

Alexandria Olek

Mrs. Jennifer Laury

Advanced Placement English

22 April 2015

Hyde Versus Dracula: The Monster Within

Throughout the entirety of history, there has been a defining line between monster and man. Upon occasion, a being is brought forth in possession of such characteristics that enable it to that push, blur, and nearly redefine that line completely. Thus, we bear witness to the birth of men who are as monsters and monsters that are brought forth into this world as men, or under the guise thereof. With each of these incarnations, the boundary between the two beings is warped even farther, becoming practically unrecognizable. This lack of definition leaves humanity inquiring as to what is man and what is not considered to be so. Traditional definitions state that monstrosity is based on physical appearances and the embodiment of practices and characteristics abhorred by society such as the inhuman features of the seductive, blood-sucking vampire, Count Dracula, in Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*. Other definitions based on modern theories see the true monster as being inside ourselves, in our thoughts and desires, and in the true nature and instincts of humanity itself as seen through the seemingly human character Edward Hyde in Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. With no predetermined definition of a monstrous being, both Dracula and Hyde can be seen as a true monster, but when compared to the seven theses of the essay, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," written

by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, it is evident that Hyde best deserves the title of monster, though some may select Dracula.

Thesis III of “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” entitled “The Monster Is the Harbinger of Category Crisis,” states that the inability to categorize a being or include it in any form of structuration, forcing a second analyzation of normality, is a large part of what makes a monster a monster (Cohen 6-7). In other words, a true monster violates those most unbreakable laws of nature, and through which it is unable to be grouped in with any singular group of beings, as it brings characteristics, symbolism, and a terror all its own, resisting classification. Throughout *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, each individual who ever comes across Hyde is of the opinion that:

He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. . . . He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. . . . No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him.

(Stevenson 5)

It is known that there is something wrong with him, but they are unable to place what it is, filling the criteria of impossible categorization brought forth by Thesis III. Another aspect of monstrosity brought to light is the idea that a monster is created through the violation of the laws of nature. Hyde is created by Dr. Jekyll by means of a potion that possesses the ability to repress his strong morality, and it changes his appearance to reflect that repression. He goes beyond the boundaries of natural science by splitting his own psyche, cleaving his one personage into two. Perhaps the biggest contributing factor to Hyde's fulfillment of this thesis is the fact that he is not a whole person himself,

but merely a part of Henry Jekyll, that is created during a time of personal crisis. He is the darkest, most demonic side of an upstanding citizen, revealing man's true nature. Humans feel that there is a place for everything and that everything has its place, but we cannot categorize what we do not truly understand. According to "The Evolution of Monsters in the Romantic and Victorian eras, seen through Frankenstein and The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" by Ina Helen Storøy of the University of Tromsø, this incorporates itself into society's fear of chaos integrating into and latching onto members of a civilized society, for chaos results from a lack of organization and categorization through which man and monster become one. This draws off of an idea presented in "A Complicated Matter of Villainy" by Ömer Ögünç, which presents the fact that Victorians attempted to create various social structures to control other members of society. Refusing categorization made it much more difficult to maintain control and resulted in an overwhelming desire for freedom and individuality, proving that monsters are not only cultural, but refuse categorization and welcome our desires, as we are shown through the character Edward Hyde.

The fears that are presented to us, wrapped up in the abhorration that the monster makes us feel are in all actuality a representation of our deepest desires, as stated in "Thesis VI: Fear of the Monster Is Really a Kind of Desire." Such freedom can only be reached and seized by overstepping the social and cultural boundaries which confine us (Cohen 16-20). This means that humanity uses the creation of monsters to explore thoughts and ideas that are not deemed socially acceptable. They enable us to claim ideas that we would not otherwise adopt as a part of our individual or cultural

identities. This difference is best stated in “Henry Jekyll’s Full Statement of the Case” when he states:

The worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such 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 gravely countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures . . . from the high high views that I had set before me I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. (Stevenson 42)

