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Echoes of the Unconscious:
Freudian and Modernist Readings of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

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ABSTRACT: Considering Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* the present article aims to analyze the novella through the lens of Freudian psychoanalytic theory and modernist literary elements. Additionally, this article situates Stevenson's work within a broader context of modernist literature by examining its exploration of critiques of Victorian moral rigidity and the fragmented identity. The novella's use of Uncanny elements, unconscious mind and other concepts later developed by Freud highlights its avant-garde nature that also offers a narrative that delves into the psychological depth of the human mind. This article underscores the significance of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* not only as a timeless exploration of human nature and social expectations but also reveals its contribution to both psychological literature and modernist narrative techniques.

KEYWORDS: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Freudian analysis, Modernism

RESUMO: Considerando *O estranho caso de Dr. Jekyll e Mr. Hyde* de Robert Louis Stevenson, o presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar a novela pelas lentes da teoria psicanalítica freudiana e de elementos literários modernistas. Além disso, este artigo situa o trabalho de Stevenson num contexto mais amplo da literatura modernista, examinando as suas críticas sobre a rigidez moral vitoriana e a identidade fragmentada. O uso de elementos do *Uncanny*, do inconsciente e de outros conceitos desenvolvidos posteriormente por Freud destacam a sua natureza vanguardista, que também oferece uma narrativa que investiga a profundidade psicológica da mente humana. Este artigo ressalta a importância de *Dr. Jekyll e Mr. Hyde* não apenas em sua exploração atemporal da natureza humana e das expectativas sociais, mas também revela a sua contribuição tanto para a literatura psicológica quanto para as técnicas narrativas modernistas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Dr. Jekyll e Mr. Hyde*, Análise Freudiana, Modernismo

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MODERN PERSPECTIVES ON STEVENSON'S *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a novella written by Robert Louis Stevenson in 1886. It explores the duality within human nature and the struggle between good and evil. Doctor Jekyll is a respected doctor in Victorian London who has been conducting experiments to create a potion that enables him to split the good and evil aspects of his personality. Mr. Hyde is the personification of his dark side, but progressively Doctor Jekyll loses control over the transformations leading to tragic consequences. This article will explore how Stevenson's novella can be interpreted through Freudian psychoanalytic theory and modernist perspectives, highlighting how the narrative anticipates key concerns about repression, the unconscious mind, and the complexities of human identity.

The story portrays a dichotomy also present in Victorian society, the "outward respectability and inward lust" (Hammond 1984, 125). It is a society which sought to maintain a façade of moral refinement while keeping dark secrets behind the walls. Stevenson's novella becomes even more interesting to analyze when we start to consider the modern elements present in the story. Even though it predates the full development of modernism, the novella often delves into the complexities of the human mind, exploring the central duality and the split between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. These internal conflicts mirror modernist concerns with the fragmented self and the multiplicity of human identity.

Therefore, we may wonder what modernism means. According to the Oxford dictionary, the word modern has its origin from the Latin word *modernus*, which means just now. As stated by Richard Hand, "the word appears towards the end of the fifth century AD and was used for centuries in order to differentiate between what is here and now and what has become the past" (2012, 61). Different authors diverge in their interpretations of this movement, but they seem to agree that the modern stands in opposition to the traditional. Peter Childs, for example, states that "with regard to literature, modernism is most readily understood through the work of the avant-garde authors who wrote in the decades before and after the turn of the twentieth century" (2019, 5). Furthermore, he argues that one of the defining features of modernist writing is the way authors immerse readers in a world that feels unfamiliar, offering little guidance, unlike the detailed descriptions and explanations typical of nineteenth-century realist writers. As a result, readers find themselves in a world they do not initially understand and

must progress through the narrative to gradually uncover its mysteries and grasp the rules and meanings of this new reality (*idem,* 6).

