From Prodigy to Pathology: Monstrosity in the British Novel from 1850 to 1930.

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Abstract
In this project, I explore cultural representations of aberrant embodiment, society's monsters, to assess the sociopolitical implications of corporeal deviance. Imaginative literature participates in the re/construction of monstrous bodies as an...
element of a larger social process of individuation and community through exclusionary practices.

By situating Victorian and Modernist British novels in dialog with one another, I chart a trajectory in cultural understandings of embodied deviance that moves “from prodigy to pathology.” The change occurs, I argue, because the rise of medical practices ultimately constitutes the “domestication” of the monster, rendering it knowable, predictable, and containable within the boundaries of the diagnostic paradigm. Whereas the monster in Victorian fiction presents an ambivalent figure—threatening and alluring—in Modernism, the monster has been rendered largely performative and instrumental, the product of its pathologization by scientific discourse.

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