

# *The Strange of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

## *and Mr Hyde*

Examining Gothic Tropes



# Why do we consider *Jekyll and Hyde* to be gothic?



- ❧ There are no ghosts, actual monsters (?), or crumbling castles.
- ❧ There isn't a whole lot of suspense, sensationalism, no great mystery to be solved by the audience (though this is true for the characters).
- ❧ There is no damsel in distress and no real brooding, Byronic hero.
- ❧ Much of the novel takes place in polite, urban society in London.
- ❧ Stevenson is was/is well-known for the range of genres he adopted: essays, travel writing, short stories, novels and romances, as well as poetry, plays and biography. Stevenson also composed music.

# What *does* make *J & H* Gothic?



Some things **should** be taken into account before we can fully answer this:

1. How does the novel destabilise strict, culturally enforced binaries?
2. What atmosphere does the novel provoke by appealing to the senses and by churning the brain cogs?
3. Which gothic features does Stevenson employ in his novel?

# Dissolving Boundaries



- ❧ The gothic portrays a radical instability in the established binary thinking of society.
  - ❧ Good/evil, living/dead, human/animal, civilised/barbarian, rational/supernatural, sanity/madness etc.
- ❧ When the boundaries between these assumed positions are blurred, characters are forced to question their understanding of the world and their place in it.
- ❧ Many of the tropes we are about to look at are involved with one or more of these binaries.

*Can we think of examples in literature where any of these boundaries are dissolved?*



# Gothic Atmosphere



“Two fears dominate this Gothic world, the fear of terrible separateness and the fear of unity with some terrible Other. They are embodied in two classic formulas of the ghost story: the heroine’s terrifying discovery that she is all alone and her subsequent discovery that – horror of horrors! – she is not alone.”

(Eugenia C. Delamotte, *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth- Century Gothic*)

*What does this quote suggest about the gothic, gothic atmosphere and the mind (or thought patterns)?*

# Gothic Atmosphere



## ☞ Sensation Fiction:

- ☞ One of the original terms for gothic literature is sensation fiction.
- ☞ As the name suggests, these novels were focused on producing sensations (or significant physical and emotional responses to the book's content).
- ☞ While these sensations include fear, the Gothic usually deals more specifically with emotions such as paranoia, dread, confusion, and helplessness (as distinct from the horror genre).
- ☞ Consider the way that the five senses are appealed to, provoked or stimulated in the Gothic.
- ☞ The Gothic is more interested in exploring **why** something is frightening, than simply scaring their reader.

*Does anyone think that they can explain this paradoxical sounding definition of fear?*

# Conventional Gothic Features/Elements/Tropes



Beyond creating a Gothic atmosphere, conventionally, the gothic is interested in exploring ideas related to:

- ☞ The Supernatural
- ☞ Science
- ☞ Religion and 'the soul'
- ☞ Beauty and aesthetics; the sublime
- ☞ Civilisation/society
- ☞ Psychological as well as physical spaces (related to fear)

*Let's look at these generic conventions in more detail...*

# The Supernatural



*Nosferatu*, 1922

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, 2004





# The Supernatural



- ❧ The use of the supernatural is possibly the most well-known gothic trope.
- ❧ It refers to unexplained magical or divine sources.
- ❧ It provides a clear-cut way to examine and destabilise boundaries.
- ❧ Supernatural characters often occupy two opposing positions at once. For example:
  - ❧ Vampires, ghosts, zombies = living and dead
  - ❧ Werewolves = human and animal

# The Supernatural In *J&H*



## The Doppelgänger

- ☞ A duplicate or double of a character (often alter-ego).
- ☞ Often threatens to take over their life in some way.
- ☞ The uncanny and the uncanny valley.

*What might be the function of a double? Why is it significant to the Gothic?*

## Deal with the Devil

- ☞ Linked to the belief that monsters and animals have no souls.
- ☞ What function does the soul serve?
- ☞ Can you be human without a soul?

