

## ***Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, from Rouben Mamoulian (1932) to Victor Fleming (1941): Remaking a Horror Myth, Aesthetics, Ideology and Gender Issues**

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**Mot-clés :** remake, représentation, transgressif, normatif, double, masculin, féminin, montage, sexe, fantasme.

Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) has been a favourite literary work for movie makers almost from the beginning of cinema. The motion pictures have indeed contributed to the development of one of the greatest modern gothic or "fantastic" myths along with Dracula and Frankenstein. The original story has a tremendous popular appeal (it was more widely read in the USA than Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*), as well as a visual, spectacular potential due to the very notion of duality and metamorphosis which it entails. It also represents an important challenge for an actor as well as for a cinematographer and set designer. It was thus transposed to the screen no less than eight times between 1910 and 1920. In 1908, the Selig Polyscope Company released *The Modern Dr Jekyll*. Another short one reeler was produced in 1911 by Thanhouser, starring James Cruze in the dual role of Jekyll and Hyde. It was followed in 1913 by a longer adaptation (20 mn) produced by Carl Laemmle (IMP, Universal), directed by Herbert Brenon with King Baggott, and another from the British Kineto-Kinemacolor company.

However 1920 is really a landmark in the development of the myth since it saw the release of several films, including Murnau's *Head of Janus* with Conrad Veidt as leading actor (a film unfortunately considered as lost), three different American versions including a feature produced by Louis B. Mayer with Sheldon Lewis, one released by Arrow and above all the Paramount version directed by John S. Robertson and starring "The Great Profile" John Barrymore, one of the most

celebrated actors of the period who achieved a stunning double impersonation with little help from make up or special effects.

This shows the amount of interest manifested by the cinema studios regarding this story, but also reveals the fascination the topic of Jekyll and Hyde holds for the American movie-going public. It was only the beginning of a long series (over 70 films) of filmic adaptations, more or less close to Stevenson's original work, but each time attempting to provide an interpretation in relation with the context of production and the status and expectations of the spectator.

Hollywood has deeply altered the structure and contents of the original story and this from the outset. But as was also the case concerning the screen adaptations of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, the first transformation came from the stage. Indeed a leading American actor, Richard Mansfield, already well known for his impersonation of grotesque, semi-monstrous characters, became immensely popular following his performance in the stage adaptation of *Jekyll and Hyde* in 1887, only one year after the publication of Stevenson's book. The play written and directed by T. Russel Sullivan was performed first in Boston, then New York, and even in London where it opened in 1888 at an ominous moment, while the Whitechapel murders were starting to traumatize public opinion and puzzle the police. This might partly account for the subsequent conjunction of the two stories, that of Jack the Ripper, and that of *Jekyll and Hyde*, of which we can find some traces in specific films, as for instance, the British Hammer production, *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (Roy Ward Baker, 1971).

Sullivan and Mansfield brought to Stevenson's novella radical alterations which would set a model for subsequent screen adaptations. First they suppressed the complex structure made of several embedded narratives including the diary of Dr Lanyon and as a final disclosure of the long held mystery, the statement of Dr Jekyll himself. This structure implied a series of enigmas and a network of time manipulations, of circulation of fragmented, delayed and/or misleading information in order to sustain the suspense as to the real relationship existing between Jekyll and Hyde. Contrary to this, the play gets rid of the embedded narratives of Lanyon and Jekyll<sup>1</sup> and reestablishes the chronological order. However it preserves a certain amount of suspense by delaying the explanation of Jekyll's situation. Another major

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<sup>1</sup> Only the French version by Jean Renoir, *Le Testament du Dr Cordelier*, keeps a partly retrospective structure by which Jekyll tells his colleague, Dr Joly, the main focalizer in the film, about the circumstances of his experiment, in a kind of equivalent of the literary diary.

change is the foregrounding of Jekyll/Hyde at the expense of the characters of Utterson, Enfield and Lanyon who keep only a minor part. At the opposite, the episodic character of Carew (the only acknowledged murder of Hyde in the novella) becomes much more prominent as General Sir Danvers Carew, to whose daughter Agnes Jekyll is engaged. This means another major change. Stevenson's novella focuses on male characters and male friendship, even pairing male protagonists (Jekyll/Lanyon, Jekyll/Utterson, Utterson/Enfield, Jekyll/Hyde), and female protagonists are almost absent, apart from very minor roles such as the little girl Hyde tramples upon or some servants, or the woman selling matches. Conversely, the play and the films insist on the relationship of Jekyll (and Hyde) with women, emphasizing the sexual element which was toned down to a minimum by Stevenson (just hints concerning Jekyll's "impatient gaiety of disposition and irregularities"<sup>2</sup>).

The three major classic adaptations (Robertson, Mamoulian, Fleming) follow the same narrative line, cutting short several episodes of the novella and emphasizing some emblematic settings and situations. What is stressed is a double form of character duality: that of Jekyll and Hyde, but also that of the angelic and respectable fiancée as opposed to the low-class, sexually promiscuous woman. I shall concentrate on Rouben Mamoulian's Paramount film starring Fredric March and Myriam Hopkins (1932) and its remake by Victor Fleming produced by MGM and starring Spencer Tracy, Ingrid Bergman and Lana Turner (1941).

