

Realism(s)

Lecture 3: The Rise of the Novel

1) The Novel as a Distinctly Modern Genre

2) Beginnings in First-Person Narration

3) The Emancipation of Fiction: Henry Fielding and the Conventions of Authorial Narration

1) The Novel as a Distinctly Modern Genre

[The novel] differs from its predecessors – the novels of classical antiquity and the romances, chivalrous or courtly, of the middle ages – through what Ian Watt calls ‘formal realism’. Instead of damsels in distress, knights in shining armour and fire-spitting dragons, it has credible everyday characters. It is set, not ‘elsewhere’ and in some mythological time, but in a space and in a time that seems, if not identical (because it is fictional), then at least continuous with our space and our time. It replaces stock plots with original, ‘once only’ plots, and these plots are driven not by wonders and miracles, but by action that answers to the demands of reason and causality. It is a new genre that is decidedly of this world. We have grown so accustomed to the realist paradigm of the modern novel [...] that we tend to forget how scandalous and counter-intuitive its advent must have appeared. For it is easy to see why there should be a demand for literature that is about things that do *not* exist in the real world (giants and dwarfs, witches and magicians, the never-never-lands of mythical adventure and unrestrained eroticism, talking animals, supernatural metamorphosis, etc.), but why there should be, in the first place, a literature that reflects things that exist already is truly puzzling (and many of the early novels play entertainingly with that thin line that separates that new kind of fiction from extra-literary fact). Why duplicate reality at all?

There are two explanations for this and they go hand in hand: the emergence of the modern novel in Western Europe coincides with unprecedented social change. As change accelerates, societies develop a sense of their own historicity and there comes a point in time when the literary forms of comparatively static societies will no longer serve the dynamism of the modern age: reality outgrows forms of fiction that have no systematic place for fundamental change but rather celebrate the general,

the ideal, the eternal, and such like. In turn, the modern novel celebrates the particular, the individual, the concrete and the specific – and all that is in state of becoming.

However, accelerating social change is, of course, not only experiences as chance and opportunity, but also as a potential threat. It is more difficult to make sense of things if they are changing all the time. And in steps the second explanation for why it is the modern novel, as *epic* genre, that, in its realist mode, so radically transforms the literary scene: mankind has one powerful tool for making sense of life, the universe and everything and for creating meaning, and that tool is *narrative*. Narrative transforms what might otherwise be a meaningless succession of *contingent, isolated events* into a string, a sequence of embedded events that have the *semblance of (narrative) necessity*.

(Bode 2017, 26-27)

Early Examples of the Novel:

Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (1605/15)

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* (1688)

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719),
Moll Flanders (1722)

Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1740),
Clarissa (1747/51)

Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (1742),
Jonathan Wild (1743),
Tom Jones (1749)
Amelia (1752)

Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67)

2) Beginnings in First-Person Narration

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, Or the Royal Slave* (1688):

I do not pretend, in giving you the history of this royal slave, to entertain my reader with the adventures of a feigned hero, whose life and fortunes fancy may manage at the poet's pleasure; nor in relating the truth, design to adorn it with any accidents but such as arrived in earnest to him.[...] I was myself an eyewitness to a great part of what you will find here set down.

Daniel Defoe (1719)

The Life and Strange Surprising
Adventures of
Robinson Crusoe,
of York, Mariner

Who lived eight and twenty years, all alone in
an un-inhabited island on the coast of America, near
the mouth of the great river of Oroonoque,
having been cast on shore by shipwreck, wherein
all the men perished but himself. With an
account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd
by pyrates, written by himself

The Preface

If ever the Story of any private Man's Adventures in the World were worth making Publick, and were acceptable when Publish'd, the Editor of this Account thinks this will be so.

The Wonders of this Man's Life exceed all that (he thinks) is to be found extant; the Life of one Man being scarce capable of a greater Variety.

The Story is told with Modesty, with Seriousness, and with a religious Application of Events to the Uses to which wise Men always apply them (viz.) to the Instruction of others by this Example, and to justify and honour the Wisdom of Providence in all the Variety of our Circumstances, let them happen how they will.

The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it: And however thinks, because all such things are dispatch'd, that the Improvement of it, as well to the Diversion, as to the Instruction of the Reader, will be the same; and as such, he thinks, without farther Compliment to the World, he does them a great Service in the Publication.

Beginning:

I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of York, of a good Family, tho' not of that Country, my Father being a Foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull: He got a good Estate by Merchandise, and leaving off his Trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my Mother, whose Relations were named Robinson, a very good Family in that Country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual Corruption of Words in England, we are now called, nay we call our selves, and write our Name Crusoe, and so my Companions always call'd me.

