

**Lecture 1:**  
**Emergence and Evolution of the Novel**  
**Modern novel**

**The Novel: Definitions and Distinctions**

- ❖ **Genre:** Fiction and Narrative
- ❖ **Style: Prose**
- ❖ **Length:** Extended
- ❖ **Purpose:** Mimesis or Verisimilitude

“The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written. The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen.” Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, 1785.

**Verisimilitude**

Refers to the illusion that the novel is a representation of real life. Verisimilitude results from:

- ❖ a correspondence between the world presented in the novel and the real world of the reader.
- ❖ Recognizable settings and characters in real time what Hazlitt calls, “the close imitation of men and manners... the very texture of society as it really exists.”
- ❖ The novel emerged when authors fused adventure and romance with verisimilitude and heroes that were not supermen but ordinary people, often, insignificant nobodies .

**Precursors to the Novel**

**Heroic Epics**

*Gilgamesh*, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*

**Ancient Greek and Roman Romances and Novels**

*An Ephesian Tale* and *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Petronius’s *Satyricon*, Apuleius’s *The Golden Ass*

**Oriental Tales**

*A Thousand and One Nights*

**Medieval European Romances:** Arthurian tales culminating in Malory’s *Morte Darthur*

**Elizabethan Prose Fiction:** Gascoigne’s *The Adventure of Master F. J.*, Greene’s *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*, Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Deloney’s *Jack of Newbury*

**Travel Adventures:** Marco Polo, Ibn Batuta, More’s *Utopia*, Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Voltaire’s *Candide*

**Novelle:** Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptameron*

**Moral Tales:** Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Johnson’s *Rasselas* .

**The First Novels**

*Don Quixote* ( Spain, 1605-15) by Miguel de Cervantes

*The Princess of Cleves* (France, 1678) by Madame de Lafayette

*Robinson Crusoe* (England, 1719) , *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) by Daniel DeFoe

*Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (England, 1740-1742) by Samuel Richardson

*Joseph Andrews* (England, 1742) and *Tom Jones* (1746)by Henry Fielding

**Types of Novels**

- ❖ Picaresque Regional
- ❖ Epistolary Social
- ❖ Sentimental Mystery
- ❖ Gothic Science Fiction
- ❖ Historical Magical Realism
- ❖ Psychological
- ❖ Realistic/Naturalistic

***Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616)**

First European novel: part I - 1605; part II - 1615

- ❖ A psychological portrait of a mid-life crisis
- ❖ Satirizes medieval romances, incorporates pastoral, picaresque, social and religious commentary
- ❖ What is the nature of reality?

***The Princess of Cleves* Madame de Lafayette**

- ❖ First European historical novel – recreates life of 16<sup>th</sup> c. French nobility at the court of Henri II
- ❖ First *roman d’analyse* (novel of analysis), dissecting emotions and attitudes .

## **The Rise of the English Novel**

- ❖ The Restoration of the monarchy (1660) in England after the Puritan Commonwealth (1649-1660) encouraged an outpouring of secular literature
  - ❖ Appearance of periodical literature: journals and newspapers
    - Literary Criticism
    - Character Sketches
    - Political Discussion
    - Philosophical Ideas
  - ❖ Increased leisure time for middle class: Coffee House and Salon society
  - ❖ Growing audience of literate women
- England's First Professional Female Author: Aphra Behn 1640-1689**

### Novels

- ❖ *Love Letters between a Nobleman and his sister* (1683)
- ❖ *The Fair Jilt* (1688)
- ❖ *Agnes de Castro* (1688)
- ❖ *Oroonoko* (c.1688)
- ❖ She also wrote many dramas .

### **Daniel Defoe**

- ❖ Master of plain prose and powerful narrative
- ❖ Journalistic style: highly realistic detail
- ❖ Travel adventure: *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719
- ❖ Contemporary chronicle: *Journal of the Plague Year*, 1722
- ❖ Picaresques: *Moll Flanders*, 1722 and *Roxana*

### **Picaresque Novels**

- ❖ The name comes from the Spanish word *picaro*: a rogue
- ❖ A usually autobiographical chronicle of a rascal's travels and adventures as s/he makes his/her way through the world more by wits than industry
- ❖ Episodic, loose structure
- ❖ Highly realistic: detailed description and uninhibited expression
- ❖ Satire of social classes
- ❖ Contemporary picaresques: Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

