



RESEARCH PAPER

Gothic Representation in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: A Textual Analysis

Prof. Rajendra Prasad Bhatt

Central Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Far Western University, Nepal

Corresponding Author: srpbhatt@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the use of Gothic elements and their importance in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It examines the dual aspects of human nature by reflecting the conflict between good and evil qualities of individual characters. Stevenson presents the dark aspects of Victorian society through the representation of Gothic techniques such as intense emotions, suspense, mystery and murder. To analyse the role of gothic existence in shaping the novella's themes and narrative structure, this research examines the Gothic atmosphere, psychological conflict and symbolic representation in the text and how these elements contribute to the exploration of identity and repression. This study employs qualitative methodology with a textual analysis approach to examine the role and importance of gothic elements in the novella. Gothic literary theory and psychoanalytic perspectives are used to interpret the psychological conflicts and dark aspects of human nature. The findings reveal that gothic elements presented in the novella effectively expose the fear, anxieties and moral uncertainties of Victorian society. Findings also reveals that repression of forbidden desires leads to psychological conflict and self-destruction. By applying gothic techniques, Stevenson not only creates suspense and horror, he criticizes Victorian hypocrisy to explore the complexity of human identity. This research concludes that gothic existence is central to understanding the novella because it reveals the hidden fears and divided self of modern humanity. This research recommends further studies from feminist and psychological perspectives, as well as comparative analysis with the works of other famous Gothic writers.

KEYWORDS Gothic, Suspense, Psychological conflict, Morality, Suppression

Introduction

Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is one of the greatest Gothic novellas in English literature. He wrote it in 1886. It explores the hidden darkness of human nature through the story of Dr. Henry Jekyll, who is a respected doctor and scientist and lives in London. Dr. Jekyll has evil desires, which he expresses through the character of Mr. Edward Hyde. The novella combines mystery, fear, suspense, horror and morality, making it an important text in Gothic literature. Stevenson presents a world where human beings struggle between good and evil by constantly balancing their virtuous and sinful impulses.

The Gothic tradition emerged in the eighteenth century and became popular for its themes of mystery, fear, suspense, supernatural existence, violence, and horror. Gothic literature often examines the darker side of human existence by revealing the psychological conflicts hidden within individuals and society. During Victorian time, Gothic literature was very popular for expressing anxieties related to science and religion. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* reflects these anxieties through its plot, characters and events.

The concept of gothic existence refers to human experience of living with fear, anxiety, moral ambiguity, and the constant conflict between good and evil within the self. It explores how individuals struggle with psychological, moral and existential challenges in a

mysterious and threatening world. By representing the hidden or repressed aspects of human life, Stevenson's novella reflects gothic existence through the themes of repression, suspense, dual identity, psychological conflict, the mysterious transformation of Dr. Jekyll, the unexpected and violent actions of Mr. Hyde, and the fear of losing moral control. The novelist uses Gothic elements such as mystery, suspense, darkness and fear to portray the psychological struggle between good and evil within individuals and to explore the darker aspects of human nature.

Stevenson also reflects the moral contradictions of Victorian society through his works. Victorian society on the one hand valued respectability, discipline, and social order and on the other hand, beneath this civilized appearance existed hypocrisy, crime, repression, and secret desires. Through the characterization of Dr. Jekyll, Stevenson criticizes the duality of Victorian society. Dr. Jekyll, who attempts to separate his good and evil selves, ultimately fails because human nature cannot be divided completely.

This research paper aims to analyse gothic existence and its importance in the novella. The study focuses on how Gothic elements contribute to themes of duality, fear, repression, identity, and the clash between virtue and vice.

Literature Review

Several scholars and critics have examined *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* from different many point of views. Some have observed it from the perspective of morality, some others have from the perspective of Gothicism, psychoanalysis and Victorian social criticism. The studies have revealed that Stevenson's novella is a classic work of Gothic literature that explores the duality of human nature.

Early critics like, Eigner (1966,) primarily focus on the morality. He argues that the novella exposes the struggle between good and evil by reflecting the dual nature of human personality. He also views that it is not useful to separate good from evil. Similarly, Saposnik (1971) contends Jekyll and Hyde as representations of the dual aspects of human nature, the presence of both virtue and vice in human character. He believes that Hyde becomes increasingly powerful because Jekyll attempts to suppress rather than integrate his darker impulses.

