

# INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE EXTENDED ESSAY

## GRADUATION THESIS ENGLISH

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Subject : To what extent, in the novel ‘The Strange Case Of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde’ by R. L. Stevenson, the good and evil sides of a man is brought to light by the external (social) and internal (psychological) factors and what are the results of this metamorphosis over the psychology of Dr. Jekyll?

## ABSTRACT

Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850. Stevenson, besides his authorship, was also a well-known poet and a travel-writer. Today, Stevenson is among the authors whose novels are most translated to other languages in the world .  
*'Stevenson's characters often prefer unknown hazards to everyday life of the Victorian society.'*<sup>1</sup>

'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' by Robert Louis Stevenson, which is accepted as the best novel of the R. L. Stevenson, first published in 1886 and in a real short time sold nearly 40,000 copies in Britain. The mystery of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is revealed by the testimonies of Dr. Lanyon, Mr. Utterson, Mr. Enfield, and Poole(Jekyll's butler). One day, with the help of Dr. Jekyll's will, Mr. Utterson (Jekyll's lawyer), finds out that a stranger, named as Mr. Hyde, is the heir of the Dr. Jekyll's heritage. Mr. Utterson first couldn't realize the fact behind this weird situation despite his wide research about this stranger and conversations with his friend Dr. Jekyll. However a few witnesses who witnessed this man only mention the irritating evil energy that transpires through his being. First Dr. Jekyll states that Mr. Hyde is simply a close friend of his. Then, when Mr. Hyde is suspected of murder,

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<sup>1</sup> Liukkonen , Petri . Pegasos . Web . 17.11.2010

<<http://kirjasto.sci.fi/rlsteven.htm>>

the mystery starts to be revealed. One night Mr. Utterson and the butler Poole enters Jekyll's laboratory to solve this mystery and break the door of his room with an axe. When they enter the room, they find the death of Mr. Hyde. Two documents that they have found in the room clarify Dr. Jekyll's mystery: In one of these documents, Dr. Lanyon confesses that, Dr. Jekyll is, in fact, the same person with Mr. Hyde. Plus, in the second document Dr. Jekyll confesses that, to unchain the evil and the good that is hidden inside him, he made a drug which transforms him. This drug brings the evil side of Dr. Jekyll, Edward Hyde, out. And one day Dr. Jekyll's storage of drugs ends and he finds himself changing into Mr. Hyde completely and irreversibly. Dr. Jekyll suicides to block the metamorphosis, but before, last words of his confession are written by the last fragments of his nature: *'Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Dr. Jekyll to an end.'* (Stevenson , 181).

Word Count : 414

‘ *“There must be something else, ” said the perplexed gentleman.*

*“There is something more, if I could find a name for it .*

*God bless me, the man seems hardly human! ...*

*or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul*

*that thus transpires through, and transfigures,*

*it’s clay continent ?*

*The last, I think; for O my poor old Harry Jekyll,*

*if ever I read Satan’s signature upon a face,*

*it is on that of your new friend. ” ’ (Stevenson , 37)*

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## I . Introduction

The purpose in writing this thesis is to examine the external and internal factors that bring the good or the evil side of a man out. By stating as external factors, it's meant to express the socio-cultural pressure applied by the unnaturally formed relationships between the arrogant and selfish bourgeois over a modest gentleman who is a wealthy scientist at the same time. After a while, these relationships -that are far from the sincerity- starts to awaken the wrath hidden in once bourgeois scientist Dr. Jekyll and starts to pull him away from his luxuriant life to an old and a small bedroom which gets colder and darker every night with the greatest regrets of a young scientist and burns up and brighten with the evil desires and wraths of an evil man.

Actually this thesis is in nature of a mirror that shows us the pathetic silhouettes that belong to the invisible swamps of the Victorian Age that just breed to continue their '*show off*'s carelessly. And Dr. Jekyll's evil side appears at exactly this moment and starts to vomit anger, depression and wrath over the fake humanity.

Indeed this novel shows us an evil man who rebel against the system by murdering, and a gentleman who fights with his evil side to stop himself, to end his endless hate to the bourgeoisie's profitier moral and religion mentality which once had him. Dr. Jekyll

sometimes appears as a crying and regretting young scientist and sometimes as a murderer, as Mr. Hyde, who is full of evil desires to kill, to destroy his gentle and caring side by killing him-like gentle persons. Added to that by naming as external, not just the insincere relationships in the Victorian Age society is meant to be expressed, also the social and cultural state of the society is going to be expressed too. And undoubtedly by naming as internal factors, the psychology and the traumatic depression of the Dr. Jekyll is meant.

