Frankenstein, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* are excellent examples of Gothic fiction. These stories deal with the forces of good against evil. The good forces are the family, social conscience, religious belief and moral judgement, all constituents of a civilised society. The evil side is the corruption of conscience, the misuse of power, violation of nature and rampant ego. The themes of each work explore the dual nature of mankind. Behind the benevolent face of civilisation there still lurks the beast within every man and it is this fear that the protagonists exploit to justify their blasphemous experiments. The brooding gothic background is powerful vehicle for writers to express their unease regarding the imbalance between nature, science, man and spirituality.

Frankenstein is the story of a brilliant chemist who discovers the elixir of life and sets himself up as a 'creator'. The second story is *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the equally famous tale of a scientist who assaults the social order by unleashing his dark side. Finally *The Island of Dr Moreau*, is where we meet the most modern of the three scientists, but we are left without a solid description of what we must fear. *The Island of Dr Moreau*, as with the other two novels, deals with the failures of science. As Mason Harris points out:

> *The Island of Dr Moreau*, where science fails, belongs entirely to the Gothic genre…Early reviewers condemned the story for gruesomeness and blasphemy and readers since have found it particularly disturbing. (Harris 7)

He also points out that:

> Gothic horror endows the story with a deep ambivalence towards science and contributes much to the mood and anxious uncertainty in which it ends. (Harris 7)

The very fact that practically everyone knows of Dr Frankenstein's experiments is ample proof of the fear that science can invoke. What draws us to this tale is the very nature of what Frankenstein's experiments. Sometimes in the gore of Hollywood's version of the tale, it is possible to forget the magnitude of his accomplishment. He does not reanimate a corpse, he fashions a new being and through his own knowledge imbues it with life. Only one other being has every accomplished that feat; namely God. That Shelley's anti-hero is usurping the role of the Divine is evident from the outset. Shelley's tale is one of a terrible act against God and humanity.

Frankenstein sought to create something beautiful and larger than life but ultimately created something corrupt and pathetic. Unlike God who oversees his creation in what is perceived to be a paternal and all-powerful way, Frankenstein is unable to maintain any paternal responsibilities or care for his monster. The monster was of a cerebral conception, of a monstrous creation without proper nurturing. In his laboratory of dark horrors Frankenstein fashions an entirely male birth denying the necessity of the female in creation. The monstrous conception and birthing room is described in Frankenstein's journal:

> I pursued nature to her hiding places. Who shall the conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay?…..I had returned to my old habits, I collected bones from the charnel houses-houses; and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame…..the dissecting room and the slaughterhouse furnished many of my materials. (Shelley 54-55)

As God breathed life into Adam, so Victor Frankenstein used his perverted science in re-animating the monstrous corpse into an abomination of God's creation. When Frankenstein has to confront the truth of his actions he is horrified and 'the beauty of the dream vanished and breathless horror of disgust filled my heart'. Such is his fear and horror, Frankenstein is compelled to leave the monster and walk out his terrors through the streets. As he hurries on a verse from Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* fills his mind:

> 'Like one who, on a lonely road,
> doth walk in fear and dread….
> Because he knows a frightful fiend,
> Doth close behind him tread'. (Shelley 59)

This verse highlights Frankenstein's isolation from his monster, his fellow man and his original intentions. It is at this time that Frankenstein is aware that his experiment was a failure and indeed far worse.

The very subtitle of the book, *A Modern Prometheus*, must in part refer to the Titan who fashioned men from clay, and thus establishes Frankenstein as both creator and god. Repeatedly Shelley hammers home the direct analogy between God and Frankenstein. The Monster likens himself to Adam and Satan, and no opportunity is lost to refer to Frankenstein as 'creator' and 'father.' Furthermore, while there is a direct theft of God's duties there also is what amounts to an attack on God himself as the creator and embodiment of nature.

When Frankenstein is hiking in his native mountains we are told that:

> The immense mountains and precipices that overhung me on every side. . . spoke of a power mighty as Omnipotence – and [Frankenstein] ceased to fear, or to bend before any being less almighty than that which had created and ruled the elements. (Shelley 94)

If God is the master of nature then Frankenstein seems to aspire to no less a title when he states:

> It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things, or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my enquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world. (Shelley 37)

At times of great tension, Shelley changes the mood to a more descriptive and reflective setting. For example, after the death of his mother, Frankenstein goes hiking in the mountains to reflect upon the power and omnipotence of nature, which acted as a salve to his tortured soul. Similarly, Frankenstein's creation the monster seeks relief from his misery. After being abandoned by Frankenstein he is tormented by hunger, cold and solitude and he seeks out somewhere warm and safe. The monster has not been created without intelligence or feelings but has been left to learn without direction or education. His sorrow is the realisation that he is hideous to his fellow man and he will always be isolated, a permanent outcast from society. If Frankenstein feels at the end of the story to have put himself outside of accepted society by reason of his actions, then the monster pathetically has no choice in his exclusion and longs for the serenity of death.

