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ENGL 374-80

20 June 2022

George Carew: Static or Not?

In the silent film *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920), the philanthropic Dr. Henry Jekyll is corrupted by his future father-in-law, George Carew. Throughout the film, Dr. Jekyll battles for control with his alter ego, Mr. Hyde. Contrary to this, George Carew remains a rather static character throughout the film. He is introduced with “Always as far from misery and suffering as he could get was Sir George Carew” (0:6:13). During dinner with Dr. Jekyll, Carew says that “A man cannot destroy the savage in him by denying its impulses. The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it” (0:12:33). From the beginning, Carew’s character is a dispassionate and elitist man who doesn’t bother to concern himself with right and wrong. The only thing he does concern himself with is his daughter, Dr. Jekyll’s love interest. Dr. Lanyon says that “The one decent thing about him is the way he has brought up Millicent” (0:22:21). **Carew does not change as the film progresses, and this seems to be intentional. Carew’s character represents temptation and pompousness.** While Jekyll battles between good and evil, Carew only shows concern when his daughter begins to worry about Jekyll. Meanwhile, Carew speaks horribly of Mr. Hyde and wonders what Jekyll could possibly “have to do with a fiend like that” (0:55:19). **This again shows Carew’s shallow nature because he only wants to associate with the esteemed Dr. Jekyll rather than get to know or show concern for the ‘deformed’ Mr. Hyde.** It certainly plays into the ableist nature of Carew’s character, who finds Mr. Hyde repulsive due to the stigma of his appearance. The Disability Studies Reader explains that the

stranger with a visible difference is “thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (DSR 135). It also explains that “the term stigma, then, will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (DSR 136). This concept of the stigma and its negative implications is certainly present in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Mr. Hyde presents as deformed and disfigured, which is unfortunately meant to amplify his evil-natured characteristics. Despite the fact that this is a clearly flawed and incorrect view, it is one that George Carew certainly holds. Carew describes Mr. Hyde as a “vile thing” (0:57:45) and withdraws his daughter’s hand in marriage to Jekyll for merely having association with Hyde. This leads to Carew’s demise. From the beginning of the film to the end, George Carew’s character remains static. Other than himself, Carew cares only for Millicent and separates himself from the world of the unfortunate and disheveled. He stays true to his introduction of being as far away from misery and suffering as possible, neglecting those around him until it leads to his demise. Ultimately, he serves as a force of temptation for Jekyll and discredits those near him due to the stigmas that surround them.

Works Cited

Goffman, Erving. "Selections from *Stigma*." 1963. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th Edition, Routledge, 2017, pp.133-44.

Robertson, John S., director. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Paramount, 1920.

This essay rightly recognizes that only his concern for Millicent tempers George Carew's self-centeredness, and that his hedonistic outlook remains unshaken throughout. Thank you for this very effective argument.