## Definitions

If we may consider Rouben Mamoulian's film as a re-adaptation of Robertson's silent version (and of Stevenson's novella), with obvious technological improvements, the diegetic sounds and dialogues of course, but also sophisticated special effects, the Fleming version must clearly be seen as a remake according to some defining criteria of the concept. As Serge Chauvin points out:

Le *remake* est fondé sur le postulat suivant: le succès d'une œuvre préexistante peut être reproduit, à condition de l'adapter aux goûts et aux attentes supposées du nouveau public visé, qu'on soupçonne à tort ou à raison, d'être réfractaire à l'original [...]. La plupart des *remakes* relèvent d'une réactualisation (ou selon le terme de Masson, d'un *aggiornamento*) d'un film plus ancien dont le succès passé semble prouver la valeur de l'intrigue, mais dont la forme paraît obsolète. Le *remake* est censé

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<sup>2</sup> In the original version of the novella burnt by Stevenson, there were intimations of homoeroticism.

apporter un supplément à l'original, souvent lié à une innovation technique. (Chauvin, 595)<sup>3</sup>

There are diverse typologies of the remake. Thomas Leitch, among others, quoted by David Roche in his recent book (Roche, 13), identifies four different types (or stances): the “re-adaptation” and the “update” involve different attitudes towards the literary hypotext, the “homage” or “true remake” concern the attitude to the original film. The “homage” pays tribute to a classic work and renounces any claim to be better while the “true remake” combines a focus on a cinematic original with an accommodating stance which seeks to make the original relevant by updating it. The producers of the “true remake” wish not only to accommodate the original story to a new discourse and a new audience, but to annihilate the model they are honouring, to eliminate any need or desire to see the film they seek to replace. This is clearly the case for Mamoulian’s and Fleming’s films, the latter seeking literally to erase the other. MGM bought the rights to the previous Paramount film and did not distribute it for twenty-five years. Fortunately the film, though heavily cut, did not disappear and it is now considered as the best version of Stevenson’s novella.

Some important scenes in Mamoulian’s film have been missing for a long time<sup>4</sup> from copies in circulation in the USA and elsewhere. It is only recently that these scenes have been restored. This situation was particularly detrimental for the spectator since one of the missing scenes was the famous opening sequence shot in subjective camera of Jekyll playing the organ and answering in voice over the queries of his butler Poole (Edgar Norton). Another missing scene was the episode of the cat pouncing upon a bird as a prelude to Jekyll’s involuntary transformation and subsequent aggression of Ivy Pierson.

### Similarities

We can speak of a remake *stricto sensu* indeed as the MGM film follows the same narrative pattern and foregrounds the same sequences in the same order, often keeping the same details or objects: Hyde enjoying the rain, Ivy’s garter, the dance

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<sup>3</sup> Serge Chauvin, entry “Remake”. “The *remake* is based on this assumption: the success of a given film can be reproduced if it is adapted to the taste and expectation of a new public, supposed to be, rightly or wrongly, adverse to the original. The remake supposes a re-actualization, an ‘aggiornamento’ according to Masson of an older film whose past success proves the value of the plot but whose form seems obsolete. The remake is supposed to bring a supplement to the original, often linked to technological innovation”.

<sup>4</sup> We must also remember that Mamoulian’s Paramount film was unavailable for the public until 1967, the rights having been bought by MGM in 1940 in order to keep the previous film from circulation and promote their own version with Spencer Tracy. A fully restored print was released only in 1992.

scene between Jekyll and Muriel/Beatrix, the use of mirrors. Both films use the same kind of locations, contrasting the hospital where Jekyll exercises medicine for the poor<sup>5</sup> and the respectable bourgeois house of General Carew (Mamoulian) and Sir Charles Emery (Fleming) where Jekyll attends dinner parties with the aristocracy and various notabilities. Stress is laid on the contrast between the upper class world and its conformist moral and spiritual values exemplified in the “drawing room” scenes and embodied by the character of the father, and on the one hand the world of poverty and suffering to which Jekyll devotes his time, on the other hand the world of cheap entertainment tainted with transgression and moral corruption where Hyde revels. Contrary to the novella where Jekyll is middle-aged, the two films feature him as young and attractive, beloved by women, his fiancée and the other “loose” woman alike. Jekyll is also presented as an idealistic figure, a philanthropic non conformist character who chooses to devote his life to curing the ailments of the poor rather than gratifying the whims and attending the social rites of the ruling class. Hence the recurrent motif of Jekyll being delayed at dinner parties or cultural events (the concert at The Royal Albert Hall for instance in Fleming’s film).

In both films, a spatial and symbolic opposition is built up between the cabaret (the Variety Music Hall or the Palace of Frivolities) where Ivy sings—a locus of lowly pleasures and corruption—and the garden where Jekyll courts his fiancée, an idyllic place associated with nature, a locus of innocence but also a nest for romantic love (with the two cherubs and the waterlilies in Mamoulian’s version). Another important place is Hyde’s apartment in Soho which can be contrasted with Jekyll’s patrician house. Yet the Soho apartment is also decorated with taste and adorned with many paintings and sculptures (especially in Mamoulian’s version), thus suggesting Hyde is not only a primitive beast and testifying to a certain refinement and interest in art. This conjunction of physical bestiality, sadism and sophistication makes Hyde all the more uncanny and blurs too univocal a meaning. Both films also foreground Stevenson’s dichotomous space within Jekyll’s own house: the bourgeois, refined apartments where Jekyll plays the organ, receives his guests and patients (and admires himself in the mirror) and the secret laboratory accessible through a small gangway where the eminent doctor practises his secret experiments. Both films also

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<sup>5</sup> There is a notable difference here. In Mamoulian’s version, Jekyll devotes his time to poor patients in the free ward of the hospital. In Fleming’s version Jekyll works for a normal hospital where he also practises his research until the director of the hospital warns him against his transgressive experiments.

use the same dramatic tensions and conflicts, between the father and Jekyll, Lanyon, the conformist doctor and Jekyll the more daring and transgressive scientist and they also dramatize the contrast between the two female characters, the respectable bourgeois fiancée of Jekyll, with only a change of name (Beatrix instead of Muriel), and the low-class, loose-mannered Ivy.