This sense of disorientation and gradual revelation is central to *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Stevenson does not immediately present the duality of Jekyll and Hyde, but instead constructs a fragmented narrative, much like the modernist texts described by Childs. The novella withholds clear explanations, leaving readers to piece together the psychological and moral complexity on their own. By resisting a straightforward narrative and focusing on the inner turmoil of its protagonist, the story anticipates many of the modernist concerns with subjectivity, fragmentation, and the instability of identity. Moreover, the typical modernist opposition to tradition is also reflected in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*

By attempting to divide and control the conflicting parts of his psyche, Dr. Jekyll disrupts traditional religious and ethical conceptions of human nature. In doing so, he assumes a godlike role — creating a new self, Mr. Hyde, through scientific experimentation rather than divine or natural means. This act challenges long-standing beliefs about the unity and sanctity of the soul, echoing modernism's broader tendency to question inherited truths and dismantle established systems of thought.

Virginia Woolf, a central figure in literary modernism shared a similar thought on her essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (1924), where she claims "On or about December 1910 human nature changed. All human relations shifted, and when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature" (1978, 4-5). This remark reflects the profound transformation in the way individuals understood themselves and their place in the world. In Stevenson's novella, this change is already represented through the figure of Dr. Jekyll, who no longer relies on divine or moral frameworks to define human nature but instead turns to science and personal experimentation.

Other characteristics of modernism outlined by Childs that are deeply embedded in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are the questioning of reality, uncertainty in a Godless universe, and the tension between societal conventions and inner pass[66] (2019, 8). The novella destabilizes the notion of a unified, knowable self and presents reality as fractured and elusive, particularly through its structure of unreliable narratives and hidden truths. In a universe where humans get closer to the role of God, Dr. Jekyll

takes it upon himself to manipulate the very core of human nature, challenging moral and metaphysical certainties. This scientific overreach reflects the modernist uncertainty about spiritual frameworks and the disillusionment with traditional beliefs.

Dualism in Jekyll and Hyde opposes the Victorian idea of the mind as a unity (Houghton 1985, 165). Instead, the novella explores a modernist perspective that the mind has different phases of development, and it contains distinct divisions that define our personality. These divisions and phases will be better explored throughout the article with the support of Freud's theories. As Whitney May suggests in her essay *Through the Cheval-Glass: The Doppelgänger and Temporal Modernist Terror in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dr. Jekyll's evil half is not a medieval monster haunting ruined castles, but a distinctly modern figure born from internal fractures within the human psyche. Hyde's emergence from Jekyll reflects a broader literary shift from external horrors to internal anxieties—a hallmark of the *fin de siècle* Gothic and a forerunner of literary modernism. As a modern monster, Hyde embodies fears not of the supernatural past, but of psychological fragmentation, moral collapse, and the destabilization of identity. Jekyll's transformation can be read as a *psychomachia*, a spiritual and psychological battle within a self divided by the conflicting demands of instinct and morality, desire and repression. This internal conflict mirrors the Victorian and early modernist audience's own confrontation with a rapid social and scientific landscape shift (2018, 123). Moreover, May defends that understanding *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as a modernist text and its complex dynamic between Jekyll and his double is vitally important to understand the narrative. Although chemically separated into distinct identities, Jekyll and Hyde remain intimately bound—a dual consciousness that embodies what Marshall Berman describes of modernism: "a unity of disunity" (1982, 51). Jekyll does not initially reject Hyde with disgust; on the contrary, he welcomes him with a sense of relief and recognition, admitting that Hyde felt more authentic, more vivid, than the fractured identity he had previously inhabited. This moment of self-recognition challenges traditional notions of monstrosity and instead reveals how deeply the other is part of the self. The novella thus reconfigures the Gothic monster, not as an external threat, but as an internal inevitability. Jekyll's final failure to destroy Hyde stems from this inescapable entanglement: the two are not opposites but reflections. As May highlights, "neither Jekyll nor Hyde, neither Gothic past nor modern future, can exist without the other" (2018, 124).

