

The Popular Gothic Novel
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Lecture 1D

Gothic Foreboding; Affinity with the French Revolution; Types of Gothic Fiction

(Refer Slide Time: 0:12)



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Lecture 1D: Gothic Foreboding; Affinity with the French Revolution;
Types of Gothic Fiction

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Image source: <http://mskellyenghclasshu.weebly.com/gothic-literature-and-dark-romantics.html>



Hello and welcome to this lecture on The Popular Gothic Novel. In today's session we will be talking about Gothic foreboding, the Gothic genre's affinity connection with the French Revolution in a very brief manner. And I will be finishing up with a quick discussion on the different types of Gothic fiction.

(Refer Slide Time: 0:36)

Gothic Fear



- 'characterized by a necessary presentiment of a somewhat vague but nevertheless real evil. It is a fear of shadows and unseen dangers in the night.'
- Explicitness runs counter to its effectiveness,
- Gothic fear is not so much what is seen but what is sensed beyond sight.'

• Source: [KEECH, 1974, p.132]

• Image source: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-the-gothic>



Gothic fear is embodied by this very important concept of a presentiment, in one of the previous lectures I discussed about the idea of the omnipresence of fear, so this presentiment means that you get a hint of things to come, evil things to come so this presentiment essence that the character and the reader gets is somewhat way, but there is very real presence of evil from the corner in a Gothic narrative.

So, what is this fear? It is a fear of shadows and unseen dangers at night and what we got to remember very very clearly is that this fear is not made explicit, the danger is not made very explicit and in fact explicitness runs counter to its effectiveness, the effectiveness of fear provoked on the part of the character as well as on the part of the reader.

So, Gothic fear is very-very unique because it is not so much what is displayed, described, seen but what is kind of sensed it seems to be beyond sight that the presentiment is beyond sight you get a sense of it but you do not kind of get it in a visible manner.

(Refer Slide Time: 2:10)

Foreboding



'The fear in a traditional Gothic novel is created not only by that which frightens, the darkness of the underground passageways in Otranto's castle when the maiden's lamp is accidentally extinguished, but by the foreboding that magnifies its dangers: Isabella's apprehensions of her fate if captured by Manfred in this darkness.'

• Source: (KEECH, 1974, p.132)

• Image source: <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2018/10/18/brief-history-gothic-horror>



The other word that you can use to talk about such vague feelings of uneasiness and a kind of an anticipation of things to come is foreboding. So, the fear in a traditional Gothic novel is not only produced by that which really scares the readers such as, as well as the character involved in the Gothic plot, such as the darkness of the underground passageways in Otranto's castle when the maiden's lamp is accidentally extinguished.

But it is that foreboding the sense that the kind of magnifies, expands the dangers. So, Isabella is really frightened by her fate of what could happen to her if she was caught by Manfred in that darkness. So, the fear is not so much only about being trapped in that darkness, in that kind of labyrinthine passageways in The Castle of Otranto, but of an uneasiness, a kind of a real fear about the things that will happen to her if Manfred does indeed capture her in that vulnerable place.

(Refer Slide Time: 3:28)

Foreboding and Fear



- 'Victor Frankenstein's horror at the monster's brutal murder of his brother' but the premonition of those future atrocities which the monster's anguished hatred is both capable and desirous of inflicting.
- The Monk : not just at 'Ambrosio's acts of murder and rape alone, but also by the presentiment that his process of moral corruption will intensify with further dreadful consequences.'

Source: (KEECH, 1974, p.132)



So, this kind of foreboding and fear can be seen in other texts of Gothic literature such as Shelley's Frankenstein, so Victor Frankenstein, the doctor, the scientist who creates that monster is not only horrified by the brutal murder of his brother by the monster but he is also terrified by his anticipations, by the forebodings of really further evil things that will happen to his loved ones.

So, the premonition of future atrocities that might be committed by the monster's hatred is what kind of intensifies the horror of the scientist as well as the readers who are reading this narrative. So, real fear becomes double and treble by this kind of sense of things to come.

