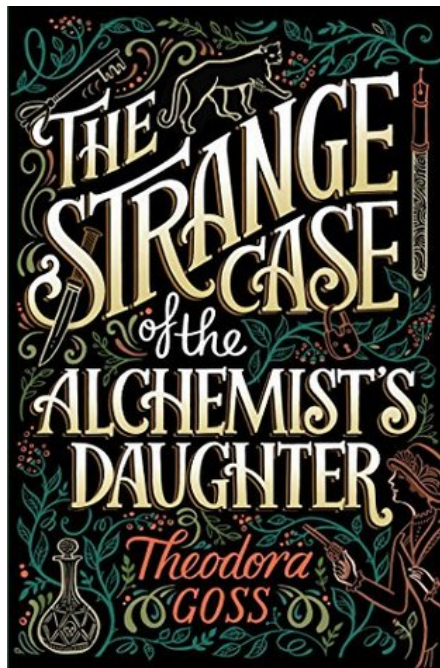




The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter

Theodora Goss

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The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter Theodora Goss

Based on some of literature's horror and science fiction classics, this is the story of a remarkable group of women who come together to solve the mystery of a series of gruesome murders—and the bigger mystery of their own origins.

Mary Jekyll, alone and penniless following her parents' death, is curious about the secrets of her father's mysterious past. One clue in particular hints that Edward Hyde, her father's former friend and a murderer, may be nearby, and there is a reward for information leading to his capture...a reward that would solve all of her immediate financial woes.

But her hunt leads her to Hyde's daughter, Diana, a feral child left to be raised by nuns. With the assistance of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Mary continues her search for the elusive Hyde, and soon befriends more women, all of whom have been created through terrifying experimentation: Beatrice Rappaccini, Catherin Moreau, and Justine Frankenstein.

When their investigations lead them to the discovery of a secret society of immoral and power-crazed scientists, the horrors of their past return. Now it is up to the monsters to finally triumph over the monstrous.

The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter Details

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From Reader Review The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter for online ebook

Veronique says

Being a fan of 19th century classics novels, this book from Theodora Goss was always going to be one I just had to get my hands on. Mary Jekyll, after the death of her mother, finds out some very puzzling information involving her father, who passed away several years before under strange circumstances, that she cannot resist wanting to solve. Her investigation leads her on a dangerous path peopled by some very intriguing people, Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson being only two of them.

From the first, I wondered how Goss would orchestrate such a tale, using characters from the Gothic canon, inventing others, playing with the known stories, and I must say she does on the whole a very good job of it, putting together an entertaining mystery. It is in the characters themselves however where she shines the most, portraying their interactions brilliantly.

There is one thing that might not be to every one's taste. The author creates a very unusual narrative where the main characters keep disrupting the narration with their comments on what is being told, injecting their own views on the events and how these are being illustrated. Readers will either love it or not. Personally, I did like it very much, especially since it didn't just enrich each personality and provide a comical angle (the nascent relationship between Mary and Diana is hilarious), but also reflected on the art of writing. It always amazes me how a technique that breaks the suspense of disbelief is used here to strengthen it...

Finally, do you need to have read the texts referred to here? Not necessarily, but you will enjoy this book a lot more if you have. (List:(view spoiler)

Rachel Schulte says

I REALLY wanted to like this book, especially after all the good reviews and the NPR review. However, the book was just too over cluttered. Between the discovery of not one, not two, but five different women from previous novels with unusual "monstrous" characteristics, not to mention throwing Holmes and Watson in there, Goss had no time to focus on any character development, leading to an exciting plot with a bunch of people that I just didn't care about. I mean, it made Sherlock Holmes boring. Sherlock. Holmes. The other aspect that threw me was the layers of fantastical that, when taken in moderation would have added up to a clever book, but by the end bordered on the ridiculous. By the climactic ending scene, I couldn't even keep up with the number of absurd characters involved. If she had focused on telling one good story instead of five mediocre ones, this book would have been great. Sometimes, less is more.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Final review, first posted on Fantasy Literature:

I've read several of Arthur Conan Doyle's original Sherlock Holmes works in the last few years, as well as *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. In my college days (not long after the Victorian age) I also read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Would it be sacrilege to say that I enjoyed this delightful pastiche and tribute to Holmes and other Victorian era fantasy better than most of the originals? What *The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter* lacks in literary depth, it makes up for in humor and accessibility.

