

## FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

When Daniel Collins first asked me if Mr. Hyde, from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, could be related to the figure of the golem, I had to tell him that I wasn't sure, although the question was certainly an interesting one. To the best of my knowledge, no scholar had looked at Stevenson's novella in that particular way. But I could see where Daniel's ideas were coming from, and I encouraged him to pursue the line of inquiry he had started. I'm glad he did: the paper he wrote is an original work of scholarship that shows us something no other scholar has about the novella and its central antagonist, the uncanny Mr. Hyde. It provides us with greater insight into how Stevenson conceived of Hyde's character and just what it is that makes Hyde so disquieting.

This paper assignment, for the first major paper of WR 150, was left intentionally open-ended. Students were simply asked to write an academic research paper focusing on a central question they had formulated based on the readings. What makes Daniel's paper important as a work of scholarship is not only the originality of the question he raises, but also the care and specificity with which he researched that question and responded to it through reasoned arguments supported by textual and historical evidence. He makes a convincing case that Mr. Hyde is a golem figure, and addresses clearly and thoroughly the implications of that argument. To me as a teacher, his paper demonstrates that students at any level can engage in the ongoing conversation that is academic research, adding to that conversation their own observations and insights. It is unusual for an undergraduate to add a significant contribution to the scholarly research on a nineteenth-century literary work, but that is exactly what Daniel has done here.

Theodora Goss

WR 150: Fantasy at the Fin-de-Siecle

## FROM THE WRITER

I first became familiar with the golem legend during my senior year in high school, when I took a course on speculative fiction that, among other things, discussed the influence of Jewish culture on the genre's development. So it was that when I read Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, I was struck by the similarity of Mr. Hyde's description to that of the golem. This revelation led to a closer examination of the relationship between the two stories and the subsequent realization that, not only was this connection largely undocumented, but that it helped to elucidate some of the finer points of the text, as well as place Stevenson's work in a broader literary context.

DANIEL COLLINS is a sophomore at Boston University, where he is enrolled in the College of Fine Arts/College of Arts and Sciences Double Degree Program and majors in music composition and physics. He resides in Bushnell, IL, and graduated from the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in 2015. As a musician, Daniel is a conductor, pianist, and clarinetist in addition to a composer. His works have been read and performed by numerous ensembles, including the BU Symphony Orchestra, ALEA III Contemporary Music Ensemble, and JACK Quartet. His current compositional interests include designing dramatically compelling musical structures that rely on motivic repetition and non-linear thematic development. This fall, he will be continuing his studies abroad at the Royal College of Music in London.

Daniel would like to acknowledge the contributions of Ms. Tracy Townsend, the teacher of the speculative fiction course which laid the groundwork for this paper; Dr. Michael Hancock, whose unwavering support and friendship have been a constant sources of relief and encouragement; Prof. Anandita Mukherji, the WR 100 instructor who sought so valiantly to impose word limits on his writing; and Prof. Theodora Goss, the WR 150 instructor who allowed him to so flagrantly ignore them.

DANIEL COLLINS

## HYDENTITY CRISIS: INTERPRETING DR. JEKYLL'S DOPPELGÄNGER AS A GOLEM

It has been noted that Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, can be read as anything from a detective story to a religious allegory. Depending on one's perspective, the labels of Gothic novel and science fiction may also be justifiably applied (Linehan 124). Yet despite the breadth of these interpretations, it is curious to note that virtually none of them point out the striking similarity between the character of Mr. Edward Hyde and the archetypal figure of the golem from Jewish folklore. Strangely, this comparison has been readily made to another, equally famous character of the same genre: the monster from Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*. While there can be no doubt that these two works, though written some 68 years apart, bear a marked resemblance to one another, it is intriguing that Stevenson's novel has yet to be thoroughly analyzed for its use of the golem legend. Consequently, this paper will seek to establish an interpretation of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* that treats Mr. Hyde as a golem figure. Furthermore, it will explore the repercussions such an interpretation would have on traditional readings of the novel and consider its effects on the work's placement within the larger continuum of science fiction literature.