Therefore, Stevenson also develops a more modern Gothic view in his novella. Unlike traditional Gothic literature, where monstrous figures typically inhabit dark castles or old mansions, the "scaring creatures" in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are not external but are internal, existing within the characters themselves. This reflects a shift in Gothic writing, where the focus moves away from reviving medieval spirituality and instead engages with a more modern sensibility — one that questions the idealization of past centuries, often viewing them as periods shaped by superstition and oppression (Baldick & Mighall 2012, 271). In this sense, the Gothic becomes a space to explore psychological fragmentation, repressed desires, and the hidden aspects of human nature, themes that resonate with modernist concerns about the complexity of the self. This dynamic is illustrated by the way Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde portray a fractured identity, where "Stevenson's novella and modern man at the same time suffer from a case of fragmentation as [the] subordinate dominates over the dominant" (Kemaloğlu 2020, 97).

Fragmentation in the novella goes further than the fragmentation of the human mind. A very common aspect of modernism is the use of fragmented and non-linear narrative structures that reflect the complexities of the human psyche and perception. The novella is structured through documents, letters and narratives with different characters' perspectives, creating a fragmented panorama of the own storyline. The depiction of space in Stevenson's novella also embodies modernist characteristics. Dr Jekyll's house has two entrances, a main door linked to the main street, which is used by the doctor and a lateral backdoor, dislocated like its user: Mr. Hyde. Despite the two different doors that serve two different purposes, they still belong to the same house, like the two distinct personalities that belong to the same man. It disrupts the conventional unity and coherence of Victorian societal norms (Lightman 2010, 14). Alienation and isolation are frequent themes of modernism. As Dr. Jekyll loses control throughout the story, he becomes more isolated from his friends and society. Similar to some modernist works, the doctor's private space, in this case his laboratory, reflects his own internal duality and conflict, as can be perceived in the following passage: "Once crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus, the floor strewn with crates and littered with packing straw, and the light falling dimly through the foggy cupola" (Stevenson 31).

Once established how the modernist nuances of the novella are important to the analysis of this paper, it is relevant to explore Freud's theories. The concepts which will be discussed here are "Id", "Ego" and "Superego", defense mechanisms and the Uncanny. They will be useful to better understand the duality of human nature and the complexities of the mind, recurrent themes in modernist literature, also present in Stevenson's novella.

FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS IN *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*

Before Sigmund Freud, thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant had already questioned the idea of "clear" consciousness. In *Emile, or on Education* (1762), Rousseau highlighted the complexity of human nature, suggesting that society represses innate instincts, leading to inner conflict. Kant, in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), argued that human consciousness is shaped by both sensory data and cognitive processes, rather than being transparent or simple. John Locke's *tabula rasa* theory (1689) had already suggested that the mind is a blank slate, influenced by experience. Freud built on these ideas by suggesting that human minds are complex and that they repress many emotions into the unconscious. This new view laid the groundwork for modernists' beliefs that humans have dark and profound feelings, and art needs to represent this facet as well.

One of the most important theories developed by Freud was the Structural Theory, a mental division established between the ID, the Ego, and the Superego. Starting by analyzing the ID, it represents the most primitive part of the human psyche, responding instinctively to basic needs, urges, and desires. The ID seeks immediate gratification without considering consequences or moral values, operating illogically and irrationally, like the impulsive nature of a newborn. The Ego and the Superego are developed later in life. The Ego mediates between the ID's desires and societal rules, trying to balance these conflicting demands. As the author explains, "The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the ID, which contains the passions" (Freud 1923, 25).

Another of Freud's theories that easily relates to the ID's primitive instinct is the "Death drives". According to the psychoanalyst, people were ruled by two distinct forces: the Life instinct, named Eros, and the Death instinct, named Thanatos. The two forces

compete to guide human behavior. Thanatos was the personification of death in Greek Mythology and guided people to the underworld in the Afterlife. “Freud believed that people typically channel this death drive outward, which manifests as aggression toward others” (Jones-Smith 2020, 235). The character of Mr. Hyde manifests in himself both the ID and the Death instincts. He takes pleasure in violence, seeks instant gratification, and follows no morals or rules. This kind of behavior eventually leads him to destruction. One of the first appearances of Mr. Hyde in the novella already supports this idea: “And then, all of a sudden he broke out in great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane and carrying on like a madman” (Stevenson 27). Furthermore, he transmits a sense of negativity to the characters around him. As Mr. Utterson states, Hyde conveys a sense of “unexpressed deformity” (Stevenson 17). Hyde instills a sense of isolation in Jekyll, since, when the doctor starts to lose control, he also loses contact with his friends. Eventually, he decides to confine himself to his house, which leads him to a lonely existence.