### **Epistolary Novels**

- ❖ Novels in which the narrative is told in letters by one or more of the characters
- ❖ Allows the author to present the feelings and reactions of the characters, and to bring immediacy to the plot, also allows multiple points of view
- ❖ Psychological realism
- ❖ Contemporary epistolary novels: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*;

### **Pioneers of the English Novel**

#### **1. Samuel Richardson 1689-1761**

*Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-48)

- ❖ Epistolary
- ❖ Sentimental
- ❖ Morality tale: Servant resisting seduction by her employer

#### **2. Henry Fielding 1707-1754**

*Shamela* (1741) *Joseph Andrews* (1742), and *Tom Jones* (1749)

- ❖ Picaresque protagonists
- ❖ "comic epic in prose"
- ❖ Parody of Richardson

### **The Novel of Manners: Jane Austen**

- ❖ Novels dominated by the customs, manners, conventional behavior and habits of a particular social class
- ❖ Often concerned with courtship and marriage
- ❖ Realistic and sometimes satiric
- ❖ Focus on domestic society rather than the larger world
- ❖ Other novelists of manners: Anthony Trollope, Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Margaret Drabble

## **Gothic Novels**

- ❖ Novels characterized by magic, mystery and horror
- ❖ Exotic settings – medieval, Oriental, etc.
- ❖ Originated with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764)
- William Beckford: *Vathek, An Arabian Tale* (1786)
- ❖ Anne Radcliffe: 5 novels (1789-97) including *The Mysteries of Udolpho*
- ❖ Widely popular genre throughout Europe and America: Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798)
- Contemporary Gothic novelists include Anne Rice and Stephen King

### **1. *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley 1797-1851**

- ❖ One of the most famous gothic novels
- ❖ Inspired by a dream in reaction to a challenge to write a ghost story
- Published in 1817 (rev. ed. 1831)
- ❖ Influenced by the Greek myth of Prometheus
- ❖ *Frankenstein* is also considered the first science fiction novel

## **Novels of Sentiment**

- ❖ Novels in which the characters, and thus the readers, have a heightened emotional response to events
- ❖ Connected to emerging Romantic movement
- ❖ Laurence Sterne: *Tristram Shandy* (1760-67)
- ❖ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774)
- ❖ Francois Rene de Chateaubriand: *Atala* (1801) and *Rene* (1802)
- ❖ The Brontës: Anne Brontë *Agnes Grey* (1847) Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847)

## **The Novel: A Definition**

### **According to M.H. Abrams:**

“The term novel is now applied to a great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of fiction written in prose. [...] Its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), ampler development of milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motives than do the shorter, more concentrated modes.”

### **The emergence of the novel**

The most important are:

1. The development of the printing press: which enables mass production of reading material.
2. The emergence of a middle class (“middle station”) with the leisure to read.

When the novel appeared in the late

## **Lecture 2:**

### **Emergence and Evolution of the Novel The Modern Novel**

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#### **The Brontës Charlotte (1816-55), Emily (1818-48), Anne (1820-49)**

- ❖ *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* transcend sentiment into myth-making
- ❖ *Wuthering Heights* plumbs the psychic unconscious in a search for wholeness, while *Jane Eyre* narrates the female quest for individuation

#### **Historical Novels**

- ❖ Novels that reconstruct a past age, often when two cultures are in conflict
- ❖ Fictional characters interact with with historical figures in actual events
- ❖ Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) is considered the father of the historical novel: *The Waverly Novels* (1814-1819) and *Ivanhoe* (1819)

## **Realism and Naturalism**

### **Realism**

- ❖ Middle class
- ❖ Pragmatic
- ❖ Psychological
- ❖ Mimetic art
- ❖ Objective, but ethical
- ❖ Sometimes comic or satiric
- ❖ How can the individual live within and influence society?  
Honore Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, George Eliot, William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Leo Tolstoy, George Sand

### **Naturalism**

- ❖ Middle/Lower class
- ❖ Scientific
- ❖ Sociological
- ❖ Investigative art
- ❖ Objective and amoral
- ❖ Often pessimistic, sometimes comic
- ❖ How does society/the environment impact individuals?
- ❖ Emile Zola, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Thomas Hardy, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser

### **Social Realism**

- ❖ Social or Sociological novels deal with the nature, function and effect of the society which the characters inhabit – often for the purpose of effecting reform
- ❖ Social issues came to the forefront with the condition of laborers in the Industrial Revolution and later in the Depression: Dickens' *Hard Times*, Gaskell's *Mary Barton*; Eliot's *Middlemarch*; Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*
- ❖ Slavery and race issues arose in American social novels: Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 20<sup>th</sup> c. novels by Wright, Ellison, etc
- ❖ Muckrakers exposed corruption in industry and society: Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*
- ❖ Propaganda novels advocate a doctrinaire solution to social problems: Godwin's *Things as They Are*, Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*

### **Charles Dickens 1812-1870**

By including varieties of poor people in all his novels, Dickens brought the problems of poverty to the attention of his readers:

"It is scarcely conceivable that anyone should... exert a stronger social influence than Mr. Dickens has.... His sympathies are on the side of the suffering and the frail; and this makes him the idol of those who suffer, from whatever cause."

