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Florida International University
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Master's Thesis Defense

Abstract

A Non-Normative Paradigm: Disability and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Gothic Literature

by

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Within nineteenth century society, normalcy is presented through unfeasible means of appearance and identity, leading to a rejection of the self. By exploring characters in Victorian gothic literature, who are marginalized by society, and invoking the work of Gail Weiss, Kim Hall, and others, this essay investigates the way these norms are immortalized through published Otherized representations and how they expose the lingering presence of rejection of disabled, queer, and gender-fluid bodies. Through the analysis of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray, I look at the contextualization of marginalized existence compared to able-bodiedness and normalized gender to argue that the impacts of nonnormative representation are prevalent in breaking these stereotypes. Through topics of historization, normalcy, disability aesthetics, gender, and sexuality, I find that normative realizations of appearance and identity are unattainable because they cannot be achieved within the complexities that are born as constructs of society.

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Major Professor: Dr. Maneck Daruwala