

The Use of the Doppelganger in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

The term Doppelganger emerged within German Romanticism and rose to popularity under the Gothic Literature genre. The Doppelganger presents a notion of subjectivity that is “defective, disjunct, split, threatening, spectral” (Vardoulakis 100). The Doppelganger is often viewed as a piece of the fragmented self; it appears to loom over and haunt the subject, but it can also be associated with “evil and the demonic” (Vardoulakis 100). The Doppelganger is uncanny; it inspires a sense of eerie familiarity within the self by reminding us of our “inner compulsion to repeat” (Vardoulakis 105). The Doppelganger’s ontology is created by “a chiasmic or differential identity”; the inner concept of identity creates a compulsion to create an image of oneself (Vardoulakis 50). The subject’s compulsion is seen as a transgression, which makes the Doppelganger overcome and undo the limits. However, the Doppelganger is in fact “a transgression of transgression”, which allows for the redoing of limits “as the liminal zone of transgression” (Vardoulakis 114). The repetition of reality, as well as the Doppelganger as the liminal subject, allows for the subject’s differential identity and creates “the other”. In *the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, by Robert Louis Stevenson the Doppelganger is used to express the distortion of perceived reality. Stevenson uses the uncanny to equally compel and disturb his readers through the Doppelganger, Mr. Hyde. Hyde portrays the grotesque ‘other’ that resides in humanity.

The Gothic genre is fueled by this idea of otherness. Often time this other is portrayed as being inhuman or a supernatural monster. For example, in *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley, the other in her story is referred to as “the monster”. The Monster is of large stature and is made of both animal and human remains. The monster was not created to become an evil being; he was rejected by his creator and every human he came into contact with. Overtime the monster

became wicked due to the psychological pain Victor inflicted by creating and abandoning him. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, however, is also the inversion of Frankenstein. Dr. Jekyll creates Mr. Hyde knowing that Hyde would be a manifestation of his evil. Mr. Hyde is Dr. Jekyll's alter ego and carries out his evil deeds in Dr. Jekyll's body. Mr. Hyde appears to be human; he is accepted by society, but greatly unsettles those around him. Unlike Victor Frankenstein and his Monster, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are Doppelgangers that reside in the same body. Dr. Jekyll would not exist without Mr. Hyde, the epitome of rampant cruelty.

Despite Mr. Hyde's cruel behavior, he is not a physically threatening other. He is described as hunched over and "gives a strong feeling of deformity". Hyde's description is displeasing, yet he is not physically menacing. Hyde's inner wickedness is displayed on his body. Mr. Hyde symbolizes a side of humanity that is "irrational, uncontrollable, and incomprehensible" (Anolik 1). Hyde is the ultimate other because he is completely separated from morality. Mr. Hyde's appearance causes intense discomfort among the characters in the novel because he possesses a human body that carries out immoral acts. Mr. Hyde's brutal actions cause even Dr. Jekyll's close friends to misremember his appearance. When Utterson asked Mr. Hyde to reveal his face, he described him as pale and dwarfish and "gave the impression of deformity" (Stevenson 19). His smile is "displeasing" and he has a "murderous mixture of timidity and boldness" (Stevenson 19). Utterson confronts Hyde and asks to see his face "presuming that the outward form will allow him to perceive the inner essence" (Clunas 179). Utterson is unable to recognize Mr. Hyde because he is unfamiliar with the wickedness lying in his friend's soul. Mr. Hyde's appearance physically represents the undesirable aspects of Dr. Jekyll's personality; when Dr. Jekyll transforms into Mr. Hyde his reflection becomes distorted. Utterson is disturbed by his encounter with Hyde. Hyde seems eerily familiar, yet he is

unable to describe why. The friends of Dr. Jekyll are more disturbed than the others around them because they are well acquainted with the source of evil.

