologists, educationalists, etc.” We might add lawyers and writers to this list.

If the body is no longer the object of punishment, says Foucault, then something must take its place and that something is the soul: “The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body.” The novel, as I have suggested elsewhere in this study, is heavily involved in the process by which the soul becomes an “instrument of political anatomy.” Gothic novels—because they emphasize and dwell upon the unnatural relations between inside and outside, because they chart the transition of inside to outside, because they turn bodies and minds inside out in their search for monstrosities—Gothic novels play a significant role in the history of discipline and punishment. The Gothic monster is precisely a disciplinary sign, a warning of what may happen if the body is imprisoned by its desires or if the subject is unable to discipline him- or herself fully and successfully. The failure to self-discipline, as exemplified by both Dr. Jekyll and Dorian Gray, results in social death, outcast and outlaw status, and ultimately physical demise. The monster (from *de-monstrare*) encourages readers to read themselves and their own bodies and scan themselves for signs of devolution.

In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Jekyll’s strange “case” is not his body but his soul, a soul that divides against itself and becomes its own warder, doctor, educator. Jekyll’s body is a disciplined body, a body that understands itself to be in the grips of conscience, under the higher power of discipline. Jekyll produces another self that must be controlled and imprisoned, kept inside; he realizes “the trembling imma-
teriality, the mist like transience, of this so seemingly solid body in which we walk attired” (80). The body clothes the soul but the soul emerges and rules the body: “I bore the stamp of the lower elements in my soul” (81).

In Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the body is obviously enthralled to the soul. Shortly after murdering Basil Hallward, Dorian tells Lord Henry: “The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned, or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us, I know it” (215). Dorian’s proof, of course, is that his soul has been extracted and transferred to a painting that sits in judgment over him. But Dorian, like Lord Henry, represents a failure of self-discipline and that failure is linked to the fact that his soul is separate from his body.

Without the sense that the soul is buried deep within, the body becomes all surface. Lord Henry characteristically inverts the values of depth and superficiality: “It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible” (22). Inversion, indeed, defines much of Lord Henry’s speech and it is interesting, therefore, that he provides one of the novel’s most careful meditations upon the soul and upon psychology, the science of the soul: ”Soul and body, body and soul — how mysterious they were! There was an animalism in the soul, and the body had its moments of spirituality. The senses could refine, and the intellect could degrade. Who could say where the fleshly impulse ceased or the psychical impulse began?” (58). Lord Henry characterizes the attempts to separate mind from matter as psychological: “He began to wonder whether we could ever make psychology so absolute a science that each little spring of life would be revealed to us” (58). Lord Henry precisely does not separate body and mind, surface and depth; he revels in the beauty of the superficial. He is never chastened or shamed, regretful or sorrowed; he never looks for meaning in depth or truth in reality. Lord Henry — the “survivor” in Wilde’s novel, the one who gets away with more than murder — Lord Henry survives because he has no conscience, he is not available to discipline.

Like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, of course, Wilde’s novel does attempt to delimit very specifically where the mind or spirit ends and the body begins. But the splitting of Dr. Jekyll into Hyde and the division of Dorian Gray between his youthful perfection and the degenerate painting make tangible first the separation of mind and body and then their
absolute inseparability. Dorian Gray sees the painting as equivalent to a reading of his subjective self: “But the picture? What was he to say about that? It held the secret of his life, and told his story. It had taught him to love his own beauty. Would it teach him to loath his own soul? Would he ever look at it again?” (91). Reading and writing the self in both of these Gothic tales makes discourse the place where both the soul (conscience) and its horror (monstrosity) are produced.

The picture, to Dorian, is equivalent to a narrative. Art, the novel tells us, must be unconscious, ideal, remote, not self-conscious, realistic, too close. The picture and Dorian and Gothic style, however, infect by revealing the ugliness, the pain, the violence of identity. In its most perfect form, art would tell no story; in its Gothic form, it tells too many stories. To be art it must have no plot, but its grotesque quality is that its line and shadows, its expression and composition tell of the love of Basil for Dorian, they tell of his abandonment of Sibyl, his adulation of Henry, his sins and misdemeanors. Henry has no story, no secrets, he is like his poisonous book that infects by seducing.

