THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

The prose of the world presented by
Assist Prof. Lahoti R.K.

A definition

According to the dictionary a novel is

- a fictional prose narrative of considerable length, typically having a plot that is unfolded by the actions, speech, and thoughts of the characters

- the literary genre represented by novels

More definitions

- The novel is a worldwide cultural instrument which helped redefine
  - the time and space where we live
  - the way we speak and talk
  - how we feel
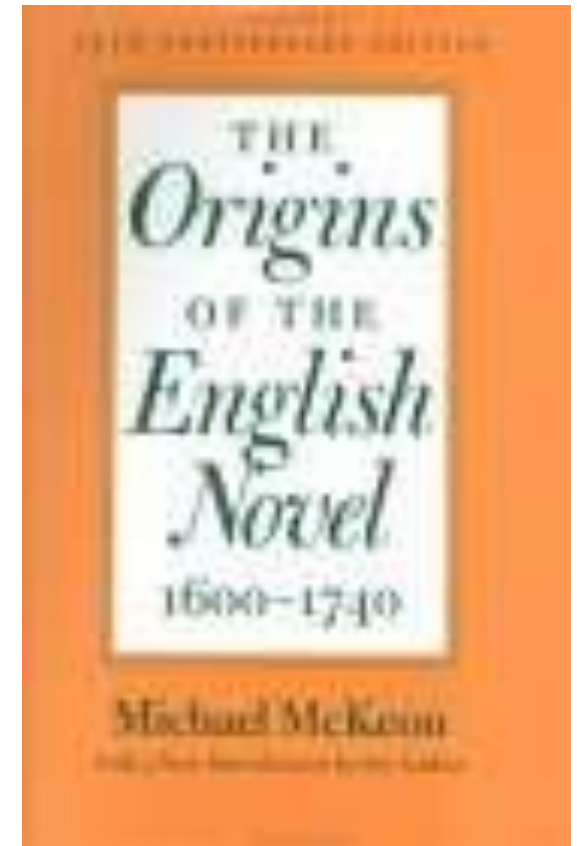 - what we do

Hybrid genre

The novel

- encompasses many different sub-genres

- is always in search of a definition

- battled with other genres from the very beginning

- different theories on its rise
    - **Ian Watt,** *Formal Realism* (1957)
    - **Michael McKeon,** *Progressive Narrative* (1987)
    - **J. Paul Hunter,** *Specific Features of the novel* (1990)

The
Rise
of the
Novel

IAN WATT

With a new Afterword by W. B. Carnochan

Before Novels

The Cultural Context of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction

J Paul Hunter

THE
Origins
OF THE
English
Novel
1600-1740

Michael McKeon
With a New Introduction by the Author

Another definition

A novel (from French nouvelle Italian novella, "new") is an extended, generally fictional narrative in prose. Until the 18th century the word referred specifically to short fictions of love and intrigue as opposed to romances, which were epic-length works about love and adventure. During the 18th century the novel adopted features of the old romance and became one of the major literary genres.

Origins

The dominant genre in world literature, the novel is a relatively young form of imaginative writing. Only about 250 years old in England—and embattled from the start— its rise to pre-eminence has been striking. After sparse beginnings in 17th century England, novels grew exponentially in production by the 18th century and in the 19th century became the primary form of popular entertainment.

When & Where

- 1st half of 18th century in England
- Prototypes of the novel date back to the Elizabethan literature
  - Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*
  - Aphra Behn's *Oronooko, or The Royal Slave* (1688)
  - John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678)

Why

- The rise of the novel coincides with the rise of the middle classes in Western Europe
- Profound social and economic changes brought the novel into popular prominence
  - advances in the technology of printing
    - made written texts available to a growing population of readers
  - changes in modes of distribution and in literacy rates
    - brought books and pamphlets to populations excluded from education working-class men and women of all classes
  - authors became free agents in the literary marketplace
    - dependent on popular sales for success and sustenance
    - reflecting the values of a middle-class readership

Antinovel campaign

- Attacks on the new genre
  - Identified with French romance
  - Derided as a sensationalistic import
  - Considered antithetical to English values
- Campaign outcomes
  - Selective legitimation of novels that displayed non-romantic features.
  - The novel as a genre developed and was valued according to these features

Features

- Realism and drama of individual consciousness has precedence over external drama