Likewise in The Monk, on the novel by Matthew Lewis, so there is fear not just at Ambrosio's' act of murder and rape alone, but also by this foreboding, by this kind of anticipation of further elements of moral corruption that will kind of be inflicted by Ambrosio and the further dreadful consequences which will follow from his hands.

So, evil that is happening right now is not just what is troubling the reader or the characters involved, but also the kinds of evil acts that might be happening in a much more magnified manner very soon.

(Refer Slide Time: 5:20)

Gothic and the French Revolution



- 'The affinity of the tumultuous years of the Revolution and its aftermath with the heinous crimes of gothic villains has been noted by many critics, and the political bias of each reader determines whether this resemblance is accounted to the credit or disgrace of the genre.'
- (Lydenberg,1978, 103)



So, what is the relationship between this cataclysmic radical event of the French Revolution and the Gothic genre? Lydenberg critic states that “the affinity, the resemblance, the connection between the tumultuous years of the Revolution and its aftermath with the heinous crimes of Gothic villains has been noted by many critics and the political bias of each reader determines whether this resemblance is accounted to the credit or disgrace of the genre.”

So, what this critic suggests is that people have noticed, critics have noticed the connection between the symbolic as well as the kind of graphic connection between the horrors of the French Revolution and the horrors of the Gothic villains that we see in Gothic narratives. Take for example, Prince of Otranto, the Monk, all these narratives are kind of evoking the horrors that happened during that cataclysmic period.

But whether there is a kind of a further relationship between these two, the Gothic genre and the French Revolution depends on the political bias of, and the reader who is reading this literature and Lydenberg says that and we do not know whether that is to the credit of the genre or the disgrace of the genre, whether it is a good thing or a bad thing is up to the readers point of view.

(Refer Slide Time: 6:58)

Gothic and the French Revolution

'In *Idee sur les Romans*, the Marquis de Sade attributes the emergence and popularity of violent gothic fictions to the effects of the French Revolution.

This cataclysmic upheaval...has produced a traumatized public which has seen too much of reality to be moved by anything but the most horrific novelistic adventures.'

Source: (Lydenberg, 1978, p.103)

Image source: <https://lifeistooshort192.wordpress.com/2013/03/19/critical-analysis-of-the-french-revolution-on-literature-and-art-focusing-on-the-gothic-influence/>



In this work *Idee sur les Romans*, the Marquis de Sade attributes the emergence and popularity of violent Gothic fictions to the effects of the French Revolution. So, this writer Sade is very-very confident that the popularity and this kind of origin of really dreadful Gothic fictions has its emergence in relation to the French Revolution. This cataclysmic upheaval has produced a traumatized public which has seen too much of reality to be moved by anything but the most horrific novelistic adventures.

So, the public's attraction to this novel is connected to the traumatized psyche of the population which have been really badly affected by the French Revolution and he argues that the people who have been affected by too much reality cannot be moved by anything less than the most horrific of novelistic genres and which is the Gothic genre which contains a lot of terror and horror.

So, there is a connection between the traumatized psyche of the people and traumatic incidents that are described in the Gothic fiction and Sade argues that an affected people can only read such works which really horrifies the reader.

(Refer Slide Time: 8:36)

Gothic and French Revolution



• 'It seems to me unnecessarily reductive, however, to argue that the gothic novel is either the precursor to or the "indispensable fruit" of the French Revolution. This sort of historical categorization would seem to contradict the qualities of uncertainty and extension which we have seen are characteristic of the gothic mode.'

Source: (Lydenberg,1978,p. 103-104)



Enlightened further goes on to say that “it is kind of unnecessarily reductive”, it is kind of reducing the complexities of the Gothic genre, “to argue the Gothic novel is either the precursor to or the “indispensable fruit” of the French Revolution. This sort of historical categorization would seem to contradict the qualities of uncertainty and extension which we have seen are characteristic of the Gothic mode.’

So, he says that it is not very useful to reduce the manifold and multitude perspectives that are contained within this complex genre and we need not necessarily argue that this Gothic genre has come before or is the effect of the indispensable thread of the French Revolution. So, this kind of historical categorization for this literary genre is not very useful and delimits, kind of reduces the uncertainty, the obscurity, the mystery and the expansion of the human psyche which one kind of receives after having read or during the reading of the Gothic fiction.

