

The Nineteenth Century Novel
Prof. Divya. A
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology – Madras

Lecture - 47

R. L. Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde key Themes and Incident, Chapters 1-4

Hello and welcome to week 10's lectures. In today's session, we will be doing a thematic recap of the first four chapters we looked in the previous sessions. So I will be discussing the key themes, the key statements and the key symbols, and also I will be talking a little bit about the generic importance of this particular novella by R. L. Stevenson.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:42)

Utterson's Meeting With Hyde



Now I want to show you this illustration of Mr. Edward Hyde, and this illustration pertains to Mr. Utterson's meeting with Hyde. If you remember the initial narrative moments in the novel, Mr. Utterson is obsessed with this figure, Mr. Hyde, and he is haunting the streets where Mr. Hyde was last seen. And on one lucky day Mr. Utterson gets a glimpse of this terrible figure, and then he stops him as Mr. Hyde is entering the door, which apparently led to a cellar.

So as he is inserting the key into the door, Mr. Utterson intervenes and has a brief conversation with him. I want you to pay attention to the bent figure. This is not a tall, upright gentleman, a Victorian gentleman, quite the contrary. Even though he is wearing a top hat and then he has an overcoat and he has a cane, and there are certain accessories which

would indicate that the clothing belongs to a gentleman, whereas the man who is putting on those clothes is quite unlikely to be termed a gentleman.

Even look at the hand, it seems slightly bestial, there is an animal-like set of features to the hand. Look at the way the hand is clutched, it is bony, it is skeletal, and look at the mouth which is also kind of reminds us of an animal. So we have an evil monstrous figure who is masquerading as a Victorian gentleman. And there is an, kind of an aura of a thief to this figure, and he kind of enters the door, enters this house in the middle of the night like a thief.

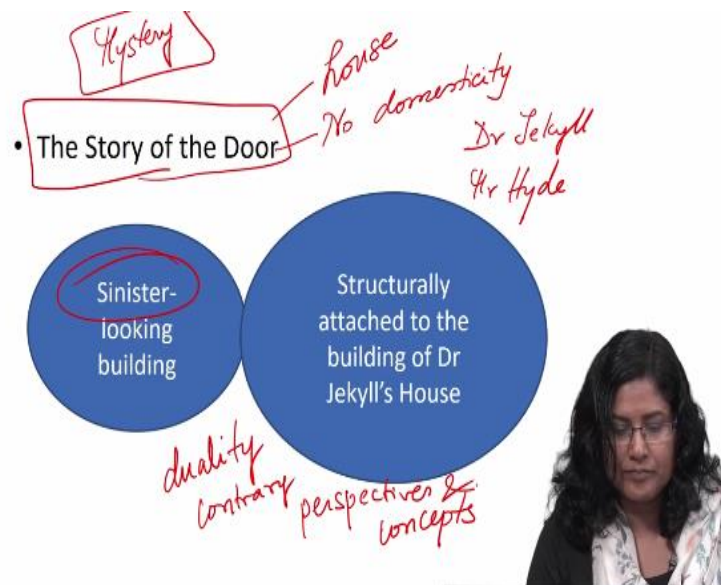
And there is this Victorian context to this particular character and moment in R. L. Stevenson's life. In fact, there is a figure called Deacon Brodie who was a thief, and who did a lot of burglaries, you know, he robbed some of his friends and he pretended to look for that thief by offering a reward and things like that, and eventually he got found out. So again there is this, you know, context that gentlemen can also be robbers in the middle of the night.

So that kind of context also comes forth in this characterization of Mr. Hyde who is entering Dr. Jekyll's premises. As you read the novel you will know that this is a kind of an entry into the home of Dr. Jekyll, because the entire setup belongs, the entire structure belongs to Dr. Jekyll who is a well-respected gentleman, who has a certain dignity in society. So there is a duality in this figure of Mr. Hyde, something we need to keep in mind as we progress through the novel.

And also in this illustration you can see how the notoriety of this particular neighborhood also comes through. Look at the graffiti here which have been marked by the loungers, by the wayfarers, by the wastrels, who kind of haunt this neighborhood. There is a lot of graffiti here, and then look at the notice put up by the police. The police wants somebody, and that notice also put up there on the wall.