## **II.External Factors-Victorian Society's Economical and Social State**

Victorian Age was the brightest age of the United Kingdom which was the period of Queen Victoria's reign that started in 1837 and ended in 1901. At that time poverty in the country decreased and technology developed in a great amount. However in Victorian Era, there were no equality in the society and every person was belonging to a different class. This inequality couldn't cast a cloud on this victorious age but the Victorian Age which was full of contradictions and conflicts, has been a great inspiration to lots of authors and poets .

Victorian Era has a few leading features that made it famous and valuable for the authors and poets. In Victorian society, there were social classes, and aristocrats -noble and wealthy ones- were on the top. Aristocrats -like Dr. Jekyll and his friends- were living a life full of fun, luxury and insincerity. By the time passes, radical social traditions and the development in the areas of poetry, literature and art had been crushed under the insincere relationships of these aristocrats. Aristocrats always had a different understanding of life than the rest of the society.

The social, economical and cultural difference among these social classes is also given in the novel by the detailed descriptions of Edinburgh, where the story takes place and also birthplace of R. L Stevenson. In the novel, Edinburgh city is described by dividing the city into two distinct parts. First part is the old, historical part of the city where poor people live in. This part of the city is generally portrayed as a place that is full of slums and with the darkest fears. This section of the city is also described with the common places for the poor part of the society of the Victorian Age and also these detailed descriptions set light to the hypocritical, disgusting and the cruel morality of the Victorian Age . Moreover, in these descriptions we witness the social and economical state of the Victorian Age society and it's corrupted understanding of life.

*'As the cab drew up before the address indicated, the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin palace, a low French eating house and twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass; and the next moment the fog settled down again upon that part, as brown as umber, and cut him off from his blackguardly surroundings.'* (Stevenson , 57).

And the second part of the city often comes to life within the spacious and modern streets of the city. *'...the streets as clean as a ballroom floor; the lamps, unshaken by any wind, drawing a regular pattern of light and shadow.'* (Stevenson,31).

Aristocrats were generally looking alike when it comes to the personality. Like being colorably respectful to the social values, being ridicilously pleased of the economical, social and political state of the country, seeming like ashamed of the sexual content and naming self-seeking marriages as 'holy', being materialistic and just thinking about more money, stating poor people as worthless and dishonorable, seeing art as a worthless tool of entertainment.

In the novel 'The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde', Dr. Jekyll and his friends belong to the upper-class and they have nearly all of the qualities listed above, like living a luxurious life, never thinking about the rest of the society and the country and being materialistic. Through the novel, these qualities and the luxurious life styles of the figures are reflected to the reader with the help of the detailed descriptions of the places '*...into a large, low roofed, comfortable hall paved with flags, warmed by a bright, open fire, and furnished with costly cabinets of oak.*' (Stevenson , 39). These detailed descriptions also prove the peaceful and luxurious life style of the aristocrats. Moreover, through the novel, this wealthy life style is also stated in the narratives of the Dr. Jekyll. These narratives show us the economical and social state of the Dr. Jekyll and also give us informations about the earlier life of Dr. Jekyll. These narratives help us to imagine Dr. Jekyll as a true aristocrat indeed. '*I was born in the year 18– to a large fortune, ..., fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellowmen, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every quarantee of an honourable and distinguished future.*'(Stevenson , 139). In an age and a social and economical state like that, Dr. Jekyll noticed that, he was increasingly getting further away from sincerity and becoming a selfish and a greedy beast.

Corrupted mentality of the Victorian Age aristocrats and their classification of art -as a worthless tool of entertainment- ensured today's art and literature to be strictly bonded to an extremely solid origin. Philosophers like Max Weber , Karl Marx , Sidney Webb; painters like Claude Monet, Dante G. Rosetti and authors like Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Oscar Wilde all had arised in this age. Victorian Age had a great impact on the society psychologically. Dr. Jekyll was belonging to the aristocrats but by the time passes he also had been a part of the psychological revolution rising in the society.

### **III.Internal Factors-Psychological State of Dr. Jekyll**

With the help of the discovery that he had made, Dr. Jekyll finally discoveres a method to release his natural and depressed identity. Dr. Jekyll finds a way to express his anger which had been depressed by himself to carry on his luxurious and selfish life style. The hidden anger for the fake humanity... The drug<sup>2</sup> -'drug' word can ring a bell with every person who knows the famous 'forbidden fruit' story, symbol of desires and the greed(one of the greatest seven sins), in the Bible; which is the reason for the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Heaven and damnation with mortality- that had been discovered by Dr. Jekyll was a key that would carry Dr. Jekyll to his dreams.