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The Impact of Gothic Fiction



- ‘Thomas Gray was made afraid of sleep at night by reading The Castle of Otranto; Byron called Vathek his Bible; Ann Radcliffe’s novels established her to the age as a major novelist; Coleridge gave The Monk serious critical consideration in The Critical Review and thought it the “offspring of no common genius”; and genuine originality and serious literary skills were noted in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer. That their power and emotional force can still be felt, in part, today gives added weight to the need for legitimate recognition of the Gothic as a meaningful literary experience.’
- Source: (Keech, 1974, p.131)



So, what is the impact of Gothic fiction? So, we need to constantly remember that Gothic fiction had a huge impact on the reading public, Gothic fiction was immensely popular. Radcliffe was paid huge amounts and as she was in fact even compared to writers such as Shakespeare during her day.

So, what are some of the impacts of Gothic fiction on the readers? Keech states that “Thomas Gray,” the poet, the romantic poet, “was made afraid of sleep at night by reading The Castle of Otranto; Byron called Vathek his Bible; Ann Radcliffe’s novels established her to the age as a major novelist”, even though she is not read quite a lot today.

“Coleridge gave the monk serious critical consideration in the critical review and taught it the “offspring of no common genius”; and genuine originality and serious literary skills were noted in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein,” we got to remember Walter Scott’s very positive review of Frankenstein, “and Maturin’s Melmoth the Wanderer.” So, these are some of the classics of Gothic fiction.

“That their power and emotional force can still be felt, in part, today gives added weight to the need for legitimate recognition of the Gothic as a meaningful literary experience.” So there is a lot of power, there is a lot of potency and this power in these literary works argue for their

acceptance as legitimate and meaningful literary experience. And let us look at some of the works that are referred to here in this comment by the critic Keech.

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Vathek, Gothic novel by William Beckford, published in 1786.

'Considered a masterpiece of bizarre invention and sustained fantasy

Vathek was written in French in 1782

translated into English by the author's friend the Rev. Samuel Henley, he published it anonymously',

Claimed the novel as his own... 'translated from an Arabic original!'

Source: Vathek, a Novel by Beckford. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Vathek>

Image Source: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/859694.Vathek>



Vathek is a Gothic novel by William Beckford which was published in 1786. It is considered to be a masterpiece of a really kind of curious invention, bizarre invention something that is not very ordinary, it is an extraordinary kind of fantasy, a sustained fantasy and this was originally written in 1782 and was translated into English by Beckford's friend, the Reverend Samuel Henley and he published it anonymously.

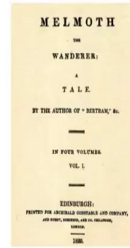
But the novel was claimed as Beckford's own work; own original work and he kind of mentioned that he had translated it from an Arabic original. So, once again we are back to this a concept of distancing on the part of the author. The kind of argument made by writers that okay this is not mine but this is from a different world, a strange world, a Catholic world, a pagan world and this has been translated by me and offered to the enjoyment of the readers at home that is Great Britain, so that idea is repeated again here in this novel as well.

You might want to remember Horace Walpole's argument that his work of castle, that his work was, Castle of Otranto- was a translation but he later kind of accepted that novel as his own work.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:29)

Melmoth the Wanderer, 1820

- the Reverend Charles Maturin (1780–1824), a writer and Irish Protestant clergyman.
- In the Preface to *Melmoth*, Maturin claims to have written the tale to illustrate a passage of one of his sermons.
- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/melmoth-the-wanderer>



Now, the other work referred to in that comment by Keech is *Melmoth the Wanderer* published in 1820. This was written by Reverend Charles Maturin and he was a Irish Protestant clergyman. So you have the title on the title page there on the slide and in the preface Maturin claims to have written the tale to kind of exemplify a passage in his sermon. So this is a kind of a moral way of explaining a point, so this is the anecdote that he apparently offers to drive home a moral point.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:10)

Melmoth the Wanderer

- In 1816, John Melmoth discovers the story of an ancestor – the Melmoth of the title – who, having sold his soul to the devil for a 150-year extension of his life, went into a wandering exile, trying, and failing, to find someone wretched enough to change places with him.
- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/melmoth-the-wanderer>



So, what is the story about Melmoth the Wanderer? In 1816, John Melmoth he kind of discovers the story of an ancestor the Melmoth of the title – who, having sold his soul to the devil for a 150 year extension to his life, had to go into a wandering exile, in order to try and find and fail to find someone who is wretched enough to change places with him.

