

## Lecture 4

### Early Novels and Novelists – Robinson Crusoe 1

#### 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

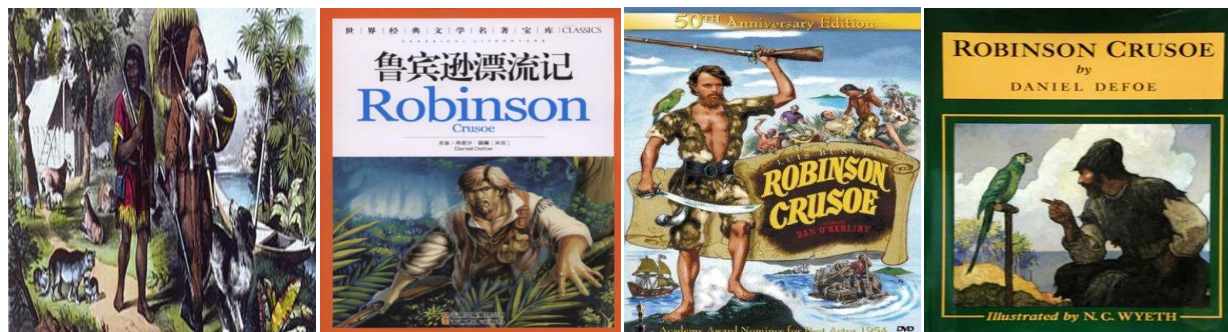
### Early Novels and Novelists – Robinson Crusoe 2

#### 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 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 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)

### Lecture 8

## Modernism and the Novel

### Modernism: Background

- ❖ By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, artists and novelists were already becoming unsatisfied with realism.
- ❖ Rejection of Realism and Naturalism became common
- ❖ a wide range of experimental and avant-garde trends (all the -isms: dadaism, surrealism, expressionism, futurism, etc.)
- ❖ A reaction to the modern, urban experience
- ❖ A rejection of bourgeois values

### Discontinuity and Fragmentation

- ❖ Realism stressed the role of art as a mirror of social reality, the values of bourgeois society, and notions of progress.
- ❖ Modernism questioned art's capability to reflect reality, questioned the coherence of that reality, the bourgeois values of society and the notions of progress and happiness.
- ❖ Life and reality are not coherent or simple and it is an illusion to think that the novel or art in general can simply depict them like a mirror.
- ❖ Bourgeois values and morality are fake and superficial

What modernism stressed instead was:

- ❖ Discontinuity and fragmentation
- ❖ Juxtaposition and multiple points of view
- ❖ Lack of a unitary self
- ❖ "Self" is seen as artificial, a social fiction
- ❖ The individual is stripped of the traditional defining categories of personhood

## Modernist fiction

Stressed:

- ❖ Crisis rather than coherent reality
- ❖ Attempts to represent multiple truths as reflected in consciousness and the psyche
- ❖ Rejection of external, unitary, coherent appearance of realist conventions
- ❖ Stresses a lack of causality (chaos)
- ❖ Insufficiency of language (incapability to represent)
- ❖ Oppositional relations between the individual and the social, (the alienation of the individual in his/her social environment)
- ❖ Antibourgeois (because bourgeois values and lifestyle are fake and superficial)
- ❖ Uses first person narrator, and he/she is often unreliable, reflecting the difficulty to represent reality
- ❖ Reflects a sense of urban dislocation and alienation
- ❖ Works by male writers tend to be misogynistic

## Compare: Édouard Manet, "Breakfast in the Studio" (Realist Art)



## With: Picasso "Weeping Woman" (Modernist Art)



- ❖ Discontinuity and fragmentation
- ❖ Juxtaposition and multiple points of view
- ❖ Lack of a unitary self
- ❖ "Self" is seen as artificial, a social fiction of undetermined status
- ❖ Individual is stripped of the traditional defining categories of personhood

## Or Picasso's famous Guernica 1937



## Or any of Salvador Dali's work



### Lecture 9

## *Heart of Darkness: Background*

### Joseph Conrad: 1857-1924



- ❖ born Józef Teodor Conrad Korzeniowski in Russian occupied Ukraine
- ❖ 1874 joined French merchant marines, later the British
- ❖ 1886 became British citizen
- ❖ 1890 traveled to Congo

## Major works:

- ❖ *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897)
- ❖ *Lord Jim* (1900)
- ❖ *Nostramo* (1904)
- ❖ *The Secret Agent* (1907)
- ❖ *The Secret Sharer* (1909)

## *Heart of Darkness* (1899, 1902)

- ❖ According to Conrad, it is based on real events–
- ❖ Conrad is "Marlow" in the novella.
- ❖ Conrad, born in Russia of Polish parents, did not learn to speak English until he was in his late 20s, yet he wrote *Heart of Darkness* in English and is considered to be a British novelist and one of the best prose writers in the English language.

## *Heart of Darkness*: background

- ❖ *Heart of Darkness* is set in the Congo at the time of the Belgian colonization
- ❖ Africa was the last continent to be overtaken by Europeans.
- ❖ There was a big push to colonize by Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium.
- ❖ There was no regard for the native inhabitants. Millions of Africans were killed and maimed or worked to death.

