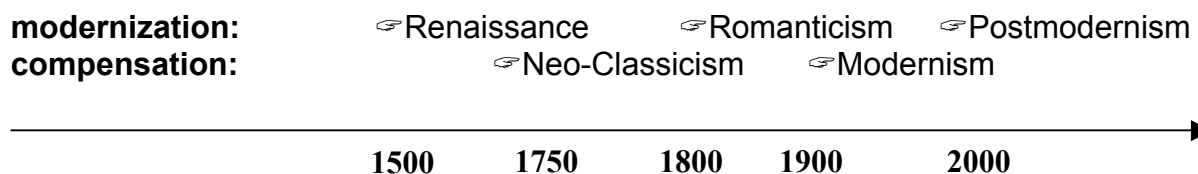


Romanticism

Lecture 8: Romantic Fiction

- 1) Functions of Modern Literature and the Competition between Poetry and Prose
- 2) Famous Definitions of the Novel
- 3) The Novel in Transition
- 4) Romanticism and Realism

1) Functions of Modern Literature and the Competition between Poetry and Prose



Modernization	vs.	Compensation
the influx of subjectivity	vs.	the persistence of a longing for objectivity
resulting in/ counterbalanced by		resulting in the emergence of
poetic form a) as imported from (oral) tradition b) as 'liberated' by writing/printing (innovation, defamiliarization)		prose as a flexible, open-form signifying practice which seemingly maintains the clarity and control of direct interaction in writing
leading to		leading to
reflexivity/intransparency		an evasion of reflexivity/ the illusion of transparency

Verse is not removed from the configuration of signifying practices that make up communication. It is just that its extension is restricted. The domain of signifying practices is remapped. Prose appears and claims a territory of its own.

[P]rose withholds itself from view [...] it becomes identified with the linguistic substratum so that whereas one recognizes that it emerges relatively late, it presents itself as prior to verse or any specific discourse. It can thus claim a foundational role and functions as the ground of reference, a sort of degree-zero of language for all further elaboration. [Thus,] verse is seen as developmentally second. But we know it to be developmentally first. Well then, if verse is first *and* verse is second, where is prose? [...] Prose is meant to have no place; prose does not happen. Prose is what assigns place.

(Kittay/Godzich 1987, xvii/197)

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)

MEANING

1. “objective” meaning

- narrative suggests that meaning resides in the world and can be “discovered”
- key categories: probability/(the illusion of) reference
- narrative draws upon conventionalized/‘naturalized’ views of the world
- events seem to “speak for themselves”

2. subjective meaning

- narrative suggests that meaning is “constructed” by individuals
- key categories: experience/time
- subjective meaning can emerge either in accordance with “objective” orientations
(> education, ‘Bildung’) or in revolt against them (> alienation, isolation)

3. narrative meaning / literary meaning

- narrative acknowledges that meaning is produced by plot structures and other narrative devices
- narrative devices can be supported by additional, specifically literary devices which can be either of traditional or of modern provenance
- reflexivity

(cf. Reinfandt 1997, 147-154)

2) Famous Definitions of the Novel

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, “Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik” (1835-38)

Das

“Romanhafte im modernen Sinne des Wortes”

steht im Zeichen des Konflikts zwischen

“Individuen mit ihren subjektiven Zwecken”

und der

**“feste[n], sichere[n] Ordnung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft
und des Staats”,**

zwischen

**“der Poesie des Herzens und der entgegenstehenden Prosa
der Verhältnisse”.**

(Theorie-Werkausgabe, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1970,
Bd. 14: 219f. u. Bd. 15: 392f.)

Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans* (1920)

[D]ie Form des Romans ist, wie keine andere, ein Ausdruck der transzendentalen Obdachlosigkeit. [...] Der Roman ist die Epopöe eines Zeitalters, für das die extensive Totalität des Lebens nicht mehr sinnfällig gegeben ist, für das die Lebensimmanenz des Sinnes zum Problem geworden ist, und das dennoch die Gesinnung zur Totalität hat. [...] Die Epopöe gestaltet eine von sich aus geschlossene Lebenstotalität, der Roman sucht *gestaltend* die verborgene Totalität des Lebens aufzudecken und *aufzubauen*. [...] Kontingente Welt und problematisches Individuum sind einander wechselseitig bedingende Wirklichkeiten.

(Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971, 32/47/51/67)

3) The Novel in Transition

Fielding died in 1754, Richardson in 1761, Smollett in 1771, and Sterne in 1768. In only four decades the English novel had made some giant steps forward. After the work of these four great writers, a relatively barren period followed. Though the stream of fiction broadened continually, nothing of intrinsic literary value was written in the form of the novel.

(Wagner 1988, 73)

Fiction in the Second Half of the 18th Century

Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67)
Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote* (1752)
Tobias Smollett, *Humphry Clinker* (1771)
Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (1771)
Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House* (1793)

Gothic Novels/Oriental Tales:

Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)
Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* (1777)
William Beckford, *Vathek* (1786)
Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)
Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (1796)

William Beckford, *Modern Novel Writing* (1796)
William Godwin, *Things as They Are, or
The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794/1831)
Elizabeth Inchbald, *Nature and Art* (1796)

Co-ordinates of Experimentation

The Castle of Otranto: fiction/extremes vs. unity → intermediality/painting, drama
[Gothic fiction]

The Man of Feeling: subj. experience → fragmentation vs. textuality
[sentimental fiction, the novel of sensibility]

*Caleb Williams, or:
Things as They Are*
[Jacobin novel] society/the world vs. subj. experience → narrativity

4) Romanticism and Realism

19th century Realist fiction in England is a form of Romantic art, but it differs from Romantic art itself in throwing emphasis on the importance of reproducing the external conditions of life and the material laws. It emerges from Romanticism by a process of natural development of central Romantic ideas under the influence of new social forces.

(Williams 1974, xii-xiii)

Charlotte Smith

Emmeline: The Orphan of the Castle (1788)

CHAPTER I

In a remote part of the county of Pembroke, is an old building, formerly of great strength, and inhabited for centuries by the ancient family of Mowbray; to the sole remaining branch of which it still belonged, tho' it was, at the time this history commences, inhabited only by servants; and the greater part of it was gone to decay. A few rooms only had been occasionally repaired to accommodate the proprietor, when he found it necessary to come thither to receive his rents, or to inspect the condition of the estate; which however happened so seldom, that during the twelve years he had been master of it, he had only once visited the castle for a few days. The business that related to the property round it (which was very considerable) was conducted by a steward grown grey in the service of the family, and by an attorney from London, who came to hold the courts. And an old housekeeper, a servant who waited on her, the steward, and a labourer who was kept to look after his horse and work in that part of the garden which yet bore the vestige of cultivation, were now all its inhabitants; except a little girl, of whom the housekeeper had the care, and who was believed to be the natural daughter of that elder brother, by whose death Lord Montreville, the present possessor, became entitled to the estate.

This nobleman, while yet a younger son, was (by the partiality of his mother, who had been an heiress, and that of some other female relations) master of a property nearly equal to what he inherited by the death of his brother, Mr. Mowbray.

He had been originally designed for the law; but in consequence of being entitled to the large estate which had been his mother's, and heir, by will, to all her opulent family, he had quitted that [Pg 2] profession, and at the age of about four and twenty, had married Lady Eleonore Delamere, by whom he had a son and two daughters.

The illustrious family from which Lady Eleonore descended, became extinct in the male line by the premature death of her two brothers; and her Ladyship becoming sole heiress, her husband took the name of Delamere; and obtaining one of the titles of the lady's father, was, at his death, created Viscount Montreville. Mr. Mowbray died before he was thirty, in Italy; and Lord Montreville, on taking possession of Mowbray Castle, found there his infant daughter.

Her mother had died soon after her birth; and she had been sent from France, where she was born, and put under the care of Mrs. Carey, the housekeeper, who was tenderly attached to her, having been the attendant of Mr. Mowbray from his earliest infancy.

Lord Montreville suffered her to remain in the situation in which he found her, and to go by the name of Mowbray: he allowed for the trifling charge of her board and necessary cloaths in the steward's account, the examination of which was for some years the only circumstance that reminded him of the existence of the unfortunate orphan.

With no other notice from her father's family, Emmeline had attained her twelfth year; an age at which she would have been left in the most profound ignorance, if her uncommon understanding, and unwearied application, had not supplied the deficiency of her instructors, and conquered the disadvantages of her situation.