And you can also clearly see that this wall, this neighborhood has not been well kept up. You can see the bricks showing through the coat of paint. So all these give us an indication this is not a very reputable neighborhood.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:11)



Now I want to go back to the chapter, the beginning of the novella which has this title, the Story of the Door. As I mentioned, there are several thematic significances, and one particular thematic significance that I want to discuss here is that even though there is this door which references a house in this particular novella at this particular point of time, we realize as we read the novella, we realize that the door does not lead into any kind of domesticity inside.

In fact, we realize that Dr. Jekyll lives on his own, he is a bachelor, and we also realized that Mr. Hyde also lives on his own, he is a bachelor too. In fact, the men that we come across, all very significant men who occupy certain important middle class professions in this novella are described as being single or their domesticity is not explored in great detail.

So the door leads into an empty space, a mysterious space, which is kind of blank and devoid of any kind of warmth, domesticity, and femininity. That is one thing we need to keep in mind. And we also need to remember the mystery that is behind the door which will be unpacked quite radically and threateningly and horrifyingly towards the climax of that novella.

So how is this building described by the narrator? It is called as sinister-looking, and there is a kind of an association between the human being which occupies that space, and the nature of the building. So both are sinister, and the building somehow reflects the sinister qualities, the evil nature of the man who occupies that space. And the interesting thing for us as readers and critics to think about is this.

If the building that Hyde occupies is sinister, and if that building theoretically and structurally belongs to Dr. Jekyll, the respected physician, then what are the comparisons, what are the assumptions we can draw? So is Dr. Jekyll's, you know, respectability a facade, a front to something that is very sinister that is attached in the background. So these are some of the ideas we might want to think about.

So again there is this notion of duality, doubleness, contrary perspectives and qualities that are embedded in one unit, and that is what we need to look for in this analysis.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:26)

Mr Utterson

- "Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance . . . the last good influence in the lives of down-going men."/>

Representative of the Victorian gentleman

Perfect code of conduct?

Knowledge about Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

link

Dr Jekyll?

Dr Jekyll

We are introduced to an important figure, Mr. Utterson. In fact he is one of the narrators to this story, there are also other narrators, we have letters being used as a narrative through which to tell the story. And so, Mr. Utterson is an interesting figure because he is a friend to the many male characters that we come across, all the important characters are related to Mr. Utterson be it the victim Sir Danvers Carew, be it Dr. Lanyon, be it Enfield, be it Dr. Jekyll.

So he is the most important link that connects all male figures in this late Victorian novella. So what kind of a man is he? He is a lawyer. He holds that very symptomatic middle-class profession of barrister. So he is a lawyer, and we did talk about this, he has a very, you know, unwelcoming exterior, but deep down he is extremely, you know, helpful and tolerant of the people who come to him in need.

So in fact look at the quotation, he is the last good influence. He is almost priestly, you know, in the help and support and comfort that he offers to men who are going down in their lives. So the last good influence in the lives of downgoing men, and is this a reference to Dr. Jekyll? That will be the question that will come to our minds because we see that Mr. Utterson is very very keen on helping out his dear friend, who is Dr. Jekyll.

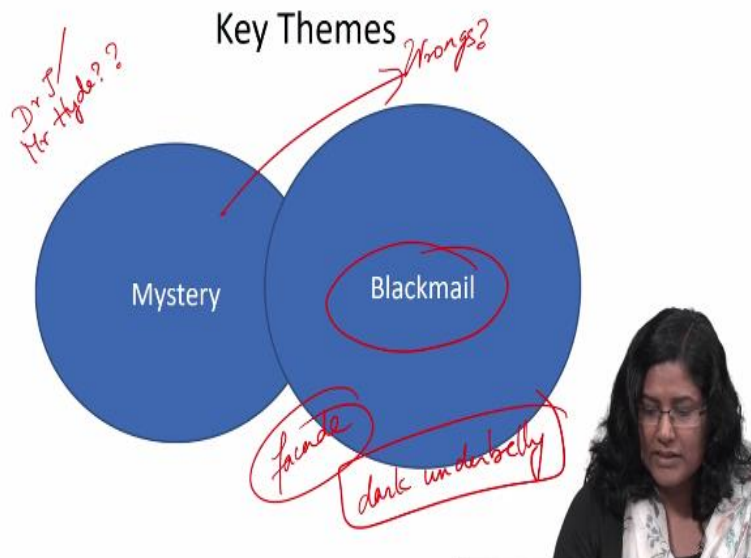
And again we have a duality, his appearance is rugged, and his inner quality seems to be full of warmth and kindness. That is one way to interpret it. The other is, are there aspects of Mr. Utterson that we do not know, and is it indicated in his desire to know more about the relationship between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

