

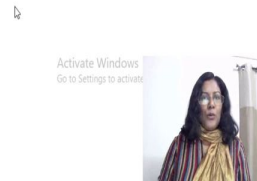
Dracula
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Lecture 40
The Urban Gothic, New Woman and Gothic Monsters

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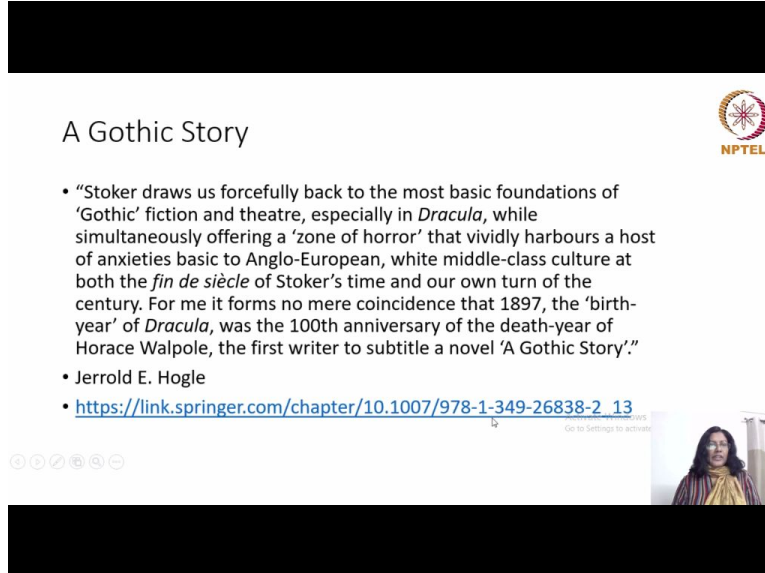
Week 8: Dracula

Lecture 8E: The Urban Gothic , New Woman and Gothic Monsters



Hello, and welcome to week eight's lectures on Bram Stoker's Dracula. In today's session, I will be discussing the idea of the Urban Gothic, I will be revisiting issues related to the New Woman, and I will be finishing up by talking about Gothic Monsters.

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A Gothic Story

- “Stoker draws us forcefully back to the most basic foundations of ‘Gothic’ fiction and theatre, especially in *Dracula*, while simultaneously offering a ‘zone of horror’ that vividly harbours a host of anxieties basic to Anglo-European, white middle-class culture at both the *fin de siècle* of Stoker’s time and our own turn of the century. For me it forms no mere coincidence that 1897, the ‘birth-year’ of *Dracula*, was the 100th anniversary of the death-year of Horace Walpole, the first writer to subtitle a novel ‘A Gothic Story’.”
- Jerrold E. Hogle
- https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-349-26838-2_13

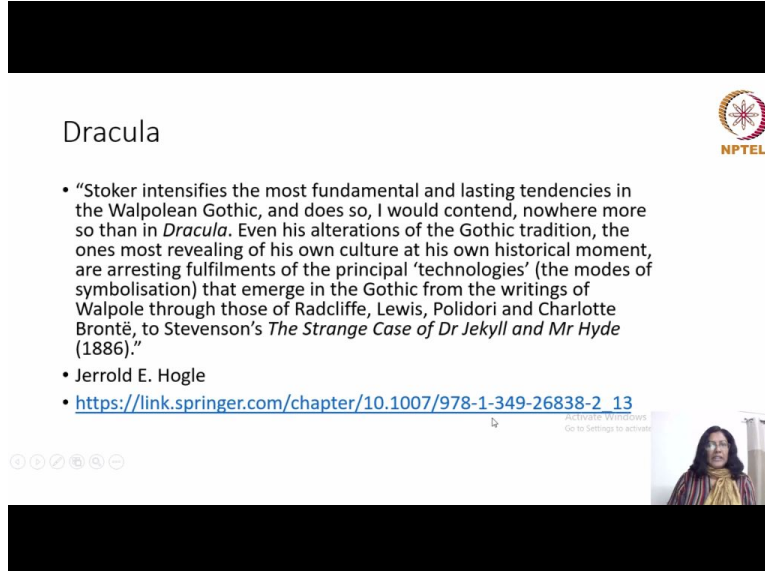
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“Stoker draws us forcefully back to the most basic foundations of Gothic fiction and theatre, especially in *Dracula*, while simultaneously offering a zone of horror that vividly harbours a host of anxieties basic to Anglo-European, white middle-class culture at both the *fin de siècle* of Stoker’s time and our own turn of the century. For me, it forms no mere coincidence that 1897, the birth year of *Dracula* was the 100th anniversary of the death-year of Horace Walpole, the first writer to subtitle a novel ‘A Gothic Story’.”

These are the critical perspectives of Jerrold E. Hogle. And what he states here is that *Dracula* firmly belongs to the foundational concepts of Gothic fiction and theatre, and he suggests that there is a particular domain of horror. He calls it the zone of horror, in this novel, that illustrates the anxieties that are particular to Anglo-European white middle-class culture. And he suggests, argues that these are particularly manifested at the turn of the 19th century. And he goes on to say that these anxieties keep recurring at the turn of centuries.

He is referring to the next turn of the 20th century. And he also draws a symbolic connection between the birth year of *Dracula*, the year in which *Dracula* died, and the 100th death anniversary of Horace Walpole that fell on the birth year of *Dracula*. And he says that there is a symbolic connection there because Walpole was the first writer to call his novel *A Gothic Story*. So, these ideas of Hogle make us think deeply about the originary narratives around this sub-genre called the Gothic.