I had two elder Brothers, one of which was Lieutenant Colonel to an English Regiment of Foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Coll. Lockhart, and was killed at the Battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards: What became of my second Brother I never knew any more than my Father or Mother did know what was become of me.

Being the third Son of the Family, and not bred to any Trade, my Head began to be fill'd very early with rambling Thoughts: My Father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent Share of Learning, as far as House-Education, and a Country Free-School generally goes, and design'd me for the Law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to Sea, and my Inclination to this led me so strongly against the Will, nay, the Commands of my Father, and against all the Entreaties and Persuasions of my Mother, and other Friends, that there seem'd to be something fatal in that Propension of Nature tending directly to the Life of Misery which was to befall me.

Typical Examples of Narrator's Discourse in RC:

- "I observed in this last Part of [my father's] discourse, which was truly Prophetick, tho' I suppose my Father did not know it to be so himself; I say, I observed [...]" (p.7)
- "But I was to have another Trial for it still; and Providence, as in such cases generally it does, resolved to leave me entirely without Excuse." (p.13)
- "Any one may judge what a Condition I must be in at all this, who was but a young Sailor, and who had been in such a fright before at but a little." (p.16)
- "As for me, having some Money in my Pocket, I travelled to *London* by Land; and there, as well as on the Road, had many Struggles with my self, what course of Life I should take, and whether I should go Home, or go to Sea." (p.22)

Samuel Richardson

Pamela, or

Virtue Rewarded

In a series of familiar letters from a beautiful young damsel to her parents: and afterwards, in her exalted condition, between her, and persons of figure and quality, upon the most important and entertaining subjects, in genteel life. Publish'd in order to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion in the minds of the youth of both sexes.

Daniel Defoe/Samuel Richardson [empirical authors]

▼ (posing as editors)

TEXT:

Preface:

'Editor' (D.D./S.R.) > 'implied author function'

(implied author > implied reader)

Discourse:

Narrator (Robinson Crusoe/Pamela) > Narratee(s)

Story:

Protagonist (RC/P) <> other characters (Friday, Mr. B.)

▼ ▲

reader

First-Person Narration:

- a) **Stanzel:** First-Person Narrative Situation
- explicit narrator as protagonist or witness
 - continuity between level of discourse and level of story
 - shifting relationship between narrating self (I) and experiencing self (I)
 - perspective is limited to the narrator's individual consciousness and feelings *and* to the narrator's position in the world.
- b) **Genette:** homodiegetic narration
(fixed) internal focalization

The Limits and Dynamics of First-Person Narration:

- overt homodiegetic narrator
- fixed internal focalization
- narrating self (discourse) ↔ experiencing self (story)

a) continuity

e.g. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders* (1722)
David Copperfield (1849/50), *Jane Eyre* (1847)
Enduring Love (1997)
[> the autobiography paradigm]

b) emphasis on experiencing self

e.g. *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa* (1747/51)
[epistolary novels, "letters, written ... to the *Moment*"]
Molloy/Malone Dies/The Unnamable (1950-52)
[interior monologue, present tense]

c) emphasis on narrating self

e.g. *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67)
Midnight's Children (1981)
[digressions, metafictional tendency]

3) The Emancipation of Fiction: Henry Fielding and the Conventions of Authorial Narration

Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (1742): Preface

[I]t may not be improper to premise a few words concerning this kind of writing, which I do not remember to have seen hitherto attempted in our language. The epic as well as the drama is divided into tragedy and comedy. Homer, who was the father of this species of poetry, gave us a pattern of both these, tho' that of the latter kind is entirely lost; which Aristotle tells us, bore the same relation to comedy which his *Iliad* bears to tragedy. [...]

And farther, as this poetry may be tragic or comic, I will not scruple to say it may likewise either be in verse or prose: for tho' it wants one particular, which the critic enumerates in the constituent parts of the epic poem, namely metre; yet, when any kind of writing contains all its other parts, such as fable, action, characters, sentiments, and diction [...] it seems, I think, reasonable to refer it to the epic [...] Now a comic romance is a comic epic-poem in prose; differing from comedy, as the serious epic from tragedy: its action being more extended and comprehensive, containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a greater variety of characters. It differs from the serious romance [...] in its characters, by introducing persons of inferior rank, and consequently of inferior manners [...] [In the comic species of writing] we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature from the just imitation of which, will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to the reader [...] life every where furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous.

Henry Fielding

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling

Book I

Containing as much of the Birth of the Foundling as is necessary or proper to acquaint the Reader with in the Beginning of this History.

