



Literary Studies

# Medium Specificities of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson: Marvel Comic, Video Game, and Korean TV Drama

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## A B S T R A C T

This study analyzes Medium Specificities found in the adaptations of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. This study uses Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation focuses on medium specificity in engaging audiences and the process of repetition but not replication. This study found three adaptation works of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* fulfilled the process of repetition but not replication from their textual transformations and innovations occurred in the works.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The novelette *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* focuses on the investigation by a lawyer named Gabriel John Utterson related to a badly behaved man named Edward Hyde and his relationship with his best friend who is also Utterson's client, doctor Henry Jekyll. With various mysterious and unpleasant events, it is revealed that Jekyll has found a potion that can awaken a hidden side in a person that is different from the personality that is usually shown in society. Utterson's investigation revealed the fact that Jekyll had drunk the potion too often, which was able to change Jekyll physically and personality so that Jekyll could behave freely as someone with a different identity named Edward Hyde. It turned out that Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde are the same people.

As with the classic literary works published in the late of 19th century and earlier, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson has been categorized as a literary work owned by the public domain. It means that the public owns this work and is no longer a subject to copyright. Project Gutenberg, a service site that provides copyright-free classic literary works, publishes this

novelette through their official website in e-book format (Stevenson, 1886). Apart from the original version, this novelette was also written and retold in an abridged language that is easily understood by various publishers of classical works. Apart from being retold, of course, this novelette has been adapted in various other popular media.

Marvel Comics is a comic publisher that is famous for its superhero comic releases with popular characters such as Captain America, Spider-Man, Iron Man, The Avengers, Doctor Strange, Fantastic Four, X-Men, and others. In 1976, Marvel published a comic adaptation entitled *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Kin Platt and drawn by Nestor Redondo (Lee and Plan, 1976). It is not surprising considering that in addition to releasing superhero comics, Marvel Comics has also released various comics with standard themes and adaptations from various other media such as *Star Wars* or *Transformers* comics. This comic adaptation is part of the *Marvel Classic Comic Series* which also releases illustrative adaptations of other classic literary works such as *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne. Adaptation of *The*

Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Marvel focuses on Henry Jekyll's efforts to question and free his evil side (and humans in general).

In 1988, Toho released a side-scrolling action video game for the Nintendo Entertainment System or NES (called Famicom in Japan) for the United States market region titled *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Unlike the original novelette by Robert Louis Stevenson, this game tells the story of Dr Jekyll to attend his wedding to Miss Millicent at a church. However, along the way, Jekyll faced obstacles that made him angry and turned him into Mr Hyde. He had to turn back into Jekyll again by reducing his anger until he arrived at the church safely. The game received low ratings and is often criticized as one of the worst NES games ever released on this console. This game was critically panned, especially from the control and gameplay aspects that were too difficult and confusing to players. *Something Awful* (2000), a page that dedicates its content to video games gives a score of -37 for this game because of the control aspect. Apart from that, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is also a recurring joke by James Rolfe in his character *The Angry Video Game Nerd* in two episodes (episode 2 and episode 95) to show the frustration experienced by an NES gamer for more than twenty years (AVG Episode 1,2, 2020; *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Revisited*, 2020).

Seoul Broadcasting Company (SBS) from South Korea produced a television drama series titled *Hyde, Jekyll, Me*, starring Hyun Bin and Han Ji-Min in 2015 for 20 episodes (*Hyde Jekyll*, 2020). Contrary to the novelette version by Robert Louis Stevenson, the story of this television series focuses on a character named Go Seo-Jin who has a rough and cold personality, but when his heart rate exceeds 150 beats per minute, a gentle and friendly personality named Robin will emerge. Korean drama romantic comedy genre can be considered as a parody of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* because it is based on a webtoon with the same title and has its uniqueness, which is different from the source of the work it has adapted.

Medium specificity is an inseparable aspect of the adaptation process of a work from one medium to another. From the addition, subtraction, replacement or change required in the process, the transformation and innovation of the text must also be thoroughly studied, considering the difference in

the final results compared to the media from which they originated. It is fascinating to examine it from the perspective of adaptation studies, comparative literature, and even in intertextual studies because of the changes in the media presented from telling, transforming, showing, and eventually interacting.

This study focuses on the dynamics of textual transformation and innovation on the adaptation works of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. This study also focuses on the medium specificity presented by each adaptation of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* either from comics, video games and to Korean TV drama.