There are however some changes or shifts. In Mamoulian's film, Jekyll is driven to drink his potion because of his scientific hubris, but also because of his delayed wedding, inducing sexual frustration. In Fleming's version, Jekyll first struggles to save Sam Higgins, a patient obsessed with evil, as a consequence of an accident (a gas explosion) and he also experiments on animals, before deciding to try the potion on himself when Higgins dies, while the doctor was on his way to give him the medicine that might have cured him.

Mamoulian's Jekyll (Fredric March) is less repressed than John S. Robertson's protagonist in the 1920 version and he appears early in the film as drawn to the seductions of the flesh as embodied by Ivy Pierson (Myriam Hopkins). He does not express any guilt feeling or even regret after having kissed her, which leads to a shocked comment from his friend Lanyon. Spencer Tracy's interpretation in Fleming's film is highly derivative of the earlier version as he also expresses no pangs of conscience after the scene of seduction with the barmaid Ivy Peterson (Ingrid Bergman). Both characters acknowledge the human propensity to yield to sexual desire as something natural.<sup>6</sup> Another similarity concerns the foregrounding of the transformation scenes, because of their appeal and spectacular potential. There are seven scenes in Mamoulian's film and also seven in Fleming's film. However, the treatment is quite different as we shall see.

Both films rely heavily on the star system. The lead male character is a major star of the studio (as was already John Barrymore in Robertson's silent version). In Mamoulian's film, Fredric March is the emblematic romantic hero (he will soon be Vronski in *Anna Karenina*). Ivy is interpreted by Myriam Hopkins, a popular, glamorous actress, famous for her *risqué*, subversive parts such as that of Temple, the young depraved heroine in *The Story of Temple Drake*, a loose adaptation of William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*. Rose Hobart, cast in the role of the respectable Muriel Carew, is less well known. In Fleming's version, a similar strategy is used, but more

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<sup>6</sup> Mamoulian considers that the main conflict is not between good and evil, but between nature and culture, the primitive and the civilized. Hence his choice to feature Hyde as an apish creature (using the Neanderthal model).

blatantly even and with some interesting twists. Spencer Tracy<sup>7</sup> is a big MGM star, but both female characters are also impersonated by famous stars, Lana Turner and Ingrid Bergman. Turner was supposed to interpret Ivy and Bergman Beatrix. Because of Bergman's insistence, Lana will finally play the respectable blonde Beatrix while Ingrid embodies the loose-mannered dark-haired barmaid, playing against her habitual filmic persona, but emphasising the romantic and melodramatic aspect. This inversion adds interesting ambiguities to both characters as we will see. Donald Crisp who plays the strict but benevolent father is also quite well known. Thus the casting strategy is supposed to seduce the audience up to the point of having them forget the previous film.

Lastly, both films play upon genre conventions, primarily the horror genre quite popular at the time with the huge popular success of *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1932) produced by Universal and which generated many sequels throughout the thirties and early forties. Hence the stress on the modes of representation of the couple Jekyll/Hyde and the shifts from one to the other, on spectacular effects and the foregrounding of the female victim confronted with the monstrous Other. Each film also associates horror with other genre conventions, especially those of romance, social satire and melodrama.

These are a few similarities. However there are also many changes, illustrating the idea of "improvement" and recontextualisation implied in the notion of remake, but also revealing some ideological choices. I shall mostly focus on these choices, on the modes of representation of the monstrous and on gender issues since both films foreground female characters and their contrasted relationships with male power. Some of these changes account for the notion of paradox.

### **Aesthetic Choices and Formal Devices**

The style and mise en scene are quite different in the two films. Mamoulian who has a background in theatre and opera is famous for his use of lavish settings and daring metaphors, his use of lap-dissolves and split-screen. He is a very innovative director who uses subjective camera thus inducing a certain relationship of identification with the spectator. He also uses extreme close ups on faces and editing techniques akin to Eisenstein's "intellectual montage" (i.e. the sequence of the boiling

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<sup>7</sup> Tracy was at first reluctant to play the double part as he did not wish to alter his star image.

cauldron). Sound devices in the first transformation scene are quite effective. What is also noticeable is the symbolic significance associated with some objects, in particular paintings, statues, but also mirrors.

The house of Jekyll as well as Hyde's flat in Soho are decorated with many paintings and sculptures. Indeed, a bronze statue of an athlete holding a wreath of glory, a marble head of a woman expressing joy are all shown in a fast edited montage sequence while Jekyll is playing the organ, overjoyed with the expectation he will soon marry Muriel, a long delayed union. The most striking symbolic use of cultural objects takes place in the scene where Hyde kills Ivy Pierson after having bullied, tormented and tortured her. While Hyde crushes Ivy on the floor and starts to strangle her, the camera leaves most of the violent crime off screen and ironically displays by means of a tracking shot a replica of *Eros and Psyche*, Antonio Canova's famous sculpture featuring two entwined loving bodies. Spiritual elevation and physical love are here shattered by the revelation of the proximity of Eros and Thanatos. Uncontrolled impulses banish the dream of unity and degrade the human being who falls a prey to sheer materiality and crime. The use of cultural references stresses the tension between ideality and materiality, nature (savagery) and culture. The equivalent scene in Fleming is more sober but no less cruel and leaves the murder even more off screen.

