

## THE ABJECTION PROCESS IN MR. HYDE AND HULK

It is not from today that Literature has embodied a topic from other sciences. Psychoanalysis, for instance, has been used in Literature for a long time, especially in what concerns the question of Doubleness. The Double has placed itself in Literature in a comfortable way and has helped authors to create great works of duplicity, such as: *The picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) by **Oscar Wilde**, *The turn of the screw* (1897) by **Henry James**, *The Yellow wallpaper* (1892) by **Charlotte Perkins Gelman**, *The Strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) by **Robert L. Stevenson**, and so on. This idea of fragmentation of the self provoked by the action of the double is the subject of much literature from the late eighteenth century. According to Rosemary Jackson: “Long before Freud, monistic definitions of self were being supplanted by hypotheses of dipsychism (dual selves) and polypsychism (multiple selves) (2000, p. 86)”.

Besides Literature, another form of art that has also embodied Psychology is the Comic Books. In fact, it is important to remember that Comic Books take inspiration of most of their characters from Literature, as it may be seen in this passage extracted from an interview given by Stan Lee about the creation of the character Hulk:

That’s what first gave me the idea of creating a heroic monster, a creature who was basically good at heart but who would be continually hunted and hounded by society. The Incredible Hulk was my own personal homage to Frankenstein. But another classic story influenced me, as well. Feeling that it might be difficult to give the Hulk’s tales enough complexity if they consisted of nothing more than a monstrous being terrorizing the countryside for page after page, I thought about Robert Louis Stevenson’s unforgettable tale Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (DEFALCO, 2003, p.7).

It is neither the aim of this article to discuss the existence of a canon in Comic Books, nor elevate it to the same level of Literature. The purpose of this article is to analyse the idea of the doubleness under the viewpoint of Psychology in two characters: Mr. Hyde, from *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and *Hulk* (1962), a famous comic book character, once we have already seen that both kinds of art may not be in the same level but both areas can create an interaction between their characters.

I do not intend to analyse in this article Frankenstein’s monster but study and compare the process of doubleness in Mr. Hyde and Hulk showing that although the

idea of the double in one character may indicate his evil side, the double part of another character may be used in a positive way to set someone free from oppression. From this moment on, let's put both characters side by side and observe them from the inside (psychological profile) to the outside (up to the moment of the birth of their new bodies), and try to verify the similarities they have, and if by means of these similarities we can really say that comic books are inspired in Literature as Stan Lee previously assumed. And I also intend to portray a profile of the characters and analyse the idea of the double in each of them and what leads them to fit so well in the Gothic theme.

The table below, indicates the most common characteristics of both characters in a way to help us to see their similarities, once not all the readers are well familiarized with Mr. Hyde and Hulk.

<b>DR. BRUCE BANNER</b>	<b>DR. JEKYLL</b>
Father's occupation: Scientist	Father's occupation: Physician
Occupation: Doctor; Scientist	Occupation: Physician
Science: he began to research gamma radiation and came to believe that it could be used to cure many diseases.	Science: he began to research a potion to separate the good and the evil in man so that he would find out the perfect man.
Alter ego: Hulk	Alter ego: Mr. Hyde

In a quick look at the table above we may observe at least four pertinent similarities in both works. It is also, visually speaking, as a mirror<sup>1</sup> reflecting each other work, and it is not a surprise that the double motif constantly appears in gothic fiction in different forms, and the mirror is one of them. To understand how the fragmentation of the characters happen it is helpful to use the image of the mirror and to consider its metaphorical use in psychoanalytic theories of the social formation of the 'self':

By presenting images of the self in another space (both familiar and unfamiliar), the mirror provides versions of self transformed into another, become something or someone else. It employs distance and difference to suggest the instability of the 'real' on this side of the looking-glass and it offers unpredictable (apparently impossible) metamorphoses of self into other (JACKSON, 2000, pages 87, 88).

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<sup>1</sup> Mirror according to Chevalier

From the narratives previously mentioned the best known example is *The picture of Dorian Gray* in which a portrait assumes the double part of the character Dorian Gray, acting as a mirror which reflects his dark side.