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Dracula

NPTEL

- “Stoker intensifies the most fundamental and lasting tendencies in the Walpolean Gothic, and does so, I would contend, nowhere more so than in *Dracula*. Even his alterations of the Gothic tradition, the ones most revealing of his own culture at his own historical moment, are arresting fulfillments of the principal ‘technologies’ (the modes of symbolisation) that emerge in the Gothic from the writings of Walpole through those of Radcliffe, Lewis, Polidori and Charlotte Brontë, to Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886).”
- Jerrold E. Hogle
- https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-349-26838-2_13

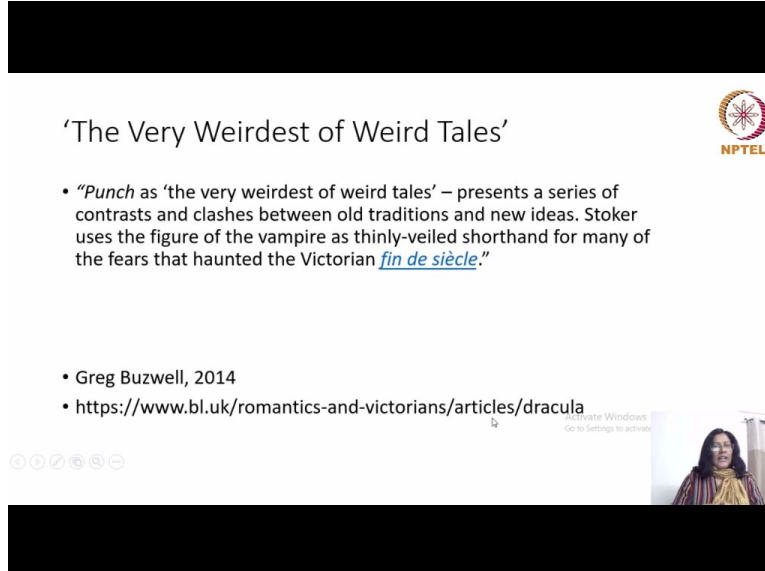
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What Hogle tries to communicate through these ideas here on the slide is that, even when Stoker is experimenting and coming up with a new mode of Gothic technologies, what he is trying in reality to achieve is to continue the traditions of the Gothic that we have seen in writers such as Radcliffe, Lewis, Polidori, Bronte up to Stevenson. So, Stoker is very, very strongly rooted in the fundamental and lasting tendencies, the very basic tenets of the Walpolean Gothic. That is what Hogle argues in his work.

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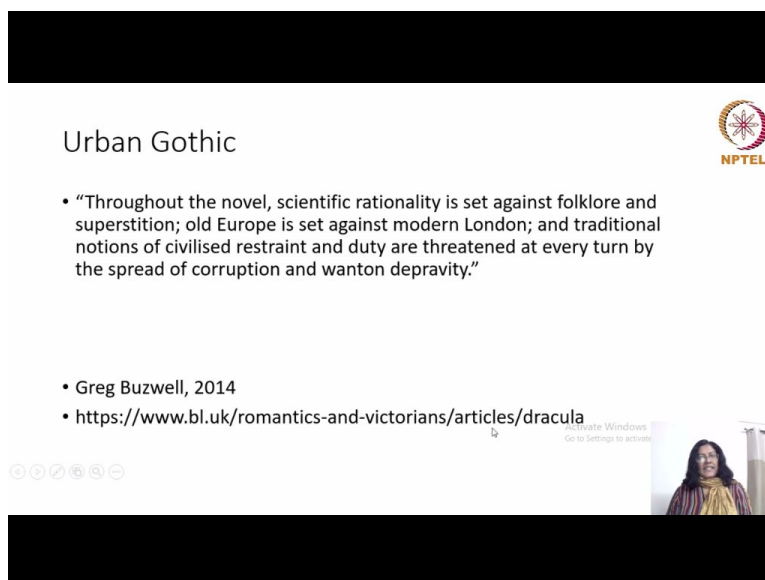


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“Punch calls Dracula as the very weirdest of weird tales.”

And Stoker uses the figure of the vampire as thinly-veiled shorthand for many of the fears that haunted the Victorian fin de siecle. Dracula becomes that vessel in which all the anxieties of the Victorian culture can be thrown in. So it is a very useful literary medium to rehearse, think through and act all the anxieties and problems of the turn of the century in Great Britain.

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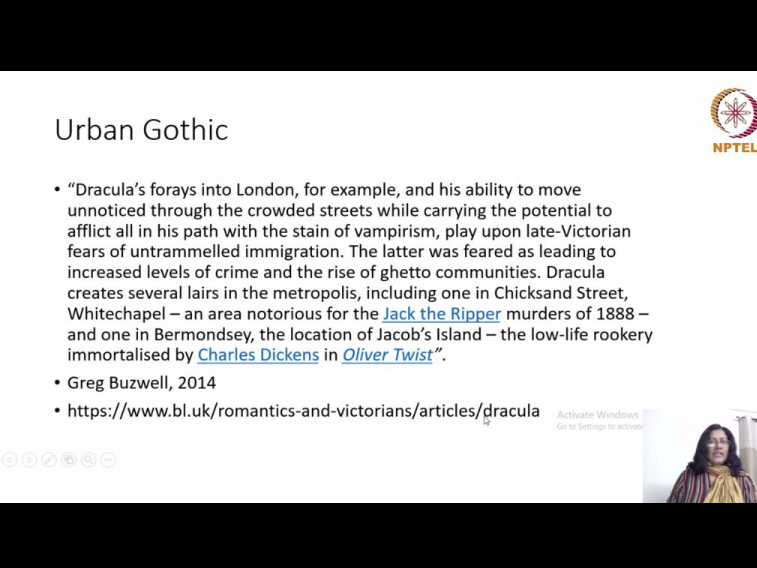
The slide features a black header bar at the top. Below it, the title "Urban Gothic" is centered. To the right of the title is the NPTEL logo, which consists of a circular emblem with a star-like pattern and the text "NPTEL" underneath. Below the title, there is a list of bullet points. The first bullet point is a quote: "Throughout the novel, scientific rationality is set against folklore and superstition; old Europe is set against modern London; and traditional notions of civilised restraint and duty are threatened at every turn by the spread of corruption and wanton depravity." The second bullet point is "Greg Buzwell, 2014" followed by the URL "https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/dracula". Below the text is a video player interface with a set of navigation icons (back, forward, search, etc.) and a small video thumbnail showing a woman speaking. The video player is partially obscured by a black bar at the bottom of the slide.

