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The Sense of *Un-Ending* in Fin-De-Siècle Literature: A Study of *Dr. Jekyll* and *Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula*

Keiko KIRIYAMA

“There comes an end to all things; the most capacious measure is filled at last” (94)¹). This statement of Dr. Jekyll on the point of departing his life clearly shows the sense of ending—the sense that everything comes to an end at last. Naturally enough, every measure is finally filled if he keeps pouring some water into it. Dr. Jekyll, as if he demonstrated the truth of the sense of ending, accepts the finality of his death with good grace after finishing his statement. What happens, however, if the measure leaks and water flows out without stopping? Dr. Jekyll must continue to pour water into it only to find that there is no end to his tiresome work. While doing this dreary work endlessly, he must lose the sense of ending.

In this paper I will examine fin-de-siècle texts such as *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (JH) (1886) and *Dracula* (1897) in terms of the sense of ending. It seems natural that every one should have the sense of ending, but those who live in London at the end of the nineteenth century, as we shall see, have nearly lost it. In the text of *Dracula* we will witness the critical moment when the sense of ending is entirely reversed. Let us start with JH by considering how the identities of the characters as English gentlemen are on the verge of a crisis by the appearance of Mr. Hyde in fin-de-siècle London.

I

In JH, Mr. Hyde, the double of Dr. Jekyll, makes frequent appearances in London at the end of the nineteenth century. Other characters

thrust on Mr. Hyde all unfavorable elements for their identities as English gentlemen and label him as the "other" being different from themselves. Mr. Hyde has so grotesque an appearance that Victorian gentlemen, seeing him even at a glance, can never forget him. Let us make inquiry into other characters' description of Mr. Hyde and consider his outward appearance. No doubt that "[t]here is something wrong with his [Mr. Hyde's] appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked", says Mr. Enfield, "[y]et I scarce know why" (14). Mr. Enfield seems to have difficulty in describing Mr. Hyde. On the other hand, Mr. Utterson remarks on some characteristics of Mr. Hyde in the following way: "Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish; he gave an impression of deformity without any namable malformation, he had a displeasing smile" (23), "but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him" (24). There is something wrong with Mr. Hyde's appearance, to be sure, but nobody can clearly delineate what is wrong. We can never exactly know the details of Mr. Hyde's appearance. Besides, Mr. Utterson begins to doubt if Mr. Hyde is a human being and cries: "[T]he man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say?" (24). There are several pieces of evidence endorsing his opinion. Poole, an elderly servant of Dr. Jekyll, often uses the word "the creature" instead of "he", talking about Mr. Hyde and testifies that "the creature was so doubled up" (58-59) and that the "masked thing [Mr. Hyde] like a monkey jumped up among the chemicals" (59). Mr. Hyde, looking like a troglodyte or a monkey, must have great difficulty in walking straight like a modern human being. Also his hand "thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair" (88) is not the hand of a modern man but that of an ape. Judging from his appearance Edward Hyde is regarded as a primitive man rather like a monkey.

My Hyde's way of life, however, is not barbarous, on the contrary he lives as if he were a cultivated gentleman. Where he lives is never a cave but a decorative house "furnished with luxury and good taste. A closet was filled with wine; the plate was of silver, the napery elegant;

a good picture hung upon the walls ... and the carpets were of many plies and agreeable in colour" (35). And even just before his death Mr. Hyde prepares "the tea things" with "the very sugar in the cup" (64), which proves that Mr. Hyde has a custom of making tea like an English gentleman. Although repeating an offense "with ape-like fury" (31) to other people, Mr. Hyde cautiously "mastered his fury with a great effort of the will" (97) and devised appropriate measure to save his life when his existence was at stake. "[T]he creature", as Dr. Jekyll admits, is too "astute" (97) to be simply categorized as an ape.

His outward appearance is not that of a fully developed man but a troglodyte, yet he is not a complete fool like a lower animal to be subjugated to human beings. Mr. Hyde who is "more of a dwarf" (57) has decisively defeated Dr. Jekyll, "a tall fine build of a man" (57), "endowed ... with excellent parts" (77). This ape-like primeval at last becomes no other than "a usurper" (Herdman 136)²) against the Victorian gentleman, or it would be better to say that Edward Hyde himself might be much nearer to a Victorian gentleman than a primitive man³).

