

The Doppelganger Motif in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

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ABSTRACT

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde was written by Robert Louis Stevenson in the late Victorian era. During the time, there was a great deal of change that challenged old beliefs and experiences. One subject that interested many writers of the time dealt with the complex nature of human psyche. The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a psychological thriller which pre-dates Freud's psychoanalysis. The duality of man is the motif or theme of Stevenson's short novel which can be seen, for example, through his characterization, the characters' dialogues, and the setting. The purpose of the article is to point out the motif or theme through these elements that are repeated and predominate in the story.

Keywords: Doppelganger, Duality, Motif, Sigmund Freud, Psychoanalysis

บทคัดย่อ

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde ประพันธ์โดย Robert Louis Stevenson ในปลายสมัยวิกตอเรีย ในช่วงเวลาดังกล่าวเกิดการเปลี่ยนแปลงมากมายที่ทำทลายความเชื่อและประสบการณ์เดิม ๆ ประเด็นหนึ่งซึ่งเป็นที่สนใจของนักเขียนหลายคนในยุคนั้นเกี่ยวกับความซับซ้อนของจิตมนุษย์ The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde เป็นวรรณกรรมสยองขวัญแนวจิตวิเคราะหซึ่งเกิดก่อนความรู้เรื่องจิตวิเคราะห์ของฟรอยด์จะเป็นที่แพร่หลาย บุคลิกภาพสองตัวของคน คือ

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แนวคิดหลักหรือแก่นของเรื่องนี้ ซึ่งสังเกตได้จากบุคลิกตัวละคร จากบทสนทนาของตัวละคร และฉากที่ผู้ประพันธ์นำเสนอ บทความนี้มุ่งชี้ให้เห็นแนวคิดหลักหรือแก่นของเรื่องผ่านลักษณะต่าง ๆ เหล่านี้ที่ปรากฏซ้ำ ๆ ตลอดทั้งเรื่อง

คำหลัก: สองบุคลิก, บุคลิกที่แยกเป็นสองลักษณะ, แนวเรื่องหลัก, ซิกมันด์ ฟรอยด์, จิตวิเคราะห์

The duality of nature has intrigued writers for centuries, since man is a complex being possessing different or even strange traits that can contradict each other. For that reason, any works addressing the problems inherent in man's dual nature may easily attract readers' interest. Even before psychoanalytic theories were officially formulated at the beginning of the twentieth century, the doppelganger, or the motif of the "double", was used by several notable writers in their most famous works, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* (1891).

One literary main idea, the doppelganger, firstly recognized in German Romanticism, became popular during the English Romantic period when the theme of double personalities was popularly shown in various Gothic novels. The carrying on of this popularity was due to the Victorian period's feelings of confidence and optimism. However, most good feelings finally ended with discontent, uncertainty and increasing doubt. This was due to lots of migration problems of millions of upcountry people to find work in cities. Those problems such as urban degeneration, mass poverty, sickness and demoralization, together with fast changes and developments in nearly every aspect, seriously affected the traditional society. Medical and scientific advances, along with the advent of technological knowledge, strongly conflicted with the former knowledge and conservative beliefs. This is because many scientific, social and psychological breakthroughs

brought about theories which were not according to those former beliefs. As a result of these questionable issues, many were in doubt of concepts concerning reality of truth. And one of them was the doubt in the nature of human mind. This increasing interest led to one predictable main subject in many psychological thrillers during the period.

The doppelganger or the “the double” became one popular literary means used to present main characters with dual personalities. In most cases, dark sides were against moral sides. The concept happened to corroborate Sigmund Freud’s theory of each person having 3 parts controlling one’s self. They were ‘id’, ‘ego’, and ‘superego’. Id was believed to respond to all situations instinctively and maybe unconsciously, while ego was aware of one’s self and reasonably acted between id and the external world according to social rules and etiquette when deciding how to behave. Finally, superego, which consisted of 2 systems: the conscience and the ideal self, was supposed to control the id impulses and push the ego towards perfection. Superego was also responsible for the feeling of guilt if one failed in whatever task, and kept one behave properly in society. In Freud’s opinion, keeping the balance of these 3 parts made it possible for one to lead a normal life.