“Throughout the novel, scientific rationality is set against folklore and superstition, old Europe is set against modern London and traditional notions of civilized restraint and duty are threatened at every turn by the spread of corruption and wanton depravity.”

We have been talking about the contrast between old Europe and modern London. London seems to be at the forefront of change. So, there is a conflict between the fast pace of modernity and the timeless ancient traditions of old Europe. So, there is this friction that is always there in Gothic narratives between the present and the past.

And we can see that in *Dracula*, the civilized society, which is represented by restraint, normality, ordinariness, rationality and discipline and these characteristics are threatened at every turn by moral corruption and physical depravity, which are represented by old Europe, and which is embedded in the figure of the count and on vampirism.

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The screenshot shows a presentation slide with the following content:

- “Dracula’s forays into London, for example, and his ability to move unnoticed through the crowded streets while carrying the potential to afflict all in his path with the stain of vampirism, play upon late-Victorian fears of untrammelled immigration. The latter was feared as leading to increased levels of crime and the rise of ghetto communities. Dracula creates several lairs in the metropolis, including one in Chicksand Street, Whitechapel – an area notorious for the [Jack the Ripper](#) murders of 1888 – and one in Bermondsey, the location of Jacob’s Island – the low-life rookery immortalised by [Charles Dickens](#) in *Oliver Twist*”.
- Greg Buzwell, 2014
- <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/dracula>

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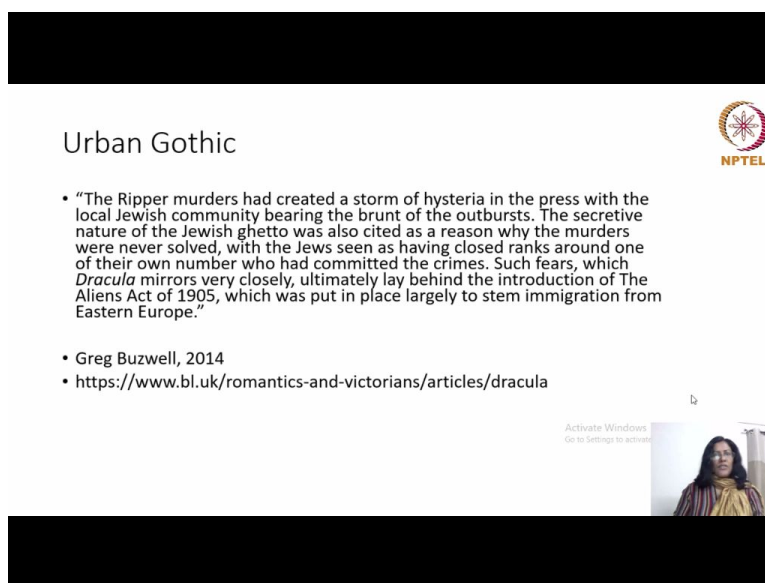
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Ripper murders of 1888 and one in Bermondsey, the location of Jacob's Island- the low-life rookery immortalized by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*.”


The crowded streets of London are very important because they have talked about how vagrant poor are associated symbolically with vampirism. And it is important for us to notice the connection between the ghetto communities, immigrant population, and the figures of vampires in *Dracula* and his followers.

So, one can see that there is a connection between *Dracula*, vampirism and the crowded population in ghettos. In fact, the pockets of the poor in the metropolis, which is associated with not just poverty, but also crime is also symbolically connected to the idea of moral and physical depravity, and degeneration. And it is very important to remind ourselves of the Jack the Ripper murders of 1888 because of the association between crime and poverty and the location of a crime, which is Whitechapel, which is notorious for being a ghetto community.

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Urban Gothic



- “The Ripper murders had created a storm of hysteria in the press with the local Jewish community bearing the brunt of the outbursts. The secretive nature of the Jewish ghetto was also cited as a reason why the murders were never solved, with the Jews seen as having closed ranks around one of their own number who had committed the crimes. Such fears, which *Dracula* mirrors very closely, ultimately lay behind the introduction of The Aliens Act of 1905, which was put in place largely to stem immigration from Eastern Europe.”
- Greg Buzwell, 2014
- <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/dracula>

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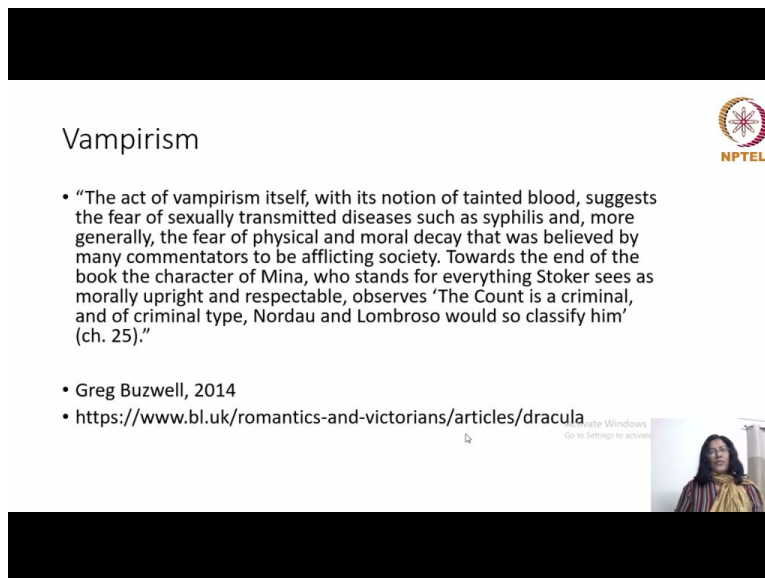


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mirrors very closely ultimately lay behind the introduction of The Aliens Act of 1905, which was put in place largely to stem immigration from Eastern Europe.”

