Hoarding Spaces: The Laboratory in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* and Wells's *The Invisible Man*

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Abstract

In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Invisible Man*, R L Stevenson and H G Wells respectively represent the laboratory as an invasive site that "hoards" public spaces. This paper argues that the two novels' laboratory manifests as a heterotopic space that stands in radical opposition to the public space. This study further argues that the tensions in the two stories are founded on how the private practice of science within the laboratory invades public space. As a space of otherness cast in opposition to public visual accessibility, the laboratory in the selected novels becomes the approximation of concealment and hoarding of important, as well as dangerous, knowledge. Finally, this study compares the laboratory's representations in the two books to show how the tensions between the private and the public spaces interact within and across narratives of the late Victorian period.

Keywords: Hoarding Spaces, Private and Public Spaces, Laboratory, Heterotopic Space

As Louis James has noted, many imaginative creations of the late Victorian period come "from a cultural schizophrenia" (2) that derived from the mixed feelings of anxiety and excitement towards scientific discoveries of the time. As a place for scientific experiments, the laboratory became a convenient artistic symbol with which some Victorian writers probed the consequences of science. Anne Stiles reveals that the dominant feeling in the late nineteenth-century Britain was pessimism towards evolutionary science, a pessimism that was given expression in the late Victorian journal titled *Mind* wherein popular critics and even scientists such as Thomas Huxley, James Sully, Francis Galton, and Alexander Gain published articles that discountenanced scientific practices and discoveries of the time (319). Some of these critical writings, as Stiles further notes, have been widely influential in the positions taken by writers of the late Victorian period, specifically Robert Louis Stevenson and Herbert George Wells (323). These writers published dystopian science romances in which the laboratory took the form of a "devil's smithy," as expressed in Robert Browning's poem "The Laboratory" (1844). In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (henceforth, *Jekyll and Hyde*) and *The Invisible Man*, Stevenson and Wells respectively represent the laboratory as an invasive site that "hoards" public spaces.

Philip Tocker reminds us that the word "hoard" derived its meaning from the sixteenth-century practice of outdoor poster advertising for the storing or holding on to "space on the rough board enclosure surrounding construction work which was commonly used for posting" (26). To *hoard* in this sense, therefore, signifies both taking over and concealment of space. In the two selected novels for this study, the laboratory is depicted as a metaphor for how the private practice of science *hoards* public space, an act that creates a tension between the private and the public spaces.

To draw insight from Michel Foucault, space, among other things, can be the "intersection of places" (1), that is, a "form of relations among sites" (2). Space provides the environment within which many places or sites interact. Yet, a space has an interactional relationship with other spaces. Each space is defined through the cluster of relations that links it to other spaces. However, in this paper, I am more interested in the space Foucault refers to as heterotopia – the other space, the opposite or the physical manifestation of utopia. These are spaces that "have the curious property of being in relation with all other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize or invert the set of relations they happen to designate, mirror or reflect" (Foucault 3). Heterotopias are based on a displacement that arises when places are termed in opposite to the generally occupied space. Such spaces – the heterotopias – become isolated from the general space. Although, as Benjamin Genocchio has observed, Foucault's notion of heterotopias is problematic in not making a clear distinction between heterotopias and other physical spaces (40), in which case it is possible to categorize every spatial manifestation as heterotopia, I am nonetheless using heterotopia as the other space which creates a radical alterity between itself and an established space. In this case, the established space is the public space, the place where visual accessibility is not restricted to the public.

This paper therefore will show that the laboratory in *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Invisible Man* manifests as a heterotopic space that stands in radical opposition to the public space. This study will also argue that the tensions in the two stories are founded on how the private practice of science within the laboratory invades public space. As a space of otherness cast in opposition to public visual accessibility, the laboratory in the selected novels becomes the approximation of concealment and hoarding of important, as well as dangerous, knowledge. Finally, this study will compare the representations of the laboratory in the two books to show how the tensions between the private and the public spaces interact within and across narratives of the late Victorian period.