Gothic critics like Botting (1996), highlight the importance Gothic elements such as, mystery, horror and violence in Stevenson's work. He argues that Gothic literature exposes hidden fears and anxieties through dark and desolate settings. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the gloomy atmosphere of the city London, secret and strange laboratory of Dr. Jekyll, violent crimes done by Mr. Hyde, and mysterious transformations create an atmosphere of terror and uncertainty. Similarly, Punter and Byron (2004) view that Gothic spaces often symbolize fear, uncertainty and the presence of the unknown, reflecting the inner conflict and emotional instability.

Psychoanalytic critic Linehan (2003) views the conflict between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as the struggle between repressed desires and socially acceptable activities and behaviour. He believes that the dual personality of Dr. Jekyll is a symbolic representation of the conflict between good and evil within human nature.

In the same way, many scholars have examined the novella in relation to Victorian society and its moral contradictions. Showalter (1987) argues that Victorian culture values following established social norms and expectations. It emphasizes to uphold rigid ethical behaviour, virtue and self-discipline while suppressing and disguising private immoral behaviours. Stevenson reflects this hypocrisy of Victorian society through the dual identity of Dr. Jekyll, who appears kind and gentle in public but secretly expresses forbidden desires through Mr. Hyde.

According to Hurley (1996), Stevenson's novella reveals contemporary fears concerning scientific inquiries that uncontrolled scientific advancement can challenge religious beliefs and disrupt social order. Dr. Jekyll's experiment represents a dangerous quest for forbidden knowledge. His efforts to separate the good and evil qualities of human nature through scientific experiments finally results in disaster. It demonstrates the destructive effects of the reckless scientific inquiries.

Eagleton (1985) argues that Stevenson's texts often reveal underlying social and economic tensions. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the novelist exposes social struggle through the conflict between public respectability and private desire that is to uphold the society's strict moral expectations, individuals have to suppress their inner desires. The contrast between Jekyll's upper-class respectability and Hyde's association with violence and social marginality reflects the class divisions of Victorian society.

Theoretical Framework

This research applies Gothic literary theory, psychoanalytic theory and Victorian social criticism to analyse and interpret Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. These theories examine the themes of duality, repression, fear and the unconscious mind and reveal the psychological and social tensions portrayed in the novella.

Gothic literary theory mainly focuses on the exploration of mystery, fear, isolation, violence, psychological conflict and the darker aspects of human nature. It helps to explain the hidden fears, repressed desires and the psychological conflicts within literary texts. In this novella it focuses on the conflicts between rationality and irrationality in human behaviour.

Psychoanalytic theory, particularly the ideas of Sigmund Freud, is useful in understanding the divided self in the novella. Freud divided the human mind into Id, which represents primitive or hidden desires and instincts, Ego, rational self of an individual, and Superego, which represents moral conscience of human beings. In Stevenson's narrative Mr. Hyde represents the Id because he follows inner desires, pleasure and violence without moral control. And Dr. Jekyll represents the Ego and Superego because he is conscious to his duty and responsibility and he tries to maintain it. When inner instincts are repressed, it creates psychological conflict. Psychoanalytic theory also explains unconscious fears and inner conflicts. By reflecting the transformation of Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde, Stevenson reveals that repression can become distractive if human desires are completely ignored.

The research also uses Victorian social criticism to examine the social issues reflected in the novella. This theoretical framework helps to analyse how gothic existence reflects both personal psychology and social anxiety.

Material and Methods

This research uses a qualitative research methodology with a textual analysis approach to analyse and interpret the plot, setting, themes and Gothic existence and its importance in the novella. The primary source of this research is Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The secondary sources are books on Gothic literature, research papers, journal articles, literary criticism, research reports, internet sources and other works relevant to this area. Scholarly reviews and interpretations are also used to support the analysis.

The study focuses mainly on gothic representation and its importance in the text. It also concentrates on social, psychological and moral issues to understand the theme and message of the novella.