Chapter I

The Introduction to the Work, or Bill of Fare to the Feast.

An Author ought to consider himself, not as a Gentleman who gives a private or eleemosynary Treat, but rather as one who keeps a public Ordinary, at which all Persons are welcome for their Money. In the former Case, it is well known, that the Entertainer provides what Fare he pleases; and tho' this should be very indifferent, and utterly disagreeable to the Taste of his Company, they must not find any Fault; nay, on the contrary, Good-Breeding forces them outwardly to approve and to commend whatever is set before them. Now the contrary of this happens to the Master of an Ordinary. Men who pay for what they eat, will insist on gratifying their Palates, however nice and whimsical these may prove; and if every Thing is not agreeable to their Taste, will challenge a Right to censure, to abuse, and to d-n their Dinner without Controul.

To prevent therefore giving Offence to their Customers by any such Disappointment, it hath been usual, with the honest and well-meaning Host, to provide a Bill of Fare, which all Persons may peruse at their first Entrance into the House; and, having thence acquainted themselves with the Entertainment which they may expect, may either stay and regale with what is provided for them, or may depart to some other Ordinary better accommodated to their Taste.

As we do not disdain to borrow Wit or Wisdom from any Man who is capable of lending us either, we have condescended to take a Hint from these honest Victuallers, and shall prefix not only a general Bill of Fare to our whole Entertainment, but shall likewise give the Reader particular Bills to every Course which is to be served up in this and the ensuing Volumes.

The Provision then which we have here made is no other than HUMAN NATURE. Nor do I fear that my sensible Reader, though most luxurious in his Taste, will start, cavil, or be offended, because I have named but one Article. The Tortoise, as the Alderman of Bristol, well learned in eating, knows by much Experience, besides the delicious Calibash and Calipee, contains many different Kinds of Food; nor can the learned Reader be ignorant, that in Human Nature, tho' here collected under one general Name, is such prodigious Variety, that a Cook will have sooner gone through all the several Species of animal and vegetable Food in the World, than an Author will be able to exhaust so extensive a Subject.

An Objection may perhaps be apprehended from the more delicate, that this Dish is too common and vulgar; for what else is the Subject of all the Romances, Novels, Plays and Poems, with which the Stalls abound. Many exquisite Viands might be rejected by the Epicure, if it was a sufficient Cause for his contemning of them as common and vulgar, that something was to be found in the most poultry Alleys under the same Name. In reality, true Nature is as difficult to be met with in Authors, as the Bayonne Ham or Bologna Sausage is to be found in the Shops.

But the whole, to continue the same Metaphor, consists in the Cookery of the Author; for, as Mr. Pope tells us,

True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest,
What oft' was thought, but ne'er so well exprest.

The same Animal which hath the Honour to have some Part of his Flesh eaten at the Table of a Duke, may perhaps be degraded in another Part, and some of his Limbs gibbeted, as it were, in the vilest Stall in Town. Where then lies the Difference between the Food of the Nobleman and the Porter, if both are at Dinner on the same Ox or Calf, but in the seasoning, the dressing, the garnishing, and the setting forth. Hence the one provokes and incites the most languid Appetite, and the other turns and palls that which is the sharpest and keenest.

In like manner, the Excellence of the mental Entertainment consists less in the Subject, than in the Author's Skill in well dressing it up. How pleased therefore will the Reader be to find, that we have, in the following Work, adhered closely to one of the highest Principles of the best Cook which the present Age, or perhaps that of Heliogabalus, hath produced. This great Man, as is well known to all Lovers of polite eating, begins at first by setting plain Things before his hungry Guests, rising afterwards by Degrees, as their Stomachs may be supposed to decrease, to the very Quintessence of Sauce and Spices. In like manner, we shall represent Human Nature at first to the keen Appetite of our Reader, in that more plain and simple Manner in which it is found in the Country, and shall hereafter hash and ragoo it with all the high French and Italian Seasoning of Affectation and Vice which Courts and Cities afford. By these Means, we doubt not but our Reader may be rendered desirous to read on for ever, as the great Person, just above-mentioned, is supposed to have made some Persons eat.

Having premised thus much, we will now detain those, who like our Bill of Fare, no longer from their Diet, and shall proceed directly to serve up the first Course of our History, for their Entertainment.

