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ALL GROUPS

Lecture 2: Aspects of the Novel

The novel, as previously stated differs from its previous forms because of its numerous characteristics. It is made of a plot, a setting and, most important, a set of different characters.

Plot:

Plot is a series of events or episodes that make up the action of a work of fiction and E. M. Forster defines it as “a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality” (1966: 93). The reader questions the reasons of the happenings of the events and this is called curiosity. It requires intelligence and memory.

Plot refers to the action or “story line” of the literary work. Both drama and fiction have plots, but sometimes poems also do. Plot often involves conflict between two or more characters or between a character and himself or between a character and external opposing forces. One has to bear in mind that there is no action without conflict. Conflict in literature might include the following:

- Man VS Man or self?
- Man Vs Nature?
- Man Vs (God) Religion?
- Man Vs the supernatural?

Man Vs Technology?

The typical and traditional representation of plot in literature involves the following steps:

- Exposition: a phase within which conflict / action begins. The author at this stage often introduces the characters, the setting and provides a description of the background.
- Rising action: these are the events that promote the conflict.
- Climax: this is the peak of conflict or the point of greatest emotional tension in the story.
- Resolution: a phase where the character solves the conflict or someone else solves it for him.
- Denouement: it's the ending and therefore any remaining mystery after the resolution will be solved, explained and clarified either by the characters or by the author.

Setting:

The setting is time and place. The novelist is concerned with men in a particular place at a particular time, and according to Walter Allen, the greatest novelist is the one who is able to write about his time in a way to distinguish it from another (1958: 23-24).

Characters:

Characterization went through different stages in order to reach the kind of 'people' we have in novels. The first break with the old tradition was to select characters from lower classes, no more kings and queens, nor knights. The new hero of the new genre was an ordinary man that we might meet throughout our lives, and the importance of the realistic aspect of characters is demonstrated by Lionel Stevenson: "no matter how believable the action may be in itself, it does not win the reader's full credulity unless it is performed by distinct individuals who are recognizable in terms of our experience" (1960: 8). The character in a novel resembles strangely and realistically human beings in real life.

The Different Types of the Novel:

- *The epistolary novel*: it is made up of letters exchanged by the characters, such as **Pamela** (1740) and **Clarissa** (1748) by Richardson
- *The picaresque novel*: from picaro (dishonest and unusual) a kind of journey in search of an ideal, with characters rather foolish and involved in situations too complex to be resolved.
- *The comic novel*: the characters and/or the situations they live are absurd.
- *The historical novel*: fictional narrative which constructs history and recreates it imaginatively.
- *The psychological novel*: modern and postmodern, it is fiction devoted to the investigation of spiritual, emotional and mental life of characters caring nothing for plot or actions (Virginia Woolf).
- *Thesis novel*: it deals with social, religious or political issue having a didactic purpose (**Hard Times** by Dickens)
- *The sentimental novel*
- *The gothic novel*:
- *The detective / thriller novel*

Major writers of the 18th century:

Major 18th Century Novelists:

During the early years of the eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe (1659/1661-1731) produced *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and that was quite different from previous works. This book is about the adventures of a common man, not those of a king, a knight or an extraordinary hero.

Yet, the real break from the previous tradition was made by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) in *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), when he introduced the narrative combined with the epistolary form. He added a "dramatic presentation of events through a series of letters, and the analysis of human emotions and motivation in prose story form" (Smith & co 1974: 172-3), as well as sentimentality influenced all the coming novelists. He was considered as sexual moralist and for women he was a prophet of emotion.

Henry Fielding (1707-1754) introduced irony and satire (the comic form) and used many characters to represent all social classes. He wrote *Shamela* (1741); a total imitation of *Pamela* in which he ridicules Richardson's simplistic reduction of virtue to female virginity and it was a failure. Then, he wrote *Joseph Andrews* (1742), *The History of Tom Jones* (1749), and many others. Fielding wanted to reform manners whereas Richardson worked to improve them.

Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759) a comic novel on morals in which he introduced sentimentality, and Tobias Smollett (1721-1771) a moralist and satirist who used comedy to talk about what disgusted him in society as in *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748).

These lectures were elaborated based on the courses of Dr Mouro, Dr Kheladi, Ms Mengouchi, Dr Belmerabet. Prof Serir