While disgusted with Mr. Hyde's grotesque figure, most Victorian gentlemen remember him and burn with curiosity about Mr. Hyde's true character. Curiosity is the important keyword to interpret this text. Among gentlemen, only Mr. Enfield is able to repress his curiosity about Mr. Hyde according to the rule: "the more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask" (14), and makes sure to solidify his resolution by saying to Mr. Utterson: "Let us make a bargain never to refer to this [Mr. Hyde's violence against a girl] again" (15). Since Mr. Enfield could suppress his curiosity about Mr. Hyde he had never been disturbed by him. Dr. Lanyon, however, could not control his curiosity about him when he first met Mr. Hyde who had asked Dr. Lanyon to collect some necessary chemicals for his transformation. Dr. Lanyon remarked: "[T]o my interest in the man's [Mr. Hyde's] nature and character there was added a curiosity as to his origin, his life, his fortune and status in the world" (73). Out of his "greed of curiosity" (75) he could not allow Mr. Hyde to leave his house without knowing about his background and boldly asserted that: "I have gone too far in the

way of inexplicable services to pause before I see the end" (76). To see "the end" for him meant the discovery that Mr. Hyde, far from being the "other", was nothing less than the double of a high-minded man, Dr. Jekyll. The grim truth that the respectable professor changed into the brutal criminal provoked a disturbance in his identity, because he realized the possibility that everyone could become "Edward Hyde", another "self", if once loosing "the balance of" his "soul" (94). Dr. Lanyon, in the end, chose death over life because he could not bear the fear of changing into another "self". Also Mr. Utterson who should have been "a lover of the sane and customary sides of life" (17) could not suppress his "curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde" (20). We can infer from Dr. Lanyon and Mr. Utterson's ardent curiosity about Mr. Hyde that Victorian gentlemen, at least those who believe that they are, are more or less in sympathy with Mr. Hyde. Their unaccountable aversion for him may result from their self-defensive ability which warns them not to approach the dangerous ape-like man, but at the same time their intuition also suggests that there is something similar between their own natures and Mr. Hyde's. We cannot know from the text what Mr. Utterson becomes after reading "Dr. Lanyon's Narrative" and "Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of The Case" and learning the dreadful truth, but who can deny that the same destiny as Dr. Lanyon will await Mr. Utterson? A slight curiosity about Mr. Hyde will prove fatal to his life.

II

Victorian gentlemen resemble Mr. Hyde in their innate dispositions, but manage to protect their identities as impeccable men by imposing everything undesirable for them on Mr. Hyde as the "other". All they have to do is to cover their bad dispositions still lurking in the unconscious with their ingenious and beautiful masks. John R. Reed offers an explanation of the effect of masks by referring to Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) in *Victorian Conventions*: "All men, Wilde suggests, are in disguise. All men have their secrets which they will not reveal and which convert their everyday appearances

into masks at odds with their souls" (348). Dorian, a refined young gentleman, had succeeded in putting on his beautiful mask by thrusting "the burden of his shame" (105)⁴ in his life on his double, namely his own portrait, until he "stabbed the picture" (223). What stirred up Dorian to commit a crime was "his own infinite curiosity" (105) about all human experiences including evil. Dorian could not gratify his curiosity merely by experiencing the good aspects of his life conducted by "Dr. Jekyll". Dorian's inexhaustible interest in life awoke "Edward Hyde" from his long sleep, whose bad deeds came to be recorded in Dorian's portrait. Since the time when Dorian's picture changed through his wicked acts, his picture for him had embodied "Edward Hyde". When we read the last description of ugly Dorian: "He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage" (224), we notice, evidently, his beautiful mask had been torn off already. Dorian's picture—the embodiment of "Edward Hyde"—also usurped beautiful Dorian—that of "Henry Jekyll"—just as Mr. Hyde in *JH* usurped Dr. Jekyll.

However hard Victorian gentlemen endeavor to conceal another "self", their masks easily come off and "Edward Hyde", who should be repressed as the "other", emerges from the unconscious. After all, there is little difference between English gentlemen and Mr. Hyde. Only a thin wall segregates civilized men from troglodytic Edward Hyde. Daniel Pick insists that a Victorian belief in the category of "human beings" is no more than a shattered illusion.