*Is the soul relevant today or to you in some way? Why/why not?*

# Science



*Frankenstein, 1931*

*The Island of Dr. Moreau, 1996*



# Science

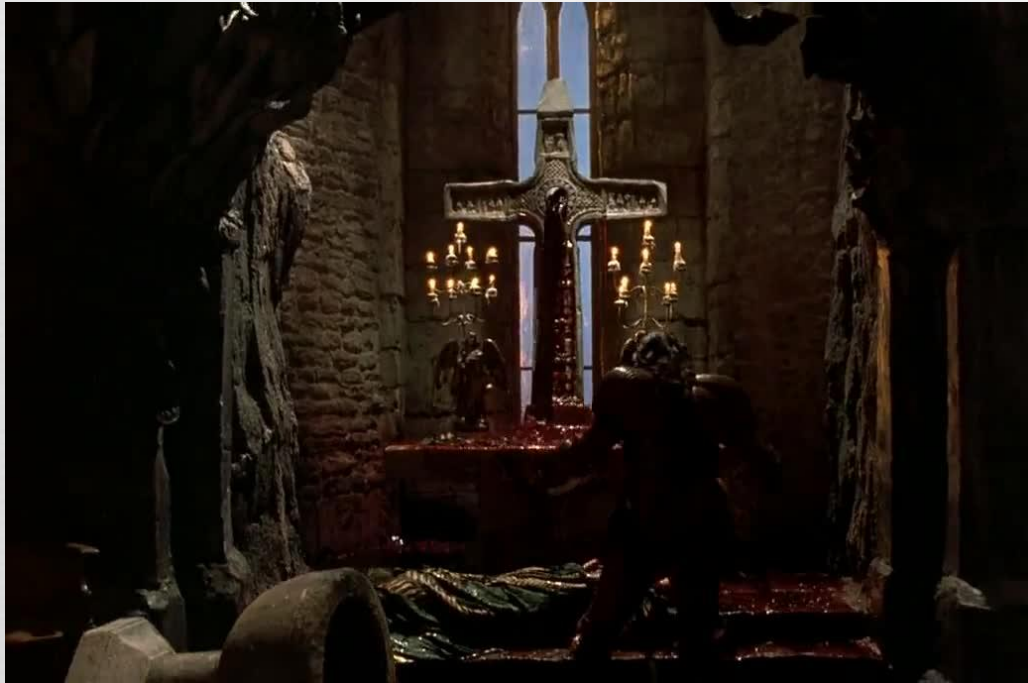


- ∞ The gothic is often skeptical about the morality and scope of ever-growing and developing scientific experimentation and advancements.
- ∞ The Gothic is interested in how our ‘humanity’ and how society is affected by science and technology (and related new ‘discoveries’ and inventions).
- ∞ The gothic often asks ‘what are the consequences of someone gaining God-like abilities?’ E.g.:
  - ∞ The ability to give life (or eternal life).
  - ∞ The ability to alter genetics.

*Can you think of examples in literature and/or film that explore this question?  
Why is this such a focal point in our (or another – past or present) society?*



# Religion and the Soul



*Bram Stoker's Dracula, 1992*



*Taste the Blood of Dracula, 1970*

# Religion and the Soul



- ⌘ Paired with science as a rigid binary to destabilise (they are often pitted against one another).
- ⌘ Most gothic texts will investigate the morality and consequences of one or both.
- ⌘ The gothic often raises questions about whether God's nature is cruel or kind.
- ⌘ The discourse can be seen to have stemmed from the Protestantism vs. Catholicism debates/arguments and alliances (in Europe over 100s of years).
- ⌘ Humanity has often been defined (and distinguished from other life) by the possession of a 'soul'.



*What is the soul? Do we believe humans are different or special? Why/why not?*

From *The Monk*, by Matthew Lewis

# Beauty and Aesthetics



*The Phantom of the Opera, 1925*



# Beauty and Aesthetics



- ∞ Beauty and ugliness are often examined in relation to the body and soul (in relation to morality and sometimes intelligence and class), with varying levels of criticism and opinion on the ideas explored.
- ∞ Often the idea that the physical body reveals humanity's animalistic origins and places us within a context of the natural world is explored in the Gothic. (*Why is this interesting or important?*)
- ∞ The belief that the soul is related to the 'higher order' of humanity and the notion that our appreciation for the arts is indicative of our heightened capacity to appreciate beauty are often explored in gothic texts.
- ∞ The grotesque and the monstrous often indicate dehumanisation and/or regression.

*Can you think of any examples in literature that are related to these ideas?*



# Civilisation



Opium smoker's in the East End of London, 1874

# Civilisation



- ❧ The term Gothic is derived from the name of a Germanic ‘barbarian’ tribe called the Goths.
- ❧ The genre is interested in contrasting the old and the new, and in revealing the barbaric hearts of ‘civilised’ characters.
- ❧ Our violent, superstitious past bursts forth into the text’s ‘civilised’ present, critically questioning what it means to be ‘civilised’ or ‘barbaric.’

*Is this still relevant (or worthy of discussion)? Why/why not?*

Modern readers might note that Victorian discussions about civilisation are often hindered by contemporaneous views about race, religion, and gender.

# Psychological Space



*Beauty and the Beast, 1991*



# Physical/Psychological Spaces



- ❧ Gothic settings and architecture often echo the psychological or moral state of characters (and/or their society)
- ❧ Gothic narratives' action/plot/story occurs in both interior *and* exterior spaces.
- ❧ The fundamental aspect of gothic atmosphere is the psychological experiences of characters.
- ❧ Old buildings, often in a state of decay and disrepair can and usually act allegorically.
- ❧ Gothic settings often reveal the criminal or corrupt (and hidden) aspects of a character or society.

*Can we think of literary examples in relation to these points?*



# Psychological Space



**Interior**



*Crimson Peak*, 2015

**Exterior**



*Wuthering Heights*, Robert McGinnis

# Psychological Spaces Allegorised



## Interior Settings

- ☞ Attics, basements, and dungeons.
- ☞ Narrow passageways.
- ☞ Secret locked rooms.
- ☞ Labyrinthine, enclosed spaces.
- ☞ Churches, castles, haunted houses etc.

## Exterior Settings

- ☞ Isolation and anonymity.
- ☞ Desolated, wild, uninhabited areas.
- ☞ Moors, forests, and swamps.
- ☞ Grimy, corrupt cityscapes.
- ☞ The chaos of nature and/or society.

*What might some of these settings actually symbolise / allegorise about a character and why?*

# Group Work



- ❧ Each group is to produce some sort of **visual map** or **guide** to these gothic features in *Jekyll and Hyde*.
- ❧ Use **examples/quotes** (give the chapter and page numbers, and contextualise and summarise the plot event).
- ❧ Make notes for each example that discuss how it is linked to the trope and how it investigates larger themes and ideas (can/should be linked to context). Try to make notes on the *why?* as well as the what and how.
- ❧ Groups will share their work with the class – each group assigned a gothic element/trope to work with.