Another innovative aspect is indeed the technique of montage close to Eisenstein's "montage of attractions". Mamoulian proceeds at times to a highly metaphoric juxtaposition of fast edited shots, which is quite at odds with current Hollywood practice (though there are other exceptions<sup>8</sup>). The filmic enunciation may be quite conspicuous through the use of long lap-dissolves superimposing various images (the most famous being Ivy's dangling legs as they are imprinted in the memory of Jekyll and the spectator). The use of the split-screen reinforces the duality motif and allows parallels between scenes featuring in particular the two contrasted female characters as we shall see.

Fleming is more academic and conventional, as can be illustrated by focusing the analysis on some transformation scenes. MGM, partly because of Spencer Tracy who did not want to look simian and wear heavy makeup, takes a completely different

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<sup>8</sup> For example, the fast edited montage sequence in Woody S. van Dyke's *San Francisco* (1936), which provides an impressive and spectacular rendering of the famous 1906 earthquake thanks to the skill of Slavo Vorkapitch.



stand, stressing the physical similarities between Jekyll and Hyde and not the differences like Mamoulian.

A comparative analysis of the first transformation scene in both films shows this strikingly. In Mamoulian's film the spectator is much closer to the character from the outset. Indeed the scene is presented through the device of a mirror, which means that the spectator is led to identify with Jekyll's position as he beholds the reflection of his gradually changing face. However, the spectator only witnesses the first outward manifestations. The camera leads him away from the mirror in a movement which blurs the setting and involves him in the character's inner visions. Mamoulian presents a montage of images all referring to previous scenes of the film and emphasizing on the one hand the moral reprobation of his entourage (Lanyon and Carew), on the other hand the desire induced by the resilient memory of his first encounter with Ivy and also his own pent up violent instincts. We are thus shown successively a series of shots dissolving into one another in a kind of circular motion: Jekyll confiding to Muriel his fiancée that "he can't wait any longer", her father hammering "Positively indecent", Lanyon's reproach, "your conduct was disgusting", Carew again stressing rules of conduct, "it isn't done", Jekyll's previous outbreak directed at Carew, "I could strangle the old walrus" followed by a shot in medium close up where he expresses his sexual desire, "can a man die of thirst?", finally a shot of Ivy's dangling legs<sup>9</sup> while her voice purrs "Come back soon".

Throughout the scene we hear a heart beat accompanied by a kind of low droning sound which intensifies our uneasiness. As Mamoulian states:

To accompany the transformations I wanted a completely unrealistic sound. First I tried rhythmic beats, like a heart-beat. We tried every sort of drum, but they all sounded like drums. Then I recorded my own heart beating, and it was perfect. Then we recorded a gong, took off the actual impact noise and reversed the reverberations. Finally we painted on the soundtrack, and I think that was the first time anyone had used synthetic sound like that, working from light to sound. (quoted in Milne, 49)

We then come back to the room, no longer blurred, as Hyde filmed in subjective camera moves towards the mirror revealing his simian<sup>10</sup> appearance and showing his exultation at his newly found freedom. ("Free, free at last..."), but also his youthful

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<sup>9</sup> In Fleming's film the dangling leg is replaced by Ingrid Bergman's face which remains by means of a dissolve on the subsequent image of Jekyll and Lanyon in the carriage. This shift illustrates the toning down of the erotic dimension.

<sup>10</sup> This better corresponds to Stevenson's own notations concerning Hyde whose apish proportions and gestures are outlined.

innocence and even fear of his new environment as he first hides behind a pillar. Thus the spectator is, to some extent, associated with a monstrous figure. It is all the more provocative as Hyde is closer to a neanderthalian ape-like creature than to a civilized human being.

The second transformation scene in Mamoulian's film is in a way more classic, but also formally inventive. Jekyll faces the viewer in frontal close up and is gradually changed into Hyde in a single shot, the camera focusing alternately on his face and hands, thus allowing time for make up. This spectacular metamorphosis akin to a modern morphing represents a technical feat long held a secret. Mamoulian used filters of different colours so that layer after layer of make up could be disclosed without breaking the continuity. Hence as Pierre Berthomieu states, an impression of dissociation: "Filmé en frontal, Jekyll apparaît comme dissocié de lui-même, comme si des parties de son visage lui échappaient peu à peu en une suite de masques qui empêchent l'unité". (Berthomieu, 37).<sup>11</sup> This time, the spectator witnesses each stage of the transformation and is confronted ultimately to a rather primitive and regressive image.