So we need to ask certain critical questions about Mr. Utterson too, because in the critical, you know, domain, Mr. Utterson usually is understood as a man who is following the code of gentlemen in Victorian society and he is always seen as the perfect embodiment of the Victorian gentlemanly ideal. But there might be one or two gray areas even in his life that needs to be thought about.

And as I said, is he the representative of the Victorian gentleman? One who is kind, one who is good, one who does not talk too much, he is silent, he is reserved, he cherishes friendship and he is a man who believes in upholding the moral order. And as I said, he is also symbolic of the perfect code of conduct, he is honorable, he is loyal and he wants to protect the respectability of his friend Dr. Jekyll, who seems to be associating with an evil minded man, and he does not want his friend to be affected by that association. So he is doing his best to separate the man Dr. Jekyll from his evil friendship.

Now as I pointed out, his desire to know about Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, does it, you know, spring from his desire to protect his friend, or does it spring from a desire to know about the you know, the scandalous, you know, relationship between the two. So those are some of the questions that would keep coming up if we explore the novel deeper and deeper.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:31)



Mystery is a key theme of this novel. There is a lot of mystery about the central characters Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Who is Mr. Hyde? What are his, you know, lineages and what are his connections, we do not know. We do not know anything about his family and we do not know much about Jekyll's family too. There is a very very abrupt, very you know, crisp background that we get about Dr. Jekyll towards the close of the narrative.

I will come to that in due course, but there is a lot of mystery, we do not know a lot about Mr. Utterson too. Almost all the characters are clothed in mystery. I can give you an example, for example let us look at Sir Danvers Carew, what was he doing, walking all by himself, an aged gentleman, you know, an MP who was walking quite late at night, and why is he harmed by Edward Hyde.

And then you know, is it because of the pure evil quality of Hyde, or did he say something to Hyde which provoked him. So these are some, some of the mysterious questions that come up time and again. So the big question is what was he doing in the middle of the night. And again the question about Enfield that we can ask is what was he doing in the middle of the night when he encounters the evil nature of Hyde, when he crushes his small child and walks casually past her.

So these are some of the questions to which there are no answers in the narrative, and we need to kind of speculate about it in a logical manner thinking about the context and the times in which the narrative was produced. So like a Tale of Two Cities, this narrative is full of

secrets, and there is this associated theme of blackmail. This concept keeps recurring in this narrative.

The first time we come across is this concept is when the crowd which is, you know, massively offended by the behavior of Mr. Hyde, corners Mr. Hyde into paying the child's family a lot of money, about 100 pounds, and they threaten him with exposing his character to the rest of the society. And Mr. Hyde, wanting to protect his respectability, and that in itself is an irony, but then you know, that is the reason, that is the outward reason for which he pays the girl's family about 100 pounds to protect his honor.

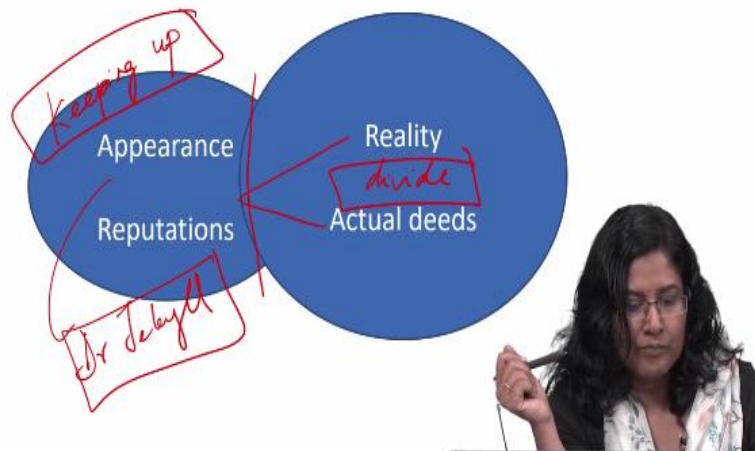
So we can see that this theme is repeated in Mr. Enfield's belief that Mr. Hyde has the checkbook of Dr. Jekyll, probably because Dr. Jekyll is being blackmailed by Mr. Hyde for some of the, you know, wrongs that he did as a young man. So what were those wrongs? What were those, you know, faults and follies? Again, we do not know, and that is mysterious. And likewise, Mr. Utterson also believes that Mr. Hyde is, you know, blackmailing his friend Dr. Jekyll and he wants to free his friend from the clutches of this monster.