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<sup>2</sup> *'...and out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil... And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest there of thou shalt surely die ...'* -Genesis 2: 9, 16-17(KJV)- (Resource:[http://www.gracecathedral.org/enrichment/brush\\_excerpts/brush\\_20030409.shtml](http://www.gracecathedral.org/enrichment/brush_excerpts/brush_20030409.shtml))

In fact, Dr. Jekyll symbolizes the desire of social revolution awakened in the society in the Victorian Age. Victorian Age had a great influence on Dr. Jekyll and brought his natural and pure desires, his good and evil sides out. Indeed, Dr. Jekyll symbolizes the wrath arised, towards the aristocrats, in the society and the main reason that brought Mr. Hyde out was also this irresistible wrath. From one aspect, Dr. Jekyll is a respectable aristocrat who can not abandon his luxurious life and on the other hand he is the symbol of the psychological revolution and the metamorphosis of the society.

We can say that, Dr . Jekyll had suffered psychologically and had experienced a deep trauma after noticing he lived a pointless and a hollow life in fact. *'I began to perceive more deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mistlike transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired.'*(Stevenson,143). Because of the insincere behaviours he had, to carry on his valuable position in the society, he had been pushed into a psychological trauma which ended with a kind of physical dementia. In fact, the situation that Dr. Jekyll struggles in, is actually a kind of reckoning with his own being. Dr. Jekyll actually questions his own being and tries to find an answer to his hypocritical nature . Dr. Jekyll, who had been urged to behave as a normal citizen, experiences the awakening of his own soul and discovers the most benighted corners of his own being. It can be said that, every person is a mixture of the evil and the good (Ying-yang<sup>3</sup>) and the ratio between these

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<sup>3</sup> **Yin Yang is the belief that there are two opposite forces in the universe. And there is an eternal and stable balance between these forces. It is believed that each of these forces have a small portion of the opposite force inside. Both of these forces exist in a balance without affecting each other. Yang symbolizes the good, the positive or the God. In contrast, Yin symbolizes the evil, the negative and the Devil. In order to keep the balance of the universe stable, these two forces are required. Also in some resources, it is said that, Yang symbolizes the man or strength and Yin symbolizes the woman or intelligence. In all of these descriptions of the Yin Yang, the main idea is, the eternal balance between these opposite forces.**

forces, changes person to person. Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll have a relation similar to this. When we look at Mr. Hyde in the novel, he is often described as a short and a thin man; because he is the symbol of the depressed thoughts, suppressed wrath for the hypocritical society and the hidden desire of freedom. *'I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy .'* (Stevenson,171) Actually nobody wants to get closer to him and anyone who witnesses his being, gets irritated of his presence and his evil energy that transpires through his body; because Mr. Hyde symbolizes the suppressed thoughts, desires and feelings of the humanity and every individual in the society afraid of facing with the reality because people think that being hypocritical and insincere in social interactions, is easier and beneficial in general.

Mr. Hyde is indeed a revolt to the natural hypocrisy of the humanity. The suppressed wrath of Dr. Jekyll, towards the aristocrats, shows up with the murder of an aristocrat by Mr. Hyde.

When Dr. Jekyll transforms into Mr. Hyde, he feels happy and free; because for the first time, he behaves freely as he desires and for the first time he squirms out of his hypocrisy. *'I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, ..., a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul.'*(Stevenson,147). In fact, Dr Jekyll does the thing that every individual desires to do and for the reason that rest of the society couldn't be brave enough as Dr. Jekyll (or Mr. Hyde) and couldn't reach to the purity, beware of him and they find his smell and appearance irritating. In fact, Mr. Hyde is the expression of the disgust for the Victorian

Age's hypocritical society and for the reason that everybody in the society have that hypocrisy in his or her nature, see Mr. Hyde as an enemy or an evil person.

#### **IV. Role of the Symbolism and the Linguistic Devices**

In the novel, there are some symbols which often come in sight -like the 'drug' we have mentioned before- and one of them and maybe the most important one is, the *salt*. Salt is often stated as a major ingredient for the drug prepared by Dr. Jekyll; '*...a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required...*' (Stevenson, 145).

