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Departament de Filologia Anglesa i Germanística

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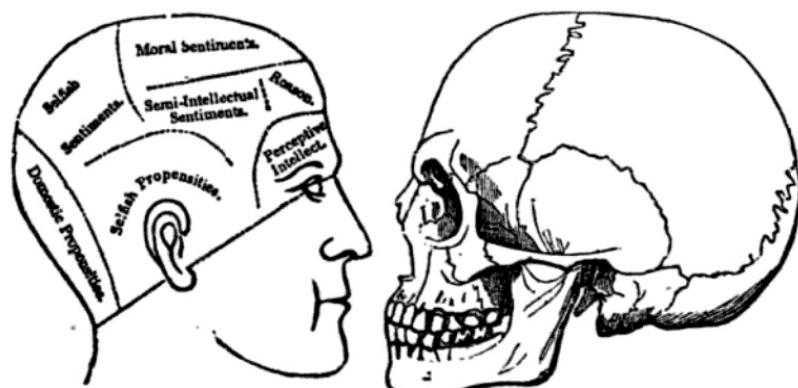
## Mentally Unconscious:

### The Scientific Method in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and its Moral Constraints

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No. 15.—GROUPING OF ORGANS.

No. 16.—HUMAN SKULL.

M. Nutting, 1857

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## Abstract

*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is a well-known piece of horror fiction written by Robert Louis Stevenson. The novella focuses on the duality of the consciousness of man and the division of the soul between good and evil. The main character, Dr. Henry Jekyll, is a respectable London scientist. Nevertheless, Jekyll's experiments get out of hand and his dark side takes over his life when his experiment leads him into becoming Mr Hyde, a man of dubious reputation.

The Gothic background of the novella is the ideal setting for recounting the story of a rare scientific case. The society in which the story takes place and the tension between science and religion do not make it easier for the scientist to rely solely on a single line of enquiry. Moreover, the limitations of science in the 19th century prevent Dr. Jekyll to find an accurate, specific and reliable conclusion to his experiment.

The main studies devoted to *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* have focused on the duality of the soul and how they relate to 19th century scientific theories about the constitution of man. However, little has been said about the method that Dr. Jekyll uses to explore this duality of the soul and if, at the end, he succeeds in relying solely on science for answers.

The aim of this essay is to question the effectiveness of the scientific method applied by Dr Jekyll, which is described in the last chapter by the scientist himself. During the 19th century, science made an attempt to be more secular and less dependent on religious and moral dogmas. However, the Victorian society in which the novella is set is still torn between science and faith and Jekyll's method shows this duality between strict scientific methodology and the tendency to justify everything through religion.

“The mind is its own place, and in itself  
can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven”

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

## Introduction

*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) is by now a classic piece of horror fiction. The novella focuses on the duality of man's consciousness and the division of the soul between good and evil. The main character, Dr. Henry Jekyll, is a respectable and well-known London scientist. Nevertheless, Jekyll's experiments get out of hand and his dark side takes over his life, transforming himself into a man of dubious reputation called Mr Hyde.

The Gothic background of the novella is the ideal setting for recounting the story of a 'strange case'. The society in which the story plot unfolds and the tensions between science and religion do not make it easier for the scientist to rely solely on a single line on enquiry. Moreover, the blurred boundaries between science and the supernatural (or 'uncanny') in the 19th century prevent Dr Jekyll from finding an accurate, specific and scientific answer for his strange transformation into Mr. Hyde.

The main studies devoted to *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* have focused on the duality of the soul represented in the novella and how this relates to 19th century scientific and psychological theories about the constitution of man. However, much less has been said about the empiricist method that Dr. Jekyll employs to explore this duality of the soul and if, at the end, he succeeds in relying solely on science for answers. The aim of this essay is to question the effectiveness of the scientific method applied by Dr. Jekyll, which is described in the last chapter of the novella by Jekyll himself.