Darwin⁵ ... had already dealt his "blow" to human "narcissism" ... by warning that there was no absolute evolutionary separation from the world of the animals, no escape from the stigma of that descent. Behind even the most imperiously "contemptuous" human smile, one usually caught the glint of a set of once *ferocious teeth*. (171, emphasis added)

Once they have taken off their masks, the Victorians have no means of veiling their bestial features such as ferocious teeth, which turn out to be the typical characteristics of Count Dracula discussed further in the next section.

The characters in *JH*, as stated above, cannot ascertain the cause of their aversion to Mr. Hyde because to explain the reason why Mr. Hyde is such a disgusting character leads them to realize that "Edward Hyde" is nothing but their doubles. Nobody wants to admit "Edward Hyde" exists inside them. They must survive at the end of the nineteenth century as a English gentleman, even though harbouring their fear of changing into "Edward Hyde", until they meet their ends. Dr. Jekyll preparing for his own death, in fact, confesses that: "it was no longer the fear of the gallows, it was the horror of being Hyde that racked me" (98). The fear of transformation is for Dr. Jekyll bigger than that of his death. And his fear that Mr. Hyde may utterly subdue Dr. Jekyll is justified at last. Dr. Jekyll has met his end not as a respectable professor but as an ape-like criminal.

Let us go into further details about Dr. Jekyll's end. Dr. Jekyll, being at death's door, writes in his last confession: "Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? Or will he find the courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless" (102). What the passage makes clear is that Dr. Jekyll has already lost interest in Mr. Hyde's ultimate destiny. It does not matter for Dr. Jekyll whether Hyde dies miserably or averts his death for a while. The important thing is that Dr. Jekyll himself surely will be able to die. His final confession concluded with the following lines: "Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end" (102). Dr. Jekyll could not preserve his identity as an honorable man, and so he had no choice but to put an end to his existence. As we have seen, Dr. Lanyon as well as Dr. Jekyll preferred to die rather than to live with fear of transformation. In "Dr. Lanyon's Narrative" he fully perceived his coming death: "My life is shaken to its roots ... I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die" (77). Dr. Lanyon's discovery of his dual identity delivered a horrible shock to him and forced him to choose death over life. Both Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Lanyon longed for their own ends and reached their final destinations. Their pride as English gentlemen did not admit the existence of "Edward Hyde" in their own natures. Thus, the moment "Edward

Hyde" utterly usurped their masters, they decided to give up their lives for honour. In this text the Victorians at least could have the sense of ending and could die, even though another "self", that is "Edward Hyde", had crushed their identities by depriving them of their ingenious masks.

III

In *Dracula* published in 1897, much nearer to the end of the nineteenth century, their last means for preserving their pride as English gentlemen are easily thwarted by the appearance of Count Dracula in fin-de-siècle London. What is implied yet never manifested itself in *JH* comes to light in *Dracula*. The transformation into another "self" for most Victorians might be a childish fantasy, but it is turned into reality. "The relationships between ... 'fantasy' and 'reality'", as Asa Briggs remarks, "were becoming more complex in the 1890s" (173), and fantasy begins to intrude into reality at the very end of the nineteenth century.

Rosemary Jackson in her work *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* succinctly categorizes "nineteenth century tales of fantasy and horror" (38) into two types with "the interrelations of the 'I' and 'not-I', of self and other" (53). *JH* belongs to the first type: "[T]he source of otherness, of threat" "is seen to originate from the subject" (58). That is to say, the subject itself has the source of otherness that transforms himself into "Edward Hyde". Indeed, the cause of Dr. Jekyll's changing into Mr. Hyde lay in Dr. Jekyll himself not in the external conditions. His transformation arose from his using a drug invented by Dr. Jekyll. As for other characters, Mr. Hyde's emergence in London impelled them to the disturbance in their identities as Victorian gentlemen, but the utter ruin of other characters was accomplished not by Mr. Hyde but by their own curiosity about him. All danger of transformation in *JH* was incurred by the subject itself.