When Dorian shows the picture to Basil in order to taunt him with what has become of his artwork, Basil is shocked by the transformation of his representation of Dorian’s ideal form. He sees the effect of separating out soul from body: “He held the light up again to the canvas, and examined it. The surface seemed to be quite undisturbed, and as he had left it. It was from within, apparently, that the foulness and horror had come. Through some strange quickening of inner life the leprosies of sin were slowly eating the thing away. The rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful” (157). The painting that once revealed too much of Basil’s soul now reveals too much of Dorian’s. It does so by giving the illusion of an “inner life” that changes radically the composition of the portrait and creates its monstrous depths. Gothic effect in this passage is achieved by balancing surface against depth and revealing the dissolution of one by the other. Just as Jekyll is being eaten away from within by his Hyde, so the picture of Dorian is consumed internally, parasitically by his foul deeds. The representation here of inner reality suggests that monstrosity is precisely an internal not an external feature. Frankenstein’s monster terrified people because of his appearance, Jekyll and Dorian are monstrous because an exterior hides a corrupt self. In each case the bad double is an inversion or an inner version of the outer self but in each model of subjectivity, the depth model seems to give way to one that privileges a version of subjectivity as the shifting ground of various surface effects.
Jekyll shakes the doors of “the fortress of identity” and they give way to reveal that one identity imprisons another. Uncanny effect within Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde has everything to do with the idea that one self, Hyde, is housed within another. Hyde describes Jekyll as “my city of refuge” (94) and Jekyll recognizes that, as Hyde, he is “hunted and houseless” (96). By suggesting that identity itself is uncanny, that, indeed, the body resembles a haunted house, Stevenson's novel shows the ideological dangers of trying to separate the haunted from the spook.

In the opening scene of the novel, Utterson and Enfield are out on one of their walks. The streets they pass along are noted for the types of houses which line them. One street, a place of thriving trade during the day, is filled with shop fronts which stand out like “rows of smiling sales women” (3). By contrast to the dingy neighborhood surrounding it, this street shines like a “fire in a forest.” Utterson and Enfield notice, however, that the “general cleanliness” of the area is disturbed by “a certain sinister block of building. . . . It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discolored wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence” (3). The “sinister block of building,” of course, turns out to be the refuge of Mr. Hyde. It is the backside of Jekyll's eminently respectable house, a place “which wore a great air of wealth and comfort” (18). By symbolizing the two identities that make up Dr. Jekyll as houses, Stevenson makes a connection between housing and identity, facade and character.

The first chapter of the narrative, then, Enfield’s “Story of the Door,” establishes Jekyll and Hyde as uncanny in relation to their places of residence. Hyde's door is “blistered and disdained,” a place, moreover, where “tramps slouched into the recess” (3). Jekyll's door sits among “ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate” (18); while these decaying houses are divided up into “flats and chambers,” Jekyll's house alone “was still occupied entire.” But Jekyll's house, too, has become a fragmented dwelling as the back door signifies. Between the front entrance and the back exit, furthermore, other divisions mark the space of the home as fractured. When Utterson visits Jekyll, for example, he waits for his friend in a “large, low-roofed, comfortable hall warmed . . . by a bright open fire” (19). This part of the house, however, is divided by an old surgical theater, or “dissecting room,” from Jekyll's laboratory. The dissecting room acts as a place of passage between front and back, home and scientific work, the light of bourgeois respectability and the shadow of a criminal underclass. The
old surgical theater, one a place for the dissection of human bodies after death in the service of medical knowledge, now signifies the dissection of the living body and the breakdown of holistic identity.

Once Hyde has committed murder and has been identified as a refugee of the law, Jekyll becomes his only hiding place. The game of “hide and seek” mounted earlier by the lawyer Utterson — “If he be Mr. Hyde . . . I shall be Mr. Seek” (15) — now becomes Hyde’s mode of existence. Jekyll, as all that remains of the battered “fortress of identity” and of the crumbling stability of home, acts as a place to hide, and a place to Hyde, and the function he performs in housing Hyde produces in Jekyll a murderous anger towards his other self.