We can also observe that both characters followed their fathers' occupation and both became great scientists. Dr. Bruce Banner possessed such a brilliant mind that it could not be measured by any known intelligence test, as described in his profile on the book *Hulk - The incredible guide* (2003) by **Tom Defalco**. Dr. Jekyll was also a very respectable and famous physician of his time, he could be considered the best example of a Victorian gentleman. So, both characters were fitted easily in the prescriptive norms.

There is no mentioning about Jekyll's father in the novella, except that we know that Jekyll's high quality of life followed him since he was born, as it is described in the first lines of the chapter "Henry Jekyll's full statement of the case":

I was born in the year 18 – to a large fortune, endowed besides with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of a noble and distinguished future (STEVENSON, 1994, p. 69).

However, according to **Fred Botting** in his article "Aftergothic: consumption, machines, and black holes" (2002), the paternal metaphor is formal and not substantial in its operations: different figures can assume the function of the father such as: God, father, teacher, priest, etc. During the Victorian *fin de siècle*, it was very common for a doctor who was starting his career to have someone more experienced than him to become his tutor in his new professional life. Jekyll was Dr. Lanyon's *protégé*, and in the novella it seems that Dr. Lanyon assumes the role of Jekyll's father, specially because he is the one to whom Mr. Utterson poses the statement "(...) If any knows, it will be Lanyon (...)" (ibid, 1994, p. 18) to decide about who would be the best person in London that knew Jekyll so well that could tell what was wrong in Jekyll's life. Unfortunately, Lanyon gave up his son, Jekyll, due to the difference they had in some points in Science, as we may observe in the following excerpt:

(...) But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though, of course, I continue to take an interest in him for old sake's sake as they say, I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash, 'added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple,' would have estranged Damon and Pythias<sup>2</sup> (STEVENSON, 1994, p.19).

Bruce Banner's father, Brian Banner, was an atomic physicist who worked for the U.S government. The more Brian learned about radiation, the more he feared it. Once he thought he was exposed to great amounts of radiation, he believed it had changed his genetic structure. He started drinking to deal with his high stress level and began to suspect that he had infected his son, Bruce Banner, who was still an embryo in his wife's womb. According to **DeFalco** in *Hulk – The incredible guide* (2003):

Brian's paranoia increased when Bruce began to show signs of a gifted intellect. Rebecca<sup>3</sup> tried to defend her son, but Brian took his frustrations out on her and became increasingly more abusive. When she decided to leave him, Brian accidentally killed her in a fit of anger<sup>4</sup> (p. 8).

What we see in both characters' lives is someone who plays the role of a father giving up on them, letting them suffer with the consequences of their future actions. What I observe in Hulk's narrative is the pertinent presence of the oppressor father resembling Gothic Literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as in *The castle of Otranto* (1764), for example. Dr. Lanyon plays exactly the figure of the oppressor father who polices the boundaries of Science, of Jekyll's behavior and Jekyll's identity as a doctor, not letting him transgress this boundary.

Jekyll became a respectable doctor or as he preferred to place himself in his final letter of *The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* “[...] I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes [...]” (STEVENSON, 1994 p.79). In other words, Dr. Jekyll had a respectable and lucrative occupation and he lived in the most elegant place in London, the West End.

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<sup>2</sup> The mentioned youngsters were the friendship symbol of the Greek Classicism.

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca was Bruce Banner's mother.

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca was killed in front of Bruce Banner when he was still a very young boy.

But as a doctor, Jekyll could not live all the pleasure that life could offer and still poses himself as a noble man, specially because in the last chapter of the novella he explained that:

[...] the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as 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 than commonly grave countenance before the public (STEVENSON, 1994, p. 69).

From this moment on, Jekyll unconsciously knew that he needed to create another part of him to satisfy all these repressed desires he had. Someone who would not look like him, someone who could face the world as he is, experiencing all his repressed dark desires.