Apart from the laboratory, there are other heterotopias in radical opposition to established public spaces in the Victorian period – mental asylums and prisons, for instance. Some other heterotopias like the libraries, museums, art galleries, and display shops, unlike the laboratory, remained subjected to the public gaze and thus did not inspire feelings of anxiety in the society. Even mental asylums and prisons

did not create so much anxiety as the laboratory, because these sites were maintained with strict restriction of inmates who were not allowed to mingle with society. The Victorians' fascination "with the act of seeing" (1), as Kate Flint informs us, as well as the power and pleasure constructed in seeing, seems challenged in the emergence of private laboratory practice in late Victorian period. The laboratory in signifying an enclosed experimental space, hidden beyond the voyeuristic and controlling gaze of the public, led to hysterical reactions at the time. Andrew Cunningham and Perry Williams observe that by the late nineteenth century private laboratory practices, especially in physics and medicine, have replaced earlier public practices like the anatomy theaters. The public's anxiety towards private laboratory practices was not entirely based on abstract fears. The medical historians Bynum, Brown, and Porter remark that many new discoveries were made in the latter part of the nineteenth century "when new pathogenic organisms were being announced every few months" (129). They note that such infectious diseases as tuberculosis, cholera, and gonorrhoea became known from laboratory rooms, leading to mixed feelings over the potentials of laboratories to manufacture and infect the public – physically and psychologically – with *new* diseases that were not previously known or that were not previously in existence. The restriction of visual access to the public on the activities within the laboratory space further intensified public anxiety.

The stories of *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Invisible Man* reveal late Victorian suspicion of the laboratory as a site for the creation of social disorder. Represented as a place with the potential to destroy individual and social harmony, the laboratory in these stories becomes a site for the transformation of the scientist into a monster and a threat to society.

In *Jekyll and Hyde,* the laboratory is the private space within which Jekyll creates Hyde. Importantly, Hyde is not only a creation of Jekyll's, but also the product of Jekyll's transformation. The private space of laboratory experimentation destroys the individual scientist and poses a threat to the public. The story reveals that the experiments and discoveries within the private space of the laboratory do not remain within the laboratory. Such discoveries as Mr Hyde escape from the laboratory into the society. They contaminate and threaten the stability of the community. Already, laboratories signify the sites of experiment and the potential places for the manufacture of diseases in cases of failed experiments for instance. The disease metaphor and the notion of failed experiments are strong in the narrative depiction of Edward Hyde. Hyde's contact with the society is portrayed as contagious. He infects the people who come in contact with him with his "pure evil" (71). He brings out the worst in them – morally and physically. Although it can be contended that it is not the wrong in Hyde but the wrong in these characters that manifests in their meeting with Hyde, yet it is during such contacts with Mr Hyde that they display their extreme behavior. The gentlemen, Mr Enfield and the unnamed doctor in the beginning of the story, are said to have "screwed [Hyde] up to a hundred pounds," (9) inflating the cost of the treatment of the child who Hyde has trampled upon

when he runs into her path. Also, Mr Utterson, believing that Mr Hyde has taken his friend and client, Dr Jekyll, hostage over some past sins requests Jekyll to permit him to clean up his (Jekyll's) mess by implicating Hyde in something that could free Jekyll from the burden of his past sin. The most obvious impact of this contagious destructiveness of laboratory discoveries in the story is seen in Dr Hastie Lanyon's deterioration after witnessing Hyde transform into Jekyll. Lanyon suffers from the psychological exposure to the scientific discovery from Jekyll's laboratory. After this incident, Dr Lanyon says in his letter to Mr Utterson,

> I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now when that sight has faded from my eyes, I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer. My life is shaken to its roots; sleep has left me; the deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night; and I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die. (66)

The narrative language used to describe Hyde in the story is full of images of degeneracy, contagion, and disease. At one point, Mr Utterson says that Hyde possesses "one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer" (50). In another instance, Hyde is described by the butler Poole as the "masked thing like a monkey" (52).