Frankenstein's desire to master the science of creation is far stronger when measured against his subtler desire for mastery of his beloved, Elizabeth, who is presented as a proxy for nature from her first appearance. Is it at all surprising that the Frankenstein's Monster destroys Elizabeth, just as Frankenstein is trying to usurp God? The fear that *Frankenstein* evokes is thus not just the fear of a murderous monster; rather, it is the fear of science run amok. It is possible that Shelley was merely trying to write a scary ghost story with the trappings of science that she picked up from her travelling companions.

While there is certainly a case to be made for the fact that the story can be read as a proxy for any creation that spin out of control, it remains particularly poignant when thought of in relation to science.

Firstly because it implies that the very act of science can undermine belief systems. If man can create life then does one truly need a God? And secondly, it implies that the material products of science, whether intended for good or ill, may have disastrous effects on their creators as well as innocent bystanders. It does not seem at all surprising that a world in the political, economic and social unrest of the early 19th century would call forth something like *Frankenstein*.

Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* maintains some of the elements we have seen in *Frankenstein* but adds a new twist both to the role and character of the scientist and to the dangers of science. The novel is enduring because of the protagonist's actions and their effects on his own psyche and his social environment.

However, it may be worthwhile to take a moment to re-examine the character of Jekyll. Most perceive Jekyll as the "good" side of the coin with Hyde as the "bad." While Hyde is definitely Jekyll's dark side, it is a mistake to see Jekyll as the good. Jekyll implies that he was prone to living a life somewhat more immoral than that of a decent English gentleman, but that he had done his best to suppress these urges under a respectable veneer. Jekyll created Hyde as a mechanism to let his socially inappropriate impulses free. Of course, he soon found that his own will was not strong enough to control the beast he had created and when science eventually failed him as well, his very self was destroyed.

In some ways Jekyll's crime does not seem to be as ungodly as that of Frankenstein's. His crimes were against the social structure of man, rather than an immediate affront to God. He reshaped a being out of his own person who was, 'alone, in the ranks of mankind, [who was] pure evil.' With such a terrifying description one might think that the fear this book inspires is about the depths of evil that lurk within every man's soul. This, however, is not the case. While our age may have dulled our senses to everyday sins, it seems difficult to think that Victorian society would have considered Hyde's debauchery, grouchiness and even his single murder to be the ultimate in evil. This is not to say that Hyde would not have been a frightful notion to that society, but simply that his fearfulness would have arisen from the threat that he posed to the social order.

We may take the pre-transformation Jekyll as the paradigm of a proper gentleman. He was:

> born to a large fortune, endowed . . . with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future. (Stevenson 81)

His friendships with men of substance, including a peer of England confirm his status. He may have been 'wild when he was young,' but he reformed in order to fit in with the rigid requirements of society, where even misplaced gossip could cause horrific repercussions. Such a society certainly tolerated science – so long as it, like emotions and behaviour, were channelled down acceptable routes.

The reason that Jekyll's research seems so terrifying is that it suggests that when science moves outside of acceptable realms it may alter humanity in such a way that society itself tumbles.

Hyde is the ultimate threat to a society based on mutual friendship and patriarchal ties. He is a one-sided user of the friendships established by Jekyll – both those of his lawyer, Mr. Utterson, and his fellow researcher, Dr. Lanyon. He commits the blatantly threatening act of murdering of Sir Danvers Carew, a member of the House of Lords. Importantly, this act is committed with the very cane given to Henry Jekyll by one of his fellow gentlemen.

Hyde is no longer the underling, the hidden self; he becomes the master and the dominant persona.

The Victorian social order is turned around, a great fear in that class-conscious society. David Punter in *The Literature of Terror* raises political parallels. He considers the novella can be viewed from different levels.

For instance, perhaps it dramatises the striving of the bourgeois middle-classes to sublimate their more humble working class origins in their quest for social respectability. Therefore Jekyll mixes with the upper class in his desire to conform with accepted society. Hyde therefore is the antithesis of Jekyll desiring only the satiating of his appetites and inclinations and using Jekyll's friends and contacts as his prey. It is the Freudian theory of the 'shadowy' otherness within all of us. It is relevant that in the late 19th Century Imperialism was the dominant culture and the British Empire was Master and sought to dominate other countries for it's own furtherance. *Jekyll and Hyde* represented the reversal of this relationship.

