

THE APOLLONIAN

A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies (Online, Open-Access, Peer-Reviewed)

Vol. 1, Issue. 1 (September 2014) || ISSN 2393-9001

Chief Editor: Girindra Narayan Roy

Editor: Anindya Shekhar Purakayastha

Associate Editors: Lalima Chakraverty & Maria Pia Pagani

Executive Editors: Subashish Bhattacharjee & Saikat Guha

Research Article:

*Frankenstein's Victorian Legacy: The Creation of "Fellow-devils" in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and the Strange Case of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde**

Jane Kubiesa

Find this and other research articles at: theapollonian.in

Frankenstein's Victorian Legacy: The Creation of "Fellow-devils" in The Island of Doctor Moreau and the Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Jane Kubiesa

Almost one hundred years since Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) brought the possibility of human transformation to the attention of the reading masses, the deep-seated fears it unleashed were still very much in the public domain and still at the heart of the modernist gothic genre. This is in no way more greatly reflected than in the production of some of the most popular and influential gothic novels of the 1890s: the *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). Such texts manoeuvre the reader into a state of terror principally through the invocation of the era's preoccupation with the physical form and the inversion of the gothic theme of the supernatural, which instead becomes the unnatural. Rather than following the eighteenth century gothic paradigm of peopling their pages with supernatural entities intent upon murdering the human individual, the authors turn to the realms of the unnatural where subverted or transfigured versions of that human physicality pose the threat. Initially certain characters are subject to this threat, but there are wider implications for the future of humanity as a whole.

These works focus upon the motility of the human form and its potential for subversion and this paper will offer consideration of this issue in terms of *Frankenstein's* legacy and gothic conventions by looking to the "monsters" which followed at the fin de siècle.

Shelley's use of the human body to elicit fear from the reader stems from the process of inverting the familiar. As Jerold E. Hogle explains: "The Gothic clearly exists in part, to raise the possibility that all 'abnormalities' we would divorce from

ourselves are a part of ourselves" (12). In relation to the body, this inversion of the familiar to produce a humanoid being who is not quite human, which I will term a "Franken-likeness", acts to develop the sense of sameness while also alienating that fellowship and forcing the reader and characters such as Edward Prendrick and Dr Lanyon to be repulsed by such notions. Hogle's "abnormalities" can easily be read as the Franken-likenesses inhabiting the fin de siècle world.

The threat to the survival of the human race, as depicted in these novels, manifests itself internally and externally. The internal menace is revealed in *Jekyll* with the division of the human identity, whilst the external danger in *Moreau* is represented by a new breed of beings. "In every case, the hauntings can be reduced to one formula: the part that turns against the whole," (227) as Manuel Aguirre asserts in "On Victorian Horror". Both the internal and external threats to or "hauntings" of the race occur from the locus of the body and are indeed a part of that whole.

In *Jekyll*, the newly categorised science of chemistry is pillaged to unleash a previously caged portion of the human psyche in combination with a correspondingly representative "pale and dwarfish" (Stevenson 11) body. This newly created separate entity superimposes itself upon the doctor's physical being. It is the creation of this new being which poses an internalised threat to humanity as Jekyll manages unnatural reproduction, while simultaneously freeing the destructive, conscienceless elements of his personality. It is the combination of this unnatural procreation and the replacement of a moralised person with an unwholesome creature, which threatens the survival of the human race.

Embodying the external threat to the nation, Moreau is in the process of fathering a new human-like race endowed with the outward appearance of normality but personifying anthropomorphism by bridging the divide between what is fundamentally human and what is not. *Moreau*, which "succeeded in becoming the first member of this class to stir the same outrage and disgust amongst its first

readers that *Frankenstein* provoked" (Baldick 153), uses the figurehead of science to generate the Beast Folk. It mutates animals into "triumphs of vivisection" (Wells 71) in approximation of their human counterparts. The blurring of species boundaries is further distorted as Moreau not only tests the elasticity of the beast/human divide but the distinction between animal varieties, crafting hybridised versions of wild creatures before attempting to amalgamate this into a humanised subversion. These new beings initially attain an increased level of intelligence when compared to their original brute state and retain a greater level of strength than their human opposites, making them physically and mentally superior to man and more than capable of defeating him in a battle for race supremacy.