The bottom line is that there is apparently a connection between crime and immigrant communities, which is reflected in Stoker's Dracula. And Greg Buzwell suggests here that, due to that kind of perception in society, the Aliens Act of 1905 has put in place, particularly to reduce immigration from Eastern Europe and it is very significant that Dracula is from that part of Europe. And he symbolizes a range of associations ranging from crime, depravity, degeneracy, and possibly poverty as well, which I discussed in the previous lectures in relation to a particular critic.


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Vampirism



- “The act of vampirism itself, with its notion of tainted blood, suggests the fear of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and, more generally, the fear of physical and moral decay that was believed by many commentators to be afflicting society. Towards the end of the book the character of Mina, who stands for everything Stoker sees as morally upright and respectable, observes ‘The Count is a criminal, and of criminal type, Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him’ (ch. 25).”
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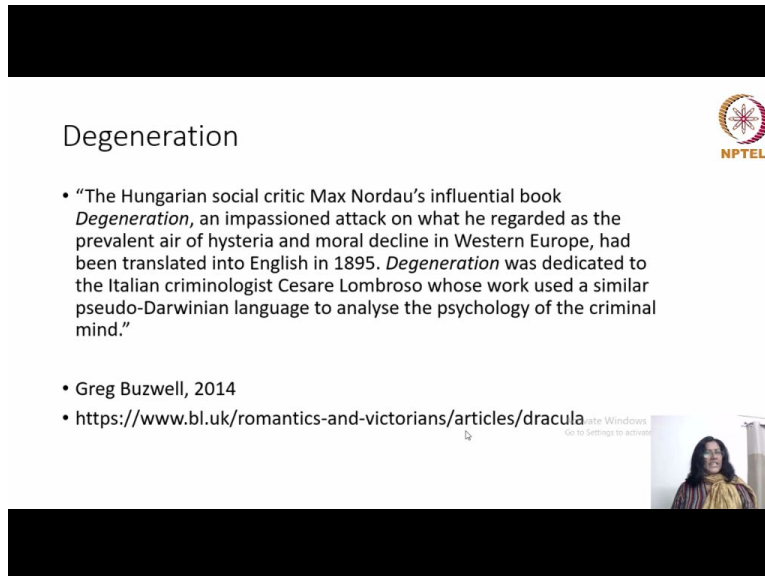


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Vampirism refers to a set of attributes, which we discussed in our previous lectures. It stands for attentiveness. It stands for sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis, and it also broadly

stands for physical and moral decay, deterioration, degeneracy. And these are considered to be some of the factors which are afflicting society. And in the novel, Mina, who is the symbol of everything that is pure and upright and respectable condemns The Count as a criminal. She argues that scientific experts such as Nordau and Lombroso would classify the Count Dracula as belonging to the type of the criminal.

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The slide features a black header bar at the top. Below it, the title "Degeneration" is centered. To the right of the title is the NPTEL logo, which consists of a circular emblem with a star-like pattern and the text "NPTEL" underneath. Below the title, there is a list of three bullet points. The first bullet point is a quote about Max Nordau's book. The second bullet point is a citation for Greg Buzwell, 2014. The third bullet point is a URL. At the bottom right of the slide, there is a small video thumbnail showing a woman with dark hair wearing a yellow and black patterned shawl. The slide has a black footer bar at the bottom.

Degeneration

- “The Hungarian social critic Max Nordau’s influential book *Degeneration*, an impassioned attack on what he regarded as the prevalent air of hysteria and moral decline in Western Europe, had been translated into English in 1895. *Degeneration* was dedicated to the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso whose work used a similar pseudo-Darwinian language to analyse the psychology of the criminal mind.”
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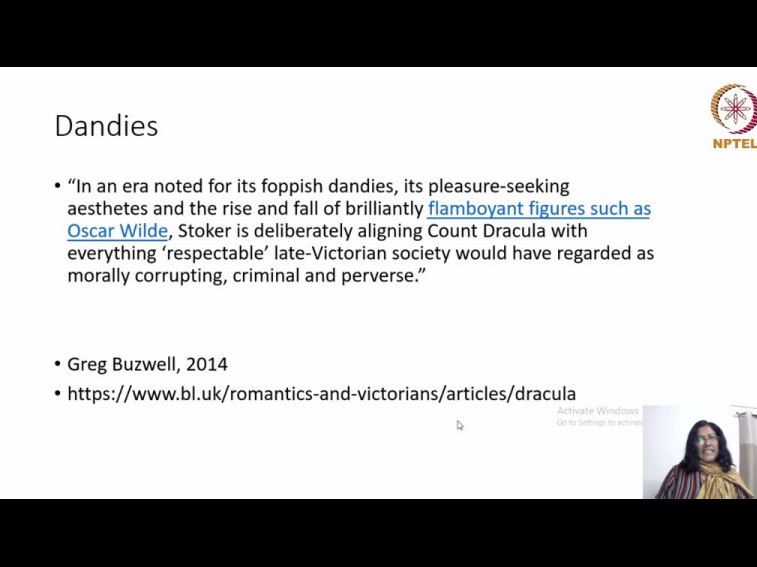
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Here we can see some of the scientific text and researchers who could have influenced Stoker's narrative of *Dracula*. The Hungarian social critic Max Nordau’s book, *Degeneration*, was dedicated to Cesare Lombroso, who was an Italian criminologist. And he uses the kind of a pseudo-Darwinian language to study the mental makeup of criminal minds.