Mary Jekyll, daughter of Dr. Jekyll, who has been gone for many years, is facing a penniless life on her own after her mother's death. Mary comes across some mysterious papers in her mother's desk that lead her to believe that Mr. Hyde may still be around (she has no idea he was her father's alter ego). The reward for Hyde's capture for his murder of Sir Carew many years ago is very appealing, but Mary's not certain whether that the reward is still being offered, or who she can trust with her potentially valuable information. So she decides to go to 221B Baker Street, to enlist the help of Sherlock Holmes.

One thing leads to another, and gradually we assemble a very appealing and fascinating cast of characters: Diana Hyde, a wild and irrepressible 14 year old; Beatrice Rappaccini (from Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Rappaccini's Daughter"), with poisonous breath and a burning touch; Catherine Moreau, a woman with disturbingly cat-like qualities; and Justine Frankenstein, an extremely tall and gentle woman who was assembled to be the bride of Frankenstein ? all women who might be considered monsters by society.

These young women, with the help of Sherlock Holmes and some additional characters (it's nice to see a servant play a substantive role in the plot), work together to solve a series of creepy murders, in which young prostitutes have been found dead with various parts of their bodies missing. To make matters worse, the murders are tied to a secretive society of scientists, the *Société des Alchimistes*, to which all of these women have a connection as well.

The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter is, on a higher level, faithful to the Victorian era and the works that inspired, but takes some intriguing (and necessary) liberties with the original stories: Mary Shelley deliberately misled her readers when she wrote that Dr. Frankenstein had destroyed his woman creation before giving it life, and Beatrice relates a different ending to "Rappachini's Daughter." While these women are generally well-grounded in Victorian times, we see aspects of that society that often don't appear in literature: Beatrice supports Votes for Women and Dress Reform, Catherine's atheism is counterbalanced by Justine's deep religious faith, Diana has been raised by prostitutes and mistrusts men on principle, and Mary finds herself wondering how much more women could accomplish if they were permitted to wear trousers.

These women are a diverse group, each with a distinct and memorable personality and unexpected talents. Though they've experienced rejection and cruelty in their lives, and some of them even sexual and other types of abuse, in the process of working together they find support and friendship. They eventually name their group the Athena Club ("We claim the wisdom of Athena, but we identify with her dubious parentage"). It's refreshing to see these familiar stories through the eyes of the female characters, rather than the men who used and mistreated them.

The sometimes dark plot of *The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter* is lightened by the humorous banter between these women, especially as ? in a rather meta feature of the book ? they continually interrupt Catherine's writing of their story with snarky comments and arguments about how the book is being written. These side conversations do sap a little of the tension from the story, since it's clear that all of these young women have survived the investigation and are still together, but they add a fun and creative twist to the story.

Though a part of the mystery is resolved, there are lingering questions about the the Société des Alchimistes, and another mystery raises its head in the end. Here's hoping for many more adventures and mysteries for the Athena Club!

I received a free copy of this book for review from the publisher through NetGalley. Thanks!

Anthony Ryan says

Theodora Goss mines the rich legacy left by the originators of the horror story to craft a tale of monstrous but compassionate heroines banding together to battle a nefarious conspiracy in 1890s London. A enjoyable and inventive romp through the murk and mystery of Victorian monsterdom which is sure to delight fans of Kim Newman's 'Anno Dracula' and Alan Moore's 'League of Extraordinary Gentlemen'.

Melora says

"The Unfortunate Case of the Gimmicks That Took Over the Story"

This was disappointing. Hard to see how anyone could write a mash-up of so many Victorian "monster" stories and make it boring, but that's what Goss has succeeded in doing here.

The business of having the characters interjecting comments into the narrative wasn't exactly a *problem*, but it didn't really add anything, and it was a bit of a distraction from the narrative. The real problem is that the author, in her eagerness to include references to so many Victorian characters, both literary and historical, completely neglected to write an interesting story. We have Jekyll and Hyde, Van Helsing and Renfield, Rappaccini and Moreau, Mary Shelley and her mad scientist, Darwin and Lamarck, Jack the Ripper, Holmes and Watson, and more, but the story holding them all together was, apparently, barely an afterthought. Characterization, also, was neglected, and most of the characters are completely flat.

