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Florida International University
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Master’s Thesis Defense

Abstract

The Monster Within: How Disability Narratology Uncovers the Representations of Bodily Difference and Disability as Monstrosity in Gothic Fiction

by

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The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the various depictions of monstrosity in Gothic literature through the lens of a new theoretical framework, disability narratology — coded patterns operating within literary texts that pertain to the impaired body and its portrayal as monstrous through repetitive tropes that paint bodily differences as horrifying. The villainous other, the monster, is often representative of something more than what the author plainly states. It often works as a stand in for characteristics deemed undesirable within a cultural group. The monster is a complex being within each text, speaking—or not speaking in some instances—and acting through coded patterns that distinguish the villainous other from the acceptable norm that the main character typically represents. Likewise, disability in literature is portrayed as the antithesis of societal norms and acceptability. To do this work, this thesis will analyze three prominent vampire texts, Carmilla, by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, published in 1872, Dracula, by Bram Stoker in 1897, and Queen of the Damned, by Anne Rice in 1988.

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Place: MMC, DM 457

Department: English
Major Professor: Dr. Martha Schoolman