Moreover, Hyde depicts the ID in many different forms. He is constantly eager to gratify his animalistic impulses and, to prove it, the doctor admits: “at once glorying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated” (Stevenson 77). By being this incarnation of the ID, his behavior reflects a lack of morals or societal conventions. An example of that is the moment he murders Carew without mercy, never showing any regret or guilt. Hyde is the manifestation of Dr. Jekyll ’s repressed, animalistic side, illustrating the nuances of the unconscious — a crucial modernist element already present in this work. This exploration of inner impulses reflects a broader artistic trend of the period, in which “Artists of the avant-garde art movements of the 20th century explored various ways to delve into their unconscious and express the desires and fears hidden in it” (Egemen 2022, para. 7). The novella also acknowledges that “The primitive is also found in the modern man, in the unconscious part of the mind” (Lagana 2013, 150), reinforcing the idea that beneath the surface of civility lies an untamed, enduring presence.

On the other hand, in Dr. Jekyll, Stevenson portrays the perfect Victorian gentleman who follows the rigid rules of society. Jekyll may be considered the Ego, because, in contrast, it is “that part of the ID which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world” (Freud 1923, 24). The Ego emerges because of the influence of the external world, which is why it develops during childhood. It takes social

norms and rules into consideration to determine human behavior. While both the ID and the Ego seek pleasure, what differentiates them is that the Ego is concerned with creating strategies to achieve this satisfaction within the constraints of reality. The Ego is "like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse" (*idem*, 25). Jekyll is also a representation of the Life Instinct or Eros (the Greek god of love and fertility), because he is engaged in preserving not only his own life and safety but the others around him, especially when he realizes Hyde is out of control. He is rational, ruled by societal principles and, as mentioned in the previous quote, the doctor struggles with keeping the urges of the ID taking form in Mr. Hyde. One of the first descriptions of Jekyll establishes this positiveness on the doctor's character attesting that he is "a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a stylish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness — you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection" (Stevenson 23). Another important fact about the Ego is that it works by mediating the ID's impulses and the moral restrictions of the Superego. Doctor Jekyll is presented as a mediator between the rules of Victorian society (Superego) and Hyde's ID impulses. As Jekyll says: "But I had voluntarily stripped myself of all those balancing instincts by which even the worst of us continues to walk with some degree of steadiness among temptations" (Stevenson 73). Like the Ego, Jekyll tries to be realistic to balance Hyde's urges and the moralism of Victorian society.

However, as Freud defended, the Ego, or even the Life drive alone, could not explain all human behavior. An individual is cohabited by Ego, ID and Superego, as well as by both Life and Death drives. As Jekyll himself states, "Man is not truly one, but truly two" (Stevenson 66). This is an avant-garde representation of the modern society that "is linked to the negotiation between civilization and desires, and the negotiation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle" (Egemen 2022, para. 4). The Doctor's desire to be totally separated from the ID's urges brings him to a tragic end, emphasizing that men are driven by different instincts, and that denying the ID might be dangerous. One of Dr. Jekyll's biggest mistakes was not previously admitting this duality of human nature. At the beginning, the doctor truly believed he could not only separate himself from the ID but also control it: "The moment I choose I can be rid of Mr. Hyde" (Stevenson 24).

The way Stevenson constructs the physical spaces around Jekyll further reinforces this idea of internal division. The decaying laboratory, hidden behind Jekyll's otherwise

elegant home, suggests that darker instincts are not entirely external forces but intimately connected to the respectable façade. Similarly, Hyde's initially smaller, almost stunted form symbolizes how repressed evil impulses may seem insignificant at first, yet with indulgence, they may expand and begin to dominate the internal "space" of the self. This spatial metaphor extends beyond the house: throughout the novella, Hyde moves through dark, labyrinthine streets in contrast to the orderly and civilized spaces associated with Jekyll's public life, suggesting that the broader society itself mirrors the divided, unstable human psyche.