The "conclusion," after the brief flare of activity that serves as a climax, is utterly interminable. Absolutely *nothing* happens in the last hundred pages, which are mind-bogglingly dull and repetitious. Reading the Kindle version, I kept supposing that something *had* to happen, or that maybe the final 10% would be a sample of the next in the series, but, nope. Two stars, and one of those is for the pretty cover.

Lindsay says

A fun literary mash-up set in the 1890s in the vein of The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen but with the daughters of some of fiction's most well-known mad scientists as well as other figures from the literature of the time.

Miss Mary Jekyll has just buried her mother and without her mother's endowed income she faces ruin due to lack of funds. On discovering a reference in her mother's estate to money being paid for the upkeep of "Hyde" she seeks help from the well-known detective Mr Holmes to see if the reward for the murder Edward Hyde is still on offer. The mysteries uncovered from this lead to Mary discovering family and others women with peculiar origin stories who are all connected.

This book is a lot of fun, particularly because of the interactions between the various ladies that Mary encounters and befriends. The conceit of the story is that one of Mary's friends is actually writing the story and including commentary from the group throughout, so we get the amusing reactions of the characters to how the writer is depicting them and each other. This is another "found family" story that works largely because of the clear affection that each of the ladies has for each other.

This is clearly book one of a series that I will definitely be continuing with. The final chapter hints at a new addition to Mary's ladies that should prove very interesting.

Philip says

3.5 stars

Clever and witty in the vein of many Victorian classics but much more accessible, if not necessarily as sophisticated.

There's a colorful cast of women based on said classics who are often charming and enjoyable to follow. Mary, the eponymous Alchemist's Daughter, is especially lovely and admirable. Her foil- and half-sister- Diana, is sometimes one-note in her perpetual disagreeableness, but always entertaining in her interactions with Mary. The inclusion of the reputable duo of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson adds another fun element, even more so because they are mainly relegated to supporting character status allowing the female cast to shine.

Goss employs the literary device of allowing her cast to interject their thoughts and reactions during the "writing" of the novel by Catherine, one of Dr. Moreau's creations. While it's cute and sometimes provides insight into the thoughts of the characters, it's not strictly necessary and comes off as more of a frivolous conceit.

The pacing is disjointed, the last third (basically all conclusion) especially, although I actually did enjoy Justine's lengthy monologue. It shows Goss's connection, love, and understanding of the source material and ended up being quite touching. Overall not incredible, but with the possibility of a sequel left wide open, (view spoiler) I'm more than willing to follow the Athena Club around on their next adventure.

Posted in Mr. Philip's Library

Fran says

I loved this book and blurbed it so very hard. Now I can share with you what I wrote after I read it.

To wit:

Theodora Goss' *The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter* provides a new and altogether mesmerizing revelation for fans of *Watson & Holmes*, *Van Helsing*, *Jeekyll & Hyde*, and *Victor Frankenstein*: until now, you've only heard half the story. Goss' deft, poetic interweaving of edge-of-the-seat adventure with the artful voices of her characters creates a matryoshka doll of hidden Gothic fiction in the best sense. *The Strange Case of the Alchemists' Daughter* proves the point that behind every evil genius you'll find a team of fantastic women working to set things right.

As if Charlie's Angels, as written by Mary Shelley, took over the Bluestocking Society, with bonus well-mannered explosions. Utterly delightful & transformative.

Karl says

This book is an advance readers copy.

samantha (books-are-my-life20) says

a really Interesting read if you love the Classics like Sherlock, and mary shelley Frankenstein, it's a Great Book that brings to life characters that we all think we know. from Sherlock to jekyll and hyde to rappaccini's daughter, The plot/mystery is interesting (solving the Whitechapel Murders), but more interesting is the origin story of the Athena Club and its monstrous members. I am to book two.

Fables&Wren says

The Cheerful Wednesday Book Club Pick for May 2018

Hey guys! I'm so excited for this book! I literally know nothing about what this is going to be, and I am kind of living for the surprise of it! Here is the schedule for this read.

All of these days are Wednesdays, because I thought that was a fun idea:

May 09: 01-05

May 16: 06-10

May 23: 11-15

May 30: 16-21

And we are back to actual chapters! The last two books have been great, but they have been in different formats. So we finally have chapters to go by now, and I am so excited about it! Who is joining:

June Pick: Aru Shah and the End of Time (Pandava Quartet, #1)

I AM SO EXCITED FOR THIS! MIDDLE GRADE FOR THE WIN!

