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Class: L1

Module: Literary Text

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Lecture Six: The English Novel (Part Two)

Tutorial Outcomes

By the end of this tutorial, students will be able to:

- Identify and define various types of novels within English literature.
- Provide examples of each novel type, citing key authors and works.
- Understand the distinguishing characteristics and historical context of each novel type.

Prerequisites

Before exploring the types of novels, please consider the following questions:

- What are the key elements that define a novel, such as plot, character, and setting?
- How do different types of novels reflect different social, cultural, and historical contexts?
- What are some of the most well-known examples of each type of novel, and what makes them significant?

Terminology Used in This Tutorial

- Genre: A category of artistic composition, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.
- Protagonist: The main character in a literary work.
- Satire: The use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices.

Introduction

The English novel encompasses various types, each with distinct characteristics and historical contexts. These types reflect different narrative styles, themes, and cultural influences. This lecture will define and exemplify several key types of novels within English literature, drawing from M.H. Abrams's classifications.

1. Types of Novels

The English novel includes several distinct types, each with unique characteristics. Here are some of the key types:

1.1) Picaresque Novel

Definition: Originating in Spain, the picaresque novel (from the Spanish "pícaro," meaning "rogue") features a wandering hero who experiences a series of loosely connected adventures

Characteristics: This type is episodic, realistic, and often satirical. It typically follows the adventures of a roguish protagonist as they travel to different places.

Examples:

- Don Quixote (1605) by Cervantes (Spanish origin)
- The Unfortunate Traveller by Thomas Nashe

1.2) Epistolary Novel

Definition: An epistolary novel is told through a series of letters exchanged between characters (from the word "epistle," meaning letter)

Characteristics: The narrative unfolds through the correspondence of the main characters, providing insight into their thoughts and relationships.

Examples:

- Pamela or Virtue Rewarded (1740) by Samuel Richardson.
- Clarissa Harlowe (1748) by Samuel Richardson.
- Sir Charles Grandison (1753) by Samuel Richardson.

1.3) Domestic Novel

Definition: A domestic novel focuses on the social and daily lives of its characters.

Characteristics: These novels often depict the everyday experiences and relationships within a particular social setting.

Examples:

- Works by Fanny Burney (early examples)
- Novels by Jane Austen (renowned for her domestic novels)

1.4) Gothic Novel

Definition: The Gothic novel, also known as the "Novel of Terror," emerged in the late 18th century. The term "Gothic" initially referred to Germanic tribes and then to the medieval period.

Characteristics: These novels are characterized by elements of the supernatural, terror, mystery, and often feature dark and scenic settings.

Examples:

The Castle of Otranto (1764) by Horace Walpole.

Wuthering Heights (1847) by Emily Brontë (employs gothic elements).

1.5) Historical Novel

Definition: A historical novel is a fictional narrative set in the past, aiming to depict historical events and periods with artistic imagination.

Characteristics: These novels blend historical accuracy with fictional storytelling, providing insight into past eras.

Examples:

- Novels by Sir Walter Scott (considered the pioneer of the historical novel)
- Rob Roy (1817) by Sir Walter Scott
- Ivanhoe (1820) by Sir Walter Scott

1.6) The Comic Novel

Definition: Comic novels place characters in absurd situations, often with a negative vision of life.

Characteristics: Absurdity and strangeness are emphasized, and the novels can be both brutal and humorous.

Examples:

- The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (1759) by Laurence Sterne.
- The Adventures of Roderick Random (1748) by Tobias Smollett.

Practice

Compare and contrast the characteristics of the picaresque novel and the historical novel. How do these types of novels reflect different aspects of human experience?

References

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- Frye, N. (1957). Anatomy of criticism: Four essays. Princeton University Press.