And what is pointed out by the Hungarian social critic is that there is a kind of a decline. There is a very strong anxiety in Western Europe about the decline of the human psyche about

degeneracy. So, all these kind of anxieties and fears about the future of the human race would have strongly influenced Stoker.

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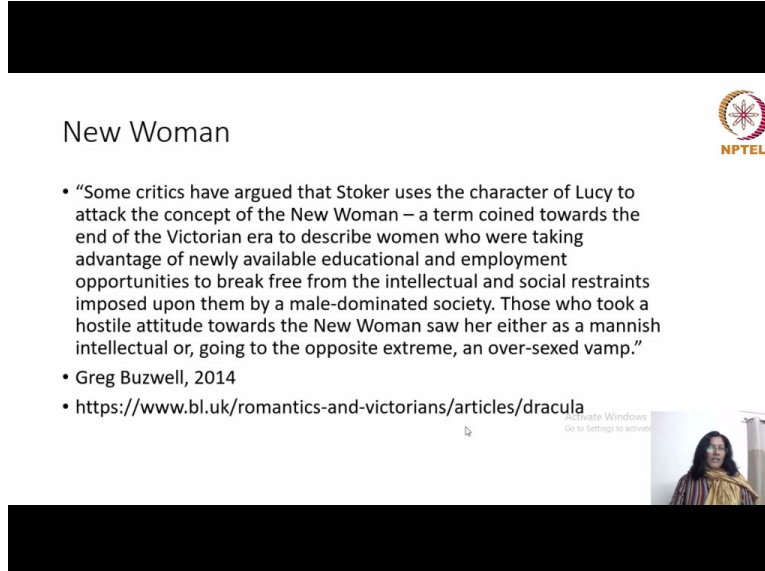
The slide is titled "Dandies" and features the NPTEL logo in the top right corner. It contains a quote and a citation. The quote is: "In an era noted for its foppish dandies, its pleasure-seeking aesthetes and the rise and fall of brilliantly flamboyant figures such as Oscar Wilde, Stoker is deliberately aligning Count Dracula with everything 'respectable' late-Victorian society would have regarded as morally corrupting, criminal and perverse." The citation is: Greg Buzwell, 2014, <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/dracula>. There is a small video thumbnail in the bottom right corner of the slide showing a woman speaking.

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We knew about the late Victorian culture of the foppish dandies and Oscar Wilde can be categorized as belonging to that kind of category. He is brilliant but flamboyant. Oscar Wilde is a great writer, but we associate dandyism with him.


And it is particularly important to notice that Stoker is aligning or, associating Count Dracula with everything respectable Victorian culture would find repulsive. The Count is corrupt, criminal and perverse and all these factors would have really disgusted, respectable late Victorian society.

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New Woman

- “Some critics have argued that Stoker uses the character of Lucy to attack the concept of the New Woman – a term coined towards the end of the Victorian era to describe women who were taking advantage of newly available educational and employment opportunities to break free from the intellectual and social restraints imposed upon them by a male-dominated society. Those who took a hostile attitude towards the New Woman saw her either as a mannish intellectual or, going to the opposite extreme, an over-sexed vamp.”
- Greg Buzwell, 2014
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The slide features a black header bar at the top. Below it, the title 'New Woman' is centered. To the right of the title is the NPTEL logo, which consists of a circular emblem with a book and a lamp, with the text 'NPTEL' below it. The main content is a bulleted list. The third bullet point includes a URL. At the bottom right of the slide, there is a small video thumbnail showing a woman with dark hair, wearing a patterned shawl, speaking. The video player interface shows '0:00' and 'Go to Settings to activate'.

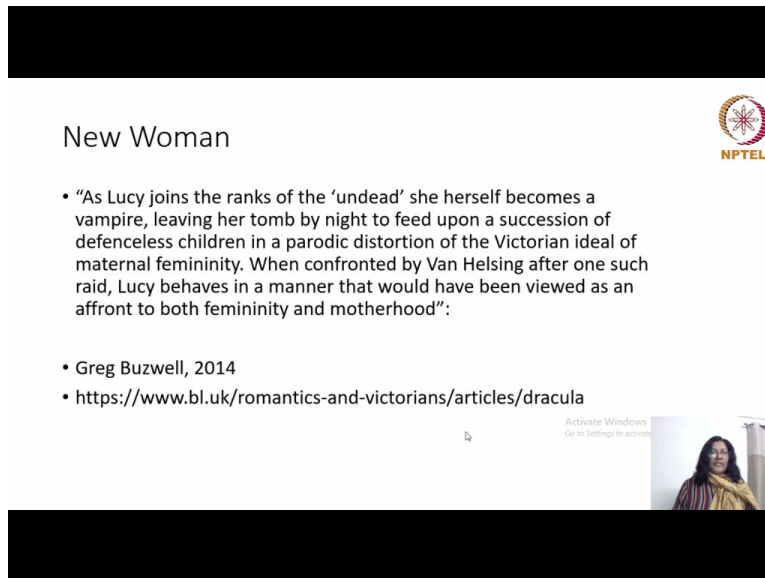
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We have been talking about the representation of femininity in Dracula. We have seen how certain characters were condemned and certain characters held up for praise. And we also saw, how, even those characters which are morally, apparently, very respectable, become problematic in some respects, especially in relation to Dracula. So, we are revisiting the idea of femininity and the idea of the role of women.