- Focus on experience of the individual as subject matter

- Exploration of individual consciousness and perception

Realism

- Synonymous with veracity

- Denial of fictionality

- Particularity of description

- "Photographic" attention to detail (verisimilitude)

- Rejection of fabulous imaginings and idealism of romances

Subject matter

- Significant choices in subject matter
  - appearance of probability in character, setting, and event.
  - logical cause-and-effect sequencing
  - solidity of detail in order to achieve the reader's willing suspension of disbelief
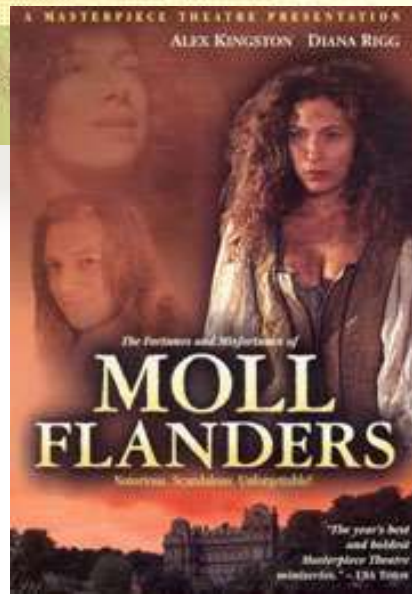- Focus on middle-class protagonists
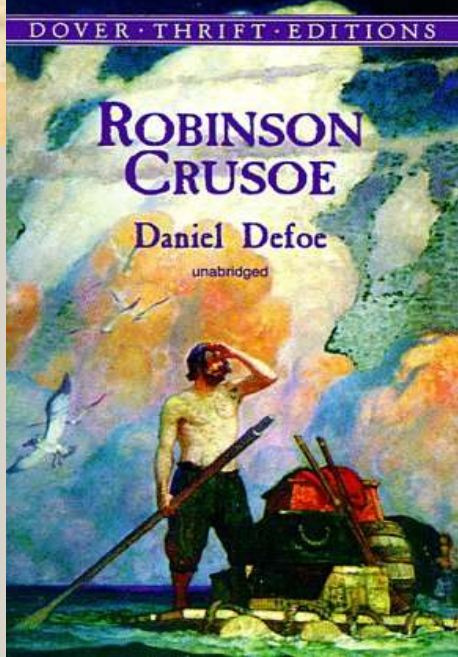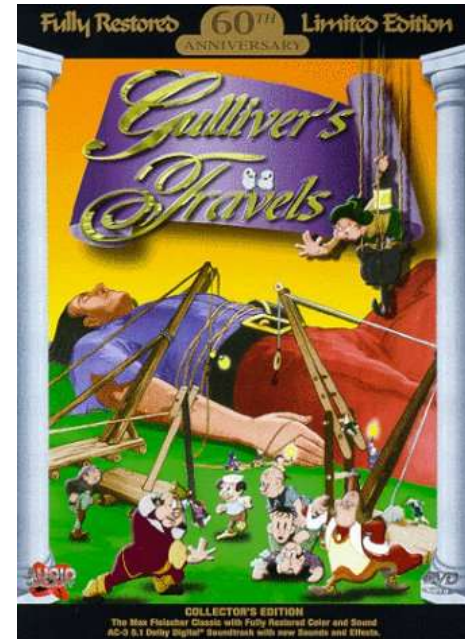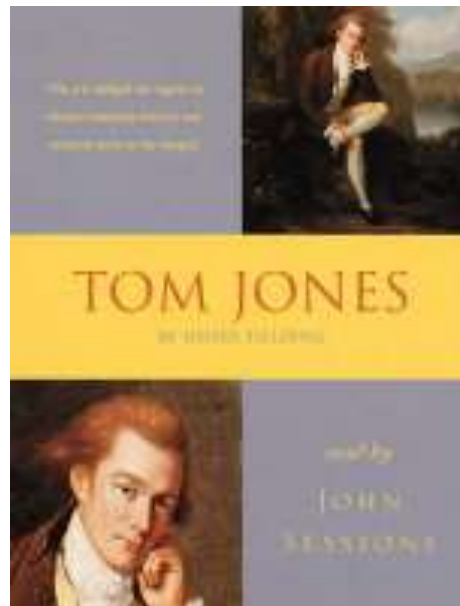
Who

DEFOE

FIELDING

RICHARDSON

SWIFT

STERNE

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What

Ian Watt - *Formal Realism*

- Philosophical background - Descartes and Locke, Individual apprehension of reality. - individualist, innovating reorientation

- Rejection of traditional plots

- Self-consciousness about innovation and novelty

- Particularity. (individualisation characters detailed presentation of environment)

- Specificity in setting (place, correlation of time)

- Formal realism as convention. Air of total authenticity - confusion between fact and fiction.