Freud (1856-1939) explains that if the id-the instinctive, impulsive part of the psyche-is either severely repressed or not controlled at all by the ego or the superego, then the uncanny may appear. According to Freud, “the uncanny applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open.” (Freud, 2003) The appearance of the doppelganger, or the double, is a form of the uncanny. This is explained by Carl Jung (1875-1961) as one of the archetypes of the psyche, which he refers to as the shadow. “The shadow exists as part of the unconscious mind and is composed of repressed ideas, weaknesses,

desires, instincts, and shortcomings. The shadow is often described as the darker side of the psyche, representing wildness, chaos, and the unknown. These latent dispositions are present in all people, although they sometimes deny this element of their own psyche and instead project it onto others.” (Kendra, C., 2014) Similar to Freud, Jung believes the appearance of the double can cause complications. The best possible solution for a fragmented psyche is to mend it and make it whole once again:

This confrontation is the first test of courage on the inner way, a test sufficient to frighten off most people, for the meeting with ourselves belongs to the more unpleasant things that can be avoided so long as we can project everything negative into the environment. But if we are able to see our own shadow and can bear knowing about it, then the small part of the problem has already been solved: we have at least brought up the personal unconscious. The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalised as harmless. This problem is exceedingly difficult because it not only challenges the whole man, but reminds him at the same time of his helplessness and ineffectuality. (Jung, 1968)

In short, in order to form and bring back one’s coherent psychic whole, the person who is troubled by the double must first identify and acknowledge that double and take responsibility by accepting its existence. This is the way to begin the re-assimilation of the self.

Based on these psychological analyses, the doppelganger is a recurring motif in literature, which can appear in various relations to the character that is being doubled. Christine M. Gamache concludes that “A double can be latent (only seen in the protagonist’s mind) or manifest (physically there in the real world), and can be either consciously or unconsciously created. Furthermore, a double can represent a division of

the self, as in a separated fragment of the protagonist's psyche, or a multiplication of the self, in which there is not a split but rather the appearance of another character that is very similar in many ways to the initial character and oftentimes an autonomous being." (Gamache, 2011)

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, is perhaps one of the most famous literary examples of the doppelganger. It was written while Freud's psychoanalytical theories were still being formulated. Interestingly, the issues raised in the book anticipated and confirmed many of the ideas in Freud's theories. The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is the story of Dr. Henry Jekyll, a prestigious and respected physician in conservative Victorian society. Jekyll is well aware of the evil that resides within him and the duplicity of the life he leads. Deeply, he wants to free this evil in him but is afraid of doing so openly for fear of social criticism. In order to gratify this urge inside, he uses a potion to transform his appearance. He consciously creates his double—Edward Hyde—and shares the same body with his double. Since Hyde's physical appearance and psyche are different from that of the creator, Jekyll is pleased that he can freely enjoy the pleasures that both parts of his being desire. At the beginning, Jekyll can control the process of transformation, but as time passes, the evil personality of Mr. Hyde takes over that of Dr. Jekyll, and makes it more difficult for Jekyll to reverse the process. The growing autonomy of Hyde forces Jekyll to make a decision. That is to dissociate himself from his double, which finally leads to his doom.

The characters in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde clearly manifest Freud's structural theory of the mind. Jekyll represents everyone's ego. He is conscious and rational, and is dominated by social norms. However, inside, he has a difficult time struggling between the demands of the id, represented by the character of Hyde, and the

superego as represented by the proclaimed and implicit constraints of the Victorian society. As a result, while Jekyll maintains his respectability and gentility to conform to necessary outward appearances and decorum, he gradually gives in to the evil temptations of the repressed side of his self, which is completely opposite to his ideal self. He admits to himself his sense of guilt and shame at the duplicity of his life:

And indeed, the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I conceal my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take a stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. (Stevenson, 2005)

Although Jekyll tries to hide his wicked part of himself to conform to Victorian's social standards and respectability, the urge to reveal the personality repressed underneath is so strong that he decides to create his double. He realises and accepts this dual nature in himself and wants to live both lives separately, believing that the encasement of man's evil qualities inside of a separate being will free the righteous part to detach itself permanently from the notion of guilt:

If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and

penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. (Stevenson, 2005).

To emphasize the doppelganger motif, Stevenson carefully crafted his characters as well as the setting. For example, he makes it clear that Hyde is the evil, hidden, and primitive part of Jekyll in physical look. When he is first described by Enfield, Hyde's ruthless, brutal, and destructive characteristics are obvious:

I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross-street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut. (Stevenson, 2005).

