

Scientific Homophobia

Both Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Siobhan Somerville's "Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body" explore the feminine bodily characteristics that patriarchy uses to stereotype homosexuals in order to inhibit their agency in public spheres.

First, the heterosexual Dr. Jekyll describes the exiled, voiceless, and homosexual Mr. Hyde as less masculine and of noticeably more delicate build than his heterosexual facade, emulating society's feminization of homosexual individuals. The "evil" Mr. Hyde appears "less robust and less developed...hence, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter, and younger" in comparison with Dr. Jekyll (Stevenson 114). Frailer and more passive in appearance despite more deviant motives, Mr. Hyde manifests as the less masculine version of the seemingly righteous Dr. Jekyll. In addition, the womanish traits Dr. Jekyll uses to characterize Mr. Hyde become associated with his innately evil nature. In this manner, Dr. Jekyll's description compares the deviance of his homosexual self, Mr. Hyde, with the deviance of women. In consequence, Mr. Hyde's agency is limited to that of women such that he becomes limited to the private sphere of Dr. Jekyll's home in which he has little to no voice. In fact, Mr. Hyde's narrative is first filtered through Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Utterson's narratives, subjecting its contents to alteration. In other words, Dr. Jekyll's homophobia, like the general society, causes him to feminize the homosexual portion of his identity, materialized in the character, Mr. Hyde. By doing so, he eliminates his homosexual self's ability to achieve visibility in society, having been strictly isolated in the private sphere of existence, and therefore limits the autonomy of

homosexuality in the same manner that represses female autonomy. At the crux, Dr. Jekyll embodies the patriarchal attempt to stereotype homosexuals for the purpose of limiting their agency outside of the private sphere of the home.

Next, Somerville further explores the parallels between the stereotypes used for females and those used for homosexuals, both achieving the common goal of hindering the feminine sphere's agency. Somerville references Ellis who "assumed that the 'invert' might be visually distinguishable from the 'normal' body through anatomical markers, just as the differences between the sexes had been traditionally mapped upon the body," essentially using science to validate perceived social hierarchies (Somerville 39). Just as women are identified by their bodies, as best exemplified by the fame of the Hottentot Venus, scientific figures of the era use their observations to associate homosexuality with physical characteristics considered to be deformities. In this manner, the characteristics of smaller stature, slimness, and less stereotypically "masculine" traits become methods of indicating underlying homosexuality. That is to say, society views men who fall short of patriarchy's standards of masculinity as suffering from a defect or disease for which the term homosexuality was invented. Not accidentally, the physical passiveness juxtaposed with threatening agency (as seen in Mr. Hyde's heinous crimes) parallels the physical passiveness yet underlying deviance of women. By associated one with the other, society succeeds in degrading homosexuals, identified through their physical failure to achieve masculinity, to the same restricted agency and removal from public visibility as women. Essentially, patriarchy views both women and homosexuals as threats to the established gender hierarchy and, therefore, uses scientific "proof" to establish the deviance of both groups as justification for their oppression to the private sphere. Accordingly, patriarchy achieves the limitation of homosexual agency and consequentially, the agency of the entire private, feminine

sphere. Fundamentally, patriarchy utilizes physical markers of lacking stereotypical masculinity to feminize homosexuality through science, degenerating homosexual agency to the level of female agency, completely feminizing homosexuals to the private sphere.

Conclusively, Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Siobhan Somerville's "Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body" analyze patriarchy's use of feminine bodily characteristics as markers for homosexuality in order to feminize and inhibit the agency of homosexuals.