McKeon - *Progressive Narrative*

- Categorial instability about how to tell the truth led to "rise of the novel"

- Instability of social categories, how the external social order is related to the internal, moral state of its members

- "What kind of authority is required of narrative to permit it to signify truth to its readers? What kind of social existence or behaviour signifies an individual's virtue to others?"

- Novel can be understood as a cultural instrument designed to confront intellectual and social crisis

Hunter, *Before Novels*

- Contemporaneity
  - Novels are stories of now or about events in a relevant past
- Believability
  - Credibility and probability are essential qualities
- Familiarity
  - Novels portray everyday existence and common people

Hunter, *Before Novels*

- Individualism, subjectivity
  - Novels show an intensified consciousness of selfhood
- Object of identification
  - Readers of novels "identify" or "empathize" with the heroes and heroines of novels
- Coherence and unity of design
  - Novels have guiding design
- Inclusivity digressivenes, fragmentation

The mode of the future

Richardson and Fielding created a consciousness among readers and potential writers that a significant and lasting form had come about and that literary careers could be built upon the genre.

How

- [Epistolary novel](#)
- [Realistic novel](#)
- [Philosophic novel](#)
- [Epic novel](#)
- [Experimental novel (meta-novel)](#)
- [Buildungsroman](#)

Epistolary novel

- Enjoyed its greatest popularity in England and France from the mid-1700s to the end of the century
- Plot is advanced by letters or journal entries of one or more characters
- Montesquieu in France *Lettres persanes*
- **Richardson's *Pamela* (1740)**
  - the first example of the epistolary novel
  - the first mature novel to be written in English
- Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761)
- Laclos 1782 *Les Liaisons dangereuses*
- Goethe *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1744)
- Foscolo *Le ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1802,)

Realistic novel

Robinson Crusoe (1719)

- Regarded as the first novel in English

- A fictional autobiography by a first person narrator

- This device, presenting an account of supposedly factual events, is known as a "false document", and gives a realistic frame to the story

- First of an endless series of novels in all world literatures up to modern times

Philosophic satiric novel

Gulliver's Travels (1726)

- A satire on human nature

- A parody of the "travellers' tales" literary sub-genre

- A philosophical novel

- Almost unique in England

- A satirical view of the state of European government, and of petty differences between religions

- An inquiry into whether man is inherently corrupt or whether men are corrupted

- A restatement of the older "ancients v. moderns" controversy

- French equivalents
  - Voltaire's *Candide* and *Zadig*
  - Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*

Epic novel

Tom Jones (1749)

- Comic romance rooted in the narrative conventions of romance and epic
- Un-heroic hero - 'ordinary' person
- Omniscient, meddling, third person narrator
- Wide social range topics
- Direct show and discussion of narrative devices
- Paved the way for Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and William Thackeray

Experimental novel (meta-novel)

Tristram Shandy 1759

- One of the greatest comic novels in English
- Rambling plot
- Meddling and maddening third person narrator
- Digressions as important as main plot
- A forerunner for many modern narrative devices
  - stream of consciousness
  - self-reflection
  - modernist and postmodernist writing

Buildungsroman

A German word for "novel of education" or "novel of formation", a novel which traces the spiritual, moral, psychological, or social development and growth of the main character from (usually) childhood to maturity.

Features

- The hero or heroine leaves home for a real or metaphoric journey due to some form of loss or discontent

- The process of maturity is long, arduous, and gradual
    - clashes between the protagonist's needs and desires and the views and judgments of social order.

- In the end the spirit and values of the social order become manifest in the protagonist who
    - accommodates into society.
    - assesses his/her new place in that society

Examples

- The full bloom of Buildungsroman is in 19th century Eurean literature
- Almost all 18th century English novels can be considered buildugsroman
  - Robinson Crusoe is certinly a good one
  - Pamela in anothe good example
- All Jane Austen's novels are buildungsroman
- One of the best bildungroman is Goethe's Wilhelm Meister

THANK YOU