While Stevenson, like Shelley, was certainly in part simply trying to write a terrifying tale, he was all too aware of the nature of the English gentry. His life varied between happy member and distrustful outsider, and it seems likely that he was well aware that the tenuous bonds of society were all that held the culture together. Moreover, he was familiar with the way that the infamous murderer, Deacon Brodie, used his upstanding reputation and appearance to prey on his fellows.

Stevenson lived much of his life in Edinburgh, where he must have repeatedly seen the unsettling activities that gentlemen would undertake in the name of science. Using these influences, he crafted a character that remains with us today as another bogeyman of science – the two faced aristocrat of science.

We still fear the power that scientists have in society and the destabilising effects that trusted individuals may have when they are corrupted by their work. That there should have been a particular fear of social disruption in a rigidly class-based society is hardly surprising.

Jekyll became the man who haunted himself. The tragedy of Jekyll was that as himself, he was aware of his id, namely Mr Hyde. His story is one of the best-known doppelganger tales. The tale of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is from one point of view the story of a split personality and one, which would be easily recognised by a post-Freudian society. However it is even more modern as the split personality has been chemically induced. It follows a strong gothic tradition, which includes Edgar Allen Poe's tale of *William Wilson*. However such was the strength of late Victorian fears regarding hideous murders that Stevenson's tale captured society's imagination. Certainly Jack the Ripper is a compelling contemporary of Mr Hyde.

In a similar vein to the tale of split personality contained in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* the theme of multiple personalities is contained in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Victor Frankenstein is the vessel for many 'personalities'.

He is the good husband, the fond son and the monstrous scientist and it is the conflict between these personalities, which create the heightened tension, drama and suspense within the novel. In the classic Gothic genre Frankenstein is the aristocratic intellectual who is tormented by his own ambitious ego.

Although raised within a nurturing family background Frankenstein is compelled to punish his creation for failing to be perfect. The monster is Victor's 'child'. He is the antithesis of the educated and urbane Victor.

If one were to make a list of corrupt scientists, H.G. Wells' Dr. Moreau would merit a place. He was banished from England for his cruel experiments and both his methods and their results seemed to have generated universal disgust in the mass of humanity. However, his is the work most complex to criticise, as he is the most modern of the scientists.

The story of Dr. Moreau undoubtedly still terrifies us, because his tale relates most closely to modern science and the slippery slope of modern ethics, which makes it far harder to construct a convincing moral argument for our fears. It was Moreau's clear lack of moral boundaries or obligations to humanity that horrify us. His science is 'science without conscience' – science for science sake. Because his experiments were so extreme and cruel, isolation from civilisation became vital. This isolation is a theme common to all the stories.

Wells always sought to be more of a moralist than a science fiction author. Oddly, we are left with a puzzling dilemma concerning the moral message of *The Island of Dr Moreau*.

There is certainly the thinly veiled message that all of humanity can easily act beastly toward one another and that much of a civilisation is still founded on barbarity. However, his thoughts on his villain, Dr Moreau, are not at all clear.

While Frankenstein sought to usurp the place of God, and Jekyll to tumble society, in Moreau we find an individual who has indeed *become* God and who has altogether obliterated society so as to create his own anew.

Moreau is described as:

> The white-haired man. . .was a powerfully built man. . .with a fine forehead and rather heavy features; but his eyes had that odd drooping of the skin above the lids that often comes with advancing years, and the fall of the heavy mouth at the corners gave him an expression of pugnacious resolution. . .a white-faced white-haired man, with calm eyes. Save for his serenity, the touch almost of beauty that resulted from his set tranquillity and from his magnificent build, he might have passed muster among a hundred other comfortable old gentlemen. (Wells 24-25)

Far from being the kindly old grandfather figure, Moreau is in fact the epitome of corrupted paternalism and monstrous ego. Because his ambitions are thwarted by society's conscience, he seeks to create his own society in order to impose his own rules of evolution, thus he becomes both creator and destroyer:

> The version of the island myth conveys a powerful and imaginative response to the implications of Evolution. (Huntington 445)

One would certainly be tempted to suggest that Wells is presenting Moreau as God. Moreover, Moreau's beastly creations consider him as divine, stating with awe that:

> *His* is the Hand that makes. *His* is the Hand that wounds. *His* is the Hand that heals. *His* is the lightning flash. *His* is the deep salt sea. (Wells 57)

It is not at all surprising that the Beast Men should consider Moreau a god, not only did he create them, but he gave them the gift of civilisation. It is through his Law that they aspire to be true men.