The term "golem" can be traced back to the Hebrew Bible, where, in Psalms 139:15, it is used to denote "my unshaped form" (Cohen 1), referring to the primordial matter to which God has yet to give life. In a more practical context, "golem" is used to describe a large creature fashioned from clay that is made with the purpose of accomplishing some task. While various forms of the golem legend appeared throughout the Middle Ages, the most famous is that associated with Rabbi Loew of Prague. In order to protect the Jewish ghetto from anti-Semitic attacks, the Rabbi is said to have built the golem with clay from a nearby riverbank and brought it to life by carving the word *emet*, the Hebrew for "truth," onto its forehead. To destroy the golem, the letter "e" was erased, forming the word *met*, the Hebrew for "death." Other versions of the myth hold that the tetragrammaton was combined with every letter of the alphabet and pronounced with all possible vowel sounds so as to produce the correct permutation of the name of God, thus emulating creation. Still others simply state that instructions were written on a slip of paper that was placed into the golem's mouth, bringing it to life, but inhibiting its speech. Whatever the method, the remainder of the story tells of how the golem, required to rest on the Sabbath, is not deactivated by Rabbi Loew in time and goes on a rampage until he is eventually destroyed. It is in this form that the golem legend has made its way into popular culture. For instance, the word "golem" is sometimes used to refer to someone who is dumb or slow, or who follows rules pedantically. The latter alludes to the golem's connection, especially within the realm of science fiction, to robots or automatons, which, by their very natures, can only interpret instructions literally (Cohen 1–4). More generally, however, golems, in their various forms, have become a staple of science fiction literature, and Stevenson's novel is no exception.

Though it is by way of Mr. Enfield's discourse with Mr. Utterson that Mr. Hyde is first introduced to the reader, it is not until Mr. Utterson's encounter with Hyde that the reader is given a

good description of him. After the rather unpleasant meeting, Utterson remarks: ““God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell? or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent? The last, I think; for O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan’s signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend”” (Stevenson 17). This characterization is fascinating, as it seems, even superficially, to contain many allusions to the golem legend. The most prominent of these is Utterson’s description of Hyde as having a “clay continent”, which Katherine Linehan clarifies to mean “earthly, i.e. the body” (17 note 1). This bears a remarkable resemblance to not only the golem’s physical composition, but also the root of the word itself. Moreover, Utterson’s comment that he has “read Satan’s signature upon [Hyde’s] face” seems to directly parallel the notion that golems were controlled by carving instructions onto their foreheads. What is interesting, however, is that, should one choose to accept this theory, it presents an apparent contradiction on Stevenson’s part, since the character of Satan does not exist in Judaism. How, then, should Utterson’s comment be taken? One possibility is that Utterson is the product of a highly Christian society and therefore simply projects his own preconceived notions onto the narrative. This stance is easily supported by the fact that Utterson was previously described as, on Sunday evenings, customarily “sit[ting] close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity on his reading desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed” (12). Alternatively, Stevenson may merely be making an oblique reference to the Jewish notion of *yetzer hara*, or the evil inclination that naturally exists in everyone. This possibility is favored by Jekyll’s belief that everyone is composed of both good and evil parts.

Utterson’s impression alone, however, does not constitute the entire body of evidence in support of an interpretation of Hyde as golem. Indeed, this similarity is noted by Dr. Jekyll, who, in his “Full Statement of the Case,” remarks, in the third person, that:

He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. (Stevenson 60)

Here again, Linehan provides context by observing that “Jekyll’s vision of ‘amorphous dust’ masquerading as life invites comparison with Genesis 2:7, where ‘the dust of the ground’ is made man only when God gives it shape, breath, and immortal soul” (60 note 2). Given this, the comparison drawn between Hyde, as deformed, and something that “was dead, and had no shape” seems to clearly reference the golem, whose name literally means “unshaped form.” This is further supported by the images of “amorphous dust” and “slime of the pit” which, in their depictions of primordial matter, also seem indicative of the golem, particularly its biblical origins. Moreover, Jekyll’s description of Hyde as alive, yet “not only hellish but inorganic,” again echoes the golem motif, since golems give the appearance of being alive, though they are made of clay, and can be quite destructive, under the right circumstances.