Harriet Martineau, *The London Times* called him "pre-eminently a writer of the people and for the people . . . the 'Great Commoner' of English fiction."

- ❖ Dickens aimed at arousing the conscience of his age. To his success in doing so, a Nonconformist preacher paid the following tribute:  
"There have been at work among us three great social agencies: the London City Mission; the novels of Mr. Dickens; the cholera."

### **The Russian Novel**

- ❖ Russia from 1850-1920 was a period of social, political, and existential struggle.
- ❖ Writers and thinkers remained divided: some tried to incite revolution, while others romanticized the past as a time of harmonious order.
- ❖ The novel in Russia embodied these struggles and conflicts in some of the greatest books ever written.
- ❖ The characters in the works search for meaning in an uncertain world, while the novelists who created them experiment with modes of artistic expression to represent the troubled spirit of their age.

### **The Russian Novel Cont.**

- ❖ Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910):  
*The Cossacks, Anna Karenina, War and Peace, and Resurrection*
- ❖ Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881)  
*The Gambler, Crime and Punishment, Notes from Underground and The Brothers Karamazov*

**Lecture 3:**  
**Social and Historical Background**  
**The Modern Novel**

***The Novel: A Definition***

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***The emergence of the novel***

The emergence of the novel was made possible by many factors.

The most important are:

1. The development of the printing press: which enables mass production of reading material.
2. The emergence of a middle class (“middle station”) with the leisure to read

***Popular Taste***

- ❖ When the novel appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was not considered a literary genre.
- ❖ Daniel Defoe was a literary merchant and he took advantage of an emerging market and an emerging reading public
- ❖ Defoe was more concerned with pleasing the tastes of the public (the average reader). He was not concerned with pleasing the tastes of the critics.
- ❖ He referred to his audience as “honest meaning ignorant persons.”

**Language and Popular Taste**

- ❖ Defoe did not write his first novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, until he was 59. Until then, he was a journalist and a political pamphleteer, and his style was influenced by journalism.
- ❖ Other factors that influenced language at the time:
- ❖ The desire to keep language close to the speech of artisans and merchants because they were the new economic and financial agents of England.

**Socio-Historical Background**

- ❖ Worldwide travels, the establishment of colonies in the Americas, the international slave trade, industrialization
- ❖ Europe, especially England, is now in control of international trade routes and owns the bulk of the international trade.
- ❖ The new economic realities produce a middle class in England, people who used to be serfs working the lands of aristocrats can now be entrepreneurs, slave traders, adventurers, colonists in America. Their children can now be educated.
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- ❖ The new markets also demand a new type of worker: skilled and literate. The establishment of grammar schools..

### **The Development of Prose Fiction**

- ❖ In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, prose was still not recognized as a literary form. Only Greek and Latin and English verse were considered “high culture.” English prose was what lower or middle class people read and wrote.
- ❖ The economic wealth created in the 18<sup>th</sup> century a middle class that has a good income and leisure time. They cannot read Greek or Latin and formal literature, but they can read simple stories in prose.
- ❖ The first novels were published as serial stories in newspapers. Travel stories published in episodes telling the English public of adventures in far away lands.
- ❖ The establishment of colonies, worldwide travel and international trade made people in England curious about the new lands they were traveling to. This is how stories began to be published in newspapers in prose about travel adventures in exotic and far away lands.
- ❖ These stories were a success and people began to buy and read them.
- ❖ The popularity of these travel stories made publishers realize that there was a market and this is how novels in book format began to be published.

### **The Impact of Printing on Literature**

- ❖ Printing affected the way literature produced and the way it circulated.
- ❖ Literature was no more a public act, a performance where a poet delivers his poetry directly to the public or a play performed in front of an audience. Literature is now a book that is read by a reader in the comfort of his/her home.
- ❖ Still, bookshops, coffeehouses, salons and reading rooms provided new gathering places where people discussed literature.

