

Gothic Transformations:

Monsters and Mad Science

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A 5 session course exploring the transformations of the Gothic in the nineteenth century. Following the origin of the Gothic with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* in 1765 and the rise of Gothic icons Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis in the 1790s and early 1800s, the nineteenth century saw the Gothic turn towards monsters, supernatural transformations, and science.

This course will take you through some of these key developments in British Gothic, and to start us off we'll be looking at some of Mary Shelley's short stories. Though perhaps best known for her iconic 1818 novel *Frankenstein* with its mad scientist, Shelley continued to publish throughout her life and authored many short stories. After exploring a selection of Shelley's short stories, we will turn to Robert Louis Stevenson, focusing on his best known novella *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and also his short story 'The Body Snatcher.' These strange tales offer different perspectives on nineteenth century monsters as well as reflecting anxieties surrounding scientific discoveries and the relationship between the human body (dead or alive) with science. Finally, we will turn to H. G. Wells's novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau* to explore the Gothic anxieties at the end of the century surrounding evolution, devolution, and mad science.

Texts:

All of the texts are available to read free online. For each session, we will provide a link to the online version as well as recommended print versions if you wish to purchase the text and have a physical copy.

- Mary Shelley - short stories (1819-1835) including: "Transformation", "The Mortal Immortal", "Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman"
- Robert Louis Stevenson - *Jekyll and Hyde* (1886) and 'The Body Snatcher' (1884)
- HG Wells - *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896)

Gothic Transformations: Syllabus

Session 1: Mary Shelley's Short Story Transformations

In this first session we will be exploring the developments of the Gothic in the Romantic period. Focusing on a selection of Mary Shelley's short stories (with reference to her other works like *Frankenstein*), we will explore the ways in which the Gothic transformed from stories of old castles and persecuted heroines to tales of alchemy, immortality, and scientific speculation.

Key Texts:

Shorts stories will include

"Transformation"

"The Mortal Immortal"

"Roger Dodsworth: The Reanimated Englishman"

Available online here:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/56665/pg56665-images.html>

<https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/shelley/redding/dodsworth.html>

Recommended Print edition:

'Transformation' and 'The Mortal Immortal':

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/184749787X?ie=UTF8&n=341677031>

Further reading

(Unless indicated this is not essential reading for the course, but rather should be viewed as a starting point if you want to read around the novels. We will also create a google drive for the course with other recommended sources)

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818)
- Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (1826)
- Angela Wright, *Mary Shelley* (University of Wales Press, 2018)

Session 2-3: Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Tales

In the next two sessions we'll be turning to Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson and discussing the evolutions of Victorian Gothic. The focus of session two will be Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and we will explore the development of Gothic themes and tropes including found documents, good and evil, and Gothic doubles or doppelgangers alongside the anxieties surrounding contemporary scientific issues such as evolution and degeneration.

In the third session we will continue to discuss *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in relation to Stevenson's short story "The Body Snatcher". Written as a Christmas Ghost story for the *The Pall Mall Gazette*, this short story follows a traditional ghost story format but like *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* it does not contain supernatural ghosts: instead, and drawing on the real lives of Burke and Hare, this story depicts the dark side of anatomy, medical dissection, and body snatching.

Key Texts:

Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1885)
"The Body Snatcher" (1884)

Available online here:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/43/43-h/43-h.htm>
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/426/426-h/426-h.htm>

Recommended Print edition:

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Terror - Penguin Classics

Further reading

(Unless indicated this is not essential reading for the course, but rather should be viewed as a starting point if you want to read around the novels. We will also create a google drive for the course with other recommended sources)

- Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (1883)
- Robert Louis Stevenson, "Markheim" (1884)

Session 4-5: H. G. Wells's Science-Fiction Experiments

The final two sessions will focus on "father of science fiction", H. G. Wells, and his mad scientist novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. In session five we will consider the growing anxiety about humanity and animality in the 1900s, exploring Wells' engagement with the Gothic. We will look at the Victorain discourse around vivisection and the Gothic in light of scientific developments.

In session six we will round out the course by considering how *The Island of Doctor Moreau* set the tone for the Gothic of the Fin de Siecle. We will look at the progression of the Gothic's fascination with transformation and physical transgression, looking back to Shelley at the beginning of the 19th century and then bringing ourselves up to date by exploring how the tradition has continued to develop with texts such as Silvia Moreno Garcia's reimagining of Wells' in *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau*

Key Text:

The Island of Doctor Moreau (1896)

Available online here:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/159/159-h/159-h.htm>

Recommended Print edition:

The Island of Doctor Moreau - Penguin Classics

Further reading

(Unless indicated this is not essential reading for the course, but rather should be viewed as a starting point if you want to read around the novels. We will also create a google drive for the course with other recommended sources)

- H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (1895)
- H. G. Wells, *The Invisible Man* (1897)
- H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1898)
- Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *The Daughter of Doctor Moreau* (2022)