From then on, there will be very few subjective shots from the point of view of Hyde in Mamoulian's film. In some climactic moments, for instance when Hyde seduces Ivy by sheer strength and hypnotic power or when he threatens Ivy or later tries to assault Muriel, he is filmed frontally in extreme close up, drawing closer and closer to the camera as if the object of the aggression was the (female) spectator, identified with the point of view of the victims. However Hyde is not only characterized as a sheer brute. In other words, Jekyll is constantly present within Hyde as for instance when he reads at the Soho flat the newspaper announcing Muriel's return from Bath, or when, witnessing in the park, on his way to Muriel's house, the cat preying upon the bird, he repeats, in a different lower tone, the same fragment of Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* already uttered by Jekyll prior to his transformation: "Thou wast not made for death, immortal bird". Mamoulian also emphasizes Hyde's sadistic and murderous impulses as is illustrated in the psychological torturing and strangling of Ivy, much more than in the murder of old General Carew which is shown at a distance, the victim being off screen as he is beaten to death. In this version, Jekyll tries to the very end to conceal his criminal

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<sup>11</sup> "Filmed frontally, Jekyll appears as dissociated from himself as if parts of his face slipped from him gradually in a series of masks, preventing unity."

acts performed as Hyde and to escape justice and retribution. He does not commit suicide (as in the novella) and is ultimately shot by a policeman while trying to resist and escape, dangling in the air like an ape and clinging to a shelf. In death, Hyde reverts as in Robertson's film to the original body and face of Jekyll.

### **Conventions, Moral Values and Expressions of Desire**

The opening scene in both films already testifies to obvious ideological, moral, religious and cultural choices. Each foregrounds one specific setting and mood. Mamoulian's film starts in Jekyll's drawing-room where he plays the organ (Bach's famous Toccata and Fugue) which stresses his spirituality, sensitiveness and lofty ideals, but also a form of excitement, exaltation, as is signified when he plays again on the instrument to celebrate his future wedding. Moreover, the reference to the organ may be ambivalent as this instrument can also be associated with evil (male) characters for instance in *The Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, 1928) where Erik the Phantom (Lon Chaney Sr.), plays his own organ score unaware of Christine Daaé's presence, or in Edgar Ulmer's *The Black Cat* (1934) where the diabolical architect (and magician) Poelzig (Boris Karloff) also plays Bach's Toccata.

The shots following the opening scene also stress the public (and popular) figure of Jekyll. The choice of a sequence shot, with a subjective point of view, is quite daring. Jekyll expresses his thought-provoking ideas concerning the possible partition of the soul through his provocative address to students and colleagues at the university amphitheatre. What is emphasized is thus a public appearance which is also dramatized by the sudden change of the camera position and the low-angle shots on Jekyll, while we are identified with the diegetic spectators forming the audience.

Fleming's film opens with a clearly significant shift of setting, not at Jekyll's house, but during a church ceremony, at the moment of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, with the sermon of a Bishop perturbed by a man raving about the necessity of evil. Jekyll obviously takes interest in the man, a potential patient for his research on how to separate good and evil within the mind or rather the soul. Fleming downplays the philanthropic character of Jekyll (we hardly see him at the hospital) and emphasizes his transgressive quest. Jekyll no longer addresses students, in a public space, but he develops his theory during a dinner party where he exposes his ideas in front of Sir Charles Emery, the Bishop (Charles Aubrey Smith) who was earlier delivering the

sermon, some growingly outraged and indignant fellow doctors (including Dr Lanyon), a colonel and some flabbergasted women including Mrs Marley, the hostess who gives the party. While Mamoulian emphasized the conflict between nature and culture, civilization and instinct, Fleming reverts to a more conventional opposition between good and evil and the narrative is fraught with religious references, also introducing the character of the Bishop who uses sensible arguments to counter Jekyll and is rather presented in a positive light, not at all a caricature. The film ends with a religious hymn with female choirs and Poole, Jekyll's servant, kneels down and says a prayer, "Lord is my Shepherd", as an epitaph to his master whose body, shot to death in the semblance of Hyde has gradually recovered the appearance of Jekyll.

As Virginia Wright Wexman wrote, in Mamoulian's film we shift from the stereotype of the white perverted and degenerate upper class rake interpreted by Barrymore in the silent 1920 version to another, more darwinian stereotype, in conformity with the American context of the thirties: that of the Black primitive, sexually aggressive and seen as more than a potential threat for white females. Thus in this version, Hyde is construed as an embodiment of some phobic fears or fantasms (cf *King Kong*, released one year later) which correspond more to the American context of the thirties than to the English one of the finishing nineteenth century.

In 1941, the context has changed and censorship is also enforced more strictly. Hence also the change in the modes of representation of the monstrous Other and a complete erasure of the racial connotations attached to the character and particularly well illustrated in the scene of Muriels's aggression by Hyde, protruding his lips in a grotesque way as he attempts to kiss her. One positive consequence of that shift is that Hyde appears more realistic and convincing than the apish, abject being in Mamoulian's version where Hyde also undergoes a progressive physical degradation, as if he reverted more and more to animality: his face at first smooth becomes hairy, his features are creased, more distinctly simian. As Wexman states:

The abomination represented by Hyde's sexual appetite is made palpable by his hideousness. While Jekyll's handsome demeanour is often enhanced by backlighting and is set off by the grace of his carriage, the coarse typically underlit features of Hyde are complemented by stealthy, apelike movements. Thus the racial overtones inherent of the representation of Hyde are intimately associated with his physical repulsiveness. (Wexman, 289).