**Lecture 4:**  
**Early Novels and Novelists – Robinson**  
**The Modern Novel**

**Daniel Defoe**

- ❖ Born in 1660 in London
- ❖ His mother and father, James and Mary Foe, were Presbyterian dissenters. James Foe was a middle-class wax and candle merchant.
- ❖ He witnessed two of the greatest disasters of the seventeenth century: a recurrence of the plague and the Great Fire of London in 1666.
- ❖ He was an excellent student, but as a Presbyterian, he was forbidden to attend Oxford or Cambridge. He entered a dissenting institution called Morton's Academy
- ❖ Defoe developed a taste for travel that lasted throughout his life  
His fiction reflects this interest; his characters Moll Flanders and Robinson Crusoe both change their lives by voyaging far from their native England.
- ❖ He became a successful merchant and married into a rich family, but his business failed later on and he had money troubles for the rest of his life.
- ❖ He worked as a merchant, a poet, a journalist, a politician and even as a spy, and wrote around 500 books and pamphlets.

**Defoe's Writing**

- ❖ Defoe published his first novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, in 1719, when he was around 60 years old.
- ❖ The novel attracted a large middle-class readership. He followed in 1722 with *Moll Flanders*, the story of a tough, streetwise heroine whose fortunes rise and fall dramatically.
- ❖ Both works straddle the border between journalism and fiction.

**Robinson Crusoe**

- ❖ *Robinson Crusoe* was based on the true story of a shipwrecked seaman named Alexander Selkirk and was passed off as history
- ❖ Focus on the actual conditions of everyday life and avoidance of the courtly and the heroic made Defoe a revolutionary in English literature and helped define the new genre of the novel.
- ❖ Stylistically, Defoe was a great innovator. Dispensing with the ornate style associated with the upper classes, Defoe used the simple, direct, fact-based style of the middle classes, which became the new standard for the English novel.
- ❖ With Robinson Crusoe's theme of solitary human existence, Defoe paved the way for the central modern theme of alienation and isolation.
- ❖ Defoe died in London on April 24, 1731, of a fatal "lethargy"—an unclear diagnosis that may refer to a stroke.

**Plot Summary**

- ❖ Crusoe sets on a sea voyage in August 1651, against the wishes of his parents, who want him to stay at home and pursue a career, possibly in law.
- ❖ After a tumultuous journey that sees his ship wrecked in a storm, his lust for the sea remains so strong that he sets out to sea again. This journey too ends in disaster and Crusoe becomes the slave of a Moor (Muslims in Northwest Africa) .
- ❖ After two years of slavery, he manages to escape and is rescued and befriended by the Captain of a Portuguese ship off the west coast of Africa. The ship is en route to Brazil. There, with the help of the captain, Crusoe becomes owner of a plantation.
- ❖ Years later, he joins an expedition to bring slaves from Africa, but he is shipwrecked in a storm about forty miles out to sea on an island (which he calls the Island of Despair) on September 30, 1659.
- ❖ His companions all die, save himself, and three animals who survived the shipwreck, the captain's dog and two cats. Having overcome his despair, he fetches arms, tools and other supplies from the ship before it breaks apart and sinks. He proceeds to build a fenced-in habitation near a cave which he excavates himself.  
He keeps a calendar by making marks in a wooden cross which he has built. He hunts, grows corn and rice, dries grapes to make raisins for the winter months, learns to make pottery and raises goats, all using tools created from stone and wood which he harvests on the island. He also adopts



a small parrot. He reads the Bible and becomes religious, thanking God for his fate in which nothing is missing but human society.

