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Prologue

The world of English has always played a key role in my life, from the moment I was introduced to the macabre writings of Edgar Allan Poe by my eighth-grade teacher, Ms. Barry. Her passion for English showed through her class structure, teaching mythological literature and its allegorical ties to the modern world, and pushing her students with “creative Fridays,” a day for composing original creative pieces from a simple prompt. She was strong-willed in her devotion to the subject, and I had never been as invested in English as I was during my time in her class. The snowball effect began, and I focused my energy into reading as many books as I could, although it never seemed enough. Once I began taking Honors and AP classes, I realized I was in this for the long haul. Ms. Barry was a dedicated woman to the subject, and one of my greatest sponsors of literacy, my father being the leading literary sponsor, bringing to life the events at Hogwarts and the realm of Middle Earth in my bedroom during nightly stories. The relationship that I have cultivated with English because of these sponsors have grown my passion for this subject into what it is today, a pursuit towards a degree centered around the world of English.

The value of English in the world is so much more than perfecting language, grammar and learning the complex sentence structures and its vocabulary. Without the dedicated classes for English in school systems, workplace literacy would fail to demonstrate proficient technical skills, communication between team members, effective discussions, and engaging in cognitive

demands that are only learned from classroom creativity. I have learned so much in this class regarding the importance of studying English, the language of literature and how catering towards both personal and professional goals only grows when you commit to the vast knowledge of the subject. Being introduced to many types of writing, and recognizing the inclusivity of humanistic emotions, sympathies and development helps to connect with different audiences, and I think that showcases the need for studying English. It doesn't just help you communicate more effectively, with clear intention, it also opens a world of mortal qualities that cannot be replicated by advanced technology without a basic understanding of English. "The Ethics of Reading" by Jane Gallop has really stuck with me as well. It opened my eyes to how I read, giving me ideas on opening myself to new perspectives, approaching reading with a more literal intent. Before being introduced to her journal, I had not heard the term "close reading" before. Reading the text itself, with intention, instead of assuming what it is written beyond the text, forced me to see more clearly what I was meant to focus on. She proclaims, "It means noticing things *in the writing*, things in the writing that stand out" (p.7). There are five things that readers who close-read usually take to heart, and I realized how easy it was to apply those things to my own reading. In hindsight, I believe that is exactly what Gallop intended to happen, and I understand more fully why it is important to read without a preconceived bias or a subconscious assumption of whatever is being read. I loved learning a new theory for reading, noticing too well it has cleverly made a home inside my mind, becoming an interwoven thought that I will always take part in.

My writing style tends to be conforming, and I usually avoid including any sort of emotional connection or personal bias, having been taught of its "unorthodox nature" when annotating literature. With this class, my first feedback was very strong, but necessary. It forced

me to understand my audiences, responding more fluidly without being resistant to change. With this in mind, knowing my deep interest in English, I am aware the journey towards my goal will only become denser, introduce more struggles, perhaps become harder to manage, but I am determined to complete my degree with dignity. I have grown to become more open with criticism, learning how to be vulnerable in my writings. While some of the units were easy to dive into, such as the literary and creative studies section, I was aware of how uncomfortable the English education unit was to me. I felt guilty for knowingly deciding against the idea of teaching, despite having fallen in love with English *because* of my teachers. I am also aware that this goal is for me, and the days of pleasing everyone else and choosing a “simple” career in something more attainable are over.

The Dark Humanism within Mr. Hyde:
A Literary Studies Essay
By: Sierra Jorgensen

Selected passage from the chapter "Search For Mr. Hyde":

That was the amount of information that the lawyer carried back with him to the great, dark bed on which he tossed to and fro, until the small hours of the morning began to grow large. It was a night of little ease to his toiling mind, toiling in mere darkness and besieged by questions. Six o'clock struck on the bells of the church that was so conveniently near to Mr. Utterson's dwelling, and still he was digging at the problem. Hitherto it had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved; and as he lay and tossed in the gross darkness of the night and the curtained room, Mr. Enfield's tale went by before his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures. He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor's; and then these met, and that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled, and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding. The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes; and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the lawyer's mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde. If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away, as was the habit of mysterious things when well examined. He might see a reason for his friend's strange preference or bondage (call it which you please) and even for the startling clause of the will. At least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy: a face which had but to show itself to raise up, in the mind of the unimpressible Enfield, a spirit of enduring hatred.

The snippet above is from Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This Victorian novella approaches the complexity of recognizing the dangers with harboring and combating inner demons, the struggle between what is expected within each role in society and what is more comfortable, perhaps morally ambiguous; and how descending into that comfortable place inevitably presents a darker version of oneself. The selection above takes

place very early in the morning inside Mr. Utterson's bedroom. Mr. Utterson is tossing and turning after having sought out information about Mr. Hyde from an old friend, Dr. Lanyon. My initial thought from this passage was noticing the "colorful" imagery that Stevenson astutely displays throughout this excerpt. When I say colorful, I intend to point out the clever irony Stevenson portrays with the *lack of color*, as evidently seen in phrases including, "That was the amount of information that the lawyer carried back with him to the great, dark bed", following with another example; "and as he lay and tossed in the gross darkness of the night and the curtained room". To me, this seems to allude to the emphasis on the "unseemly feelings" that are conjured when speaking about or finding oneself in the presence of Mr. Hyde. The word "dark" is repeated in this passage, giving life to the idea of emptiness, an unavoidable outlook on the lack of emotion regarding Mr. Hyde, and the "almost human" quality that always finds its way at the forefront in any encounter with him. I cannot help but notice the atmosphere from this passage presents a strong sense of mystery, and I feel this is one of many fervent themes that are sprinkled throughout the novella, and later on in the story, it could end up giving more meaning as to why inward emotions are always so repugnantly negative in connection with the elusive Mr. Hyde.