Mrs. Carey could indeed read with tolerable fluency, and write an hand hardly legible: and Mr. Williamson, the old steward, had been formerly a good penman, and was still a proficient in accounts. Both were anxious to give their little charge all the instruction they could: but without the quickness and attention she shewed to whatever they attempted to teach, such preceptors could have done little.

Emmeline had a kind of intuitive knowledge; and comprehended every thing with a facility that soon left her instructors behind her. The precarious and neglected situation in which she lived, troubled not the innocent Emmeline. Having never experienced any other, she felt no uneasiness at her present lot; and on the future she was not yet old enough to reflect. [...]

Jane Austen

Sense and Sensibility (first draft in letters 1795, published 1811)

Volume I

Chapter I

The family of Dashwood had been long settled in Sussex. Their estate was large, and their residence was at Norland Park, in the centre of their property, where, for many generations, they had lived in so respectable a manner, as to engage the general good opinion of their surrounding acquaintance. The late owner of this estate was a single man, who lived to a very advanced age, and who for many years of his life, had a constant companion and housekeeper in his sister. But her death, which happened ten years before his own, produced a great alteration in his home; for to supply her loss, he invited and received into his house the family of his nephew Mr. Henry Dashwood, the legal inheritor of the Norland estate, and the person to whom he intended to bequeath it. In the society of his nephew and niece, and their children, the old Gentleman's days were comfortably spent. His attachment to them all increased. The constant attention of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dashwood to his wishes, which proceeded not merely from interest, but from goodness of heart, gave him every degree of solid comfort which his age could receive; and the cheerfulness of the children added a relish to his existence.

By a former marriage, Mr. Henry Dashwood had one son: by his present lady, three daughters. The son, a steady respectable young man, was amply provided for by the fortune of his mother, which had been large, and half of which devolved on him on his coming of age. By his own marriage, likewise, which happened soon afterwards, he added to his wealth. **To him therefore the succession to the**

Norland estate was not so really important as to his sisters; for their fortune, independent of what might arise to them from their father's inheriting that property, could be but small. Their mother had nothing, and their father only seven thousand pounds in his own disposal; for the remaining moiety of his first wife's fortune was also secured to her child, and he had only a life interest in it.

The old Gentleman died; his will was read, and **like almost every other will**, gave as much disappointment as pleasure. He was neither so unjust, nor so ungrateful, as to leave his estate from his nephew; - but he left it to him on such terms as destroyed half the value of the bequest. Mr. Dashwood had wished for it more for the sake of his wife and daughters than for himself or his son: - but to his son, and his son's son, a child of four years old, it was secured, in such a way, as to leave to himself no power of providing for those who were most dear to him, and who most needed a provision, by any charge on the estate, or by any sale of its valuable woods. **The whole was tied up for the benefit of this child, who, in occasional visits with his father and mother at Norland, had so far gained on the affections of his uncle, by such attractions as are by no means unusual in children of two or three years old; an imperfect articulation, an earnest desire of having his own way, many cunning tricks, and a great deal of noise, as to outweigh all the value of all the attention which, for years, he had received from his niece and her daughters. He meant not to be unkind however, and, as a mark of his affection for the three girls, he left them a thousand pounds a- piece.**

Mr. Dashwood's disappointment was, at first, severe; but his temper was cheerful and sanguine, and he might reasonably hope to live many years, and by living economically, lay by a considerable sum from the produce of an estate already large, and capable of almost immediate improvement. But the fortune, which had been so tardy in coming, was his only one twelvemonth. He survived his uncle no longer; and ten thousand pounds, including the late legacies, was all that remained for his widow and daughters.

His son was sent for, as soon as his danger was known, and to him Mr. Dashwood recommended, with all the strength and urgency which illness could command, the interest of his mother-in-law and sisters.

Mr. John Dashwood had not the strong feelings of the rest of the family; but he was affected by a recommendation of such a nature at such a time, and he promised to do every thing in his power to make them comfortable. His father was rendered easy by such an assurance, and Mr. John Dashwood had then leisure to consider how much there might prudently be in his power to do for them.