Not only would this beast race usurp man's domination of the world and therefore be a danger to mankind, as with the internalised versions of the threat, but they would also act to destroy each individual as demonstrated by the deaths of Moreau and Montgomery. In the case of Moreau, as the availability of animals to vivisect becomes scarce, there is no reason that his dreams of "man-making" (Wells 73) could not take the not inconsequential leap to experimenting on the elasticity of the human race, as inspired by Victor Frankenstein a century before.

As "Victorians imagined their society as a harmonious 'family'" (Moran 2) any interference with that family unit or the future of the human race and its somatic stability, as epitomised by the genesis of Frankenstein's creature, would be a serious disruption to the status quo. Thus the threatened death of that race through the denial of natural reproduction and the circumvention of the mother would be particularly potent. As the archetypal motherless monster, Frankenstein's creature represents the boundless possibilities for unnatural generation and is undoubtedly the progenitor for the paradigmatic humanoids that follow at the fin de siècle. This paradigm even continues with the absence of female partners as a reflection of the creature's lack of a viable mate and the consequent termination of his species.

Judith Wilt notes the gothic trend for an avoidance of natural reproduction as “a profound resentment of the sources of one’s being, especially the female sources, stemming from the desire to be one’s own source” (65). Echoing this sentiment, Elaine Showalter explains:

Among the recurrent themes of these narratives are fantasies of replacing heterosexual reproduction with male self-creation. In men’s writing of the fin de siècle, celibate male creative generation was valorised, and female powers of creation and reproduction were denigrated.

(72)

Female creation may have been demoted by male writers, but it certainly could not be overlooked as the Victorians’ strict moral code would not allow for this. Moreau leads the way in generating his new race of humanimals, who are his “parthenagenic children – monsters, like all imaginary offspring of male mothers” (Showalter 80); he is also assisted by Montgomery who could be viewed as having equal parental status. Again the dissolution of the female position is highlighted, this time with her notable absence from the text except in the guise of infertile beast woman. One female creature given prominence in the text is the Puma, who escapes her shackles and kills Moreau. It is telling that it falls to the female to avenge her usurped gender role and bring an end to the experiments.

In *Jekyll’s* largely male, solely adult, world, Stevenson inverts reproduction by allowing Jekyll to double himself asexually, thus creating two entities in one (broadly speaking) body. According to Richard Davenport-Hines, “Stevenson’s story follows in the tradition begun by Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and is a [...] warning that a creature’s abnormality is the result of abnormal origins” (312). The abnormal origins in this case result from the circumvention of the mother. This allows for an infinite number of personalities to exist in one body, thereby negating the need for a physical birth process to increase the population and thus corrupting the notion of

the individual. Here fear comes not merely from the concept of polar opposites as good or evil, but that both exist in one being blurring the notion of identity.

This method of self-production means Jekyll fathers Hyde and metaphorically gives birth to him as he “lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born” (Stevenson 53). Hyde reacts to this inverse genealogy by attacking Jekyll’s parental roots with the symbolic demolition of items belonging to Jekyll’s father, who is also Hyde’s father and grandfather at the same time. In both of these texts the authors are complicit in the germination of the “man-made” individuals, as they take on the role of creator in writing the novels and as Anne Cranny-Francis notes, “One of the most striking uses of ‘the body’ is as a metaphor for the output of an artist” (34).

The paradigm of doubling fascinated Victorian novelists and pervades period texts in the form of doppelgangers and shadows endowed with independence; and also in the thematic sense with parallels drawn between character’s actions and physicalities. For Antonio Ballesteros Gonzalez, this proliferation of motifs comes ultimately from “the anthropomorphic belief in an innate duality in man” (264). The theory of such a duality goes a long way to explaining the popularity of this literary device and its success in the creation of Franken-likenesses who exemplify the secret part of man and slot into the paradigmatic doubling as Hyde is the “sole shadow” on Jekyll’s contentment (Stevenson 48) and the Beast Folk make “Every shadow become something more than a shadow” (Wells 41).

In creating a monster from the dead, Frankenstein produces his own double and enters into the archetypal struggle between what Aguirne calls “the haunter” and “the haunted” (214), a binary opposition where two forces repel and attract one another concurrently. Adding to this dialogue, John Herdman explains this relationship as a dependence of the “second self or alter ego” (14) on the original, but adds: “By ‘dependent’, we do not mean ‘subordinate’, for often the double comes to dominate, control, and usurp the functions of the subject” (14).