The enclosure of the laboratory space beyond public censorship and control leads the individual scientist to extremes, beyond the bounds of caution. Jekyll remarks, "the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound, at last overcame my suggestions of alarm" (69). Jekyll's desire at the onset bears a mark of socially good intent in what he regards as the wish to cure a widespread human problem of the warring members in humanity. But the desire for personal glory and power, envisioned within his laboratory space, leads to his catastrophic end. The laboratory space in this story therefore signifies a place of scientific egotism, of destructive desires, and of the disorder of the individual. As a private space, Jekyll's laboratory is a potential threat to the public, rather than a cure for the society. Yet, if the laboratory as a private space is radically opposed to public gaze, then even Mr Utterson's study where the letters that explain the secret life of Dr Jekyll are hidden becomes implicated. Such private heterotopias that emerge from high intellectualism and professionalism and which maintain an occult disposition towards the public are questioned in the story.

Stevenson depicts the laboratory as a site within which the progressive scientist, without a level of public control, transforms into a monster. Interestingly, Dr Jekyll's laboratory has once been a public anatomy theater before he converts it into a private chemical lab. The description of the laboratory's trajectory carries a tone of anticlimax:

> The doctor had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination of the block at the bottom of the garden … the theatre, once

> crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus, the floor strewn with crates and littered with packing straw. (32)

Dr Jekyll, like every other human being in the society, is imperfect and divided between the attractions of good and evil. But as Mr Hyde – the transformed scientist from the laboratory – Jekyll becomes "pure evil" (71). The laboratory transforms the scientist into an emotionless monster. This view of laboratories as private spaces within which the scientist is transformed into a monster is more elaborately depicted in H G Wells's *The Invisible Man.* Griffin the invisible man is dismissive of public laboratories. He abhors the intrusion of the public into his private affairs, and he struggles to restrict the public from knowing what he does within his laboratory and from what he believes to be the public's desire to rob him of his intellectual property.

In *The Invisible Man,* Griffin the liberal scientist is invisible to the public gaze. His invisibility on the one hand stems from his lack of social status and unwillingness to participate in society. On the other hand, the society refuses to accord him social status, prying into his private space and seeking to establish its control over him. The tensions in the novel often arise when society pries into the activities going on within Griffin's enclosed laboratory. At "Coaches and Horses," Mrs Hall and the Iping villagers curiously probe what Griffin does within his room, and also what is hidden within the bandaged figure of Griffin himself. Griffin has faced a similar situation with his landlord and his neighbors at the house in Great Portland Street before he disappears completely from their view. Griffin's inclination to hide in his laboratory alienates him from the society, making him apprehensive and violent each time he feels that the public space is trying to invade his privacy. Meanwhile, the nature of his private laboratory practice is already an invasion into public space and consciousness. His seclusion arouses an unhealthy curiosity in the public.

Daniel Berlyne's theory of curiosity is instructive here in explaining the relationship between curiosity and knowledge or the desire to know, as well as how curiosity can be understood as the response to an already invaded psyche. Berlyne observes that curiosity is often usually externally stimulated, particularly from experiences that create stimulus conflict or incongruities (180-181). That is, new experiences and discoveries are invasions that often create a complex and uncertain sensation within the brain. This sensation leads to an unpleasant experience that stimulates the brain to act in ways that can dispel the uncertainty. Although Berlyne's theory does not account for the curiosity that comes in contexts that may not require any new experience or discovery, it however provides an explanation of the kind of motivation behind the conflict in *The Invisible Man.* The incongruity or stimulus conflict created in the situation of Griffin's hoarding of knowledge and the anxiety that his privatized knowledge can be harmful to society (or even for the mere inquisitiveness to know what is hidden within his laboratory) arouses social curiosity

at first, and later a concerted violence towards the isolated scientist. From this sense too, curiosity reinforces Kate Flint's observation of the Victorians' attractions with the visual and the construction of power and vulnerability on the ability to see and be seen respectively: "The Victorians were fascinated with the act of seeing, with the question of the reliability – or otherwise – of the human eye, and with the problems of interpreting what they saw" (1).