I would like to call attention to the tone that repetition and alliteration brings to this passage and a few phrases that stood out to me; "dreaming and smiling at his dreams", "move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly", "wider labyrinths of lamplighted city". These small but moving sentences promote a rhythm that aids in painting the bigger picture; Mr. Utterson excessively detailing the night, its nocturnal nature (which tends to harbor dark, underlying threats and shrouded mysteries along lowly lit streets) and a clear opposition regarding any sort of "light" that is a stark contrast to the darkness. The use of lamps, lighted pictures and morning

hours in later segments from this chapter help to further this major theme of duality. Light is irrefutably defying this discovery of dark gloominess that Mr. Utterson cannot seem to get away from, and I feel drawing attention to the basic function and purpose of curtains on his bedroom window in this passage, as well as repeating the word "light" throughout the rest of this excerpt, help me imagine how simple it can be to "curtain" the light, or positive feelings, that are natural in the daylight, making way for the atmosphere to change and charge with voyeuristic intention, like the "human Juggernaut" that Mr. Utterson seems to fixate on.

As for the rhythm and structure within this passage, I feel the reader is allowed a messy glimpse of Mr. Utterson's innermost thought process, and rather than complete sentences and finalized ideas of communicating, Mr. Utterson is trapped by his mind's ceaseless consumption with Mr. Hyde, "it had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved". I find that using the word "enslaved" paints a picture of what it would be like to wrestle with the thoughts of Mr. Hyde, and how Mr. Utterson begins to obsess over discovering the *real* Mr. Hyde. Mr. Utterson is so caught up in this dilemma, this *enigma*, and no one can really give a description of what Mr. Hyde looks like, undoubtedly solidifying this sort of tainted bond between the two characters. The tone of this passage, the never-ending sentences, help in unveiling this obsessive curiosity and revulsion of Mr. Hyde that Mr. Utterson is so preoccupied with and cannot seem to calm his thoughts enough to give focus to anything else. He even goes as far as to "haunt the door in the b-street of shops", spending hours before stores open in the morning, waiting to capture this evasive mystery. But at the same time, I feel the way Mr. Utterson's emotions strengthen in a contradictory aspect whenever he talks of Mr. Hyde, it comes across as a bad habit that will turn into a treacherous road no one can walk away from.

In this novella, and as I mentioned earlier, a topic that is touched on frequently is the inability to pinpoint the looks of Mr. Hyde. No one throughout the story can give definitive answers, or factual identification on his appearance, instead heavily focusing on their own emotions regarding his demeanor, his physical attributes, his elusiveness. Mr. Utterson senses his own feelings regarding this, and the unavoidable sensations relating to Mr. Hyde's mysterious aura, tugging at his own moral strings, and wondering why Mr. Hyde gives off this unbecoming fear that is so detrimental to society; "and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the lawyer's mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde". It is as if there are bits of evil sewn into the subconscious of his peers, infected by the constant obsession with Mr. Hyde and his appearance. So why, in this passage, is Stevenson so focused on key parts of a human body, like the visual privilege in taking in the world around us and turning it into a hellish nightmare that seems to cause people to look away, "And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes..."? Or why all of the characters are so insistent upon catching a clear glimpse of Mr. Hyde, and now knowing that in the case of Mr. Enfield and his conjuration of Mr. Hyde's "spirit of enduring hatred", if a person creates this much turmoil in the face of others, the idea of wanting to see the face of someone with such revolting human qualities alludes to the desire to test the complacency of roles within society, and asking for the threat of the unknown, all because, according to Mr. Utterson, "At least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy...".

Taking everything into account, Mr. Hyde could be seen by his society as a dark, threatening mystery that gives no light to any sort of moral comfort. In this passage, I feel the use of repeating two opposite illuminations throughout gives depth to their important roles and the

duality this dilemma presents; Dr. Jekyll exudes the epitome of a being full of light, with empathy and compassion, ideologies that are necessary within a field of doctorship, while Mr. Hyde exemplifies more aptly what a person centered around darkness would be, full of mischief and terror and a lack of sympathy, or any other type of upstanding qualities in acceptable roles. I feel that Stevenson's use of alliteration with words and the repetitive mentions of Mr. Hyde's problematic appearance only helps to convey a deeper tone on what Mr. Utterson feared throughout the novella; this morbid curiosity that shapes a negative enigma, in this case, Mr. Hyde's elusiveness, and how both Mr. Utterson and Dr. Jekyll going too far with their respective curiosities seemed to be all-encompassed with regret, regarding the outcome between the two and Mr. Hyde's relationship with others throughout the story.

Works Cited

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde*. Oct 31, 1992, David Wigner, The Project Gutenberg eBook, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/43/43-h/43-h.htm>. Accessed 14 December 2023.