In a gruesome parody of pregnancy, Jekyll carries his sleeping, brutal other “caged in his flesh” (101), never knowing when the horror would resume: “[H]e thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life” (100). Here, indeed, the house is haunted and the ghost, the “slime of the pit,” the hell-baby threatens to consume his host. In suggesting that Jekyll is pregnant with Hyde, Stevenson makes the monstrosity of the Jekyll/Hyde transformation a function of gender inversion and therefore connects bodily duality to sexual difference and a fundamental fear of femininity. The monstrosity, in other words, of a self that hides within one’s body is specific to the maternal body, the body deformed and swollen with its other, its hell-baby. Sexual difference within Jekyll’s body breaks down and it is the masculine body that swells with the life of another. Since he moves in an almost exclusively masculine world, Jekyll, as divided and dividing, becomes different from his colleagues and friends by becoming woman and alien, feminine and foreign. The combination of sexual and racial difference, as we will see, is crucial to the threat that Jekyll/Hyde poses to the bourgeois order.

The relation between Jekyll and Hyde by the narrative’s end, as Hyde threatens to swallow up what remains of Jekyll, is specifically vampiristic. Hyde feeds upon Jekyll, gains from him “his energy of life,” and arises from the dead to “usurp the offices of life.” The vampire, in Gothic literature, is always an unwelcome guest and the vampiric relation between monster and maker is a part of what we are calling Gothic subjectivity.

The relation between Dorian and his victims is similarly described
as vampiric. In one of the most gruesome scenes in the novel, Dorian kills Basil Hallward by cutting his throat. Blood becomes the signifier of criminality throughout this scene. First, Basil attempts to make Dorian pray for forgiveness and quotes Isaiah 1.18 to him: “Though your sins be as scarlet, yet I will make them as white as snow.” Dorian, enraged by Basil, “rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man’s head down on the table, and stabbing again and again” (158). The body now becomes thinglike: “The thing was still seated in the chair, straining over the table with bowed head, and humped back, and long fantastic arms. Had it not been for the red jagged tear in the neck, and the clotted black pool that was slowly widening on the table, one would have said that the man was simply asleep” (159). Like a vampire, Dorian has torn the man’s throat out and let him bleed to death. When he later looks at his portrait he sees “a loathsome red dew that gleamed, wet and glistening, on one of the hands, as though the canvas had sweated blood” (174). Blood, the bodily fluid that marks the inside of the body, also becomes a primary marker of identity in the context of vampirism. As we will see in the next chapter, blood, in Gothic, is always overdetermined—it signifies race as well as sex, gender as well as class and to have blood on your hands is to be implicated in the blurring of essential boundaries of identity. If Hyde lives vampirelike within and upon Jekyll, Jekyll also feeds upon Hyde. And if Dorian lives like a vampire upon the young men whose lives he ruins, they also feed upon him as the abject place of secrecy, sex, and superficiality.

Race and Monstrosity

Henry Jekyll recounts that his discovery of his own dual nature makes him all too aware of the “trembling immateriality, the mist like transience, of this seemingly so solid body” (80). If we want to disrupt the notion that the hidden selves of Jekyll and Dorian Gray are not simply representations of repressed psychic other, it is worth considering what kinds of monstrosity are concealed by only concentrating on sexual or psychosexual monstrosity. Jekyll’s hidden self is supposed to represent the base material of his nature, the worst potential of his character. The otherness that Mr. Hyde represents is a composite of a range of alternative identities, identities that literally subvert (overturn from below) the unity of the self. Hyde’s deformity depends at least partly upon racist conceptions of the degeneration of the species.