Once again, in this novel, many critics have observed that the novel is very critical of the concept of the New Woman. They say that the representation of Lucy is an indirect attempt to attack the idea of the New Woman. Who is a New Woman? A New Woman is a woman who makes use of available educational and employment opportunities to become economically and morally independent to one who tries to break free of the patriarchal control, under which she has been controlled.

So, the hostility towards New Women became manifest in these ways, that as she would be seen either as a mannish woman or she would be seen as an over-sexed vamp, somebody who is indulging in excessive sexuality. So, this is how the New Woman was attacked as lacking in feminine qualities or becoming excessively sexual.

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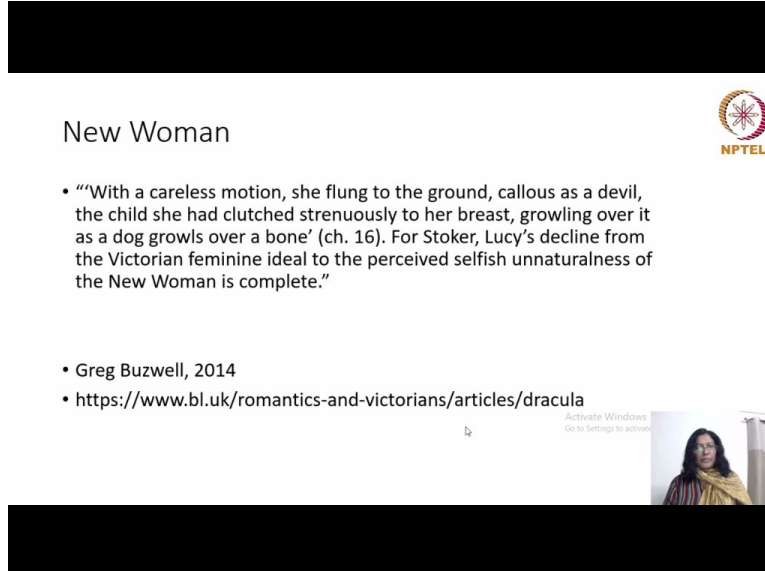


The screenshot shows a presentation slide with a black header bar at the top. The title 'New Woman' is centered. To the right is the NPTEL logo. Below the title is a quote in italics: "As Lucy joins the ranks of the 'undead' she herself becomes a vampire, leaving her tomb by night to feed upon a succession of defenceless children in a parodic distortion of the Victorian ideal of maternal femininity. When confronted by Van Helsing after one such raid, Lucy behaves in a manner that would have been viewed as an affront to both femininity and motherhood:". Below the quote is a citation: "Greg Buzwell, 2014" and a URL: "https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/dracula". In the bottom right corner, there is a small video thumbnail showing a woman speaking, with a Windows watermark and the text "Activate Windows Go to Settings to activate" overlaid on it.

“As Lucy joins the ranks of the undead, she herself becomes a vampire, leaving her tomb by night to feed upon a succession of defenceless children in a parodic distortion of the Victorian ideal of maternal femininity. When confronted by Van Helsing after one such raid, Lucy behaves in a manner that would have been viewed as an affront to both femininity and motherhood.”

The one character, which best exemplifies Stoker’s attack on the concept of New Women would be Lucy. She becomes certainly undead. She is turned into a vampire and goes out at night and feeds on helpless children. And this act becomes a very disturbing parody of the role of Victorian femininity and motherhood. And Lucy becomes anathema to one of the foremost ideals of society, a society that celebrates womanhood and motherhood.

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New Woman

• “With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone’ (ch. 16). For Stoker, Lucy’s decline from the Victorian feminine ideal to the perceived selfish unnaturalness of the New Woman is complete.”

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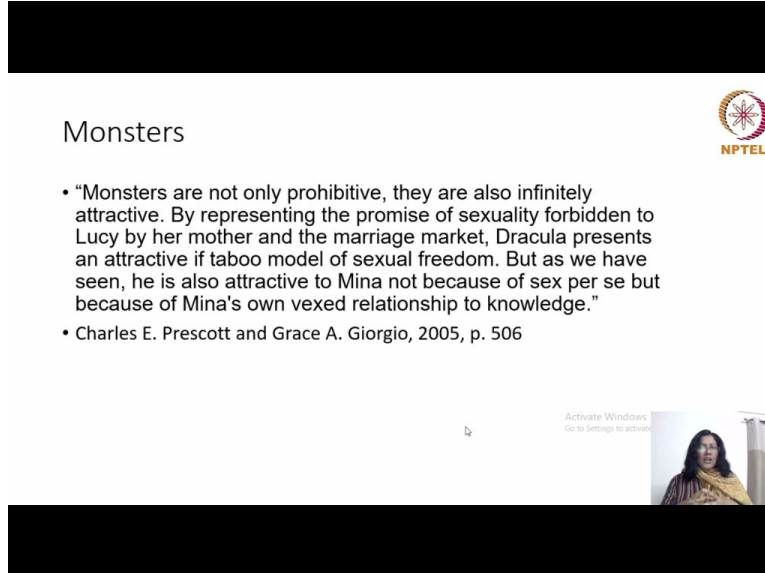


“With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child she had clutched strenuously to her breasts, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. For Stoker, Lucy’s decline from the Victorian feminine ideal to the perceived selfish unnaturalness of the New Woman is complete.”

This quotation shows that she is no longer a female or a woman. She just becomes an animal who is feeding on a helpless child, and she is compared to a dog that growls over a bone. So that is animalistic behaviour on the part of Lucy.

But critics argue that such a representation had been done by Stoker to indirectly point a finger of blame at the New Woman who is trying to get out of the limited boundaries of femininity and motherhood that Victorian society had put her in. So, this attack on the New Woman becomes complete according to Greg Buzwell through such representations of Lucy.