During the 19th century science made an attempt to be more secular and less dependent on religious and moral dogmas that were still debating between good and evil. The founding of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882 by Frederic W. Myers, with his ideas about the “subliminal self”, is a perfect example of an interest in science as a discipline that aims at describing reality devoid of religious prejudices, even though these objectivist efforts usually fall prey to a myriad of metaphysical or moralistic explanations for lack of a fully developed scientific method. Myers himself, upon reading Stevenson’s novel, decided to contact him in order to praise his work as well as give him advice on some “medical and psychological improvements” (Myers, quoted in Grimes, 2011:14). But these recommendations were general abstractions about the fact that the “subliminal” (subconscious) was not a ghostly representation of the mind. Myers tried to drift apart from metaphysical explanations of the physique of man while he lacked the actual scientific means and methods to do so, even though some attempts to categorize the science of the mind in objective terms had been made –for example, the earlier *phrenology* of the German physician Franz Joseph Gay and his belief that the skull could be measured and compartmented. Phrenology and, later on, mesmerism and hypnotism, had already aroused the curiosity of writers such as Charlotte Brontë (in *Jane Eyre*), George Eliot (in *The Lifted Veil*) and Edgar Allan Poe in his piece *Mesmeric Revelation* (1844). These pseudo-scientific methods failed to be taken seriously as medical disciplines due to their lack of empiric data, since they failed to abide by a full scientific method. The notion of a scientific method as conceived by empiricist thinkers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century failed to live up to its expectations for lack of scientific tools and ingrained religious thoughts. The early psychology of the mind, before the great Freudian revolution in physiotherapy and psychoanalysis –that is, the science of treating a mental condition through a scientific method– was still dependent

on its own predecessors and contemporaries: religious thinking and post-romantic or Gothic approaches to the supernatural constitution in man.

The analysis of Dr. Jekyll's duality offers an insight into the nature of man and it is also a reminder of the tensions between science and religion during the 19th century in Britain. If the hostilities between science and morality are still unresolved, to what an extent is the scientific method featuring in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde informed by moralistic observations?* During my graduate course on Victorian Literature I was struck by the fascination of Victorian writers towards objectivity and how it clashed with moralistic constraints that inevitably informed the descriptions of their social milieu. This paper argues that the inescapability of these contradictions between science and morality is based more on the limitations of the scientific method at that time rather than to a reluctance to do away with moralistic concerns. As we shall see, these moralistic concerns were at the core of the scientific method itself, since they eventually were superseded not by a moral revolution, but (in the case of mental science) by the 'newfound' method of psychoanalysis.

## Chapter 1

### **Know Thyself: Science and Religion in the Victorian Era**

The Victorian Era of British history (1837-1901) has been a topic of intense study among scholars over the years. The interesting atmosphere of this specific time provides for a thorough research in all areas of knowledge. The Victorian Era owes its name to Alexandrina Victoria, popularly known as Queen Victoria, who ruled in The United Kingdom for 64 years. The reign of Queen Victoria is still the largest in British history and was under her rule that Great Britain experienced enormous changes – in culture, science, religion – that would shape and define a whole period of Great Britain's history.

As Moran points out: "Victorians valued stability, tradition, authority and grandeur in public life; so it is fitting that their culture is symbolically allied with the hereditary monarch, head of the most powerful nation of the day." (Moran, 2006:1)

The novella<sup>1</sup> to be analyzed, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*<sup>2</sup> by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886), was both written and published during the last part of the reign of Queen Victoria. Undoubtedly, the environment by which Stevenson was surrounded influenced the writing of the novella and the story itself. Stevenson was a Victorian himself and the changes that his society underwent seem to have affected the way in which he portrays the last years of Victorianism.

Two major topics are of interest when discussing *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* from a scientific point of view: science and religion and their statuses during Victorian times and what their relationships were like. Moreover, not only science and religion play an important role in the understanding of the case but also the Victorian morals and how those influenced by them were brought up and educated.

For the most part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century science was both encouraged and dismissed. Victorians wanted to embrace the new possibilities that science and technology could offer but at the same time they feared its unpredictable consequences in many aspects of their lives. As Moran points out in *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2006): "The Victorian period is a flexible framework marked by continuities, innovation and diversity." (Moran, 2006:2)

According to Moran, the Victorian Era and consequently its culture can be divided in three periods: the 'Early Victorian' culture - which comprises the beginning of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is largely considered a novella and not a novel, since it is longer than a short story but shorter than a novel.

