

THE GENERATION OF EDWARD HYDE

The Animal Within, from Plato to Darwin to Robert Louis Stevenson

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To the memory of my father, Warrant Officer Gordon Leslie Bland, DFC
Lest we forget

and

To the memory of my mother Kathleen, which is not as good as it used to
be

DECLARATION

I certify that this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

SUMMARY

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* first appeared in 1886. Readers at the time commented – either directly or by implication – on three major influences at work on the text:– Darwinism, the Bible, and Platonism. Although surviving commentaries tend to identify each in isolation, Stevenson employed all three together in his representation and explanation of Edward Hyde. Nor was he alone among authors in combining these seemingly disparate elements. With the passage of time commentators have tended to focus on either the Darwinian or the biblical implications surrounding Hyde; and the Platonic implications have been more or less overlooked. For a full understanding of Hyde all three must be considered; and they must all be considered together.

The aim of this dissertation is to locate Edward Hyde within the history of ideas. It examines earlier literature involving apes or ape-like creatures, thereby revealing a tradition which deals with mankind's burden of evil; a tradition in which evil is portrayed in ugly, deformed, and beastly bodies; a tradition which explores and questions the origins of mankind – theological, philosophical, and scientific – in an attempt to account for the presence of our lower impulses; a tradition which links humanity with the beasts—very often, although not exclusively, with the apes. The chosen texts show that, as time passes and knowledge of the natural world increases through exploration and scientific learning, earlier ways of looking at the world, instead of being replaced by new ideas, come to serve as a mythic or poetic way of accommodating such new ideas, absorbing the new and incorporating it into the old mythological framework. The dissertation attempts to demonstrate how this tradition feeds naturally into Stevenson's text, providing a Darwinian-biblical-Platonic context within which to examine Hyde.

Stevenson's story, dealing as it does with the timeless theme of evil within the human soul, employs language and imagery which were

familiar and accessible to the educated readers of his day, but which are becoming increasingly remote from and unrecognizable to the general reader of today. The object of this dissertation is to provide a literary background from which to interpret the figure of Edward Hyde and his importance as a traditional emblem of sin.

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