Critics have considered *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as an allegorical
treatment of Victorian preoccupations with the instability of body and mind. Such preoccupations arose out of a popular concern with infectious diseases such as syphilis and tuberculosis (which Stevenson suffered from) and a post-Darwinian fear that evolution may be reversible, that, indeed, degeneration was both the symptom and the illness of the age. Race-thinking in the second half of the nineteenth century attempted to allay fears about degeneration and infection by establishing what Hannah Arendt has called "a natural aristocracy" based upon racial purity. As race-thinking gave way to full-fledged racism towards the turn of the century, the body became the setting for a drama of blood. Issues of inheritance, in other words, no longer solely focused on class but now came to rest upon biology and upon the racial body; and predisposition to diseases like syphilis or to the possibility of degeneration were ascribed to certain races (such as the Jews), to their genealogy and their lifestyles, in order to give moral structure to the seemingly random process of infection (Nordau, 1895).

In an essay on film versions of the Jekyll and Hyde story, Virginia Wright Wexman notes that the cinematic depiction of Mr. Hyde very often produces a figure whose repulsion rests upon "racial overtones." Rouben Mamoulian's version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, released in 1932, Wexman writes, conceives of Hyde as "a primitive man" and "builds on a racial Darwinian undercurrent in Stevenson's story." Jekyll's evil side, then, as represented by the dwarfish, dark, hirsute Hyde, maps the ugly onto the uncivilized and the evil onto the racially mixed. By making an essential and visual connection between race and character, the film and the novel suggest that human nature depends upon blood rather than circumstance and they both subscribe to a sense of history as a series of fatalities. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, as writers sought general answers to the specific questions of history, Gothic writings contributed to a desire to pin politics, sexuality, and their separation onto biology. For this reason Gothic becomes the place where we can most easily chart the conversion of class differences and racial differences and gender differences into a more neutral category of psychological difference; Gothic, in other words, tracks the transformation of struggles within the body politic to local struggles within individual bodies. The Gothic monster, moreover, as a creature of mixed blood, breaks down the very categories that constitute class, sexual, and racial difference.

The idea of dividing world history into struggles between black,
yellow, red, and white races was elaborated in the most detail by Count Arthur de Gobineau in *Essai Sur L'Inegalites des Races Humaines* (1853). Gobineau, a “social pessimist” who predicted the inevitable decline of civilization, believed that civilization was corrupted by the mixture of races and that, while racial purity was desirable, the races were already too mixed and the decline of the species and culture was now inevitable. Defining degeneracy, Gobineau writes: “The word *degenerate* when applied to a people means . . . that this people has no longer the same intrinsic value as it had before, because it has no longer the same blood in its veins, continual adulterations having gradually affected the quality of blood.” The popularity of Gobineau’s particular brand of race-thinking at a time when many books appeared on the subject may be attributed to his forceful polemic. Hannah Arendt notes: “Nobody before Gobineau thought of finding one single reason, one single force according to which civilization always and everywhere rises and falls” (171). The very specificity, in other words, of the *Essai* marks it as an ideological tool, a foundation for later racisms. Furthermore, by making race the key to historical determinism, Gobineau highlights the body as “the battlefield of history” (Arendt, 175) and suggests that struggle within the individual is historical struggle.

Although Gobineau’s writings were not anti-Semitic or overtly racist, they did give rise to racist conceptions of essentially pure and impure races. As the division between races became polarized into an opposition between Aryan and Semitic, or light and dark, the light races were increasingly identified with purity and spirituality while the dark races became the representatives of corruption, decay, and materiality or sensuality. Fields as diverse as anthropology, linguistics, and comparative anatomy participated in ratifying race as “the new key to history” (Arendt, 170). The reemergence of Gothic monstrosity at the end of the century coincides suggestively with the Gothic interdisciplinary interest in the racial body; indeed, by the turn of the century, the Gothic horror novel, from the popular “penny dreadfuls” and “shilling shockers” to canonized works of literature, became a privileged site in the representation of potential dangers of racial decline. The battle for dominance between Dr. Jekyll and his other self, Mr. Hyde, suggests Gobineau’s warring races within one body and produces a monster out of the threat that a wave of immigration in London in the 1880s posed to the concept of national character. Indeed, Stevenson depicts the body in this novel as no more than a casing for struggling identities. If Jekyll represents, there-
fore, the bourgeois individual, Hyde combines within his repulsive aspect the traces of nineteenth-century stereotypes of both Semitic and black physiognomies.