Utterson also refers to Hyde as a sort of cave-dwelling creature: "the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say?" (Stevenson, 2005). Poole, Jekyll's servant, exclaims that "when that masked thing like a monkey jumped up from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice." (Stevenson, 2005) While the animalistic, primitive part of Hyde is emphasized, the readers are always reminded that two personalities dwell in the same body, as Jekyll states: "I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two." (Stevenson, 2005)

The doppelganger motif is also reflected in the setting of the story. The buildings and the streets where Jekyll and Hyde live reflect the true personality and psychology of their owners. Jekyll's and Hyde's houses are actually one edifice, with two façades and separate zones, connected by a

back passage. Jekyll's house looks on a healthy busy square, the other one on a small, dark side-street. Hyde's house "was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; bore in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence." (Stevenson, 2005)

This building, practically a ruin, on the dark side of the city represents the evil, decaying, repressed part of the doctor's inner self and becomes the principal emblem of his duality. The two houses are connected by a secret passage from one of Hyde's rooms to Jekyll's laboratory. The secret passageway is the symbolic transformation of the good physician into his evil twin and vice versa. This is not only the exchange of form, but it is also the exchange of their opposite values and visions of life; it shows that both of them are two different aspects of the same person. This passage stands between the two worlds: the normal everyday world of the doctor's social life and the infernal abyss of Hyde's hell, where he plunges when falling prey to his evil side. In other words, it is the passage from the ego to the id or the unconscious. The door symbolises a point of entry to, or division between, different aspects of the psyche. The writer, in short, presents the house as the metaphor for Jekyll's fragmented and chaotic personality.

When Jekyll sees his face reflected in his bedroom mirror after the transformation by the effect of the potion, he feels joyful at the sight of the self he had excluded from his surface life for so long: "And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine." (Stevenson, 2005) It is evident that

his delight may be rooted in two psychological reasons. On the one hand, it is the gratification of the repressed desires and needs, while on the other it is probably his personal revenge on the social system that makes him adopt a persona that he does not feel at ease with.

For a few months, Jekyll feels satisfied with his two characters as well as his two appearances. But once he loses contact with his moral sense by splitting off into Hyde, degeneration quickly follows. Under the countenance of Hyde, he allows himself to commit a variety of heinous acts in direct violation of his conscience. His previously undignified “pleasures” become monstrous and more sadistic. The release of Hyde—the id—carries with it an excessive aggression that leads to his savage murder of Sir Danvers Carew. At the start, Jekyll believes that Hyde is dependent on him, but having broken off from Jekyll and the influential conscience of the superego, Hyde’s irrational and instinctual power becomes uncontrollable. Horrified and remorseful, Jekyll tries to lock the double away, but soon learns that Hyde can no longer be contained. The power of the id—the unconscious part of Jekyll—is evident when Hyde starts returning without being called for. He makes his first appearance one day while Jekyll is literally unconscious, lying asleep in bed. He awakes to see his hand transformed; it is “lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor, or thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair.” (Stevenson, 2005) He immediately realises that he now runs the risk of losing control over his double: “if this were much prolonged, the balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown, the power of voluntary change be forfeited, and the character of Edward Hyde become irrevocably mine.” (Stevenson, 2005)

Under forced circumstances, Jekyll has decided to choose one persona over the other. It is not an easy decision. It is difficult because the pleasure in Hyde’s actions remains irresistible, as he reveals after the terrible crime he committed against Carew:

Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror. A mist dispersed; I saw my life to be forfeit; and fled from the scene of these excesses, at once glorying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated, my love of life screwed to the topmost peg. (Stevenson, 2005)

Jekyll knows well that his doppelganger's powerful autonomy is strengthening, whereas his own integrity of self is gradually weakening. This, according to Freud, is a pathological condition when two or more equally powerful parts of the self are struggling for consciousness:

If they obtain the upper hand and become too numerous, unduly powerful and incompatible with one another, a pathological outcome will not be far off. It may come to a disruption of the ego in consequence of the different identifications becoming cut off from one another by resistances; perhaps the secret of the cases of what is described as "multiple personality" is that the different identifications seize hold of consciousness in turn. (Freud, 1960)

Although he does not deny that Hyde is a part of him, Jekyll never intends to be a part of Hyde, which means that he refuses to take any responsibility for his double's action. Despite the fact that the good and evil exist inside of him, Jekyll's final response to this dilemma is not an attempt to resolve or alleviate the conflict between personal drives and his social aspiration, but literally to separate them. A whole self comprises the id, the ego, and the superego, according to Freud's study, so the effort to make a clean divorce between the constituent elements leads to the end of Jekyll's existence. To conclude, by destroying his double to preserve the ideal self that he projects to the world, Jekyll unintentionally succeeds in destroying himself, as well.

The doppelganger, the haunting double infecting the self, was a popular fictional subject for writers in the late 19th century. Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is an exploration into the conflicts between Jekyll's ethically directed ego and the animalistic, instinctive id in the form of Hyde. The story suggests that failing to face and acknowledge the dark or "shadow" side of an individual can inevitably lead to fatal consequences.

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