So blackmail is a common theme, and what does it tell about the Victorian society, late 19th century England? It tells us that the respectability of many of the citizens in society is just a facade, and underneath that respectable, sophisticated veneer, there is a dark underbelly which is full of you know, crimes and immorality and other evil nature of human beings which are hidden and buried, and people just try to suppress these dark parts of humankind.

So blackmail is a thematic concept which leads us to think about all these issues about the Victorian society.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:02)

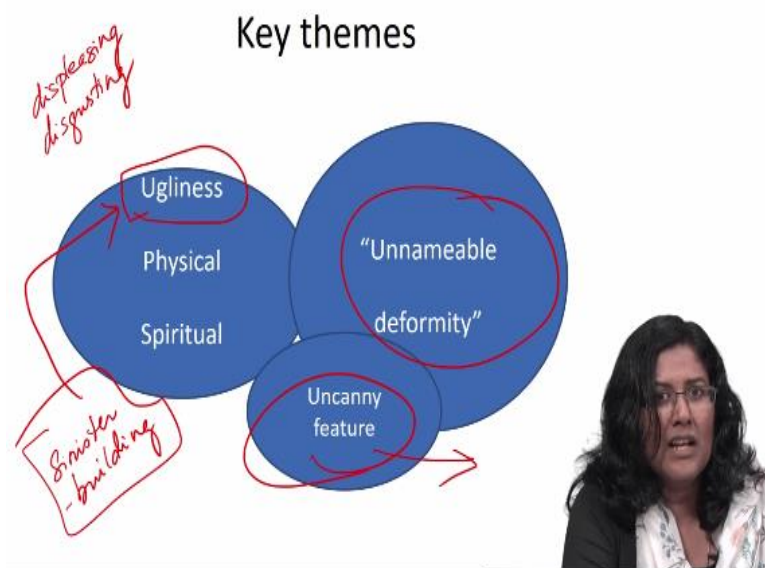
Key Themes



Further themes that we can elicit from the first 4 chapters are the, you know, emphasis on keeping up appearances, maintaining appearances. And Mr. Utterson, as I said, is worried about the respectability of Dr. Jekyll, and he is anxious that the reputation would be spoiled by his association with this man, this evil minded man Mr. Hyde. And again this set of themes would automatically want us to think about the distinction, the divide between reality and actual deeds.

So that is also a set of themes which are related to blackmail and mystery and the difference between appearance and reality.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:01)



Further key themes that we can, you know, come across in this novella are the concept of ugliness. Mr. Hyde is extremely ugly; he is displeasing to look at. He is disgusting. People

will be repulsed, they will be repulsed when they meet this man in a street, in fact Mr. Enfield, Mr. Utterson have similar reactions to meeting Mr. Hyde, and in fact they say that there is an unnameable deformity.

There is something, you know, physically wrong about Mr. Hyde. And the funny thing is, the weird thing is, they are not able to specifically point out what is that, you know, deformity, the physical wrongness about him, and they are not able to put a finger on it. And perhaps that deformity is spiritual, his heart and mind are evil, which is why it comes through for these people in his physique.

So evil embodies, you know, evil aspects in appearance. So we can think about the sinister-looking building that we came across earlier into which Mr. Hyde went into when Mr. Utterson met him. So his building is sinister looking, the space that Mr. Hyde is occupying is evil, and so is he, which is why his physical appearance is you know ugly, he is bent, his hands are gnarled, you know, there is a monstrous looking, you know mouth, it is almost as if he has you know an evil intention of maiming people as soon as he sees them.

