

EN2L8 TALES OF TERROR: GOTHIC AND THE SHORT FORM
SECOND ASSESSMENT – 3000 word ESSAY

This assignment is worth 70% of the overall module mark.

DEADLINE: submitted on Tabula by **12pm on TUESDAY 17th January 2023** (Term 2, week 2)

You should choose **one of the options below** and create your own specific thesis based on that option. Your assignment should include **evidence of some original secondary reading and engagement**. You may greatly benefit from evidence of original research using digital and/or physical primary resources.

You may use texts set on the course and/or you may go beyond and use other examples of Gothic short pieces from the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920) and you may use primary and secondary material from the course as well as going beyond it.

You are welcome to use some of the textual contents from your first assessment anthology/ anthology reviews, but the essence of the topic/argument must be different. Check with me if unsure.

I strongly advise coming and discussing your ideas with me in an office hour.

Essays should adhere to the English department presentation guidelines as per <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/essay>

Note we use MLA or MHRA referencing.

Extensions should be sought via **self-certs** on Tabula (under the personal circumstances tab) or using the **specific extension button** on tabula next to the assignment (this route requires evidence of unexpected circumstances).

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1. In his article “To Make a Long Story Short”, Allen W. Grove views “the fragment as a quintessential unit that creates both the poetics and politics of Gothic fiction” (2) and warns that “we must be careful not to equate its fragmentation with ‘incompleteness’” (9). Using 2-4 examples of individual pieces first published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920), consider the relationship between the Gothic and “the Fragment” and/or the idea of Fragmentation.

2. Linda K. Hughes “searching periodicals page by page, issue by issue” and making “side glances across periodical titles” with “online as well as in printed materials” can produce “radiant images from traces of the solid, thick, and simultaneously layered materials of history out of which scholars must construct a new narrative line” (“SIDEWAYS!: Navigating the Material(ity) of Print Culture”). Using physical and/or digital resources, find a “new narrative line” that considers the relationship between magazine/ newspaper/periodical publication and Gothic short pieces from any part of, or from across, the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920).

NB: You might consider whether you want to compare different periodicals across a narrow time frame, or look at one periodical over a short or extended period, or even one single issue in detail. You may want to think about readership, editorship, and authorship, and/or to think about content between Gothic short fiction and what else is in the periodical, think about illustrations, formatting, advertisements, historical development, or a specific moment, etc.

3. In *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century*, Tim Killick writes that “[t]here is an ideological gap between stories collected in book form and those published in periodicals” and that changes in format and publication context can reshape a stories function and effect. Using between 1-3 short Gothic stories originally published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920), and then subsequent editions of those same stories (from any period), conduct an investigation into the effects caused by the process of revision.

NB: You may want to consider changes in format (e.g. an interpolated tale from a novel or travel book now being made into a single story, or lengthening/shortening, or ballad to prose etc), changes in publication space (commercial / literary, digital / physical, periodical / volume) and/or concentrate on textual differences.

4. Thomson and Hoeveler explain that “[t]he many writers interested in the poetic tale of terror turned to the ballad as a pliable medium for conjuring up the old, folk-inspired bogies and demons” (“Shorter Gothic Fiction”). Using 2-4 Gothic ballads of the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920), examine the relationship between this more poetic form and the use of the Gothic.

5. “The ecogothic inevitably intersects with ecophobia, not only because ecophobic representations of nature will be infused, like the gothic, with fear and dread but also because ecophobia is born out of the failure of humans to control their lives and their world” (Keetley and Wynn Sivils “Introduction: Approaches to the Ecogothic”). Using 2-4 examples first published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920), explore how those texts project or document the fraught relationship between humans and nature.

6. In Alison Milbank’s *God and the Gothic*, she posits the Gothic as a cultural means by which “writers seeking some mediation between the transcendent God and the diurnal reality of nature and the human [...] develop complex and creative theological strategies to allow a new metaphysical ‘home’ for the supernatural”. Using 2-4 examples first published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920), consider their treatment of the relationship between religion/theology and the Gothic/the supernatural.

7. In her chapter “The Gothic in and as Race Theory”, Maisha Wester explains that “Race has long been a haunting discourse in Gothic literature. Often masked by a monstrous visage, racial minorities appear throughout traditional Gothic texts as figures around which authors spin debates about civilisation, enlightenment, freedom and human nature.” Using 2-4 examples of Gothic short fiction from the long nineteenth-century (c.1780-1920), consider the relationship between the Gothic short form and ideologies of race and/or Empire and Nation.

8. In his 1827 essay “On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition, Walter Scott declares that “[t]he marvellous, more than any other attribute of fictitious narrative, loses its effect by being brought much into view. The imagination of the reader is to be excited if possible, without being gratified.” Examining text and/or illustration in 1-3 examples first published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920), explore the relationship between what is seen and what is not seen, what is obscured and what is revealed and how that relates to the Gothic effect.

9. Using 1-3 examples, investigate the influence of “folk-lore” (either legends and beliefs and/or the practice of collecting folklore/folklore scholarship) on the Gothic Short Form of the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920).

NB: You may want to take into account oral tradition of story-telling, frame narratives, illustrations, think about a piece in relation to its publication space, and/or you may want to focus on specific aspects such as narrators or spaces, or style etc. You might want to choose one strand of folklore and its use, or think about how folklore itself functions as the gothic short form.

10. Sarah Iltot writes that “Through the mechanisms of the Gothic short story, the reader’s imagined physical proximity to danger renders them accomplice and/or victim, either party to – or under threat from – the horrors presented therein (“Gothic and the Short Story”, 336-7). Investigate this claim, and the relationship between reader and narrative more broadly, with reference to 2-4 examples first published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920).

11. Darryl Jones writes that “Nineteenth-century medical horror provided the source for one continuing, and often highly controversial, strain of viscerally embodied horror, which placed a strong emphasis on the corpo-reality of fear,” (“The Horror story, 182). Investigate the emphasis on the body/medical horror in 2-4 short Gothic examples first published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920).

12. The narrator of “Fireside Horrors for Christmas” in the December 1847 issue of *Dublin University Magazine* declares that “telling ghost-stories is the proper employment for a winter’s night” and so too is a dark chilly night the proper setting for such stories. Using 2-4 examples first published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920), examine the relationship between Christmas and/or Winter and the Gothic short story.

13. Tabish Kair states that in the nineteenth century, “the novel-reading middle class lived in a relationship of ambivalence with both the aristocracy and the ‘labouring classes’” and “calls for ‘reforms’ were balanced not only between these two internal ‘Others’ – the aristocracy and the ‘labouring classes’ – but also marked by the ambivalence of the middle class towards both.” Using 2-4 examples, examine how the Gothic short form of the long nineteenth century (c.1790-1920) negotiates and uses notions of “class”.

14. With reference to 2-4 examples of short Gothic fiction first published in the long nineteenth century (c.1780-1920), explore Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet’s contention that “gothic has been the site of queer sexual and gender ambiguities from the start” (*The Poetics and Politics of the American Gothic*).