Such a notion of the split personality made up of the stoic public face and the stunted private one is represented throughout *Jekyll*, with the warring pair battling to the death. Jekyll as the haunted, is relentlessly pursued by his haunter, Hyde, who eventually commits suicide to avoid facing capture for his crimes. This point can be argued as to whether Hyde kills his double after gaining the “courage to release himself at the last moment,” (Stevenson 54) whether he commits suicide to evade justice or whether it is in fact Jekyll that kills both parties in a bid to “bring the life of an unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end” (Stevenson 54). Whatever the case, the death of Jekyll/Hyde brings an end to the doubled fusion figure and a notable end to the deviance from the accepted moral code.

It cannot be denied that Moreau doubles himself with the creation of the Beast People and his principal obsession throughout the novel is to get his creatures to conform to his conception of humanity, and himself by proxy. Individuals not reaching near-human perfection, and thus a representation of Moreau himself, are banished to the village. At the other side of this mutually desirable replication, the Beast Folk try to imitate the “five-man” (Wells 60) thus bringing themselves closer to Moreau’s image.

A further example of the double motif and the haunted/haunter device in *Moreau* occurs with Prendrick and the Leopard Man. During his flight into the forest, Prendrick is stalked through the shadows by the Leopard Man, as metaphorical shadow. In an “echo” (Wells 44) to Prendrick’s footsteps, the leopard becomes “the lurking shadows” which “moved to follow me” (Stevenson 46), bringing the once benign shadow to life in a gothic duplication of Prendrick’s movements as haunted. Later in the novel the hunt is reversed and Prendrick as overseer takes on the role of shadow to track down and kill the Leopard Man.

True to the oppositional nature of the haunted and haunter concept, each of the aforementioned doublings is compelled into a Frankensteinian battle for survival, which results in the hunters (Hyde and the Beast Folk) being sacrificed as

the haunted (Jekyll and Moreau) show their supremacy, supporting the “folkloric belief that the encounter with one’s double presages death” (Herdman 2). As the pairings submit to the notion of binary opposition, so the haunted cannot endure once its haunter is dead. The Beast Folk devolve into “some rather peculiar rats” (Wells 5) once the “five- men” disappear and the death of the Jekyll/Hyde body must result in the loss of both consciousnesses.

By the fin de siècle *Frankenstein* had reached mythic status amongst the reading populace due to its negation of the boundaries governing the physical form and the implications this posed to identity, race and the future of humanity. The monster’s “Fellow-devils” (Shelley 127) in *Jekyll and Moreau* continued this dialogue for the contemporary reader and brought the body horror debate up to date.

WORKS CITED:

- Aguirne, Manuel. "On Victorian Horror." *Gothic Horror: A Reader's Guide from Poe to King and Beyond*. Ed. Clive Bloom. London: Macmillan, 1998. Print.
- Baldick, Chris. *Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1992. Print.
- Cranny-Francis, Anne. *The Body in the Text*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1991. Print.
- Davenport-Hines, Richard. *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin*. London: Fourth Estate, 1998. Print.
- Gonzalez, Antonio Ballesteros. *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*. Ed. Marie Mulbery-Roberts. London: Macmillan, 1998. Print.
- Herdman, John. *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990. Print.
- Hogle, Jerrold E. "Stephenson, Robert Louis." *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*. Ed. Marie Mulbery-Roberts. London: Macmillan, 1998. Print.
- Moran, Maureen. *Victorian Literature and Culture*. London: Continuum, 2006. Print.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. London: Penguin Books, 1992. Print.
- Showalter, Elaine. "The Apocalyptic Fables of H.G. Wells." *Fin De Siècle, Fin Du Globe: Fears and Fantasies of the Late Nineteenth Century*. Ed. John Stoken. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. "Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde." *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde with The Merry Men & Other Tales and Fables*. London: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1999. Print.
- Wells, H. G. *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. London: Penguin Books, 2005. Print.
- Wilt, Judith. *Ghosts of the Gothic: Austen, Eliot & Lawrence*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1980. Print

AUTHOR INFORMATION:

Jane M. Kubiesa is a Doctorial Research Scholar in the Department of English at University of Worcester.