So it all comes through and is part of a piece. And I mentioned this unnameable deformity, and there is an uncanny feature, something is wrong, and we do not know what that is, and this uncanny aspect will be revealed at the end of the novella. Uncanny is something which is familiar yet unfamiliar. It is strangely unfamiliar too. So this combination of the familiarity and the unfamiliarity which is putting us off our balance is what is uncanny, and Mr. Hyde has that capacity quite a lot.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:30)

Carew's Murder



ape-like
↓
sub human
uncivilized

Ferocity

Gift by Mr Utterson
to Dr Jekyll

Symbolic

"the young man"

Mr Utterson



This is a representation of the murder that Hyde commits one night in the open streets. This is the man who is a victim, is Sir Danvers Carew. Look at the ferocity with which Mr. Hyde clubs this old gentleman. This is the cane that he uses to attack this elderly gentleman, and interestingly this cane was a gift by Mr. Utterson to Dr. Jekyll. So again we have a symbolic connection.

This is a symbolic connection of Dr. Jekyll to this crime committed by his friend, a person who has been taken under Dr. Jekyll's wing. And interestingly again, we know that Dr. Jekyll uses the phrase "the young man" to refer to Mr. Hyde, and the question is, Is Mr. Hyde a young man? Can we see that youth in this representation? It is quite unlikely, there is a distortion in his face.

He is distorted by his own cruelty. Look at the way he, you know, keeps his hand, it is almost as I said animal-like, and in fact Mr. Hyde has been referred to as ape-like in behavior, not human, sub-human is what Mr. Hyde is. He is uncivilized and beyond the pale of respectability, and that is quite clear. And look at the letter that drops from Sir Danvers Carew's pocket that connects Mr. Carew to Mr. Utterson, the lawyer to whom he had written a letter.

So Sir Danvers Carew is a client. So as I pointed out earlier, Mr. Utterson is the link who kind of connects all the male figures in this particular novella. And further, as you know, Mr. Hyde clubs this man to death, he also tramples on this gentleman, trampling, he is trying to

you know, bury this man under the earth. And it was the same attitude that he exhibited when he was attacking the little child of eight years in the initial chapter.

So we see similarity in his cruelty too, so that is something we can also think about. Stamp somebody out of existence, that is what he is doing.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:22)



Further themes that we can see is the idea of detection. Late 19th century is a period which was fascinated by this trajectory of detection, and we see that quite a lot in the novels of the period, in the short stories of Arthur Conan Doyle too. And Wilkie Collins was the one who began it in the context of the Victorian novel with his Moonstone, and several of his novels, and we see that element running through in R. L. Stevenson's work as well.

And Mr. Utterson plays the detective here. It begins by his haunting or stalking of the figure of Hyde, and he is present at all times in the neighborhood of Mr. Hyde's house. Morning, noon and night he is present in order to catch a glimpse of this man, so that that glimpse, that recognition would come in handy later on in the narrative, and it does, and it does. And what are the other themes that we can see? We can realize that the city is represented as a dark space, that is an interesting representation, urban space.

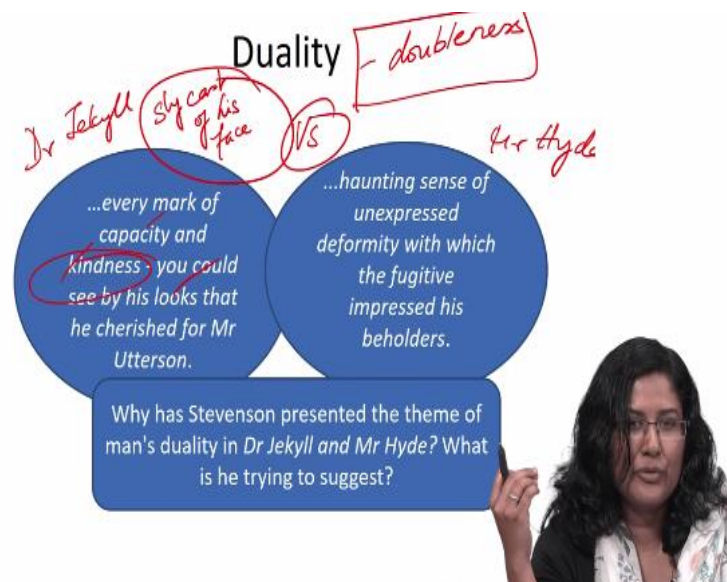
Urban space becomes uncondusive space, it is not very comfortable and convenient to, you know, the way the novel unfolds in terms of its moral compass. The city is dark, the city is full of criminals, the city is you know, is not a safe space, as the girl who is crushed by Mr.