Dracula, on the other hand, belongs to the second type: The danger of transformation "originates in a source external to the subject: the self suffers an attack of some sort which makes it part of the other"

(58). Victorian people in *Dracula* are always exposed to the danger of transformation, because it is Count Dracula that presents the danger to them. Whether having curiosity or not about Count Dracula, they gradually alter and finally become the same race as Dracula, once Dracula injects his blood into their veins. Count Dracula, unlike Mr. Hyde who usurped only Dr. Jekyll, has never contented himself with taking possession of a particular man. His diabolical scheme for transforming human beings into his species is contrived against everyone in fin-de-siècle London. How, then, does Count Dracula come to London, approach his targets and transform them into his species?

Although Count Dracula's appearance changes, he is satisfactorily grown up compared to dwarfish Mr. Hyde who can hardly walk without being bent. We can point out his main characteristics: he is "a tall man" with "a pair of very bright eyes", "very red lips" and "sharp-looking teeth" (10)⁶. His figure is quite human in shape. It is noteworthy, in passing, that Victorian people infected with his blood inherit from Count Dracula his characteristics, especially, ferocious teeth. Jonathan Harker admitted that his wife, Mina's "teeth are some sharper" (323) after she was attacked by Dracula, and just before Lucy turns into a vampire "the gums" of Lucy's mouth, according to Dr. Seward's diary, "seemed to have shrunken back from the teeth" (127). Behind their masks, human beings surely hide a set of ferocious teeth. No matter what splendid masks they put on, Count Dracula can find out their ferocious teeth.

In preparation for his transferring to London, Count Dracula learns "new tongues ... new social life; new environment of old ways, the politic, the law, the finance, the science, the habit of a new land and a new people" (321). Studying books "relating to England and English life and customs and manners" enables him to appear to be more like a Victorian gentleman than a shabby stranger. Moreover his possession of "the Law List" (19) in his library shows that Dracula wants to avoid the watchful eye of the Law while he is in the big city. What he hopes is to make the Victorians believe him to be a "noble" not "a stranger" (20). Both his man-like appearance and his sophisticat-

ed manners make it possible for him to move around in London without others' suspicion against him. The figure of Count Dracula in London is also depicted in *The City of Dreadful Night* (1880). Certainly "phantoms" like Count Dracula "haunt those shadowy streets", but they "mingle freely there with sparse mankind" (VII, 1-2). Nobody distinguishes Count Dracula inconspicuously mingling with the crowd in the metropolis.

While Mr. Hyde rambles through the streets of London aimlessly, Count Dracula has his definite purpose of multiplying his race in the great city. His visit to London is never regarded as that of a tourist or a sightseer. He is nothing short of an invader aiming at ruling over Londoners by transfusing his blood to their veins and changing them into his species, that is, the Un-Dead. All vampires and human beings infected with Dracula's blood belong to the Un-Dead. What is precisely the Un-Dead? Prof. Helsing, an expert in the study of Dracula, explains:

[T]hey [the Un-Dead] cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world; for all that die from the preying of the Un-Dead become themselves Un-Dead, and prey on their kind. (214)

The Un-Dead, to put it more strictly, are neither alive nor dead, since their lives are lifted up in suspense between life and death. Their ends never will come until someone emancipates their souls from their bodies by means of the "horrid task" (30): cuts off their heads, fills their mouths with garlic, and drives a stake into their bodies. The Victorians who change into the Un-Dead by Count Dracula's blood, in short, cannot die of their own will. Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Lanyon in *JH* could bring their lives to an end with their unshakable determination, but those who are exposed to Dracula's attack have lost control of their existence. Nina Auerbach points out the fear peculiar to Count Dracula and his species: "[S]ince vampires are immortal ... they embody not fear of death, but fear of life: their power and their curse is their undying vitality" (5). The fear of life, in other words, the fear of *un*-end, dominates all Victorians when they are targeted by Count

Dracula.

A few courageous men assemble to fight against Count Dracula, and each member of a team honestly expresses his own fear of *un-end*. Prof. Helsing, for instance, compares the Un-Dead to the figure of circle. As “the circle goes on ever widening, like as the ripples from a stone thrown in the water” (214), the Un-Dead multiply endlessly and spread among the big city. This image of circle leads the second example: the movement of a carriage. Jonathan talks about the carriage that takes him to Castle Dracula: it is “simply going over and over the same ground again” (11). The ever-running carriage that appears in the opening of this text must imply the sense of *un-ending* spreading through it. Thirdly, Dr. Seward is intensely afraid that his diary never reaches its ending. The sentences from his dairy are as follows:

Truly there is no such thing as finality. Not a week since I said “Finis”, and yet here I am starting fresh again, or rather going on with the same record. (189)

It may be better to begin a fresh start from the first, but the contents of his diary appear to be “the same record” for him. The final page in his diary may circle back to its opening page. Both the carriage and Dr. Seward’s diary fail to achieve their final destinations, like an ever-rolling circle. Finally, even Quincey Morris, who seems to die a hero’s death at the battle against Count Dracula, may begin his life from the very first as the son of Jonathan and Mina. “[O]ur boy’s birthday is the same day as that on which Quincey Morris died” says Jonathan, “we call him Quincey” (378). Their son is probably reborn Quincey Morris. If, as Laurence Rickels insists, “vampirism does not really come to a close” (62), Quincey must fight against Count Dracula only to die and revive again. Their destinies are no other than to repeat what they have already done. The Victorians in *Dracula* were possessed not with the fear of end but with the fear of *un-end*.

Victorian gentlemen in *JH* could believe that “[t]here comes an end to all things; the most capacious measure is filled at last” (*JH* 94),

but at the very turn of the century, in *Dracula* they no longer grasped how much water the measure held because they could not find its bottom, namely the end itself. In *JH* Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Lanyon, after their beautiful masks slipped off, threw away their lives for the sake of their English gentlemanly pride. In *Dracula*, however, when Count Dracula—the embodiment of *un*-end—appeared in London, the sense of ending disappeared. Count Dracula began to fill the mind of people at the fin-de-siècle with the sense of *un*-ending instead of the sense of ending. The comparison of *JH* and *Dracula*, as we have already seen, enables us to realize two different senses of ending at the end of the nineteenth century and the turning point from the sense of ending to that of *un*-ending. The sense of ending, of course, did not suddenly change into the sense of *un*-ending. It is reasonable to think that the sense of ending was gradually replaced by that of *un*-ending as the century drew to an end. In fact, we can find fin-de-siècle people's fear of *un*-end in the lines from *London Nights* (1895): "World without end; but how to ravel out/The inextricable doubt?" ("Intermezzo: II Serata Di Festa", 24-25). Fin-de-siècle people could never find an answer to this question, or rather, they no longer wanted to. Their fear of *un*-end grew more and more and culminated in the appearance of Count Dracula in the great city. The emergence of Count Dracula in fin-de-siècle London exactly incarnated the sense of *un*-ending itself.

Frank Kermode writes about the difficulty in distinguishing the end or the beginning in a long history: "End grew harder and harder to think of as an imminent historical event, and so incidentally did the beginning" (27). The existence of the end itself is suspicious, which naturally forces that of the beginning into uncertainty. When the nineteenth century drew to an end, the Victorians could not but doubt if the next twentieth century would really come, or if even this nineteenth century would peacefully end. People at the fin-de-siècle, like the Undead, must have stagnated between the beginning and the end. As represented by Prof. Helsing's words: "Life is nothing! I heed him not" (237), people at the fin-de-siècle did not wish for a tiresome life. It was the end itself that they dearly longed for. All they could do was to

pray God for their endings just as Jonathan did even with resignation: "God will aid us up to the end. The end!" (289). No one made sure of their own ends and their century's end, but craved for the end forever. Fin-de-siècle people were desperately running not toward the beginning of the next century but toward the *un*-end of the nineteenth century. What they acquired at the final destination, if it existed, was nothing less than the sense of *un*-ending.

Notes

- 1) Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (London: Longmans, 1886). All quotations from the text are referred to this edition.
- 2) Herdman regards Edward Hyde as a usurper against Jekyll. "The balance [between Jekyll and Hyde] is being lost; Jekyll will gradually lose the power of voluntary change, and become irrevocably Hyde." "This double [Hyde] is a usurper." See Herdman, 136.
- 3) Arata also thinks Hyde a gentleman. "The noun used most often in the story to describe Hyde is not 'monster' or 'villain' but 'gentleman.'" See Arata, 38.
- 4) Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Isobel Murray (London: Oxford UP, 1974). All references in the text are to this edition.
- 5) Darwin writes: "[M]an bears in his bodily structure clear traces of his descent from some lower form." See Darwin, 98.
- 6) Bram Stoker. *Dracula* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996). All quotations from the text are referred to this edition.

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