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Monsters

- “Monsters are not only prohibitive, they are also infinitely attractive. By representing the promise of sexuality forbidden to Lucy by her mother and the marriage market, Dracula presents an attractive if taboo model of sexual freedom. But as we have seen, he is also attractive to Mina not because of sex per se but because of Mina’s own vexed relationship to knowledge.”
- Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio, 2005, p. 506

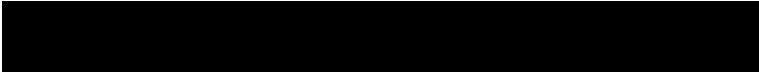
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Now, let us talk about the idea of Gothic monsters in Dracula. Monsters in Gothic narratives and in Dracula too are very attractive. Count Dracula is not just prohibitive. We do not just become repulsed by a Dracula, there is also an infinite fascination towards him by the characters in the novel.


Lucy and Mina are restricted by their femininities in different ways. Lucy is restricted by her mother and the marriage market, and Mina is restricted by not being welcomed into domains of knowledge. So, because of their restrictions, there is a desire on their part, in their own ways to somehow get out of their restrictions by being attracted towards this figure.

In Lucy’s case, it is very overt. She enjoys the idea of sexual freedom and Mina, even though she is repulsed by Dracula, there are certain moments in the novel when she is also not too resistant to his attractions.

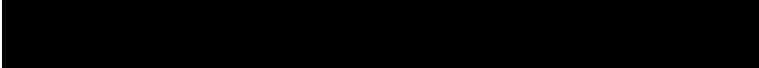

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Monsters



- “Due to Van Helsing’s repeated efforts to infantilize her through paternalistic injunction, knowledge itself has become taboo for Mina: “tabooed objects are those to which we summon up not a simple emotional reaction but a dialectical one in which the mind oscillates between attraction and repulsion, worship and condemnation” (Punter 410). In his attempts to protect Mina and mystify his own “common sense” knowledge, Van Helsing has rendered knowledge itself taboo for Mina.”
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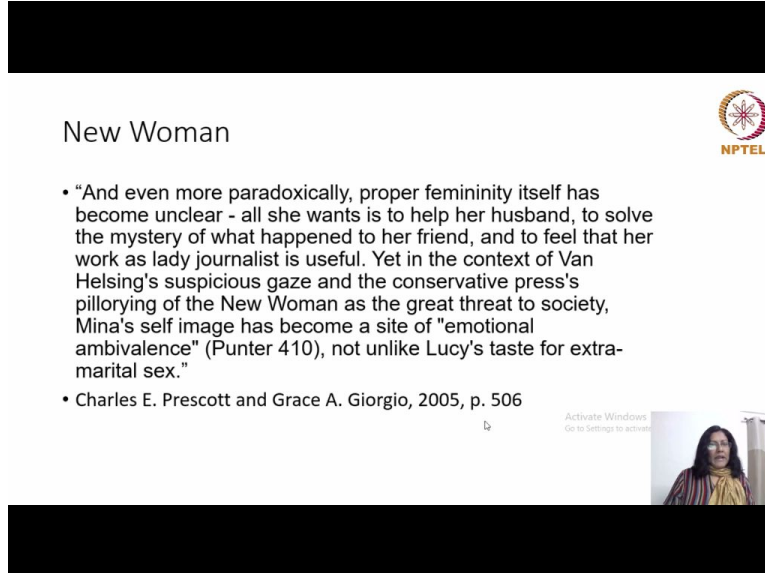


“Due to Van Helsing’s repeated efforts to infantilize her through a paternalistic injunction, knowledge itself has become taboo for Mina. Tabooed objects are those to which we summon up not a simple emotional reaction, but a dialectical one in which the mind oscillates between attraction and repulsion, worship and condemnation. In his attempts to protect Mina and mystify his own common sense knowledge when Van Helsing has rendered knowledge itself taboo for Mina.”

We have seen in the previous lectures as to the kind of surveillance that is imposed on not just Lucy, but also to a great extent on Mina by Van Helsing. So, what Van Helsing is trying to do in the narrative is infantilize Mina, treat her as a juvenile, treat her as a child that needs to be protected. He is being fatherly, but what essentially happens is a manifestation of patriarchal control over Mina’s mind and knowledge itself becomes a taboo for Mina, because of the efforts of Van Helsing and other men.

And tabooed subjects are very interesting because, towards the taboo object there is, according to Punter, an emotional reaction of attraction and repulsion, one is simultaneously attracted by it and repulsed by it. We try to worship and condemn it simultaneously. So, Dracula becomes one such tabooed object for certain female characters in the novel. Knowledge becomes such a tabooed object. For Mina, she is attracted and repulsed by it.

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New Woman

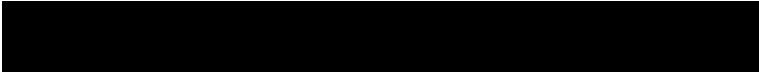
- “And even more paradoxically, proper femininity itself has become unclear - all she wants is to help her husband, to solve the mystery of what happened to her friend, and to feel that her work as lady journalist is useful. Yet in the context of Van Helsing's suspicious gaze and the conservative press's pillorying of the New Woman as the great threat to society, Mina's self image has become a site of "emotional ambivalence" (Punter 410), not unlike Lucy's taste for extramarital sex.”
- Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio, 2005, p. 506

“And even more paradoxically, proper femininity itself has become unclear. All she wants is to help her husband to solve the mystery of what happened to her friend and to feel that her work as a lady journalist is useful. Yet in the context of Van Helsing’s suspicious gaze and the conservative press’s pillorying of the New Woman as the great threat to society, Mina’s self-image has become a site of emotional ambivalence, not unlike Lucy’s taste for extramarital sex.”