<sup>2</sup> From now on, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* will be abbreviated to *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

the reign of Queen Victoria until 1850 -; 'high' or 'mid – Victorian' culture, between 1850 and the 1870s, and the 'Late Victorian' period. (Moran, 2006:2,3)

If we are to agree with Moran's division of Victorian culture, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* belongs to the late Victorian period since it was published in 1886. Nevertheless, one shall not forget that Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850 and he was immediately exposed to the influence of mid-Victorian culture which he carried onto the last period of Victorianism:

Yet, mid – Victorian controversies periodically undermined confidence. Unchecked urban expansion (creating problems of public health and crime), scientific developments (such as Darwin's theory of evolution) and scholarly research (like the historical analysis of religious texts) challenged orthodox convictions, both religious and secular. The 'late Victorian' period inherited this contradictory mix of cultural assurance and self – doubt, but reimagined it as a battle between the outmoded values of the Victorian past and the rebellious, liberating possibilities of a more modern outlook. Of course, identity for many still depended on traditional moral and religious principles and codes of social conduct. However, a number of artists and intellectuals challenged the assumptions of previous generations, rejecting orthodox religious belief, mainstream models of gender and sexuality, and established artistic conventions. Instead, they reshaped the final years of Victoria's reign into a time of nervous but creative anticipation of a new century. (Moran, 2006:3)

The main character of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Henry Jekyll, is described as "a large, well – made, smooth – faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness" (19)<sup>3</sup>. Jekyll himself, on his Statement of the Case writes: "I was born in the year 18–" (55) thus confirming that he is a 19<sup>th</sup> century man. Yet, according to Moran's explanation of the different Victorian periods, Henry Jekyll does not fit in either of the two cultural positions: he does not completely abandon the rigid morals of his time nor gives fully into the new views on life; Dr. Jekyll is a hybrid and that is what makes his *case* complicated and controversial.

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<sup>3</sup> Edition used: Stevenson, Robert Louis. (ed) Mighall, Robert. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Terror*. London, Penguin Classics, 2002.

The relationship between science and religion was not a smooth one during Victorian times. The new approaches and considerations about the nature of life challenged the established faith of the Victorians. Moreover, after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859 a serious discussion on the nature of man was raised: "advances in the natural sciences also undermined belief in the literal truth of the Bible." (Moran, 2006:30) However, it was still hard for most of the population to rely solely on science and let go of their religious beliefs; religion still played a starring role on their everyday lives.

When talking about religion in the Victorian Era one should specify which religion is being considered. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Evangelicalism was the form of Protestantism that dominated religious thought (Moran, 2006:26). Since the story of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is located in London<sup>4</sup> we can claim that Henry Jekyll's faith corresponded to that branch of Protestantism. Jekyll's fears and thoughts coincide by those experienced by his historical peers: "Evangelicalism shaped the nineteenth-century cultural imagination. Emphasis on the fallen nature of humanity fostered introspection and guilt on the Victorian personality. Self-awareness meant acknowledging one's wickedness and being constantly attuned to the dangers of temptation that lurked everywhere." (Moran, 2006:27)

In *Ordering Nature: Revisioning Victorian Science Culture*, Barbara Gates gives a very clear idea on how the scientific Victorian culture had a huge impact on the mind frame of the Victorians:

Victorian scientific culture, like Victorian culture in general, was marked by change. Not just the Darwinian revolution with its complex implications for Victorian religion and Victorian values, but discoveries in medicine, mathematics, and physical science

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<sup>4</sup> However, there is much controversy on the real environment in which the novella is settled: some authors claim that the descriptions of the city are actually more fit to Edinburgh than London.

altered the way people might understand life or locate themselves in the universe. [...] The insights of science forced constant reassessments of self, society, and nature, both by scientists and by members of a science – hungry and science – fearful public. (Gates, 1997:179)

The new discoveries in science and their challenging views on the established way of thinking brought a problematic encounter between science and religion. For years, scientific assumptions and their implications were often linked to God's hand, that is to say, scientific discoveries served as proof of an existing and almighty power that made possible what was being found.

Nevertheless, science was still in the hands of a selected minority and although the knowledge was widespread, the vast majority of Victorians did not know how to face the new information. "Common" Victorian people as well as men of science saw their beliefs challenged by what their peers were discovering. Henry Jekyll should be described as a man of science with strong religious and moral beliefs that are being challenged by no other than himself.