In Fleming's version, the treatment is quite different, though the actual disclosure of Hyde is also delayed. Spencer Tracy carries out his transformation from Jekyll to Hyde through a minimal use of make up and props, playing upon the expressiveness and mobility of his face (with thinner lips, more bushy eyebrows, teeth showing and wide open eyes) and the transformation of his voice, broken, low and raucous when he embodies Hyde. The first scene is again filmed frontally without the device of the mirror however, an absence which establishes a distance rather than favours an identification process with the character. As soon as he swallows the potion, Jekyll collapses in a kind of swoon, but instead of witnessing his metamorphosis, the spectator is taken inside his subconscious and partakes of his fantasies (a point we will revert to) and not as in Mamoulian, his memories. When the transformation is completed and Hyde becomes visible, Fleming delays the disclosure of his new image by means of various devices. Tracy is first turning his back at us as he gropes on the floor, then reels up to a standing position, then his distorted shape is seen through glass bottles, finally the mirror through which he gazes at his new self is covered with dust, so that his face is blurred. Only when he wipes it clean, can we discover Hyde whose appearance is much closer to the human. Thus Fleming goes against the animalization of the character of Hyde (hinted at in Stevenson's text), maybe also because MGM feared some possible analogies between the animal, sexual predator and black people seen as potential rapists. In Fleming's film Hyde is, significantly enough, killed by Dr Lanyon who appears as an auxiliary of justice and the dominant order, an advocate of moral conformity and a potential rival for Jekyll despite his assertive Puritan stance and his pruriency in matters of sex.

### **Gender issues: The Foregrounding of Women Characters**

The two films foreground female characters, a means for Hollywood cinema to appropriate the myth and put it in conformity with its requirements in order to meet the spectator's expectations. Already we find in John Robertson's silent version two antinomic female figures: Millicent, the pure innocent girl, and Gina, the promiscuous low-class Italian dancer. The latter may have been inspired by Sybil Vane the young actress who falls in love with Dorian and commits suicide in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This exotic, marginal and highly attractive dark-haired woman (Nita Naldi) announces Mamoulian's Ivy in some respects but she remains a

relatively secondary character. Her encounter with Jekyll is cut short and her relation to Hyde is hardly developed as we only see its beginning and its outcome.

Mamoulian brings essential changes by giving an equally important part to Muriel, the upper-class respectable fiancée of Jekyll, and Ivy, the low-class, promiscuous “fallen” girl and also by suggesting an implicit rivalry between them. Muriel (Rose Hobart) is even presented by Jekyll during the garden scene as an initiatory figure, as an embodiment of the mystery of female sex and desire. As Jekyll states emphatically: “But now, the unknown wears your face, looks back at me with your eyes”. The impact of Jekyll’s words is reinforced by framing and editing devices: a close up of Muriel’s face followed by an extreme close up on her eyes suggests the fascination she exerts upon Jekyll—whose eyes are also framed in close up—as if she were drawing him (as well as the spectator) to her like a magnet or absorbing him. The female character is sublimated and seen as an unfathomable mystery in almost a poesque tradition: the eyes of Ligeia, “as deep as the well of Democritus”.

As they kiss, Luigi Arditi’s waltz-song *Il Bacio* (1860) is resumed and the camera glides first on the statue of a cherub, then upon twin waterlilies until it discloses the apparently ominous shadow, projected on the pavement, of a man, which proves only to belong to Hobson the butler, recalling Muriel to her duties as a hostess and interrupting a scene of secret intimacy. However as soon as they get inside, the lovers start waltzing again, lost among the other dancing couples. Jekyll’s request to marry earlier is rejected by the General who judges his endeavour “positively indecent”. Jekyll, frustrated and furious, takes his leave, but we may notice that Muriel’s image lingers a long time, superimposed on the next shot where we see Jekyll and Lanyon step down the staircase of the Carews’ house. This lap-dissolve announces a subsequent, even more insistant and significant one, that on Ivy’s dangling legs, while it establishes the first of a series of parallels between the two women. Various devices are used to establish this implicit rivalry, such as lateral wipes which split the screen, for example when Ivy Pierson, on the left side of the frame drinks a glass of champagne after her visit to Jekyll while Muriel, on the right side, vainly expects the Doctor at the reception where their wedding should be announced. In fact, the device stresses the dramatic irony of the situation. Jekyll neglects his fiancée because in the physical form of Hyde, he is about to visit Ivy who he calls “my pretty little bride”, but he is only intent on murdering her for her betrayal.

Mamoulian also stresses Muriel's capacity of resistance to her father's authority. Though she is at first obedient and refuses to leave with Jekyll, asking him to be patient, she does assert her independence of mind when Jekyll comes to visit her after having missed the dinner party announcing their wedding. While her infuriated father refuses to welcome him, she imposes her views and allows Jekyll within the house against her father's will. This approach of the female character is rather progressive and modern, if not quite subversive.

In Fleming's version, the vision of women is more conventional. Beatrix the fiancée is presented as more naive and submissive, knowledge and power being on the side of the male figure as can be seen in the equivalent garden scene. Jekyll dispenses his knowledge to the innocent girl who also heard Jekyll's talk on the presence of good and evil in each individual. To her anxious query concerning the nature of their love feelings: "There is nothing evil in that, is there?", Jekyll answers in a very self-assured paternalistic tone, almost like a father figure. The scene is filmed very simply in a two-shot where Jekyll and Beatrix face each other, filmed in profile. Its end (Jekyll kisses Beatrix) is similar to Mamoulian's but with a difference: it is no longer a servant whose shadow is ominously projected on the ground, but the father himself who interrupts the lovers' embrace, preceded by the noise of his footsteps on the soundtrack. Sir Charles takes advantage of the situation to warn Jekyll against what he calls his "flight of fancies" and tries to discourage him from pursuing his subversive research on the splitting of the soul which he considers as "harebrained". During the whole scene, Fleming uses a classical, sober editing style which contrasts with Mamoulian who constantly changes the frame, makes a provocative use of close ups and uses quick editing, denying the famous Hollywood classic transparency.