## KING LEOPOLD II of Belgium



- ❖ Leopold II became king of Belgium in 1865
- ❖ He was greedy, inept, and unscrupulous.
- ❖ Leopold had an inferiority complex due to his small stature and because Belgium was small and weak.
- ❖ He wanted to acquire colonies and compete politically with the big powers like France and England

## The Colonization of the Congo

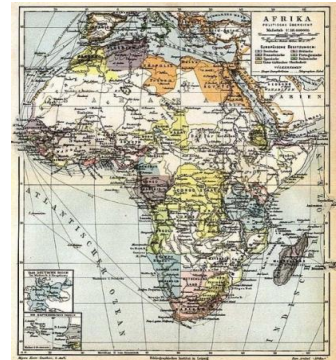
- ❖ In 1876 [Leopold] organized a private holding company disguised as an international scientific and philanthropic association.
- ❖ In 1879, under the auspices of the holding company, he hired the famous explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo region”

([http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/ Leopold\\_II\\_of\\_Belgium](http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Leopold_II_of_Belgium))

- ❖ Leopold II financed exploration of the Congo area, laid claim to it, and made it his private colony.
- ❖ It belonged to the man, not to the country of Belgium. It was therefore called a "crown colony."
- ❖ Profits from the area went into his own pocket, not into the treasury of Belgium.

## The Congo Free State

- ❖ Belgian Congo area was larger than Britain, France, Spain, Italy and Germany combined.
- ❖ Leopold called it the "Congo Free State."



- ❖ Later it became known as Zaire and is now called Democratic Republic of Congo
- ❖ Congo Free State is called by Adam Hochschild, author of the book *King Leopold's Ghost*, "the world's only colony claimed by one man”
- ❖ The Belgian Congo under Leopold’s rule became an example of how terrible colonial rule can be.
- ❖ The native people were treated as commodities, and atrocities were committed against them
- ❖ Leopold hired the famous explorer Henry Morton Stanley to get control of the Congo.
- ❖ Stanley cut a deal with the chiefs of the native tribes and got economic control.
- ❖ Leopold realized that huge profits rely on forced labor, so it became illegal to pay an African for his work
- ❖ Leopold ordered Stanley to purchase as much land as possible and to acquire power among the chiefs from the mouth of the Congo River as far into the interior as possible.

- ❖ Stanley gained control by offering the chiefs bribes.
- ❖ An 1884 treaty signed by Stanley and the chiefs gave the chiefs *a piece of cloth* in exchange for *all of their waterways, roads, game, fishing, mining rights, and freedom-- FOREVER.*
- ❖ Once the land was acquired, Leopold imposed taxes on the roads, waterways, etc. Natives were allowed to use them, but they had to pay a tax to do so.

## Rubber and Ivory

- ❖ Leopold declared a monopoly on rubber and ivory.
- ❖ His agents in the Congo were given the freedom to use *as much force as necessary* to get the rubber and ivory.
- ❖ Their profits were based on the total amount extracted, so it was to their advantage to work the natives mercilessly.
- ❖ Leopold set up a mercenary force called the Force Publique - 19,000 members, *most of them Africans.* They controlled Congo Free State for Leopold for 23 years between 1885 and 1908, and helped him extract rubber and ivory from the area

## Forced Labor

- ❖ The Force Publique took over native villages in areas where there was rubber or ivory to be harvested.
- ❖ They made the natives work for them but did not pay them--it was illegal to pay an African for his work. This is called "forced labor."
- ❖ The only difference between forced labor and slavery is that the workers in forced labor situations are not actually owned by other people.
- ❖ Forced labor is even worse than slavery because in slavery, the "owner" is anxious to protect his "property" and has to feed them and clothe them. In Forced labor, the worker work for free and are responsible for their own food etc.

## Leon Rom and Kurtz

- ❖ The head of the Force Publique was Leon Rom, a ruthless and cruel man who decorated his yard with a fence featuring human skulls on posts and a garden with a rockery of human skulls of dead natives
- ❖ Rom kept a gallows permanently erected in his station to intimidate the workers



❖ The character Kurtz in the novella is based on Leon Rom.



- ❖ The Force Publique went into villages and captured the natives for forced labor.
- ❖ The women and children were separated from the men and held hostage until the men brought in their quota of rubber or ivory.
- ❖ If a worker didn't meet his quota, sometimes the Force Publique would motivate him by cutting off the hand or foot of one of his children



- ❖ The Men wore a numbered metal disk on a string around their necks. An accountant kept track of how much ivory or rubber each worker brought in.
- ❖ The Force Publique *sold* the women back to the natives when they were finished in the area.
- ❖ Leopold claimed that his goal was ultimately humanitarian-



- ❖ In 1908, Leopold, realizing that his reign in the Congo had come to an end, had all the archives of the Belgian government burned to destroy the evidence of the atrocities. The fire burned for eight days and nights
- ❖ Leopold II was responsible for the deaths of between *ten and eleven million people* in the Belgian Congo.



## Heart of Darkness

- ❖ Conrad, author of *Heart of Darkness*, said that *Heart of Darkness* is a documentary--the things described in it really happened.
- ❖ Conrad actually did go to the Congo and was the captain of a steamboat on the Congo River. *Heart of Darkness* is a record of his experience.
- ❖ Marlow in the novella = Joseph Conrad
- ❖ Kurtz in the novella = Leon Rom, head of the Force Publique

## Further Reading

To find out more, Read

*King Leopold's Ghost*, by Adam Hochschild