In the introduction to the essays concerning the scientific context of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Katherine Linehan proposes that Dr. Jekyll is an analogue for what was being studied and examined during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, Linehan points out the key issue on Jekyll's behavior: "The Evangelical mainstream of Victorian society continued to stigmatize such behaviors as shameful acts of madness or morally contaminating acts of sin." (Linehan, 2003:132). Nevertheless, Victorian morality was not what it seemed to be. The Victorian Era has also been considered as a time when hypocrisy was at its peak: "As men were required to support Christianity by church attendance and active charity, and to accept the moral ideals of earnestness, enthusiasm, and sexual purity, the gap between profession and practice, or between

profession and the genuine character, widened to an unusual extent." (Houghton, 1957:395)

When considering the effects of the discoveries made during the 19<sup>th</sup> century we have to identify two major audiences: the experts – men of science – and the common or popular people. As Fyfe and van Wyhe point out:

Although much has been made of a mid-Victorian crisis of faith, perhaps triggered by the sciences, this seems to have been a feature of a certain class of intellectuals, and not an accurate description of the majority of society (especially middle-class society), which retained a religious faith long after most expert men of science. (Fyfe & van Wyhe, Web, 2012)

Consequently, Henry Jekyll would align himself with the experts who had seen their faith challenged. Moreover, Jekyll focused his own scientific pursuit on finding out the true nature of man, thus basing his investigation on moral grounds. Victorian science and morals were constantly contradicting each other and this fact underscored the inevitability of moral thought when dealing with the scientific method. As Frank Turner points out: "Scientific research stood subordinate to moral values, a concept of God, and a view of human nature that had been formulated by clergy and religious writers. Certain questions, areas of inquiry, methods of research, and conclusions were discouraged or proscribed because they carried the implication of impiety, immorality or blasphemy" (Turner, 1978:361). Moreover, there were questions raised within science itself which could destabilize the scientific methods: "The context of moral struggle was also important. The late Victorian scientist, in contrast to the early Victorian scientist, foregrounded the problems and problematics of the laboratory [...] late Victorian scientists rather remind one of the present – day cultural critics of the laboratory and of its often disorganized character." (Turner, 1997:288)

Dr. Henry Jekyll must fashion himself as a man of science who is clearly subordinated to his moral values. The doctor's research is focused on finding the true nature of man and its implications on everyday life. However, when he is unable to continue the investigation his morals and his fears take over him, making it impossible to truly find out to what extent exclusively scientific proof is valid. This is exactly what Sigmund Freud argued when describing the methods of writers who attempt to be 'objective':

[the writer] can ever increase his effect and multiply it far beyond what could happen in reality, by bringing about events which never or very rarely happen in fact. In doing this he is in a sense betraying us to the superstitioners which we have ostensibly surmounted; he deceives us by promising to give us the sober truth, and then after all overstepping it (p.1)

Such an objectivity cannot be reached by writers, who resort to an old-fashioned superstition under the false pretense of objectivity. But the "us" are men of facts and not of imagination, individuals who use an objectivist method of thinking and approaching reality without any coloring of the emotions. According to Freud's argument, fiction writing is incapable of using a scientific method or rendering a factual account.

## Chapter 2

### **The Gothic Tradition of the Doppelgänger**

Henry Jekyll was a scientist who had in his possession numerous credentials: "MD, DCLM LLD, FRS &c.;" (11)<sup>5</sup> those not only qualify him as an outstanding scientist but also as a respectable member of his profession and of his society. Jekyll became fascinated by the theory of the duplicity of man. The theory of the duplicity of man tries

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<sup>5</sup> Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Civil Laws, Doctor of Laws & fellow of the Royal Society.

to differentiate the "good" and the "evil" that every human being has inside him/her. Henry Jekyll's investigation is marked by a clear moralistic tone: we encounter a scientific research with a research thesis based on moral grounds.