In a great part of the story, Hyde's influence overcomes the Doctor, and the hostility between them becomes so intolerable that they can no longer coexist. As a final resource, Jekyll once more follows the Ego's logic and solves the situation by killing himself.

Once established, this duality between the Ego and the ID (Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde) — and how they merge — it becomes crucial to recognize that they are not merely opposing forces, but fundamental aspects that coexist within every individual. Therefore, it is important to also explore the third element of Freud's trinity: the Superego. It consolidates the morals and values instilled by one's parents and society. Developed during childhood, the Superego guides behavior in a socially acceptable manner. One of the most important functions of the Superego is to control the ID's desires, encouraging the Ego to follow moralistic goals rather than merely realistic ones. By Freud's own words, "The superego is, however, not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the ID; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices" (1923, 33). The definition of the Superego provided by Ayda Önder offers valuable insight into the role this mechanism plays in human behavior: "The superego acts like an internal censor, leading us to make moral judgements in the light of social pressures" (2019, 32-33). The Victorian Society plays the function of an "internal censor" because it establishes the morals, values and attitudes that must be followed by the citizens. The Victorian Era in England (1837-1901) was marked by rigid etiquette rules that eventually led people to repress certain kinds of behaviors that were not appropriate in public (O' Gorman 2010, 8). In this sense, Dr. Jekyll can be seen as an example of someone who tried to follow the moralistic values of society (Superego), leading him to use his scientific knowledge to be separate from his own irrational desires (ID). Even the supporting characters are

introduced with detailed information about their profession and social standing, accentuating the significance of the Superego in defining their identities. For instance, the opening line of chapter one starts by stating that “Mr. Utterson the lawyer…”, with his profession being also his first characteristic (Stevenson 7). Moreover, Dr. Jekyll is often described as a respectful and influential member of society. As mentioned, while the novella portrays most characters as "true gentlemen" who follow their superego apart from Mr. Hyde, this portrayal might be more complicated than it first appears, particularly when it comes to Mr. Utterson. The lawyer is outwardly reserved, rational, and morally upright, traits often associated with the "gentleman" archetype; however, he seems to superficially adhere to societal expectations, failing to truly embody what makes one a "true gentleman". The opening of the novella suggests this, when describing him as "...cold, scanty, and embarrassed in discourse..." and noting that "At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eyes, something indeed which never found its way into his talk..." (Stevenson 7). By establishing Utterson in this way, Stevenson does not deny the duplicity of feelings present in the members of that society. Rather, he highlights the internal conflict between outward appearances and hidden desires, suggesting that even those who seem morally upstanding are not immune to the complexities and contradictions of human nature. Although only Jekyll fully demonstrates his restrained eagerness, it is enough to make the readers understand that under the surface of those perfect aristocrats is also hidden a dark side and unsettling ambitions. As Dr. Jekyll states: “I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures” (Stevenson 24). He was bound to hide his desires to satisfy societal rules (Superego). Once more, we can see Jekyll as a moderator figure (Ego) who tries to balance his inner urges with what is publicly acceptable. If his experiment had worked, he would have found the perfect solution to deal with the internal struggles of Victorian Society. The intricate social critique about the hypocrisy of Victorian morality present in the narrative reflects modernist concerns like the disillusionment with social norms and values. Besides, like in modernist writings, there is some skepticism about the novella regarding scientific advancements. Although Jekyll is a man of science, his experiments only brought him misery, with rationality not being able to solve the fundamental problems of human nature. According to Susan Stanford Friedman,

Modernism is grounded in what she calls "crises of belief: loss of faith, experience of fragmentation and disintegration, and the shattering of cultural symbols" (1981, 97). To modernists, humans cannot be completely rational. Indeed, the novella portrays the limitations of rationality in understanding the complexities of human nature, being described as an ambivalent tool capable of great advancements and fatal failures.