If, on account of its racial content, we read Stevenson’s narrative as, at least in part, a text preoccupied with what Homi Bhabha has called the “colonial margin,” we can better formulate the disciplinary role of Gothic within a nineteenth-century discourse on race. Race, Arendt has argued convincingly, substituted for nation at the turn of the century as imperialist expansionists attempted to justify their domination of other lands and other peoples. In other words, as the nation expanded to become empire, as Englishmen left the country to go to the colonies, and as a flood of immigrants entered England from Eastern Europe and Russia, national identity came increasingly to depend upon race rather than place. The “colonial margin,” in Bhabha’s conception of racial difference, as “that limit where the West must face a peculiarly displaced and decentered image of itself ‘in double duty bound,’ at once a civilizing mission and a violent subjugating force,” describes perfectly the relation between Dr. Jekyll and his hideous double, Mr. Hyde.

Hyde, as the dark side of Jekyll, functions within the novel as a stereotype of otherness. In other words, he embodies the traits of the ugly and the undesirable and makes those traits essential signifiers of evil. In “The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,” Bhabha theorizes the “ambivalent mode of knowledge and power” contained by the stereotype (149). The stereotype, he claims, both fixes the other within racist discourse and recognizes the other as a danger and threat to all notions of origination and racial purity. The ambivalent aspect of the stereotype is, then, a function of the possible simultaneity of fear and desire within representations of otherness, a possibility that may be understood according to “the Freudian fable of fetishism” (160). Within this fable recognition and disavowal of castration allow the subject to maintain contradictory beliefs about an originary sexual difference; difference, in other words, is both acknowledged and subsumed in a process which reestablishes a sense of totality, wholeness, and similarity. Bhabha’s proposal that colonial discourse creates stereotypes as fetishes allows him to discuss colonialism as a discipline, as, in other words, a “non-repressive form of knowledge” which can sustain opposing views and contradictions. I find Bhabha’s formulation to be very helpful in thinking about the productive nature of othering and the way othering always constructs selves precisely because
Bhabha, in his use of psychoanalysis, manages to avoid reducing all social and political difference to a psychological mechanism. Rather, Bhabha allows us to comprehend the ways in which social and political antipathies are constructed through and as psychic mechanisms. He sees psychoanalysis as not only an explanation of the psyche of domination and submission but also as a description of what Foucault calls “the implantation of perversions” in *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1.

If the fetish is a “penis-substitute,” in Freud’s words, “a substitute for the woman’s (mother’s) phallus which the little boy once believed in and does not want to forego,” the stereotype is a kind of skin substitute which glosses over racial difference and yet maintains it as otherness. That is to say, race and sex both circulate within the economy of the fetish. Bhabha shows convincingly that racial and sexual differences are denied by the stereotype-fetish or the “stereotype-as-suture” (167) although the threatening aspect of both, “the threatened return of the look” (169) is maintained. Again, the importance of this formulation lies in its ability to show the complex structure of racial stereotyping in relation to the various mechanisms of sexual stereotyping.

Hyde is the fetish figure that Jekyll both recognizes and disavows. His appearance inspires hatred in all who observe him, although no one can precisely say what is so repulsive about him. Utterson remarks: “He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something down-right detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere” (8). Deformity, we are told, inheres to Hyde; his face carries “Satan’s signature” upon it, his body suggests “something troglodytic” (18). As a stereotype of otherness, Hyde must represent the non-human; as a fetish figure within the novel, he hides a lack, a generalized anxiety about identity (national and individual).