However, while attacking God and society were enough to topple Jekyll and Frankenstein, these do not appear to be the crimes for which Wells damns Moreau. Surely Prendick, as the symbol of Western morality, is viscerally offended by what seem to be Moreau's travesties of nature.

However, he acknowledges that he would be willing to forgive these indiscretions were there some useful "application" to Moreau's work. Unfortunately, Moreau is not undertaking his research for any such reason; rather, he is "on [a] different platform." Nothing, certainly not pain, can stand in the way of his research, research ultimately done for the sole academic satisfaction of answering a question:

> I [Moreau] went on with this research just the way it led me. That is the only way I ever heard of research going. I asked a question, devised some method of getting an answer, and got – a fresh question. . .the thing before you is not longer an animal, a fellow-creature, but a problem. . . I wanted to find out the extreme limit of plasticity in a living shape. (Wells 72-73)

Moreau is finally slain by one of his own creations that escapes his control. And then, with their 'God' destroyed by his own ambitions the civilisation of the Beast Men collapses and soon after they physically cease to exist.

So why did Wells slay him? Why are we still terrified of this man? The answer could lie in the fact that we fear science without the restraints of altruism.

Moreau's experiments equate with pain for both men and beasts and pain is a great leveller, rendering us equal in suffering.

Ultimately what Prendick despises is Moreau's absolute insensitivity to pain. It is the screams of Moreau's subjects that upset him and it is the Beast Men's talk of His House of Pain that inspires pity.

Despite his endless self-loathing, Frankenstein ended his days by suggesting to his confessor that another might succeed where he had failed. Jekyll, in a laboratory, previously owned by a man with tastes more anatomical, died believing that future studies would confirm the validity of his work and prove man's mind to be composed of a legion of individuals. Moreau on his island achieved the greatest practical success although it was perverted.

Darwin had slain a compassionate God and replaced him with one red in tooth and claw. The awareness of human evolution and psychoanalytic studies suggested that the mind was in fact as prone to evil as to good, if such concepts had any meaning at all.

If science is to conquer ignorance it must take responsibility that it must not become so extreme or unregulated that it becomes repugnant and horrifying to those that it seeks to benefit. It must not become an end unto itself, losing touch with pain and anguish or it will be loathed as much as the supernatural demons it removed.

This is a lesson, in an age when science fiction is fast becoming fact that must be remembered by those who would take up the mantle of *Frankenstein*, *Jekyll* and *Moreau*. These are cautionary tales of science without conscience set against a classical background of gothic splendour, sensibilities and atmosphere.

Frankenstein was the precursor to *The Island of Dr Moreau* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.* It was written in the early 19th century following a time of great political unrest and violence. It is a tale of forbidden knowledge written at a time when science was just beginning to make powerful inroads into the day to day lives of ordinary people. The boundaries were falling and knowledge was filling the voids left in the collapse of old beliefs. With knowledge comes responsibility and not everyone has the moral and spiritual strength to meet this burden.

Kelly Hurley in *The Gothic Body* examines 'the ruination of the human subject', by examining the way in which the human body is destroyed both in physical and metaphorical form in Gothic literature. In the second section, Hurley, 'situates the Gothic's making-abhuman of the human body within a range of evolutionist discourse' (Hurley 10). This links the behaviour of humans and animals with their physical appearance.

The setting of *The Island of Dr Moreau* is most similar to that of *Frankenstein*. The island has great natural beauty and provides a strong contrast for the unethical horrors lurking beneath. These two tales involve the corruption of God's creation into ungodly abominations. Their creators started out with good intentions of improving the lot of mankind but were overtaken by ambition and vanity.

Frankenstein does suffer from enormous feelings of guilt and horror and tries to make amends by destroying his own creation, but Moreau has no such misgivings.

Indeed in isolating himself from the restraints of society upon his island, Moreau destroys any chance of moral intervention from outside forces. Moreau has no conscience, no pity and his ego is the most monstrous.

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde has a more urban setting. It is the story of one man's life being stolen by his doppelganger. Whereas Victor Frankenstein and Dr Moreau do have degrees of dual personality involving man versus scientist, Dr Jekyll achieves a complete split allowing the evil Mr Hyde, his 'shadowy other', to invade and take over his existence. Dr Jekyll's experiment has both moral and social ambition but he is unable to control his 'creation' Mr Hyde, and is unable to replicate his original experiment.

All three tales explore the relations between the human and the bestial. We all fear our 'otherness', the beast within. All three scientists sought to replicate in some way, 'the creation' and all failed because as their stories suggest they sinned against the natural order of life and simply created a parody of God's perfection.

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