So you can see, in what kind of a double bind that Mina and Lucy are in this Gothic narrative. All Mina wants to do is to be very useful and helpful to her husband and to find out about the unfortunate circumstances that had befallen her friend Lucy. And yet she is always already within the suspicious gaze of Van Helsing. She is also apprehensive about the kind of attack that the conservative press has made towards the idea of the New Woman. The New Woman is seen by the press as the greatest threat, the most disturbing factor in society.

Therefore, Mina’s mind is full of fear and anxiety. It has become a site of ambivalence towards what is the right thing for a female to do. And that kind of problematic frame of mind is detrimental towards the health of the psyche.

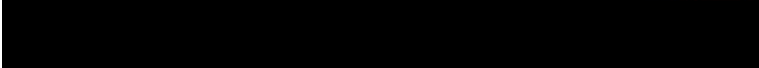

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New Woman



- "Now both a site of tabooed knowledge as well as sexual potential, Dracula has become even more attractive to his next victim: "This corporal fluidity, this simultaneity of anxiety and desire, ensures that the monster will always dangerously entice" (Cohen 19). Comprised of all Van Helsing's worries and prohibitions, all of Lucy's longings and desires, and all of Mina's musings, ambitions, and "devouring anxiety," Dracula has become the perfect monster of the Victorian fin de siecle."
- Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio, 2005, p. 507

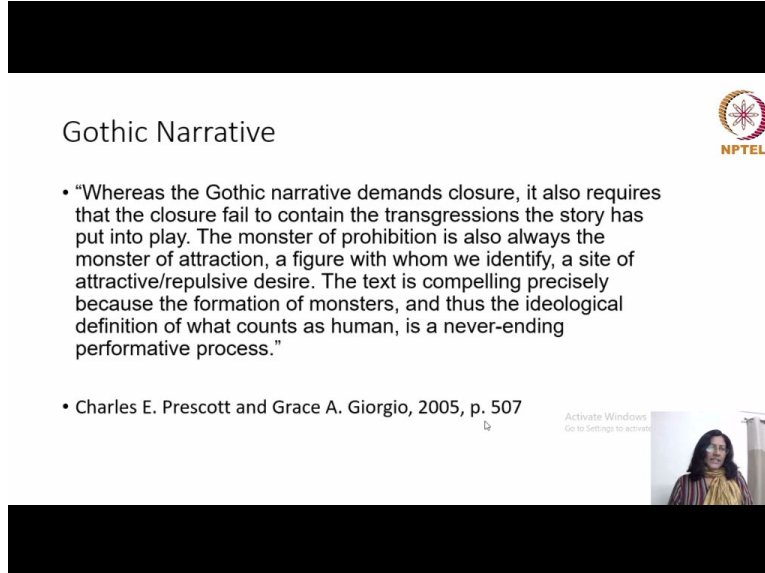


“Now, both a site of tabooed knowledge as well as sexual potential, Dracula has become even more attractive to his next victim. This corporal fluidity, this simultaneity of anxiety and desire ensures that the monster will always dangerously entice. Comprised of all Van Helsing’s worries and prohibitions, all of Lucy's longings and desires, and all of Mina’s musings, ambitions and devouring anxiety, Dracula has become the perfect monster of the Victorian fin de siecle.”

So, Prescott and Giorgio very impressively and convincingly suggest that Dracula has become a tabooed object. He represents a lot of taboos in society. He represents the knowledge that is taboo for Mina. He represents sexual freedom that is taboo for women in general and particularly for Lucy.

So, you can see that Dracula can be the embodiment of a range of cultural anxieties of late Victorian society. Therefore, he is the perfect monster because as we have seen, taboos are very attractive as well as repulsive. So, this combination of anxiety and desire in relation to a tabooed object makes it very attractive. And therefore, Dracula has become the perfect monster because it is attractively dangerous, and it represents all the fears of late Victorian society.

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Gothic Narrative

- “Whereas the Gothic narrative demands closure, it also requires that the closure fail to contain the transgressions the story has put into play. The monster of prohibition is also always the monster of attraction, a figure with whom we identify, a site of attractive/repulsive desire. The text is compelling precisely because the formation of monsters, and thus the ideological definition of what counts as human, is a never-ending performative process.”
- Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio, 2005, p. 507

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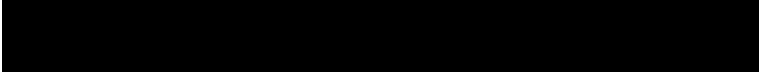
All narratives seek closure. Gothic narratives demand closure as well. Yet, we also see that such narratives require that the closure does not really necessarily delimit the transgressions that the narrative has put into play in it.

So, while there is closure, the closure does not always close off all the transgressions in the story. The monster of prohibition, the really dangerous monster continues to be an attractive monster with whom the readers identify, with whom the characters inside the novel also identify. The monster becomes a tabooed object of attraction as well as repulsion.


Gothic narratives are very compelling. They are very attractive for this reason, that is the formation of monsters, the eruption of monsters is very fascinating to the humans because the humans find a fascination as well as a repulsion. They tend to identify with such figures. And

therefore, it is a performative process, the process of identification and repulsion that the readers find through Gothic narratives is a continuing ongoing process.

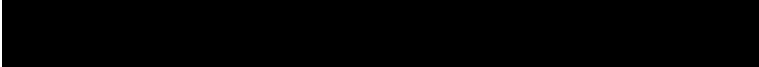


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- **Dracula: vampires, perversity and Victorian anxieties** Article written by: [Greg Buzwell](#) Published: 15 May 2014



Thank you for watching. I will continue in the next session.