Result and Discussion

Gothic Atmosphere and Existence

Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is famous for Gothic representation. The Gothic atmosphere and existence within the text creates a dark mysterious world that reflects inner psychological conflict. The feeling of fear, suspense and uncertainty are represented through gloomy atmosphere, dark streets, foggy nights, strange buildings, and violence. The city London also appears mysterious and threatening. It reflects the hidden darkness of social life during Victorian era. The city streets are often empty, silent, and shadowy. As narrated, "The street was small and what is called quiet, . . . " (Stevenson, 1922, p. 3). The small and quiet streets of the city symbolize suppressed social life, hidden secrets and psychological conflict within individuals. This setting creates fear and suspense throughout the narrative.

The laboratory of Dr. Jekyll represents the darker, concealed aspects of human identity. It is isolated, secretive, and connected to dangerous scientific experiments. As narrated, " IT was late in the afternoon, . . . where he was at once admitted by Poole, and carried down by the kitchen offices and across a yard which had once been a garden, to the building which was indifferently known as the laboratory or the dissecting rooms" (Stevenson, 1922, p. 34). The passage introduces the gloomy and isolated laboratory of Dr. Jekyll, which creates a Gothic atmosphere of mystery, secrecy and scientific experimentation. The laboratory symbolizes the hidden side of human nature, where suppressed desires and forbidden scientific experiments are explored. The secret scientific experiments raise fear and suspense in the society.

Duality of Human Nature

Duality of human nature is the central theme of the novella. It suggests that human beings contain both good and evil qualities. Stevenson has demonstrated this duality through the character of Dr. Jekyll in the novella. He explains that humanity is not truly one but divided into multiple selves.

Dr. Jekyll makes experiments and attempts to distinguish his darker instincts from his better qualities through scientific inquiries. As he admits,

I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man ; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. (Stevenson, 1922, p. 81)

Like other humans Dr. Jekyll has both sorts of qualities; good and evil. He is a kind and gentle fellow. London people respect him. On contrary of it he has evil desires too. He expresses his evil desires through the character of Mr. Hyde. His respectable actions and his sinful desires are genuine part of his personality.

The duality between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde also reflects the conflict between public identity and private desire. Jekyll appears respectable and moral in public, but secretly desires freedom from social restrictions. He fulfils his hidden desires by transforming himself into Hyde. This divided identity reflects Gothic existence in the novella.

Psychological Conflict and Repression

Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* represents psychological conflict as one of the major issues. The novella mainly focuses on Dr. Jekyll struggles between moral responsibility and forbidden desire. Strict social rules force individuals to suppress instincts and maintain social respectability. To maintain his position in the society, Dr. Jekyll represses his darker desires which later emerge violently through the character of Hyde. As Dr. Jekyll narrates,

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 inopportunitiy in the moment of exhibition, utterly blot out that immaterial tabernacle which I looked to it to change. (Stevenson, 1922, p. 82)

In the beginning Dr. Jekyll hesitates to test his theory because he knows that it is very dangerous. He fears that even the small mistake in the drug's preparation and use can destroy his identity, even his life. But gradually he becomes habitual to it and turns into Hyde, who symbolizes repressed instincts and unconscious desires. Hyde shows violent behaviour. His actions reveal the destructive consequences of repression.

If this thing is observed from psychoanalytic point of view, Hyde activities and behaviour represents the inner instincts of Jekyll's mind. And Jekyll's transformation indicates that hidden desires can dominate human behaviour. if they are ignored or suppressed. The novella suggests that repression creates psychological suffering.

Fear of Science and Degeneration

Victorian era is popular as the age of rapid scientific progress. During this period, on the one hand scientific discoveries made people's lives easier and on the other hand these discoveries created chaos and disorder in the society. People began to worry that science might challenge morality, religion, social order and human identity.

Through his scientific inquiry, Jekyll separates good and evil qualities which are inherent in humans. Jekyll's experiment does not contribute to humanity. It just creates confusion in the society. Finally, it becomes the cause of his own destruction. The product of Jekyll's experiment, Mr. Hyde is physically smaller and ugly. He looks violent. His appearance reflects the fear of Victorian society and degradation of human values. Hyde symbolizes the dark aspects of Victorian social life. The novelist believes that science without morality leads to dangerous situation that is the reason he warns against uncontrolled scientific ambition.