After seeing his mother being killed by his father, Bruce Banner tried to cover for his father during the resulting murder investigation, but Brian Banner was eventually convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to a mental institution. Bruce was a shy and quiet child who rarely expressed any kind of emotion. The family that took care of him after his father was arrested tried to get him to come out of his shell and enrolled him in a private school for gifted science students.

Brian Banner caused in Bruce's life a disorder as described by Fred Botting in "Aftergothic: consumption, machines, and black holes" (2002):

Mothers are long dead, fathers rarely stay the course. Parentless children are left to roam the wild and gloomy landscapes without protection or property and often without the secure sense of themselves that comes with a proper name or position (p. 284).

As in Literature, we have in the comic book the gothic idea of the Sins of the Father. This gothic theme is well represented in both works by means of the sins committed by the fathers, those sins are repassed to the sons through the repetition of events. For Bruce, Science was the only thing that attracted him. He devoted all his time and energy to his studies. He decided to become a doctor, but always remained fascinated with the study of radiation, the one thing that scared his father. Although he did not know about his father's occupation and studies, Bruce Banner became a figure very close to the one his father was. That is how the Law of the Father happens, the sons

must pay for the fathers' sins. In fact, I believe that the relationship that Bruce Banner and his father had is probably the most important detail in Bruce's life, because his father works as the necessary stimulus to make all those hidden memories emerge from Bruce's mind.

From his childhood up to his adult life, Bruce used to have some nightmares<sup>5</sup> with a monster destroying everything in its path:

After being treated by Doctor Samson, Bruce realized that this was how he had always seen his father. It is also the way he sees himself. In many ways, his relationship with the Hulk mirrors the one he had with his father. Bruce is trapped in a never-ending nightmare. He must contain the ranging beast within or it will destroy everything he loves (DEFALCO, 2003, p. 9).

What we may observe here is a comic book absorbing literary elements to its world, specially the abjection in the characters. In both Bruce and Jekyll, what came out was the consequence of being repressed, and it happened in the figure of monsters, of abjection. Mr. Hyde needed to be born so that Dr. Jekyll could satisfy all his secret desires and construct his own identity as a doctor, once as he said, he felt as if he was wearing a mask and never showed his own personality. Through Hulk, Dr. Banner is able to be the monster - as he sees himself - and smash<sup>6</sup> all the enemies he has, but not as the ordinary doctor, but as the green huge monster. So, as said by **David Punter** and **Glennis Byron** in *The Gothic* (2004) “ [...] like in any Gothic hero, the protagonists are doomed by forces beyond their control, and even their self-awareness and scepticism cannot help them to escape from the horror of their position” (p. 75). I would like to stress again that although both characters had their other sides represented as monsters, there is a clear division between Hulk and Hyde. It is a tradition to literary criticism to read this fragmentation of the characters as a symbolism of a divided consciousness, and this symbol of otherness is generally represented in gothic fictions as the evil. But this is not the case of Hulk who is a monster with a good heart, Hulk is not someone who goes on saving the world wearing a superhero uniform. Actually, he is the anti-hero, that's

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<sup>5</sup> Freud says that the dreams have a meaning, and they are also the realization of the desires (2000, p. 128 – 150).

<sup>6</sup> *Smash* is the word Hulk uses in his speech when he wants to say that he will fight someone, destroy someone or kill someone.

why his narratives are very much close to *Frankenstein* and *The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. While Mr. Hyde is extremely perverse, as shown during the narrative with his constantly increasing of a horrid laughter, theft, sexuality, criminality, in other words, he breaks every social taboo.

In both narratives we observe that the chaos and disruption was not located outside, for sure external events provoked the split in the characters' mind, but the double created by Jekyll and Bruce was produced within their minds whence we also see the birth of a fight inside these characters' minds involving them in a constant duality which once again calls the idea of a mirror which reflects the positive and the negative side of human being, the inverted image of body and spirit, good and evil, light and dark, heaven and hell, sacred and profane, which are nothing more than mere moral beliefs imposed by society to men.