What is very interesting to me here at this point is that how the story is not of the here and now, it is not a contemporary story, but a story which emerges from the past. So, Melmoth discovers this in a story. It is not happening to him. So, if that kind of distancing effect is once again very-very important because it is a key Gothic trope, key Gothic motive, so the past is supposed to be full of all these extraordinary events and the present is a better, sophisticated, more cultured and rational space so that contrast is brought to the fore once again.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:24)

Syllabus



- 2: Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*
The 'Explained Supernatural', Gothic Sublime, and Aristocratic Villainy
- 3: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Female Gothic: Feminine Anxieties, Scientific Monsters, and Haunted Landscapes



Now, in these 12 weeks I am going to talk about text, different text, very popular Gothic fictional text. So, this first week has been about introducing the concept through various perspectives and from week two I will be picking up specific novels and explaining to you in detail the nature of the Gothic embedded in that particular text. So, we will be looking at Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* next, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and I will be looking at concepts of the

supernatural, The “Explained Supernatural” with reference to a Radcliffe, the Gothic Sublime and Aristocratic Villainy.

With reference to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we will be looking into concepts such as Female Gothic, the Anxieties of the Feminine, Scientific Monsters and Haunted Landscapes. So extreme weather is also a key Gothic mode, key Gothic trope as we discussed in one of the previous introductory lectures.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:37)

Syllabus

- 4: Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey*
Mocking the Popular Gothic
- 5: Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*
Byronic hero and ghostly women: Realism, Fantasy, Violence, and Cruelty
- 6: Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*
Gothic Symbolism and Rebellion

Image source: <https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2016/apr/19/why-jane-eyre-is-a-ya-novel-charlotte-bronte>



Week 4, we will be looking at the idea of the Mock Gothic. So, Jane Austen kind of mocks, satirized this craze for Gothic fiction in *Northanger Abbey*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* talks about that Byronic hero and ghostly women. So, there is a kind of a medley combination in which realism and fantasy lives cheek by jowl, there is plenty of violence inflicted on women and vulnerable men.

So, all these take on a Gothic hue in this grand work *Wuthering Heights*. *Jane Eyre* written by her elder sister Charlotte Bronte, will also be looked at for its kind of symbolic Gothic mode and we will be looking at a Gothic Rebellion on the part of its women, especially the key female character Jane Eyre.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:32)

Syllabus

- 7: Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*
Grotesque Gothic: Spectral City, Allegory, and Morality
- 8: Bram Stoker, *Dracula*
Vampires, Moral Degeneration, Late-Victorian Anxieties
- 9: Wilkie Collins *The Moonstone*
Imperial Gothic: Mysticism, Irrationality, Otherness and Empire

Image source: <http://www.freebooks.com/horror/dracula/>



Christmas Carol by Dickens makes the city itself spectral and we will be kind of discussing questions of allegory and morality through the Gothic nature of the appearance of the ghosts in this novella. We will be looking at Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in week 8 where Moral Degeneration is symbolically made to come to the fore through this creation of vampires and these vampires also embody Late-Victorian anxieties.

Week 9 we will be looking at the *Moonstone* and how a particular jewel from an Indian temple which has been stolen by the English causes havoc on some of the key characters in the novel so we will be analyzing concepts of mysticism in rationality and the idea of otherness and empire and how we get the concept of the Imperial Gothic itself.