Interestingly in both *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Invisible Man,* the scientist's body is both laboratory (experimental space) and experimental object. This point is clearly demonstrated in *The Invisible man* as Griffin's laboratory space becomes aesthetically linked with his body. At Great Portland Street, his landlord and neighbors are curious about the activities within his laboratory room. But at Iping, the villagers are curious to know what is hidden within his bandaged body. The body as the scientist's private laboratory opens up more avenues for the investigation of gazing and spaces. The Victorian society's investment in the visual and the desire of the public to have visual access to the physical and material body (laboratory) of the scientist lead the late Victorians into antagonism with the increasingly isolated scientist. The inability to see the scientist's laboratory complicated with society's feeling of vulnerability inspired from the awareness of being seen by the scientist further sets the public against the hidden scientist. Ironically, the more secluded and invisible the scientist turns, the more visible they become to the haunted public psyche. This point reinforces the notion of the invasive nature of private laboratory practice at the time. Hyde's deformity makes him visible to the public even when no one remembers exactly how he looks, given also that no photographs of him exist in the public domain. Griffin's invisibility emphasizes on this point better. He becomes visibly present in the public consciousness in his invisibility, a development that creates an uneasy relationship between him and the public.

Even before the latter part of the nineteenth century, writers have been skeptical of scientific exploits, often showing how such ventures can be destructive to the scientist and to the society. For example, Mary Shelley's Faustian hero in *Frankenstein* is a scientist who alienates himself from society in pursuit of grand ambitions. He ends up creating a monster that makes life miserable for him and his relatives. The major difference, however, between such earlier and later Victorian dismissals of scientific practice is that the later Victorian writers like Stevenson and Wells are more wary of the private practice of science as against the practice of science generally. In *Frankenstein,* it is basically the grand ambitions of science that is critiqued, not the private practice of science. Stevenson and Wells portray their own Faustian scientists' pursuits as scientific processes towards their dehumanization largely due to their seclusion from public control. Once alienated from the public, science becomes private and serves the individual will rather than a social need. The implications for the alienated scientist's seclusion are usually privations that – apart from the dangerous experiments that could transform them into monsters – further deny them of the basic means of social survival. In Griffin's case, his ambitious

experiment runs him into bankruptcy, and further leads him into desperate criminal activities as he struggles to survive.

Without institutional backings which already signify a level of public control on experiments, Wells depicts in the story the futility of embarking on such lone projects as Griffin's. Money is a powerful symbol in the story. Griffin's monkish behavior and inability to establish healthy relationships with people lead him to relate with the society only in a formalized, business-like atmosphere founded on monetary terms, as Paul Cantor has observed. From his landlord at Portland Street to Mrs Hall at Iping, Griffin loses his humanity further as his relationship with others becomes defined in monetary terms.

At first, we are made to think that Griffin's invisibility (his secret discovery) is the cause of his vulnerability and that society is already primed up to antagonize him. The curiosity that greets his contact with people reveals the public desire to invade his private space, to know what is going on within the laboratory. But gradually we realize that it is more about Griffin's unwillingness to participate in society as against society's invasive prying into his private space. Even when he realizes that his lone scientism is useless without some form of social existence, Griffin still holds on to his private space and turns violent towards the society. His privations are more self-inflicted than socially-conditioned. His desire to privatize knowledge alienates him completely from society and relationships. He is scornful of the open nature of laboratories in institutions like the universities, suspecting that his professor will steal (publicize) his discoveries and partake in his "glory." He tells Kemp thus:

> Now you have me! And all that I knew and had in mind a year after I left London – six years ago. But I kept it to myself. I had to do my work under frightful disadvantages. Oliver, my professor, was a scientific bounder, a journalist by instinct, a thief of ideas – he was always prying! And you know the knavish system of the scientific world. I simply would not publish, and let him share my credit. (78)

He abandons the public laboratories for a more private space. The more he embraces his private laboratory the more alienated he becomes from family, from friends, and from love. In his egotistical manner, he dismisses the alienating effects of his laboratory:

> I did not feel then that I was lonely, that I had come out from the world into a desolate place. I appreciated my loss of sympathy, but I put it down to the general inanity of things. Reentering my room seemed like the recovery of reality. There were the things I knew and loved. There stood the apparatus, the experiments arranged and waiting. And now there was scarcely a difficulty left, beyond the planning of details. (81)

He loses his sense of humanity, showing neither remorse nor sympathy over his

father's death. He foreshadows his own death through the dream he has the night he successfully makes himself invisible:

> I experienced again the strange sensation of seeing the cloth disappear, and so I came round to the windy hillside and the sniffing old clergyman mumbling "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," at my father's open grave.
>
> "You also," said a voice, and suddenly I was being forced towards the grave. I struggled, shouted, appealed to the mourners, but they continued stonily following the service; the old clergyman, too, never faltered droning and sniffing through the ritual. I realised I was invisible and inaudible, that overwhelming forces had their grip on me. I struggled in vain, I was forced over the brink, the coffin rang hollow as I fell upon it, and the gravel came flying after me in spadefuls. Nobody heeded me, nobody was aware of me. (96)

Griffin's laboratory is not the only one apparent in the story. Dr Kemp's study is also a private laboratory that symbolizes high intellectualism and it is hidden from the public gaze. His private study has always been a laboratory, through which he gazes at the world unseen. Only when there is no threat of an intruding public gaze does he leave his window blinds up. His introduction in the story goes thus:

> IN THE EARLY EVENING TIME Dr. Kemp was sitting in his study in the belvedere on the hill overlooking Burdock. It was a pleasant little room, with three windows north, west, and south – and bookshelves covered with books and scientific publications, and a broad writing-table, and, under the north window, a microscope, glass slips, minute instruments, some cultures, and scattered bottles of reagents. Dr. Kemp's solar lamp was lit, albeit the sky was still bright with the sunset light, and his blinds were up because there was no offence of peering outsiders to require them pulled down. (59)

In a sense, the difference between Kemp's laboratory and Griffin's is that Kemp makes his private discoveries "public" – public in the sense that his discoveries are available to the cult of scientists or the science societies, unlike Griffin who refuses to publish. Kemp is due to receive a *fellowship* – social recognition – from the Royal Society because he publishes his scientific findings. Unlike Griffin who is a private scientist, Kemp is a *social* scientist, the type Griffin calls scientist-journalists. In another sense, however, Kemp's works are private and hidden from public gaze, given their high intellectualism. His high intellectual disposition, which already sets him apart from the common people of Port Stowe in his isolation within his study, is perhaps best illustrated in his initial condescending attitude towards the people over the rumors of an invisible man. Kemp believes then that the rumor is simply a manifestation of the common people's vacuousness.

Wells may have also used Kemp to represent the cult of scientists (the Royal Society) which tries to exercise power and control over society and over private discoveries.

In this sense, Kemp's public is different; his is the Royal Society's. The systematic artfulness with which he plots Griffin's doom exposes his motives to destroy a free and private power that threatens to displace the respectable place of the Royal Society. When Adye the police officer remarks that the methods proposed by Kemp to hunt down Griffin are "unsportsmanlike" (a metaphor for inhuman), Kemp replies, "The man's become inhuman, I tell you … I am as sure he will establish a reign of terror – so soon as he has got over the emotions of this escape – as I am sure I am talking to you. Our only chance is to be ahead. He has cut himself off from his kind" (112). "His kind" that Kemp refers to may by no means be the generality of humanity as it can be the cult of scientists. Griffin's death therefore is not entirely the victory of society over the individual, but also the victory of a regulated public authority (like the Royal Society or the government) to control the individual's private space. It is the victory of the Royal Society over the prodigal scientist. Perhaps this view explains the empathetic narrative tone that informs Griffin's death.