Blog • Bookstagram • Goodreads • Twitter • LinkTree • Club

Maria says

I'm not sure what to say about this book. I liked the premise, I enjoyed reading it, I liked that it was a story about extraordinary women coming together as sisters. It even had Sherlock Holmes!

But something about the basic structure of it sort of threw me off. The story is punctuated by characters' comments, snippets of conversations and observations that happened over the course of the book's creation. On the one hand, it supposedly offers better insight into the personalities of the characters and makes

guessing the accuracy of certain descriptions throughout a bit of a fun game.

But at the same time, these conversations inevitably appeared at the story's climaxes, and by their nature slowed down the plot considerably. Now, I'm not one to need my plots car-crash fast (I do not need to be "hurtled along" by any means), and I actually love slower paced books that center around characters and relationships more so than "plot."

But even though this is explicitly addressed during one of the character asides that "this isn't one of your thrillers, it's the story of us coming together" the basic structure of the story--and the characters involved--were...well...suited to a thriller. And it was very hard for me to reconcile the artificially (is that the right word..? Expressly...Purposely...) slow structure with the thriller it encased.

And somehow it felt like the actual structure of the writing--punctuated with character observations--overlaying a thriller--murder! dark secrets!--actually ended up damaging both the exploration of characters/how they came together as well as acting in detriment to the thriller elements themselves.

That is to say, the periodic interjections did not seem to actually add dimension to the characters, and the fact that it was a thriller they were interjecting (?) also did not help the issue. So we have this story that's not a great thriller because it moves so slow because of character interjections that are supposed to add character but--to me, mind you--fail to do so, thus creating a rather disappointing slowly-paced not-thriller (thriller) with two-dimensional characters that obviously had backstories but who somehow never seemed to come alive, repeating the same line about "monstrosity" every 5 pages, touching superficially on their opinions on everything from God to suffrage, culminating in the very confusing realization that I technically knew a lot about the characters and their differences but at the same time felt no real closeness/empathy/understanding/attachment to/with any of them.

Our main characters felt strangely indistinguishable and had the same cardboard emotional appeal, leaving me dissatisfied. I could never get a feel for them. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson suffer the same fate, with personalities that technically exist but have no fundamental uniqueness. They reacted to every situation essentially the same (with Sherlock, of course, holding an edge in deduction and basic competence) but there was no depth somehow. It was dull where it should not have been.

But I have been harsh. I think it is worth a read. But I am not finishing this book feeling particularly attached to it, and that makes me disappointed. I wonder if it is in part because the humor didn't resonate with me as much? Ahh, maybe that's my problem.

Book Riot Community says

Ooooo, it's several classic characters all in one place! Mary Jekyll is looking for her father's old partner, the murderous Edward Hyde. If she turns him in, the reward will solve all her financial woes. Instead she finds Hyde's daughter, Diana, and a group of other women: Beatrice Rappaccini, Catherin Moreau, and Justine Frankenstein. With the help of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Mary and the others are going to solve the mysteries of their origins. This book is an epic nerdpurr!

Backlist bump: A Study in Charlotte by Brittany Cavellaro

Tune in to our weekly podcast dedicated to all things new books, All The Books:
<http://bookriot.com/listen/shows/allt...>

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/06/20/...>

“That was the first meeting of the Athena Club. ... Readers who remember their classical mythology will immediately realize its significance: Athena, born from the head of her father, Zeus. We do not claim the wisdom of Athena, but we identify with her dubious parentage.”

The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter may be the latest in a long line of mashups based off of some of literature's most famous horror and sci-fi classics, but it possesses a charm you don't find in a lot of retellings today. The awesome quote above is one of my favorites from the book—which I just had to use to begin my review, because it manages to capture the essence of this book so perfectly, as well as the strength and spirit of the women in it.

As the story begins, we are introduced to Mary Jekyll who is in mourning for her mother, dead after years of suffering from a debilitating madness. Left with nothing to her name, Mary has no choice but to sort through some of her family's old accounts, only to find that for years her mother had been sending money to a halfway house for “fallen women”. Following this trail, our protagonist is led to Diana Hyde, daughter of Edward Hyde, the man Mary only knows as her father's former employee—and murderer. Mr. Hyde has been wanted for his crimes for years, and with this new development, Mary has hopes that helping the authorities capture him would mean the end of her financial troubles once she collects the reward.