Victorian Hypocrisy and Social Criticism

The novella criticizes the hypocrisy of Victorian society, which values public morality, family values, social responsibility and religious faith. Morality was the top priority for respectable social life, but individuals secretly engaged in immoral behaviour. Dr. Jekyll is one of the examples of this contradiction because he maintains a respectable public image while hiding his darker desires. He expresses his evil desires by disguising himself into Hyde. Though the separation between public and private identity cannot survive longer. Stevenson suggests that denying human complexity creates psychological and social problems. Victorian society attempts to hide evil rather than confront it honestly.

Mystery and Suspense

Mystery, which is one of the important Gothic elements, play an important role in the development of the plot of novella. Stevenson presents mysterious events and characters, which create suspense and fear. Dr. Jekyll is one of the mysterious characters. Though he is very gentle and kind but his own experiment creates problems for him. Sometimes he suddenly turns into Mr. Hyde due to the effect of the drug. As Utterson says,

That is just what I was about to venture to propose, "returned the doctor, with a smile." But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as 'froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse, for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word. (Stevenson, 1922, p. 48-49)

Dr. Jekyll suddenly changes from a calm and friendly mood to one of extreme fear and despair which reveals his deep psychological suffering and loss of control over his secret. This terrifying expression shocks Utterson and Enfield.

In the beginning it becomes difficult to understand the connection between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The novella gradually unfolds the secrets through letters and investigations and find unexpected outcomes. This structure of the novella also creates suspense and emotional tension. It reflects the uncertainty of human identity and existence. The hidden truth about Jekyll symbolizes hidden truths within human nature itself.

Violence and Horror

Violence and horror are two important tools of Gothic literature. Violence plays an important role in creating horror. Stevenson presents Hyde a violent character in the novella. He is small and ugly. His appearance is also very terrifying. He murders Sir Danvers Carew brutally, which shocks society and reveals his uncontrollable evil. As narrated,

Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognise in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master, and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill contained impatience. And then all of a sudden, he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. (Stevenson, 1922, p. 28)

The maid recognizes Mr. Hyde standing with a cane and showing signs of growing impatience and anger. Suddenly Hyde loses control and attacks violently upon Sir Danvers Carew like a madman. The violent scenes demonstrate the destructive power of repressed instincts. Hyde's cruelty contrasts sharply with civilized Victorian behaviour. Stevenson demonstrates both physical and psychological horror through violent scenes in the novella.

Isolation and Alienation

When Dr. Jekyll uses more and more drug to fulfil his evil desires, he loses power to control his inner instincts. Hyde gains more power and becomes uncontrollable. Sometimes when Jekyll faces difficulties to fulfil his social responsibilities, he isolates himself from his friends and society because he fears exposure and destruction. As narrated, "The fire burned in the grate; a lamp was set lighted on the chimney-shelf, for even in the houses the fog began to lie thickly; and there, close up to the warmth, sat Dr. Jekyll, looking deadly sick. He did not rise to meet his visitor" (Stevenson, 1922, p. 35). Isolation is a common Gothic theme in the novella. Characters like Jekyll often suffer alone with hidden secrets and

psychological torment, when they feel any moral or psychological pressure. Jekyll's loneliness reflects the emotional consequences of repression and guilt. The same sort of feeling Hyde also encounters when he commits any crime, though he exists outside normal human relationship and morality.

Symbolism in the Novella

Stevenson uses many symbols to express gothic existence.

The Door

Stevenson uses door symbolically in the novella. The mysterious door connected to Hyde, symbolizes secrecy and hidden identity. In the novella, it represents the entryway to the darker side of human consciousness. As narrated,

It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. (Stevenson, 1922, p. 3)

It is a two-story building with no windows. There is one single door, which is neglected and dirty. Its dirty walls and worn appearance shows years of poverty, decay and lack of care. This description creates a gloomy and mysterious Gothic atmosphere in the novella.

Fog

Fog symbolizes uncertainty, confusion, and moral ambiguity. The foggy streets of London reflect the unclear boundaries between good and evil. As narrated,

The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles; and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. But the room was gay with firelight. (Stevenson, 1922, p. 38)

The city is covered with fog that makes it appear dark, mysterious and lifeless. Due to dense fog the distant sounds of vehicles seem like a powerful wind. In contrast, the room is warm and cheerful with firelight. It creates a sense of comfort and safety against the gloomy atmosphere outside. Here, the fog represents secrecy, uncertainty and the hidden duality of human nature that exists in the novella.