In this article, I have argued how the London society of the time repressed some behaviors, because they believed they had a superior mental development, which enabled them to control their actions. However, as it is possible to see when taking the example of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, this repression may lead to dreadful consequences. Freud implied that all humans "share some universal primitive desires and fears" (Leitch *et al.* 2018, 756). "Likewise, canonical works reflect common desires and fears that can be found in everyone" (Egemen 2022, para. 4). The duality of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde reflects the inner struggles to repress the conflicting feelings present in each individual.

To better analyze the outcomes of this repression in the novella, it is relevant to understand Freud's theory of Defense Mechanisms. "Freud argued that, when placed in a psychologically dangerous or threatening situation, the patient was likely to resort to defense mechanisms for protection. In a psychoanalytic context, a dangerous threat is something that challenges the patient's self-concept or self-esteem" (Baumeister *et al.* 1998, 1098). Freud identified several ego defenses throughout his work, which his daughter, Anna Freud, later compiled in a single book called *The Ego and the mechanism of defense* (1936). Indeed, repression is one of those mechanisms. According to Freud's definition, repression is related to the feelings that are hidden and are forced into the unconscious in order to protect the individual from emotional distress or anxiety. These repressed thoughts, often involving desires, memories, or traumatic experiences, are kept out of conscious awareness because they are deemed unacceptable by societal norms or by the individual's own moral standards. However, as illustrated by this novella, the repression of the ID urges does not make them cease. By repressing his darker impulses, Dr. Jekyll's attempt to maintain the stability of the three components of the human psyche is deeply unsettled. Rather than controlling his darker side, he only makes it stronger, as he reflects: "All things therefore seemed to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse" (Stevenson 74). As Dr. Jekyll tries to satisfy the Superego, the repression of his internal

urges just makes Mr. Hyde become even more of an escape to the ID's primitive tendencies. Jekyll struggles to separate Mr. Hyde from him, but it is a useless attempt. The ID's instincts cannot be disembodied because they are intrinsically connected to the self. As is stated by John Hammond, "Dr Jekyll is not faced with a simple choice between good and evil; he is compelled to accept that either both exist or neither" (1984, 125).

Another defense mechanism associated with the duality between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is projection, which Freud identified as a psychological process where an individual attributes their own thoughts, feelings, or desires to another person in order to avoid confronting these aspects within themselves. In this case, Mr. Hyde becomes not just a projection but the materialization of Dr. Jekyll's darker, more primal instincts. By projecting his repressed desires onto Hyde, Jekyll distances himself from the parts of his identity he cannot accept. As Jekyll reflects, "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" (Stevenson 70).

Dr. Jekyll, in most parts of the story, uses another of Freud's defense mechanisms, which is denial. As the name suggests, it involves denying events and situations that the person refuses to experience. Dr. Jekyll, as was already mentioned, denies the duality of human nature, refusing to accept his darker side. Besides the denial of his inner conflicts, he also denies the consequences of his actions. He believes he can control the transformations; he seems not to be aware of the potential dangers of his deteriorating control, which leads to tragic outcomes. As Dr. Jekyll states in the quote already referred to: "The moment I choose I can be rid of Mr. Hyde" (Stevenson 24). After Mr. Hyde murders Sir Danvers Carew, the doctor attempts to deny Hyde's power by affirming that he is the one in control. To prove that, he destroys Hyde's papers and stops taking the potion. He also states in the chapter "Henry Jekyll's full statement of the case":

> But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it—I did not even exist! Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second or two to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready; and whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror. (Stevenson 71)

These passages show the naivety of Jekyll's beliefs. The doctor was certain that he could escape from Hyde anytime he wanted, which reflects his ongoing denial of the

stronger psychological connection between them. However, his resolve is short-lived, because he begins to realize that Hyde is an inseparable part of him that he cannot control or dismiss: “I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught” (Stevenson 71). The quote expresses the inevitable resurgence of Hyde. Jekyll’s denial and attempts to suppress his other half have failed, leading to the uncontrollable emergence of his darker side.

