Invasion, Disease, and the Other

Gothic Bodies:

Invasion, Disease, and the Other
Abhuman, Posthuman, and Dangerous

The Gothic body is a socially dangerous one. It is always on the brink of change, metamorphosis, and rupture - about to become something not-quite-human, but not inhuman. Many scholars of the Gothic describe these characteristics as either “abhuman” and/or “posthuman.”

1. Abhuman: the “not quite human,” on the brink of becoming something different but familiar.
2. Posthuman: the questioning and deconstruction of what is considered to be “normative” human behavior.
The Gothic Body and the Threat of Invasion

H.G. Wells’ “War of the Worlds” premiered as a radio drama on 30 October 1938 and, due to the high levels of stress and anxiety already present due to the impending second world war, caused a widespread public panic. In the aftermath, the majority of listeners interviewed assumed that the show was breaking news and assumed that the country really was being invaded.

Anxiety about “foreign” invasion has always been as gothic as it is scifi-ish.
The Gothic Body and Disease

- Disease as metaphor for race-mixing, class-mixing, STIs and impurity.
- Jack Halberstam says that the monster, by embodying all the “undesirable” components of the Other, produces normative humanity as a side effect. *Normalcy is defined by the abnormal.*
Carmilla: Vampiric Lesbianism and Suspect Blood
Abjection: Identity and Loss

“It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (Kristeva 4).