During the time Robert L. Stevenson wrote the novella discussed in this paper, science was growing, and people started looking at it in another way, as if for Science there would be no obstacles. In 1859, Charles Darwin related about his theory of Evolution, in which, according to him, man descended from the apes. What Robert Louis Stevenson did with Jekyll was to go back in the theory of the Evolution to become Mr. Hyde, that used to move like an ape. In other words, the farther man goes from the established patterns, the more he becomes the 'other'.

Thus, the *Doppelgänger* is used in both works to materialize the fears of Jekyll and Bruce, fears they have of what they are and what they do not want to be in their lives. The *Doppelgänger* has come to refer to any double or look-alike of a person, most commonly in reference to a so-called evil twin or to bilocation. In Literature the idea that once someone has viewed his own *doppelgänger* he is doomed to be haunted by images of his ghostly counter part is very strong.

Then, what we observe here is the human being divided in two parts, between the self and the alter ego, or an "I" and an "alter ego", the latter usually a projection of the characters' repressed desires that did not fit the ruled pattern and consequently were accepted by the society. In both narratives the double belongs to the dark and sinister side of Jekyll and Bruce, and the double in both works conquer a huge autonomy because both Jekyll and Hyde are afraid of the existence of these new personalities inside of them, as seen in this excerpt about Hulk:

The gray version was the first incarnation of the Hulk. He seemed to exhibit a lot of traits that embarrassed Banner, which might be one of the reasons why he could only come out at night<sup>7</sup>. He was crafty, sarcastic, selfish and manipulative. In so many ways, he seemed like the typical teenager that Banner had never allowed himself to become (DEFALCO, 2003, p.15).

Otto Rank analysed the idea of the Double in Literature together with the topic of psychoanalysis, what is fundamental to make a link to our modern Psychology and to the study of the double in the presented works in a concrete way.

Psychology can explain these divisions in Jekyll and Bruce referring their doubleness as production of their mental disorders. The distinctive symptom of this disturbance is an abruptly and temporary change of someone's function that is normally connected to the consciousness, identity and movements, so that one or two of these functions do not occur in harmony with the others. According to Suely Caldas Schubert, who quotes Dr. Jayme Cerviño's definition in her book *Transtornos mentais*:

Entendemos por dissociação ou automatismo o fato de uma área mais ou menos extensa do cérebro agir desvinculada da consciência "normal". Nos casos mais elementares – diremos automatismo parcial ou segmentar – apenas certos grupos de neurônios (células nervosas) adquirem independência e pode não haver alteração ostensiva do estado de consciência (2001, p. 51).

I believe that the author made use of the process of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID)<sup>8</sup> from Psychology, in order to make the double in Hulk come out, specially because someone who experiences this process is someone who is tied to several different disorders usually involving early childhood trauma and anxiety, which emerges as such a profound collapse in ego integrity that the personality is considered to literally break apart. For this reason, dissociation is often referred to as splitting or altering, exactly what Bruce Banner had during his childhood and got higher when he suffered his first transformation as shown by Tom DeFalco:

The Hulk was born in the heart of a nuclear explosion. Like any other newborn, he also grown and evolved over the years. It is currently

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<sup>7</sup> I notice that the same procedure can be observed in the vampire figures.

<sup>8</sup> Explain this process as an umbrella term



believed that Bruce Banner suffers from a physiological disease called MPD or multiple personality disorder. When Bruce Banner first became the Hulk, the creature had gray skin and could only emerge from sunset to sunrise. As Banner continued to change, the Hulk's skin took on a greenish hue and was completely green within a matter of weeks (2003, p. 14).

In Jekyll's case however, I believe that Stevenson used a lot the ideas that were emerging at his time, specially the idea about Multiple Personalities, as seen in the following:

Man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens (STEVENSON, 1994, p. 70).

Jekyll and Bruce show a remarkable array of symptoms that can resemble other psychiatric disorders, such as anxiety disorders, personality disorders, schizophrenic and mood psychoses. Symptoms of this particular disorder - DID - can include some feelings such as: Depression; anxiety; physical symptoms; fluctuating levels of function, from highly effective to disabled; time distortions, time lapse, and amnesia; sleeping disorders; psychoactive substance abuse; sexual dysfunction.

Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) is an identity dissociative disturbance. The person who has this multiple personality disorder may have two or more different and separated personalities, in a way that each personality determines its behaviour, actions and attitudes during the period in which this personality is in the control of the person's mind. The transition from one personality to another is sudden and frequently dramatic. The individual suffers from amnesia during each state of personality to the existence of the others and to the actions that happened while one of these personalities was dominant. Suely Caldas Schubert describes an interesting fact about MPD that is very close to what happens to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde when referring to the state of amnesia:

Algumas vezes, entretanto, um estado de personalidade não é atingido por esta amnésia e retém completa consciência da existência, qualidades e atividades das demais personalidades. Em alguns casos

as personalidades têm consciência de algumas ou de todas as demais podendo encará-las como amigas ou adversárias (...). As diferentes personalidades podem ter características fisiológicas diferentes, como por exemplo, diferentes receitas para óculos. Podem ter perturbações distintas, das quais as mais comuns são transtornos do humor, de personalidade e outros transtornos dissociativos. Também pode ocorrer que tenham Q.Is. diferentes (2001, p. 57-58).

From the observation of the symptoms such as: Depression; anxiety; physical symptoms; fluctuating levels of function, from highly effective to disabled; time distortions, time lapse, and amnesia; sleeping disorders; psychoactive substance abuse; sexual dysfunction, all of them also an array of symptoms of DID that Jekyll experienced if compared to the first list we had about the symptoms Banner had, we may conclude that the psychological profiles of these two characters are almost the same and assume that Hulk's character was really inspired in the novella *The Strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

The elements I found enabled me to show the huge possibility of an interaction between the comic book and the novella, as well as give validity to the declaration that Stan Lee gave about Hulk's creation. Besides that, the two previous lists of symptoms show us that both Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Bruce had some symptoms from Dissociative Identity Disorder and Multiple Personality Disorder what I consider strategies used by the authors to show the figure of "the other", that is, the double as a reflection of the dark side of the "I" of the characters.

Using the process of doubleness and psychological theories, the authors – Stevenson and Stan Lee – created two new identities for Jekyll and Bruce that now require bodies in order to have their own existence. I believe that what we have from this moment is the birth of two new bodies, the birth through the abjection process. And here I agree with the ideas developed by Kristeva in her book *Powers of horror* (1982), that we need to observe the abjection of these two characters not only as opposed positions or two halves of a logical model, but also as supposedly discrete and complete identities in and of themselves, so that we are able to recognize that key elements such as: being ejected; dark revolts of being; fascinate desires not satisfied and characters that feel that they cannot live in this society within a certain established pattern. It is their moment of vomiting, spasms in the stomach, tears rolling down, sight-clouding dizziness, their moment of self recognition and self invalidation, of elevation

and frustration, of ecstasy and agony. According to the events presented in both characters' lives, what caused the abjection was not lack of cleanliness or health, in reality I believe that Jekyll and Banner gave birth to Mr. Hyde and Hulk because their actions (desires) were disturbing their identities, the moral system and the prescriptive order, they were not respecting the borders.

According to Kristeva (1982, p.5) "There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning language, or desire is founded". This explains clearly why both characters needed to suffer the abjection. Their wishes were so strong that both would live in isolation or exclusion if they did what they wanted to their lives. The only way out for them was Mr. Hyde and Hulk be born, two passions (in the sense of power) that would use their bodies to fulfil their desires instead of castrating them, as long as they keep feeding this passion.

Although both Hyde and Hulk are considered the double part of Jekyll and Bruce, respectively, the monsters may not be the real deep representation of the other characters, Jekyll and Bruce, but they are certainly the real representation of the society's desired answer against all the repression suffered in both periods.

Mr. Hyde against the moral example that Victorian society used to expect from people: no gambling, no drinking, no smoking, no prostitution, or a person cannot be part of this honorable society. And Hulk against all this modern time where atomic elements may control and destroy the whole mankind; as a response to the violence we face on the streets; to the nuclear menace and the exaggerated Science which is guiding men's life, but at the same time is leading men to prepare their own deaths.

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