He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted, and rather selfish, is to be ill- disposed: but he was, in general, well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties. Had he married a more amiable woman, he might have been made still more respectable than he was: - he might even have been made amiable himself; for he was very young when he married, and very fond of his wife. But Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself; - more narrow-minded and selfish.

When he gave his promise to his father, he meditated within himself to increase the fortunes of his sisters by the present of a thousand pounds a- piece. He then really thought himself equal to it. The prospect of four thousand a-year, in addition to his present income, besides the remaining half of his own mother's fortune, warmed his heart and made him feel capable of generosity. - **»Yes, he would give them three thousand pounds: it would be liberal and handsome! It would be enough to make them completely easy. Three thousand pounds! he could spare so**

considerable a sum with little inconvenience.« - He thought of it all day long, and for many days successively, and he did not repent.

No sooner was his father's funeral over, than Mrs. John Dashwood, without sending any notice of her intention to her mother-in-law, arrived with her child and their attendants. No one could dispute her right to come; the house was her husband's from the moment of his father's decease; but the indelicacy of her conduct was so much the greater, and to a woman in Mrs. Dashwood's situation, with only common feelings, **must have been** highly displeasing; - but in her mind there was a sense of honour so keen, a generosity so romantic, that any offence of the kind, by whomsoever given or received, was to her a source of immovable disgust. Mrs. John Dashwood had never been a favourite with any of her husband's family; but she had had no opportunity, till the present, of shewing them with how little attention to the comfort of other people she could act when [...]

Chapter II

Mrs. John Dashwood now installed herself mistress of Norland; and her mother and sisters-in-law were degraded to the condition of visitors. As such, however, they were treated by her with quiet civility; and by her husband with as much kindness as he could feel towards any body beyond himself, his wife, and their child. He really pressed them, with some earnestness, to consider Norland as their home; and, as no plan appeared so eligible to Mrs. Dashwood as remaining there till she could accommodate herself with a house in the neighbourhood, his invitation was accepted.

A continuance in a place where every thing reminded her of former delight, was exactly what suited her mind. In seasons of cheerfulness, no temper could be more cheerful than hers, or possess, in a greater degree, that sanguine expectation of happiness which is happiness itself. But in sorrow she must be equally carried away by her fancy, and as far beyond consolation as in pleasure she was beyond alloy.

Mrs. John Dashwood did not at all approve of what her husband intended to do for his sisters. To take three thousand pounds from the fortune of their dear little boy, would be impoverishing him to the most dreadful degree. **She begged him to think again on the subject. How could he answer it to himself to rob his child, and his only child too, of so large a sum? And what possible claim could the Miss Dashwoods, who were related to him only by half blood, which she considered as no relationship at all, have on his generosity to so large an amount. It was very well known that no affection was ever supposed to exist between the children of any man by different marriages; and why was he to ruin himself, and their poor little Harry, by giving away all his money to his half sisters?**

»It was my father's last request to me,« replied her husband, »that I should assist his widow and daughters.«

»He did not know what he was talking of, I dare say; ten to one but he was light-headed at the time. Had he been in his right senses, he could not have thought of such a thing as begging you to give away half your fortune from your own child.«

»He did not stipulate for any particular sum, my dear Fanny; he only requested me, in general terms, to assist them, and make their situation more comfortable than it was in his power to do. Perhaps it would have been as well if he had left it wholly to myself. He could hardly suppose I should neglect them. But as he required the promise, I could not do less than [...]

Jane Austen might almost be said to have provided the basic format for the later realist novel [...] She could have claimed, in a sense, to have reconciled the achievements of Fielding and Richardson and made possible a whole new kind of development in the English novel. Walter Scott's contribution was more dramatic and more quickly appreciated. He was the first to describe the forces at work in human society as a whole and to show the individual as the focal point of historical, economic and cultural forces beyond his control [...] he also managed to preserve his confidence in the possible harmony of man's experience and in his essential dignity [...] Consequently Austen and Scott must be understood to have contributed enormously to the development of the Realist novel of the mid-nineteenth century.

(Williams 1974, 10-11)

If Fielding and Richardson provide [...] the thesis against which Mackenzie [and others] attempt an antithesis, Austen and Scott must seem to offer the grand synthesis. And implicit value judgements lurk in such an ordering of the facts.

(Spacks 1990, 238)

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