At another level, contrasting with Muriel who at times challenges her father, Beatrix appears as more submissive to patriarchal authority. However, she does visit Jekyll at his place by night after waking up in fright. When her rather shocked father arrives to take her back home, she first resists and Jekyll must convince her to yield to paternal orders. Interestingly, Muriel's subsequent rebellion scene is erased from the film as Jekyll calls Beatrix from behind the window pane, preventing her father from noticing his arrival.

After this romantic and lyrical version of love, both Mamoulian and Fleming provide a more sensual, eroticized version in introducing the character of Ivy, the cockney girl, played with gusto by both Myriam Hopkins (in Mamoulian's) and Ingrid Bergman

(in Fleming's), but in a different register. The sequence where they strive at seducing a rather willing Jekyll is a good illustration of the spectator's involvement through "mise en scene". In Mamoulian's film, while the camera is set inside Ivy's room, the door opens, giving way to Jekyll holding in his arms Ivy who showers insults on her aggressor, then starts her game of seduction. The next shot is an extreme close up on the top of Ivy's thighs, corresponding with the point of view of Jekyll, but also positing the spectator as voyeur and almost participant since Jekyll remains off screen — only his hand enters the frame as it is seized by Ivy who presses it on her thigh. The involvement becomes even stronger when the position of the camera changes: Ivy looking at the camera faces Jekyll off screen, thus the spectator. However while Jekyll is supposed not to see, having his back turned, the spectator is having a privileged position as he is allowed to witness Ivy's undressing. The camera follows Ivy's movement while she bends to pull up her dress, but instead of coming up to focus on her face, it remains fixed upon her thighs and is raised again only when Ivy, having taken off her stocking, throws her first garter at Jekyll's feet. By showing only Jekyll's legs and cane in the frame, Mamoulian favours the spectator's identification as he is inclined to fill the missing part of Jekyll's body. The scene culminates with the often commented glimpse of Ivy's naked body as she embraces Jekyll. While Lanyon, who has entered unexpectedly and interrupted the kiss, (another parallel with the garden scene) and Jekyll leave, the image of the dangling legs of Ivy continues to be seen through a slow lap dissolve on the following shots, while her words are repeated almost obsessively: "Come back soon... yes you can." While this scene stimulates Jekyll's erotic impulses and leads him to become more pressing when he next meets Muriel, it will also motivate his transformation as Hyde while he loses patience about Muriel's delayed return from a trip imposed by her father, obviously to put him to the test.

The treatment by Fleming is more subdued and less overtly eroticized. Ingrid Bergman remains almost fully clothed, discloses little of her body except for her bare shoulders, and the scene is more romanticized, even melodramatic, less playful and ironic. The director relies much more on the proximity of the two characters filmed in close up, but there is no metaphorical play, no sexual games and little exhibition of female flesh. Fleming's approach thus seems less audacious in his conception of Hyde and his representation of women who are more dependent and submissive than in the earlier film.



Both versions play upon the ambiguity of the Jekyll/Hyde character, especially in the parallel scenes of Ivy's visit to Jekyll's cabinet after she has been beaten up by Hyde and of the last and tragic confrontation between Hyde and Ivy. It is made clear for the spectator that Jekyll is conscious of what Hyde does and vice versa. This is why Jekyll<sup>12</sup> has some money brought to Ivy, but also why he feels embarrassed when Ivy shows her bruised body and complains about Hyde's brutality and inhumanity. This mutual awareness is also shown through Hyde's sarcastic repetition of Jekyll's words and Ivy's statements. Obviously, Jekyll and Hyde share a common memory. In Mamoulian's film, before strangling Ivy, Hyde even gives away his secret, asserting his hatred of Jekyll, but also admitting the common identity of Jekyll and himself: "I am Jekyll!" In order to emphasize Ivy's dawning recognition of the truth, Fleming adds a significant moment. While Ivy Petersen is about to depart from Jekyll's house after having been promised by Jekyll that she would not be troubled by Hyde again, she turns round and expresses some misgivings: "For a moment I thought...", implying an uncanny connection between her benefactor Jekyll and her tormentor Hyde. The camera closes up on her face, stressing her distressed and puzzled expression.

### **Sexual fantasies**

While the sexual content is strongly present in Mamoulian's film, especially in the scenes featuring Jekyll and Ivy or Hyde and Ivy, the representation remains rather sober and restrained, especially during the transformation scenes. The first one is related to memories and opposes the law and morals represented by Carew and Lanyon, as we saw, and desire is signified specifically by the shot on Ivy's dangling legs which had already lingered a long time in a previous sequence. In the second transformation scene, we only see the shift from Jekyll to Hyde from an external point of view and we have no access to his interiority.