The essential splitting of the self that occurs in Jekyll’s transformation into Hyde makes explicit the duality of the stereotype. Jekyll is quite literally sutured to Hyde and ever in danger of slippage back into the dangerous other persona. In allegorizing the potentially fragmented nature of a certain kind of subjectivity (the other’s), Stevenson’s novel both assures readers of the possibility of wholeness and yet confronts them with the fragility of the whole. Jekyll/Hyde may be split and splitting but Utterson is an “utter one,” a total subject against whom the stereotype, the dark and evil other, cannot prevail. Hyde, then, is stereotyped in this novel by his physiognomy and by his essential role as other to
Jekyll’s self. Small, dark, and ugly, Hyde manifests the evil side of Jekyll in a physical form that marks vice upon the body and makes an essential connection between sin and hideous aspect. The body, in this novel, represents the aesthetic space in which sexuality and race conspire to determine human destinies. Hyde as a racial stereotype fixes sexual and racial difference within a body which combines horrific effect with Semitic and Negroid features.

Hyde’s name, as we have discussed, puns skin—“hide”—with secrecy and it is within this pun that the relation between race and sexuality becomes clear. While the sexual fetish remains a sign of the difference that must be kept secret, the skin, and specifically skin color, is difference that cannot be hidden. Secret and perverse motivations, then, the sexuality of the other, are announced by the ugliness of the outward appearance; sexuality and race, desire and blood, work in tandem to define otherness. Bhabha again explains this relation within racist discourse: “First, the schema of colonial discourse—what Fanon calls the epidermal schema—is not, like the sexual fetish, a secret. Skin as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as common knowledge in a range of cultural, political, historical discourses” (166). Here again, the fetish does not summarize racial discourse or displace it into the realm of the sexual; the fetish reveals the multilayered process of stereotyping which functions through many different axes of representation. Racial stereotyping occurs metonymically and at the surface; sexual stereotyping occurs metaphorically and as a secret. Furthermore, the surfacing of one layer of the stereotype eclipses the other and therefore obscures the dual or multiple functions of othering.

Hyde is both a sexual secret, the secret of Jekyll’s undignified desires, and a visible representation of physical otherness. The fact that observers can describe Hyde’s appearance—he is “small,” “dwarfish,” “ape-like,” “troglodytic,” a “masked thing like a monkey”—but cannot say what it is about him that gives such a strong impression of deformity suggests that evil is both the most visible and the most invisible of traits. Jekyll’s double has deformity hidden within him and blatantly inscribed upon his hide, his skin. Hyde’s doubleness, then, the pun of his name and the relation between himself and Jekyll, represents difference as always a function of both race and sexuality.

Hyde’s monstrosity, his hideous aspect and his perverse desires, transforms the politics of race into a psychological struggle between
competing identities within one body. By reading the metamorphosis of a Jekyll into a Hyde in terms of Bhabha's "colonial margin," we find that racial and sexual otherness are not hidden within respectability, they are produced by it. Keeping in mind Michel Foucault's analysis of Victorian sexuality as not a repressive system but, in fact, a "proliferation of discourses" (18), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* contributes to a history of sexuality which generates otherness (in this case racial otherness) alongside bourgeois morality.

While the racial discourse produced by *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is not so obvious in relation to Dorian Gray's monstrosity, there is nonetheless a figure in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* who is described as monstrous, and precisely in racial terms. Dorian is telling Lord Henry about his visit to the theater where he saw and fell in love with Sybil Vane. At the theater he encounters a monster: "A hideous Jew, in the most amazing waistcoat I ever beheld in my life, was standing at the entrance, smoking a vile cigar. He had greasy ringlets, and an enormous diamond blazed in the center of a soiled shirt. 'Have a box, my Lord?' he said, when he saw me, and he took off his hat with an air of gorgeous civility. There was something about him, Harry, that amused me. He was such a monster" (48). This monster, the Jew, charges Dorian a guinea for his seat and then tries to find out if Dorian is a drama critic or publicist. He is naturally disappointed to find out that Dorian is merely a lover of the theater and he tells Dorian that theater critics are in a conspiracy against him. Dorian concludes his harangue about the Jew by noting: "He was a most offensive brute, though he had an extraordinary passion for Shakespeare" (52).