Hyde and the elderly gentleman who is killed by Mr. Hyde realizes. So we have deaths and injury happening in the city, in the open streets in the city.

So the city is not a comfortable, pleasant space, in fact it is nightmarish. So we have symbolic nightmares, we have literal nightmares, the literal side of it is enjoyed or experienced by Mr. Utterson who kind of, you know, dreams about Mr. Hyde blackmailing Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde kind of haunting the city as a kind of a spirit floating over the city, the fog filled city. So nightmares are literal and symbolic of the moral disorder that is enveloping London.

So London is a place where crimes are quite common, and this theme is reflected in much of the late 19th Century fiction.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:19)



Now I want to come to this notion of a duality, doubleness, I did make a reference to this concept earlier in my earlier sessions too, but we need to keep track of this notion because it is explored in quite a lot of domains and in relation to quite a lot of characters, the primary ones being Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Let us see how Dr. Jekyll is described, he has “every mark of capacity and kindness - you could see by his looks that he cherish for Mr. Utterson.”

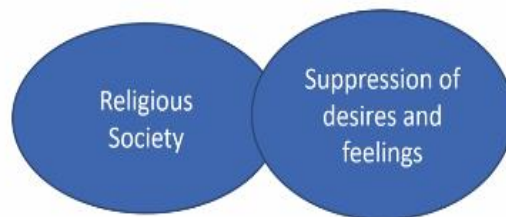
So he is a man who is full of kindness, and he is charitable, and that set of good attributes, goodness comes through on his face as well. And in this excerpt I have not made a reference to the sly aspect, the sly cast of his face, but we know that it is there. But generally, he is a man who is full of kindness and goodness, and he wants to do good to the society, and we can

contrast this with Mr. Hyde's characterization, who is full of a “haunting sense of unexpressed deformity with which the fugitive impressed his beholders.”

And we can see that there is a clear and marked difference between the two characters in terms of the qualities that they embody. So we can also ask this question, why has Stevenson presented the theme of man's duality in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? What is he trying to suggest to his readers? So this is an important question that we can think about in detail as well as in due course over the rest of the narrative too.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:16)

Victorian Context

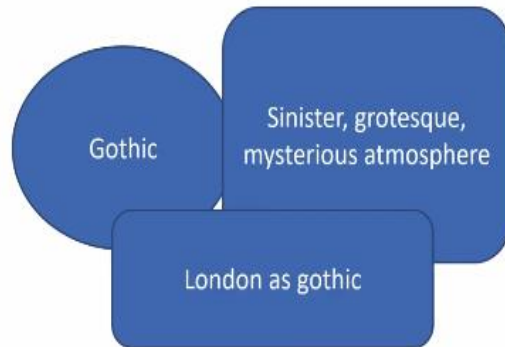


We can also think about in another important Victorian context, and that context is the reference to the religiosity of the society. The late 19th Century England is still religious despite the, you know, publication of Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*.

So despite the interventions provided by Charles Darwin, the society is extremely religious. And this book also explores, this novella also explores what would be the results if man continued to suppress his desires and feelings. What would be the cost that humanity would have to pay in the case of such suppression and repression? And the other context that we might also want to think about is Freud who was beginning to lecture on his theories of psychoanalysis.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:13)

Genre



A final word about genre, the form of this narrative is also significant. It is gothic in tone, it is called as the late 19th Century novella by R. L. Stevenson. The Gothic is a genre which came into its own in the late 18th century, and the key aspects of the Gothic are elements of the sinister, grotesque, and mysterious atmosphere, especially in relation to Victorian architecture.

So London, the urban space that we come across in this particular novella, is what is gothic in this text. London itself becomes sinister, and its setting arises lots of complications and mysteries which are slowly becoming unraveled in this novella. Thank you for watching, I

w

i

l

l

c

o

n

t

i

n

u

e

i

n

t