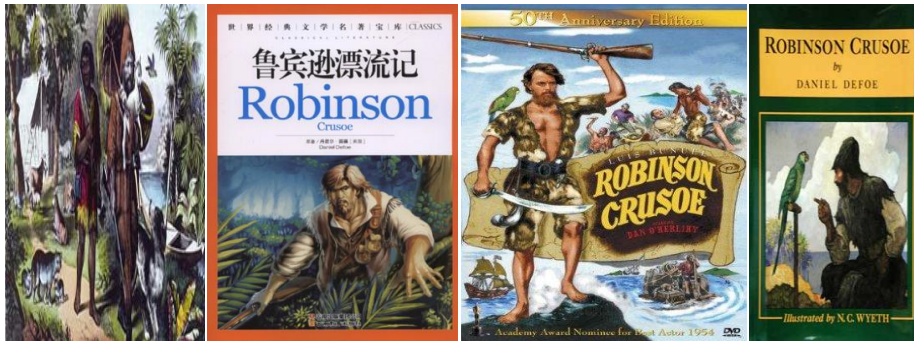
- ❖ Years later, he discovers native cannibals who occasionally visit the island to kill and eat prisoners. At first he plans to kill them but later realizes that he has no right to do so as the cannibals do not knowingly commit a crime. He dreams of obtaining one or two servants by freeing some prisoners; when a prisoner manages to escape, Crusoe helps him, naming his new companion “Friday” after the day of the week he appeared. Crusoe then teaches him English and converts him to Christianity.
- ❖ After another party of natives arrives to partake in a cannibal feast, Crusoe and Friday manage to kill most of the natives and save two of the prisoners. One is Friday's father and the other is a Spaniard, who informs Crusoe that there are other Spaniards shipwrecked on the mainland. A plan is devised wherein the Spaniard would return with Friday's father to the mainland and bring back the others, build a ship and sail to a Spanish port.
- ❖ Before the Spaniards return, an English ship appears; mutineers have taken control of the ship and intend to maroon their former captain on the island. Crusoe and the ship's captain strike a deal in which he helps the captain and the loyal sailors retake the ship from the mutineers, whereupon they intend to leave the worst of the mutineers on the island. Before they leave for England, Crusoe shows the former mutineers how he lived on the island and states that there will be more men coming.
- ❖ Crusoe leaves the island December 19, 1686 and arrives in England on June 11, 1687. He learns that his family believed him dead and there was nothing in his father's will for him.
- ❖ Crusoe departs for Lisbon to reclaim the profits of his estate in Brazil, which has granted him a large amount of wealth. In conclusion, he takes his wealth overland to England to avoid traveling at sea. Friday comes with him and along the way they endure one last adventure together as they fight off hundreds of famished wolves while crossing the Pyrenees.

## Lecture 5: Early Novels and Novelists – Robinson The Modern Novel

### Reception

- ❖ published on April 25, 1719
- ❖ Before the end of the year, this first volume had run through four editions.
- ❖ Within years, it had reached an audience as wide as any book ever written in English.
- ❖ By the end of the 19th century, no book in the history of Western literature had had more editions, spin-offs and translations than *Robinson Crusoe*, with more than 700 such alternative versions, including children's versions with mainly pictures and no text.

### Versions



- ❖ The term "[Robinsonade](#)" was coined to describe the genre of stories similar to *Robinson Crusoe*.
- ❖ Defoe went on to write a lesser-known sequel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.
- ❖ It was intended to be the last part of his stories, according to the original title-page of its first edition but a third part, *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* was written; it is a mostly forgotten series of moral essays with Crusoe's name attached to give interest.

### Themes: colonialism

- ❖ Robinson Crusoe is the true symbol of the British conquest: The whole Anglo-Saxon spirit is in Crusoe.
- ❖ Crusoe attempts to replicate his own society on the island: application of European technology, agriculture, and even a rudimentary political hierarchy.
- ❖ The idealized master-servant relationship between Crusoe and Friday.
- ❖ Crusoe represents the “enlightened European.” Friday is the “savage” who can only be redeemed from his supposedly barbarous way of life through the assimilation into Crusoe's culture.
- ❖ Nevertheless, within the novel Defoe also takes the opportunity to criticize the historic Spanish conquest of South America.

### Themes: Religion

- ❖ Robinson is not a hero, but an everyman--a wanderer to become a pilgrim, building a promised land on a desolate island.
- ❖ Robinson becomes closer to God, not through listening to sermons in a church but through spending time alone amongst nature with only a Bible to read.
- ❖ Defoe's central concern is the Christian notion of Providence.

## Lecture 6: The Development of the Modern Novel The Modern Novel

### The Anti-Novel Campaign

- ❖ In the 1850s it was still common to find people who forbid their families from reading novels
- ❖ To tell stories, especially fiction, was still considered by some to be a sin. This only made people more curious and desiring to read narratives and stories.

By the 1880s, the prohibition was softened. As Anthony Trollope records in his *Autobiography* (1883): “Novels are read right and left, above stairs and below, in town houses and in country parsonages, by young countesses and by farmers’ daughters, by old lawyers and by young students.”