It is while following up on the case that Mary ends up meeting with the famous detective Sherlock Holmes and his assistant Dr. Watson. As it so happens, the two men are also currently helping Scotland Yard investigate a string of gruesome murders in Whitechapel. Some of the victims, all street women, were brutally dismembered and one even had her brain removed. Could these murders be related to the Edward Hyde? Further digging leads Mary and Diana to find and befriend more women, all of whom have been created through experimentation by a shadowy group known as the Société des Alchimistes: Beatrice Rappaccini, raised by her father to tend to a garden of poisonous plants until she herself became poisonous to others; Catherine Moreau, a beast woman brought to life by her creator's human-animal hybridization experiments; and last but not least, Justine Frankenstein, reanimated from the corpse of a dead girl by Dr. Frankenstein to be a female companion to his monster.

One part creative re-imagining and one part loving homage, my favorite aspect of this book is most definitely its premise, or the idea of getting the “daughters” of some of gothic literature's most famous characters together to solve a mystery. Goss gives all the women personalities that let them stand out as unique individuals, like sensible Mary Jekyll who is the de facto leader of the group, Justine whose great physical strength and stature belies her gentle soul, or Catherine whose irreverence and independence reflects the fact she used to be a puma. My absolute favorite, however, was probably Diana—the lovable hellion who just does and says whatever she pleases, much to the chagrin of Mrs. Poole the housekeeper. Then there are of course the nods to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and even some to Dracula by Bram Stoker. Indeed, if you are a fan of any of the referenced classics, you should have a lot of fun with this novel. It was also very clever how the story even incorporated Jack the Ripper; even though it was done in a very oblique and subtle way, the location and details behind the murders are clearly meant to make you think in that direction.

The structure and format of this tale is also interesting. The book, as we find out early on, is an account of events as told by Catherine Moreau, who among other things is an aspiring writer. For better or worse, she has also allowed her companions to chime in in reaction to everything going on in her manuscript, meaning we frequently get interruptions in the narrative ranging from humorous remarks made by the characters objecting to the way they are being portrayed, to snarky comments about the quality of Catherine's writing. While this is all done in good fun, I admit that sometimes these asides can get a little excessive and distracting, and it took me a while to get used to them. Granted though, I can still say these are vastly preferable to pesky footnotes.

In terms of pacing, my only complaint was the drawn out conclusion. Goss had it so that each of the women were able to tell their individual stories, and for the most part, these were spread out nicely throughout the book and came in at appropriate times. The only exception was Justine. Her backstory was left until the end after the plot's climax, piggybacked onto the denouement which I thought was a little awkward. The wrap-up section explaining the formation of the Athena Club could have been shortened too, along with the setup for their next adventure—but I'm not going to grumble too hard on this point. After all, it is foreshadowing that bodes well for the possibility of a sequel, and it's safe to say I wouldn't mind seeing more from this world and its characters.

A delightfully vibrant fusion of mystery and adventure, *The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter* will make you think about your favorite literary classics in a whole new light. I thoroughly enjoyed this novel and will be looking forward to more by Theodora Goss.

Elle Maruska says

Ok I'm going to be incredibly enthusiastic here: I LOVE THIS BOOK.

Like. I love it SO HARD.

I LOVE IT.

I want more in this universe. I want more of this series immediately.

MONSTER GIRLS! MONSTER GIRLS WHO LOVE AND PROTECT EACH OTHER AND COME TOGETHER TO STOP A SOCIETY OF MEN WHO TREATED THEM AS INHUMAN LIKE I LOVE THIS

I mean I could offer criticisms I suppose but I don't want to. Because THIS BOOK is the kind of book we need more of it. We need books about girls have adventures together, girls being friends and confidants, girls who are feminine and girls who aren't, girls who are bold and girls who are shy, girls who are allowed to make mistakes, girls who are allowed to be all sorts of different things. THIS BOOK HAS SO MANY GIRLS HAVING ADVENTURES and I can't stop screaming about how much I love it.

Like the girls in this story are so well-rounded, so well-defined, and they MAKE SENSE. What they do, how they think...it all makes sense within the context of the story and the period in which it is set. ALSO THERE IS LIKE 0 ROMANCE WHICH IS MY FAVORITE THING EVER TBH. No one is distracted by irritating boys being gross. The most important thing to these girls is each other and that's so special I can't get over it.

I hope there are more books coming because I am sad that I'm finished with this one and I need MORE IMMEDIATELY.

