

Rising from the Dead: Who are the Monsters and Why?
How culture develops monsters, reflecting the fears of the time in literature.

How does culture make a monster?

A monster represents the fear of a society created by a certain cultural moment. Even though a monster may be destroyed, it can be reimagined and revived by the new fear that is embodied within the civilization at that time. As people and culture change, so too do the fears that create their monsters¹. This project will test this theory by comparing the monsters in the novels *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Robert Louis Stevenson) and *The Invisible Man* (H.G. Wells) to their reinterpretations in the graphic novel *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill).

Jekyll and Hyde
The Consumption of Violence

Original Text Premise: to indulge in his vices, the scientist Jekyll designs a draught that allows him to transform into another, Hyde. However, Hyde's violence and overpowering nature soon becomes too strong and overpowers Jekyll. With no other choice, Jekyll must kill Hyde to rid the world of both of them.

Original Text (1886)

Hyde is monstrous because he stripes Jekyll of his ability to distinguish between his Victorian, gentlemanly body and Hyde's monstrous, violent one.

- In the Victorian Era, the idea of masculinity was determined by the body of a man². This is problematic for Jekyll since he and Hyde share a body:
"even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both" (43)³
- Hyde embodies Jekyll's evil desires:
"At that time my virtue slumbered; my evil... was projected [as] Edward Hyde" (45)
- Hyde's monstrosity is depicted in his appearance, linking his animalistic form to his violent nature:
"with apelike fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered" (15)
- The danger of Hyde exists when Jekyll loses his ability to differentiate between himself and Hyde, unable to recognize Hyde's hand as not his own at first:
"It was the hand of Edward Hyde. I must have stared upon it for near half a minute, sunk as I was in the mere stupidity of wonder, before terror woke up in my breast" (47)

Graphic Novel (1999-2003)

When Jekyll is extinguished, Hyde is made into a violent monster without restraint that also infects the reader, making them equally as monstrous.

- While maintaining his ape-like appearance, Hyde takes on gentlemanly traits:
 - curse-filled speech to civil conversation
 - ripped clothes to fully dressed in a suit
 - wild eyes and bared teeth to the visage of a normal human
- However, it appears as though Hyde is consuming Jekyll:
"My growth has been unrestricted, while he's wasted away to nothing...without him, I have no restraints" (#5)⁴
- Without the human element of Jekyll, Hyde cannot maintain his humane façade, exhibited when he violently kills his former, traitorous teammate, the Invisible Man in a truly horrific manner.
- Hyde's rage consumes him, reverting him to a monster that lacks any likeness to humanity in appearance or mannerisms.
Understanding his actions to be too traverse, Hyde accepts his own monstrosity and destroys himself⁵.

¹ Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. Print, pp. 4-6.

² Cohen, E. D. "Hyding the Subject?: The Antinomies of Masculinity in "the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 37, no. 1/2, 2003., pp.182

³ Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Roslyn: Black's Reader Service, 1991. Print. All references are to this edition.

⁴ Moore, Alan. *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, Vol. 2. La Jolla: America's Best Comics, LLC, 2004. Print. All references are to this edition.

⁵ Hyde's death is a self-destruction, not a moment of self sacrifice. He alludes to the fact that he knows that he is too monstrous, he would have to take his own life when admitting that he has contemplated killing Mina (Moore, v2).

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The Invisible Man
The Terror that Creates Monsters

Original Text Premise: When Griffin turns himself invisible, he is forced to run away and hide in the village Iping. Here, he develops his plan to institute a Reign of Terror in which he will use his invisibility to carry out his “judicious slaying[s]”. In the end, he is cornered by a mob and beaten to death.

Original Text (1897)

Due to his invisibility, Griffin is distanced from human society, portraying an unseen and unknown terror that incites others to lash out and become monsters as well.

- Griffin is invisible in more than just his body. He is cut off from society through his lack of connections to others, only connecting to his experiments:
“There were the things I knew and loved. There stood the apparatus, the experiments” (144)⁶
- With no social definition, Griffin doesn’t have a society to define or police his actions, allowing him to enact his Reign of Terror:
“Not wanton killing, but a judicious slaying...[to] take some town like your Burdock and terrify and dominate it” (193)
- The fear he instigates push the people of Iping to beat him to death despite his pleas:
“There was, I am afraid, some savage kicking. Then suddenly a wild scream of “Mercy! Mercy!” that dies down swiftly to a sound like choking” (229)
- Griffin is made visible in death, only to have his face covered⁷ by the mob that killed him. Unwilling to view the murder they conducted and take responsibility for their actions, the people deny Griffin his humanity by covering his face.

Graphic Novel (1999-2003)

Griffin’s invisibility creates an unreadable body that distances him from the reader while he also challenges the reader to face their own monstrosity.

- The League is depicted as a family when Mina checks on them when sleeping like a mother.
Griffin’s false body symbolizes his self-ostracization from this monstrous family.
- Griffin’s depiction lacks a visible face to associate with his words for the reader to read⁸, distancing him from humanity.
His actions are unreadable too: he lashes out in unnecessary violence and refuses to show a hint of sympathy when viewing a massacre⁹.
- Unreadable, Griffin acts outside of what is expected of a hero by attacking his teammates and so gives Hyde reason to kill him.
His attack in Mina incites Hyde’s rage towards him: “I’m cross because your treatment of Miss Murray was...uncivil” (#5).
- Griffin’s humanity is again denied when his murder, nor body, is shown. However, by concealing this, both Hyde and the reader shared the status of the murderer¹⁰.
Without a visual representation, the reader is left to imagine Griffin’s death. Doing so makes them active participants in the murder, carrying it out in their minds.

What do monsters make of us?

Hyde embodies the fear of violence consuming humanity, morphing from blurring differences between violent and civil to violence creating a monster without restraint. Griffin embodies the fear of an unknown “Other” that creates monsters and incites them to kill the Other. However, when visible again, Griffin’s innate humanity is denied. The texts act as a warning against allowing fear to result in the act of killing, changing to a confrontation when the reader is made a participant in murder, asking if they will deny the humanity of the Other.

⁶ Wells, H.G., *The Invisible Man*, New Jersey: Troll Communications L.L.C., 1980. Print. All references are to this edition.

⁷ Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 231.

⁸ Hilton, Laura. “Gothic Science Fiction in the Steampunk Graphic Novel *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman*.” *Gothic Science Fiction 1980-2010*, edited by Sara Wasson and Emily Alder, Liverpool University Press, 2011, pp. 196. All references are to this edition.

⁹ The senseless violence is shown when bludgeoning, while a lack of sympathy is exhibited when lighting a cigarette from fires of a massacre.

¹⁰ Hilton, Gothic Science Fiction in the Steampunk Graphic Novel *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman*, 205-6.