### Why did the novel become such a dominant literary form in the Victorian period?

- ❖ The audience for the novel grew enormously during the nineteenth century. In part, this was due to economic factors:
  - ✓ The growth of cities, which provided bigger markets
  - ✓ The development of overseas readership in the colonies
  - ✓ Cheaper production costs both for paper and for print processes
  - ✓ Better distribution networks
  - ✓ The advertising and promotion work

Add to that, the spread of literacy, the increase in wealth, the development of a middle class with leisure time, etc...

### “A novel is a splendid thing after a hard day’s work”

“A novel is a splendid thing after a hard day’s work, a sharp practical tussle with the real world”

This is how one of the characters in Mary Braddon’s *The Doctor’s Wife* (1864) described the novel. Reading fiction is a way of relaxing or winding down after a day of hard work for both men (working outside) and for women (doing housework).

### Novel Writers

Novel writers were told in the *Saturday Review* 1887 that the average reader of novels is not a critical person, that he/she cares little for art for art’s sake, and has no fixed ideas about the duties and responsibilities of an author: “all he asks is that he may be amused and interested without taxing his own brains.”

Eventually, a distinction developed between novels that were intellectually, psychologically and aesthetically demanding and ones that served primarily as a means of escapism and entertainment.

In the final decades of the Victorian era, a firm division was established between the artist or serious novelist and the masses of readers.

### Happy Endings

- ❖ Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were palpable demands on novel writers to make their novels have a happy ending.
- ❖ Dickens is known to have changed the ending of some of his novels to please the reader with a happy ending.
- ❖ George Eliot is known to have opposed the idea. She demanded that the readers should curb their desire for fiction to provide the exceptional and romantic (fairy tales) and learn rather of the importance of the ordinary, the everyday, the commonplace

### Novels and Romance

- ❖ The issue of happy endings was essentially a question about the place of romance in the novel. Romances have a history of providing escapism. John Ruskin writes:

“The best romance becomes dangerous, if, by its excitement, it renders the ordinary course of a life uninteresting, and increases the morbid thirst for useless acquaintance with scenes in which we shall never be called upon to act.” (*Sesame and Lilies*, 1865)

### Sources

For more information, see Kate Flint, “The Victorian Novel and Its Readers,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, Deirdre David ed., (Cambridge University Press, 2001): pp. 17-35.

## **Lecture 7: Realism and the Novel The Modern Novel**

### **The Development of realism**

The foundations of early bourgeois realism were laid by Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift, but their novels, though of a new type and with a new hero, were based on imaginary voyages and adventures supposed to take place far from England.

Gradually the readers' tastes changed. They wanted to find more and more of their own life reflected in literature, their everyday life of a bourgeois family with its joys and sorrows.

These demands were satisfied when the great novels of Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollet appeared one after another.

### **Sympathy for the Common Man**

- ❖ The greatest merit of these novelists lies in their deep sympathy for the common man, the man in the street, who had become the central figure of the new bourgeois world.
- ❖ The common man is shown in his actual surroundings, which makes him so convincing, believable, and true to life.

### **Realism in the Victorian Novel**

- ❖ Realist writers sought to narrate their novels from an objective, unbiased perspective that simply and clearly represented the factual elements of the story.
- ❖ They became masters at psychological characterization, detailed descriptions of everyday life in realistic settings, and dialogue that captures the idioms of natural human speech.
- ❖ The realists endeavored to accurately represent contemporary culture and people from all walks of life.
- ❖ Thus, realist writers often addressed themes of socioeconomic conflict by contrasting the living conditions of the poor with those of the upper classes in urban as well as rural societies.
- ❖ Realist writers are widely celebrated for their mastery of objective, third-person narration.
- ❖ Many realist novels are considered to be reliable sociocultural documents of nineteenth-century society.
- ❖ Critics consistently praise the realists for their success in accurately representing all aspects of society, culture, and politics contemporary to their own.
- ❖ Realism has exerted a profound and widespread impact on many aspects of twentieth-century thought, including religion, philosophy, and psychology.

### **Characteristics of the Realist Novel**

- ❖ The linear flow of narrative
- ❖ The unity and coherence of plot and character and the cause and effect development
- ❖ The moral and philosophical meaning of literary action
- ❖ The advocacy of bourgeois rationality
- ❖ Rational, public, objective discourse
- ❖ The Realist novel of the nineteenth century was written in opposition to the Romance of medieval times
- ❖ Representation of "real life" experiences and characters versus ideal love, ideal moral codes ideal characters (nobility), and fixed social values

### **Sources and Further Reading**

- ❖ Raymond Williams, 'Realism', in *Keywords* (1976)