Salt is a cleansing material which is as popular as holy water when it comes to the exorcism rituals. Salt is a common material used in the blessings and in the purification rituals, to be protected from the evil spirits. Salt is believed to be a holy material that repels evil, negative energy or in other terms, evil spirits. Salt has a different place in every belief and culture. For example in Germany, usually salt is poured to the corners of the house to repel evil spirits. Also according to the old Jewish traditions, Jewish people were used to dip their Challah or bread into salt on Shabbat Day. In Japan, sumo wrestlers often throw salt into the ring before the match starts in order to purify and sanctify the ring and repel the evil energy. Added to that, in Pagan rituals, salt has been used in breaking curses, evil spells. There are still some countries that keep these kind of traditions alive like throwing salt over someone's shoulder to repel evil energy. Also there are some references to salt in the Bible: In Old Testament, Lot's wife turns into a pillar of salt. Added to that, in New Testament,

Matthew 15:3, J. Christ addresses his disciples by saying that they are the salt of the World. Apart from that, salt has a important role in art too. When we take a closer look at Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting; 'The Last Supper'. We see that Judas –one of the disciples of Jesus- knocks a bowl filled with salt. It can just be figured out from the famous painting that, salt is the symbol of the natural balance formed between the good and evil .

Dr . Jekyll adds salt in his drug and as a result of this, evil side of his -Mr. Hyde- comes out. We mentioned that, salt repels evil and it is a holy material that helps keeping the balance between the good and evil stable. So we can say that, evil side of Dr. Jekyll is repelled from his body with the effect of the salt. This transformation processes good to the evil and evil to the good in both ways(Dr. Jekyll transforms into Mr. Hyde and Mr. Hyde transforms into Dr. Jekyll). So we can say that, salt controls the balance between the good and the evil.

In the novel there are some other symbols like the *mirror* and the *hearth*. In the novel, Dr. Jekyll places a mirror into his room to observe the metamorphosis. Mirror, in fact, shows him the good and evil. Dr. Jekyll, in his confessions, does not use the 'buy' word. Instead of that, he says that; mirror '*was brought there later*'. This reminds us of a divine force which observes this metamorphosis and urges Dr. Jekyll to witness the nature of the Mankind and indeed this force tries to punish Dr. Jekyll because of his experiments that has damaged the balance between the good and evil and curses him with Mr. Hyde. We can name it as poetic justice.

Through the novel, heart in the house of Dr. Jekyll's is often described as a bright and powerful fire within. *'The hall, when they entered it, was brightly lighted up; the fire was built high; and about the heart the whole of the servants,...'* (Stevenson, 93). In some parts of the books, like when the transformation happens or when someone like Utterson arrives to talk to Dr. Jekyll, there is often a description of the heart given. When an important thing happens, in general, a description of the fire in the heart is given. Fire in the heart can symbolize the hell; because when Mr. Hyde appears or a bad thing happens, fire grows up and lights up the house. Fire in the heart can also symbolize the evil feelings and desires in the heart or in the mind of Dr. Jekyll.

Also it is meaningless to talk about the linguistic devices and the symbolism in the novel without mentioning the message hidden in the name of Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll. By naming this character as 'Hyde', Stevenson tries to arise the word 'hide' in readers' minds. His name is Hyde; because he symbolizes the hidden feelings, thoughts and desires of Dr. Jekyll. Apart from that, also there is a hidden message in the name of Dr. Jekyll. Doctor's name, Jekyll, is pronounced as 'gee-kill'. It is so obvious that, like in Mr. Hyde's name, there is a message intended to be given. If we pronounce 'Jekyll' as 'gee-kill', it is impossible to miss out the 'kill' word. This word symbolizes the death or maybe a murder, which would show up later in the book. With the help of the foreshadowing technique, Robert Louis Stevenson directs readers' attention to the story and keeps on setting up various traps between his words.

## **V.Conclusion**

Our research question was : To what extent, in the novel ‘The Strange Case Of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde’ by R. L. Stevenson, the good and the evil sides of a man is brought to light by the external (social) and internal (psychological) factors and what are the results of this metamorphosis over the psychology of Dr. Jekyll? Through this essay, I have tried to answer this question by examining the effects of external and internal factors on a man.

Robert Louis Stevenson uses the third person narration technic and with the help of this type of narration, he creates a mysterious and a breath-taking atmosphere where the mystery of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is revealed by the testimonies of Dr. Lanyon, Mr. Utterson, Mr. Enfield, and Poole(Jekyll's butler).

In conclusion, while examining our research question, we have seen that both external and internal factors have a great effect on bringing the good and evil sides of a man out and also these factors are deeply related with the natural balance between the good and the evil forces. We have mentioned the social and the economical state of the city; Edinburg, the age - Victorian Era- that the novel takes place and the social and economical state of the Victorian society, the corrupted Victorian mentality -which ensures aristocrats to rule the rest of the society-. We have also mentioned the hypocrisy, aristocracy and inequality. We have examined the social and economical differences between the social classes of the society - between aristocrats and the citizens-. We have examined the psychology of Dr. Jekyll. We

have also examined some of the symbols and metaphors that have been mentioned in the novel and which actually makes the novel unique and a world-wide classic.

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