In Fleming's version, there is more emphasis on dream images filled with sexual imagery and metaphors which mostly concern sado-masochistic fantasies centered round the two women, the respectable high society Beatrix and Ivy who here features

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<sup>12</sup> With a significant change. In Mamoulian's version, Jekyll sends Poole and his identity is revealed to Ivy. In Fleming's version, the benefactor is still Jekyll but he remains anonymous.

as a barmaid<sup>13</sup>. This sequence is replete with rather explicit Freudian symbolism. During the first transformation scene, Jekyll absorbs the potion and starts noting symptoms, then his hand fails him and he collapses on the floor. The camera leaves him to enter his subconscious. The first image shows a quiet expanse of transparent water (an image of previous happiness) covered with white water-lily flowers. The water becomes opaque and the surface is hollowed by quick whirling movements (a possible echo of Stevenson's text evoking "a running mill of images"). The lilies become two female faces, their eyes turned towards the top of the screen, as if an unconscious desire were actualized. The analogy with Jekyll's state is all the clearer as one hears the polka dance music later associated with Ivy (and already very faintly heard in the carriage when Jekyll left her). The water whirlpool becomes a flood of mud (or burning lava) absorbing, aspiring the two women downwards, burying their faces. Here again, the symbolic meaning is fairly obvious: the mud can signify moral depravation, and lava, the unleashing of repressed desire. The last fantasy is even more explicit as Jekyll becomes a coach driver who cruelly whips, lashes his horses, a white and a black one, filmed in close up, filling the frame. This scene adumbrates Hyde's subsequent whipping of Ivy at his Soho flat. Again the image shifts. By means of a dissolve, the horses are superseded by the faces of Ivy and Beatrix who express contrasted emotions (terror and delight) when their flesh is exposed to the biting of the whip, whose impact is reinforced by a rhythmic musical motif. Beatrix, the pure fiancée, expresses sexual jouissance while Ivy expresses intense fear, an inversion which may correspond to Jekyll's fantasy or the spectator's.

The second transformation scene stages sexual fantasies still more explicitly. The scene manages a progression in the violence of the representation of sexual drives. Beatrix is first seen, dressed in a white virginal gown, lying prone in a bucolic setting. However in order to convey the intensity of desire, two enormous eyes (Jekyll's) are superimposed on the frame, a perfect example of the voyeuristic "male gaze" defined by Laura Mulvey in her famous article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema". Then follows a close shot of Ivy in a similar position, but laughing aloud, then the camera cuts to Beatrix whose face expresses an intense terror, as if she were confronted with the look of someone who would have altered his appearance (Jekyll become

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<sup>13</sup> While Mamoulian's Ivy is clearly promiscuous with her customers and could indeed be a prostitute, Fleming's Ivy denies being a whore while she is in her room with Jekyll. However, her stammering the phrase "I ain't" and her unfinished sentence denote a form of uneasiness.

Hyde). Volcanic vapours reappear, with a superimposition of a bottle where the body of Ivy is inscribed, her hands crossed like a mummy's, in a state of passivity and abandonment. Then Beatrix finds herself enclosed in the bottle. A gigantic hand manipulates a cork-screw above Ivy's head. The cork-screw/face explodes orgasmically while the musical score, dramatized during the whole scene by means of string crescendoes, reaches a paroxysm, with the unleashing of the brass instruments and the crashing of percussions. Just after the end of this second transformation, Hyde goes to the music hall in order to find Ivy and satisfy his sexual thirst but also his violent, sadistic impulses. Failing to seduce her, he provokes a brawl and bribes Ivy's employer, asking him to fire her. Thus, left out at night in the cold, destitute, Ivy becomes an easy prey for Hyde.

### **Paradoxes**

First, contrary to what might be expected, Fleming's remake is not particularly innovative aesthetically. While Mamoulian experiments with many formal devices as we saw, plays upon contrasts in light and shadow in a subtle way and uses subjective camera and montage as well as sound effects very efficiently, Fleming reverts to a more conventional way of filming and editing. He mostly relies on shot-reverse shot editing and favours dramatic close ups, especially on Ingrid Bergman's beautifully expressive face. There is also less invention in the filming of the transformation process as Hyde is not much physically different from Jekyll. The morphing device is clearly imitative of the earlier film. Thus the remake seems less ambitious and less inventive than the original film, which may be seen as paradoxical.

Fleming and MGM also play upon two seemingly opposite and contradictory strategies. On the one hand they explicit, by means of an overt sexualized imagery, elements that remained more discreet and metaphorical (or metonymical like Ivy's garter and Jekyll's cane) in the earlier adaptation. On the other hand, they offer a more consensual and conformist view, highlighting normalcy, social order and a manichean opposition between good and evil. Jekyll finds in death, as in Mamoulian's version, his familiarly handsome physical appearance (contrary to what happens in the novella where the body of Hyde remains as such even in death), but the religious aspect is much more emphasized in the remake.

Fleming also stresses the image of the father, a respectable, sensible bourgeois figure, quite different from the almost caricatural General Carew in Mamoulian's version. The ideological values of the dominant class are less challenged. The interpretation of the myth depends on a specific social, ideological and cultural context which here incites the MGM director to erase some disturbing elements, present in the former version. Fleming's remake tends to tone down or overlook the controversial issues raised by Mamoulian. His approach is less bold and original both as regards the conception of Hyde, who is however more credible<sup>14</sup> (Bordat, 143) and the representation of women who appear more dependent and submissive than in the previous film. This may correspond to an evolution of the context, but also to the ideological choices made by a more conservative studio which adopts a moralizing discourse. However, as we saw, another striking feature of the film is the emphasis on sexual imagery fraught with a relatively heavy-handed psychoanalytical symbolism, a necessary counterpoint to the explicit conservative stance and a way to appeal to the spectator's voyeurism.

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<sup>14</sup> As Francis Bordat states: "La discrétion du maquillage de Hyde-Tracy ne diminue pas son apparence maléfique. Bien au contraire".