Week 10 we will be looking at the *Hound of the Baskervilles* and how the anxieties of the past and the future kind of create this concept of Gothic crime and how a hound is used to exemplify all these Gothic effects on the characters and the readers. Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* will be discussed in week 11, so dark ambition and the idea of Degeneracy is discussed or explored in great detail through this idea of aesthetics and how aesthetics it has become Gothic terror themselves. And finally, we will be discussing how the Gothic becomes accommodated in various genres especially in relation to domestic realism.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:28)

Victorian Gothic



- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'Sherlock Holmes' novels,
- Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,
- Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray,
- the quintessential vampire novel, Bram Stoker's 'Dracula'.
- Victorian anxieties regarding industrialization, Darwinism and religion.

• Image source: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-fiction-in-the-victorian-fin-de-siecle>

• Source: <https://penandthepad.com/types-gothic-fiction-4585244.html>



Now, if you want to kind of categorize, package Gothic into different types, even within the 19th century you can differentiate into the Gothic into the Romantic Gothic, you can talk about Victorian Gothic, Sir Doyle's 'Holmes' novels, Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray and Bram Stoker's 'Dracula', the quintessential vampire novel, all can be classified as Victorian Gothic whereas the others Radcliffe, Walpole and Lewis's work can be classified as Romantic, Dark Romantic Gothic. The Victorian Gothic on the other hand kind of embodies the anxieties surrounding industrialization, Darwinism and complications that arise in relation to religion as well.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:29)

American Gothic



- 'American setting
- tends to be characterized by themes and anxieties
- religion, racial tension, nature and wilderness, and rationalism vs. the irrational.
- Edgar Allan Poe's works
- the classic American ghost tale, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving'
- Stephen King—considered the father of contemporary horror fiction; and Anne Rice—who gave birth to the modern vampire romance.
- Stephenie Meyers *Twilight*

Source: <https://www.thegothiclibrary.com/the-american-gothic-tradition/>
Image Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b009rncg>



We have another category called the American Gothic, I am not discussing American Gothic as part of this course. It is a separate topic which can be dealt as part of a separate course and in the American Gothic we have American setting, of course, and it tends to be characterized by themes and anxieties which are experienced by the American population. Some of the key themes involve religion, racial tension, particularly is important and the tension between nature and wilderness, rationalism and the irrational are explored through this, through this Gothic narrative.

So, the key figures that immediately come to mind are Edgar Allan Poe and the American ghost tale, which is very-very popular "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" by Washington Irving are some of the key classical American writers and text. In the contemporary world Stephen King is considered to be the father of contemporary horror fiction and Anne Rice is supposed to have given but the modern vampire romance and of course Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* is also part of that tradition of the Gothic. So, all these writers are kind of still using the Gothic mode and which kind of tells us that the Gothic has not gone away completely.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:58)

Southern Gothic

- 'social issues and the values of Southern society.
- aristocratic decline, racial tensions, moral and physical decay, and the grotesque.
- prominent writers of this subgenre are William Faulkner, Harper Lee, and Flannery O'Connor.'
- "fixation with the grotesque, and a tension between realistic and supernatural elements" (Marshall Bridget, 2013, Defining Southern Gothic).

Source: <https://www.thegothiclibrary.com/the-american-gothic-tradition/>
Image source: Flannery O'Connor: <https://www.britannica.com/art/Southern-Gothic>



Within American Gothic we have this category called the Southern Gothic which discusses 'social issues and the values that pertain to the southern states or the southern society', southern Gothic discusses aristocratic decline, racial tensions and decay both physical and moral and an obsession with the grotesque and the implications of the grotesque for the society and how the complications in society are kind of embedded in the trope of the protest.

And we have lots of writers who write in this tradition, we have William Faulkner, Harper Lee and Flannery O'Connor', the images of Flannery O'Connor there on the slide and Marshall Bridget argues that Southern Gothic has this fixation obsession with the grotesque and there is a tension between the realistic and the supernatural elements which are analyzed in the southern Gothic narratives.

So, these are some of the types, I have not exhausted all the types and I am not going into American Gothic in this course and I am not talking about contemporary popular, contemporary popular Gothic fiction.

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Lightning image. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/551902129311387186/>

Ruined castle. <https://wallhaven.cc/w/96g2p8>



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