

Two Worlds Collide: Hypertext and Rewriting - Introduction

The hypertext referred to in this chapter, The Multiple Perspectives of Jekyll & Hyde, is available online at www.jekyllandhyde-multipleperspectives.co.uk.

As a lifelong student of creative writing, when I came to choose a topic for my PhD, it was naturally a difficult thing to do. With the whole range of the written word open to me, where could I start and how could I ensure it would be of a sufficiently academic level? After much thought and consultation with tutors I decided to combine a number of my interests by rewriting a classic gothic story as a computer-driven web of texts known as a *hypertext*. By doing this I would be obliged to examine not just the process of writing, but that of *re-writing*. I would also need to combine this with a study of hypertext and the interaction with this new medium as both writer and reader. There had already been a lot of work done on the theory and practice of hypertext, and there was more still on the processes of both writing and rewriting, but there had been little investigation of the cross-over between these two fields.

Part of the survival of any new medium - be it the replacement of LPs with CDs or VHS tapes with DVDs - is the ability to provide adaptations of previous works. This must hold true for the medium of the literary hypertext if it is to become more than just a curiosity. To investigate the possibilities for this, I chose to rework R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* as a

narrative in hypertext form with all the implications of this in terms of the increased accessibility and navigability which 'new media' can bring.

This led to two areas of consideration. First, the concept of hypertext itself, what it is, how it works, and how readers interact with it.

Secondly, the process of rewriting itself and how the use of the new medium affects this process. In this chapter I will look at the theories surrounding these areas and also explore how they were applied in the actual writing of the hypertext which became *The Multiple Perspectives of Jekyll & Hyde*.