THE UNCANNY SPLIT: DUALISM IN STEVENSON'S NOVELLA

To start discussing the “Uncanny” nature of *The strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* it is necessary to establish the definition of the expression. In his essay *The Uncanny* (1919), Freud affirms that the subject of the Uncanny is “undoubtedly related to what is frightening, to what arouses dread or horror” (2003, 123). The word “Uncanny”, or “unheimlich” in the original German, means something uncomfortably strange, mysteriously difficult to explain. Still according to Freud, the Uncanny is “that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (*idem*, 124). The definition of Uncanny goes beyond the feeling of dread and fear; it is related to something that has been repressed, forgotten and is eager to be released even against our will. The uncanny is characterized by both aversion and recognition. In many passages, Hyde is described with hostility; he is considered a “dwarfish”, “doubled-up”, and a “monkey” (Stevenson 17, 37-38). However, the luxury of knowledge, one of the biggest ambitions of Dr. Jekyll as a man of science from Victorian society, culminates in this creature that is Uncanny because, although dreadful, it embodies the true nature of the human. Nicholas Ruddick, in “The fantastic fiction of the fin de siècle”*,* argues that there is a sense of refusal to recognise the existence of familiarity in this other half: “Hyde is Self unnervingly become Other arousing uncanny disgust among men because they refuse to acknowledge consciously that a similar being lives under repression in themselves” (2007, 192). The following statement illustrates how hard it is for the other characters to perceive Hyde:

> He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. (Stevenson 12)

The inability to identify what is wrong with Hyde contributes to the Uncanny feeling. There is a strange familiarity with him, people recognize something human in Hyde, and yet there is something in his nature that sets him apart. The lack of explanation of why Hyde is so detestable amplifies the fear and discomfort that surround him. He has an indefinable sense of wrongness because there is a duality within him. Through the split personality of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson encapsulates the modern idea of displacement in society. It can be applied not only to the Victorian era, as we see in the novella, but also in the Contemporary world. The split personality of the two men reflects the fragmentation of the Modern world. As Fred Botting explains, "The fragmented modern world of isolated individuals, guilt, anxiety, despair and internalizing fear produce narratives which focus on psychological disturbance and are dominated by fantasy, hallucination and madness" (1996, 11). Through this analysis, I propose that Stevenson's novella aligns with this perspective.

Additionally, regarding the story's structure, the Uncanny as a narrative technique is another modern element present in the novella. It evokes a sense of horror and suspense, which is a characteristic of modernist literature, by focusing on creating psychological depth and exploring the darker aspects of human experience. As Eve Kosofky Sedgwick (1986) defends in a more modern conceptualization, the uncanny is evident in objects and images, but it is particularly significant in the relationships between characters in a narrative. This can be seen in the way the narrative fragments into different perspectives and uses the spaces, especially the private, as a reflection of internal duality, where Dr. Jekyll's two personalities coexist and contend. His house, for instance, becomes a symbolic structure of this split self: the respectable façade conceals the hidden, sinister laboratory at the back, just as Jekyll conceals Hyde within himself. This double perspective of space was not confined only to Victorian society. In today's world, where the complexity of the human mind is increasingly recognized, we also navigate multiple selves across different spaces and narratives—public and private, real and digital. This diverse fragmentation functions like modern equivalents of Jekyll's divided home and psyche, revealing how we

display different facets of our personality depending on the environment. Thus, Stevenson's use of uncanny spaces and symbolic objects continues to resonate, offering a powerful lens through which to explore the fractured, performative nature of identity also in contemporary society. After all, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a prime example of an atemporal narrative that encompasses all those elements, creating a piece of Gothic modern literature about the duality of human nature.

CONCLUSION

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a great example of a narrative that discusses themes of dualism and fragmentation, efficiently capturing the essence of Freud's concepts and psychoanalytic theories. The novella delves into the complexities of the human psyche, such as the conscious and unconscious mind, the Uncanny, the conflicts of repressed urges and the societal rules. In addition, the narrative also embodies key elements of modernist literature as the novella serves as a critique of Victorian society. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* transcends the Victorian era and bridges with the Modernist thought of fragmented identities and multiplicity of self, while offering insights that are as compelling today as they were at the time of its publication.

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