Some critics have defined Jekyll as a Mad Scientist. A Mad Scientist is usually defined as someone who is trying to play God, someone who is evil, eccentric and even insane. Nevertheless, Jekyll's morality is only challenged when he stops being himself to become Hyde. The problem that Jekyll encounters during his investigation is how to stop turning into Hyde once the drug is in motion so he will not see his morals torn apart. Christopher Toumey presents in one of his articles the traits of mad scientists and how to distinguish them. According to Toumey, if we are to place Dr. Jekyll into the category of a mad scientist, we can also say that Jekyll is not evil at all:

Once can say that fictional mad scientist become more moral, or less, if they enhance their good features, or diminish them. I use the following three features to describe character and trace its changing condition:

- a. *Intention*. Some mad scientists are motivated by vengeance or pride [...] while Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Delambre (title character of The Fly) start from altruistic moves.
- b. *Remorse, reflection and responsibility*. Some mad scientists regret having inflicted violence on the world and are troubled by what they have done. They accept responsibility for their deeds by attempting to reverse or mitigate the results.
- c. *Level of maturity*, that is, naïveté versus experience. (Toumey, 1992:419)

Henry Jekyll definitely regrets and has remorse about what he has done, not only when he becomes Hyde but also for being the one who unleashes him through his scientific investigation. The Doctor finds himself in a difficult situation: Jekyll wants to carry on his investigation but also feels compelled to stop it due to the moral implications that his research might challenge. Nevertheless, Jekyll decides to pursue his investigation under the belief that, ultimately, neither he nor the potion are the triggers of the evil force.

That night I had come to the fatal cross roads. Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth, I had come forth and angel instead of a fiend. The drug had no discriminating action; it was neither diabolical nor divine; it but shook the doors of the prisonhouse of my disposition; [...] At that time my virtue slumbered; my evil, kept awake by ambition, was alert and swift to seize the occasion; and the thing that was projected was Edward Hyde. Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair. The movement was thus wholly toward the worse. (59)

When analyzing Henry Jekyll's morality there is not a clear path to follow. Jekyll is a man torn between his Christian faith and his scientific mind. The moral ambiguity that is found in Jekyll is certainly a portrayal of the state of the morals for most of the population in Great Britain during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jekyll articulates his fear of science through moral grounds, by conveying that the drug he consumed produced the same nefarious effects than a magic potion.

Gothic fiction is usually defined as a literary genre which contains both horror and romance. Nevertheless, the term Gothic has been enriched with a various number of elements through time, incorporating and mixing new conceptions and new elements. David Punter points out that "Gothic has to do with the uncanny: the uncanny has now come to form one of the major sites on which reinvestigations of the mind, from both the psychoanalytic and also the neuropsychological points of view, can take place. And Gothic speaks, incessantly, of bodily harm and the wound." (Punter, 2012:2)

*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is rightly regarded as a novella that belongs to a late revival of the Gothic genre. Yet, we must specifically place the novella in the 'decadent Gothic' of the 1890s. (Punter, 1996:1). The 'decadent Gothic', or *fin de siècle* Gothic, explores "the dissolution of the nation, of society, of the human subject itself" (Byron,

2012:187). The Gothic explores the horrors that human beings have to be faced with and how they face them.

One of the outstanding features of the Gothic that we find in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is the usage of the figure of the Doppelgänger. The word Doppelgänger is originally a German term which the literal translation corresponds to "double – goer". The Doppelgänger is a shadow self of a human being, usually believed to be in the form of a ghost or a spirit. Yet the tradition also recognizes the Doppelgänger as a double of a living person, one who is subject to the same conditions as the original human being.

Mr. Hyde has mostly been considered Jekyll's Doppelgänger, however, they are both physically and morally different. This is also in line with a Victorian fascination with ghosts and phantoms, since they are largely the result of mental emanations or projections (Grimes, 2011). According to Punter, there is in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* a discrepancy between what is considered a Doppelgänger and what the text shows:

Again, there is a problem here, a further reticulation of the Doppelgänger structure, about the relation between Stevenson and Jekyll. It is reasonable that Jekyll should not want, or be able, to acknowledge Hyde as in any way human, and indeed that onlookers like Enfield should hold whatever opinion they please, but Stevenson himself appears to stop short of certain realisations. (Punter, 1996:5)

Indeed, Hyde is not recognized as a human being but as a creature resulting from an experiment. When analyzing *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, we must inevitably consider the idea of Hyde as Jekyll's Doppelgänger according to the Gothic tradition, following the critics who have agreed that the core Gothic theme of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is the Doppelgänger. However, when moving out from the Gothic tradition in analyzing the novella, the creature might be considered as the result of a scientific experiment. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* can be entirely read as a record of a scientific experiment where

Hyde is not a Doppelgänger but a result, a consequence or even a failure of an empirical endeavor. The Gothic tradition of the novel is not being denied but kept aside in order to focus on the scientific dimension of the novel. This allows us to explain the psychological level of the novel and how the anxieties of the *fin de siècle* were captured in literature. We should consider then that the figure of the Doppelgänger in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is more of a metaphor for the double nature of man than a real portrayal of two separate individuals that are biologically the same.