According to Linda Hutcheon in her book *The Theory of Adaptation* (2006), adaptation works have various ways of engaging audiences in an immersive manner. This method can be in the form of telling, showing, and interacting directly, so as to be able to answer what, who, why, how, when and where adaptation occurs and occurs. After that, the adaptation must be seen from the point of view of the advantages and disadvantages of the original source of the adapted work. The adaptation work is viewed and contextually analyzed against the time, place, social, and cultural the two works are created. The adaptation work will be seen whether it is really a work of adaptation as an 'adaptation' and also how the appeal of an adaptation work as a repetition but not a repetition but not replication (169-173).

Medium specificity is a repertoire of adaptation that puts forward the elements of creativity and transcoding into different sets of conventions (33). Hutcheon emphasized that the social and communication dimensions of the media in the adaptation process are important elements in their form (34). In this case, this study sees the obvious transitional aspects of the medium between adaptation works compared to original source works from the perspective of the presentation of the work. The transition process includes telling referring to literary works, showing in comic adaptations and television dramas, and interacting or controlling on video game adaptations.

## II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method utilizing textual analysis of a literary work and its adaptation works. Qualitative methods are used to accommodate textual analysis and innovation between the works

of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Robert Louis Stevenson's Hyde* with the adaptation of the Marvel comic book *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1976), the video game *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* for NES published by Toho (1989), and Korean drama *Hyde, Jekyll, and Me*, which aired on SBS (2015), in the realm of textual adaptation research, comparative literature, and the relationship between texts (intertextuality).

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the Marvel Comics version, offers an interesting textual innovation seen from the storyline. The stories presented in the original and adapted works remain the same, but the Marvel Comics version uses a very different plot arrangement. The storyline used by the adapted version is a chronological forward plot and without any flashbacks at all.

The beginning of the story from the comic version of this Marvel adaptation starts from the perspective of storytelling by Henry Jekyll who admits that he

has found a potion that can separate his personality to face two types of life, his life as a good person and as a bad person who does not know the rules. It is different from the original novel version which started from a conversation between Enfield and Utterson about the incident about a child being violently beaten by someone named Mr Hyde.

Generally, the storyline of the Marvel Comics version can be compared with the plot of the original novel version in the table 1.

*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the Marvel Comics version, still offers the same story as the original novel version. However, with a story sequence that is very different from the original version, this is an innovative text presented by this comic version. It is an exciting finding because the visual medium presented by the comic version is entirely linear and does not experience any flashback at all.

Another text innovation brought up by the Marvel Comics version is the use of Henry Jekyll who

**Table 1. Comparison of Plot Sequence**

Plot	Original Novelette Version	Marvel Comics Version
Beginning	Utterson's conversation with Enfield regarding reports of a beating case accompanied by the payment of a check on behalf of Henry Jekyll by someone named Mr Hyde.	The origin of the double life of Henry Jekyll and his discovery of a potion that can accommodate his desire to face this double life.
Raising Action	Utterson argues with Jekyll about the contents of his will, indicating that all his property should fall into the hands of Edward Hyde.	Edward Hyde collided with a girl because he was annoyed, Hyde hit the child roughly with his stick, causing a commotion and Enfield forced Hyde to compensate and take the child for treatment. Hyde hands Enfield a check on Henry Jekyll's behalf.
Climax	Jekyll suddenly turned into Hyde without the potion, shut himself up in his laboratory room and did not want to be disturbed. Utterson tries to break down the laboratory door and finds Hyde lying dead, Utterson is confused about where Jekyll is but finds a letter from Jekyll.	Utterson's thorough investigation of Edward Hyde. Utterson believes that Edward Hyde has used and threatened Jekyll in the matter of drafting a will. Utterson tries to catch Edward Hyde, who has become a fugitive.
Falling Action	Utterson reads the contents of Poole's letter and is shocked to learn that Jekyll and Hyde are the same people. Utterson then reads the contents of Jekyll's letter, which clarifies what exactly happened. Utterson was very sorry that he had just found out what had happened and that he could do nothing to help his client.	Jekyll suddenly turned into Hyde in the middle of the city and went hiding. Hyde asked Poole to help him, Poole was shocked to find out that Hyde drank a potion and turned into Hyde. Jekyll finally chose to shut himself in his laboratory room.
Resolution	Henry Jekyll and Poole's confession regarding the actual facts about what happened to Henry Jekyll and his dual identity as Edward Hyde due to the potion they found.	Utterson reads the entire contents of Poole and Henry Jekyll's letter and feels sorry that he cannot do anything to save Jekyll from his desires and actions in facing the double life of good and evil that resulted in Jekyll's death.

not only functions as the main character but also becomes the narrator of this comic. Using Jekyll as the narrator, the reader sees the whole story from Jekyll's point of view and his confession of the desire to face two different lives, to live as a good doctor and to live as a bad guy who does not know the rules. This point of view is very different from the original version of the novelette which, although it does not have a narrator, the narrative perspective focuses on Utterson's investigation of a Hyde and his relationship with his client, Henry Jekyll. Seeing the approach from Jekyll's point of view as a narrator in the Marvel Comics version is an effort to facilitate readers' understanding of the storyline. With this approach, the reader is told from the start that Jekyll is Hyde and that he wants it. In the original version of the novel, the approach from Jekyll's point of view is adopted when Utterson reads the contents of Jekyll's confession, at the end of the novelette.