The Invisible Man is Wells's depiction of the destructive tendencies of science and the tension between the public and the private spaces. From the story's plot, we can reach one significant conclusion: the private laboratory with its attendant alienation and inhumanization of the scientist can lead the lone scientific discoverer to one end – criminality! Like in *Jekyll and Hyde,* the creation from the laboratory is an infectious disease. This contagion metaphor has deeper implications in the two stories. The infectious power of laboratory discoveries does not die with the scientist who has discovered them. Like diseases, they spread. Already, Thomas Marvel has contracted the disease as we observe from the epilogue to the story.

Foucault's description of nineteenth-century European society's relation with the heterotopic space of the dead is significant here. The cemetery, we are informed, used to be located at the center of the city to signify the soul of the community. But in the nineteenth century, cemeteries were shifted to the outskirts of the city with the increased fear that death was an illness in itself and could be contagious. Foucault puts it thus: "The dead, it is supposed, bring illness to the living, and it is the presence and proximity of the dead right beside the house, next to the church, almost in the middle of the street, it is this proximity that propagates death itself" (6). This notion of contagion in such heterotopic spaces as the cemetery perhaps led society to move further away from public domain other *contagious* sites like asylum homes, prisons and even hospitals. But the laboratories remained in proximal relationship with the public. The fear of contagion from private laboratories can be traced to their proximity with public spaces. The denial of visual access into the private laboratories leads further to tensions between the individual and the community as we observe in both stories. These tensions that arise from the demand to see, especially in the awareness of being seen, reveal also how power and vulnerability are respectively constructed around seeing and being seen without seeing in the Victorian society. In these novels therefore, laboratories are depicted as destabilizing heterotopias that

superimpose their gaze on the public space. The laboratories threaten to control the ability of the public to gaze.

In both *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Invisible Man,* the scientist is the visible unseen. The visibility of the unseen scientist who is hidden within the private laboratory walls hoards public space in the sense of a taking over of and a concealment of space, of knowledge, and of public consciousness. In the two stories, Jekyll/Hyde and Griffin use the confines of their laboratories to launch themselves in covert ways into the public space. Their different experiments provide them with means through which they can gaze at the society without being seen. One significant difference however between the representations of the laboratory in the two novels is on the scientist's purpose for disallowing public visual accessibility into the laboratory. In *Jekyll and Hyde,* visual accessibility is denied the public because of the scientist's desperate desire to cover up a failed experiment. In *The Invisible Man,* it is more about the scientist's desire to hoard or privatize knowledge.

Society's curious action to restore the scientist to public control eventually leads to disastrous ends for the scientists. In *Jekyll and Hyde,* the butler Poole mobilizes the people with the endorsement of Mr Utterson and they invade Jekyll's laboratory. In *The Invisible Man*, Dr Kemp mobilizes the inhabitants of Port Stowe to reclaim possession of Griffin's body as they bludgeon him into public visibility. Interestingly, in the two stories, at the point of the lone scientist's forceful public invasion into their private space, they cry out for "mercy." Hyde cries, "for God's sake, have mercy!" (53); Griffin cries, "Mercy! Mercy!" (128). But their cries fall on deaf public ears that are bent on reclaiming the private domain of the scientist for public control. These unheeded cries for mercy when considered as pleas for clemency from *erring* scientists raise moral charges against the Victorian public. Could the private practice of science and the discoveries from the secluded laboratories be a moral consequence of the public decadent behavior, a point more emphasized in *Jekyll and Hyde*? Could the society's anxiety and unease with a heterotopic space that seems to play surveillance on its hidden activities be a result of society's desire to suppress such gazes in its bid to cover its hypocritical existence?

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