## Chapter 3

### **The Unconscious: Psychological Inquiry in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde***

Henry Jekyll is a man who considers himself to be "committed to a profound duplicity of life" (55). Jekyll is divided between what he wants and what he wants other people to think about him. The status that Jekyll acquired through many years of respectable work and ethic has now become a barrier that he has to overcome if he wants to fulfill those pleasures that would not be morally accepted in the society he lives in.

The novella focuses on the battle against the evil nature inside of Henry Jekyll's body (Hyde) and his other superior self. According to psychology, we can also define this duplicity as the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious and unconscious states of mind have been largely studied in the field of psychology and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is one of the best known scientists who sought to explore these two dimensions. Nevertheless, there are also other works to be considered when referring in particular to the unconscious.

The unconscious was deeply explored by what is called the 'Philosophy of Nature'. Carl Gustav Carus, in his work *Pysche* (1846), was "the first to attempt to give a complete and objective theory of unconscious psychological life." (Ellenberger,

1954:7). In *Sigmund Freud, Critical Assessments* we can find the first paragraph of Carus' book:

The key to the knowledge of the nature of conscious life of the soul lies on the realm of the unconscious. This explains the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of getting a real comprehension of the secret of the soul. If it were an absolute impossibility to find the unconscious in the conscious, the man should despair if even getting a knowledge of his soul, that is, a knowledge of himself. But if this is the impossibility is only apparent, then the first task of a science of the soul is to state how the spirit of man is able to descend into these depths. (137)

Jekyll is precisely performing what Carus defines as a science of the soul, that is, he is trying to understand why his soul is divided into two separate beings. Nevertheless, Jekyll's evil self does not descend into the depths of his unconscious mind but rises and incarnates as a being.

Sigmund Freud continued to develop the concept of the unconscious in his works. Alasdair Macintyre defines and locates Freud's unconscious in six particular aspects of his theoretical work. Nevertheless, we will focus here on the fifth meaning that Macintyre provides:

The unconscious is an omnipresent background to conscious and overt mental life and to behaviour. It exerts a continual causal influence upon conscious thought and behaviour. The form of Freud's concept of the unconscious here derives partly from Freud's assumption of total determinism. [...] The unconscious is the place in which behaviour is determined. (Macintyre, 2004:66)

According to Freud, the unconscious holds the power to determine our behaviour in our everyday life. Jekyll, however, identifies his unconscious with evilness. The Doctor, in spite of being a man of science, could not relate his questionable instincts to the fact that they were raised by his unconscious mind and therefore undertake some sort of 'psychotherapy treatment' to get rid of them. Henry Jekyll links the unconscious to a

supernatural force at which he calls evil. It is not surprising, though, that Jekyll blames the demon in him for the monstrous acts that he performs while being Hyde. Jekyll has a vast knowledge on many fields but he lacks information on how psychology and the mind work. Jekyll's method to research the duplicity of the soul is not a psychological analytic method but an empirical one. Jekyll does not have the means to explore his mind scientifically since psychology and neurology were not fully developed until later thanks to the works of Freud and Carl Jung.

However, we cannot say that Freud influenced Stevenson's work because *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was published earlier than most of Freud's works in the field of psychoanalysis. Yet, Freud has been largely used to give an explanation of the case by the critics. Nevertheless, as it has been stated before, Jekyll could not use the information given by Freud on the unconscious because he simply did not know of its existence.

## Chapter 4

### **The Case: Casting a Shadow over the Scientific Method in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde***

Henry Jekyll engages himself in a chemical experience in order to explain the double nature of men. Jekyll's thesis is predicated on the belief that "man is not truly one, but truly two" (55). The Doctor is experienced in the world of science and he is a respectable man in his field. Henry Jekyll is a man of science who proves his theories on the basis of experience. However, when Jekyll cannot control the consequences of his experiment and science cannot help him he tries to find the answer in religion.