Jekyll’s uncertainty about Hyde’s true nature smacks of the phenomenon of the “uncanny,” which is discussed by the Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud at length in his essay of the same name. In his exploration of this singular feeling, Freud explores the origins of the word’s German counterpart *unheimlich*, which he explains refers not only to that which is “unhomely” or foreign, but to that which “ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (200). Hyde certainly fits this bill, as Jekyll goes to great lengths to keep him out of the public eye, only letting him out at night and by way of the back door. Therefore, when Hyde is encountered, he

immediately evokes an uncanny response in the viewer, since they know they are bearing witness to something that they were not meant to see. This effect is particularly evident following the “Incident at the Window,” in which Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield unwittingly see Jekyll involuntarily transform into Hyde. As the two gentlemen try to invite Jekyll on a walk, he begins to respond, only for the following to transpire:

But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his [Jekyll’s] 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. In silence, too, they traversed the by-street; and it was not until they had come into a neighbouring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life, that Mr. Utterson at last turned and looked at his companion. They were both pale; and there was an answering horror in their eyes. (Stevenson 32)

This scene describes the type of uncanniness discussed by Freud to a T. Utterson and Enfield are both struck with a sense of literally unspeakable horror because they have seen something that Jekyll had meant to keep within his home but that had managed to escape. Moreover, Stevenson makes a point of saying that it is not until Utterson and Enfield have returned to a populated area, where “there were still some stirrings of life” (32), that they can even begin to comprehend what they have just witnessed.

It is this last detail in particular that really bridges the gap between the uncanny and the golem. In his essay, Freud quotes the German psychologist Ernst Jentsch’s supposition that feelings of uncanniness can be aroused by “doubts [about] whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate” (qtd. in Freud 201). Moreover, Freud notes that Jentsch cites “wax-work figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata” as good examples of this, as well as “epileptic fits, and . . . manifestations of insanity, because [they] excite in the spectator the impression of the automatic, mechanical processes at work behind the ordinary appearance of mental activity” (201–2). Jentsch’s first point seems to mesh not only with Utterson and Enfield’s reaction to Jekyll’s transformation and their subsequent need for human contact, but also with Jekyll’s own surprise that “what was dead, and had no shape [referring to Hyde], should usurp the offices of life” (Stevenson 60). The second, that the uncanny is something that displays mechanistic behavior in place of human emotion, is satisfied by Enfield’s account of his first encounter with Hyde. He recounts an incident in which Hyde, “like some Juggernaut,” tramples a little girl in the street one evening, only to remain “perfectly cool and [make] no resistance” upon being stopped, “but giving me [Enfield] one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running” (9). This portrayal of Hyde is very reminiscent of the mechanistic and inhuman behavior described by Jentsch. Enfield’s description of Hyde as a “Juggernaut” carries its own foreign and mechanistic connotations, while Hyde’s lack of emotion suggests some sort of automaton devoid of feeling.

These characterizations of Hyde and his repeated evocations of uncanniness align perfectly with more contemporary notions of the golem. In the larger tradition of science fiction literature, golems are commonly regarded as precursors to automatons, androids, and later cyborgs (Cohen 1). It is, then, but a matter of mutual association to conclude that Hyde can himself be seen as a golem. Doing so helps to explain not only the mechanistic and unemotional variety of uncanniness he causes, but also the questioning of his origins and even life, as it were. Thus, interpreting Hyde as a golem is consistent with the uncanny nature of his character and, in fact, goes so far as to offer an explanation for its so being. Yet this conclusion serves to open up another parallel that helps to both resolve some of the contradictions in Jekyll and Hyde’s character and place Stevenson’s novella in a broader literary context.