The use of the narrator from the main character of the story is the medium specificity caused by the transformation of the text from the process of telling to the process of showing. The presence of the narrator's text is consolidation as a result of changing from the writing medium to image medium with dialogue accommodating the reduction in the text that occurred. The presence of text is no longer significant because it is replaced by scenes depicted by the comic. The function of the text that was previously dominant in the original novel version has been reduced only as a text for the narrator and fillers of the dialogue presented.

Overall, there are not many textual innovations presented by the Marvel Classic Comics version can be found apart from a different storyline sequence and the use of characters as the narrator of the whole story. The author finds that the use of Henry Jekyll as a narrator is a medium specificity that can only be presented by a comic version emphasizing visual elements in its storytelling. The use of a narrator is an element that is widely used in various media comics or graphic novels but choosing the main character as a narrator is a medium specificity that can only be presented by comics like this Marvel Comics' version.

Unlike the comic version adaptation by Marvel, the video game adaptation of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* produced by Toho and distributed by Bandai America for the Nintendo

Entertainment System (NES) platform offers an entirely new storyline. With the side-scrolling action genre, players control Dr Jekyll or Mr Hyde with a storyline that was not in the original novel version. Narratively, this video game version offers a story about Dr Jekyll going to the church due to marrying Miss Millicent. In this game, players control the character Dr Jekyll and move towards its destination and face various kind of attacks from residents, insects, animals, to various disturbing obstacles. If the attack hit Dr Jekyll too much, the character will get angry and turn into Mr Hyde. Players then destroy various monsters that appear in Mr Hyde's world to turn back into Dr Jekyll. As Dr Jekyll, he does not have any abilities and should be able to dodge attacks with limitations. As Mr Hyde, he can throw a projectile (in the game called Psycho-wave) that can destroy the appearing monsters.

Each character has different goals. Dr Jekyll scrolls to the right of the screen and his mission are to dodge more attacks because he has no abilities. On the contrary, Mr Hyde scrolls to the left of the screen and have to kill as many monsters as possible to revert to Dr Jekyll. By moving left, Dr Jekyll's distance to his destination would be even further. The game ends when Mr Hyde runs out of power or if he fails to turn back into Jekyll, a bolt of lightning will strike Hyde, and the game must be repeated.

This game has two different endings depending on who finally arrives at the church. When Jekyll arrives, the game is over, and Jekyll can finally marry Miss Millicent (considered a bad ending). If Hyde arrives at the church, then the game continues to face the last enemy, and the game is over with Jekyll getting married but accompanied by Hyde's silhouette with a cross behind his back indicating that Hyde's character has died (considered a good ending).

The textual transformation and innovation presented by the game *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* for NES take the form of a completely new storyline not related to the original novelette version. The storyline of this video game version is a free interpretation of the source that maintains the dualism of personalities experienced by Jekyll and Hyde. Presenting a different story gives a new destiny to Jekyll, which if the player succeeds in completing the game (regardless of

the ending chosen), Jekyll will live happily with Miss Millicent and the character Hyde who haunts him destroyed. Apart from storyline changes, the game also offers new characters that have nothing to do with the novelette version. Miss Millicent's character and the monsters Mr Hyde is purely a creation of Toho to develop the gameplay. These monsters are called demons and have different characteristics from one another.

The medium specificity presented by Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde video game that the original novelette version does not have is Mr Hyde's unique ability which can shoot projectiles to kill the monsters he faces called psycho-waves. In the novelette version, Mr Hyde does not have any special abilities except for his violent and brutal nature and actions. In this game, Mr Hyde equipped himself with an attack as a feature in video games impossible to be presented in the novel version. Providing a shooting attack attribute is a common feature in action shoots' em up games. Psycho-wave attacks themselves are classified as ineffective and often make it difficult for players because their attacks are not straight and rarely hit the opponents. Psycho-wave is the medium specificity that can only be presented by the medium of interaction (controlling) and cannot be presented by works on the medium of writing (telling).

Overall, Video game of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde offers an interesting textual innovation with the presence of a new story plot and unique elements that the source did not have. Unfortunately, the execution of this game is low due to the character's unresponsive movement and the game's difficulty level that is too high. This difficulty level is more due to the game design, which looks promising in concept but poorly implemented in gameplay.

