

B.A. Seminar
American Gothic: Origins and Consequences
HS 2018, Wednesday, 16:15-18:00
Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen

Puritan settlers came to America in the hope of fulfilling a divine promise, and yet, even during the crossing, what has since been called the American Jeremiad was born: What if we fail in this project and the country conceived as a ‘city on the hill’ will turn into a haven of devils, witches and monsters? Gothic sensibility is a response to this specifically American cultural worry. Early fiction taps into a fascination with the horror lying beneath the surface of normality, as does the poetry written in response to the civil war. And, of course, once the demonic moved to the silver screen, the gothic became one of the seminal concerns of cinema and T.V.

1. (19.09.) Introduction

A PURITAN LEGACY

2. (26.09.) Robert Eggers: *The Witch* (2015)
3. (03.10.) Charles Brockden Brown: *Wieland; or, the Transformation* (1798)
E.T.A. Hoffmann: “Der Sandmann”* (1816; optional)
4. (10.10.) Nathaniel Hawthorne: “Young Goodman Brown,”* “Alice Doane’s Appeal”* (1835-37)
5. (17.10.) Washington Irving: “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,”* “Rip van Winkle”* (1819-1820)
6. (24.10) Edgar Allan Poe: “The Black Cat,”* “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,”* “The Fall of the House of Usher,”* “Ligeia”* (1838-45)

BATTLE AT HOME AND OF THE MIND

7. (31.10.) Emily Dickinson: “Through lane it lay – through bramble”* (1861-65)
“I felt a funeral in my brain”* (1861-65)
“‘Tis so appalling – it exhilarates”* (1861-65)
“‘Twas like a maelstrom, with a notch”* (1861-65)
“The soul has bandaged moments”* (1861-65)
“One need not be a chamber – to be haunted”* (1861-65)
“If I may have it when it’s dead”* (1861-65)
“What mystery pervades a well!”* (1861-65)
“In winter in my room”* (1861-65)
8. (07.11.) Walt Whitman: “Drum-Taps”* (1891-92), excerpt from *Specimen Days** (1882)

DEAD MOTHERS, HAUNTED HOUSES, REVENANT BRIDES – REDUX

9. (14.11.) William Faulkner: *As I Lay Dying* (1930)
10. (21.11.) Alfred Hitchcock: *Psycho* (1960)
11. (28.11.) Herk Harvey: *Carnival of Souls* (1962)
12. (05.12.) Shirley Jackson: *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962)
13. (12.12.) Steven King: *The Shining* (1977)
14. (19.12.) Jordan Peele: *Get Out* (2017)

Select Bibliography:

Fred Botting. *Gothic*. 2013.

Leslie Fiedler. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. 1966.

Jerrold E. Hogle. *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*. 2014.

Robert K. Martin and Eric Savoy. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. 2009.

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock. *The Cambridge Companion to American Gothic*. 2017.

Requirements for the class:

- All students must prepare a thesis statement for each class, to be posted on Olat (course forum) by Tuesday 9 am of the respective week. This can also entail a series of questions, comments or associations; it will facilitate class discussion and allow me to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for the class sessions. **Neglecting to hand in 13 thesis papers will result in a fail.**
- Students taking the class for 6 KP must write an essay to be handed in on **March 1, 2019** (hard copy in my pigeonhole in the secretary's office and a pdf version to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch).
- BA thesis students are asked to present their project in the final session. You will have to hand in your **BA thesis by April 12, 2019** (hard copy in my pigeonhole in the secretary's office, and a pdf version to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch). It is wise to use the class discussions to test your ideas for this written assignment.
- Plagiarism is a serious offense and pertains to all assignments.
- All texts marked with * will be on OLAT.