Specifically, conceding that Hyde's unhuman uncanniness is a result of his similarity to a golem leads one to question whether other aspects of the uncanniness described by Freud can be explained by this solution. Indeed, such is the case with the idea of the double, which pervades both Freud and Stevenson's works. In his discussion, Freud explains that doubles come across as uncanny because they were "originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego," but over time, and with the advent of civilization and the forfeiture of more primitive ideas, "the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death" (210–11). More generally, doubles came to encompass two opposing identities inhabiting the same form. Karl Miller summarizes this best by observing that "[o]ne self does what the other self can't. One self is meek while the other is fierce. One self stays while the other runs away. . . . Doubles may appear to come from outside, as a form of possession, or from inside, as a form of projection" (126). Within Stevenson's novella, the double is obvious, yet there is a subtler one present in the golem legend. Recalling that the golem was made by Rabbi Loew to protect the Jewish ghetto of Prague from anti-Semitic attacks, it is apparent that a doubling relationship exists between Rabbi Loew and the creature that he creates. Just as Miller notes: "[o]ne self does what the other self can't." Furthermore, Cohen states, albeit it in a different context, that "the golem is depicted as both domestic servant and resistance fighter, simultaneously protector and threat, emblematic of both the act of creation and the act of destruction" (1). Thus, the golem interpretation expands upon the established notion that doubles are a central thematic element of the novella. Yet in so doing, it exposes yet another parallel that cannot go unnoticed. Namely, the doubling of creator and creature, present in the story of Rabbi Loew, reveals a thematic connection between Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Commentators have noted many similarities between Stevenson and Shelley's novels, not the least of which is their utilization of the mad scientist archetype. Shelley's Victor Frankenstein is the classic unsettled genius, seeking to create life from inanimate matter. Eventually, he succeeds in creating a monster composed of an amalgam of reanimated body parts that is then inadvertently let loose upon the world, only to return and wreak havoc on Victor and his family and friends. A similar, albeit internal, trajectory is followed by Stevenson's Jekyll, who is also prone to study arcane science while this time attempting to separate his being into its good and evil components. However, things go wrong, and his creation ends up coming back to destroy him, or so it seems. Indeed, while Victor is left to chase his creation through the Arctic, Jekyll, in the ultimate inversion, is locked in his cabinet with himself, now transformed involuntarily and permanently into Hyde, with the prospect of either suicide, or arrest and execution. In the final scene chronologically, the reader is left with Utterson breaking down Jekyll's door to a cry of "for God's sake, have mercy!" only to find Hyde dead on the floor after apparently committing suicide with cyanide (Stevenson 38–9). While these events are clear enough, their perpetrators are not. Specifically, there is significant debate as to who cries out at the last and who commits suicide. In his narrative, Jekyll contemplates suicide as a way of stopping Hyde, but hypothesizes that it will be to no avail given the involuntary transformations. Before breaking down the door, Poole remarks that the voice is not his master's, and Utterson similarly concludes it is Hyde's. Yet this creates a fundamental contradiction that makes it impossible to tell who is responsible for what. If Poole and Utterson are correct and Hyde is the last man standing, as it were, then he would have committed suicide himself, which seems at odds with his rebellious character. Applying the golem interpretation helps to resolve this paradox. If Hyde can, in fact, be seen as a golem, then it would be up to his creator, Jekyll, to stop him, just as Rabbi Loew did. The cry for mercy, then, could be interpreted as Hyde's plea to Jekyll, who may have retained some amount of mental dominion, rather than Utterson. Interpreting the story thus provides a neat application of the golem theory while differentiating the story from *Frankenstein*, since Victor himself is not responsible for the monster's death.

Given the remarkable amount of evidence in favor of interpreting Hyde as a golem, it remains perplexing that *Frankenstein* has received practically all of the attention in this regard, while *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has received virtually none. Perhaps this is a result of the swaths of Christian allegory that cloak Stevenson's story, obscuring some of its more Jewish elements. Or perhaps, as Christopher Toumey (414) points out, it is the utter lack of detail regarding the monster's creation in *Frankenstein* that allows at least some room for speculation. After all, Frankenstein's monster quite literally is a re-shaped form, whereas Hyde is merely a deformation of Jekyll. Thus, it is perhaps this difference in imagery that separates the two stories and leads scholars to primarily interpret *Frankenstein* as a reimagining of the golem legend. Yet if anything, the corpus of evidence presented here in favor of a similar treatment of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* should warrant a reevaluation of this convention. Not only do many details of the story suggest that Hyde is, in fact, a golem, but this theory is consistent with the Freudian psychological elements of the story and is useful in elucidating certain points of the plot. Indeed, the use of the golem legend in the story is one of many aspects that go into securing its place as a cornerstone of science fiction literature.

## WORKS CITED

- Cohen, Simchi. "A Living Man, A Clay Man: Violence, The Zombie, And The Messianic in H. Leivick's *The Golem*." *Cultural Critique* 90.1 (2015): 1–21. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 7 Feb. 2016.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Uncanny'." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Ed. James Strachey. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997. Print.
- Miller, Karl. "The Modern Double." *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Ed. Katherine Linehan. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003. 124–126. Print.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Ed. Katherine Linehan. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003. Print.
- Toumey, Christopher P. "The Moral Character of Mad Scientists: A Cultural Critique of Science." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 17.4 (1992): 411–437. *JSTOR*. Web. 7 Feb. 2016.

## WORKS CONSULTED

- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Ed. Maurice Hindle. New York: Penguin Classics, 1992. Print.
- Spiro, Mi. "Containing The Monster: The Golem In Expressionist Film And Theater." *Space Between: Literature & Culture, 1914-1945* 9.1 (2013): 11–36. *Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson)*. Web. 7 Feb. 2016.