The Korean television drama titled Hyde, Jekyll, Me focuses on the character Go Seo-jin who has heart problems and conflicted romantic twists with a woman named Jang Ha-na. Seo-jin is a cold and calculating playground director which has a split personality in contrast to himself named Robin, who is more cheerful and friendly. Seo-jin transforms into Robin when his heart rate exceeds 150 beats per minute. This dual personality occurs as a result of the trauma he has experienced in the past.

This television drama from South Korea does

not carry the same plot, time and place setting, characters, and themes as the original novelette version. Hyde, Jekyll, and Me only bring elements of multiple personalities to the main characters. With a place and time setting that only focuses on the Korean area, with the characters of South Korean people and the theme presented is more of an attempt to forget the traumatic past through true love, making this television drama the least related to the source.

The textual transformation and innovation presented by Hyde, Jekyll, Me can be seen from their choice to maintain multiple personality elements, each of which is contradicting each other. However, unlike the original novelette, this Korean television drama version does not present a physical transformation but only a behaviour change. In the novels, comics and video game versions, the character Jekyll has a handsome and normal appearance while the character Hyde is ugly and creepy. Meanwhile, the characters Seo-jin and Robin maintained their physical appearance and only differentiated between wearing glasses.

Hyde, Jekyll, Me falls into the romantic comedy genre that is very different from the original novelette. The narrative aura is light and cheerful, especially in the development of the character Robin who has the desire always to save people (saviour complex). The comedy element in this drama makes Hyde, Jekyll, Me an adaptation that is less gloomy and more cheerful and bright.

Hyde, Jekyll, Me offer an interaction between Seo-jin and Robin which is controlled by 19 rules (nineteen protocols) so that others do not know this dualism condition. Seo-jin and Robin have existential conflicts with each other, so various rules must limit them. Seo-jin wished that Robin would never come back in her life again and take over the body for her own sake.

The medium specificity presented by Hyde, Jekyll, Me is a creative visualization display in the form of a heart rate indicator on Seo-jin's glasses. This creative visualization can only be displayed in a visual medium (showing) which is unique and cannot be translated into a written medium (telling). Unfortunately, this indicator appears inconsistent and is ultimately ignored.

Overall, Hyde, Jekyll, Me is an exciting adaptation because it only takes the duality of personality

and applies a new setting, characterization, and theme that is different from the original version. The medium specificity presented in the television drama feels minimal and does not show that this work is a faithful adaptation of a novelette written by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Generally, the three adaptations of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* has fulfilled the element of repetition but not replication. Each adaptation work has medium specificities that can only be displayed thanks to the features that only these works have. *Marvel Classic Comics The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* put forward the narrative element taken from the main character by ignoring the storyline that goes flashback into a chronological forward plot and is easier to show through visual media (pictures or comics). Video games of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Toho gives the character the psycho-wave power attribute as a unique element much like a shooting game feature (action shoot 'em up genre) that can only be presented through the medium of interaction. Meanwhile, the South Korean television drama *Hyde, Jekyll, Me*, produced by SBS, puts forward elements of creative visualization to make it easier for viewers to understand the state of Seo-jin's character who turns into Robin when her heart rate passes 150 beats per minute.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The three adaptation works (*Marvel comic*, *video game*, and *Korean TV Drama*) above have fulfilled the elements of 'repetition, but not replication' which those three adaptations progressed taking the essence of the source into the works of the adaptation.

*Marvel Classic Comics' The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* drastically changed the composition of the storyline without changing the content or meaning of the storytelling to accommodate the needs of comic storytelling that were heavy on visualization. Presenting a more chronological and linear storyline arrangement provides a different experience for readers, especially those who have read the original literary work. This comic carries the same nuance, characterization, setting, and story theme, but with a different plot sequence by adding a narrator element from the main character as a central factor that distinguishes it from the original work.

Toho's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* video game, having a terrible and challenging playing style, can present its interactive nuances and offers an entirely different storyline according to the producer interpretation. The characterization that is added with the power attribute called *Psycho-wave* like other games with visual media (video) is a specificity that can only be presented by this work and not possible to be presented in the original version. *Psycho-wave* is a mainstay of Toho as part of its product sales strategy to emphasize the difference between this work and the original literary work.

Meanwhile, the South Korean television drama titled *Hyde, Jekyll, Me*, produced by SBS emphasizes the dualism of personality rather than presenting the same plot, setting, characters and themes. With elements typical of Korean dramas, this work puts forward creative visualization as a mainstay in giving viewers an understanding of what is happening to the main character.

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