The Potion

The product of Dr. Jekyll's scientific experiment, the potion, is also used as a symbol in this novella. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the potion symbolizes the dangerous power of science to unlock the hidden and darker side of human nature. It also represents the harmful consequences of crossing moral boundaries. Dr. Jekyll, who is very gentle and kind in public, is very ambitious. He has dark desires in his mind. He fulfils his inner instincts by drinking potion. Through his experiments he attempts to change human nature and ultimately this thing leads him to dangerous consequences.

Hyde's Appearance

Hyde's ugly appearance is also symbolic in the novella. He is physically short and deformed. He is intensely violent and evil in nature. As Enfield describes, "He was perfectly

cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running" (Stevenson, 1922, p. 5). Hyde's terrifying and evil appearance frightens the observers and it creates a strong physical reaction of fear. Enfield further says, "I never saw a circle of such hateful faces; and there was the man in the middle, with a kind of black, sneering coolness see that' —frightened too, I could —but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan" (Stevenson, 1922, p. 6). Hyde's ugly appearance and unacceptable activities represent devil like cruelty and moral corruption. It symbolizes evil, immoral and the corrupt side of human nature.

Importance of Gothic Existence

Gothic existence plays a vital role in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* because it creates a dark mysterious atmosphere that reflects inner psychological conflict and exposes the dual nature of human beings. It also highlights the hidden fears, desires and conflict between good and evil within human beings and society. Stevenson's reflection of Jekyll's inner conflict and his transformation into Hyde symbolizes the struggle between good and evil within an individual and the harmful consequences of separation and suppression. With the use of Gothic features, the novelist reveals the complexity of human nature and illustrates the dual nature of human beings. He suggests that fear, darkness, and inner conflict are part of human life and they move hand in hand. The novella is also relevant for present context because in the present time individuals struggle for recognition and identity and they bear inner conflict. They suppress a lot of hidden desires to maintain their respectability in the society. Gothic elements also help readers understand social hypocrisy and moral anxiety. Stevenson's use of Gothic elements makes the text dark, mysterious and psychologically intense by highlighting the themes of fear, duality and moral conflict.

Conclusion

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is one of the most significant works of Gothic literature. It explores the dual aspects of human nature, the conflict between morality and hidden desire and the dangers of repressed identity and reckless scientific inquiries. Through Gothic settings, mystery, violence, psychological battle, and dual identity, Stevenson presents the conflict between good and evil within humanity.

The Gothic existence in the novella reflects the dark and desolate picture of the contemporary society. It suggests that human beings have dual nature, on the one hand they pretend to be ethical and try to maintain their respectability and on the other hand they have hidden unethical desires and ambitions. They are trapped between good and evil forces within themselves and struggle to maintain balance between them. Hidden unethical desires create fear, repression, moral conflict, and psychological fragmentation.

Stevenson uses Gothic elements not only to entertain readers but also to criticize Victorian hypocrisy and scientific arrogance. Jekyll's transformation into Hyde demonstrates the dangers of denying human complexity and repressing inner desires.

The novella remains important because it shows the conflict between the civilized self and hidden primitive self by revealing the fear, isolation, moral uncertainty and dual nature of human existence. In this way, this research concludes that gothic existence is central to understanding the novella's themes and message. The Gothic mode allows Stevenson to explore fear, psychological conflict and duality of human nature.

Recommendations

There are multiple possibilities for future researchers. One possibility is that they can analyse Stevenson's works from feminist point of view to develop broader understanding. Comparative studies can also be conducted to examine Gothic themes in

Stevenson's works alongside the works of other Gothic writers such as, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, Ann Radcliffe and Edgar Allan Poe. Further research can also be done on psychological studies that explore the relation between repression and psychological crisis. Academicians can also conduct talks on morality, mental health and human psychology because it can be fruitful for creating new dimensions of human thinking and behaving.

Declarations

I hereby declare that this research paper is my own work and has been prepared solely for the purpose of academic publication. During the preparation of this paper I took ideas from other scholars, who have been appropriately acknowledged and cited in this paper. I further declare that this manuscript has not been published previously and is not currently under consideration for publication anywhere.

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