What are we to make of the appearance of this other monster in the monstrous tale of Gothic production? It is not enough to point to the anti-Semitism of this scene, of course; rather, what is notable about the anti-Semitic depiction of "the horrid old Jew" (52) is that the Jew's monstrosity is precisely a function of the same characteristics that mark Dorian as monstrous. The Jew is a parasite upon art, according to the text; he makes his living from the theater, he has pecuniary interests in whether Dorian might be a theater critic, and he sells theater for a profit. Art for anything but art's sake, art as functional, is punishable in this text. Dorian uses art to deflect his own corruption and Basil uses art to hide or expose his love for Dorian. The Jew uses art to make a living and therefore is as corrupt as the others. But also, like Dorian, like the aesthetes and dandies, the Jew is depicted as parasitical in his inability to produce
anything original. He is not an artist using art, he is merely a business­
man who lives off the success of other people's art.

The monster Jew is a substitute for the multiple monstrosities of
Dorian and his dandies. He condenses, in one supposedly repulsive
form, the economic and aesthetic violations that add up to monstrosity.
He, like Dorian, is not an original (the portrait is the real original now)
and he becomes another Gothic surface to reflect the breakdown of
authentic and artistic subjecthood into an army of imitations.

Conclusion

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde was discontinued as a theater production in
1892 when Jack the Ripper stalked the streets of London. Critics felt it
was inappropriate to entertain audiences with images that resonated
with the all too real terror of the Ripper. The Picture of Dorian Gray was
used as evidence for the prosecution in the trial of Oscar Wilde on
charges of homosexual activity in 1895. In both cases life and art came
into conflict and the text threatened to merge with the real. Monsters,
indeed, tend to blur the distance between the real and the imagined; they
set a fragile limit on the powers of representation and they force us to
consider the difference between real violence committed upon monsters
by "justice" (as in the trial of Oscar Wilde) and literary violence com­
mitted by monsters upon respectable citizens (as in Hyde's brutal mur­
der of the old man). The link between a Jack the Ripper and a Mr. Hyde,
a Dorian Gray and an Oscar Wilde is unclear; the relation between repre­
sentations and reality in these cases is what we might now call "Gothic."
It is negotiable, shifting, and unpredictable but usually monstrous.

I have been using the term "Gothic" throughout to attempt to iden­
tify the moment in writing when interpretation becomes monstrous,
spawns monsters, and fixes othernesses in highly specific sites. The ease
with which the monstrous form can take the imprint of race or sexuality,
of class or gender, as we saw in relation to Frankenstein, suggests that
Gothic form is precisely designed for the purposes of multiple interpre­
tations. We can read homophobic and racist discourses running through
the body of the monster and we can as easily find traces of sexist or
classist constructions of subjectivities. What we should resist at all costs,
therefore, is the impulse to make the monster stabilize otherness. What
the monster does in the tales of doubled monstrosity that I have exam­
ined here is to call into question the project of interpretation that seeks
to fix meaning in the body of the monster. The texts are Gothic inasmuch as they make language or representation itself into the place of monstrous affect.

Dorian Gray becomes Lord Henry’s clay to mold when he is struck by the power of words: “Words! Mere words! How terrible they were! How clear and vivid, and cruel! One could not escape from them. And yet what a subtle magic there was in them! They seemed to be able to give a plastic form to formless things, and to have a music of their own” (19). The plasticity of words that Dorian remarks upon recalls Robert Louis Stevenson’s impression that literary form was “so much plastic material.” The word “plastic” in both contexts connotes the Greek sense of plastikos meaning “molded.” The Gothic text is plastic because it makes monsters out of words and it makes texts out of monsters and it invites readers into a free zone of interpretive mayhem. The pleasure of monsters lies in their ability to mean and to appear to crystallize meaning and give form to the meaning of fear. The danger of monsters lies in their tendency to stabilize bias into bodily form and pass monstrosity off as the obverse of the natural and the human. But monsters are always in motion and they resist the interpretive strategies that attempt to put them in place. And that, as Donna Haraway puts it, is their “promise.”