Chapter II

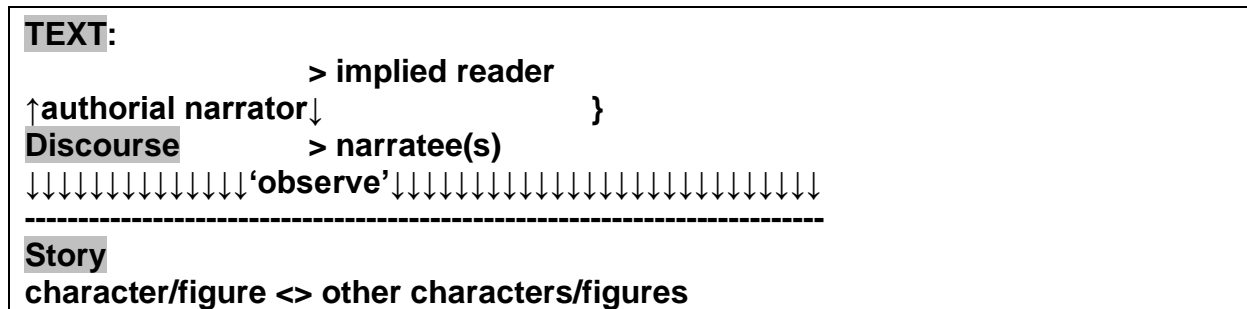
A short Description of Squire Allworthy, and a fuller Account of Miss Bridget Allworthy his Sister.

In that Part of the western Division of this Kingdom, which is commonly called Somersetshire, there lately lived (and perhaps lives still) a Gentleman whose Name was Allworthy, and who might well be called the Favourite of both Nature and Fortune; for both of these seem to have contended which should bless and enrich him most. In this Contention, Nature may seem to some to have come off victorious, as she bestowed on him many Gifts; while Fortune had only one Gift in her Power; but in pouring forth this, she was so very profuse, that others perhaps may think this single Endowment to have been more than equivalent to all the various Blessings which he enjoyed from Nature. From the former of these, he derived an agreeable Person, a sound Constitution, a solid Understanding, and a benevolent Heart; by the latter, he was decreed to the Inheritance of one of the largest Estates in the County.

This Gentleman had, in his Youth, married a very worthy and beautiful Woman, of whom he had been extremely fond: By her he had three Children, all of whom died in their Infancy. He had likewise had the Misfortune of burying this beloved Wife herself, about five Years before the Time in which this History chuses to set out. This Loss, however great, he bore like a Man of Sense and Constancy; tho' it must be confest, he would often talk a little whimsically on this Head: For he sometimes said, he looked on himself as still married, and considered his Wife as only gone a little before him, a Journey which he should most certainly, sooner or later, take after her; and that he had not the least Doubt of meeting her again, in a Place where he should never part with her more. Sentiments for which his Sense was arraigned by one Part of his Neighbours, his Religion by a second, and his Sincerity by a third.

He now lived, for the most Part, retired in the Country, with one Sister, for whom he had a very tender Affection. This Lady was now somewhat past the Age of 30, an *Æra*, at which, in the Opinion of the malicious, the Title of Old Maid may, with no Impropriety, be assumed. She was of that Species of Women, whom you commend rather for good Qualities than Beauty, and who are generally called by their own Sex, very good Sort of Women - as good a Sort of Woman, Madam, as you would wish to know. [...]

empirical author (Henry Fielding)
▼ ('copying' himself into the text)



▼ ▲
reader

Third-Person Narration:
(Stanzel: Authorial Narrative Situation)

- heterodiegetic narrator
(overt/personalized ↔ covert/withdrawn)
- combination of
external focalization (narrator-focalizer)
and
internal focalization (character-focalizers)
- ► zero (= flexible) focalization
- omniscience/omnipresence
- narratorial functions:
 - 1) presentation of story world
 - 2) direct commentary
 - 3) generalizing commentary
 - 4) reflexive functions

[Natural vs. Unnatural Narrative, cf. Alber 2013, Alders 2013]

The Dynamics of Authorial Narration:

- heterodiegetic narrator
- zero (= flexible!) focalization:
 - external focalization (narrator focalizer) frames
 - passages of internal focalization (character focalizers)
- story world is observed from a 'transcendental' discourse level
→ omniscience, omnipresence
- overt/explicit/personalized ↔ covert/withdrawn narrators
- a) overt narrators can cover the full range of narratorial functions
(presentation, direct, generalizing or reflexive commentary)
e.g. *Tom Jones* (1749), *Vanity Fair* (1848), *The Satanic Verses* (1988)
- b) withdrawal of narrator reduces the possibilities for explicit commentary until
only implicit forms (ironical tone etc.) are left
e.g. *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *A Passage to India* (1924),
The Porcupine (1992)

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