The firm morality, derived from the strong upbringing of Dr. Jekyll and the high standards to which he feels obligated to hold himself to, represses his innermost desires that do not live up to the expectations he holds himself to. By taking the potion, he is enabled to become the real person that he so desires to be without the consequences and responsibility that accompanies the other side of himself, carefully hidden within his subconscious mind. Through Stevenson’s writing, we grow to fear Hyde and his degenerate actions, but also begin to covet the freedom he allows Jekyll to have while he lives out a double-life. Restrained by his own morality and the societal code of conduct to which a man of his social standing must adhere, Jekyll looks to Hyde as an occasional, controlled means of escape. He enables him to follow through with dastardly deeds and actions, without facing the repercussions, guilt, or moral dilemmas that it may cause in a man of his standing, because they were not committed by Jekyll, but by the immoral Hyde. Unfortunately, man is not so strong as to keep his instincts bottled up for so long, to only be let out of the cage every so often. The more time we force our animalistic nature to spend in its cage, the stronger it becomes, until we can

no longer control it or ourselves, and give ourselves over to our own horrific and unspeakable actions permanently, at first supporting, and then unraveling the duality of man's true nature. This idea is best expressed when Jekyll says, "My devil had been long caged, and he came out roaring. . . . I had voluntarily striped myself of all those balancing instincts by which even the worst of us continues to walk with some degree of steadiness among temptations; and in my case, to be tempted, however slightly, was to fall"(Stevenson 49).

The duality of humanity reaches every corner of the world and is pushed even further by today's looser morals and our ever-expanding realm of technological advances, making it all too easy for a person to put on one facade during the day, and be an entirely new person when the sun sets. It matters more to us how others perceive us, than the need to fulfill our own wants for fear of judgement. Thus, man so frequently switches back and forth, that the line grows thinner and thinner until their true personage is revealed. Because they do not conform to predetermined values of right and wrong, they are outcast. It is for a fear of the society which we ourselves have created, that we become the monsters lurking in the darkness. Although Hyde presents us with sufficient reasons grounded in "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" to win the title of monster, Dracula does so as well based off of theses one and five, and thus one might believe that Dracula himself is more deserving of the monster title.

In order to bestow such a title upon Dracula as some may argue, we must first examine the criteria upon which it is to be based. Thesis I states that "The Monster's Body Is a Cultural Body" meaning that a monster is a reflection of the cultural movements in place at the time of conception, therefore, signifying something other

than itself (Cohen 4). The creation is birthed through the certain places, events, fears, and other feelings of a time period. Dracula is one such character brought about by such means. The Victorian Era saw many advances in the technological and scientific fields. A common fear at the time, was that science would take over and vanquish religion and the belief systems associated with it, bringing about terrible inventions and creations that would ruin their society as they knew it. We see the contradiction as a form of reassurance in Dracula's weaknesses and limitations, which are imposed on him by garlic and various religious effects. Dr. Van Helsing and his medical methods can do nothing for Lucy to protect her. It can only sustain her life for a slightly longer period of time before Dracula finishes her off, leaving the methods and theories of science useless until it is paired with Christian mythological beliefs. The need for proven scientific fact exceeds the want for unproven claims in religion and faith, but an open mind towards the coexistence of the two is the most beneficial. As Van Helsing states in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, "You are clever man, friend John; you reason well, and your wit is bold; but you are too prejudiced. You do not let your eyes see nor your ears hear, and that which is outside your daily life is not of account to you. Ah, it is the fault of our science that it wants to explain all; and if it explain not, then it says there is nothing to explain." Another large concern at the time was the more expressive sexuality being viewed in the younger members of Victorian society, violating societal normalcies. Dracula's promiscuous sexuality contradicted these social norms and in the eyes of Victorian society, only furthered his classification as a monster; however, Hyde also fits this description of being conceived through cultural concerns and unrest.

