

The monstrous double

*T*he Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a novella written by Robert Louis Stevenson and published in 1886. It is about a lawyer, Gabriel John Utterson, who investigates strange occurrences between his old friend, Dr Henry Jekyll and the evil Edward Hyde. In this extract which is near the end of the novella, a letter is found in Dr. Jekyll's laboratory, close to the dead body of Edward Hyde.

The text is an extract from the tenth chapter and it is written in the first person singular : this helps the reader to understand Jekyll's adventure.

We can analyze 4 notions :



*F*irstly, the reader can understand Jekyll's theory and examine his designs. Henry Jekyll is convinced that man is composed of two different

personalities : an evil side and a moral side which are struggling. He thinks that there is a duality within each man and that this duality proves the fact that we may alternatively do bad or good things unconsciously. Jekyll explains in his letter that he had been considering that theory for some time. Persuaded that he is prisoner of an evil side which is locked inside him, Jekyll decides to put his theory to practice.

The Self Portrait and **The Three Studies for Self Portrait** by Francis Bacon illustrate men who seem to be torn between two different sides. Indeed, we can say that faces are not represented with normal appearance codes, they are blurred and disfigured. Those painting can be a metaphor of human's disturbed spirit, notion explained by Doctor Jekyll.



*I*n the second paragraph we witness to the preparation of the potion. In this paragraph, the reader can think of a rational medical experience. Doctor Jekyll seems to have a scientific knowledge and uses scientific ingredients: he purchased some particular salts and boils them before that he compounding them. In this paragraph, Stevenson wants to make us think of a realistic scene. There is no elements of the supernatural yet. This realistic scene has been adapted on cinema many times :

In a version of 1912 and in an other one released in 1931, we can see the same scene where Dr.Jekyll is preparing his potion while behind him test tubes are placed on a shelf. The musical score scenes participate to a gradation effect : the tension tends to increase.

-In the third paragraph, the reader discovers Jekyll's sensations after drinking the potion and thereby, Jekyll's transformation. The doctor has unpleasant sensations like painful spasms and nausea. We can say that the potion is an element of the Gothic. It creates a transition inducing progression and movement : Jekyll is going to transform.
In an adaptation released in **1931(pictures on the left and at the top)** , the strange sensations of Jekyll who seems to suffer are represented. The transformation is a device which adds dynamism into the plot, and in the movie from **1941 (picture on the right)** for example, the scene consists in surprising the spectator who is discovering another Dr.Jekyll.



-But quickly, Jekyll feels a surprising heady sensation of happiness as he becomes Edward Hyde.
The description in the extract and screen shots from the film (1931) relate his new state of mind and show us that the potion transposed him to a new pleasant personality.



*T*he presentation of Hyde's portrayal connotes the notion of "delightful horror" which is naturally a Gothic element. Indeed, Dr. Jekyll

discovered that he has been transformed into Hyde and despite his frightening appearance, he willingly welcomed his "evil-side" Hyde and is not conscious of any repugnance but rather a "leaping welcome".

The reason is that Hyde is a part of Jekyll so he is sure to follow Hyde in his actions. This part of him is perceived as natural and human too. He really lives the experience and his way of thinking and acting is naturally oriented by Hyde and not by the moral side : Jekyll.

Stevenson uses comparatives to describe Hyde. He appears to be "younger, lighter, happier " and words "Freedom of the soul" state clearly that Hyde has less moral limits. Edward Hyde (which is dead) is the element of mystery of the novella.

An adaptation of Stevenson's work called "**Doctor Jerry and Mr. Love**" produced by Jerry Lewis in 1963 is an example of a story inspired by this pleasant element of mystery. Dr. Jerry drinks a potion and turns into "Mr. Love" who is an arrogant, defiant and proud character, acting without the limitations set by the moral limits of Dr. Jerry.

The common characteristic to all these adaptations is that Hyde is uninhibited while Jekyll struggles with his own moral limits