Mr. Hyde is Dr. Jekyll's Doppelganger and "resembles the protagonist to an uncanny degree" (Hughes 60). This greatly unsettles the other characters within the novel; they are compelled and disgusted by Mr. Hyde because he is unknowingly familiar to them. The Doppelganger perpetuates the uncanny and "haunts subjectivity" by creating a clouded double vision (Webber 1). The Doppelganger is above all, "a figure of visual compulsion"—it creates a sense of double vision by physically representing the divided self (Webber 3). In *Jekyll and Hyde*, this double vision temporarily blinds Utterson, Enfield, Poole, and Lanyon's subconscious. They refuse to recognize their close friend as being a murderous brute. The separation of Dr. Jekyll's soul causes a sense of double-blindness between "cognitive and carnal knowledge" (Webber 3). Mr. Hyde, the Doppelganger, "introduces voyeurism and innuendo" into Dr. Jekyll's deteriorating sense of self (Webber 3).

Jekyll and Hyde's personalities are drastically different, but this doubling is not a simulation, but rather a disfigurement. Hyde's bodily identity is "represented through the agony of metamorphosis" (Webber 9). Enfield claims that he cannot describe Hyde, but that he has a "strong feeling of deformity" (Stevenson 10). Mr. Hyde also wears Dr. Hyde's clothes which are "far too large for him" (Stevenson 58). When Dr. Jekyll transforms into Mr. Hyde his body becomes physically distorted and hunched over to portray the doctor's perverse and cruel double. Hyde's deformed features, which are unpleasant to the eye, along with his unnecessarily brutal actions cause the other characters in the novel to view him as a delinquent. When Jekyll transforms into Hyde however, he does not physically transform into another body. Dr. Jekyll, for example, does not transform into the Incredible Hulk. If Jekyll did turn into the Hulk, there

would be an easy distinction between his subjectivity and the “fantastic forms of [his] altered state” (Webber 7). However, since Mr. Hyde is the other half of Dr. Jekyll’s personality, there is horror in “beholding the disturbance of Jekyll’s subjectivity in his original shape” (Webber 9). The Doppelganger is the manifestation of the subject’s evil pleasures; Mr. Hyde is portrayed in human form (rather than portrayed as a monster) infers that all humans have this ugly-shriveled up alter-ego so evil that it is unrecognizable to its friends.

The Doppelganger in Jekyll and Hyde cannot be described in Freudian terms, as in the “rampant and instinctual” Id and the “corrective and socializing” Superego (Webber 8). The complexity of the Doppelganger goes beyond the construct of Freudian psychoanalysis. The Doppelganger is a “slippery double agent” carrying out the deeds of Jekyll’s divided self (Webber 8). Jekyll’s desire to commit evil acts is transferred to Hyde—a not entirely different being. However, Jekyll finds himself craving despicable pleasures even when he has not taken the potion that transforms him into Hyde. Dr. Jekyll’s psyche is “divided between person and persona” as he weaves back and forth between his life of luxury and friendship and his path of destruction (Webber 8). Dr. Jekyll creates Hyde to act as “the vicarious agent of repressed fantasies” (Webber 17). *Jekyll and Hyde* takes place in Victorian London—a world full of middle-aged bachelors. It is presumed that most men at this time are like Jekyll; they all have a dark side unfit for public appearance. Unlike the other characters presented in the novel, Jekyll indulges in his fantasies “through the nightlife of his double” (Webber 17).

The Doppelganger is often seen as a figure of displacement; it appears randomly in unlikely scenarios as a way to displace the host. The Doppelganger’s appearance strengthens the personality of the subject by reflecting the subject’s subconscious feelings and motives. In *Jekyll and Hyde*, Mr. Hyde seems like a mysterious displacement; however, the Doppelganger used as

a motif completely ties the plot together (Webber 4). The creation of Mr. Hyde as the other unveils Dr. Jekyll's true personality. The eerie sense of the uncanny is pierced through as the other Utterson, Enfield, Poole, and Lanyon realize that the evil Mr. Hyde was their dear friend's alter-ego. The mysterious duality of Dr. Jekyll's life, which was common for middle-aged bachelors in London, did not cease to baffle readers. Dr. Jekyll is overrun by compulsion that he tries to separate from his good social standing; his Doppelganger is unable to overcome and undo his subjects' limits, which led to the uncontrollable "transgression of transgression" of Dr. Jekyll's soul (Vardoulakis 114).

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