The growing population of London at the time during which *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was written, instilled a fear of the masses into the hearts of its people. With rising crime rates, citizens began to fear that a person could be one person during the day and another at night, switching back and forth as one pleases (Storøy). Hyde does exactly this, committing the despicable acts which were feared most. He commits murder, assault, and other forms of violence all without guilt or consequences. Hyde is able to walk through his daily life as Jekyll, but become the living embodiment of the terrors of the masses at night. The way he is able to become the living representation of the anxieties of the time was by embracing the also abhorred aspects of science by using it to separate himself, displaying the possible consequences of science and its dangers, which were also unwelcome during the height of Gothic literature. In an ever-expanding urban city, isolation begins to grow as well. Hyde shares the fears of the people at the time thinking that his actions would be looked down upon and he would be cast from society. Through this thesis of "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," we can see that Hyde is a better representation of the cultural upheavals; therefore, he is much more deserving of the monster title than Dracula, as also proven by Thesis V.

"Thesis V: The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible" of "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" by Jeffrey Cohen states that monsters are essentially warnings of the unknown, scaring humanity away from such ideas so as to avoid our seeking of further knowledge pertaining to them, keeping us distanced from such ideas completely. *Dracula* steers readers away from the possibilities of science by expressing its failures when it is most needed in the lives of its characters, instead driving them toward

acceptable beliefs, which resided in Christian mythology at the time. One other such practice which was not to be explored at the time was a wandering sexuality, full of passion and exploration. By making the vampiresses embodiments of these frowned upon behaviors, once again we are driven away from our seemingly evil sexuality with the narration:

The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck, she actually licked her lips like an animal. . . . Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. . . . I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with beating heart. (Stoker 32)

This exhibits the more erotic fantasies of the younger Victorian generation, which was considered to be evil, especially in the eyes of the church and thus expressed through unholy, demonic feminine vampires, simultaneously marring the reputation of the eras changing gender roles, feeling the need to put women in their “rightful place.”

On the other hand, Hyde better represents the warning presented to readers on certain topics such as science, freedom, and the monster within. Although religion provides many people with their values, morals, and consciences, science often strips them away. Many scientists become distant and unattached and this is one feared aspect of it displayed in the novella. After Jekyll takes his potion created through chemistry, he becomes Mr. Hyde and is devoid of all feelings of justice or remorse. Science when used to attain the incorrect ends in a monster such as Hyde, drives people even further away from the study, giving them the impression that it will be

pushed to the point where they cause irreversible damage and cannot correct it by any means. When Jekyll sees all of the extended possibilities available to him by becoming Hyde, he turns away from his morality and surrenders to his newfound freedoms which had for so long been repressed. The mayhem and damage caused by Hyde also drives humanity away from embracing the side of them that is not morally acceptable, forcing them back into the submission of societal confines so as to avoid becoming the true monster as Edward Hyde did. While both characters succeed in turning people away from unfavorable practices, Hyde affects the psyche on a deeper level showing that unlike in *Dracula*, where the monster is actually a monster, it proves that more often than not, the real monster is man and succeeds in turning humanity away from the exploration of everything, especially their own selves.

The essay "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen succeeded in reestablishing the defining line between monster and man, rendered unrecognizable by the battle between traditional and modern definitions. Through theses three and six, Hyde is proven to be best deserving of the name monster, proving that the monster is always hidden within man, but *Dracula* was shown to share several of the qualities in theses one and five, of which, Mr. Hyde was also a better representation of. Through Hyde's cultural representations, inability to be categorized, warnings against the unknown, and embodiment of hidden desires, we are able to bestow upon him the true title of "monster," despite the fact that he is a man. Each of us embodies a minute piece of Mr. Hyde that is constantly struggling against our own inner Dr. Jekyll. Hyde is a monster found in every corner of the Earth, in every living being, and is

irrepressible. In this lies the true terror and the true monster, for we create monsters as nothing more than reflections of ourselves.

Works Cited

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 3-25. Print.

Öğünç, Ömer. "A Complicated Matter of Villainy: Mr. Hyde in R. L. Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde." *Inter-Disciplinary.Net*. Inter-Disciplinary.Net, Aug. 2010. Web. 7 Apr. 2015.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Mineola: Dover Thrift Editions, 1991. Print.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Mineola: Dover Thrift Editions, 2013. Print.

Storøy, Ina Helen. "The Evolution of Monsters in the Romantic and Victorian Eras Seen Through *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*." *Munin Open Research Archive*. University of Tromsø: The Arctic University of Norway, 29 May, 2013. Web. 7 Apr. 2015.