Jekyll's morals and heart are still guided by his religion and it is because of his own morals and religion that Jekyll is inefficient to scientifically prove that man is two - sided since he blames an external evil for his deeds. Religion serves Jekyll to find an

answer that not only suits him but also his community. Henry Jekyll finally blames his condition to a demoniac possession because science has failed him to provide a concrete and strong reason for his condition.

#### **4.1. The scientific method and its outcome**

Dr. Jekyll makes a full statement of the case in the last chapter of the novella. In this chapter, Jekyll confesses what brought him to try and discover the truly nature of man and how his experiment came out. Anne Stiles, in her article "Robert Louis Stevenson's "Jekyll and Hyde" and the Double Brain" provides the scientific background that Stevenson may have had in mind when writing *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Stiles argues that Stevenson's idea for the duplicity of man came from the theory of the double brain:

"The opposites embodied in the Jekyll/Hyde binary conform to late-Victorian ideas about the brain as a double organ, in ways that both Harrington and Showalter have helped to outline. [...] Variant versions of dual-brain theory were circulating during the nineteenth century posited that the left and right hemispheres of the brain could function independently; according to this theory, everyone has two perfectly formed brains, each of which can substitute for the other in cases of unilateral brain injury." (Stiles, 2006:884)

Jekyll might have had the theory of the double brain in mind and tried to prove its validity by experimenting with himself. The basics of Jekyll's experiment is an empirical research, which is based on gaining knowledge through experimentation. Moreover, Jekyll also inquires into the field of chemistry in order to prove his theory. As a result, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is not only a Gothic novella that explores the unreliable nature of man but also a scientific document. As Stiles points out:

Jekyll and Hyde embraces contemporary scientific theories with remarkable thoroughness, containing an altogether more explicit address to medical

inquiries than we find in these earlier works by Stevenson. After all, the novella's full title, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, explicitly invites us to read the work as a scientific case study." (Stiles, 2006:888)

As it has been stated before, Jekyll himself writes a full statement of the case for the ones who would follow his path. Nevertheless, Jekyll states that he will not dwell fully into his scientific discoveries because "my discoveries were incomplete" (56). It is true that Jekyll's discoveries were incomplete because he lacked the resources to complete them and because when he no longer was capable to carry on his investigation he gave up and turned into religion. Nevertheless, if we are to consider *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* a scientific study we must look into the statement of the case.

First of all, Jekyll prepared the drug which allowed him to turn into Mr. Hyde:

I had long since prepared my tincture; I purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required; and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke together in the glass, and when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion. (57)

We find in this paragraph alone a thorough and scientific explanation of how all the scientific process started. In the following pages, Jekyll gives a description of what effects the drug has in his body and how it transforms him into Mr. Hyde. Nevertheless, when Jekyll tries to give an explanation of how the drug turned him into a monster, we can already appreciate how his morality is lurking through his scientific background and he abandons his more pragmatic side apart:

Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth, I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend. The drug had no discriminating action; it was neither

diabolical nor divine; it but shook the doors of the prisonhouse of my disposition [...] Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had learned to despair. (59)

Moreover, once Jekyll reflects upon the deeds he has committed while being Hyde, he destroys everything that he has recorded from the experiments: "I ran to the house in Soho, and (to make assurance doubly sure) destroyed my papers" (64). By destroying the evidence of his experiment, Jekyll/Hyde also makes sure that nobody finds proof of an actual scientific experiment being carried on. In addition, with the papers being burnt, nobody can blame Henry Jekyll for the crimes committed by Edward Hyde. Nevertheless, the statement of the case counts as proof of the scientific experiment that Henry Jekyll carried on himself.

Henry Jekyll, in the statement of the case, does not fully comment on the procedures of his experiment but on the consequences of it. The only literal scientific procedure that the reader faces is the making of the drug and its effect on Jekyll:

The power of the drug had not been always equally displayed. Once, very early in my career, it had totally failed me; since then I had been obliged on more than one occasion to double, and once, with infinite risk of death, to treble the amount; and these rare uncertainties had cast hitherto the sole shadow of my contentment. (62)

The explanation of the use of a potion in the novella and not any other method relies on "the powerful influence that chemistry and physics had upon biology in the nineteenth century." (MacDuffie, 2006:5) In addition, Robert Mighall points out that:

His [Jekyll's] chemical experiment achieves what Ribot observes in extreme pathological cases: 'when one appears the other disappears'- the very premise of Jekyll's use of Hyde: 'Think of it – I did not even exist'. This pathological emphasis in the scientific literature is an important consideration when exploring

the context for Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde. For Stevenson employs the fantastic plot device of chemical transformation to effect what were described in the psychiatric literature as dysfunctional phenomena. (Mighall, 2002:147)

Nevertheless, there has been controversy on the statement of the case. Some critics consider the statement a confession and not a scientific record because Jekyll says that he will not "enter deeply into his scientific branch of my confession" (56) Yet, we can infer from Jekyll's writing that he is also making a statement of his experimentation within his confession, thus allowing us to consider the statement of the case a scientific document. In Jekyll's full statement of the case we find the reason behind Jekyll's experiment so we can legitimately reckon Jekyll's confession as a scientific statement:

I hesitated long before I put this theory to the test of practice. I knew well that I risked death; for any drug that so potently controlled and shook the very fortress of identity, might by the least scruple of an overdose or at the least inopportunity in the moment of exhibition, utterly blot out that immaterial tabernacle which I looked to it to change. But the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound, at last overcame the suggestions of alarm. (57)

Nevertheless, Saposnik argues that the statement is more a confession than a statement because "however he may attempt to disguise his experiments under scientific objectivity, and his actions under a macabre alter – ego, he is unable to mask his basic selfishness" (Saposnik, 1971:721). Without disagreeing entirely with Saposnik when it comes to the complexity of the statement under Jekyll's circumstances and his confession, one should add that Jekyll is not only guided by his selfishness but also by his morals: the experiment might never be fully objective since Jekyll himself is biased by the religion and the morals of his time. Moreover, Jekyll trusts himself to God when he is no longer able to carry on with the experiment: "Henry Jekyll, with streaming tears of gratitude and remorse, had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God"

(64) and he resolves to religion to ease his mind and soul. As Saposnik points out: "Henry Jekyll's experiment to free himself from the burden of duality results in failure because of his moral myopia, because he is a victim of society's standards even while he would be free of them" (Saposnik, 1971:715). Furthermore, and in agreement with Saposnik's argument, Jekyll fails his experiment not only because he abandons all scientific objectivity but also because "by seeing Hyde as another being rather than as part of himself, he is forced to deny the most significant result of his experiment and indeed of his entire story, the inescapable conclusion that man must dwell in uncomfortable but necessary harmony with his multiple selves" (Saposnik, 1971:724).

## Conclusion

The Victorian Era has always been an interesting field of study because of its lights and shadows. The novella looked at in this paper, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, is a clear example of the complexity that one can find when writing about this remarkable period of Great Britain. There are certain aspects of the novella which have not been dealt with in detail but which are of enormous importance, from the representation of the Victorian society and its obscure morals regarding sexuality to the Gothic environment of the London (or Edinburgh) scenario.

Henry Jekyll embarks himself into a scientific project to discover and prove the double nature of man. Nevertheless, he fails into the attempt of giving a truly objective and scientific conclusion to his experiments. Since religion was one of the major issues during Victorian England, it is not surprising that a man who devotes his life to science has also a spot in his heart for religion. However, Jekyll blames his condition to a demoniac possession instead of blaming himself and his lack of objectiveness when failing to provide an empiric answer to his research question.

At the same time, it was not unusual to resort to the devil when trying to explain the unexplainable. Cases of schizophrenia, bipolarity and mental disorders were often associated with evilness. It was not until further discoveries and development of psychology that mental diseases were classified as such and not as deeds of the devil. Jekyll himself, a presumed man of science, could not help it but kneel down to the power of religion and link his own experience to faith rather than trying to pursue a scientific resolution. However, Jekyll is not to blame for his beliefs when trying to improve his condition.

Religion, and not science, was always the answer when one could not find the solution elsewhere: there is where Jekyll fails in his investigation. It is no wonder, then, that Jekyll turned to religion, especially at the end when he saw himself doomed.

Nonetheless, the scientific process that Jekyll went through should not be underestimated. Given the necessary tools and information, Jekyll might have enlightened himself and his society about new conceptions of the mind. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is, undoubtedly, one of the most intriguing works of Robert Louis Stevenson.

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